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LA VIDA ONLINE: THE PARALLEL PUBLIC SPHERE OF FACEBOOK AS USED BY
COLOMBIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN ATLANTA

by

MICHAELANNE MARIE DYE

Under the Direction of Emanuela Guano

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines how Colombian women within the city of Atlanta utilize Facebook as a parallel public sphere, a cultural phenomenon through which the silenced use mediums of popular culture to discuss private and public dilemmas (Dewey 2009). Through ethnographic research in Atlanta, I analyze how these young women use Facebook as they negotiate their identity through the multiple contexts of their everyday lives. Drawing from feminist critiques, I explore whether Facebook provides an alternative to the traditional public sphere, while also investigating how power structures influence freedom of expression online. Through an international network of friends, these women tackle topics of discrimination, personal struggles, and individual accomplishments. By addressing pertinent issues, such as immigration reform policies, through a public forum, Colombian women become activists in order to disseminate information and educate others. This study explores the parallel public sphere, as well as its possible implications for diasporic communities, by examining the power of social connections and the performance of public personas through an arena not bounded by physical space.

INDEX WORDS: Diaspora, Social media, Public sphere, Identity, Public persona, Cultural anthropology, Facebook, Colombia, Internet, Women, Social capital, Immigration

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by

MICHAELANNE MARIE DYE

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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2011

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COLOMBIAN IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN ATLANTA

by

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May 2011

DEDICATION

To my father, Dr. John F. Thomas, for knowing I was a scholar, for engaging me in debates from theology to pop culture, and for opening my eyes to the joys of cultural study.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

I have just walked in the door of my home. After greeting my dog, putting down my purse, and sitting on the couch, I open my white MacBook. My mouse double-clicks the blue Internet Explorer icon on my desktop and I type www.facebook.com into the address bar. I have entered the world of Facebook¹, a routine I have repeated on multiple occasions, nearly every day since Facebook first started in 2005. Across the globe, millions of people participate in a similar routine to mine. Whether in an Internet café in Bali or a high-rise condo in Manhattan, the physical settings through which people enter this site may change, but the world of Facebook is consistent internationally.

There is a global revolution going on in how we think of ourselves and how we form ties and connections (Giddens 1995:51), resulting in groups of dispersed peoples coming together on the basis of common interests, agendas, and information exchange (Ryan 2008:1). The development of online social networking has allowed for the creation of virtual communities within a state of liminality (Wellman et al 2002) where people are freed from their ordinary social roles, allowing for new states of knowing and being known (Turner 1986). To date, little anthropological research has been conducted surrounding social media sites and immigration. By researching Colombian immigrant women who choose to represent themselves online, I seek to foster a deeper understanding of the complexities of online self-representation and identity formation. Furthermore, I explore how the Internet² affects the lives of individuals living in diaspora.

¹ See Appendix A for a guide to Facebook terms, applications, and common Internet jargon.

² The terms ‘Internet’ and ‘web’ are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

Out of the millions of users on Facebook, I chose to study this particular group for various reasons. During my undergraduate studies, I researched and worked with Latin American immigrant groups living in the Atlanta area. As a result of previous studies and my ability to speak Spanish, I hoped to research Latin American immigrants in Atlanta, however, I wanted to narrow my focus to immigrants from a particular country. While I did not know any of my participants before beginning this project, I had worked with other Colombian immigrants in the past and was aware of the large Colombian population in Atlanta. While a variety of research exists on Latin American immigrants in general, little research has been conducted on Colombian women in Atlanta specifically. To my knowledge, there has been no research on young Colombian women and their use of Facebook. Furthermore, very little research has been conducted on diasporic groups and social networking sites.

Through ethnographic research in Atlanta, in this thesis I analyze how young Colombian women use Facebook as they negotiate their identity through the multiple contexts of their everyday lives. Drawing from feminist critiques (Landes 1992, Fraser 1997, Dewey 2009), I explore whether Facebook provides an alternative to the traditional public sphere, an arena where people may freely discuss and identify societal issues and, ideally, influence political action (Habermas 1989). Through an international network of friends, the women I studied tackle topics of discrimination, personal struggles, and individual accomplishments. By addressing pertinent issues, such as immigration reform policies, through a public forum, Colombian women become activists in order to disseminate information and educate others. This study explores a parallel public sphere, a cultural phenomenon through which the silenced use mediums of popular culture to discuss private and public dilemmas (Dewey 2009). I examine Facebook's possible implications for diasporic communities, by examining the power of social

connections and the performance of public personas in an arena not bounded by physical space. Through my research, I explore whether social media has assisted traditionally marginalized individuals in the process of negotiating a public identity while also investigating how power structures influence freedom of expression online. My research examines the usefulness of social networks as tools for individuals to negotiate virtual space and perform their identities. It also explores the performative and communicative strategies involved in the creation and negotiation of online personas. However, the use of Facebook also presents problematic aspects, such as self-imposed censorship, privacy issues, and surveillance (Raynes-Goldie 2010; Tufekci 2008; Ryan 2008). From complaints of wasting time to fears surrounding lack of privacy, Facebook is often the topic of anxious discussions. The influence of social norms and peer pressure affect the types of information discussed and how these women choose to represent themselves virtually.

An overwhelming majority of the research focused on social networking sites has been observational and quantitative in nature, demonstrating the need for further ethnographic study, particularly through an anthropological lens. While claims about the liberating potential of Internet technology have had supporters (Rheingold 2000; Mitra 2001) and critics (Escobar 1994; Zimmer 2007), few anthropologists have explored how marginal groups live their lives online while incorporating both the barriers and conducive aspects to virtual self-representation (Miller & Slater 2000; Bernal 2005). The women interviewed feel that they may enter into discourses on multiple topics through a medium in which they won't be silenced. My hope is that this research will affect other diasporic communities and demonstrate the need and importance of anthropological research within cyberspace. Furthermore, I hope my research will shed light on the importance of access to information for all members within a society, regardless

of race, class, gender, or social status.

Thesis Overview

Chapter one includes a review of relevant literature, background information, and methodology. The literature review covers identities in diaspora, social media and identity, and the public sphere. The background section provides brief histories of Colombian immigrants in the United States, Facebook, and the anthropology of cyberspace. Additionally, this chapter includes the methodologies utilized in this study as well as the challenges and strengths of the research. Chapter two introduces the research participants and discusses their migration experiences as well as their motivations for joining Facebook. Chapter three focuses on the performance and negotiation of digital identities by the women interviewed. Chapter four includes discussions and data regarding Facebook as a parallel public sphere, as utilized by interviewees in this study. Chapter five discusses problematic aspects of Facebook use including privacy and surveillance. Chapter six contains a brief discussion, as well as conclusions reached as a result of the research conducted.

1.2 Literature Review

Identities in Diaspora

When examining an online diasporic community, such as Colombian women within Atlanta, the most relevant theories revolve around the building, negotiation, and performance of identity by immigrants in diaspora as well as the importance of social capital, particularly among marginalized groups. Among diasporic individuals, their public persona is a production, instead of an accomplished fact; it is something that occurs within representation (Hall 1996). While all identities are in process and are never complete (Hall 1996), people in diaspora have experienced life changes that may complicate the negotiation and performance of their identities. For

diasporic individuals, their identities are deterritorialized as a result of their attachment to a distant homeland and the dispersion of meaningful relationships (Bernal 2005). As a result, immigrant women often perform a public persona that seeks to bridge the gaps they encounter within diaspora (Durham 2004). Society often assigns a specific set of identity narratives to diasporic groups, labeling them as an 'Other' and causing them to internalize these ascribed identities (Mitra 2001:30). Therefore, it is important for diasporic individuals to have a medium with which to grapple with the multiple and complex components of their personas (Subrahmanyam et al. 2008). As diasporic individuals, study participants described feelings of marginalization and discrimination as a result of living in the United States; however, it is important to note that their ethnicity is not to be equated with subordination. These participants are empowered people, particularly due to their education levels and types of employment. While they have experienced discrimination, often due to their accents or appearances, and often grapple with issue affecting them as a result of living in a diaspora, these women are not to be considered silenced or marginalized simply because of their ethnicity.

By reflexively adjusting one's perception of self in reaction to society, people perform their individual identities (boyd 2001). Interaction with popular culture, peers, and media, are key components that comprise identity performance, particularly among young adults (Durham 2004). The examination of identity and public personas should consider the interconnectedness of individuals' relationships and discursive practices (Hall 1996). When examining identity negotiation and performance by Colombian women, I employ Facebook as a means to observe how the women interviewed use narratives to relay experiences to others and, ultimately, create knowledge of self and other (Singer 2004). Through this research, I examine whether Facebook provides the women interviewed a means to perform and negotiate their identities within a

structured social system (Mitra 2001:30). When examining diasporic individuals, the importance of access to spaces where one may perform and negotiate identity, while also building social networks, becomes increasingly evident.

Facebook and the Anthropology of Cyberspace

Through the advent of social media applications like Facebook, a cultural shift is seemingly under way (Tanneer 2009:1). Over the last 15 years, the Internet has become increasingly populated by a variety of new sorts of communities and communication (Wilson and Peterson 2002:149). With more than 300 million active users, Facebook has emerged as one of the most popular online networks worldwide (Facebook 2009). In 2004, Facebook began as a Harvard-only social media network but expanded to include anyone in September 2005 (Ryan 2008). Facebook quickly became embedded in the everyday social practices of its users (Arrington 2005) and surpassed twelve million active accounts by the end of 2006 (Facebook 2009). As of 2011, Facebook had more than 500 million active users (Facebook 2011).

While social media networks have implemented a wide variety of technical features, their main feature consists of visible profiles, unique pages where users can display the identity of their choosing. After joining Facebook, an individual develops a personal profile, which includes descriptors such as age, location, interests, an "about me" section, and a personal photo. While some sites allow users to enhance their profiles by adding multimedia content or modifying their profile's look and feel (boyd 2008), Facebook is unique in that each profile has the same structure. While users perform their online identities through profile pictures and text, the foundation for each profile is the same. Therefore, the structure of Facebook appears to provide all individuals with the same tools to describe themselves. However, as with any mode for identity performance and public interaction, this medium is hardly un-problematic.

The development of online social networking has allowed for the creation of virtual communities that transcend spatial and physical limitations, often in creative and uninhibited ways. The flexibility and mobility of modern industrial culture increases the chances for spontaneous community formation where people are free to perform their own identities (Turner 1986). Social media has turned the corner to adult and corporate embrace. Millions now turn to blogs, social networks, and video as their primary source of news, opinion, and entertainment, making it easier for others to voice their opinions through social media networks and to be heard (O'Hara 2009:3). As individuals in diaspora, Colombian women immigrants are relying on Facebook to maintain relationships, perform their complex identities, and voice their opinions.

The anthropology of cyberspace is a relatively new field of study given that the Internet has only become widely available in the past couple of decades. The first virtual ethnographies focused on Usenet newsgroups (Baym 1992), online gaming sites (Turkle 1995; Jacobson 1996), and online bulletin board systems (Myers 1987). With the increasing availability of the Internet, more researchers began to shift their attention to new forms of online interaction (Ryan 2008:28). By 1993, Howard Rheingold introduced the concept of “the virtual community” and, in 1994, Arturo Escobar coined the term “the anthropology of cyberculture” in his widely received article “Welcome to Cyberia.” When considering its social implications, early studies surrounding the Internet predicted it to be revolutionary (Turkle 1995). However, by the turn of the 21st century, researchers were beginning to question the power of the Internet to contradict existing power structures, especially when considering states' attempts to control information (Wilson & Peterson 2002: 452). While the potential for liberation through Internet technology had its supporters (Rheingold 1993; Mitra 2001) and its critics (Escobar 1994; Kottak 1996), few anthropologists were actually exploring the ways marginal groups live their lives online (Miller

& Slater 2000; Wilson & Peterson 2002).

In 2004, danah boyd published her research on Friendster, one of the first ethnographies on social networking sites (SNS). Since then, more researchers have begun to shift their focus to similar, rapidly growing online groups (Ryan 2008; Subrahmanyam et al. 2008; Ellison et al. 2007), however, anthropological research surrounding social networking sites is still lacking. Some anthropologists have centered their attention on virtual worlds, such as Second Life, where individuals interact through a virtual representation of themselves, or an avatar (Boellstorff 2008). These virtual worlds, while similar to SNS, operate much differently from sites like Facebook and MySpace, where individuals are encouraged to represent their own identities. When considering previous scholarship surrounding SNS, anthropologists must pull from multiple fields of study due to the scarcity of current anthropological research (Ryan 2008). Current trends among researchers studying SNS usually revolve around questions of involvement by adolescents (Boyd 2008; Reich 2010) or American young people (Subrahmanyam et al. 2008; Ellison et al. 2007). A few researchers are beginning to explore immigrants' utilization of online sites (Davis 2010); however, to my knowledge no work has been conducted regarding immigrants and their use of Facebook.

Social Media and Identity

By exploring various factors contributing to identity, such as culture, nationality, gender, and personal history, this thesis explores identity performance through social media, recognizing that a variety of factors contribute to each person's public persona. It is important to distinguish between public personas and identities since identities are not bounded objects and, instead, are ongoing discourses that change according to perspectives, as well as the arena in which they are performed. Modernity has affected how individuals in Western cultures approach identity

(Taylor 1991). In relation to identities, authenticity is often constructed as a moral ideal, which refers to the “modern ‘quest’ for self-fulfillment, self-realization, or personal development” (Taylor 1991:3). Within Western societies, individuals commonly assume that they are called to be true to themselves and that there is an essential, eternal self that may be expressed or hidden. Similar to Rybas (2008:57), I do not consider identity as a “coherent unified entity with a body subordinated to consciousness and social codes.” Identity does not imply a consistent core of the self; it is not a stable or unified essence. Identities are mobile, multiple, and “constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices, and positions” (Hall 2000:17). Facebook has been presented as a “calculated authenticity machine” where users are asked to cautiously construct their identities (Pooley 2010:83). However, authentic self-disclosure does not exist since all social interaction is performative, whether it occurs online or in person (Pooley 2010). Similarly, this study is more concerned with the ways that Facebook serves as a medium for a particular type of identity performance.

Despite popular discourse that perpetuates a distinction between “virtual” cyberspace and “real life,” it is evident that people are integrating technologies of the Internet into their lives as extensions of everyday communication and identity performance (Levinson 2000). Social networking sites like Facebook display individual identities through the construction of dynamic member profiles. Some researchers (boyd 2001:15) argue that social media allows individuals to freely perform their identity and presentation during social interactions, granting people the ability to perform aspects of their identity that they may not have in other mediums. Although many similarities in online identity performance may exist regardless of one's background and social status, individuals in diaspora utilize online networks to cope with issues encountered as a result of the situation in which they find themselves. Diasporic groups seeking to perform and

celebrate their identities across space are now turning to the Internet. In their research of Indian immigrants to the United States, Skop and Adams (2009) found that individuals used the Internet to create trans-boundary networks to construct a sense of shared identity. Similarly, in his research of First Nation teenage girls and their interaction with social media, Paul Letkemann (2009) suggests that social media networks serve as an extension of one's identity performance. First Nation girls celebrate their heritage through social media and performed public personas more freely than they might in other settings. The use of social media by First Nation youth provided them with interconnections that served to mitigate various forms of marginalization by creating and maintaining a sense of place in a community (Letkemann 2009).

The Public Sphere

The public sphere, according to Habermas, is “an intermediary structure between the political system ... and the private sectors of the life-world” (1996:367) that functions to familiarize the state with the needs of its citizens. Ideally, Habermas (1989) envisioned the public sphere as a locus of rational and open discussion. Although not routinely achieved, the ultimate goal of the public sphere is decision-making and public accord. However, the main value of the public sphere lies in its ability to facilitate uninhibited and diverse discussion of public affairs. Habermas’ ideas of the public sphere revolved around a bourgeois public sphere, which was supported by the 18th century liberal democracy. The capitalistic drive of the mass media and society’s focus on consumerism led to the collapse of the bourgeois public sphere. The modern public sphere has been dominated by capitalist objectives, thus becoming a vehicle for ideological reproduction (Habermas 1974). Habermas’ foundational work included a theorization of the captive public sphere of postmodern societies; one where the interaction and the debate is pre-empted through an atomization of publics and a one-way flow of information.

However, through the Internet, the structure of information flow is being changed. It appears that the Internet solves some of the structural problems that Habermas identified in traditional mass media in that it allows for a wide plurality of voices as well as interactive exchanges.

While Facebook is far from a utopian public sphere, the top-down model of information flow has been adjusted to include less regulated discourse that transcends geographic boundaries: hence, a parallel public sphere.

Through my research, I explore Facebook as a type of public sphere by examining the performance of discussions, relationships, and identities through this medium. In their different accounts of public life, Habermas (1962) and Richard Sennett (1977) discuss how, historically, coffee houses served as a locus of direct relationships through which the public sphere developed. While the authors do not refer to coffee shops in the modern sense, but to particular places in a specific time and place of the world (such as British coffee houses and French salons of the 18th century), their discussions of the public sphere are applicable to modern-day places and events. Both authors stress a certain setting aside of differences; Habermas notes that statements were judged on their rational merits, not the status of the speaker, while Sennett emphasizes the acceptance of diversity as a desirable feature of social life. Several feminist authors have challenged Habermas' idea of the public sphere, arguing that the traditional ideas of the public sphere need to be reworked from a feminist perspective in order to demonstrate how discourse can subordinate others (Fraser 1997). One of the prominent feminist critiques revolves around how Habermas' public sphere was limited to a small number of elite, white men, excluding women by pushing them into the periphery and expecting them to remain in the private sphere of the home (Landes 1992).

In the past several years, more researchers have begun to examine the Internet as a type

of public sphere (Dahlgren 2005; Bernal 2005; Castells 2008). Some critics of cyberspace point to powerful institutions that have undermined the Internet's political potential by converting it to a place for the powerful, privileged, and wealthy (Graham and Khostravi 2002:222). Susan Dewey (2009) sought to expand the definition of the public sphere with her research on women in India. Dewey (2009:15) defined a parallel public sphere as a place for marginalized groups to engage in dialogue, particularly when events occur that expose inequality. According to her research, Indian women utilized the parallel public sphere (women's magazines) as a way to resolve private dilemmas. Her work is an excellent demonstration of the ways in which Facebook, as a component of popular culture, serves as a parallel public sphere that “provides women a means to engage with socially stigmatized topics of concern to them” (Dewey 2009:126). When considering the public sphere, Bernal (2005:661) described the widespread use of the Internet as a product of diaspora as well as a medium used by individuals in diaspora. Bernal (2005) explored how Eritreans utilized the Internet to form multiple public spheres that allowed them to communicate their concerns regarding current events while also performing their identities. While Fraser (1997:37) argues that marginal public spheres contain a “weak character” because they lack practical force in society, I aim to demonstrate that Facebook can serve as parallel public sphere, providing Colombian immigrant women with an outlet to discuss personal issues, as well as public concerns that they may not be able to communicate openly.

Immigrants require knowledge and information to improve their livelihoods; they often have a complex range of information needs (Schilderman 2002). Social media supports humans' needs for social interaction and self-representation through web-based technologies where users are transformed into content producers and, as a result, the democratization of knowledge and information is supported (Ryan 2007). Knowledge and profound ideas need to be accessible to

as many people as possible in order to dispel myths about the natural inferiority of subordinated groups and correct misconceptions (Downum and Price 1999). The democratization of knowledge is a means to enlightenment and can lead to a more accurate understanding of the human condition (Freeman 2000) as well as empowerment among individuals (Minja et al 2005). Information that is easily accessible and understandable can offer powerful cultural resources that serve local ends (Mattingly 2006). Among research regarding marginalized communities, discussions of technological empowerment have been shown to affect the local community's perceptions for its potential use (Uimonen 2001). In the past decade, research has emerged demonstrating the Internet's potential to influence cultural practices through the performance of cultural identities online (Sherry 2002, Wilson and Peterson 2002) while also having implications for participation in new public spheres (Briggs & Bauman 1999, Spitulnik 2001).

1.3 Methodology

By moving between offline and online communities, I utilized ethnographic research in an attempt to gain an understanding of Facebook culture and the performance and meaning of human relationships there. My goal throughout my research was to juxtapose a variety of representations- scholarly, historical, technological, autobiographical, institutional, and popular- with the subjective accounts of Colombian immigrant women who engage with online social networking sites as regular facets of everyday life. Multiple research methods were utilized in order to conduct this research.

All ethnographers speak and write within a particular context that has been created by their own history, experiences, beliefs, and cultures (Hall 1996:222). Considering this, I thought it necessary to examine how my personal experiences have motivated me to choose this research topic this project so that I could properly become engaged with my work while not attempting to

take on a detached approach. Having lived in multiple countries as a child and then moving to the United States at the age of eight, I experienced the act of going between multiple cultures. Although my parents are American, I often felt a sense of loneliness, confusion and a loss. There are aspects of my life experience that have been heavily influenced by countries other than America. How much harder would my transition have been if I was unable to speak English or if my parents were not American? Since I had spent several years in Spanish speaking countries, I was interested in focusing my research on a specific Latin American group within Atlanta.

I remember the day my family first connected to the Internet. As we listened to the computer dial into the server, my father told me intently, “Michaelanne, pay attention to this; it will change the world.” I quickly went on to become a digital native (Prenkys 2001), using the Internet, particularly social media websites, in my everyday life. When I joined Facebook in 2005, I was amazed at the numerous individuals that I became reconnected with, initially on a national level and, as Facebook users increased, on an international level. The ability to maintain a large group of connections across international boundaries felt incredibly empowering to me. Furthermore, by posting pictures, links, and status updates, I felt as though I had a structured medium to perform my identity to others while having a means of self-reflection. Facebook assists me in negotiating my identity between multiple aspects of my life and lived experiences. These life experiences have led me to my current research questions and have fueled my passion for this field of study.

When conducting this study, I focused on a small group of women to collect my in-depth data. In order to recruit participants³ for my research, I first asked friends and acquaintances to introduce me to their Colombian friends. While many of my friends told me that they would be willing to introduce me to potential interviewees, this method did not prove very useful. Instead,

³ Throughout this paper, the terms ‘participant,’ ‘interviewee,’ and ‘contributor’ are used interchangeably.

I turned to the very space around which my research revolves. Through Facebook's search tool, I searched for women who lived in Atlanta, claimed Colombia as their hometown, and were between the ages of 20 and 30. I sent them a brief message on Facebook informing them of my research and asking if they would be willing to participate. Over the course of my research, more than 30 women on Facebook were extremely receptive and expressed a desire to help. However, moving from a few initial conversations on Facebook to actually scheduling an in-depth interview proved challenging. My goal was to involve ten women in my research and, although it took a lot of follow-up and more time than I anticipated, I eventually got ten women. Although I did not attempt to limit my interviewees to a certain class, education level, or marital status, all women interviewed have either graduated from college or are currently enrolled. I sought out participants between the ages of 20 and 30; however, the women interviewed are all between the ages of 21 and 26. All participants, except one, are unmarried, live by themselves or with roommates, and are currently employed or full-time students. My research consists of two main methods: in-depth interviews and online participant observation, both of which contain multiple facets allowing me to gather useful data.

Once an individual agreed to participate in my research, we negotiated a time and place to meet in person. Most of these locations were in coffee shops of the individual's choosing. After introducing myself and explaining my research, I explained the terms of the confidentiality form to each individual, asked if she had any questions or concerns, and requested that she sign it. We discussed her role in my research and I explained that I planned to conduct a couple of in-person interviews with her. I also informed her of my intent to conduct participant-observation with her through Facebook and what this entails. Both methods of in-person interviews and participant-observation are discussed in further detail below. The majority of interactions occurred in

English; however, each participant was aware of my fluency in Spanish and I made it clear that we could converse in whichever language they felt most comfortable.

Examining Identity Performance and Negotiation on Facebook

When examining the negotiation of identities by young women in diaspora groups, ethnographic research is the ideal method in attempting to understand “the social conditions and experiences which play a role in constituting [people's] subjectivities and identities” (McRobbie 1994:193). In order to better examine the formation and negotiation of identities by Colombian women on Facebook, I met with each participant in person to conduct semi-structured, in-depth interviews that are tape-recorded. I begin by asking questions regarding general background information (their age, when they moved to Atlanta, why they moved here, etc.). During these interviews I also asked them when they became aware of Facebook, when they joined, and how often they use it. I used a combination of direct and open-ended questions in order to better explore the issues of identity and social capital on Facebook. Each participant was asked why they use Facebook and whether they find it useful, not only in maintaining social networks in their community, but also in maintaining ties with friends and family who live in Colombia. We discussed the extent to which each woman uses Facebook to maintain existing social contacts versus entering new social networks in Atlanta. Do these women connect (in person) with the contacts they have developed online? Furthermore, I examined how the use of Facebook has affected their daily schedules and whether they feel that the time they spend online benefits or hinders their lives offline.

Through in-depth interviews, I attempted to gain an emic perspective from contributors in order to discover how each individual perceives they are forming and negotiating their identities on Facebook. We discussed their experience of negotiating American and Colombian culture and

how their involvement on Facebook has affected this. I inquired about the ways they perform their identities online and if they feel that they are able to better present their identity through Facebook. Furthermore, I asked them how they wish to be perceived by others on Facebook. We discussed whether they overtly attempt to portray a certain type of identity or whether they believe their identity is more organic. Interviewees were asked about the types of information they share online and why they choose to share it. I discussed with them which details of their identity they withhold from Facebook and their reasons for doing this. I also inquire as to whether each woman's view of herself has changed since using Facebook and if they view Facebook as a tool for self-reflection. Each in-depth interview lasted between one to two hours. I conducted at least one follow-up interview with all ten women through Facebook's chat tool, through which I communicated through instant text messages on Facebook.

After each interview was transcribed, I began coding the data collected through the interview. After the initial in-depth interview, I began conducting participant-observation on Facebook. Each participant was added as my Facebook friend, which granted me access to their profiles and the information they choose to disseminate through Facebook. While on Facebook, I took field notes on observations involving contributors. I recorded the type of information shared on Facebook and I captured screen grabs of each participant's profile. Among the women interviewed, screen grabs are limited to include participants' profile pictures, information about themselves that they have chosen to display on their profile (such as hobbies, favorite music, interests, etc.), and/or status updates that they themselves have posted. I also observed the applications each individual uses on Facebook most often. Users are able to keep a blog on Facebook through the application "Notes" and share their thoughts with friends. Additionally, one can publish short thoughts directly to their personal profiles, which will also appear on their

friends' "News Feeds." I interacted directly with each participant on Facebook through various applications. Utilizing Facebook's chat feature, I asked contributors to comment on a task as it was occurring (Greenhow and Robelia 2009). I asked individuals questions about why they were currently online or about information that they recently posted. So as to not be too invasive, each participant was informed of my intentions to do this and had given me their consent. Through online participant-observation, I continued to examine emic perspectives by interacting directly with individuals but I also examined observed behavior. By observing these women while they are online, I was able to see how they utilize Facebook on a regular basis and the ways they are forming and negotiating their identity.

I explored the ways that users chose to engage with online friends and the discourses present online. Furthermore, not only are interactions important in the formation of identity on Facebook, but users' individual wall posts, pictures, and links posted provide important insight into user identities. In order to examine online identities, I followed similar methods to other online researchers (Thomsen et al 1998), who create content heavy online ethnographies by employing text and direct quotes from users in order to examine identity performance. Similarly, other research (Driver 2007:179) employs multiple direct quotes from online users in order to arrive at common themes regarding the ways individuals perform identities. I recorded the thoughts and emotions my informants communicate on Facebook, as well as their interactions with each other, their friends living in the United States, and in Colombia. I also noted the formats they use to display their personas on Facebook (notes, comments, status updates, photos, etc.). I recorded the types of information shared and disseminated to others through Facebook and discuss with my informants whether they feel whether comfortable communicating their opinions online or not. Furthermore, when examining individuals' Facebook profiles, I made

notes of the types of information they have shared in the past on Facebook, enabling me to examine the ways in which they've kept a virtual record of their past. Finally, I addressed whether online life and identity representation mimics their physical lives and provides more insight into their identities, or if they attempt to represent an entirely different identity online than they do in everyday life.

Examining Facebook as a Parallel Public Sphere

Using Dewey's (2009) research as a platform, my research explored the ways that Facebook serves as a parallel public sphere in that it allows individuals to enter into discourses that they cannot in the mainstream public sphere. The parallel public sphere is a “venue for the socially sanctioned (albeit marginalized) dialogue that takes place between society and individuals who are part of relatively disempowered groups” (Dewey 2009:125). I examined how users voice their opinions surrounding politics and popular culture as well as issues that are considered taboo. Expanding upon past research (Gerhards and Schafer 2010), this thesis explores Facebook's openness for participation and interviewees' perception of their ability to communicate their thoughts and opinions. By recording and examining these types of interactions, I explored how Facebook acts as a parallel public sphere in allowing Colombian immigrants to communicate their thoughts and represent their identities. I examined whether they felt empowered through the use of Facebook and if they felt able to openly voice their opinions through this medium. Similarly, I studied whether Colombian women are using Facebook to directly address the issues they face as migrants in their lives offline. I considered whether Facebook provides moral and economic support by allowing these women to discuss issues and gain important information regarding current events, access to resources, and relevant policies. As a result of the different methods employed, I aimed to approach my research

questions from a variety of angles in order to gather data that is both comprehensive and meaningful.

1.4 Challenges and Strengths

I am fluent in both written and spoken Spanish, which enables me to interview research participants in whichever language (English or Spanish) they feel most comfortable conversing in. Furthermore, this allowed me to understand information that interviewees are sharing in Spanish through Facebook. Since I am an avid Facebook user, and have been for the past five years, I have a working knowledge of this site. Additionally, as the New Media Specialist for the Georgia Aquarium, I built and maintained the Aquarium's social media sites, including Facebook. Having a professional knowledge of the way this medium is used was also helpful in understanding the multiple facets of Facebook.

The contributors whom I studied were in my age bracket and we share the same gender. I found this to be incredibly beneficial in making participants feel comfortable with me. In addition, most of us shared similar interests, allowing me to develop rapport with these women. Instead of appearing as an Internet lurker, which has been the fear of other researchers (Boyd 2007; Driver 2007), each participant was been more than eager to assist me with my project and have interacted with me online. In some cases, I discovered mutual friends with interviewees through Facebook, granting me more credibility with individuals. Each participant was interested in my motivation for choosing this topic for my research. I discussed with participants how my experiences living in countries other than the United States served to fuel my interest in this topic. This revelation assisted in developing further rapport between us.

As a result of Facebook's News Feed application, my homepage was constantly updated with numerous posts from my Facebook friends. Since Facebook keeps a virtual record of all

activities by contributors, I was not only able to observe activity as it occurs, I could also examine each user's history of posts and interactions. Sifting through all this information can be overwhelming. When beginning my research in the summer of 2010, Facebook had a tool that allowed me to place all interviewees in one group, separating them from my personal friends, so that I could observe their activities at once. However, Facebook often changes its format and tools; in the fall of 2010, they dropped this incredibly useful feature, further complicating my ability to observe contributors' online activity. The multiple changes made to Facebook over the course of my research proved to be incredibly frustrating when trying to research participants online.

Since I was observing individuals and their activity on Facebook, I did not have a regular meeting time to observe and converse with interviewees. As opposed to researching a community group or organization that meets in a physical space, Facebook is always open, allowing activity to occur whenever users desire. From a research perspective, this can be overwhelming, since monitoring Facebook activity requires a lot of diligence and persistence. Nevertheless, the women interviewed were very receptive to me in answering my questions and allowing me to follow-up with them online. Since some interviewees are more active on Facebook than others, my online participant observation focuses more heavily on such contributors. However, with the time allotted to research individuals on Facebook, I attempted to make my observations as inclusive as possible by citing evidence from each participant.

With the growing popularity of ethnographic research online, some researchers have addressed confidentiality issues when conducting virtual ethnographies, arguing some may abandon ethical principles because research is being conducted among people the researcher never sees (Bird and Barber 2007:146). Since my research was not only conducted online, but

offline as well, I met personally with each participant to inform them of my intentions and that their real names, e-mail addresses, and other identifying information will be kept strictly confidential, as suggest by Bird and Barber (2007:145). Additionally, the women interviewed gave their consent for me to explore all aspects of their online profiles as well as the information that they post online and that is visible to the rest of their Facebook community.

Cyberethnography is a relatively new field of study; therefore, many topics remain unexplored. My research may shed light on related issues. However, due to the limitations of my research and the lack of previous scholarship, there are various topics that fall outside of the scope of my research. Although my interviewees are all women, I am not examining gender issues explicitly. Aspects of gender may enter into discourses regarding the main themes in this paper, but this topic is not central to my investigation. Additionally, advertisers' use of individuals' demographic data for marketing purposes is currently a popular topic of discussion among the media and society. Although this topic is mentioned briefly in chapter five, it is not heavily integrated into my study.

1.5 Background

Colombian Immigration

Most immigrants enter the United States through major urban centers (Maharidge 1996). From 1980-2000, the Latin American population in Atlanta increased by 1,032 percent (Global Atlanta Networks 2000:1). As of 1997, there were 8,000 Colombians living in the city of Atlanta (Walcott 2002:53). For the past two decades, Colombia has been in turmoil from an ongoing undeclared Civil War, which has resulted in widespread guerilla and drug-related violence (Collier and Gamarra 2003:1). Additionally, the late 1990s brought an economic recession to the South American country. As a result of the political and economic instability, tens of thousands

of Colombian citizens have been displaced from their homes (Collier and Gamarra 2003). While peasants are fleeing areas by relocating to internal refugee camps or neighboring countries, Colombians with financial means have been migrating to Europe and the United States (Collier and Gamarra 2003). Colombian migrants have naturalized within the United States in great numbers following the enactment of Colombian dual citizenship legislation in 1990 and the US immigration reforms of the 1990s (Escobar 2004). The number of middle to upper class Colombian migrants to the United States has dramatically increased since the late 1970s (Thoumi 1995). While all socio-economic classes are still involved in Colombian migration, the majority of Colombians who have migrated to the United States since the 1990s have been middle, upper-middle, and upper class professionals (Thoumi 1995). These migrants come mainly from the larger Colombian cities, such as Bogota and Cali, and migrated primarily to escape the increased violence and personal security threats from Colombian paramilitaries, guerillas, and government security forces (Collier and Gamarra 2003). Additionally, with the declining Colombian economy, many migrants are also looking for improved economic opportunities in the United States.

Upon arrival in the United States, many immigrants seek employment through traditional Colombian methods, which involve gaining positions through close networks among families and friends. Due to their unfamiliarity with U.S. employment practices, many Colombian migrants report difficulty finding employment (Collier and Gamarra 2003). Immigrants in the city of Atlanta have the experience of "going between" their culture at home and American culture in their everyday lives, which can create a sense of confusion and loss. Very few Colombian immigrants have the types of jobs that are able to influence policies that affect their community (Hofmann et al. 1995:15). It is necessary to emphasize education and development of

Colombian immigrants who are able to compete in the upper echelons of the job market while keeping alive their connections and commitments to their community (Hofmann et al. 1999:15). Among Colombian immigrant in New York City, the most serious problem reported was the world's negative image of Colombia and, within the community, the poor command of English, the lack of political representation (Hofmann et al.1999:15). Among Colombian immigrants, the most highly reported struggles deal with the lack of representation within the larger society and feelings of marginal impact within their community (Hofmann et al 1999:17).

Chapter 2: Facebook and Colombian Women

*Mon: I am optimistic, REAL, focused, and a smart, wise LATINA
(About Me Section, Facebook Profile)*

2.1 Participant Profiles

While reviewing the literature on Facebook and social media, I became increasingly frustrated due to the polarizing nature of the majority of the research I encountered. Facebook was either good or bad; individual identities were either authentic or fake; Facebook was either empowering or constricting. What follows is an attempt to blend and demonstrate multiple facets of life on Facebook, as lived and reported by research interviewees. This study includes ten contributors, all women, who consider themselves Colombian immigrants and are currently living in Atlanta. All participants are between the ages of 21 and 25 and are either currently attending or have graduated from college. Although I did not intend for this to happen, eight of the women interviewed have attended or are currently attending Georgia State University. Each woman has used Facebook for at least two years and reports accessing the site a minimum of once per day. Participants chose the location, date, and time for their in-depth interview. Additionally, in order to make the women as comfortable as possible, and since I had not met any of them prior to this research, I gave participants the option of bringing a friend to their interview or conducting the interview via Skype⁴. I feel it necessary to mention, lest the interview locations suggest a researcher bias, that six out of ten participants selected Starbucks as the location for their interview. The participant profiles below contain brief introductions to each woman, their age, and the reason they moved to the United States. This information was gathered during each participant's in-depth interview and, therefore, was reported to the researcher in-person.

⁴ Skype is a software application that allows users to make free voice calls, chats, and video conferencing over the Internet.

Lori⁵—I met Lori through a mutual friend and after talking with her on Facebook about my research, she enthusiastically agreed to help me because, as she put it, “I try to participate in things that may be beneficial to other people who are experiencing things that I have as an immigrant.” Our first in-person meeting took place at the North Druid Hills Starbucks, about ten minutes north of downtown Atlanta. As I introduced myself to Lori, she smiled and gave me a big hug. Although it was a muggy July afternoon, Lori insisted on sitting outside because it reminds her of the weather in Colombia. Over the next two hours, she discussed her personal history and her experiences on Facebook. Lori is a 21-year-old who was born in Cali, Colombia and moved to the United States when she was 16 years old. Before Lori was born, her aunt moved to the United States and married an American. At the time of Lori’s birth, her aunt convinced Lori’s parents to move to Georgia. However, it took Lori’s family 16 years to get the paperwork in order and, by that time, Lori did not want to leave Colombia. Lori was about to commence college at a Colombian university and did not want to leave her friends and family. However, her parents decided it would be better to move to the United States so that Lori could study here. Lori describes the move and transition as incredibly difficult. The summer before she went to college, Lori started using Facebook at the encouragement of her best friend from Colombia. Lori spoke animatedly about the importance of Facebook in her life. She conveyed an eagerness and helpful attitude in each one of our interactions. About two months after our first interview, Lori moved to France for a year of study abroad. Although she was in another continent, Lori would follow up with me through Facebook chat every couple of weeks, asking how my research was going and if there was anything more she could do to help.

⁵ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Lori were gathered during an in-depth interview on July 21, 2010

Ali⁶— Ali and I first met at a Starbucks in Dunwoody. Ali, 22, had been out shopping with her best friend, an American whom she met in high school, and she asked if it was ok if her friend sat with us. As the three of us sat around a small patio table, Ali began to tell me about her move to the United States. She says that her family “had a good life back in Colombia.” Her father worked for a large car dealership and her mother owned a hair salon, however, she told me, “my parents worked too much; my sister and I basically grew up with a nanny.” Despite their economic prosperity, Ali’s parents felt that she would not have a bright future in Colombia because of the country’s economy and the increasing violence surrounding political unrest. At the age of seven, Ali’s family left Bogota, Colombia, so that her and her sister could attend school, and eventually college, in the United States. Ali described her move to Atlanta as “super crazy” mainly because of the new culture and language. In order to adapt to American culture, Ali tried to make several American friends and learn English as perfectly as she possibly could. Her English hardly carries a trace of Spanish, which she seems proud of. Although Ali was young when she left Colombia, she still feels the impact of immigration today. In 2008, Ali began using Facebook after her sister introduced her to the site. She had used MySpace for about a year before joining Facebook, but she said that Facebook was easier to use and more people were on it, so she deleted her MySpace account and now exclusively uses Facebook. Unlike some of the other interviewees, she discussed her use of Facebook in a more casual manner. Several times she said statements to the effect of, “I guess I never really thought of how much Facebook affects my everyday life.” She admitted that she had not really considered the importance of Facebook or how it had affected her life, although she says she uses it everyday. For Ali, she says she does not know what she did before Facebook: how she interacted with

⁶ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Ali were gathered during an in-depth interview on August 18, 2010.

friends, shared news, or what she did with all of the time that she now spends on Facebook.

Much like our in-person interactions, Ali is more pensive and easygoing on Facebook. She does not update her status with her feelings as much as other participants; however, she says that she displays her emotions through music. Ali is constantly posting links to various on her profile that reflect her current mood.

Jasmine⁷—Currently in her senior year at Georgia State University, Jasmine requested that we meet in the university’s library. As soon as she walked into the small study room that I had reserved for our interview, Jasmine flashed me a wide smile and gave me a hug. Jasmine, 24 years old, was born in Miami, Florida. However, her parents moved back to Colombia when she was six months old. During this time, Jasmine’s father passed away and her mother decided to move the family to the United States because higher education in Colombia is much more expensive. In 2004, at the age of 16, Jasmine, her mother, and two siblings returned to the United States, settling in Lawrenceville, GA. The family moved to Georgia because, “it wasn’t full of Latinos like Miami” and a good family friend was living in Georgia. Jasmine describes her experience as a migrant as difficult, full of transitions, and something that will always impact her life. When she was 18, Jasmine’s older brother introduced her to Facebook. After logging in for the first time, Jasmine says she was “hooked.” Through expressive eyes and hand gestures, Jasmine described to me how she uses Facebook. At the conclusion of our in-depth interview, I asked Jasmine (as I asked the other women) if there was anything that she would like to add. She paused for a moment then looked straight into my eyes and exclaimed, “I love Facebook!”

Lolo⁸—Another participant, Lori, introduced me to Lolo on Facebook, saying that she was

⁷ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Jasmine were gathered during an in-depth interview on November 10, 2010.

⁸ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Lolo were gathered during an in-depth interview on

interested in participating in this study. Lolo asked if we could meet at the Starbucks near her house, which was actually the same Starbucks that I met Lori at. In the early afternoon of November 11, Lolo and I sat on metal stools at the Starbucks counter, facing a window overlooking a crowded shopping center parking lot. Lolo propped her feet on the bottom bar of my stool and then asked if she was invading my space because, as she put it, “sometimes I forget that people here can be uncomfortable with us getting too close.” I told her that I had grown up in countries that also had a different definition of personal space. At this revelation, Lolo began talking about the differences between American and Colombian culture. When Lolo was 16, she moved to Georgia from Bogota, Colombia, with her parents and brother. Her father's family, who already lived in Georgia, convinced Lolo's family to leave Colombia saying that Lolo and her brother would have more opportunities in the United States. Now 24 years-old, Lolo says that the move to the United States “wasn't easy because I moved to a really small town called Dublin, GA, so there were hardly any Spanish speaking people.” Lolo started using Facebook the summer before she started college because she thought it was a tool to meet people before you start school, however, she said she soon learned that “it was so much more than that.”

Marcela⁹ – A Colombian friend of mine from high school told Marcela about my research and she actually contacted me expressing interest in being involved. On a brisk evening in December, Marcela, 22, and I met at a Starbucks in Midtown Atlanta. The coffee shop was crowded with patrons, so we decided to sit in the shopping center's courtyard where it was quieter. Sitting around a concrete table, Marcela began to tell me about her experiences as a Colombian immigrant. In 2001, when she was in high school, Marcela traveled to the United States as an

November 11, 2010.

⁹ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Marcela were gathered during an in-depth interview on December 11, 2010.

exchange student. During that time, she lived with her sister who had previously left Colombia for the United States. After returning to Colombia, Marcela said that she would cry herself to sleep because she deeply missed her sister. When relaying this story, she told me that, “I wanted to try and reunite my family again; I just wanted us all to be together.” Marcela said that her parents had good jobs as lawyers in Colombia, so they did not feel economic pressure to leave. However, Marcela wanted to keep her immediate family together and, therefore, her parents decided to leave Colombia. Upon arriving in the U.S., Marcela said she was happy to have her family together, but the transition was much more difficult than she expected. They first moved to Florida, and Marcela said that she felt a lot of discrimination from other Latino immigrants who had been in the U.S. longer than she had. After a year, her family moved again to Georgia where Marcela says she was much happier. After a friend encouraged her to open her own account, Marcela began using Facebook in 2006 during her second year of college. She was amazed at how she was able to find several of her friends from all over the world through one site.

Essa¹⁰ – After my interview with Lolo, she connected Essa and I on Facebook. Once Essa accepted my Facebook friend request, I asked her if she would be willing to participate in my research. Essa agreed and, like many other participants, suggested that we meet at a Starbucks near her home. On a chilly December morning, Essa and I settled into brown, overstuffed chairs in a sunny corner of an Atlanta Starbucks. Essa, a 24 year-old, is one of two interviewees who was born and grew up in the United States. Her parents moved to Georgia for economic reasons shortly before Essa was born. As a child of immigrants, Essa says she considers herself and immigrant, too, however, she feels as though she is completely American, while at the same time

¹⁰ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Essa were gathered during an in-depth interview on December 12, 2010.

being fully Colombian. Essa's parents made an effort to teach her and her sister Spanish as well as Colombian customs. Essa and her sister have traveled to Colombia every couple of years since they were born, something that her parents worked very hard to make happen. As a result, Essa feels very in touch with her Colombian roots and is close to friends and family living in Colombia. Although she was raised in the U.S., Essa still feels like an outsider at times, both in the U.S. and when traveling to visit family in Colombia. When she was growing up, Americans treated her differently because she was Latin American but she also felt ostracized by Colombian immigrants who were born in Colombia and moved to the U.S. as children. During high school, some Colombian immigrants would tell Essa that she was not Colombian because she was born in the U.S. However, Essa says that she felt that she was actually, in her words, "more Colombian than they were because I do not discriminate against other Colombians and I actually take pride in who I am. Just because I was born in America doesn't make me any less Colombian." Essa feels as though she is more appreciative of her Colombian side because she has made an effort to visit Colombia continually and, "to really make that part of my identity." Before starting college, Essa joined Facebook because, as she put it, "that is what everyone was doing before going away to school." She uses Facebook to stay connected with friends, access information, and share important news and information with others.

Mon¹¹ - While searching Facebook for participants, I came across Mon and sent her a message regarding my research. Although we had no mutual friends and she had never met me, Mon was eager to help. The same day that I sent her a Facebook message, she replied with a suggested meeting place, her phone number, and e-mail address. On a foggy afternoon in January, Mon met with me at a Starbucks in Buckhead during her lunch break. Dressed business casual, Mon

¹¹Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Mon were gathered during an in-depth interview on January 19, 2011.

approached me, introduced herself, and gave me a hug, saying that she recognized me from my Facebook profile picture. As we made our way to a secluded couch, Mon told me that she was excited that I was researching her community and she was happy to be a part. Mon is 21 years old and was born in Gainesville, GA. Her parents moved to Atlanta from Colombia during the 1970s seeking better economic opportunities. Similar to Essa, Mon considers herself both American and Colombian and has made a continual effort to travel to Colombia as often as possible. She has close friends who live in Colombia and is also close with relatives living there. Mon has dual American and Colombian citizenship, something that she says is important to her, especially when traveling to Colombia because she feels “more legitimate.” Additionally, Mon said it could be dangerous to flash around an American passport in Colombia. Mon feels that, to Colombians, she looks very American, but having a Colombian passport makes her feel safer when she is visiting Colombia. Mon started using Facebook around the time she started college and soon discovered many useful tools available on Facebook to reconnect with friends and share information.

Camila¹² –Similar to Marcela, I met Camila through my Colombian friend from high school, who put us in touch on Facebook. Due to her busy work schedule and long commute, Camila requested that she be interviewed via Skype. As I began explaining my research to Camila, we were soon distracted as my little dog hopped into my lap to investigate Camila through the computer. However, this served to put Camila at ease as she began talking about her own dog, of whom she has posted many pictures on Facebook. Camila is 25 and she moved to Atlanta in January 2005 to go to school. She initially went to Georgia State University because she received a scholarship, but after two years, she transferred to Brenau University. Camila started using

12 Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Camila were gathered during an in-depth interview on January 23, 2011.

Facebook in 2005, when she first moved to the United States and was able to access Facebook because she was an American college student. After 2007, when Facebook opened to the public, her friends and family in Colombia started joining the site.

Kat¹³ - I met Kat through her best friend, Lori. After interviewing Lori, she asked if I was looking for more study participants and suggested that I contact Kat. Although I began communicating with Kat on Facebook in October, it was not until February that I was able to schedule a meeting with Kat. According to her, she was wary of meeting someone that she did not know and who had contacted her through Facebook. In order to put her more at ease, I offered to conduct the in-depth interview via Skype and Kat agreed to participate. After a few minutes of talking, Kat became more at ease and apologized for being suspicious of my intentions, saying she felt guilty for being cautious. Despite her initial reservations, Kat treated the interview more like a conversation between friends, often inquiring about my own life throughout our discussion. Kat, 21, left Colombia at the age of 10 with her parents and siblings because her parents wanted to provide them with “a better future.” Her parents were able to make more money by moving to the U.S.; they now own several international phone card shops in Georgia, as well as clothing stores in Colombia. Additionally, her parents wanted Kat and her siblings to go to college in the United States. Kat’s upbeat personality soon shown through during our interview; she laughed and smiled often. Kat told me that she began using Facebook before starting college and after a lot of her friends started using it. Similar to Ali, Kat said she had not fully considered the implications of using Facebook in her day-to-day life. As we continued to talk, she would pause after certain questions then suddenly her eyes would light up, as if she was thinking about certain aspects of Facebook for the first time.

13 Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Kat were gathered during an in-depth interview on January 27, 2011.

Tati¹⁴ – I met Tati through my work with Culture Connect, Inc.¹⁵. Tati is a mentor with the organization’s Go-Betweener Mentoring Program, through which she mentors a ten-year-old Colombian girl who recently moved to Atlanta. When I asked Tati if she would consider participating in my research, she immediately agreed and explained to me, “I’m a mentor so that I can give back to my community and I like to participate in anything relating to Colombians in Atlanta.” My in-depth interview with Tati took place in the tiny lobby of Culture Connect’s Decatur office. Having been there before, Tati said that it was the easiest place for us to meet. When Tati arrived for our interview, she sat down in the office chair next to mine and asked with an enthusiastic smile, “so, what do you want to know?” Tati, 21, was born in White Plains, New York, but moved to Colombia when she was two months old. Tati’s father had been living in the United States and traveling back to Colombia to be with his family. When Tati was 11, her mother became pregnant and chose to move to the U.S. so that their family could be together. Additionally, Tati’s family business in Colombia had failed due the struggling economy so her parents decided to try to find work in the U.S. Tati joined Facebook in 2007. In order to juggle the multiple representations of herself online, Tati has created two Facebook profiles, one, which is more conservative, for family members and a few family friends and another, which she considers to be her “real” Facebook, for her friends.

3.2 Colombian Migration and Diaspora

When selecting interviewees, I did not consider education or class; however all participants are educated, having either graduated from college or currently attending college.

¹⁴ Excluding communication on Facebook, all direct quotes from Tati were gathered during an in-depth interview on January 28, 2011. Unless otherwise noted, the information gathered from Tati’s Facebook profile comes from her Facebook

¹⁵ Culture Connect, Inc. is a non-profit organization serving immigrants and refugees in the city of Atlanta. For more information on Culture Connect, visit their website at <http://www.cultureconnectinc.org>

Part of this may be attributed to the fact that Facebook initially started as a tool for college students and, as a result, the majority of Facebook users in the United States have attended, or are currently attending, a university. Each of the women interviewed came from working or middle-class families in Colombia. While the interviewees may appear to be a fairly homogenous group, when considering the demographics of the Colombian diaspora in Atlanta, participants provide a good sample of their community. As opposed to their counterparts living in Colombia, Colombian migrants to the United States have three more years of schooling (Gaviria 2004). Over the past two decades, the years of schooling of the average Colombian immigrant have risen steadily (Gaviria 2004). Furthermore, Colombians with more financial means (therefore typically middle to upper class) are the ones who are able to migrate to the United States (Gaviria 2004). When considering these similarities between participants, I glanced at my Facebook chat and noticed that Mon was online. I sent Mon a short line of text asking her if she had time to chat with me. Mon immediately responded with “Sure! I’d be happy to help! ☺.” Mon said that she knows of many middle aged to older Colombians in Atlanta who are on Facebook, hold a college degree, and are middle to upper class. However, she says she also knows middle aged to older Colombians who are on Facebook, are small business owners, and have a high school diploma but have not attended college. When considering children of immigrants, and specifically Colombian women between the ages of 20 and 30, Mon feels that the majority of them attend or try to attend college:

Mon: Generally, children of immigrants make sure to work hard in school because they know their parents came to the United States to give them a better life. We want to make them proud and eventually pay them back for what they have done to help us. Obviously, there are always exceptions to everything. I know many people, men in particular, who do not care about becoming educated and are perfectly fine where they are. On the other hand, as women, we are sometimes made to feel that education is our only way out, our only to get away from our parents. As men, sometimes it seems like it doesn't matter what they do.

They can stay at home until their 40, go into the military, and a whole host of things besides getting an education. (Facebook chat, March 20, 2011)

Each participant discussed the importance among Colombian culture of attending college, especially for women who are children of immigrants. During my interview with Essa, she described to me how she would have never considered not attending college: “After all my parents did for me and how hard they worked to get here, it would be like a slap in the face if I didn’t go to school.” Essa explained how many of her Colombian girlfriends feel similarly; if they did not attend college in the United States they would be denying themselves opportunities.

Among participants, their family’s motivations for moving to the United States varied slightly. Each interviewee traveled to the United States with their parents, except for Camila who came here on her own to attend college. Since both Mon and Essa were born in the United States, their personal experiences as immigrants vary from the other women. Having grown up in the U.S., their English carries no trace of a Spanish accent. Mon and Essa also said that they feel more knowledgeable regarding American customs, the education system, etc. than other Colombian immigrants who were born in Colombia. Although both say they consider themselves to be immigrants, at times they spoke about immigration from the perspectives of their parents, family members, and other friends who were born in Colombia and later moved to the United States. However, both Mon and Essa reported similar feelings and experiences to the other women interviewed regarding discrimination. While these women describe feelings of marginalization and discrimination as a result of living in the United States, it is important to note that their ethnicity is not to be equated with subordination. These participants are empowered people, particularly due to their education levels and types of employment. While they have experienced discrimination, often due to their accents or appearances, they are not silenced nor marginalized individuals as a whole.

While discrimination against ethnic minority groups is well documented, the question of how minorities experience and interpret their own situations is often neglected (Verkuyten and Thijs 2001:479). In their discussions of the struggles of Colombian immigrants, research participants, many discussed the difficulties of being able to communicate in their native language. During my interview with Lori, she became serious when I asked about her transition from Colombia, to Atlanta. The difficulties of migration are still very real for Lori; Lori says, “I would be like 'my name is Lori' and that's all I knew how to say. It was very hard.” Lori told me that she felt confused and invisible when she first moved to Atlanta: “my first reaction was like these people don't even care if I'm here; they don't even know that I'm alive.” In Colombia, Lori was very talkative, but in Atlanta, she began to feel like she was a different person. While sitting in Starbuck’s outdoor café area, I inquired as to Ali’s transition to the U.S. from Colombia. Ali looked directly at me and said “Oh, Michaelanne, it was a very, very crazy time.” Ali told me that many of the difficulties of her migration were due to her inability to speak English. During each interview with participants, I asked them to tell me about their experience as immigrants, from their move to the U.S. from Colombia as well as their lives in Atlanta among the Colombian diaspora. Without hesitation, each woman described the difficulties that result from trying to negotiate between the differences in American and Colombian Culture. Each woman spoke seriously with me about immigration and I thought it important to incorporate each participant's experience as an immigrant in the United States. The following includes excerpts of interviewees’ responses when asked to describe their transition from Colombia to the U.S.:

Lori: It was very hard. I would cry. For six weeks straight, I would cry everyday. I wasn't used to the culture. And I went to, well it was pretty much a white school, well it was pretty diverse but it was pretty much a white school. They're very, well, Colombian culture is more warm, I guess. Here, you go in a room, and they wouldn't say anything to me. Like they don't even notice that you're there. In Cali [Lori's hometown in Colombia] if you're new, everyone comes up to talk to you

and welcome you. So I felt very out of place.

Lolo: Moving here wasn't easy because I moved to a really small town called Dublin, GA, so there were hardly any Spanish-speaking people. The only Hispanics were Mexican so they weren't from my culture. I didn't know anyone so making friends was really hard. I couldn't understand anybody. It was hard but I mean it was still good to be here. You always grow out of hard situations. The act of migration is really hard in and of itself. Leaving my family was so hard and I missed them so much every day. It was really hard to get used the way that people acted because it seemed like they were really immature. I had to get over a lot of things to make friends.

Camila: The hardest part of my transition was the food actually. It was very, very, very different. In Colombia, eating is part of the experience. You get together with your family and you all eat together. Here, it wasn't like that. Just the culture; it's so different.

Jasmine: It was pretty tough for many different factors; mainly the language barrier and feeling out of place and it's hard to socialize. I'm a very social person and it's very hard to socialize. I went from a very big city to Lawrenceville, which is really small for me. And I lost a lot of independence. I went from being able to take the bus anywhere – to the mall, the store, school – to having to get a car to drive everywhere. Definitely a culture shock. In Colombia, I would go to my neighbors' houses and hang out with them after school. In this culture people don't talk to their neighbors as much.

Marcela: The worst experience I had was when I had to do an oral presentation on a scientist so I spent three weeks researching and practicing for it. After I presented it, my teacher got up and said “Ok, for all of you who didn't understand a word that she said, here's a recap.” I was devastated. I told my parents, either we're going back to Colombia or we move because I couldn't take it any more.

Ali: It was just really weird because of the kids, the way they dressed, um, just everything, the environment. The neighborhood we moved into was so quiet. Like in Colombia, everybody is outside, all of the kids play outside. When I got here I was like “where are all the kids at?” Um, just everything. The restaurants, the food, everything. I was like, wow, it was a total change. A 180. Things [in Colombia] are nothing like things here.

This background information is part of an attempt to better understand the ways these women use Facebook and their motivation for doing so. As mentioned in Chapter One, there is a large number of Colombians living in Atlanta. While this population may not be as visible as other Latin American diasporic communities, thousands of Colombians occupy the city and

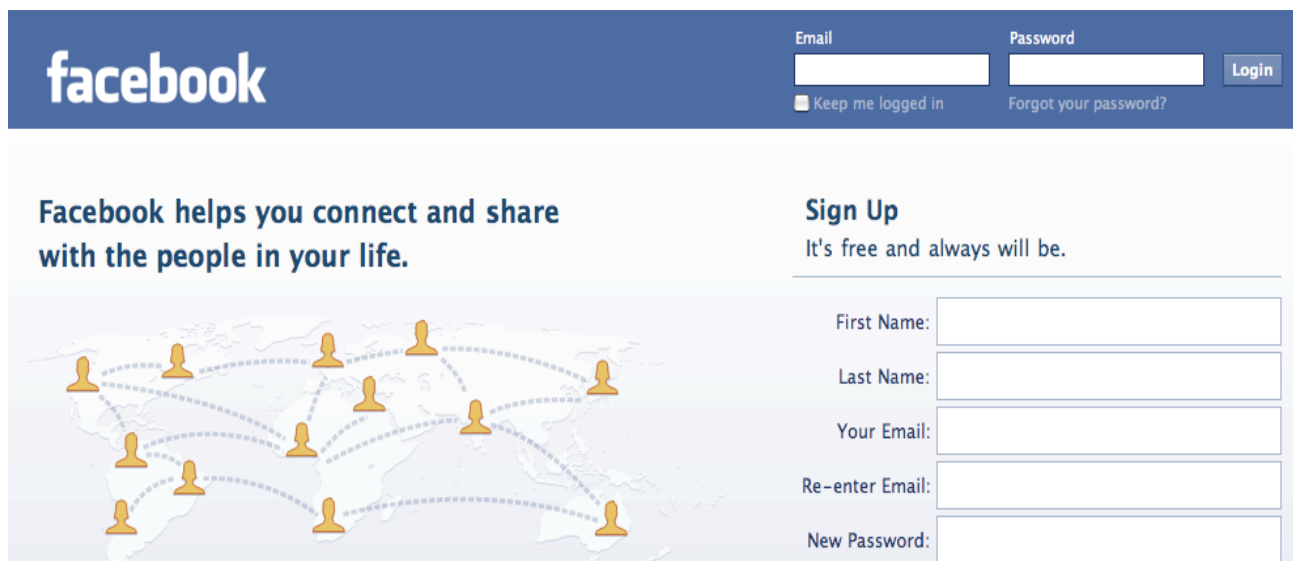
surrounding areas. In addition to their presence in Atlanta's physical space, the number of Colombians on Facebook is numerous. Searching for the word "Colombia" on Facebook returns results by the thousands. Colorful pictures appear on the screen, representing everything from Colombia's national soccer team to the country of Colombia itself. Interspersed between these pages are member profiles of Colombians. As I discovered during my research, many of the Colombians in Atlanta are connected to one another. When individuals view a user's profile, Facebook displays friends that you have in common with them as well as the user's friends that you may know (based on common friends). Building, bridging, and maintaining social capital might be augmented by social networking sites, allowing diasporic individuals to create and maintain larger networks of relationships, cheaply and easily, from which they could potentially draw resources (Donath and boyd 2004; Resnick 2001; Wellman et al. 2001).

2.3 Getting Started on Facebook

Marcela: Facebook is an amazing tool because, ten years ago, immigrants didn't have a free, easy way to communicate with their friends here or back home.

Facebook has a different feel than most websites, since the entire system is organized around exploring and engaging other participants. The world of Facebook is a place of communication, a source of information, and a multifaceted arena of identity performance. This site blends human actors, individual personalities, and companies and organizations through code-powered, semi-automated visual interfaces. Upon logging on to Facebook, users are greeted by their News Feed, which portrays the latest application updates and the published shifting statuses of their friends. Facebook may be comparable to the buzz of the city or the front page of a newspaper, that is, a newspaper that includes the top news about individuals in your personal network. Participants are able to easily find new friends and old, company Facebook pages, and

other relevant information. Practically every venture in social exchange is a function available through the Facebook system, making the accomplishment of multiple social tasks easier than attempting to conduct them offline. Although many of these tasks have been implemented into other programs and websites, Facebook's high logon rates, deep integration, and the ability for anyone to conduct such tasks unbeknownst to others as well as in an overt fashion have made it the most widely used social networking site in the world.



(Figure 1 – Login page for Facebook)

In initial conversations with interviewees, each one discussed their motivations for joining Facebook, how often they use this site, and their purpose for engaging with this online medium. All ten participants joined Facebook at the encouragement of a close friend or family member who was already involved on the site. During my interview with Marcela, I asked her why she opened a Facebook account. She gave me a look as if to suggest that the answer to my question was obvious and then replied, “because everybody else was using it; I just had to join.” Six contributors had profiles on a similar site, MySpace, however, once discovering Facebook, they began using that as their primary social networking site, saying that it was more conducive

to their needs. Since Facebook quickly became more popular than MySpace, it was easier for contributors to locate friends and family members on Facebook. When asking the women interviewed how often they are on Facebook, each one said they check the site at least once per day. Nine out of ten users have smart phones, which allow them to access Facebook on their mobile device. While sunning herself at Starbucks, Lori had already put down her Frappuccino and picked up her Blackberry before she realized, “I’m actually checking my Facebook right now. See, I do it without even realizing.” Because she is constantly connected to the Internet through her mobile, checking Facebook is almost second nature for Lori because, “Facebook is at my fingertips 24/7.” Lori joined Facebook after her best friend from Colombia told her that it would be a great way to keep in touch.

Lori: At first I thought Facebook was so lame but a good friend used it to talk to all of her friends, say hi to people, and, oh, the pictures! So I decided to open a Facebook. And it was so much better for communicating with her. We started to become more updated on each other's lives and more people started joining my Facebook. Now, I can't stop.

Although all contributors acknowledged the problematic aspects of Facebook use, each one described Facebook as being a critical aspect of their life; a tool that they use on a continual basis that impacts them in many ways. Initially, the biggest draw to using Facebook, as stated by each participant, was the ability to engage and interact with friends and family with whom they are separated from, as well as friends who were local. Some research has shown that the web might help individuals with low psychological well being due to few ties to friends and neighbors, such as immigrants (Bargh & McKenna 2004). Particularly in relation to diasporic individuals, a social network with a mixture of ties is important for people to obtain the fundamentals of identity performance, affection, and emotional and material support (boyd 2001). Facebook makes multiple spheres of one’s life available to them simultaneously. All ten

of the women interviewed stressed the importance and benefits of maintaining multiple relationships through Facebook:

Camila: Now I have a lot of friends from Colombia on Facebook. Now everyone has it – my friends, my family, my aunts and uncles, my cousins, my parents. Everybody is right there. Everyone has a Facebook.

Essa: I hate the phone and so I'm so bad at keeping in touch with people through that. Facebook is a great way to stay in touch with people. I do all my check-ins on Facebook. I don't try to keep in touch with all my friends and they don't try to keep in touch with me – it's all through Facebook. Without it, I'd loose touch with my friends, both in Colombia and the U.S.

Jasmine: The number one reason why I use it is to keep up with people all over the world. I have friends in Colombia but also all over the world. That's how I communicate with them through Facebook. It's so much cheaper, well because it's free.

Marcela: Someone told me about Facebook and went on there and I just kept finding more and more friends. Friends from the US, friends in Colombia. And, at first, that was enough, just having everyone in one spot where I can find them.

Lolo: I like Facebook because no matter how many times you move or change friends, you can still keep track of everyone. And they can keep track of you and how you are changing.

Lori: I keep up with people much better on Facebook. My two best friends in Colombia – our whole relationship is on Facebook. We don't e-mail, talk on the phone, nothing, just Facebook. I can see what they're up to and they can see what's going on in my life. Also, I have a really good friend right now and he I met him through Facebook. He started talking to me on there and I didn't know who he was but now he's one of my best friends. And he's super cool. We always text and hang out now.

Mon: I'm very professional so I love to network with people on Facebook and maintaining those relationships. Facebook is a great opportunity to connect with someone who knows someone who knows someone who may be able to help me get a job later on in life. So why not be on Facebook?

Social networks offer Colombians a way to communicate with family and friends with whom they are geographically separated (O'Hara 2009:3), assisting in increasing one's social capital. When individuals move to the United States from Colombia, they do not have to loose

touch with their social network. Instead, they may increase their social capital through meeting new people while still maintaining the contacts they had in their native country. The development of online social networking has allowed for the creation of virtual communities that transcend spatial and physical limitations (Wellman et al 2002), multiplying people's social capital, useful knowledge, and ability to get things done (Rheingold 2000:361). All participants use Facebook to connect with friends in Atlanta and to reconnect and maintain ties with their friends and family in Colombia. As we sat outside a Midtown Starbucks, I asked Marcela if Facebook has affected her life in any way. With a laugh, she immediately responded, “oh, yes!” and, placing her hot cup of coffee on the cold, concrete table, elaborated on her statement:

Marcela: Without Facebook, I think I would be a lot more disconnected from the world. I'm a recruiter so I'm on the road a lot so I don't have time to call people and socialize. It's a great way for me to stay in touch with my family and friends. I really love it. I think if used properly it's a great tool to keep up with my friends in Colombia, send them a message – I'm alive, I'm OK. I don't have time to write a letter to my friends in Colombia and calling is way too expensive. I love Facebook to keep up with them.

Additionally, Facebook allows users to share useful information, even when other forms of communication are unavailable. During my interview with Ali, she described how, at times, Facebook can be a more reliable means of communication than e-mail or phone. While observing Ali's interactions on Facebook, I came across several examples of what she meant. For example, on February 17, 2011, Ali's father posted on her Facebook wall: “*Hija estamos en F/Lauderdale y salimos a las 9:20 pm, llegando a Atlanta a las 11:00 pm. Recojanos en la terminal NORTE. Estamos sin telefono. Love, Dad.*” [Daughter, we are in Ft. Lauderdale and we leave at 9:20 p.m., arriving in Atlanta at 11 p.m. Pick us up at the North Terminal. We do not have access to a phone.] Although he was without a phone, Ali's dad was able to access Facebook to let her know important

information. Similar to other participants, Ali actually said that her Facebook was the best way to get a hold of her, since she sometimes checks it before her cell phone.

During my interviews with participants, I asked them to hypothesize about the possible differences in the ways that they, as Colombian immigrants, use Facebook when compared to their American counterparts. This question was often followed by brief pauses, during which interviewees would gaze into space, contemplating their response. Lori, however, answered immediately with, “They just don’t need it as much as we do!” Historically, diasporic individuals have been silenced by the larger, dominating national discourse (Gramsci 1972), and the Colombian diaspora in Atlanta is no different. Prior to using Facebook, Lori explained to me that she felt as though she “didn’t have an outlet to say what I felt, I did not know who to talk to or who would listen.” During my interview with her, Lori told me that, “Facebook isn’t perfect but at least no one on there can tell me what I am or what I am not. I can speak for myself.” While sitting in Culture Connect’s office, I also asked Tati how she thinks that Facebook use by Colombian women her age is different from American women. Tati responded, “I think Americans take it for granted. They may use Facebook to stay connected with friends in Atlanta, but I would lose contact with my whole family and friends in Colombia without it.” By utilizing wall postings, links, and other interactions on Facebook, interviewees reported that they feel closer to a larger network of friends and family. Through pictures, individuals are able to better visualize their friends’ everyday lives and through status updates, they catch glimpses into the daily nuances of their contacts. While some of these details may seem trivial, Essa stated that it is “important to know how your friends are doing day to day. Facebook gives you insight into the little details of their lives, which, in reality, make up the big picture. For someone who has family and friends and a whole other world thousands of miles away, Facebook helps fill in

the gaps.” Being able to share cultural practices assists immigrants when encountering a lack of social support (Garcia et al 2009). The women interviewed employ Facebook as a means, not only to stay in touch with friends and family in Colombia, but also to share cultural practices with one another.

2.4 Gender and the Parallel Public Sphere

Although the difference in Facebook use between men and women is not a central focus of this paper, since the participants are all women, this section touches briefly on some of the issues of gender communication on Facebook. In their research on conversational styles between men and women, Zimmerman and West (1975) found that men tend to dominate in conversations with women. The researchers concluded that men do not view women as equal conversation partners. During their study, men interrupted women more, were interrupted less, and spoke for longer periods of time. Michael et al. (2010) suggest that recently, women are being encouraged to adapt the linguistic norms of the public domain. However, as women are urged to adapt more masculine styles of discourse in the public sphere, they are often seen as confrontational or aggressive (Michael et al. 2010:21). This leads to another aspect in considering Facebook as a parallel public sphere. In the traditional sense, other users are not able to interrupt participants in an effort to control the conversation. Certainly, domination and control may occur on Facebook, however, participants overwhelmingly felt as though they could state their opinions without being silenced. While sitting on Starbuck’s outdoor patio, Ali told me how, “in other situations, people may try to talk over you or totally control a conversation. On Facebook, they can’t do that. I can say as much as I want about whatever I want.” Interviewees stated that, in general, they felt that they could communicate more freely on Facebook as opposed to many offline contexts. Historically, women’s participation in the public sphere was condemned as women

were pushed to the domestic sphere (Rappaport 2000). In the early 20th century, the rise of the shopping mall marketed this site of consumption as a respectable public place for women (Rappaport 2000). The sociality of the corridor street was moved indoors as the shopping mall became a type of fortified enclave through which consumption practices were based on amusement rather than practicality (Rappaport 2000). While women are not as limited by the historical notion of respectability and the public sphere, many still feel as though they must perform in a certain way in public, particularly in relation to voicing their opinions in the presence of men. Although Facebook has been infiltrated by numerous marketing and advertising campaigns, this is in no way the main purpose of the site, nor is it, by any means, central to the activities and interaction that occur on Facebook. Rather, Facebook has become a public sphere through which women may voice their opinions. On an evening in March 2011, I was browsing my News Feed on Facebook when Mon's name appeared, showing that she had recently posted an article regarding immigration policy form. A green circle appeared next to her name, showing that she was online at the time. I sent her a short message through Facebook chat and asked if I might talk to her for a moment. Mon is regularly on Facebook chat and, like many other participants, has always been helpful and willing to talk to me online. As we discussed talking about sensitive topics on Facebook, I asked Mon if she is able to communicate differently on Facebook than in offline contexts, to which replied, "Yes without a doubt. Face-to-face conversation is so much different than it is online. Ideas flow more freely online and people are braver and willing to say things they would not normally say to someone's face (Facebook chat, March 9, 2011)." While Mon stated that she often felt freer to communicate on Facebook, she did say that there are instances when she is treated differently because of her gender.

Mon: As a woman, I know I am always treated differently, whether it's good or bad. People are just socialized to act a certain way in person and online or they

think things can be said or done online and then not have to worry about consequences because it is "online" and not in person. (Facebook chat, March 9, 2011)

Although the women interviewed said they felt freer to communicate on Facebook, there is an underlying notion that one needs to be careful about what they say. During my chat conversation with Mon, I noticed that Lolo was also online. Curious as to what Lolo's views were on the subject, I sent her a chat message asking what her thoughts were. During our chat conversation, Lolo told me that she does not feel any pressure from men specifically to act a certain way on Facebook. Additionally, she said that, in her experience, she thinks that the ways that men and women use and communicate on Facebook are very similar. Initially, each participant said that they felt that there was no overarching difference between Facebook use by men and women.

Although participants were in their early to mid twenties, older Colombian women use Facebook, as well. All ten participants reported that their mothers used Facebook and four participants said that their grandmothers used Facebook. However, these older Colombian women typically had Facebook accounts in order to communicate and keep up with their children and other relatives. Additionally, since initially Facebook was only open to college students, older users joined Facebook later and are often not as familiar with Facebook's tools as are younger users. The issue of gender and communication on Facebook unearths elements that have yet to be explored by researchers and these topics warrant much more attention in future research.

Chapter 3: Identity and Facebook

3.1 Digital Identities

When joining Facebook, users create a personal profile¹⁶, around which one's virtual world revolves. This type of personal home page serves as a launching point for other interactions on the site. In addition to text, users are able to add images, video, and applications to their profiles. Furthermore, the profile also contains a public list of the people that users identify as “friends” and comments from other members. Since the style of social networking sites emerged from online dating services (boyd 2008), profiles often contain information typical of dating sites, including, demographic details, interests, a profile picture, and personal descriptions of the user. According to boyd (2007), there are four primary factors that make online identity formation different than offline: (1) searchability – individuals can search for specific information that has been posted on social networking sites - writing one's thoughts in a diary is much different than writing them online; (2) replicability – it is very easy to change or duplicate items that one or others have posted online; (3) persistence – online text is stored indefinitely; (4) invisible audiences – individuals are unaware of who is actually reading their thoughts and their thoughts may be interpreted out of context.

While the language used by interviewees describes how the women interviewed perform aspects of their identity on Facebook, it appears that this is more a type of identity performance or a display of a public persona. As discussed previously, each person displays performative aspects of their identity and, therefore, all such performances serve to reflect one's identity. In other words, there is no authentic self-disclosure within individuals that needs to be performed,

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See Appendix A for images of participant's Facebook profiles.

either on Facebook or in face-to-face interactions. Taking that into consideration, participants differed in their discussions of a public Facebook persona that varied from a private self, which will be reviewed in further detail in this chapter.

The core of identity performance and negotiation on Facebook begins with the personal profile that allows users to report demographic data, such as birthdate, hometown, gender, sexual preference, etc. Additionally, individuals join groups and report their interests, education, and employment history. On her Facebook profile, Jasmine posts, “3 words that define me: Catholic, philanthropy, nature.” Among the Colombian women in this study, Facebook serves as a platform for them to negotiate and perform their identities. Below are some examples of the information that each participant chose to display on their Facebook profile in order to demonstrate one of the methods employed by these women to perform their online identity. In the previous section (3.1 Participant Profiles), I included information reported in-person to the researcher during in-depth interviews. In contrast, the information below appears on each woman's profile page and is visible to all of her Facebook friends:

Lori – Has 1,129 friends; has worked at MetroPCS; studied at Versailles Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines University and Georgia State University; knows Colombian Spanish, American English, and French; political views are listed as “other;” interests include God, cultures, languages, immigration, and listening to music.

Maigm7– Has 336 friends; works at Anis Bistro; studied respiratory therapy at Gwinnett Technical College; from Bogotá, Colombia; political view listed as liberal; is interested in music; currently lives in Dunwoody, Georgia.

Jasmine – Has 381 friends; is a promotional model and brand ambassador; studied public policy at Georgia State University; lives in Atlanta, Georgia; knows Spanish, English, French, and Italian; from Bogotá, Colombia; Roman Catholic; people who inspire Jasmine include Leonardo Davinci, Mother nature, Jeff Corwin, Steve Irwin, and Jesus.

Lolo – Has 658 friends; Reservations Sales Agent at AirTran Airways; In a relationship (includes her boyfriends name); studied psychology at Georgia State University; knows Colombian Spanish and English; from Bogotá, Colombia;

supports Colombia's national soccer team; enjoys watching *Sex and the City* and *Novelas* (Latin American Soap Operas).

Marcela – Has 268 friends; is an Admissions Counselor at Kennesaw State University; studied International Economics at Georgia State University; lives in Dunwoody, GA; from Calí, Colombia.

Essa – Has 592 friends; is a Bilingual Reservations Agent at AirTran Airways; studied computer information systems at Georgia State University; Catholic; enjoys running and bowling; supports the Atlanta Falcons and Colombia National (Colombia's soccer team); listens to Juanes (a popular Colombian musician; is a fan of *Twilight*.

Mon - Has 929 friends; is an Intern at the Department of Homeland Security; studied criminal justice at Georgia State University; lives in Atlanta, GA; is a big sports fan, supporting local Atlanta teams as well as Colombian teams; her interests include kickboxing, soccer, basketball, the beach, and reading a great book.

Camila – Has 1910 friends; is an Interactive Marketing Coordinator at Red Clay Interactive; studied business management at Brenau University; from Bogotá, Colombia; is in a relationship with (includes boyfriend's name); her favorite quote is “Carpe Diem;” Her favorite musical artists include Juanes, Nate Currin, and Fonseca.

Kat – Has 1032 friends; is a Sales Associate at MetroPCS; studied accounting at Georgia State; is from Manizales, Colombia; is in a relationship with (says boyfriend's name); knows Spanglish, English, and Spanish; Under interests, Kat states: “I love my life, love my culture, love to listen to music, love to dance, love to laugh.”

Tati – Has 501 friends; is a volunteer teacher at English for Successful Living and a volunteer at Culture Connect, Inc.; studied political science at Georgia State University; lives in Atlanta Georgia; from Bogotá, Colombia; knows Spanish, Spanglish, and English; political views listed as liberal; she's a member of the following groups: COLOMBIA, Dream Act 2010, UNICEF USA, and Lower the Drinking Age to 18.

The information included above is just a fraction of the information each user has shared on their Facebook profile. The amount and types of information published vary in degree from each participant and will be discussed in more detail in the following sections of this study.

Judith Butler (1990) argues that society's identity categorizations are too restricting in that they

limit the possibilities for more fluid or subversive identity formations. On one hand, Facebook contributes to societal categorizations by providing online forms, with pre-determined categories, through which users build their virtual selves. However, contributors often used the traditional categories and filled them with non-traditional responses. For example, Facebook profiles include a “political views” section, to which Jasmine entered “Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia” and Mon put “registered voter and informed citizen.” While users' interests and demographic data provide personal insight, identity on Facebook, as in the physical world, transcends the basic demographic information reported. Users post pictures, blog entries, status updates, and interact with friends. Participants reported their status updates as one of the strongest tools in performing their identity. While sitting outside in the afternoon sun, Lori told me that she turns to Facebook as a way to share her emotions with others:

Lori: Facebook lets me perform myself. Sometimes if I'm frustrated, I just go to Facebook and put it on there. If I'm bored, if I'm happy, I post it on Facebook. Or when you achieve something you want to put it up there so people know and can celebrate with you.

One aspect of identity performance on Facebook involves the application “Notes,” which serves as a type of blog. Notes allow users more flexibility in terms of length and editing when compared to posts and comments. Users can tag others in their Notes, which is especially useful when one wants to ensure that certain friends are aware of the Note they recently published. Additionally, one can share Notes, via hyperlink, with individuals who do not have a Facebook account. Facebook and non-Facebook users may comment on interviewees' Notes. Few participants utilized Facebook's Note feature, however, during their in-depth interviews, Jasmine, Essa, and Lolo all said they enjoyed posting Notes. As we sat at a round, white table in a study room on the fourth floor of Georgia State’s Library, Jasmine told me that, “Facebook is another way for you to tell people about you, but in a more in-depth way.” Jasmine explained that she

feels free to share much more personal information on the through Facebook Notes. Below is an excerpt from a note published to Facebook by Jasmine that she entitled “Booty-free until marriage”:

Months of therapy had shown me that growing up without a father - he died when I was 6 months old- had a profound effect on my self-worth, and I had a tendency to date inappropriate men who were either emotionally or physically abusive. I had to accept that sex affected my emotional wellbeing and physical health and had blurred my understanding of relationships. (Facebook Note, April 21, 2010)

After reading this very intimate note, I sent Jasmine a message on Facebook chat, asking her about her motivations for sharing something so personal on Facebook. Jasmine told me that it was important to her to share this aspect of her life with her friends and it was easier to do so on Facebook because users can comment as they wish. As Jasmine put it, “you're not throwing it in their face.” While some postings may seem trivial or humorous, each interaction and post serves to reflect aspects of identity that are both located offline as well as performed and negotiated specifically on Facebook. Through exploration of Facebook profiles and individual's activities on this site, researchers can discover the ways users' identities are being formed through this medium (Greenhow and Robelia 2009). When discussing her attraction to Facebook during her interview, Marcela added, “being able to see what's going on with people everyday is important. If you just keep up with people on the phone rarely – they may tell you the big, important things going on – but there are gaps. You don't really know how they're doing day to day. Being on Facebook gives you little details about people's daily lives.” During my in-person interview with Lolo, she discussed how she uses Facebook status updates and told me that, “basically, I can post everything there.” Lolo explained that she uses status updates to share her feelings, items of importance to her, and information she wants others to know.

3.2 Visual Identities

In addition to spreading useful information, contributors also reported that the ability to post and view pictures on Facebook as one of the strongest motivations for joining and using the site. Users display personal characteristics through images and Zhao et al. (2008) argue that Facebook profile images are forms of implicit identity performance. All 10 participants emphasized the importance and attraction of Facebook pictures. Over iced coffee at Starbucks, I asked Lolo what her favorite aspects of Facebook were. She placed her hand on my arm, saying, “The pictures are huge; you can see everything.” During my Skype interview with Camila, I asked her what she enjoyed about using Facebook. While sitting on her bed with her dog in her lap, Camila immediately answered, “I love the pictures. I love posting and sharing them and looking at other peoples’ pictures.” During in-depth interviews, each participant’s eyes would light up when they mentioned being able to share and view pictures on Facebook:

Marcela: I love posting and viewing pictures on Facebook. I have a lot of pictures and I think those show the type of person I am.

Kat: Being able to see my friends and family’s pictures on Facebook is one of the best parts.

Lolo: Facebook pictures are a huge part of being on Facebook.

Tati: Most often, on Facebook, I just go on and look at other peoples’ pictures. I also like posting my own so other people can see what is going on with me.

Mon: I love going back and looking at old pictures on Facebook. They're all in one place. I can look back and see what me or my friends were doing years ago.

Jasmine: And not only can you talk to them, you can look at their pictures. It's a deeper way to connect with them. It creates a stronger bond between your friends and yourself. You can comment on their pictures. It helps you visualize how they're doing.

Lori: I love looking at all my friends' pictures on Facebook, especially my friends

in Colombia. They are always talking to me about their friends in Colombia and it helps to be able to know who they're talking about because I've seen all their pictures.

Essa: I think keeping up with my family and friends in Colombia on Facebook is really important— especially through the pictures. That's an amazing way to see what's going on.

On Facebook, the pictures also serve as a means to gather personal histories; users' visual memories are anchored in one place. While sitting outside Starbucks with Ali, she explained that her main motivation for joining Facebook was because of the pictures. Ali's older sister introduced her to Facebook and Ali began logging on to her sister's account to see the pictures she posted, as well as her friends' pictures. After watching her sister's friends interact through the sharing of pictures, Ali wanted to be able to upload her own pictures "and share them with friends from years ago." During our interview, Ali pulled her cell phone out of her shoulder bag and logged onto Facebook. She scrolled through her friends' recently posted Facebook pictures, something she does several times each day. The majority of Ali's pictures consist of her going out with her friends in Atlanta, her family both here and in Colombia, as well as individual images of herself. As with other contributors' profile pictures, the pictures Ali chooses to display as her main profile images are not chosen haphazardly. After posting a profile picture of herself in a bathing suit in September 2010, Ali received several comments from other Facebook users such as: "I love this picture....you look gorgeous!"

Ali, as well as other participants, reported that they enjoyed receiving compliments and positive feedback from friends regarding the pictures posted on Facebook. Facebook profile images serve as an example of what Goffman (1959) refers to as implicit performance given off through visual appearance, while information offered on contributors' profiles serve as performance given through explicit verbal communication. Some of the women interviewed,

including Ali, Kat, Tati, Lori, and Camila have posted profile pictures of themselves that they later removed because, as Kat put it, “it was not a picture I would want my parents or coworkers to see.” While all participants consider carefully the types of images they use for their profile pictures, some of the women interviewed, including Mon, Marcela, Lolo, Essa, and Jasmine, told me that they want to look attractive in their pictures, but they are more concerned with looking professional and posting pictures that are appropriate for the wide variety of groups represented among their Facebook community. Some participants are not as aware to how context-sensitive information is on Facebook. Furthermore, there appears to be a homogenization or flattening out of the many contexts of daily interactions on Facebook. When talking to Ali about her profile picture (in which she appears in a bathing suit) she did not seem concerned that many different types of people had access to her picture on Facebook.

This type of behavior is a type of byproduct of the romantic ideology that has developed out of modernity: the fact that individuals in public need to be true to their allegedly authentic inner selves (Sennett 1977). Although participants modulate their behavior according to their publics, initially, most participants stressed the importance of expressing their “true” selves freely and consistently. Up until the eighteenth century, public life had allowed a distance between outward appearance and inner self—a clear separation between public and private. However, under conditions of modern life, there is a notion that one’s public appearance has to be a “true” reflection of the self (Sennett 1977). This romantic notion of authenticity has become attached to the public sphere and is the dominant theme permeating discourse on the self at work. Thus, in contemporary society, our bodies are bearers of status and distinction (Bourdieu 1984). Many participants do choose not to display images that are as revealing as Ali’s. Several of the women interviewed choose to display “attractive” photos of themselves in less overt or

suggestive ways. One of Camila's recent profile pictures displays a shadowy image of herself on the beach:



(Figure 2 – Camila, profile picture, January 2009)

The picture is very creatively taken and Camila told me that this picture was much more about displaying her creativity and her love for the beach than to appear physically attractive. Similar to offline contexts, participants did try to portray a positive image of themselves, often through the types of pictures they posted. According to Lori, “I’m not just going to post ugly pictures of myself. Like if someone else tags me in a picture that looks bad, I may un-tag myself.” By ‘un-tagging’ herself from a picture, Lori would remove her name from the picture

and, by doing so, the picture would no longer be linked to her account nor appear on her profile. While viewing other users' Facebook pictures is a daily activity of each participant, all of the women interviewed reported the posting of personal pictures as an important interaction on Facebook, which also reflects aspects of their identities. When observing these women's interactions on Facebook, I noticed that some women use profile pictures that are not images of them. In February 2011, Marcela changed her profile picture from her own image to the image of her one-year old niece, a baby girl with big brown eyes, wispy dark hair, and a playful grin. Marcela included the caption: "Proud auntie of the cutttteesssstttt baby on earth ☺" (Marcela, Facebook profile picture, Feb. 2011). Marcela received more comments on this profile picture than on any of the others that she included in which she was pictured.

While chatting with Mon on Facebook in February 2011, I noticed that she had changed her profile image from a picture of herself to a poster advertising a fundraising event. Similar to Marcela, Mon told me she often changes her profile picture from images of herself to event posters in order to publicize important events since "not everyone will look at other pictures I post right away, but they always see my profile picture" (Facebook chat, Feb. 16, 2010). Although users post many more pictures than their profile picture, the profile picture is the clearest attempt at photographic self-representation. This picture serves as the user's digital body and not only lives on the user's profile, but is also attached to all other Facebook interactions. When people search for others on Facebook, profile images are displayed among results. While all interviewees' profile images are visible to non-Facebook friends, privacy settings exist that will prevent one's profile picture from being displayed during searches.

3.3 Performing Identity

In social interactions, both online or offline, individuals react to feedback received by others in that environment (boyd 2004:22). People constantly adjust their performance for context; individuals assess what is appropriate and expected in each situation. Interactions on Facebook reflect what Goffman (1967) describes as face-work, which revolves around the positive image of self that people have during interactions with others. Considering it to be a sociological construct of interaction, Goffman (1967) argues that face is a type of mask, which changes depending on the type of audience and context of social interaction. While the face is neither a permanent aspect of nor inherent in the individual, Goffman contends that each individual strives to maintain the face they have created in various social situations. Similar to offline contexts, individuals use various strategies to maintain their faces on Facebook. Facebook further complicates Goffman's ideas surrounding face in that it blends multiple faces into one context.

Over the course of our two-hour long interview, Lori told me about how she uses Facebook to communicate her opinions. Lori explained that Facebook is important to her because, "on Facebook, I have a place to speak my mind. When I first came [to the United States], I didn't feel heard. Now, I don't have to keep things to myself because I have Facebook." When discussing identity performance with Lolo during her in-person interview, she explained to me that it helps her to have a place "that's always open where I express my identity by posting my thoughts." During my interview with Lolo, she explained how she thinks about the ways in which she performs her identity and what aspects she wants to portray. Lolo told me that, while people's lives contain mundane or boring aspects, they may not necessarily portray it Facebook. In her opinion, people want to appear "cool" and that affects how they perform their identities.

Through a self-concept schema (Hoyer and MacInnis 2007:54), users attempt to represent a mental conception of what they consider to be their ideal selves. The deployment of the ideal identity schema causes users to select which consumption behaviors or labels best describe who they are, or desire to be. Other researchers (Walther et al. 2008) have found that impression management on Facebook centered on users' desires to appear socially attractive and gain credibility among their online networks. Such behavior further substantiates a user's identity and may facilitate social acceptance in their desired network (Hoyer and MacInnis 2007).

Communication on Facebook can be one to one or one to many, however, if a user comments on another person's profile, this is visible to that user's friends, who are then free to enter into a conversation that originally began between two people. While this lack of privacy may seem problematic, Ali reported that this was one of their favorite aspects of Facebook. In the muggy heat of an August afternoon, Ali used her hands for emphasis as she excitedly told me: "I love it when you comment on someone's status and then someone else comments and then someone else and it becomes like a party on your wall."

In the examination of online identity performance, identities on Facebook are more implicit: users prefer to show rather than tell and emphasize group identities to personally narrated ones (Zhao et al. 2008). Several researchers have argued that identity negotiation and performance involve the idea of an audience (Grosz 1994; Merchant 2006) and on Facebook, this audience not only consumes the performance of one's identity, they are players in constructing it. In this way, it seems that identity and social capital intersect. The maintenance and creation of social capital through Facebook allows the women interviewed to keep up with multiple groups of people. These people, in turn, interact and engage with users' online identities, allowing multiple discourses to contribute to their identity. Some of the strongest responses from friends

on Facebook result from the posting of negative emotions or sharing feelings of stress or self-doubt. When participants communicated difficulties in their lives, their friends are quick to offer encouragement and support. When Jasmine was having relationship problems and displayed her frustrations on her Facebook profile, other users were ready to respond:

Jasmine: Why do guys keep lying? Don't you ever get tired? He said, "I'm single, I'm not dating anyone", then I get texts from a random girl saying she's his girlfriend. It happens all the time. You can't trust no one these days.. :(.
(Facebook post, Oct. 26, 2010)

Facebook user 1: OMG He is a JERK!!! He doesn't worth your time nor your friendship. LAME LAME LAME! I hope you can find a good and honest guy soon :) They might be someone with those qualities out there. I found one! :D

Facebook user 2: Not all guys are the same... but the majority of them say the same BS! but yes they are good guys out there just like u and my bf LOL ! :)

Facebook user 3: Girl be glad you got rid of him now & didn't waste any more time on a guy like that. How pathetic. & idk what attitude that girl had when she texted you, but she's def lowering herself texting you to begin with. Why argue over some asshole. Ah lucky her she gets to keep him! Hahaha. Love you gorgeous! ;)

These are only three of the responses, out of 30, that were posted on Jasmine's profile performing concern, sharing her frustration, and encouraging her. While many affirmed Jasmine' and encouraged her, others began a discussion on gender and why women are held to different standards than men. What ensued was an interesting discussion on societal and cultural gender norms where many different Facebook users communicate their opinion. McClard and Anderson (2008:12) note that identities on Facebook are not primarily formed by the demographic information provided by users but more so through the interactions between individuals. In November 2010, Tati carried on a conversation with one of her Facebook friends whom she had not spoken to in several months. As demonstrated in the Facebook conversation below, by interacting with one friend through a means visible to others, Tati reveals information about herself to her entire Facebook community:

Facebook User: Hey Stranger! ♥

Tati: Hey you!!! :) Wow. How have you been??

Facebook User: LOL! I've been great how about you..?

Tati: Good Good.... What have you been up too? Are you still living around the gwinnette area?

Facebook User: I live in Dunwoody.. but my parents are still off Killian Hill. I've just been working my ass off and living. Did some school, going back in January.. What about you?

Tati: AW that's good.. Just school, graduating in May, and sporadic work, and allot of volunteering to teach English as a second language...

Facebook User: Awww that's awesome! What's your major?!

Tati: Political science, concentration international affairs, and minor in Spanish.. Yours?

Facebook User: Excitingggggg!!! That's awesome! I'm getting my associates in Medical Assisting with Certification then going into some type of specialized medicine.. not too sure where yet. I've been debating with myself about that for years. What kind of career are you interested in?

Tati: I am thinking peace corps, then graduate school... Probably to study something with latino americans or latin america. i was going to do law, but no I cant lol not that committed to something I don't even agree with half the time jeje (Facebook posts, Nov. 12, 2010)

By interacting with a friend via Facebook, aspects of Tati's identity unfolded throughout the conversation, which is also visible to her friends. This interaction, therefore, is not simply between two people, there is an audience that consumes interactions on Facebook, even if they are not directly involved in the conversation. Facebook allows users to “tag” others in their profile posts. For example, when writing a post, users include the symbol “@” in front of a name and Facebook provides a drop down menu of that user's friends. The user is then able to select the friend whom they wish to tag. That friend's name shows up as a link in the post, it is automatically posted on the tagged friend's Facebook profile, and the person who has been tagged is notified. In this way, users can publicly send messages to specific users, while allowing their entire Facebook network to also view the post. Kat enjoys celebrating other people on Facebook because “it means more when you brag about someone in public.”

Kat: Life is full of events which make us grow in many ways. But I have found that all of them have been better b/c of who I have by my side...Happy six-year

anniversary baby...I love you ;) ♥ (Facebook post, Jan. 7, 2011)

Obviously, this message was intended for Kat's boyfriend; however, the five responses to this Facebook post came from people other than Kat's boyfriend, offering their congratulations. Clearly, Kat not only wanted to wish her boyfriend a happy anniversary, she also wanted her network on Facebook to be aware that she was celebrating her six year anniversary. There were performative aspects involved in this post. On Facebook, impression management (Goffman 1959:6) occurs through users modifying their online behavior (whether consciously or subconsciously) in order to affect the impression that others have of them. Identity on Facebook clearly contains the performative aspects of which Goffman (1959) refers. However, instead of actors playing different roles on different stages, the multiple stages of the offline world form a more cohesive stage, combining multiple publics.

3.4 Public vs. Private Personas

There has long been a distinction between public and private selves, creating an idea that there are binary aspects of identities: those that are kept hidden and those that are public. Furthermore, several social analysts have posited that an individual's hidden self is the true or authentic version of his or her identity and the public self is a mask, something that the individual constructs in order to project a desired identity (Pooley 2001). Additionally, an individual's public persona has often been considered unauthentic. Social analysts have also had a tendency to denote binary classifications to identities: public vs. private, rationality vs. sentiment, solidarity vs. self-interest (Gal 2002:77). These boundaries appear to be fixed in many people's minds, however, among participants, it is not enough to classify their digital identities as 'public' and their one-on-one interactions as reflecting a 'private' persona.

There are multiple interactions that occur on Facebook, such as private messages, which are

only between two users. However, interviewees also send intimate messages to one friend by posting it on their Facebook wall. Although that communication is directed towards an individual, it is nonetheless visible to both the sender and receiver's Facebook friends. In conversations with participants, none of them distinguished between a private and public self. The opinions interviewees shared in private conversations with me regarding immigration, politics, and their use of Facebook were equally reflected in their activities on Facebook. Participants acknowledged acting differently in certain situations (whether they are with their boyfriend, family, at work, or on Facebook), however, they saw the need to censor themselves in all situations to varying degrees, regardless of whether they were interacting with others face-to-face or online. During my interview with her, Marcela described how the type of job she has, and the fact that her boss and co-workers are friends with her on Facebook, causes her to be careful about the types of information she posts:

Marcela: I mean, I work for the state, so I don't just throw my opinions out there freely, you know? Like, I need to be careful with what I say. But, at the same time, this isn't very different from everyday life. I'm not just going to blurt out everything that comes to my mind when I'm having a face-to-face conversation with my friends – it's the same on Facebook. I'm a little more cautious about what I say but that's why I share articles and news stories – I can demonstrate my opinion through them. But everybody in my office knows I'm pro Dream Act. Like when the board of regents banned access to undocumented students at Georgia universities, I did post a status update about that. One of my co-workers said just be careful. So knowing that everyone has access to my Facebook I have to be careful. I mean, I post things and give my opinion, and it may not always be appropriate, but I try to be careful because my boss is my Facebook friend and my co-workers. Often times, though, I don't even have these types of discussions face-to-face. So, I guess I actually voice my opinion more on Facebook.

During this study, participants made seemingly opposing statements regarding the need to censor themselves on Facebook. While the women interviewed stated that they monitored the type of information they posted, as well as what others posted about them, they also said that

they felt free to speak their mind on Facebook. During my early morning interview with Essa, she explained to me that she thinks that it is important to enact self-censorship when using Facebook because, “You need to be aware and sensitive to what other people feel and realize who all is looking at your Facebook. I don't think people understand what Facebook is really for – it's to connect with people – it's not to fight with people or to vent.” Essa said that she does not mind censoring herself because at least “I am the one doing it; nobody is censoring me.” While participants do consider the types of information, pictures, and comments they publish on Facebook, through in-depth interviews and online observation, it appears that the performance of their identities were more an organic process than a carefully structured and planned performance. The women interviewed said that they often felt freer voicing their opinions regarding controversial issues on Facebook than they might in offline contexts.

3.5 Negotiating Between Colombian and American Identities

***Lolo:** You should look forward, but you should never forget where you come from, ever. Facebook helps me do both.*

Through the tension that arises as a result of immigration, individuals are forced to reassess their identities in the new situation in which they find themselves. Immigrants often challenge and negotiate new, emergent identities during this time of change, a practice that appears to continue throughout their lives (Hall 1996). Furthermore, the loss of friends and family in Colombia can lead to feelings of personal loss. When interviewing Ali, her eyes glossed over slightly as she thought back to her transition into American culture. She explained that leaving Colombia was a difficult experience because, “I felt like I lost a part of me.” During my interview with Lolo, she also discussed the difficulties of leaving Colombia and entering “a completely different culture.” As she slowly sipped on her coffee, Lolo described the importance

of adopting aspects of American culture without losing her Colombian roots:

Lolo: When I first came to the US and saw my cousins who had already lived here for a while, I didn't even recognize them because they were so American. For me, that was really sad. Because I knew them in Colombia and most of them had forgotten how to speak Spanish. That's so sad because they had let so much of their Colombian culture go. I said that I would never let that happen to me. That kept me from socializing with people at my school because I was holding on to who I used to be so hard. And then I let go of it a little bit so that I could make friends. Once I made friends I took it all up again. My brother and I made a pact to not be like our cousins. And I was like we're never going to do that. It's something good to have and that's sad that you want to lose it. We wanted to keep our identity.

As reflected in my conversation with Lolo above, the negotiation of identities by diasporic individuals is an ongoing process. Similarly, diasporic individuals often negotiate their identities throughout times of tension and confusion (Gilroy 1997). As a result, individuals often challenge and negotiate new, emergent aspects of their identities during this time of change. The statements made by contributors during their in-person interviews regarding the negotiation between American and Colombian culture were strongly reflected on their Facebook profiles, as well. On Facebook, seven of the women interviewed list Colombia as their “hometown” on their profile; the other three have not included that information on their profile. Although she was born in the United States, on Facebook, Essa lists Bogota, Colombia, as her hometown because she says that is where she is originally from. Individuals recall aspects of their native culture on Facebook and find other individuals who share similar interests. When observing Lolo’s Facebook, I noticed Lolo often posts status updates regarding Colombian artists, music, and popular culture, such as, “My fellow latinos, do you remember XUXA?? She was my childhood idol...! So 20 years ago!” (Facebook post, Oct. 30, 2010). Marcela says that she displays aspects of her Colombian culture by “liking” Colombian bands, groups, and even companies on Facebook. During interviews with contributors, each woman described how their

Facebook profile reflects aspects of both their Colombian and American identity. Essa, Lori, and Jasmine made the following statements during my interviews with them:

Essa: As far as my identity on Facebook, I do represent both parts of me that are Colombian and American. A lot of times it's through status updates – like on Colombia's day of independence I always say something on my Facebook profile. I choose to “like” certain things from Colombia – like my favorite artists, companies, and other things – and that becomes a part of my profile. I demonstrate my Colombian culture on my profile that way. I also say certain things to my friends or comment on things. Like if it's a soccer match between Mexico and Colombia I always say “Go Colombia!” That's one way that I stay in touch with my roots.

Lori: I feel more connected with Colombian culture and my friends back in Colombia. I am afraid that without Facebook my friends in Colombia would forget about me. I have a place to talk or to write a nice letter that says that I miss them. It helps me not forget them, too. Facebook is an amazing help.

Jasmine: I think it helps me retain aspects of my Colombian culture. Your friends post pictures of what they are doing and what they are wearing. Also, a lot of my friends in Colombia post links and comments about politics in Colombia. So I can be involved with that. It refreshes my memory of what like used to be like when I was in Colombia.

As discussed previously, interactions with other users are integral to identity performance on Facebook. This remains true in the negotiation of Colombian and American identities. At least several times per week, participants would discuss aspects of their Colombian culture with American friends. When observing her Facebook profile, I noticed that Ali often spoke about Colombia with her American Facebook friends. For example, the following conversation between Ali and one of her American friends is visible publicly on her Facebook wall:

American Facebook Friend: Hey! I am living in Colombia! How are you doing?

Ali: Omg! What are u doing in colombia??????? r u serious...never imagined ...why?

American Facebook Friend: I'm living in Medellin teaching 7th grade history at the Columbus school. Do you ever go back to Colombia?

Ali: that's insane..u have balls lol. But yea, most likely i'll go in march. How is it over there? Do u like it?

American Facebook Friend: haha.. yeah it is really nice...the paisas are really nice.

Ali: nice... yea I bet ur loving the food too right? Its amazing...i love going there just to eat lol. But I will b going to bogota and medellin. Not for long through bc me and my family go 2 or 3 times a year. (Facebook conversation, Jan. 27-30, 2011)

Similar to the previous discussion regarding identity performance, these women negotiate between their two cultures through interactions with friends. The audience on Facebook contributes to the performance of both their Colombian and American identities. Not only does this serve to inform their American friends about aspects of themselves that are Colombian, it also brings their Colombian identities into their world in the United States. That is not to say that their identities are fragmented or split, rather, participants often reported the need to act “American” around their American friends and “Colombian” around family members or other Colombian friends. However, Facebook seems to provide one place where performance of both Colombian and American identity can occur. In our little corner of a Buckhead Starbucks, Mon described Facebook as an important place to perform multiple aspects of her identity by creating a balance between her two cultures:

Mon: I think Facebook helps me balance between my two worlds. Oh my gosh, it so does. Not just among people, but also within myself. My whole life can be laid out on Facebook – my books, my music, my passions, my likes, my dislikes. I'm a huge music person so I love showing that on Facebook. I can connect with my friends here, in Colombia, and my whole family. I can communicate with everyone. It's a nice balance. It's so crazy to think about people ten/fifteen years would never have been able to do this. Find people from high school, middle school, even elementary school that easily? No way.

During our conversation, Mon highlighted the importance of communicating in both English and Spanish on Facebook. In fact, all participants interact in both languages. When negotiating between their Colombian and American identities, interviewees jump between Spanish and English online, demonstrating the importance of language in maintaining their native cultural identity while still incorporating an American one. While performing identities on

Facebook, participants have constructed a type of diglossia, incorporating two distinct and divergent languages. Diglossia is considered a kind of bilingualism, which occurs when members of a single language community use two dialects or languages (Ferguson 1959). Originally, the term diglossia referred to a high variety (H) language, one used in formal, public, and educational settings, and a low variety (L), often used in the home and among family and friends (Ferguson 1959). When discussing language use outside of Facebook, the women interviewed said they most often spoke Spanish in their home, to their families, and with other Spanish-speaking friends. In nearly every other setting, school, work, etc., they are expected, if not required, to speak English. Yet, Facebook interactions often include a blend of both languages within the same setting. While interviewing Marcela on an evening in December 2010, we huddled around a small outdoor table, shielding our backs against brisk wind that had steadily picked up during hour we had been talking. Her cheeks flushed from the cold, Marcela spent fifteen minutes talking to me about language use on Facebook:

Marcela: All the articles that I post are in English and sometimes I wonder how it makes my Colombian friends feel to see all of my stuff in English. I mean the people that I interact with everyday – it's in English. It's important for me to connect with my friends in Colombia, but it's hard to deny the fact that I'm not actually there. If I want to connect with people here, too, I have to communicate in English as well. Even my Hispanic friends here speak English to me. My friends in Colombia will send me messages asking me “So are you an old Gringa, now?” and I'm like “I'm not a Gringa!” I just want people who this message is meant to go to understand it. My friends in Colombia all know when I update because their whole news feed is in Spanish and mine will be the only one in English.

Marcela said she often considers the language that she uses on Facebook and how it appears to others. However, she admitted that she often switches between both English and Spanish without thinking. During interactions on Facebook, interviewees code switch from English to Spanish depending on their intended audience. Often, participants include both

English and Spanish within the same post or sentence. When opening my Facebook on November 5, 2010, Camila's name popped up under the "Birthdays" tab on my homepage. I clicked on her name and was transferred to her page, which was covered in birthday messages from both friends in Atlanta and Colombia. Later that evening, Camila wrote on her Facebook wall, "Thank you for all the great messages and texts! I love you all! :) *Gracias por todos los mensajes! los quiero mucho!*" (Camila, Facebook Post, Nov. 5, 2010). Within this post, Camila says the same message twice, first in English, then in Spanish, a habit that is repeated by the other women in this study as well.

When the Internet first emerged, the vast majority of websites were only in English, causing language barriers for non-English speakers (Dor 2004). However, with the development of social networking sites, Internet users are able to interact with others in whichever language they choose. From a linguistic perspective, the women interviewed are also incorporating new language varieties, such as Netspeak (Cook 2004), into their daily online conversations. Along with a blending of English and Spanish, participants often use Netspeak, or Internet lingo, in their daily interactions. Similar to Marcela's statements in the previous paragraph, the women interviewed said they think about the amount of English and Spanish that they use on Facebook. Ali says that her profile is in English but "sometimes I look at my Facebook wall, and all of the posts are in Spanish and I think 'wow, I need to use more English on here.'" Many participants include both English and Spanish within the same post. Not only do they post the same phrase twice, once in English and once in Spanish, they also write two different sentences in both languages within the same Facebook post. In addition to including both English and Spanish sentences within one post, interviewees often combine the languages within the same sentence. On one of Marcela's profile pictures that she has of her niece, she placed the following caption

below the picture: “*ayyyy esa bebe esta hermosa* [awww this baby is precious] and I love this profile pic ☺” (Marcela, profile picture caption, March 2, 2011). Similar to other diasporic Latino immigrants in the United States (Mendoza-Denton 1999), expressing diglossia through codeswitching plays a complex and important role in the negotiation of identity. Through mediums such as Facebook, widespread codeswitching and bilingualism occur without extreme functional differentiation (Mendoza-Denton 1999).

Previously, researchers (Fishman et al. 1971) have labeled such situations as unstable because they may lead to shift and loss as a result of the minority language no longer inhabiting a protected domain, which is impenetrable by outside influence. While technologies such as Facebook create an arena where two languages within a diglossic community are used in tandem, thus increasing the blending of the two languages, it may be argued that no domain, whether now or in the past, is ever truly impenetrable. Furthermore, some researchers claim that US Latino diasporic groups challenge the language loss paradigm, especially among ‘new’ immigrant populations who exhibit the greatest language loyalty (Mendoza-Denton 1999). When discussing her move to the United States, Lolo said that the language and cultural barrier was incredibly difficult to navigate. Lolo's parents encouraged her and her brother to speak in English as much as possible, but Lolo refuses to speak English at home because she does not want to lose her ability to speak Spanish. When they first arrived in the U.S., Lolo and her brother made a pact with each other to speak only Spanish when they were at home, in order to better maintain their heritage and help remind each other where they came from. Lolo explained that her desire to speak both English and Spanish fluently carries over into her interactions on Facebook:

Lolo: I speak in Spanish on Facebook a lot and I use certain words that only Colombians use. Well this is more to do with my identity, but when I find friends

on Facebook that have similar interests I comment on them, and that shows up on my profile. My friends and I celebrate each other. Like when I say, “I love Colombia” other people say “Yeah, me too!” So we celebrate each other’s things.

Switching between English and Spanish is an important way of demonstrating the intersect between American and Colombian identity for participants. On February 4, 2011, Jasmine posted on her Facebook wall: “It’s sad to know about Biology and chemistry in English but not in Spanish which is my first language :(.” These women discussed how displaying public personas through speaking and writing in Spanish was an important aspect of staying in touch with their Colombian roots. Tati, Lori, Ali, Marcela, Mon, and Kat all communicated fear at losing their ability to speak fluent Spanish. This eagerness to maintain their Spanish language skills through practicing Spanish reflects how the women interviewed view language as closely tied to their Colombian identities. These women participate in what they describe as an important project on Facebook: the maintenance of their Spanish language and the performance of their Colombian culture through this language. Jasmine thinks it is important to remember where one comes from and she says that Facebook can assist people in recalling their heritage:

Jasmine: I think Facebook helps you remember who you are. When I first came to the US, I tried to become completely American. It wasn’t good. Then I visited Colombia and was reminded of where I came from. Facebook helps me keep up with that. You’re not being true to yourself if you completely leave your native culture out. You need to change and adapt with your new country, but still keep parts of your homeland.

The classic view of assimilation considered acculturation to be a process during which immigrants and their children gradually replaced their ethnic culture with American culture (Xie and Greenman 2005). Additionally, adaptation to American society was considered to be dependent on one’s social class (Xie and Greenman 2005). However, recent research has demonstrated how technological advances are allowing immigrants from both middle and professional classes to maintain their ethnic language

and culture, as well as pass that culture onto their children (Mitra 2001; Xie and Greenman 2005; Bernal 2005). Interestingly, all interviewees said that they made conscious efforts to perform their Colombian heritage on their Facebook profiles. Many reported that they did this through displaying interest in political and social issues occurring in Colombia and by sharing Colombian popular culture with their friends on Facebook. However, participants also reported that they did not necessarily make an effort to perform American culture but that those aspects were reflected on their profiles more naturally. As we waited for our morning coffees to give us the jolt of caffeine we needed to stop yawning, for example, Essa and I began talking about her experience as a diasporic Colombian. Essa spoke with me about how her Facebook serves to reflect aspects of both her Colombian and American culture. She feels that she exhibits Colombian culture on Facebook more overtly and intentionally:

Essa: I kind of take for granted that my Facebook profile is American. Like I don't wear bracelets that are American, but I do wear bracelets that are Colombian. I mean people here don't really wear American shirts and stuff unless it's the Fourth of July or something. If someone wears one it's like "what are you trying to say?" If you're my friend on Facebook, you should know that I'm an American. I don't have friends on there that I don't actually know. I mean during the World Cup I say "Go USA" on Facebook or I cheer for the Hawks. I just kind of take it as an assumption that I naturally reflect aspects of American culture on Facebook.

Curled up in her large, red Starbucks chair, Essa showed me the group of bracelets that she "wears all the time, no matter what." The red, yellow, and blue leather bracelets, the colors of the Colombian flag, adorn her wrist constantly. "Since I wear them all the time, people ask me about them, and then I get to tell them about my culture," Essa explained, "It's a simple way for me to represent this side of me." Although she was born in the United States, as a child of immigrants, Essa considers herself to be a diasporic individual

who experiences loyalty to two nations. Similar to Essa, Mon was also born and raised in the US, although both women traveled to Colombia frequently throughout their childhood. During my conversation with her at Starbucks, Mon's dark, brown eyes twinkled as she spoke fondly of her "home," which she considers to be Colombia. At the same time, and within the course of our interview, she also referred to the United States, specifically Atlanta, as her "home." While Essa reassured me throughout her interview that, "I know who I am; I'm Colombian, but I'm also American and no one has to understand that but me," Mon told me that she struggles negotiating between two cultures:

Mon: Negotiating between my Colombian and American identities is something I continue to struggle with all the time. I mean I try to post little things on my Facebook that show my pride in my Colombian heritage – like a little picture of the Colombian flag. It's very important for me to have that place to show that side of me. Although I won't forget it, you have to work harder because being you live in United States. It's hard. I was born in America and I am American, and yet, I consider myself Colombian. I just make sure to have Spanish quotes on my Facebook. I'm also friends on Facebook with my cousins who live in Colombia and they see my Facebook and always say 'oh yeah, she's American' but people here think, 'Oh, she's Colombian.' Whenever I go visit my cousins in Colombia I don't want them to think, 'Oh, she's my silly, white, American cousin.' I'm definitely in-between two cultures and that plays into my identity.

Each interviewee discussed the pride they feel in being able to share aspects of American and Colombian culture online. Individuals' nationality, culture, community, and lived experience contribute and feed into their identity. For Colombian women living in diaspora, their identities are further complicated by the fact that they have strong ties to both Colombia and the United States. Diasporic individuals perform their identities "at the unstable point where the 'unspeakable' stories of subjectivity meet the narratives of history, of a culture" (Hall 1984). However, instead of this being an internal conflict, it appears as though much of the difficulties in negotiating between two cultures came from the ways in which others view them. The

‘unspeakable stories’ of diasporic individuals feed into their marginalization. Among diaspora, immigrants are inserted into an already ongoing narrative of the culture, which has often already categorized them as “Others” (Mitra 2001:30). This categorization also ascribes a certain set of narratives onto diasporic identities, systematically disenfranchising these individuals. During my in-depth interview with Marcela, we held warm cups of coffee in our hands on a chilly December evening. While sitting in a courtyard in Midtown Atlanta, we were bathed in a warm glow of light streaming out of the adjacent Starbucks windows. From outside, we watched a group of American women talking and laughing inside the coffee shop. Marcela glanced at them for a moment, then turned to me:

Marcela: It can be so hard to be with Americans but also with people who live in Colombia because I always feel like an outsider - out of place. I never forget that I'm a minority everywhere I go. It's a constant challenge – my good friends are Hispanic and from other countries because they can relate. I feel like I'm always missing something.

Marcela says that she enjoys that she is both American and Colombian, but it is hard for others, who are not in her position, to understand how she feels. Additionally, Marcela explained how both Americans and Colombians living in Colombia automatically assume certain things about her. She can use Facebook to “try and show how I really am, not just what people expect of me.” Through Facebook, participants are renegotiating identities while living within a structured social system, something that, among diasporic individuals, often creates numerous obstacles in the offline world (Mitra 2001). While some may argue that negotiating between two cultures creates identity confusion, all interviewees communicated that they felt their identities were stronger because of the influence of two cultures. Tati says she feels lucky to be able to claim both the United States and Colombia as her homes and Essa said her life feels fuller because she has two strong cultures feeding into who she is as a person. However, this does not

mean that the negotiation of one's identity between two cultures is free of conflict. Participants said, although Colombia is inherently a part of who they are, they still need to work to remember aspects of their culture and language. During our mid-day interview at yet another Starbucks, Mon explained, "Negotiating between my Colombian and American identities is something I continue to struggle with all the time."

3.6 Conclusion

Facebook is a mediated environment where facial cues and body language are not visible (boyd 2008:129); therefore, users must learn "to write themselves into being" (Sundén 2003). On Facebook, individuals must perform their identity through articulation and interaction with others, demonstrating the self-reflexivity, which Giddens (1995) states is important in the performance of identity. During my interview with Mon, she described Facebook as "self-reflexive," a term that I found very interesting in regards to identity performance. Mon went on to explain that "on Facebook, you can go back and look at what you've posted, what other people have posted. You can go back and look at pictures. That's important for me to have all of that in one place." As reflected in my conversation with Mon, the performance of identity is found in one's "capacity to keep a particular narrative going" (Giddens 1995:54). In examining identity as one's self-perception in relation to their community, experiences, and society, forms of self-reflection allow for internalized evaluation (Giddens 1991:52-53). All online interactions conducted through Facebook are permanently stored, allowing contributors to create narratives over time and reflect back on past experiences. When considering the intersect between agency and identity, Holland et al. (1998:270) take identity to be a "central means by which selves, and the sets of actions they organize, form and re-form over personal lifetimes and in the histories of collectives." These narratives over time have also resulted in interviewees performing their

identity, through multiple means, in one location. Through Facebook, contributors not only write identities into being, they also negotiate and perform these identities in a medium that involves feedback and interaction with multiple spheres.

Marcela: I don't write on my wall everyday, but I feel safe because I know that when I've posted something, I can reach someone for sure, and it's always going to be there.

Through Facebook, multiple elements of the identities of diasporic individuals are meshed into one representation. Through various forms of communication and interaction, as well as the posting of pictures, thoughts, and links, participants form an online representation of themselves. Furthermore, the women interviewed utilize Facebook to grapple with issues affecting their self-representation and public personas. On Facebook, Kat often grapples with issues facing diasporic individuals. As an immigrant, Kat communicated her feelings regarding discrimination: “If only those people would step into the shoes of immigrants, what we see, how we feel” (Facebook post, Oct. 16, 2010). Through articulating one's thoughts, activities, and emotions, while also interacting and receiving feedback from others, Colombian women are performing virtual selves that reflect multiple and fluid identities. Towards the end of my in-depth interview with Lori, I asked her if she ever thought about what life would be like without Facebook. She pulled her feet up onto her black metal seat, rested her chin on her knees, and thought for a moment. Since she is constantly connected to Facebook through her phone, Lori admitted that it is difficult to picture life without Facebook, although it has only been around for six years:

Lori: Without Facebook, I think my life would be harder; it definitely wouldn't be easy. When I didn't use Facebook, my friends didn't know what I was feeling or thinking. I mean I would talk to them on the phone but not as much. This gives me easier access to share my feelings and get support from my friends. You can put your thoughts out there and people can comment on them. I can show many sides of myself.

Chapter 4: The Parallel Public Sphere

4.1 Introduction

Through cyberspace, diasporic groups are contributing to new forms of communication, identity formation, and political debate and participation (Graham and Khosravi 2002). My research expands upon Dewey's (2009) ideas of the parallel public sphere, which she views as a place for silenced individuals to communicate with each other. However, Facebook appears to be a medium through which interviewees not only communicated with other individuals in diaspora, but also with people from multiple classes, genders, and ethnicities. As a parallel public sphere, participants use Facebook in order to engage in topics of importance to them as well as to educate themselves and others. As a result of their subordination by those in power, marginalized individuals need to have the opportunity to speak for themselves (Spivak 1998). During interviews with participants as well as my own observations of their online interactions, Facebook exemplifies a parallel public sphere by providing a medium through which these women discuss important issues. The women interviewed said they felt as though they had a voice on Facebook and that their voice was being heard. During my interview with Mon, she spoke with me about how Facebook facilitates discussions and the sharing of information, often in easier ways than offline contexts:

Mon: It's amazing though how I can speak my mind on Facebook better than offline. Oh my gosh. I mean I'm really comfortable talking with people face to face but on Facebook, I mean I'm on news sites all the time – New York Times, Washington Post, CNN – and it's so easy to share on Facebook, just here's the link, click, copy and paste, and post. And it's just here's a story, here's what I think. And a nice little discussion pops up on Facebook. A nice little intellectual discussion. I mean you can do that in person, but on Facebook it's easier. You can link to news stories; you have straight facts right there. You can also refer back to what you said and what other people said – whether it's in that conversation or a conversation that happened a long time ago. You can quote articles easily and it leads to better discussions. So I really think it is easier on Facebook. That is good because it leads to more people talking.

Through the building of social capital, users create an online community where they can generate and contribute to discourses on topics of importance to them. Social capital allows individuals to draw on resources from other members within their networks and these resources can take the form of useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity to organize groups (Coleman 1988; Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992; Paxton 1999; Granovetter 1973). Recently, researchers have begun to examine the Internet as a public sphere, noting its widespread use as a product of diaspora as well as a medium used by diasporic individuals (Bernal 2005:662). Colombian women immigrants are using Facebook to communicate thoughts on current events that they feel strongly about. During my interview with Marcela, she explained that Facebook facilitates communication with a larger number of people in her social network, increasing dialogue on important topics. According to Marcela, “Facebook is a place where I can share and talk about news stories with a wider audience than just the people I see everyday.” Particularly, Facebook serves to illuminate the effects that legislation and current events may have on an individual's situation. While sitting in a study room in Georgia State's library, Jasmine used her hands for emphasis as she described to me how Facebook serves as a platform, not only for spreading information, but also for voicing one's opinions:

Jasmine: It's your space; you can say what you want. Nobody has the right to tell you what you can or can't say. If someone doesn't want me saying something, I can say, this is my profile; I can say what I want. If you don't like it, delete your Facebook.

When examining the possibility of the Internet as a public sphere, Dahlgren (2005) describes how multiple different types of groups have broken away to form thousands of web sites where they may discuss their opinions. These multisector online spheres cause fragmentation and possibly threaten to undercut a shared public culture. Furthermore, Dahlgren (2005) argues that, in instances where online communities have little contact with one another,

these fragmented public spheres may serve to foster intolerance. However, this study demonstrates some of the ways in which Facebook may serve to increase tolerance and understanding among multiple individuals. According to Sennett (1977), the modern era has been defined by people's demand for intimacy and immediacy in nearly all relationships. As a result, people are uneasy with relationships with others that are basically different from them and choose to avoid them (Calhoun 1998:395). However, interviewees pointed out that Facebook helps to bridge the gap between individuals who might not normally interact in the physical world. It is clear that the Internet facilitates new connections, in that it provides people with an alternative way to connect with others who share their interests (Ellison et al 2006; Horrigan 2002; Parks & Floyd 1996). During my interview with Lolo, she emphasized the importance of building links with multiple individuals from different communities and backgrounds. According to Lolo, “because of Facebook profiles and postings, you find things that you have in common with other people that you didn't realize you had.”

4.2 The Public vs. The Private Sphere

Similar to previous discussions of public and private personas, the women interviewed did not conceive of a stark contrast between a private sphere and a public sphere. When researching student interaction on Facebook, West et al. (2009) suggest that young Facebook users (individuals in their 20s) have a different notion of ‘public’ than discussed in literature. In their findings, students described Facebook as a public that comprises their private social world. Similarly, participants did not seem to differentiate between two distinct realms of private and public. While Calhoun (2007) views the public sphere and one's community as two separate spaces, Facebook appears to blend multiple communities into one, allowing individuals to mix multiple public and private spheres. Similar to the discussion of multiplex identities, the parallel

public sphere of Facebook serves as a base from which users may choose to share and interact with multiple publics, including people they know and people they do not yet know. However, it is important to note, that Facebook is not entirely “public” in the sense that users' information is not readily available to all. It appears that interviewees view Facebook as a private venue to the public sphere or as a semi-public sphere.

As a result of the multiple publics that comprise one's Facebook audience, users are able to engage in targeted performances by blocking certain viewers from viewing certain parts of their Facebook accounts. As people present themselves differently to different audiences, participants also tailor their online presentations to particular audiences. However, depending on users' privacy settings, information is disseminated to the public in varying degrees. If a user has not enacted any privacy settings, any individual with a Facebook account may view their information. With the most strict privacy settings, only the individuals selected by the user can view a user's profile. Furthermore, the user's name will not appear in searches. All of the women interviewed had employed some form of privacy settings, however, all of them are visible in searches and people outside of their Facebook network can see their profile pictures, names, current job, and their friends. Additionally, users who share mutual friends (but are not Facebook friends themselves) may view interactions between mutual friends.

When participants interact on Facebook, perform their identities, and voice their opinions, they are often in a private setting since they are accessing Facebook from their personal computer, to which only they have access. This notion of being in a private setting while simultaneously interacting in a public setting further serves to blur the lines between public and private. Facebook is considered by interviewees to be a type of public place, however, an illusion of safety may exist. Since interactions occur in a virtual environment where users are not face-to-

face, participants may feel that they can voice their opinions without similar consequences that may occur in offline contexts. However, contributors appeared to be aware of the potential consequences of online interaction and many of these women took those consequences seriously. When the women interviewed first started using Facebook, they said that they were not as careful about the type of information they posted. As they spent more time online and became more familiar with Facebook, however, they began incorporating more privacy settings and monitoring the type of information they posted, as well as what others published about them. The women interviewed stated that they felt freer to voice their opinions on Facebook. However, prior to disseminating information, participants analyze and consider the types of pictures they post, comments they make, and status updates they publish. In order to protect themselves and their privacy, interviewees reported that they often censor the type of information they share on Facebook. Similar to off-line interactions, not all sharing or posting on Facebook is done completely openly or without consequences. During in-depth interviews with participants, we discussed whether they felt safe to voice their opinions online regarding various topics. When interviewing Lolo, Jasmine, and Essa, respectively, they all described how they feel the need to censor themselves on Facebook:

Lolo: I don't always express my thoughts openly, but sometimes I do say things I can't say off of Facebook. There are a lot of things that I want to say sometimes but I can't because Facebook is now a way to market yourself for your career. So if I'm friends with coworkers, bosses, or potential employers, I don't want to put things on Facebook that could jeopardize my professional life. But there are some things that I wish I could say.

Jasmine: I think sometimes people portray themselves differently than what they are in real life. I do that sometimes, too. I can show my true feelings but I hold back sometimes. I don't always want to show my true feelings because I don't want to be too vulnerable. Like if something happens that's really embarrassing like they just stood me up, I'm not going to say that on Facebook. I try to post positive things.

Essa: I do censor myself on Facebook because I do have a lot of friends, well some friends who have totally opposing views. For example, my roommate is Mexican and we have completely opposite views on illegal immigration and the Dream Act. We actually got into a really big fight about it in-person. So I'm not going to post anything on Facebook that is going to hurt his feelings or make him mad at me.

Although Essa does censor herself on political issues, she does enter into discussions on Facebook regarding politics. However, she does not feel comfortable enough to start those types of discussions herself. During her interview, Essa said that this was not so much due to the fact that she was afraid to state her political opinion; she simply did not want to “put up with all the drama.” While talking with Essa, she gave me an example of how certain statements she posts on Facebook may offend others and “create unnecessary drama:”

Essa: I try to not share my political views a lot on Facebook because I think that there can be a lot of hypocrisy. I think people may say something back to me because Facebook is not as confrontational. If I have a political opinion I don't share it on Facebook. But a lot of my friends do, so I comment on what they post but I try not to post anything directly.

Essa described how there are many methods on Facebook that users may employ to voice their opinions. Essa often chooses to share links to news articles or comment on other friends' Facebook posts. Through these methods, Essa says she communicates her opinions in an indirect way and, by doing so, does not offend others as often. In face-to-face conversations, individuals must voice their opinion directly. However, on Facebook, users can support someone else's comment by “liking” it. Additionally, Marcela said that if she does not want to voice something directly, she posts a link to a news story that she finds important. Through various methods, participants said that they are able share their opinions regarding controversial issues more easily than they could in face-to-face interactions. Tati explained that she does see problems with Facebook and privacy issues. According to Tati, “I think there's tons of privacy issues with Facebook. Everybody can

see you. Sometimes I feel like my information is just out there.” However, Tati told me that she still openly communicates her opinion on Facebook because “that is the best place I have to speak my mind.” She does receive criticism sometimes for being critical of institutions, governments, and other organizations. Every so often, Tati says she tries to post positive comments. For example, on November 8, 2010, her Facebook status was “I’m going to post something happy... :) ... see?” However, Tati says that she will continue to discuss important issues on Facebook and share her opinion. She says she values her ability to be honest and open and that if she “does not tackle difficult issues, who will?” Each of the women interviewed described how there are topics of concern to them that they cannot discuss through other mediums, except Facebook. As discussed in further detail in chapter 5, users often grapple with the need to be mindful of the contextual nature of communication on Facebook. While participants state that they are able to discuss certain issues on Facebook that they cannot on other sites, there may still be consequences for stating certain opinions due to the various individuals in one networks, including parents, coworkers, friends, and acquaintances.

4.3 Gathering Information and Communicating Opinions

Participants said that Facebook was one of the easiest methods for them to access useful information regarding many different subjects, from the seemingly mundane (suggestions for which movie they should see over the weekend) to the more important (how to renew their study visa). On December 22, 2010, Lolo posted on her Facebook: “does anyone know who I can contact in order to validate an international degree in America?” She posted this at 12:21 a.m. and by 12:23 a.m. she had her first reply. Over the course of the next ten minutes, three different friends posted replies to Lolo's question and by the following morning, Lolo responded, “thanks

for all your help! I have now worked it out!” Lolo said that Facebook makes gathering this type of information incredibly easy. Additionally, she does not have to worry about the time of day because “Facebook is always open and someone is always online in some part of the world.” Among interviewees, Facebook seems to be used more than online search engines for finding useful information. In February 2011, Camila was planning a trip to Colombia for the summer. Instead of checking with a travel agency or conducting an online search, she logged on to Facebook. Through the site she sent a message to all of her friends asking for travel tips and, “The very next day I had tons of messages from everyone including information of where to get tickets and everything. It's amazing.” Since participants' Facebook friends know them personally, the information they receive from their contacts is often much more useful than what they may find on a search engine.

On her research of the parallel public sphere in India, Dewey (2009) observed that women, who were unable to discuss controversial topics in other public settings, turned to mediums of popular culture to voice their opinions and resolve dilemmas. Although she describes the parallel public sphere as marginal, Dewey (2009) found that such marginal spheres serve as an outlet for Indian women to grapple with pressing matters that cannot be discussed openly. Similarly, throughout my ethnographic research I encountered Colombian women using Facebook as an outlet to engage and discuss topics that are important to them but that they are not able to discuss through other mediums. As we sat around a table in the library study room, Jasmine was very adamant in her treatment of Facebook as a site to spur on important discussions. During our interview, Jasmine referenced specific comments on Facebook as examples of ways she communicates her opinions with others. In November 2009, Jasmine published the following note on her Facebook, saying that she needed a place to communicate

issues that were currently bothering her.

Jasmine: Colombia is considered one of the happiest places on earth according to some surveys...where did they get that from? from the country side of Colombia, where innocent indigenous people and farmers are being literally 'hunted' for fun as if they were deer or any other animal? How is Colombia the happiest place on earth, if students of medicine in northern Colombia kill homeless people to obtain 'fresh' corpses so they can study. How can be Colombia the happiest place on earth when the guerrilla keeps torturing, raping, massacring farm workers.. I'm tired of this.. I'm tired of the never-ending bad news, of the 'dialogues' between gov't and las farc, I'm tired of missing my family, of not being able to hold my 7-year old cousins. When is this going to stop? when are WE going to stop envying others, getting obsessed with others, raping 3-year old boys until their butts look like hamburger meat? when are we gonna stop racism? cheating? killing people for the heck of it? have we lost our purpose in life? have we forgotten about God? why can't we wake up one day and start appreciating God's creation? why did we lose respect on one another? Why can't we live in a little bit, just a little bit of harmony? (Facebook Note, November 17, 2009)

During my interview with her, Jasmine explained to me that she turns to Facebook to vent about issues that upset her and that she feels like she must say something about, but she does not know who to tell. Facebook serves as a mechanism to say things that may not be socially acceptable in other settings or to share painful private dilemmas. Jasmine's post above also serves to demonstrate the ways in which posts on Facebook serve to reflect aspects of participants' native culture as well as aspects of their identity. Participants reported, on several occasions, that discussions, such as Jasmine's post above, would not be occurring without the use of Facebook. When considering the affects of modernity on the public sphere, Habermas (1989) argues that the emergence of media power created a battle among the public sphere over influence and the control of communication flows. However, with the emergence of new forms of media, such as Facebook, researchers have argued that a shift in communication flow and control has occurred. Instead of society regulating the flow of information, participants share opinions, news stories, and personal experiences with each other by choosing what topics to discuss. The discussions and news shared by interviewees demonstrate topics that are important

to them and reveal issues that they are passionate about. As Camila sat on her bed at home and me on my couch in my living room, we looked at each other through our respective computer screens during my Skype interview with her. Camila explained to me that when she shares things on Facebook, sometimes her friends surprise her by giving her positive feedback that she were not expecting: “you may be embarrassed to say something to someone's face, but when you say it on Facebook, people who want to respond can and those who don't want to don't have to.” Many of the women interviewed engaged in conversations regarding political and social issues in Colombia as well as issues of relevance to their community in Atlanta. While sitting next to me in Culture Connect’s lobby, Tati explained to me that, having recently graduated from college, she misses having a place to talk about intellectual issues or social concerns. However, she says that she has started having these types of discussions on Facebook. When observing Tati’s Facebook page over the last several months, I noticed that she indeed uses Facebook as a place to engage in conversations as well as voice her thoughts. In November 2010, Tati posted the following statement to her Facebook wall:

Tati: This is such an individualistic society... which limits our sight. Because the reality of it is that its not just an individual thing/hurdle/or issue it a societal problem that is rooted in the systems social structure and institutions. Self-interest "may" natural... But the degree to which it is prioritized is not... Also not socialist more like leftist lol but who’s talking about handouts and donations. I'm talking about restructuring institutions that perpetuate racism classism and over all discrimination and that only benefit a small percent of a population, that already has more then needed, while neglecting the other. But not all are negligent and also some people's success has clearly been based on abusing other (so its not like the other choose to be negligent and end up were they end up). The problem is that certain institutions facilitate and perpetuate that. Yes subcutaneously we might all discriminate, but does that make it okay? (Facebook post, Nov. 10, 2010)

After seeing the Facebook post above, I sent a Facebook message to Tati inquiring as to why she chose to use Facebook as a medium to communicate her thoughts. Tati explained that

she would not simply say something like this out in public, but on Facebook she feels like she is able to do so. Additionally, Tati said that she feels strongly about many issues but she does not want to simply call up one person and “vent” to them. During my interview with Tati, she explained that she prefers to post it on Facebook because her friends may “look at it if they want and they can ignore it if they don't want to look at it, but at least I have a place to put down all my thoughts.”

4.4 Educating Others and Battling Discrimination

***Jasmine:** Doesn't know what to think about the elections. She only hopes & prays that whoever is in charge of this country tries to be less selfish and more tolerant and selfless. SAY NO TO DISCRIMINATION! (Facebook post, Nov. 10, 2010)*

When discussing their ability to share information with others, participants became very impassioned about the use of Facebook to gather information and educate their friends. Interviewees view Facebook as a means to communicate their ideas and their experiences, hoping that they can help influence others and assist their own community. In conversations with interviewees, these women discussed how discrimination was one of the most difficult aspects of being an immigrant in the city of Atlanta. The women interviewed consider Facebook to be a tool that can assist them in battling discrimination. All interviewees reported discrimination as one of the major struggles facing Colombian immigrants.

Marcela: I went to a school with 6,000 students, a lot of them minorities, and I encountered a lot of discrimination. My English was really bad and a lot of the Hispanics who had been here a while and were more accustomed to this country were really mean to me. It wasn't the white kids – it was the Hispanic kids.

Ali: Being accepted is the hardest part of being an immigrant in the city of Atlanta. People notice that you have an accent or that you look Hispanic and there is still prejudice. It's more unspoken but it's definitely still there.

Essa: You can feel discriminated by your own race. Colombians treated me differently here because my skin is lighter. In eighth grade I started dating a Mexican boy and the other Hispanics felt threatened like I was taking their guys –

they saw me as white. But then they became my friends because they really got to know me and they were like “oh, you're not what we thought you were.' On Facebook, you can get to know people better and you realize all you have in common.

Jasmine: I think discrimination is definitely still a problem here. It's hard for people from this country to understand our situation. They are like why are you here? Why did you come to this country? But they have never been in our shoes. They don't know what it is like. Maybe if they could see what it is like for us as immigrants they would have more empathy. With Facebook, I've seen immigrants post information regarding immigration reform and they are starting discussions with non-immigrants that wouldn't happen outside of Facebook. It's almost a safer place to carry on these important discussions.

Jasmine said that she thinks Facebook helps combat discrimination towards immigrants by educating others regarding the types of issues that immigrants face, as well as demonstrating that people have more in common than they realize. Formal institutions often create structural barriers impeding immigrants from achieving equality (Giroux 1981:130). As discussed earlier, structured systems often ascribe narratives onto diasporic individuals and, as a result, systematically disenfranchise them (Hall 1984). The ascribed narratives of diasporic individuals appear to reflect a structure of oppression (Bourdieu 1977), which leads to tension and feelings of insecurity among immigrant populations. With mellow jazz music playing in the background, Mon spoke freely with me about how, at times, she feels silenced. Mon says that Facebook allows her to communicate her opinions and define herself on her terms:

Mon: A lot of times, people expect to think a certain way because I am a woman and because I'm Latina, but that's not necessarily how I think. Of course it affects me, but just because I am Hispanic doesn't mean that I think the U.S. shouldn't have borders. I mean that's absolutely ridiculous. I think that is really important because it allows you to share your opinions on issues of everyday life.

As a result of their categorization as “Others,” diasporic individuals often feel as though their ability to voice their own opinions has been curtailed, however, among social networking sites, immigrants are employing new mediums to combat discrimination and inscribe their own

narratives (Mitra 2001). Facebook's format is universal; while each user may add different content and applications to their profile, the basic structure is the same, placing all users on the same level. Participants noted that Facebook is a type of equalizer, allowing individuals too see past differences that may keep them from interacting with each other in the physical world. During our discussion of her experience as a Colombian woman in Atlanta, Essa explained that, "discrimination in general is still a problem. I felt it more strongly in high school because there is a tendency to form cliques with people of your same ethnicity, so the differences and separations are more apparent." She said that she thinks Facebook is a platform where individuals can celebrate their differences while also realizing the basic principles that make us all human. On January 25, 2011, Essa posted on her Facebook: "To effectively communicate, we must realize that we are all different in the way we perceive the world and use this understanding as a guide to our communication with others." As I was interviewing Lori in person, she described to me how Facebook is a great way to educate others and start discussions. Lori is very active on Facebook when it comes to posting information regarding immigration reform. In February 2011, one of Lori's American friends on Facebook responded to her plea that people rally for the DREAM act.

Facebook user: Lori, your heart is in the right place, your reasoning is flawed. Don't get me wrong; I know the USA is THE land of opportunity because of immigration. The energy, conviction and attitude of someone deciding to leave home and go to a strange place for a hope or expectation of a better life is amazingly courageous and critically valuable for... the country to which they immigrate. The reason we remain THE land of opportunity is the rule of law. This mess of so many illegal aliens living here is a big problem. We need their energy, their courage, their burning desire to better themselves...they need legal status to fully enjoy the potential of their opportunity...we need them to be registered, legal, and on the path to citizenship is that is their interest. Something must be done other than overall amnesty and sending everyone home...many, most, a great majority rightly consider "home" to be the USA. (Facebook post, Feb. 28, 2011)

Lori: yes, but it doesn't mean is morally/humanly right for the police to stop me just because i look like an immigrant and ask me for proof of residence....there is a lot of racial profiling in this law....are we going back to ww2? where jews could

just be taken bc they looked jews...?

At least a couple times each week, participants' Facebook posts included comments regarding their personal situation and experiences. While looking at Kat's Facebook wall, I noticed that, on October 13, 2010, Kat had shared the following comment publicly with her Facebook community: "Sad that many students' dreams are being destroyed with this new law in GA. Would love to do something about this, ughh. Wish these people could open their eyes and realize there are more important things in life." After posting this, several Facebook users began responding on Kat's wall, inciting discourse regarding an important topic affecting these women. Interviewees noted how Facebook is conducive for educating themselves and others on current events by engaging in conversations and disseminating useful information. The following includes excerpts from in-depth interviews with participants regarding Facebook and the ways they use it to spread information and educate others:

Lolo: I think it's a really helpful tool to gather information about things happening in Atlanta and the rest of the world. Especially now with all of the new laws that have been passing regarding immigration, especially with schools, I have friends that are directly affected by that. We all post news about it and that's how I find my information. And we share it with each other.

Jasmine: Facebook helps me learn more about what is going in Atlanta and I have more access to resources. Sometimes I don't check CNN's website for news or anything, but I find out about news and important things through Facebook because other people post it. I can get all of my information. For example, I know about all of the American holidays through Facebook. Also, they tell you about all of your friends' birthdays so you know it is happening.

Essa: I already have my citizenship since I was born here so I can't completely understand what my friends are going through because I'm in a different situation. But I talk to them on Facebook and that helps me to understand. I think they think that I don't really know what's going on because I've never had to go through what they're going through. I think Facebook helps us connect with people who are in the same boat as we are. I know a lot of my friends get support and help through Facebook – that's how they get their information.

Mon: It's so important for people to get educated. Some of my friends pretty

apathetic and I'm always like posting things on Facebook like "primaries are coming out, you should go vote!" With Latinos it's becoming more of an issue now, especially with immigration. But I feel like it's taken all this bad stuff happening for people to actually care and realize that they need to be informed.

Each participant stressed the importance of using Facebook to promote and educate others regarding immigration reform and the Dream Act. During my initial in-depth interview with contributors, I never asked a question regarding the Dream Act; however, without fail, each participant used the Dream Act as an example of how they utilize Facebook as a tool for communication and mobilization. Under the Dream Act, which has undergone many changes since it was first introduced to Congress in 2001, "most students who show good moral character since entry and who came to the U.S. at age 15 or younger at least five years before the date of the bill's enactment would qualify for conditional nonimmigrant status upon acceptance to college, graduation from a U.S. high school, or being awarded a GED in the U.S." (NILC 2010:1). All ten women posted information about the Dream Act on their Facebook profiles and engaged in conversations and debates with others on Facebook. Marcela is incredibly active on Facebook when it comes to the dream act. She shares links to news stories, comments on other users' posts, and encourages her friends to become informed. On November 23, 2010, Marcela posted information and a link in order to "dispel Dream Act myths." As I discussed the types of information Marcela shares on Facebook with her during our interview, Marcela explained to me that it is very important for her to use Facebook to spread information and educate those around her:

Marcela: My friends are very diverse – Colombian, American, White, Black, Asian – I love it – I love having them all come together in one place and sharing our opinions with each other. A lot of my friends who aren't Colombian or Hispanic may have no clue what I'm talking about and they're like "Is that really happening?" "I don't believe that!" And I can let them know what is happening in our community. And I do have a lot of friends who ask questions and who just want to learn from what is happening.

In order to contribute to political discussions and help their friends stay better informed, interviewees described how they turn to Facebook to spread relevant news and information. Their statements were overwhelmingly supported by the activity I observed on their Facebooks during my ethnographic research. The intensity through which participants shared information regarding issues of immigration demonstrated their eagerness to as individuals in diaspora to stand up and be counted. As a result of the reported importance of discussing immigration issues by interviewees, what follows is a select number of Facebook posts, out of several, regarding immigration policies and reform:

Essa: All I can do is hope that someday all the dreaming can become a reality! (Facebook post, Oct. 20, 2010)

Marcela: Be sure to watch A TELEVISED MSNBC SPECIAL WITH VOTO LATINO IMMIGRATION AND LATINO-AMERICA tonight on MSNBC at 10 pm EST! (Facebook post, Nov. 15, 2010)

Camila: Please watch! - The Deliberate Dumbing Down of America (Facebook post, Feb. 2, 2011)

Mon: This is just an opinion but it has some great information...whatever your political ideology. Get educated people! CNN.com – Ruben Navarrette says a plan by a GOP state legislators' group to end birthright citizenship for the children of immigrants is hypocritical and show a poor grasp of U.S. law. (Facebook post, Jan. 5, 2011)

Kat: Call senator Reid to tell him to keep his promise and move the DREAM Act! (Facebook post, Nov. 3, 2010)

Jasmine: Say no to any Arizona-style nonsense legislature! Sign the petition! (Facebook post, Feb. 8, 2011)

Lori: GA's new immigration laws are crazy! How can we stop this? (Facebook post, Jan. 28, 2011)

Lolo: An Arizona-style law would be destructive to Georgia's economy. I want a prosperous Georgia: www.causes.com. (Facebook post, Jan. 28, 2011)

While the most common issue discussed by women interviewed was immigration reform,

other issues of importance were also introduced and explored through Facebook. On February 8, 2011, Jasmine shared a link on her Facebook profile regarding new legislation that will change the law so that only certain types of rape “count.” Along with the link, Jasmine said, “once again stupid republicans are fucking up this country! Thank you GOP for making it easy for rapists to get away with it” (Facebook post, Feb. 8, 2011). Throughout my research, Tati, Jasmine, Marcela, Essa, Lolo, and Ali all posted links and comments regarding environmental issues and encouraged their friends to be more environmentally conscious. Interviewees reported that using Facebook to disseminate information and educate others was one of this site's best features. However, mobilization is also a factor when considering Facebook as a parallel public sphere.

4.5 Mobilization

Although the capacity for knowledge and influence is inherent in each individual (Foucault 1976), unless people believe they can achieve the desired effect and prevent undesired ones from happening, they will have little incentive to act (Bandura 1997). Generally, public forums and media outlets do not include the thoughts and concerns of groups in diaspora (Bernal 2005:663). Among these women, it is clear that Facebook is utilized to share information and engage in conversation concerning political and social issues. However, does this virtual participation in the parallel public sphere encourage inactivity in the physical world? While sitting in Starbucks with Essa, she discussed with me how she not only accesses new information through Facebook, but also learns of ways she can take action to support causes that are important to her.

Essa: A lot of my Colombian friends in Atlanta use Facebook to share political views. They will post things on my wall like – call this number now to support the dream act – and I will because I think it's a great thing and it will help my friends and give them more opportunities.

Similarly, Lori discussed the implications that Facebook may have for political

mobilization. Lori explained that she began to view Facebook as a powerful tool as a result of an incident that occurred a few years ago. During her freshman year in college, Lori's friends and family Colombia began to tell her about recent events occurring in her native country because of *Las Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia* [The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia] (Las FARC), a terrorist guerilla group. In an effort to organize against them, Colombians started joining Facebook to create a group promoting a peaceful protest against Las FARC. Lori says that people were too afraid to stand up and say anything out in public, but they felt that they could safely show opposition to Las FARC if enough people joined the group online. Because of Facebook, thousands of people around the world joined together to march for peace in Colombia. As demonstrated by the anti-FARC rallies, Facebook may be used to enhance political activism, not only on the local level, but internationally as well (Neumayer & Raffl 2008:10). Other research on the public sphere (Warner 2002) takes for granted that the type of sphere they describe depends on a freedom of expression without the fear of violent reprisal (Bernal 2005). A large portion of the Colombian diaspora in Atlanta has developed as a result of violence; many Colombians left their homes due to the increasing violence and potential danger to their families. As a result, individuals have turned to Facebook in an attempt to speak out against this violence. Lori argues that many Colombians "feel safer expressing their opposition to the violent movements in Colombia on Facebook." Feeling as though they were able to participate in taking a stand against Las FARC had a large impact on Lori, her family, and other Colombians. Lori says that Facebook is "more than just a social networking site, it's connecting people around the world through important themes that mean something to each of us." Over the lull of American Christmas music playing in Starbucks, Lolo shared with me how she has experienced the use of Facebook as a tool to mobilize people:

Lolo: It's an interesting forum for people to educate non-immigrants, too, about their situation. There was an immigration march in Atlanta and I used Facebook to get more people to come out and participate. It was really big and I learned about it on Facebook. My sorority sister was the girl who was caught and detained by INS. We all rallied around her, informed news stations, and other people – all through Facebook. They are going to let her finish school and I think one of the main reasons is because of all the support we were able to give her through Facebook. It's really hard for her because she was brought here so young that she's practically American. Her whole life is here. If she is sent back to Colombia, she will have no one there. But seeing all of the help that people gave to her and encouragement on Facebook was really inspiring. Facebook is a really important tool, especially for young people. The people who share your beliefs and interests, that's how you can get to them – through Facebook. It would be hard to find those people otherwise. That's where they see everything. Like with voting, that's where everyone encourages everybody else to go vote. People who can't vote, like because of their immigration status, encourage those who can to go out and take advantage of that opportunity.

While not all participants' involvement on Facebook may be as powerful as Lolo and Lori's examples, many said they felt that this site was a useful tool eliciting action from individuals. Jasmine told me that she uses Facebook to encourage her friends to get involved and be informed citizens because “so many people don't use their right to vote and that's important. On November 4, 2010, Jasmine posted on her Facebook wall “today is such an important day for the US! did you already vote? Get involved and do your part!” Similarly, on Dec. 9, 2010, Marcela posted on Facebook, “Dream Act vote delayed. Keep calling your Senators at 866-996-5161!” These women also employ Facebook as a means to plan and organize events. Through Facebook's events tool, users can create an event that includes the date, time, location, and pictures. Facebook then allows them to add their friends. Friends receive a message that they have been invited to an event and they are able to RSVP, comment on the events “wall,” and invite other friends. Additionally, the majority of participants had phones with access to the Internet and Facebook. As a result, these events are automatically added to their phone's calendar. Once a Facebook user has RSVP'd to an event that action is

posted on their Facebook wall for their friends to see. What often follows is a type of chain reaction, where other users see that their friends is attending an event, they become interested, and may attend the event themselves as a result. While reading through my Facebook News Feed in January 2011, an update appeared on my Facebook feed that stated the following: “Camila is attending Bowling for Equality 2011.” The post includes a link to the event, as well as an 'RSVP' button so that Camila's friends may also attend. I scrolled my mouse over the phrase and noticed that it was hyperlinked. By clicking on it, I was transferred to the event’s Facebook page, which included event information, pictures, and a list of Facebook users who were attending. Similarly, Tati also uses Facebook to publicize events and encourage others to participate. On November 16, 2010, Tati posted an event to her Facebook page entitled “Fight for the Dream” and said on her Facebook wall “a rally for the dream act, today @ GSU library plaza starting at 11 a.m. Please wear white to support the dreamers!” The next day, Tati posted pictures from the event:



(Figure 3- Tati, Facebook post, Nov. 17, 2010)

In addition, Tati posted the following message: “thanks to for all that came out to the

Rally. Don't forget that you can make a change, you just have to act and demand” (Facebook post, Nov. 16, 2010). Tati said that the event was much more successful because of Facebook and that even people who could not attend were able to view the pictures and become more educated regarding what she was fighting for. In addition to organizing events on Facebook, in order to bring about mobilization and action, participants also said they enjoyed starting dialogues with their Facebook friends. For example, Marcela posted an article from CNN on her Facebook recently regarding ethnic studies in Arizona.

Marcela: From CNN.com - Arizona schools superintendent John Huppenthal has told the Tuscan district to stop teaching its controversial Mexican-American studies program or face losing \$15 million in annual state aid under a new law, he said Tues. (Facebook post, Jan. 5, 2011)

Facebook friend: WHAT?? Don't even want to read the article, the title already angers me.

Other interviewees also use Facebook as a medium through which they start discussions with other Facebook users. In January 2011, Lolo posted on her Facebook wall: “In the state senate, Nathan Deal insinuated that his women colleague was a prostitute. Is this the kind of man you want running the state of Georgia?” Following this comment, one of Lolo's friends responded, “I agree, but then again do we want a former governor who brought us to #50 worst state for education. This was the reason Roy lost to Perdue. I wish there was none of the above for governor. Deal has money issues too.” This began a discussion that involved other Facebook users, some of whom said that they would never pay attention to politics if it were not for their friends sharing information on Facebook. On Thanksgiving, Tati posted the following comment on Facebook, involving her friends and another research participant, Marcela, in the discussion:

Tati: Turkey day: I would like to give thanks to the societies and rich cultures we wiped out in order for our society to prosper. Then we wonder why this country is in bad shape, what starts bad ends bad. Unless the basic rotten fundamentalist principles that its started with are changed... Have a Happy Turkey day :) (Facebook post, Nov. 25, 2010)

Marcela: Let's protest by killing a turkey and eating it.

Tati: I like the way you think my love LOL!!!

Facebook user: *Parecen estudiantes de la universidad nacional!* [You all seem like students from the National University!] I like the status tho!

Tati: WOOWOW!!! *Jajaja, pero si estuviera en Colombia todavia* [Hahaha, but if I was still in Colombia] that's probably where I would be going to school lol.

Facebook user: *Veo que las CTW classes te han agudizado el pensamiento critico! Ojala mas jovenes fueron como uds., no revoltosos, pero si criticos.* [I see that the Critical Thinking Through Writing classes have sharpened your critical thinking! I wish more students were like you all, not unruly, but critical thinkers].

In addition to discussing political topics and current events, participants also posted information regarding local events that benefited causes that were important to them and encouraged their friends to get involved. In January 2011, Mon posted information regarding a happy hour event that benefited the local organization, Caminar Latino, saying, “Proceeds from this event go to a GREAT Organization! Caminar Latino is something I am VERY passionate about! Please try to go and support!” Additionally, contributors shared information regarding “easy” ways that their friends can get involved in certain issues. For example, Jasmine encouraged her friends to boycott Coca-Cola products:

Jasmine: It's always the right time to do what's right. Please do not buy Coca cola products, you will be contributing to deforestation, drought, global warming, contamination, and unfair labor practices. (Facebook post, February 20, 2011).

In order to reach as many people as possible, Jasmine posted this story twice on her wall, once in English and once in Spanish. In addition to posting information, participants employed the use of their Facebook profile pictures to publicize important events. During my interview with Mon, she explained to me that she often changed her profile picture to images or posters of events that she wanted to advertise to her friends. According to Mon, “people might not see an event or a wall post, but by profile picture appears next to all my interactions on Facebook. Changing my picture is sometimes the best way to spread the word.” For example, Mon changed her profile picture from an image of herself to the following:



(Figure 4 - Mon, Facebook profile image, Sept. 1, 2009)

Mon said that this image is “eye-catching” and encouraged more of her friends to click on her Facebook profile to learn more about the event. Other women interviewed also employed this method to mobilize their friends and publicize events that were of importance to them. Although some of the participants are friends with each other on Facebook, not all of the women interviewed knew each other. Regardless, all interviewees supported similar causes and rallied around the same events. In addition to the Dream Act and other immigration policies, many participants’ most recent Facebook activity revolves around new Georgia immigration policies similar to those in Arizona. In March 2011, Tati published the following picture as her Facebook profile image in an attempt increase publicity for a public rally:



(Figure 5 - Tati, Profile image, March 2011)

Tati's profile image advertises a rally that is taking place at the capital building. Using a combination of English and Spanish, the top line of text says "*Di no a leyes como en Arizona!*" [Say no to laws like the ones in Arizona!]. The side bar of the image, in Spanish, urges individuals to stop racial profiling, the criminalization of immigrants, and the separation of families. Soon after changing her profile picture to this image, one of Tati's American friends commented: "Fight the good fight!" Although they are not friends on Facebook, Kat also changed her profile picture to the same image and included a comment: "Por favor hagan tag a sus amigos! Tag yourselves and others! SPREAD THE WORD! SI SE PUEDE! (Kat, Profile image, March 10, 2011). In addition to making this image her profile picture, Kat employed an additional method to help spread the word about this event: she tagged her friends in the image.

Image tagging is used to identify people in pictures and once someone is tagged, this image appears on their profile and they receive a notification that someone has tagged them in an image. Although none of her friends' faces appear in this picture, Kat knew that tagging them would serve to increase the number of people who see the picture, thus better publicizing the event. Similar to the image, Kat used a combination of Spanish and English in her post in order to capture a wider audience. Through in-depth interviews, and through my own observations of their activities on Facebook, these women often demonstrated a desire to communicate to both English and Spanish-speaking communities. They view their position as an important one, since they have experience with both American and Colombian culture, and are able to communicate with both groups. As a result, many participants felt as though they can contribute to a mutual understanding between both groups, often using Facebook as platform to do so.

Mon: I think Facebook is an important place to discuss politics and current events. I think people who live in this country, especially citizens, should be informed on issues that affect them. I also want to be sensitive to other people's political ideologies. I mean I don't really care what your ideology is – whether you're right wing, or left wing, it doesn't matter. Just vote and stay informed.

4.6 Conclusion

When examining Internet sites as public spheres, researchers have mixed opinions (Harvey and Porter 2000), often arguing that users begin using sites with enthusiasm and high levels of activity but that eventually dies down and people quickly loose interest (Lax 2000). However, all of the women in this study have been using Facebook for at least four years. Instead of the becoming frustrated with the new tools that Facebook adds, participants reported that the new features keep the site interesting. However, Facebook's staying power revolves more around the discussions that users are having with each other and the ability to maintain multiple ties at once. Even while considering all the problematic aspects involved, users stated that they could not imagine themselves leaving Facebook anytime in the near future.

It is not necessarily that posting your opinion on Facebook will directly affect a policy, but it will serve to educate others and, possibly, mobilize people into action. However, defining Facebook as a parallel public sphere is not simply limited to political issues. As discussed previously, multiple discourses take place on Facebook whose topics range from humorous, serious, personal, and beyond. The ability to participate in a public forum and contribute to relevant discussions allows individuals to realize the agency they possess in being able to define their identities and communicate their opinions. Furthermore, Facebook serves as a place where people can gather and discuss issues that may possibly lead to offline action.

Essa: I think Facebook is a very important support group and arena to find people who are fighting for the same things that you are. Social networking sites help with that. I mean the idea of Facebook is to connect with the globe. Even if you don't a person you can find someone who is going through the same thing that you are.

Dewey (2009) discusses how, through the parallel public sphere, those who have been silent learn to use their voices at certain times and in certain ways. Additionally, Dewey's notion of the parallel public sphere includes dialogue between society and disempowered groups. She notes how this dialogue is not an equal exchange and, therefore, participants reinforce their own marginal status in some way by participating in the parallel public sphere. Since Facebook is utilized by many different types of individuals, in general, it seems that marginalized people do not necessarily reinforce their status anymore so than they might in everyday interactions with people. Facebook is a medium used by those in power, as well as marginalized individuals, which may lead to some to argue that Facebook is simply another method for surveillance and control. While this will be discussed in further detail in chapter six, it is important to note here that the participation of marginalized individuals on Facebook is important because they are utilizing a space that is not limited to marginalized groups. While Colombian women may not be

able to engage in these same dialogues in other spaces, and therefore must turn to Facebook, they are participating in a sphere that is being utilized by many different groups, not just those that have been subjugated. Dewey (2009) draws attention to Jacqueline Urla's (1993:833) work on Basque activists, which demonstrated how individuals, who have been labeled as "Others," embraced mechanisms used by the Center as "a tool of community empowerment and public self-representation." In order to battle discrimination, Marcela said it is important to educate others and she sees Facebook as a tool for doing so.

Marcela: I think it's so important to give back to the community but also contribute your own personal story to the greater milieu. People don't understand what it's like to be an immigrant. People resonate a lot more with someone's personal history and it's important to get the information out there.

Using this parallel public sphere assists in the performance and negotiation of one's online identity. Additionally, being able support many ties at once allows these users to increase their social capital and bring dispersed people together through meaningful discourses. Jasmine encouraged others to "go out and vote today! Use your voice!" (Facebook post, Nov. 4, 2010). Not only do users share pictures and events, by engaging in meaningful discussions, ties are strengthened. Because social capital is not equally available to all and has been abused to marginalize certain individuals (Edwards and Foley 1997), it is crucial for these women to be able to use new mediums, such as Facebook, to further develop their social capital, perform their identities, and participate in a parallel public sphere. Lori says that without Facebook, she would not talk as openly about issues that are important to her. Additionally, she feels that her relationships with friends in Atlanta and in Colombia are more meaningful because Facebook allows them to share multiple aspects of each other's lives and respond to them.

Chapter 5: Stalking, Privacy, and Surveillance

Ali: Facebook has become such a controversy. It's so crazy. Even my parents are on Facebook now. It's all he said she said. I spend way too much time on Facebook.

5.1 Introduction

While Facebook and the Internet have been celebrated as a liberating tool, it is not without its drawbacks. As discussed previously, self-censorship is one of the problematic aspects of Facebook use, however, other issues arose during this study. In order to further disseminate the problematic aspects of Facebook, this chapter is dedicated to some of the main concerns voiced by participants. During this study, the women interviewed discussed several problematic aspects of being involved on Facebook. Throughout history new forms of media have initially been met with fear by the general public, including the printing press, film, and television (Ryan 2008:112). Social media networks have also been the subjects of a moral panic. In 2006, MySpace was the target of a moral panic, largely fueled by the media, surrounding the notion that pedophiles were using the site to elicit young users (Tufekci 2008). As a result, many MySpace users were criticized for publishing personal information on such sites and, therefore, making themselves easy targets for unwanted attention (Raynes-Goldie 2010). Some academics have argued the latter, saying that they do not care about their online privacy due to either ignorance or indifference (Raynes-Goldie 2010). With the increasing popularity of Facebook, its own users are often critical of this medium. From complaints of wasting time to fears surrounding lack of privacy, Facebook is often the topic of anxious discussions. According to the women interviewed, the media, their parents, and society in general have exaggerated the dangers of Facebook use. However, research interviewees did report feelings of concern regarding their use of Facebook.

5.2 Wasting Time and Facebook Stalking

During in-depth interviews with contributors, I asked each one of them what they considered to be negative aspects of Facebook use. Participants' initial responses all dealt with the time-consuming nature of Facebook; some even referred to Facebook as being addictive. When asked if they seriously considered Facebook to be an addiction, each participant would laugh and respond with a statement like, “Well not a serious addiction, but you know what I mean.” Although it has yet to be classified as an official mental disorder in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), Internet addiction has recently become a popular topic among researchers, psychiatrists, and support groups (Ryan 2008). Proponents of its inclusion have developed a set of diagnostic criteria, which includes excessive use, a desire to cut down on Internet activities, reduced involvement in important family, social, or occupational activities, and signs of withdrawal such as anxiety and obsessive thinking (Ryan 2008). From extensive online observation and conversations with participants, I would argue that none of them meet this set of criteria, although many of them described the time consuming nature of Facebook as a negative result of using this site. When I asked Tati about negative aspects of Facebook use, she paused for a moment, and then laughed and admitted, “well I check it way too much.” In similar conversations with the other women interviewed, each one approached this topic lightheartedly, often laughing or making jokes about how often they use Facebook. The following includes contributors’ initial responses to the question 'what do you consider to be negative aspects of using Facebook?':

Lolo: Facebook definitely takes up a lot of my time. But it also gives me a way to keep in touch with everyone. It's like you're addicted to your friends in a way.

Marcela: Sometimes I do feel like just closing it and disconnecting myself because it does get a little too addictive – stalking everybody. But I like it.

Ali: Oh God. I'm obsessed with it. I'm on Facebook all day everyday. It's crazy. It didn't used to be like that. But now I have to always be checking it.

Jasmine: Facebook is time consuming. I think that I'm addicted. I don't have any other addictions, but I'm addicted to Facebook. I post status 4-5 times a day. I check it all the time.

Mon: Today I was in class and my friend next to me was on Facebook and it was a huge distraction. She was looking at my profile and my friends' profiles, and I couldn't focus. It can be a huge distraction. Or people will use it as an excuse like, 'oh, I was on Facebook so I couldn't finish my homework.' They just need to prioritize.

Tati: Facebook can be time consuming. It becomes like an addiction.

Camila: I waste so much time of my life. It's horrible and really sometimes it's almost an addiction to me because I really, really like Facebook.

Lori: Now I have a 3G phone so I have Facebook with me all the time. Every five minutes I check Facebook, I read through all the notifications that I get all the time; it's addictive. Sometimes I think it's a waste of time. Like, I'm supposed to be working on a project for school and I can't keep my eyes off of Facebook. Some of my friends deactivate Facebook during finals week because they can't concentrate. I think it's kinda crazy how distracting it can be.

In addition to the time-consuming nature of Facebook, the women interviewed also said that they often used Facebook to “stalk” other friends. These women reported spending a lot of time on Facebook looking at their friends’ pictures, who they are dating, what they are saying, etc. While allowing users to keep up with friends is the main purpose of Facebook, it seems that when contributors were reading other users' interactions or viewing pictures and not interacting themselves they labeled this as “stalking.” When the women interviewed took on roles of silent observers on this site, they felt as though they were acting as a type of voyeur. They said that Facebook allows them to “spy” on their friends without anyone knowing. While sitting in a quiet corner of an Atlanta Starbucks, Ali casually mentioned that she joined Facebook so she could “stalk her boyfriend.” With a giggle, she brushed off this statement by laughing and assuring me, “no, I'm not that paranoid,” but later in the interview, she admitted to looking at her

boyfriend's profile a lot: "sometimes I see girls who are writing on his profile and I ask him 'who is this chick?'" Two weeks earlier at a Starbucks across town, Lori shared a similar story with me:

Lori: Like I really liked my boyfriend (before we were dating) and he didn't like me. I would totally stalk him on Facebook constantly. He started dating another girl and changed his relationship status to "in a relationship" on Facebook and all of my friends started posting on my wall "congratulations." I was like "it's not me!" All these posts were public on Facebook and I was like, "this is crazy" because it was all because of Facebook. It can definitely start rumors and it can absolutely affect the way I feel day to day. Other people can post things that make me sad or I can be happy celebrating with someone else.

With multiple posts, pictures, and conversations being added to Facebook daily, the amount of information posted on this site accumulates at a rapid pace. Additionally, users' News Feed tool, which appears on each person's Facebook homepage, is continually updated with their friends' latest activities on Facebook. It is easy to see how users could begin "stalking" their friends. The very nature of Facebook encourages this. However, as demonstrated in previous chapters, contributors also enjoyed being able to see all of their friends' information and knowing that their friends could also keep up with them so easily. It appears, therefore, that the openness of Facebook that contributors enjoy is also an aspect that can make them feel uncomfortable.

Although Facebook does contain privacy settings, and all of one's friends on Facebook must be confirmed, users are never actually aware of the audience that is viewing their posts, pictures, or interactions. Facebook exists in a virtual, yet very real world and, as a result, the majorities of interactions are through text and lack visual and tonal cues of face-to-face interaction. This can be a deterrent, since one must base the intentions of each activity solely on the words. However, there are tools with which to display emotion, including capitalization, smiley or frowny faces, etc. While these may seem trivial, these tools are useful in determining users' emotions and context underlying their Facebook postings. Additionally, if there is

confusion surrounding a person's post, other users often comment asking for clarification, which users may choose to provide or ignore. Regardless, some of the women interviewed spoke about how they missed face-to-face interaction with friends since the majority of their interaction took place on Facebook. While sitting next to me on a large, overstuffed couch in the corner of a Buckhead Starbucks, Mon explained, "on Facebook you do lose that face-value without having face-to-face discussion with people. I think it's important to communicate in-person and with all this technology, we're losing a lot of that." However, she also noted that she communicates with a lot of family and friends that are separated from her geographically and, without Facebook, she feels that she would not be able to connect with them at all.

5.3 Privacy and Surveillance

Perhaps the most controversial aspect of Facebook use revolves around users' privacy. With the rapid popularity of Facebook, the ways that users view their own privacy is changing. Recently, Young and Quan-Haase (2009) conducted a study in which they interviewed 77 undergraduate students who use Facebook regarding privacy concerns. Their findings concluded that the majority of users care about protecting their privacy online and, as a result, took measures to minimize unwanted access to their profiles. Among their study, some users faked personal data so that strangers would not have access to true information about them. Among contributors, all reported to posting accurate information about themselves. However, some of the women interviewed did feel as though Facebook was not private enough. During my first meeting with Lori in July 2010, she explained to me how

Lori: Sometimes it feels like it's too public. Sometimes people tell me that I have like 1,000 friends and I don't know any of them. Well, sometimes that's true. Sometimes there are people who add me that I don't even know. They keep requesting to be my friends and I keep hitting ignore, ignore, ignore. It's not private enough.

Depending on one's privacy settings and number of friends, certain users share information with larger groups of people than others. For example, one of Tati's two Facebook profiles has the highest privacy settings in place: her name will never appear in search results and the posts she makes on other friends' pages will not be visible to users who are not Tati's friend. On the other hand, Ali's Facebook profile is not as private. Her name appears in search results, friends of friends and users in Georgia State's Facebook network may view her pictures and posts on other friends' sites. However, even with the strictest privacy settings in place, users' posts and information are still visible to the public of their Facebook friends. During my interview with Mon, she described the importance of learning about privacy settings on Facebook:

Mon: There are definitely privacy issues on Facebook. A lot of people really don't take the time to set up their privacy settings even though the options are available. Facebook can be a private place. The majority of people aren't going to through and making sure only certain people can view this and others can view that. That can also be kinda scary. Anyone can type in your name and look you up and see you're info. But that kind of bugs me because some people have their address on Facebook! I mean, seriously? People like that complain about a lack of privacy on Facebook but they don't take the time to set up their privacy settings.

Recently, the media, researchers, and Facebook users themselves have complained about Facebook's negligent use of its users' privacy. Due to the nature of the Internet, user information is often much more easily accessible than in offline contexts. In an effort to educate its users regarding privacy issues, Facebook has dedicated several pages¹⁷ on its site to dealing with privacy issues, including a step-by-step tutorial designed to train users on how to use privacy settings as well as educate them on the potential risks involved. The potential for information sharing between online social networks and legal authorities is often a source of concern for Facebook users. Facebook's privacy policy states:

We may disclose information pursuant to subpoenas, court orders, or other

¹⁷ Facebook's privacy web pages may be accessed by visiting the following URL:
<http://www.facebook.com/policy.php#!/privacy/explanation.php>

requests (including criminal and civil matters) if we have a good faith belief that the response is required by law. This may include respecting requests from jurisdictions outside of the United States where we have a good faith belief that the response is required by law under the local laws in that jurisdiction, apply to users from that jurisdiction, and are consistent with generally accepted international standards. We may also share information when we have a good faith belief it is necessary to prevent fraud or other illegal activity, to prevent imminent bodily harm, or to protect ourselves and you from people violating our Statement of Rights and Responsibilities. This may include sharing information with other companies, lawyers, courts or other government entities (Facebook 2011).

Facebook's privacy statement alludes to the fact that Facebook may disclose user information if they have "a good faith belief" and this statement appears rather vague. When asked, participants stated that they were not concerned with the government accessing their information. Contributors concerns revolved more around individual users seeing certain aspects of their profile. Recently, Facebook has also been the target of criticism regarding their targeted advertisements. While Facebook (2010) states that they disclose no personally identifying information to advertisers, they do use user data to better target advertisements, which appear on the right column of each Facebook page. From my own personal experience, this targeting can be slightly unnerving. For instance, users may identify their family members on their Facebook page. Having no children myself, I "added" my dog as my child. Almost immediately, the types of advertisements on my Facebook changed to include ads targeted directly at new mothers such as baby products and mommy blogs. This change in advertising was so distracting that after two weeks, I removed my dog from my Facebook profile. While combing Facebook's News Feed one evening in mid-February, I notice that Mon had posted a comment on her wall regarding Facebook ads and how individuals take this feature too seriously. I clicked on the lower right corner of my Facebook page on a blue bar entitled "Chat." A list of 63 of my friends appeared, all of whom were currently on Facebook. I saw that Mon was online and I sent her a brief line of

texting, asking if she had some time to discuss her Facebook post with me. We began conversing about Facebook's advertising strategies and Mon admitted that it initially caught her off guard:

Mon: Honestly, when I first noticed [Facebook's targeted ads] I thought it was creepy and it bothered me. However we put our information out there for them to use. It is actually a pretty smart business move on their part. Yeah I can see where people get upset but I think that's the price we pay for social networking.
(Facebook chat, Feb. 16, 2011)

Mon said that she feels that her information is safe on Facebook, but she would never post her address or telephone number. She regards people who do disclose that type of information as being naïve. During Atlanta's ice storm in January 2011, the icy roads made the city not navigable, leaving me, and my study participants, homebound for several days. During this time, the majority of my interviewees were on Facebook chat, exchanging "snowpocalypse 2011" stories and connecting with their friends around Atlanta. I took advantage of this time and sought out participants on Facebook chat to discuss the recent debates regarding Facebook's privacy settings that had been taking place among my Facebook community. Each woman said they were aware of Facebook's privacy settings but they know users who do not employ them, especially users who are older in age. When chatting with Lolo during this time, she explained that she understands the privacy settings and how to use them, but feels that some of her friends do not. Lolo said she tries to help her Facebook friends learn more about privacy settings by posting helpful tools and updates to Facebook's format. For example, she recently posted information regarding changes to Facebook's privacy settings:

Lolo: Heads Up!!! FACEBOOK ALERT: As of today, NEW PRIVACY setting called "Instant Personalization" that shares data with non-Facebook websites and it is automatically set to "Enable." Go to Account >Privacy Settings > Applications and Websites >Instant Personalization > Edit Settings, and un-check "Enable". BTW if your friends don't do this, they will be sharing information about you. PLEASE COPY & REPOST (Facebook post, Jan. 8, 2011)

Since she began using Facebook, Lolo has shared several bits of information regarding

changes to Facebook's privacy settings. She explained that some of her friends "don't care or won't take the time to make sure their information is safe. Or, they are older, and don't really understand how Facebook works." Lolo tries to help educate others regarding privacy on Facebook because she thinks it is important to be aware of how Facebook has changed the sharing of information. During my chilly, December interview with Marcela, she discussed some of the problematic aspects of Facebook privacy. One of the main issues that Marcela emphasized is how she feels like a lot of fear surrounding Facebook use comes from stories that have been overly exacerbated by worried parents.

Marcela: My mom heard this story of this guy from Miami who went to Colombia and got kidnapped. They think the only way they could have known where he was going was because of his Facebook status. Anyway, my mom always gets nervous about what I post on Facebook. My mom has Facebook to keep up with family but she won't post anything like pictures – it's kind of funny. It's hard where to know to where the line is.

Marcela stated that she did not even know if this story was true but it continues to make her mother worry. When discussing whether these types of incidents worried her, Marcela said that she feels that she has adequately used Facebook's privacy settings to block unwanted users from accessing her information. She thinks fears over privacy issues "depend on how educated you are about privacy settings." While Lolo said that she enjoyed that no one could silence her on Facebook she did feel that, "online there is more pressure as far as the things you post and how people are always checking on you." As discovered by other researchers (Livingstone 2008), interviewees were not necessarily concerned with the type of information posted on Facebook as much as who is able to see it. As we sat around a small, metal café table, I asked Ali about the multiple audiences on her Facebook and how she manages the information she posts. She agreed shared other participants' feelings regarding the unnerving notion that, amongst your Facebook community, you never know exactly who is viewing your information.

Ali explained that the idea of strangers being able to view her information makes her feel weird: “Facebook can be negative. Like creepy people trying to view your profile and trying to talk to you.” In regards to privacy, Lori said that it is strange for her to have people she does not know very well interact with her on Facebook:

Lori: There are also people you don't know well that comment on your status and that's weird. Like the other day, my post was “Thank you, God, thank you, God, thank you, God.” This dude who says he knows me but I don't know him and he wrote this whole paragraph about human beings and God and it was just weird. I was like 'I was just trying to celebrate something with my friends' and out of nowhere, this dude comments.

After this incident, Lori said she went through her Facebook and deleted people that she “didn't really know.” While all contributors stated that they were concerned with strangers seeing their information, they stated that their privacy concerns stem more from people they already know seeing certain aspects of their Facebook activity. Strater and Richter (2007) examined privacy and disclosure on Facebook among college-aged users through direct interviews and profile reviews. Among study participants, their findings concluded that users were more concerned with blocking access to their information from certain friends, coworkers, and acquaintances rather than strangers or businesses (Strater and Richter 2007). Similarly, these women discussed how they are more concerned with people among their social networks becoming offended if they post certain things or upsetting family members with pictures of them partying.

Mon: I try to be careful with how extreme I am about certain things because I don't want people to think that they have to be careful around me, like they can't talk to me about certain things because I have certain viewpoints. And also for professionalism. I work for the Department of Homeland Security so I don't want my boss to get on my Facebook and see certain things. So I try to keep it clean. I mean that shouldn't affect the type of things that I post or say on there but it does.

For Mon, the most important aspect of self-censorship and privacy involved not

offending certain friends and maintaining a professional demeanor since the majority of her co-workers were also her Facebook friends. Lolo said that Facebook “can be used as a monitoring tool” for businesses or co-workers to keep tabs on peoples' activities and what they are doing. When asked if she saw this as a problem for her, however, Lolo said that she was not too concerned with that. While presentations of identity through Facebook have allowed the women interviewed to blend multiple aspects of their identity, the enabling nature of Facebook also makes it easier for one to be falsely impersonated. Technically, anyone may open a Facebook account under the guise of someone else. This was actually only a problem with one participant, Kat:

OMGGGG sooo check this out. a friend from colombia just contacted me and told me there's a girl over there pretending to be [*Kat stated her full name here*] osea yo [*in other words, me*].... ANDDD she's sending other girls msgs [messages] saying that she wants to fight them & they were wondering whether it was really me... I was like wowwww i'm so far away and... they want to involve me in probs [problems]. jajajajaja girls so immature these days (Kat, Facebook post, Jan. 10, 2011).

Although this was a frustrating experience, Kat was not overly worried, stating that her friends knew the “real” her and they would know that she would never do something like that. The other nine contributors reported that they had never encountered any issues with identity theft or Facebook hacking. One method that participants used to control their privacy was what Lori called “Facebook purging.” On February 8, 2011, Lori posted on her Facebook: “Tired of cleaning up my Facebook of useless contacts!!! And the number never really goes down!” Other women interviewed also said they purged their Facebooks of contacts that they did not know well or people that they had added at one time but later realized that they did not really know these people in their offline lives. Another aspect of Facebook purging involves removing old posts or pictures.

Mon: I actually went through a stage where I went back and removed things from my Facebook. Like in the beginning, people would invite me to join groups and I would just accept all those requests. I went back and removed those groups and kind of cleaned up my profile so it only included the things I was really interested in.

5.4 Conclusion

Building on the original notion of the panopticon, Foucault (1979) posits that subjects internalize panoptic power and, as a result, they participate in their own subjugation. Thus, the panoptic structure perpetuates the top-down power relationship (Foucault 1979). On Facebook, surveillance takes on a new form. Recently, researchers have begun to examine Facebook and other social media sites as new forms of voyeuristic surveillance, referred to as lateral surveillance, peer-to-peer surveillance, and participatory panopticon (Zimmer 2007). Since surveillance implies an explicit power relationship between watchers and those under their gaze, the current terms used to refer to peer-to-peer surveillance appear insufficient in order to fully understand this new type of surveillance (Zimmer 2007). In accordance with previous research (boyd 2007, Raynes-Goldie 2010), this study concludes that interviewees are less concerned with institutional privacy and more concerned with social privacy. Participants do internalize the surveillance of their information by others and, as discussed throughout this chapter, discipline themselves accordingly. However, this discipline is not fraught with extreme anxiety. As Tati explained, “when it comes down to it, if it’s something really important, I’m going to say it on Facebook regardless of what others think.” The women interviewed participate in their own surveillance; however, this does not make them completely equal with the individuals in the panoptic model. The surveillance that takes place on Facebook appears to imply a type of balance between users as individuals share their data with others with the assumption that they will be able to view others’ data as well (Zimmer 2007).

In order to discipline themselves accordingly, participants employ various tactics to control the flow of their information and prevent certain people from accessing their profile. Some users preferred to censor the type of information they share as a whole, rather than divide their Facebook contacts into different groups (where some have access to more information than others). About ten minutes into my interview with Marcela, she began to discuss the ways she has to monitor her information on Facebook. However, regardless of the need to censor herself due to her job, Marcela says that she still feels strongly about being able to freely communicate on Facebook:

Marcela: It's my identity – my job can't fire me for having these opinions because it's my community and it's what makes me who I am. I can respect their position and my job, but that's not going to change who I am or the types of news stories I share on Facebook.

Marcela limits the types of information she posts or the way she words certain statements, however, she tries to hold onto what she views as her right to say what she wants. The most important aspect of self-regulation on Facebook, according to Marcela, is that “you may regulate yourself on Facebook but there's nobody regulating you.” During my interview with Mon, she, too, discussed how the sharing of information on Facebook can be a cause of concern. Mon explained that she is aware of problematic aspects of sharing certain information on Facebook, but she thinks it is important to continue to discuss provocative topics:

Mon: Overall, I think it's really important to have discussions on Facebook about these very relevant issues. Whenever I post news stories, I already know that certain ones of my friends are going to respond a certain way. Like I know if I post this so-and-so is going to say something because they don't agree with it. Like this person is going to comment negatively, I have to be ready.

When asking if they would close their Facebooks, all of the women interviewed responded that they would not, saying that the benefits of using Facebook outweigh whatever risks they may be exposed to through their involvement on this site. When I first met with Ali at

Starbucks in August 2010, she mentioned several times that she is on Facebook “24/7.” These statements were often accompanied by a laugh and a comment that was meant to be lighthearted, such as “maybe I have an addiction!” While Facebook is time-consuming, Ali said that she also saves time by using Facebook because she is able to gather information quickly and connect with a large number of people instantly. In regards to privacy and self-censorship, Tati said, “that's the price we pay for social networking. It's almost like a necessary evil.” When interviewing Marcela, she told me that the benefits of Facebook outweigh the potential risks:

Marcela: I think if I disconnected myself it would be like going backwards. Because everybody is on Facebook – why would I not want to be on Facebook? The students I'm trying to reach are on Facebook. It's a great resource to reach people. It's also a lot cheaper – instead of doing a mail out – I can contact them on Facebook. Students also feel more comfortable connecting with someone on Facebook; it's not as intimidating. I think it's safe, it's free – if you're not on it, you're denying yourself a type of resource and denying the fact that that is where we're heading; everything is online. Not being on it makes you kind of weird. Either very old, or very weird. It's like a necessary evil. By being able to connect with people – it helps me not forget and it helps me not forget them. It keeps my Colombian side alive.

When asked, participants could easily name what they considered to be negative aspects of Facebook. Additionally, they mentioned that many of their friends were very critical of Facebook, although they, too, are avid users of the site. Interviewees stated that their American friends (who are non-immigrants) were always more critical of Facebook than their immigrant friends. Interviewees do acknowledge differences between themselves and their American counterparts in the ways in which they use Facebook and their motivations for doing so. In conclusion, it is clear that the women interviewed are concerned and aware of the problematic aspects involved in Facebook use. While other researchers have stated that young people are not as concerned with privacy and will readily share their information, study participants were eager to state that they do not haphazardly post information without first considering the consequences.

However, contributors also agreed that their parents, the media, and other institutions are often overly fearful of the risks associated with using Facebook. Considering the few years that we have been in the Facebook age, the full implications of the problematic aspects of Facebook use are not yet known. Regardless, it is crucial to continue examining such concerns as well as educating others on the importance of being aware of such aspects.

Chapter 6: Conclusions

Facebook allows individuals to navigate through the changing landscapes of their identities. Participants' activities on Facebook revolve around the performative nature of identity, which Hall (2000) describes as the process of identification constantly in the making. Interviewees are continually maintaining their online presence, which requires effort and attention. By voicing their opinions, sharing experiences, interacting with friends, and posting pictures, people create a virtual record of their daily lives. Individuals form an ongoing narrative (Giddens 1991), allowing them the capacity to more easily mold their multi-faceted identities. Ali describes her online narrative history as "being able to look back and see what I felt, what people said about it, what I've done and I like that." While Facebook interactions may be spontaneous at times, a sense of control exists. Through the creation of a virtual record, Facebook serves as a type of life map, allowing participants the ability to see multiple interactions, photos, and conversations that have occurred throughout the years.

When performing and negotiating identity on Facebook, Colombian women are not limited to one identity. Participants display multiple facets of their identity and, through self-reflection and the feedback of others, Facebook seems to provide a medium through which these women may negotiate and perform their identities in ways that they choose. Furthermore, participants described the safety they felt at having a place where they can find the majority of their friends in an instant, as well as being able to store their memories:

Lori: Sometimes when I'm looking at my friend's pictures from Colombia I can picture myself there. I can see places I love and used to go to in Colombia. It reminds me of my home and my native culture Facebook is absolutely helpful for me to keep track of the memories I have.

Slater (2002) argues that social networking sites allow users to form aspects of their identity that might not be possible offline. While this control over identity performance on

Facebook is not limited to the participants studied, these women employ Facebook in unique ways when compared to their American counterparts. As reported by participants, Facebook provides a unique platform to carry on discussions that they cannot in other contexts. Mon told me that, “sometimes, people do not want to listen to me because I am a woman or because I am Latina. They take for granted that I think or feel a certain way. On Facebook, I can talk about Colombia, America, my own experiences, everything.” According to Mon, Facebook allows her to combat the discrimination she has felt in various offline contexts. As stated previously in this thesis, these women are not marginalized individuals simply because of their ethnicity, gender, or immigration status. However, each participant reported feeling marginalized or discriminated by others because they were either Colombian, a woman, spoke with an accent, or looked Latin American. While Facebook is far from an egalitarian society, it does act as a type of equalizer, granting these women identity control and the ability to freely voice their opinions.

Additionally, as Colombian immigrants, these women utilize Facebook as a means to battle loss: loss of their native culture, friends and family in Colombia, and even their own memories. On Facebook, users can hold on to aspects of their identity from their Colombian culture, without the fear that those aspects or they themselves will be forgotten. This allows them the freedom to negotiate other facets of their identities, including those pertaining to American culture. Similar to other women interviewed, Ali says that without Facebook, her offline life would be very different. Not only is she able to communicate with friends about where they going to meet for drinks on Saturday night, she can quickly connect with friends in Colombia, allowing her to hold on to an important part of herself that is actually thousands of miles away. Individuals are not limited to a static identity that others may have assigned to them. Furthermore, the identities they form do not have to remain fixed; their Facebook identity can

change along with their identity in the physical world. By being able to perform aspects of their identity online, and thus creating it, individuals see things they have in common with others Facebook users that may not be readily obvious in the physical world. Online, the line between the center and the other blurs, as people are able to define themselves, discover the similarities between them and freely voice their opinions.

However, as discussed in chapter five, Facebook use is not without its drawbacks and anxieties. Some participants reported not talking to their friends as much on the phone because most of their interactions occur on Facebook. While this saves time and money, Ali told me that she misses hearing her friends' voices and receiving phone calls from them. As she put it, "sometimes it would be nice to just talk to them on the phone or hear their voice. On Facebook you can't always tell how they are feeling." The lack of vocal intonation on Facebook does complicate communication, although users have found others ways to supplement this loss, such as emoticons. Anxieties over social privacy also exist on Facebook, particularly in regards to co-workers and family members. The women interviewed most commonly reported concern surrounding a need to appear professional on Facebook while still being able to communicate with friends and family in ways that they choose. Participants are constantly affected by a modern ideology of one's allegedly authentic inner self that must be expressed, however, they also present a self that is carefully calibrated. The blending of the multiple audiences and stages on Facebook have created a notion among participants of one authentic, complex self that is often unable to emerge in other contexts.

In wake of the recent and ongoing revolutions in the Middle East, the degree to which the web may be used as a tool for mobilization is becoming increasingly evident. The Internet has been used famously to unite people in Tunisia, call international attention to the struggle of

Mexico's Zapatistas, and demonstrate the great lengths that Cubans will go to in their battle for free speech. It is important to note, however, that law enforcement, state regulators, and corporations are using computer-mediated communications for surveillance and data accumulation. The Internet is far from the egalitarian utopia which some have made it out to be. However, the extreme explanation, that the web is yet another tool which may be used by those in power to control others, is not valid either. Facebook can be a powerful and problematic tool. In the context of the lives of participants, it appears that Facebook assists in supplementing face-to-face communities and identity performance.

By annihilating distance and bypassing some “spatial divisions that underpin social divisions of inequality” (Graham and Khosravi 2002:219), interviewees are utilizing Facebook for political and social communication and action. Facebook initially attracted all ten women because of their desire to stay in touch with their friends and family in Colombia, the United States, and other countries. However, each one has evolved their use of Facebook beyond simply connecting with contacts. In exploring and performing multiple aspects of their identity online, participants are living out their lives in a virtual arena. While many people are initially drawn to Facebook because of a desire to follow up with their friends, and because of the wide number of people who are already users, it is often a place where one is exposed to different ways of viewing and thinking about the world. Whereas some many not seek out political stories in the news or in their offline lives, Facebook aggregates multiple different types of stories and news, which users choose to share, into one place. As a result, users find themselves entering into discourses that they may not seek out, or may not be able to, in offline contexts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: A Guide to Facebook Terms and Common Internet Jargon

The following contains brief definitions and explanations of the most commonly used Facebook terms, jargon, and applications based on the researcher's personal and scholarly involvement on Facebook.

Facebook Basics

The **profile** is a user's personal page containing personal information, pictures, video, and anything else the user would like to share.

The **News Feed** is a continuous stream of updates about a user's friends' activities on and off Facebook. It appears on the users home page, which is different than the Facebook profile.

A **Facebook friend** is someone whom a user has "added" to their list of Facebook friends and, by doing so, allows them to view the information they post and their interactions with others. If a user chooses to do so, they may limit the types of information each friend sees so that not all Facebook friends have the same access to the user's activity.

Tag or **Tagging** involves identifying your friends in a photo by tagging the image. A tag will link to the profile of the tagged friend and cause the photo to display in the photos section of their profile. The five most recently tagged photos will also appear at the top of the profile. You can only tag your friends in photos, but you can tag any photo you are able to view. If you tag a photo that was not uploaded by a friend, the owner of the photo will need to approve the tag. You may also tag Facebook friends in your profile posts.

Events allow users to organize gatherings and parties with Facebook contacts, as well as non-Facebook users. Additionally, it allows individuals to let people in their community know about upcoming events. The Events applications page displays users' upcoming events, any invitations they have pending, and links to their own events.

Communicating with Facebook Users

6. The **wall** lives on user's profiles and functions to allow the user and their friends to communicate with one another. Users and their friends may share text, pictures, links, and video on the wall. Furthermore, a user's wall publishes all of their activity on Facebook, regardless of whether it takes place on their wall. If a user posts on someone else's wall, joins a group, comments in a forum, etc., it is all published on their wall. Users have the ability to delete wall posts.
7. A **status update** is text posted by a user directly to their wall which appears on their friends' News Feeds.
8. **Messages** are similar to e-mails. They are private and are only visible to the user(s) to which they are sent.
9. **Chat** allows users to communicate in real time with other friends who are currently online. Furthermore, all of your chats are stored in your account.

10. A **Poke** is a casual gesture that means “I’m thinking of you.” If someone is Poked, she receives the Poke on her Home page when she logs in and has the choice to Poke the person back. Only she, and not her friends, is aware that someone Poked her.
11. The **Like** tool is extremely popular on Facebook. It appears next to practically all forms of interaction Facebook: wall posts, advertisements, pictures, videos, etc. Users can “like” their friends' status' and videos as well as books, music, companies, and much more. This is also one of the main ways that Facebook gathers advertising data on users in order to tailor advertisements to them. You can also connect to content and Pages through social plugins or advertisements on and off Facebook. The vast majority of Internet websites are now connected to Facebook through this tool.

Common Internet Jargon

- **LOL** – laughing out loud
- **FB** - Facebook
- **OMG** – oh my god
- **IDK** – I don't know
- **BFF** – best friends forever
- **TTYL** – talk to you later
- **LMAO** – laughing my ass off

Appendix B: Participant Facebook Profiles

Screen grabs of all participants' Facebook profiles appear below. Their names have been blurred as well as the names of any friends that may appear on their Facebook profile to protect their anonymity.

Camila's Profile

facebook

Search

Interactive Marketing Coordinator at Red Clay Interactive

Studied Business Management at Brenau Alum

Lives in Gainesville, Georgia

In a relationship with Ryan Eugene Sawyer

From Bogotá, Colombia

Born on October 4, 1985

Education and Work

Employers

Red Clay Interactive

Interactive Marketing Coordinator - Sep 2008 to present - Gainesville, Georgia

Red Clay Interactive

Interactive Marketing Coordinator - Sep 2008 to present - Gainesville, Georgia

College

Brenau Alum

Class of 2009 - Business Management

Brenau Alum

Class of 2009 - Business Management

Georgia State University

Philosophy

Favorite Quotations

CARPE DIEM

"And we should consider every day lost on which we have not danced at least once. And we should call every truth false which was not accompanied by at least one laugh."

...See More

Arts and Entertainment

Music

Wilder Embry Nate Currin FONSECA Juanes Stevie Monice

More

Activities and Interests

Other

CHOCO CHOCICE, alambra - asesores, Linchpin Web Design, Spanish Connector, Marina Bay, Brian Hook Photography, Red Clay Interactive, Door44, The Monkey Barrel, Blonde, Brenau University Athletics, Nathan Deal, The Clothing Warehouse - Atlanta, Colombia Reports, CoastalContacts.com and 41 more

Wall

Info

Photos (3,372)

Friends

In a relationship with

Family

Father

Mother


Sister

Friends (1916)

Mon's Profile

facebook

Search



Wall

Info

Photos (495)

Notes

Friends

Friends (934)

Georgia State

Georgia State

UGA

UGA

UGA

UGA

UGA

Kennesaw

Georgia State

Georgia State

Family

Sister

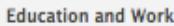
Mónica García

Intern at Department of Homeland Security


Studied Criminal Justice at Georgia State University

Lives in Atlanta, Georgia

Born on July 6




Employers



Department of Homeland Security

Intern · Atlanta, Georgia


College



Georgia State University with Vanessa Guarin

Class of 2011 · Criminal Justice · Sociology

High School



West Hall High School

Class of 2007

Philosophy

Political Views

Registered Voter and Informed Citizen

Favorite Quotations

"Do not go where the path may lead; go instead where there is no path and leave a trail"

-Ralph Waldo Emerson


"Live as if your were to die tomorrow. Learn as if you were to live forever."

- Gandhi


...See More

Sports


Favorite Teams




Los Angeles Lakers



US soccer national team




Atlanta Hawks




Deportivo Pereira


Favorite Athletes




Ray Allen




Al Horford



Roberto Ahnondanzier



Diego Forlan




David Villa

137

Ali's Profile

facebook

Search



[Wall](#)
[Info](#)
[Photos](#)
[Boxes](#)

About Me

Basic Info	Birthday:	September 21, 1987
	Siblings:	Wanda Wynn
	Current City:	Atlanta, Georgia
	Hometown:	Bogotá, Colombia
	Political Views:	Liberal

Bio

"Those who talk about individuality the most are the ones who most object to deviation, and in a few years it may be the other way around. Some day everybody will just think what they want to think, and then everybody will probably be thinking alike; that seems to be what is happening."

"People sometimes say that the way things happen in the movies is unreal, but actually, it's the way things happen to you in life that's unreal. The movies make emotions look strong and real, whereas when things really do happen to you, it's like you're watching television -- you don't feel anything."
— Andy Warhol

Favorite Quotations

...." When i was 5 years old, my mom always told me that the key to life was happiness. I went to school and they asked me what i wanted to be when i grew up. I told them "happy." They said i didn't understand the assignment. I told them them they didn't understand life"....
— in a museum

" Then i start to panic because i think i don't know whats attractive that i should eliminate before it starts causing me any more trouble. You can see, to get to know one more person is just too hard, because each new person takes up more time and more space. The way to keep some of your time to yourself is to maintain yourself so unattractively that no body else is interested in any of it"

[...See More](#)

Information

Birthday: September 21, 1987

Current City: Atlanta, GA

Likes and Interests

Activities [Show all \(1\)](#)


View Photos of Alley (179)

View Videos of Alley (2)

Send Alley a Message


Poke Alley

eat the world up



facebook

Search



Has worked at MetroPCS Studied Modern Languages at Georgia State University Lives in Saint-Cloud, Centre, France Knows Colombian Spanish, American English, French From Cali, Colombia Born on April 5, 1989


Wall


Info

Photos (1,790)


Friends


Family


 Mother


 Father


Friends (985)


























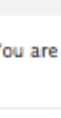

Education and Work

Employers	 MetroPCS with Angelica Garcia
College	 Georgia State University Class of 2011 · Modern Languages · International Economics
	 Université de Versailles-Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines Class of 2011
High School	 Collins Hill High School Class of 2007

Philosophy

Religious Views	You are the Truth, You are the Light, You are the Way
Political Views	Other
Favorite Quotations	"de rodillas ante Dios para estar de pie ante situaciones difíciles" "el q nada debe nada teme" "it is all about probabilities" ...See More

Arts and Entertainment

Music	 Reggae  Sin Bandera  Fonseca  Bonka
-------	---

Jasmine's Profile



Wall

Info

Photos

Notes

Friends

Friends (383)



Maria Gonzalez



Universidad de Los



Georgia State



Texas A&M



Georgia State



Georgia State



Tony Gonzalez



Georgia State



Georgia State



Iris Hernandez

Family



Mother

Iris Hernandez

Promotional Model/Brand Ambassador at Self Employed – Independent Contractor
 Studied Public Policy at Georgia State University
 Lives in Atlanta, Georgia
 Knows Spanish, English, French, Italian
 From Bogotá, Colombia
 Born on May 8



Education and Work

Employers



Self Employed – Independent Contractor with Jawaska Napper

Promotional Model/Brand Ambassador · Jan 2010 to present · Atlanta, Georgia

College



Georgia State University with Nayubel C Estrada and Gino Contreras

Class of 2011 · Public Policy · Biology

High School



Colegio Hijas de Cristo Rey

Class of 2002

Philosophy

Religious Views



Roman Catholic

A religion does not define an individual's personality, but it does provide a benchmark where his/her values are based upon. Religions rock!

Political Views



Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia

There should be no boundaries separating nations. All the global citizens should be more selfless and work together to protect mother earth for current and future generations. ~ME

Favorite Quotations

~Hunting is not a sport. In a sport, both sides should know they're in the game. ~Paul Rodriguez
 ~Knowledge is power!
 ~Don't waste your time on someone who isn't willing to waste their time on you...
 ~ If you stand for nothing you will fall for anything
 ~Crisis is opportunity
 ...See More

People Who Inspire Iris



Leonardo
Davinci



Mother
Nature



Jeff Corwin



Steve Irwin



Jesus

141

Lolo's Profile

facebook

Search

Wall

Info

Photos (1,041)

Notes

Friends

In a relationship with

Georgia State

Friends (665)

Georgia State

UGA

Georgia Tech

Georgia State

Georgia State

Georgia State

UGA

Georgia State

Georgia State

Diana Lopez

Reservations Sales Agent at AirTran Airways

Studied Psychology at Georgia State University

Lives in Atlanta, Georgia

In a relationship with Andres Torres

Knows Colombian Spanish, English

From Bogotá, Colombia

Born on November 5

Education and Work

Employers

AirTran Airways

Reservations Sales Agent · Mar 2009 to present · College Park, Georgia

Sales and costumer service.

Best Buy

Costumer Service Specialist · May 2010 to Nov 2010 · Atlanta

Cash handler

College

Georgia State University

Class of 2010 · Psychology

High School

Dublin High School

Class of 2007

Philosophy

Favorite Quotations

Physical variations in the human species have no meaning except the social ones that humans put on them- The American Anthropological Association

LA PUERTA MEJOR CERRADA...ES AQUELLA QUE PODEMOS DEJAR ABIERTA. Proverbio Chino.

Normal is the halfway point between what you want and what you can get. - Samantha Jones
...See More

Sports

Favorite Teams

Selección de fútbol de

Manchester United

142

Essa's Profile

facebook 


Search 



 Wall


 Info

 Photos (653)


 Notes

 Friends

Friends (591)


 Georgia State

 Flowery Branch Hig


 

 University of Florid

Vanessa Guarin
 Bilingual Reservations Agent at AirTran Airways  Studied Computer Information Systems at Georgia State University  Born on November 26**Education and Work**

Employers

**AirTran Airways**
Bilingual Reservations Agent · Nov 2007 to present

**General Electric Company** with Jonathan King
IMLP Intern · May 2010 to Dec 2010 · Atlanta, Georgia

College

**Georgia State University** with Mónica Garcia
Class of 2011 · Computer Information Systems

High School

**West Hall High School**
Class of 2007

Philosophy

Religious Views

**Catholic**

Favorite Quotations

I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me: Phil 4:13
A fool is quick-tempered, but a wise person stays calm when insulted.
<--Proverbs 12:16-->
...See More

Sports

Sports Vanessa Plays

**Running**

**Bowling**





Wall

Info

Photos (1,350)

Friends

Friends (1047)

-  **Maria Alvarado**
-  **Cristina Reyes**
-  **Ernesto Alvarez**
-  **Ricardo Ramirez**
-  **Gwinnett Technical**
-  **Liliana Rodriguez**
-  **Fran Colon**
-  **Tony Colon**
-  **Wendy Martinez**
-  **Luisa Rios**
-  **Georgia State**
-  **Sandra Darias**

CarlitoNOVA Santacoloma Ovella

📍 Sales Associate at MetroPCS 🎓 Studied Accounting at Georgia State University 🏠 Lives in Lawrenceville, Georgia 🗣️ Knows Spanglish, English, Spanish 🌐 From Manizales, Caldas 📅 Born on August 4, 1989







Education and Work

Employers



MetroPCS with Angelica Garcia and 2 others
 Sales Associate · Oct 2010 to present · Atlanta, Georgia



K'sandra Salon & Spa
 Receptionist · Aug 2006 to Dec 2010 · Lawrenceville, Georgia



Ernst & Young
 Intern · May 2010 to Aug 2010 · Atlanta, Georgia



Metro PCS
 Sales Associate · Dec 2009 to May 2010 · Atlanta, Georgia

College



Georgia State University
 Class of 2011 · Accounting

High School



Peachtree Ridge

Arts and Entertainment

Music


CarlitoNOVA


ATLANTA TECHNO


NICA



DJ EU "Ke Es La Ke"


24 Horas

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
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Isabella Wilson



Colleen Nelson



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Isabella Wilson



Georgia State

Lina Drada



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Lives in Dunwoody, Georgia


From Cali, Colombia

Born on May 17



Education and Work


Employers



Kennesaw State University

Admissions Counselor · Jun 2009 to present · Kennesaw, Georgia


College



Georgia State University


Spanish · Public Policy · International Economics

High School



Colegio Luis Horacio Gomez

Class of 2004



Chattahoochee High School

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