EXPLORING COMMUNICATION IN NETWORKED PUBLICS THROUGH A DRAMATURGICAL APPROACH

Atefeh BAZAZORDEH

School of Arts and Media

College of Arts and Social Sciences

University of Salford, Salford, UK

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Abstract

The use of social network sites (SNSs) in Iran, where people's freedom of expression is limited provides new opportunities of sociality to be explored. The introduction of SNSs and in particular Facebook provided an opportunity for Iranians to experience a different way of life online while living with the restrictions and control of authorities in offline settings.

Drawing on the perspectives of dramaturgy and networked publics this study examines how Iranians use Facebook and why people engage with it the way they do. It has undertaken a qualitative field study approach. The empirical data are sourced through semi-structured interviews and participant observations with 30 individuals. This study demonstrates that Iranians are using the SNSs and Facebook as an independent platform from offline life. This study found that Iranians are developing their own approaches and strategies to control privacy, arranging the privacy features of the Facebook to meet their needs and self-presentation goals. The constant engagement with overcoming Internet censorship and devising privacy control strategies to maintain privacy enabled this group of users to develop a particular set of digital skills. Facebook cannot be treated as an independent platform for communication in society, but as a technology that is shaped by people and their perceptions about privacy violation based on the impact of ongoing social and political forces in Iran.

1 INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study is concerned with the introduction of Social Network Sites (SNSs) into the everyday life of Iranians. This chapter argues that this research is justified by the need for a better exploration and explanation of self-presentation practices and the rationale behind the specific self-presentation methods adopted by different individuals. In this chapter, the research problem area is identified, and the scope of the study is introduced by outlining the main areas of the research and these areas are translated into a research question and sub-question, which provide the focus of the thesis. This chapter outlines the organisation of the study, the research design and implementation and finally, the structure of the thesis will be presented.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

To introduce the study and the problem it aims to address, a brief outline of the research problem, the state of SNSs and specifically Facebook's use among Iranians is provided. This section highlights the main areas of research that require further study. The overall issue of SNSs use among Iranians is discussed. More specifically, the areas are: the use of SNSs for self-presentation practice and the implications of privacy concerns on self-presentation practices; these are identified as being under-researched and hence are the focus of the work. Research questions relevant to these areas are outlined and anticipated contributions to knowledge are identified.

In countries where freedom of expression is limited, SNSs such as Facebook, Twitter, and blogs are providing a space with similar features to that of a public space in countries where one is able to express different ideas and opinions without restriction by the authorities and government. The attraction of the Internet for Iranians arose from its nature, as it had created accessible connections to multiple sources of information and it allowed them to have new perspectives and even to criticize the regime. Even more importantly, it permitted them to get connected to people that they were not connected with in physical space as the visible boundaries of the religious community meant this had been inaccessible to them in physical space; this included getting connected to the opposite sex (Najmabadi, 2005). Access to the Internet therefore opened a new door for

Iranians to explore different resources and a variety of information about Iran and the world, from social network sites to blogs and news websites. Through the Internet, people were experiencing a new world that was very different from what they had been able to experience in their physical spaces.

The Internet was introduced to the lives of the urban Iranians in early 2000s. It is known that Internet uptake in Iran was directly related to both the introduction of the 'Unicode system' which made typing in Farsi possible, and technological and economic affordability for most of the urban middle classes (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008). To control access to the Internet among people (religious and non-religious), the Iranian government implemented a sophisticated filtering system on the Internet to block all websites that could endanger the morality and the security of the Islamic Republic. A range of sites has been filtered, including the SNSs and in particular Facebook.

Since 1979, Iranian society has been living under a set of standards based on Islamic traditions. Control of women and their sexuality in the private and the public spheres is at the core of its standards (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008; Afshar, 1998). With the introduction of blogs to Iranians from 2001, some women bloggers have started the trend of virtual unveiling in cyberspace. Similarly, a 2014 unveiling campaign started on Facebook. By posting unveiled photos in physical spaces to a Facebook page, women are reclaiming their image from the Islamic Republic and Western media according to *The Guardian* (2014). It must be noted that in both cases (blogs and Facebook) real names and offline identities of these women were protected by pseudonyms, as there is a fear of privacy violation in both cases since it presents a disobeying of several socio-cultural boundaries imposed on them. These steps to become visible and speak out are valuable and are only available online through SNSs for the time being. Presentation of the self in a desired fashion online is a product of open public space in SNSs for Iranians and while individuals gradually start to adopt the social conventions of the online space in which they participate, it could encourage the request for similar desires in offline spaces, and hence for a positive change for societies like Iran.

During and after Iran's 2009 election, access to the SNSs became more vital as they were the only avenue for citizens to voice their views to the world, and report on the inhumanity of the regime's forces (Afshar, 2008). The restrictions (The Guardian, 2009) and banned access (BBC and British news agencies were denied access to Iran from 2009) of Western

reporters in Iran, highlights the crucial role of the SNSs in assisting Iranians to self-broadcast to the world the brutality of the powerful against the disempowered. Access to this kind of technology to broadcast information instantly, particularly information of a horrific nature, angered the regime at the time and many were identified, arrested and punished for the kind of citizen journalism they demonstrated through SNSs. (For example, see the case of Saeed Arabi "Iran moves forward with the death penalty over Facebook posts" and the case of Beheshti, BBC, 2013).

In this study, the focus is on self-presentation in the context of the SNS, Facebook, which is widely used by Iranians for various reasons such as communication with different groups of contacts (Shirazi, 2012). While research has examined the relationship between SNS use and self-presentation (Boyd, 2008; Marwick and Boyd, 2011), the focus here is more specifically on self-presentation on Facebook by Iranian users. Although it has been argued that self-presentation on SNSs (Boyd, 2008) is not necessarily the same as 'real-life' self-presentation (Goffman, 1959), nevertheless, as in real life, they are of different types depending on the ways the technology is used. A key feature of the structure of Facebook is that, in general, the profile information is available and visible to the whole Facebook community and a wider audience, but users have a degree of control over information visibility, which in turn depends on their goals in using Facebook – they will decide what to display or hide. This raises issues of how the process of self-presentation is managed and who is accepted as an audience and also the type of material Facebook users' display. This in turn relates to what information is considered to be private and public, and how this shapes self-presentation. At the same time, privacy in SNSs with specific attention to personal security is debates widely in the media and among scholars (Gross and Aquisti, 2005; Boyd and Ellison, 2007; Tufekci, 2008).

In Facebook, social contacts that are separate in the offline context co-exist as parts of the network. Individuals are faced with an audience consisting of both personal and professional connections; friends and family and unknown audience who can view the profile's public display of information. Therefore, Facebook is a technology with a networked audience (Boyd, 2010), and in the case of the participants in this study, it creates new communication opportunities, as well as new tensions and conflicts, in which they need to present a self accordingly to limit the possible harms that they might be subjected to as a result of using it. Thus, Facebook's technical design and nature raise a

number of privacy issues. On the one hand, information shared on Facebook is persistent, searchable, replaceable, and scalable (Boyd, 2010). On the other hand, creating and sharing information in SNSs is both easy and enjoyable (Ferneley and Helms, 2010), which results in large quantities of private and personal information being broadcast across the Internet whereas in physical spaces this act might never have taken place. To study the SNSs phenomenon, the offline and online experiences and actions of those involved need to be taken into account (Baym, 2010). For this purpose, an interpretive field study is undertaken with qualitative data sources from Iranian users of Facebook.

Facebook is user driven and the role of the user and their interaction with it cannot be underestimated (Boyd, 2008). The BBC reported on the popularity of Facebook among Iranians and the use of Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) for access purposes: "Now, Facebook is as much part and parcel of Iranian culture as Persian rugs – of course for those equipped with the means to circumvent the filtering of the site" (BBC, October 2013). Those who have no anti-filtering software, but wish to access a filtered website like Facebook, would be confronted with a message notifying them that the site they wished to access has been filtered for 'criminal' content. This research asks: given the risks of publishing and interaction on Facebook for Iranian users, how do they manage the public/private presentation of self on Facebook? It investigates in detail how particular groups of adults use Facebook to share personal information online. The research explores whether individuals construct their 'selves' in the same way in a digital context as they do in the 'real world'.

This investigation examines Facebook use from an individual's point of view, to explore (given the risks of publishing information on Facebook for Iranians) self-presentation practices and how privacy concerns shape this process. On Facebook, massive information sharing for self-presentation by users has attracted the attention of policy makers, governments and industries worldwide. Despite the impressive scope of this phenomenon, very little is understood about why Iranians are using Facebook in everyday life. Similarly, there are limited studies about Facebook use from different countries that explore how individuals present a self-online. Past research has highlighted interesting findings between self-presentation and user motivation and privacy patterns in Facebook (Lampe et al., 2006; Boyd and Marwick, 2011). Given that Facebook supports different

languages, it is appropriate to explore users from different countries and explain considerations that are arising through its increased use (more detail in Chapter Two).

This study employs Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach as a theoretical lens for exploring participants' self-presentations on Facebook. Goffman's primary interests were in how individuals present themselves when in the presence of others (Goffman, 1959). His focus was not on personal development or change, developmental issues or crises, or internal psychological structures. Instead, Goffman's concern was micro-level social interaction, how individuals present themselves during periods of co-location, and the particular self they display when they are in the presence of others. Goffman's dramaturgical approach was developed well before the availability of the Internet for everyday interactions, but it provides a valuable tool for understanding online interaction by comparing it to face-to-face interaction. The dramaturgical approach was developed through qualitative data sources and therefore his perspective provides in-depth tools for rich analysis of the way individuals present themselves, and why they choose to self-present in a particular way on Facebook.

According to Goffman, social interaction is a continuous exchange of information among individuals based on one's reflexive understanding of social situations and subjective and normative beliefs. Goffman's work incorporates aspects of a symbolic interactionist perspective (Schlenker, 1984). A symbolic interactionism explains that the meaning associated with the social situation is the way people define and interpret happenings and events. According to this tradition, everyday behaviours towards the interaction between people can help to explain society. One situation can be interpreted differently by different people depending on their past experiences and their current social situations, and therefore they might act differently. The dramaturgical approach emphasizes the qualitative analysis of the self and interaction with others. Goffman (1959) proposed that interaction is a 'performance' that takes place both in front of the audience and behind the scenes. This performance is shaped by the environment and the expectations of those watching and sometimes participating in the performance (Barnhart, 1994).

1.3 The Research Questions

Little has been known until now about Iranian Facebook users. This study delves in-depth into the complexities and process of self-presentation by individuals, through interpretive

field study. The study of self-presentation is best suited to the use of qualitative data sources for practical and ethical reasons, as it is important to understand individual self-presentation of their stories and self-reports.

The purpose of this qualitative field study is to understand the self-presentation of Iranian Facebook users. In order to explore how Iranians use Facebook for self-presentation practices it is important to explain how they use Facebook. The use of Facebook is associated with privacy concerns in Iran, as access to Facebook is filtered and there is much evidence of recriminations and harm to individuals as a result of using Facebook. In particular, this study also wanted to examine the factors related to privacy that influenced people against using the site extensively or shaped certain types of self-presentation on Facebook. More work is needed to understand how Facebook users navigate the tensions between privacy and self-presentation and how participating on Facebook is shaped by privacy concerns. Therefore, this study aimed to address the following research question:

- **How do Iranians use Facebook?**

Sub-Questions:

- **How would Iranians describe their self-presentation on Facebook?**
- **How do privacy concerns shape the self-presentation?**

1.4 Significance of the Study

It is important to discover how technologies such as SNS are being used in different national contexts. Academic work to date has mainly focused on usage patterns of American and European users. This study provides an original contribution to knowledge through its focus on the use of Facebook among Iranians. Arranging interviews and observations about the practices of Iranian Facebook users was more complicated than expected for two reasons: first, Facebook is filtered in Iran and it is accessible by using VPNs, which to date have been, and still are, illegal to use. Second, a number of participants withdrew from the study after recruitment and before the data gathering phase as a result of security and privacy concerns. Another group of participants, sometime after participation in the interview phase, requested their withdrawal from the study. However, Iran is nevertheless an interesting and important place to investigate self-presentation on

Facebook. Popular media present stories about how Facebook influenced and affected people's life and families in Iran after the 2009 elections. People were arrested for "provoking unrest in illegal websites" by the Iranian government (The Guardian, 2014; BBC, 2012, 2013). Iran's cyber police defined Facebook usage as a cyber-crime yet it was clear to the researcher that, anecdotally, there was a surge in Internet use by Iranians worthy of detailed academic investigation.

This study is not attempting to illuminate the entirety of the Iranian population of Internet users. Instead, this study explores the intersection of Iranian Facebook users and the mechanics of self-presentation on Facebook among a selected sample, whose members are based inside and outside Iran, respectively. The research aims to extend existing knowledge on the area of digital technologies and Internet studies and to contribute knowledge from which the practitioners and researchers focusing on the socially driven Internet use might benefit. This study's findings may well help to inform and support theories about the self in online spaces, but its real significance comes from providing insight into contemporary Iranian users' footprint on Facebook.

In recent years, SNSs, and Facebook in particular, have become embedded in our everyday lives, and are part of broad-based changes to how we engage in knowledge production, communication, and creative expression. Facebook has been taken up by a wide range of individuals from all walks of life in Iran. Facebook has escaped the boundaries of public and private in places like Iran, where the line is clear in the physical space through many rules such as dress code. Since 1979 Iranians have been subject to a high degree of systematic and institutional control from gender segregation (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008) and dress code in public spaces to the type of information from around the world that they have access to.

Although SNSs and in particular Facebook are filtered, its uptake is highly diverse among different ages and especially youth and a generation is growing up in an era where SNSs are part of the information gathering and learning about affairs outside Iran's walls, play, and social communication. The empowerment through Facebook, where individuals are gaining more visibility and voice (Morzov, 2009), is particularly important to Iranians.

Use of Facebook disrupts the existing set of power relations between the government and authorities in Iran and the people and interest in using Facebook by Iranians, despite the

fact that it is filtered and its use could create trouble for the user, is remarkable and curiosity provoking. Internet and in particular SNSs filtering in Iran highlights the acknowledgment of the power of this platform from those in position of power. SNSs enable their citizens to act as full social subjects despite their effort to control the private and public life, both online and offline; its use could encourage change both socially and politically.

It also places a responsibility on both policy makers and technology inventors in the societies and countries where this platform was invented to not only see Iranians (and other nations with Internet and Facebook censorship policies) as legitimate social and political actors whose requirements must be considered in making these platforms, but also to recognize that these platforms could be a potential innovator and driver towards change.

1.5 Research Objectives

Given the context of this study as previously outlined, this research focused on the interplay between self-presentation of individuals on Facebook and the privacy practices that shape this online engagement. The research sets out the following objectives:

- To explore Iranians' use of Facebook through individual personal accounts and self-presentation;
- To explain how self-presentation is shaped by privacy concerns;
- To provide an enriched conceptual account of self- presentation on Facebook by Iranian users;
- To explore dramaturgical lens in understanding of Facebook use among Iranians;
- To situate the participants' narratives in the context of the current literature.

The research objectives used for this research provided a meaningful entry into research participants' individual stories. The field study methodology was used to collect and analyse individuals' practices. In order to fully explore the first study objective and explain the second objective, the dramaturgical approach of Erving Goffman (1959) was adopted as a research lens to complete the analysis. His research approach provided a useful and original research lens for this study. The research objectives of this study allow it to be shaped by the research participants' inputs and stories. In doing so, it aims to

provide a faithful account of the research process that can potentially help individuals new to narrative inquiry to deal with the unpredictable nature of researching human subjects contained in a complex social space.

Boyd's (2010) notion is that "Networked publics are publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such, they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (Boyd, 2010a, p.39). In these publics, technology plays the role of connecting people and structuring people's engagement with the environment and shapes it particularly according to its features (Boyd, 2010). By employing the notion of 'networked publics' this study will demonstrate in the discussion of the findings how Facebook's technical features alongside the personal privacy strategies shapes the privacy control and consequently shapes the self-presentation and participants' engagements with their audience. The properties of networked publics provide a structured framework for exploring the logic of privacy concerns in social practices on Facebook.

In the discussion of findings in both Chapters Four and Five, 'networked publics' affordances will be employed to explain the mechanisms for controlling the spaces used by participants. Indeed, the key aim of this research has been to explore privacy concerns in both public and private spaces in offline settings and how these shape self-presentation in the online setting of Facebook. The research finds that use of Facebook does not necessarily make the everyday life of individuals visible. By using privacy strategies, evidence suggests users employ SNSs to empower themselves, by keeping the SNSs as a unique medium for self-presentation that exists in the everyday life reality of the individuals who use it.

As has been outlined previously, this study employed the work of Goffman (1959) as a theoretical lens, to consider the presentation of the everyday self in the technologically mediated environment of Facebook and alongside Boyd's (2010) notion of 'networked publics'. The dramaturgical approach has been used previously in the study of SNSs (Boyd 2008; Pearson 2009) and in the ethnographical study of Australian users in three different PhDs; theses by Goldie-Ryers (2011), Davison (2012) and Robards (2012). However, the current research study differs from these ethnographic studies of Australian users methodologically, as it employs an interpretive field study approach.

In order to explore and explain how privacy concerns shape the participants' self-presentation on Facebook, 30 individual in-depth interviews were conducted and, from the same sample, 10 participant observations were used. Chapter Three explains the research design and implementation process. The research is conducted in an interpretive fashion with the philosophical assumption that knowledge is constructed socially and the meaning associated with it is dependent on the context in which it is created (Walsham, 1995).

This study presents the voice of Iranians both living in Iran and outside of Iran (in the UK). The researcher had access to information gathered from two different geographical locations; this experience adds a rich insight into different experiences from individuals who have access to SNSs through filtering and without filtering restrictions, respectively. The recruitment of participants from two different geographical locations highlighted issues from the authorities' power and control over Internet filtering to individuals' practices to resist such control. The power and control of authorities emerged as an important theme of this research as it is also relevant in explaining how privacy concerns shape self-presentation. Goffman's interpretive framework provides relevant analysis tools that enable an in-depth explanation of this study.

This study identified that the use of Facebook among participants living in Iran and their personal information sharing still tends to be conservative. Self-censorship has found to be the preferred choice for controlling personal privacy. The use of default privacy settings was described effective when it is adjusted and managed for the specific audience. The process has been found to be challenging for Iranian users, as the boundaries between the desires to present and share information and controlling one's privacy are blurred. This attitude towards Facebook use has also raised the question of the presentation of the 'authentic self' or a self-censored one, and raises issues such as transparency, ethics and openness.

Facebook as a tool puts individuals at the centre of their activity like a self-governing system, as it interrupts the control of the authorities over the individuals' public display of self, where the usual policies, practices and assumptions don't exist. However, the fear of authorities has been described by participants as an ongoing facet. Therefore, as a result of privacy concerns this group of individuals adopts self-censorship to protect their safety

against possible surveillance threats. Moreover, Facebook disrupts established public versus private rules set by the state for individuals, thereby empowering Iranian users.

Participants' active presence on Facebook not only changes their approach to privacy, as they embrace the benefits of SNSs and Facebook in particular; it also informs their evolving sense of self as a result of their participation in online public spaces. Specifically, for some women who are forced to wear the veil in public spaces by the requirements of their country, Facebook provides a space not only to unveil their hair, but also unveil their lives, and to experience virtually those things that they could not experience in a physical space and to express the physical self freely.

1.6 The state of research in SNSs currently in Iran

In Iran, research on Internet usage and SNSs lags behind the wealth of research being done elsewhere around the world as a direct result of Internet and SNSs filtering since 2009. It has been reported that to control and minimize scholarly research on subjects such as SNSs, which are possible to undertake research outside of Iran, the government has adjusted research approval policies. However, the current study was started in 2009 and the researcher had no intention to change the research interest as she was motivated and interested to undertake the PhD process on the basis of her personal interest. Here is the direct quote from the ministry of education in Iran: "The director of student affairs at the Iranian Education Ministry announced on March 8 2011 that those studying abroad -- both students on government scholarships and those paying their own way -- are forbidden to submit a thesis related to Iran".[1]

1.7 Conceptual framework

This research will be centred around the main question: How do Iranians use Facebook? In addressing this question two sub- questions have emerged: How would Iranians describe their self-presentation on Facebook? How do privacy concerns shape the self-presentation?

[1] http://www.rferl.org/content/iran_students_abroad_decry_restriction/2334218.html. It was also reported in a Phd seminar in Manchester Bussiness school to inform Iraninan students and guide them on the possible changes to the reasecrh topics. (www.cdi.manchester.ac.uk/.../AmeripourEtAlSocialMediaPresentationMa.)

In responding to these questions the research should contribute to knowledge in a number of ways. Firstly, and related to the other two contributions, the research will add to the body of knowledge concerning the use of SNSs and in Iran. Secondly, it will add to the general body of knowledge of SNSs and online interactions. In doing this it will provide the rationale for and provides an in-depth understanding of the introduction of SNSs in the everyday life of Iranians. Thirdly, through exploring the individual's interpretation of the phenomenon under study it will add to our knowledge of how Facebook is conceptualised locally and how such conceptualisation changes with different self-presentation goals and privacy violation experience.

This sub-section of the thesis outlines the conceptual framework. It has been developed to illustrate diagrammatically the main themes being investigated and their connections. The conceptual framework is depicted in Figure 1: Conceptual framework: (Figure 1).At the top of the conceptual framework is the main research question. This leads to the sub-research questions in which the two themes of self-presentation and privacy in SNSs are examined from distinct perspectives of dramaturgy and networked publics. To illustrate the relationship between the two themes there are arrows at the lower part of the concept which provide the connections. For example, the self-presentation theme explains and informs the online interaction. Similarly, the privacy theme highlights limitations of interaction on Facebook and self-presentation; therefore it has an impact on the self-presentation. Both themes are connected and potentially shape users' interaction online.

The literature review discusses the relevant literature, proving a context for the research project. Guided by the initial purpose of this research, the research questions were identified informed by the suggestions in the literature to address where the more research is needed. Set of research questions focuses on the use of Facebook in the context of Iran. After finding an appropriate research methodology for this research project, and techniques associated with it were deployed for data collection in the field work. The themes identified in the literature review feed into the interview guide. The dramaturgical approach consists of a framework of analysis that allows me to foster a deeper understanding of the phenomenon presented by participants. It has assisted this research to explore the process that respondents use to make sense of and interpret the world around them. Boyd's thinking tools around 'networked publics' are introduced in the review of the literature help to provide the conceptual framework for the study. To tackle the research questions, the combination of strategies (Participants interviews and

Participants observations) were adopted. The qualitative approach (Milles and Huberman, 1994) was adopted for analysing the generated data. Dramaturgical approach as a research lens and networked publics key concepts were employed for the analysis of the overall findings of the research.

To study and explore Iranians use of Facebook, the literature in the area of Internet communication has been used, especially in the context of SNSs in Iran. As the study progressed, I was led by the data itself to seek further literature that would enlighten the social struggles reported by the research participants. This is when I found the work of the sociologist Erving Goffman, who provided a complementary research lens for this study. The findings are a study of individuals describing how Facebook transforms the way of communication and social practice in public spheres in Iran and how digital technologies for communication practice clash with what is required by the regulations in Iran for the communication of its citizens in public spheres.

To understand how Iranians use Facebook and to examine the interplay between the self-presentation and the privacy concerns of Facebook users this study has employed a qualitative field study. The research data in this thesis is drawn from two main sources, thirty in-depth interviews and participant observation explained in the research process section of Chapter 3 – Research design and implementation. The foundation of this study has been built on the belief that knowledge is a social construction and individuals make sense of situations and interpret the world around them depending on the contexts in which it is created. This study aims to present the voices of those who actively engage with Facebook, by exploring their motivations and frustrations and its relation to Iran's internet regulation in which context such practices take place. I analysed the relations of power present in their everyday lives.

The conflict between institutional and individual perspectives of Facebook use was evident and the power exercised by the institution emerged as an important theme of this research. To explain this phenomenon, I have used Goffman's work. His analysis framework provides relevant thinking tools (introduced in chapter two) that enable a thorough exploration of this research project

This research found that Facebook represents a tool and an environment where Iranians can exercise their creative and innovative spirit. The Facebook is a place where they find and meet with others who share similar values. It therefore informs their ways of living

by offering them insights to the alternative ways to which they have experienced within the controlled environment of Iranian social and cultural settings. The adopting of privacy strategies, the sharing of experiences from offline settings, and self-censored participation in open/public online spaces are activities that partially summarise the ways in which research participants do conduct their SNSs practice. Their desires to transfer their ideas from offline settings to the digital setting is often in conflict with the rules imposed by Iran's settings (social, cultural and political restrictions in offline public sphere transferred to the Facebook setting. These struggles are in contrast with the potential of the Facebook in creating a space for open and transparent interaction platform. This is due to the fact that the use of Facebook as part of the social communication and interaction process is not a regulated and accepted activity by Iranian authorities. Networked public's affordances are in contrast with user's actual privacy settings and this is in particular is harmful to the group of users in Iran. The voluntary disclosure of information based on the imagined privacy settings could lead to a much unexpected conflicts in Iran.

Conceptual Framework

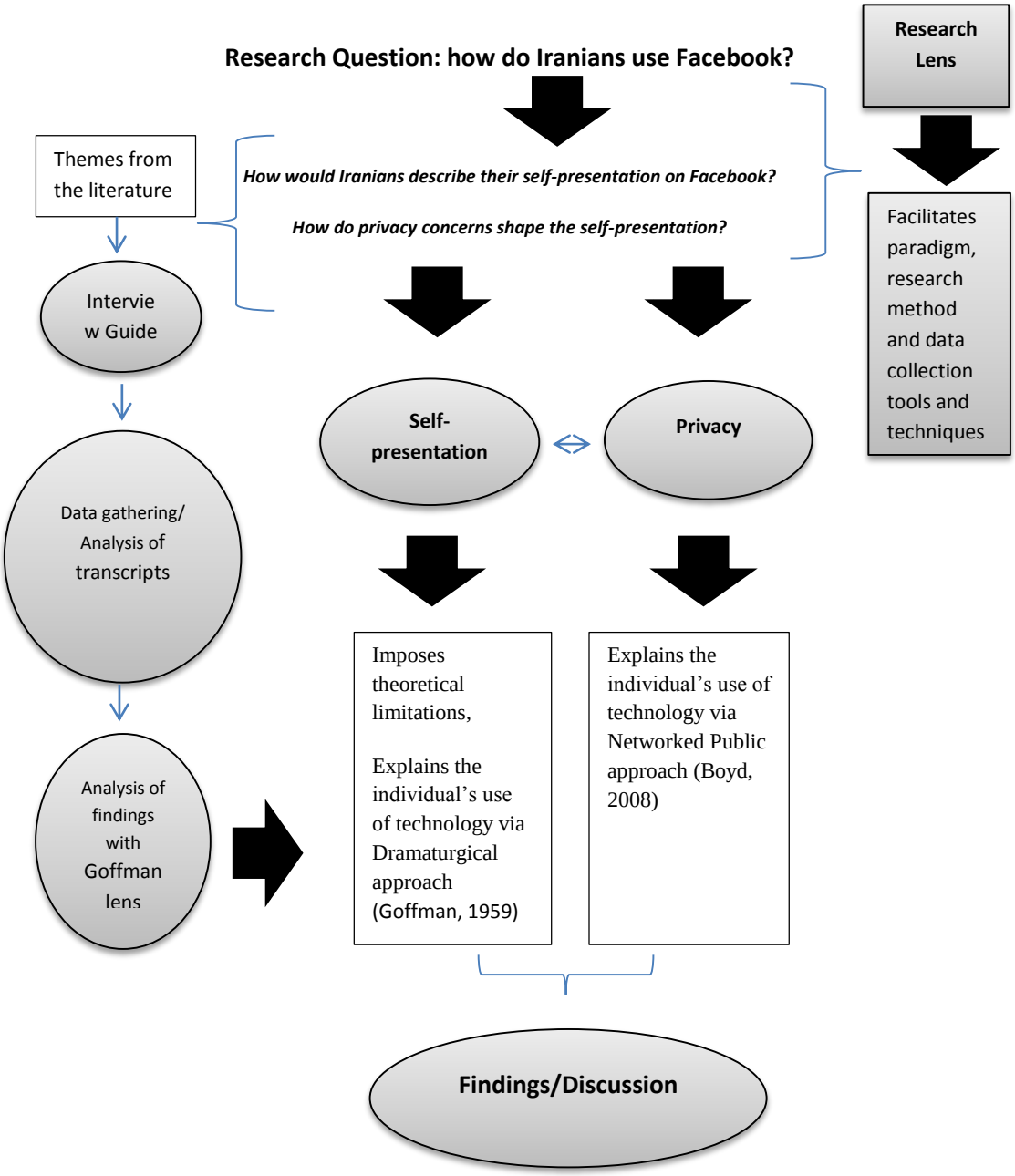

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

1.8 Thesis structure

This chapter has set the scene for the thesis by establishing the background and importance of the topic and highlighting the gap in the field of study. The overall structure of the study takes the form of six chapters, including this introductory chapter. The outline of the remaining chapters is given below.

Chapter Two: Literature review. The chapter aims to locate this research within the context of existing literature and to explore how individuals present a self in SNSs, the types of information they share online and the uses and issues that arise from sharing this information. This chapter is divided into two sections, with the first section exploring the evolution of interaction online and social network sites, reviews the literature on the Internet and online interaction and Facebook. The second section identifies the Internet and SNSs use in contemporary Iran. An analysis of the literature will then identify a number of factors that influence self-presentation and privacy-related issues in the context of Iran.

Chapter Three: Research design and implementation. This chapter describes and discusses the methods used in this investigation. The first section describes the various philosophical standpoints, research strategies and data collection techniques considered for this research. The second part moves on to describe in greater detail the implementation of the research process. The main themes discussed are the implementation of the research paradigm, data collection and data analysis. To satisfy the interpretive research paradigm adopted for this work, a description of the research settings, and the participants' backgrounds has been outlined. The participants were introduced in line with the ethical consent provided, which aimed to disguise their identity. The implementation of the interpretive field study research method is discussed, drawing on the management of its limitations, addressing research ethics and an outline of the data analysis. Ethical considerations were outlined in detail, drawing on the consent form and the ethical approval process as stipulated by the University of Salford Ethics Committee.

Chapter Four: Participant interview findings and discussion; reports on the findings and analysis of the interviews followed by discussions of each finding. Self-presentation strategies in SNSs are configured by both the technical and social norms.

Chapter Five: Participant observation findings and discussion. Reports on the findings and analysis of the participant observations followed by discussions. The intention of this phase of the research was to attempt to observe participants' privacy settings application and compare these observations to the findings from the interviews.

Chapter Six: The conclusion includes a summary and critique of the findings, a discussion of the implications of the findings for future research in this area and finally the areas for further research are identified.

2 Performance and Negotiation of Self Online

2.1 Introduction

This chapter provides the foundation for the research and aims to place this study in the context of what has already been published. By drawing on the previous work around the use of SNSs in everyday life, this chapter points out the strengths or possible weaknesses and bias in the previous work. It also points to the gaps that have not been previously addressed by research studies. It deals with the debates surrounding the public and private and understanding how SNSs blur the boundaries of traditional concepts. It was necessary to understand and identify key concepts before narrowing down the study of literature to the interplay between privacy within public spaces enabled by technology (Boyd, 2010) and the practice of self-presentation in these spaces. In doing so, this literature review starts with an historical perspective of the SNSs from the early 90s and then filters down to the studies of SNSs in recent years.

This chapter has two subsections. Part one provides the background to the study of SNSs and identifies the research's theoretical lens (Goffman, 1959) that the researcher will explore later during data gathering and data analysis. Building on Boyd (2010) regarding the Networked Publics' affordances for self-presentation and privacy control in the Facebook setting, I agree that individuals can shape technology and that the technology that individuals use also shapes their practice and approach. This literature review seeks to provide an understanding of Facebook as technology in the lives of its Iranian users.

This chapter defines the key concepts used in the research. It explores the changing and rather elusive concept of self, public and private with reference to online communication. It then examines the Goffmanian perspective and its application to studies on SNSs. In addition, this chapter describes different aspects of privacy issues in SNS (based on Boyd, 2007) and links them to potential strategies employed by users for privacy control when presenting a self on SNSs. I discuss how users might deal with self-presentation and privacy and which strategies can be used to achieve a balance between the two. It pays particular attention to the research that has been conducted on SNSs using Goffman's framework. This chapter will show a gap in the existing literature that this study aims to explore, in order to bridge the gap. Part two reviews the state of the Internet and specifically SNSs in the context of Iran. The rationale for this literature review is to

identify multiple perspectives of the same reality in order to understand how it provides both enjoyment and struggles in Facebook for self-presentation and privacy control by individuals. The review of the literature in this chapter aims to provide an overview of the importance of SNSs in the life of ordinary Iranians. It will enable other researchers, who are interested in undertaking a similar study, to understand the field and topic of this research and also to be able to evaluate the researcher's work within that field.

2.2 Early online communication research

Howard Rheingold, in his book entitled Virtual Communities: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier (1993), has emphasized interaction within Internet-based communities and the study has been used as an early reference point for studies on Internet use by the mainstream public. However, there is earlier evidence (Licklider and Taylor, 1968) from the Internet's founding documents that portrays online settings as communities on the Internet (Parks, 2010). Today, SNSs such as Facebook are still using the "community metaphor" that Rheingold (1993) identified as an important influence from offline settings to gather people in online settings. Similarly to what was identified in Rheingold (1993), SNSs still provide opportunities to build social and meaningful connections with other individuals. However, relationships on Facebook could be built on existing social ties from offline settings (Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe, 2008), unlike the online communities in Rheingold (1993), in which they were built solely around the topics and not individuals. These SNSs provide features that encourage a better conviviality and empathy from their users towards others in the network (Parks, 2010).

Research into online-based interaction has had a relatively short history up until now. Turkle (1995) studied Multi User Domains (MUDs) around the time Rheingold (1993) studied the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link – one of the Internet's earliest bulletin board systems), an early network community which allowed Internet users to carry out public conversations and email exchanges. Turkle (1995) and Rheingold (1993) have provided a unique perspective on users' interactions from the early days of the Internet. However, in contrast to Turkle (1995), in which she worried about anonymity and lack of authenticity among users, Rheingold (1993) has offered an alternative point of view. According to Rheingold (1993) authenticity existed in the communication on these networks. He has noted that, "People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our bodies behind" (Rheingold, 1993, p. 3).

The ability to alter or manipulate the presentation of self was used in early online interaction environments, but at the same time, as Goffman (1959) stated, it constantly occurs in the offline and face-to-face settings. Similarly, Rheingold (1995, p. 27) has argued that "You can be fooled about people in cyberspace, behind the cloak of words. But that can be said about telephones or face-to-face communication". Rheingold (1995) has further suggested that online identities could in fact be more 'true' to the self. He based his conclusions on the observed interactions of information seekers and providers. Information collectives in WELL were intended to aid people in their lives outside of the computer-mediated environment. Influenced by Turkle (1995), Rheingold (1995) moved on from WELL to consider MUDs, and has discussed the identity play occurring in these environments, expressing some similarities with Turkle's views. However, unlike Turkle's tendency to generalise, Rheingold's discussion of identity online was highly influenced by the platform and technology where the particular communication was taking place. In other words, it was becoming apparent that the technological platform's affordances mattered. Similarly, Rheingold (1993) was one of the first scholarly works that linked the formation of virtual communities on the Internet to the opportunity to re-shape the public sphere and has stated: "with the advent of virtual communities the means necessary to revitalise citizen based democracy are back in the hands of the public. We temporarily have access to a tool that could bring conviviality and understanding to our lives and might help revitalise the public sphere. The same tool, improperly controlled and wielded, could become an instrument of tyranny" (Rheingold, 1993, p. 14).

With the emergence of online dating websites from the late 1990s, research on online interactions shifted from studies of MUDs and WELL, where users experienced total anonymity, to online dating sites, where users selectively disclosed personal information. McLaughlin, Vitak and Crouse (2011) have demonstrated that in online dating websites users must present a level of authenticity to achieve the level of satisfaction from their use and participation: "Individuals recognised that too large of a mismatch between their online self-presentation and reality may lead to negative outcomes" (p. 2). At the time of the early studies in MUDs, the anonymity-enabled interactions on the Internet were a main concern (Turkle, 1995). Turkle (1997) has suggested that a new form of identity on the Internet was mobile and disassociated to the self, behind the screen. In Turkle (2011) however, unlike her early concerns over anonymous settings in MUDs, she has stated

concern over one's exaggerated performances within real-name online settings (Hogan, 2012).

2.2.1 Defining Social Network Sites

Social network sites (SNSs) have been defined by Ellison and Boyd (2013) by their key technical and social features as follows: "A social network site is a networked communication platform in which participants (1) have uniquely identifiable profiles that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-provided data; (2) can publicly articulate connections that can be viewed and traversed by others; and (3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with streams of user- generated content provided by their connections on the site" (p. 158).

The nature and terminology of these connections may vary from site to site. This thesis will use the term 'social network site' to describe this phenomenon; however, the term 'social networking sites' also appears in public discourse, and the two terms are often used interchangeably. Boyd and Ellison (2007) have further argued that "we chose not to employ the term 'networking' for two reasons: emphasis and scope. 'Networking' emphasizes relationship initiation, often between strangers. While networking is possible on these sites, it is not the primary practice on many of them, nor is it what differentiates them from other forms of computer-mediated communication" (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, p. 1).

The visibility of users contact list to others make SNSs unique compared to other forms of online social communication (Boyd and Ellison,2007). To start a membership, the user is asked to include profile details to create a profile page. Apart from a choice of username, password and a valid email address which are compulsory for membership, the rest of the information asked for in a variety of lists is not necessary for the account set up (Facebook Inc.). This includes a list of various personal details and content that the user has chosen to voluntarily present on his/her profile page. However, privacy settings allow users to control the visibility of their profile to others as well as whether or not their profile can appear in search engine results. While specific functionalities vary across SNSs, Boyd (2010a) has listed profiles, friend lists, public commenting tools, and stream-based updates as four types of features that play a salient role in defining SNSs. Profiles are unique pages and visible to the public where one can "type oneself into being" (Boyd

2007, p. 13). The visibility of a profile varies in different SNSs and according to user choice. Structural differences around the visibility of profiles and access are one of the primary ways that SNSs differ from each other (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). The user of SNSs is represented to others by their profiles (Gross and Acquisti, 2005).

2.2.2 From SixDegrees to Facebook

The first recognizable SNS launched in 1997 was SixDegrees.com with similarities to Facebook. SixDegrees combined the ability to create a profile page from previous online dating sites and the ability to search for people to affiliate with their high school or college from classmates.com. These two features allowed users to create profiles and list their Friends and later in 1998 users were able to view others' Friends lists (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Two reasons were identified by Ellison (2007) for the failure of the first SNS; the website was known to be ahead of its time (reported in Ellison (2007) based on the personal interview with its founder) and the users complained about the absence of friends and known people from offline settings for interactions. Boyd and Ellison (2007) have provided a detailed review of literature on SNSs from 1997-2007. In another study Kirkpatrick (2011) identified several factors that the founders of Facebook Inc. learned from previous early SNSs' rise and fall. For example, Facebook's control over its users was loose in comparison to Myspace and Friendster at the time; instead it offered users some control over their profiles by limiting the access to user profiles (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). On the other hand, unlike the early days of online interaction as in MUDS which was structured around topics, Facebook was structured around the people.

2.2.3 Facebook

The introduction of SNSs into people's lives has blurred the boundaries separating different social groups and contexts. These have become merged, with one unable to separate professional from personal, and public from private (Boyd, 2008; Baym and Boyd, 2012). Facebook is a site of web pages containing individual personal profiles created by users. It was created in 2004 mainly for students at Harvard University (Lampe, et al., 2006; Gross and Acquisti, 2005). The profile pages on Facebook are used for personal opinions and public or private commentary, and are linked to others within the site by 'friendships' or networks (Boyd, 2006).

In line with Boyd (2006, 2008), this study defines the term 'Friends' on Facebook for participants in this study as they are a mixture of known and unknown individuals from both online and offline settings gathered under the feature of the friend list on the Facebook profile page. Like other online SNSs (Donath and Boyd, 2004; Stutzman, 2006), Facebook provides a formatted web page profile in which each user can enter their personal information in response to questions about him- or herself. On Facebook, this may include their date of birth, e-mail address, physical address, hometown, hobbies, sexual orientation, relationship status, course schedule, favourite movies, music, books, quotations, online clubs, and a profile picture (or other graphic) chosen by the user. Within and across SNSs, users are allowed to search for other registered users and can send friendship requests (to get into each other's network) to other individuals. Boyd (2006) defines 'friendships' on Facebook, unlike friends in traditional settings, as ranging from acquaintances up to intimate relationships; these friends "provide context by offering users an imagined audience to guide behavioural norms" (Boyd and Ellison, 2007 p.220). The 'Friends' feature in Facebook represents the links between different profiles. Another main feature of a profile is a 'wall' where a profile owner's friend can leave messages to the owner. These messages can be viewed by other registered users based on user privacy settings. Early studies of SNS use among students show that between 80 and 90 per cent of all university students have a profile on one of the SNSs; this result is based on a factor that in the early days of Facebook, its designers aimed the site at the US student population (Gross and Acquisti, 2005; Lampe, et al., 2006; Stutzman, 2006). According to Facebook (Facebook Newsroom, 2014) there were 890 million daily active users on average in December 2014.

2.3 Previous Scholarship and SNSs

Scholarship concerning SNSs is emerging from diverse disciplinary and methodological traditions, and addresses a range of topics. The following section of this chapter is a review of the literature related to studies conducted on Facebook users and the issues surrounding it. The purpose of the literature review is to look into why individuals use Facebook and share information, as well as investigating privacy and self-presentation practices by individuals on Facebook. The next subsection will demonstrate the state of the Internet and SNS in Iran and will look at studies conducted specifically on Iranian

SNSs users. The review of the literature in this area showed that most research focuses on teenagers and young adults, and that little has been done to explore SNS users from different ethnic backgrounds.

2.3.1 Studies of Self-presentation

In online interaction, there are limited ways to observe one's self-presentation, as the disclosure of information is controllable by users and sometimes their authenticity is suspected (Joinson, 2008). In the initial stage of interactions, people spend considerable effort making and managing impressions (Goffman, 1959). In SNSs, users can organise the information disclosure and enhance their self-image by strategically selecting how and what to present to the receiver (Walther et al., 2008). Similarly, it has been reported that Facebook users have manipulated their friend by portraying a different perception about their lives, even with those whom they have met in offline settings (Ellison, et al., 2006).

One of the early studies on self-presentation in SNSs was by Donath and Boyd (2004) who studied 'Friendster', one of the early SNSs that encouraged its users to use their real name, unlike previous SNSs in which being anonymous was acceptable. Friendster allowed users to negotiate presentations of self publicly and connect with others. Donath and Boyd (2004) have noted that individuals display their Friend list and social connections publicly in SNSs as they aim to provide proof that the information they share about themselves is real, but they do this to varying degrees. On the same subject, Marwick (2005) have examined users on three different SNSs and concluded that they had complex strategies for presenting profiles in an 'authentic' form, while Boyd (2008), in the study of Facebook and MySpace, concluded that profiles could never be 'real' even after the real-name policies, and there are 'fakesters' in all SNSs.

Audience in SNSs (known as 'Friends' in the case of Friendster and Facebook) to one's profile have been identified as an important factor for participation and also presentation of self in the sites. Early examples are from Friendster users who admitted that creating and managing a particular image for one's friends is a reason for choosing to connect with particular friends (Donath and Boyd, 2004). In defining "Friends" Boyd (2006) has suggested that friends in the SNSs act as an imagined audience in shaping a guideline for one's self-presentation. Detailed examination of the testimonial function of Friendster as

a self-presentation device by Boyd and Heer (2006) showed that the attractiveness of one's friends affects others' view of one's self-presented image in a positive manner.

In a study of social capital and its relationship to control among Facebook users, Ellison et al., (2007) found that Facebook led to a significant increase in well-being and self-esteem for shy people. They have also repeated the survey study among those with less shy natures and concluded that this effect was not found in people who were less shy. They have argued that this is because Facebook provides users with better control over how they manage their self-presentation. However, it is not clear in their methodology how they have identified and distinguished the less shy from the shy individuals in their study.

When considering self-presentation in online settings one might question whether, when the aim is a performance to a targeted audience, privacy concerns are only valid about an unknown audience. Baym (2010) has suggested that the display of personal information and ideas of self or performance as Goffman refers to it, show others that "we are real, available, and that we like them, as does our willingness to entertain them" (p. 62). In conducting a performance, based on the play metaphor, Facebook is a form of stage in which public display of performance is expected to be displayed, but Facebook's affordances allow the performer to adjust the performance to the target audience, and here, we could see the creation of different stages based on privacy concerns. The performer (profile owner) is known to be responsible for the displayed performance, but as has been argued in Boyd (2010), network publics' dynamics and affordances permit other users (in the case of Facebook, people from the friend list) to shape the performance by voluntarily contributing to the performance.

Friends in the Facebook Friend list contribute to one's self-presentation practices. Joinson et al., (2011) have argued that contributions of others to one's profile page happen through wall posts, Likes, comments, and the tagging of photos or location. Ellison et al., (2007) have identified that disclosure and access to information on Facebook build and bridge social capital, but at the same time disclosure of private and personal information which leads to negative results as in Facebook one's friends usually range from family and social contacts to professional and work contacts. Boyd (2008) has argued that the range of different people in one's profile is a form of social convergence created by the dynamics of the mediated publics: "social convergence occurs when disparate social

contexts are collapsed into one" (p. 6). The existence of this group of people (one's friends, family, co-workers and other causal social contacts) under one Facebook 'Friend list' could contribute to one's Facebook profile with a variety of content, such as comments and sharing information and hence contribute to shaping one's self online Boyd (2010b) has referred to the former situation as context collapse. Ellison et al., (2011) have suggested three strategies that Facebook users might employ to manage and control different audience' existence in one profile; these are friending behaviours, disclosures on the site, and managing audience via privacy settings. Similarly, Pew Internet Research (2012) reported that by comparing their previous study's results in which Facebook users reported the difficulties about managing privacy settings, this report highlighted the growing attempts to configure privacy controls to manage different audience and privacy in general among American users.

Authorities and government agencies' use of Facebook information for prosecuting individuals is well documented in the popular press. Legally, the information on Facebook visible to the public is considered as public information and therefore has been used for and against its users. For example Ward (2007) have reported on the use of Facebook content by criminal defence solicitors to research witnesses in the American context. In Iran, the use of Facebook content by law enforcement agencies has been used to incriminate individuals for a variety of reasons and there have been cases of imprisonment and the death penalty reported through Western-based news agencies as a result of Facebook use (for example BBC 2012, BBC 2014 and The Guardian).

2.3.2 Content Shared on Facebook

Before the advent of Facebook, Putnam (2001) had warned that Internet applications have the potential to create gaps in social capital, transform the role of weak ties, and shift the boundaries between public and private. The uptake of Facebook has led to new directions for Internet research. DiMaggio et al., (2004) has identified that research on Internet topics and its users focused on digital divides, access information, jobs and economic mobility, education, access to government services, and similar benefits. To better understand the mechanisms of Internet participation and its effects on everyday life, Malcolm Parks (2010), in his study of communities in SNSs, has identified the main reasons for participating on SNSs as being for social activities, entertainment, self-status seeking and information seeking, collaboration and community development.

The use and gratification theory has been explored by Joinson (2008) to understand how people use Facebook , and it concluded that the most participants use it for keeping aware of contacts, sharing photos, organising groups, and participating in applications. Uses and gratifications theory is a psychological communication perspective that examines how individuals use mass media. This theory also has been employed by Papacharissi and Mendelson (2010) to study how motives and social-psychological traits affect Facebook use, and social capital generated. Their findings have supported Park et al., (2009) who stated that the major uses and gratification factors of SNSs users are socialising, entertainment, self-status seeking, and information seeking. In particular, these studies draw on findings from previous studies of Facebook that find the main reason for participation in the website is to learn more about the known individuals from offline settings (Lampe et al., 2006). A follow-up study found that Facebook use is strongly connected to bridging social capital, in particular within weak ties and among individuals with low self-esteem (Ellison et al., 2007).

According to Madden and Smith (2010), based on American PEW research, 33% of Internet users (and 50% of young adults) have shared personal details such as their date of birth. Similarly, Gray and Christiansen (2009) have stated that teenagers were more likely to protect their address and phone number, as they consider this information to be private and personal. However, health, emotional or physical-related information is freely discussed with no concern for privacy threats. However, in her earlier study, Boyd (2008) has reported that American teenagers display and hide information based on their understanding of who is an outsider (one's parents were described as an outsider and not trustable online) or who is trustable. In summary above studies have indicated that individuals elect to use SNSs and display content , it unites the importance of social ties, generates and maintains social capital, and encourages frequent social connections.

2.3.3 SNSs studies from different countries

Research on the popularity of SNSs and specifically Facebook among different nations has been scant in comparison to English speaking countries. Utz and Kramer (2009) have highlighted the popularity of Orkut among Brazilians, CyWorld in South Korea and MeinVZ in Germany. It is relevant to mention that Iranians were among the early users of Orkut and it was the most used SNS in Iran before Facebook dominated, however, it was filtered and its use declined (Freedom House, 2010).

Use and acceptance of SNSs and specifically Facebook in different countries and cultures has not been largely investigated. There are a number of studies into specific countries and their use of SNSs. Most studies on the impact of cultural differences on different online activities are based on Hofstede's (1986) culture dimensions framework. A number of researchers have studied cross-cultural comparisons of online communications in various topics, using Hofstede's cultural dimensions as theoretical explanations. For example, Kang and Mastin (2008) employed two of Hofstede's cultural dimensions – power distance and individualism/collectivism effect – in their analysis of public relations websites in 44 countries.

Fragoso (2006) studied the cultural differences between Brazilian and American users of SNS Orkut (Orkut is an SNS launched by Google in 2004). Although originally an English-only platform, Orkut was quickly adopted by Brazilian users (by 2005, over 75% of Orkut users were Brazilians). Similarly, Kim and Yun's (2007) work on Cyworld.com and Korean users investigated how users manage both interpersonal relationships and self-regulations on the website. The study found that the website developers' integration of Korean cultural beliefs and activities into online communication and behaviour is the reason for the website's massive uptake. Papacharissi (2009) has stated that Cyworld is a good reference point for SNSs developers to understand and implement users' demands in different countries because its design adopts that countries national norms and social expectations.

2.3.4 Connecting Online and Offline with Social Network Sites

Traditionally, self-presentation in offline settings does not require privacy, in fact privacy, depending on how it is preserved, could be a barrier to a desired presentation of self. SNSs provide a platform for self-presentation based on personal goals to the public or to the selected audience or to both simultaneously.

Offline and online connections in SNSs have been highlighted in a number of studies. According to Ellison et al., (2007) maintaining existing offline relationships on Facebook is what differentiates SNSs from earlier forms of public CMC. Similarly, Steinfield et al.,(2007) have reported that Facebook is used to maintain and solidify existing offline relationships rather than for meeting new people and building new relationships. These relationships may be weak ties but typically there is some common offline element among

individuals who befriend one another, such as being in the same study group. Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2006) found that Facebook users engage in 'searching' for people with whom they have an offline connection more than they 'browse' for complete strangers to meet. In particular, Pew research found that 91% of US teens use SNSs to connect with friends from offline settings (Lenhart and Madden, 2007).

SNSs have been described as the bridge between online and offline social networks (Ellison and Boyd, 2013). To understand the Facebook use pattern by students in Midwestern University, Lampe et al., (2007) conducted a survey study and found that students mostly used Facebook for social purposes, to stay in touch with their friends from high school as well as to form connections with people they had met offline such as in their student halls or in class. Similarly, Ellison et al., (2007) found that students used Facebook to maintain or bolster existing offline connections rather than to form new relationships. Such ties appear to have some positive benefits and greater Facebook use was associated with more perceived social capital. That study have identified three kinds of perceived social capital emerging from Facebook usage; bridging social capital, bonding social capital and maintaining social capital.

According to the study conducted by Steinfield et al., (2008), participants' responses as to whom they add to their SNSs networks, as well as analysis of their top online and offline networks, suggest that people use SNSs to connect with people from their offline lives. However, individuals rank the level of importance of friends in different contexts in different ways. Moreover, Ellison, et al. (2007) and Hargittai and Hinnant (2008) found that age, gender and nationality play a significant role in SNS choice and participation.

The publishing of unauthorised information about one's profile through tagging has been explored by Tufikchi (2007) and Boyd (2007). Similarly, Chen et al., (2009) have indicated that while individuals may be conscious of their own reputation based on what they share online, their privacy can be threatened by the disclosure of unauthorised information by their peers. Das and Jyoti (2011) drew attention to Facebook profiles that have been hacked. In 2010, an online security consultant posted online the personal details of 100 million Facebook users. This illustrated the vulnerability of profile information and Facebook privacy protection against unexpected and unknown audience.

The development and maintenance of reputation online have been explored by Bagheri and Ghorbani (2006). They have reported that it is based on context and that online information can easily be taken out of context. There are genuine issues and consequences to consider around sharing information. Madden and Smith (2010) have argued that 44% of SNS users have searched for information about someone whose services or advice they seek in a professional capacity, which consequently illustrates the importance of an individual's online reputation. Brown and Vaughn (2011) also highlighted the importance of maintaining one's reputation online.

According to Boyd (2010), images on SNSs available to the public are considered 'public domain' and can be retrieved by third parties without the author's permission. This factor of information availability can be harmful to one's reputation. For example, Neda Agha-Soltan's Facebook pictures were used by the world media and press (BBC 2009, BBC 2012) to report on her death during the 2009 Iranian election protests. Her name is often misquoted as 'Neda Soltani' in world media reporting on the incident; Neda Soltani is a different woman, whose Facebook profile photo was mistakenly published in many articles about the incident. She tried in vain to remove her photo from the Internet but ultimately had to flee from Iran and live the rest of her life under the protection of the German government.

High levels of self-disclosure are linked to a high level of offline–online integration on Facebook (Ellison et al., 2007). Similarly, Tufekci (2008) has conducted a survey study of students' attitudes on Facebook and concluded that they tend to use their real names and engage in high levels of self-disclosure on Facebook. Facebook allows users to 'tag' individuals with photographs uploaded to the site, which means identifying the person in the photograph and thereby linking the picture to that person's profile, and thus creating a searchable digital trail of a person's social activity.

Tufekci and Spence (2007) has reported that almost half of their sample identified had experienced unwanted pictures of themselves posted by other people, linked to their own profile. In this way, Facebook provides a bridge from these postings to the profile owner. They have concluded that this design feature makes social network technologies such as Facebook unique. This is in line with Boyd (2007), who presents persistence as one of the main characteristics of SNSs. Similarly, Uski and Lampinen (2014) have argued that even if people have the right to decide whether or not to share something on their profiles,

they often have limited control over the content others disclose about them on SNSs. Facebook's design allows individuals to participate in "manual sharing of purposely user-generated content" (Uski and Lampinen, 2014, p. 2). This can increase problems due to individuals' limitations of control over how self-presentation (Goffman, 1959) is reconfigured in the context of Facebook.

Similarly, Ellison et al., (2007) found that more than 90% of Facebook users employ Facebook to stay in touch with or stay up to date with the shared content and activities of their acquaintances. In another major study Tufekci and Spence (2007) found that more than half of the Facebook users reported that they have discovered important information about their acquaintances' lives from their Facebook profile. The studies above demonstrated that individuals have limited control over the disclosure of personal information. Self-presentation and privacy have collided in the study of Uski and Lampinen (2014) and similarly in Tufekci and Spence (2007) where, Facebook users discover a side of their ' Facebook Friend' life that they have no access to an offline setting, either for physical contact limitations or because that individual "mask" part of their selves from others. Here Facebook's persistence affordance feeds information to others that they will not have access to in other circumstances.

2.3.5 Privacy and SNSs

Research into privacy has a long history. More recently attention has focused on the provision of SNSs and how it is generating new connections between public and private life. Boyd (2008) drew on an extensive range of sources to assess SNSs use in an ethnographical study and suggested that SNSs provide a platform in which users' personal information is more easily accessible and its affordances and dynamics could alter people's sense of public and private from offline social norms. Nissenbaum, in her book Privacy in context , has stated that many current privacy policies which are built on the distinction between public and private fail to provide a concrete clarification, hence, the definitions will continue to evolve.

The concept of privacy must be defined based on the structure of that society as privacy is shaped by the norms and expectations of a society (Nissenbaum, 2011). To address privacy in the online environment, however, she proposes that "Answering questions about privacy online, like those about privacy in general, requires us to prescribe suitable,

or appropriate, constraints on the flow of personal information. The challenge of privacy online is not that the venue is distinct and different, or that privacy requirements are distinct and different, but that mediated by the Net leads to disruptions in the capture, analysis, and dissemination of information as we act, interact, and transact online. Protecting privacy is a matter of assuring appropriate flows of personal information, whether online or offline, and disruptions in information flow, enabled by information technologies and digital media, can be equally disturbing, whether online or off" (Nissenbaum, 2011, pp. 39-45). For Boyd (2008), privacy has this meaning: "privacy is not an inalienable right – it is a privilege that must be protected socially and structurally in order to exist" (Boyd, 2008, p. 19).

The studies presented thus far provide evidence that the concept and applications of privacy are subjective. Therefore, as the generalizability of the privacy concept in SNSs is not the aim of this study, this study sets out to explore privacy in Facebook from the meaning and concerns each participant associates with it in order to capture participants' interpretation of it and draw on their concerns, as it aims to understand how they use Facebook as a platform.

Boyd (2010) defined privacy control in SNSs as one's ability to control and manage different social contexts which are collapsing in these spaces. However, users' control in these platforms is co-dependent on the websites' affordances and features and the introduction of a new feature could be disruptive to privacy, as users need to adapt and learn about new features and their affordances. On the same subject Boyd (2012) asserted that Facebook's introduction of the 'News Feed' feature to users' timeline disrupted users' sense of control. Similarly, Stutzman (2006) has argued that the privacy settings offered by SNSs do not provide users with the degree of control they need to manage posts from friends with different attitude towards privacy. Having defined what is meant by privacy in Facebook, I will now move on to discuss the previous studies shaped around privacy in SNSs.

Talking at the Crunchie Awards in San Francisco, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg said that the rise of SNSs reflected changing attitudes among ordinary people towards privacy in the last few years and privacy was no longer a "social norm". According to his presentation, reported in the Guardian, "People have really gotten comfortable not only sharing more information and different kinds, but more openly and with more people"

(The Guardian, 2010). Zuckerberg and Facebook Inc.'s position on privacy is based on the idea that openness and transparency is encouraging integrity and has positive outcomes for the society.

Boyd (2010) has argued that young people, just like adults, are concerned about privacy. In an interview, Boyd told the Guardian that "Kids have always cared about privacy, it's just that their notions of privacy look very different than adult notions. As adults, by and large, we think of the home as a very private space … for young people it's not a private space. They have no control over who comes in and out of their room, or who comes in and out of their house. As a result, the online world feels more private because it feels like it has more control" (The Guardian, 2010). Similarly, Solove (2007) claimed that people are concerned about privacy violation in SNSs and they search for ways to negotiate privacy concerns and at the same time benefit from social capital opportunities that SNSs environment provide. He stated: "Rarely can we completely conceal information about our lives, but that doesn't mean that we don't expect to limit its accessibility, ensure that it stays within a particular social circle, or exercise some degree of control over it" (Solove, 2007, p. 200). However, Boyd (2010) looks at the roots of SNSs' technological affordances and suggests that the characteristics of networked publics are to blame for privacy concerns and privacy violations around shared information."

In one of the earliest studies on Facebook and privacy, Gross and Acquisti (2006) have investigated the Facebook usage of students in American universities and found that users are not very knowledgeable about the website's privacy settings or who can view their profile. Similarly, Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2006) have surveyed university students and found that on Facebook, people search for those they know from offline settings. However, they did not include professors, employers and university administrators in their Facebook network. Many early studies of Facebook relied on survey results and information gathered from information visible to the public on user profiles for their empirical data (for example, see Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield, 2006, 2007, 2008). DiMicco and Millen (2007) have studied students' Facebook use after graduation and in transition to employment and found that users removed all information from profiles or created a new profile for their life after graduating, as they fear SNSs expose their private information to unknown audience, in this case their employers. Similarly, Dwyer et al.,

(2007) have used the trust between the user and SNSs provider as an indipendednt variable and have argued that privacy within SNSs is undefined and often not expected by users because of the lack of trust in the service provider. Users' perception about their information on SNSs is that there is always potential to use it in social data mining, concluding that SNSs need clear policies and data protection mechanisms.

It has been often stated by users of Facebook that they are concerned about privacy, yet people display and share a variety of information (Utz and Krämer, 2009). This subsection draws on previous literature on privacy and SNSs. More importantly, it also aims to identify the literature on privacy and self-presentation. Use of privacy settings to address privacy concerns by users has been identified in a few studies (Livingstone, 2008; Boyd, 2008; Lewis et al., 2008; Lenhart, 2009). In a study of teens and their use of SNSs Livingstone (2008) argued that teens struggle with the right implementation of privacy settings of the SNS for two reasons; limited Internet skills and literacy, and the complicated or poorly designed privacy settings in SNSs. However, in contrast to Livingstone, Boyd (2008) has demonstrated that American teens are capable of applying privacy settings according to their needs; she suggested that if they display information it is a purposeful decision and they have a self-presentation goal behind it. Similarly, Lewis et al., (2008) have suggested that the privacy setting application is based on personal decisions, for example, reports on mainstream media in Western countries about privacy violation from SNSs and the use of one's personal data for commercial purposes have influenced people's decisions towards more restrictive privacy settings. In line with Lewis et al., (2008), Lenhart (2009), in a study of American SNSs users have reported that 60% of adult SNS users had changed the default settings towards more private and restricted information visibility.

2.4 Boundaries of Public and Private in SNSs

Researchers have investigated the potential threats to privacy associated with SNSs. Gross and Acquisti (2005) conducted one of the first academic studies of privacy and SNSs and studied American students. They outlined the potential threats to privacy contained in the personal information included on the site by students, such as the potential ability to reconstruct users' social security numbers using information often found in profiles, such as their hometown and date of birth. Acquisti and Gross (2006), in their extended study of privacy in SNSs, argue that there is often a divide between

students' desire to protect privacy and their desires and behaviour towards building new connections. Likewise, Stutzman's (2006) survey of Facebook users notes that users are not aware of the public nature of the Internet.

Boyd (2012) has argued that dimensions of privacy are changing with the blurred boundaries between offline and online in SNSs and questions the shift of boundaries between public and private. It is not clear in many countries whether or not Facebook profiles are considered public or private in legal systems. SNSs are challenging legal conceptions of privacy (Ellison, 2007). Ellison has used examples of police and government authorities and questioned their right to access content posted on Facebook without a warrant. Similarly, Nissenbaum (2011) has stated that the activities and interactions through SNSs cannot be clearly categorized as either public or private within this dichotomy. As previously stated in her comprehensive examination of privacy and what is considered private in the society, Helen Nissenbaum (2004) has suggested that for legal protections, privacy must be approached through the lens of contextual integrity.

2.4.1 From Publics to Networked Publics

Social Network Sites are types of "Networked Publics" as per Boyd's (2010) definition that they are "publics that are restructured by networked technologies. As such, they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined collective that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice. Networked publics serve many of the same functions as other types of publics – they allow people to gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes and they help people connect with a world beyond their close friends and family. While networked publics share much in common with other types of publics, the ways in which technology structures them introduces distinct affordances that shape how people engage with these environments. The properties of bits – as distinct from atoms – introduce new possibilities for interaction. As a result, new dynamics emerge that shape participation" (p.39).

The mediation of technology for interaction among its participants brings on the affordances of that technology, hence the emergence of new possibilities for interaction and empowerment of the participants in these environments is based on the employment of these evidences and the design and architecture of the networked publics. In her comprehensive analysis of networked publics, Boyd (2010) was able to show that the

architecture in online spaces, similar to the architecture of buildings in offline settings, is based on the purpose of its design and its use encourages or discourages possibilities for interactions among its occupants. In SNSs the process and shape of interactions are dependent on the affordances of that network (Boyd and Byme, 2012). Participants' interactions in these publics are shaped by the evidences of those environments towards empowering the users and not based on their use and consumption (Papacharissi, 2009). Furthermore, Boyd (2010) has argued that these affordances work towards empowering the users and not to dictate their use and consumption of the technology based on its designers' intentions. However, later, this study will argue that participants are benefiting from the technologies' affordances but at the same time they are concerned about the way it controls their interactions and leads them through a certain path of interaction dictated by its affordances, so that they perform a type of resistance towards that power, in the shape of self-censorship. It happens because (as is shown in Chapter 4 and 5) they do not trust the affordances of the technology working towards their privacy protection, as they believe these affordances lead towards openness and publicness, something that participants in this study fear and resist. By identifying the affordances of networked publics, Boyd drawn attention to the architecture of these environments to highlight the common dynamics that emerge from this evidence and the way it aims to shape the interaction among participants in these spaces.

Next I will draw on Boyd (2010) to map out the affordances and dynamics of networked publics; later I will underline the definitions of 'public' and 'private' adopted in this study and what constitutes public and private in contemporary Iran, in order to lay a foundation for Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 and for a better understanding of how the affordances of Facebook, as a type of networked public, restructure the traditional public and private distinction for Iranians, hence leading to the self-presentation strategies.

For Boyd (2010), networked publics' affordances refers to their ability to shape publics and the ability of their users to negotiate them. These affordances are generally assumed to play a role in assumptions people make when engaging in social life, however, it is not clear to what extent they determine social practices in networked publics (Boyd, 2010). She has further explained that it is as though these affordances reshape publics both directly and through the practices that people develop to account for them; thereby, it is important for participants in these environments to manage their power in controlling

information and shaping interactions. According to Boyd (2010, p. 40), information on networked publics consists of "bits" and "its properties makes it easier to store, distribute, and search. Four affordances that emerge out of the properties of bits play a significant role in configuring networked publics: Persistence, Replicability, Scalability and Searchability: content in networked publics can be accessed through search".

To determine the effects of 'Network Publics' affordances, Boyd (2010) introduced new dynamics of 'Networked Publics' as affordances shape this dynamics. To draw on dynamics that play a role in shaping networked publics, she has employed Meyrowitz's (1985) definitions as he articulated that broadcast medium's properties change the social environment by influencing people and their behaviour. Boyd (2010) has classified core dynamics that shape networked publics as invisible audience, collapsed contexts and the blurring of public and private: without control over context, public and private become meaningless binaries, are scaled in new ways, and are difficult to maintain as distinct" (Boyd 2010, p.49).

2.5 Defining public and private

Privacy has been defined by many scholars at different times. According to Westin (1967, p. 7) "privacy has been defined as "the claim of individuals, groups, or institutions determine for themselves when, how and to what extent information about them is communicated to others". Similarly, Rossler (2004) has suggested that people value privacy as it provides them with the ability to control their personal information and visibility.

The 'public' and 'private' dichotomy according to Weintraub (1997) "has been one of the grand dichotomies of Western thought and a point of departure for different types of analysis" (Weintraub, 1997, p. 1). Similarly, Bailey (2000) has defined this dichotomy as "fundamental ordering categories in everyday life where the private constitutes a realm of personal intimacy, of relationships which are to be defended from public scrutiny or interference, of values which cannot or should not be experienced in public life" (Bailey, 2000, p. 384). In her comprehensive examination of privacy and what is considered private in society, Helen Nissenbaum (2004) has suggested that for legal protection, privacy must be approached through the lens of contextual integrity.

The term ‘public’ is defined in the literature, both as an adjective and as a noun. Habermas (1992) defines it as an adjective in opposition to ‘private’. As a noun, Livingstone (2005) has defined it as a “collection of people who may not all know each other, but share a common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding the collective interest” (Livingstone, 2005, p. 9). In relation to locations, it refers to places accessible to everyone in the society (Habermas, 1992), and in relation to a writer’s and performer’s audience, it refers to the strangers who are unknown but the audience for the performance or written content (Boyd, 2007).

Public and private boundaries have been blurred since the existence of SNSs in the lives of people; it has become more complicated to differentiate when a SNSs user is someone who is interested in sharing something that is seemingly private or when technology complicates people’s ability to manage privacy and visibility control (Boyd, 2010). By drawing on the concept of privacy, Grimmelmann (2009) has argued that SNSs blur the boundaries and the social dynamics of privacy by challenging one’s control over personal information accessible to others. However, in contrast, Boyd (2010) has argued that the use of SNSs and networked publics in general, is not a sign that people are not interested in controlling their privacy.

In part of her major study, Livingstone (2005) identified that “the public is quite similar to the audience, as both refer to a group bounded by a shared text, whether that is a world view or a performance” (p. 9). She further proposed a mediating domain – ‘civic culture’, or ‘civil society’– perhaps positioned between ‘the public’ and ‘the audience’ (Livingstone, 2005, p. 9). Furthermore, for the public in online settings, Boyd (2007) has suggested that in “SNSs and online settings, it is accepted to collapse the concept of public and the audience, or vice versa, as both mediated public and the audience are affecting the interaction environment. In another study, she has suggested that the architecture of the SNSs enables a distinction to be made between public and private, where ‘public’ means that a profile is visible to anyone and ‘private’ means that profile content is visible to ‘Friends-only’. However, the profile’s existence, once it is created by users, is visible for public viewing” (Boyd, 2010, p.46).

The relationship and distinction between public and private in SNSs has been widely investigated (Boyd, 2010; Ford, 2011; Jurgenson and Rey, 2012). Historical debates on public and private, and also the current understanding of it, have been integrated by Ford

(2011). She has argued that SNSs users experience different levels of privacy depending on the methods of control they employ in the visibility of their information. She has proposed a continuum model instead of a simple dichotomy. In contrast to Ford (2011), Jurgenson and Rey (2012) have argued that privacy and publicity are interconnected and stated that "publicity and privacy do not always come at the expense of one another but, at times, can be mutually reinforcing" (p. 191). In Iran, where private activities online have public consequences for its citizens (BBC, 2012; BBC, 2014) and where private activity on SNSs is questioned and punished for its potential contribution to the public sphere, no realm of public or private life is free from official regimes of governance (Livingstone, 2005). In SNSs, privacy is about the individual's ability to control or deny access to personal information (Solove, 2007). Privacy covers a variety of different issues and a single definition that effectively incorporates all the subtle differences that privacy evokes has so far proven impossible (McCullagh, 2008).

Although extensive research has been carried out on privacy in SNSs, no single study exists which adequately addresses how people can regain a sense of control in a society that is connected through SNSs (Boyd, 2010). This study aims to explore the participant's self-presentation on Facebook and to understand how self-presentation on Facebook is shaped and managed by negotiating and controlling the blurred lines of what is considered as private and public in real life.

While a variety of definitions of the term 'privacy' have been suggested, this study will use the definition suggested by Rossler (2004) who has described it as one's ability to control personal information's availability and visibility to others in any given context. At the same time, it must be stressed that Boyd's (2010) argument about the public and private distinction is valid for this study. She has stated that "public and private are certainly in flux, it is unlikely that privacy will simply be disregarded" (p. 54).

2.5.1 Online Studies and Public/Private Distinctions

Numerous scholars have addressed the dichotomisation of public and private within SNSs (Boyd 2007, 2008, 2010; Dwyer et al., 2007; Lange, 2007; Marwick, 2008; Stefanone and Jang, 2008; Stutzman and Hartzog, 2009; Hargittai, 2010). All of the above studies concur that individuals seem to be displaying much of their private lives in the public realm of the Internet. It has been argued that as Facebook provides space for different

content to be shared, from one's photo of a night out with a new partner, to workplace related information, the line between public and private is less clear (Boyd, 2008).

Lange (2007) applied the idea of a public-private dichotomy to YouTube users, arguing that different types of behaviours exist, which she termed 'publicly private' and 'privately public' respectively. Similarly, Williams and Williams (2005) have used the idea of a dichotomy to study the private sphere in relation to mobile telephones. Lange (2007) argued that it is difficult to define public or private without referring to the other. In contrast Boyd (2007) has stated that what it means to be public or private is quickly changing through the disruption of everyday life by SNSs. Boyd (2006) has named the SNSs as another form of public space. Similarly, Benkler (2006) has argued that SNSs created a new model of public for communication that is characteristically more democratic because of its public nature. He argued that SNSs empower their users in authoritarian regimes, in comparison to old media in which citizens had no strong voice as these spaces are controlled by the regimes.

2.6 Self-Presentation and Dramaturgical approach

This study draws on set of definitions to understand and explore further concepts, therefore, next sub-sections aims to draw on these concepts. Self-presentation in this study was defined according to Goffman's (1959) view as it was compared to a theatrical performance. In relation to any presentation, there is an actor, a performance, setting, viewer(s), front stage, and backstage. What is important in this definition is to see how actors perform before people on the front stage, where they are separated by the setting. Goffman used the word 'performance' to refer to "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observation" (p. 22). In relation to the importance of other people – or the audience in the Goffmanian approach – and self-presentation, Leary et al., (1995) wrote that "because people's outcomes in life depend, in part, on others' perceptions and evaluation of them, people sometimes try to convey impressions that will help them to obtain valued goals; as a result, they often monitor and attempt to control the impressions they are making". Zarghooni (2007) has noted that "the self-presenters are the same people as before, but now they have got SNSs, a new self-presentation tool and a new arena for social interaction" (p. 6). Therefore, it seems that the two main concepts of this study, public self and private self, are quite interconnected. Facebook provides a situation in

which one can inspect, edit, and revise the presentation of one's self for particular purposes.

2.6.1 Introducing the Goffman for research lens

In the analysis of the interviews, the work of Erving Goffman is evident. Goffman's thinking tools are used as a research lens for the stage of the research analysis and discussion of this research. This was necessary as the study began to focus not just on the individual, but also showed issues such as Internet filtering that constrained and enabled ways of self-presentation.

In the section below, Goffman's dramaturgical lens and some of the key concepts are introduced as they are adopted for this study. Goffman's theory was chosen for this research because it provides a useful framework to study, Facebook use among Iranins Iran. His sociology is an attempt to understand and represent practice within the constraints of the social world.Goffman's frequent use of the study in the Shetland islands in the book: the presentation of self in everyday life, in which he observed and qualitatively analysed the institutional social life. He portrayed that people in institutions avoid being completely controlled and pressured by the institution and this social structure is responsible for preparing a basis for the emergence of particular types of selves. His sociological viewpoint could provide a lens to understand self-presentation strategies among Iranians' Facebook use, and how the institutional rules for self-presentation in public spaces shapes Iranian Facebook use and self-presentation strategies. Goffman's dramaturgical concepts used for this study provide a framework for analysis of the phenomenon under focus. It provides new ways on the understanding of self-presentation in online spaces.

Goffman's sociology covers a wide range of areas of knowledge and practice. His interests included philosophy, anthropology, communication, and culture production. The key concepts in his dramaturgical approach have become research lenses through which social phenomena can be understood and explained. In this section I present the concepts of actor, audience, performance, team and the stage. Although Goffman centred most of his work and research on North American and western society, the ideas he put forward can be carefully 'appropriated' to other societies, provided they are justified in the contexts to which they are applied.

2.6.2 Dramaturgical principles

The dramaturgical approach explains a set of principles central to Goffman's sociological perspective. Goffman believes the characteristic of social interaction consists of five key components: the actor, the performance, the audience, the team, and the stage. In detailing his perspective, he offers the following: "The perspective employed in this report is that of the theatrical performance; the principles derived are dramaturgical ones. I shall consider the way in which the individual in ordinary work situations presents himself and his activity to others, the ways in which he guides and controls the impression they form of him, and the kinds of things he may and may not do while sustaining his performance before them" (1959: Preface).

Actor

Goffman's (1959) observational analysis, the dramaturgical approach, defines the individual as an actor, who demonstrates the mode of presentation and its meaning in the broader social context where social interactions as dramaturgical performances shaped by environment and audience, aimed at creating specific impressions according to the desired purpose of the actor. The result is a 'face', staging a self-presentation that varies according to the social situation. The actor is the central component which gives rise to the four other components of Goffman's dramaturgical framework: performance, audience, team and the stage.

Goffman borrows a term from Ichheiser (1949, p6-7) to describe the actor as " the individual will have to act so that he intentionally or unintentionally expresses himself, and the others will in turn have to be impressed in some way by him" (in Goffman 1959, p. 14). According to this statement every person in a social situation can become a performer. The actor is primarily concerned with appropriately projecting a definition of him/herself and of the instructional situation, given their current role. The interaction in physical space transforms the actor into a performer. Physical interaction is defined as 'the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's action when in one another's immediate physical presence' (Goffman1959, p. 15).

Performance

The performance is defined as "all the activity of a given participant on a given occasion which serves to influence in any way any of the other participants" (Goffman, 1959, p.15). Performance is the presentation of selected information from the individuals to the audience. Performance consist of "the expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expressions that he gives, and the expressions that he gives off. The first involves verbal symbols or their or their susbstitudes which he uses admittedly and solely to convey the information that he and the others are known to attach to these symbols. This is communicated in the traditional and a narrow sense. The second involves the wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way". (Goffman 1959, P. 14) As such, performance does not exist on its own; it is shaped by the social environments in which it connects to the individual for existence and performance, and to other individuals in the form of audience and teams. Similarly, the performance is modified to blend into the environment (stage) that it takes place (Goffman, 1959).

It is a set of performer (individual) and shared environment with others that justifies individual performances and actions. In this sense, performance can be seen as an agent for manipulation depending on the context and individual characters. Goffman points out that the reason for individuals' performance is to guide and control the impressions that others form of them: "The performer will seek to influence the definition of him or herself, mobilising his or her activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey" (Goffman, 1959, p. 4). Goffman further suggests that "a performance may be cynical, whereby the individual, in full awareness, attempts to foster a specific impression, but it may be sincere whereby the individual is taken in by his own act and is convinced that the impression of reality which he states is the real reality or, more typically it will lie someplace in-between"(p. 17). Indeed, it is in the presence of others in the performance environment that shapes individuals' performance. In this sense, performance is also influenced by the environment to which individuals belong as well as the different types of audience and their existence in viewing performance.

Audience

Goffman talks about three types of audience: “the audience consists of the others, the observers, the co-participants or those who contribute’ to the performance” (Goffman, 1959, p. 15). Interestingly Goffman identifies the imagined audience as “the individual may privately maintain standards of behaviour which he does not personally believe in, maintaining these standards because of a lively belief that an unseen audience is present who will punish deviations from these standards. In other words, an individual may be his own audience or may imagine an audience to be present” (p. 87). Nevertheless, Goffman states that the presence of an audience inevitably informs and influences the actor to stage a performance and the type of audience will command a particular performance to be employed by the actor.

Actors segregate the audience: “the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting” (Goffman, 1959, p. 49). While a performer may, on occasion, attempt to transcend such segregations, such attempts are typically limited as “the audience can see a great saving of time and emotional energy in the right to treat the performer at occupational face value, as if the performer was all and only what his uniform claimed him to be” (Goffman, 1959, p. 49). In other words, it is often the audience that stabilises a performance, leading the actor to share limited information.

Team

Goffman explores the nature of group dynamics through a discussion of ‘teams’ and the relationship between performance and audience he stated: “I will use the term ‘performance team’ or, in short, ‘team’ to refer to any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine. The concept of team allows us to think of performances that are given by one or more than one performer”. (Goffman 1959, p.85-86). The obligation of each individual to maintain his or her front in order to promote team performance reduces the possibility of dissent. While the unifying elements of the team are often shallower and less complete than the requirements of performance, the individual actor feels a strong pressure to conform to the desired front in the presence of the audience, as deviance destroys the credibility of the entire performance. In this way, a clear division is made between team and audience. Nevertheless, the position the individual occupies within the team is visible in their front and backstage presentation, “the impression

fostered by the presentation is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course, indicating a more truthful type of performance" (p. 112).

Stage

Goffman describes the division between team performance and audience in terms of 'region', defined as "any place that is bounded to some degree by barriers to perception" (Goffman, 1959, p. 109). "Two kinds of bounded regions have been considered: front regions where a particular performance is or may be in progress, and back regions where action occurs that is related to the performance but inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the performance" (Goffman, P.135).

Extending the dramaturgical analysis, he divides region, also referred to as 'stage', into 'front' and 'back'. The front stage refers to the "place where the performance is given" (ibid, p. 110). The backstage, in contrast, is a place relative to the front, where 'the performer can relax; he can drop his front, speaking his lines, and step out of character' (ibid., p. 112). A stage is a socially constructed place and is therefore reliant on the current audience, so while we often come to define one place as the back and one as the front, 'there are many regions which function at one time and in one sense as a front region and at another time in another sense as a back region' (ibid., p. 128). So while one stage may be the front for one performance, it may also be the back for another. Goffman also considers one last region, consisting of all areas not included in the front or the back, called 'the outside' (ibid., p. 134-135). The maintenance of this 'two-face world' (ibid., p. 132) is reliant primarily upon a front. The concept of the 'front' helps to understand the individual on the basis of projected character traits that have normative meanings. The actor, in order to present a compelling front, is forced to both fill the duties of the social role and communicate the activities and characteristics of the role to other people in a consistent manner. This 'process is predicated upon the activities of impression management, the control or lack of control and communication of information through the performance' (Goffman, 1959, p.35).

Goffman believed that this dramaturgical framework could be applied to any social context and meant his work to 'serve as a sort of handbook detailing one sociological perspective from which social life can be studied' (Preface). As already established here, this study will be using his theoretical lens. Goffman (1959) uses the term front to refer

to ‘that part of the individual’s performance, which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance’ (Goffman, 1959, p. 22). Therefore, in relation to the front itself, it would be interesting to see what kind of front individuals perform in SNSs, and if they admit to presenting such a front in SNSs in the first place.

Goffman provides what he calls a “dramaturgical” account of social interaction as a kind of theatrical performance. Individuals seek to create impressions on others that will enable them to achieve their goals, and they may join or collude with others to create collaborative performances in doing so (Hogan,2010). Goffman’s dramaturgical approach is used for this study and as a research lens it offers to understanding the social phenomenon under study. Goffman attempted to overcome the dichotomy of practice and theory when he studied institutional society in the Shetland islands through an observational lens, using individuals’ experiences and his own observations. Like Goffman, in which he used the institutional setting and the society in which this institution exists, this study uses offline and online settings as the combination of both worlds provides a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study. The contribution of Goffman’s theory to this research is two-part: (1) it provides a set of thinking tools which can be used as a conceptual framework for analysis of the phenomenon under study; (2) it provides a renewed perspective on self-presentation and privacy in the case of Iran, since the Goffmanian lens does not seem to have been used extensively to address this issue.

2.6.3 Dramaturgical approach adopted in previous research

The dramaturgical approach has been applied to SNSs analysis, as SNSs create a society-like environment, centred around the users, providing the user with a stage for performance (in Goffman’s terms) for self-presentation. A number of scholars have applied and recommended the dramaturgical approach as a useful theoretical foil for understanding online behaviour (Boyd, 2007; Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Mendelson and Papacharissi, 2010; Tufekci, 2008; Schroeder, 2002). This section will review the extensive use of Goffman’s dramaturgical approach within SNS studies.

A number of authors have drawn on Goffman's work in respect of self-presentation. Donath (1998) has employed Goffman's theory to study human signalling in mediated and face-to-face communication. Schroeder (2002) has undertaken Goffman's dramaturgy quite literally in his analysis of virtual worlds. Similarly, Boyd (2006 and 2007) has used Goffman to ground SNSs activity as networked identity performance. Hewitt and Forte (2006) have used Goffman to explain identity production on Facebook and conflict arising from the use of multiple fronts. Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis (2008) have drawn on Goffman's front-stage/backstage distinction for deriving research questions about privacy. Tufekci (2008) has built her research on Facebook presentation around Goffman's approach, alongside Dunbar's social brain hypothesis. Quan-Haase and Collins (2008) used impression management to discuss the art of creating status messages that signal availability. Mendelson and Papacharissi (2010) have demonstrated that the pictures on SNSs conform to traditional notions of impression management. These articles mainly stressed how individuals employ dramaturgical techniques to present an idealised self. Marwick and Boyd (2012) have used Goffman (1959) to investigate how content producers navigate "imagined audience" on Twitter. Boyd was one of the few theorists to utilise Goffman's framework in a largely unaltered manner, in spite of the interaction differences. Boyd (2007) has emphasised these differences in one of the early articles defining SNSs and pointed out that "social network sites are a type of networked public with four properties that are not typically present in face-to-face public life; persistence, searchability, replicability, and invisible audience. These properties fundamentally alter social dynamics, complicating the ways in which people interact" (Boyd, 2007, p. 2). Additionally, the dramaturgical framework has been utilised to study self-performances in SNSs (Livingstone, 2005; Pearson, 2009), blogs (Hodkinson and Lincoln, 2008; Reed, 2005), dating sites (Ellison, et al., 2006) and personal homepages (Papacharissi, 2002; Schau and Gilly, 2003). Boyd (2007) conducted an ethnographical study of American youth, applying a dramaturgical framework. Similarly, Davison (2012), following Boyd (2007), conducted an ethnographical study of Australian users of SNSs, drawing on the dramaturgical approach as a theoretical framework to justify users' self-presentation attitudes.

There have been a number of criticisms questioning the application of Goffman's dramaturgical framework to online communication and interaction studies; mainly due to the 'immediate physical presence' factor in his theory (Lemert, 1997; Rettie, 2009;

Hogan, 2010; Aspling, 2011). Critics used Goffman's methodology to criticise its unsuitability to mediated environments. Goffman's methodology is based on the nature of the social interaction in physical settings on which the dramaturgical framework primarily concentrates. For example, Aspling (2011) has claimed that "the difference between face-to-face and mediated interaction" is the main constraint for Goffman's applicability to explain online interactions (p. 44). Another study has argued that Goffman is "better suited for synchronous mediums" as it uses the back stage (Rettie, 2009, p. 425); some utilise aspects of Goffman's framework, but consider other aspects to be of limited applicability, and others have replaced his framework entirely (Hogan, 2010). It has been argued that Goffman is a product of the television age and his theories were set in the context of the advent of television (Lemert, 1997) and their application to the interactions of the Internet is not insightful. In contrast to Lemert, Wellman, et al. (1996) have maintained that the same concepts from the offline social network literature of the physical world are equally valid for those networks built and/or maintained in the digital world.

Miller (1995), in the early days of online communication research, highlighted Goffman's applicability to online settings and explained that Goffman's approach employs the depth of everyday interaction and the problem of establishing and maintaining an acceptable self remains the same as in an offline setting, but with the difference that there is a range of expressive resources available within the online setting. SNSs provides users with a range of multimedia features to adopt and customise according to the meaning they want to attach and present in their profiles. Miller and Arnold (2009) in their research titled 'Identity in cyberspace' studied online interaction from Goffman's approach by seeing offline interactions as backstage preparation areas for interactions that occur online. However, later Arundale (2010) argued that Goffman's work is now outdated and should be modified as at the time the common technological tool for interaction among individuals, apart from face-to-face interaction, was the telephone.

Jenkins (2011) drew on Miller (1995), in the study titled 'The 21st century interaction order' and asserted that the richness of computer-mediated communication tools bridges the gap between face-to-face and online interaction, and therefore Goffman's approach is not outdated. Scholars (Laughey, 2007; Jacobsen, 2010) have endorsed the timelessness and usefulness of Goffman's dramaturgical theory and its application to digital settings.

Similarly, Bullingham and Vasconcelos (2013) explored and applied Goffman's work in the analysis of the presentation of self and interactions online with reference to 'weblogs' and 'second life' users. Their conclusions confirmed Goffman's framework's applicability and usefulness for understanding interaction and presentation of self in the online world.

Technology is involved in Goffman's dramaturgical approach (Pinch, 2010; Baker, 2012). By drawing on the concept of technology and different examples from Goffman (for example the door was essential in his analysis as a component of mediation and defined the different stages on this basis), Pinch (2010) has been able to show that Goffman's approach in analysis of physical interactions was often mediated by everyday invisible technologies. He has argued that "the application of Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical framework to mediated interaction should not, therefore, be abandoned on this premise and indeed the reason Goffman is so evocative in this area is that the new media technologies have become part and parcel of everyday interaction" (Pinch, 2010, p. 409). In analysing performance Goffman wrote about such things as "the merry-go-round" (Pinch, 2010, p. 410) which is a reference to technology affordances (Baker, 2012). In fact, "communication and interaction are often materially mediated in Goffman's interaction examples and while the opposite is frequently assumed, we should avoid the trap of declaring that online interaction is special because it is the technologically mediated interaction" (Pinch, 2010, p. 412).

2.6.4 Dramaturgical approach and current study

Goffman's methodology may lead to a better understanding of online social interactions and the ways in which they differ from everyday interactions due to the mediation of the technological platform. Goffman's analysis can be applied to an individual's social interactions in SNSs. Based on SNSs definition (Ellison and Boyd, 2013), SNSs create a community around the user based on the "Friend list" as an audience and profile page for initial space for community meetings or, in Goffman's terms, offering the actor a stage for performance. On Facebook, the front stage consists of the profile page, which displays personal information about the user, the wall postings, the friend network and the photos. The backstage is reserved for the actor only; in Facebook, this is the information available only for the actor after logging in, such as the inbox for private messages and chat feature.

The relationship between Facebook as backstage and privacy has been investigated in Lewis et al., (2008) and Tufekci (2008). In the survey-based study of American students' attitudes towards privacy on Facebook, Tufekci used elements of Goffman to draw on her results. Similarly, Lewis et al., (2008) used the notion of Facebook as the backstage to explore privacy behaviours; they have concluded that display of information by individuals with private and public accounts is dependent on both social influences and personal incentives.

The studies presented thus far provide evidence that this study will benefit from the application of Goffman's dramaturgical approach to study how Iranians use Facebook. This study considers two issues emerging from the dramaturgical approach: the use of Facebook in which the front stage is connected to offline public and private space, hence, highlighting the limitations for Iranian users. Therefore, in order to explore the presentation of self in Facebook, it is necessary to explore privacy on Facebook as it is relevant to the current state of Facebook use and its filtering in Iran.

2.7 The Audience in the SNS context

The popularity of SNSs has also given individuals the opportunity to interact with larger and more diverse audience than were formerly physically available in the offline settings (Boyd, 2010). Similarly, SNSs' characteristics, in combination with their popularity, challenge the average person's understanding of communication, audience, and public (Livingstone, 2005). In face-to-face settings, people typically interact with small and visible audience, relying more on who they can see or hear in the actual audience, rather than their imagination.

In one of the early researches on perception of audience on SNSs, Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2006) has asked student users to identify their audience on Facebook. They have identified three main reasons for audience awareness by users: the introduction of the 'news feed' feature, popular press stories about Facebook benefits and cost, and some university guidance about Facebook use and concluded that audience awareness results in less discloser or personal information and more dissatisfaction from Facebook use. Similarly, the dramaturgical approach suggests that individuals, similar to actors in the play metaphor, tailor self-presentation based on context and audience. Everyday performance consists of an individual's choice in the selection of content to display to the

audience (Goffman, 1959). Furthermore, "successful performers are aware of the impression they foster. Thus, taste statements need to be crafted so as to stand up to the scrutiny of an audience that is able to glean unofficially by close observation" (Goffman, 1959, p. 144).

Individuals present a self differently according to who they are talking to and where the conversation takes place: in offline settings, for example, norms and expectations in a job interview differ from meeting friends in the bar. The same goes for online settings (Marwick and Boyd, 2011). Studies of identity presentation on SNSs and online dating sites have demonstrated that profile owners are concentrating on their audience (Boyd, 2006; Ellison, et al., 2006). This section examines the current literature on the audience in SNSs. Previous studies on the audience have analysed self-conscious identity performances to audience in SNSs (Boyd, 2007; Livingstone, 2005), audience in dating sites (Ellison et al., 2007) and audience in personal homepages (Papacharissi, 2002).

2.7.1 Multiple Audience in SNSs

Many SNSs merge multiple audience into one, which Boyd (2008) has referred to as "Invisible Audience". The existence of different people in one's network and the unknown audience that are not visible to the user creates tension on SNSs (Boyd, 2008). The invisible audience in the case of participants in this study could be harmful as the use of Facebook is filtered in Iran, specifically it is related to government and its Internet police FATA. However, SNSs offer privacy settings, which users are able to change according to their needs. Marwick (2005) has argued that privacy settings alone do not address the control of visibility to an invisible audience, for example on Facebook, users are 'Friends' with a range of people whom they may know from different offline settings, such as acquaintances, co-workers, and family. SNSs' users adopt a variety of tactics, such as using multiple accounts, pseudonyms, and nicknames, and creating 'fakesters' to obscure their real profile from groups of people that they do not normally bring together (Marwick, 2005). Similarly, users negotiate multiple, overlapping audience by strategically concealing information, or using the grouping feature to group different audience to target uploaded content to each specific audience (Lampinen, 2014). On sites like Facebook with a large audience, in order to present both an authentic self and an interesting personality, users may only post things that they believe their 'Friends' on Facebook will find non-offensive, which Marwick (2005) has referred to as the "lowest-

common-denominator effect". Similarly, Hogan (2010) has argued that the "lowest-common-denominator effect" is a main strategy adopted by Facebook users to exhibit the desired self to the audience, and performances are subject to continual observation and self-monitoring. However, Marwick and Boyd (2011) observed Twitter users and concluded that they were using two techniques to navigate the tensions among different audience: self-censorship and balance. People decided to avoid discussing certain topics, while others balanced disclosure of personal information strategically and displayed authenticity.

In SNSs, similar to physical spaces, one is surrounded with different audience depending on the situation and environment one is in. Individuals interact and adapt their behaviour based on who is in the actual audience (Goffman, 1959). Audience in SNSs are categorised into three types: known, unknown and imagined (Boyd and Heer, 2006; Marwick and Boyd, 2011; Litt, 2013).

There are no physical eyes of the audience tracking a performer in SNSs, and no physical traces of communicators. These "Unknown Audience" (Boyd and Heer, 2006) are represented by their profiles, shaped by the architectures of their chosen online platforms (Pearson, 2009). Characteristics of the networked audience have been described by Marwick and Boyd (2011, p. 17) as follows: "the networked audience combines a person's social connections, it is both potentially public and personal. The networked audience includes random, unknown individuals, it has a presumption of personal authenticity and connection". During SNSs use, individuals imagine their audience; without being able to know their audience, they create content for an imagined audience, but there is an actual audience on the other side of the screen reacting and judging the performance (Marwick and Boyd, 2011).

In defining the characteristics of an imagined audience, Litt (2013, p. 334) has stated that "the imagined audience is not a stable construct and varies from people envisioning specific individuals, communities of people to the masses or a heterogeneous collection of individuals". Additionally, Litt (2013) has argued that the imagined and actual audience existence in SNSs mean there are more audience members to judge behaviours and self-presentation of each other in comparisons to offline settings. For example, individuals imagine their audience in Facebook as their 'Friends' and tailor their activities for this group, but in fact the audience may also consist of parents, co-workers and

sometimes government agencies. Similarly, Marwick and Boyd (2011, p. 2) have argued that "every participant in a communicative act has an imagined audience. Technology complicates our metaphors of space and place, including the belief that audience are separate from each other". They have claimed that individuals' knowledge about the online SNS communication audience is limited. Boyd (2007) has described how the imagined audience might be entirely different from the actual readers of a profile.

It has been reported that Iranian SNSs users have suffered from the existence of unknown audience such as government authorities as hidden and unknown audience, and consequences of imprisonment and loss of life have been documented (e.g., BBC, 2013; The Guardian, 2012). If the unknown audience plays such a powerful role in shaping how and what Iranians communicate with a known audience, it is necessary to understand better what influences its construction. A better understanding of the unknown audience and strategies employed by users to avoid its unwelcome members could yield significant insight into people's struggles and desires, as well as to lead to policies and tools to help everyday users better navigate SNS spaces. The imagined audience process before sharing contents, however, might encourage Iranian users of SNSs to use self-censorship more frequently online as they do in offline settings.

2.8 Contemporary Iran

This subsection aims to provide an overview of Iran as a country and the shapes and norms of its physical public and private spaces. Iran is a multicultural nation comprising numerous ethnic and linguistic groups, with a population of around 77 million (World Bank, 2010).

In Iran, public and private spheres are separated along gender lines (Hourani, 1991). One of the main cultural factors in Iran is the reputation of oneself and one's family (Moghadam, 2003). It is important to mention that, as Moghadam (2003) wrote, "a family's honour and reputation rest most heavily on the conduct of women, sex segregation and veiling is part of the Islamic gender system" (p. 123). Veiling in Iran is compulsory for women; it is an Islamic mechanism for social control of women (Moghadam, 2003). It is worth mentioning that veiling is expected for all social

appearances of women in society, it is not only a physical coverage; women are expected to veil their voice (for example laughing out loud by women is an act of silliness in public), ways of conduct, looking at opposite sexes, and so on (Khosravi, 2008). Similarly, Naficy (2000) stated that "veiling of the voice includes using formal language with unrelated males and females, and decorous tone of voice, avoidance of singing, boisterous laughter, generally any emotional outburst in public than the expression of grief or anger" (p. 562). Veiling or the 'hijab' (the female head-to-toe veil) separates one's public and physical appearance in the public space from the public by providing an instant private space for women (Hourani, 1991). However, this instant privacy is compulsory and not desired by all the Iranian women. SNSs provides a space for its participants with freedom of choice about how they want to portray their physical appearance, as they want and not as they have been forced to be.

2.8.1 The Internet and Social Network Sites in Contemporary Iran

SNSs are used and adapted by a broad spectrum of the Iranian population, such as the young, students, intelligentsia, supporters of the current government and those against it, conservative and religious Iranians, and the security forces (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008). However, the exact characteristics of Iran's SNSs users cannot be determined, but based on a 2008 social network analysis of the Persian blogosphere, they represent a broad and diverse range of political ideologies, social activists, different ages and genders (Kelly and Etling, 2008).

In many places around the world, governments and citizens have almost the same rights of expression in online spaces as they do in physical spaces, but in Iran the government has restricted access to websites which the authorities deem to be un-Islamic, immoral, or undermining of the Islamic establishment (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008; Freedom House, 2010). Facebook is among the many other filtered sites in Iran and access is only available through a virtual private network (VPN), which is illegal to possess, according to the Iranian cyber police. Since 2005, Iran has developed a 'national internet' similar to the Internet system implemented in North Korea and intends to implement it nationally by 2016 (as claimed by hardliners). It aims to improve control over online interactions and content, but it promises a high speed access to ease its citizens' access to a variety of moral and Islamic knowledge. The project, which is separate from the World Wide Web, is known as the 'clean internet' by the government (Freedom House, 2010). It will provide

a system capable of preventing unwanted information from outside Iran getting into the closed system. For the time being, only government offices are connected to the 'national internet' (Reporters Without Borders, 2012).

In Iran, people have to adapt their presence and public representations according to the Islamic code of practice imposed by the central government forces; therefore self-censorship is publicly practised through self-expression and communication the moment one leaves their home and enters the public urban space. The Internet entered the lives of urban Iranians in the late 1990s, and particularly after 2001 when the Unicode system made typing in Persian possible (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008). It has been said that the Internet opened new doors for Iranians as it offered a free space to compensate for some of their private needs and objectives, which was not previously possible. In early 2000, the first Iranian news websites were created to bypass state controls over traditional media sources, rendering the Internet an important information resource in Iran. However, these sites were filtered shortly thereafter. For younger generations, the Internet was more attractive as a venue to overcome restrictions on cross-gender interactions in physical public spaces. Online, they could interact and find new friends and communities through emails, instant messaging, chat rooms, and forums (Farivar, 2011).

Over time, the Internet became cheaper and more affordable through greater uptake in Iran's large population, and Facebook has become one of the most important environments in Iranian cyberspace (politically, socially, culturally and personally). According to the BBC Persian news agency, in January 2014, Iranian Cultural Minister Janati confirmed that "Four million Iranians are on Facebook, and we have restricted it; we cannot restrict the advance of [such technology] under the pretext of protecting Islamic values". However, Iranians from inside the country access Facebook through Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) and therefore, it is not possible to predict an accurate number of users; neither has Facebook Inc. published the number of Iranian users.

Observers have noted that Facebook is largely blocked; in the early days of the Internet in Iran, the SNS Orkut gained significant membership before it was banned. The video sharing site "YouTube" has been blocked intermittently since December 2006. The sites of English language news sources such as the BBC have been blocked since presidential elections in 2009, and similarly, websites and blogs linked to the reformists are blocked the most frequently (Freedom House, 2010, 2014).

2.8.2 Studies of Internet use in Iran

In Iran, media and communications are run and controlled by the state, but SNSs are independently facilitating communications between Iranians, and between Iranians and the global community. According to Anderson (2013), the Iranian authorities have extensively blocked access to SNSs through filtering them and controlling and reducing Internet speeds. Facebook, for example, has been blocked in Iran since 2009 and is only accessible through illegal circumvention tools.

What we know about the social state of Internet use in Iran is largely based upon empirical studies that investigate digital devices and the inequalities that exist between skilled and the new users. For example, Abdollahyan et al., (2011) have studied the second-level digital divide among students at Tehran University and have concluded that from both a communication and a sociological perspective, Iran's digital divide is skill-based and it is causing inequality of opportunities, which in turn can cause other inequalities across various groups. However, this study is one of few at the national level and the divide in the larger context of Iranian society needs more attention and wider study. They have argued that Internet skill divides are visible in all ages and unlike general assumptions that younger Internet users are very skilled, they have argued that in the case of Iran, this is not applicable. Based on their argument, in Iran, educational funding and planning are focused on equipping educational institutions with new devices and there has been some attention given to the Internet and online communication technologies.

Semati (2008) has argued that the government has pursued a policy of education for the masses for the past three decades since the revolution and as a result education has become widely available in Iran. Drawing on Semati, Abdollahyan et al., (2011) have argued that social capital is a more important factor in Internet use in Iran, although economic factors play a role. However, they have concluded that there is a massive skill divide among students at Tehran University, which is known to be one of the best universities in Iran; one might question the digital abilities of others and the fact that education is available to all does not necessarily mean they can access the Internet and digital technologies. On the other hand Abdollahyan et al., (2011), in their conclusion, stated that a large number of university students are regarded as Facebook users, but they stressed it is hard to provide reliable statistics for that claim. However, their argument did not directly highlight the state regulations about filtering and control of high-speed

Internet connections as the study was conducted in Iran and they had limitations on highlighting the cost of drawbacks when it came to criticising the state-run education system. Similarly, Shirazi (2010) has argued that Internet filtering in Iran has resulted in negative outcomes for the countries' ICT growth and it has increase the digital divide both nationally and regionally.

In a recent study, Khazraee and Unsworth (2012) studied the role of social media in social change through interviews and content analysis of the status updates and posts of eight Iranian users of Facebook. Adopting actor-network theory as a theoretical lens, the study concluded that the efficacy of social media for revolutionary change is overrated. Similarly, Hajin (2013) studied the use of SNSs among Iranians and interviewed six participants. The study concluded that Iranian users of SNSs were changing self-presentation acts according to others in their friend list; however, the findings of the study are from a small sample.

2.8.3 Restrictions of Online Spaces in Iran

In post-revolutionary Iran the Islamic ideology was imposed as a core foundation for regulating and defining social and behaviour norms. In her book, Crossing the Red Line, Kar (2007) has portrayed how individuals have learned through the years to use different ways of manipulating others, to protect one's contrasting beliefs with the Islamic ideology in public and sometimes within the private space of their homes. Individuals must present the appropriate appearance and behaviour in different public and private settings through the use of multiple behavioural strategies (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2009). One study by Kian (2013) has examined the emergence of a new trend for resistance among women and youth against the forced Islamisation. She found that the desire for modernity and demands for social, political and cultural rights, have challenged the Islamic and masculine rules and order in both public and private spheres (Kian, 2013). Furthermore, the access to satellite TV and the Internet are reasons behind the rise in new models of self in the public spaces (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008). Digital technologies for Iranians provided the ability to build and maintain broader relationships with the world, but the new information channels bring obstacles in the ways of controlling individuals' lives. The Internet and in particular SNSs introduced whole new opportunities for individuals to explore new ways of interactions without the restrictions of public spaces. However, these spaces are restricted by different forms of control in the forms of filtering of

websites and surveillance of citizens using the Internet (Freedom House, 2010). Moreover, Amir-Ebrahimi (2008) argued that the controlling Islamic state is responsible for the expansion of the public sphere in a non-Habermasian way, both in physical and online spaces. A broader perspective has been adopted by Gole and Ammann (2006) as they identified that public spheres in non-Western, Islamic societies are altered by the cultural meanings and social practices in each culture.

In view of all that has been mentioned so far, one may suppose that the role of the Internet in shaping up a new form of existence is vital for individuals living under political and religion restrictions. In the case of Iran, the use of the Internet as an online public space (as established by Boyd, 2010) provides a space with less control and restrictions from authorities. However, this use of new technologies provides a space in the form of appearance and behaviour that is in complete contradiction with the models accepted by the Islamic Republic.

2.8.4 Internet and SNSs in Iran

In contemporary Iran, literacy is high and the Internet is used widely. In 2008, out of a population of roughly 72 million, there were almost 23 million Internet users in Iran (taking private and public users together) – in other words, there were about 32 Internet users for every 100 people; by 2009, Internet users had increased to 27.9 million, which is 34 percent of the population (World Bank Group, 2010). As of 2009, Iran had 30.2 million mobile phone users (Freedom House, 2009), with 72 mobile phone subscriptions for every 100 people (World Bank, no date). The Iranian Internet market is divided into a single public Internet service provider (ISP) and more than 50 private ISPs. The public ISP dominates the market, with the private providers depending on the regime-run Iranian telecommunications company (Reporters Without Borders, 2009). These private ISPs must officially register with the regime and deploy the same regime-approved filtering system that the public ISP is required to use.

Persian is one of the most widely used languages on the Internet, specifically in the blogosphere (BBC News, 'Blogosphere Sees Healthy Growth', 2006). A diverse assortment of personal and collective Persian-language blogs cuts across the Iranian ideological spectrum. According to BBC reports, Persian first entered the top ten languages of the blogosphere in 2006. Facebook is highly popular for correspondence and

networking in Iran, but there are no official accurate data about users (Arab social media report, 2012). On Facebook, communications are typically either in Persian; in Persian transliterated into English; or in some alternative language, most often in English. As it is impossible to determine how many Iranians use Facebook, it is impossible to quantify how many communications are written in Persian, as opposed to English or other languages.

2.8.5 Accessing Facebook in Contemporary Iran

It is almost impossible to give exact figures or estimates concerning the use of Facebook among the Iranian population as there are no official figures due to the site being filtered. The only information we have comes from case study surveys and documented observations. For Iranians the Internet provides a platform for freedom of expression; it has also provided similar opportunities for men and women. According to Amir-Ebrahimi (2008), the Internet provides a platform for freedom of expression and access to a variety of uncensored information for Iranians. It has changed the social boundary that is drawn between men and women in their society. Internet content filtering is widely practised by many Middle Eastern governments, however, they claim that censorship is necessary for the restriction of access to pornography and the protection of Islamic values (Wheeler, 2006). In another report specific to Iran, Internet censorship is justified by authorities as being for the prevention of social immorality, and the preservation of religious-political authority and national security (Reporters Without Borders, 2012).

Iran's extremely slow Internet speed, as well as filtering, is a major obstacle to accessing Facebook and other sites with multi-media or media-rich content. Alongside the 2006 ban on high-speed broadband for residential Internet services, authorities often control web traffic as a means of censoring and blocking access to Internet content, as was the case during the 2009 and 2013 presidential elections in Iran (Freedom House, 2013). Freedom House reported that "the Iranian authorities have taken a range of measures to monitor online communications and use them as a basis for criminal punishment. A number of protesters put on trial after the 2009 election were indicted for their activities on Facebook. Many arrested activists reported that interrogators had confronted them with copies of their emails, asked them to provide the passwords to their Facebook accounts, and questioned them extensively on their relationships with individuals on their 'friends'

list. The authorities actively exploited the fear created by these reports, claiming that they had access to all the email and text messages exchanged in Iran" (Freedom House, 2012).

Internet filtering is a key obstacle to accessing Facebook inside Iran. Users can only access Facebook by bypassing the filters and relying on illegal software. The use of software for bypassing the filtering carries criminal penalties. According to the findings of the Abadpour and Anderson (2013), based on 188 survey responses, Iranians use a variety of circumvention tools to access Facebook. Virtual Private Networks (VPNs) are overwhelmingly the most popular solution. Despite being illegal, there is no clear consensus on the security of using these tools.

2.8.6 Concerns about Privacy and Potential Risks Associated with Facebook Use

Iran's information environment is controlled by the regime and it has cut off access to millions of websites (Rhoads and Chao, 2009). In March 2009, Reporters Without Borders placed Iran among the world's 12 top countries known for effectively censoring news and information and systematically repressing Internet users (Reporters Without Borders, 2009). In 2006, the government cut off access to Facebook and made its use illegal. In February 2009, the government legalised its use, but this was for a short period; Facebook was prohibited once more on May 23, 2009. An official posting on Facebook's blog six days after the 2009 uprising, announced that the company had created the Persian version to accommodate the volume of news and information shared on Facebook in Persian (Facebook.com). The Iranian regime intentionally lifted the filtering of SNSs after elections in June 2009 so that it could collect information about others who has used online platforms and participated in political conversations (Elson, 2012).

Despite knowing that software such as Tor project, VPNs and proxies are a threat to privacy and information theft, many Iranians use them to remain anonymous, and to get access to unfiltered Internet (Stelter and Stone, 2009b). According to Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society report (2008), financial cost plays an important role for Facebook use in Iran. Handheld devices with Internet access are expensive for many Iranians before even factoring in the cost of VPNs and proxy servers. Monitoring these servers, the regime would then immediately blacklist these proxies and VPNs, leaving users with no option but to purchase another unblocked VPN, sometimes within a matter of days. The Center for Investigating Organized Cyber Crimes, originally founded in

2007 “to investigate and confront social and economic offences on the Internet” (Foreign Affairs Committee of the National Council of Resistance of Iran, 2010), has been harassing and threatening Facebook and blog users since 2009 (Freedom House, 2010). Fassihi (2009) reporting on Wall Street Journal, “Certain reports alleged that by December 2009 the government had extended these measures to Iranians living abroad in the form of threats and intimidating correspondence targeting those who had spoken against the Iranian regime” (Fassihi 2009, p.3). The authoritarian nature of the Iranian regime is feared by many SNSs users yet ordinary Iranians, journalists and activists still rely heavily on the Internet and SNSs to communicate.

2.8.7 Transformation of publics in Iran

Physical spaces are limited by space and time, but the specific affordances and the dynamics of Networked Publics allow people to work around physical barriers to interaction. It supports the gathering of large groups and networks of people (Boyd, 2010). Networked Publics’ affordances provide a platform for easier interaction among people, from one-to-many to many-to-many (Boyd, 2010). Iranian authorities clearly did not approve of the creation of new public online, as it provided a faster and easier interaction among individuals far from the offline public that they have controlled successfully. They have started to control and manage this new sphere since the 2009 elections by filtering all the SNSs and Facebook (Amir-Ebrahimi, 2008). The filtering of the Internet in general is a mechanism to restrict the availability of new publics, in which people could behave regardless of the Islamic restrictions in comparison to the offline publics; hence, the barriers in how people meet, interact and talk in the Networked Publics have been eroded and it has become ever more attractive since the censorship.

2.8.8 Chapter Summary

This literature review aimed to frame the context of this study. It provided a background perspective on how SNSs have evolved through time. The argument is then taken forward to the present, and I introduce Facebook as the SNS under investigation in this study. The review takes the reader through different definitions of public and private and whether there is a difference in its definition online and offline.

I briefly introduce the different studies in the area of SNSs and Facebook in particular and narrow down the study of the past literature on privacy and self-presentation. The last

subsection of the study draws on the current state of the Internet and Facebook access and use in Iran. It is important to draw attention to the blurry line between network publics and public to explore participants' privacy experiences and self-presentation practices. Thus, for Iranians the blurry line between network publics and publics mapped out here is not simply a constraint in the online world, but it is a part of negotiating the norms and rules of everyday public life (Boyd, 2010).

This study will use a dramaturgical approach as a theoretical lens to understanding self-presentation on Facebook. This approach is particularly useful for a systematic understanding of the self-presentation process. Individual self-presentations on Facebook are shaped to some degree by the affordances of the nine settings (Papacharissi 2009, Boyd, 2010). So a combined perspective of both Goffman and Boyd (2010) will be beneficial to this study as Boyd (2008) borrowed Goffman's dramaturgical features previously in an extensive ethnographical study to explore SNSs' affordances and dynamics and to suggest how they shape networked publics and people's participation.

In conclusion, Facebook has become a prosperous environment for the development of new public space which allows Iranians to obtain connections and communication with the outside world and experience a public space without restriction. Based on the review of the literature, Facebooks' privacy features also provide a degree of privacy within the public space and this will be further explored in the field study. This chapter also provided an overview of Goffman's dramaturgical approach.

So far, very little has been published on the use of Facebook among Iranians and approaches used to enhance their self-presentation and privacy protection experience and practice. Literature on the online personal practices of Iranians, their appropriation of Facebook, their engagement with the wider public, or their self-presentation on it, is still scarce.

As mentioned in this literature review, even studies focusing on privacy focus their attention, particularly on users in Western countries with no restrictions on access to Facebook, or else they studied different forms of self-presentation. This study aims to bridge that gap by looking at these individuals' use of Facebook to explore their privacy and self-presentation practices.

Moreover, how this particular group of Iranian Facebook users, Iranians, develop and nurture their profiles and present a self beyond the boundaries of the control and surveillance of Iran's regime, needs further examination. The majority of studies to which I had access focused on the use of the Internet in general and the context of the regimes' censorship towards information control.

3 Research Design and Implementation

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapters identified the background literature and justification for this study. It also highlighted the advent of SNSs and its uptake in Iran. This chapter first discusses the underlying philosophical assumptions, and ontological and epistemological positions, as they inform the methodological choices for this study. Later, three research paradigms - positivist, interpretive and critical - and the applicability of this research will be discussed. The interpretive paradigm is adopted for this research. Paradigm selection will lead to a focus on appropriate research methods. The second part of this chapter moves on to describe in greater detail the research design and implementation. Later, it explores and reflects on field study as a methodology and as a technique for understanding the research practice in the study of SNSs. Detailed examination of field study as a research approach is developed, focusing on its characteristics and limitations. The chapter concludes with a discussion of data collection process and data analysis.

The research lens introduced to aid the analysis of research data was Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach. It has been used to formulate the understanding of phenomena that the participants were revealing and to help with the analysis of collected data as well as with the ethical issues I had to deal with as part of this project.

This research study adopts a qualitative approach. It aims to develop and draw a richer picture and an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. Hence, the research paradigm is an interpretive one and the research design is based on this. This study made use of field study as a research method, as explained in later subsections of this chapter. Data is gathered through semi-structured interviews and observation. The qualitative methodology provided a more suitable approach to engage with the research participants and their primary personal experiences.

3.2 Philosophical Assumptions

Information systems (IS) research includes both computing and computer science subjects and social sciences, and the connections to this section of research disciplines allows IS researchers to implement a range of different philosophical approaches and research methods. For the purpose of this study the three most common research

philosophies in the IS discipline have been analysed: Positivist, Interpretive, and Critical, following the work of Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991), Oates (2006) and Myers and Klein (2011). Before proceeding to examine the justification of the choice of paradigm for this study, it will be necessary to discuss the core strengths and weaknesses of the three popular research paradigms (Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991; Oates 2006; Myers and Klein; 2011).

There have been several descriptions and ways to explain viewpoints on philosophical paradigms. It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by philosophical paradigm. Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 107) define it as: "A paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a world view that defines, for its holder, the nature of the world, the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts". The authors further propose three essential questions, the anwers to which show how researchers consider a specific research approach in line with their epistemological and ontological beliefs:

1. The ontological: questions the nature of reality and how the knowledge seeker (in this case, the researcher) views the reality.
2. The epistemological: questions how the knowledge seeker gain knowledge.
3. The methodological: questions the tools that the knowledge seeker use to find new knowledge.

According to Guba and Lincoln (1994) four underlying paradigms for IS research are: positivist, post-positivist, constructivist, and critical. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) suggest three major paradigms: positivist, interpretive, and critical. This study considers a classification scheme which itself is based on Chua's (1986) classification. Although it must be acknowledged here that this classification is just one of many, it is adopted for the purpose of this study and is not too dissimilar from Cuba and Lincoln's framework (Myers and Klein, 2011).

A number of authors have reported and demonstrated a range of alternatives to the positivistic paradigm, mainly interpretivism and critical research (Guba and Lincoln 1994; Walsham 1995; Oates 2006). At the time Walsham (1995, p.376) has argued that "despite the dominance of positivism, there are signs that interpretivism is gaining

ground, and the epistemological choice between interpretivism and positivism is an important choice for IS researchers". The use of a different set of philosophical paradigms and beliefs resulted in the appearance of the more diverse application of research methods among IS researchers. Moreover, Silverman (2006)has argued that the research paradigm and the research approach are decided on the basis of the research problem as the paradigm needs to facilitate themeans and routes to discovery or exploration. The purpose of the following is to discuss the three paradigms for the current research and justify the chosen option.

3.3 Research Paradigms

Before proceeding to examine different paradigms, the word 'paradigm' must be defined. In line with Oates (2006, p.13) "Paradigm as a word refers to a shared way of thinking. The philosophical paradigm of a research as an underlying paradigm [..,] about the kinds of research questions to ask and the process by which to answer them because different academic communities and individuals have different ideas about the kinds of research questions to ask and the process by which to answer them because they have different views about the nature of the world we live in and therefore about how we might investigate it. These different views stem from different philosophical paradigms."

Positivism

The definition of Positivism varies slightly among various authors, as different authors use different parameters to evaluate the paradigm. According to Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991, p.5) IS research is positivistic if there is evidence of "formal propositions, quantifiable measures of variables, hypothesis testing, and the drawing of inferences about a phenomenon from the sample to a stated population". This is rootedin the study of the natural world, for example, within the fields of physics, chemistry and biology. (Oates 2006; Klein and Myers 1999). Positivist research in more general terms has been associated with the methods and techniques used in scientific experiments, such as laboratory works.

Myers and Klein (2011) described that in the positivism paradigm, a subject's data has been collected in an objective manner. They argued that all participants in a study would perceive a given situation for study in the same or similar way. Additionally, another

characteristic of positivism, as defined by some scholars, is the use of representative sampling, whereby a larger population is represented by the study investigation of a smaller portion thereof (Klein and Myers 1999; Orlikowski and Baroudi,1991). The broad use of the term positivist is sometimes equated with quantitative data and methods (Chen and Hirschheim 2004). It has been argued that generalisability is a core element of the positivistic approach (Oates, 2006), hence, quantitative data collection and analysis facilitate it. The data gathering approach through surveys, for example, is popular as a data collection tool with positivist researchers because it permits large-scale representative studies to be conducted, hence the generalisability of the results argued. Having defined the positivist paradigm, I will now move on to discuss the interpretive paradigm.

Interpretivism

Despite the historical dominance of positivism in IS, interpretive approaches have emerged which challenge the philosophical underpinnings of positivistic research (Klein ad Myers 1999; Walsham 1995; Oates 2006; Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991). This approach began to develop and evolve as many researchers concluded that positivism and the natural science approach were unsuitable for studying the social world (Walsham 1995). Interpretivism view of the world and reality differs from positivism; interpretivism describes the world as constructs of the human mind. Oates (2006, p. 292) stated that there is "no single version of the truth". Klein and Myers (1999 p.69) stated that it is "social construction, such as language, consciousness, shared meaning defines reality for interpretivism". Similarly, Walsham (1995) argued that when the interpretivist approach is employed, researchers must be reflective and ignore their personal views and assumptions because unlike positivism, this approach is not objective. Accordingly, Oates (2006) has identified that interpretive paradigm could produce several possible explanations for a phenomenon for further examination. Therefore, the aim of an interpretive research is not to find one, single explanation, and this reflects the subjective nature of the methods used for its explanation. While positivism revolves around a hypothesis/testing approach, interpretive studies are based on understanding human and social contexts. Klein and Myers (1999 p. 69) have defined the interpretivist approach as : "[interpretivism] does not predefine dependent and independent variables, but focuses on the complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges". Similarly Oates

(2006, p.292) describes the approach as trying to “identify, explore and explain how all the factors in a particular social setting are related and interdependent”. This process examines people in their natural setting, rather than a controlled or laboratory-like situation (Oates, 2006). This view suggests that interpretivism, unlike positivism, is suitable for exploratory studies. Similarly, Walsham (1993, pp 4-5) describes the aim of interpretive research as “producing an understanding of the context of the information system, and the process whereby the information system influences and is influenced by the context". Based on the definitions above, the interpretive approach provides a valid paradigm for thoroughly exploring the subject matter.

Critical

Historically, critical theory is known to be frirst discussed by three leading theorists of Frankfurt School - Horkheimer, Adorno and Marcuse. Horkheimer (1982, p. 244) has defined it as defines it “[Critical theory] seeks human emancipation to liberate the human being from the circumstances that enslave them”. Similarities between interpretive paradigm and critical paradigm exist. According to Oates (2006) “critical research in IS is concerned with identifying power relations, conflicts and contradictions, and empowering people to eliminate them as sources of alienetation and domination” (p.296).. Moreover, Klein and Meyers (1999) defined the aim on a critical approach being to expose oppressive, alienating, or restrictive conditions. Another similarity between the critical and interpretive approach is that researchers employing this paradigm do not usually follow the hypothesis/testing approach, and instead look to explore social context. It has been argued that in critical research, qualitative data gathering and analysis are possible and popular among researchers, which highlights another similarity to interpretive approaches (Klein and Myers 1999).

However, this study has adopted an interpretive paradigm, as in line with Guba and Lincoln (1994), who argued that the interpretive research paradigm aids the researcher to demonstrate the set of beliefs that inform what and how the phenomenon in question is studied. Similarly, Walsham (1995) identified that interpretive paradigm is concerned with specific focuses on phenomena, which individuals have constructed through in-depth definition as of the study subject. In this study, the researcher aims to interpret the reality presented by research participants and, unlike the critical paradigm, does not aim

to question reality's status quo.This section has analysed the most commonly practised paradigms in the field of IS studies and has argued their relevance to this study. The next part of this chapter aims to justify the choice of paradigm for this research.

3.4 Justifying the choice of interpretive paradigm

It has been argued that positivism may not be appropriate or suitable for the study of social phenomenon. Oates 2006 (p. 288) argued that for reasons of reductionism, repetition, generalisation, perception and interpretation, positivism is "less suited to researching the social world, that is, the world of people, the organisations and group structures that they build, the cultures they develop and the meanings they impose on things". At the beginning of the research design it was felt that the nature of this study was best investigated by research paradigms that are concerned with the subjectivity of research (Walsham, 2005). Therefore, the interpretive approach was best suited as it allows an in-depth examination of how SNSs users engage with privacy protection and how it shapes their self-presentation practice. This approach allows the interpretation of social reality from the research participants' perception and "stands in a subject-subject relating to its field of study" understating the objectivity of the surroundings of research subjects (Myers and Klein, 2011 p. 30). The research goal of this study is to provide clarification and exploration of specific social phenomena, therefore interpretivism is adopted as it provides research direction "through the exposure of what is believed to be deep-seated, structural contradictions within social systems" (Orlikowski and Baroudi 1991, p. 6).

Interpretivism values a reality that is socially constructed. From an ontological stance, it has a subjective view towards reality as it believes reality depends on social actors and from an epistemological point of view, it believes that the meaning of reality is derived from social interactions (Klein and Myers, 1999). Furthermore, Oates (2006) identified that "the decision on the paradigm selection is usually based on the given research questions, the research context, the tradition of the discipline and the researcher's willingness to take a risk and challenge traditional beliefs both of the discipline and the researcher" (Oates 2006, p.304).

This study's research questions are mainly concerned with how interaction and self-presentation is shaped on Facebook by the participants in this study. This leads to multiple

explanations which do not favour the use of a positivism epistemological position, which assumes that there should be one generalisable explanation of the truth. The critical and the interpretive epistemological positions are thus more appropriate. However, as there is no interest in challenging power structures and status quo on the level of relationship between theory and practice within this research, the critical paradigm is therefore not applicable. This leaves the interpretive paradigm as the most appropriate option since the posed research questions aim to explore how people engage, interact and self-present in SNSs. This thesis applies interpretive methods. The interpretivist approach can be understood as consisting of an ontological base sustained by the assumption that access to reality can be obtained through social constructions such as consciousness, shared meanings, and language (Klein and Myers, 1999; Walsham, 2006). Therefore, interpretive methods are appropriate for understanding how interaction between SNSs users and SNSs is shaped.

Previously, the researchers' ontological and epistemological standpoint was demonstrated. From an ontological standpoint my understanding and view of the world and reality is my interpretation of a subjective world, which is dependent on social actors and aware of the context (Klein and Myers, 1999). Ontological assumptions inform my epistemological position, by which I believe the meaning and knowledge of reality is driven from social interactions and understanding of the phenomena under examination through the meaning assigned to them (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). In taking the interpretivist research approach the methodological choices adopted for this research seek to understand the state of the present social reality with in-depth examination and exposure to the phenomena (Chua, 1986), using theoretical concepts (Goffman, 1959) to justify the phenomena with the field study research method (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). As explained earlier, the philosophical assumptions of this study echo Denzin and Lincoln (2000) "a relativist ontology (there are multiple realities), a subjectivist epistemology (knower and respondent cocreate understandings), and a naturalistic (in the natural world) set of methodological procedures" (p. 24).

Taking an interpretivist research approach the next section outlines the methodological choices adopted for this research and the research implementation through justification of the choice of research strategy; field study makes up the empirical work of this thesis. First, the field study strategy is described with a focus on the advantages and

disadvantages . Then the research design and implementation is described, presenting the overall research design for this project.

3.5 Research method

The previous subsection discussed the philosophical assumption of this study and established it to be of the interpretive paradigm. This subsection will now focus on the selected research method and discuss and identify the main characteristics of the chosen research method and translate these to the given research setting. A research method is a technique for data collection and data gathering. There are many methods and approaches that fall into the category of qualitative research. It has been argued that qualitative researchers employ a method that allows them to capture and discover the meanings that their subjects experience in their lives, hence, the methods offer ways of capturing both verbal and written meanings of the subjects' lives (Denzin and Lincoln 2000). Similarly, Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that the qualitative data aims to capture individuals' first-hand experiences and it is valuable when exploring a new phenomenon or concept. According to Oates (2006) there is a variety of options in interpretive information systems research. She has identified these methods as: surveys, case studies and field studies, ethnographies, action research and design and creation.

On the application of the different data gathering methods within qualitative research Denzin and Lincoln (2000) have described that qualitative research recognizes the use of different methods to collect empirical data: "case study, personal experience, introspection, life story, interview, artifacts, and cultural texts and productions, along with observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts—that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (Denzin and Lincoln 2000, p. 4). Similarly, Myers (1999) has argued out that qualitative data sources include observation and participant observation, interviews, questionnaires, documents and texts, and the researcher's impressions and reactions. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), in using qualitative methods interpretive researchers often use more than one interpretive data gathering method as each method offers a new way of viewing the phenomenon under study. This study employed both interviews and participant observation as a data gathering strategy.

3.5.1 Field study method

This study applies an interpretive approach, which believes that knowledge of reality is gathered through social constructions and shared meanings (Klein and Myers, 1999; Walsham, 1999). Interpretive studies in IS research includes a range of case studies (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Walsham, 1993) and field studies (Clemons and Row, 1993; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). For this study, the research design is a field study. The choice of research method is not exclusive; depending on the research questions, researchers could explore and consider different research methods (Probert 1997, Heinze, 2008). Rather than providing an abstract overview of each of these methods, this part of the chapter aims to explore and justify the chosen method for this study. It is also worth noting that the use of a case study as a research method was significant and more frequent in the past in interpretive studies (Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991; Walsham, 1993) than field studies (Clemons and Row, 1993; Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). Alternatively, Sayer (2000) argued that in comparison to other paradigms, the interpretive paradigm is more flexible in terms of research method choices that a researcher might adopt "compared to positivist and critical approaches, interpretivism endorses or is compatible with a relatively wide range of research methods, but it implies that the particular choices should depend on the nature of the object of study and what one wants to learn about it" (p. 19).

According to Rom Harré (1979) types of research methods can be divided into two general categories: "extensive approaches and intensive approaches. Extensive methods employ large-scale surveys, questionnaires, and statistical analyses. The researcher looks for regularities, patterns, and similarities with a restricted ability to generalize to other populations and thus has limited explanatory power. Intensive methods focus on individuals in a specific context and employ interviews, ethnography, and qualitative analysis, while asking the question: what produces change?"(pp.132–135) .Scholars suggested that these methods are not exclusive and the combination of different research methods could provide richer and more reliable research findings (Oates, 2006, Miles and Huberman, 1994, Walsham, 1995).

Commenting on the field study approach, Bailey (2007) argues that "the field research is the systematic study of ordinary activities in the settings in which they occur. Its primary goal is to understand these activities and what they mean to those who engage in them.

To gain this understanding, field researchers collect data by interacting with, listening to, and observing people during the course of their daily lives" (Bailey 2007, p. 1). According to Denzin and Lincoln (1994 in Bailey 2007, p.11) the "field" of field research is undefined and scholars continue to debate "what field research is, how it should be conducted, how it should be evaluated, and how ethical issues should be resolved" (Bailey 2007,P.11). The aim of field studies is to address research questions through different types of data gathering methods from the research subjects. As explained earlier, field research takes place within natural settings and serves different purposes. It is well suited for, but not restricted to, descriptive or exploratory research (Baily, 2007).

Field study as a research strategy is diverse and not restricted to academic research or any specific branch of academia. Bailey (2007) identified its application in nursing, education, anthropology, management, hospitality and tourism, Africana studies, communications, and sociology. Furthermore, Denzin and Lincoln (1994) stated that field study in different disciplines differs from each other and is not consistent within one discipline either. This represents the diversity and flexibility of field study research. "One of the reasons for the diversity within field research lies in its history" Bailey (2007, p. 8). On the history of the field study method, Flick, von Kardorff, and Steinke (2004) identified that the recognition of social science as a part of scientific discipline in the 19th century was a starting point for the field study tradition. This view is supported by Bailey (2007) who writes that one of the first few female researchers who undertook field study research was sociologist Harriet Martineau (1802– 1876), who studied the lives of women and children in the United States. Commenting on guidelines for conducting the field study research process, Bailey (2007) argues that in field study, step-by–step guides are not popular as this research strategy requires flexibility in the data gathering process. In view of all that has been discussed so far, one may suppose that field study research requires flexibility in many aspects of the research process.

It is important to mention here the difference between case studies and field studies as one is confronted with several different strands of case study research. This view is supported by Swanborn (2010) who writes that by studying some of the popular literature such as Glaser and Strauss (1967); Stake (1995); Yin (1994) and Miles and Huberman (1994), it is evident that each one of them has little in common with the other. Platt (1992) argued that the first generation of case studies conducted in the Chicago School of

Sociology, field study method was practised on urban society (Platt 1992). Similarly, Swanborn (2010) demonstrated that historically the case study is more or less identical with field research in a natural context, by drawing examples from anthropology and cultural study disciplines. A case study, however, need not necessarily include participant observation, and interviews and document analysis of the case under study is favoured (Yin, 2003). Furthermore, Swanborn (2010) stated that "the possibility to observe behaviour renders the case study exclusively apt for studying contemporary phenomena" (Swanborn 2010, p.17).

There are many similarities and differences between interpretive case studies and field studies. Case study research seeks to understand a bounded phenomenon (Yin 2003), while the boundaries to study the phenomenon under research are less strict in field study research. According to Yin (2003) the case study approach is suitable for studying a well defined and/or complex phenomena such as the study of groups, social networks, organizations, and organizational relationships. The boundaries of the phenomena under study must be determined, though it is not uncommon for these boundaries to change during the course of research (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2003).

The main distinction between the case study and the field study in this dissertation is the notion of boundaries and the role of the researcher. A case study has clear boundaries (Yin, 2003), whereas a field study does not need to have an identified boundary (Swanborn, 2010) and offers flexibility. A field study can also be conducted by interviewing participants and simultaneously exploring a phenomenon as it is occurring, through participant observation, hence, it allows researchers a degree of flexibility. However, a researcher in both case studies and field studies, can be positioned outside the studied phenomenon or can be in direct contact with the study subjects depending on the data gathering methods of the study (Swanborn, 2010).

3.5.2 Research method strategy justification

A number of considerations were made regarding the decision to apply a field study approach. To answer the first research question through recording and analysing the events that take place as a result of Facebook use from the participants' self reports, a flexible approach with less strict boundaries was required. From an interpretive standpoint, using an interpretive case study of the given research would make it possible

to provide a rich description of the use of Facebook among Iranians, as the case study (Yin, 1994) is determined by the 'how' and 'why' research questions and by events over which the researcher has no control. However, observation as a research technique is excluded (Yin, 1994,2003) and this makes the case study method less than ideal for this study as there is a need to confirm participants' self-reports in interviews to some degree, specifically on the implementation of technical privacy settings, to avoid a degree of bias from self-reports. Similarly, the ethnographic method is not appropriate for this study as it is not suitable to observe participants, both in real-life setting and through their Facebook profile page, for a defined long period of time. Form the ethical point of view , it is not appropriate for the researcher to have direct access to the site where the phenomenon takes place (Oates, 2006), it is not acceptable to request that participants provide their usernames and passwords (to my knowledge, no participant would willingly provide their username and password to any researcher). The ethnographic study of Facebook requires access for unlimited observation (no intervention) of the participants' profile page on Facebook. However, some studies claim that they have conducted ethnoghrapical research from the observation of visible to "Public" profile pages of the participants or they have "Friended" the participants in order to observe their activities in real-life settings, but these methods were not fully inline with the ethnographical method. The restrictions identified make the case study and ethnographic methods less than ideal for the present study.

Moreover, in field studies, research is carried out in natural settings and the researcher makes no attempt to control the situation or influence the participants' opinions and acts (Walsham, 1993). The researcher aims to explore the subjective experiences of participants. The phenomenon is reported from the participants' point of view and is observed and reported as it occurs, hence, the researcher in this situation is more involved in the phenomenon being studied (Swanborn, 2010).

The other consideration relates to the collection of data. While field study research is essentially open to the kinds of data that might be collected, it is often equated with qualitative data collected through the use of semi-structured interviews. The strength of this method is that it is highly flexible. In addition to the philosophical assumption of the author in the previous section, the decision to use the field study methods rests upon the aim of this study to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the self-

presentation process adopted by Facebook users and how privacy concerns shape this process. It was argued earlier this study adopts the interpretive point of view which holds that social reality is connected to the social meaning given to it by those in the setting (Walsham, 1995). Together, these studies outline that from an interpretive standpoint, field study would provide a rich insight into the phenomenon under study. The field study in this research employs semi-structured interviews and participant observation through profile page demonstrations of a group of 30 individuals to focus on the SNS Facebook. The choice of methods in the study was governed by what data could actually be collected in the research context to answer research questions.

3.6 Data Generation

This section will outline and compare quantitative and qualitative research approaches and explain the reasons for using the qualitative research approach in this research. The qualitative research approach has been widely used in social and human interactions especially in the area of human interactions within digital technologies (Walsham 1995; Oates 2006; Myers and Klein 2011). A qualitative approach has been found suitable and is selected for this research as it aims to explore and understand the use of SNSs from the subject's point of view.

Quantitative research is often referred to as naturalistic, in defining the reason for this Denzin and Lincoln (2000) argued that in the past analysts was performed either through experiments in laboratory surroundings or in the field, and in natural surroundings and as qualitative research data gathering strategies happen in natural settings, therefore it is also known as naturalistic. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer a general definition of qualitative as following: "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. Qualitative research consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world" (p. 3). Furthermore, "qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials (…) that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals' lives" (p. 4). Qualitative research differs from quantitative research in that quantitative research provides mainly quantifiable numerical results. For example, results are generated from answers to yes/no questions, and to questions asking how many? For this reason, quantitative methods are known for being more structured than qualitative methods, as this research aims to get answers to how and why questions, this provides the researcher

with greater flexibility to gather visions of research subjects (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). Similarly, Creswell (2007) points out that quantitative approaches employ statistical procedures to analyse the numerical data often to prove or reject hypotheses. However, this study attempts to find the meaning of the phenomenon under study from the meaning that individuals attach to how and why questions.

This thesis is based on a qualitative approach. When studying an online phenomenon like Facebook, the qualitative approach provides many advantages when trying to understand how the research informants make use of Facebook, and how their relationships are created, maintained and developed through that use. This is especially true in relation to methods of data collection. The flexible features of the qualitative method make it possible to interpret the data in its context (Silverman, 2006).

3.7 Data Generation sources

This study undertakes a qualitative field study strategy, and data is sourced from two different data collection methods, participant interviews and observation, as they assist to explore and to understand the research questions, therefore, these two data gathering methods are the most feasible and suitable for this study. This sub-section provides an overview of selected data generation methods – semi-structured interviews and observation of participants – and justifies the rationale behind considering it.

3.7.1 Interviews

The term 'interview' in this research refers to a special type of conversation between two people (the researcher and a single participant), in which the researcher is interested in gathering information from a participant on a topic of research. (Oates, 2006). There are generally three types of interview: structured, unstructured and semi-structured (Oates 2006, p. 187). Structured interviews are designed to ask participants a fixed set of questions for data gathering, whereas in unstructured interviews participants are in control of the interview process as the process aims to allow participants to develop ideas and lead the conversation (Oates, 2006). This study has an exploratory nature and semi-structured interviews are most suitable as this allows the researcher to conduct interviews around the guidelines with questions and themes to explore the research questions in more detail (Silverman, 2006), but at the same time the semi-structure form of the interview allows both researcher and participant to follow up any interesting ideas that arise from

the conversation (Flick, 2006). The focus of the interview is chosen by the researcher and the objective is to record and understand the participant's point of view (Oates, 2006). During semi-structured interviews, open-ended questions suggested by the interviewer are used, and usually some questions arise naturally during the interview depending on the response to the questions (Oates, 2006).

The interview technique allows personal interaction between the researcher and the participant in which the researcher is able to record the moods, emotional responses or other social nuances of the participants for a richer description to be gathered (Oates, 2006). For example, if a particularly interesting issue or example is brought into the discussion by the participanst, the researcher may then follow this up and ask for more details. The semi-structured interview is known to increase the likelihood of capturing interpretations and constructed reality from an individual point of view (Oates, 2006). However, Miles and Huberman (1994) are identified that interviews also have limitations. For example, participants might steer the conversation towards what the researcher wants to hear. This bias is linked to the direct face-to-face interview setting where both parties (researcher and participant) naturally aim to build a rapport during the process. Reserchres are adviced to conduct follow up interviews with specific cases to reduces the biases. (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

There are two ways of recording interview responses: taking notes during interviews or tape-recording the conversation process to be transcribed after the interview sessions(Oates, 2006). Both of these methods have disadvantages and the researchers'choice of recording is based on personal preferences (Silverman, 2013). Taking notes during the interviews could place an uneasy divide between the interviewer and the interviewee, and a loss of concentration or attention. On the other hand, tape-recording the conversation is certainly the most effective approach, which allows the researcher to transcribe the interview with attention to detail, however, this could also create an uneasy divide between the participant and researcher as the idea of tape-recording their views and opinions could be considered risky and thus participants may not be completely honest or open about their feelings (Oates, 2006). This study will use both methods of recording interviews, depending on participants' preferences.

In order to better track changes in usage behaviours over time, follow-up interviews and observations were conducted (Miles and huberman, 1994; Oates, 2006) with participants

when it was required (only with those who agreed to participate in two phases of the study). Most interviews were tape-recorded with the permission of the respondents, however, a few participants preferred not to be tape-recorded. Interviews were conducted in Farsi and English, depending on the participants' preferences and were translated and transcribed thereafter. The interview guide was provided to participants before the interview date, describing the research and the interview process along with the interview questions. The participants were assured of anonymity as part of their consent to participate in the research. Descriptions of the participants are therefore generic and unspecific, so that their identity is not revealed.

3.7.2 Observations

The observation of participants in a field study is essential and beneficial for many reasons. Oates (2006) has identified two general types of observation: a) participants are not aware of being observed by the researcher (covert observation) and b) participants are aware that they are being observed by the researcher (overt observation). This study benefits from the overt observation because of the ethical and moral standpoint; it is not acceptable to watch participants' Facebook interactions for research purposes, through covert observation.

However, Miles and Huberman discussed the applicability of bias in the process of observation as "'A' the effects of the researcher on the case, and 'B' the effects of the case on the researcher." (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 265). Triangulation is known as an effective way of managing the biases (Miles and Huberman 1994) in field study research. The triangulation process is based on the use of independent measures to evaluate the situation by the researcher. One way, for example, is to use different data sources for the data gathering process (Miles and Huberman 1994; Oates 2006). Therefore, this study benefits from triangulation by drawing on semi-structured interviews and partcipants observation.

Another technique for observation is identified as systematic observation (also referred to as structured observation) which involves using a predetermined plan to observe preselected objects or events (Oates, 2006). This approach can generate in-depth data and provide perspectives and views that are not available through other forms of observation. This study benefits from the systematic observation of participants, as the research aims

to observe the technical privacy settings application of the profile page, and this process is demonstrated by the participants to the researcher. Therefore, both overt and systematic observation techniques are applicable in the process. In this study, the researcher explores the field with the reaserch subject. The observation process takes place through the demonstration of profile page by the participant, therefore, it helps to limit the possible observation bias. This methodology was developed after the researcher faced many difficulties to recruite and conduct observation with Iranian participants (more details in follow up section). It was evidednt that the application of similar methods from SNSs studies in the westen context is not suitable for the participants in this study. However, this observation method can be applied to studies of SNSs in other countries. It is ethical in comparison to other observations methods in the SNSs field and reduces the bias from participants self reports from interviews and surveys as well as reduces the bias from the researcher, since the participant and researcher are both colaborartiong in collection observation of data.

The data collected from interviews are much more in-depth, the ability to follow up on points and flexibility in the questioning style allow the interviewer to bring out related issues. Although interviews conducted over the telephone or through video conferencing will still facilitate these advantages, face-to-face interviews also add the possibility of reading facial expressions and body language. In the case of participants in this study, all interviews were conducted in face-to-face settings, apart from a few follow-up discussions, which were very short and conducted for clarification on specific matters that were mentioned during the face-to-face interviews, therefore they were conducted over the phone.

To sum up, in this research multiple data collection techniques (interviews and observations) were employed. Interviews allow for the collection of in-depth data, but are difficult to implement with a large number of research participants (Swanborn, 2010). Observational techniques are good for examining specific situations (Oates, 2006). Although each technique uses a distinct approach and may produce different kinds of data, each is applied to the same research question. This can facilitate the gathering of multiple perspectives on the same issues. It may be the case that one technique reveals something that another technique would not, or perhaps one technique may corroborate or disprove the findings of another technique (Oates, 2006). It was therefore hoped that

the interviews would provide depth, while observation of participant's specific activities would then be used to confirm or disprove the findings of the study.

As described earlier in chapter two, the majority of literature reporting on empirical research in SNSs consists of studies revolving around quantitative data. A significantly smaller amount of research has involved the use of qualitative data, or a mixture of both qualitative and quantitative methods. Upon analysis of the literature, it is also evident that few studies have practised methodological pluralism or attempted to achieve triangulation of data. It is therefore hoped that this study will bring new insights into the potential use of more varied research methods in the SNSs literature. Next sub section, identifies the criterias for evaluation of the interpretive field study.

3.8 Trustworthiness of the Field study

Validity and reliability (Lincoln and Guba, 1985) are applied widely in research studies to measure the trustworthiness of a study. However, some studies have suggested that these measures are suitable to the positivist approach and are not applicable in interpretive research. The focus of interpretive field studies is on a particular matter rather than a general matter, and the nature of the qualitative methods used for data gathering and the epistemological assumptions of this way of research conflicts with validity and reliability measures (Lincoln and Guba, 1985). Similarly, Oates (2006) showed that the validity is defined depending on the research tradition, however, "a piece of research has validity, it means that an appropriate process has been used, the findings do indeed come from the data, and they do answer the research question(s)" (2006 p. 10).

The following describes how this study satisfies the trustworthiness criteria for this field study research. To ensure credibility of the field study, a safe environment for data gathering from the participants was created. The process of triangulation is useful to improve the trustworthiness by using a mixture of data gathering sources. Triangulation involves the use of multiple data sources in an investigation to produce a more complete understanding of the phenomenon studied (Oates, 2006). To address the trustworthiness of the field study, triangulation of data sources was applied and peer debriefing was used (Oates, 2006). As described, semi-structured interviews were conducted; observation of the technical privacy settings and privacy control activities was used to ensure an adequate level of confidence in the truth of the findings. Participants were given their

interview transcriptions and a summary of the initial data analysis, and were asked to provide their comments. Participant observation is used as a second data gathering source. During observation sessions, the codes identified from interview transcripts were discussed with participants for approval and confirmation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Transferability was improved by using detailed descriptions of interview transcripts. Extensive quotes were included to give the individuals in the case a voice; a strategy which Patton (1990) describes as enforcing the validity of the study. To ensure dependability, the extent to which the findings are consistent and can be repeated, external audits were performed to evaluate the accuracy and whether or not the findings, interpretations and conclusions were supported by the data. External audits also improved the conformability of the field study. The externals audit was the supervisor of the research study, as he was the only other person consented by the partcipants to review the transcribed data. This, along with the triangulation of data sources, enhanced the likelihood that the findings were not biased towards the motivation of the researcher. This study benefits from the triangulation of data sources as the combination of interviews and observations increased the likelihood of capturing the subjective nuances of the participants (Oates, 2006), as well as the constructed reality they described (Walsham, 1995), with the aim of exploring and understanding how and why they used Facebook in a certain way.

3.9 Ethical considerations

The importance of ethics and moral implications is identified as a key area of concern by scholars, especially with research that deals with human beings as research subjects (Flick 2006; Oates 2006). Literature on the subject of ethics is concerned with two important perspectives: the research subjects and their rights, and the responsibilities of the researcher towards research subjects (Flick 2006; Oates 2006). In this study, in line with Oates (2006) and Flick (2006), these two areas are fully considered and applied, and the next subsection explains the application of the recommended ethical rules in different stages of the study.

Flick (2006) identifies several codes of ethics produced by organisational bodies, including the British Psychological Society's Code of Conduct, the British Sociological

Association's Ethical Practice, and the American Sociological Association's Code of Ethics. Based on these codes, Flick concludes with two recommendations: firstly, that researchers must consider obtaining consent from participants prior to the data gathering process, and secondly, that the participants should not be harmed during the course of the research. Flick (2006) described harm as any possible physical or mental harm, the maintenance of the participants' privacy during and after the participation process, and the researcher's responsibility to provide honest information about the aims and goals of the research. Similarly, Oates (2006) identified that researchers must behave with integrity and follow an appropriate professional code of conduct towards research subjects. The participants must be given the right not to participate and to withdraw at any time during and after the data gathering process. Informed consent must be obtained and anonymity and confidentiality must be protected (Oates, 2006).

This study follows the University of Salford's code of conduct for researchers, and ethical approval was obtained from the university's ethical approval committee prior to the data gathering phase. Consent from participants was obtained before the interview process. Each participant was given a form with information about the purpose and methods of the research, and its procedures for data gathering purposes. The data collection tools used in this study (interviews and observation) all involve the extraction of views and opinions from people, and therefore all required ethical consideration.

A clear description of the purpose, aims and objectives of the research was providedat the beginning of the interview so that the participants were clear about what research activities they were taking part in. A printed statement describing the purpose of the research and the guarantee of anonymity and confidentiality was given to the interviewees for their signature. A tear-off slip was also provided for the participants to keep which included details of how to withdraw from participation in the research even after the data gathering process. All submissions from either the interviews or observations include the participant's consent .

The use of observational methods posed a more complicated ethical problem. Ethical considerations regarding research on the Internet and its consumption by humans is an enormous grey area (Oates, 2006). Problems arise due to blurred boundaries between the research situations in the virtual world and the existence of participants in the real world. Perhaps the biggest issue in terms of this research was whether postings on

Facebook and discussion boards were considered to be in the public domain or not. Oates (2006) describes a debate between researchers, some of whom see publicly accessible forum discussion material in the "Public" domain and therefore usable, and others who feel that posts on SNSs and the Internet in general are private within the circle they are interacting with. For example, in the case of an unrestricted Facebook page about a specific topic or organisation, participants might post to the Facebook page of that group assuming that the post would only be read by group members. They may not necessarily realise that the post could also be read by outsiders and unknown audience, nor that it may be used by researchers (for example, see posts on the BBC Persian Facebook page).

It was decided that anonymity and confidentiality would need to be strongly enforced. In the majority of real-world research, anonymity simply involves omitting names so that their identity is protected. However, if a quote from an anonymous online discussion is published, entering the quote into a search engine would quickly reveal the identity of the person who posted it. The inclusion of quotes from participants' Facebook comments, or any other information from the profile that may result in the identification of the participant was strictly forbidden. However, one might argue that such discussions could be considered as already existing in the public domain, but it must be remembered that this group of participants access Facebook with the knowledge that it is a cybercrime(according to the law in Iran), and it could have serious consequences for the user if combined with other accusations from the authorities in Iran.

Upon completion of each interview, participants were asked to demonstrate their profiles to the researcher. Those who agreed to do so were asked to demonstrate their profile page privacy settings. According to Oates (2006), observation techniques involve a great deal of involvement between the participant and the researcher and a significant amount of engagement time. All participants agreed to be observed by the researcher through their "Public" profile, but only ten agreed to demonstrate their profile and be observed by the researcher after the completion of the interview process. Due to the time constraints of this research, this meant that the number of cases that could be observed was rather limited as it was not feasible to recruit another 20 participants (to participate in another phase of interviews and observations) in order to include a total of 30 observations. Hence, after consultation with the supervisor and as the purpose of study is to conduct a qualitative in-depth investigation, the number of participants was approved to provide a

rich data. During the observation, particular emphasis was also placed on trying to both confirm and disprove the findings of the interviews.

3.10 Participant Sampling Process

Before defining the sampling techniques and specific samples used for the research, it is necessary to identify the sampling frame. A sampling frame refers to a defined group of people that constitutes the 'population' for the research (Oates 2006). In other words, a sampling frame includes a group of people which may be selected as the final sample. In the case of this research, the sampling frame is all the users of Facebook from Iran. Clearly, it is not feasible to contact every single Iranian person who uses Facebook. It is therefore necessary to specify the research sample from within the sampling frame. Various techniques are available for selecting a sample, which can be divided into either probability- sampling or non-probability sampling categories (Remenyi et al., 2005). This study employed purposive sampling followed by snowball sampling from non-probability sampling category.

Purposive sampling is usually based on predefined qualities, Patton (1990) identified that "the potential of purposeful sampling is in "selecting information-rich cases for study in depth" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). Similarly, Maxwell (1997) defined purposive sampling as a technique of sampling in which "particular settings, persons, or events are deliberately selected for the important information they can provide that cannot be acquired as well from other choices" (Maxwell 1996, p. 87). Purposive sampling was especially useful in this thesis, as the informants had to be active Facebook users, rather than just registered members. When attempting to locate samples of such people it was likely that one of the main indicators would be the number of connections that a person had. Based on this, the search for eligible informants was initiated and 60 individuals were identified, out of which only 10 agreed to take part in the study. As part of choosing a group of research participants through purposeful sampling, criteria were established to recruit participants. In order to qualify, participants had to: a) be an active Facebook user and have used Facebook for the past two years and b) be an Iranian national and available for face-to face meetings for interviews and observation (living in the UK and in Iran).

After identifying several candidates through purposive sampling, the first round of interviews was completed. The interview participants were also asked to recommend

people they thought might be interested in participating in the study. Thus, the snowball sampling began and the sample grew. In snowball sampling, the researcher uses existing participants as a source of introduction to other potential participants (Oates, 2006). The process of recruiting new participants continues until the researcher gathers the right number of participants. From a sample of 35 potential participants introduced through 10 interviews, only 23 agreed to participate in the study, 20 were contacted by the researcher. Therefore, in total, 30 participants contributed to the study with 30 in-depth semi-structured interviews and 10 participant demonstration and observation process.

3.11 Data collection process

To recruit participants, the researcher informed her own friends on Facebook about the study. Two of the participants were recruited through friends' networks (purposive sampling) and they were asked to introduce the researcher to people they knew would fit with the characteristics of participants for the study (Iranian nationals, adults, active Facebook users). Those "friends of friends" who agreed to participate in the study were contacted and recruited for interviews in person in Tehran and in the UK. Fifteen participants were recruited in Iran from the snowball process (RP15-RP30) and another fifteen informants agreed to participate in the UK (RP1-RP15). The majority were engaged in full-time employment but three of the participants worked part-time and were studying for a postgraduate degree. The minimum age for this study was 30 years old.

To gain the informants' trust, snowballing was used through introduction to other eligible friends from those participants who were recruited through purposive sampling from known contacts. However, this did not guarantee the attendance of recruited participants to the appointment and hence, the process of data gathering was faced with a number of obstacles. Five of the interviewees did not attend the interviews. The study continued with ten informants at that time. The absent informants were contacted by telephone on the same day to find out the reasons for their absence. Two of them failed to answer their mobile phones. The remaining three provided different explanations that implied they were concerned about attending interviews regarding their use of Facebook. One of them explained on the telephone that he became afraid of participating in the interview as a new job contract required him to sign a declaration not to join Facebook and other SNSs. He said, "I signed the paper while I was active on Facebook and continued using it under a pseudonym". He felt he might risk his job by participating in my research interviews.

Two of the interviewees decided to withdraw their participation, after almost a year after the interview date. To achieve the requirements of the study (based on ethical approval form), seven more participants were recruited in Iran during 2013-14. The empirical material of the study includes the complete transcription of thirty session interviews with thirty informants, fifteen living in Iran and fifteen living in the UK. All informants showed their Facebook profiles to the researcher and the relevant information was discussed during the interviews. However, only ten agreed to participate in observation sessions. Interview participants did not agree to contribute to observation sessions, due to personal reasons. Some cancelled participant observations due to shortage of time and wanted to terminate the data gathering process after interviews. Others (mainly those who were introduced to the researcher through snowball sampling) felt uncomfortable showing their profile page to the researcher as there was no previous social connection between the researcher and participants. This could be explained as a lack of trust, in Iranian society to research in general as they accosiate it usually towards government policies. Iranian population in which it is difficult to build trust and disclose information about personal activities in the first meeting. The order of the questions was not strictly followed as planned, and the interviewees were to a certain extent, given the chance to lead the interviews . Interviews from Group one was held in Persian and conducted at the researcher's home in Tehran. Each interview lasted about sixty minutes and was recorded. Observation took longer, between 2-3 hours for each case.

3.11.1 Data collection and research implementation process

A semi-structured interview question guide was developed to address the research questions. The guide provides a range of open-ended questions to prepare a discussion with participants about their experiences of Facebook use. Each interview started with a generic question about the participant's general use and the background of their Facebook membership. All interviews followed a natural pattern of conversation with the same interview questions.

The interview process started with the arrangement of an appointment. This was confirmed and an email with an overview of the research and a consent form was sent to the interviewee. Interviews were tape-recorded. Once the interview was transcribed, it was emailed to the participant for approval. Generally, the interviewing process started with an explanation of the research and the signing of the consent form. The same

questions and facilitation guides were used for all interviews. The questions were open-ended, allowing the participant to feel more comfortable by taking control of the dialogue and talking about what they wanted to. If any interesting issues emerged, these were probed further. The second half of the interview was more specific asking the participants questions which built on previous interview and observation data. Despite the benefits of the semi-structured interview method and its appropriateness for the research topic, there were some disadvantages. The most labour-intensive part of the process was transcribing hours of audio recordings. The observations made in this research are based on the author's perception of face-to-face sessions and electronic interactions with participants. The initial focus was on the privacy element of Facebook, since it was the use of settings and tools on the SNSs which was of particular interest to the author. The observations were not structured in any particular order and any events that were perceived as 'unusual' were given particular attention. The author was able to sit next to the participant, observe their Facebook activity and make notes on the process. In other sessions the author was engaged with participants via Facebook as the author was added to the friend list of participants and was able to follow their activities for an agreed period of time.

3.12 Rationale for the choice of this group of participants

The information collected for this study is a combination of interviews and observations. The best way to understand and measure how people present themselves online is by asking them in the interview, The empirical data was generated through semi-structured interviews between 2011 and 2012 and the second phase in 2013- 2014 (seven interviews upon returning to Iran, to compensate for those who withdrew from the study). It comes to light here where the information from two data gathering methods are brought together to give a rich understanding of how and why people share personal information online with respect to privacy concerns. The study investigates two groups of Iranians, those who live in Iran and those who live outside of Iran. Iranians outside of Iran are chosen from those living in the UK. The reason behind this is that as the researcher spent some of the study time in Iran and the UK (part-time study) it was therefore possible to recruit a mix of participants from two locations..

As previously discussed, Chapter Two illustrates that there were many studies on young people and students, mostly under the age of 22, undergraduate students in America or Europe. This research aims to extend the understanding of Facebook use by deliberately

choosing mature candidates who would offer different perspectives. The two chosen groups represent 30-year-olds and above, who were settled in their careers had taken in their career paths. These individuals have been working for many years and remember a time before SNSs were so deep-rooted in everyday life.

Collecting qualitative data on the interactions and practices of Iranians on Facebook is not easy for two reasons: first, Facebook is filtered in Iran and is accessible by using Virtual Private Networks (VPNs). Access and use of VPNs and other software which allow users to break Internet filtering is illegal in Iran (to date). Second, many aspects of interaction and social practices on Facebook are considered private and cannot be observed publicly. This resulted in the withdrawal of some people from participation before and after interviews, also it was against their previous agrrement with the researcher to take part in research.

Previously, literature highlighted the gap in the study of Facebook usage among other various nations and cultures (see chapter two of this study). Iran is an interesting place to start investigating self-presentation on Facebook. Popular media is full of stories of how individuals' Facebook use influenced and affected their lives and their families in Iran after the 2009 elections. Many were arrested for 'provoking unrest in illegal websites' by the Iranian government (BBC,2009, 2012, 2015). In became particularly more interesting to investigate, when Iran's cyber police defined Facebook usage as a cyber crime.

3.12.1 Descriptions of participants

This section presents the narratives of the participants, using pseudonyms to represent them in the study. They were all active online and all used Facebook with only two using both Twitter and Facebook simultaneously. Most of the individuals uploaded photographs, commented on posts and posted status updates and other content. Research participants 1-15 are Iranians living in the UK, Group one refers to these participants and Group two are research participants 16-30, Iranians living in Iran. In order to protect the identity of the participants I have referred to them using codes in order of interview participation, from RP1 (Research Participant one) to RP30 (Research Participant thirty).

Group one	Age	Location
RP1	30-39	UK
RP2	30-39	UK
RP3	30-39	UK
RP4	30-39	UK
RP5	30-39	UK
RP6	30-39	UK
RP7	40-49	UK
RP8	30-39	UK
RP9	40-49	UK
RP10	30-39	UK
RP11	40-49	UK
RP12	40-49	UK
RP13	30-39	UK
RP14	40-49	UK
RP15	30-39	UK

Group two	Age	Location
RP16	30-39	IRAN
RP17	40-49	IRAN
RP18	30-39	IRAN
RP19	40-49	IRAN

RP20	30-39	IRAN
RP21	30-39	IRAN
RP22	30-39	IRAN
RP23	30-39	IRAN
RP24	40-49	IRAN
RP25	30-39	IRAN
RP26	30-39	IRAN
RP27	40-49	IRAN
RP28	40-49	IRAN
RP29	40-49	IRAN
RP30	30-39	IRAN

Participant's Profile

3.13 Data Analysis

This chapter has so far provided a detailed description of the data collection. Individual data collection processes via observation and interviews were outlined. This section will focus on the two stages of the data analysis process, which were undertaken during this research as part of a field study research and afterwards, once the research data gathering process was completed. The two processes of data analysis also influenced the structure of this section. Each analysis process has a dedicated subsection. The definition of data analysis in this research is adopted after Miles and Huberman (1994) as: "We define [qualitative data] analysis as consisting of three concurrent flows of activity: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification" (p. 10).

The data reduction flow is concerned with: "the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting, and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcriptions" (Miles and Huberman 1994:10). The data reduction starts at the outset of the research before the data collection phase. This is reflected in the selection of

research questions and other initial thoughts. At the data collection stage, the data reduction flow is primarily concerned with coding, summarising, identifying themes and discerning patterns. After the data collection period, the analytical emphasis is on which concepts will aid in the drawing of conclusions. The analysis of interviews is undertaken as part of interpretive field study, the conclusions drawn inform the observation cycle.

Data reduction on interview transcripts started with readings of the transcribed material over and over again in order to become familiar with the transcribed data and classify participants' answers according to the questions. Once the data was reviewed many times, codes representing and indicating certain themes were extracted from the data. Finding similar or different patterns with regard to the empirical materials to construct a descriptive and an inductive approach aided the process of analysis. An inductive approach means the themes identified are strongly linked to the data and analysis is data-driven (Patton, 1990). In the coding process the data was conducted without trying to fit it into a pre-existing coding frame or the researcher's analytic preconceptions. The coding process took place to organise the raw data into relevant themes emerging from the data. Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 56) stated: "codes are tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study. Codes are usually attached to 'chunks' of varying size – words, phrases, sentences or whole paragraphs". The analysis resulted in the identification of the dominant themes. Themes were reviewed and relations to the other themes were checked. Defining and naming themes comes at this stage, where all themes from all transcripts come together, to reach the overall story of the analysis, generating clear definitions and names for each theme in order to proceed to the data display phase.

Data display is the process of drawing conclusions from pages of data. To achieve a satisfying outcome, this process must be carried out continuously during the data collection period rather than at the end of the data collection (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This stage is concerned with delivering logical summarised information to the audience. There are a number of different display formats for qualitative data, such as tables. The general aim is to display interview transcripts in an easier format for a clear understanding.

The final stage is where the analysis leads to the development of the study's conclusion. It is concerned with interpreting data and answering research questions. The interpretation

can be in the form of the identification of themes, emerging patterns and explanations, all of which were emerging from the data. At this stage, the emergent patterns and themes from the analysis was connected to the research questions and the literature in order to produce a report of the findings and analysis.

Verification of the conclusion is examined through testing the plausibility. In this research this was done through the observation of participants after interviews and participants' confirmation of the transcribed data after reading through their interview transcripts.

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study this study employed member validation and triangulation (Holloway and Wheeler, 2013). Participants were given the interview transcriptions and a summary of the data analysis, and asked to comment on the analysis and interpretation of the interview findings. The process of triangulation is useful to improve the trustworthiness by using a mixture of data analysis of different data gathering sources. The participant observation is used as a second data gathering source. During observation sessions, the codes identified from interview transcripts were discussed with participants for approval and confirmation (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Data analysis of qualitative research is "an interactive process which constantly iterates between data reduction, display and conclusion drawing/verifications" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 12). The three integral parts of the analysis have been iteratively implemented in this work. Miles and Huberman (1994) describe data analysis of qualitative research as a process where constant collaboration between the three stages must be maintained. After each interview, analysis steps have taken place. During the analysis, several codes were removed or collapsed due to redundancy, while others were broken into multiple codes. Following Miles and Huberman (1994), after coding the interviews, the author constructed "a summary of responses to questions related to each of the research questions" (Miles and Huberman 1994, p.178). On presentation of the findings, quotes were displayed after specific chosen code/theme. All names were changed in the presentation of findings, according to the interview order, for example, RP1 refers to research participant one.

Through interview questions the data analysis was first reduced to issues which the researcher wanted to discuss according to the research questions, then presented it in the

form of interview transcripts and analysed it through searching for themes. For those participants who agreed to take part in the observation cycle, the areas identified before the process were observed and certain issues that were raised during interviews were also observed. Both the initial findings and the interview transcripts were given to participants at the later stage for confirmation. However, this resulted in some participants withdrawing from the participant's agreement as a result of viewing their interview transcripts and hearing the voice recordings. Some provided fear of government authorities as a reason.

This affected the research time table and the researcher had to go back to the first stage and recruit a few more participants in order to compensate for the withdrawing participants. However, it must be noted that the data saturation was reached at that stage, but this action was undertaken in order to maintain the number of participants stated on the ethical approval form.

3.13.1 Stage 1: Analysis during data collection

Generally, data analysis of this work was conducted in two main stages: during data collection (Stage 1) and post data collection (Stage 2) and both stages of data analysis followed the three steps from Miles and Huberman (1994). The analysis during the data collection stage (Miles and Huberman 1994, p. 50) was conducted in the real-life settings during and after the interview process. This was conducted on the interview data gathered from those participants who agreed to take part in observation and profile demonstration. Many participants prepared to take part in observation and profile demonstration on the same day and at the same time that interviews took place, therefore it was important to highlight the initial themes and areas for further investigation at that time. The post data collection analysis was conducted when all the empirical data had been collected.

As discussed earlier, this research was subject to limitations which were a direct result of Iran’s settings for interviews on Facebook-related topics and interviews not wanting to be tape recorded and allowing unlimited observation, hence participant demonstration was thought to be more effective than observing participant public profiles. However, in this process, again participants were in charge of the observation, the researcher asked the participants to handle the navigation through their profile. This was done for two reasons: first, to respect the privacy of the participant by not controlling navigation around

the page and second, to build trust between researcher and participant. This strategy limited the researcher's control of the situation, but the benefit of this was that participants trusted the researcher, and therefore voluntarily disclosed more information.

A further limitation was that in the observation process, there was insufficient time between interviews and observations for the researcher to fully transcribe interview data to identify all the parts that were highlighted by the participant to be observed, therefore, the researcher followed an observation list to check the relevant content. However, this process divided the data analysis into two stages and was beneficial to the researcher's understanding of emerging trends and themes before the second stage analysis of the all collected data. Consequently, key themes as perceived at the time were noted (Data reduction) and used to inform participants for profile demonstration and observation (Data display) and to enable reflection (Conclusion drawing/verifications).

3.13.2 Stage 2: Data analysis after completion of data collection phase

The second data analysis stage was conducted after the completion of the interviews and observation process. At this stage, after completion of the data collection period as planned, the researcher had finally been able to distance herself from physical contact with participants and examine the data in more detail to introduce further themes and concepts from data transcripts. It is important to mention that while the researcher was conducting data collection, it was difficult to conduct data analysis simultaneously as she was under pressure to solve practical issues.

At this stage, each individual data transcript was read through and manually coded (Data reduction). Coding included sentences, paragraphs, or at times entire subsections of transcripts were allocated a certain theme. A theme is a term used to refer to the keywords that were used to explain the data in a more abstract form. Initially, some parts that were identified contributed to more than one theme and the identified themes were not logically connected to each other. After a few more reviews of coding and identifying themes, logical interconnections among themes and codes were established through finding complementing patterns of data. Therefore, each individual interview produced codes a, then these codes formed the categories in the shape of themes, and later all the categories again reduced to concepts contributing all the common themes (few main themes explaining all initial codes).

3.14 Summary

This chapter describes and discusses the methods used in this investigation. The first section described the various philosophical standpoints; research strategies and data collection techniques considered for this research. The second part moved on to describe in greater detail the implementation of the research process. The main themes discussed were the implementation of the research paradigm, the research method, data collection and data analysis. To satisfy the interpretive research paradigm adopted for this work, a description of the research settings and the participant's background were outlined. The participants were introduced in line with the ethical consent provided, which aimed to protect their identity. The implementation of the interpretive field study research method was discussed by drawing on the management of limitations, addressing research ethics and outlining the data analysis. Ethical considerations were outlined in detail, drawing on the consent form and the ethical approval process as stipulated by the University of Salford Ethics committee.

The research was conducted from an interpretive philosophical standpoint, conducting a field study and using a multi-method approach utilising two data collection techniques. This section concluded with the overview of data collection. The study has used two data gathering sources: observations and interviews of which descriptions have been provided. Data was collected subject to the consent form, interviews were tape-recorded, transcribed and sent to participants for their approval and general records. Most of the individuals the researcher approached were happy to contribute to the study, many suggesting that this was a new and important area which needed investigation, especially in Iran. The overall analytical approach adopted largely followed Miles and Huberman (1994). Data analysis was conducted in two stages: stage one was conducted whilst the data collection was taking place and stage two was conducted following the completion of data collection. Overall in this chapter the author explained why certain data is collected, what data was collected, where and how it was collected, and how data was analysed in order to answer the research question. It has been argued here that the approach taken was well suited to exploring the research question, and the benefits and weaknesses of this approach were presented.

4 Interview Findings and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the findings of the interview data collection. As described in the research method chapter, the interview participants were Iranian Facebook users. 30 separate, face to face interviews were conducted. A semi-structured interview technique was used, consisting of open-ended questions. After transcribing interview recordings and translating from Farsi to English, data analysis began. Data analysis in this research is adopted after Miles and Huberman (1994). By considering each individual interview data as a whole, several findings emerged. The chapter is presented around the stages which has followed during the interviews which was, in reverse, based around the topics covered in interviews' question guide.

This chapter is based primarily on the current research's fieldwork as examined through the Goffmanian lens and Facebook discourse. In particular, building on the groundwork provided by the previous chapters to produce an understanding of the findings from fieldwork, this chapter examines what happens when Facebook is taken up in the everyday life of Iranian adults. As this chapter is based on qualitative findings, the presentation of results differs somewhat in style and content from the thesis thus far. For example, parts of transcripts are included from face-to-face interviews, follow-up interviews and observation of participants. This approach is further informed by Goffman's (1959) model of self-presentation. Rather than arguing that Facebook is simply forcing unthinking users into complicated privacy-related problems in offline settings, this chapter draws on Goffman (1959) to demonstrate how users are meaningfully managing their privacy within the system of Facebook and how they control self-presentation concerns. This study has been able to demonstrate that self-censorship allows Iranian users to satisfy the need for connecting on Facebook while actively managing profiles through privacy settings and self- identified privacy strategies. Overall, this chapter analyses the intersection of Facebook and its users as a space where users take up and negotiate privacy and the public nature of the site within the context of their everyday social lives.

4.2 Functional profile construction

4.2.1 Technical and social barriers to connection

To gain some insight into the general use practice of the interviewees, questions were asked about the Facebook use for everyday purposes such as what they use Facebook for and how often they use it, and how they get connected to use it (how they have managed to use it despite its being filtered in Iran). This opening question was designed to warm up the discussion and to lead to the participants putting a definition on what Facebook use and participation entails for Iranians.

To address the research question one, participants were asked to describe how they are involved with Facebook, what methods they have used to get connected and how frequently they use it.

One respondent (RP4) said that: *"Generally, it is recommended to not access Facebook and YouTube at work from a work computer as the activities are traceable from work managers, it's for controlling the productivity of workers I guess, and the rest. They don't shut down the access here, but it feels the same really, being fearful of your manager for Facebook access. It reminds me how I used to access FB in Iran. Anyway, I can access Facebook from my mobile phone at work."*

A positive view of Facebook was described by this respondent (RP5): *"Now that I have the iPad it's much easier to access, to Facebook everywhere really, Wi-Fi is available pretty much everywhere I go, I love it, it's great. It's made Facebook much easier. I think Facebook is a great way to update people with your life and get updates from them."* Another participant (RP6) used Facebook less frequently: *"I normally use Facebook in the evenings in bed when I check my email before I sleep, I am not using it all the time like some people every minute of every day, if nothing's happened, like nobody's updated or anything, I log out."*

In terms of devices used, another person (RP8) said that: *"I use different devices, but probably the iPad the most because I check whilst watching TV. I don't access it from my work computer as I am always busy at work and I have my phone where I'm logged in on all the time if I need to see something, but usually at home or when I'm out on the iPhone."* Similarly RP19 explains: *"I access Facebook from home from my laptop with VPN. I sign*

in first thing in the morning to get the news, to see what's happening around the world and what we are not getting from our media here (Iran). I read the news and the thoughts of others on Facebook."

A contrasting view was given by RP18: *"I was not interested in getting a Facebook account as I didn't have VPN, it was costly at the time."* And another participant (RP20) said: *"I access Facebook from laptop at home and my mobile phone recently that I updated my VPN on; I used different proxies in the past."*

The impact of different mobiles was demonstrated by one participant (RP17): *"Since I have purchased this new phone I use Facebook more I think, in my previous phone I couldn't install VPN so I only accessed it while I was at home but now it's with me on the go."* This makes it a lot easier to access, he said: *"If it didn't have the same mobility I would feel locked into a computer."* Another participant (RP23) pointed out that: *"I use my phone and personal computer to access Facebook (we have installed the VPN so we can use it on the move) mostly at home while watching TV."*

A further participant (RP28) keeping Facebook access outside of work stated that: *"I use Facebook from my mobile and at home; it is forbidden to access Facebook at work, it is not possible as there is no VPN allowed for download."* VPN use was further described by RP19: *"I have purchased a very good VPN and I can download it in any device for a year if they (referring to cyber police) don't block it; I hate paying for VPN every time they block one."*

4.2.2 Entertainment and keeping connected

A number of different Facebook uses and activities among participants were identified. One respondent (RP10) described his involvement as: *"I like to share funny stories and the work of comedians, particularly Persian ones like Omid Djalili. This is because I like to share new things that people may not have experienced before. I use Facebook every day just as I use my email."*

Another participant (RP8) gives the following account*:* "*I use Facebook to check on the status, photos and comments. Sometimes I play Farmville with my sister who also uses Facebook. I do not really play the other games, I get invited from friends to join in but I*

would rather not, it is time consuming. Sometimes I comment on other people's posts and 'Like' a post."

Another interviewee classified himself as *"just a user"* because in his own words, *"I don't really do content posting".* However, unlike the above interviewee, he did participate in commenting on friends' posted content and actively involved himself with other Facebook pages from businesses and organisations around the world; in his own words he (RP17) stated: *"I use Facebook more for myself to have a fun time and to get information about everything really, I like to enjoy it the ways I want, seeing the other pages from other countries".*

Another participant (RP22) suggested this function for Facebook: *"In Iran we don't have a celebrity gossip magazine with shiny pictures like those in the UK so Facebook fills this gap in a way with the difference, here ordinary people are their own celebrities, it was fun to see what everyone is doing, where they have been, I get a lot of information from Facebook about others, that I didn't know before. I also like the other pages and get information from them, for example, there is the page I 'Liked' about health and I have learned very important things from it."*

This interviewee (RP22) was also involved in the management and maintenance of a Facebook page for fashion and Iranians' celebrity gossip in the Farsi language. She stated that she was involved with three Facebook public pages, but then suggested that it was mainly one now and her own personal profile page. Interestingly, this interviewee was also rather reserved when classifying her involvement and use, as it later emerged from the participant observation phase that there were several other pages which she had previously managed as admin. She stated: "*I think if it wasn't for sharing online I wouldn't capture all these photos and updates, I'm not sure where all this desire to share came from, maybe it's my 'i' technology (referring to her iPhone and iPad) which made it easy to share."*

A number of respondents described Facebook as a useful tool for staying connected to others. One participant (RP5) stated: *"Facebook is a very useful tool for people living overseas or far away from their community and family. For me it provides a way to be in contact regularly as it's difficult with phone and Skype calls." This was confirmed by* RP13: *"I use Facebook mostly to keep in contact with friends and family that was the*

reason when I started using it and I checked it every day. Only when I got the iPad I started logging in every day."

Another participant (RP7) had this perspective: *"I use Facebook to update family and friends on the 'adventure' of living overseas. I'm using Facebook to be in touch with my family in Iran as a family, we are living away from home in the UK where there are different expectations and lifestyles. I guess my use of Facebook is more about justifying the move to family, that by posting about the current achievements at university etc. it allows them to be a part of my day to day life."*

Facebook's purpose was described in a similar way by this participant (RP27): *"I use Facebook at home because I have a VPN installed on one computer, I don't have it in my mobile. I have joined Facebook because my wife wanted to join, we have one account and we both use it. She wanted to see in general what my friends are up to, also to see what our friends living abroad post and how they live really, in Facebook I can see and learn more about foreign countries than if I go for holiday to those places."*

One participant commented (RP1): *"I use Facebook as a communication tool. I share photographs. With Facebook, it is easier to be in touch with people you know and keeping updated with their life, this helps me keep ties very strong from a distance with friends and family back in Iran."*

As one interviewee, who was involved with several Facebook pages as both a user and page administrator, put it (RP22): *"Facebook is a social tool for me to touch base with friends that live far away so I still feel like part of their lives and share photos and updates on what we are doing. I also love reading links attached by others such as music, news, events, it keeps me in touch."*

4.2.3 Digital Skills and Engagement with Audience via Information Sharing and Information Seeking

There were different approaches to the range of information shared for keeping the connections and demonstrating participations. RP1 said:*" I try to post things with a positive and happy attitude because I'm quite a positive person."* Another participant (RP20) said that: *"In the past week I've shared some photos of funny things I saw on*

Facebook, commented on friends' posts, had chat messages with a couple of friends and played online games."

A relaxed approach to sharing information was taken by one participant (RP28): *"I share on my profile a lot of information such as date of birth, profile picture, email, mobile number, likes and dislikes for movies/books/fashion, school, university and previous employment details, gender, relationship status and religion."*

By contrast, RP4 had no multimedia information on his profile, he did not share photos; he gave his real name, but that was all. The interviewee attempted to address this issue by explaining that: *"I don't want to be so personal on Facebook, my friends forced me into joining Facebook, I comment on others' posts occasionally and 'Like' things."*

Another more cautious participant (RP10) said: *"In my profile I have posted pictures, email, where I work, education and I think where I live. I don't update information that often and I think I'm slightly selective and conservative with what I share."* Another interviewee (RP21) similarly stated: *"I'm using Facebook to keep in touch with people. I don't post updates every day, but I check it all the time. I'm using iPhone, laptop and PC to access information anywhere, anytime. I have shared my date of birth, profile, photo, gender, relationship status and education on my profile."*

Another participant (RP9) suggested benefits of using Facebook in the UK: *"Facebook is bridging the gap between us foreigners and locals here, for example, because of Facebook I know about my English colleague, otherwise I wouldn't have a clue if he is married or in a relationship or anything else. When I was working in Iran I knew everyone in my department and their personal lives, if they had children or they are single or where about in Iran they are from. If I was in Iran now I wouldn't add any of my colleagues to my Facebook, I wouldn't need to, I kind of could have guessed what sort of a life they have plus for security reasons I wouldn't add them, but here in Manchester Facebook helps me to get to know more about people here (referring to UK norms and customs)."*

Facebook is described as a useful platform to stay connected, especially with friends and family abroad or back in Iran. In the absence of direct contact with others, this platform provides a rich channel of information, enabling people to follow their friends, their photos and achievements. Also, it provides a rich channel for young Iranians to learn

about living abroad by following Iranian diaspora's life on Facebook. Some participants describe following others' lives on Facebook as entertaining and educational. However, people mostly share their special moments on Facebook such as parties and travels, which may be interpreted as a deliberate decision for self-presentation.

One respondent (RP18) noted simply that: *"I joined Facebook a few years ago, it was more about curiosity really; it allows me to find out what others are doing in their lives."* RP7's main reasons for using Facebook were, as he suggested, *"As a way to see what news my friends have and what they have been up to".* Another interviewee (RP17) agreed with this view by stating: *"I enjoy browsing on Facebook seeing what everyone is up to, reading the updates, I guess Facebook is all about getting to know new things every day."*

Another participant's view of Facebook was similar (RP8): *"I like to catch up with friends and family from home (referring to Iran) that I haven't met in years and to see what they are up to through either their photos or updates or information shared."* One interviewee (RP18) commented in a similar way: *"I am using Facebook to be in touch and connected to people, to see what family and close friends are doing, see their photos and maintain contact with overseas friends. I wouldn't see any need to use Facebook if the family and friends weren't using it."*

Another interviewee alluded to the notion of entertainment (RP19): *"It's very interesting to see someone's life that is different to my life, Facebook entertains in a way that I can see other people's lives. I usually log in a couple of times a day, mainly with iPhone at home, and post something like a status update or photo once a week."*

One respondent (RP30) said: *"I have joined Facebook because many of my friends are using it. It allows me to see what my friends are up to, and share updates and photos with family overseas, Facebook makes this easy to keep in contact, I have cousins living in California and Facebook allows me to be in touch."* Similarly, another participant (RP25) said: *"I started using Facebook because a dear friend moved overseas recently and we wanted to stay in touch. I live in Iran and I have family and friends living overseas, so Facebook is quite helpful."*

As several interviewees described earlier, participation is often based on personal interest, and keeping in touch with extended family members seems to be a popular reason for

information seeking. This interviewee (RP20*)* also suggested an interesting point: *"To get updates from others. I use Facebook for entertainment and to ask/share information. I occasionally post about my personal life, but am logged in every day to see what people are doing. I really like looking at people's profile, photos, I don't think I would have used Facebook if I didn't have many of my family and friends in it, there would have been nothing interesting to see in strangers' lives."*

However, participants living in Iran found that they have not received or sent a friend request to co-workers, unless they have been a very close friend outside of the work environment. It seems that individuals have an agreement among themselves that is something like this: "I don't know if you are on Facebook and you don't know about me," so they will not add or accept friendship requests from co-workers due to security and spying threats. Interview responses to questions targeting "reasons and ways of Facebook use" demonstrate how Facebook makes it possible for Iranians to practice social norms in online settings. The possibility of maintaining oneself in parallel in online and offline settings shows that Facebook use among Iranians is complex.

Information sharing and information seeking is often related to frequency of use and access to technologies such as VPNs. During interviews, often participants talked about the time they have spent on Facebook as they were answering to opening questions such as how they are using Facebook, and why they have started using it participants described their frequency of use as part of the answer to the question about how they use Facebook. In fact, of the 30 participants interviewed for this study, the participant who logged on the least often still did so once a week. One participant (RP5) suggested: *"I check Facebook and then ten minutes later check it again."* RP5 reported logging on to Facebook all the time on her smartphone and that she keeps checking updates every ten minutes until she goes to sleep. She constantly monitored the profiles of people she knows and sometimes profiles of strangers and people she has never met in person. RP3, who logs onto Facebook about once a week, is the least active participant. RP5 and RP3 reflect the two opposite ends of participants' Facebook log-in habits.

RP1 is an example of someone who spends long hours on Facebook. She used her laptop to access Facebook: "*If I'm busy at work, I sign in less because I don't have time when I'm working, and I'm too tired once I get home. On Facebook, it's like having a conversation with someone; just like offline conversations you need to have the energy to*

do it." The findings are in line with Lampe et al. (2011) who found that regular users of Facebook often develop more skill sets and are knowledgeable about using the site for different purposes other than finding friends. The participants show both variation and similarities in their levels of involvement on Facebook. These results also show how some participants use Facebook in numerous ways: socially, for entertainment, and as a knowledge gathering platform.

The findings observed in this study mirror those of McCullagh (2008) that have examined self-presentation on blogs. She found that "because the self is only developed through interactions with others and because the reflexive project of the self is a characteristic of late modernity, the opportunity to continuously work on the project of the self via the interaction on blogs and comments to posts was the main reason why the majority of bloggers engaged in blogging" (p. 8). Similarly, this study's finding confirms the association between the participants' use of Facebook as front stage and self-presentation. Furthermore, when asked to identify reasons for Facebook use, participants showed that their main reason is to be connected to people for social interactions. This confirms that participants recognise the self-presentation opportunities that Facebook provides.

Ellison et al., (2011), studied the social capital gain from Facebook connections and found that social capital is gained with social information seeking from Facebook connections. Christofides et al., (2009) argues that sharing information on Facebook is related to the need for popularity from users. The findings observed in this study mirror those of the previous studies as this study suggests that participants used information sharing as a means to gain information from their audience through visible shared content. Similarly, information seeking is accomplished because one's audience disclose information on their profiles in the hope of seeing others displaying information to them.

The fact that many participants check their Facebook accounts very regularly is significant and demonstrates how Facebook has become a part of the daily online activities. Participants reported logging on to Facebook simply to see if they had received a message or if a "Facebook friend" had updated his or her profile. Participants point out that the length of time they spent on Facebook depends on whether they were simply checking for messages or updating their own profiles, and checking out the profiles of their friends or strangers.

A number of respondents living in Iran noted that they access Facebook from home and personal devices and they have learned to cope with the filtering on Facebook by using VPNs. However, the respondents living in the UK accessed Facebook from a variety of locations freely, but they have faced access restrictions in the workplace. In particular, they found it useful to access on the go with mobile technology and free wifi in public spaces.

These findings further support the idea of Hargittai (2003) who used the term "digital inequality" to define different access levels to Internet technologies among American users. The different access to Internet between the two user groups in this study identified similar gaps in access to Facebook. Participants living in the UK can freely access Facebook from public or mobile Wi-Fi without VPN access, but the other group do not have this privilege. Abdollahyan et al., (2013) have studied the digital divide among students in Tehran University and identified that a skill-based digital divide is evident among their sample; they have suggested that inequality in access to the Internet causes inequality of literacy in Iran. However, this research shows that to have access to Facebook participants need to find a VPN, Tor, or any other software that hides their IP number so that they can become an invisible self on the Internet. This alone requires a digitally skilled user, to find and download the software, and afterwards they need to have another set of digital skills to participate in Facebook. The participants also demonstrated a set of digital skills for uploading photos and videos, using Facebook privacy features, chat and private messaging features and many more. The finding in this study contradicts the findings of Abdollahyan et al., (2013) as the participants living in Iran demonstrated similar skills to participants living in the UK. Those living in Iran have an additional set of digital skills in comparison to users in democratic countries, in order to overcome the barriers of access to the uncensored Internet.

4.3 Iranian heritage and Performance on Facebook

Unlike Facebook developers' initial aim for an open and public design, as they state: "We give you the power to share as part of our mission to make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, data policy 2013), many participants in this study want a space where they can control openness, where they can manage connections and visibility of content. Facebook's privacy policy provides a degree of control over visibility through its settings.

4.3.1 Fear of Publicness

Participants described their concerns as a direct result of Facebook being filtered and hence illegal to use in Iran. This has affected the initiating and building of a connection for users, for example, sending or accepting a friend request from known and unknown people was described as a challenging process as one needs to identify if the person is not related to any government agencies. Morozof (2009, p. 12) described the fears of Iranians about SNSs as he said: *"Both Twitter and Facebook give Iran's secret services superb platforms for gathering open source intelligence about the future revolutionaries, revealing how they are connected to each other. These details are now being shared voluntarily, without any external pressure. Once regimes used torture to get this kind of data; now it's freely available on Facebook."*

Participants found this state of affairs frustrating and they talked about different techniques to protect their profile visibility from others, such as using nicknames, use of avatars for profile pictures and restricting account visibility to specific audience by adjusting default privacy settings. Participants have reported employing Facebook's privacy settings differently. While some remained slightly open, allowing their profile picture to be viewed by the public, others restricted their profile entirely. When asked about reasons for applying the privacy setting, some participants expressed the belief that Facebook is a public space and the privacy setting can provide little protection, for example, RP27 described WWW as a public space and said: *"In my opinion, there is nothing private in World Wide Web."*

One participant (RP5) suggested: *"I'm a careful person when it comes to sharing with others and I don't really get that, I care about what friends and strangers would think. Because I know Facebook is a public space, no matter how I control privacy settings, things might get out of control, this is the reason I am careful of what I put up… I don't want to be embarrassed."* This cautious approach was shared by another participant (RP30): *"I filtered the way I interacted online and I believe everything people post online can be viewed by the public in some way, no matter how hard you try to be private by changing the privacy setting of your account."*

While most of the users were optimistic about improvements in Facebook privacy settings and were familiar with privacy settings, nevertheless many users still complained about

the violation of privacy by Facebook, for example, some users considered the "News Feed" feature in Facebook to be a violation of their privacy by revealing their activity that they are not willing to share with others. Participants also complained about Facebook's design intentions as to be "public". For example, if the profile's privacy setting is "Friends" it means all activities from the profile owner are visible to friends only, however, when the profile owner chose to comment and/or "Like" a post from other users and other pages which had their privacy setting's visibility set to "Public", this activity became visible to a range of unknown and unwanted audience unclear sentence. Boyd (2010a) has refered to this as new affordances from SNSs, where different contexts are collapsing as a result of information on them being searchable, persistent, replicable and scalable. She further emphasises that "While such affordances do not determine social practice, they can destabilize core assumptions people make when engaging in social life. As such, they can reshape publics both directly and through the practices that people develop to account for the affordances. When left unchecked, networked technologies can play a powerful role in controlling information and configuring interactions" (Boyd 2010b, p.7). This is especially harmful for users from countries like Iran. Participants talk about avoiding the sharing of content and personal photos as a way to avoid privacy risks.

4.3.2 Personality/heritage influence

A number of respondents found that the nature of their personality (being shy in front of others, being generally conservative) and Iranian heritage were reasons for controlling the privacy and visibility of shared content to the audience. One (RP9) suggested that: *"I am a naturally conservative person. I was brought up to be private, so it might be related to my Iranian heritage."* Similarly, another participant (RP11) said: *"There is both a professional and personal pressure to be on Facebook, not being on Facebook is like not being informed and updated with information on things because they were discussed or shared on Facebook."*

Another respondent (RP12) noted that: *"Probably it does relate to my background, but it's more about the sort of person I am."* In particular, one (RP13) suggests: *"I think it is more family upbringings that affect my sharing and maybe a bit of my personality as being shy, I have rules for what to share and what not to share, I am also aware that I have a variety of friends with different understandings of the things I might post so I am*

careful with what I share." Another respondent (RP20) noted that: *"I haven't really thought about it, but Facebook is a global platform and I'm not just sharing with other Iranians, as I think Facebook is not a private space so this is maybe affecting my certain attitude towards sharing. I think it is more to do with me and my personality. I think it's embarrassing to post everyday activities; perhaps that's from my Iranian heritage that I care about what people think about me, but I know people in the west don't really care what others think about them, they behave more relaxed and I guess it is because they have experienced much personal freedom more than us in Iran."*

This echoes the findings of Morzof (2009) who notes that now Facebook provides the regime in Iran with an accessible and easy platform to gather information about citizens and use it against them. This information in the past was obtained through surveillance and detentions and Interrogation of people, but now the same people are willingly displaying personal ideas and opinions. Although the popular press in Western countries (see for example BBC News, The Guardian, Huffington Post) is full of examples of mistreatment and jailed individuals in Iran as a result of Facebook information disclosure, this does not prevent individuals from accessing the SNSs and specifically Facebook.

4.3.3 The negotiation of authentic "self" through performance

Several participants described their self on Facebook as a self that they felt was true and authentic. RP18 stated that: "*I like to think that I am who I am, in real life or in Facebook it is the same."* Another participant (RP16) added that: "*I don't separate who I am for different groups of people, but I know many people who do and I think that's a reflection of their offline behaviour too."* Similarly, RP6 said: *"In Facebook the things I say in the posts and the pages I like are exactly the same things as I would do in real life. I think my friends are the same, open and honest about what they share and I think they are not acting."*

Another participant (RP25) stated: *"I use Facebook so that I can continue to be in touch online with my friends that I know in real life, of course it is presenting my true ideas online."* RP5 spoke of the way Facebook's design makes people present a true self on Facebook, saying: "*I think the presence of friends and family on Facebook make it impossible to portray a different picture of yourself."* RP11 similarly said: *"I don't want people to think I'm an idiot from my posts. I try to be as naturally like who I am, so I can't*

get into trouble. I don't really care what other people post, but, if someone puts up a photo of me that I don't like, I will tell them to remove it."

Another participant (RP13) suggests that: *"I think some of my friends blocked my postings or block me, they don't want to see our ugly reality in Iran in my opinion, I was told the stuff that I shared is too depressing and some people prefer to not see it on Facebook, I share honest and true material that I believe people need to see, but it proves many of my friends would rather not comment on this stuff as it might bring their image down in front of their foreign friends, you know what I mean."*

Meanwhile, one participant (RP24) suggests: *"Facebook is definitely not the 'true' self of some people as they only put things on there and they want people to see them that way, in my opinion people hide many things and the things they share is mostly from other pages, like they share the quotes from a poet's page to show that they are cultured."*

The decision to use a specific profile photo was also considered a very important self-presentation decision. Recognising others' photos as a tactic for self-presentation is popular among interviewees. One participant (RP13) gave an example: *"In my friend list a couple's profile photo is of their wedding, they both have the same profile picture for years, if you see them in person you wouldn't believe it's the same person, I mean people age, right!" This* interviewee alluded to the notion of lack of sincerity about others' self-presentation decisions.

Another participant (RP6) had this view: *"The profile picture is meant to present the user, but many of my friends have a photo with their spouse or children; I believe there is a trust issue among Iranian couples, what is the point of having a photo of your spouse in your profile picture, it is meant to be representing you."*

One individual (RP22) stated that: *"I have asked people to remove photos of me that I did not like. I don't want to have damaging stuff in my profile, I would rather keep it simple and positive."* And another (RP19) commented: *"I try to keep my profile as a positive space as I think people like to see happy stuff."* In particular, one (RP20) suggested that: *"I don't want to look silly on my profile picture, after all, that is what the public sees when they search for someone. I always have professionally snapped photos, most people I know have a flawless profile photo from special event photos like wedding and*

graduations as a profile picture, I think it's because of the flawless quality of professional photos is what people are after, no one wants to look embarrassing." This participant suggests that individuals in her experience present an ideal physical image of self in public through their profile photo, and this is how Facebook allows people to use it as a way to manipulate others.

In general, participants described their profile picture as the most important feature in Facebook. The care and attention given to selection of a profile picture highlights the blurred line between presenting an authentic self or self-censored one. A number of respondents found that they had no embarrassing information posted about them on Facebook; they thought it was because they did not post embarrassing pictures, or that their friends had similar internal rules about posting. From the observational data there was evidence that audience had altered information and some had gone as far as using "Photoshop" software to edit photos before sharing with others.

The use of photographs on Facebook is one form of self-presentation practice, and interviewees in this study demonstrated similar attitudes to participants in Mendelson and Papacharissi's (2010) study. They define photographs *"as an instrument of self-presentation"* (p. 1). They argue that the photographs displayed by Facebook users are *"highly selective version of themselves"* (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010, p. 2); this highlights the extent of strategic self-presentation.

4.4 Engaging with Audience

Facebook allows users to have control over their information and who sees it. It is controlled through adjustment to the user's Facebook profile, "friends list", and content visibility to a known audience in the "friends list" and an unknown audience outside of the friend list who can see the user's Facebook account. The user can modify the visibility of each section by changing the privacy settings. For example, a user can change the visibility of the friend list to everyone, friends, custom, and only me. However, the Facebook profile is visible to individuals outside of one's friend list, but content visible to non-friends might differ according to the privacy setting. However, non-friends have no restriction on viewing one's cover photo and profile photo and profile display name; this content is public by default and so far there have been no attempts by Facebook developers to provide a solution for the visibility control. As was evident from the

interview findings, Iranian users have developed a strategy to overcome this issue through self-censorship and use of pseudonyms. Non-friends can send private messages, address the user, send friend requests and search for the user profile from search engines. However some users chose to disable this option from privacy settings, in order to gain full control over initiating a connection.

Interview participants suggest that one of the reasons they developed a Facebook profile was to stay connected with friends and to easily communicate with them. Using Facebook to stay connected to friends and known people from an offline setting has been identified by other researchers (Ellison et al., 2007; Steinfield et al., 2008) as mentioned before, as a main reason for Facebook users' participation, however, participants in this study have expressed concerns about their connections with audience.

One (RP20) suggested that: *"I found the behaviour of people on Facebook interesting. I think a lot of people who post are looking for comments and positive compliments. For example, when they post a status update 'I am at the gym', what they want to hear is like no, you are fit or you don't need to go to the gym or well done. Or when they post like 'I'm shopping shoes' I guess they want comments like 'I wish I was there' (she laughs)."* Another participant (RP23) suggested that: *"I think that Facebook allows me to show the world that my life is not boring."*

A further participant (RP28) noted that: *"I update my status most days, talking about a variety of things like what I'm planning to do, many things really. I share a variety of things like lunch, food, etc. with my friends, I have divided them into groups so it is easier and safer to share things with close friends and those I don't want particularly to see my stuff."*

4.4.1 Freedom to contact others

In comparison to an offline setting, Facebook provides a space with no limitations to get connected to the opposite sex for users in countries with gender segregation rules and defined lines of interaction among the opposite sex in public spaces. As RP28 puts it: *"Facebook is very popular among the young Iranians I think, all my friends use it, despite being banned everyone uses VPNs to get connected, and to get to be in touch with boys and girls that we can't mix with easily outside. In Iran we have some troubles having relationships with boys in university, work and other public spaces but Facebook is a*

relatively free space for having communication with men. In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with that, but our society and culture and also government don't approve of that."

Respondent RP27 gave a married person's perspective: *"When I first joined Facebook my wife and I had separate Facebook accounts, and I wanted to see her page and friends from university etc, but later we have decided to have a joint account."* When he was asked to explain the reason for it, he replied: *"It's very interesting that you ask this question, you must know as a researcher that most married couples in Iran use a joint account or have their profile pictures of both of them presenting to the public that they are together, it's not because they don't trust each other, I think it's the culture, in Iran online spaces and chat rooms are always known for searching for new partners and in Facebook some people still think this way."* He continued by saying: *"Some married men say the main reason they join Facebook is to control their wife's page through their friend list and their relations with others. In addition, men believe when they present themselves on Facebook as their wife's partner, other men will not think of contacting their wife."* This reflects on the changing nature of interactions on Facebook: when one gets married in the offline life, equally interactions online get re-shaped, and there is a change from how it was used initially.

Facebook can create tension between couples in Iran, mostly based of the image propagated by the state. Individuals with a religious upbringing and families are particularly likely to be more pessimistic about the use of Facebook. RP27 had his privacy settings on friends only and had never friended someone that he did not know. RP27 mostly used Facebook to share photos with friends/family. He was concerned with what his friends might think of his wife's posting: *"We both add our friends to this account so I know who she knows and she knows who I know and all our friends know we share this profile together, but sometimes she posts girly stuff which I might not like, but then everyone knows it's her not me (he laughed)."*.

Participants in interviews suggested that the main audience for their Facebook profiles is their "friends" and people they know from offline settings and had met face to face before. In response to the questions about friends and connections on Facebook, one participant (RP6) suggested: *"It is my close friends and people I know that I am in touch with on Facebook. I do mean to stop some people from seeing things on my Facebook and change the privacy settings, but I haven't done it yet. But most of the people on my Facebook are*

my friends." This view is supported by another respondent (RP1): *"I have many friends on Facebook from different walks of life; work colleagues and fellow students, extended family members, but I am in touch mostly with my close friends. I sometimes look at friends of friends to see if there's anyone that I don't know."*

The finding here echoes of Marwick (2005)who has argued that privacy settings alone do not address the control of visibility to invisible audience, for example on Facebook, users are 'Friends' with a range of people whom they may know from different offline settings, such as acquaintances, co-workers, and family.

4.4.2 Iranian heritage influence on sharing

Cultural background did make a difference to what participants would share online. This study recruited two sets of participants from one culture and national heritage but living in two different countries. The first set live in Iran, where accessing SNS, and specifically Facebook, is banned and the only way to get connected is to use VPNs and this is illegal and considered a crime. Cyber police in Iran deal with this crime there. The second group of participants is those currently living in the UK, and accessing Facebook with no filtering from a service provider. This group all lived in Iran for some time and experienced Facebook use in Iran too. This part of the study tries to capture and understand participants' interpretation of use and access to Facebook in two different countries; in one country, it is a website for social and personal use and in the other, users could be arrested for using it. One participant (RP14) suggested: *"This is a combination of my work and my upbringing. At work, because I've been told about it and as for my upbringing because I came from an incredibly conservative Iranian family, I also prefer to keep my private life for myself if possible, and my Iranian upbringing contributes to this I guess."*

When asked about Iranian heritage and upbringing and its influence on Facebook use, RP1 suggested: *"I don't want people who are working with me to see anything that they wouldn't like; I mean specific things about Iran, I don't approve of revealing too much to people I don't know, it may be my culture that I don't want to express it online."* Another participant (RP15) answered that: *"I've never thought about that at all because we are a Muslim family, we don't show much affection in the real world and I think it is the same online in Facebook although I think being from Iran and all the press behind*

Facebook use I am influenced by what I share with others, I usually think like, is it ok to talk about this topic before talking about it." One participant (RP14) simply said: *"I don't know the answer to this one. I like to share things with people back home who don't get to see the things outside of the country. But I try not to upset anyone with my posts, it's about sharing the things that I think are right or not right. I am generally careful with what I say online because I don't wish to face trouble from authorities when I return to Iran."*

RP7 said that his cultural heritage influenced what he shared online: *"When returning home to Iran for brief holidays, I would always post photos about 'typically Iranian' things so my friends around the world could see how culture is in Iran and what things look like."* Iranians' social life has two dimensions; one in public settings and one in private settings. Similarly the audiances are devided based on distinction in offline settings.For example, in the public places (anywhere outside of one's house) one has to follow the mandatory rules to wear 'hijab', but in the private spaces one does not follow those rules. Facebook allows just one profile picture at a time, based on this assumption that users have one social representation in offline settings. This can be extended to other Muslim cultures as well. Females in Islamic culture have two levels of self-presentation. One should wear hijab in public, but can be more relaxed in private settings.

It has been reported that SNSs users have imagined audience in mind before posting content online (Marwick and Boyd 2011; Boyd 2007) but the imagined audience might be entirely different from the actual readers of a profile. Marwick and Boyd (2011, p. 2) have argued that "every participant in a communicative act has an imagined audience. Technology complicates our metaphors of space and place, including the belief that audience are separate from each other". They have claimed that individual's knowledge about the online SNS communication audience is limited. Alternatively, participants reported part of their careful attitude towards interaction with others on Facebook is related to their upbringing and their Iranian heritage. The existence of imagined audience for this group of participants have its route in their everyday life as they have brought up knowing there is always someone out there listening and watching us. They have altered to some extent their interactions on Facebook around these kind of ideas.

4.4.3 Seeking community approval

Participants were concerned about receiving approval and confirmation from their friend community for activities on Facebook. Activities such as posting status updates, changing profile pictures and sharing content from the web or offline was carefully altered before posting. Another group of participants identified that receiving approval about profile content and posts from Facebook contacts is highly important. As one participant (RP18) stated: *"I am very conscious of how other Iranians will perceive me online and what people will think about my posts."*

One of the interviewees (RP27) stated that: *"I don't update status or upload pictures, just like real life, I would not say something that would question my beliefs. I usually don't leave home without checking myself in the mirror that is the reason why all Iranians have a full body size mirror on their doorway, they want to check themselves first before leaving the house and again first thing when they enter the house to see if they looked alright in public (he laughed)."* Another respondent (RP16) noted that: *"I definitely consider the possibility that the things I share will not become a problem in the future. This might also be a consequence of society in Iran becoming a lot more relaxed about online social interactions."* Similarly, another participant (RP30) suggested that she was concerned with what her friends might think of her posts, due to *"this conservative behaviour in the Iranian culture. When I update my status it's for things I hope one of my friends may be interested in and like or comment on it."*

In particular, RP17 found that the community's disapproval can cost more than anyone expects: *"I am careful in my postings, I don't share anything really with the public, if they find out I have a Facebook profile, I might lose my job, it is a cybercrime from their point of view, but it doesn't stop people from using it"*, and hence his unwillingness to participate and interact with Facebook actively. This participant later described himself as a lurker and then added: *"I have shared content occasionally, but I'm much more of a lurker because I usually don't comment and like others' activities as my friends do."*

Another respondent noted that simply (RP22): *"I would not communicate anything terrible that had happened to my friends/family on Facebook or post something that questions my reputation in the community."* Interestingly, this participant (RP22) talked about why rejecting a friend request from family and community members might be

interpreted as being secretive and not truthful in Facebook, saying: *"Rejecting a friend request can be worse, you know, they will think something is going on there and she is hiding something or she is up to no good in Facebook, something is wrong with our Iranian heritage, everyone wants to know everything."*

This echoes the findings of Dwyer et al., (2007) have found that online connections can develop in SNSs where privacy concerns are high and trust-related issues in new connections do not prevent users from information sharing. These results therefore need to be interpreted with caution as interviewees in this study talked about situations where new relationships were built up on Facebook, with known and trusted existing social connections such as extended family members from offline settings. The findings show that participants are careful about information sharing and in the above cases; seeking approval from known people has reduced information sharing habits. Similarly, Ellison et al., (2007) have argued that trust among social ties results in less privacy concerns and more information sharing; but this statement contradicts the interview findings of this study. Participants demonstrated that they would hide photos and information from their extended family members. This shows that trusted, close ties in offline settings will not necessarily be shaped for, and carried onto, the online setting. During SNSs use, individuals imagine their audience; without being able to know their audience, they create content for an imagined audience, but there is an actual audience on the other side of the screen reacting and judging the performance (Marwick and Boyd, 2011).

At the same time, participants negotiate multiple, overlapping audience by strategically concealing information, or using the grouping feature to group different audience to target uploaded content to that specific audience (Lampinen, 2014). On sites like Facebook with large audience, in order to present both an authentic self and an interesting personality, users may only post things that they believe their Friends and acquaintances will find non-offensive (Marwick, 2005).

Participants reports here that they are aware of others as audience in Facebook, not necessarily known by them. Marwick and Boyd (2011) found that the audience consists of both real and potential viewers of the SNSs user's profile. To create a communication network, these viewers are connected to the user and to each other, although connections

among individuals differ in strength and meaning (in the case of RP27, he demonstrated a fear of potential audience contacting his wife, hence, she has deleted her profile).

4.5 Privacy and Surveillance concerns

Interviewees indicated that they knew the stories that friends or acquaintances faced threats from the state because of using Facebook. Participants stated that they did care who saw their Facebook profiles. Participants were concerned about the availability of content to government agencies, employers and extended family members. This was largely due to the participants' belief that Facebook is an illegal venue online in Iran and employers would be less likely to hire them and that relatives would misinterpret the material on their profiles or take it out of context.

All of the participants confirmed that they knew about Facebook surveillance by Iranian authorities. Interviewees indicated that they knew the stories that friends or acquaintances faced threats from the state because of using Facebook. Participants stated that they did care who saw their Facebook profiles. Overall, these cases support the view that government agencies have the capabilities to use Facebook profiles for surveillance and control. This was largely due to the participants' belief that Facebook is an illegal venue online in Iran and employers would be less likely to hire them if it was known they used it. Some participants expressed the belief that content on Facebook profiles might be misinterpreted by their extended family and friends too, and fear of surveillance from the existing friend network is another reason for privacy measures.

4.5.1 Surveillance by authorities

It was explained by one participant (RP23) as follows: "*I wouldn't want a stranger or any government official reading it so I have set up my Facebook page to only be viewed by my friends and I check my privacy setting regularly."*

Another group of participants reported the fear of surveillance and monitoring of government and employers as a contributing factor for privacy concerns. RP16 said: "*I definitely considered what an employer or government agencies would think before I posted things in the past, I have deleted posts after posting it on Facebook re-considering whether it is a good idea to have it on my profile as it related to me and might be harmful, like political comments."*

Participant RP11 added: *"I used to always put different types of fun things on Facebook. Now that I have a new job and my manager is on Facebook, I'm a little more conservative and far more aware that things are on Facebook and accessible to public. Now I have to be aware of my career and how I am perceived here as a foreign employee to my manager as well as having a fear of surveillance from back home (Iran)."*

Another participant (RP5) noted that: *"I'm concerned by reports on media that employers in the UK would check employees on Facebook and their account, it sounds like the Iranian authorities controlling people's Facebook accounts; for them to be concerned about things happening in employees' private life is not acceptable."*

One interviewee (RP6) suggests: *"The place where I work has informed employees of the potential negative impacts of Facebook, and I think our bosses always check Facebook, so I leave it open for everyone to view it."* Similarly, another participant (RP13) commented: *"My Company claims that they have guidelines for Facebook use because sometimes employees' post can harm the reputation of the company, but I can't see how it would? That is another excuse for surveillance of people's lives."* One participant (RP3) simply noted: *"In my opinion, it is just another excuse to be like a big brother state and control people's lives, but at the same time claiming to have the democratic right for freedom here, I don't understand why Facebook use should be a worry for my employer here, sometimes it feels like being in Iran, as I have to think twice before commenting and sharing my opinion."*

Several participants from the group living in Iran also talked about their concerns about being implicated as Facebook users. One (RP22) suggested that: *"Occasionally before I post something I think about the government or employee or family members that are not in my friend list and what if those I don't want to see my posts see them, but then Facebook is a social tool for me to touch base with friends and share photos and updates with each other. I also love reading links attached by others such as music, news, events, it keeps me in touch, these are everyday activities and I don't think they are harmful to anyone, I don't understand why they have filtered Facebook in Iran."*

Another respondent (RP29) noted that: *"I have read about people who have had bad experiences from using Facebook and some of them are even jailed and died (he referred to BBC Persian news on Sattar Beheshti). For this reason, I think, I am extra cautious in*

what I say on Facebook." This was supported by two other participants. RP22 said: *"occasionally before I post something I think of the government or employee or family members that are not in my friend list and what if those I don't want to see my posts, view it."* In addition, RP29 commented: *"I don't post too much as it might be misinterpreted, I have read about others who have had bad experiences from using Facebook, especially since the 2009 election and its filtered status makes me to be extra alert about posts."*

Another interviewee (RP28) referred to the notion of Facebook for political posts: *"My use of Facebook for political posts was limited to some specific time when political tensions are high, but it is temporary, like election 2009, I have only posted stuff that other people shared, nothing dangerous. I haven't had an embarrassing moment so far or need to delete what I said in my status updates, I always keep redlines about do and don't in Iran in consideration when I want to share something."*

One (RP25) said that: *"I am, as some might say, slightly conservative about what I share because I think in Facebook, no matter how your security settings are, if someone wants to find you, they will, and if it is from the above (referring to the government) they can."*

Another participant (RP10) was also cautious: *"I am careful of what I post because of the political situations where friends and family live. It's difficult for my friends and family in Iran to get access to Facebook because it is filtered and banned to access since the election 2009, so I tend not to send photos and sensitive things from back home in Facebook."*

Respondent (RP3) acknowledged the risks: *"I have seen news on BBC about Iranians being jailed for Facebook so I am very aware that information can be misused. For example, my friends post sensitive stuff, like political comments, I think they don't consider that it might be harmful to friends or family who are in Iran. This might have consequences for them too when they go back to Iran."*

This interviewee (RP14) also admitted: *"I do change myself based on what the government of my home country might think, but I am careful with people's privacy. Never tag names on my posts. I have changed some privacy settings based on being worried about people reading it on Iran, it is not government worries only, sometimes I rather hide some stuff from certain people on my profile, I think the best practice is not*

to post something that might be harmful in the first place, but it is not manageable all the time."

Participants living in the UK have mentioned the fear of employers as they have been informed about an online activities code of conduct. They also expressed a general fear of Iranian authorities' surveillance. However, while participants in Iran avoided friendship with co-workers as a way to hide Facebook participation from employers, they were more concerned about government authorities.

Previous work has identified potential privacy risks and negative consequences associated with Facebook use. This finding supports the idea in which privacy concerns and negative consequences of Facebook use are linked to self-presentation strategies. This finding corroborates the ideas of Gross and Acquisti (2005) who suggested the risks to Facebook users' privacy such as stalking and identity theft. This study is also in agreement with Boyd and Ellison's (2007) findings, which identified a number of privacy risks threatening Facebook users such as damage to reputations, unwanted contacts, surveillance, harassment, and use of personal information by third parties.

4.5.2 Surveillance of/by known audience

On information sharing issues, a discussion with interviewees led to some of them describing looking for other profiles as a surveillance-like activity and explaining that they can be a subject to those of other Facebook members. One individual (RP17) stated that: *"I'm looking at others' Facebook profiles to get a better idea of what they're like, it is entertaining, that is why I'm cautious about what I share publicly as I think about others are doing what I'm doing."*

Similar views were expressed by another interviewee (RP16), who suggested that*: "I have deleted my extended family from Facebook, the noisy ones I mean; and I have blocked some family members so they can't see me there, some people should keep away if possible, I think Facebook is not for family members."* And another (RP21) commented: *"I am not a big fan of sharing personal information online as I know that it can come back to you. I often look at what others have posted and get embarrassed about what they are sharing".* One interviewee (RP23) spoke of the possibility of surveillance by other people as normal activity in Facebook not only for the purpose of fun, but also as a way of keeping track of others' lives among Iranians, and suggested: "*I am not that worried*

about what I share with my friend list because when I post something I think carefully not to post harmful stuff for my reputation or my security". This interviewee suggested the idea that not sharing and self-censoring partly provides a safer option in any case when individuals are worried about surveillance by others. Another participant (RP22) said: *"I consider what my friends would think when I upload content, I try to be myself always when I post something, I know other people might be looking as sometimes I look at strangers' profiles for fun."* This interviewee has confirmed the frequently described surveillance by other Facebook users, and suggests that it is for entertainment and could be harmless.

4.5.3 Privacy concern from tagged content

A tag feature provides a type of link to someone's profile. Tagging is used to show the tagged person's association with the story (all content posted on Facebook can be tagged; it can be a photo, location, event, video, another person's profile) and add it to their timeline. Once a profile name is tagged, it is visible to the profile user and their friends in "News Feed". Photo sharing has become a popular feature of Facebook. This feature of the site allows users to tag photos with those who are in them. The findings show that participants control photo privacy, according to their needs. Participants reported that they have responded to the unwanted disclosure of content by "untagging" or adjusting the privacy settings to preview the tagged photos before permitting them to be visible to others. However, the tagged content is visible according to the privacy settings of the profile which published the content first. Participants were all highly selective of their profile picture and album photos. The photos' unattractiveness was generally given as the reason for untagging.

Some of the participants have identified untagging photos as a way of preventing further issues with authorities in Iran. A number of respondents (living in the UK) found that they learned to cope with privacy concerns by deleting their profile photo or deactivating their Facebook profile for a short period of time while travelling to Iran. One respondent (RP15) stated that: *"I have deactivated my account every time I travel, I have heard them check passengers' Facebook on their arrival in Iran. This happened to my friend in Tehran airport, the immigration officer asked her if she is using Facebook, and she lied and said no, officers escorted her to a room and searched her name, her profile came up, immigration officers told her 'We know what you do, don't lie to us' and they let her go."*

In further discussion regarding photo tagging issues, one interviewee (RP16) stated: *"I have been tagged in photos by a friend who has an open profile. I only share my photos with friends so I untagged myself. I might have asked people to remove photos of me in the past, I would rather post things myself, then I'm in control of what others can see from me, this way I won't be in trouble from family, work, government, this way I know who is seeing things (she laughs)."*

Another respondent (RP10) noted that: *"On an Iranian student demonstration in front of BBC Manchester building in protest against 2009 election results, some people were filming and taking photos of the scene, of course it all was posted online. Some students suspected that there might be government agents among the crowd (it is well known among the Iranian diaspora community in Manchester that a large number of Iranian government employees are residing in Manchester through association with Iranian cultural bureau and government sponsored PhD students). On arrival in Tehran, my friend was arrested, they held his passport and he couldn't get back to Manchester for almost 6 months just because he was there; they had identified him from Facebook and the Persian student society in Manchester, he wasn't a political activist or anything. I have heard about more incidences after that. Since then whenever I go back home, I deactivate my Facebook or any trace of me on the web."*

One participant (RP5) said: *"I have never asked anyone to remove photo tags of me. I believe that if you are not a criminal you have nothing to worry about, you shouldn't have anything to hide in Facebook."* Supporting this statement, another participant (RP14) commented: *"I have untagged photos of me in the past. It is I think because of privacy concerns that I have about my work I also prefer to keep my private life to myself if possible, and my Iranian upbringing contributes to this I guess."* And another interviewee **(**RP11) further commented**:** *"I don't usually tag people or post others' photo that I don't have permission from. A number of my friends are frightened of Facebook because of the things in Iran, and when they ask me to remove photos of them, I understand."*

On the other hand, some participants were unsatisfied with Facebook's privacy control features. They have suggested that the nature of Facebook is public and attempts from Facebook developers to provide better privacy settings are not very satisfactory. One respondent (RP14) suggested that: "*My careful attitude and choice of what I post relates to my knowledge about privacy settings designed by the website, I think applying privacy*

settings to posts doesn't mean they are only available to known people and it is fully protected, for example, I had commented on a friend's post and she had an open setting, so everyone could see my opinion, I had no choice but to delete the comment." Another respondent (RP5) noted that: *"If I saw something that might give a wrong idea about me, I would respond to it and delete it as I don't think the settings are in place to protect my posts from others."*

One interviewee (RP20) spoke of the use of privacy settings when first joining Facebook, and that it is difficult to protect the visibility of one's content, and said: "*When I first started using Facebook, I wasn't sure how to use it, now that I have experienced the settings and how it works, I still believe that if I post something sensible (meaning political stuff) I shouldn't be relying on settings to protect my privacy".* Another one (RP15) stated that: *"To be honest, I know about privacy problems that might be caused as a result of Facebook use but now that the Facebook settings are easier to change compared to when I started, I don't think it can cause a problem, plus I don't just say anything that comes to my mind."* Similarly, another interviewee (RP26) commented: *"I have friends all over the world and from family to work people, I have realised the privacy threat from Facebook profiles is always there no matter how careful I am to change the settings, I think the best option is just think twice before you say something."* From these two viewpoints, not trusting the privacy settings designed by the website developers itself could be considered as a reason for censoring the content before sharing on Facebook.

4.5.4 Privacy knowledge

A small number of those interviewed suggested that privacy settings are complicated to master and when they are not applied properly it can result in information sharing with unknown audience. Participants admit that they know Facebook provides a support service when it applies the new settings for privacy and other media also discuss it in technology sections, but it has no benefit in empowering Iranian users as it is for other nationalities where Facebook is not filtered. The news about this trend is discussed and evaluated in print and other media to inform users. Some participants expressed the belief that users in Iran are deprived of access to expert knowledge because of its illegality; instead some users help each other and share their experiences and practices.

One participant (RP17) explained: *"In other countries when Facebook designs a new feature, it is usually reported in the media and newspapers and users get extra experts' knowledge, integrating the new privacy feature and how it's good or bad, but we don't get it here, also this stuff is in other languages, so even by sourcing it I don't think it will be easy to understand, usually I get to hear about settings capabilities from my friends."* Another participant (RP30) noted: *"We should find out about privacy setting changes ourselves, and it is difficult with the low Internet speed, sometimes it is better not to say anything damaging to your security by applying that settings."* This participant suggests that self-censorship is a safer option than applying privacy settings to prevent privacy threats.

The most surprising aspect of the data is that a small number of participants demonstrated a trust in the use of privacy settings; one respondent (RP23) noted that: "*I think Facebook's privacy setting is awesome, all my friends use it, we even teach each other how to hide things from each other, we are a funny nation (she laughs)"*.

Another participant suggests a lack of adequate knowledge about privacy settings is because users are not trying to learn the right way of applying it from the site developers; this participant used examples to portray the idea that if the technology is developed in other countries, Iranians need to adjust their understanding of its application to their lives in order to use it in the right way. He (RP21) said: *"I think it's like mobile phone use here, we get the western technology without getting its how to use manual. Here it is acceptable to have your mobile phone on the table, let's say when you are out socialising, but this behaviour is considered rude in the west, where the actual designers and first users come from. In Iran, we access Facebook via VPNs and Tor, therefore we start the process with softwares that are not ethical and in my opinion disrespect humanity. Therefore, Iranian users are not updated well enough about privacy setting changes from experts and developers, national media is banned from reporting on it."*

On the subject of security settings application to the profile, one individual (RP22) stated that: *"It's very time consuming to set privacy setting, with the low Internet speed here, it is frustrating, it's better not to share anything, because if you get to share it and while wanting to change the setting the Internet might get disconnected, and then who knows what (laughing) my settings is open, I'm careful about what I put out there."* And another one (RP23) commented: *"I think my setting is in place, but I am worried that it might not*

be right, I prefer to be careful before sharing rather than worrying about changing the setting and protection after."

The participant (RP22)'s suggestion indicates that the reduced privacy of Facebook encourages users to finds ways to protect their privacy, however, a notoriously slow Internet speed in Iran is simultaneously a barrier to applying privacy settings, and she has suggested that self-censorship is a reliable privacy protection mechanism. This respondent seems to indicate the gap that many researchers have noted between privacy violation worries of the audience and their connection to the creation of private Facebook profiles (see, for example, Stutzman and Kramer–Duffield, 2010). It has been identified that Internet skills affect what people do online and to enjoy Facebook, profile owners need to be knowledgeable about privacy settings and have the Internet skills to apply and manage their privacy settings (Harigiati, 2010). Can you explain a little more about why the privacy settings are problematic in user terms?

4.6 Privacy maintenance

Self-presentation techniques and presentations were evident in the performance of participants. To start the Facebook membership, users must create a profile. To do this Facebook requires information such as a choice of name or profile picture from the user; this information can be authentic or fake depending on the account creator's selection. The membership registration process indicates that Facebook encourages users towards self- presentation. Many participants were selective in their likes, and comments, attempting to represent a front stage in Goffman's term; as one interviewee (RP12) suggested: *"In Facebook I think everyone shows the best and most important aspects of their lives, like in their profile picture for example, I think all of my friends post the best snap they had".*

To address the second research question participants were asked how they were maintaining privacy management and control. They have explained privacy concerns and ways to control visibility of content on Facebook. To overcome the concerns, participants developed strategies and tactics according to their skills around the privacy settings and some demonstrated creative ways such as using a pseudonym, or different languages such as Farsi and ethnic Iranian languages for interactions with targeted individuals. A number of respondents found that they learned to cope by using the privacy settings to group their

friend list into different categories. Another group of participants identified limited participation through the "Like" feature as a way to maintain privacy.

4.6.1 Grouping and listing

This feature allows users to manage and display specific contents to specific audience. Lampinen et al., (2009) found that in Facebook people from one's offline setting are present and this multiple group of people is present under one "friend" group which is known to the user. The existence of the different groups of friends, family and acquaintances is managed by use of grouping strategies designed by Facebook for privacy control.

One respondent (RP20) said that: *"I have my boyfriend and also some male friends on Facebook who keep writing to me and tagging me in pictures, I couldn't reject my relatives' friendship requests, so now they are all in my friend list as well as my boyfriend; the only way to keep them from knowing this and my private life is to restrict their access to all my content by grouping the friends list."* Another one (RP28) also grouped friends: *"I use grouping friends and change the visibility setting to protect me, but when Facebook changes the privacy setting, like what they did recently, it can change the content's visibility to groups, I don't think it fully protects privacy."* A further respondent (RP11) also stated: *"There are some things that I just wouldn't share with all my friends, I have grouped them based on how close our friendship is, but still I don't put any inappropriate photos as I do understand that there is a big wide world out there and once it's out there it is out of control."*

One respondent (RP20) restricted the profile: *"My profile is restricted to friends only, I think it is a stupid idea to have open to everyone privacy setting; I am also considering grouping people according to what I want to share with them."* So did this respondent (RP23): *"My profile is limited to friends only, but I have divided them into some groups, especially those people I personally haven't met, but I know because they are my husband's relatives who live in America. I have posted regularly photographs of some events and holidays on Facebook in the past."*

However, another participant (RP19) points out that *"In Iran we use Facebook to explore a space without limitation, but it's amazing how we manage to take all this limitation with ourselves to Facebook and then we use all these exhaustive privacy settings and grouping*

people according to their different characters, just to be there, sometimes I think I should delete my account and not worry in the online world as in the offline world but then I can't imagine excluding myself from all the free fun and knowledge that goes around on Facebook." Similarly, another participant (RP13) asked: *"What if people find out about this, I think Facebook's feature for grouping and filtering is so embarrassing, it's like you invite people to your home and offer drink to some and ignore the rest, why do you invite them in the first place?"*

One unanticipated finding was that one participant talked about having two accounts to easily manage and control the audience and content. This participant suggests that tailoring content to the right people is only manageable with this strategy, as before, he had one account and he was not satisfied with the level of protection from privacy settings; he (RP29) stated that: *"I used to have one account but now I have two accounts, one for my Iranian friend network and one of my foreign friends network. To keep up with my foreign friends, I created a Facebook account for my foreign friends. In this way I can get conference news and connect with useful people in my field of interest, it is helpful for job searches too, this profile is more of my serious side, I don't post personal and Iranian things here, I use the English language. On my other profile I am more relaxed and I use Farsi as all my network is Iranian."* These comments and observations show that attempts to use groups differ between participants. While observing participants' use of group settings for privacy and audience control (see next chapter), it was evident that dividing friend lists into different groups such as family, friends, university friends and many more is a popular choice.

As several interviewees described, limited participation and information sharing is often based on privacy risk concerns and surveillance concerns, so it seems logical to assume that lurkers could begin to actively participate given the required privacy control tools and knowledge. One interviewee (RP20) also made an interesting point: *"My profile is restricted to friends only, I think it is a stupid idea to have an open to everyone privacy setting, I have grouped people according to what I want to share with them. I'm not sharing information with people who don't share things in return or limited my access to their profiles, but I understand why everyone is so protective."* Participants talk about choosing limited participation and lurking, for example, deciding not to comment on others' activities, not to share personal photos and ideas as a way to avoid privacy risks.

4.6.2 "Public" privacy setting

Interestingly, the respondents RP6 and RP21 reported that they had an open privacy setting. By being open, they meant their privacy settings were set to public as this is the default setting in the software. One of the participants (RP6) was living and working in the UK. However, it is interesting that he refers to being open as the best strategy and at the same time he talks about selecting content before sharing; this indicates that this participant applies a type of censorship and monitors his ideas before sharing them on Facebook.

This participant (RP6) refers to combining being a "lurker" and self-censorship as his strategy to control privacy: *"My profile is open to all, it is like saying: here I am and if you want to contact me feel free to do so. It is not restricted at all as there is nothing bad. I very rarely update Facebook."* Similarly, the other participant (RP21) suggested: *"My profile is viewable to public, I just don't share things that I won't shout out from the balcony, you know what I mean. I am usually watching others' activities and posts and if someone tags me on a photo or anything else I untag it; this is the best policy for me."*

4.6.3 Protected by privacy settings

A small number of those interviewed suggested that Facebook provides functional privacy setting options on the profile page if applied correctly. They have reported that these settings are useful and practical and allow users to be in control and safeguard their profiles from public view. One of these respondents (RP22) said that: *"I care who sees my profile and I have adjusted my settings, but I don't know, because there's not really anything on there that makes me seem silly or completely embarrassing and dangerous."* Another participant's (RP10) view concurred with this: *"I have changed my privacy setting so only limited people can see my posts and I haven't placed anything that might result in prosecution by law in Iran, I know it has caused problems for people."* And a third (RP8) commented: *"My profile's privacy setting is closed to everyone but friends, although my profile is viewable on Google search (I Googled myself) and I haven't changed it yet."* This finding is in agreement with Boyd and Hargittai's (2010) findings, which showed that making changes to privacy settings in Facebook is in direct correlation to the individual's Internet skills, type and frequency of use. Similarly, Joinson (2008)

studied student users of Facebook in the UK and found that more than half (57.5%) of the study sample reported that they have modified the privacy settings.

4.6.4 Tactics

The use of tactics to control audience was justified as a way of protecting one's privacy. A number of respondents managed to cope with different people as an audience on Facebook by applying personal strategies with the adjustment of privacy settings provided from the Facebook platform. Participants suggested that tactics are useful and applied when one wants to present content to differing audience. In particular, they found it was a way to cope with the pressures and dilemmas of what to share and what not to share. For example, RP19 stated: *"In Facebook I am my own woman and I am in charge of my appearance and the way I socialise with other people, men and women; I can control who can see my content and how I want to be seen."* In Iran, the reputation of a woman is also the reputation of the family in society, whereas the Facebook profile offers new avenues for this group of individuals to find their voice. However, applying strict privacy settings alongside other tactics reduces the privacy concerns of this sort of individual. In Iran, while people are living under the strict rules with a lack of social freedom and a repressive environment, the use of tactics and strategies to control privacy allows them to find refuge in their Facebook profile. Similarly, another participant (RP16) commented: *"Facebook is a platform for me to be me by ignoring the rules of government on how to act every day in public; here we have a how to live manual from family and government and everyone else, so why not be the way you want to be on Facebook."*

One participant (RP20) made an interesting point: *"In Iran we can choose our nose shape, it is very accepted and normal in society, but I think of the rest of the world, it's not an easy option, so why not in Facebook be whatever we want, after all it's easier to change yourself online, isn't it? (Referring to high nose cosmetic surgery performed in Iran)"* Another participant (RP16) suggested: *"If I get some comments on my post from friends that I don't like, I will delete it."*

Facebook is an illegal space for social interactions in Iran, and this group of participants is extremely careful to hide their presence on Facebook from their employers and fellow co-workers. The tendency to express a positive attitude on Facebook is an example of altering behaviour to appear in a specific way. In this way the individuals are creating a

front by altering their manner online. This is in line with Boyd (2006, p. 9) as stated that the Facebook profile generation is an explicit act of "writing oneself into being", and participants must determine how they want to present themselves to those who view their self-representation or those unknown audience that might view it. Participants who were conservative about what they shared on Facebook managed their presentation to a much higher degree than those that shared freely. In doing so they did not give away too much information from their offline life. Those that were more creative with what they shared, were more likely to blur the lines between the online and offline life. For example, RP16 shared photographs of daily activities which are offline activities or in Goffman's terms are backstage events that would not appear on front stage. This is a calculated self-presentation choice by RP16 to record and share information about daily activities. In line with Boyd (2006), participants showed that in order to make an offline self into an online one in Facebook, users carefully chose to demonstrate content from the offline setting to an online audience, voluntarily ignoring the possible privacy risks.

4.6.5 Pseudonym

Users on Facebook have been found to create fake profile names in order to manage the lack of privacy and anonymity. For participants who seek to create a space outside of the restrictions in Iran with public and social structures, and away from authorities, profiles with a pseudonym known only to their circles of friends are a solution. However, this contradicts Facebook's policy which encourages users to present an authentic and verifiable profile. On the subject of privacy control, one interviewee (RP17) suggested: "*I have my nickname as my name, so no one found me on Facebook. I rarely share private information and usually make comments on other people's pages."* Similarly, RP13 stated that: *"For me there were two options, either use a different name or not to have a profile, I wanted to use Facebook and I decided to use nicknames, it is better than not to be there at all."*

These comments were echoed by RP22 who commented: *"All my friends and my network know that it is me, I don't see why it should be a problem, I am myself, the nickname doesn't change my way of Facebook use, it is just for my protection."* And another participant (RP13) talked about use of Farsi characters to display a profile name and suggested: "*Since I have started working in UK I am more reserved , my profile name is in Farsi, so as to prevent people from finding me, this way my profile is more private, I*

don't know, maybe because I share a lot of Persian things in my Facebook and sometimes I feel if my non-Iranian friends see them, they might judge me and Iran in a negative way, I don't share all nice things about Iran, we have lots of wrong things going on, I don't mean political things, just look at what is happening every day to women, you know what I mean, I'm not an activist, but I share many things." Similarly, another participant (RP20) said: *"My profile name is in Farsi, I have my first name sectioned into two parts, as Facebook's profile registration settings asked for my surname and I didn't want to provide it."* [As an example: Ate as a first name and Feh as a surname where the first name is Atefeh – Researcher's note.]

A small number of those interviewed said that they wanted to be connected to the information they post and share. One participant (RP21) said: *"There was no fun in being anonymous"*; it was previously established that this participant's profile privacy setting is "public" and visible to everyone. As this case very clearly demonstrates, it is important to this person that one presents the offline name, not just for authenticity, but as there was fun in receiving feedback about one's own life experiences and ideas; even if they were projecting a specific personality this was still seen by the individual as genuine. A pseudonym protects them while providing a measure of responsibility. According to the "Facebook Help Center", users are required to use "the name on credit card" for a Facebook profile. Entering false information violates the agreement, even if individuals use their own picture. Clearly, some participants are ignoring Facebook's terms and condition by using a pseudonym and a nickname. However, this way of participation offers a route for concerned users to participate rather than not having a profile at all.

The fear of receiving negative outcomes from the offline setting was said to be a reason for using a pseudonym and other forms as outlined for the profile name. By masking one's real name, this fear of surveillance can be reduced. The fear of damage to reputation was also known to be a reason for this by some participants.

4.6.6 Language

As mentioned in the previous section, use of a different language to present a profile name was reported by some participants as a mechanism to protect one's profile visibility and searchability. Participants reported further use of a different language to update status, post location, YouTube videos from other languages as a strategy for privacy control and

to target the information to specific audience. Some have used a different Iranian ethnic language, such as Azerbaijani and Kurdi to reach specific audience. As one interviewee (RP13) suggested: *"I'm using Farsi for my profile name, it is spelt with Persian letters and the only possible way that other English speaking friends could find me on Facebook is by my profile picture."* Similarly, RP14 suggested, *"If it is something that I don't want some people to engage and comment with then I will write in Farsi. Sometimes I don't want English speakers to know what I am saying and this is usually because it is about the situation in Iran, where things have gone stupid or I complain a little bit about things here, I know some people might use google translate, but that is not a concern as it is never accurate."* In this way he uses Iranian language to differentiate conversations among his audience. He said: *"When I speak in Farsi I am differentiating the conversation so that only some people will know about it."* By using this creative method, this participant demonstrated controlling different groups of audience and controlling privacy from different groups at the same time. Baym and Boyd (2012) have discussed this phenomenon in the context of teenage users who use these ways of communicating to create a private space in a public network. The participants of this study are not teenagers, but they do create similar spaces.

The use of tactics for privacy control indicates that users will compensate and find solutions for their privacy needs and preferences if the service does not provide it for them. This might suggest that different cultures, which have different value systems, might use SNSs differently from each other.

The use of pseudonyms was very popular among participants living in Iran. From observation, it was evident that many interviewees from the group living in the UK used different tactics such as using the English language to show their first name and the Persian language to show their surname or using a spouse's name, and using their first name in a different format to manipulate both the Facebook registration process and other audience on Facebook. In general, participants have used and edited their profile name and they have enjoyed this option given to them from Facebook's website design. This is possible as Facebook allows users to edit their profile name at any time during their membership. Some participants were concerned that if Facebook decided to ask users to provide proof of identification from their offline identity, they would not be able to

continue using Facebook. (Facebook requires users to provide their real names when creating personal profiles https://www.facebook.com/help/).

Stutzman and Kramer-Duffield (2010) argue that Facebook users are more concerned about visibility of information to their acquaintances rather than strangers and unknown audience (such as authorities and organisations). Similarly, Raynes-Goldie (2010) found that Facebook users were more concerned with protecting personal information from the known audience and friend list and were less concerned about protecting their information from strangers and companies. Boyd (2008,) also in her ethnographic study, demonstrated that teenagers used various techniques such as deleting wall posts, untagging photos, and creating multiple accounts to protect privacy.

The findings of the current study do support the previous research identified above, as participants in this study were concerned about information privacy and protection from both known and unknown audience. In addition the findings of this study suggest that internet censorship as a result of the political situation and social control exerted by the authorities in Iran are also a factor in the privacy control attitude of participants.

Prior studies have noted the importance of strategies to control or manage potential privacy risks (Steifield et al., 2008; Tufekci 2008). Lampinen et al. (2009) found that users manage privacy through dividing friends into groups and categories. They also identified that Facebook users employ communication to be visible to public or private chat and messages according to the audience group. As mentioned in the literature review (Lampe et al., 2008), users restrict access to information and remove certain information as a way to manage privacy. Similarly, Tufekci (2008) found that students are controlling privacy in Facebook in a variety of ways, such as content visibility, control, profile visibility control and use of nicknames.

4.6.7 Limited participation through “Like” feature

Facebook pages are public and it means, for example, when a user likes or posts a comment on that page, that this information is available to public view. When a user "Likes" a Page, the connection is created and it is added to the timeline. This is visible to the users’ friends through their “News Feeds”. This allows the page to contact and send updates to the users via “News Feeds” and private messages. Another form of controlling privacy was identified as limiting interactions. Use of the “Like” feature has become a

popular choice among participants for non-verbal communications. As one participant (RP21) said: *"Those that like things are consumers of information only, I think they don't share interesting things and usually don't share their personal lives, most of my friends have been using Facebook this way, when I post content I get lots of likes but comments are very rare."*

A number of participants described the use of the "Like" button as an easy way of participating on Facebook. Individuals felt that they were part of something bigger by "Liking" information and comments. It is a way of communicating without having to put effort or thought into the interaction. One participant (RP13) said: *"When I get a Like to my content I feel more ignored rather than getting attention from my friends, it means I don't want to spend time for you, but I still see you, it doesn't mean anything to me, when I say something negative or positive still get the same thing as Like, and I don't like it,"*

Another participant (RP8) commented: "*Liking does not really positively impact my activities, but it's about people acknowledging my shared opinion and things I share, those who like at least participate, some people don't participate at all, I have friends that never said anything about my activities, no like or comment, they have just sent me a friend request."* Another respondent (RP25) noted simply: *"I don't need to comment in English or Finglish (Farsi with English language characters). A "Like" makes it easier if I want to show interest in someone's post."*

It was suggested that a "Like" is a way of contributing to a conversation without exerting much effort especially on posts written in English language. The fear of being criticised by an audience for posting in English language with grammar mistakes was identified as a reason for the popularity of Facebook's "Like" feature. Participants in the UK were less inclined to use Facebook's "Like" feature and were more likely to comment about a post from their friend list. According to Kim and Yun (2007) in a context that is non-western, such as Cyworld, the architecture of SNSs features is adapted to match the cultural norms of the users. Facebook is accessible in Farsi, but according to Hargittai (2007) Facebook requires Internet literacy to enjoy its privileges.

Participants' use of different strategies to protect privacy in Facebook is shown to be different from the offline setting. For this group of participants, the use of self-imposed privacy strategies seemed to facilitate the intention to self-presentation according to the

self-presentation goals they have while considering cultural norms and codes. The current findings seem to be consistent with Marwick and Boyd (2011) who found that individuals built their idea of self though their interaction with their audience in SNSs. Although these findings are consistent with those of Marwick and Boyd (2011), they differ from Boyd (2007), as she argues that individuals apply the same communication strategies in a Facebook setting and offline settings in order to maintain authenticity in front of an audience. This finding may be explained by the fact that Facebook is filtered in Iran and since its use has been listed as cybercrime by officials, naturally participants felt they were involved in illegal activity and therefore authenticity for this group of users can be a burden of participation. As some said, any access is better than no access to Facebook and this includes using a pseudonym and fake profiles.

4.7 Self-censorship

Iranian Facebook users know exactly where the line is drawn on what the government will allow them to say publicly. To compensate for a lack of privacy on Facebook, participants avoid politics altogether and instead focus on information seeking and self-presenting. In connection with self-presentation and the literature on privacy control, interviewees were asked if they consider holding back their content before posting on Facebook. They were asked if they have experienced situations such as starting to write a comment or a status update and deciding against posting it. A range of responses was produced. One participant (RP14) noted that: *"I would never say just what was in my head and what I was feeling at that moment, I know we have some control over what is on our profile, but we don't have control over photos that we are in and other people tag on their profiles and that is what I don't like."* Similarly, another one (RP23) suggested: *"I am from a religious family, but it does not influence what I share in Facebook, I wouldn't tend to put my religious views or political views on Facebook as I feel this is private and doesn't need to be shared."*

Another participant (RP5) simply said: *"I don't share my own photos on Facebook, I share photos, but mainly the interesting stuff from other websites, but I have a profile photo with my husband (couples photo)."* One individual (RP20) stated that: *"I am careful with what I share, simply because of the things I have seen others share. I think people carefully select what they post."* And another (RP7) commented: "*I'm aware that what you post today could be seen by the public and not only friends on the profile. I will*

always give a thought to what I post and think about this before posting." One participant (RP18) was very restrained in Facebook usage: *"My profile privacy is set to friends only. The profile picture is a photo from a holiday (photo of an object in Paris). I don't see the need to put any more data on my profile, I rarely update status and I don't upload family photographs."*

Some participants expressed the belief that being careful is not optional when it comes to content sharing, for example (RP1): *"I update my status every now and then, but I am careful about what I say."* Another participant (RP10) commented that: *"I am very careful about what I share with others, it is not only where I lived that makes me conservative, it is past experience and my own knowledge of technology due to my work and I think I'm slightly selective and conservative with what I share. I am often worried about when the information is out there, it's out there for people to see it anytime."*

One participant (RP9) simply stated that: *"I almost deliberately would be careful of what I wrote and how I wrote it."* This participant described her friend's list as mostly co-workers, and family living overseas. Another participant (RP15) suggested that *"I've never thought about that at all because we are a Muslim family, we don't show much affection in the real word and I think it is same online in Facebook although I think being from Iran and with all the press behind Facebook use I am influenced by what I share with others, I usually think like, is it ok to talk about this topic before talking about it."*

Several participants mentioned that they had untagged themselves from photos to avoid having that picture available for friends to view and nearly every participant admitted to writing a post, and editing, then either deleting it, or choosing not to post it in the first place. One participant (RP28) commented: *"Maybe after three rewrites I'll come up with something that is acceptable for a description of a photo or a comment on something or status update, I keep asking myself if it is alright to post it for everyone to view it."* Another participant (RP16) pointed out that: *"Even with all this when I want to post something I always think like what if I shouldn't be posting it in the first place."* From this comment it is clear that participants are censoring themselves before posting and at the same time using Facebook's tools to control the audience.

Some participants expressed the belief that it is time consuming to go through all the privacy settings on Facebook and not sharing content is easier than managing privacy

settings, as one interviewee (RP11) said: *"When I have accepted people in my friend list as friends, they are already chosen and filtered among the public so why should I filter myself with all these settings, they are very complicated, my profile is set to be seen only by friends".*

Further analysis showed that a small number of participants had identified their Iranian heritage and upbringing as a contributing factor to being careful and self-censoring in terms of what they share in public. One individual (RP9) stated that: *"Maybe my conservative approach to Facebook is related to my Iranian background where I was taught to be cautious about my reputation and also information could be available to the public on Facebook no matter how the settings are in place; we get to hear all these stories from people being punished just because they state their personal opinion on Facebook, this makes me think twice before I post information there."* And another one (RP29) commented: *"It might be related to my Iranian heritage that I don't trust anyone or anything easily apart from my family."* One participant (RP16) said: "I try to be careful about what I say because I worry about what people think of me."

Participants talked about being cautious and not sharing personal matters as a general rule they set for themselves. Some participants expressed the belief that it is best to be moderate when displaying personal ideas and content to avoid potentially unpleasant situations arising from unknown audience such as authorities and government agents. The pattern of self-censorship tends to repeat itself during different interview questions and among different participants. It seems to be an important issue and tends to manifest itself across a number of aspects of user behaviour in this study. These participants demonstrated that they frequently negotiate between the extent to which personal content should be disclosed or self-censored. The term self-censorship in this study refers to the users' reluctance to participate in different interactions (or speaking out) with their audience on Facebook. One might argue that the participants in this study were raised in, and some are still living in, a heavily censored public space in which they are forced to live with a clear boundary of public and private, hence, self-censorship is a part of their daily practice in the offline setting and they are carrying it into the online setting too. Using Goffman's term, the back stage here (Iran) shapes the performance on the front stage, and for some participants audience play the role of a second censor and shape it again.

In accordance with this study's findings, previous studies (Brandtzaeg et al., 2010) have demonstrated that a self-censored attitude towards content sharing activities is due to unwanted surveillance and control from a large network of Friends on Facebook. In addition to network size, the findings in this study demonstrated that the type of audience network is also affecting the self-censorship.

4.7.1 Limited Participation

A number of respondents found that they learned to cope with privacy concerns and visibility to unknown audience by not using the "Comment" and "Like" features in other people's content. For example, RP28 described herself as a big fan of Lady Gaga's music, and she checks her official profile on Facebook. From the observation, it was evident that she did not "Like" Gaga's page (to become a fan). During observation, the researcher explained to RP28 that if she "Likes" a page she will get updates from the page regularly. RP28 explained that she knows about the "Like" feature, but she prefers to check the page without "Liking" it. She said: *"If I like the page, the news update will send it to my friends' 'News Feed', and people might think that I am interested in sexual behaviours like Gaga, you know how our culture is, I would rather not be seen like that."* However, aspects of the self that do not comply with expectations are minimised or masked (Goffman, 1959, p. 57) in order to comply with self-presentation that will be approved by audience, as demonstrated by the participant above.

Participants described Facebook's design of privacy settings as one of the reasons for not displaying their interests. One participant (RP28) suggested: *"In my opinion Facebook is just like the Iranian government, they are the same; they both punish people when they share what they really think, that is why we are very good at censoring ourselves in public. Facebook is a public venue in my opinion."*

This view was supported by another participant (RP30) who stated that: *"Naturally we have learned in Iran how to protect ourselves from the damages of saying things that might cost us, we are good at hiding our personal life from others, we are good at censoring ourselves, I think this is why many people use Facebook, knowing that it is illegal but they manage to get around it."*

Another participant (RP17) described pressures associated with Facebook: *"Sometimes I feel pressured to add people, such as my extended family, but friends and family expect to befriend you on Facebook too, then it becomes like a family gathering there. Since I had my extended family I am not commenting or liking other posts as before, I don't want everybody to see what I'm doing here, it is not like I'm doing something wrong (she laughs)."*

Respondent RP27 noted that simply: *"Sometimes I look into the BBC Persian news page and VOA (Voice of America TV channel in Farsi) but I don't press 'Like' on the political pages from outside of Iran, they post negative stuff about the Iranian government and I don't want to be seen as their followers, it will give the impression to the viewer that I am opposing the system, that is not what I would like to happen. I watch these channels daily on satellite TV."*

A number of participants have identified that the visibility settings of fan pages on Facebook are public and this is a reason to not "Like" the Facebook pages, especially those from other countries such as news agencies' Facebook pages. In the interviews, the data reveal that they were all seeking ways to improve their privacy and security of content visibility to a not unknown audience.

Taken together, the comments of these participants suggest that there is an association between limited participation and self-censoring to protect privacy risks and possible reputation damage on Facebook. This echoes Solove's findings who found that reputational damage can occur as a result of information visibility to different audience in SNSs (Solove, 2007). Similarly, the findings support Das and Kramer (2013) who found that having a large Friend network on Facebook is associated with users deleting their own postings regularly and performing a form of self-censorship. One's reputation could be at more risk with a large Friend network if a privacy violation occurred. However, it was beyond the scope of this study to look for quantifiable data, such as number of Friends, but it was recorded during the participant observation phase as the researcher was exploring the privacy settings on the 'Friend list'.

It is interesting to note that a small number of participants suggested that the place where they work in the UK has provided the employees with guidelines for Facebook and Twitter use. They have compared it to filtering of Facebook in Iran and suggested it

creates a similar fear to what they have experienced back in Iran. One (RP6) said that: *"I am very strict about what I share. The company that I work for has Social Media participation guidelines for employees, these guidelines are about what you can say online about things happened offline and its effect on the work environment."*

Another participant (RP4) noted that: *"I think about the people that I don't know, but they can view my posts. I think I'm generally very careful about sharing personal content online. I'm aware of the consequences and posting some content can be harmful in terms of work and also when I go back to Iran."* In a similar vein, RP2 reported that: *"A number of my colleagues have written something in the past about work and then regretted it. The people I have on my Facebook friend list are very cautious and informed about the consequences of Facebook use, I think.*"

Another participant (RP13) stated that *"I don't even have friends from work on Facebook and I won't send friend requests, my name is spelled in Farsi on Facebook and so far I haven't been approached by my English speaking co-workers. I am very conscious of how I look on Facebook."* Similarly, RP14 said: *"We sign agreements about Facebook and Twitter personal usage. There are certain things about the work that we are not allowed to tweet or Facebook about."*

Interestingly, one participant living in Iran reported having a co-worker on a friend list, but this is an exception as this participant works in a private organisation and therefore there are more relaxed employment rules and physical appearance rules compared to public organisations. RP28 described it as follows: *"Where I work is a relatively small private company, we don't wear 'magnehe' (Iranian official head cover, like a headscarf), we just wear our everyday scarf, there is no hard restriction on what to wear like public organisations, I think all of my co-workers are on Facebook but I only have two of the girls in my friend list, we've been friends from university days, I wouldn't add the others, they won't send me a friend request either, we pretend we have no idea about the Facebook use of each other, to be honest we never talk about Facebook at work."*

These findings further support the view of Skeels and Grudin (2009) that mixing work and social friends from offline settings is linked to tensions among Facebook users. Similarly, this finding, in agreement with DiMicco and Millen (2007), confirms the association between managing different groups of friends on Facebook and the difficulty

of implementing the privacy settings. However, unlike their findings which concluded that the difficulty of applying privacy settings results in users ignoring the implementation of privacy settings and accepting the public visibility of their posted content, the findings in this study suggest that users explore different avenues to implement their privacy protection strategies according to their self-presentation goals.

The reasons for restricting access to certain parts of profiles differ among participants, while a small number of participants reported not applying restrictive privacy settings. The findings are consistent with those of Livingstone (2008), who argued that SNSs users apply privacy settings according to their technical abilities to balance the benefits and risks of its use. Similarly, the findings of this study show that participants apply privacy settings to profiles according to their technical knowledge and self-presentation goals. Similarly, the findings of the current study partly supports the previous research by Raynes-Goldie (2010) and Boyd (2008) who found that Facebook users are more concerned about the visibility of content to people that they know than having their profile activities visible to governments and companies. However, unlike the later part in their findings, this study found that participants are fearful from government and authorities in Iran There are, however, other possible explanations for this partly contract between the studies, for example, the study sample of Raynes-Goldie (2010) was of students, using Facebook with no access restrictions from government and Boyd (2008) studied teenage Facebook users in the USA. However, with a sample from Iran, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other countries where self-censorship is not expected from users in physical public spaces. With a link to Goffman (1959), Facebook profile pages encourage the presentation of one's personal characteristics and interests, but participants reported self-censorship as an essential tool for safe participation. Therefore, self-censorship is perceived to be serving as a tool for self-presentation on Facebook as a front stage with the influence from back stage settings.

Individuals in this study present a "self- online" in the same way as in the offline public spheres in Iran by applying self-censorship as a mechanism for protection against the potential harms of free expression. They have recognised SNSs' public nature and their direct influence on their everyday life in Iran. Therefore, the factors that influence their presentation of self in SNSs are different to those individuals using SNSs in democratic, secular countries. In this specific context, the censored self on Facebook is a

representation of the everyday self for Iranians. There is a direct link between the elements of Goffman's framework for presentation of self in the offline world and the online self. There is the added element of technology with its privacy settings. In the case of Iranian users, the element of self-censorship is attached to the act of self-presentation. It is altering the way that the online self is formed and maintained.

Participants were asked why they have decided to provide their personal information, including their name and photo, on Facebook (considering it is banned in Iran). They expressed the opinion that being connected to the information they have shared is exciting; as one interviewee said, *"There was no fun in being anonymous".* Participants felt that there was fun in receiving feedback about one's own life and experiences and ideas. Pretending to be someone else or a different self from themselves was not considered as "fun" and interesting. Even when they were projecting a specific personality, this was still seen by the individual as genuine. This is in contrast to the literature where Turkle (1995) observed that individuals wanted to play with their identity online and present fraudulent sides of themselves. This research has shown a determination of the individuals to be authentic in self-presentation.

Goffman's dramaturgical framework (1959) has served as a theoretical lens through which Facebook profiles have been explored. Participants who raised privacy concerns seemed to be either unaware of all the privacy options offered on the site (such as creating special, limited profiles for viewing by specific users) or the design of these privacy features did not conform with the expectations and experiences of privacy they brought to the site. It appears that the participants experience on Facebook is a mixture of control and loss of control over self- performance as they must address broad known and unknown audience that may include peers, parents, extended family members and government surveillance agencies.

The key finding from the interview data is that participants often attempt to re-create their offline selves online, rather than actively engaging with persona adoption. The interesting finding here is that participants attempt to present their offline self, on Facebook, however the two selves are not as identical as the participants described. During the observation, it was clear that participants tried to keep their online self close to their offline self, but the shared content from certain Facebook pages was an indication that there is an attempt to show a positive and intellectual persona on Facebook. For example, RP13 'Liked'

many pages in French and when the researcher asked her if she could speak French, she replied *"No, but the page looks nice".* Personal information given by profile users on their profile page is a recreation of the offline self in online spaces, however, this information in many cases is very limited. Friends and family and in some cases work colleagues are in the 'Friend list' and this contact from offline settings is contributing to the authenticity of the profile owner's online self. Therefore, these are very small attempts by participants to present a self away from their offline self. Goffman (1983) refers to it as the continuation of one's contacts and encounters, in the case of Facebook from offline to online and vice versa.

Indirect communication for self-presentation

This indirect communication is an important component of Facebook and it is facilitated by status updates and photos, video, and third party content sharing. The kind of communication that Facebook facilitates seems to lead to an indirect ideal self-presentation sociality, whereby participants experience a different form of sociality but this is not to say that people did not experience indirect self-presentation in a physical urban public space (for example different styles of clothing with bright colours which they could often get arrested for, and charged for immoral public appearance) before Facebook; however, the indirect self-presentation encouraged by Facebook seems different in two particular ways. First, rather than having to discuss activities and ideas from offline settings, Facebook allows users to communicate indirectly about activities in public places by posting relevant content (e.g. Photos). That is, people do not necessarily have to tell their Friend list or target audience that they went to a new place or bought a new car, but they can indirectly alert them by checking into a new venue or posting a picture. Second, the exchange of indirect self-presentation information is accelerated by features of Facebook (for example, check- in), because it allows users to share the content as it occurs in real time with the option to include automatic updates on the location and time when it is happening. Together, these two features of Facebook encourage users towards more indirect self-presentation practices and also connect the real-life activity in public space to the Facebook space. On the other hand, the check-in messages also encourage users to respond and 'Comment' and 'Like' a post. In this case the check-in initiates users and encourages them to communicate through the network.

In this way, sharing activities from the offline setting, even if they are not received and viewed by the audience in real time, can contribute to users feeling socially connected to their network of audiences and part of the social tie just by knowing what is going on. Participants suggested that they have friends who rarely participate and share information, but still comment on the check-ins and status updates from their network. As one participant suggested, (RP20) "*There's also a group of people who never share content ever, but they always want to know what other people do. They usually comment on others' activities or like a content that is as far as they would go."* Another one said (RP10) *"Some people still find it interesting to observe others' activities, but they don't want to participate by sharing their personal information and photos, I used to be like that when I started using Facebook but gradually I found it interesting to share content with my friend list, it helps to start a conversation with those people who I haven't spoken to for a long time, usually it is like saying I am here and people comment and like it means like saying I haven't forgotten you."* These comments from participants still suggest a social connectedness among members of Facebook even if members are not moving through the public and physical spaces together; they can still observe and experience space through others' activities. Inevitably, people use Facebook for various purposes and in various contexts, some of which seem to contribute to an indirect self-presentation.

In the case of Iranian users in this study, the backstage is defined as the geographical place of residence. This influences users' decisions about self-presentation on Facebook. This research studied two groups of Iranian nationals with understanding and experience of Iran's cultural and social boundaries. One set of users is connected to Facebook with the help of VPNs and experiencing this illegal venue. The second set of users is experiencing the same platform with no restrictions from Internet providers.

This study shows that people are conscious and concerned about the content they share in SNSs. They have set rules about what kind of information they might share on SNSs. They are using SNSs to present a specific side of their lives, such as being "successful". They are deliberately sharing specific information with the public and hiding certain information. While they were carefully self-censoring content, Facebook profiles were still a representation of the true self. This behaviour was not inauthentic, but rather part of the individual and represented how that part of them was portrayed. The level of appropriateness of shared content was up to the individual and will differ, but the

presentation of self was thought about before development. Both groups were aware of their audience and their connection to their reputation. The presented self by individuals had connections to the perceived reaction they might get from their current and future audience.

This research has demonstrated that participants are using privacy control options by Facebook providers and self-censorship, along with privacy strategies adopted by users to control self-presentation. It can thus be suggested that the self- created through using Facebook does present a form of self that already exists in the offline setting in the Iranian public space where one needs to obey certain codes of conduct and self-censor, to a greater degree, from physical appearance to disclosure of personal ideas and thoughts.

The architecture of online spaces, much like the architecture of physical spaces, suggests and enables particular modes of interaction (Papacharissi, 2009). The architecture of online spaces has been connected and simulates real life in virtual environments (Turkle, 1995, 1999). The SNSs allow users to create their profiles, display a picture, accumulate and connect to friends met both online and offline and view each other's profiles (Papacharissi, 2009). Participants in this study are educated about the public nature of Facebook and how it encourages an authentic self. For this group of users, Facebook might bring serious consequences for offline life, therefore, the self- presented online is the self-censored self. This supports the ideas of Bagheri and Ghorbani (2006). They have stated that reputation is managed through context and that online information can be easily taken out of context as it is sometimes hard to replicate the context. The online and offline self for the Iranians are represented in similar ways. The self is always performing in public spaces, online or offline, on a stage where the audience is central to the creation (Goffman, 1959). The performance must be within certain boundaries. Those who choose to perform otherwise, must be prepared to face the consequences.

As Stephen Evans reported on BBC News (December, 2014): "Twenty-five years ago, the Berlin Wall was pushed down. If you talk to East Germans now, they often say that their real yearning was not for some abstract idea of freedom, but just to get a first-hand view of the outside world". Likewise, Facebook is providing Iranians with the need to see real people's lives, and therein lies the problem, as the Iranian regime, by filtering access to Facebook, limits the freedom of access to the outside world, and those with technical skills and financial affordability are getting through the gaps in the wall that separates it

from the outside world, but one question remains unanswered and that is how long will the Internet censorship last?

4.8 Chapter Summary

For the purposes of this study, the researcher interviewed individuals in the context of the nationality and geographical location they were living in at the time of the study. Each interviewee's position in the study is defined by their current place of residence or offline stage. This research has shown that both the groups involved in this study believe they are being watched by the authorities, and therefore their online self on Facebook is well thought-through and usually made to create a specific impression.

In this chapter, I have addressed technical and social aspects that underlie acts of self-presentation and information sharing by Iranian users. Self-presentation strategies in SNSs are configured by both the technical and social norms. This analysis is based on two sets of qualitative data gathered from the Facebook experiences of Iranian adults. The analysis identified social norms that were formed around the main usage practices among Iranians. The analysis revealed that self- presentation and information sharing were formed in a similar way. The self-presentation techniques employed by participants fitted within Goffman's (1959) understanding of the front stage. However, the participants in this study applied privacy strategies and self-censorship alongside elements of the dramaturgical approach and created a front stage according to the limitation of backstage. Several studies attempting to utilise Goffman's dramaturgical approach have suggested that Facebook is a form of backstage, but Goffman's own definition contradicts this as he defines the front as "the place where the performance is given" (p. 107). This study maintained Goffman's definition and defined Facebook as a front stage. The backstage for the participants of this study is Iran, where they have learned the social norms and behaviour in public spaces.

Facebook often prevents new users from establishing profiles under clearly fictitious names, but use of a pseudonym and an altered personal name is possible and new users are not required to enter personal data. This affords Iranians and those using Facebook in similar environments the opportunity to use Facebook under a pseudonym or modified version of their real name. Pseudonyms are accepted among Facebook users in Iran. In short, Facebook users can control what is revealed and what is kept private on their

profiles. The ability to use SNSs without providing personal data makes it less likely that individuals behind politically unsafe posts will be identified. Indeed, by using pseudonyms and anonymous email addresses to set up their profiles, Iranian SNSs users could post political content after the 2009 election with reduced potential for consequences from the government. This allows one to form the conclusion that although the social norms that guide content sharing differed between the two group contexts, there is an identical goal in profile construction and management and that is the **presentation of a "self-censored self" and not "presentation of authenticity".**

To highlight the Iranian self-presentation process on Facebook (research question one), two primary themes, technical and social barriers to connection and self-presentation modes based on Iranian heritage themes were identified from the interviews. To address how privacy concern shapes self-presentation process (second research question) three primary themes were identified. The next chapter is based on research question two and, through using participant observation, aims to identify how participants' privacy concerns shape the privacy implementation process in their profiles.

5 Diverse privacy strategies of Facebook users

5.1 Introduction

This chapter draws on the findings from Observation to explain how the self-presentation is shaped by privacy concerns and to provide an enriched conceptual account of self-presentation on Facebook by Iranian users Facebook provides a space for users to share information with the people they choose. The privacy settings provide an option to select the audience and by doing so, they are able to form a self through the presentation of meaningful content. The option, provided by Facebook, for people to select their own audience aims to empower users, but only those who know how to apply this option benefit from its richness. This section of data-gathering observes how participants use Facebook's privacy tools to control what they share and who sees it. Interview findings showed that users' privacy control strategies not only rely on privacy setting controls provided by the Facebook platform, but also on complex self-identified strategies and self-censorship. However, for practical and ethical reasons, it is difficult to observe users' complex behaviour and practices in the Facebook environment. In terms of practical reasons, many researchers have to rely mainly on self-reports from users with all their shortcomings. Otherwise research might employ online ethnography techniques, which is out of scope of this study, and in terms of ethical reasons, it would be a violation of privacy if research participants were asked to provide their log-in details for research purposes. However, previous studies have relied on Facebook users' public profiles for observation purposes. An example of this is the study carried out by Lampe et al., (2006,2007,2008) in which Facebook use among students for a period of three years was studied through surveys and observations. It was established in chapter four that this study is undertaken combining qualitative semi-structured interviews alongside observation of privacy control strategies to capture users' self-presentation. The observation of ten participants, in addition to interviews, aims to provide a deeper understanding of the interview findings about the participants' privacy practices and also to limit the shortcomings of self-reports during interviews on technical privacy settings.

5.2 Observation Process

This part of the study aimed to focus on diverse privacy strategies of Facebook users using participant observation techniques. Out of 30 interview participants, ten gave consent to be observed by the researcher and participated during the observation phase, they also agreed to be in touch with the researcher for future follow up interviews and observations, if needed (RP6, RP7, RP8, RP10, RP13, RP20, RP21, RP22, RP27, RP28). This process asked participants to demonstrate their privacy settings for content visibility control. Collected data was analysed concerning how privacy settings were applied and how interaction was shaped by its application.

During the interviews it was noticed that some participants had difficulty remembering the technical application of privacy settings, hence this method allows the researcher to compare the privacy setting described by the participants during interviews with what has actually been set in the profile. The researcher is permitted by the participants to take screen shots of the privacy setting in place, where necessary. Privacy settings are known to be valuable as this protects information and empowers users through different ways of sharing information with the audience.

Participants were asked to demonstrate the many ways they control who sees the shared information. For example, when one posts content (textual or non-textual), the visibility of it is adjustable to Public, Friends, and Custom This feature on Facebook gives users the ability to select and target the audience for shared information. This enables one to be in control of what is visible to friends, family and other audience. The tool is powerful because it allows users to control the information in their own way, as soon as they post.

To avoid being intrusive to the participants of the study, they were asked to show their settings and overall profile once, following the interview. Participants were given a copy of the collected data to check and to exclude any data where necessary. The combination of in-depth interviews and observation provides rich data and a better understanding of participants' self-presentation practices and their implementation of privacy settings. During interviews, some participants did not remember how they had applied their privacy settings, so observation and demonstration provided confirmation of the answers obtained from interviews.

During the interview participants were asked to describe their personal Facebook use and practices, and describe their experiences of the privacy settings. Focusing a few questions on the privacy settings and privacy concerns provided a background for participants to build trust with the researcher and feel comfortable to allow the researcher to view their very private space with little hesitation. However, the profile demonstration process was different among participants; some tried to hide the embarrassing and private conversations during demonstration. For example, participants were contacted via Chat and the initial conversation was accidentally viewed by the researcher. Similar incidents with other participants affected the time that researchers spent with the participants navigating around their profile.

5.3 Privacy Setting control application

The observation examined the participants' use of the privacy settings and visibility control. It has been previously established from interview findings in chapter five that the privacy settings to control visibility are adjusted according to users' self-presentation goals and technical knowledge of its applications. The profile and its content can be visible to Public, Friends, or Custom set. Visibility of content to the Public (those not on a Friends list) indicates that this participant wants to present a self to the rest of the Facebook population. Observation revealed that RP7, RP8, RP10, RP13, RP20, RP22, RP27 and RP28 have undertaken Custom settings for visibility of content and visibility of Friends list to others. This means that participants demonstrate knowledge of applying the complex "Custom" privacy settings and at the same time it enables them to present content to audience according to the self-presentational goals they want to achieve. However, RP6 and RP21 have privacy settings set to "Public", allowing all known and unknown audience the same access to the content on their profiles. All observed participants displayed their e-mail address alongside their profile picture and cover photo to the Public.

The clearest forms of self-presentation are through the display of photos and pictures uploaded by the users on their profile Wall, and pictures with comments posted to users' Walls from others. Users can upload unlimited photos within their Facebook profile Walls. All observed participants' privacy settings to photo albums was set to "Custom". Participants projected a "custom-made" self to targeted audience by using a large number of photographs of their family, friends and places they have visited.

5.4 Control over Timeline

Participants were observed on how they controlled the visibility of content on their Timeline. Whenever users add content to their Timeline, they can select a specific audience, for example, they can choose to display content to Public, Friends only or customise it according to their Friends list.

5.4.1 Custom control

The participants in the interviews suggested the active use of a custom control icon to customize the audience. Therefore, it is necessary to observe how this feature is applied. Custom control is used to hide an item on the Timeline from specific people.

Friend list visibility to others was observed. Participants have the option to select an audience for the Friends list, it allows users to control who can see the entire list of Friends on the Timeline. However, depending on Friends, Custom Friend list visibility, the control attempts from users end up being useless. For example, if a user selects "Only Me" as the audience for the Friends list, but a Friend from the Friends list sets their Friends list to "Public", anyone will be able to see the connection between two users on the Friend's timeline. Facebook offers different visibility options of the Friends list: "Everyone", "Friends only" and "Only Me". Users are able to "Custom" set it, for example, they can adjust visibility to one group of Friends and restrict it for another group.

Participants demonstrated how they selected the audience for each of their Facebook posts. RP7 suggested that *"To control an audience and visibility of posts, I share each post with the people I want, and I do it every time I post".*

Sharing sensitive information was mentioned by some interview participants as being one of the reasons for applying Custom privacy settings. During the course of the observation of participants, there is little evidence that such activities take place in any significant amount. For example, RP13 posted content from a variety of sources to portray a general picture of women and children's hardship in Iran, the content can be interpreted as more of a social theme than politics in general. As it was shared from other sources and not captured by the user there is not much room for privacy threat from the authorities. However RP13 suggested otherwise, and hence, the privacy settings were customised to make sure the specific audience has access to view it. Participants RP13 and RP22 have

the largest "Friends List", ranging from just over 300 to just over 350 at the time of observation, with Custom privacy settings for Friends list and posted content on the Wall. At the other extreme, RP6 and RP21 have no personal posts at all, a very small Friends list and "Public" privacy settings. This point is particularly interesting when considering the previous discussions on information seeking and lurking. These two participants described their Facebook privacy as open as their approach to Facebook use were based on creating a profile and visiting other people's profiles and having access to available pages for information seeking and entertainment, but not sharing content for fear of security and surveillance from the authorities.

Adjustment of "Friends list" visibility also empowers users to keep the boundary between public and private. Facebook users create a semi-private space while adding or removing people to their "Friends list", therefore the ability to adjust the Friends list to the audience by customising its visibility (whether to hide it from some people and display it to others) is a form of a self-presentation technique that is provided by the platform. This technique aims to empower users. For example, one can display influential connections or hide the connections according to one's self-presentation goals.

5.4.2 Display of personal preferences through visibility control

The interview data suggested that the two primary reasons for participants to control visibility of content to the audience were because of the fear of surveillance from Iranian authorities and family members and to present different content to different audience through grouping.

Facebook users are encouraged by the site's features to display a range of information as a form of self-description. However, the display of information in this feature is done voluntarily. These options are a list of preferences that define users. For example, users can display their personal interests and hobbies, including their favourite movies, music, books, and TV shows, other pages that they are fans of on Facebook. During the observation, it was evident that participants displayed lists of interests and preferences indicating personal tastes and preferences. Liking a page displays the personal taste and preferences of the participant, and the Iranian heritage of the participant was displayed through the use of the "Like" feature. The observation suggests that participants liked many pages designed for Farsi language speakers, (the visibility of the "Liked" pages is

Public as the page owners decide on that and the participants cannot hide it). The "Like" pages are visible to no Friends in all observed participant profiles, demonstrating the relation between the profile and Iranian heritage. The non-verbal and visual use of content indicates indirect self-presentation. The evidence of this can be clearly seen by the Liking of a page, informing the audience of the interest of the user.

Participants give the impression of preferring the use of indirect, non-textual content sharing such as photos and videos from secondary sources to display their interests. It may be that these participants benefit from this form of self-presentation as it allows users to display their cultural heritage and belonging to a community. The observed correlation between non-textual content-sharing and the fact that this content is of a secondary source and not directly related to a user profile might be explained in this way: users aim to create a safe space from the authorities and government as they can claim that they are not the author of that content.

The short and in many cases, non-existent "About Me" content is observed. The reason for this is not clear, but it may have something to do with avoiding statements in textual and first person forms, by which the user can perform a passive, non-active act in order to protect privacy and security. The observed correlation between the selection of "Friends only" privacy settings for "Wall" posts and displays of non-textual and secondary sourced content might be explained as participants being aware of the existence of known audience and this is a strategy to protect one's privacy.

5.4.3 Information display and Privacy Control

Textual descriptions are a way of self-presentation and on Facebook it is displayed through status updates, comments and "About me" features, where the profile user is able to display personal ideas, feeling and thoughts to the audience. The privacy settings enable the user to take control of the visibility of all textual and non-textual content, therefore depending on the nature of self-presentation, users apply the setting. In the "About me" feature RP13, RP20, RP21 had written one or two short sentences and the other participants (RP7, RP8, RP10, RP22, RP27, RP28, and RP6) had chosen to leave this section blank.

In addition, only two of the participants, who had previously stated that their profiles were set to Public and who displayed content in the "About me" section, were recorded during observation as:

(Rp20) - " I am a fun person, love to live life and am interested in reading, swimming, listening to music, movies, etc.".

(RP21) - written in Farsi and translated as: "I am who I am and this space is too small to describe me".

Occasional "Status update" visibility was evident from RP10's profile. This participant displayed his profile picture, phone number, e-mail address, education history, and place of residence. From observing this profile one can see that RP10 displays a mix of professional and personal information on Facebook, and is "Friends" with colleagues, family and friends. His "News Feed" shows photographs of past holidays, alongside his status updates. During interviews he expressed concerns about disclosing information and possible security risks, stating, "I don't update that often and I think I'm slightly selective and conservative with what I share". However, observation data shows that he has displayed status updates and pictures in the past with "Public" privacy settings. The researcher has identified these sections and informed the participant. The participant demonstrated how he applied the "Custom" setting for visibility of the "Friend list" and seemed to be knowledgeable about the technical privacy settings. The display of some content to a public audience contradicts this participant's statements given in interviews as he suggested: "there are possible privacy risks" but it may be that this participant benefited from the occasional public display of content for self-presentation goals.

Photos

Most of the photos on display were group pictures, with family members, and those of secondary sources such as online magazines. During the profile observation, it was clear that the use of pictures for expressing ideas and presenting activities was evident, however, some of the pictures shared were from secondary sources and the profile user had no input in the production of it. Profile pictures varied among participants: a photo of the profile user, a couple, a blank profile picture, an avatar or an object, or a group of people. The participants chose to either not to show their faces at all or to show their faces along with the faces of others in their profile picture, thus representing the struggle to

protect privacy and to overcome the two social representations that one (female participants to be precise) has in Iran. According to Islamic rules, women in Iran are expected to cover up in public spaces, and it is forbidden to appear in public without the Islamic veil. However, in family and private settings they are not expected to follow this rule, and one behaves as one desires. However, Facebook allows one representation in the form of a profile picture as a public representative. This finding may be explained by the fact that one social representation in Iran is not practised, and society and the way the backstage setting in Goffmanian terms is formed in Iran encourages Facebook users to use strategies for hiding their faces. This finding has important implications for developing a more private setting for users from societies like Iran as Facebook aims to have one social representative in offline and online settings according to its founder Mark Zuckerberg, but with current privacy settings, Iranian users are encouraged to present the public side of themselves as measures of security.

Participants demonstrated how they have deleted content they posted in the past, which they do not want to be visible on Facebook anymore. For example, un-tagging photos and changing the privacy of past posts was observed. Apart from controlling from the user side, participants acknowledged that in the past, they have asked Friends and others to remove posts they may have shared about the participant and they wish to be removed from the site.

Work/Education

Some of the issues emerging from this finding relate specifically to the fact that Facebook is not an anonymous online space, rather, the participants in this study employed strategies to change the intention of the site developers from an open and public environment to one that meets their needs. For example, Facebook provides a feature where users can list their education and work history, it aids users in finding peers for future networking and maintaining connections with past peers. Based on interviews, participants living in Iran have reported that they chose not to include work history in order to avoid surveillance and security problems that would come from employers and government authorities. Similarly, participants living in the UK chose not to disclose work-related information, with the exception of the case of RP6. However, the majority of participants reported that they chose to disclose their education history. These findings suggest that academic and education values are important and meaningful among

participants or they believe there is no harm in disclosing academic achievements to a public audience.

The selves presented on Facebook might satisfy the profile users' needs, but at the same time technology helps to portray aspects of one's personal life that might appear unconventional and they might not display in offline public settings. For example, RP27 has created an account to use with his wife, similarly RP8 uses a joint account with her husband. This suggests that sharing online space can be linked to the control and trust-related issues among Iranian couples.

Surveillance

Findings from interviews suggested that participants control the visibility of their content for the fear of being watched by Irans internet surveillance police (FATA). The second surveillance, fear was referred to family members and those with close ties in offline settings. Participants identified 'Friend list grouping' as an affective and management strategy to control surveillance from family members. However, to control surveillance treats from authorities, a number of strategies such as using first names, not posting profile photos, and control of privacy settings were suggested. Participants, however, maintained a degree of self-censorship as a more effective mechanism to prevent most surveillance fears.

Participants reported surveillance-related activity for themselves and other users during interviews. This activity was described mainly as going through another person's photo or searching for the Friend's network of contacts. The present findings seem to be consistent with other research which surveillance and information seeking from peers and Friends on Facebook is a form of "social curiosity" (Brandtzæg et al., 2010). These findings further support the idea of Ellison et al., (2011) as in order to gain social capital participants engage in surveillance and information seeking from peers.

Surveillance spelling cost from the audience might differ between different users depending on the displayed content. Public display of a relationship status out of wedlock seems to be rare by Iranian Facebook users. For example, only RP20 has her boyfriend as a Facebook Friend and nobody shares an interest in a same-sex relationship. Yet, based on interview data, fifteen participants claimed to be in a relationship in offline settings. One of the issues that emerges from these findings is that under the ''looking for" feature,

participants either selected ‘‘Friendship” or they had not selected the option. This seems to suggest that the participants chose not to display their sexual relationship status, as it is defined by many in Iran as abnormal, despite the fact that Internet users in Iran have a location for connecting with the opposite sex freely in online settings. The fact that these participants chose not to disclose their sexual relationships suggests the presence of similar social pressures that exist in offline settings, and a degree of self-censorship on Facebook is needed to protect one’s privacy. In contrast, socially recognised sexual relationships were openly displayed on Facebook. Participants who specified their sexual relationship status, all claimed to be married. This portrayal of commitment in a traditional marital context is in line with the traditional expectations of offline settings for opposite sex connections in the Islamic conservative society of Iran.

Users cannot control people from finding them with privacy settings. People can find others when they search for content they have access to view, for example, a photo or other content in which a user has been tagged. All cover photos are public. This means that anyone who visits a profile page will be able to see their cover photo and the comments and Likes for that post. This violates the user’s attempt to customise the “Friend list” visibility. RP28’s privacy setting for visibility was “Friends” only and displayed her date of birth, profile picture, e-mail address, mobile number, likes and dislikes for movies/books/fashion, school and university details, gender, relationship status and religion to this targeted audience. The participant has access to Facebook from her Smartphone and tablet and she connects to Facebook with the help of a VPN.

This participant (RP28) updates her status regularly, talking about a variety of things from offline settings such as photos of lunch and other food. The visibility of “Status updates” were set to “Custom” suggesting that personal thoughts and activity announcements were targeted to a certain group purposefully. During the interview, she (RP28) suggested that she is very conscious of how people perceive her online and she is careful about what her friends, family and people who don’t know her will think about her posts. During the profile observation, the researcher did not detect any evidence of hiding information from a certain group of friends as the participant’s privacy settings for “Friends list” visibility was set to “Friends” only, meaning she had restricted the public from viewing the profile content and her Friends list members had the same access to information. The participant demonstrated a knowledge of technical privacy settings and the visibility of content on

Facebook, but her posts' visibility on Facebook were based on a deliberate decision. This participant's Friends list consists of different male friends and as she stated during the interview that she finds Facebook particularly useful for keeping in touch with male friends from university, (quoting from interview transcripts) she said: "*in Iran we have some trouble having relationships with boys at university, work and other public spaces, but Facebook is a relatively free space for communicating with men. In my opinion, there is nothing wrong with that, but our society, culture and also government don't approve of that".* It was evident that she posts a variety of content, from her own pictures to secondary information such as posts from "YouTube" and other websites. The privacy settings for shared content varied from "Friends only" settings to "Public" settings, depending on the type of content, suggesting that the participant is in control of her audience and voluntarily displays certain content to targeted audience.

This participant (RP22) uses a pseudonym for a profile name. *RP22 said "I consider what my friends would think when I upload content",* but this same consideration was not given to strangers or hidden audience. From observation of her Facebook page, the researcher can see that her updates were about her personal time; her Timeline was full of all parts of her life. Privacy settings on Status updates is "Friends only". During interviews she has suggested that *"I would not communicate anything terrible that had happened to my friends/family on Facebook or post something that questions my reputation in the community".* This statement suggests that the participant is applying self-censorship as well as the "Friends only" privacy setting to control visibility of content to the audience. The application of settings in this profile demonstrates a skillfull and knowledgeable user, however, she added that it was necessary for her to learn about the privacy settings functionality as she gets Friend requests from extended family members. She suggested that deleting and rejecting such requests might question her reputation, as she stated: *"rejecting a Friend Request can be bad, you know, they will think something is going on there and she is hiding something or she is up to no good on Facebook, something is wrong with our culture, everyone wants to know everything".*

An observation of updates and posts showed that RP28 mostly shared happy photographs of events or holidays and commented on other people's posts. It seems she displayed a positive space with a set of standards to keep control of the content. Different privacy settings were applied to shared content. For example, RP28 sets up several Friends

groups from her "Friends list". This practice suggests that the user actively manage and control self-presentation by targeting different audience, according to her social desires and relationships. Importantly, these two examples represent a situation in which an individual's goals for self-presentation are in tension with privacy concerns, hence, the application of different privacy strategies. They have limited unknown and known audience's visibility to their content by grouping the 'Friend list' and displaying information to that particular group. To address their privacy concerns, they have used different languages alongside the application of 'Custom' privacy settings.

5.4.4 Creating a private space within the private space of a profile for two

The visibility control allows different means of privacy control. RP27 and his wife share one profile. This participant's profile suggests the attempt to create a private space within the privacy that is created from previous privacy settings application to the profile. During interviews this participant (RP27) stated: *"When I first joined Facebook my wife and I had separate Facebook accounts, and I wanted to see her page and friends from university etc…, but later, we decided to have a joint account".* When he was asked to explain the reason for this he replied: *"it's very interesting that you ask this question, you must know as a researcher that most married couples in Iran use a joint account or have their profile picture of both of them presenting to the public that they are together, it's not because they don't trust each other, I think it's the culture, in Iran online spaces and chat rooms are always known for searching for new partners and on Facebook some people still think this way".* He continued: *"some married men say the main reason they join Facebook is to control their wife's page through their Friends list and their relations with others. In addition, men believe when they present themselves on Facebook as their wife's partner, other men will not think of attracting their wife".* This reflects the changing nature of interactions on Facebook when one gets married in offline life, equally the interaction online gets re-shaped. And this is how he used it initially.

Facebook can create tension between couples in Iran, mostly based on the image broadcast by the state indicating that Facebook encourages adultery and they use this as one of the reasons for filtering the site. Especially, individuals with religious upbringing and families are more pessimistic about the use of Facebook. This participant's privacy settings for "Friends list" visibility was "Friends" only and other content visibility was set to "custom". RP27 mostly used Facebook to share photos by using "Custom" setting

as he demonstrated how it allows him to target specific audience. He was concerned with what his friends might think of his wife's posts, and stated during the interview that *"we both add our friends to this account so I know who she knows and she knows who I know".*

5.5 Control over content and "Friends list" visibility

RP7's main reasons for using Facebook were "*to see what is new with friends and what they have been up to, also to catch up with friends and family from home" (referring to Iran).* His privacy setting for the "Friend list" visibility is "Friends only". The privacy setting for content visibility is "Custom". During demonstrations of the profile it was noticed that this participant had uploaded several profile picture since he joined Facebook, the visibility of the profile photo album was set to "Public", therefore, by clicking on the profile picture any unknown audience could view his past photos including comments and Likes from friends. This feature discloses Friends' profiles to the public against RP7's wish, who had previously attempted to restrict his Friend list visibility to the Public. The researcher explained the visibility violation to the participant and advised him on ways to prevent the unwanted disclosure.

For (RP20) control over "Friends list" visibility and content visibility is very important as any information disclosure about her personal life might damage her reputation among her extended family members, who happen to be on her "Friends list". She stated: *"I have my boyfriend and also some male friends on Facebook who keep writing to me and tagging me in pictures, I couldn't reject my extended relatives friendship requests, so now they are all on my Friends list as well as my boyfriend, the only way to keep them from knowing this and my private life is to restrict their access to all my content by grouping the Friends list, if I don't like something on Wall posts I will delete it".* This participant's "Friend list" visibility is set to "Only Me" (RP20). The privacy setting for shared content on the profile is visible to "Friends". The participant also enabled "Timeline Review". This feature updates the user so that whenever someone posts on her "Wall" or tags her, she gets a notification from Facebook asking if she wants to display it on her "Timeline" or remove it. However, the content hidden from the audience through the Timeline review setting is available on the Timeline of those who post it in their "News Feed" and search.

This participant (RP20) used "Custom" privacy setting to control visibility of the content posted to her "Wall". During observation, it was evident that she posts content in the hope

of targeting a specific group. The participant (RP20) used Farsi characters to display her profile name, the First Name split into two parts, my profile name is in Farsi, this user presents a creative way to protect her privacy and offline identity on Facebook by not providing a full name (surname) [for example Ate-as first name and Feh- as a surname, researcher suggests].

Another participant (RP13) uses Farsi language characters to display profile name. During interviews she suggested this was a mechanism to hide her profile page from co-workers in the UK to spare them the embarrassment of her rejecting their friendship request. This user (RP13) also commented:" *I have rules for what to share and what not to share, I am also aware that I have a variety of friends with different understandings of the things I might post so I am careful with what I share".* This statement indicates that the user applies self-censorship and a second strategy to manage audience and content. However, during profile demonstration it was noted that the participant developed a customised settings, so that each post is either visible to "Friends only" or the visibility is "Custom". She has divided her "Friends list" into groups (family, Iran friends, England friends, male friends, university) and each group has access to view her Wall postings according to her choice. It was noticed that the participant "blocked" visibility of her profile from several individuals. She has suggested that her Friends don't comment and like the sensitive content she posts for fear of being associated with her opinion and postings. It is important to bear in mind the possible bias in this self-report statement. However, in observing her posts, it was evident that she actively posts secondary sourced content such as videos, photos and articles about violence against women and children in Iran. During the observation period, it was noted that she shared up to ten different pieces of multimedia content in one day. The content's visibility settings was a mixture of "Custom" and "Public". It seems possible that the non-participation from her Friends list was due to the privacy settings of the shared content. Furthermore, it was noted that this participant applies privacy settings to selected content visibility, for example, the "Friends list" visibility was set to "Only Me". During the interview she suggested that grouping "Friends list" is not something she would consider, she said: *"what if people find out about this, I think Facebook's feature for grouping and filtering is so embarrassing, it's like you invite people to your home and offer drink to some and ignore the rest, why do you invite them in the first place?"* During observation it was evident that this participant is true to her word, the filtering of her information to others were

based of known and unknown separation of audience. From the observation of the content visible in the profile, it was evident that she is not using the "Grouping" feature. Instead, she set visibility to either only "Friends list" or "Public". This participant demonstrated a good knowledge of the application of privacy settings, therefore visibility of certain content to the public might be interpreted as voluntary and the personal choice to portray a certain self-presentation goal.

From the observation of (RP8) at first glance, it was evident that she is hiding herself online behind her spouse. This participant (RP8) used her husband's profile with a profile photo of both of them as a couple. She has explained during the interview that (RP8) "*I shut my personal one down and use my husband's page because I travel to Iran regularly and anyway we have many joint friends".* This meant that officially she has befriended people that she is not acquainted with from offline settings. To control the "Friends list", she has "Custom" setting and the "Friends list" is divided into groups. This allows her to control posted content visibility to different groups of audience. However, this profile demonstrated a more relaxed approach towards controlling content. During the interview, RP8 expressed the belief that *"I am conservative and careful about content sharing and I select my posts"*. The element of self-censorship is evident from this statement and explains why the privacy settings of some secondary sourced content as set to "Public" view.

5.6 Privacy settings as Public

This participant's (RP21) profile content visibility is Public and displays his date of birth, profile, photo, gender, relationship status and education on the profile. He has access to Facebook from a variety of personal devices with a VPN and proxy. The participant's (RP21) choice of "Public" privacy setting was voluntary and the participant was knowledgeable about privacy settings when he spoke of his friend's Facebook profiles. During interview this participant (RP21) noted: *"I am not a big fan of sharing personal information online as I know that it can come back to you. I often look at what others have posted and get embarrassed by what they are sharing".* This statement suggests that the decision to set the profile view to Public is not harmful to security and privacy from unknown audience, as there is limited content posted in the past, and they are of a secondary source. The profile picture is a scan of his work ID card (taken in a professional studio). On closer inspection, it was evident that the "Friends list" visibility was set to

"Friends". During the interview, participant (RP21) stated: "*my profile is open to all, it is like saying: here I am and if you want to contact me feel free to do so. It is not restricted at all as there is nothing bad. I very rarely update Facebook".* This statement suggests that the participant's openness to "Public" visibility setting is related to a combination of being a "lurker" and self-censorship as a strategy to control privacy.

This participant (RP6) reported to have an open privacy setting. By being open they mean to set privacy settings to Public as it is the default setting in the software. This participant lives and works in the UK. However, it is interesting that he refers to being open as the best strategy and at the same time he talks about selecting content before sharing; this indicates that this participant applies a type of censorship and monitors his ideas before sharing it on Facebook.

During interviews this participant (RP6) commented: *"my profile is viewable to the public, I just don't share things that I wouldn't shout from the balcony, and you know what I mean. I am usually watching others' activities and posts and if someone takes a photo of me or anything else I un-tag it - this is the best policy for me".* The participant also referred to the SNSs participation guidelines for employees in his place of work, and as a result he has decided to leave the privacy settings as the default setting with open to all information disclosure policies. This choice of privacy setting and his interview statement suggest that this participant chooses to self-censor and use Facebook. On the observation of profile there was no evidence of privacy setting and information restriction to "Friends list", but there was no personal content displayed either. The profile consisted of a profile photo, education history, e-mail address and place of residence.

5.7 Privately visible

Participants attempt to display the best presentation of themselves before the social circle they are in contact with, in order to increase approval. Participants' concern for gaining approval from family, friends, and society in general was a troubling matter for both women and men. From the observation, it was evident that the use of privacy settings of participants living in Iran is essential: with the exception of RP21, the participants applied a range of privacy settings to control visibility of content on their profiles. However, participants living in the UK found using calculating strategies to be a challenging task. Both participating groups were creative in the use of tactics for privacy as well as using

Facebook privacy settings. However, one might note that extreme privacy measures in relation to one's presentation of content on Facebook might not be specific only to Iranian society and can be seen elsewhere as well. Analysis of the interviews revealed that the participants use tactics to control what they share on Facebook and with whom. The use of Facebook for participants living in Iran is described as a liberating opportunity (RP22, RP28) from the gender-segregated Iranian society where norms and codes of public behaviours have been set according to Islamic rules. Facebook is an essential part of online communication of individuals in this study. They have managed to create a relatively safe space within the Facebook platform by applying privacy settings and visibility tactics despite the fact that Facebook is filtered in Iran and its use could have damaging consequences for Iranians as it has been reported in the media (see BBC 2014).

The observation phase of data collection helped to better relate interview statements to users' actual practices. For instance, while RP10 stated that he did not comment much on other activity, he frequently used the comment function to stay in contact with his sister. Another case is RP7 who during interviews suggested that *"I am careful about my audience and will not accept friendship from unknown audience"*. However, during observation, he accepted quite a few pending Friend Requests and said, "I don't know this girl or these girls". When discussing this fact with him, he described in detail how he decides whether to "Confirm" or "Delete" "Friend Requests".

In general, participants described the profile picture as the most important feature on Facebook. The care and attention to select a profile picture highlights the blurred line between presenting an authentic self or a self-censored one. A number of participants said that they had no embarrassing information posted about them on Facebook, they thought it was because they did not post embarrassing pictures. During observation, it was noticed that participants had altered their profile photo (RP8, RP27) and some had gone as far as using "Photoshop" software to edit photos before sharing it with others. This form of showing one's profile picture on Facebook, could be interpreted as masking one's self. For Goffman (1959) the use of mask in the interaction means using "deception in interaction" (p.57).

Facebook's privacy settings provide users with options to present their content visible to Public, Private, or they may Customise the audience access according to their self-presentation needs. This feature empowers users by purposefully preventing or disclosing

content to targeted audience. Applying privacy settings allows users to target specific content to specific audience as well as actively managing privacy (Boyd and Hargittai 2010). Although privacy settings allow users to apply a degree of control over content accessibility and visibility to a range of audience, it is unable to provide a completely private space according to the user's needs. Users' content visibility can be entirely public or entirely private, but they experience the boundaries crossed between the public and the private too As it was shown in this study, these participants who looked for a reliable privacy decided to have 'Public' privacy settings but similarly they have described self-censorship as an effective strategy (RP6, RP21). This supports the findings of Ford (2011) has argued that participants in SNSs are continuously negotiating the public/private boundaries and the distinction has no fixed borders. Similarly, Boyd (2008) stated that the line between private and public in "Networked Publics" are never clear due to the affordances of these spaces. Another group of participants demonstrated their understanding of the blurred line public and private in Facebook by avoiding to provide a direct information on the profile page. Up on the observation, it was evident that the use of first names as profile name was used frequently among participants as their strategy to mask their offline real-names on Facebook. During the interviews RP7, RP22, RP27, RP8 said that they use their offline real-name on Facebook. However, during observation, it was evident that they have not used and displayed their full offline name (first name+ surname). When researchers started asking question about it, they have insisted that they haven't lied about it in interviews, "I just realised it now, I forgot to tell you in the interview, it is my name, just in a different shape" suggested RP7. Another group of participants used their spouse's First name as a profile name (RP8). She suggested that "*it offers me more privacy, those who know me, know its my husband's name*". The strategies used by this group of participants suggest that they are aware of the public nature of Facebook, as they have used different privacy settings in line with these strategies. This recalls Goffman's mask metaphor, as using part of one's real name or part of spouses name indicates one's desire to use deception in the interaction, these participants have demonstrated the involvement in deception of others in the Facebook community as to protect their own self-interest.

From passive observation of the participant's profile demonstration, it is difficult to collect data regarding the reasons for a participant's participation and privacy protection, other than observing the activities which they share. Certainly, a vast number of

participants' posts are from secondary sourced content to display personal interest and tests to specific audience controlled by Friends list grouping. In this respect, the views of the interview respondents seem to accurately describe the privacy control mechanisms. However, the third reason, fear of surveillance from Iranian authorities and family members, is more complicated.

As the interviews indicated, respondents felt that generally, social interaction is the reason for the creation of a Facebook profile, but did not feel it is important to control privacy settings and change the default settings. This would suggest that either this group of users employs self-censorship as a mechanism to protect privacy and has a self-presentation goal with "Public" privacy settings, or they use other sections such as private messaging and chat for participation. It was beyond the scope of this study to observe users' private messaging and Facebook chat room participation, firstly for ethical reasons and secondly, participants were guarding their profile during the demonstration and the researcher concluded that requesting to see this part of participants' profiles might result in the losing of trust between the researcher and the participant, or the termination of the demonstration process.

In a related point, some interview participants stated that one of the reasons they used Facebook, considering its banned status in Iran, was because of the support of the privacy settings they get from Facebook. In many posts throughout the profiles, the application of participants' privacy setting is evident. They describe the reasons for this in interviews, explain why they prefer them and how it helps to use Facebook otherwise they would have deactivated the profile because of the fear of privacy violation.

Several interview respondents stated that information seeking and lurking was one of the reasons they used Facebook. This does not necessarily mean that participants intentionally create a profile with the aim of not posting anything, but rather that they read and do not always find the need or the opportunity to post content. Clearly the observation of research participants could not monitor the lurker-like attempts, but the observed correlation between the amounts of content posted from a participant and information sharing with Friends lists might be explained in this way. However, the occasional post by users, which described their participation can give an indication that at least some are sharing as well as seeking, information.

Another important finding that came from analysis of the profiles of individuals was the availability of shared content to unknown audience. Many believed that the information that they shared could be viewed only by their friends. What occurred was that if a friend commented on an individual's status or post, for example, it then appeared in that friend's news feed. The news feed could be read by any of the friend's friends without the individual knowing or adding them to the friend list. This meant that other individuals could form an opinion as an audience without the consent of the individual or knowing the context of the original post. In this way the technology itself acted as a channel of information to unknown audience and did so without any interaction with the individual other than the original post. Therefore, there was a gap between what individuals understood of sharing with a specific audience and the reality. In practice, self-presentation in SNSs might be formed outside the individual's consent. Participants believed themselves to be protected by privacy settings and self-censorship. However, in reality it was different and the cost of the unknown and unintended audience can be high. The observed situation is in line with Boyd (2010) as she describes "networked publics" in terms of "persistence, replaceable, scalable and searchable. When left unchecked, networked technologies can play a powerful role in controlling information and configuring interactions" (2010, p. 46). However, the participant in this study has demonstrated good understanding of privacy control and skills to manage and manipulate it, but as in line with Boyd (2010) the affordances of Facebook is not controllable. It seems that the self-censorship strategy for this group of skilful participants, as described above, will be a most effective way to control privacy. This group of participants are no strangers to self-censorship in public spaces in Iran from the time of the 1979 Islamic revolution. Therefore masking one's self and using deception and manipulation in online spaces in interaction with others is acceptable. Many would blame the censorship and illegality of Facebook as a reason for getting involved in deception, however, based on Zuckerberg's comments, presentation a different name for one's in Facebook shows a lack of integrity. One might question that is the censorship of the Internet and SNSs in Iran promotes deception, manipulation and lack of integrity among the large population of its users? And how the society will be dealing when this norm and behaviours become a part of everyday practice in offline settings? Are we going to be another North Korea after the implementation of "national Intranet"?

Previous literature has studied the importance of privacy settings on Facebook. One of the early studies was conducted by Gross and Acquisti (2005). They found that only a small number of students adjusted Facebook's default privacy setting. In the follow-up study a year later, they found that those users who were concerned about the privacy violation from Facebook use, carried on sharing content without the appropriate default privacy setting adjustment. Similarly, Lampe, Ellison and Stainfield studied students in The Michigan State University to find out their use of privacy settings on Facebook between 2006 and 2008, and found that only a small number of students applied privacy settings to control content visibility to non-Friends.

Research resources to investigate privacy settings with observation in this investigation was limited as it is only possible to view the settings with access to profiles. As pointed out in the introduction to this section, observing all sections of participants' profiles was not pursued firstly for ethical consideration and secondly, none of the participants trust the researcher to provide this information. It was decided to view the privacy settings application while participants were interacting on Facebook and demonstrating how they applied privacy settings. The task took considerable effort, especially with a group of participants living in Iran as users interacting with the site in private, but the site is filtered in Iran and is not accessible everywhere and anytime.

This methodology proved that this study was able to reveal what users actually do to control privacy, and achieve self-presentation goals by combining participants' statements from interviews with observation of their privacy settings through member demonstrations. This study suggests ideas for improving SNS privacy design. However, this methodology cannot recognise some privacy strategies in collecting data such as self-censorship within postings unless participants report it during interviews.

The combination of observation data and the information gathered from participants' interviews on privacy control from users provides findings that may provide better support for SNSs software design for users from countries such as Iran. Facebook privacy features are interfering with users' self-presentation practices and it can be identified and improved. For example, Facebook can provide a notification to users about the privacy setting of the content on the site they have commented on or liked. This can be in the form of "pop-up message", so users will see the notification immediately after they have engaged in the activity, and they can decide whether or not to delete it. This additional

feature might ease users' problems and encourage users to participate and engage in communication on the site rather than being a "lurker" or voluntary self-censor. For example, observation revealed situations where commenting on political activities evolved into chat-like conversations of a small group of users where all comments were available for public view (for example, see BBC Persian Facebook page, it is visible for Public and those outside of Facebook, comments are visiable from Google search. The BBC Persian is filtered in Iran and its website is filtered). SNSs software may detect such situations and could alert users, before they comment, that this post is available for public view to protect users' privacy.

5.8 Performance and Negotiating Online Self

Facebook promotes constitutive directions in the construction of self-presentation with a variety of privacy options. Users employ privacy tactics and shape their presentations to certain ends. Participants in this study were digitally skilful in offline settings, based on the number of photos and videos they uploaded to their Facebook pages, as this requires a degree of engagement and involvement with the technology. The group of participants in Iran also needed certain skills to be able to learn about finding, downloading and using VPNs in order to get connected to Facebook. This finding points to the fact that participants are comfortable with the use of digital technology and they would be able to overcome the filtering if it became more restrictive than is currently the situation in Iran. This is also a positive sign as these participants are in a strong position to benefit from SNSs, especially given that as this generation ages, their experiences from gaining information in SNSs could influence their position of questioning and challenging the current social and political power system in Iran.

During observation of participants, profiles were littered with different content some however, with reference to political opinions. A privacy setting of contents was "Custom" and it indicated that there are aimed at a targeted audience. The question here is whether Facebook drives political engagement or not, as it is directly linked to the privacy concerns and consequently self-presentation of Iranians. Engaging in political discussions is not the first thought in the minds of participants in this study, but it does not mean that it is not on their minds either, as their frequent sharing of different multimedia content from social and political situations demonstrated themes and ideas related to a need for freedom of expression. Those living in Iran displayed these ideas through third party

materials, such as sharing information from other Facebook pages and from other Internet websites. This strategy was used to protect one's privacy and reduce the chances of being targeted by authorities; at the same time displaying a degree of self-censorship. However, a more direct approach was taken by group one, living in the UK, as they used Facebook features such as 'status updates' to directly display their frustrations about social and political situations in Iran. The finding, however, contradicts Fraquhar's (2009) study of American Facebook users which suggested that they avoid political discussion on Facebook due to either a lack of interest in politics or in an impression management technique. The American approach to display of politics indicates that managing self-presentation in front of one's Friends over a taking part in something that is generally good for society. One can interpret the participants in this study's display of sensitive and political frustrations as a way to present a caring and responsible self by raising their disagreements on Facebook. So, maybe the need to present a positive self in these two studies is similar, however, due to the political circumstances of the two countries and the differences between the two nations, this has been presented in a different fashion.

Research question one focused on the intentions of Iranians who are using Facebook and how they use self-presentation. Facebook was explored as a space in which participants showcase the process of self-presentation. This exploration was made through the 'Networked Publics' lens and it further highlighted the importance of privacy in the process of self-presentation on Facebook. Privacy components were frequently updated by participants, and the visibility of the content to others (known and unknown audience) was constantly monitored.

This study finds that the privacy settings and privacy feature provide a mechanism and drive the action on self-presentation for participants in this study. The privacy control mechanism combined with privacy settings permits participants to present a self-based on their own goals and not dictated by Facebook's features and dynamics. The findings of this study greatly enrich our understanding of Goffman's key concepts and claims. Facebook brilliantly manifests processes central to the dramaturgical approach, including observation of others, development of and response to the observations by providing feedback through 'Comments' and 'Likes', performances, and subsequent performances.

5.9 Goffman and the Audience

In terms of specific self-presentation within the Facebook context, my study helps to show the extent to which individuals seek acceptance through self-presentation from their community, by presenting themselves in accordance with their Iranian heritage. Based on Goffman (1959), self-presentations are continually adjusted throughout the day, based on the environment where the self-presentation and performance take place (for example home or work environment) and audience who receive the self-presentation via performance. Participants in this study made attempts to control the environment by using the 'Group' feature to control the 'Friend List' environment, and they also demonstrated adjustments of performances based on visibility to others.

The Goffmanian lens (1959) explains the clues given in self-description, features such as 'About me' and 'status updates'. Also, use of other features such as lists of favourite books, movies, etc. provides some information from other pages on Facebook to help support one's attempt at self-presentation. Information posted from the network of 'Friends' on the profile page in the form of 'Comments', 'Likes' and different multimedia forms act as a form of confirmation and validity of one's self-presentation. The visibility of this information is under the control of the profile users; it can be deleted at any time. However, this information, when 'Tagged' on the profiles of 'Friends', is not in control of the user. One might 'untag' this information and reject the association with it. In Goffman's terms this is known as information 'given off' where information which was not intended to be given was received by the audience and a profile owner has less control of the content visibility. The cues posted by 'Friends' on one's Facebook profile affects others' views of the profile owner (Walther et al., 2008). Participants in this study made a great effort to control this feature. They have reported attempts such as 'untagging', deleting the Facebook Friend and on many occasions contacting the Facebook Friend and requesting the removal of that information. Whether it was a simple, innocent photo or a video from a social gathering or one's photo without a 'veil', privacy strategy by participants' attempts to control information persistence (Boyd, 2010b) and to control the self-presentation on Facebook according to their goals. This finding contradicts a study of American adults by Farquhar (2009) who found that "Facebook users placed little importance on these less-controlled items in assessing others" (p. 211).

Facebook in this study is considered as the front stage where the performance is visible to the audience, according to the self-presentation goals of profile users. In this study the back stage of Facebook is offline settings in which participants are to some degree influenced by its norms and regulations for presenting a self-based on this environment. Goffman's use of theatre shapes the dramaturgical approach in which he refers to front and back stage as a drawing line in the physical space. In Facebook, similarly, one experiences the different stages. In this study, by referring to the blurred line between online and offline settings, one is able to display content from the offline setting, online (for example display of photos, videos and other information from one's offline activities).

An actor is conscious of being observed by an audience in front stage, and the performance to those watching is shaped by observing certain rules and social conventions drawn from those watching (Goffman, 1959). Similarly, participants in this study have drawn on the norms and restrictions of Iran to control and manage their privacy and at the same time display a self to a chosen audience. The presentation of self for these participants is defined in accordance with their perception of the privacy controls according to different audience. The self-presented on Facebook by this group of participants is a form of censored self.

Farquhar's (2009) results suggested that "In terms of Goffman's (1959) front and back stages, Facebook operates almost entirely on the front stage, a realm filled with cues, norms, and contexts about the environment, relationships, and personal presentations" (p. 212). However, later she suggested that "Facebook has almost complete overlap with the world of offline relationships" (p. 123). In Contrast, Boyd (2010), by drawing on Facebook affordances, has argued that the line between private and public is not clear. Similarly, Facebook is known for bridging the connections from offline settings to online settings (Lampe et al., 2008); therefore, Farquhar's (2009) claims contradict this study's findings. Similarly, my study in line with Boyd (2010) and Lampe et al., (2008) employed offline settings as an environment in which Facebook bridges its public and private boundaries to online settings. Therefore, it is reasonable to claim in line with Goffman that the offline settings are a back stage where the Iranians are faced with restrictions on the use of SNSs, but they manage to break the restrictions and appear on stage (Facebook). However, there is no guarantee that their performance will be very different from their

offline performance, as it has been displayed here, the performer carries the worries and fears of surveillance and privacy violation to the stage. The participants in this study have demonstrated different strategies to control their privacy. The fear of surveillance, restrictions and possible punishment for one's display of content and ideas from offline settings and back stage is the driver behind the various ways of controlling one's privacy. Similarly, participants' use of strategies, especially in the case of RP13 who used Farsi characters to display her real name on Facebook, as this strategy masks the person's name and helps to hide from certain audience (in her case the non-Iranians on Facebook, are a form of self-presentation). In Goffman's terms the hidden person behind this mask (her own name) is a facet of the same individual.

Expression Given

Participants were chosen to present themselves in a particular way as, in terms of Goffman's concept, it is known as expressions we 'give' to others (Goffman, 1959). For example, female participants (RP20, RP22), were posting their photos without the 'veil' to targeted audiences; in some cases these audiences never meet them without a 'veil' in offline settings. Although the participants elected to mask their real name by using a first name in two parts as with for a full real name, they chose to 'give' part of a self that they wanted to present. This example also demonstrates the desire to present a self against the restrictions of offline public spaces in Iran and use "Facebook as a place for practice of defiance" (Khosravi 2008, p. 3).

Participants generally replicated their offline selves on their Facebook profile page, but they did not replicate their whole offline real self. Some have used different strategies to hide their full real name from unknown audiences, so their profile could not be related to their offline self by others. Others chose different photos or no photo for the profile page. These strategies were used to control visibility from those who might search for their profiles in Facebook. However, participants displayed part of their offline self to their audience from the 'Friend list'.

One unanticipated finding was that RP6 and RP21's profile visibility was set to 'Public'. RP6 had both personal and professional friends, both from Iran and the UK. However, he said that "I won't post or share anything at the same time, I really don't participate in communication with people here, but I use it every day as I enjoy seeing what people do".

What this means is that his audience always sees one side of him: “This is my way of controlling my privacy, I can’t share stuff and restrict my friends from seeing them, I have my boss here and that won’t look nice, I would rather not to say something that I might regret later”. Similarly, RP21 gave the following account: “I am usually very careful with what I share, actually I would rather not share content, I prefer browsing around other pages and watching my friends, my profile privacy setting is open as I don’t have things to hide”. Although these two participants are not masking themselves (Goffman, 1959, p.57), they are displaying a profile page as an online self with profile photo and profile name as their real offline name, but by not participating they portray a self-censoring attitude to others, because, just as they said, they would rather not participate and prefer to watch others’ activities on Facebook. The Facebook friends and unknown audience, therefore, they were presented with a part of the offline self.

5.10 Online Self Performances and Offline Self Performances

In Facebook, the connections from offline settings all come together under one’s ‘Friend list’ and therefore, offline merges with the online venue to create an almost complete overlap between the two (Boyd and Ellison, 2007). Display and exchange of information on the Facebook ‘wall’, ‘status updates’, ‘sign in’, and the features which allow information sharing in one-to-many forms, are connecting one from offline to online, depending on the privacy settings and visibility of the content to the public or selected audience. Responses to the display of information in the shape of ‘Comments’ and ‘Likes’ cause further activity replies. Based on the displayed information’s privacy settings, the ‘Comment’, ‘Like’ and ‘Reply’ might reach unknown audience. Again, here, the offline and online could be connected and sometimes it brings negative outcomes. Participants in this study were cautious of their interactions, as they were afraid of surveillance by the authorities and other unwanted audience.

The concept of ‘Networked Publics’ provides a useful way of understanding the distinction between offline ‘self’ and online ‘self’ as the public display of private information (Lange, 2007) causes a conflict between one’s privacy needs and self-presentation goals. As emerged from my interviews and observation, sharing information in the Facebook ‘wall’, ‘status updates’ and ‘sign in’ features while one’s general privacy setting for that feature is set to ‘Custom’ does not mean the information is only available to a ‘Custom’ audience. Participants need to adjust the default privacy settings for each

content before posting it on the profile. However, only a few skilful and careful individuals demonstrated this capability and many participants' self-reports of privacy settings during interviews were shown to be implemented incorrectly. As a result the information they intended for a particular audience was visible to different audience. The information shared through this feature is persistence, as they are usually in the form of writing or an image, as Boyd (2010a) has argued, "Both writing and photography provide persistence, but they also transform the acts they are capturing" (p. 46). This shows the role played by Facebook in shaping 'Networked Publics' and people's participation. Here, the control is shifted from the user to the platform, however, previously the user was imagined to be in charge of the settings. The 'Networked Publics' affordances are connected and dependent on each other; therefore, the information displayed in this form is scalable too: "Scalability in networked publics is about the possibility of tremendous visibility, not the guarantee of it" (Boyd, 2010, p. 48). Based on these two affordances, one's imagined privacy setting could result in a voluntary disclosure of personal and sometimes sensitive information. Particularly in the case of Iranian users, this could lead to a variety of mistreatments by the regime. This could be prevented by a simple adjustment in the design of website interface by adding a 'pop up message' in the form of a warning about the privacy setting of that particular content before sharing it. Table below presents summary of findings from previous two chapters:

Themes	**Sub-themes**	**Findings**
Functional profile construction	➢ **Technical and social barriers to connection** ➢ **Entertainment and keeping connected** ➢ **Digital Skills and Engagement with Audience via Information Sharing and Information Seeking(Similarities among both groups)**	This study found that Iranians are developing their own approaches and strategies to control privacy, arranging the privacy features of the Facebook to meet their needs and self-presentation goals. The constant engagement with overcoming the Internet censorship and privacy control strategies to maintain privacy from the regime enabled this group of Facebook users to advance their digital skills in a particular way. Finding shows that the participant in both groups has demonstrated good understanding of privacy control features and skills to manage and manipulate it, at the same time they were aware of the affordances of Facebook as a

		networked public. Participants referred to Facebook as public space and this explains the self-censorship attitude they referred to as an ultimate strategy to manage one's privacy. Participants living in Iran have reported that they chose not to include work history in order to avoid surveillance and security problems that would come from employers and government authorities. Similarly, participants living in the UK chose not to disclose work-related information, as the fear of availability of personal information to the employers in the UK was described by participants as the same fear they have had experienced in Iran. Participants in both groups have reported that they chose to disclose their education history. These findings suggest that academic and education values are important and meaningful among participants or they believe there is no harm in disclosing academic achievements to a public audience.
Iranian heritage and Performance on Facebook	➢ **Fear of Publicness** ➢ **Personality/heritage influence** ➢ **The negotiation of authentic "self" through performance**	This study found that Facebook cannot be treated as an independent platform for communication in the societies like Iran, but as a technology that is shaped by people and their perceptions about privacy violation based on ongoing social and political forces. Technical and social barriers for connection and self-presentation practices based on their Iranian heritage shaping participants' self-presentation practices.
Engaging with Audience	➢ **Freedom to contact others** ➢ **Seeking community approval** ➢ **Display of personal preferences through visibility control**	This study finds that the privacy settings and privacy feature provide a mechanism and drive the action on self-presentation for participants in this study. The privacy control mechanism combined with privacy settings permits participants to present a self-based on their own goals and

	➢ **Iranian heritage influence on sharing (differences between two groups)**	not dictated by Facebook's features and dynamics. There was a gap between what individuals described about sharing with a specific audience and the reality. However, during the observation process it had appeared to be different, the information shared was available to a variety of unknown audience. For this group of Facebook users the visibility of Facebook profile information to the unknown and unintended audience could be risky. Those living in Iran displayed these ideas through third party materials, such as sharing information from other Facebook pages and from other Internet websites. This strategy was used to protect one's privacy and reduce the chances of being targeted by authorities; at the same time displaying a degree of self-censorship. However, a more direct approach was taken by group one, living in the UK, as they used Facebook features such as 'status updates' to directly display their frustrations about social and political situations in Iran.
Privacy and Surveillance concerns	➢ **Surveillance by authorities** ➢ **Surveillance of/by known audience (similarities in both groups)** ➢ **Privacy concern from tagged content** ➢ **Privacy knowledge**	Findings from interviews suggested that participants control the visibility of their content for the fear of being watched by Iran's internet surveillance police (FATA). The second surveillance, fear was referred to family members and those with close ties in offline settings. Participants identified 'Friend list grouping' as an affective and management strategy to control surveillance from family members. However, to control surveillance treats from authorities, a number of strategies such as using first names, not posting profile photos, and control of privacy settings were suggested.

		Married couples in both groups have reported on sharing one Facebook account and surveillance on each other's activities. This suggests that sharing online space could be linked to the control and masculine power related issues among Iranian couples.
Privacy maintenance	➢ **Grouping and listing** ➢ **"Public" privacy setting** ➢ **Protected by privacy settings (differences between two groups)** ➢ **Tactics** ➢ **Pseudonym** ➢ **Language** ➢ **Limited participation through "Like" feature** ➢ **Creating a private space within the private space of a profile for two** ➢ **Privately visible**	The findings suggest that participants have demonstrated a level of creativity in managing their privacy by using different strategies. They use privacy settings provided by the Facebook platform with adjustments and control mechanisms to support their self-presentation goals. Their personal experiences about privacy threats from offline settings and negative experiences of their friends and families about privacy threats have shaped and influenced their self-presentation practices and privacy control strategies and their overall experiences. Participants from both groups have reported similar Privacy control attitudes, Content Visibility control, Profile visibility control and Use of different strategies to hide one's offline self in online setting. Participants living in the UK found using calculating strategies to be a challenging task. Both groups were creative in the use of tactics for privacy control as well as using Facebook privacy settings. They have managed to create a relatively safe space within the Facebook platform by applying privacy settings and visibility tactics despite the fact that Facebook is filtered in Iran and its use could have damaging consequences for Iranians.
Self-censorship	➢ **Limited Participation**	Individuals' self- presentation on Facebook is shaped around their understanding of how the default privacy settings on Facebook work; participants use self-

	➢ **Privacy settings as Public (both groups)**	censorship very often to prevent unexpected privacy violations. Participants in both groups have reported using self-censorship as a more effective mechanism to manage the surveillance from known and unknown audience. Participants described the combination of the privacy settings with self-censorship as an effective method for presenting a desired self to others. However, RP6 (living in the UK) and RP21 (living in Iran) have reported an open to public privacy setting as the chose to self-censorship as the best strategy to protect their privacy on Facebook.

5.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter has described the findings of the observation phase of the research. The intention of this phase was to attempt to observe participants' privacy settings application and compare these observations to the findings from interviews. Although the purpose of the observation was confirmed, special care was taken to avoid confirmation bias and to attempt to both prove and disprove the findings as the unique participant observation method used in this study provided a good opportunity to both participants and the researcher to be equally involved in the process. The observation phase has been providing interesting findings that were not captured from interview data (for example discovery of using short names for profile name as it contradicted participants' interview suggestions). The chapter has shown that there are differences between the privacy settings application on profiles and participants' concerns about privacy violation.

In comparison to the real world, Facebook provides a relatively free space with fewer limitations for users, especially customary limitations and communicative restrictions in countries with gender-segregation rules and defined lines of interaction in public spaces. Users' privacy strategies rely only to a limited extent on the privacy setting features provided by Facebook. Other means such as self-censorship, use of different forms of one's name to display the profile name (First name, First name with Farsi characters, spouse's name), using multiple SNSs accounts, supplement the use of Facebook's privacy setting and control features.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Introduction

In this final chapter I review the research objectives used for this research project. I consider how this research makes contributions to knowledge, practice and policy. I then provide a reflective evaluation of the research process and the way it was conducted. The limitations of the study and future lines of research are also suggested. This thesis ends with some final reflections. The chapter discusses the contribution of this research and its findings, and in addition it explores the implications of this research for individuals and businesses.

The previous chapter discussed the current research findings in the light of the literature. There were a number of similarities and some differences with other researchers found in this study (see Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 for Findings and Discussion) and overall the data collected in this study supports several theories and previously published research as demonstrated. However, there are several extensions to the existing body of knowledge, and specific findings from this particular group of participants under study. This chapter summarizes how this research, by fulfilling the objectives of the study, advances the knowledge of the research topic and extends the existing literature. This will form the basis for the contribution to knowledge of the current research.

The chapter is structured in the following order: the first section is concerned with the subject of this work, which proposes contributions to knowledge based on the research objectives. The second section of the chapter is concerned with the limitations of this work. Bearing in mind these limitations, suggestions for future work are provided. The chapter ends with the final conclusions of overall reflection on the research- based PhD findings.

6.2 Revisiting Research Objectives

At the beginning of this thesis, I stated the following research objectives:

- To explore Iranians' use of Facebook through individual personal accounts and self-presentation;
- To explain how the self-presentation is shaped by privacy concerns;

- To provide an enriched conceptual account of self- presentation on Facebook by Iranian users;
- To explore dramaturgical lens in understanding of Facebook use among Iranians;
- To situate the participants' narratives in the context of the current literature.

I have addressed these objectives through the development of a qualitative field study, based on data sources from participant interviews and observations. Informed by themes from the literature review, interview and observation, questions were formed in order to address the research questions:

- How do Iranians use Facebook?

Sub- questions:

- How would Iranians describe their self-presentation on Facebook?
- How do privacy concerns shape the self-presentation?

The findings were supplemented by analysis through the dramaturgical approach and unexpected new themes that emerged from the interviews and observations benefited from Goffman's theoretical approach in order to provide structured explanations for the self-presentation practices (detailed findings and decisions in Chapters 4 and 5). Below I provide a summary of how the research objectives were achieved.

The contributions proposed by this research will be structured around the research objectives posed. The four issues of contribution: audience, literature, new insight and use, are as suggested by Walsham (2006): "[To] construct our piece to aim at a particular type of audience or audiences. In addition, we can ask to what literature we are aiming to contribute. Thirdly, what does the piece of written work claim to offer that is new to the audience and the literature? Finally, how should others use the work?" (p.326).

The research has an interdisciplinary nature and therefore the contributions can be useful in the domain of information systems, communication studies, Internet studies, cultural studies, and market research. This study is also unique as it is conducted in the settings of Iran, where there is very limited independent, non-governmental funded social science research. This study has not been funded by either the UK or Iranian government.

6.3 Contributions to Knowledge

It presents an empirical study that employs the participants' application of privacy settings based on the intention of exploring the accuracy of their own deployed access control policies. The findings show that the privacy settings of many users do not match their privacy concerns and self-presentation intentions.

The research demonstrates the need to provide SNSs users in non-English spoken countries with a detailed and usable privacy and access control process. This study contributes with qualitative data that shows the wide variety of privacy concerns Iranian SNSs users experience and the strategies and methods they depend on to reach a level of privacy control that the existing privacy settings in the site are unable to provide based on their needs and self-presentation goals. The strategies that participants demonstrated during the field study only compensate to some degree for the shortcomings in the existing privacy settings and controls.

It contributes with a novel approach for explaining the SNS users' privacy concerns with using participant observations through participant profile demonstrations of individuals. This additional context increases the trustworthiness of the findings by grounding the users' responses to interview questions in reality. This method demonstrates a novel ethical approach to capturing participants' activities through observation in SNSs.

This study shows that the state of accuracy of Facebook users' privacy settings could be improved by introducing additional features (for example, pop up messages to warn about 'visible to public content' while one is commenting on a post) to the existing mechanism, to inform users about the nature of an interaction. These modifications do not require re-designing the existing access and privacy control mechanism, but an extra feature will help those in different countries to use and interact in Facebook with less fear of privacy violation and it would also assist Facebook Inc. towards a better and ethical interaction system design with considering the needs of all people around the word.

This study moves beyond most SNSs research to date such as survey- based laboratory studies, ethnographical studies with observations based on access to user profiles with friendship mechanism and public profile observations (see Chapter 2 for examples). During this investigation, the aim was to assess the participants' personal experiences

through qualitative field study and this study has shown that the privacy settings that people are using in their profiles sometimes contradict their self-presentation goals. Based on using participant observation through participants' profile demonstrations, the actual privacy settings through Facebook's available settings were captured. It has shown a number of differences between the users' self-reports in interviews and actual profile settings through observations. This finding emerged through the unique implementation of the methodology in this study, which in turn evolved from participant observation of participants through participants' profile demonstrations. This approach was formed due to the limitation that emerged from the usual participant's observation process that has been reported in the literature. However, in this study, it has been shown that a limitation imposed from a method could lead to new ways of applying it based on the needs and norms of the participants in a specific social setting and specific worries, here the case of Iranian users. Future studies could benefit from using this research direction for data generation from online personal profiles. The methods used for this study may be applied to other SNSs studies elsewhere in the world; it will assist future studies to work towards a usable access control mechanism that people will actually be motivated to use to protect their shared information and manage the presentation of self systematically.

Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight into the privacy concerns and privacy control mechanism employed by the user, as well as suggesting areas of technical improvement which could be very useful for Facebook users from Iran and similar social contexts in which SNSs and Facebook is filtered.

This study confirms previous findings on self-presentation practice on SNSs and contributes additional evidence that suggests both technical and social barriers for connection and self-presentation practices based on their Iranian heritage shaping participants' self-presentation practices. Additionally, it suggests that individuals' self-presentation on Facebook is shaped around their understanding of how the default privacy settings on Facebook work. The findings show that participants use self-censorship very often to prevent unexpected privacy violations. The other findings show that participants demonstrated a level of creativity in managing their privacy by using different strategies (more detail in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5). At the same time the findings show, in line with previous findings from other studies, that participants use the privacy settings provided by the Facebook platform with adjustments and control mechanisms to support their self-

presentation goals. The findings also show that the users' overall personal experiences about privacy threats from offline settings and negative experiences of their friends and families about privacy threats (they have drawn examples from different people who were in prison in Iran as a consequence of Facebook use for personal and social/political activities) have shaped and influenced their self-presentation practices and privacy control strategies and their overall experiences.

6.4 Contributions to Literature

The study contributions are particularly significant to research in the field of SNSs studies. In addition, the audience would include those practitioners who wish to use theory to inform their practice. The use of Boyd's 'Networked Publics' (2010) to explain Facebook's technological affordances was necessary in order to explain the privacy concerns and the use of innovative privacy strategies by participants and the current study highlighted the important role that the designers of the SNSs' original goals and intentions has to play when implementing privacy policies.

The findings from this study make several contributions to the current literature. First, a contribution to the literature in terms of new approaches to observation methods application in capturing participants' practical use of privacy strategies has been made by the findings from the observation phase of this research. This work has highlighted the key issues of Facebook usage among Iranians: communication, social interaction, self-presentation and privacy. In doing this, it makes a contribution to the study of SNSs and it particularly contributes to the current growing body of literature. It has also illuminated the benefits to the understanding of these issues that come from theoretical perspectives. Second, the findings of this research provide insights for the use of SNSs and Facebook in the context of Iran. Third, this study draws directly on the Iranian users' first-hand experiences of Facebook use; by employing a field study, this research has demonstrated, for the first time, that use of this method could provide valuable insight from individuals' experiences, but it also highlights the difficulties of conducting a qualitative field study for topics that are not supported by the regime rules. Despite its exploratory nature, this study offers some insight into the purpose of undertaking research within this context and the methods used for this study may be applied to other national contexts elsewhere in the world, in which it can be used as a guideline.

The first significant influences on the current work came through considerations of the dramaturgical approach (Goffman, 1959). The findings of this study identify key issues that need to be addressed by practitioners and researchers when dealing with SNSs users. Privacy concerns had been identified as the key issue in the self-presentation process and the networked public's framework has helped to explain aspects of self-presentation and privacy issues. The key issues identified in this work can guide researchers in the field of SNSs and policy makers concerned with the Internet and ICT development and usage in Iran. The findings of this study can be used as guidelines to structure the design and implementation of privacy settings for users with similar socioeconomic norms as the participants in this study.

This research gives access to rich insight into active Iranian users on Facebook through the use of field study (see methodological choices in Chapter 3). It also provides insights into how their involvement in environments mediated by the SNSs technology has helped them to use these platforms and practice online interactions in ways that contrast with those expected by their government authorities in Iran. Through their active participation in Facebook, research participants adopt a culture of sharing and collaboration that informs their ways of working and seeing the social world in which they are contained and act. The ideas and practices that are available in environments supported by the SNSs and especially Facebook tend to contradict established practices of communication among the public in Iran. However, Facebook provides research participants with opportunities to try new ways of becoming connected to people and to gain information from inside and outside of Iran without the constraints of the rules controlling public interactions in Iran. It gives them access to networks of people and information with whom they can explore new ideas and exercise their freedom in ways that they are not able to do in offline publics. For example, in Facebook, unlike public spaces in Iran there is no dress code, no limitations for interaction with the opposite sex and there is no barrier to exploring different social and political ideas.

Participants' self-reports during the interviews explain how they use Facebook and how self-presentation practices are shaped by privacy concerns from offline audiences and the way it influences their goals in the self-presentation process. It also clarifies their stance in the process of presenting an authentic self on Facebook and the importance of self-censorship as a mechanism to control privacy in offline settings and its practices online.

And it defines their own interpretation of their goals for self-presentation; of wanting to make a difference and wishing to contribute to the wider Iranian community's problems offline by sharing their opinions and news from offline settings in an online environment. These practices often contrast with those supported by the government as the practices exercised within the SNSs are not yet fully contemplated with the Islamic and social-political restrictions and rules imposed in offline public settings.

The consequences of using Facebook are not exclusively positive. There are also some pitfalls as depicted in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5, which lead the research participants to develop strategies in which they can both continue their Facebook use and remain relevant within Iran's living environment. The research participants present two contrasting pictures regarding the use of the Facebook. On the one hand, research participants' use of Facebook was described as empowering as it allows information sharing and information seeking, which leads to gaining social capital (Ellison et al., 2008) and encourages their self-presentation practices in new ways, given that they have access to different tools and networks from Facebook's features to promote a self away from Iran's offline restrictions. On the other hand, they are confronted with the rules of the Iranian authorities and cybercrime and what is expected of them as non-trouble making citizens. Here, those in the position of power and the research participants tend to take separate views on how online interaction practices should be conducted.

This research has contributed to the academic study of methodology, by applying a new ethical way for observation of users' profiles in the SNSs platforms. Having conducted this research within the context of Iran, one major contribution is in the use of qualitative methods, as there is a shortage of studies in this region applying qualitative methods within social science. Moreover, the interpretive paradigm is rarely used as a philosophical underpinning of the research process, due to the restrictions imposed on research and development in the social sciences and Internet studies by the government. Thus, this study adds value to research in general in Iran in terms of the methodology and method of data gathering in participant observation through participant demonstration of their profile.

This research has chosen two different groups of Iranians in order to explore and explain the experience of those who have used Facebook and SNSs with (those living in Iran) and without (those living in the UK) restrictions and censorship. It offers a reference point to

other researchers interested in studying similar populations from around the world. It has found that users in Iran are as digitally skilful as those living in the UK. Furthermore, most studies of SNSs and Facebook, as demonstrated in previous chapters (see Chapter 2), applied online surveys or ethnography using text-based analysis or content analysis in most cases. However, those cases had a more limited sample and unit of analysis where ethnographers can easily lurk among a particular group of users and observe their attitudes and behaviours online. Conducting the face-to-face interviews in Iran and reporting on the usage of the illegal platform of Facebook by Iranians proved to be a very difficult task in the case of this research. This method of choice proved to be the most effective way to aid the researcher in observing the participants' profiles while they were demonstrating their tactics for protecting themselves and their privacy on Facebook. This guaranteed the researcher's observation of the body language of the participants, which has influenced the analysis of the interviews. Therefore, not only is this a new study, but it also adds a valuable reference base into research of all kinds of SNSs in the research methods applied.

It contributes through a novel approach to explaining the SNS users' privacy concerns with using participant observations through participants' profile demonstrations of individuals. This additional context increases the reliability of findings by grounding the users' responses to the interview questions in reality. This method demonstrates an ethical approach to capture participants' activities through observation in SNSs. In addition, the methodological approach of this research – Chapter 3 – is a new approach to capture Iranians' attitudes qualitatively in the study of SNSs. The findings should be of interest to analysts and policymakers concerned with Iranian politics and public opinion, as well as SNSs researchers.

6.5 Contribution to Practice

In addition to theoretical contributions, this dissertation includes two practical contributions that are primarily a consequence of the theoretical framework based on the Goffmanian approach. First, it has been established that Facebook profiles for this group of participants serve as a platform to present a self, according to the personal goals of self-presentation that profile users follow and it means they are not necessarily intended to portray an authentic self, by referencing their offline selves.

Facebook combines most functions of other SNSs, and integrates the capabilities of several types of SNSs, such as YouTube, Flickr, game-playing websites and dating websites. Therefore, it provides access to work-related and public content as well as to personal content. Iranian users carefully select a use of SNS and also the choices of people in their social context play an influential role. Developers and practitioners should therefore consider the different needs of users from different cultures in the future when developing and expanding these platforms. For example, this study suggests that the state of correctness of Facebook users' privacy settings could be improved by introducing additional features (for example, pop up messages to warn about visible to public content while one is commenting on a post) to the existing mechanism, to inform users about the nature of interaction. These modifications do not require redesigning the existing access and privacy control mechanism, but an extra feature will help those in different countries to use and interact in Facebook with less fear of privacy violation and it will also assist Facebook Inc. policy makers to work towards a better ethical interaction system.

6.6 Contributions to Business and Market Research

While investigating how self-presentation is formed on Facebook may seem unrelated to the business world, the two are in fact intricately linked. Individuals are involved in all parts of business and by understanding how they use technology, businesses can better understand the human factors in running a business. Clients can be serviced when an organization understands how and why they do something, as it allows them to tailor their products and services. This research helps businesses to appreciate the needs of the large population in Iran. For example, Iranians are a large marketing segment and after the elections in 2013, the new government's promises included a better Internet broadband connection and economic relationship with Western countries. Since the election of the new parliament, the sanctions against Iran by Western governments have been partly lifted. By understanding how this group uses Facebook and the Internet in general, targeted marketing of Iranian consumers would be easier. This study shows that Iranian Facebook users are using it regularly and share information about what they find interesting on Facebook which makes it an ideal platform to understand and target these users appropriately. Understanding how different groups of people from around the world use technology and the ways they interact with it is important data for strategic channel marketing.

Recently, Facebook has launched a new service called "Facebook Lite" and in their campaign they have proclaimed that they want to bring the Internet to the two thirds of the world's population that does not have it. Facebook Lite's size is "252KB download — about one hundredth the size of Facebook's main Android app, which is around 25MB depending on your device" (Internet.Org). Facebook Lite is only available in eight countries at the moment (Bangladesh, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Sudan, Sri Lanka, Vietnam and Zimbabwe) and it can be downloaded from Google Play now. It shows how the policy makers and developers are realising that two thirds of the countries without fast cellular networks or cutting-edge smartphones (Internet.org) are a large population and their needs should be considered too. However, one might argue that it is 10 years from the birth of the Facebook in Harvard dorms, and this technology was not initially designed for the digitally divided, disadvantaged population of our world, and the only reason, 10 years later, that they are interested in spreading its goodness is because of its economic advantages for those companies in a position of power.

6.7 Contribution to the theory

This research is based on the dramaturgical framework of Erving Goffman for explaining the continuous participation of Iranians on SNSs. The findings can guide future studies in the same research areas. The outcome of this research makes multiple contributions to the body of literature on SNSs in the Middle East in general, and specifically in the case of Facebook usage among Iranians. First, this dissertation expands the body of knowledge on SNSs use by applying the Goffman's approach to study this group of participants. This approach helps to explain how and why adopters of SNSs in Iran are practising self-presentation and it allows an explanation of how offline settings based on participants' interview reports influence their Facebook use and practice of self-presentation. The approach complements the existing body of literature by describing how individuals from different geographical locations use this technology and present self in the online setting, and furthermore, complements the existing body of literature by adding to the existing framework to explain these dynamics. The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of privacy concerns on SNSs and how it shapes self-presentation. By taking Goffman's framework and conducting an interpretive approach, this dissertation provides an in-depth, qualitative contribution to meet the objectives of existing research.

Goffman's theatrical approach has provided an explanation for the study of people in countries with strict rules and censorship for their people.

The study has gone some way towards enhancing our understanding of self-presentation within the illegal venue for interactions (Facebook in the case of participants from Iran) by using Goffman's theoretical approach. In particular, this approach provides the explanation for distinctions between online and offline setting of public spaces which Goffman refers to as the "stage". The restrictions and filtering of Facebook in Iran and its consequences for users are reported in different media outlets of Western countries from time to time (BBC 2012, 2014, The Guardian, Huffington Post) but this study is one of the few academic works to date which has looked at the case of Iran and thus contributes to the literature. This study hopes to open the doors for researchers from the countries affected by it to talk about it in order to raise awareness towards a change in laws in Iran. For example, opening Facebook on a mobile phone and sharing whatever one wants to post while in the tube in London is referred to as "Facebooking" but in Iran this practice – if one is not careful about their posts, as in the case of Sattar Beheshti – leads to imprisonment and death sentences.

The way that individuals in this study shared information was thoughtful and not brief. The media in Western countries portray individuals as sharing with abandon with little thought for the consequences, but individuals in this study were well aware of their audience and how they want to be perceived. They learnt it in Iran due to the current political and social situation in the country. In Iranian society, there is a dress code for appearing in one's home balcony and garden, if it is viewable from the surrounding buildings and streets; therefore, one's home could be considered as a public space depending on the situation around it. The line of what is public and what is private is clear in Iranian public space. What one must obey and follow according to the society's imposed rules and regulations, never mind being reminded of the consequences of disobeying distinctions between these two in offline settings, has educated people with fear, so when they are in the online public space, they would be very cautious, as was portrayed through participants' experiences and suggestions about the degree of self-censorship they have exercised during Facebook profile creation and its use afterwards. Self-censorship might be frowned upon in many open and democratic societies, but among Iranians it is an acceptable practice both online and offline, as it is a necessary and

the only reliable way to protect one's privacy and security from one's personal opinions and ideas having negative outcomes.

Individuals adopt certain roles within the public space while they are growing up and they are fully aware of the consequences of displaying private matters in public. From the findings of this study, it is clear that Iranians distinguish Facebook as a public space and they plan their interactions in accordance with this knowledge. These individuals are very knowledgeable about the privacy settings designed by Facebook's developers, and they have been very creative in using certain tactics to protect the self they are presenting on Facebook. These individuals behave on Facebook just as they would in a public space as the line between private and public space is clear and not blurred in Iran, and thus if a red line is crossed in the online or offline stage, it is a deliberate act and intended to deliver a message. Therefore, for Iranians, SNSs such as Facebook – where users need to connect to their offline selves in order to interact – are a public space and they are choosing self-censorship as a method just as they would in an offline public space in everyday life.

This study highlights the importance of technology's affordances in the formation of a self-online. While individuals may feel that they are separating their online and offline performances, the technology is interacting between the two to lessen the division. Offline information can be shared easily with unintended audiences (Boyd, 2010a). However, this study shows that the two groups in the study demonstrated the similarities and differences in how they use it and the way they control the privacy about their audience: Facebook for Group2 (Iranians living in Iran) comes with a mainly Farsi speaking audience while Group1 (Iranians living in the UK) have an international audience, and presenting a positive national heritage seems to be one of the goals of this group. Facebook is a new tool to present a specific self to specific audiences, where the privacy concerns and strategies to control it assist the users in presenting a self. These findings assist our understanding of how self is presented on Facebook by this specific group of participants.

This research shows that individuals in this study have a good understanding of how they should present a self-online according to their self-presentational goals and privacy control needs and this highlight the controlled presentations of self in a digital context. The research should provoke discussion around how an individual is seen online and give people a better sense of how they are presented to others. The findings highlight the shifts

in the way that individuals communicate through technologies of Western origin in societies such as Iran. Western media frequently report on random postings of personal details of Facebook users to embarrassing Facebook posts or threads concerning privacy on Facebook. This study reports on individuals from Iran that are generally careful in the way they present and respond to online posts. February 2014 marks 25 years of the Internet and 10 years of Facebook. These platforms have matured, and so too have the patterns of communication behaviour as well as the presentation of self on these platforms from anonymous days in MUDs to the real-name days of Facebook today.

This research process also provided a useful thinking process to its participants; some individuals reflected on the way they have used Facebook and decided to review their privacy settings to ensure a better private space. One hopes that the participants will make appropriate social comments and choices in terms of how much of themselves they share with known and unknown audiences after the participation process in this study. Some participants had never thought about future audiences and the possible impact of unknown audiences and information persistence (Boyd, 2010b). The findings of this research should act as a channel for people to become more aware of their personal information affordances.

This research also highlights the need for individuals to understand the privacy settings on their Facebook accounts; many believe that they are adequately covered from an unknown audience with default privacy settings, but in fact the settings as it was demonstrated are not a guarantee of full privacy protection. Based on Facebook's "Graph search" feature, which shows users' likes and activities, it lets other users discover one's information and interests, therefore, based on these affordances ones is not protected even with the most secured privacy settings. Therefore, one could only be certain that no unwanted audience could view their activities if one deliberately and consciously self-censored, just as participants in this study reported.

The findings of the current study do support the previous research identified above, as participants in this study were concerned about information privacy and protection from both known and unknown audience. In addition the findings of this study suggest that internet censorship as a result of the political situation and social control exerted by the authorities in Iran are also a factor in the privacy control attitude of participants.

Prior studies have noted the importance of strategies to control or manage potential privacy risks (Steifield et al., 2008; Tufekci, 2008). Lampinen et al., (2009) found that users manage privacy through dividing friends into groups and categories. They also identified that Facebook users employ communication to be visible to public or private chat and messages according to the audience group. As mentioned in the literature review (Lampe et al., 2008), users restrict access to information and remove certain information as a way to manage privacy. Similarly, Tufekci (2008) found that students are controlling privacy in Facebook in a variety of ways, such as content visibility, control, profile visibility control and use of nicknames.

It was suggested that a use of "Like" feature is a way of contributing to a conversation without exerting much effort especially on posts written in English language. The fear of being criticised by an audience for posting in English language with grammar mistakes was identified as a reason for the popularity of Facebook's "Like" feature. Participants in the UK were less inclined to use Facebook's "Like" feature and were more likely to comment about a post from their friend list. According to Kim and Yun (2007) in a context that is non-western, such as Cyworld, the architecture of SNSs features is adapted to match the cultural norms of the users. Facebook is accessible in Farsi, but according to Hargittai (2007) Facebook requires Internet literacy to enjoy its privileges.

Participants' use of different strategies to protect privacy in Facebook is shown to be different from the offline setting. For this group of participants, the use of self-imposed privacy strategies seemed to facilitate the intention to self-presentation according to the self-presentation goals they have while considering cultural norms and codes. The current findings seem to be consistent with Marwick and Boyd (2011) who found that individuals built their idea of self though their interaction with their audience in SNSs. Although these findings are consistent with those of Marwick and Boyd (2011), they differ from Boyd (2007), as she has argued that individuals apply the same communication strategies in a Facebook setting and offline settings in order to maintain authenticity in front of an audience. This finding may be explained by the fact that Facebook is filtered in Iran and since its use has been listed as cybercrime by officials, naturally participants felt they were involved in illegal activity and therefore authenticity for this group of users can be a burden of participation. As some said, any access is better than no access to Facebook and this includes using a pseudonym and fake profiles.

These findings further support the view of Skeels and Grudin (2009) that mixing work and social friends from offline settings is linked to tensions among Facebook users. Similarly, this finding, in agreement with DiMicco and Miller (2007), confirms the association between managing different groups of friends on Facebook and the difficulty of implementing the privacy settings. However, unlike their findings which concluded that the difficulty of applying privacy settings results in users ignoring the implementation of privacy settings and accepting the public visibility of their posted content, the findings in this study suggest that users explore different avenues to implement their privacy protection strategies according to their self-presentation goals.

The reasons for restricting access to certain parts of profiles differ among participants, while a small number of participants reported not applying restrictive privacy settings. The findings are consistent with those of Livingstone (2008), who argued that SNSs users apply privacy settings according to their technical abilities to balance the benefits and risks of its use. Similarly, the findings of this study show that participants apply privacy settings to profiles according to their technical knowledge and self-presentation goals. Similarly, the findings of the current study partly supports the previous research by Raynes-Goldie (2010) and Boyd (2008) who found that Facebook users are more concerned about the visibility of content to people that they know than having their profile activities visible to governments and companies. However, unlike the later part in their findings, this study found that participants are fearful from government and authorities in Iran There are, however, other possible explanations for this partly contract between the studies, for example, the study sample of Raynes-Goldie (2010) was of students, using Facebook with no access restrictions from government and Boyd (2008) studied teenage Facebook users in the USA. However, with a sample from Iran, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be transferable to other countries where self-censorship is not expected from users in physical public spaces. With a link to Goffman (1959), Facebook profile pages encourage the presentation of one's personal characteristics and interests, but participants reported self-censorship as an essential tool for safe participation. Therefore, self-censorship is perceived to be serving as a tool for self-presentation on Facebook as a front stage with the influence from back stage settings.

Individuals in this study present a "self- online" in the same way as in the offline public spheres in Iran by applying self-censorship as a mechanism for protection against the potential harms of free expression. They have recognised SNSs' public nature and their

direct influence on their everyday life in Iran. Therefore, the factors that influence their presentation of self in SNSs are different to those individuals using SNSs in democratic, secular countries. In this specific context, the censored self on Facebook is a representation of the everyday self for Iranians. There is a direct link between the elements of Goffman's framework for presentation of self in the offline world and the online self. There is the added element of technology with its privacy settings. In the case of Iranian users, the element of self-censorship is attached to the act of self-presentation. It is altering the way that the online self is formed and maintained.

Participants were asked why they have decided to provide their personal information, including their name and photo, on Facebook (considering it is banned in Iran). They expressed the opinion that being connected to the information they have shared is exciting; as one interviewee said, "There was no fun in being anonymous". Participants felt that there was fun in receiving feedback about one's own life and experiences and ideas. Pretending to be someone else or a different self from themselves was not considered as "fun" and interesting. Even when they were projecting a specific personality, this was still seen by the individual as genuine. This is in contrast to the literature where Turkle (1995) observed that individuals wanted to play with their identity online and present fraudulent sides of themselves. This research has shown a determination of the individuals to be authentic in self-presentation.

Participants who raised privacy concerns seemed to be either unaware of all the privacy options offered on the site (such as creating special, limited profiles for viewing by specific users) or the design of these privacy features did not conform with the expectations and experiences of privacy they brought to the site. It appears that the participants experience on Facebook is a mixture of control and loss of control over self-performance as they must address broad known and unknown audience that may include peers, parents, extended family members and government surveillance agencies.

The key finding from the interview data is that participants often attempt to re-create their offline selves online, rather than actively engaging with persona adoption. The interesting finding here is that participants attempt to present their offline self, on Facebook, however the two selves are not as identical as the participants described. During the observation, it was clear that participants tried to keep their online self, close to their offline self, but the shared content from certain Facebook pages was an indication that there is an attempt

to show a positive and intellectual persona on Facebook. For example, RP13 'Liked' many pages in French and when the researcher asked her if she could speak French, she replied "No, but the page looks nice". Personal information given by profile users on their profile page is a recreation of the offline self in online spaces, however, this information in many cases is very limited. Friends and family and in some cases work colleagues are in the 'Friend list' and this contact from offline settings is contributing to the authenticity of the profile owner's online self. Therefore, these are very small attempts by participants to present a self away from their offline self. Goffman (1983) refers to it as the continuation of one's contacts and encounters, in the case of Facebook from offline to online and vice versa.

6.8 Limitations of this study

As previously stated, this research covers a specific time period, specific groups and specific applications, and the research is limited by these boundaries. The limitations of this study serve as an opportunity for future work to be done in these areas. Time is one limiting factor in this study; this area of research is dynamic and the way that individuals use SNSs and select privacy settings changes quickly.

This is an emerging area of research and therefore the possibilities for inquiry are great. This research was limited to specific groups and how the individuals present themselves on Facebook only. Many individuals use multiple applications across different technologies and therefore it would be interesting to see the differences in self-presentation based on privacy settings across other SNSs. To explore and to provide a rich understanding of the phenomenon under study, it was necessary to choose a relatively small sample of individuals for the qualitative study with the interview and observation data gathering method. This approach is known for its labour intensive and timely nature. In total 30 participants were involved in the field study and data generation process. However, with a small sample size, caution must be applied, as the findings might not be applicable across all sections of the groups represented.

Lois Beck (2014) offers a unique perspective on the trust of Iranians to participate in the field research and how it was more difficult when the researcher was connected to foreign countries. As a postgraduate scholar of the Chicago School, Beck went to Iran to study the Qashqaiee tribe. In the notes about the detail of the investigation, it was suggested

that generally Iranians perceive research from Western countries on the topic of Iran as a way to intrude and to control Iranians and this negativity became worse after the revolution as people associate social science research as a foundation for providing information about people's private lives to the regime. Similarly, Nadjmabadi (2010) argued that the social sciences in general have had an unsteady history in contemporary Iran especially after the 1978-79 revolution. The regime also discouraged studies in social sciences and research in the field was associated with the potentially dangerous raising of political consciousness and promoting immorality and Islamophobia. In such a negatively charged environment, I had to justify even to my own relatives in Iran what I was doing and why I was doing it. This study has been able to demonstrate that state censorship promotes self-censorship among individuals in Iran and this new wave of learning how to manipulate others in the online space is not healthy for the already morally fragile Iranians' society. One is praised for the creativities of manipulating others in daily public life, and practising it online creates a more skilful unethical population. Internet censorship in Iran will have very damaging social consequences. The use of VPNs and Tor project protects people from being exposed to others and at this time there is no clear understanding of criminal use by Iranians, such as its use for child pornography. The use of these tools for access to the unfiltered Internet in Iran is very accepted. In households in Iran, one member of every family might access Facebook.

The qualitative nature of the study makes an element of researcher bias inevitable and part of the process. While the measures to contain this limitation were discussed in Chapter 3, it is important to recognise the influence it may have over the findings. The closeness of the researcher to the study is both a positive and negative factor as it allows for detailed findings, but also brings the researcher's beliefs and values to the forefront. However, the multiple methods of data generation and systematic data analysis process (Miles and Huberman, 1994) lessened the possibility of researcher bias.

The findings identified in this study clearly represent a very specific group of SNSs users in a particular context. Further work in this research area is required to build towards a theory of self-presentation online in Islamic societies. The field study consisted of a relatively small sample size and although purposive sampling was used to ensure the gathering of rich data, the field study sample size of 30 represents a narrow study if one compares it to a study with a large survey sample. The aim was to provide a detailed

insight into use of Facebook and undertake an in-depth investigation through exploring the phenomenon. The statistical generalizability has not necessarily been established, as the study objective was to explore and explain Iranians' Facebook use experiences.

6.9 Future Research

The submission of a thesis marks a symbolic end to a research study, but there are naturally several aspects and improvements one still wants to develop further before considering the work truly complete. This is an early stage in the discourse development around the presentation of self in online settings, as the concept of online self has only just begun to be explored and the way that we present self is not disconnected from the self we create in the 'real world'. It has been shown through the findings that participants link the privacy-related issues to the self-presentation strategies in Facebook, and it would be useful if future studies could explore How Iranians achieve successful self-presentation on Facebook?

This study utilised an exploratory approach to interpretive field study using semi-structured interviews and participant observation through demonstration of profiles from participants as data sources. The aim was to explore the phenomena extensively, but future research could undertake a survey as a data gathering method, with a combination of qualitative participant observation method in line with this study. The triangulation of the paradigms and methodology for the empirical data gathering process will highlight the potential depth of issues in a particular context. It would also be interesting to see a comparative study in two different national settings using similar methodologies. The research question could therefore be:

How the successful self-presentation in SNSs shape the everyday life of X (nations) in comparison to Y (nations)?

This thesis provided a number of insights in relation to the implementation of Internet censorship and SNSs filtering in Iran. It would be interesting to conduct a similar study when the censorship is removed and access to Facebook was no longer a threat to one's offline life. This study provides a good reference point for any future study of SNSs use among Iranians if the restrictions to access have been removed by the authorities. A comparative study between the participants' findings during the censorship period and possible free and open access to Facebook will provide a very interesting finding.

The research question could therefore be:

How the self-presentation strategies changed since freedom of access to Facebook in Iran?

This study is a moment in time and involves specific groups; therefore there is great scope to investigate other groups, for example the concept of religion was not addressed in this study, but it would be interesting to link the findings of this study to religion, and examine the ways that religious beliefs shape information sharing on Facebook. The research question could therefore be:

How do religious beliefs in the offline world carry over into the online realm and self-presentation practices?

6.10 Final Reflections

The will to access and to explore individuals' perspectives on the use of Facebook led me to undertake an extensive interpretive field study. The choice of paradigm is in line with my personal ontological and epistemological stance, and how I see and understand the word around me. However, later on, during the empirical data collection in the field I was soon to realise the difficulties, conflicts and struggles of conducting a field research through interviews and observations in the context of Iran, and hence, the limited social science studies in the country based on this strategy.

It was during the data collection phase that the need for a different strategy for participant observation became evident. The initial attempts to conduct the participant observation through friendship requests on Facebook failed as the participants limited the access of the researcher to their content through privacy settings, and a few informants refused to participate in the observation process because they felt uneasy about being observed; this group of people only participated in the interview phase. Therefore, it was clear there was a need for a new approach towards observation. Looking back now on the process, it is evident that the difficulties and obstacles for participant observation in SNSs led to a novel approach in this study. The research participants' frustrations about privacy applications took my research to a new level as the complicated privacy settings needed a new method of explanation. I found the work of Erving Goffman and his theoretical lens to explain the first research question and the work of Boyd (2010) in "Networked

Publics" to explore the findings and relations between privacy and self-presentation on Facebook, as explained in different sections of this thesis. Goffman's key concepts question how self-presentation is maintained in the offline world, at what cost, and through which mechanisms. Goffman makes available a set of thinking tools that aim to critique the presentation of self-offline. By applying this to the SNSs context, his work has increasingly informed this research. The discovery and learning about Goffman's dramaturgical approach has probably been one of the most important aspects of my intellectual growth throughout this learning journey.

To conclude, this research project has evolved through different stages of study. It is far from being a perfect work in that it did not follow a neat structure; rather, it developed according to the different phases of which it is composed. As part of this process I have observed and reflected about my intellectual growth and that has been, for me, the greatest achievement of the experience of having done this research. I now feel more capable of conducting research in the field of social sciences.

The popular press is full of stories about how Facebook has changed the world; we communicate more freely, quickly, frequently and in real time. This research has shown that people are influenced the most by the rules of the public sphere around them in offline settings and this has influenced the self-presentation on SNSs of those who use these platforms with their real names. This has brought conflicts between the need to self-present an authentic voice that is close to the 'real' self, and the need to protect privacy. To overcome the obstacles to Facebook use, participants reported that they self-constructed rules around what they will share and what they will not; this is known in this study as self-censorship, showing that online selves differ from offline selves. It is important that policy makers realise that the popularity of SNSs among people provides a valuable platform towards social change for a better outcome in every aspect of one's life in society. Its importance has been recognised by those who are in the power of monitoring the individuals and are fearful of SNSs powers, hence their actions of Internet censorship and filtering SNSs. This thesis has shed new light on the ways in which people engage with SNS's and manage self-presentation in this socio-political context.

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Appendix A

Semi-structured interview guide

Participation in this interview is completely voluntary. If you do not want to answer any question, just tell the interviewer. Similarly, you may stop the interview at any time. No personally identifiable data gathered from this interview or from your Facebook profile will be used in the final version of this study unless you grant me permission. The interview should take between 45 and 60 minutes. I am recording the interview and will transcribe them to ensure that I have an accurate record of your responses. The recording will be destroyed at the conclusion of this study.

The Interview questions were shaped around three main questions, but participants can discuss further anything that they feel is not covered or anything they think is important to include: (1) describe their usage practices, (2) explain their privacy settings, and (3) describe their experiences with Facebook. The data collected provided cues to talk about specific use practices of the participants.

How Iranians use Facebook

What information do you share in your Facebook profile? (Expand: participants were asked whether they showed their phone number and address favourite music, book, movie, political views, romantic status, interests, sexual orientation, religion).

Why did you sign up to the Facebook?)

How often do you use Facebook and how do you access it?

What are you using Facebook for? (a. What sort of activities are you doing on Facebook? B. What sort of material are you posting on Facebook?)

How do you access Facebook?

Privacy settings

Do you use (change the default setting) Facebook's privacy settings? (Expand – why and how?)

Do you you manage/alter the privacy settings in your profile for specific people? (For example –through restricting who can see a post, by using Facebook's group setting, by utilising privacy settings for specific people).

Do you consider holding back your content before posting on Facebook? (For example – you have started writing a comment or status update and decided against posting it)

Who are your Facebook friends? (Examples – friends, family, coworkers, parents, bosses, siblings)

Are you concerned about who may be looking at your profile? (why, or why not?)

How concerned are you about your profile'd visibility to unknown people?

Do you modify your Facebook posts to specific people in your friend list?

How do you manage your information from public view?

Are you generally aware of who can read your profile content?

What kind of information do you share?

What kind of information do you interested to see from others profiles?

Have you faced, or know of someone who has faced an unexpected/ difficult situation due to Facebook content?

Have you ever turned down a friend request? (Expand – if yes, why?)

Do you believe you are judged on what you post on Facebook? (Expand – does this affect what you post or how you post on Facebook?)

Have you ever untagged yourself from a Facebook photo? (Expand – if yes,

why?)

Is there anything else you would like to add?

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

My name is Xyz, a PhD researcher at the school of Media, Music and Performance, University of Salford, UK. I am conducting research on how to manage Social Network Sites usage in everyday life in relation to on/offline self.

As the researcher, I will be interviewing selected people in order to collect their views about Social Networking Sites. The resulting data will then be analysed and will ultimately be combined into a study report as a PhD thesis. Participation in this research will involve a semi-structured interview of up to one hour and participant observation (1-2 Hours, each session)

In the course of this study and with the publication of research findings, the anonymity and confidentiality of participants will be preserved by the use of pseudonyms. Moreover, access to any original tapes and transcripts will be restricted to the researcher and the supervisor of study Professor Ben Light. Furthermore, I will provide each participant with a transcript of data concerning them for their prior approval before it is included in the write up of the research. Before interviews, participants in the research study are required to complete and sign the attached Research Participant Consent form and submit it to the researcher. Participants in this study are not exposed to any risks and they can withdraw anytime by contacting the researcher.

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of PhD Student: Xyz

(tick as appropriate)

□ I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above study including what my contribution will be.	**Yes**	**No**
□ I have been given the opportunity to ask questions (face to face, via telephone and e-mail)	**Yes**	**No**
□ I agree to take part in the interview	**Yes**	**No**
□ I agree to the interview being tape recorded	**Yes**	**No**
□ I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the research at any time	**Yes**	**No**
□ I understand that further publications for academic journals will be developed from the study.	**Yes**	**No**
□ I understand that my anonymity will be guaranteed at all times and that only the researcher and her supervisor will have access to my recordings.	**Yes**	**No**

Name of participant: ……

Telephone: ..... e-mail: .....

Signature: ……

Date: ……