

Running Head: A LIST BLOGS

Examining the New Influencers: A Self-Presentation Study of A-List Blogs

By

Kaye D. Trammell, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Manship School of Mass Communication
212 Hodges Hall
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803
trammell@lsu.edu
225/578-7380

and

Ana Keshelashvili
Louisiana State University
Baton Rouge, LA 70803

Note: The authors wish to thank Renita Coleman and Ralph Izard for their contributions on this project. An earlier version of this manuscript was a top 3 paper presented at the 2005 National Communication Association's conference in Boston, MA.

Trammell (University of Florida, 2004) is an assistant professor in the Manship School of Mass Communication at Louisiana State University.

Keshelashvili is a graduate of the Manship School of Mass Communication's master's program at Louisiana State University.

Please direct all correspondence to the first author.

Manuscript #05-53 accepted for *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*.

Examining the New Influencers: A Self-Presentation Study of A-List Blogs

ABSTRACT

This study investigated impression management tactics and self-presentation on popular, A-list blogs. Building on Goffman's (1959) constructs of self-presentation and operationalizing impression management strategies, this study content analyzed the most-linked-to blogs. A-list bloggers reveal more information about themselves than other bloggers and actively engage in impression management. Differences in blogs based on gender confirm traditional gendered online behavior. Findings indicate the diversity in blogs and encourage researchers to understand the pieces of blogs before purporting to understand the medium as a whole.

Examining the New Influencers: A Self-Presentation Study of A-List Blogs

The evolution of personal publishing offers new tools allowing Internet users to become content creators. One need not own a printing press or a broadcasting station to reach large audiences anymore. One of the latest popular tools in personal publishing is the Internet-based blog. Just as the printing press gave way to the mass production of pamphlets and newspapers, blogs too extend the ability to communicate on the Internet beyond simple static Web pages.

While still young, blogs have been described and defined in many ways. Some define blogs by their format: frequently updated Web sites containing dated entries arranged in reverse chronological order.¹ Blog genres range from personal, diary-like pages to in-depth public affairs analysis.² Blogs bear different purposes: some provide description of subjectively selected links, others tell about details of a writer's day, and some offer personal opinions and commentaries on the news of a day. Opinionated people, called bloggers, post their thoughts, experiences, and politics, on blogs.³

Whatever the type, purpose, or content of a blog, it remains a virtual environment controlled by the author, where, unlike face-to-face communication, a person is only what is expressed in manifest content. Some authors manage to create a persona, making themselves a "celebrity" among the community of bloggers. These bloggers are among the most well-known and regularly linked by others. As such, the media's view of blogging comes directly from this select "A-list" of bloggers, and it is, therefore, important to understand these popular bloggers.

Bloggers of late have served as independent experts, with their analyses even appearing in mainstream media.⁴ With 51% of journalists indicating that they read blogs and 53% finding story ideas or sources from them, it is not surprising that stories have transferred from blogs the

to media.⁵ This is said to be the case for Trent Lott's racist remarks, blogger investigative journalism during "RatherGate," and breaking of a major news story that resulted the end of a career for a CNN executive. Some of the Internet's most read blogs provided "coverage" of these events igniting a spark to prompt mainstream media coverage.⁶

This small group of A-list bloggers has arguably the largest influence on the public's perception of blogging because of their high profile. As such, this study sought to examine this small, yet well-known, group of blogs. With more blogs being created each day and the anecdotes of their power to impact the media growing, it is important to understand what is behind this blog genre.⁷ Grounded in previous online self-representation research, we examined the process within A-list blogs.⁸

The purpose of this study was to investigate impression management tactics and strategies used by popular blog authors. In doing so, this study investigated self-presentation trends in this influential group of bloggers, providing a view of what the reader sees rather than what the blogger *thinks* he or she might be presenting.⁹ In this vein, analyzing the content presented in blog posts offered the clearest method by which to examine impression management and reduced the chance of receiving socially desirable answers which could result through a survey method. The content presented within the blog post is what the audience reads, and as such, this study focused on that content to examine self-presentation in these influential blogs.

Literature Review

The self-presentation concept, also referred to as impression management, implies that every individual performs a certain role while appearing in public. Goffman explained it as the ways individuals manage impressions of themselves on their audiences.¹⁰ Leary and Kowalski proposed that impression construction involves both the process of determining the kind of

impression one tries to make and choosing how one goes about it.¹¹ This study conceptualized self-presentation in accordance with scholars who have defined impression management and self-presentation in terms of fostering impression in others' eyes.¹²

Self-presentation and Impression Management. Using the metaphor of a theoretical play, Goffman described the concept as a person managing self-presentation as an “actor.”¹³ This actor plays in a scene on the stage, managing what the audience sees. The actor is not always on stage and can take respite “back stage” where the behind-the-scenes living occurs. Regarding Web pages, Papacharissi asserted that they enable Web authors to “stage an online performance through which the individual’s personality or aspects of it are revealed.”¹⁴

Later studies built on the self-presentation concept review impression management strategies incorporated in the process.¹⁵ Jones discussed impression management through the command of variables such as ingratiation, competence or self-promotion, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication.¹⁶ As an exploratory study, this research focused on ingratiation and competence as operationalized variables for examination.

According to Jones, ingratiation is used by a person who intends to be liked by others and does not typically involve conscious awareness of deliberate planning. Common characteristics of ingratiation are opinion agreement, compliments, favors, warmth, understanding, or compassion. This strategy also involves modesty, self-deprecation, and self-mockery. It is possible that the blog authors are using the ingratiation strategy when they link to other blogs (showing opinion agreement with what others have posted) and may attract readers with their attempt to be likable.

Competence or self-promotion is used when one tries to be perceived as skilled and qualified. Common characteristics include claims about abilities, accomplishments,

performances, or qualifications. Self-promotion strategies go beyond claims of competence and require framing of performances. Jones mentioned that people not only want to be seen as competent, but are interested in having their achievements attributed to natural ability.

Self-presentation Online. Smith explored the strategies Web page authors use to present themselves and attract readers.¹⁷ Dominick content analyzed personal home pages and found most personal Web pages did not contain much personal information.¹⁸ Data showed that Web sites looked for approval from others and mostly used their site to foster and maintain supportive relationships. Walker found that authors used their pages to support online activities and home pages functioned as a “back-up for online interaction, as a home or an identity.”¹⁹ Additionally, hyperlinks allowed expression of connectedness and improved ability to express some aspects of identity.

Papacharissi contributed to the investigation of self-presentation online with several studies.²⁰ Using mixed methods, Papacharissi combined content analysis and survey to study the utility of personal home pages for their creators, finding Web page authors maintained sites to fulfill “information” and “entertainment” needs. The study also revealed that authors who viewed their personal home pages as self-expression tools posted more personal information and those who used their pages as professional tools avoided posting personal information online.²¹ More extensive content analysis of personal home page characteristics focused on how individuals used home pages to present themselves online.²² Web page authors maintained their sites for self-presentation, affiliation with the community of personal Web page creators, and Papacharissi noted a significant relationship among home page characteristics.

Based on the previously reviewed literature on impression management, the following research questions are asked:

RQ1: To what extent do the A-list bloggers reveal themselves?

RQ2: What impression management strategies do the A-list bloggers use?

Blogs. The earlier described technical definition asserts blogs are Web pages with frequently updated posts that are arranged so the newest material is at the top of the page. The social definition, touched on by Walker, asserts blogs provide a mechanism for personal publishing, encouraging the expression of thoughts, feelings, and commentary.²³ While the structure of blogs is said to have developed in the late 1990s, the sentiment has been around for much longer.²⁴ “Blog” is merely nomenclature for a technology that allows people to communicate their ideas and experiences. The software behind blogging pushed forward an affordance that has always been available on the Internet, only now one does not need Internet coding skills to publish content on the Web. As such, Blood noted blogs have been adopted widely and quickly with the content being compared to diaries, letters to the editor, and editorials.²⁵

Many have tried to count the ever-increasing world of blogs or chart demographics through sampling. Perseus estimated more than 4.12 million blogs, mostly (92.4%) maintained by people under 30 and slightly dominated by female authors.²⁶ Viegas, however, asserted that blogs were predominately maintained by males.²⁷ Scholars contend that while the media paints the portrait of blogs as being a male-dominated medium, there are indeed more female bloggers overall.²⁸ It is evident that no one can agree how many blogs are in existence, how many are active, and the basic demographic make-up of bloggers. Indeed, Bortree asserted that blogs are ever shifting, making it difficult to assign such demographics.²⁹ A different approach by some scholars has been to tackle these questions by focusing on a particular genre. For instance,

Huffaker and Calvert found a nearly equal gender mix in their study on teen blogs.³⁰ Such approach will be taken here and based on previous research, we suggest:

H1: A-list blogs will be more likely to be maintained by males.

Another area of interest in defining blogs has been in understanding the readers. Pew Internet and American Life Project found 17% of Internet users read blogs and 5% run their own blog.³¹ Jupiter Research asserted that blog readers were more educated and “better off” than bloggers.³² Johnson and Kaye found blog readers were predominately male and assigned a higher level of credibility to blogs than other information sources – including traditional media.³³

Three major types of blogs are identified in the literature: filters, personal journals, and notebooks.³⁴ The filter blog contains links to content the author finds from surfing the Web. Filters contain little original content and are known for pointing to news items. Personal journals express the blogger’s thoughts and daily activities. Notebooks may contain either external or internal content but are distinguished by longer, focused essays.

Herring et al. content analyzed 203 randomly selected blogs to compare empirically observable features of the blogs with popular claims about the nature of blogs.³⁵ They found that the media exaggerate the extent to which blogs are interlinked, interactive, and oriented toward external events, while underestimating the importance of blogs as an individualistic, intimate form of self-expression. Additionally, bloggers provided considerable information about their real-life identities, although some are more self-revealing than others. The blogs shared a common purpose: to express the author’s subjective, often intimate, perspective on matters of interest to him or her (in the case of most blogs, the matters of interest concern the authors and their daily lives). The researchers asserted that A-list blogs were more likely to be filter blogs,

whereas the average blog was more likely to be personal journal. As such, the following is submitted:

H2: A-list blogs will most likely be filter blogs.

Self-presentation on Blogs. Papacharissi content analyzed random sample of blogs to reveal personal expression and social utility as primary motivations.³⁶ An average blog featured a self-reflective account that served the purpose of personal expression. The study revealed important differences between the personal home pages and blogs, especially with regard of self-expression online. Papacharissi argued that “personal home pages present a medium for self presentation, whereas blogs, on average, present a medium for self disclosure.”³⁷

These findings are in line with claims about blogging. Returning to Goffman’s metaphorical look at self-presentation, a good deal of content in blogs provides a “behind the scenes” look into the blogger’s “back stage.”³⁸ This creates transparency in content production where the process of creating content actually becomes discussed alongside traditional conversations. Thus, review of self-presentation in blogs presents an excellent opportunity to examine the traditional constructs set forth by Goffman.

Several studies have drilled into specific blog genres and explored self-presentation and identity. Bortree analyzed teen blogs, finding that girls self-disclosed more information than boys on their blogs.³⁹ Additionally, Bortree found linking from one blog to another represented a form of ingratiation, in expressing “like” for another blog or blogger. Huffaker and Calvert investigated identity constructions on teen blogs.⁴⁰ The researchers noted a high degree of self-revelation and submitted disclosure of identity information, such as real name or location, “play an important role in creating and maintaining blogs since these kinds of descriptors are relevant to the self.”

Method

This study investigated strategies of impression management and the extent of self-presentation by A-list bloggers through content analysis. Content analysis is “a research technique for the systematic, objective, and quantitative description of the manifest content in communication.”⁴¹ The use of Berelson’s definition is intentional, as his definition specifies a scientific method where coders are not to consider latent content or “read between the lines” to determine meaning. In a similar study on the characteristics and self-expression used on personal homepages, Papacharissi relied on content analysis as the sole method of inquiry.⁴²

Blogs were defined as Web pages with entries arranged in reverse chronological order.⁴³ “A-list blog” was operationally defined as a blog that had a high readership, resulting in numerous links to the blog. For inclusion in this study, blogs that were maintained by one person and hyperlinked to from at least 100 other blogs, meaning other Web sites have provided a link to the site thereby supporting the claim that these blogs are influential.

Sampling. A complete directory of blogs does not exist, and it is impossible to select a random sample. In the absence of such an official directory, a list of the “most popular blogs” was obtained through alternate ranking systems. This study identified the top single-authored, personal blogs through a ranking site called Popdex.⁴⁴ This popularity ranking is built upon the logic that in that in order to be popular, other people should be reading the blog content and inspired to link to it. The threshold of 100 inbound links resulted in a sample of 209 single-authored blogs.⁴⁵

The sample was collected by locating the Web address provided by Popdex on October 2, 2004. Front pages of the blogs were downloaded between October 9 - October 11, 2004. The front page of a blog was a unit of analysis, using a similar method as employed by others.⁴⁶

Categories. The codebook, based on the work of Papacharissi, was used to investigate the self-presentation of popular bloggers; specifically, coders examined units for self-revelation, ingratiation, competence, blog type, and basic demographics.⁴⁷

In regard to self-presentation, the extent of self-revelation was operationalized as information presented by a blogger about oneself – name, gender, biography, contact information, mention of hobbies and interests, family or friends, feelings and thoughts, photo of oneself, photos of family and friends, or photos of places blogger visited. These variables were measured dichotomously as being either present (1) or absent (0).

The impression management strategies were indicated by overall demonstration of praising, competence or criticism, whether the author addressed the audience directly, and use of experts/authorities to shore up an argument.⁴⁸ The earlier discussed operational definitions for these constructs from the literature review were used and these variables were measured dichotomously. The use of hyperlinks and topics discussed in the blog measured ingratiation and competence tactics. The number of hyperlinks to other content were counted. Topics were measured based on Trammell's categorization of blog post topic content (e.g., thoughts and feelings, political statement, technology) and recorded as being either present or absent within the unit.⁴⁹

Blog type was recorded categorically, using the earlier described definitions of filter, personal journal, and notebook blogs. An additional category, mixed type blogs, described those that contained elements at least two of the previously defined types.

Coding Process. Three trained coders content analyzed the units. Intercoder reliability was established throughout the coder training process based on 10% of randomly selected items from the sample. Intercoder reliability was tested using Holsti's formula to measure the percentage

of agreement for following variables: extent of self-presentation (.99), impression management strategies (.97), topics discussed (.99), and blog type (.98).

Results

This research employed content analysis to study a sample of A-list bloggers ($N = 209$). Coders identified gender for 201 bloggers, most of which were male (70.8%). Overall, the blogs were text-oriented and contained few visual elements. For example, while the mean word count was 4,230.60 words per page, the mean number of graphics per page was 3.15 ($SD = 5.51$) with minimum of 0 and maximum of 33 graphics per blog front page. Only 5.7% blogs contained multimedia; of the blogs that contained multimedia, the most popular features were video (84%) and animation (30%). A-list bloggers posted several times a day (40.7%), once a day (25.8%), or several times a week (22%). Only a few A-list bloggers post once a month (0.5%).

For the most part, A-list bloggers maintained the common structure of blogs. Common structure was measured through presence of common features of blogs (topic statement, blogroll, calendar, archive, comments, trackback, syndication, and hyperlinks within posts).⁵⁰ The analysis showed that, on average, each blog has nearly five of these eight common features ($M = 4.95$; $SD = 1.50$). The most frequently observed features were hyperlinks within posts (91.4%), archive (89.5%), and syndication (85.6%). Few bloggers had blog topic statements (22%) and calendars (23.4%).

Self-revelation. In examining the extent of self-revelation in blogs, each item was analyzed in a dichotomous manner for the presence of information about blogger (e.g., name, biography, photo, contact information, personal feelings and thoughts, interests and hobbies, political slant, discussion of families and friends, their photos, photos of places blogger has seen).

Bloggers presented a considerable amount of information about themselves. A-list bloggers revealed their full names (83.26%); however, some only disclosed first name (8.6%) or nickname (8.13%). A majority of bloggers shared some contact information (89%). Among those who shared contact information, the most frequent was e-mail address (99.5%). Many bloggers invited the readers to instant message them (13.4%). Some provided a mailing addresses (5.4%) or phone numbers (5.9%). A majority of A-list bloggers provided readers with personal facts, biography, occupation, or social status (68.4%). However, few posted photographs of themselves (34.4%). A-list bloggers told their readers about their day (80.4%), talked about feelings and thoughts (79.4%), shared political slant (45.4%), and talked about friends and families (41.6%).

Impression Management Strategies. Items were analyzed to identify whether posts seemed to demonstrate praising, competence, or criticism. Most of the bloggers demonstrated competence by presenting their intellectual abilities (78.9%) or praised others (25.4%) rather than criticize or blame (18.2%). This implies that bloggers presented themselves as competent and likable by using the ingratiation strategy.

Gender. Previous research argued that A-list bloggers are adult men.⁵¹ The first hypothesis posited that the A-list blogs would be maintained by men rather than women. A chi-square test showed that the observed frequencies were significantly different from the expected, $\chi^2(1) = 44.9, p < .001$. Indeed, A-list blogs are more likely to be maintained by males (70.8%) than females (25.4%), where gender is able to be determined.⁵²

Types of Blogs. The second hypothesis posited that A-list blogs most likely would be filter blogs. Each item was analyzed for blog type (diary/journal, notebook, filter, or mixed). A chi-square test showed that observed frequencies were significantly different from the expected ones, $\chi^2(3) = 43.11, p < .001$. However, the hypothesis was not supported. Instead, filter blogs

were the least used blog type (6.7%). Mixed type blogs were the most frequently used (37.8%), followed by diary/journal type (28.7%) and notebook (26.8%). Additional analyses showed that men were more likely than women to maintain filter blogs, while women were more likely to maintain diary/journal rather than any other type of blog, $\chi^2(3) = 22.97, p < .001$.

Discussion

The blogs studied here can be considered the new influencers. Indeed, this select group of A-list bloggers has been noted to have readership that rivals smaller media outlets and readers rate them as more credible than mainstream media.⁵³ With blogs containing biased and opinionated views of the world, it is important to understand how these views are being presented. As such, this research investigated impression management and self-presentation strategies on A-list blogs. Just as previous studies found homepages a medium through which authors employed self-presentation strategies, this study found similar evidence among A-list bloggers.⁵⁴

Self-presentation. While these 209 blogs were all different, there were clear trends. A majority of A-list bloggers displayed a high level of self-revelation in regards to their identity. Most bloggers shared contact information ranging from e-mail addresses to phone numbers. Some bloggers only told their readers their nicknames, which may also be understood as an attempt to create certain impression on the audience while maintaining anonymity.

This self-revelation of identity occurs in A-list blogs at a greater rate than in other blog genres.⁵⁵ Moreover, this level of self-revelation as a rule is not seen in other static computer-mediated communication.⁵⁶ Such is likely the case because other genres, like teen blogs, have different perceived uses and are targeted at different audiences.

In understanding self-presentation, this research looked at the topics discussed in blogs. Results indicate bloggers post a record of their day (80.4%). For example, Vodkapundit provided an example on October 7, 2004:

“Didn’t want to spend a day like today thinking about the election, trying to be clever, counting pageviews, checking trackbacks, or any of that BS. Just enjoy the crisp, clean, dry air and enjoy the scenery.”

This post showed the blogger’s daily life and revealed information that otherwise would be hidden in the “back stage.” Additionally, it noted posting on the blog made the blogger feel clever, demonstrating competence.

Another widely discussed topic centered on the process of blogging: metablogging. Some of the bloggers saw themselves as opinion leaders and look to this role as with responsibility and obligation. This indicates a high degree of self-awareness of purported influence. The most common example of metablogging occurred when bloggers discussed their role in society and journalism.

The blurring line between the blogger and journalist was discussed in this A Small Victory post from October 4, 2004:

Everyone wants to break a story, everyone wants the Drudge link [...] I’m much happier when I forget there’s actually an audience out there. [...] As a blogger and not an independent peer reviewed journalist, I am able to write about what I had for lunch or my broken coffee pot without feeling as if I’m breaking some journalistic standard. I’m a blogger, hear me roar. About hot dogs, about the war in Iraq, about the state of pop music, about my noisy neighbors, about the election, about the way Saran Wrap won’t stick to Tupperware, about my job, my kids, my life, Iran, Andy Rooney, education reform, crappy computer speakers and why I hate the circus.

This post exemplified how some bloggers see the function of blogging. When the blogger admits that “everyone wants the Drudge link,” the desire to be perceived as competent enough to receive a link from another well-known alternative media news source (The Drudge Report) is evident. The blogger saw blogs as a place to provide commentary and analysis, but was allowed

latitude to discuss personal/mundane matters. This showed the balance between self-promotion through competence and attempting to get others to like you through intimate self-disclosure.

Impression Management Strategies. A goal of this study was to investigate the impression management tactics bloggers used and identify the common personal qualities they “show off.” Based on Jones’s propositions, popular bloggers demonstrated competence and ingratiation.⁵⁷ Bloggers preferred these strategies over being boastful or critical. A-list bloggers strived to be more likable in communicating to their audience. Jones would assert that avoided behavior of boasting or exaggerating abilities would be unattractive and possibly jeopardize the image an individual tried to convey.

A majority of those who demonstrated competence and promotion of their own abilities were also praising others (21.2%). A-list bloggers used experts to shore up their own arguments (53.6%) and addressed the audience directly (74.2%). They fostered an environment of net narcissism by linking back to others who linked to them. This finding is consistent with other online impression management studies, which assert hyperlinks can structure one’s identity by aligning or associating with the content on external site.⁵⁸ Such tactics suggest that A-list bloggers put effort into appearing competent and likable. Therefore, it can be concluded that A-list bloggers see the difficulty balancing opinionated content and attracting readers. As such, these bloggers may propose radical ideas but do not viciously attack others within their community. In fact, these bloggers link to others to show a connectedness and display ingratiation.

The relationship an A-list blogger has with the audience here is key. While Bortree reported that bloggers are not naïve enough to think only those who they want reading their blog are accessing the pages, the researcher revealed that some bloggers are taken by surprise at the

notion of an anonymous or even lurking reader.⁵⁹ The very definition of A-list blog implies a relatively large audience for a blog, and therefore, the A-list blogger is reliant on that audience to maintain position on the “A-list.” As such, direct communication with the audience, asking for opinion and attempting other favor-winning strategies such as ingratiation are advantageous for the continued success of the blog. An example of this is illustrated in a post from Neurotic Fishbowl’s on September 29, 2004 as she shopped for glasses:

I found two frames that I like, but I wanted to get some opinions on them. [...] I snapped a couple of pictures. [...] what do you think?

This post demonstrated the blogger’s dependence on the audience and the blogger’s need for social approval.⁶⁰ The blogger wanted the reader’s opinion and called for two-sided communication. This strategy is present in other types of online communication, such as Web pages, and manifested in similar fashions.⁶¹

Gender. Gender played an interesting role in blogs, as men were more likely to maintain the traditional filter blog whereas women were more likely to run a diary/journal blog. Not only did these findings confirm Bortree’s conclusion that females self-disclose more and prefer more intimate communication on blogs than males, but these findings were consistent with representation of gender online.⁶² Indeed, men are information seekers and women are communicators online⁶³ – thus, having the external-information driven filter blog genre dominated by men and finding the communicative and personal diary genre dominated by women is a logical embodiment of what West and Zimmerman call “doing gender.”⁶⁴

Limitations. This study used a purposive sample to explore the research questions and hypotheses, but is limited without an official directory or listing of A-list bloggers.

Future Research. Others should investigate blogger motivation and reader perceptions. Additionally, future studies should examine bloggers through more direct means, such as a

survey. A survey would allow such influential bloggers to provide a self-reflexive account of their impact on the news media. Finally, the actual influence of these blogs must be investigated further – both through impact on media in the agenda setting process and reader effects.

Conclusions. This research added to the knowledge of A-list bloggers, those whose thoughts are heard and quoted far beyond the blogosphere and in mainstream media. Indeed, bloggers are opinionated people who use this channel to communicate their thoughts and reflections about the world.

Even though these blogs are said to impact the news media and credited with bringing stories to the attention of the mainstream media, they are far from journalists. Yet, they are not unemployed or uneducated net-philes typing in their pajamas all day either. Their reports rely highly on their own reflections and biases, yet they self-reveal at a higher rate than others online. These A-list blogs, while each different from the next, lie somewhere between the editorial page and news shorts.

The intimacy and personalized tone that creates impression of uncontrolled, spontaneous flow of feelings and thoughts allowing reader to look far beyond the stage into a person's "back stage." On the other hand, blogging is deliberate process and allows bloggers to convey the qualities of their selves creating the impression that what the reader sees is the author's "real self" or "back stage" – all the while performing in public. In these performances, A-list bloggers employ traditional impression management strategies providing insight into how the self is presented in blogs. Even so, blogging has evolved from the 1990s in that filter blogs which point readers to interesting stories without much commentary no longer provide a formula for success. Here, A-list bloggers told more about themselves than people in other forms of the Internet communication. Today, bloggers must put more out there about themselves and their ideas –

thereby increasing the variables used in managing their online identity. As blogs rise in popularity, gain readers, and possibly garner more influence over the media and public opinion, it is important to move forward from this baseline analysis of who these bloggers are to actually test what influence they wield.

Endnotes

¹ Jill Walker, "Weblog," in *Routledge Encyclopedia of Narrative Theory* (Routledge 2005).

² Susan C. Herring, Lois Ann Scheidt, Sabrina Bonus, & Elijah E. Wright, "Bridging the Gap: A Genre Analysis of Weblogs," in *Proceedings of the Thirty-seventh Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (Los Alamitos: IEEE Press 2004).

³ Rebecca Blood, *The Weblog Handbook: Practical Advice on Creating and Maintaining Your Blog* (Cambridge, MA: Perseus Publishing, 2002).

⁴ Howard Kurtz, "In The Blogosphere, Lightning Strikes Thrice," *Washington Post*, 13 February 2003, D01. Kurtz notes three cases: Trent Lott's racist comment in 2002, "RatherGate" which involved CBS presenting fake documents about President George W. Bush's military service, and a comment about the military assassinating journalists made by CNN's Eason Jordon at an off-the-record conference in 2005.

⁵ Euro RSCG Magnet, "Great Thoughts: Turning Information Into Knowledge," press release (20 June 2005), retrieved October 12, 2005 from <http://www.magnet.com/index.php?s=thought>.

⁶ Kurtz, "In The Blogosphere, Lightning Strikes Thrice."

⁷ Pew Internet and American Life Project, "Buzz, Blogs, and Beyond" <http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/p/1088/pipcomments.asp>.

⁸ Joseph Dominick, "Who Do You Think You Are? Personal Home Pages and Self-Presentation on the World Wide Web," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 79 (autumn 1999): 646-658; Katherine Walker, "'It's Difficult to Hide It': The Presentation of Self on Internet Home Pages," *Qualitative Sociology* 23 (spring 2000): 99-120; Zizi Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life: Characteristics of Personal Home Pages," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 79 (autumn 2002): 643-660.

⁹ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life," relied on content analysis as a method in this benchmark study of online impression management. A survey of A-list bloggers would reveal what the blogger thinks he or she is presenting, without examining the actual content.

¹⁰ Erving Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (New York: Doubleday, 1959).

¹¹ Mark R. Leary and Robin M. Kowalski, "Impression Management: A Literature Review and Two-Component Model," *Psychological Bulletin* 107 (1990): 34-47.

- ¹² Roy Baumeister, "A Self-Presentational View of Social Phenomena," *Psychological Bulletin* 91 (1982): 3-26; Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*; Barry R. Schlenker, *Impression Management: The Self-Concept, Social Identity, and Interpersonal Relations* (Monterey: Brooks/Cole, 1980).
- ¹³ Goffman, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*.
- ¹⁴ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life," 654.
- ¹⁵ Leary and Kowalski, "Impression Management;" Edward Jones, *Interpersonal Perception* (New York: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1990); Schlenker, *Impression Management*.
- ¹⁶ Jones, *Interpersonal Perception*.
- ¹⁷ Matthew J. Smith, "E-merging Strategies of Identity: The Rhetorical Construction of Self in Personal Web Sites," (Ph.D. diss., Ohio University, 1998).
- ¹⁸ Dominick, "Who Do You Think You Are?"
- ¹⁹ Walker, "It's Difficult to Hide It," 17.
- ²⁰ Zizi Papacharissi, "The Self Online: The Utility of Personal Home Pages," *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 46 (2002): 346-368; Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."
- ²¹ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."
- ²² Papacharissi, "The Self Online."
- ²³ Walker, "Weblog."
- ²⁴ Blood, *The Weblog Handbook*.
- ²⁵ Blood, *The Weblog Handbook*.
- ²⁶ Perseus, "The Blogging Iceberg: 4.12 Million Weblogs, Most Little Seen and Quickly Abandoned," press release (2003), retrieved October 25, 2003 from http://www.perseusdevelopment.com/corporate/news_shell.php?record=51 .
- ²⁷ Fernanda Viegas, "Blog Survey: Expectations of Privacy and Accountability," (2004) retrieved December 31, 2004 from <http://web.media.mit.edu/~fviegas/survey/blog/results.htm>
- ²⁸ Herring et al., "Bridging the Gap.": This finding draws the distinction between the average blog, studied by Herring et al. and the A-list blog studied here. Herring et al. remarked that the average blogger is female, however the A-list blog is likely male.
- ²⁹ Denise S. Bortree, "Presentation of Self on the Web: An Ethnographic Study of Teenage Girls' Weblogs," *Education, Communication and Information Journal* (2005): 25-39.
- ³⁰ David A. Huffaker and Sandra L. Calvert, "Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10 (2005), retrieved February 7, 2005 from <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue2/huffaker.html> .
- ³¹ Pew Internet and American Life Project, "The State of Blogging," http://www.pewinternet.org/PPF/r/144/report_display.asp.
- ³² R. Greenspan, "Blogging by the Numbers," *CyberAtlas*, 23 June 2003, retrieved August 4, 2004 http://cyberatlas.internet.com/big_picture/applications/article/0,,1301_2238831.00.html .
- ³³ Thomas J. Johnson and Barbara K. Kaye, "Wag the Blog: How Reliance on Traditional Media and the Internet Influence Credibility Perceptions of Weblogs Among Blog Users," *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly* 81 (autumn 2004): 622 - 642.
- ³⁴ Herring et al., "Bridging the Gap"; Blood, *The Weblog Handbook*.
- ³⁵ Herring et al., "Bridging the Gap."

³⁶ Zizi Papacharissi, "The Blogger Revolution? Audiences as Media Producers," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, New Orleans, LA 2004), 20.

³⁷ Papacharissi, "The Blogger Revolution?," 22.

³⁸ Kaye D. Trammell, "Celebrity Weblogs: Investigation in the Persuasive Nature of Two-Way Communication," (Ph.D. diss., University of Florida, 2004).

³⁹ Bortree, "Presentation of Self on the Web."

⁴⁰ Huffaker and Calvert, "Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs."

⁴¹ Bernard Berelson, *Content Analysis in Communication Research*, (New York: Free Press, 1952), 18.

⁴² Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."

⁴³ Blood, *The Weblog Handbook*.

⁴⁴ Popdex uses an algorithm to create a score based on the number of links pointing back to a blog. It is an automated tool that searches the interlinked Web and ranks pages on popularity.

⁴⁵ Blogs included (alphabetical order): 0xDECAFBAD; A Small Victory; Aaron Swartz; Adam Curry's Weblog; Aged And Confused; Akma's Random Thoughts; AllAboutGeorge; Allied; Amygdala; Andrew Sullivan; Anil Dash; Anita Rowland's Home Page; Antipixel; Anything but ordinary; Attu Sees All; AWholeLottaNothing; Bag and baggage; BaghdadBurning; Balloon Juice; Big Pink Cookie; Biz Stone, Genius; Blog Maverik; Bluishorange - two lovers walk a lakeside mile; BodyAndSoul; Brad DeLong's Semi-Daily Journal; Bryan Bell; Burningbird; BuzzMachine; California Insider; CamWorld; Caterina; cheese dip; Chris Pirillo; Colby Cosh; Counterspin Central; Cup of Chica; Curiouser and Curiouser!; Cut on the bias; DaGoddess; DailyKos; Daimnation!; Dangerousmeta!; DanGillmor; Daniel Bricklin Log; Daniieldrezner; DaringFireball; Defective Yeti; Die Puny Humans; Dive Into Mark; Don Park's Daily Habit; Dooce; Dr. Weevil; Dynamist blog; Eclecticism; Editor Myself; Eject! Eject! Eject!; Electric Bugaloo; ElectricVenom; Electrolyte; Emergic; EmptyBottle; Epeus's epigone; Eschaton; Evhead; Flemming Funch; Freedom To Tinker; Ftrain; Gapingvoid; Geek Ramblings; Geisha Asobi; Gnomegirl; Gut Rumbles; Halley's Comment; Healing Iraq; How To Save the World; Hullabaloo; IMAO; Indepundit; Inessential; Informed Comment; Inluminant; Instapundit; Interconnected; IpseDixit; Jeffrey Veen; Jeffrey Zeldman Presents the daily report; Jenett Radio; Jeremy Zawodny's blog; Jill/txt; JoanneJacobs; JoelOnSoftware; John Robb's Weblog; JohoTheBlog; Joi Ito; Jonathon delacour; Jon's Radio; Jozjozjoz; Justin's Links; Kadyelebee; Kasia In a Nutshell; Ken Layne; Kevin Sites Blog; Kottke; Languagehat; Lawrence Lessig; Librarian.net; Library Stuff; Lileks (james) ; LittleYellowDifferent; Loobylu; Making Light; Mamamusings; Marc's Voice; MargaretCho; Mathemagenic; Matt Welch; Matthew Yglesias; McGee's Musings; Megnut; Meyerweb; Michelle Malkin; MightyGirl; Min Jung Kim; Mitch Kapor's Weblog; Moxie; Nathan Newman; Neil Gaiman; NewMedia Musings; Oblivio; Oblomovka; OfftheKuff; Oliver Willis; On Lisa Rein's Radar; Onfocus; Open Brackets; Orcinus; Overstated; Paolo Valdemarin Weblog; PatioPundit; Pejmanesque; Peterme; Phil Ringnalda; Phil Windley's Enterprise Computing Weblog; Phillip Greenspun's Weblog; Piquant rants and sassy impudence; PlasticBag; Pocket Soap; Promoguy; Q Daily News; RabbitBlog; reality bites; Rafe Colburn's Weblog; Randgaenge; Real Live Preacher; Rebecca's Pocket; Research Buzz!; Rick Klau's Weblog; Right Wing News; Roger L. Simon; Roland Tanglao's Weblog ; Ross Mayfield's Weblog; Russell Beattie Notebook;

Scobleizer; Scott Andrew; Scott Rosenberg; ScriptingNews; Scriptygoddess; SellsBrothers; Shellen dot com; Shutterblog:Choosy moms choose; Sifry's Alerts; SimpleBits; Sjoerd Visscher's weblog; Snazzykat; Solonor's Ink Well; Stevenberlinjohnson; Taegan Goddard's Political Wire; Talking Points Memo; TedbarlowTBogg; Tenth Boooooos; The EGR Weblog; The Fat Guy; The Hivelogic; The Neal Pollak Invasion; The Presurfer; The Road To Surfdom; The Talking Dog; The Trademark Blog; TheDocSearlsWeblog; TheNeuroticFishbowl; ThePeople'srepublicofSeabrook; ThePoorMan; TheShiftedLibrarian; TheSpoonsExperience; Tim Blair; Tomalak's Realm; TonyPierce; Transterrestrial Musings; Unquakified Offerings; usr/bin/girl; Vodkapundit; Waxy; Weblog Wannabe; Weblogged; What Do I Know; Wil Wheaton dot Net; Wood's lot; Workbench; Yourish.

⁴⁶ Papacharissi, "The Blogger Revolution?," Huffaker and Calvert, "Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs."

⁴⁷ Papacharissi, "The Blogger Revolution?"

⁴⁸ Bortree, "Presentation of Self on the Web;" Papacharissi, "The Blogger Revolution?"; Smith, "E-merging Strategies of Identity."

⁴⁹ Trammell, "Celebrity Weblogs."

⁵⁰ Lois Ann Scheidt and Elijah L. Wright, "Common Visual Design Elements of Weblogs," *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs*, Laura J. Gurak, Smiljana Antonijevic, Laurie Johnson, Clancy Ratliff, and Jessica Reyman (Eds.). <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/> (2004).

⁵¹ Herring et al., "Bridging the Gap."

⁵² Coders were unable to identify gender for 3.8% of the population.

⁵³ Dave Pollard, "How to Save the World," *Salon*, 4 January 2005, <http://blogs.salon.com/0002007/categories/blogsBlogging/2005/01/04.html> ; Johnson and Kaye, "Wag the Blog."

⁵⁴ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."

⁵⁵ Huffaker and Calvert, "Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs."

⁵⁶ Dominick, "Who Do You Think You Are?"

⁵⁷ Jones, *Interpersonal Perception*.

⁵⁸ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."

⁵⁹ Bortree, "Presentation of Self on the Web."

⁶⁰ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."

⁶¹ Papacharissi, "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life."

⁶² Bortree, "Presentation of Self on the Web."

⁶³ Tracy L.M. Kennedy, Barry Wellman, and K. Klement, "Gendering the Digital Divide," *IT & Society* 1 (2003): 149-172.

⁶⁴ Candace West, and Don H. Zimmerman, "Doing Gender," *Gender and Society* 1 (1987): 125-151.