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Zoom as a Virtual Conduit: The Possibilities and Limits of Intimacy in Remote Instruction

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by

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Introduction

The Pandemic

It was beautiful that day. We were midway through the semester and I remember staring out the wall of windows in the laboratory on a stool that was much too hard. The sprinkling of new leaves on the trees glowed chartreuse in the sun - bringing a speck of warmth to my heart. Everyone in the classroom was murmuring about the news, even the skulls on the display shelf seemed to be intrigued. The Coronavirus had entered New York City, a 2 hour train-ride from our college, and was spreading like wildfire. The optimists and pessimists were bickering about our fate when our professor strode into the room with her classic confidence. We all turned and stared, her brunette curls bouncing on her shoulders as she made her way to the front of the room. We held our breath waiting for her to speak; if anyone knew what was happening it was her - the renowned epidemiologist, Felicia Keesing.

"You guys should start looking at plane tickets home." She sighed.

The Coronavirus (COVID-19) affected my life in a far larger way than I had expected in March of 2020. I knew that the virus was going to have major political impacts, but growing up as a white, middle-class American in the suburbs, I had a convoluted idea of the power of the United States government to protect me from harm. I was a victim of American exceptionalism, if you will. I was taught about the severity of the environmental crisis from an early age and the pandemic was just further proof of the human race's impending doom. From my understanding of Keesing's explanation of the pandemic, the continual progression of industrialization forced large, non-human mammals out of human-centered areas and allowed small mammals (such as rats, bats, and racoons) to thrive. This move was counter-productive because humans are more

likely to catch zootropic viruses from smaller mammals. So, as global human populations rose and continued unsustainable practices, a pandemic was inevitable. I just did not expect it to be during my college years.

Because of the highly contagious nature of the virus, students had to attend their classes entirely online. I am lucky enough to attend a college that followed and continues to follow rigorous protocols to limit outbreaks while keeping students on campus and in class. Despite us coming back to campus the next year, we still had to attend class online and be relatively successful students. As someone with an anxiety disorder -- especially in relation to people I consider authority figures, like professors -- this was an overwhelming shift. Students and professors alike had to reframe how they taught or learned in a new context and maintain their success. Students also had to reevaluate expectations of a college social life.

Collectively, responses to the shift to remote classes were complicated and ambivalent. Initially, for many students, the transition to remote instruction seemed like a logical inevitability for education. For many of us, teachers had been trying to integrate technology into their lessons for a while and there were already many established online schools. For example, in my eighth grade math class in 2014, the Los Angeles Unified School District tried to implement a new method of standardized testing that had us take the math portion of the California Standardized Test on iPads. Despite the increasing familiarity with online education, the transition to remote-only instruction solidified our collective understanding that life as we knew it, was drastically and rapidly changing.We as humans are animals who must adapt in order to survive, and it is this adaptation in education which will be the focus of my senior project.

Social and Political Conditions

However, the Coronavirus Pandemic was not the only thing on the forefront of the minds of many Americans. The social and political conditions were fraught with boiling tensions, violence, injustice, and many other stressful components that contributed to how my interlocutors were feeling at the time. These stressors deserve discussion because they affected the ways in which my interlocutors engaged with each other and the class.

Donald Trump was elected to the presidency in January of 2017 and his presidency finally ended in January of 2021. The following opinions are biased but align with the general opinions in the Bard College community based on my four years of direct observation. The man was dangerous in more ways than one. He is an open sexist/sexual assaulter though he wouldn't use that vocabulary prefering to normalize his actions as "men being men." He is an open racist as exemplified by his proclamation that countries populated by people of color are, "sh*thole countries," as well as the abuse he sanctioned at the Mexican American border. In addition, he cultivated an alliance and friendship with Vladimier Putin, the "president" of Russia who regularly jails or poisons political opponents who gain popular traction or question his legitimacy and authority. Having a man like Trump as the leader and commander-in-chief of the largest and most well-funded military in the history of the world with seemingly no compunction about abusing the power of his office, creates an atmosphere of uncertainty and menace that can be extremely stressful.

In the third year of the Trump presidency, on May 25th, 2020, police in Minneapolis, Minnesota murdered George Floyd, a black man, in the streets because they believed he may have used a counterfeit twenty-dollar bill. His murder was filmed by a young girl, posted to

social media, and the clip went viral soon after. The video neatly exemplified the longtime history of police brutality towards people of color, in particular black people. It protests across the country in the middle of the pandemic and these protestors were mainly from the progressive end of the political spectrum. That group also largely, though not uniformly, believed in the institutional scientific consensus which informed the pandemic protocols. Maintaining those disease-mitigating strategies was complicated by many Trump supporters adamantly denying the existence of the virus, their beliefs that masks were an infringement on their freedom and an oppressive government intervention, and their enthusiastic harassment of anyone who tried to tell them otherwise. Tensions were at high in a socio-political sense and people were hurt, frightened, angry, and aggrieved.

Then, one fateful day in September of 2020, the Supreme Court Justice, Ruth Bader Ginsberg, passed away. She is a femenist icon who many believed would help protect the rights of those underrepresented in the American government (non-cis-straight-white-men) and she had a significant impact on United States jurisprudence during her years on the Court. However, Trump, with his decreasing popularity, saw her death as an opportunity to appoint a Justice who would align with his politics and world view. Knowing the events that transpired on January 6th, I cannot help but to think that his decision to nominate Amy Coney Barret to the Supreme Court and have her quickly confirmed before the November election was in part, an effort to ensure that he would have a political ally on the Court. This could help if he was able to mount a successful legal challenge to a potential election loss and have the Court adjudicate the final outcome in Trump's favor… As Trump feared, the election was won by Joe Biden. Trump mounted an unprecedented number of legal challenges, almost all of which were struck down in lower cours. At the same time, he and his supporters sought victory in the court of public opinion

alleging without evidence that his loss was the result of widespread election fraud, particularly in swing states.

With acrimony and division at a boiling point and the defeated President seeking to inflame supporters at every opportunity, a mob of loyal followers stormed the U.S. Capitol building in an effort to obstruct the certification of the election, a necessary formal step in the peaceful transition of power. Despite the police presence, the violence they inflicted during the Black Lives Matter Protests, and the fact that they were warned of this event, the police were "underprepared" and the Trump supporters violently broke into the building forcing members of congress to be evacuated to a safe house (giving some members COVID in the process). The insurrectionists were beyond terrifying to my general public. They wore animal skins or dressed as soldiers, they had huge guns and a mix of American and Confederate flags and they brutally attacked police guards, even almost killing one until an insurrectionist felt sympathy after they heard the guard had a son. They were trying to stop the peaceful transition of power between democratically elected presidents that has been an essential part of American Democracy since the creation of the country.

These political events provide context for the variety of conditions that affected investments in education. These events were stressful and required many to lean on support systems that were struggling to survive with the separation the pandemic had caused. It is important to have a background to these stressors in order to better understand the feelings of need for intimacy and the relationships students had with the class when Bard was instructing through Zoom.

Agenda

     I provided a basic background of the social and political tensions and events that were

contributing to elevated anxiety levels among students and professors. Our sudden need to adapt

to technologies - like the Zoom video conferencing platform - along with coping with other

realities of the COVID pandemic itself either coincidentally arrived with or helped to expose

many other aspects of American life that could be considered anxiety-producing. This report is

entirely concerned with the creations and fortifications of intimacy on the Zoom platform during

remote instruction at Bard College. In order to proceed we must first have a basic understanding

as to what *intimacy* actually is. According to Thomas Kasulis, "intimacy is most essentially a

sharing of innermost qualities" (Kasulis 2002: 28). Tom Boellstorff's conception of intimacy, on

the other hand, "is predicated on language's ability to mediate selfhood" (Boellstorff 2015: 152).

When thinking about these definitions together, I gather that intimacy is created through

expressing aspects of ones' self while allowing the other to do the same. In my analysis, I use

intimacy to mean the bond shared between two or more people that is based on a privileged and

private sharing of personal subjects including "innermost qualities" but also extending to

passions and interests. This intimacy serves to create trusting relationships as components of a

broader support system that people can rely on in times of need, to better deal with hardships,

whether emotional or material. Zoom class altered the ways in which this intimacy was - or was

not - achieved and it is this alteration that I wish to explore. To what extent did Zoom class

promote a sense of social connection and intimacy among students and professors? To what

extent did Zoom class actually undermine such connections and intimacy? In this project, I argue

that Zoom both facilitated intimacies and, also, inhibited the creation and fortification of social

relationships. In particular, students relied on chatting and breakout rooms to forge and bolster intimacies with their peers, while they used the camera function on Zoom to manage their relationships with professors and the class as a whole. At the same time, Zoom's features set certain constraints on students' interactions. Zooms auditory, visual, and textual features superseded students' usual ways of creating connections.

In the first chapter, I provide theoretical frameworks as a foundation for my analysis. I first offer a comparison of some of Tom Boellstorff's analysis of the intimacies possible in the video game, Second Life, with the Zoom software and how it facilitated intimacies between students and between students and professors. I do this to situate us within the platform of Zoom, propose a new term for programs like Zoom, and to show that online intimacies are possible. Continuing on with theoretical frameworks, I analyze Michel Foucault's chapter "Docile Bodies," in his book *Discipline and Punish*, to discuss the configurations of place in institutions in which a subordinate group exists. Zoom complicated that configuration at Bard College when the institution transitioned to remote instruction, setting the foundation to understand that the relationships students have to their learning spaces, including with the class as a whole and with individual peers, had changed. I suggest that this change is due to the amalgamation of personal and institutional spaces. I then go on to discuss Michel DeCerteau's introduction and chapter entitled "Making Do" in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* in order to understand how students created room to maneuver within institutions that imposed certain kinds of constraints. Finally, I offer an introduction to Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* and his dramaturgical framework for analyzing interaction. I use Goffman heavily throughout my own analyses of the interactions that occurred among my interlocutors. Goffman's analysis was written in the late 1950's, long before the pandemic and before computers were in people's

homes, and yet it is still relevant to the interactions that occur online. His analysis helps to understand the goals, methods, and motivations of students during remote instruction, along with the aspects of Zoom that facilitated or inhibited their interactions.

In the Second Chapter, I go through the three main methods of having intimacy on Zoom that are built into the program itself. First, I go through the chat function as the most common tool for student to student intimacy fortification, how the transition to Zoom affected those interactions, and how students used the chat to maintain class engagement through the intimacies they fortify within it. I then provide a brief discussion of breakout rooms as they seemed to be the only way in which students were able to actually create relationships that did not exist before or outside of Zoom. However, the discussion is brief due to the rarity of these creations. Finally, I discuss the use of the camera in the fortification of student to professor relationships as well as student to class relationships to show how these interactions were altered with the transition to Zoom. I also analyze camera usage to understand student to institution relationships through some of the issues that came with the transition.

I interviewed several professors and multiple students for this analysis. I recruited the professors through a mass email my project advisor and I constructed. I used pseudonyms for my interlocutors so that they could be more candid without having to be concerned with professional, academic, or social consequences. Professor Peter has been teaching within the division of Science, Mathematics, and Computing at Bard for over 30 years. He mainly taught on Zoom through screen sharing, in a lecture capacity. When we were in our interview, he demonstrated what his desktop camera can see when he uses his iPad as a blackboard and it was mainly, the top of his head. I also interviewed Professor Susan who taught in the division of languages and literature for over 20 years. Her preferred method of teaching was to have students

write a response to the assigned reading and then discuss those responses during class. Finally, I met with Professor Lucy, who has worked within the division of Social Studies at Bard for the past couple of years. Her teaching style seemed to be a lecture and discussion combination also using the iPad as a blackboard. At the beginning of the interview, she was very confidently anti-Zoom but as the interview progressed she described herself as "more ambivalent about it than [she] thought." Professor Lucy was a millennial and seemed very in tune with technology and the internet which I think added a layer of relatability to her, at least to me.

I recruited the students from my social circles and relied, to some extent, on snowball sampling. Mara is a Studio Art major who will be graduating this Spring. She loves video games and social media, specifically Instagram, and we shared an affection for Tumblr during our Freshman year. Daisy, Bailey and Blaze are Studio Art majors as well, though Daisy and Blaze are currently Juniors and Bailey is also graduating. All four of these artists are dedicated to their respective crafts, but Bailey seemed to have been invested in other academic pursuits during the pandemic while Daisy, Blaze and Mara seemed to be more focused on their art. Petunia is an extremely dedicated student majoring in Physics and is a Senior as well. She is the most diligent and responsible student that I have ever known. Seth is somewhat like that as well. He's a Senior, double majoring in Archeology and Theater. He is very dedicated but is one of those students who can quickly produce intelligent work and be successful whereas Petunia is more careful and detailed. Leo is one of those students who can produce intelligent work at a rapid pace without much thought required as well, though he is a Biology major instead. Leo uses she/they/he pronouns but seems to most prefer he/him so I use he/him throughout the project for continuity's sake.

My interlocutors offered valuable insights into the different ways in which people existed and interacted with one another on Zoom. Each of my interlocutors had a unique perspective and provided interesting stories and discussions that conflicted and coincided with each other in satisfying ways.

After my analysis, I provide a conclusion that captures the main ideas presented. After which, I have also offered a playlist. This playlist was created under the inspiration of my interlocutors, and the music others and myself were listening to at the time. I believe that music has a capacity to create a social atmosphere or a social scene by its very existence allowing people to use it to feel a sense of connection across physical boundaries. In a project meant to analyze how intimacies were created and sustained across physical boundaries, I felt it important to include an element with that power of fluidity that helps convey the emotions of the time in a way that requires interpretation and can connect to the listeners identity. Two of the songs on it, "F2020" and "Antibodies" were written, produced, and released during the pandemic and were about the pandemic. The rest of the songs I chose in an attempt to elucidate the general feelings of myself and interlocutors during and about the pandemic; I tried to capture the mood, tone, and tenor of the pandemic experience even if the songs are not specifically about the pandemic itself.

Theoretical Frameworks

This analysis of the way in which intimacy was altered requires a theoretical foundation. I use Tom Boellstorff's analysis of intimacies on Second Life to emplace our discussion of Zoom and to show that these cybersocialities are possible. I then go onto discuss Foucault's analysis of the ways in which spaces are divided in an effort to maintain the functionality of institutions in which there are varying levels of authority. This is to assist in understanding the transition to Zoom when those divisions became muddled, therefore affecting students' relationships with the ways in which they interacted with the institution itself. Their most common interaction happens in a Zoom class with the representations of authoritative power being the professors and the representative of the goal of the institution being the class. I then move on to a discussion of DeCerteau's analysis of the ways in which subordinate groups maneuver within systems and the ways in which dominant groups attempt to maintain a level of control. This helps us understand how students were able to maneuver within the institution and create these intimacies despite those connections being peripheral to the goal of knowledge production and the ways in which their relationships with professors were altered or maintained. These theories provide the foundation for understanding not only that intimacy on Zoom was possible, but the kinds of intimacies students had to maintain at Bard changed with the transition to remote instruction.

Boellstorff

The socio-political affairs of the time and the Covid Pandemic created a strange condition for many that was alleviated in different ways. This condition was a combination of boredom and stress. The amount of each was dependent on the person, their economic status, their familial

conditions, their ability to entertain themselves or manage stress, the amount of their responsibilities and whether or not they had increased, their political affiliation, and degree of social isolation. However, stress and boredom seemed prevalent no matter where you looked. Students were definitely not immune to this condition, especially college students. There is a widely-held belief in America that college is a time for education and personal development well beyond the classroom. The college years are seen as the moment an individual first experiences a level of freedom from their parents for self-exploration and boundary-testing. This includes, socializing, romantic and sexual exploration, and chemical experimentation or "partying." All of these elements of academic and social learning are supposed to help students transition into adulthood. Obviously, Covid completely transformed the interpersonal and social parts of the experience. It made the "party" experience impossible if one were to follow COVID precautions, which many students at Bard College did. It made extemporaneous interaction of all kinds significantly more complex and potentially perilous. Not only that, but it transformed the learning experience into an online experience affecting the social conditions and interactions created in classroom environments. These interactions often are important supplemental social experiences that can help one's performance in class and support a healthy life balance. Due to the practical elimination of outside social relationship creation and the communal social experience that is often referred to as a "party", the in-class social condition became more centralized in the lives of many students.

In order to understand the kind of intimacy that occured within the culture of the Zoom classroom, we must first understand the bounds of a 'culture.' Cultures are not sealed entities unaffected by cultures around them, or that they exist in accord with or opposition to, but rather are fluid and intersect with each other (Boellstorff 2015: 241). As a technoscape, Zoom

classroom culture is no different. A "technoscape" is a constructed global configuration of technologies determined by the perspectives of actors situated historically, politically, and linguistically that moves efficiently across boundaries previously considered impervious (Appadurai 1996: 33 & 34). Zoom is a technoscape because it was constructed as a virtual meeting ground and used to satisfy the requirement of reunion that later helped to continue our schooling and economy.

  I use Boellstorff to further my analysis of the kind of intimacy that is possible in a technoscape. Boellstorff is analyzing the possible intimacies in the video game, Second Life. This game is essentially a virtual replication of the actual world with features that are or can be manipulated to emplace aspects that users wish were true. This game functions as a virtual community allowing users to interact with one another. This clip from the television series, *The Office* depicts one way in which a user can interact with the game: ▶ The Office Second life . In the game of Second Life, players create avatars and usernames to represent themselves. They create homes for their avatars and virtually explore the world of the game. In their exploration they can interact with other users and they often would create groups of players who would play together. This is similar to how one socializes in other virtual world video games such as World of Warcraft or Fortnite. The in-game relation building without actual world in-person interaction, the consequences of in-game actions remaining in-game, and the ability to be someone completely different than the assigned and cultivated identity one possesses in the actual world is what makes Second Life a virtual world.

  Virtual worlds are a kind of technoscape but they distinguish themselves through their configuration. It is important to differentiate between the virtual world of Second Life that Boellstorff analyzes and the technoscape of Zoom class. Boellstorff defines "virtual worlds" as "

hav[ing] unique characteristics and social significance that [do] not hinge on a direct relationship to the actual world. Virtual worlds remain linked to the actual world, and questions of political economy, inequality, community, and selfhood remain just as pertinent. Yet [his] conclusion as an ethnographer of Second Life is that virtual worlds are distinct domains of human being, deserving of study in their own right" (Boellstorff 2015: 238). What Boellstorff means by this is that virtual worlds are a product of, and can often even recreate certain aspects of the actual world. However, the social significance of a virtual world cannot be reduced to "real world" social relations and meanings, and are not merely a reflex of those relations and meanings. The game of Second Life is deemed a virtual world because essentially, what happens within that space is only occurring in that specific space and no one, but the player, can allow the consequences of what happens to be felt in the actual world – unless there is some sort of illegal activity. Feelings about the game and the people with which they interacted were very real, existing in the actual world, but they did not affect the ways in which users lead their lives.

By contrast, Zoom classes exist in the technoscape but do not constitute virtual worlds as Boellstorff defines them. Zoom was designed to complement embodied in-person relations, and during the early stages of the pandemic it was employed to provisionally take their place. While both Zoom and Second Life aim for a kind of real world replication, the intention of the user with Zoom in professional settings, like a classroom, hinges on actual world identities being present. On top of that, the consequences of actions that occur on Zoom are often felt in the real world. For example, if a student were to admit to cheating while in class on Zoom, the student would be reprimanded for that action by the school they attend and it would affect various aspects of the students actual world life.

The status of Zoom as a technologically mediated mode of communication, but not one that cositutes a virtual world, is also apparent if we consider "Zoom bombing." Zoom bombers were people who used Zoom to enter into professional settings that they were not a part of in the actual world, often under names that were not their own, for the purpose of wreaking havoc. They were relatively common when people first started working with Zoom when the pandemic began, but have since become a rarer occurrence. The action of Zoom bombing is not illegal, but many Zoom bombers would share graphic images and videos that are illegal to create, have, and/or share, like underage pornographic material and hate-speech. In response, the FBI released a statement giving advice on how to limit the abilities of Zoom bombers as well as providing resources to report what they call "teleconference hijacking," which they labeled a cyber-crime (FBI 2020).

The legality of Zoom bombing is convoluted, so the common practice taken by Zoom users was to use the programs abilities to take precautions. For example, one of my interlocutors, Professor Lucy recounted, "I haven't had a Zoom bomber, which is a thing that people have had to deal with. A professor had someone just enter into the room and start putting like lots of Nazi slogans in the chat, really scary. So, I use a password on it, and then I use the waiting room." The software permits the host of a Zoom meeting to password protect the meeting and use a "waiting room" that allows the host to admit specific people. The waiting room on the participants side is a little white box that says "the host will let you in soon" with a loading symbol underneath whereas on the hosts side, names appear as pop ups on the top of the meeting screen and they can admit people one by one or they can put everyone in the waiting room and admit them all at once. Zoom bombers can be relatively anonymous due to the ability to write the name one wishes to enter a Zoom under, but those same users have to sign into the program under an email

and using computers and smartphones that have IP addresses unique to their hardware that can be tracked by authorities, so they can be legally reprimanded depending on the content they used to bomb. Zoom bombers cannot be truly anonymous and the consequences of their actions can be felt in the actual world. Their existence and the responses to their actions illustrate how Zoom cannot be considered a "virtual world."

The most distinguishing factor between Second Life as a virtual world and Zoom as not, is that those who used the Zoom program did so to fulfill a gap created in, and from, the actual world and are, for the most part, attempting to be human as they had been. In a virtual world such as Second Life, however, Boellstorff writes, " … we can be virtually human, because in them humans, through techne, open up a gap from the actual and discover new possibilities for human being" (Boellstorff 2015: 238). The goal of a virtual world is to explore new ways of being a human rather than an attempt at recreating the ways of being they are accustomed to.

While Zoom may not be a virtual world, Boellstorff's analyses of relation building and communication within the program are useful to help to understand how relation building and communication occurred over Zoom. The Zoom software works as a virtual interface between professionals that hinges on the identities of the users to compensate for limitations on real world interactions. There was a short period during which people also used the Zoom platform for social interaction itself, like Zoom dinner parties, but after having to spend many hours on the platform for professional or academic purposes, people grew tired of this kind of function of Zoom. I offer that instead of a virtual world, the Zoom program is what I call a *virtual conduit*. Its purpose is to substitute meeting spaces, rooms that act as conduits, through virtual space. It exists in the realm of a technoscape but is not a virtual world due to its connections to the real world and its intent as a replica of it. A virtual conduit is used in alignment with actual-world

social structures, actors, and behaviors that determine how people interact with one another and with systems they are a part of. Zoom users therefore, would often use the software as an attempt to recreate or redefine their "normal" during the pandemic as much as the program made possible.

Through our isolation, many people were still trying to connect with one another despite our inability to interact in-person on a day to day basis with friends, acquaintances, those we dislike and people we have never met. Boellstorff describes a narrative of "virtual worlds as engines of isolation" but through his and other cybersocial research came to discover quite the opposite in the sense "that virtual worlds can not only transform actual-world intimacy but create real forms of online intimacy" (Boellstorff, 156). There is a similar narrative of isolation with Zoom, the creation of online or actual-world intimacy is possible but is limited by the enforcement of a simulated classroom standard. In in-person class, creating forms of intimacy is possible and a common occurrence for some, however due to the focus on schoolwork, there is a barrier of professionality that needs to be overcome in order to create that relationship. What I mean by this "barrier" is that at the initial point of intimacy creation, there is an assumed level of politeness, in which conversations that occur are typically about the experience of being a student. This barrier can be overcome through sharing more personal insights that can create a greater sense of intimacy for the relationship to be built upon. It seems to have had an added layer when interacting with people through Zoom because of the inability to be in the same physical place. Zoom may be a way in which people could escape from the isolation of the pandemic but when used in a classroom setting, creating and fortifying intimacies became more difficult.

Foucault

In order to best understand how authority related to and shaped interactions between students and professors, I look to the way in which Foucault conceptualizes the representations and the maintenance of relations of authority. I then compare in-person representations with methods of maintenance to that of Bard College over Zoom. Michel Foucault conceptualizes discipline as a key form of power in the "modern" world (since the seventeenth century, yet still relevant) in his book *Discipline and Punish.* For Foucault, disciplinary techniques endeavor to create "docile bodies." The way they do so is through, what he calls, the "art of distributions." The first method of distribution is '*enclosure,'* like the enclosure of students on campus in dorms (Foucault 1975: 141). Foucault describes the aim of this enclosure to be, "... the protected place of disciplinary monotony… boarding appeared as the most perfect, if not most frequent, educational régime… " (Foucault 1975: 141). So, in order to maximize the capacity of learning for students, institutions such as Bard, enclose them in a space that helps to limit inconveniences to their learning experiences and equalize the student body regardless of background, origin, and socio-economic status.. Professors are not free of this enclosure either. While they do exercise institutional authority within their class and have power over students' grades, Deans, Department Chairs, and other administrators can supersede professors' authority, but the professor wields significant influence throughout the process, and those other administrators can only be enlisted to intervene through the significant effort of others. The establishment furthers its authority over professors and their actions by requiring certain efforts and providing them with offices in which they produce work in their field of study for purposes that may be personal, but the work helps to maintain the institution's status. Within the office space, professors can

prepare for classes and meet with students. The enclosure spaces enlisted by Bard that were altered by Zoom for students are dormitories and classrooms whereas for professors they were their offices and classrooms.

The concept of dorming, or living in campus housing, was complicated with the transition to Zoom. Dorms exist as an enclosure space, essentially eliminating home responsibilities, in order to create a condition in which students can more easily devote themselves to their studies, and maintain a level of freedom that is more free than being a minor at home with parents but restricted for the purpose of maintaining order and safety. Dorm living adds to what Foucault calls 'disciplinary machinery' through '*partitioning'* (Foucault 1975: 143). He says that, "Disciplinary space tends to be divided into as many sections as there are bodies or elements to be distributed" (Foucault 1975: 143). In the case of dormitories, they are divided into a number of discrete rooms, to which a corresponding number of students are to be allocated. This distribution is precise down to the placement of furniture. From my own experience of living in a "double," two students allocated to one room, my first year, and a "triple," three students allocated to one room, my second, I have studied the initial set ups of these spaces because there is a fine for not leaving the room as you found it. In these spaces, furniture such as desks or dressers are used to literally partition the bed and closet spaces between the students.

Partitioning occurs to maximize space utilization and create and limit solitude. The purpose of this, according to Foucault, is supervision of the subordinate; their conduct, attendance, and communication (Foucault 1975: 143). In order to maximize the machinery of discipline, individuals must be under constant surveillance but at the same time, need a level of solitude. The switch to Zoom expanded solitude for students and professors alike and changed the ways in which students were surveyed. Foucault describes solitude as "... necessary for the

body and soul…" and claims that the organization of modern schools echoes that of medieval monasteries. He explains that this solitude is intertwined with sleep. This only becomes more true with the transition to online learning as students were, quite literally, taking classes while in bed.

The way in which students and professors attended Zoom classes welded the *enclosed* classroom space with Foucault's third method of maintaining disciplinary machinery, "functional sites" (Foucault 1975: 143). This blurred the lines of labor and time for oneself. Functional sites are places that are particularized to be designed "... to correspond not only to the need to supervise, to break dangerous communications but also to create a useful space" (Foucault 1975, 143). To students, professors are authority figures due to the need to gain approval of their work from them, and so, the classroom is a supervised space for students, with discussions assumed to be dedicated to a matter of study if there is to be a dialogue at all. Zoom is a particularized space that is designed for professionals and is used by the institution to facilitate learning. However, the correspondence to supervision and the breaking of dangerous communications becomes muddled. The nature of supervision changed over Zoom; initially supervision in the institution was mostly based on a student's physical presentation, attendance, engagement, and the avoidance of disruptions to others on campus. Online, however, the Zoom medium changed what was visible through the students' and professors' cameras -- if they had cameras at all. In addition, students and professors had to change or accept the presentation of their living space in the frame of the camera as part of their identity, or, possibly, as a display of who they want the rest of the people on the Zoom to believe they are. Conversations deviating from the matter of study while in a Zoom classroom space became easier due to the increased ability to be anonymous as well as the chat and the ability to text.

This recodification of space forces the presentation of oneself to not only include their conduct and appearance, but also the appearance of what Foucault calls their "solitary space of contemplation." This is not to say that the entire space is on display but students and professors alike, on Zoom, must take into account the visible space around them as a form of performance. Then, when entering class, one must determine when to enter the Zoom space. Some entered early to conduct small talk, but also possibly to use this opportunity to transition their mindset from what they were doing before, to class. This process previously occurred relatively naturally through walking to the classroom space. Others would, instead, opt to join the meeting at the exact moment, often down to the minute, class was scheduled to begin. This did not necessarily eliminate the possibility for that mindset transition but may affect the beginning of a student's performance in the beginning of the class. My interlocutors mostly agreed that if one were to join the Zoom earlier than the scheduled time for class, they often engaged in small talk – students and professors alike but many found it uncomfortable for various reasons. On the students' side, the issue seemed to stem from a place of feeling exposed and anonymous, and on the professors side, as less natural. Students would often use this time as an opportunity to correct previous versions of themselves they had previously presented to the professor that they were not satisfied with. They may also be attempting to create intimacy with the professor to feel more secure about their own position, the eventual judgment of their work, and/or gain the respect of the professor who is considered to be an expert in a field of study that most likely intersects with the interests of the student. This kind of interaction could be perceived by the professor positively or negatively depending on genuinity, acknowledgement of indicators of approval or disapproval, respect owed, dued, and paid, along with a list of other factors.

This relation of authority ties into Foucault's fourth disciplinary method of machinery that further classifies individuals from space all the way to *rank* (Foucault 1975: 145). The positionality of actors in this space is not only determined by the physical spaces they are in but also the place they occupy in classifications of power (Foucault 1975: 145). Before Covid, the *rank* of professors was that of authoritative power while students worked to learn and gain the approval of these figures in power, mostly due to intellectual respect but for selfish favor as well and for a multitude of other reasons. While this authoritative relationship still occurred after the switch to remote interaction, these relationships were destabilized in many different ways.

DeCerteau

In order to understand the ways in which students took advantage of a lack of supervision afforded to them in the Zoom classroom, it is important to first understand the classifications and implementations of authoritative power and the methods of maneuvering within it. Michel DeCerteau is primarily concerned with the way this works in oppressive establishments like certain governments. However, I use his analysis to help my analysis of the ways in which the college maintains authoritative power because, while I would not consider Bard to be an oppressive establishment, the institution is invested in its own prestige which would be threatened without power delineations which function similarly, but with far less violence, than those of an oppressive government. DeCerteau provides an expansion on Foucault's ideas of discipline, and an explanation of *strategy* and *tactic* and their uses.

The social interactions that create relational determinations are founded on speech. DeCerteau, in conversation with Goffman and other authors, distinguishes between *performance* and *competence* in linguistics because, "speaking operates within the field of a linguistic system"

(DeCerteau 1984: xiii). He differentiates *performance* as the act of speaking and *competence* as a knowledge of the language (DeCerteau 1984: xiii). He goes on to say that, "the speech act," contains four characteristics: (1) speech is privileged within our interactions (2) it influences the way that language is used and its meanings (3) it situates the speaker in a, "*present,*" through the use of time and place and (4) it creates a, "*contract with the other,*" through webs of relations (DeCerteau 1984: xiii). The speech act's objective is to work within and transform the dominant's realm to best fit an individual's interests or morals (DeCerteau 1984: xiii).

The "dominant", according to DeCerteau, is the institution or organization that exercises power (DeCerteau 1984: xiv). So, in our case, the dominant would be the institution that is Bard College and Professors would be representative of authority in some way to students – especially in a time of isolation (like being off-campus) with a limited necessity to interact with administrators[1]. DeCerteau says that Foucault's work is an analysis of the methods with which these dominants use to create and uphold power for a functional purpose (DeCerteau 1984: xiv). He goes on to say Foucault's work privileges the dominant in this discussion despite people maneuvering their own interests and morals within dominant institutions (DeCerteau 1984: xiv). DeCerteau critiques Foucault for not taking into account the ways in which "dominees" subvert power for their own purposes (DeCerteau 1984: xiv). I think that DeCerteau is taking a view of the dominees that may make them appear to be a bit conniving and/or manipulative or in a great struggle for freedom from an oppressive system, which is perfectly fair.

There also are plenty of instances in which schools are oppressive systems like residential schools for indigenous people of America in the United States and Canada. As I mentioned though, Bard is not one of these places. Depending on the institution in question,

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[1] unless they are a part of the institution in a different capacity like club leadership though those interactions had to be moved mainly online as well or paused until the college returns to in-person instruction

dominees may be simply taking advantage of opportunities to exercise freedoms within institutions that work to produce a kind of activity. Oftentimes that activity is time consuming, and labor intensive either physically, intellectually, or emotionally and so this maneuvering suggests a kind of reclamation of the time for self that can include social interaction, self-care, or self-indulgence. In terms of Bard, the institution is working to maximize student capabilities for future work in whatever field they choose. It is assumed that work will be related to the students area of study, and oftentimes, that study can be intellectually intense and sometimes emotionally intense. Therefore the need to heal from that labor occurs when students have an opportunity to do so depending on the level of supervision they are under and their personal and/or professional necessities.

He goes on to further define the methods in which powers maintain authority and the methods in which dominees subvert or manipulate their positions to exercise freedom that would otherwise be limited for the purposes of the establishments production. He does this through the distinction between *strategy* and *tactic.* He defines "*strategy*" as a "calculus" of the relationships determined by a circumscribed place within which a center of power "conceal[s] beneath objective calculations their connection with the power that sustains them from within the stronghold of its own "proper" place or institution" (DeCerteau 1984: xix, xx). What he means by this is that strategies are the analyses of relationships determined by an establishment within which those in power use to assess their connections to that power and those they have power over in order to maintain their status. This means that the authority figures at the center of power use *strategies* to maintain that power by creating an "other" within their institution. In our case, the institution is Bard College and the authority figures, to students, are professors. While the authority figure to professors is administrators and the college's president, for the purposes of

this report, in terms of those actors remaining outside of the Zoom classroom space but had influence over the way in which professors employed strategic methods of power implementation, this relation to authoritative power will not be directly analyzed but rather the influence realize through my ethnographic material. In the case of a Zoom classroom space, students are the "other" according to DeCerteau's definition because their time within this college institution is limited, they must pay to be a part of it, and their ability to retain knowledge and move through the institution is constantly evaluated. Before Covid, students were surveyed by professors when they were in the place that class was held, and then surveilled in the rest of their lives by security guards and deans. After the transition to online learning, however, professors were able to surveil students while they were in their living spaces, and the social surveillance from the security guards and deans became more strict in some ways like limiting social gatherings due to the institution trying to protect dominants and subordinates alike from the virus, and less strict in the ways in which their supervision became somewhat more limited as people spent less time outside of their living spaces. This caused a shift in the ways in which people maintain a work/life balance during this period and so students worked to find ways to have the freedom to take care of their life responsibilities while being on Zoom.

DeCerteau posits that subordinates use "*tactics*" to maintain their goals as individuals while working within a system that deems them inferior. A "*tactic*" is not defined by a place but rather as the tool of the other dependent on time (DeCerteau 1984: xix). Tactics are used when there is a moment in which the subordinate can take advantage of a certain situation but, "Whatever it wins, it does not keep" (DeCerteau 1984: xix). The other must be steadily manipulating situations so as to turn them into opportunities within which a tactic may be used. They must use the tools given to them by the dominant, synthesize those with the goals of the

authorities and that of the subordinate individual, resulting in an action or way in which they take that opportunity. In short, *tactics* are dependent on time and are used to subvert power from the authority or reclaim time by using the methods and goals of the authority and amalgamizing them with their own. Whereas *strategies* are dependent on place and creating an other on which they can use their power.

In the case of the Zoom classroom, authoritative power and the freedoms students enacted with the new limitations of such come to light when looking at the relationships sustained over Zoom. Students were forced to use the Zoom classroom space as a way to fulfill the social aspect of their self-care which falls under their individual responsibilities which became much more restricted over Zoom. Students most often exercised this new freedom while on Zoom and the tactics they employed to do so while maintaining appearances become prevalent when analyzing how the peer relationship creation and fortification that students were using to satiate their social experiences during the pandemic.

Goffman

Before any analysis of intimacy creation in the virtual conduit of a Zoom classroom, it is vital to understand the fundamentals of interactions between persons and where their truths and identities lie in those interactions. In order to do so, I draw on Erving Goffman's analysis in his book *The Presentation of Self.* Goffman presents a framework for understanding how identities are presented during interactions within a social establishment. He defines a social establishment as, "any place surrounded by fixed barriers to perception in which a particular kind of activity regularly takes place" (Goffman 1959: 238). He confines them to place, meaning that they must

be physical in some way. I would like to push back on this part of his definition. He was writing before the commonization of the Internet so I cannot fault him, but with Zoom and similar platforms, social establishments can exist completely online. Online is not relegated to a physical site but rather is a concept, with physicality in terms of access (i.e. computers and smartphones), where interactions and exchanges occur between peoples from different places using hardware and other technological intermediation. Nevertheless, the rest of his definition still stands. Social establishments perceive action, belief, ideology, and power in a particular way, and the people that belong to them, regularly do a kind of thing for the purpose of maintenance or production – whether that be maintenance of order, or the establishment itself, or of the individual; production for the regulation of the establishment, or for the individual.

The social establishment I am studying is Bard College. It is an actual place, located in the Hudson River Valley of New York, with pervasive moral conceptions on how the country and world should function, and with populations who do different kinds of things regularly. Students attend class, do homework but also attend social events. Workers who do activities like gardening, cleaning, cooking, serving, and assistance or management of offices or spaces or security etc. Students can also be workers if they are qualified for the position. Professors teach in order to produce well-rounded and/or knowledgeable students, and they advise these students both academically and for their senior projects. They serve on student moderation and senior project boards, and other board and committee and advisory positions. They produce their own work in their field of study and sometimes work with Bard's other institutions. Administrators regulate these populations, and President Leon Botstein makes the institutional policy and strategic decisions in consultation with the Board of Trustees.

Goffman analogizes the interactions that occur within a social establishment with the theater and the individual with the performer. He says that in any given establishment there are performers and audience. The performers carry out the task of presenting a definition of the situation to the audience that includes the conceptions of who is "performer" and who is "audience," as well as, "... assumptions concerning the ethos that is to be maintained by rules of politeness and decorum" (Goffman 1959: 238). This presentation of a definition of a situation he equivalates to a performance. He defines a *performance* 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: 15). Classes work in a similar way with definitions of the situation varying depending on the kind of class it is, but in its most transparent form, a lecture class, the "performer" is the professor and the audience are the students and when students are in class. If they speak, it is assumed they will do so at least semi-formally and will raise their hand to ask for permission to do so beforehand. They will be taking notes unless the professor has instructed them otherwise. They will stay awake and maintain a physical expression that implies engagement, and it is assumed that they will not interrupt the professor or take away from the experience from other students by distracting them. While not all of what is assumed will take place all of the time, the professor as performer has taken on the task of presenting themselves and the situation in such a way that these kinds of ethos practices will be maintained.

Taking this analogy further, Goffman explains that within a performance there is a front region, where the players perform, and a back region, where the performance is prepared and, in order to prevent the audience from witnessing the preparations or outsiders witnessing a performance not for them, access to these regions are controlled (Goffman 1959: 238). It is within these regions that solidarity is created through the sharing and keeping of secrets that

could otherwise contradict the definition of the situation presented. The performers and audience maintain an unspoken understanding of a degree of "opposition and accord" between them but that understanding is contradicted when performers are in the absence of the audience and express their attitudes about them as well as when they communicate in an attentively regulated, out of character, manner to the audience (Goffman 1959: 238). This degree of opposition and accord is a balance created and set by performer and audience alike, without necessarily being conscious of it. Performers, at some level, resent the need to perform for an audience, and, at a different level, enjoy the act. The audience resents the performer at some level, and enjoys the performance on another. When disruptions occur that discredit or contradict the performed definition of a situation, performers, audience members, and outsiders will avoid possible disruption, correct unavoided ones, and/or make it possible for others to do so (Goffman 1959: 239). As I previously mentioned, the stage is Zoom, so the front region is what is visible on the screen, while the back region is in the physical locations of individuals and the methods of private communication between them.

Goffman analyzes establishments as closed systems. Within his analysis he provides four variations of perspectives that intersect with his dramaturgical perspective in unique and specific ways. An establishment may be perceived 'technically', "...as an intentionally organized system of activity for the achievement of predefined objectives," and intersects with the dramaturgical perspective, most obviously, through testing of the standard of work by one set of individuals, while another set of individuals attempts to produce work that contains those attributes (Goffman 1959: 240). Establishments may also be viewed 'politically', in regards to what an individual or team can require another to do, and this intersects with the dramaturgical perspective through the capacity, method, and strategy they have and employ to do so. Goffman then goes on to state

that, "... the most objective form of naked power, i.e,physical coercion, is often neither objective nor naked but rather functions as a display for persuading the audience; it is often a means of communication, not merely of action" (Goffman 1959: 241). What he is suggesting here is that physical coercion is the most obvious, and least personal, form of power but power, for Goffman, is often claimed and exercised through performance. Because power is being displayed in order to be used, it exposes the individual's intention and therefore their lack of control or their own inabilities making the display both obvious and personal. An establishment may also be perceived 'structurally' through its status divisions and the social relations between them, intersecting with the dramaturgical perspective in terms of divisions between performers and audience, and the performers ability to maintain that separation. And lastly, establishments can be viewed 'culturally' in regards to the moral values relating to customs, taste, fashion, politeness and decorum, that help shape the activity of the individual within them and intersects with the dramaturgical view through the cultural values that establish a mandatory framework of appearances and determines feelings towards matters for participating individuals.

Bard College is an establishment itself. I, however, am mainly concerned with the interactions between individuals as students, and between students and professors on the theoretical stage of the Zoom Classroom during the Covid Pandemic. Therefore I will be analyzing the Zoom Classroom space, technically through abilities to maintain work production; politically in regards to expositions of authority, methods of maintaining a previous 'normal', and the abilities of students to manipulate perceptions of their engagement; structurally through abilities to create and maintain social connections between students and professors ability to facilitate those connections; and culturally in regards to the creation or adaptation of classroom customs, appearances, and etiquette.

Goffman claims the book as a report on how people present themselves to each other in Anglo-American 1950's society while often providing examples to back up his arguments from societies that are distinctly neither Anglo nor American. He addresses such in his conclusion that states, "In this report, use has been made of illustrations from societies other than our Anglo-American one. In doing this I did not mean to imply that the framework presented here is culture-free or applicable in the same areas of social life in non-Western societies as in our own" (Goffman 1959: 244). Bard College, while in America, and a little over 50% white, is vastly different from the 1950's Anglo-American Society. So, while I will be using his framework, I will also be providing caveats and distinctions that have been created through technological advancements and the ongoing disassembling of oppressive or restrictive systems, structures, and schools of thought.

How Zoom Structures Social Relationships [and Interpretations]

How did students use Zoom to create and fortify relationships? Students used the chat function as a tool of relationship fortification, though its effectiveness varied. Breakout Rooms served more as a space for the creation of relationships because of its lack of supervision, but the creation of relationships between students on Zoom required the serendipitous conjoining of requirements that are uncommon. Whether or not students had their cameras on correlated with their relationships with their professors, and their relationships with the class as a whole. Students had to use these functions on Zoom to replace the intimacies they required to sustain their emotional health and had varying elements of success and failure.

The Chat

My interlocutors had to move between different registers of communication. The main class discussion was happening auditorily and through visual representation, either on camera or on screen share. Then students had the ability to chat the entire class, so, often there were tangential conversations or additional class comments in that communication stream. Then, within the chat, people could individually chat one another.

Zoom users could access the chat by clicking on the message icon at the bottom of their screen and a window would appear. The window has the line of communication on top and a place where to write a message on the bottom. Just above the typing box, there is a horizontal blue bar that says "Everyone ▼". If the professor/host of the meeting maintains the standard setting, then when the user clicks on that bar, everyone's name will appear and they can choose

to chat to everyone or a specific person in the meeting. Some professors turn this function off so you are only able to chat Everyone or the host(s).

Chatting other students individually was one of the ways students were able to sustain relationships while in class. It was like passing notes or whispering but better. It was less noticeable, though not invisible, there was no limit to the amount said, aside from the temporal limitation of the class. Chatting would also, not typically create a disruption for everyone else. Everyone still had the ability to text one another or message through another app, but that would require obtaining the other person's phone number or a social media username which would require outside contact. In most circumstances, this kind of exchange would be considered inappropriate if it were attempted during class both in-person and on Zoom, depending on the level of interruption and the reason for needing it. Also, if cameras were on, it was far more difficult to be on the phone in a way that would not feel disruptive or disrespectful, so the chat function was extremely useful.

Initially, I believed the chat to be the main way students formed in-class relationships because it was a tool that was always readily available and I, personally, used it quite often, but I was quickly disproven during my research. The chat, instead, served to fortify existing relations as my interlocutors altered and carried the etiquette from other kinds of conversations over to Zoom. For example, Bailey only felt comfortable messaging someone with whom she had a pre-existing relationship. Those pre-existing relationships were often created in-person, and the conversations during Zoom class were mainly centered around occurrences within it, she recounted, "Sometimes I would message someone if I knew somebody in the class and we would talk about the class, or if something was funny we would chat, but that was pretty rare because I didn't really know a lot of people in my Zoom classes." She did not use the chat often because

she felt limited to chat only those she had previously known. The subject matter was limiting as well, due to its specificity. She would only chat her acquaintances if she had something to say pertaining to the class, but felt uncomfortable saying to the rest of the class. This was either because it may not have been suitable to the identity she was trying to portray or because of lack of opportunity. Her subject matter was limited in regards to humor, because of the designation of the space for educational purposes. Joking about the subject matter publicly could range from extremely insensitive to a deviation of class time that others may have found valuable. Also, finding humor in an event or comment during class often comes at the expense of the creator of the situation. In these cases she had to take care to whom she was messaging, and her opportunities of chatting were restricted to specific actions or events that may occur a few times during a class period if at all.

Seth described something similar in his account but he expanded upon the kinds of topics that occur about the class, or that he would find humorous. He said, "Since I was a Sophomore and Junior for Zoom class, I knew people in my classes from the first year, and we'd talk about the weird stuff that was going on. Like if somebody said something stupid, or like if somebody was late, or if somebody fell asleep on zoom, or if somebody had their mic un-muted when it should've been muted, or if a professor said something funny, or if I was like, 'oh sh*t, like we have a task coming up, what are we going to do?' Stuff like that, but it was the people that I knew pretty much exclusively, and that was easier in theater classes because it's a smaller cohort." Seth, too, would only directly chat people he had known previously about classroom occurrences he was concerned about either academically or humorously. In regards to discussions about the class, those most often occur during times of confusion, need for further

clarification, anxiety about upcoming assignments, or elaboration on a topic that has been discussed.

Seth felt that actions that broke the definition of a Zoom class as a space, time, and commitment to learning or teaching, were "weird" indicating that to him, they were not supposed to occur. Seth's determination of these actions is similar to Mary Douglas' definition of 'dirt' as "matter out of place." For Seth, moments that are out of place, do not conform to the emerging conventions of Zoom classroom orderliness and decorum are weird. If someone were to say something that Seth found to be obvious, juvenile, irrelevant, meaningless, imprudent, and/or ill-thought-out, that would go against their portrayal of the identity of someone who is actively engaged in academia as a student, then they would be out of place. Someone being late is an interesting transition, because in in-person class, being late is not weird due to the possibilities of occurrences that are out of one's control that can make them late. On Zoom, despite accessibility leniency, many students had the ability to join a meeting, either on an iPhone or on a computer. So, to Seth, being late to a Zoom class was 'weird.' If somebody fell asleep over Zoom, they subsequently eliminated their ability to manage their presentations of their identities. To do so in person would often be considered disrespectful because it indicates that whatever is happening is boring, which transitioned over Zoom. The act of sleeping over Zoom, however, was much more common than in-person because many students would take class in bed, sometimes even in the clothes they slept in the night before, and possibly without a transition of mindset from one's personal life to their academic one. When people do not mute their mics, oftentimes they expose themselves as doing something that is not being an actively engaged student, promulgating their priorities that may not align with what their priorities were assumed to be. Another analysis could be that in in-person classes, if a student were to talk at a normal volume to another student,

they would disrupt the learning processes for the other students. So, during Zoom class, when students had the ability to mute their mics so any noise happening on their side of the computer screen did not disrupt the class, they could talk at whatever volume, remain muted, and not disrupt learning for other students. In this case, it is not the act of talking that goes against the etiquette of the class, but rather, the self-centered aspect of limiting other's experience that was considered rude. Nevertheless, the common practice over Zoom was to remain muted unless they had something to say. When events happened that broke the definition of the virtual conduit as a space for active academic engagement, Seth and others would message an acquaintance they had created a relationship with in-person and comment on it.

There are a few possible intentions to Seth's comments beyond and attributing to the creation of solidarity with a peer. Goffman offers that "By mocking the audience or teasing a teammate, the performer can show not only that he is not bound by the official interaction, but also that he has this interaction so much under control that he can toy with it at will" (Goffman 1959: 188). Basically, Seth may have been presenting himself as such a confident and in-control student that this break in someone else's performance was therefore, ridiculous. I offer that Seth and his acquaintance may also, or instead, have been attempting to distance themselves from the situation by acknowledging they were outside of it through the act of joking about it. Seth would want to distance himself from the exchange he considered weird because he can assure himself, while indicating to others, that he is such a committed student, those occurrences would not happen to him at all. This interpretation may be extended to an emotionally motivated need to project mastery of the entire situation from subject matter to social dynamics in order to create the impression that he was perceiving levels of the game others were oblivious to, or were unable to grasp. The underlying message of this performed distance is that he would consider himself to

be above, or beyond, the need to fully engage with something as trivial as the class, the material, the institution, other students, and/or professors but that, at the same time, he chatted his acquaintance because they too were perceiving these hidden aspects of the situation they were in together – they wanted to be separated but not alone.

As opposed to Seth's tactic of maintaining relationships whilst in Zoom class by commenting on those not included in his conversation with his friend or acquaintance, Leo mentioned a different tactic of fortification. He said when asked to whom he chats, "Usually it's to a random acquaintance and I'm like 'I really like your dog' or 'I love your poster', 'The art on your wall is cool' but I didn't really chat my friends. Because usually, if it was like a really close friend, I would just text them so I wouldn't need to chat them." Leo only chatted those he already knew but recounted phrases to me that pointed to things that would be in the view of the camera of his acquaintance. He went on further to talk about what he said to close friends, but as far as acquaintances go, he was looking for a way to fortify his connections with them during a time in which his options were highly limited to do so otherwise. He did so through using what was visible in the frame of their camera. Because many people were home, or did Zoom class in their bedroom, what was visible could have been highly intimate or, at the very least, a part of one's personal life. However, he did make the distinction between texting and chatting his friends. If he and his friend were using Apple products, they could theoretically be texting each other on the computer while class was going on and it would look no different than if someone were to be chatting over Zoom, therefore not going against class etiquette. However, if even one of the people in the conversation did not have an iPhone, then the messaging must take place on a phone which is much more difficult to hide from the camera's frame of reference. If one of the participants did not have iMessage on their computer then, they too, would need to use the phone

in order to text. So, why would Leo take the risk of breaking class etiquette by texting when he could just as easily chat his friends that are in the class if the professor has left those capabilities on? Because of a rumor.

When Bard first went on Zoom, people were using the private chat quite often, but within a few weeks a rumor spread around the student body like wildfire. We had all heard that if a professor was tech savvy enough, they could download the entire chat after the meeting, including all of the private messages exchanged between students. According to Leo, private messaging with close friends on Zoom was more of a risk due to the general subject of their discussions. He said, "I also know that the professors can access it if they want to. Professors who are more tech savvy can figure out what their students think of them because you can be like 'ah professor whatever whatever, is like whatever.' I haven't been too scandalous on private chats… That's like a rumor, that professors can download the chat, and people believe it." The rumor that held Leo back from using the chat to sustain his intimate relationships is entirely false, but the belief in the possibility of professors seeing what was discussed between friends created enough fear that many people responded by eliminating that aspect of their classroom social life completely. Others, learned the validity of the rumor and either attempted to continue the way in which they used the chat previously or continued their methods going around the chat. However, those who learned the truth seemed to be less common.

The rumor, if true, was considered a threat to the definition of the situation the students wanted to carry out. Consequences for students whose professor read their private messages to another student would have been dependent on what was actually said. Nonetheless, no matter what was said, participants may still feel uneasy due to the exposition of informal language spoken between friends - but this also depends on the understanding of this informal language by

the professor. The rumored possibility of exposure threatened the definition and performance of the Zoom classroom as an educational setting. It also threatened to undermine student's commitment and/or the performance of that commitment to the pedagogical undertaking. A break in the defintion of the situation can be problematic for the people within it. According to Goffman this break occurs when "... the participants find themselves lodged in an interaction for which the situation has been wrongly defined and is now no longer defined. At such moments the individual whose presentation has been discredited may feel ashamed while the others present may feel hostile, and all the participants may come to feel ill at ease, nonplussed, out of countenance, embarrassed, experiencing the kind of anomy that is generated when the minute social system of face-to-face interaction breaks down" (Goffman 1959: 12). Students became more cautious over chat because of the theoretical ease of the possibility for interactions that were meant to be private, becoming exposed. This would break the definition of the space as one for academic pursuits and the identity they were attempting to present.

The reactions to a break like this can be seen in a blunder of my own. One day, in a small class I was taking during the height of the pandemic, I was staring at the screen in a daze. I had two friends in the class whom I had met and known in person, and while our classmates were talking, we were privately chatting. My friends and I were all looking as though we were committed to and engaged in the discussion occuring. The reasons we were doing so varied but all relate to or center around the idea that being or performing that kind of student betters the evaluations of our labor. Out of nowhere, another student, Abel, pulled out a flute and began to play while someone else was talking. His mic remained muted so this was not an auditory distraction, it was slightly visually distracting, but it got to me in a way that miniscule distractions never really did.

I believe it upset me so profoundly, because while he was engaged in identity-management, his self-presentation disrupted the working consciousness. A 'working consciousness' is defined by Goffman as "... single over-all definition of the situation which involves not so much a real agreement as to what exists but rather a real agreement as to whose claims concerning what issues will be temporarily honored. Real agreement will also exist concerning the desirability of avoiding an open conflict of definitions of the situation" (Goffman 1959: 9). To me, Abel was not respecting the academic issues the working consciousness agreed to honor, and openly contradicted the definition of the class. Abel's decision to play the flute instead of committing to this definition felt unfair to me because I was working to maintain that definition despite not necessarily wanting to at that moment. Another reason it upset me was because in the lens of DeCerteau, as long as students remained committed to that definition, we had the opportunity to utilize the limitations of surveillance to maneuver in a way previously impossible during class. Abel allowed himself to be surveilled, possibly leading to further constraints.

Because I was so outraged, I had an immediate overreaction to Abel's defiance. I went to message my two friends, "What the f*ck is Abel doing?" As I previously said, participants can only privately message one person at a time, so after chatting my first friend, I went to chat the second. Abel's name was on my mind and I accidentally sent Abel that exact message. Realizing my horrendous error immediately after I pressed the "enter" button, I sloppily feigned ignorance by following up with, "Oh … it's a flute. LOL sorry! I couldn't tell." Despite my clumsy attempt at a recovery, Abel was kind enough to somewhat go along with my act and replied with "Yeah. It's a flute." In my overreaction, I too, had mismanaged my identity presentation as a kind, non-judgmental person to my peers and exposed my belief that my actions during class were

more respectable than Abel's. Since then, I was much more cautious when using the chat because I realized that while it was an avenue to fortify my relationships, mistakes that were too easy to make could threaten the possibility of future relationships or expose a part of my identity performances to the wrong audience.

After the event, I felt embarrassed, vulnerable, mean, and stupid and/or incompetant. I felt embarrassed and mean because I felt guilty for possibly hurting Abel's feelings for something that was not malicious nor hurt anyone including myself. I felt vulnerable because I had exposed the fact that I, too, was not paying total attention to the class discussion and Abel, then, had an opportunity to describe me as a hypocrite. And, I felt stupid and/or incompetant because of my inability to be competent linguistically on a technoscape that is supposed to be extremely familiar to me as I grew up with the technologies on which people use to communicate in a manner similar to that on Zoom.

This kind of linguistic competence is vital when it comes to the chat. Professor Lucy even had to discuss this with her classes after hearing of an experience similar to my own. She recounted, "You know, it's risky, and I do say this to classes because, I haven't had this happen, but we had an incident in the program. A student accidentally messaged everyone something that was really inappropriate. It was something about another student in the class, that just was something they obviously would not have sent to the group. It really was a big problem, the class had to kind of stop and like deal with it, and it was hard. So, you know, I do say to them 'Be really careful,' because it's complicated on Zoom. If someone private messages you, but then someone messages the whole group, and you'll write back and you'll think it's going to the person, but actually it's switched to everyone. So like, you have to be really careful. I do really say that to them." I, nor my fellow student interlocutors, recall Zoom being programmed to

change to whom one is sending a message when another student chats 'Everyone.' Either Professor Lucy is mistaken, or, she is attempting to cover up for the lack of linguistic competence displayed by the student. Another explanation may be that the student blamed the Zoom program in an effort to repair the damage done to their identity presentation.

Boellstorff analyzes this kind of linguistic competence in his writing on Second Life. In the game, users have two methods of communicating, Instant Messages (IMs) and Chats. The chat works in a similar way as chatting 'everyone' over Zoom; your message appears to everyone in a virtual space. In Second Life, chats disappear from the bubble above the avatar's head but can be accessed while logged on in the 'history' section. Whereas, on Zoom, chats remain in the thread while in the meeting. A major difference is that on Second Life, when a user is typing for a chat, their avatar is mimicking the act of typing with the sound of a keyboard as they type, indicating to the group that the user is preparing a message. Zoom on the other hand has no kind of indication other than possible visual markers of typing through the lens of the camera, though users can be typing for a multitude of reasons unrelated to communication to the group. IMs work similarly to chatting individual people in the sense that there is no indication of preparation, they are private between those in conversation and users can message anyone in the virtual world. Another difference to Zoom is that Second Life users could create group chats which were not possible over Zoom. Boellstorff says that the use of the Second Life chat is a requirement for total virtual embodiment but "... the fact that ims were directed to specific persons, rather than specific locations as in the case of chat, could give IMs a greater sense of intimacy" (Boellstorff 2015: 153). Boellstorff attributes the level of intimacy shared over an IM to the specificity of the recipient. But, because chats and IMs can and often do occur at the same time, users had to develop a sense of linguistic competency in order to parse the several different

topics, some of which may be sensitive and personal, with several different individuals and groups both of which may be intertwined that may or may not be in the same virtual space.

Users of Zoom had to develop a similar kind of competence in order to parse the several different topics, some of which may be sensitive and personal. This was done among individuals with which they had varying degrees of intimacy and the larger group of 'everyone,' in which a formal persona was expected to be maintained. However, the most complicating factor was that all chats appear in a continuous thread as opposed to separate boxes of their own conversation, and those you can chat appear on a dropdown list in which all the names were written in the same and peculiarly tiny font along with 'everyone,' and the only unique participant name being the host with the "(host)" beside their name. So, not only did students have to have a level of linguistic competence to parse through these different conversations, they also had to take care to be intentional about to whom they wish to chat and clicking on the correct name. Therefore, the chat on Zoom was risky.

Mara felt that risk as well. To Mara, the possibility of a gaffe like the one I had experienced, combined with the rumor that professors can download the chat after the meeting, created enough stress that using the chat made her identity management more precarious and therefore too risky for the kinds of rewards it offered especially when she had a work-around. She said she used the chat, "Literally hardly ever? Unless we're told to put our answers or like questions in a chat specifically. At first, when we first got into the pandemic or whatever, I was using it to talk to people that I was like friends with in the class, but then it scared me because - I know that they can't see what you're typing in the private chat, but also like, what if I accidentally send it to the wrong person or to the whole class? - So that freaked me out. So I just text instead." Mara did use the chat in the beginning of the pandemic, but the threat that

professors could see the chat freaked her out so much that she basically stopped using it altogether. She then found out the rumor was false, but, by the time she did, people had been chatting throughout that period, resulting in occasional mistakes that she had heard about, freaking her out so much that she did not return to the chat. Goffman would argue that she was so careful because she vehemently wished to maintain the appearance of being a focused, professional, and kind student. While I do not doubt she would love that description of her identity, I would add that she was also invested in *sincerely* being focused, professional, and kind. The management of this identity was made complicated by the need to replace the ways in which she maintained intimacies for the betterment of her emotional health before the pandemic with the ways provided by Zoom. Because the space was not created for the kinds of social behaviors students use, her management was forced off of the platform and into a space, in which it was much less likely that her actions would be exposed.

To use Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor, Mara is presenting an identity to an audience, the class, and felt as though her backstage interactions were so in danger of being exposed to any member of this audience that she took the interaction out of the theater altogether. According to Goffman, performers can create intimacy through their separation from the audience and often did so by derogating that audience. If this derogation were to be exposed, not only does this then break the original definition of the situation, but may offend those derogated. When we apply Goffman to my ethnographic material, it is important to understand that who is a part of that team is relative and unique for the individual and may or may not include professors. Goffman uses the term "team" to make distinctions between performers and audience but when applying this metaphor to interactions, those statuses of 'performer' and 'audience' often switch throughout the interaction. Nevertheless, those who are a part of an individuals' team typically

move with them, between performer and audience, when an interaction occurs outside of one within the team. The act of derogation then, clarifies a distinction between team and audience, in order to rebel against the obligation of having to put on a show, to maintain team solidarity, to regain self-respect that may be lost in accommodating an audience, comment on behavior so as to show they are not responsible for it, or, as I mentioned about Seth, may be to display a level of being in-control (Goffman 1959: 17, 174, 188, & 189). This theme of backstage derogation through chat permeated throughout my interviews.

While many participated in disparaging those they did not consider a part of their team, this derogation was not necessarily contradictory to the identity they were trying to manage as an engaged student. In Bailey's case even, it helped her maintain that engagement by allowing her to express her frustration, consequently fortifying her relationship with her acquaintance. She recounted, "I was taking this reproductive health and human rights class and there was this kid Brad in it, and he was the only white man in the class, and he would just mansplain for the entire class. And so sometimes I would message this girl and be like, 'Can Brad just shut the f*ck up?'" In this experience, Bailey and "this girl" established solidarity through the shared experience of having to suffer through the musings of an entitled garrulous man that caused feelings of annoyance. Bailey and this girl had done this on multiple occasions and in order to find a release for their emotional exasperation after feeling stifled in a class that in large part was about their own body processes. Bailey and this girl created a level of intimacy through their one-on-one chats that probably relieved some of those feelings, or at the very least, made them not feel isolated in their experience. Through that creation of intimacy they were better able to move on from the small annoyance and focus on what was actually important in their lives.

Bailey was not the only one of my interlocutors that derogated others for both the purpose of fortifying relations and expressing frustration. Petunia and her acquaintances did something similar, but instead, to release pressure through expression. She said, "I remember I had this crazy math teacher and I would like talk sh*t with the students about her, just because it was so insane, but that was it that was like the only time … but we could also text is the other thing which is like a little safer in a way because who knows who can see the chats or whatever. Dude, it stressed me out when it was like, 'maybe they see,' I was talking so much sh*t about my professors, oh my god." Petunia had a math professor who required a lot from their students, so in order to free herself from some of that pressure, she and her acquaintances would express the excessive nature of the professor. She then said that she would derogate many of her professors, and looking at her background as a Physics major, and from watching her devote herself to academia for years, it would make sense that she needed to find a release from the pressure and stress of maintaining that commitment to fully embodying a passionate student.

But the private chat feature did not only function as a space for creating and sustaining solidarity; it also functioned as a space to experience a kind of freedom. This freedom stems from the degradation of the supervision imposed on students. When Bard classes mainly existed online, and the chat was being used in place of social interactions, some of my interlocutors used it for nothing else but that replacement. Before Leo moved from chat to text, he said that, "Milly and I would chat usually during our classes but sometimes it's like, 'so and so is looking fucking stupid today and what she said was so stupid,' like it's usually talking absolute sh*t. The chat function isn't used for anything but sh*t unless your professors like 'put in the chat blah blah blah' like no, obviously we're not using the chat for anything academic. We're slinging that tea." The phrase "slinging that tea" is a play on the phrase "spilling the tea" which was created and

popularized within African American Vernacular English (AAVE), then was appropriated into Internet Slang. The practice of this kind of derogation especially online is predicated on many uses of Social Media, like, for example, the rants posted to Reddit about issues within users real world lives, the story-time videos on YouTube and TikTok, or the exposition of creators by other creators for committing acts the audience may find immoral on platforms like YouTube. Leo declared that the chat was exclusively used for gossip not pertaining to academia, which I found to be an interesting dedication. Along with his previous statement that he would use the chat to message acquaintances about what was visible in their frame in an effort to bond, Leo seems to have a similar method of fortification with those he feels closer to. He would use the actions, words, or appearances of others to separate himself from whatever it was that he deemed worthy of derogation, as an implication of his intelligence and ability to recognize etiquette, and what is and is not in fashion. What was liberating about this kind of communication for Leo was that he was able to freely discuss his opinions about others without the fear of repercussions, and he was able to liberate himself from the feeling of having to maintain his identity-performance by performing a different identity to his friends.

While many used the chat as a way to experience a kind of freedom within an institution that deemed them subordinate in some way, professors as the representations of authority within the classroom space had control over to whom students may chat. As I mentioned previously, professors had the ability to restrict messaging to being only able to chat 'Everyone' and the host (the professor most often) of the meeting. When the ability to chat was taken away, students felt cheated out of a kind of experience. One of my interviewees, Daisy, recounted, "Chat was turned off for one of my classes, like chatting each other, you could only chat the whole class and I thought that was such f*cking bullsh*t. I thought that was terrible because part of … like, I like

direct messaging people because that's the only form of like making eye-contact with someone, or like connecting with someone in the class is, you know, messaging someone 'lol' or something. The only opportunity to make a class friend is in the private chat. So there was one class that had it off and I was like f*ck you, as if we can't text each other?"

Daisy felt like an essential part of being in class was informally connecting with others. These connections might not seem profound, but when Daisy's ability to develop them was taken away, her reaction was profane annoyance. She had the ability to send the occasional "lol" to the entire class but did not mention that as an option for a few different reasons. For Daisy, solidarity is often created through humor, with the occasional "lol", but for her to share that with the entire class would draw a level of attention to her that she might not have been comfortable with, or someone might ask her to explain, or people might not have understood her joke. There is a much higher level of risk when chatting to 'Everyone' than in direct messaging someone they know. Not only that but, a joke that one student or a professor makes to the entire class can also establish or solidify rapport. As Daisy said, the occasional eye contact at the right moments can be a foundation for class friendship. The chat function, though not vital to Daisy's ability to learn, was vital for creating an intimate experience between students.

Some professors recognized the vitality of that kind of social behavior within a serious environment so they actively left the chat on. They may have also left the chat on in recognition of the ability for these kinds of interactions to release tensions or pressures, possibly in a show of solidarity with them as well. There was a lot to be stressed about at the time and many professors recognized the need for students to be less engaged than expected otherwise. Professor Lucy recounted, for example, that she "... certainly always left the chat setting on. And I guess my thought about it was like, it's not like if you want to be texting each other, you don't have many

ways to do so. Even if I wanted to police it, I couldn't really, but I also think it can be useful. I use that function all the time. If I'm in a faculty meeting, I am definitely gossiping with my colleagues about what's going on. I think it's one of the things that makes them wonderful. Actually, it's like what you always want to do in a room where you can whisper without annoying anyone else hearing… I'll sometimes do it for students. Occasionally, like if someone's being really quiet, I'll sometimes message and be like, "you okay?" You know, that kind of thing. So I actually think that's a real advantage of Zoom. I feel like classes have done their own thing with the chat. Like with the collective 'everybody' chat. Some classes, they just don't use it, and then other classes there'll be a side conversation going on. So I never say you have to use it or you can't use it. I just kind of see what the class wants to do." Not only did Professor Lucy actively not use her ability to restrict chatting on the program itself, she went as far as to come to a collective agreement as to what the chat would be with her students. She was trying to be on their team because she felt that it was important. When I met with her, she seemed like a professor who would usually try to be on the students team no matter the external circumstances, but I cannot doubt that she did not recognize that this ability to chat was much of what students had by way of a social life. She also mentioned that that kind of interaction with our peers would happen outside of the program, and therefore relatively outside of her control, even if she were to restrict chatting. This kind of chatting can actually help students to remain engaged in the class. She then went on to describe a few different ways the chat was used to assist in the class discussion in the 'everybody' stream.

Oftentimes the kind of interaction happening on the 'everybody stream' was dependent on the kind of class occurring. In discussion based classes, it often served as a tangential conversation for those who wished to expand upon certain topics without taking up more of the

class time to discuss others. Others like Seth, for example, described that he would mainly use the chat, "... if there were technical difficulties, like if my audio is choppy, I would use the chat to say my point. Or if my professor was really on a roll and I didn't want to interrupt by raising my hand or asking a verbal question, I would type it and they would get to it later." Seth would use the chat as a kind of archive of things he wanted to say, but was otherwise unable to, either because of technical difficulties or in fear of breaking etiquette or showing disrespect. Petunia, on the other hand, expressed that the use of the 'everybody' chat stream was less common in Physics though sometimes was dictated by the professor. About using the stream in her classes, she said, "Never, I never really did, unless the teacher was like, 'will you use the chat function to whatever.' I feel like kids that did use it, they know that the professor doesn't want them to talk but they want to talk, so they'll type it. But in Physics, you really have to speak up if you have a question. That's why they're like, 'keep your audio on and like talk, we want the conversation to be happening,' so I never really needed it." To Petunia, the everybody chat stream served as a stage for those who over-performed their intellect to the class and added that the chat was too peripheral for the kinds of immediate questions that require answers before expanding on topics in classes such as physics.

Professor Peter, a professor in the math department mentioned something similar. He also added that because of the way in which he taught class, which was almost always sharing his screen and using his iPad that is attached to the computer as a kind of whiteboard, he noticed that the chat was difficult and probably derailed conversations when he did notice a chat notification. He explained, "If I'm in the middle of a class, I can't sit there, notice the chat thing - that icon with the little number by it, and then click on it, read the chat thing while I'm talking. I just can't do that. So that was, to me, the one Zoom etiquette was, 'Be rude.' This is exactly what we were

taught not to do, but just blurt out your questions and with small class size classes, you know, Bard sized classes, that generally worked for the people who were comfortable doing that. For the people who are too shy to do that, or just felt weird, I didn't have a solution." For Professor Peter, the chat was a distraction from his lessons even if a student were to say something pertaining to the topic of the course because it required active awareness of the Zoom space which was often not possible while he was concentrating on his second device. Due to his attention being focused on the iPad, students would probably have had to verbally notify the professor if there was something in the chat therefore, somewhat, assisting him in imparting knowledge to their peers. This may be a marker for some students of technological ineptitude and can humanize him which can be helpful or harmful to professors' authority.

In Goffman's terms, professors were often the main performers on the stage of the Zoom classroom. They often switched between performer and audience due to the nature of the ways in which they conduct their classes. However, because students were often more technologically savvy than professors, students sometimes had to assist the professor in their performance. A way to do so in private, in order to safeguard the professors feelings and their authoritative power was through the private chat. Goffman outlined two ways to save definitions of situations with in-person, face-to face interactions in mind. But we can also observe similar practices in virtual conduits like Zoom classrooms. He explains, "We find that preventive practices are constantly employed to avoid these embarrassments and that corrective practices are constantly employed to compensate for discrediting occurrences that have not been successfully avoided. When the individual employs these strategies and tactics to protect his own projections, we may refer to them as 'defensive practices'; when a participant employs them to save the definition of the situation projected by another, we speak of 'protective practices' or 'tact.' Together,

defensive and protective practices comprise the techniques employed to safeguard the impression fostered by an individual during his presence before others" (Goffman 1959: 13). So, within the realm of preventative practices to save face, there are two methods of doing so, defensive and protective. Defensive practices are employed by the individual who broke the definition of the situation in an effort to repair what was lost. Protective practices are employed to assist others in the reparation of a situation. When applying DeCerteau to this definition, whether or not those practices are tactical or strategic are dependent upon whether or not it was the professor who originally broke the situation's definition.

Professor Lucy mismanaged her identity within her performance to the class and had a student employ a protective practice through the chat, leading to her defensive practice of recovery. She recounted an experience she had in which a student helped her manage her identity as someone who knows and respects their students. She said, "I had someone correct me on someone's pronoun with a direct message, which was super, super helpful. It was a way for them to do that without it being awkward for anyone. Then I could just say, 'Oh, I just got a private message, I'm so sorry.' And it was fine." In order to create a space in which students feel comfortable enough to be vulnerable while learning, gender identity can be extremely personal and a sensitive topic for many students, so using the correct pronouns is vital to the creation of that space. Professor Lucy is aware of this, so was grateful to that student who corrected her in private, so that she could apologize and use the correct pronouns in the future, acknowledging a level of respect for her students. The student opened up an opportunity for Professor Lucy to choose whether or not she wanted to correct herself. If she had ignored the message, the student could then assume that she was not invested in respecting her students' feelings. This would

make any investment in gaining her respect as an intellectual less desirable and more difficult, possibly resulting in a rebellion against the professor and her expectations.

Protective and defensive practices however were not necessarily limited to the performances by authority figures such as professors. The chat was often used to assist in the management of people's performances. Leo shared an experience in which he wished he had used the chat to save someone from accidentally exposing their body during a Zoom class, he said, "So there are definitely like a couple situations in which like someone's surroundings were like weird or like, most blatantly, like someone's roommate is like undressing in the back and you have to be like, 'okay, like, do I privately chat this person? Do I out myself and go like, look, dude, you should close your computer or move somewhere else.' Because that's pretty urgent, but like what do you do? That has happened. I saw the full backside of somebody's roommate, and it was really embarrassing for everybody involved. No one said anything but they looked and they saw the person in the back and they were like, 'oh sh*t.' Um, but yeah, it was really, really awkward and awful. Bare a*s. Yeah, it was a lot." The reason Leo did not chat this person in a protective practice is not because he did not wish to protect this innocent from accidental indecent exposure, but because it may have outed him for looking at the nudity. This is interesting because nobody involved is actively looking to be naked or see them when they are but still, Leo felt uncomfortable revealing that he had seen the incident. There is an added layer of sensitivity to this scenario but we can still see that protective practices could be employed not only to save a performance by a participant, but also to protect those who are not a part of that Zoom class.

Breakout Rooms

While the chat was used to fortify pre-existing relationships, the only encounters with creating intimacy on Zoom from my interlocutors occurred in breakout rooms. While students may have used these rooms to create intimacy, these creations were rare due to the requirements being longer and more difficult to naturally produce than in in-person interactions. Breakout rooms are a tool that many professors used for small group work during Zoom instruction. The professor/host can split the class/participants up into smaller groups. The number of groups or people within a group is at the discretion of the professor. When the professor does this, a window will appear on the screen of the student that says what breakout room they're in - they're labeled numerically and then the student presses "okay" and the application will then only show the participants of your group specifically. The professor/host has the ability to move from room to room, but cannot hear or see what is happening in rooms they are not in. Levels of comfort within these rooms varied amongst my interlocutors however a consensus emerged of the space being the most opportune for revealing aspects of identity and performance that they felt they could not otherwise.

When students were in Zoom class, the pressures of academic achievement did not disappear and often needed to be expressed through social interaction that was made near-impossible by the pandemic. The way to release this pressure is through the derogation of those who contribute to it, and an exposition of the aspects of their performance that are sincere, and those that are less so. Seth described his experience revealing a necessity of trust within the room due to the vulnerability in exposing the cracks of one's performance as a dedicated student. He communicated, "When we all went to a breakout room, it was like, everybody took a

collective deep breath, removed from class we took a few seconds to just talk and gather ourselves and then would do the assignments. Or it was where people admitted, like, 'I didn't do the work.' I guess there is a certain amount of trust in that. You obviously don't want them to rat on you that you didn't do the work, which could be a really sh*tty thing to do to another adult, you know?" When in a breakout room, Seth felt relieved because his management of his identity shifted from a performance to many people, to a performance to a select few, in which people expose their own performances to the rest of the class, in an effort to create a more relaxed atmosphere. They would use the time to do what was supposed to be done while they were in the room, but also had an opportunity to express themselves, their excitements and their struggles, when they had limited opportunities to do so otherwise. This kind of expression required a level of trust, in that the sincerity of these performances would not be revealed to the audience which includes the professor who has real power over the success of students. This trust was not given blindly and therefore the space did not always function in assistance to intimacy.

Sometimes breakout rooms were extremely useful in relation creation and fortification and sometimes not. It was entirely dependent on who was in the room and levels of trust between them based on previous experience, markers of cultural belongings such as music or fashion, and engagement within the room. Daisy expressed the ambivalence of the success in intimacy creation or fortification within the room when she mentioned, "Sometimes they're fun because you're like 'Oh that's a small group, I'm socializing' and sometimes it's just like terribly awkward and everyone just sits there with their camera off and we're just like anti-social. But sometimes you get a great one and you have a great conversation but like yeah sometimes it's like uhhh." Most of the time in a breakout room is typically spent doing the assigned activity given by the professor but there is often extra time left over that can be spent socializing or it is

spent how Daisy described in which cameras are off and mics are muted creating a silence which can sometimes be uncomfortable.

Socializing within a breakout room was important for a lot of people with the near-elimination of the ability to socialize in person. There is something meaningful and important in the sharing of how one perceives their own identity and aspects of themselves that they could or would not otherwise share. When this is taken away, people can feel isolated, lonely, and misunderstood which can contribute to ,or create, sadness. Leo felt the importance of this kind of sharing, and said so, along with an analysis of the different identities people manage depending on their audience. He monologued, "There's not any personal, small talk that happens unless you're in a breakout room, which is why I said earlier that sometimes you can show a little bit more of yourself when you're in them. That's a situation where you can either talk sh*t about the teacher, talk sh*t about someone else, or be like, 'ah, my weekends was sh*tty because my other professor was busting my a*s' or whatever. You're not sharing anything personal about yourself when you're in front of the whole class, but if you're in a breakout room, then you have like a handful of like three other people usually or something, and that's a small enough group where you can all be like, 'oh, this is what I did this weekend.' Or, 'what did you wear for Halloween? What was your costume?' Or, whatever. You can quickly go through all that and get that personal picture of somebody versus anything that's happening in front of the whole class, is catered to the whole class. Primarily it's more catered to the professor, because they're the person you're obviously going to hide the most sh*t from. But also if your crush is in the class, you're going to have a specific way of approaching the class, if your ex is in the class, you're going to look a certain way or act a certain way or whatever, you know, it just changes things based on like who's in the class and who's teaching the class. Regardless you have to be a certain person

for every single person in front of you, professors are included while in the breakout rooms, you only have to be who you're willing to be in front of three people, you know?" For Leo, breakout rooms provided an opportunity to express his identity and the ongoings of his personal life in a manner that is reasonable to a small group of strangers or acquaintances. This was important to do regularly, not only for the betterment of emotional health through intimacy utilization, but for peace of mind in order to better focus on matters that need more attention than those in one's personal life. This expression was also intrinsic to the creation of intimacy.

Breakout rooms allowed for a kind of identity expression that was vital to the fortification of pre-existing relationships, but also was the only time students were able to actually create these relationships. The space, through its privacy and minimal participants, opened up an opportunity for a kind of more personal identity presentation. However, even despite the freedom from supervision, and because this was a space within an institution, it was still regulated. Students within that space were expected to complete an activity assigned by the professor and the time in which students spent in the room was mostly up to the professors. They were the ones that sent students into rooms and brought them back into the main space, after all. Students would have to click 'accept' on the pop up that asks for permission in order to enter into a room, but were called back into the main room through a similar popup, with a timer attached, giving the option to immediately go back or to wait until the timer runs out and be sent back. This timer was not something that students were used to because even when classes were broken up into groups in-person and there was a time limit, conversations or at the very least, sentences, could be completed before rejoining. On Zoom, however, an individual might be in the middle of a sentence and be sent back. The act of watching time go by can also add an extra level of stress especially if someone is attempting to satiate their social needs through this kind of interaction.

Bailey talked about this phenomenon a bit when asked about breakout rooms, saying, "I feel like breakout rooms were actually the only way I could make connections with people when I was in classes that were on Zoom. There were tons of people that I never had a breakout room with and I then literally never had a conversation with them. So, it was sort of like the only way to have any kind of personal interaction with anybody was in a breakout room. It was kind of awkward because it would be like, 'the breakout room is closing in like one minute,' or ten seconds or something like that and so it was weird that the interactions were kind of like dictated by the professor in a more serious way. If you're talking with somebody in class you can finish what you're saying before you have to go back, like you can make that choice. But there was no choice [on Zoom], so you didn't get to choose who you were in a group with and you didn't get to choose when it ended. But I feel like it definitely helped in as much as it was the only way really to make any kind of connection with anybody. I do feel like being on the computer and having these short interactions with people that you couldn't choose when they happened either was weird. Like you really had no agency in who you chose to talk to or be friends with in your class but that almost made it easier to talk to people because you like there was no weird Bard social group norm thing going on, if that makes sense. It was sort of just like you were instantly put on the same level as somebody else. In [in-person] class, your professor would be like okay break up into groups and you would choose the people you know or you are picked last but [the Zoom version] kind of got rid of some of that social pressure. Also, there was not that uncomfortable like, ' Okay, I'm going to go now,' or, 'Okay I'm going to stop talking now,' like you were sort of forced to talk and then forced to separate." Bailey also brought up a really important aspect to breakout rooms where the students did not get to choose their breakout room companions This meant that professors could actually, if they wished, create relationships that

they wanted to see, giving them a different kind of authority over the personal lives of their students.

With this alteration of power, some professors took care to create groups that were new each time while others put them in the same groups each time or randomized their groups. Most of the time, however, breakout rooms were semi-random. When students were allowed to be a part of the same group or with one or more of the same person over multiple occasions, they could better create these interpersonal relationships and even take them past the acquaintance level. Mara recounted her experience within them, and how they affected her social life, she said, "They're always super awkward, I always like dreaded them. And then, one day there's this girl in the break out room and we just started talking because the assignment was really boring. We really connected and now we still talk and I have a really big crush on her. It formed when I was in the same breakout room as this one guy, like every time, and that kind of helped us form a little bit of a friendship. It wasn't very long lasting but we still follow each other on Instagram, I guess, but we don't talk or even respond to each other's stories anymore. Basically he was in that breakout room and then she was in that one as well, that time so we all were talking." Mara formed a friendship with that guy which allowed her to feel more comfortable and open within the breakout room space and for her to become friends with, and develop a crush on, a girl in that class. The qualifier she added about the degree of friendship she maintained with that one guy is interesting, and deserves an in-depth analysis in an ethnography on Instagram intimacies, but to provide a quick summary: sometimes people on instagram can post to their 'story' which will only stay posted for 24 hours unless saved onto their profile; these stories appear at the top of a user's home-page and are often clicked through; users have the opportunity to respond to them either through a quick response that will send an emoji to the person who posted, or type out a

response of their own; these responses are not necessarily exclusive to acquaintances or people with whom they share a deeper bond, but often are mainly responded to by them. So, Mara's friendship with this guy deteriorated to acknowledging each other's existence through the passive act of following one another but are no longer acquaintances. Nevertheless, during the time her friendship with him thrived, she was able to be more comfortable with the girl with whom she wants to have a romantic relationship with.

Cameras and Commitment

Relationships that can improve emotional health are not exclusively peer to peer. Of course, there is some rebellion among the students against aspects of being a part of an institution in which they are subordinate, but most of the student population respected their professors highly. This is because most of the professors at Bard are passionate about their field of study, and it is palpable in class. When students are passionate about that same subject there is a relationship that can be created that can be highly meaningful. Because students are in the subordinate position however, they had to express their appreciation and attempt to garner respect through class engagement among other ways. This engagement required a commitment to learning during a time of anxiety, which was difficult for a lot of people. All of this is to say that, steady engagement in a course can be indicative of respect for the professor in an attempt to maintain emotional health, but unsteady engagement does not necessarily indicate a lack of respect for the professor.

Students found it helpful for them to maintain that engagement by keeping their cameras on. This was helpful because there is increased accountability, the student had to actively

maintain the performance of engagement which can often lead to sincere engagement ("fake it 'till you make it"), and it forced them to create a physical simulation closest to a classroom possible and/or comfortable for that student. Bailey explained that she was one of those students who used the camera on feature as a tool, she said, "I would always pretty much have my camera on because I wanted to show my professor that I was like there and like present. I also felt way more accountable when I had my camera on, so I would try to have it on most of the time but I would turn it off if I had to talk to somebody really quick. I would also turn it off if I had to go to the bathroom really quickly, I would turn it off, bring it with me and listen to class. There were times when I did work for my studio classes and listened to my class with my camera off, so if I had to do something else, I would have my camera off. " The most pertinent reason, to Bailey, to have her camera on was as a performance for her professors. She then described that the camera being on increased her feelings of accountability to the class, but then indicated situations in which she turned her camera off. She turned her camera off when she was doing things that did not necessarily align with the image of a dedicated student in class. That does not mean that she was not retaining the information being relayed during class but she was not engaging exclusively with the class.

Professors quickly picked up on this relationship between students' cameras being on and their active participation in the class, but the cameras being off created a lot of other issues for them as well. Professors often have to pick up on nonverbal communication occurring in their class in order to maintain attention and control as well as to gauge whether or not their students are understanding them. Professor Lucy heavily utilized this strategy of reading her students' faces in order to gauge interest and understanding, she explained, "I started really describing to students why it was important to me that they have their cameras on, which mostly has to do

with the fact that I get a lot of information from the class. If I'm explaining something complicated and someone's face is like 'huh?' Like 'what?' I can see that and so, I would slow down. If everyone's nodding and smiling, then I speed up. It's very hard to teach without that kind of feedback. I found that once I explained that to my classes, and then also said, when you need to turn your camera off, it's fine. That combination really helped the problem. I would typically have a couple of people with their cameras off, but they would have messaged me on the zoom at the beginning to say, 'I'm not feeling well today.' I once had a student message me and say, 'I just can't, like my hair is so bad today. I cannot, I just can't.' And I was like, 'you know what? That's fine. Thank you for telling me, I hope it's better tomorrow.' Because if it's one or two, it's fine, but what I found was that once people start then other people start, and then it's just a snowball effect and then everyone has their cameras off. So I thought it was really important to just make clear that I would make an exception but the default for the community of the classroom had to be that we have them on." Many professors required cameras on because gauging reactions assisted in their goal of imparting knowledge and helping their students grow. Professor Lucy's allowance for exceptions to the general rule of cameras being on may have assisted her relationship with her students as well as make the space welcoming even if they are not fully prepared. This was a relief for many students because their focus was scattered due to the many stressful outside factors.

Some students found that trying to replicate the experience of in-person class under circumstances which made that impossible, caused them to resent the experience and become less engaged. One of the ways in which students found to relieve that resentment, revolved around being able to do other things while in class that are not typically classified under active participation and engagement. Many students found that doing things with your hands like crafts

such as knitting could actually improve their desire to engage. Blaze expressed that she was one

of those students and resented the idea that having one's camera off indicates a lack of

commitment, she said, "I feel like it's possible for people to listen and participate without having

their camera on. That is a nice option to have, especially when you're in your own space. It

would be nice to have the expectation that if people had their cameras off, they were still present

and listening. That's a hard thing to enforce if you can't see, but I think a lot of people would just

turn their cameras off and sort of leave their computers and go about their day. I also found that

helpful sometimes because sometimes doing things like knitting or drawing or other things that

can help me focus but are less possible to do in in-person classes. That was a plus to being on

Zoom; I could do busy work things without it being distracting to classmates and stuff, but I also

think that's not necessarily the norm when people have their cameras off." Blaze was a

committed student who often found it helpful to do things with her hands while in class and

preferred the privacy of doing so with her camera off so as not to distract her classmates. She

was trying to sincerely be that kind of student, but that sincerity required her to not perform

being that student to the others. It was frustrating for her when that sincerity was doubted

because she felt like her identity was questioned due to an assumption from a lack of knowledge

of her actual activities. This assumption though, was not altogether unfounded.

Many students would turn their cameras off because they could not or would not engage

with the class but wanted to continue their performance as a committed student through the act of

attendance. Their lack of engagement, however, does not necessarily mean that they were not

listening or did not retain the information, but it does mean that the class was not their main and

sole focus. Professor Lucy recounted a time when a student's decision to attend the class but not

engage backfired. She described, "There was a time when a student told me they had to have

their camera off for some reason. They were like, 'I'm totally here. I'm paying attention. I'm just gonna have the camera off.' And then I put them in breakout rooms to do an activity, and the student didn't go into the breakout rooms. It was very clear that they were not there because they didn't press the 'accept' button, and it was a long activity. So, they came back like 15 minutes later or something, and it was just the two of us. They turned on their camera and they were like, 'is class over?' And I was like, 'no kid,' and they were trying to figure out what to say and they couldn't. It was awful." Professor Lucy's student utilized the newfound freedom of privacy during Zoom class that was not possible in person for something happening in their life, rather than class. Who knows where they went, or what they did, but their decision backfired and insinuated that whatever was happening was more important to them than the class. This could have damaged their relationship with Professor Lucy and their confidence as a student as well.

It is very difficult to manage the stressful, chaotic, and boring life that the pandemic enforced and this balance between school and/or work and managing emotional health was made so much more difficult when we were in Zoom classes. This new life included for many a feeling of pointlessness to their worries and struggles before the pandemic. These feelings contributed to a kind of classroom culture that, if students were not getting the aspects of their life that were lacking (like intimacy) and felt as though their energies were best spent outside of class within this emotional management, they would try to repair that while in class with their cameras off. Daisy felt like she was not getting the life aspects that were lacking and needed to manage her emotional health especially within lecture-type classes. She told me, "I treated some classes like a podcast, like I would be making dinner, I went to a diner one time. I drove and sat down at a diner with my ex and had an airpod in, listening to the class. I didn't retain anything. I mean this is just like for this one class though because like it was the lecture one. With other classes I was

like getting up and going to the bathroom, and when I would get bored I would look at my phone. In Theater, when we had our cameras off, me and my ex took that class together, like in the same room, so we would talk when people were performing and sometimes literally not even hear a word they said, like we just turned off so yeah, I would socialize." Daisy really felt the lack of social interaction within her life during the pandemic and satiated that through her interactions with her ex. She would still deviate from engaging when she got bored like many did, but any of her actions during this distraction could be classified as self-care. Her decision may have impacted her relationship with the professors but Daisys focus was on repairing the intimacies that kept her happy and healthy rather than on other stressors or pressures.

Many students took a similar approach and, when the professor allowed it, would remain camera off, and their engagement was entirely up to them. Professor Peter described that most of his students would be camera off, especially because most of his classes happened while he was screen sharing, so people's faces were not really on screen – there is a sliver of five boxes of people on the screen during screen share. Professor Peter, like Professor Lucy, relied on facial expressions during in-person interactions, especially because he teaches in the Science, Mathematics, and Computing department, but that was taken away on Zoom. He recounted, "At Bard, I'm constantly looking at the students to see if I said something and they look puzzled, I know I better try to explain it again. You can't do that on Zoom. I'm just talking to the air and I have no idea who's taking it in or not. Some of the students have their cameras off, which I understand because they're at home and may be in circumstances that are difficult. So you don't want to insist that people turn their cameras on, but then, then you don't even see anybody, just a bunch of blank boxes and maybe one or two students have their cameras on. You feel like you're talking to a wall and that's not what teaching is about. It's about talking to people." For Professor

Peter, an essential aspect of the experience of teaching is the interactions he has with his students. He highlighted that knowing who is taking in what he is teaching is vital to his job, and therefore, vital to those interactions. He felt the absence of those interactions on Zoom especially when students turned their cameras off. Zoom classes removed the thing that he felt was essential in class.

Professor Peter highlighted another issue that the cameras on Zoom posed; people lived in different places with different privileges and different kinds of spaces that may be personal. There were varying levels of comfortability with keeping cameras on. This was an issue that was widely discussed throughout the pandemic because it is unfair to force people to inadvertently expose their living conditions, with a wide variety of economic standings. All of the professors discussed this issue during their interviews, but Professor Susan had a particularly interesting take: " I didn't [have any guidelines] at first because I didn't understand Zoom at all, and I was amazed it was even working at all but then certain things happened. I had a very well-off student who, during the pandemic, went off to their villa in some Mediterranean country. At one point, the mother or maybe someone who worked for the family, would bring lunch. Another time this person was basically nuzzling with their girlfriend and I, after class, said 'could you stay?' and I actually talked about privilege. I said, 'do you realize how this looks? Some people are basically in a one-bedroom with an entire family living in that bedroom and you're there in your villa?' so they were very, or they pretended to be very, upset. I was shocked. There was another instance of a couple who were in the same room and there was an instance of a little, you know, too close for comfort, so I would make a joke, I would say certain things. I got very confused at first when I didn't know much, when people would turn off their camera. And, once I figured out that you can make your own backgrounds - you can do them fuzzy, you can do your own thing, - I started

not really being as sympathetic to the camera off and what really changed me was when one of

the students who was in a very tough situation, who had been in an abusive situation, said that

she was really really made very nervous by the person who didn't have their camera on because

they didn't know whether that person was threatening or just, it was a trigger. So, it was

interesting because it reversed the usual 'it's very triggering to see people with their

Mediterranean villa as opposed to their one-bedroom' but the other side was that this dark space

could hide anything."

   Professor Susan experienced two sides of the accessibility issues that cameras create. If

she were to insist that cameras remain on, the kid basking in their Mediterranean villa can

contribute to the other students losing confidence, not wanting to be on camera and therefore,

class at all, and feeling extra feelings of shame without cause or need. So, she made allowances

for people who wished to have their cameras off, but by doing so, she lost the essential aspects of

teaching that create a meaningful experience for professors. With the cameras off, many students

would be less engaged and she can't connect with them in the way that she used to. But in trying

to fix that original accessibility issue she encountered a student who had previous traumatic

experiences, with the idea that someone could hide behind a black square with only their name

while they may be taking pictures or videos that may expose her location , or something else that

could make her feel unsafe. Feeling safe in a classroom environment is essential to the learning

process and her student was unable to access that feeling of safety creating another accessibility

issue. The way in which Professor Susan rectified this was through insisting that cameras are on

and can be used in combination with background filters that students can use. These background

filters have a few different options but the filters used most are the blurred filter and you can

upload an image to the program to use as your background. This background appears behind the

participant on the Zoom screen. The reason she needed to accommodate was because, not only was it the best compromise so as to ensure the most access to her students, but it also showed her students that she listens and cares about them. Building and fortifying these relationships between student and professor are vital to a positive learning environment and Zoom offered up some opportunities for professors to create these relationships that can make their job meaningful especially during a time when meaningful connections were few and far between.

Cameras were essential to the ways in which students fortified their relationships to their professors, the class, and the other students. Being in a class with cameras on has consequences that go beyond the exposition of economic disparities amongst the students. Performing for the camera was essential to class engagement but when the camera moves from a stage for outside critique, they can also serve as a tool for self-reflection which can be harmful for students who have a tendency to succumb to the harsh judgements that self-reflection may create. Daisy, for example, described, "I have a bad self-image and usually if I go to [in-person] class feeling bad about myself, I'll forget about that once I'm in class, but on Zoom I'll just be thinking about my negative thoughts about my appearance the whole time. It's not as able to go away because you're always confronted with the mirror." Daisy's ability to maintain the relationships that cameras allowed was actually inhibited by that same function. Using Goffmans' dramaturgical metaphor, the camera was the stage upon which she performed being a student, and she was used to the separation between performer and audience, but that separation is no longer once she becomes an audience for her own performance. She takes on both roles of the critic and the criticized making her performance distracting and unbearable.

In order to reduce the duration or effort one puts into their performance as students, many, when allowed by professors, opted to turn their cameras on only when they had something

to contribute. As previously explored, many students took advantage of the ability to have their cameras off and engaged in activities that would not otherwise be suitable for a classroom. Often they would then have to quickly transition back to their performance if they were called upon to participate. This created opportunities for that transition to not go quite as smoothly as the student and professor would hope, which could affect student and professor relationships. For example, Leo spoke about a time in class, "that was at 10:30 in the morning, which is not super early, but it's earlier enough to be annoying to have to be there. I was on there and like, I was smoking weed and I had something to say. I turned on my camera and I was still collecting my bong and like, I blew out the smoke and I started talking and the professor was like, 'you guys are getting way too comfortable.' Arrow was in this class and they were in their barn, tuned in, painting their roof, and they texted me and they were like, 'even I saw that and I'm painting my room right now.' I'm glad it was an art class because if I was in STEM, they would've been mad at me." Leo's drug-induced mental state made the transition from listening while engaged in other things to the performing of engaged student, awkward. This created an opportunity for him to be reprimanded by his professor and the school. Leo mentioned the difference in reaction from an art professor to a STEM professor which is based on the kinds of thinking, doing, and students participating in those programs. Art classes require hours of work that is focused primarily on emotional or intuitive modes of non-analytical expression. STEM classes require a steady stream of puzzling. One kind of class feels more suitable for a drug like weed to Leo, than the other despite the extreme inappropriateness of doing drugs in class at all. In any case, Leo's exposition created an opportunity for the professor to exert their authoritative power by getting him in trouble with the institution and therefore alter and diminish any positive relationship the two may have had but chose to instead make a joke and move on from the situation.

The Professor's decision to move on from this actually fortified their relationship not only with Leo but with the other students as well. They probably did this in recognition of the extenuating circumstances of the pandemic and to try to make Zoom a space in which students can feel comfortable enough to learn. This line of thinking aligns with Goffman's analysis when he stated, "Often, when two teams enter social interaction, we can identify one as having the lower general prestige and the other team the higher. … Interestingly enough, there are occasions when it serves the wider goals of the higher team to lower barriers and admit the lower team to greater intimacy and equality with it. Granting the consequences of extending backstage familiarity to one's lessers, it may be in one's long-range interest to do so momentarily" (Goffman 1959: 198, 199). The higher team being the professors who represent authority and the lower team being the students, but the wider goals of professors was to utilize the zoom program in any way possible to mimic the classroom and kind of experiences that happen within them while not adding unnecessary stress onto a population that is already stressed. Leo's professor interpreted those goals by acknowledging that Leo's mistake was inappropriate through teasing that would have typically occurred when Leo was not present but doing so in a way that does not exercise the full extent of their authority and alienate the class by deepening the distinction between student and professor.

Conclusion

The purpose of this paper is to analyze and display the ways in which students created and sustained intimacies during remote instruction on the Zoom platform as a virtual conduit at Bard College. I began with a discussion of the pandemic and why we had to move to remote instruction as well as with a discussion of the social and political climate in America to show the immense outside anxiety students and professors were feeling while this remote instruction occurred. These stressors affected the ways in which students felt about and engaged with their classes as well as their relationships.

I then provided the theoretical frameworks I used to analyze the relationships that were being altered. I used Boellstorff to show that intimacy is possible within the technoscape and to define Zoom as a virtual conduit juxtaposed with the virtual world of Second Life. Continuing on with the discussion of space, I then discussed Foucault and his analysis of Institutions employing authoritative power through disciplinary techniques that can be so routine that they often go unnoticed and thereby people come to regulate themselves. One example being dorm spaces whose meanings were altered when we transitioned to remote instruction, therefore altering student relationships with authority. This lead into DeCerteau's discussion of power within institutions. Subordinates within institutions use tactics to move within them in order to experience freedoms or to subvert power while those in positions of power within the institution employ strategies to maintain that power. This dynamic occurred on Zoom through the relationships between students and professors and the ways in which students attempted to use tactics such as keeping their cameras off in order to create room to maneuver in the ways they desire while maintaining the performance or sincere embodying of being a dedicated, committed, and engaged student. We also saw the strategies professors employed to maintain in-person dynamics and sustain relationships with their students like insisting on cameras remaining on.

Finally, I used Goffman's dramaturgical analytical framework to analyze the interactions that were occurring on Zoom. Goffman provides suggested intentions as well as methodologies for these interactions.

Within my analysis of my ethnographic material, I found many ways in which intimacy creation and fortification were altered on Zoom. Chatting was the main way in which students fortified intimate connections with their peers. This function was what originally allowed students to replace their social interactions with this elongated and more discrete version of whispering in class. Students were put off from the chat when a rumor spread around campus that professors were able to access what was said in private. This deterred students so strongly because oftentimes they would derogate their peers or the professor in the private chat even though this attempt was made to assist in their performance of the committed student. Nevertheless, chatting was never eliminated completely despite often being moved to iMessage or texting on a phone. Students had to develop a level of linguistic competency in order to move between the different registers of communication on Zoom, which resulted in a few errors that also deterred some students from utilizing the chat. The chat was also used as a way to correct behaviors that were distracting or inappropriate, making it a way in which students could also fortify their relationships with professors. The chat was somewhat successful as a tool for relationship fortification but made that sustaining of intimacy more difficult due to the possibilities of that process being exposed to those not meant to bear witness. Breakout rooms, on the other hand, served as a tool for the creation of relationships between peers within the virtual conduit. The lack of supervision combined with the possibility of recurring meetups set up the conditions to create acquaintances or even friendships within this space. This however was rare due to the temporal control of the professors, the lack of control for students to choose

who was in the room and the luck needed to be in a recurring breakout room with people that share enough to create those relationships in the first place. Much of the time there is no bond created within them at all. Nevertheless, breakout rooms were the one space on Zoom in which relationships were created.

The virtual conduit space of Zoom altered the ways in which students were able to create and fortify their relationships, inhibiting them in immense ways. I would love to further explore this topic and there was a lot left to analyze in my own ethnographic material, so, for now, I can leave you with the questions that remain with me. How can the platform be changed to accommodate the needs of students during times like the pandemic in which in-person interaction is made difficult or impossible? How have professors utilized what they have discovered on Zoom in their in-person classrooms? Finally, what aspects of Zoom do people now miss in an in-person class? Might students and professors even feel nostalgic for Zoom classes?

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Playlist

[Covid College Feels](#)