



## The Melting of Student Identity through Second Accounts on *Instagram*

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### **Abstract**

*This study discusses the phenomenon of the melting of the identities of eight UNJ students in Instagram. This study uses a qualitative approach. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, documentation, and literature review methods. Previous research has shown that Instagram as a social media is able to construct a new identity through exploration and sharing of its self. This study provides evidence that a new self-identity can be constructed in Instagram through a second account. Here different identities are shown to the audience with different characteristics. The ideal identity construction is displayed on First Account according to their persona. The continuous use of two accounts has various implications, such as identity fragmentation, being trained to provide a different identity appearance, freedom of expression in cyberspace and being open with digital society, and experiencing identity exploration that leads to self-discovery and development.*

**Keywords:** *identity fragmentation, instagram, students.*

**Paper type:** *Research paper*

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## INTRODUCTION

The Internet is a social communication network that allows individuals to interact with other individuals from all over the world. The development of the internet in Indonesia began to grow rapidly when it entered the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In a webinar entitled "Siberkreasi Mahasiswa Indonesia Makin Cakap Digital", Samuel A, Director General of Aptika, revealed that internet users in Indonesia have increased by 11% from 2021. This brings the number of internet users in Indonesia to 202.6 million users. Currently, Indonesia is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest internet user in Asia (Nuryana, 2021). The form of communication in Indonesian society has changed and social media has become a part of everyday life. Based on a survey conducted by GWI in the third quarter of 2020, *Instagram* is in third position with a user number of more than 80% as the most popular social media in Indonesia. The popularity of *Instagram* in the society shifts *Facebook's* position to number four (Dahono 2021; Nijman et al. 2021).

People are present in cyberspace with digital identities displayed on their *Instagram* social media accounts. In constructing identity on social media pages, a person does not necessarily take spontaneous actions, but goes through a selection process in order to give a perfect appearance (Allcott and Gentzkow, 2017; Anasari, 2015; Claypoole, 2014). On *Instagram*, there are many opportunities that users can take advantage of to construct a digital identity. Nastaran Khoshshabk explained that through the development of the internet, now individuals can control and consider more aspects of themselves to be presented to the wider community (Khoshshabk, 2017).

In addition, Seibel (2019) shows that *Instagram* as a social media is able to construct a new self-identity. With *Instagram*, individuals are able to explore and share themselves and promote their identity through computer-mediated communication and social networks. O'Donnell (2018) found that *Instagram* contributes to the expression of individual identity. *Instagram* users by posting about themselves show that their need for personal visual identity has been mediated by this self-objectification and belief. In addition, this study provides evidence that a new identity can be constructed on *Instagram* through a second account. This second account functions as a display of different identities and characteristics that are different from his own identity on the first account. The

continuous use of two accounts has various implications, such as identity fragmentation, being trained to provide a different identity appearance, freedom of expression in cyberspace and being open to digital society, and experiencing identity exploration that leads to self-discovery and development.

## **METHODS**

The research uses a qualitative approach with the type of research in the form of a case study. In this study, researchers specifically took informants who studied at the State University of Jakarta as research subjects. Another criterion set for taking informants in this study is that students as informants use Instagram social media and have a Second Account. Primary data collection was taken from in-depth interviews with 8 (eight) informants directly. Then secondary data was taken from observations regarding student activities in the two accounts and conducted a literature review as a reference.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **Instagram and Its Development in Society**

*Instagram* is a social media network that has a primary focus on visual and audiovisual content. The name *Instagram* was adopted from two equivalent words, namely "insta" (instant) and "telegram". The meaning of the word "insta" itself comes from the old Polaroid camera that can produce photos instantly. While "telegram" means a way to quickly share information with others. *Instagram* was created by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger. Systrom originally developed an application called Burbn. However, at that time Burbn still needed to be refined. After undergoing various improvements, *Instagram* was finally released by Kevin Systrom and Mike Krieger in 2010 (Housiaux, 2019).

At the beginning of its appearance, *Instagram* was identical with the vintage concept with the Polaroid camera logo. Over time, *Instagram* has made various changes and innovations to become one of the most popular social media today. After being present in society for a dozen years, *Instagram* remains synonymous with its visual concept (Veum and Undrum, 2018). However, during that time *Instagram* also continued to develop various features in its application service. Here are the five main views of *Instagram* and the features in it: home, explore *Instagram*, profile, reels and shop.

*Home* is the main page that will welcome *Instagram* users every time they open this application. Here users will see various posts from people they *follow*. Then on the *Home* display there are three main features, namely *Create*, *Activity* and *Direct Message*. Through the *Create* feature, *Instagram* provides four ways for its users to share their content, starting from *Post*, *Instagram Story*, *Reels* and *Live*. Next to the *Create* feature is the *Activity* feature, where users can see various incoming notifications. Whether it's in the form of *Likes*, *Comments* and when there are other users who follow/follow back. Furthermore, the *Direct Message* feature functions to exchange messages, both privately and in groups on *Instagram*.

*Explore Instagram* is a page that displays various recommended content for its users. This recommendation emerged as a result of an algorithmic process. *Instagram* will serve content that is relevant or appropriate to the user's account based on the content liked by the user, the content that user saved and watched, until the interaction made by the user with related content. In addition to post recommendations, on the *Explore* page there is a *Search* feature that users can search for accounts, audio, hashtags and places. Then *Instagram* will provide relevant results with keywords.

*Profile* is a user account display that can be seen by other users. When the user opens his own *Profile* page, various main features will appear such as *Menu*, *Create*, *Add Account*, *Followers* and *Following*, *Edit Profile*, *Highlight* and *Feed*. The *Menu* is a feature located in the upper right corner of the *Profile* page, in that feature there are other features related to *Instagram* for users, ranging from *Settings* to *Close Friends* and since the Covid-19 Pandemic attacked, *Instagram* has provided the COVID-19 Information Center feature.

The *Create* feature on the *Profile* page has more or less the same function as *Create* on the *Home* page. Then, shifting again to the left, there is a *Username* and a down arrow which when clicked will display the *Add Account* feature. This feature is also often referred to as the *Multiple Account* feature, where *Instagram* users can open other accounts in one application. At the bottom there are *Following* and *Followers*, this feature contains accounts that are followed and followed by users. Furthermore, there is the *Edit Profile* feature, where users can adjust the appearance of their *Profile* according to what they want. By providing a *Profile Picture*, *Username*, *Display Name*, *Pronoun*, *Website* to *Bio* for support account

owner information. Then below it is a feed that displays various content in the form of photos or videos of the account owner.

When someone's account is opened by another user, the difference in Profile appearance will be in the absence of the Create, Multiple Account and Edit Profile features, which will change the appearance to Follow and Message features. Nowadays a person's social media profile is very important because a person's identity will be determined by the appearance on his profile.

*Reels* and *Shop* is a new look presented by *Instagram*. *Reels* displays various recommendations for short videos of 15-30 seconds on *Instagram*. *Reels* can reach a wider audience because *Instagram* is starting to focus on developing video editing content creation. Meanwhile *Shop* is a special page created for *Instagram* users who have businesses to promote their products.

In addition to the various features found on the main page, *Instagram* also has various other features such as *Hashtags*, *Filters*, *Likes*, *Comments*, *Shares* and many more. As previously explained, *Instagram* is always providing new features. Create for *Instagram Stories*, *Reels* and *Live*, then *Filters* for *Instagram Stories*, to *Multiple Accounts* are examples of features that were not previously available on *Instagram*. The presence of various new features on *Instagram* brings new habits for its users as well.

### **The Existence of a Fragmented Digital Identity: Surveillance and Freedom**

According to Castells, the internet strengthens and strengthens social communication networks in people's daily lives in the real world, and replicates them into digital formats with a wider reach (Fahrimal, 2018). In the midst of the development of digital culture, there is the concept of social media surveillance (Hogan and Shepherd, 2015; Monahan, 2011). This concept refers to the mechanism of the social system to monitor every individual in society in order to create a healthy digital space. Starting from family, institutions, and the peer environment, they can monitor the prevailing values and norms (Wilson and Hahn, 2021). On the other hand, the wide reach of information on social media can allow students to interact with different audiences. Then they are also faced with various opportunities for expression and self-exploration. In the end, the students found a bias in determining which ones were allowed to be shared and which ones were not to be shared on *Instagram*.

Identity construction in cyberspace is important because the individual is what his *Profile* page says about him (Anthony and McCabe, 2015). When students feel the fragmentation of their identity, they want other parts of themselves to also be present in cyberspace. In 2016 *Instagram* made a new innovation in one of its features, namely by launching the *Multiple Account* feature. In the first account, the students of course have constructed a certain identity that he will display all this time. Therefore, to avoid unwanted appearances, they take advantage of the *Multiple Account* feature and build a new identity in cyberspace. Almost all UNJ students who use two accounts in this study know the presence of the *Multiple Account* feature from the surrounding environment, especially from among their peers.

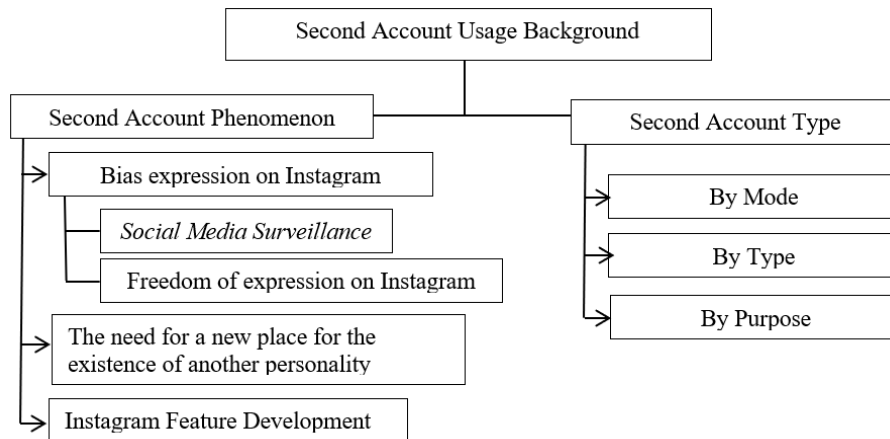
If "First Account" is a term used to refer to a person's main personal account, then there is also the term "Second Account". Second Account is often used to refer to the second account created by *Instagram* users with a different appearance from the *First Account*. There are various types of *Instagram Second Accounts* that are developing in the community.

**Table 1.**  
**Types of *Instagram* Second Accounts**

| <b>By</b>      | <b>Account Types</b>  |
|----------------|---|
| <b>Mode</b>    | Private Mode and Public mode                                |
| <b>Type</b>    | Personal Account, Creator Account and Business Account      |
| <b>Purpose</b> | Private Account, Bookstagram, Artstagram, Online Shop, etc. |

Source: Author's Analysis Results 2022

Based on the table above, students will take advantage of the mode and account type features according to the account type based on their goals. For example, someone who wants to use a Private Account will use Private mode and Personal Account type. Meanwhile, if someone wants to create a general account such as Bookstagram, then he will create an account by applying Public mode and can choose one of the three types of accounts available; Personal Accounts, Creator Accounts and Business Accounts.

**Figure 2.****Second Account Usage Background**

Source: Author's Analysis Results 2022

**Student Activities in Two Accounts on Instagram**

The internet era has driven changes in the meaning of building and managing human identity while in the cyber world (Dewi and Janitra, 2018). Çöteli argued that the presence of the digitalization process brought changes in the form of communication and socialization, thus creating what is known as “digital culture” in society (Çöteli, 2019). Digital culture refers to people's awareness of shared norms, meanings and values that are built through online interactions (Kennedy and Lynch, 2016). Suler suggests that the construction of adolescent identity in cyberspace is directly related to interactions in the virtual environment; combination of text-based and visual communication (van der Merwe, 2017).

As part of digital natives, of course, students are familiar with the name of having a social media account as a virtual self-image. Adolescents articulate their feelings about themselves through the communication that occurs with their closest friends; they also learn what information they share with others and what makes them unique (Davis, 2013). Everyone is aware that he is a unique individual, has rights and shows a form of consciousness that is generally understood. So that the development of identity on the internet tends to lead to liberality. Turkle argues that in the postmodern era, people perceive identity as a set of roles that can be personally created, diverse and need to be negotiated. The Internet became part of the computer culture that contributed to the notion of identity as multiplicity. In society's view of the self, a new picture of identity as multiplicity, heterogeneity,

flexibility, and fragmentation dominates people's thinking about identity thinking today (Turkle, 2011).

### **First Account: Reflection of Student's Ideal Persona in the Virtual World**

Kennedy suggests that online identity will usually go hand in hand with offline identity (Poletti and Rak, 2014). Someone tends to post various information related to themselves in cyberspace (Yoo, 2022). The First Account Profile page created by students contains their personal data. The students use their real name as *Username*. In addition to indicating that the account is a personal account, for students, the real name they register as a *Username* will make it easier for others to find their account on *Instagram*. In *First Account*, students will establish relationships with people they know from the real world. When students receive a *Follow Request* and then their follows them back, then they will have a mutual relationship on *Instagram*.

Although the students had tried to establish good communication relationships with the people in their *First Account*, they felt that the ropes were not that strong. This can be seen from the statements of the students who say that *Followers* and even their mutuals in *First Account* are a common community group. When growing up, students will face an increasingly heterogeneous social environment. Individuals with high status will also have complex identities because they tend to be able to reach a much wider social network (Stets and Burke 2003). For example, in YA's First Account there are family members, teachers, peers from their previous school to the present; juniors, seniors, alumni, to friends from one organization on campus. Not to mention when students who use Private mode have to change it to public mode because they are related to assignments or activities on campus. Such as YA, BA, FH, and N who have participated in the committee of events organized by organizational groups that were followed on campus.

Wijayanti and Adhiatama suggested that someone will show positive behavior and avoid behavior that has the potential to cause it in their public accounts because they have a social role to the audience (Wijayanti and Adhiatma, 2018). The ideal self will be defined by ideal characteristics, such as goals, hopes, and desires and can also include both negative and positive aspects of the self (Michikyan, Dennis, and Subrahmanyam, 2015). Some students are very aware of



the importance of how other people perceive their appearance. Each individual has their own impression that they want to show. If grouped, then the similar impression that students want to give to their audience is the persona of themselves who have adapted the values of maturity. For example, KS with his motivation for self-development skills through personal branding on First Account. KS will post content that shows his achievements to motivate others to develop. Meanwhile, there is FH who will try to be polite when he is about to post something and when interacting with people on *Instagram*. Then, there is also KA that avoids content with the possibility of offending its audience.

Students will be passive and have a personality that tends to be closed in the appearance of their identity on the *First Account*. They will also have a low intensity of content sharing on their *First Account*. This is related to students' awareness of the importance of maintaining privacy so that they are not easily shared in cyberspace. Fischer Hübner & Hedbom defines privacy as the right to information self-determination, namely the right of individuals to determine for themselves when, how, to what extent and for what purpose information about them is communicated to others (Saidah and Irwansyah, 2019).

YA, BA, and N are two students who are very concerned about the content they will post to their First Account. They will only share one or two specific posts that are considered important enough to describe the situation they are experiencing. For example, to support his appearance on the First Account that he is a UNJ student, YA will share posts when he is doing activities together with his organizational group on campus. YA doesn't want to post pictures of her family and boyfriend on her First Account because for YA it is a matter of privacy. Unlike YA, BA will only share content about important moments with family and close friends. For example, when they celebrate big days and get together. Meanwhile, N, who likes to spend time with his friends, will share content in the form of photos or short videos that contain the atmosphere of their quality time. Usually, N will only post one or two content to his First Account in, at least, one month.

### ***Second Account: Student Identity Fragmentation Painting***

Identity on Instagram can be likened to an “identity playground” (Kennedy and Lynch, 2016; Milne, 2017). When students create new accounts, they are faced with freedom and creativity in describing their personal information. In cyberspace,

teens can experiment with different sides of themselves, changing their personality and gender to see how they are treated (Maymí and Lathrop 2018). This can be seen from the way students use unique names on their usernames. Especially students using Private Accounts. For example, YA uses the name @bornonsunday, BI with the name @mr\_kumiss, KA with the name @hayang\_kawinn, LK with the name @brodie20 and N with the name @madeinheaven. Meanwhile, students who use accounts with *Public* mode will take advantage of the *Bio* feature on their accounts. For example, BA which displays his status as a Fan Artist, complete with the name of the idol group he likes, to the pronoun he uses.

Freedom of expression in the digital space offers the possibility of disclosing the personal data of others. Privacy allows people to express themselves individually or collectively without worrying too much about the order of their expressions (Saidah and Irwansyah 2019). This is felt by all students with their different identity personas. For example, Private Account users such as YA, N, BI, KA, and LK. In the previous explanation, YA and N are two students who are very closed in the First Account. But when they log into *Second Account*, both YA and N have very open personalities to show their closeness to the people there. They have no worries that their appearance will get slanted glances from others. This is supported by a situation where mutual YA and N are close friends who also use a Private Account.

YA and N feel more comfortable to share their daily activities with minimum performance. For example, YA will post photos that show another side of her that is relaxed and calm. Like when he was dressed simply and spending time with his family or closest friends. YA also likes to post photos and videos about the food he likes. When you are on a date or there is even a problem with your lover, sometimes YA will also tell a story on his *Second Account* via *Instagram Story*. Meanwhile, N prefers to share his daily activities. Like when he was in class, then did practice at the Campus Laboratory, until when he hung out with his friends. N also doesn't think much about effects or other aesthetic aspects for the photos he posts. In addition to showing his closeness to his peers, N also does not hesitate to share his love story on *Second Account*. N is active at least once a day in creating *Instagram Stories*.

The existence of anonymity that provides an opportunity for expression is experienced by other students who use *Public* accounts. When using the internet, students seem unfettered by physical and temporal limitations. They can try out different identities and shape them as they please. Unlike in the physical world with fixed consequences for their behavior; online or virtual reality allows one to get away from the other persona self (van der Merwe, 2017). For example, FH, BA and KS who do their self-exploration through *Second Account*.

FH and BA describe their hobbies and hobbies on *Second Account* and meeting new people. FH is present at *Second Account* with his persona as a *Bookstagrammer*. He uses the username @tytyreading and shares content about the reviews of the books he reads, then he will also discuss and recommend books with his audience on *Bookstagram*. Meanwhile, BA is present on *Second Account* with the persona of a *Fan Artist*. He shares various illustrations inspired by the idol groups he likes. BA is a fan of BTS and TXT, which are idol groups from South Korea under the BigHit Music agency from HYBE Labels. The hobby that BA poured through *Second Account* now brings it to a wide virtual window. Various positive feedbacks also added to his enthusiasm to give the best performance. Goffman argues that positive feedback or as support is the best thing as a default response in social interactions (Yang and Bradford Brown, 2016). Then, KS displayed his professionalism as a business owner on *Second Account*. For example, he will use models to demonstrate the use of his products in the form of photos and videos. KS revealed that he has plans to optimize content creation through Reels to expand his business activities through the @etnika.idn account.

Even though they feel free to express themselves in the *Second Account*, the students still think that what they share does not offend other parties. Especially his followers who were there. Then *Second Account* is a place, relative to the appearance being given, where students have different personas. If interpreted more deeply, it refers to the "presence" or "absence" of a person. The student actually does not have an ideal side and a hidden side, but he has a 'Mask' which is each activated in front of a different audience, for the purpose of creating and maintaining a certain definition of the situation.

### Implications of Using Two Instagram Accounts among Students

Adam and Marshal argue that the main function of identity is as a structure for understanding the individual, as well as a sense of coherence and self-consistency (Davis 2013). Individuals use the values, beliefs, and signs that exist in their social environment to form identities. As a result, the identity they form affects the way they interact with their social environment. Burke argues that the self-concept is not only an idealized view of the individual about himself, but also a self-image or working copy of the individual's self-views which he imports into the situation and which is subject to constant change and revision based on situational influences (Stets and Burke 2003). In the construction of identity, the individual not only has a concept in himself but also internalizes the views he gets from the adaptation process, which he then processes and communicates back to other individuals or groups.

In Turkle's self concept, a person will have various personas that appear in cyberspace. The virtual world provides opportunities such as anonymity, parallel living in an ongoing world, as well as the development of a way of thinking where life consists of many windows and real world life is only one of them (Turkle 2011). The different appearances that individuals make on one account with another account continuously make student identities fragmented. A fragmented identity could be because a person has a trauma or fear of rejection in a certain environment. Then, the construction that develops from various self-expressions in the phase to maturity may become a normative part of self-development. They reflect different aspects of the development of a young person's sense of self, and differences in self-representation are called into question because there is an active effort to protect the true self from being underestimated (Michikyan et al. 2015). For example, FH who doesn't want to share posts about too many books on his First Account because he is often dubbed a "nerd". Then, BI and KA who don't want to share their worries on *First Account* to maintain the appearance of the positive persona they display there. With the opportunity for anonymity in cyberspace, students will have an identity like in a parallel world. They can attend one time and have many opportunities to visit new worlds through new windows. In their other world—*Second Account*—they can create their identity without worrying about appearing in the *First Account*. Although they have wider freedom of expression on their *Second*

*Account*, several students emphasized that the posted content certainly does not contain negative things, especially the potential to invite misunderstandings or commotion.

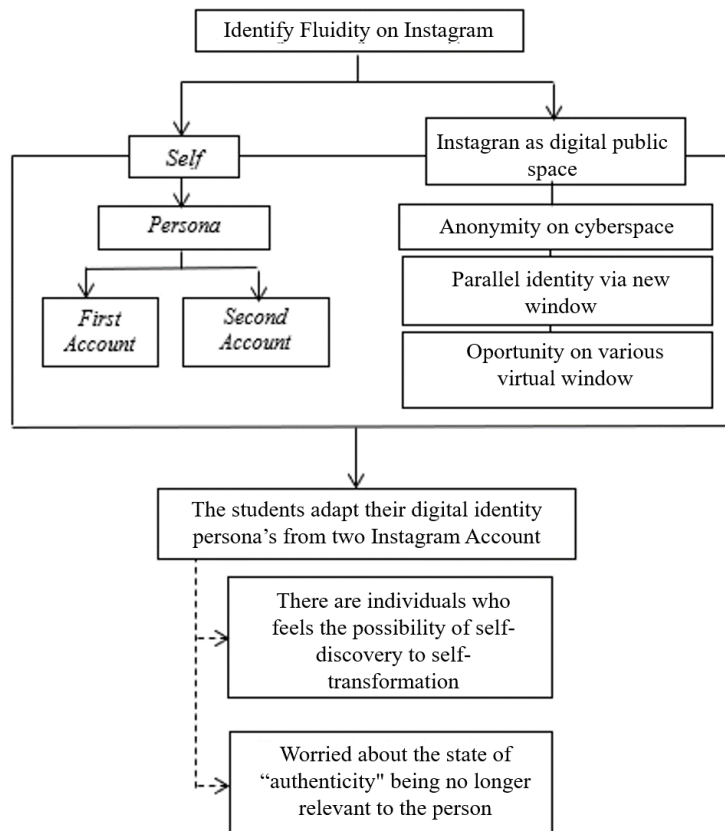
When identity is defined as a whole, it is relatively easy for a person to recognize and avoid deviations from norms that do not suit him. On the one hand, a fluid identity provides greater possibilities for accepting diversity. This is experienced by students who use *Second Account* with *Public* mode. For example, FH whose audience is *Instagram* users who like books and BA whose audience is *Instagram* users who really like drawing or K-Pop. Having a hobby, especially one that can be developed personally, encourages students to present it to the wider community. With a special account students can attract audiences that they don't find on Personal Accounts. They can meet new people with similar preferences and interests, but with more diverse backgrounds.

The virtual world is very important for individuals as a place where one can recognize the diversity within himself. But he will still have a desire for authentic self-experience (Turkle, 2011). When individuals adopt their digital personas, someone can feel uncomfortable because of the fragmentation, and some can feel relieved. There are even people who feel the possibility of self-discovery, to self-transformation (Turkle, 2011). In this study BA, FH, BI, N, and KS stated that they felt a sense of self-discovery. Turkle is known for the concept of identity fragmentation which he put into his book "Life on The Screen". However, in the book he also mentions the identity crisis felt by internet users. The implication of the melting of identity that is felt on the personality of each individual is different. If reflected in this study, some students such as YA, KA, FH, and LK have a sense of worry about the situation where "authenticity" is no longer relevant to them.

On *Instagram*, an individual can experiment or explore their identity with different characters from one another. However, there is a connection between the two student personas on *Instagram*, namely that both of them have their own character and when combined, will become a unified whole. In simple terms, the two student identities that are divided into two accounts on *Instagram* are each an aspect of itself.

Figure 2.

Identity Fluidity on Instagram



Source: Hasil Analisis Penulis, 2022

CONCLUSION

In the development of modern culture, individual identity in the digital space is becoming more fluid and fragmented. From the point of view of symbolic interaction, individuals play an active role in the process of creating their interpretations and definitions of actors in a social context. Identity construction is the struggle of actors to be able to obtain their identity in society. In cyberspace, anonymity allows them to create digital personas according to their wishes. In the end, student’s digital identities are becoming increasingly fluid and fragmented. To support the existence of their fragmented digital identity, students construct an identity which is divided into two accounts with different appearances, namely First Account and Second Account. The activities he does are providing personal information through the Profile view, posting content to Instagram, and interacting with fellow Instagram users. Even so, at the same time the students also gave a

different appearance of her fragmented personality. Appearances on the First Account show the identity they have adopted from the real world to the digital world with the expectation of an ideal appearance, while appearances on the Second Account will show the fragmentation of other identities that exist from within the students. This identity will be more diverse according to the ability and creativity of students in exploring themselves.

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