

Prompt: Think about an instance where you consciously changed your social media identity (or experienced a close friend or relative changing theirs). Why did you do it? What did you change? What were the results? How did the experience change how you think about your identity?

In this module, I learned how to identify essential characteristics of self-identity, how to reflect on the process of personal authenticity, and how to identify threats to social media identity. Module 5 delved into the intricate components essential for shaping our self-identity in the digital world, emphasizing critical aspects such as self-awareness, self-presentation, self-integration, and self-reflection. Self-awareness begins as we navigate the unique opportunities provided by social media to showcase different facets of ourselves and receive immediate feedback from virtual communities. Through the diverse mediums of images, videos, texts, and interactions, we craft our online personas aiding in building a reflective understanding of our true selves. The concept of self-presentation poses challenges in the digital landscape, where we are tasked with constructing various identities tailored for different contexts. The sociologist Erving Goffman's analogy of 'front stage' and 'backstage' behaviors on social media resonates as we curate ourselves for audiences, be they real or perceived. The virtual stage becomes a platform for selecting specific traits and behaviors to exhibit while reserving others for more intimate dialogues, underscoring the nuanced art of self-presentation that demands a delicate balance between authenticity and strategic portrayal. Self-integration emerges as a vital element as individuals evaluate themselves in the digital world, cognizant of external opinions shaping their self-image. Social media serves as a powerful tool in this evaluation process, exposing users to diverse perspectives, ideas, and feedback loops that contribute to a revised sense of self. This cycle of projecting, receiving feedback, and integrating insights align with Goffman's observations, showcasing how online interactions catalyze and streamline the journey of self-discovery and growth. The concept of self-reflection surfaces as a pivotal aspect of our self-identity underscoring the reflexive nature of our narratives and stories rather than solely relying on external reactions to define oneself. Our internal narratives about who we are and who we aspire to be intertwine with external experiences, shaping our identities both online and offline. Moreover, I learned about the threats posed to social media identity that we must consider in our digital engagements. The statistics outlining potential risks such as cybersecurity breaches, data privacy violations, and fraudulent activities bring to light the vulnerabilities inherent in the digital world. As users it is imperative to be vigilant and proactive in safeguarding our digital identities, weighing the risks against the benefits of online participation. Finally, I learned what it means to be authentic online. Being authentic online entails portraying a genuine reflection of oneself without succumbing to the pressures of presenting an idealized or over-curated version. This authenticity is not solely determined by our biographical realities; rather, it is a creative act of designing who we are in a dynamic, evolving manner across different contexts and platforms. Authenticity is aptly considered a continuous process rather than a stagnant state. Our identities are fluid, multifaceted, and capable of expressing various dimensions over time. The ability to adapt and evolve while conveying the full range of our persona on virtual platforms is key to establishing and creating content that resonates authenticity with ourselves. Imagination and "play-acting" roles in social media can influence our sense of authenticity by blurring the lines

between our genuine selves and the personas we present online. There is no instances of me changing my social media identity because unlike most people I rarely ever use social media at all. I have noticed friends' social media identities change, however. A friend of mine went from posting about her relationship and how good it was to making posts talking about how guys are dogs and unloyal. Obviously, I understood why she changed what she was posting but it is interesting to see how emotions and actions of one person will change someone's entire viewpoint and thought process.