



Today on Blogcritics

[Home](#) » [Books](#) » [Book Interviews](#) » Interview: Dr. Suzana E. Flores, Author of 'Facehooked'

Interview: Dr. Suzana E. Flores, Author of 'Facehooked'

Posted by: [Suzanne Brazil](#) October 31, 2014 in [Book Interviews](#), [Books](#), [Non-Fiction](#), [Top Stories](#) Please

Share...  5  36  7  6  0  1  0



"Keeping up with our friends on Facebook is fun and entertaining, but if we consistently choose it over real-life connection, we miss out on so much more. The Internet and social media have made our lives easier, but they were never meant to replace life."

- from *Facehooked* by Dr. Suzana E. Flores

Dr. Suzana E. Flores earned a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology from Loyola University Chicago and a Doctorate in Clinical Psychology from Argosy University. She has worked in community counseling centers, psychiatric hospitals, trained at the Federal Bureau of Prisons, and is now in private practice in Chicago.

An avid user of social media herself, she grew concerned when patients began referencing Facebook and social media regularly during their counseling sessions. She has since studied Facebook use extensively and interviewed people from across the globe about their experiences. The result is her first book, *Facehooked: How Facebook Affects Our Emotions, Relationships, and Lives*. She agreed to share some insight into the origins of the book and her experience writing it.

Where did you grow up and what led you to the field of psychology?

I grew up on the South Side (Chicago) and my parents owned a grocery store. So I was raised helping my parents in the store. They both worked very hard. It was a rough neighborhood. If you've seen the movie *Boyz in the Hood*, it was like that. Bulletproof windows, bars on the doors. We were held up at gunpoint more times than I can count.

I am one of the non-stats. I made it out. My brother went into law enforcement and I became a psychologist. We joke that it's not unexpected that considering how we grew up, I became a shrink and he carries a gun!

When I took my first psychology class in high school. I was instantly hooked. I thought "I can do this." It came natural to me. I've worked anywhere from community counseling centers, to psychiatric hospitals, trained at the Federal Bureau of Prisons and then opened my private practice.

How did this project get started?

Really, my first fascination was my own use of Facebook. I was curious about what made people post certain things, always emphasizing positive things about themselves and negative things in others. I noticed that people just seemed to have no filter. The other thing I noticed were the privacy issues, specifically even my own lack of concern with the lack of privacy on social networks. I noticed that I was on it all the time.

How often did you find yourself on Facebook?

In the beginning I was checking it every 30 minutes – even at work - and found myself getting drained. I had a very good friend that wounded me pretty badly on Facebook which shocked me. I thought this person was very mature and centered. I thought, if I lost a friend because of social media, I wonder if other people experienced something similar. It made sense.

When did your concern or interest in the topic escalate?

The concern I felt for people intensified the day I hospitalized my first client. I had a client that went through a public Facebook breakup that left him unable to cope. These were not young kids. These were highly educated professionals in their 40s. I thought "What is happening to people?"

The termination of the engagement was emotionally traumatizing enough, but the fact that something that is typically supposed to be a very private matter was instead shared publicly with the couple's family members and mutual friends intensified the trauma.

How did this experience motivate you to look into the issue?

I thought that people need to be way more concerned than they are. On Facebook, there are no filters, everyone is more impulsive. And I can't help but wonder what will happen on a global scale when we have newer generations growing up with this new way of connection and expression. We have current generations that don't know a world without social media. They will never know or value privacy the way previous generations [did].

Hasn't society always become alarmed whenever there was a communication revolution such as the printing press, radio, or television?

Yes, but there's a difference. When radio and TV were introduced, families or friends would gather around and although you were watching TV or listening to the radio, you were in the same room, next to one another experiencing the same thing. Now, we don't know how to do that. We see couples dining out together but they're both on their phones "talking" to other people. This has become socially appropriate. It's even affecting people's sex lives. In the bedroom, he's on his tablet and she's on her phone. That's the next book.



So your next book is going to focus on couples?

Yes, on how technology affects our relationships and our sex lives.

What do you think drives those who are addicted to Facebook?

It's a need for validation. Facebook and other networks tend to reflect our truest inner nature and magnify it on a public scale. People know all your triumphs but they also know all your vulnerabilities. The need for external validation is overtaking the need for authenticity and privacy.

What made you decide to write this book and how has it been received?

My idea was to help people who are overwhelmed – to give them some insight as to how prolonged social media use is affecting and changing us. I was waiting for someone to write it. There have been other books on social media but they're mostly academic. I wanted something plainly written that anyone could relate to.

The reaction has been fantastic. People are talking about lost relationships [and] friendships and [about] experiencing increased anxiety or frustration. Psychologists are grateful for a book that they can reference and give to their clients because it's not written solely for academics but is written simply, without the psychological jargon, so that it reaches a broader audience.

Do you have any success stories from patients with improved relationships after addressing their Facebook addiction?

Yes. After much discussion and exploration, some clients have told me that they never realized how reliant they were on Facebook and their smartphones. Many have taken steps to reassess how they want to spend their time and how they wish to express themselves.

If you could get one message across to users regarding Facebook, what would it be?

That NOTHING is private. For instance, Facebook recently conducted a social experiment tracking how people are affected by depressing posts. Turns out, if you see depressive posts, you post depressive things. But, no one asked permission. Privacy and control on Facebook are an illusion and this can trigger anxiety.

People post the best of what they want others to see. I was recently challenged by my social media director to post a picture of me on a "bad hair day" – I have some legendary bad hair days where I look like the Mad Hatter – I had to take some deep breaths, but I did it! It can be fun. But not everything you see on social media is a real representation.

Just to be clear for people who haven't read the book – you're not against social media?

No! I love Facebook. I love social media. I just think we need to be aware of subtle or not so subtle changes occurring psychologically, interpersonally and even globally. People just need to balance their online expression with their offline reality. There's a lot of power in social media – both positive and negative.

There's uplifting messages on Facebook and interactions on Facebook have even created social and political change. The Egyptian protests started on Facebook. But, there's also a dark side. A Facebook wall is a blank canvas that shows our best and worst selves.

What has been your family's response to your publishing success?

My family is thrilled for me because my motivation in writing this book was to try to help people by providing guidelines on how they can enjoy their social media interactions without feeling overwhelmed or without neglecting their offline relationships.

Do you have any advice for aspiring authors?

Not to listen to negativity. "You will never find an agent, never find a publisher." If I had listened to everyone, I would never have written this. Also, just write. Don't edit. Just write! If you're passionate, just do it.

Where can people go to find out more about you and your book?

My website www.dr.suzanaflores.com lists all my upcoming appearances and book signings. The hardcover is available through [Amazon](#).

Tagged with: [addiction](#) [depression](#) [Facebook](#) [Facehooked](#) [internet addiction](#) [psychology](#) [psychology and social media](#) [social media](#) [social media addiction](#) [Suzana E. Flores](#) [writing](#)

About Suzanne Brazil



Suzanne M. Brazil is a freelance writer and editor living in a recently empty nest in the suburbs of Chicago. Her work has been featured in Writer's Digest and many local publications. She is a frequent blog contributor and recently finished her first novel.