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Moncur, Wendy; Orzech, Kathryn M.; Neville, Fergus G.

# Fraping, social norms and online representations of self

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Wendy Moncur [a, *], Kathryn M. Orzech [a], Fergus G. Neville [b]

[a] University of Dundee, Dundee, Scotland, DD1 4HN, UK
[b] School of Medicine, University of St. Andrews, St. Andrews, Scotland, KY16 9JP, UK

## ARTICLE INFO

## ABSTRACT

This paper reports on qualitative insights generated from 46 semi-structured interviews with adults ranging in age from 18 to 70. It focuses on an online social behaviour, 'fraping', which involves the unauthorised alteration of content on a person's social networking site (SNS) profile by a third party. Our exploratory research elucidates what constitutes a frape, who is involved in it, and what the social norms surrounding the activity are. We provide insights into how frape contributes to online sociality and the co-construction of online identity, and identify opportunities for further work in understanding the interplay between online social identities, social groups and social norms.

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## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we consider *fraping*, an activity that involves the unauthorised alteration of information on an individual's (the *victim's*) online social network site (SNS) profile by a third party (the *"frapist"*). This alteration of information happens in an offline context, when the victim leaves their phone or computer unlocked and the frapist uses the device to make changes to the victim's profile without their knowledge. It can be understood as a performative social activity within a technologically mediated society, involving the presentation of selected facets of an individual's identity for a chosen audience.

Our analysis of fraping emerged out of an exploratory, qualitative program of research,, Charting the Digital Lifespan, which examined how participants live out their lives in online contexts. Data from interviews with participants ranging in age from eighteen to seventy gave us insights into what fraping is, who is involved in it, the implicit social norms that govern fraping, and the sanctions that are applied when these norms are violated. We situate these findings in the context of existing research in social identity, online representations of self and social norms.

The paper therefore contributes a definition of fraping that is

grounded in our qualitative data, plus insights into social norms and the role that fraping plays in online sociality and the co-construction of online identity.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Social identity and representations of self

The social identity approach to group behaviour specifies that one may have multiple social identities with associated social norms that become salient in different social contexts (Taifel & Turner, 1979; Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Goffman argues that the representations of these social identities are achieved through performances that involve the construction of an edited, perhaps inaccurate, version of self that is crafted with an audience in mind (1959) He also identifies the involvement of a co-operative team of actors in co-constructing and presenting this crafted impression to an audience in any given social context. This team of actors share a sense of familiarity and solidarity, and keep each others' secrets from the audience when such action is deemed appropriate.

The Internet offers multiple social environments in which to perform representations of social identity. Social media tools facilitate these performances, both extending offline sociality (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, & Robinson, 2001) and also providing opportunities to represent oneself and interact in ways

that are uniquely digital. For adolescents in particular, such tools can boost or diminish their interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences (Davis, 2013). Online representations of self are increasingly kaleidoscopic. Individuals construct different versions of themselves depending on "*the function of each online space; the social norms governing interaction within that space; and the perceived audience that one may encounter*" (Emanuel & Stanton Fraser, 2014, p. 147). These representations may be co-constructed, with the very social nature of many digital involvements lending themselves to "*a coherent sense of aggregate self with friends*" (Belk, 2013, p. 487). The information disclosed online varies across these representations of self, influenced by the goals of the discrete context of the online space. For example, Emanuel et al. found that individuals disclosed more conservative and factual personal information on job-seeking websites, and more personal attitudes, preferences and subjective qualities on dating websites (2014). Positive audience responses to online representations of self can boost social self-esteem and well-being, as shown by Valkenburg et al. in their study of adolescents (2006). Performative representations of self are not necessarily truthful. Page (2014) describes multiple instances of hoax online identities that are used in performances of self, including hoax blogs by (purportedly) a teenage US leukaemia sufferer and a lesbian girl in Syria.

## 2.2. Online social norms and sanctions

The construction and deployment of online representations of self in online enactments of sociality is accompanied by an emergence of social norms and sanctions that govern the content and use of these representations (McLaughlin & Vitak, 2012).

Social norms are shared beliefs within a social group regarding the appropriate ways to feel, think and behave (Reynolds, Subašić, & Tindall, 2015; Turner, 1991). While social norms can operate at an individual level, they are more commonly social rules that function in relation to shared group identities(Neville, 2015). For example, one might have various social identities (e.g. parent, academic, football supporter) that are salient in different social contexts (home, office, stadium), and each has different social norms governing how one is expected and ought to behave in each setting (being caring, objective or partisan) (Turner et al., 1987). Moreover, social norms are the mechanism by which social groups can influence their members' behaviour (Cialdini, Reno, & Kallgren, 1990). First, where the correct behavioural choice is potentially ambiguous, behaviour can be shaped by perceptions of how fellow group members feel and act. This is because members of one's social group are seen as credible guides to the appropriate (i.e. normative) way to act in a group-relevant situation. Second, groups can exert social control upon their members by threatening exclusion or sanction if group norms are violated (Turner et al., 1987).

Social norms vary between social groups, including online groups (Emanuel et al., 2014; Neville, 2015). Individuals develop their understanding of acceptable norms through the groups that they belong to, are familiar with, or aspire to join, and different norms apply for different groups. For example, gossip, joking and arguing online are framed as normative, gendered activities under a banner of 'drama' by teenage group members, yet these same activities can easily be perceived as 'bullying' by non-group members (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Normative online behaviours can also be observed amongst parents, where gender affects the number of photos that they post on Facebook of their baby after the birth - with fathers usually posting far fewer images than mothers (Bartholomew, Schoppe-Sullivan, Glassman, Kamp Dush, & Sullivan, 2012). As children grow up, parents usually adopt further norms around (e.g.) how many photos they post on social media of

their children, and the nature of the photos, with fathers particularly concerned about posting photos that showed signs of physical maturation in their young daughters (Ammari, Kumar, Lampe, & Schoenebeck, 2015). As children mature and move towards adulthood, their views of normative representation of self online may be at odds with those of their parents (Yardi & Bruckman, 2011). People's choices in how they represent themselves online are affected by age, and also by their motivation for having an online presence. They may be motivated, for example, by a desire to belong to a (virtual) community and to have a sense of companionship, or to maintain pre-existing relationships (Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2015). Whilst there are many differences in online behaviours across groups and individuals, there are also commonalities across the lifespan. Young and old (even the oldest old) hope that their posts will be met with responses from the target audience (Lenhart, Purcell, Smith, & Zickuhr, 2010). There are also common concerns over trade-offs between privacy and sociability (Brandtzæg, Lüders, & Skjetne, 2010) and the value placed on privacy (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2012).

Many of these social norms are not articulated as official 'rules'. Instead, they are understood by individuals either through observing the actions of others online and their consequences, or by carrying out actions online and experiencing the consequences directly (Burke, Marlow, & Lento, 2009). Positive feedback is seen as a motivating factor (ibid). We suggest that an example here is the 'Like' button on Facebook, which gives useful feedback to Facebook users (both those who post content, and observers) over what content is appreciated by members of their social network on Facebook. A large number of 'Likes' for a post may serve to encourage posts of a similar nature. An absence of 'Likes' — or a flurry of negative comments — may discourage creation of posts that are less popular, reinforcing tacit norms over the kind of content that the social network appreciates.

## 2.3. Fraping

Against this background of how individuals represent themselves socially online, and the accompanying social norms, this paper considers the phenomenon of fraping, which has only gained currency very recently (Graham & Mathis, 2013). In the limited existing scholarly literature on fraping, Lumsden and Morgan, 2012 associate the phenomenon with antisocial activities of cyber bullying and trolling[1]. Outside of academia, politicians and the judiciary have also interpreted fraping as deeply antisocial (McInerney, 2013). At least one judge has found a defendant guilty of criminal damage for fraping an ex-girlfriend's Facebook page, after charges were brought by police (Barrett & Mishkin, 2014). The tabloid press has focussed attention on humiliating frapes involving spurned lovers — e.g. (Curtis, 2016). Even the numerous contemporary definitions offered by the Urban Dictionary conflict (Graham & Mathis, 2013): frape is defined both as a "*combination of the words 'Facebook' and 'Rape' …*" (which sounds extremely negative), and as a (rather more innocuous) activity whereby "*Profile pictures, sexuality and interests are commonly changed however fraping can include the poking or messaging of strangers from someone else's Facebook account.*"[2]. There is confusion over what fraping actually is.

We contend that fraping may be seen as a modern form of practical joke or prank. Some scholars argue that such jokes and

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[1] Trolling is "the practice of behaving in a deceptive, destructive, or disruptive manner in a social setting on the Internet …to make users appear overly emotional or foolish in some manner" (Buckels, Trapnell, & Paulhus, 2014).

[2] http://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Frape.

pranks can play important social roles. For example, Kuipers (2015) suggests that jokes and pranks can bring groups together by emphasising shared world views, while Smith (2009) contends that they demonstrate the strength of social relationships by testing them. Moreover, ridicule may be a universal phenomenon across cultures, which can uphold shared social norms by mocking those who violate them (or are seen to do so) (Billig, 2005).

A central contribution of this paper, therefore, is to define the term "fraping": what it is, who is involved in it, the implicit social norms that govern fraping, and the sanctions that are applied when these norms are violated.

## 3. Method

Our study was carried out as part of a larger program of research (Durrant, Moncur, Kirk, Trujillo-Pisanty, & Orzech, in press; Moncur, Durrant, & Martindale, 2014), in which we engaged with participants who had recently undergone a life transition, and explored how their online expressions of self had changed across this transition. Such life transitions are characterised by change, as the central actor typically makes major adjustments, learning to cope with new experiences and developing new skills (Hulme, 2014), including online ones (Anderson & Tracey, 2001). Our overarching goal was to understand how online representations of self change across the human lifespan.

We carried out individual[3], semi-structured interviews with 46 research participants across three transition points in the human lifespan - leaving secondary school, becoming a parent, and retiring from work. We refer to these participants respectively as *young adults*, *new parents* and *retirees* throughout the paper. The University of Dundee granted ethical approval for this project. Research participants were (i) 15 young adults (ii) 16 new parents, and (iii) 15 recent retirees. Two of the new parents were in the same age group as the young adults (<23 years old), but had undergone the additional transition to becoming parents − with its associated demands for maturity - and are reported on as being part of the new parent group. The sample size was informed by Guest et al.'s guidance on estimating where saturation is likely to occur (2006). We took a nonprobabilistic, purposive sampling approach, with participants selected to maximize diversity within the three groups (e.g., young adults in work and at University, new parents and retirees of varying ages with a variety of occupations), rather than for any special affinity to technology or social media. Demographic data about study participants are shown in Table 1. We recruited participants through several different community organizations, including a community choir and a playgroup for pre-school children, and through the authors' personal connections in their community. In identifying participants in the text below, we have used pseudonyms followed by the participant group (YA = young adult; NP = new parent; R = retiree) and actual age − e.g. Mary-R65. Chosen pseudonyms were informed by the most popular names for the relevant age group and gender, within the region where our study was conducted (National Records of Scotland Web Team, 2013). Interviews all took place in the same mid-sized city (~150,000 residents) in the UK between December 2013 and December 2014.

Interviews typically ran for 1½−2 h. The same interview topics were used regardless of participant age, with broad and open questions asked about participants' behaviour on social media. We captured "*thick descriptions*" of participants' experiences, focussing on "*detail, context, emotion, and the webs of social relationships that*

join persons to one another" (Denzin, 2001, p. 206) by asking about the ways in which people presented themselves and communicated with one another using digital technology. Interviews were recorded and transcribed in full. The interview data was analysed using a Grounded Theory approach. (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) In line with this approach, the themes that emerged were generated inductively. Our interview questions did not ask explicitly about fraping: however, we did ask, "Have you ever pretended to be someone else online?". At the level of open coding, fraping was mentioned as a form of pretending; axial coding explored causes and consequences of this phenomenon, as detailed below. Using selective coding across the totality of our data, fraping was not a core code; instead, "pretending and posing" crossed ages and social groups in a way that fraping did not, as explained in this paper's discussion. Although it was not universal, fraping was still common enough in our interviews to allow for fruitful exploration around definitions, methods, and social norms of fraping.

## 4. Results

13 participants mentioned fraping explicitly during interviews: 9 young adults (2 female, 7 male), 4 new parents (2 male, 2 female). Retirees did not mention it explicitly. Herein, we present insights generated into what constitutes a frape, the actors involved, the implicit social norms attached to frapes, and the sanctions imposed when these norms are violated.

### 4.1. What is a 'frape'

Participants identified a 'frape' as involving a change to an individual's social networking account, carried out opportunistically by another person without the account owner's knowledge or consent. Common framing activities included changing the account owner's profile page or photo: "*…just the casual Facebook profile change*" (Jack-YA18). Young adults usually saw frapes as practical jokes: "*such a terrible form of humour*" (Andrew-YA21). They identified that a crucial part of a contemporary frape was that it should stand out in some way as being inconsistent with the victim's normal posting behaviour and online identity. There should be a clue to enable the victim to know that they had been fraped. This was illustrated by Jack-YA18 who immediately noticed that someone else had changed his profile picture without his consent, when he showed the interviewer his Facebook page. Frapes happened when a victim left a device unlocked or signed on using someone else's device, and a perpetrator took the opportunity presented to frape:

> "I keep leaving my phone unlocked. So they keep going in and messing (with my phone)…That was the first time it's happened to me in a while. So my guard was down." - Jack-YA18

> "… it would have been somebody on my Facebook that wasn't supposed to be on my Facebook, taking the fun out of me." - Callum-YA18

Steps taken to avoid being fraped included only signing in at home, on one's own devices: "*I don't …sign into Facebook in other people's houses or anything very much*" - Andrew-YA21.

The majority of young adults who described fraping saw it as an opportunistic and sometimes subversive act carried out amongst friends. The central aim of a frape was usually to amuse an audience comprised of either the victim and/or members of their social network. The joke could take the form of puzzling the victim, for example by changing their birthday on Facebook. This kind of change involved a temporal aspect to the joke, as the victim might

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[3] With the exception of Michael and Claire, a couple who were interviewed together.

**Table 1**
Participant demographics.

| Group | Gender (count) | | Age (years) | | Years between transition & interview | | Career area |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Female | Male | Mean | Range | Mean | Range | |
| Young adults | 7 | 8 | 19.7 | 18–23 | 2.6 | 0.7–5.6[a] | Direct to work (4) |
| | | | | | | | Direct to University (4) |
| | | | | | | | Work & attending University (7) |
| New parents | 10 | 6 | 33.3 | 17–50 | 1.3 | 0.1–2.5 | Administration (2) |
| | | | | | | | Business management (1) |
| | | | | | | | Customer Service (2) |
| | | | | | | | Education (2) |
| | | | | | | | Information Technology (2) |
| | | | | | | | Public Utility (1) |
| | | | | | | | Research (3) |
| | | | | | | | Social Media/Marketing (2) |
| | | | | | | | Social work (1) |
| Retirees | 7 | 8 | 64.8 | 59–70 | 3.6 | 1–10 | Health care (3) |
| | | | | | | | Health care (3) |
| | | | | | | | Social work (3) |
| | | | | | | | Education (2) |
| | | | | | | | Civil Engineering (2) |
| | | | | | | | Customer Service (2) |
| | | | | | | | Law/Property Management (2)[b] |
| | | | | | | | Publishing (1) |

[a] In the UK, students may choose to leave school at any time after they are 16, or remain in school for one or two more years to undertake further study that prepares them for University or employment.
[b] Frequently seen together in the UK; the participants were a solicitor and a chartered surveyor.

not realize that they had been fraped for quite some time:

> "…it was …my birthday a couple of weeks ago, and no Happy Birthdays on my Facebook. And I was thinking, 'What is this?' Turns out, one of the frapes that somebody had done to me was to change my birthday. So it wasn't actually coming up on Facebook. …It was funny." - Callum-YA18.

Frapes could also be intended to tease the account owner, and to amuse those who knew their personal tastes: "…we go into my friend ['s account], who is …really neurotic about things. …we all post lyrics to songs that he really hates, but …make some of them the wrong word, because that bugs him so much." - Andrew-YA21. Some were simply playful: "Sports. Someone added that when they were on my page without me knowing. I don't do any sports. I keep that, just because it's hilarious." - Rebecca-YA21.

The mischievous motivation behind fraping predates Facebook - illustrated by Cameron-YA18's reminiscences about use of MSN Messenger when he was still at primary[4] school: "If you were at somebody else's house, you would grab it (someone else's MSN account on their home computer) and see what you could get away with saying, without someone noticing that it wasn't them. But that was when we were just getting computers, so we were just starting to learn how to cause mischief on them".

### 4.2. Who is involved?

Most young adults admitted to both perpetrating and being the victims of frapes. New parents were aware of what fraping was, but did not admit to doing it — although one couple did admit to acting as bystanders in the same room when someone else was fraping. Neil-NP36 saw fraping as something that "university students and the young people in work" did. Retirees were largely unaware of what fraping was, and none of them admitted to fraping. Amongst young adults, fraping was often carried out between flatmates and

friends. Spending a lot of time together in the same shared space afforded plentiful opportunities to access each other's devices whilst they were unlocked:

> "Yeah, I've been fraped… At least every week, because with … the shared flat, I mean, it's just no privacy" - Callum-YA18.

> "…one of my flatmates is so bad, leaves Facebook open and I just can't not (frape). But it is never anything shocking. " - Kirsty-YA18

However, not all young adults engaged in fraping. Some viewed fraping negatively, as a waste of time: "I see that, and just think 'Oh my gosh!' I think that's so weird, I just wouldn't have time to do that" (Lauren-YA19). Other young adults were deterred from fraping through a perceived lack of the skills needed to carry it off successfully. These participants also recognised fraping as a time-consuming activity, but viewed it more positively, identifying required skills including subtlety, thinking on the spot, and cleverness: "…I try to (frape), but I'm not very subtle about it, the way some other people are. I'm not very…good at thinking on the spot, whenever a computer is open and somebody is logged in. So I tend not to bother" - Callum-YA18. Perpetrators of frapes could have a distinctive style that acted as a signature despite the ostensible anonymity of the act: "I think with fraping though …you always know that it is somebody else. I think with frapes, you can guess who it is that's fraped you" — Gavin-YA21.

### 4.3. Implicit social norms

#### 4.3.1. Variation across groups

Feelings aroused by frape varied across groups. They included amusement, bemusement, defensiveness, disinterest and dislike, and mapped on to age.

Young adults often found fraping funny, even when they were the victim - as long as the frape was considered to be well judged and amusing. Describing a frape that detailed what she had said on a drunken night out, Rebecca-YA21 told us: "I just left it there. It was on my page. I could have said, 'Oh, take that down', but it was quite

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[4] Primary school = 5–11 years old.

*funny*". Describing another fraping incident, the same participant highlighted the acceptability of frapes that contained an element of playful irony as a clue:

> "*Someone's posted, 'I've just realised that Harry Potter is a waste of time. What have I been doing with my life?' And it got loads of likes and people going, '[Rebecca-YA21], I can't believe that' and I'm thinking, 'It wasn't me, it was someone else!'*" - Rebecca-YA21.

As she was a well-known 'Harry Potter' fan, Rebecca-YA21's Facebook friends acknowledged the frape and showed their appreciation for its ironic nature through comments and use of Facebook's 'Like' button. Despite the acknowledged association with humour, young adults could also be defensive about frapes. They were reluctant to admit to doing anything that could be seen as unpleasant: "*Maybe only ever [fraping] as a joke or something, but not [pretending to be someone else]…properly*" (Ryan-YA20).

In contrast, new parents felt that fraping was an unpleasant thing to perpetrate or experience: "*I haven't even done that (fraping). I just feel bad (for the victim). I've certainly been in the room for it*" - Claire-NP33. It may be that they found it immature, as implied by Fiona-NP30: "*No, I hate that idea. I really don't like practical jokes and stuff like that. I absolutely hate that idea*". Both young adults and new parents expressed a sense that a frape victim was partly to blame themself, through being careless or naïve enough to leave their device unlocked: "*Folk have **actually** (their emphasis) left them-selves logged in*" - Neil-NP36.

Some retirees expressed disinterested in pranks carried out via social media in general (although they did not name fraping explicitly): "*…for Facebook … people put stupid jokes and things and I don't really (do that), I can't be bothered.*" - Anne-R70. Moira-R63 was sufficiently irritated that she took action against members of her online social network who "*…write a lot of rubbish, you know they put on stupid jokes and videos and YouTube and things that I'm not really interested in, so I have hidden them in the past.*"

### 4.3.2. When is fraping off-limits?

Young adults identified that it was unacceptable to frape someone that they did not know:

> "*It's more like friends playing jokes, like using your pictures to make funny images, like pranks, not really anything else…I guess when you look at it seriously, it could be considered invasion of privacy [but] because it was a friend [it was OK]… If it was a random person that had done that [fraped] it would be a huge deal.*" — James-YA19.

Where individuals entrusted account and password details to someone else — for example, a partner or family member — there was a tacit expectation that fraping should not occur, and was off limits. It did not even occur to young adults to frape their parents, if they had their login details:

> "*I see my father's Facebook account and my mum's, because they don't really use it, they aren't really into Facebook. So it was me and my sister who created their Facebook account for them, so we know the passwords and …my mum sometimes just gives me pictures and says 'Upload this to my Facebook', and then I have to get into her Facebook and upload it from her Facebook.*" - James-YA19

Couples in a relationship often shared login details with their partner too. Again, it did not occur to them to frape each other:

> "*Steven has access to all my information, and vice versa, so I can get logged in to all his stuff and he get logged into my stuff.*

*(Interviewer: But you have no reason to …do silly things on his account?) No.*" - Neil-NP36

### 4.4. Sanctions

Whilst the victim often left content changes on their Facebook page that had been made via a frape, not all frapes were welcome. Embarrassing material could be removed by the victim: "*It could be 50/50, I usually have to take it down, 'cause they're either stupid or… embarrassing*" - Callum-YA18. Obscene content and unflattering photos could also be taken down: "*If they posted something rude then I would get rid of it… And if there was a photo that I really, really didn't like, where I thought, 'Oh, God, I look awful, that's just not acceptable, I don't want that in the world,' I would ask the person to get rid of it.*" - Rebecca-YA21.

Social norms of deletion were also based upon the acceptability of the behaviour being depicted within the social group. Rebecca-YA21 found it acceptable for frapes to depict inebriation, but not being sick as a result of inebriation: "*If …you're (depicted) in…a gutter being sick or something, …it would be like, 'Take that down, that's not great'. If I had a picture of one of my friends throwing up somewhere, I'd be like, 'Okay, I'll get rid of that'. But if it's just them rambling or being entertaining, then that's fine, I would say*" (Rebecca-YA21).

When implicit rules regarding embarrassing, unflattering and obscene content were broken, the frapist expected the content that they posted on a victim's social media site to be removed. Kirsty-YA18 admitted to fraping flatmates and friends "*quite a lot*", but identified the content as unacceptable herself and acknowledged that her subjects deleted it. She added content that was "*…not … that awful but …things that would make them look daft if they kept it up. I would delete it, if someone put that stuff on…*" - Kirsty-YA18.

### 4.5. A definition of fraping

In summary, we found that a 'frape' involves a change to an individual's social networking account, carried out opportunistically by another person without the account owner's knowledge or consent. It is performative, enacted for a mediated audience, with the intention of anonymously disrupting an individual's online representation of self. It is an accepted activity for some young adults, if contained within a peer group of young adults who know each other. Frapes that are embarrassing or obscene are likely to be deleted by the victim once they are spotted, but frapes that are amusing or playful are likely to be left visible on the victim's profile page. Fraping is not an accepted activity for older adults, nor is it acceptable amongst social groups with mixed membership in terms of age, even when such a group includes young adults.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1. Social norms of fraping

Analysis of our qualitative data revealed that fraping is usually an opportunistic activity intended to amuse others, carried out within a group of young people who are friends offline (where the frapist gains access to the victim's device) and online (where the frape is enacted). Implicit social norms dictate who may be the victim of a frape, the content, and whether the victim leaves the frape up on their social network page or takes it down once discovered.

There were clear differences in the acceptability of fraping among the three groups of participants. Young adults admitted to

having perpetrated frapes, and regarded them as benign rather than malign when carried out amongst friends and flatmates. For young adults, successful fraping involved a change to a friend or flatmate's status or profile photo, carried out without their permission when they left their device or social media site unlocked. If a friend or flatmate did leave their device or social media site unlocked, they were seen as 'fair game', but fraping someone who had shared their password with you was not acceptable. Our young adult participants performed and realised playful social interactions when they participated in fraping. Valued frape content was amusing, subtle, took a while to spot, or made a joke about some facet of personality or behaviour that clearly identified it as a frape to the victim's friends — the chosen audience. This playful quality distinguishes frapes from hacks, which involve manipulating a computer program skilfully to gain unauthorised access to another computer system, and from trolling, where the intent is somewhat malign and the troll does not (usually) know their victim (Hardaker, 2010). It also distinguishes it from cyberbullying, where perpetrators may use jokes on their victims to deliberately harmful and distressing effect (Huang & Chou, 2010). Embarrassing, unflattering, and obscene frape content was likely to be deleted, representing the same exertion of social control through sanctions previously observed offline in social groups (Turner et al., 1987). Further, frapes were not carried out in other social groups that young adults belonged to — for example, their family.

In contrast to young adults, participants from the new parents and retirees groups did not report having committed frapes, and regarded them as unpleasant or pointless. The relevance of social groups to fraping was made clear by Neil-NP36, who described it as an activity for 'young people' and 'university students'. A frape with explicit content may therefore have been perceived as acceptable and humorous within a young adult friendship group, but offensive when appraised by others outwith that group.

Although retirees professed to be mystified by why anyone would bother with fraping (and were unfamiliar with the term), they did use social media in a playful manner (Stenros, Paavilainen, & Kinnunen, 2011) — for example, through subversive representations of self. For example, Ian-R60 maintained four distinct false identities online through Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and email, using witty 'spoof' names. These online identities all linked to some aspect of his real life — zeal for a certain television series, a passion for listening to certain radio programs, a desire to participate in contests and quizzes, and an interest in certain sports activities.

### 5.2. Online sociality and disrupted representations of self

The social interactions realised through fraping involve multiple actors (frapist, victim, audience). The frapist and victim know each other offline, and the activity is rooted in *offline* physical proximity, relying on the victim's profile being accessed by the frapist via the victim's unlocked device. Online, the frapist interacts with the victim's audience indirectly through the victim's profile, disrupting the victim's self-representation through the illicit addition of content. This kind of disruption has previously been observed offline by Goffman, who found that adding unsolicited material to an individual's representation of self created for them an "*appreciable chance of being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated*" (1959, p. 156) — reminiscent of the frapes that our participants told us about. Through the frape, the victim's profile becomes a shared and co-constructed performance space containing the victim's self-representation, the frapist's disruption of it, and (arguably) an element of the frapist's self if they are identifiable. The audience for these performances is comprised of the victim and the victim's *online* social network group on Facebook.

The victim may respond to the fraped content by displaying a willingness to participate in the joke, or by deeming it unacceptably embarrassing or humiliating and deleting it.

Use of the victim's profile by the frapist adds a further layer of nuance to existing understandings of the co-constructed nature of online identity. In the context of Facebook, individuals typically construct their own profiles and control the material that appears on their timeline. They can also control whether they are 'tagged' in images and comments posted on others' social media pages. However, they cannot control whether material that references them on another's pages is posted or not. Thus control of one's online representation(s) of self is not total: the boundaries are porous. Fraped content is a part of this, within the context of Facebook use, contributing to "*the expressive Internet, …the practice and performance of technologically mediated society*" (Tufekci, 2008, p. 547). These porous boundaries present a risk — termed a "face threat" by Wohn and Spottiswood - to an individual's desired online identity, as content added by others (whether on the individual's social media pages or elsewhere online) can undermine and challenge that desired identity (Wohn & Spottswood, 2016).

### 5.3. Limitations and future work

We recognise that the study represents attitudes in a small sample of participants (46), in one geographic location in the UK. We have compared the views and behaviours of three groups: young adults, new parents and recent retirees around fraping. We have not explored the views and behaviours of (e.g.) young adults in different contexts. The social identity literature suggests that an individual can perceive the acceptability of the same attitudes and behaviours in different ways at different times, depending on which of their social identities - with corresponding norms - are salient to them (Turner et al., 1987). Testing this hypothesis for the online behaviour described in this paper (i.e. fraping) by comparing, for example, young adults' norm perceptions when in a friendship group and a working environment, presents a next step for future research.

Further work is also needed to understand whether fraping occurs beyond Facebook, as our participants' experiences centre on this one platform. Only one instance of similar activities on another platform (MSN Messenger) was given, and this activity predated Facebook. Trends amongst young adults change very quickly. We anticipate that fraping via Facebook is likely to fall out of fashion quickly, but that indirect, playful and subversive interactions that affect representations of self and expressions of sociality may shift to other social media platforms — for example, SnapChat, Tumblr, Instagram. These interactions may be realised in quite different ways due to the technical affordances associated with each of the platforms, yet retain the social function of jokes and pranks previously described by scholars such as Kuipers (2015), Billig (2005) and Smith (2009). Further, we hypothesise that such jokes and pranks will be seen as unacceptable, and perceived as face threats (Wohn & Spottiswood, 2016), on sites where self-presentation has a professional context (e.g.LinkedIn), regardless of age. There may be consequences for a frapist's group membership if their apparent online behaviour is seen to have violated a group norm. This may lead to disapproval from ingroup members (Chekroun, 2008) and in extreme cases even exclusion from the group (Turner et al., 1987).

Finally, this study took place at a point in time. We do not know whether young adults will continue to enact playful, disruptive, indirect social interactions through activities such as frapes as they grow older, or whether they will view them as unpleasant (as new parents did), or irrelevant (as some retirees did). We will have to wait to find out, as the Internet and the young adults who have grown up with it both mature.

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