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The Beliefs And Perceived Experiences Of Preservice And Early Service Teachers Who Use Facebook

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THE BELIEFS AND PERCEIVED EXPERIENCES OF PRESERVICE AND
EARLY SERVICE TEACHERS WHO USE FACEBOOK

by

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This dissertation, submitted by Nathan Foss in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

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Nathan D. Foss

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify commonly held beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers with regard to their use of the social networking site Facebook. This study included recorded and transcribed interviews of 14 participants as well as observations of their Facebook accounts. The participants in this study consisted of six males and eight females who were in various stages of their educational careers. All participants were either members, or recent graduates, of the same Midwestern university. Each was either pursuing a degree in education or had recently received their education degree.

A phenomenological study design was chosen as the qualitative research method for this study. Interview data was organized into codes, categories, themes, and the following three assertions:

1. Although their use of the social networking site changes and evolves as they age, preservice and early service teachers believe that maintaining ties with friends is an important function of Facebook and can be accomplished without direct communication; however, direct communication is still highly valued with close friends.

2. Preservice and early service teachers are apprehensive about the negative consequences of having a Facebook profile, but because of perceived benefits, they continue to utilize the site under what they believe are

higher privacy settings and/or after they have policed their account removing questionable content.

3. As they mature, preservice and early service teachers create more stringent guidelines for who they will add as friends on Facebook, and they believe a level of distance between their personal and professional lives is prudent.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Context of the Problem

The Internet came into wide spread use among the majority of college

campuses across the United States in the 1990s (Goldsmith, 2000; Jones, 2002,

Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009). Students were able to use this new and

powerful tool to easily access information from a myriad of sources. As each

successive class entered the ranks of higher education, they brought with them a

stronger understanding and ability to navigate the information found within the

Internet. By the late 1990s, comprehensible computing systems were commonplace

within most homes. By the time students entered college in the early 2000s, many had

an extremely high level of knowledge and competence in the area of computing

technologies (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009).

At the onset of the 21st century, colleges and universities across the United

States began to see a new breed of enrolled students. These were individuals who

were born within the information age. These individuals could not remember a time

before the Internet, cell phones, or text messaging because they were born after these

technological advancements had become a part of mainstream society. They are what

some have described as the Net Generation or as Digital Natives (Prensky, 2009;

Tapscott, 1998 & 2008).

The Net Generation presents, or Digital Natives present, an interesting phenomenon for higher education. While previous college and university students of the information age had to learn and adapt to the new uses and implications of changing technologies, this new generation of students have been immersed in the technology since birth. It stands to reason that their uses and expectations of technology will be different than that of their predecessors. One of the unique aspects of today's college students is their ability to experience a sense of community through both the real and virtual worlds using social networking sites found on the Internet. These sites have both inherent risks and perceived benefits to their users.

Social Networking Sites Defined

Numerous social networking sites can now be found online and while many offer similar overall functions to their users, each is unique in its own way and each seems to accommodate a specific niche of users. Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) have defined social networking sites as, "virtual places that cater to a specific population in which people of similar interest gather to communicate, share, and discuss ideas" (p. 169). For the purpose of this study, the researcher has chosen to use the definition provided by boyd and Ellison (2008) to clearly describe social networking sites. By their definition,-social networking sites are:

> web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 211)

The Evolution of Social Networking Sites

To better understand how social networking sites impact those who choose to use them, it is important to trace the evolution of these sites from their genesis. It is generally agreed upon that social networking sites began in the mid 1990s with the rise of the Internet and have evolved in their ease of use and in their targeted demographics (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009). Classmates.com was one of the earliest social networking sites. It was developed in 1995 by Randy Conrads as a means of allowing people to reconnect with past classmates ranging from kindergarten to college (Classmates, 2010). The premise behind the conception of Classmates was that direct, one-to-one connections were valuable to people. Individuals would be willing to purchase a subscription to the site in order to regain lost connections with past friends (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009).

In 1997, another social networking site appeared. This one acted on a theory that a connection with an individual did not have to be direct in order to be significant. SixDegrees.com allowed users to create profiles and to connect with others who shared similar interests or to those who had mutual friends. The creation of profiles would later become a significant component for social networking sites. Profiles would allow users to create online identities that expressed their creativity and uniqueness. SixDegrees was unable to retain user support and in 2000, the site stopped offering its services (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Between the years of 1997 and 2002, several other social networking sites followed SixDegrees including: LiveJournal, AsianAvenue, LunarStorm, MiGente, and Friendster (boyd & Ellison, 2008; Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009). Each

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had a specific niche of users and each seemed to meet the unique needs of their users. LiveJournal, more than any of the others, was perhaps one of the most instrumental trendsetters for the social networking sites of today. LiveJournal allowed its users to create journal entries about topics of their choosing and to read the entries created by their friends. What made the site truly unique, however, was that it also allowed its users to create privacy settings to control who was allowed to read a posted entry (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009). Due largely to concerns raised by the potential dangers to under-aged users, privacy settings have become an important part of today's social networking sites.

MySpace.com was launched in 2003 and marked the beginning of a mainstreamed set of social networking sites. MySpace was attractive to users, because it allowed them increased freedom in the designing and development of their individual profiles. Unique backgrounds and personalized layouts helped users express their creativity and to differentiate themselves from others within the site. boyd and Ellison (2008) noted that the majority of users on MySpace could be broken into three distinctive groups: musicians/artists, teenagers, and post-college users. Rather than alienate a population of potential users, MySpace changed its policy to allow minors to access and use the site. While this helped the site create a strong base of users, it also caused a number of safety issues to arise (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009).

A number of sexual interactions between adults and minors were attributed to the site including a 21-year-old man who sexually assaulted a 15-year-old girl he met on MySpace (Bahney, 2006). Fears of sexual predators using the site to take

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advantage of underage users caused widespread concern and even prompted an *NBC Dateline* series in 2004 entitled *To Catch a Predator* which revolved almost solely around capturing men in the act of meeting teenagers they had met on the Internet (Bahney, 2006). Despite these allegations, MySpace remained among the most popular social networking sites in the United States (Fleming, 2008).

In 2004, a Harvard sophomore named Mark Zuckerberg created a new social networking site called Facebook. Initially, the site was designed to be used exclusively by those who were affiliated with Harvard. A user needed to have a harvard.edu email account to gain access (Cassidy, 2006). Within the first month of the site's startup, half of the undergraduate student population at the school had signed up. The popularity of the site spread, and within two months of its conception other Boston-area schools such as Stanford, Columbia, Yale Universities, Northeastern University, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston University, and Boston College were allowed access to the site (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009). By the end of that year, Facebook boasted more than one million registered users (Fleming, 2008).

Eventually, Facebook allowed all colleges and universities access to the site and as it continued to grow, it quickly realized a market beyond the initial niche of just those within higher education. By September of 2005, Facebook had expanded to include high school students (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). By the end of 2005, the site was being used at over 2,000 colleges and universities as well as 25,000 high schools within the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada, and it ranked seventh among the most popular websites on the Internet (Aleman & Wartmat, 2009;

Cassidy, 2006). By September of 2006, an estimated 9.5 million users were registered

with Facebook (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Facebook experienced a surge of support from countries around the world.

Turkey, Australia, France, Sweden, Norway, Colombia, South Africa, Germany, and

Spain were among the first to gain access to the site. Soon the site became a global

phenomenon. Eventually, to meet an ever growing demand, Facebook removed its

restrictions and opened the site to anyone 13 years of age or older who desired to

create an online account. By April of 2008, Facebook surpassed MySpace as the

leading social networking site. At the time of this report, the website had more than

800 million active users worldwide (Facebook Factsheet, 2011).

As with MySpace, Facebook has dealt with issues related to public impressions

of underage users as possible victims of online predators. Some researchers suggest,

however, that many of the fears regarding predators utilizing social networking sites

are inflated by the media and actual cases of underage children being coaxed into face-

to-face meetings with predatory adults are quite rare (Finkelhor, Ybarra, Lenhard,

boyd, & Lordan, 2007). Nonetheless, Facebook's policy of restricting users based on

age hinges on the honesty of the individual registering for a profile. It has been

reported that the site removes roughly 20,000 users daily who do not meet the age

requirement. Mozelle Thompson, the chief privacy advisor for Facebook, has

admitted that there is currently no means for immediately determining those

individuals who enter falsified information with regard to their age (Roth, 2011).

The creation and evolution of social networking sites, along with their viral

spread at a global level, has allowed today's college students to identify, build

community, and affiliate with others who are not only within their institution but anywhere in the world that has access to the Internet. Students are able to connect, communicate, and share thoughts and ideals through a few simple key strokes. The use of social networking sites has both perceived benefits and inherent risks. While college students are able to network with millions of other users, their personal information may be available to individuals with whom they would rather not connect.

Significance to Higher Education

The use of technology and the Internet by college students is not a new occurrence. The use of social networking sites by college students, however, is a relatively new phenomenon. Research conducted by EDUCAUSE Center for Applied Research (ECAR) began in 2004, as a means of mapping students' use of technology. At that time, ECAR reported that 69.7 percent of undergraduates were using social networking sites. By 2007, ECAR stated that 81.6 percent of undergraduates were using social networking sites. Most recently, ECAR found that 90.3 percent of undergraduates use social networking sites. Those between the ages of 18 and 19 reported an even higher rate of use at 95.4 percent, with more than three-quarters of those stating they used the sites daily (EDUCAUSE, 2009). It is apparent from ECAR's findings that the vast majority of college undergraduates are utilizing online social networking sites at some level.

As Cain (2008) is quick to point out, much of the early press regarding social networking sites was negative. Instances of students being disciplined by administrators for not meeting the moral code of conduct prescribed by the school, publicizing questionable activities such as posting photographs depicting underage

drinking, illegal drug use, or the posting of racially insensitive comments or blatant threats of crime can be found in abundance (Cain, 2008; Fleming, 2008; Lindenberger, 2006; Nealy, 2009). If one considers the millions of users on social networking sites, perhaps these instances can be discounted as the exception rather than the rule for those who choose to use the sites. Regardless, there are many who feel that higher education institutions will need to develop policies for students outlining what is acceptable behavior on social networking sites (Nealy, 2009).

While reports of the negative aspects of using social networking sites seem to have tapered, there are still many stories of insurance companies raising rates, lenders refusing loans, and employers either passing on potential applicants or terminating their services due to searches conducted on social networking sites (Bachel, 2010). Perhaps no group is more susceptible to having their personal lives scrutinized than those in education. As Manning (2010) suggested, teachers are held to higher standards than the typical professional. Therefore, when a teacher, administrator, or another who works with children is found to post pictures or comments of a questionable nature on their social networking site, it draws a greater level of attention and likely a more severe punishment. This has prompted some to suggest that higher education institutions may have a responsibility to educate their students, especially preservice teachers, on the potential pitfalls of social networking sites and the lasting implications for poor online decisions at an early age (Cain, 2008; Workman, 2008).

In recent years, researchers have begun to focus on the potential benefits that social networking sites can provide users. Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) found that when college students interacted with teachers via Facebook, and the teachers

provided a higher level of personal information about themselves, the students felt the teacher was more credible. This led to higher levels of motivation, affective learning, and an improved classroom climate. Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009) caution, however, that colleges and universities should not overstep with regard to social networking sites. Their findings suggest that most students utilize these sites primarily for social reasons, and not for formal academic purposes. These researchers did suggest that there are ways in which higher education could utilize Facebook as a tool to help students become more "settled into university life" (Madge et al., 2009, p. 152).

Researchers have also found that the use of Facebook has a direct correlation with higher levels of social capital, which, in turn, helps the user strengthen relationships and build a sense of community (Ellison et al., 2007). These stronger relationships may have lasting implications for higher education. Students have stated that one reason they leave an institution before completing their degree is that they fail to make social and nonacademic connections to their postsecondary setting (Louie, 2007). Tanner and Tanner (2007) confirmed this by suggesting that the "quality of student involvement is directly linked to the effectiveness of the undergraduate experience," or more simply put, "involved students stay enrolled" (p. 112).

At a more basic level, Tanner and Tanner (2007) also referenced Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The first, and most basic, is the physiological need of the individual or the general physical health of the student. The second is the social needs of the student. If students do not feel as though they are connected or belong, they will not feel secure. Insecurity could very well be one of the driving factors causing

students to either dropout of or not enroll in postsecondary institutions in the first place. It has been suggested that high school students are using social networking sites as a tool to help them determine which postsecondary setting would be the best fit for them (Bachel, 2010). Higher education may be able to utilize Facebook as a tool to retain more students by meeting their social needs, and at the same time present their institutions in a welcoming fashion to perspective students using the social networking site as a research tool.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative research study was to identify commonly held beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers with regard to their use of the social networking site Facebook. Facebook was chosen over other social networking sites due to its overwhelming popularity with college students and recent college graduates. The research sought to examine how and why these individuals chose to use Facebook, as well as to explore both the positive and negative implications felt by these individuals with regard to their use of this particular social networking site. The experiences ascertained from these preservice and early service teachers may identify implications for teacher education and may provide insight as to how higher education might better educate and advise students who use Facebook.

Research Questions

This study focused on preservice and early service teachers and their use of Facebook. The broad question which guided this qualitative research study was: What are the beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers who

choose to use the social networking site Facebook? Specifically, the following three questions were addressed:

1.   What gratifications are being provided by the use of the online social networking site Facebook?

2.   What are the uses of Facebook for these individuals?

3.   What have the experiences of these individuals been like with Facebook?

Theoretical Framework

This study is guided by two main theoretical frameworks. The first examines the use of social networking sites through the lens of the Social Network Theory. Also known as network theory or network analysis, social network theory has been used since the 1970s to systematically examine how individuals interact with one another (Freeman, 2004). Breiger (2004) defined social network analysis as "the disciplined inquiry into the patterning of relations among social actors, as well as the patterning of relationships among actors at different levels of analysis (such as persons and groups)" (p. 505). Similarly, Freeman (2004) defined social network theory as "a way of looking at society in terms of the interconnections among varying social actors" (p. 14). According to Freeman (2004) the paradigm for analyzing social networks dates back as far as the mid-nineteenth century, but it did not really take hold among researchers until the 1970s. At that time, Harrison White, a Harvard professor with Ph.D. degrees in both physics and sociology began teaching his students this theory. Consequently, an entire generation of Harvard graduates who entered into the world as anthropologists, social psychologists, and sociologists began applying social network theory.

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In an attempt to better understand how individuals interact with each other, researchers have utilized the Social Network Theory. Social networks, however, are extremely complex. Humans have varying degrees of involvement and ties with numerous individuals and groups. The connecting ties can be extremely strong, as is the case with spouses, families, and the closest of friends, or they can be relatively weak such as with acquaintances that one may know only distantly (Granovetter, 1973; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). Additionally, social interactions can occur at both a micro and a macro level and the two are not mutually exclusive of one another (Granovetter, 1973). These complex connections can be graphed using highly sophisticated computer programs, but they often result in intricate matrices, because they are bound and intertwined with both strong and weak ties and at different levels (Breiger, 2004; Freeman, 1978).

Krebs (2000) explained that social network theory can be used to break down complex human relationships by using the concept of nodes to represent people or groups and ties to represent their relationships. However, most human networks are sporadic and the scattering of nodes and their connecting ties often end up being disproportionate. Some areas of the network may have a large number of nodes and ties while others have very few. These areas with limited numbers of nodes and ties are referred to by Watts and Strogatz (1998) as small world networks. The term small world network is a direct reference to the small world phenomenon, also known as six degrees of separation. This is the idea that all people are only six connecting ties away from any other person on the planet and it was also the impetus for the online site

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SixDegrees.com, a social networking site that was active between 1997 and 2000 (boyd & Ellison, 2008).

Centrality is a term referred to by Freeman (1978) as a way in which to measure how important an individual is within a network. Degrees of separation, or the number of ties a node has to other nodes within a network, are one way in which to measure centrality. There are two other means of measuring centrality: betweenness and closeness. Betweenness is the level to which an individual acts as a bridge between different clusters of individuals. Closeness refers to how near an individual is to other individuals within the network and how well they are able to access information from these individuals (Krebs, 2000).

Additionally, the concept of social capital, which states social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups, can be measured using the Social Network Theory (Coleman, 1988). Social capital is loosely described by Williams (2006) as being similar to financial capital except instead of goods and services being produced, relationships are being created and with them the inherent benefits and possible risks. Helliwell and Putnam (2004), however, suggested that social capital gained through social networks is more likely to be positive than negative. Social capital may provide individuals with useful information from others within their network that could lead to anything from relationships with significant others to employment opportunities (Ellison et al., 2007).

The types of informational gains and opportunities potentially provided through social capital depend upon the type of social capital. Putnam (2000) suggested there are two different types of social capital: bridging social capital and

bonding social capital. Bridging social capital results when an individual makes numerous connections with others from different backgrounds and from other social networks. With this type of social capital, there is an increased opportunity to gain information and capitalize on resources. However, the connections made by the individual are typically not very strong and offer little emotional support. Bonding social capital results when an individual is deliberate and discerning when making connections to others. Typically, these connections are few and consist of very close friends or family members. With this type of social capital, there are not as many opportunities for new information to be gained or resources to be utilized, but it does provide the individual with more emotional support. Williams (2006) suggested that, while there are greater possible gains to be had through bridging social capital, both bridging and bonding social capital are important to individuals. Social networking sites can help foster both of these types of social capital.

The second theoretical framework guiding this study is the Uses and Gratifications Theory. An extension of media effects research, the Uses and Gratifications Theory began in the 1940s as researchers attempted to determine why individuals took part in certain media behaviors like listening to specific radio programming or reading newsprint (Ruggiero, 2000). The theory focuses on the individual and seeks to answer the questions of why people use a particular media and what gratifications they receive which make them want to continue to use the media (Katz, 1959; Ruggiero, 2000). Social networking sites may be examined using this theory to better understand how an individual user utilizes a site such as Facebook for their own needs (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Social networks existed long before the advent of the Internet. However, the number of connections one could reasonably have within one's social network was limited by constraints of the particular era. The arrival of widespread Internet use on college campuses, high schools, and most homes, as well as online social networking sites like Facebook, greatly increased one's ability to have vast networks of connections and with it increased amounts of social capital. Identified components of social network theory as well as the Uses and Gratifications Theory provided the framework used in this study to assist in understanding the complexity of the experiences, connections, and perceived gratifications by those preservice and early service teachers who use Facebook.

<div align="center">Researcher's Interest in the Study</div>

I am a doctoral student at a Midwestern university seeking a degree in higher education. Additionally, I am a special education teacher and have worked with students at both the middle and secondary levels. In 2006, I created a Facebook account as a way to stay in contact with friends and family. In a short period of time, I was connected with old high school and college friends. As an added benefit, I was able to follow my younger brother as he entered into his second year as an undergraduate and my sister as she finished her graduate degree. I also found myself catching up with cousins whom I had not seen or talked to in years. Facebook proved to be a terrific tool to stay connected to current friends and family as well as to reconnect with those long lost individuals with whom time and distance had consequently caused friendships to fade.

I soon realized that while Facebook had many great attributes, there were also some unforeseen consequences. In the last half decade, I have been inundated with "friend requests" from both current and past students. Additionally, I have recently received those same requests from some of the parents of my students. These are always difficult situations, or at the very least awkward situations. I have since stemmed these requests by changing my profile security settings to the highest level. However, I still receive requests from time to time. As a matter of best practice, I do not allow students or parents to "befriend" me on Facebook or view my profile.

I have come to realize that I had a natural trepidation about using Facebook because I had to adjust to and learn the technology. There are now those entering the final phases of their teacher education programs or their first few years in the profession of teaching who have been using Facebook since they began college, were in high school, or in some cases even middle school. Research suggests that these "digital natives" (Prensky, 2009; Tapscott, 1998 & 2008) have a different perception of such technologies than older generations less familiar with the technology, and "digital natives" have different expectations for its use. The literature on preservice and early service teachers' feelings, experiences, and uses of social networking sites, such as Facebook, is sparse. I am specifically interested in gaining a better understanding of the experiences that today's preservice and early service teachers have had with Facebook. Their stories can provide valuable insight for both myself and teacher education.

Bias of the Researcher

Maxwell (2005) argued that it is impossible to eliminate the theories, beliefs, or perceptual "lens" that a qualitative researcher brings with them to a study (p. 108). Rather than attempt to remove these, he suggested that it is better to understand how the researcher's values and expectations could influence and impact the study, either positively or negatively, and then take precautions to avoid the negative consequences. Strauss and Corbin (1998) also stated that, "We know we never can be completely free of our biases. We find it more helpful to acknowledge that these influence our thinking and then look for ways in which to break through or move beyond them" (p. 99).

One suggestion made by qualitative scholars to identify researcher bias and understand its implications, has been to keep a journal of the research experience and make notes of one's thinking during data gathering and analysis (Maxwell, 2005; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Glesne (2006) referred to this as a reflexive journal and suggested that the researcher should record their thoughts and assumptions about research being conducted and how it may be affecting the data collection process. Additionally, Glesne suggested that the researcher should record these reactions throughout the entire research process, so adjustments can be made along the way.

In an attempt to understand the beliefs and assumptions that I brought with me to this study, I kept a reflexive journal (Glesne, 2006). Within that journal, I recorded my understanding of what Facebook was and how I used it. I also recorded the reasons why I was attracted to it, versus any other social networking site, and what

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positives and negatives I had experienced through its use. Understanding my beliefs allowed me to be cognizant of the questions I asked during the interview process.

Another way in which I attempted to minimize my bias as a researcher was through utilizing member checks throughout the interview process and then again later during the coding process. During the interviews, I used phrases such as, "I'm hearing you say…" or I paraphrased portions of the interview back to the interviewee, allowing those individuals to correct any misinterpretations I may have made and to clarify anything that was unclear. During the coding process, I shared portions of the interview transcripts with the subjects to ensure that I was representing what they had said and their ideas accurately. According to Maxwell (2005), member checking is:

> the single most important way of ruling out the possibility of misinterpreting the meaning of what participants say and do and the perspective they have on what is going on, as well as being an important way of identifying your own biases and misunderstandings of what you observed. (p. 111)

Delimitations of the Study

1. All participants were either undergraduate or graduate education students or had recently graduated with an education degree from a Midwestern university with an enrollment of slightly more than 14,000 students.

2. Participants included upperclassmen in their junior or senior years in an education program and were either preparing for or currently participating in their student teaching experience.

3. Participants also included graduate level education majors who were completing resident teaching programs wherein they were getting on-the-

job experience within a K-12 school setting while also attending evening classes.

4. Participants also included those who had recently graduated with their education degrees, but had not yet entered the profession of teaching.

5. Participants also included early service teachers in their first or second year of teaching.

6. Students, recent graduates, and early service teachers were asked to volunteer to participate in the study.

7. The number of individuals who participated in this study was fourteen. The number of females in the study was eight and the number of males was six.

Definitions of the Terminology

The following terms are used throughout this study. They are defined here to assist in the understanding of the content of this dissertation. They are as follows:

1. *Preservice Teachers* are those who have declared an education major, but who have not yet completed their training to be a teacher. This study includes both undergraduate and graduate preservice teachers.

   a. *Resident Teachers* are a subcategory of preservice teachers. While these individuals are certified to teach, they are currently working toward a M.S. in special education through on-campus and online coursework as well as on-the-job experience in a school district/special education unit.

b. *Recent Graduates* are another subcategory of preservice teachers. These individuals have graduated and are certified to teach, but they have not yet acquired a teaching position.

2. *Early Service Teachers,* with regard to this study, are those individuals who have completed their training to be a teacher and are either in their first or second year of teaching within a school district.

Definition of Terms Specific to Facebook

1. *Chat* is a feature that lets users talk with other friends who are online in Facebook.

2. *Creep* is to view the content of another's profile. Typically this term is used when one is viewing the content of an individual's profile with whom they rarely interact.

3. *Block* is a function of Facebook that allows a user to place restrictions on another user so that other user is unable to locate the user's profile and subsequently cannot send friend requests, messages, etc. to that user that created the block.

4. *Fan* is a person who has joined a page because they like what that page represents.

5. *Filters* are used to separate friends into different categories with varying degrees of accessibility to one's profile.

6. *Friend* is a title given to a person after a friend request has either been sent or received by another and confirmed. It can also be used as a verb as in to friend a person on Facebook.

7.   *Friend Request* is an electronic invitation sent or received by members of

     Facebook. This invitation allows the recipient to confirm the request or

     to select "not now" to decline.

8.   *Group* refers to a site often created by an organization to promote their

     activities.

9.   *Like* is a feature that appears as a "thumbs up" icon next to something on

     Facebook such as a comment, picture, etc. and lets others know that you

     appreciate something.

10. *Limited Profile* is a profile with restricted access, so only certain people

     are allowed to view some or all of the content within the profile.

11. *Member* is a person who has joined a group and participates in activities

     within that group.

12. *Mini Feed* is a record of an individual user's recent activity on their

     profile with regard to what content or friends they may have added, status

     updates they have made, things they have liked, etc. The most recent

     Mini Feed updates are automatically sent to friends' News Feeds for

     them to see.

13. *News Feed* is a function that highlights what is happening among a user's

     friends on Facebook. News Feeds offer the "top stories" since a user last

     logged into their account. Typically, these News Feeds fill the user in on

     what the most recent change was to their friends' profiles.

14. *Poke* is a way to interact with one's friends on Facebook. It allows one user to send a virtual poke to another. It is sometimes considered a form of flirting.

15. *Privacy Setting* refers to the level of privacy of one's status updates, photos and information by allowing them to control whether these things are public (seen by all), just friends (seen only by the user's friends), or custom (seen by friends, friends of friends, specific people or lists of people, or just the user). Custom also allows the user to hide specific things from the view of selected individuals or lists of people.

16. *Profile* is a page created by someone within Facebook that allows them to share information about themselves such as their work, education, interests, relationship status, and contact information. It also allows them to post pictures, make and receive comments on walls, as well as to send and receive messages.

17. *Profile Picture* is the picture chosen by the individual user to be their main picture that is seen by their friends or by those who may search for them on Facebook.

18. *Status* or Status Updates are similar to a blogging function in that they allow users to inform friends of their current thoughts, actions, plans, etc.

19. *Tag* is to identify someone or be identified by someone on an image posted to a profile on Facebook. If an individual is tagged in a photograph, that picture then appears on their profile.

20. *Unfriend* is a function that allows a user to remove another from their friends list and, depending upon their privacy settings, keeps them from being able to view their profile.

21. *Untag* is a function that allows a user to remove their name from an image in which they have been tagged.

22. *Updates* are news feeds that are sent to a user from the groups they have joined.

23. *Wall* is a section on every user's Facebook profile page that allows friends and users themselves to post messages for all to see.

Organization of the Study

Chapter I was an introduction to my research that provided an insight into my interest in conducting this study. The chapter also framed the problem and its context within higher education while giving a succinct history of how social networking sites have evolved over time. Additionally, the purpose of this study, the guiding theoretical framework, delimitations of the study, and the researcher's bias were included within this chapter. Finally, a brief description of terminology used throughout the remaining chapters was also provided.

Chapter II is a compilation of the professional literature that I reviewed on the use of social networking sites and its implications for higher education. Specifically, I sought to review the findings of previous studies regarding the use of social networking sites by preservice or early service teachers.

Chapter III contains a description of the methods and procedures that I utilized in conducting this study. Included in this chapter is a description of the qualitative

methods and procedures that I used to conduct this study. The selection of the participants and how their anonymity was protected, the guiding research questions, as well as the methods used for data collection and analysis are also included. Finally, the procedures I used to ensure validity in the data analysis process can be found in this chapter.

Chapter IV is a presentation of the data with respect to the literature. Narratives of the participants within the study and large portions of their interviews are used to give the reader insights into their backgrounds and their beliefs and perceived experiences with Facebook.

Chapter V is an interpretative commentary on the categories, themes, and assertions that emerged from my data. Additionally, this chapter contains a summary of the research study, conclusions with reference to the literature, and recommendations related to this study.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The peer reviewed literature concerning Facebook and the issues that it

presents to higher education is growing; however, it continues to be sparse. The

literature available with regard to Facebook and preservice or early service teachers is

nearly non-existent. This chapter includes a deeper look at the available literature

regarding previous studies of the use of Facebook by college students, especially those

studies related to preservice or early service teachers, and the implications for higher

education. The content of this chapter is divided into two sections: (a) Facebook and

Issues in Higher Education, and (b) Facebook and Preservice/Early Service Teachers.

Facebook and Issues in Higher Education

Through my research, I found many opinion based articles that offered

suggestions on how people involved in higher education ought to use or refute the

technology of Facebook (Fleming, 2008; Nealy, 2009; Schwartz, 2009; Workman,

2008). There were, however, far fewer research based studies to support the claims

being made. I was able to locate three studies that centered on Facebook and its

implications for higher education. These studies revolved around questions of how

educators at the collegiate level could use the technology, or if they should use the

technology to reach or motivate college students.

Mazer et al. (2007) addressed the issue of teacher self-disclosure within Facebook and its acceptance by college students through a study they conducted with 133 undergraduate students at a Midwestern university. The researchers wanted to gain a better understanding of what college students thought about varying levels of teacher self-disclosure through Facebook. They defined self-disclosure as, "any messages about the self that a person communicates to another" (p. 1). While not uncommon for teachers to share information about themselves throughout a semester long course, by relaying personal stories, the authors suggested that the use of Facebook provided a unique opportunity for college teachers to self-disclose online. For the purpose of their study, the researchers created three fictitious teacher profiles wherein they manipulated the photographs, biographical information, and wall posts to reflect either high, medium, or low levels of self-disclosure. Students were asked to browse one of these profiles, develop an impression of what it would be like to be taught by that teacher, and then complete a questionnaire.

Results of the Mazer et al. (2007) study indicated that many of those students who viewed the profiles deemed to be at either a high or medium level of self-disclosure responded positively when giving their comments about the fictional teacher. One comment made was, "I think that as a teacher I would get along with her because of our common characteristics" (p. 11). A smaller number of students, approximately 20 percent of those participating, provided some negative comments such as, "The teacher loses her professional image with the Facebook profile" (p. 11). Over half of the students who were assigned the teacher profile with the lowest level

of self-disclosure responded that they were unable to develop an impression due to the relatively small amount of information provided.

Mazer et al. (2007) concluded that there was a positive association between the perceptions college students held of their teachers and that teacher's level of self-disclosure on Facebook. The authors suggested that the use of Facebook by teachers could provide a model for how one's profile might be used to build rapport with students, increase student involvement, and possibly act as a positive model for appropriate profile use. They cautioned, however, that even if one was diligent about how strategically revealed photographs and other personal information used in their self-disclosure are shared, it would still be possible for defamatory remarks to be made on and within the profile by those who would have access, and this could have a direct impact upon the teacher's credibility.

Another research study regarding Facebook and higher education was conducted at a British university. This study sought to gain insight into how first year students used Facebook for social integration into campus life as well as for any academic purposes. The researchers (Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009) had 213 students complete an online survey asking them about their use of Facebook. The responses revealed that many of those students had used Facebook as a way to meet others who were living in the same resident halls or who were taking the same courses. While using Facebook to create new connections within the university, the vast majority of these students also reported that they used it to maintain the ties they had with previous high school friends.

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Students' beliefs of the appropriateness of using Facebook as a formal academic tool were divided. Those who were opposed to it being used for formal academic purposes referenced their beliefs that it was for social networking, procrastinating, and otherwise escaping from the work associated with university life. Others believed that Facebook could be used as an academic tool largely by way of having groups specific to individual courses or degrees offered by the university. Another suggestion was to use Facebook as a way of posting notices or getting information out to students rather than through the university e-mail system, which was used far less frequently by these students than Facebook. However, when asked if they would consider it appropriate for staff from the university to contact them directly via Facebook, the majority of the students were opposed to the idea (Madge et al., 2009).

The authors of the Madge et al. study concluded that universities should use caution with regard to invading students' social networking space for formal academic purposes. However, the use of Facebook groups (e.g. resident halls, courses, departments) to offer support and provide information could result in greater levels of involvement and collaboration among students. Therefore, while Facebook may not be considered appropriate for formal academic purposes by students, it is not completely devoid of academic value (Madge et al., 2009).

Baran (2010) conducted a study in Turkey wherein she asked her undergraduate students to take part in a 12-week course that incorporated Facebook as a main component. She created a group on Facebook and asked her 32 students to join the group. They were then responsible for building a library of links, videos, and

pictures within this group. She advised them that they would be graded on their participation through Facebook. The goal of her study was to discover what those students thought about having to use Facebook in an academic application.

Baran (2010) found that the majority of her students felt Facebook could be used as a viable educational tool, but many were undecided as to whether it was of high value to teaching. All of her students felt it was appropriate for a teacher to utilize Facebook to communicate with students, although some expressed negative opinions about her disclosing personal information and pictures through Facebook. It should be noted that these negative opinions came from roughly 20 percent of those who took part in the study, and this number is consistent with the findings of Mazer et al. (2007).

Baran (2010) concluded that the level of connection felt by the students with one another and their connectedness to her were positively correlated to the use of Facebook as an academic tool. Over half of the students felt that using Facebook helped them to get to know their classmates better and over 80 percent of them stated that it helped them to remain in contact with their teacher throughout the course. The researcher warned that not all students may be ready to embrace Facebook as an academic tool, and even those who are may tend to use it more informally than other conventional educational technologies (Baran, 2010).

Facebook Use and Preservice/Early Service Teachers

The literature containing research studies specifically concerning preservice and early service teachers and their use of online social networking sites such as Facebook is extremely sparse. There are, however, a few researchers who have begun

to address questions in this area. In the paragraphs that follow, three of these studies are reviewed.

A study conducted by Foulger, Ewbank, Kay, Popp, and Carter (2009) sought to discover the perspectives of preservice teachers with regard to ethical dilemmas involving online social networking sites. Their study targeted 68 freshmen education majors. These individuals took part in an online homework process which asked them to submit anonymous reflections on two hypothetical scenarios regarding ethical issues regarding online social network use by teachers. The first scenario involved a female middle school teacher who received several student friend requests online. While she did not accept any of them, she did look at some of their profiles. Upon doing so, this teacher found "disturbing images" of one of her students. The teacher chose to call the student's parents to inform them of the discovery. The parents became angry and accused the teacher of "stalking" students online. They reported the teacher, and as a result, the school board was considering disciplinary action against the teacher.

The second scenario created by the researchers (Foulger et al., 2009) involved a male middle school teacher who declined a student's face-to-face request during class to friend him online. After class, however, the teacher decided to search the student online because he was "curious." The teacher found evidence of students drinking and smoking through postings on their Facebook pages. The teacher chose to contact the parents of these students to make them aware of what he had found. The parents' reaction was one of anger toward the teacher, and they accused him of being a "child predator," because he was looking students up online. These parents chose to

call the school principal, and as a result, the teacher could face possible disciplinary action by the school board.

Foulger et al. (2009) found that two central issues arose from their students' responses to the hypothetical scenarios. The first was appropriate conduct by teachers with regard to their use of social networking sites. While most of the participants felt that teachers should be able to utilize sites such as Facebook, they tended to be divided with regard to whether or not it was appropriate for the teachers to view the profiles of students. Some argued that the sites were public and therefore open to be viewed by all. Others felt the teachers had violated the privacy of their students by "snooping," or "spying" on the kids through their profiles (Foulger et al., 2009).

The fact that some students felt online profiles, even if they could be accessed publicly by anyone who chose to do so, were somehow private in nature was interesting. The authors (Foulger et al., 2009) made reference to this in their study and suggested that a level of misunderstanding exists among college students regarding their belief in the privacy afforded them with regard to the information posted on sites such as Facebook. The researchers suggested that this may be an area of potential ethical vulnerability among preservice and even early service teachers.

The second central issue found by the responses given in the Foulger et al. (2009) study was that of the authority of a teacher within the realm of an online social networking site such as Facebook (Foulger et al., 2009). Participants in the study seemed to have differing views with regard to the boundaries of a teacher's jurisdiction and responsibilities. While some defended the teachers' actions as being an extension of their concern for the students, other respondents suggested that the

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authority of the teachers did not reach beyond the confines of the school building. As such, these respondents felt that it was not the teachers' place to inform the parents of any wrong doing or disturbing images.

Foulger et al. (2009) stated that some research indicates students generally believe a teacher's authority is limited to the borders of their school. However, the fact that the participants in this study were in disagreement about the boundaries of a teacher's jurisdiction suggests social networks may be blurring the margins between where a teacher's authority and responsibility begins and ends. The researchers feel that if this is the case, it may represent another area of potential ethical vulnerability for preservice and even early service teachers.

Results of the Foulger et al. (2009) study suggested that the students who submitted reflections for the study felt there was a need for clearer policies to be put into place by schools to assist teachers in knowing what they could and could not do within online social networking sites. Suggestions for future research included conducting a study with preservice teachers who were nearing the end of their coursework in education (Foulger et al., 2009). This particular study focused primarily on preservice teachers' attitudes toward school policies dealing with online social networking use by teachers. It did not seek to discover the beliefs or experiences of preservice teachers with regard to their own use of social networking sites. Only one preservice teacher in the study questioned the idea of teachers needing to be held to a higher standard of conduct with regard to these sites. This individual was quoted as saying, "When do we cross the line to what someone is allowed to do

on their own personal time? As a teacher, is even our free time to be dictated by the

school board?" (p. 17).

Another study, conducted by Olson, Clough, and Penning (2009), investigated

how elementary education preservice teachers portrayed themselves on Facebook.

The researchers emphasized the National Councils for Accreditation of Teacher

Education (NCATE) and the importance placed on dispositions (values and

professional ethics) of preservice teachers and suggested that the assessment of

dispositions goes beyond-classroom walls. Facebook pages of 471 teachers in training

enrolled in a college level elementary education program were accessed using normal

Facebook searches. Next, five areas were assessed: photos, information, groups, main

photo, and the wall. Each of the five areas was coded as inappropriate, marginal, or

appropriate depending upon the content.

Findings of Olson et al.'s (2009) research showed that of the 471 students

enrolled within the elementary education program, 76 percent had a profile on

Facebook. Of that 76 percent, 32 percent had profiles that were fully accessible and

44 percent had profiles that allowed only restricted access. The researchers found that

over half of the fully accessible Facebook profiles contained material that was deemed

inappropriate. The majority of the inappropriate material found within these profiles

occurred in the groups section, which contained a high number of vulgar statements

and also references to alcohol, and in the photos section, which depicted a number of

images of students with alcohol. It was noted that half of the students pictured

drinking were under the legal drinking age at the time of the photos. Interestingly, the

researchers stated that six months after their study was completed, they reexamined

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the Facebook profiles of those students who had graduated and went on to be employed in full-time teaching positions. They found that while a number of additional photos had been added to the profiles, few individuals removed material that had been deemed inappropriate by the researchers.

This particular study showed the nature of some of the content that students post within their Facebook profiles. Additional insight into why these preservice teachers chose to display pictures of drinking or lewd acts, or why they chose to post vulgar comments on their profiles could have been gained had the students been asked to respond to questions regarding their Facebook pages. This study only looked at the actual Facebook pages of the students and did not go beyond what was visible upon surface inspection. In doing so, however, it helped prove that with relative ease, students, parents, and administrators could have accessed the pages of these preservice teachers and a number of negative consequences may have resulted.

Martinez-Aleman and Wartman (2009) conducted a study that looked both at Facebook profiles and directly interviewed the college students who created them. A total of 20 undergraduate students were interviewed by the researchers. The participants were from a variety of residential institutions and majors. The researchers reported on one sophomore male preservice teacher within their findings. They referred to him as Jordan. Jordan stated that he liked to exaggerate how he presented himself on Facebook in order to be funny. The example given was that under the hobbies section of his profile he wrote, "going to church and voting Republican" because he was attending a liberal school, and he just "wanted to be that guy" (p. 61).

When the researchers asked Jordan about pictures they found of him on his profile that related to drinking (the student was under the legal drinking age), he replied that he rarely censored what was posted on the profile. It was noted that most of the pictures on the profile had been uploaded by others and he had just been tagged in them, but the end result was still that they appeared on his Facebook profile. Jordan did not mind the pictures showing him at parties or drinking because he stated the behavior represented his personality. "I present myself like a party guy. I like to go to parties. I like to be out" (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009, p. 62).

When the researchers (Martinez-Aleman & Wartman, 2009) asked Jordan if he believed his profile would change as he progressed through his collegiate career, he responded that he had thought about making changes to his profile after graduation. He stated, "Apparently when I go get a job as a teacher, I'm supposed to untag all the pictures of me drinking and stuff like that" (p. 65). Interestingly, the researchers discovered that the idea of public accountability for the content posted within Jordan's Facebook page had come from older students whom he had worked with during field experiences and not through any administrative authority associated with the school.

Summary

The primary purpose of this literature review was to identify and examine those studies that were relevant to Facebook and its impact on higher education as well as its implications for preservice and early service teachers. Findings suggest that the likelihood of effectively using Facebook as a formal educational tool is not high. However, Facebook could be used as an informal educational tool through the use of groups related to courses, programs, etc. In addition, it may serve as a way to increase

student involvement and foster connections among those within certain classes. Collegiate educators may also be able to use Facebook as a way to connect and build rapport with students through self-disclosure, but caution needs to be used.

Preservice, and perhaps early service teachers as well, may benefit from clear policies guiding the expectations of schools with regard to their use of social networking sites like Facebook. These individuals may still be struggling with issues of what is public versus what is private within the realm of social networking sites. The research suggests there are a number of preservice and early service teachers who may be posting things on their Facebook pages that could be perceived as unbecoming of a teacher. Whether they are unaware or unwilling to edit and otherwise censor their profiles is unclear. Research in the area of the beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers with regard to Facebook is minimal at best. This study will seek to further the existing research regarding this topic.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to identify commonly held beliefs and

experiences of a subset of college students and recent college graduates with regard to

their use of the social networking site Facebook. Both qualitative and quantitative

methods have individual strengths and are typically used to measure different things

(Maxwell, 2005). A qualitative approach to research is one that makes the assumption

that reality is socially constructed by the perspectives of individuals, and the role of

the researcher is to attempt to understand some social phenomena through the eyes of

these individuals (Glesne, 2006). Qualitative methods can be used to gather

information about complex components of a phenomenon such as the experiences,

feelings, and thoughts of those individuals participating within a study (Strauss &

Corbin, 1998). This differs from the more statistical approach often taken by

conventional quantitative research which places more emphasis on numbers than

words. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative research approach has been chosen.

There are numerous approaches that may be used in conducting qualitative

research including: ethnographic research, critical social research, grounded theory,

and phenomenology (Cresswell, 1998; Giorgi, 1975; Glesne, 2006; Kaufman, 1994;

Kvale, 1996; Maxwell, 2005; Spiegelberg, 1960; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). For this

study, I chose to utilize a phenomenological approach to better understand the beliefs

and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers who use Facebook. The purpose of this study was to examine how and why these individuals chose to use Facebook. More specifically, it was of interest to explore both the positive and negative implications felt by those individuals with regard to their use of this particular social networking site.

This chapter contains a description of the qualitative methods and procedures that I used to conduct this study, which includes: (a) design of the study including participant selection, (b) descriptions of the participants and how their anonymity was protected, (c) guiding research questions, (d) methods for data collection and analysis, and (e) procedures for ensuring validity in the data analysis process.

Design of the Study

The study began with the research question: "What are the beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers who choose to use the social networking site Facebook?" The research examined how individuals use this site, as well as what fulfillments they gain through such use. Both positive and negative implications expressed by these individuals were explored. I determined a phenomenological study design was the most appropriate qualitative research method to glean the experiences of these individuals.

Phenomenology stresses understanding a given phenomenon through the eyes of the subject by attempting to record an open description of the individual's experiences. It hinges on the assumption that "the important reality is what people perceive it to be" (Kvale, 1996, p. 52). More concisely, Giorgi (1975) defined phenomenology as "the study of the structure, and the variations of structure, of the

consciousness to which any thing, event, or person appears" (p. 83). The phenomenological method, as described by Spiegelberg (1960), consists of open description, investigation of essences, and phenomenological reduction. Open description is the recording of individuals' experiences as they perceive them. This is followed by investigation of essences wherein the researcher seeks to find the commonalities that exist in experiences of different individuals. Finally, phenomenological reduction is employed to suspend prior knowledge or bias about a given phenomenon to come to an unprejudiced description of the phenomena in question (Kvale, 1996).

Participant Selection

Volunteers were solicited to participate in this study by the Director of Field Placement within the College of Education and Human Development at a Midwestern university with an enrollment of slightly more than 14,000 students. This gatekeeping individual had access to students who were in various stages of their educational careers. The study was explained to these students, and my contact information was given out. Specific referrals were also made by this gatekeeper, and these students were contacted by me either through their university e-mail accounts or via messages through Facebook.

For the purposes of this research, the participants needed to meet certain criteria. They had to be members of the social networking site Facebook and have an active profile. Participants needed to be a current Teaching and Learning student working toward either an undergraduate or graduate degree within the College of Education and Human Development, or they needed to be a recent graduate from this

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program. Additionally, graduates from the program who were in either their first or second year of teaching were eligible to participate within this study. Those who did not meet the required criteria were thanked for their interest in the study, but were told they could not participate.

Permission to conduct this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at the University of North Dakota and protection of human subjects participating in the study was assured. Those individuals who participated in the study were informed of the purpose of the research, the time commitment requested, and any risks or benefits from participation. The option to participate or withdraw at any time was outlined. After clearly and thoroughly reviewing the participants' roles and rights within the study, and answering any questions they had, the participants gave their written consent.

<center>Description of the Participants</center>

The participants in this study consisted of 14 individuals, six males and eight females, who were in various stages of their educational careers. All participants were either members, or recent graduates, of the same Midwestern university. Each was either pursuing a degree in education or had recently received their education degree. Two students in the study were undergraduates entering their junior and senior years. Four others were all entering their second year of graduate school. Five participants had recently graduated, but had not yet been hired by a school district. The final three individuals were all entering into their second year of teaching. All 14 participants were included in this study, because they each had user profiles on the social

networking site Facebook. A detailed description of each of the 14 will be provided in Chapter IV.

Prior to beginning my research, this study was reviewed by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). The study was given approval and an Informed Consent form was drafted detailing the purpose of the study along with the risks, benefits, and time commitments required by the participants (see Appendix A). Additionally, the consent form outlined procedures I would use to protect the confidentiality of participants.

Protecting Anonymity

Great measures were taken to ensure the confidentiality of those participating in my study. The following procedures were implemented:

1. The real names of the individuals in the study were not used in order to protect their identities and to ensure confidentiality from disclosure in any written reports, this dissertation, or journal articles that may derive from this dissertation. The actual names of participants and the settings they taught in at the time of this study, if applicable, are known only to me, the principal investigator. Pseudonyms have been given to each of the members of this study.

2. All records, including the audio recordings of the interviews have been securely locked in filing cabinets that are only accessible for my viewing, or the viewing of the IRB for auditing purposes.

3. Informed Consent forms were signed by the participants prior to conducting the research and have been locked in a fireproof safe separate

from all identifiable records. The IRB and I are the only ones permitted to access these forms.

Guiding Research Questions

In-depth interviews were used to gather data for this study. Before I could create an interview guide, I needed to formulate guiding research questions. According to Kaufman (1994), "research questions identify and specify the phenomenon to be studied" (p. 123). Creswell (1998) suggested that "a researcher reduce her or his entire study to a single, overarching question and several subquestions" (p. 99). The broad research question which guided my qualitative study was: What are the beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers who choose to use the social networking site Facebook? From this question, I was able to produce three subquestions:

1. What gratifications are being provided by the use of the online social networking site Facebook?

   a. Are these gratifications unique to Facebook or can they be duplicated elsewhere?

   b. What causes the individual to be attracted to the site?

2. What are the uses of Facebook for these individuals?

   a. Are the interactions on the social networking site primarily recreational in purpose?

   b. Do the interactions on the social networking site have any educational merit for the users?

3. What have the experiences of these individuals been like with Facebook?

a.   What positive outcomes have resulted from the use of the site?

b.   What negative consequences have resulted from the use of the site?

From these subquestions, I was able to create an interview guide (see Appendix B). This guide served to ensure that all topics were covered during the interviews, but the exact wording of each question and the order in which they were asked was unique to each individual interview and depended largely upon the interviewee's responses.

Data Collection and Analysis

Interviews and observations were used to collect data in this study. To begin, an interview format was used to gather data. Participants were asked to meet with me at a mutually agreed upon location and at a time that was convenient to both parties. Participants were then interviewed. A total of 12 interviews were conducted. While 10 of these interviews were conducted one on one, there were two occasions where a pair of participants chose to meet with me at the same time. All of the interviews lasted between 45 minutes and 90 minutes. The interviews, with permission, were recorded for accuracy and later transcribed for additional analysis. An interview guide assisted in staying centered on the phenomena of Facebook use by preservice and early service teachers (see Appendix B). As participants answered my inquiries, additional questions resulted from their responses. Flexibility in asking those additional questions was a central part of the interview process.

Observational data was collected following the completion of the participants' interviews. The need for observational data within this study was significant. It provided additional data to either confirm or contradict the information collected from

interviewed participants. I conducted online searches for the Facebook profiles of those who participated within this study. Using the same criteria as Olson et al. (2009), the information accessible to me was divided into three categories: inappropriate, marginal, or appropriate. It should be noted that I was not considered to be "Facebook friends" with any of the participants within this study; therefore my access to their information was as vast or as limited as their profiles' privacy settings allowed.

Each of the audio recordings of the interviews conducted with the participants was transcribed. As Seidman (2006) warned, once the interviews were transcribed, massive amounts of text resulted, and I needed to make decisions regarding what was most important and what could be eliminated. I used thematic analysis to make these decisions. According to Glesne (2006), this is the most commonly used means of data analysis. I coded the responses of the research participants and then separated those codes into clusters that were further analyzed. Those clusters were rearranged into categories that allowed me to make comparisons and determine patterns. Patterns within and between those categories resulted in what is known as themes (Seidman, 2006). Those themes were tied together to create a general description of the subjects' experiences (Creswell, 1998). Once the themes began to emerge, I used graphic organizers and other visual aides to assist in determining if additional data was needed to fill gaps in the research I had collected.

The data collection and analysis within qualitative research is an ongoing process that evolves and develops throughout the study (Creswell, 1998). As Maxwell (2005) suggested, I began data analysis immediately following the interview process

and then continued to analyze the data while new research was being conducted.

Glesne (2006) confirmed this strategy by stating that when data analysis is done in

conjunction with data collection, it allows the researcher the ability to focus and shape

the study as it progresses. This constant comparative method allowed me to

simultaneously code, compare, and analyze data while formulating new questions that

needed to be asked to gain further clarification.

My examination of the data resulted in codes which provided three distinct

categories representing common themes among those within this study. Stemming

from these themes were the following assertions:

1. Although their use of the social networking site changes and evolves as
   they age, preservice and early service teachers believe that maintaining
   ties with friends is an important function of Facebook and can be
   accomplished without direct communication, but direct communication is
   still highly valued with close friends.

2. Preservice and early service teachers are apprehensive about the negative
   consequences of having a Facebook profile, but they continue to utilize
   the site under what they believe are higher privacy settings or after they
   have policed their account because of perceived benefits.

3. As they mature, preservice and early service teachers create more
   stringent guidelines for who they will add as friends on Facebook and
   they believe a level of distance between their personal and professional
   lives is prudent.

The codes, categories, themes, and assertions that emerged from this study are summarized in Table 1. Chapter IV provides support for these categories and themes.

Table 1. Data Analysis.

Codes	Categories	Themes	Assertions
Friends/Family Relationships Sharing Creeping Events Transitions	Connections	The 14 participants in this study identified the importance of maintaining connections primarily with friends and to a lesser extent with family through the social networking site Facebook.	Although their use of the social networking site changes and evolves as they age, preservice and early service teachers believe that maintaining ties with friends is an important function of Facebook and can be accomplished without direct communication, but direct communication is still highly valued with close friends.
Pictures Comments/Posts Drama Privacy Censoring Miscommunication	Presentation and Misperception	All participants referenced varying degrees of concern and hesitancy regarding their level of self-disclosure and potential misperceptions by those who may view their account content and a need to safeguard against negative consequences. Observational data, however, suggests a divide between some participants' statements and actions.	Preservice and early service teachers are apprehensive about the negative consequences of having a Facebook profile, but because of perceived benefits, they continue to utilize the site under what they believe are higher privacy settings and/or after they have policed their account removing questionable content.

Table 1 cont.

Codes	Categories	Themes	Assertions
Students Athletes Parents Employers Academic Use High Standards Maturation	Professionalism	Participants within this study communicated an opinion that current students, athletes, and/or their parents should not be allowed access to their personal Facebook account.	As they mature, preservice and early service teachers create more stringent guidelines for who they will add as friends on Facebook and they believe a level of distance between their personal and professional lives is prudent.

Procedures for Ensuring Validity

The concept of validity is one that is discussed in many texts on qualitative research (Creswell, 1998; Glesne, 2006; Maxwell, 2005). Validity threats, or ways in which a researcher may be wrong, as described by Maxwell (2005), can be tempered by the use of strategies such as clarifying researcher bias and conducting member checks (Creswell, 1998; Glesne, 2006). To reduce validity threats and ensure legitimacy in my research conclusions, I used the following strategies:

1. I spent a great deal of time reviewing the professional literature.

2. I took notes recording observations and details about the individuals with whom I was conducting my interviews.

3. My interviews were transcribed promptly and accurately described the events I saw and heard.

4. I spent time reflecting on my own biases and how my experiences and assumptions may impact my inquiries.

5.   To rule out possible misinterpretations of what participants stated, I used

member checks to solicit feedback about my data and conclusions from

those I interviewed.

Summary

The purpose of Chapter III was to describe the methods and procedures used in

the current study to understand the beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and

early service teachers who use Facebook. This included a description of the

phenomenological approach I chose for the study, a brief description of the

participants who took part in the research, how their anonymity was protected, and

how they were selected. Additionally, the guiding research questions and how they

were used for data collection was discussed. Finally, the procedures used to reduce

validity threats and ensure legitimacy in the research conclusions were addressed.

In Chapter IV, data collected from the methods and procedures used in this

study has been presented and related to preexisting literature. Narratives will be used

to describe each of the 14 individuals in my study and their perceived experiences and

beliefs with regard to Facebook.

CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF THE DATA WITH RESPECT TO THE LITERATURE

The purpose of my qualitative study was to identify commonly held beliefs and

perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers with regard to their use

of the social networking site Facebook. The research sought to examine how and why

these individuals chose to use Facebook, as well as to explore both the positive and

negative implications felt by these individuals with regard to their use of this particular

social networking site.

In Chapter IV, I have used narratives to profile 14 individuals who were

undergraduate, graduate, or recent graduates from an education program at a

Midwestern university. At the start of this chapter, each of the 14 participants is

briefly described and portions of their interviews are presented for the reader. The

theories providing the framework for this study, as well as connections to the research

that this study seeks to build upon will be interwoven throughout these narratives.

Additionally, data collected through observations of each of the participants'

Facebook pages has been included to provide more meaningful insight into their

responses. It should be noted that some of the participants' privacy settings were set

to such a high level that I was unable to extract a great deal of information from their

profiles on Facebook. After each of the participants has been described and their use

of Facebook has been outlined, data from the overarching set of categories found to be

universal among their responses will be used to illuminate the commonalities and differences with regard to these preservice and early service teachers' beliefs and perceived experiences with Facebook.

For the sake of providing anonymity, pseudonyms have been used for those taking part in the study. I referred to the participants by the following names: Paul, Mike, Jill, Lisa, Megan, Katie, Neil, Terri, Lindsay, Carrie, Emily, Cory, James, and Kent.

<center>Description of Participants and Profile Observations</center>

<center>*Paul*</center>

Paul was 20 years old and entering his junior year of college as an elementary education major. Paul first began using the social networking site Facebook in 2006 when he was a sophomore in high school, although he stated that he had heard of it as early as his eighth grade year. When asked why he waited until midway through high school to create his own account, Paul said it was primarily due to the fact that his family did not have internet access at home until his sophomore year.

At the time of our interview, Paul felt that he used Facebook between three and four hours a night. During those hours he was looking at others' profiles, making comments on photographs, "liking" various things he saw, changing his status updates, or playing Facebook sponsored games. Paul referred to this last activity as a "great time killer."

Paul expressed that using Facebook helped him with his transition from high school to college. Although his roommate during his freshman year in college was from Colorado, the two were able to connect through Facebook the summer before the

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school year began. Through that connection the two were able to message one another, chat, and discover insights into what the other person was like through their pictures and interests. Paul recalled:

> I can't remember if it was him who added me or if I added him, but right away I looked through his pictures and stuff like that to see what his interests were and see stuff he did. When we first met we were already kind of friends, so that made it easier going from the transition of home to living with someone you don't really know. It just made it a little bit easier because we kind of already knew each other.

Paul's use of Facebook as a means of creating a tie with someone he had never before met in order to help him with his social integration into campus life supports the findings of Madge, Meek, Wellens, and Hooley (2009). The deliberate connection to his soon to be college roommate is what Putnam (2000) would consider a form of bonding social capital. The connection served to ease Paul's transition into his freshman year of college.

Paul stated he had between 300 and 400 friends on Facebook. He felt that 100 to 150 of those friends were individuals he connected with on a regular basis and who attended his university. He felt the remaining friends were either family members, or connections he had made when he was in high school. Paul conveyed that his primary use for Facebook was to connect with college friends rather than to stay in contact with old high school friends and acquaintances. While this runs counter to what Madge et al. (2009) found within their research, it may have been that Paul was simply

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distancing himself from his past connections in order to immerse himself completely in his postsecondary setting.

When asked about his privacy settings, Paul seemed certain he had them in place. After some thought, he concluded a "random person" trying to find his profile would only be able to view his "basic" information. Contrary to Paul's belief, I was able to find his Facebook profile and look at a great deal of his information. This included his address, e-mail, phone number, birthday, where he attended high school, his college major, religion, and current employer. At the time I viewed his profile, Paul was employed by the university's parking enforcement office. Underneath his employment information was the post, "I go around and give stupid people tickets that don't know how to park or read signs." While the statement might have held true to Paul's beliefs about those he had written tickets for, it might not have been the statement his employer would have suggested he use as his job description.

As I continued to read Paul's profile, I also learned he was a fan of the Green Bay Packers, enjoyed country music, and liked science fiction or fantasy books and movies. His interests included hunting, camping, bowling, and reading. Under the "About Paul" portion of the profile, he had posted, "I'm just the average dork that likes science."

Paul had just over 600 photographs on his Facebook profile that I was able to view. The majority of these were related to concerts, camping, hunting, fishing, or a trip to Hawaii he had taken with his family. There was only one image within all of these that pictured Paul with alcohol. He was posing with his mother as they were out to eat in Hawaii. The post below the photograph was from a friend who stated, "oh, is

the drinking age lower in Hawaii??" To which Paul replied, "i wish. dad thought it would be funny to put it there and then take the picture. it wasn't." Even though Paul explained the presence of an alcoholic beverage in one of his pictures, the image would most likely have been coded as "marginal" in Olson, Clough, and Penning's (2009) research study.

Paul's photographs were marked as "public" under the icon displaying who had visible access to the images. This suggests that his profile may be more accessible than Paul is aware. It also reinforces the findings of Foulger et al. (2009) that preservice teachers may have an ethical vulnerability with regard to how private they believe their content is on Facebook.

Mike

Mike was 23 years old and was entering his sixth year of college as a double major in secondary and middle level education with emphasis in social studies and math. He explained that during his time at the university, he was a varsity member of the football team and had also held a high ranking position within the student body government. Mike was going to be starting his student teaching during his fall semester. He also had experience working as a coach at the secondary level.

Mike first began using Facebook in the fall of 2006 as a college freshman. He stated one of his earliest uses of Facebook was to, "stay in contact with high school friends," which is consistent with the findings of Madge et al. (2009). In his first few years of college, Mike felt he used Faecbook frequently and admitted that he checked it multiple times every day. At the time of this study, Mike used Facebook once or twice a week as a means of communicating between friends. Specifically, he stated he

used it for organizing or checking on events. He was getting married, and Facebook was being used to invite people to the wedding dance. It had also been used to help organize his fiancée's bachelorette party as well as his bachelor party. To Mike, Facebook had "kind of turned into the new e-mail. That's the way I communicate with all my friends. It's not through e-mail. It's through Facebook." In their research, Madge et al. (2009) found that many users of Facebook check their profiles more frequently than their e-mail accounts.

Mike stated he had around 1,800 friends on Facebook, but he then further explained that this number was inflated because of his previous position in the university's student body government. During that time, he had used his Facebook profile as a means of creating groups, and otherwise communicating information and issues with members of the university. Mike admitted that there were likely 1,000 friends on his profile with whom he never talked. He felt that he was only close to about 100 to 200 of the friends he had on Facebook. When I asked him if he ever considered deleting people, Mike explained:

> I don't want to get rid of them. You just never know when one day you might need something. Those loose connections are there just in case. I guess that sounds really bad, but just in case anything ever comes up where I still have that connection. It goes back to the whole thing of it's not what you know but it's who you know.

Mike's use of his profile to create groups and distribute information regarding different political aspects of student body government is consistent with the research suggesting college students believe Facebook can be used as an informal educational

tool (Baran, 2010; Madge et al., 2009). Additionally, Mike's reluctance to delete

those friends with whom he was not closely connected because he may need them

someday suggests a desire to maintain bridging social capital wherein one has many

weak ties with others because of increased opportunities and potential benefits of

maintaining those ties (Coleman, 1988; Ellison et al., 2007; Granovetter, 1973;

Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Williams,

2006).

When I asked Mike about his privacy settings on his Facebook account, he

stated they were set to show only the very minimum to those who were not his friends.

When I searched for his profile, I was able to view some of his information. I was

able to see what city he was from, the city where he was currently living, his favorite

sports teams, athletes, bands, movies, and that his activities and interests included

playing sports and politics. I was also able to view 39 pictures on Mike's Facebook

page. Most of these photographs were connected to his college football team. They

were various action shots of Mike and his teammates during games, workouts, or in

the weight room. The remaining pictures were those that had, at some point, been

Mike's profile picture. These included pictures of Mike with his friends, fiancée, or

family. None of the pictures had anything in them that could have been mistaken for

alcohol or showed Mike in a party type atmosphere. However, one picture showed

Mike and a male friend sitting close together on a couch. The picture itself was not

inappropriate, but the comment under the photograph from one of Mike's friends

stated, "my nigga u needa call this pic no homo ha." The use of both racial and

antigay language within the post could be considered offensive by some. Aside from

this one comment, I found nothing in my observation of Mike's Facebook profile that would have been considered as even "marginal" by the standards of Olson, Clough, and Penning (2009).

Jill and Lisa

Jill and Lisa were friends who felt more comfortable talking with me together. They were both 23-year old graduate students entering into their second and final year of resident teaching. Jill was working with a special education program at a middle school and Lisa was working with a special education program at an elementary school. Jill said she began using Facebook in the fall of her freshman year of college. Lisa stated that she had created her profile the summer before she began at that university. While she already knew her roommate from high school, Lisa used Facebook to look up people who were going to be in her residence hall. This use of Facebook is consistent with the findings of Madge et al. (2009).

Jill and Lisa stated they both checked their Facebook profiles between three and five times a day. They each believed they had between 750 and 800 friends on Facebook, but they only considered 50 to 100 of those to be close friends. The remaining friends were those they had added out of necessity for a class, old high school friends with whom they were not very close, or as Jill stated, people she had "partied with." Both Jill and Lisa admitted that when they first began using Facebook, they would add people without much consideration. If they recognized the name or the face they would accept the incoming friend request. This changed as they got older. Now they only accepted friend requests from people they knew, saw on a daily basis, or who were family members.

When asked about the importance of privacy settings within Facebook, both Jill and Lisa stated that they considered their privacy settings very important. Both felt their settings were at a level which would allow only their friends to have access to any personal information or pictures they may have posted on their profiles. When I conducted my search, I had trouble locating their accounts. When I eventually was able to find their profiles, the information I could gain without being added as one of their friends was quite limited. Jill's profile revealed only the state in which she resided, the fact that she had recently installed Facebook Messenger on her iPhone, and that she had recently changed her profile picture. Her profile picture was the only image I was able to view on her account. This photograph was of Jill and a gentleman dressed formally, as if at a wedding.

Lisa's profile provided more information than Jill's, but it was still very restricted. I was able to see what university she attended and that Lisa studied special education. The high school she graduated from, her hometown, and her current city of residence were also listed. Her entertainment section listed country as her favorite type of music, and she included some books and television programs as her "favorites." Lisa's interests were her family, friendships, watching movies, and being on the lake. When I attempted to view Lisa's photographs I was presented with a message stating that she only shared some information with everyone. In order to view her photographs, she would need to accept me as a friend. I was only allowed to view her profile picture which was a headshot of her and a gentleman dressed in formal attire.

As with Mike's profile, I was unable to find anything within either Jill or Lisa's accounts that could have been considered to be inappropriate or even marginal by the standards used by Olson, Clough, and Penning (2009).

Megan

Megan was a 25-year old graduate student entering her second and final year of resident teaching. At the time of our interview she was working in a special education setting at an elementary school. Megan stated that she first began using Facebook in the spring of 2005 at the end of her freshman year of college. She recalled that a friend was the one who helped her get an account. Megan indicated that her initial use of Facebook was to gain information on a member of the opposite sex prior to speaking with him to set up a date. Satisfying her curiosity and determining if the young man in question was dating material can be explained as a component of the uses and gratifications theory (Katz, 1959; Ruggiero, 2000) as a desire to build social capital through information gained by her viewing his profile (Ellison et al., 2007).

From this initial use of Facebook, Megan branched off and began adding friends from high school and then college. This adheres to the research findings of Madge et al. (2009). Megan also stated that the ability to put up pictures was "huge," and it was something that she did at least once a month. However, because of graduate school, she no longer had much free time. As a result, her ability to spend extended periods of time at a computer was limited, and uploading photographs had become less of a priority. Since she had gotten her new phone, however, Megan found herself checking Facebook more frequently, but for shorter periods of time. She

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felt that she checked her account four to five times a day, and typically spent three to five minutes on the site each time she checked.

I asked Megan how many friends she had on Facebook. With very little hesitation, she told me the number was at least 2,000. She then laughed and said, "I know that sounds terrible." When asked how many of those she considered close friends, Megan admitted only 100 would fall under that category. She explained that when she first started using Facebook, she confirmed friend requests from people without hesitation. Sometimes these were friends from high school, people she had met at the gym, or just friends of friends she had never before met in person.

Megan's explanation suggests that her high level of weak ties connecting her to individuals with whom she knew only in passing or perhaps only through mutual friends was a result of being less discerning in her youth, ease of simply hitting "confirm," and a desire to create bridging social capital with numerous connections (Putnam, 2000).

When I asked Megan to explain why she maintained such a large number of loose ties, by her own admission this number was close to 1,900 individuals, she stated:

> With friends from high school, I guess it's like an ongoing yearbook. To see where they're going and what they're doing and who's in their family now… I don't know. It's still nice to see those other friends besides just those hundred. And maybe if you need help getting a job, you know? If you have those other friends and you're like, oh we went to college. I knew she was in the

education program, now she's living here. Does she know of anyone to help

me out with a job?

Megan's response is another example of a desire to have social capital; and

like Mike, who felt one benefit of keeping loose connections was the possibility of

increased opportunities, Megan believed one possible benefit of maintaining loose

associations could be the possibility of assistance with gaining employment. An

additional perceived benefit for Megan was to be able to follow her old classmates

from afar. The social capital Megan sought to gain through those connections was

information about their lives and the current events that those individuals chose to post

on their Facebook profiles (Ellison et al., 2007).

Megan reported that her privacy settings were set so only her friends could

view her information. However, when I searched on Facebook, I was able to locate

her profile with relative ease. I had access to all of her information, interests,

activities, groups, and pictures. Megan listed her current employers at a middle school

and a figure skating club. Her past employer was listed as an elementary school. She

stated her favorite book was the Bible and her interests and activities were coaching

figure skating, Special Olympics, and God. The information created an image in my

mind of Megan's values and beliefs. This image began to change as I moved into the

section of her profile that contained her pictures.

Megan had 1099 photographs on her profile at the time I made my observation.

These pictures were in numerous albums and they ranged in dates from 2006 through

2011. Some were of family gatherings. Others had been taken while she was on

vacations. More than 100 of these photographs were taken in what appeared to be a

bar or with alcoholic beverages either in the background or in the hands of those in the pictures. One picture showed Megan and another girl taking a shot with the caption, "It's not what u think…. oh wait a minute, it defintely is :)" Another was of Megan and a group of others holding shot glasses to the camera with a caption, "Tequila anyone?" Other photographs were posted that did not have Megan pictured within them, but would likely have been considered to be inappropriate by Olson, Clough, and Penning's (2009) standards. Examples of this included a girl wearing a silly hat to which one of Megan's friends had posted the comment "k queer! Lol." As was the case with the comment made below one of Mike's pictures, the antigay reference could be considered offensive. Another photograph was of a group of individuals carving pumpkins. One of the individuals in the picture had carved male genitalia into his pumpkin. Megan made this comment, "hahaha… Jim… you would make a penis in your pumpkin……… silly goooooose." A final example was a photograph of a young man in nothing but his underwear holding onto a bottle of liquor with a comment made by the individual in the picture that stated, "WOW, really Meg?! I love how I just have the full bottle in my hand at this point taking pulls, [expletive] cups lol."

Although Megan believed her privacy settings were placed so only friends could view her information, I was able to access everything within her profile. All of the photographs and their accompanying comments were available for the public to view. This supports the findings of Foulger et al. (2009) that an ethical vulnerability exists for some students regarding their understanding of what is private versus what is public.

Katie & Neil

Katie and Neil were 23 and 24 years old, respectively, and they were engaged to be married. As with Jill and Lisa, they felt more comfortable talking with me at the same time. Neil had just graduated in the summer of 2011 with a master's degree in middle level education. He had not yet acquired a teaching position, but he was working as a high school varsity basketball coach. Katie was in her second year of resident teaching, and she believed she would be graduating with her master's degree in special education in December of 2011.

Both Katie and Neil stated they began using Facebook in their senior years of high school. Neil said he was currently too busy to log onto Facebook more than once a month, but when he was in college full time he believed he checked his account at least once a day. Katie felt that she also checked it more when she was younger; but even now, she said she was able to log into her account nearly every day. Katie believed she had close to 2,000 friends on Facebook and Neil thought his number was around 500. When asked how many of her 2,000 friends she was closely connected to, Katie could not produce a number. She suggested that nearly 200 of those friends were people whom she may have known at one point, but no longer remembered. She believed around 500 of those friends were individuals she had met within her first year of college, but with whom she no longer maintained communication. When I posed the same question to Neil, he responded by stating, "For me there aren't any on there that I've had a legitimate conversation with since I graduated college." He further clarified that he would like to be able to log into his account and visit with people, but due to time constraints, he did not feel this was a possibility.

When I asked Katie and Neil how they felt their Facebook friend lists had grown to their current numbers, Neil suggested when he was younger he would add people he had just met. He admitted that oftentimes he would add members of the opposite sex on the off chance they would be compatible. He then looked at Katie and quickly added, "That was before we were engaged." Neil had little reason to worry. Katie laughed at him and added, as a single woman, she, too, had found Facebook to be an "appealing" way to connect with members of the opposite sex.

This account of how Katie and Neil used Facebook is consistent with research suggesting a desire exists to create a large number of connections through bridging social capital in the hopes of a perceived benefit such as a relationship (Ellison et al. 2007; Putnam, 2000). When asked why they kept so many friends on Facebook they no longer communicate with or, in the case of Katie, possibly even know anymore, both Katie and Neil stated it would take too long to go through their friend lists and delete people. Katie said, "It's too much of a hassle to go through that huge friend list. It just takes too long. It would take hours."

When asked about their privacy settings on Facebook, Katie stated her account was very private. She explained she had removed her last name from her account and this resulted in most people being unable to locate her if they conducted a search on Facebook. Neil stated he did not know at what level he had his privacy setting. For him it was not a concern, because he felt the information on his profile was appropriate for all to view.

When I searched for Neil's profile, I found it with ease. I had access to a great deal of information, even though I was not listed as one of his friends. As with other

profiles I was able to access, I could see that Neil enjoyed various musical artists, books, and actors. Under his interests and activities, Neil listed he enjoyed golf, basketball, and banana bread. I was able to view the 194 photographs Neil had on his profile. The majority of these pictures were of his baby nephew. Others showed Neil on vacation, spending time with his family, or posing with his fiancée. Only three images showed Neil with an alcoholic beverage in his hand and these were casual photographs where he was with his family. Olson, Clough, and Penning (2009) would have likely considered the images to be marginal, but the majority of his account was appropriate.

When I continued my search on Facebook, as she suggested, I had a difficult time finding Katie. I had to use Neil's Facebook to locate Katie's profile. Katie had removed her last name and was using only her first and middle name. I searched through Neil's friend list by using Katie's first name. When her profile popped up as one of three individuals named Katie he was friends with, I recognized her picture and clicked on the link to direct me to her page. Once there, I found that she did have some limitations set on her profile. I was unable to view any of her pictures, because I was not one of her friends. I was, however, able to view her information. This included her hometown, preference of music, and a list of her favorite movies. Under her activities and interests, Katie listed kids, friendship, reading, and Coca-Cola among several others. She also had three entries under her Notes section of the profile. The first was a narrative of how teachers make a difference in the lives of children. The second was a link to a video which no longer worked. The third was entitled "memories," and it asked people to leave a comment about their favorite

memory of Katie. This note was created in October of 2006 and there had been 24

comments posted by various individuals. Most of these comments were benign and

referenced funny things from Katie's childhood. Two were more risqué. The first

was dated before Katie had turned the legal drinking age and it stated:

> Probly a good time at anna's with jello shots… and helping someone and
>
> cleaning up their puke… and the WHOOOOOOOOOOOLE house at THREE
>
> in the morning!!! that was a good one… then we slept together in anna's bed!!
>
> haha!! WOW

The next referenced a party but it was more vulgar than alcohol related,

although it was also dated prior to Katie being of a legal age to drink. This individual

chose to write, "Prob when nature [expletive] me in the [expletive] at the senior keg

thanks Katie for ruining my life. I hate WATER now because of you."

At the time I located these posts they were five years old. It is my assumption

that Katie does not remember they are even a part of her profile. Nonetheless, the fact

that they were accessible by someone other than her friends confirms what other

researchers have found to be true of college students and a level of ethical

vulnerability with regard to a misunderstanding of what is private versus what can be

viewed by the public in online settings (Foulger et al, 2009; Olson et al., 2009).

Terri

Terri was 22 years old and preparing to graduate in August of 2011 with a

degree in elementary and early childhood education. She began using Facebook in the

fall of 2007 as a college freshman. Terri stated she had first heard of the social

networking site during her senior year of high school, but she was too busy to create

an account. As she entered college, she decided to create a Facebook profile because, "I left all my friends and family, so I kinda wanted to stay connected, and I knew all my friends were using Facebook... That's why I started." Terri's comment aligns with the findings of Madge et al. (2009) suggesting students created accounts to maintain ties with high school friends as they transitioned into college.

Terri felt that she logged onto her Facebook account once a day and would spend about a half an hour online catching up on the events her friends had posted. When asked how many friends she had on Facebook, Terri said close to 500. When asked how many of those she felt closely connected to, Terri replied, "I would say not more than 100 that I'm really close with." While she did not often communicate with the remaining 400 friends on her profile, Terri stated she liked to scan through her news feed to see if anything interesting had happened in the lives of those with whom she was distantly connected. Terri's desire to gain insight into the lives of others through her network of friends is consistent with the findings of Ellison et al. (2007) that individuals seek benefits, such as information, from increased social capital through relationships.

When asked about her privacy settings, Terri explained that her profile was extremely private, and only friends could see the information she had posted. Terri continued to tell me her profile was basic in nature. She had a profile picture, but did not have any of her interests or any personal information posted. Terri stated there were only about 20 photographs of her on Facebook, and those were ones wherein she had been tagged by others. When inquired as to why she kept her profile highly secure and basic in nature, she replied, "I don't see the point in sharing everything. I

think sometimes people share too much." When I searched for Terri's Facebook account, I was unable to locate her profile. I attempted numerous searches, but each produced zero results. The fact I could not locate her profile was consistent with her comments about the importance of her online privacy.

Lindsay

Lindsay was a 22-year old who had graduated in May of 2011 with a degree in elementary education. She first began using Facebook in the spring of 2007 as a senior in high school. Prior to having a Facebook profile, Lindsay stated she had a MySpace account, but once she began college, she discontinued her use of the page. She felt this was primarily due to the fact most of her college friends were using Facebook, and it was a more user friendly site. When asked how frequently she logged onto her Facebook account, Lindsay laughed and said, "Way too much. Multiple times per day. I was already on it this morning twice, so… Probably like six times a day." When asked what she did that required her to log on so many times throughout the day, Lindsay replied, "I like to see what my friends are doing. Sometimes it's because I don't have anything else to do, so you just look at the same things over and over again."

Lindsay felt she had nearly 300 friends on Facebook, but when it came to, "Actual friends? I would say there are probably 20 to 30 that I would actually talk to if I ran into them." When I asked her why she kept so many friends on her account that she did not consider "actual friends," Lindsay suggested it was because she wanted to be able to see what others were doing in their lives. Like others in this

study, Lindsay's response indicated a desire to keep a level of bridging social capital to maintain a degree of knowledge about her distant friends (Putnam, 2000).

Lindsay stated she had close to 400 photographs in which she had been tagged, and countless more she had uploaded herself. While many of these were her with family and friends, Lindsay admitted there were a number of pictures which showed her with a drink. She then explained her privacy settings were set so only friends or friends of friends could locate her profile on Facebook. She stated even within her group of Facebook friends she had varying levels of privacy. Lindsay explained that she had accepted friend requests from individuals who were friends with her mother. Rather than allow them full access to her photographs and information, Lindsay placed these individuals on restricted access, so they could only see certain things. As was the case with Terri, when I searched for Lindsay's Facebook account, I was unable to locate her profile. Various searching techniques all failed to produce results. My inability to find her profile confirmed Lindsay's comments about her level of online privacy.

Carrie

Carrie was a 23-year old who had graduated in May of 2011 with degrees in early childhood and elementary education. She was preparing to begin as a long term substitute teacher at an elementary school. She began using Facebook in the fall of 2006 as a college freshman. Carrie stated she had first heard of the social networking site from one of her older brother's friends, but at the time she thought it was "the stupidest thing ever." Once she started college, however, Carrie admitted, "I got it because my friends got it. Then I started using it and it was all history from there."

Carrie felt that she logged onto Facebook at least five times a day to check notifications or to see her friends' pictures and updates. When asked how many friends she had on Facebook, Carrie guessed between 400 and 500. She felt 150 to 200 of these were individuals with whom she was close, such as college friends, family members or a select few high school friends. When I asked why she kept the others as friends on Facebook, Carrie replied, "It's nice to see what they're doing in their lives." Carrie, like many of the others in this study, seemed to have a desire to maintain bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000), if for no other reason than to simply be in the "know" with the happenings of past friends.

Carrie stated that she used the privacy settings on Facebook and had these set so only select individuals could view the full content of her profile. She told me, "If someone wants to look up my name to search me, I know that nothing comes up except my picture and you can't click on my wall or info or anything." This statement proved to be accurate. When I attempted to search for Carrie on Facebook, I was able to locate her profile, but my access to any of the content was severely limited. The only photograph I was allowed to view was her profile picture. At the time of my observation, this was an image of Carrie dressed in a light fall jacket and smiling for the camera as she pulled a wagon containing two pumpkins. Her basic information listed only that she was a female. I was not allowed to view her wall, activities, interests, or any of the other offerings found on a typical Facebook profile. The only content I was allowed to read were the entries she had posted under her notes section. Carrie had two notes posted that amounted to no more than a pair of benign chain letters suggesting that if one reposted them, they would then meet the person of their

dreams. By Olson, Clough, and Penning's (2009) standards, everything I was able to view on Carrie's account was appropriate.

Emily

Emily was 22 years old and had graduated in December of 2010 with degrees in early childhood and elementary education. She first remembered hearing about Facebook from her older brother when she was a senior in high school and she began using the social networking site in the summer of 2006 before her freshman year of college. Emily stated that one of her main purposes for creating a Facebook account was because she wanted to meet people who were going to be attending the same university. This aligns with the findings of Madge et al. (2009) suggesting students created accounts to build ties with their college peers as a means of socially integrating into campus life.

Emily guessed the number of friends she had on Facebook was close to 1,000. Of those, she admitted a full two thirds were acquaintances with whom she no longer communicated. When asked why she kept these individuals as friends, Emily said this:

> I hate to admit it, but there are those people that I have no clue why I'm still friends with them, but it's just in case. I'm one of those just in case people. I save things just in case. I keep people friended just in case. Everything is about who you know now.

Emily's response was similar to Mike's regarding her hesitancy to remove those friends with whom she was not closely connected. She indicated a value in maintaining bridging social capital with multiple weak ties because of the perceived

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potential benefits (Coleman, 1988; Ellison et al., 2007; Granovetter, 1973; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Putnam 2000; Wasserman & Faust, 1994; Williams, 2006).

When asked about her privacy settings, Emily stated when she first began using Facebook, they were nonexistent. However, within a few months of creating her profile she began setting them so they were more restrictive. Emily claimed they were now, "very selective. I have only my friends that can view my pictures or my wall. Nobody can view my info." Her statement was confirmed as I sought to locate her profile on Facebook. I was able to find Emily on the social networking site by typing in her name, but when I clicked on her profile, I quickly found my access to be limited. The only photograph I was able to view was her profile picture which showed Emily in a white dress, posing with two other individuals dressed as though they were attending a wedding. The information listed under Emily's profile stated only the college and high school from which she had graduated, one favorite movie, three favorite television shows, and that she was female. As with Carrie, everything I was allowed to view on Emily's account would have been classified as appropriate by Olson, Clough, and Penning's (2009) standards.

Cory

Cory was 24 years old and had just started his second year as a sixth grade math teacher. He had graduated in the spring of 2010 with degrees in elementary and middle level education. Cory remembered creating his Facebook account in the computer lab of one of the residence halls on campus during his freshman year of college in 2005. He stated one of his first actions on the site was to search out old high school friends and then current college friends. This is consistent with the

findings of Madge et al (2009) that students use Facebook as a means of socially integrating into campus life, while at the same time maintaining connections to those from their high schools.

Cory told me he logged onto Facebook at least twice a day and more often on the weekends. He stated his main use of Facebook now was to maintain his connections with his friends from college. When I asked Cory how many friends he had on Facebook, he told me the most he ever had at one time was around 800, but the number was now down to 500, because he had deleted many he felt were no longer needed. Of those remaining 500, Cory stated 60 to 70 were family members, 80 he considered close friends, and the rest were just "socially friends." Cory explained he liked to keep up with the events of his friends' lives and that it was, "fun to see what they're up to on Facebook."

Cory explained to me that he actually had two Facebook accounts. The first was his personal account that he used to maintain his connections to friends and family. The second was a "student friendly" account. He created this profile because, "I had like 70 requests on my personal Facebook from all these kids. I just kept ignoring them and they kept trying to add me over and over again. It was crazy." Cory stated that this account was "very censored," but it provided some basic information and some pictures from a trip he had taken to Nashville and a Carrie Underwood concert he had attended. Additionally, Cory stated he only accepted friend requests from students after they were no longer in the same building in which he was teaching. The majority of the students he had on this account were from his student teaching experience. Nonetheless, Cory did state he had already received

friend requests from some of his sixth grade students. He explained, "They're just excited that you have it."

When asked about his privacy settings on Facebook, Cory told me he had them set high on both of his profiles. If someone was to search for him, they would only be able to see his profile picture and a very limited amount of information on his personal account. On his teacher account they would be able to view slightly more, but he reiterated that account was heavily censored. This proved to be true. I was able to locate both of Cory's Facebook profiles, but the only information provided to me on his personal account was his current employer, the college and high school he attended, four bands that he included in his favorite music, and that he was a male. I could not view any of his photographs aside from his rather benign profile picture which showed Cory posing with two other individuals.

On Cory's "student friendly" account, I was able to gain access to slightly more information. He had a total of 45 friends on this account. As with his other account, his employer, college, and high school were all listed. Additional information included his favorite books. Cory had two photographs visible on this account. Neither was inappropriate and one appeared to be taken in a classroom. Cory's wall had several posts, but most were listed for the benefit of his students such as, "Cory is gearing up for a new 6th grade year. I hope these kids can compare to my last group!!!" or "Cory is hoping that his former students are demonstrating good behavior. Bullying is becoming a huge problem. Please be respectful of other people regardless of their differences." I found no content in either of my profile

observations that could have been considered anything less than appropriate by Olson, Clough, and Penning's (2009) standards.

James

James was 25 years old and had just started his second year as a third grade teacher. He had graduated in the spring of 2010 with a degree in elementary education. James recalled first hearing about Facebook in 2004 as a freshman in college when a high school friend attending a university in Nebraska contacted him. Following his friend's recommendation, James created a profile as a way to stay connected to his high school friends who were attending colleges and universities throughout the Midwest. Shortly thereafter, he began adding new friends that he was meeting from within his own university. He explained that he frequently used it to learn about gatherings such as sporting events and tailgating. James' use of Facebook to maintain connections with former high school friends as well as to create new connections within his campus is consistent with the findings of Madge et al (2009).

When I asked James how many friends he had on his Facebook profile he guessed the number was between 400 and 500. Before I could ask him how many he considered to be close connections, James told me, "Realistically, I don't think there is anybody on there that I don't know." He continued to explain that he had deactivated his Facebook account shortly after starting his student teaching experience and had only reestablished the profile within a few months of speaking with me. When I inquired as to why he had chosen to disable his Facebook account, James responded:

When I was student teaching, two of my fourth grade students tried to add me.

I felt like, you know, maybe they are able to see some stuff and I don't want to

risk a college diploma or my student teaching because of something like that. That was the reason I got off for a while.

I asked James about his Facebook account's privacy settings when he was in college and if they were different now that he was entering into his second year of teaching. He explained that in college he did not concern himself with privacy settings, which explained how his students were able to find his profile. Now that he was teaching and had reactivated the account, he was certain his settings were at a level which allowed only friends to view his information. James stated his profile picture was actually that of a panther to symbolize his school's mascot. He did not want parents or students to search for him on Facebook and find anything that could be offensive.

James' statements regarding his privacy settings were confirmed when I conducted my search for his account. I was able to find his profile on Facebook, but I was only allowed to see James' name, a cartoon panther which he used as a profile picture, and that he was male. My attempts to find any other information were all met with a message stating James only shared some information with everyone and if I wanted to see more I would need to add him as a friend.

Kent

Kent was 24 years old and had just started his second year of teaching at an elementary school. He had graduated in the spring of 2010 with a degree in elementary education. Kent discovered Facebook in the fall of his freshman year of college through friends who were using the site. He created an account as a way to meet new people and to stay connected. Kent recalled that he would log onto his

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Facebook account four or five times a day when he was in college because, "It was something new. You were always wondering who was adding you or if you were getting a message from somebody." Although he stated he still used his account frequently to keep up with friends, Kent felt he was only able to log onto his account twice a day now because he was busy with work and coaching.

Kent told me he had just over 1,200 friends on his Facebook account. Of those, he felt 200 were actually close friends or family members. He then stated he had begun the process of deleting individuals from his profile. Kent admitted that when he was in college he was quick to add people who were only acquaintances, and this resulted in a number of individuals listed as friends whom he no longer recognized.

When asked about his privacy settings, Kent stated he did not know exactly how they worked, but he was sure he had them set so no one could see his photographs aside from his profile picture. He did know that he had accessed his privacy settings and changed them so they were higher now that he was teaching. When I sought to locate his profile through a Facebook search, I was able to find Kent's account, but my access was greatly limited. The only image I was able to view was his profile picture showing Kent wearing a dress shirt and tie with his arm around a woman whom I assumed was his girlfriend. The only information I was provided was that Kent was a male. Both James' and Kent's Facebook profiles would have been considered appropriate by Olson, Clough, and Penning's (2009) standards.

Interview Data

All of the participants in this study were asked similar questions during the interview process. Much of the data gathered from the interviews resulted from stories recalled by the 14 participants within the study. The conversational outline of the interviews sought to provide deeper, richer, and more vital data than a standard questionnaire. While an interview guide with a system of questions was used to provide structure to these conversations and to ensure that important topics were not forgotten, a number of additional questions arose during each of the interviews depending upon the responses of the participants. As the data was collected and analyzed, categories common among all 14 participants began to emerge into themes. These categories and themes are the following:

Connections: All of the participants in this study spoke of the importance of their relationships with friends and family, and how instrumental Facebook was in maintaining connections as they transitioned through major life events. The ability to post and read updated statuses, as well as to post and view photographs doubled as a form of communication, and provided the participants a feeling of connectedness.

Presentation and Misperception: Having others pass judgment due to the content of their Facebook profiles was a concern for those in this study. Participants acknowledged the potential for misperceptions of their character based upon pictures, comments, or posts that may be found on their profile but may not be an accurate representation of their true self.

Professionalism: Many of the preservice and early service teachers interviewed in this study spoke about a desire that existed within a number of their

students, athletes, and even some parents to befriend them on Facebook. All felt a

level of separation needed to be maintained between their personal lives, as displayed

on Facebook, and their professional lives as educators and/or coaches.

Connections

"If we both shut down our Facebook accounts, we would feel disconnected."

– Neil, Preservice Teacher

James, Kent, and Cory all expressed how Facebook allowed them to remain a

part of their friends' lives even from afar. Cory, who had taken a position at a school

four hours away from his friends, expressed when he was in college, "the majority of

my friends were in a condensed place." Now, these friends had all moved to various

parts of the state, country, or world. Kent and James also spoke of the transition from

college into the "real world." Kent referenced that his roommates and close friends

had each taken jobs as pilots in Houston and Detroit. James expressed when one

leaves college, "you leave all those friends too, you know, and you don't see them

every weekend or during the week at school or in class."

In their experiences, James, Kent, and Cory were able to catch up on the

activities and life events of their friends through the use of Facebook. While speaking

with these three, I got the impression they were all homesick, to a certain degree, and

utilizing Facebook allowed them to satisfy a need to stay connected to a community

they had been a part of for so many years.

Lindsay felt that Facebook had actually helped her to reconnect and reestablish

old social circles. When she left for college she slowly grew apart from her former

high school friends, but now that she had graduated and moved back home, she was

able to catch up with these individuals through Facebook and used it as a means of finding people to "hang out with on the weekends." Lindsay also stated that Facebook allowed her to stay connected to her former college friends and to follow their activities as they were doing things such as teaching overseas.

In my conversation with Terri, she seemed almost surprised by her continued use of Facebook as if she believed that it was only a passing fad; something to be left behind as she transitioned into the next phase of her life. After she graduated from college and moved, she discovered:

I thought maybe it would fade, like become an old thing, and I wouldn't be interested anymore, but I moved to the cities in January of this year, and I didn't know anybody. All my friends and family are [in a different state] and so I've actually started using it a little bit more often, I think. Just to stay more connected. Whether it's talking to them or just reading their status. It's kind of nice to feel like you know what's going on.

I found it interesting that Terri mentioned the ability to stay connected to someone without actually talking to them. For Terri, reading status updates gave her a sense of staying current with ongoing events in the lives of her friends. She continued to explain that without Facebook there were a number of people with whom she would have lost contact. She felt as though all of her friends were "off doing their own thing and branching out" and Facebook provided the means for her to maintain a connection with these individuals.

Emily also spoke of the difficulty of maintaining connections since graduating from college. She cited busy schedules and lack of time as the major hindrances to

staying in contact with friends. For Emily, using Facebook was a way for her to keep up to date with the lives of those who had gotten jobs in different states. Reading through her friends' profiles also allowed her to "stay in touch with friends without talking to them." Emily stated this was important, because even with those who were still in her area, most were too busy with new jobs to spend time talking on the phone or to meet in person. Like Terri, Emily felt Facebook provided an easy way to keep up with the events in the lives of her friends without actually speaking with those individuals. Through reading status updates or viewing pictures, she was able to feel as though she was still a part of their lives.

I discovered through my conversations with those in this study that the act of looking at others' profiles to gain insight into the happenings of their lives without actually speaking with those individuals had a name. Multiple participants in this study referenced "creeping" or "to creep" as one of their uses of Facebook. Cory defined this action as, "going on someone's Facebook wall and looking at their pictures. Someone you don't typically talk to like as an everyday friend. Just to see what they're doing." Carrie referenced looking through her news feed to see the most recent updates her friends had made. If something caught her eye, typically a picture, she would click on that individual's profile and see their current activities. She stated, "I guess you could consider it creeping, but I don't know. I just go in there, and it's kind of nice to get an update and stuff like that."

Despite the rather malicious name, creeping was considered by most to be a normal and acceptable function of Facebook. Although, Jill and Lisa mentioned it could be negative if people were doing it to "get into other people's business" or to

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discover the "latest gossip." Emily actually stated she had declined friend requests from her younger brother's friends due to the fact that she felt all they wanted to do was "creep on me." She conveyed to me that there would be no other reason for those individuals to want to be her friend.

Using Facebook to find out about the everyday life events of their friends by reading through their news feed, looking at pictures, or reading status updates was considered by all in the study to be an important way to stay current. Mike gave the example of a friend who played football for a different university, and had posted that he just had a hundred yard receiving game. Mike was able to see this information, and send him a message congratulating him. Others made mention of the importance of Facebook updating them when birthdays occurred, so they could wish their friends well on those days. However, major life events such as engagements or pregnancies were not viewed in the same light as football feats or birthdays. These events required more substantial and significant contact to be made with those the participants considered their close friends. This indicated there was a higher value placed on personalized contact versus mass distribution of information.

Neil and Katie referenced the importance of contacting all of their close friends and family personally before making the public announcement of their engagement online. Keeping their engagement hidden from the general public, however, proved to be more difficult than one would anticipate. Neil talked about the fear of people posting congratulatory messages on his or Katie's wall, essentially outing them, before they were able to finish telling their close friends and family. Katie confirmed this by saying:

I literally had to say, don't put anything on Facebook until I change it because then peoples' feelings get hurt. They're like, hey you didn't tell me. Why did I have to find out on Facebook? That's a quote you hear. People take it personally.

Jill and Lisa were two who expressed hurt feelings with regard to discovering through Facebook that their classmate had become pregnant. Jill stated that when she read the announcement online, "It was kind of like, 'Oh… I'm glad Facebook kind of told me, not really,' type of thing." Both Jill and Lisa felt that even a text or e-mail would have been a preferable way to make the discovery.

Carrie stated that when she had gotten engaged, she called a close friend to tell her the news, and a short time later this friend had posted a message to her Facebook wall referencing the engagement. The post was beyond her control, but it "triggered everything. Literally it was one Facebook post, but it triggered everything." Carrie explained, her friends on Facebook had seen the comment on their news feeds, and they also wrote messages on her wall. Before long, everyone in her friend list was aware of the engagement. Luckily, Carrie said she had gotten a chance to talk to nearly everyone she wanted to before the news became public, because she had not wanted those close to her to find out through Facebook. She expounded:

I think that's just horrible, and that's the reason why I didn't say anything, and I called everyone that I wanted to know. That's like the worst thing that I think you could do to a good friend or family member. Like, I found out on Facebook? Really?

When speaking to me about their use of Facebook, each of the participants in this study referenced a value and an importance in maintaining connections primarily with their friends and to a lesser extent with their families. For some, this was a central reason why they initially created an account. All of the participants in this study, with the exception of the youngest, Paul, began using Facebook within a year of starting college. Many suggested they used the site to maintain connections with classmates from high school while at the same time creating new relationships among those within their campus community. As these participants continued through their collegiate careers, each spoke of how their use of Facebook changed, but all continued to reference the importance of being able to maintain connections with friends and families.

The importance of maintaining connections was especially the case with those who had recently graduated and physically moved away from their circle of friends. Being able to share life experiences ranging from the mundane to the extraordinary through posts and pictures on Facebook was significant to those in this study. Seeing these photographs and reading these posts created a sense of connectedness even when there was no direct communication. However, for participants within this study, a distinction existed regarding which life events needed to be communicated directly to their close friends and family members, and which could be communicated through Facebook for all to see.

Presentation and Misperception

"To me, 90 percent of perception is reality." – Mike, Preservice Teacher

As was stated in the background section of this chapter, Terri explained to me that her profile was very basic in nature. It contained few pictures, little information, and was heavily secured through her privacy settings. Through our conversation, I found her dad, a "very conservative farmer," had instilled in her a need "not to be scared, but to be smart." For Terri, Facebook was more a tool for communicating and staying connected to others than it was for displaying her own life. She expressed a need and desire for privacy more than any of the other participants within this study. Terri summed it up by saying, "I'm more comfortable with keeping my life, my life, and I don't feel the need to share it with people."

Lindsay also expressed a parental influence with regard to her profile. She explained her father, a businessman, impressed upon her as she was nearing graduation that potential employers might be looking at Facebook as a means of determining who they would and would not hire. According to Lindsay, this became a topic of some debate between her and her father and she told me, "We had the whole argument: Well if I'm twenty-one, why can't I have pictures of me out with my friends and having a drink on Facebook?" Eventually, she conceded and went through her profile either removing some pictures altogether, or altering her privacy settings so the images could not be seen. Lindsay acknowledged she had gone through her profile the winter before she graduated, and untagged herself from roughly 100 photographs. She told me these were pictures which showed her out with her friends, and it "was fun at the time, but other people might not quite view it the same." Lindsay did not

want potential employers to judge her based on her actions as a freshman in college, "because people change a lot."

When I asked Carrie about her presentation of herself on Facebook, she told me she thought it was an accurate depiction of who she was as an individual. She did admit, "When I was in college, yes I partied. I'm not going to say I didn't… Now looking at my Facebook… someone would make the conclusion that I was a huge partier, which I wasn't." Carrie went on to explain while she may have had some photographs on her profile that could misrepresent her as someone who partied all the time, she did not have any images of herself that would give someone the idea that she was promiscuous. Carrie explained that she had seen these types of pictures on a number of girls' profiles when she was in college, and she felt they were seeking attention through presenting themselves in that manner. For Carrie, this was a very important distinction. She stated, "If some random person looked at my Facebook page, they would probably think that I'm a complete partier, but also, I wasn't the one who had butts and cleavage and pictures of me in swimsuits." I found this to be interesting. The other participants within this study all tended to only talk about pictures of alcohol or the references to alcohol that may have occurred on their walls. For Carrie, it was more egregious to have images representing one as wanton. This was certainly not a perception she wanted bestowed upon her.

In my conversation with Emily, I posed a similar question regarding her representation on Facebook. She explained to me the way she presented herself online evolved as she progressed through college. Emily was quick to point out that she was a very good student. She maintained a high grade point average, was involved in

different education associations on campus, and was a member of a sorority. However, "I got my work done, and I went out with my friends on the weekend, and I had fun. I was a typical freshman and sophomore in college." During her first years at the university, Emily stated she likely had pictures of herself on her Facebook that showed her out with friends and with drinks in her hand. As she got older, Emily felt as though she became more cognizant of the images she was associated with on Facebook. She went through her profile before she began student teaching. She reviewed her picture albums and old posts, and "just cleaned everything up." She continued to explain that in addition to removing questionable comments or photographs, she also unfriended individuals whom she felt could potentially post harmful content to her profile.

Emily felt she had to police the content of her profile more frequently when she was student teaching, because she had friends still in college. They might not have understood the potential implications of their posts. She stated, "Now I don't have to worry about it so much because the majority of my friends all have jobs, and so they are kind of thinking about that too." Having negative consequences result from the posting of information by others onto one's Facebook profile, was something Emily had learned from her boyfriend's brother. She explained he was going through a divorce and the court was determining who should have custody of the child. He had asked his friends to not post anything onto his account that could give people the wrong impression of who he was as a person. Emily was the only individual I spoke with who referenced others who needed to be wary of the content placed upon their

Facebook profiles. Most of the participants within this study seemed to indicate that the censorship of accounts was unique to those in the field of education.

Emily was not alone in her uneasiness of what others may post to her profile. Katie also broached the subject in our conversation by saying:

The biggest concern is other people writing something on your wall. You have no control over that, and what if it's something inappropriate? Or if they write something and you don't want it up there and don't have time to get it off and it can be perceived totally wrong?

It was clear this was something that worried Katie. She explained to me how she had gone through her profile and removed the things she anticipated as potentially being perceived the wrong way, increased her privacy settings, and even removed her last name to keep people from locating her profile. However, in spite of all these precautionary measures, this was something she felt was still out of her control.

Removing photographs as they neared the end of their collegiate career was common among the older preservice teachers in this study. Lisa and Jill both spoke of deleting pictures from their first and second years of college. They stated the reason for doing this was because many of those pictures showed them drinking with their friends. Jill explained she had deleted all of the photographs that she had uploaded over the years. The only ones she left behind were those that at some point had been her profile picture. She determined if the picture had been appropriate enough to be her profile picture, it was appropriate enough to leave on her account.

Lisa also said she removed pictures from her account, but then went a step further and adjusted her privacy settings so she was the only one who could see

photographs in which she was tagged. When I asked why she decided to take that extra measure, Lisa explained she had grown out of the "party stage" from her freshman and sophomore years of college, so she was not fearful of current images that may be posted to Facebook. However, she acknowledged the possibility that old pictures could resurface, and she did not want these to be made public on her profile. Even though pictures could be four or more years old, the perception might be that the photographs were current.

The fear of misperception and negative consequences was enough to prompt James to shut down his Facebook account while student teaching. When James finally reactivated his profile, he stated one of his first actions was to remove nearly half of his five hundred pictures. For James, it was vital that if a student or a parent attempted to find him on Facebook, there would be nothing offensive for them to view. James expressed pictures were only one part of the overall whole of his Facebook account that needed to be censored. The use of language was also important. James stated, "I would never post anything on someone's wall using bad language or anything, because I wouldn't want a parent to read that and be like, oh I hope he doesn't talk like this in front of my kid." Throughout our conversation, James continued to return to the prospect of a parent somehow being able to view the content of his Facebook account. The potential consequences of having a parent perceive him negatively caused James to carefully question all of his actions within Facebook.

Through my conversation with Cory, I discovered he had gone through his profile before he began interviewing for teaching positions. He was most concerned with removing pictures that showed him "at a frat party acting like an idiot."

Surprisingly, Cory was the only individual I spoke with who referenced a strong desire to keep these photographs. While he admitted he deleted some, he also stated that he kept many because he was afraid that if he deleted them, they would be gone forever. Cory explained:

> I think for me, I would rather have the picture and be able to relive that memory every time I look at it, rather than say, you know what, someone might see this and judge me because of it, so I may not get a job that I wanted. I think I would just tell myself, whoever did that judges too quickly and is probably not someone I want to be associated with anyway.

Cory admitted the images could cause a misperception of who he was as an individual if someone saw them, but did not know Cory at a personal level. To circumvent this and still keep the photographs, Cory adjusted his privacy settings so others could not view the pictures.

Kent confessed he had never uploaded a picture to his Facebook account. Every photograph on his profile was one that had been put on Facebook by someone else who had tagged him in the image. As Kent neared the end of his collegiate career, he felt a need to censor his profile, which meant untagging a number of photographs. However, unlike Cory, this was an easy decision for Kent because in his words, "I was young and dumb. It was fun at the time, but I don't need to look at those anymore." Kent felt he had grown as a person and those images no longer represented the man who was entering his second year of teaching.

Paul was the youngest of the participants in this study and, therefore, also the furthest away from student teaching and graduation. When I asked him if he intended

to censor his profile, especially his pictures, as he neared the end of his collegiate career, he begrudgingly admitted he would. He expressed to me his displeasure at the thought of removing his photographs, deleting groups, and eliminating posts. For Paul, going out to parties with his friends and drinking was a part of college life. While he did not feel he should have to alter his profile, he did believe there was a chance that someone may view something on his account that was not a true representation of his character.

After observing Paul's Facebook account, I found his responses regarding the editing of his profile to be puzzling. Although he believed his privacy settings restricted a "random person" from accessing his photographs and other information, I was able to view all of his content, including over 600 pictures. The vast majority of Paul's Facebook account was appropriate, and the few marginal items discovered certainly did not warrant the level of discontentment he expressed at having to "clean up" his profile.

Of all the individuals within this study, Megan was perhaps the least cognizant of the content within her account. When asked if she felt her Facebook profile accurately depicted her as an individual, she quickly provided me with an affirmative answer. Then, just as quickly, she stated, "I should probably go back and see what I even have on there." This comment was followed by another assuring me whatever was on her profile was likely appropriate. Later in the interview, Megan informed me she believed her friends were not always appropriate online, but this was likely because they were still undergraduates and had not begun to think about entering the "real world." She then again referenced her own need to go through her account and

see if she had any pictures containing alcohol that should be taken off. After observing her Facebook profile, it was little wonder Megan was unsure of its content. As previously stated, she had well over a 1,000 images with over 100 of those containing alcohol or related to alcohol. I found myself pondering, did she forget these pictures were part of her profile? Was her definition of appropriate that different than the rest of the individuals within the study? Or had her account simply grown beyond her ability to manage all of its content?

The individual within this study who perhaps expressed the greatest understanding of his Facebook content was Mike. He recalled first becoming aware that his profile did not accurately represent him when he chose to run for a high profile student body government position. At that time, a friend had contacted him and informed him that he was a member of a Facebook group which depicted women as inferior to men. Mike stated he had no idea he was even a part of it, because in his first few years of college he had clicked on things without giving them a great deal of consideration. He remembered that moment as the point where he decided he needed to go through his Facebook profile and make sure it accurately depicted him. Mike told me, however, that it had to be an ongoing process and one's account could be "a good representation, as long as you stay up to date with it." Mike believed that individuals utilized Facebook as a means to get to know people. They formulate perceptions based upon the content they find and "how you are perceived is ultimately reality."

Posting pictures, commenting on walls, and listing interests are all part of the Facebook experiences, but as the participants in this study suggested, what one does

online affects the way others view them. There was a general acknowledgement by all that a potential for misperception of one's character could result from the content found within Facebook profiles. Each participant had varying degrees of concern with regard to this and most felt the need for safeguards to protect themselves from the judgment of others. Censorship, privacy settings, and diligence in maintaining the content found within one's profile were the key components used by those in this study to ensure their accurate portrayal.

Professionalism

"Facebook is Facebook and school is school and they shouldn't be intertwined at all."

–Paul, Preservice Teacher

No one within this study stated the need for a divide between Facebook and school more succinctly than Paul. Although he had less than a hundred hours of observation within a classroom and had not yet begun his student teaching, Paul made it clear that whatever school he became a part of would have no connection to his Facebook profile. Paul was the only individual within this study who had Facebook for an extended period of time while in high school. I thought Paul may have had memories of wanting to add a favorite teacher. When I asked, he explained the thought had never crossed his mind. He did suggest, however, most of his teachers likely did not have Facebook when he was in high school. Paul seemed to understand he would one day be faced with the decision to add students and perhaps parents to his profile, but he was adamant that, "anything school related should not have any connection to Facebook."

Terri was more conflicted than Paul on the subject. While she did not anticipate her preschool students would ever attempt to add her on Facebook, she did state that she had worked as both a middle school dance coach and as a camp counselor and there was a higher likelihood she may receive a friend request from someone within those groups. Terri admitted she would not accept any of these potential friend requests because it would be unprofessional. However, she also expressed how part of her thought befriending these students may give them a feeling of support and may provide her with insight into their lives so she could better meet their needs. Through her comments, I could tell Terri was genuinely torn between a desire to help students through becoming involved in their lives and maintaining a professional distance.

In my discussion with Emily, she told me she had completed her student teaching in an affluent elementary school. On show and tell days, she would have eight year old students bring in iPads and laptops. She was surprised when these technologically savvy children asked her if she had Facebook and if they could friend her. Emily was quick to inform me she would never befriend her students on Facebook, but when it came to parents, she was of a different opinion. She admitted at the end of her student teaching she had accepted some of her students' parents as friends. She explained she had become close with these individuals throughout the year and wanted that connection to remain. When I asked Emily if she was fearful of what these parents might see on her profile, she reiterated that she had "cleaned it up" and kept it exceptionally professional. I was interested in how Emily felt about having to be professional both within the classroom and within her online profile. She

acknowledged as a teacher she was held to a higher standard than most, and this extended into all aspects of her life, including her Facebook profile.

While she had never had a parent attempt to friend her, Carrie said during her student teaching, her cooperating teacher had many parents of both current and former students as friends on her Facebook account. Carrie asked this teacher if that was "weird" for her. The teacher explained she had nothing to hide, so she was comfortable with having parents on her profile. Carrie seemed less at ease with the prospect of perhaps one day having to friend her students' parents. While she contended she too had nothing to hide within her account, she wanted to remain professional. She also believed it would be awkward if a parent sent a friend request and she declined.

Lisa experienced this awkward situation first hand. She had a parent send her a friend request during her first year as a special education resident teacher. The parent was also a paraprofessional within the same school. Her daughter was on Lisa's caseload. Lisa was torn, because she was friends with other employees in the school, but she also did not work directly with any of their children. Lisa left the request as pending for a length of time until she, ultimately, declined the friend request. It was apparent through the way she spoke that this had been an extremely uncomfortable position for Lisa. She did not want to cause a rift between herself and a coworker, but at the same time she did not want to grant that coworker, a parent of one of her students, access to her online personal life.

Like Lisa, Jill also had an experience with a parent that was stressful. While she no longer had the parent's child as a student, she still struggled with whether she

should accept the friend request. She was nervous the parent would pass judgment on her as a person based upon the content of her profile. After speaking with other teachers in the building who had also allowed this parent to be their Facebook friend, and determining, "I really have nothing to hide," Jill accepted the friend request. Hearing this story made me curious as to what the parent's motivation was for befriending so many of the teachers within the building. Was it to gain insight into the lives of those who worked with her child? Perhaps, it was simply the parent did not feel there needed to be, nor was, a separation between teachers' personal and professional lives, because they were to adhere to a higher standard.

Being held to a higher standard than most was a topic which Mike spoke on at length in our conversation. As both an athlete and as someone who had held a high student body government position, he was no stranger to being viewed in a critical light. In his experience, people were waiting for him to "screw up" so they could criticize. Mike explained teaching and coaching was no different, because "you're expected more of, but it's something that you know going into it." For Mike, being a teacher and a coach meant having the responsibility of being a role model for young adults.

Although he had not yet begun his student teaching, Mike had worked as both a boys' football and girls' basketball coach. He stated many of his athletes wanted to add him as a friend on Facebook, but he did not believe it was appropriate for a coach or a teacher to add their athletes or students. Mike even expressed a degree of unease with regard to adding athletes who had graduated from high school. For Mike, having an athlete/coach relationship did not automatically qualify an individual to be friend

worthy even after graduation. He simply did not feel comfortable allowing some of

these individuals access to his Facebook profile.

Coaching and Facebook was a topic that James and I discussed at length.

James told me that nearly all of his varsity football athletes had Facebook accounts,

and many of those had attempted to add him. Out of a sense of professionalism,

James stated he would not add these athletes to his account until after they graduated

from high school. He explained he did not want these individuals to have access to the

personal information on his account, specifically his pictures. While he did not

believe there was anything wrong with the pictures on his profile, he felt as an

educator he was held to a higher standard than the average person. As a result, he was

adamant he would never friend a current student, athlete, or parent.

When Kent and I spoke, he told me he had 67 pending friend requests, and the

majority of these were from students, athletes, and parents. Kent explained he had a

strict rule against adding current students and athletes to his Facebook profile. Only

those who had graduated were allowed access to his account. Interestingly, Kent

stated he would never add a parent to his Facebook account. He did not believe a

parent had any need to be his Facebook friend, especially considering how little he

interacted with parents in real life situations. Kent also stated he would never friend a

school administrator to his Facebook profile. He was the only one in the study to

suggest an administrator would attempt such a thing. For Kent, Facebook is "a

network you still have to very careful with." Although he felt his account was

professional, he expressed he did not have the time needed to continually police the

site. Therefore, he was steadfast that he would not allow current athletes, students,

parents, or administrators access to his Facebook profile.

Neil was another participant within this study who had strong feelings

regarding Facebook and student athletes. Within minutes of beginning our discussion,

he explained to me when he was in college, he was friends with a number of high

school boys who played for his hometown basketball team. After graduating from

college, he was hired as a boys' basketball coach for that very school. He immediately

began the process of unfriending these individuals, because he felt it was

unprofessional to be both their coach and Facebook friend. Like Mike, Neil was

hesitant to even add those who had graduated, because they were friends with younger

athletes still on the team. He explained, "It's kind of a touchy situation. It's

uncomfortable." Because he was a young coach, Neil felt his athletes viewed him

differently from their other teachers and coaches, and attempted to treat him more

"buddy buddy" than they would other adults within the school.

While Neil explained that he would never friend his students or his athletes on

Facebook, he did tell me a story of how Facebook had helped him create a connection

with a young lady while he was student teaching. He explained that he had a sixth

grade girl in his class and:

> I had a hell of a time getting her to do anything. She would come into class
>
> and be like I don't want to do this. Then one day, out of the blue, she searched
>
> me on Facebook. She found me and I got a message from her that basically
>
> said I hate school, but you're the coolest teacher ever, because I didn't think

teachers had Facebook. The next day, I didn't have any trouble with her for the rest of the year. It was all because I had Facebook.

Neil did not friend this student, nor did he even reply to her message. He spoke with her face to face the following day and explained why he could not be her friend on Facebook. Even though she was unable to befriend him on Facebook, she no longer complained in his classroom, and she began to put forth effort. Neil believed the fact that he had a Facebook account changed this students' opinion of him. He was no longer just a teacher. He was also a real person. While Neil stated it did not change his stance on friending students or athletes, he did admit that Facebook had some positive applications, even at the educational level.

As previously stated, Cory had created a "student friendly" Facebook page as a way of allowing his former students to feel as though they were connected to him. When I asked if he believed Facebook could be used as an educational tool, Cory was quick to express that having an account specifically for students was one thing, but using it for academic purposes, "could be crossing a boundary." While he uploaded some pictures and created some wall posts on his account for students, Cory expressed he had no desire to use the profile to build relationships with current students. Cory believed, at its core, Facebook was a social networking site and should remain as such. Attempting to use it as an academic tool would only succeed in muddying the waters between the professional distance that must be kept between students and teachers.

Megan was the only individual within this study who stated she had added some of her students as friends on Facebook. She explained that when she first began as a resident teacher, one of her middle school students sent her a friend request. She

confirmed this request and then two more followed from middle school girls who were friends with the boy she had just added. She accepted these, as well, but was approached the following day by a paraprofessional in the building who had noticed her addition of these students. He suggested she reconsider having the students as friends. Megan said she realized it was probably unprofessional to be friends with her students. She unfriended them and then explained to each why they could not be friends on Facebook. Although they were unhappy, Megan believed these students understood. However, she did admit that one boy would tell her every day that he was going to "poke" her on Facebook until she added him as a friend.

Those who participated within this study held a general belief that a high standard of professionalism exists for those who enter into the field of education. That professionalism is expected within the school one is teaching and is anticipated within the overarching community of that school. The individuals I spoke with expressed their belief that being a professional was an essential part of being an educator. They also conveyed an important way to maintain a level of professionalism was to enact a degree of separation between their personal lives, as displayed on Facebook, and their professional lives as educators and/or coaches.

<div align="center">Summary</div>

Chapter IV was a presentation of the data that was collected from the methods and procedures used in this study. The preexisting literature was also referenced and related to the collected data. Narratives were used to describe each of the 14 individuals, along with their perceived experiences and beliefs regarding the three

major categories and themes that emerged from the data. In Chapter V, I provide the

reader with a summary, conclusions, and recommendations related to this study.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The broad question guiding this qualitative research study was: What are the beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers who choose to use the social networking site Facebook? Adhering to a phenomenological framework suggested by Creswell (1998), my research study addressed three subquestions:

1.   What gratifications are being provided by the use of the online social networking site Facebook?

2.   What are the uses of Facebook for these individuals?

3.   What have the experiences of these individuals been like with Facebook?

An overview of the study that included its purpose, the guiding theoretical framework, and delimitations was contained in Chapter I. A compilation of the professional literature with regard to social networking sites and their implications for higher education, as well as preservice and early service teachers was given in Chapter II. The methodology for this research was detailed in Chapter III. Narratives of the participants were used to present the data with reference to the literature in Chapter IV. Chapter V includes a summary of the study, as well as conclusions and recommendations.

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Overview of the Methodology

This qualitative study consisted of 14 preservice and early service teachers, six males and eight females, who were in various stages of their educational careers. Volunteers were solicited to take part in this study. All participants were either currently attending or recent graduates of a Midwestern university with an enrollment of slightly more than 14,000 students. Interviews with participants as well as observations made regarding their Facebook profiles were used to gather data. Interviews were recorded for accuracy and later transcribed for data analysis. Thematic analysis was used to make decisions regarding information pertinent to this study (Glesne, 2006). Subjects' responses were initially coded and arranged into clusters. The clusters were analyzed and rearranged into three categories which formed patterns known as themes (Seidman, 2006). These themes were used to create a general description of the subjects' experiences (Creswell, 1998) and allowed the development of three assertions. In the next section of this chapter, I will present and discuss these three assertions.

Assertions

Assertion One

Assertion One states that although their use of the social networking site changes and evolves as they age, preservice and early service teachers believe that maintaining ties with friends is an important function of Facebook and can be accomplished without direct communication, but direct communication is still highly valued with close friends.

Madge et al. (2009) found that as student's transitioned from high school into a postsecondary setting, they utilized Facebook as a means of maintaining their ties with former high school friends while they acclimated themselves into campus life. The preservice and early services teachers in this study echoed this when I spoke with them about their earliest memories of using the social networking site. I found it interesting that as many of them were now making another transition in their lives, they were again citing their use of Facebook as a crucial fixture in allowing them to maintain connections. However, this time, it was their college friends they had left behind, or they themselves who had been left behind by those who had graduated and sought employment rather than graduate school.

These participants referenced a desire to remain a part of their friends' lives, especially if those friends had moved to different cities, states, or even countries. Interestingly, many of the participants suggested that they could stay connected with their friends without direct communication. Having the ability to view and share pictures, as well as the ability to read and write brief comments, provided the participants within this study a sense of connectedness. It allowed them to stay current on the everyday events in the lives of others even from afar.

A very important distinction arose concerning those events that were commonplace and the major events of one's life. Being one of hundreds, if not thousands depending upon the extensiveness of one's friend lists, to discover through a Facebook post that a friend had gotten engaged or was pregnant, was considered hurtful. Perhaps not if the engaged or expecting was someone the participant was loosely connected to, but certainly so if it was someone with whom the participant felt

close. In these situations, direct and meaningful communication was expected. The direct contact showed the recipient they were among a shorter list of true friends.

Assertion Two

Assertion Two suggests that preservice and early service teachers are apprehensive about the negative consequences of having a Facebook profile, but because of perceived benefits, they continue to utilize the site under what they believe are higher privacy settings and/or after they have policed their account removing questionable content.

In the study conducted by Foulger et al. (2009), the researchers suggested a level of misunderstanding exists among college students with regard to their beliefs of the level of privacy afforded them in an online forum such as Facebook. Through my conversations with the participants in this study, I discovered all felt a need to either "clean up" their accounts or alter their privacy settings to keep their content hidden. All seemed to understand the information they placed on their Facebook pages could potentially be viewed by someone other than their friends. Nearly all of the participants expressed to me that they had increased their privacy settings so only friends could view some or all of their account's content. Those who did not indicate increased privacy settings described their accounts as devoid of marginal or inappropriate content. I found this to be true with all but two of the participants' Facebook accounts. Paul and Megan believed their profiles were concealed from public view, but this was not the case. I was allowed access to all of their content. Interestingly, Paul was the youngest member of this study and Megan was one of the

oldest, suggesting age may not be a determining factor in the misunderstanding of the privacy allotted online content.

Participants in this study all stated apprehension that potential employers may see their Facebook accounts and have a misconstrued view of them as a person. The content most concerning for these individuals were pictures wherein they were drinking with their friends. Most stated these images were from their freshman and sophomore years of college, and they were no longer an accurate portrayal of their personalities and character. Remarkably, the fear of negative consequences, such as being passed over for a possible teaching position, did not outweigh the perceived benefits of having a Facebook account. James was the only participant in this study who felt a need to deactivate his account when he was searching for teaching positions. After working in the district for a year, he reactivated his account because of all the positives associated with having Facebook. The remainder of the participants within this study all felt, as long as they were careful with the content posted and with who had access to it, they could still use their Facebook accounts.

Enacting rigid privacy settings which would only allow friends access to pictures, comments, and other content within a Facebook profile is certainly a start to safeguarding against potential misperceptions and negative consequences. However, I question if any of the participants in this study realized they had anywhere from a few hundred to nearly a thousand people listed as friends on their profiles with whom they no longer communicated. Some in this study admitted they could not remember a number of the individuals listed as friends on their Facebook account. Although a few individuals indicated that they had started to unfriend people, no one expressed any

level of concern with regard to these unknown and forgotten individuals' access to their profiles.

Assertion Three

Assertion Three states as they mature, preservice and early service teachers create more stringent guidelines for who they will add as friends on Facebook, and they believe a level of distance between their personal and professional lives is prudent.

Neil, although he did not add the student to his Facebook account, shared a story that aligns itself with the findings of the study conducted by Mazer et al. (2007), which suggested college students became more involved and rapport increased when Facebook was used as a means of teacher self-disclosure. Although Neil was not teaching at the collegiate level, nor was the sixth grade girl in his story a college student, the simple fact that he had a Facebook account changed her view of him as a teacher and a person. She became more involved in class, and they had a better relationship for the remainder of the school year. Neil admitted he was grateful she felt a connection to him, but it did not change his stance against friending students to his Facebook account.

Neil's position was one shared by the other participants in this study. None were inclined to allow students access to their Facebook accounts. Nearly all spoke to me about students, some as young as eight years old, wanting to add them as friends on Facebook. Still others recalled experiences where parents had sent them friend requests. All referenced that as educators, they were held to a higher standard than the average person, and allowing students to access their Facebook profiles would be

unprofessional. Cory summed it up well by stating, "I'm not saying we're not being ourselves at school, but you're a different version of yourself at school than you are in real life and that's not always appropriate for your students to see."

Limitations

The purpose of this study was to identify the commonly held beliefs and perceived experiences of preservice and early service teachers with regard to their use of Facebook. The research sought to examine how and why these individuals chose to use Facebook, as well as to explore both the positive and negative implications felt by these individuals with regard to their use of this particular social networking site. The participants were a criterion sample of undergraduate students, graduate level students, and those who had recently graduated and were in varying stages of their educational careers. A total of 14 individuals, six male, and eight females, volunteered to participate in this study. All participants were either attending or recent graduates of a Midwestern university with an enrollment of slightly more than 14,000 students. For a qualitative study, a sample size of 14 individuals is considered large; however, the findings of this study represent an extremely small portion of the overall population of preservice and early service teachers who attend or have recently graduated from the university. While illuminating, these findings cannot be a representation of all preservice and early service teachers' experiences with Facebook.

Conclusions

The use of the online social networking site Facebook allowed those in this study to fulfill a need to remain connected to both their strong ties, close friends and family members, and their weak ties, acquaintances and distant friends (Granovetter,

1973; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The social capital, typically information, gained as a result of the maintained relationships through Facebook, was a principal reason why these individuals used the site (Coleman, 1988; Ellison et al., 2007; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Putnam, 2000; Williams, 2006). Nearly all of these individuals have had positive experiences with Facebook. As they mature and prepare to enter the next phases of their lives, they will likely alter the way they present themselves on their accounts, but they will continue to use the site as a means of staying current with their friends and family members.

<div align="center">Recommendations for Teacher Education Programs</div>

The use of Facebook by preservice and early service teachers raises many issues related to social responsibility, professionalism, and free speech. Research has shown that a degree of misunderstanding exists with regard to what is public versus what is private on sites such as Facebook. As I type this, the news is currently reporting that an elementary teacher in New Jersey may lose her job over a Facebook post in which she referred to her students as future criminals (Maragioglio, 2011). This teacher likely created the post as a way to express to her friends the frustration she felt after a difficult or trying day with her students. Regardless of the intent, the private comment made on a public forum has resulted in severe negative consequences for this individual.

My recommendation to teacher education programs is to discuss appropriate uses of sites such as Facebook early and often. In my conversations with the preservice and early service teachers in this study, all seemed aware that foolish actions on Facebook could result in negative consequences. Most believed increased

privacy settings would protect them from misfortune, but not all truly activated their settings. Additionally, the sheer number of Facebook friends many of these individuals had should raise concern as to who has access to the content they choose to post on their profiles.

Recommendations for Further Research

This study is only one small group of individuals all from a Midwestern university. There is a need for further qualitative research to gain insight into additional preservice and early service teachers from colleges and universities in different regions. Additionally, Facebook is a constantly changing and evolving social networking site. As such, research needs to be ongoing to see how subsequent generations of students, those who have been exposed to the technology since an earlier age, use and experience Facebook.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

TITLE: The Beliefs and Perceived Experiences of Preservice
                                and Early Service Teachers Who Use Facebook.

PROJECT DIRECTOR: Myrna Olson
PHONE #   701.777.3188
DEPARTMENT: Teaching and Learning

STATEMENT OF RESEARCH

A person who is to take part in the research must give his or her informed consent to such
participation. This consent must be based on an understanding of the nature and risks of the
research. This document gives information that is important for this understanding. Research
projects include only subjects who choose to take part. Please take your time in making your
decision as to whether to involve yourself. If you have questions at any time, please ask.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY?

Because of your answer to a call asking for volunteers, you are invited to be in a research study
about individuals who use the social networking site Facebook. The purpose of this study is to
identify commonly held beliefs and perceived experiences of a subset of college students
(preservice teachers) and early service teachers (those who are in their first or second year of
teaching) with regard to their use of the social networking site Facebook. The research will seek
to examine how and why people choose to use Facebook. It will also explore both the positive
and negative implications felt by individuals with regard to the use of this social networking site.

HOW MANY PEOPLE WILL PARTICIPATE?

Between nine and fifteen people will take part in this study.

HOW LONG WILL I BE IN THIS STUDY?

Your participation in the study will last no longer than the fall semester of 2011. You will need
to meet with the researcher no more than three times. Each visit will take about an hour.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING THIS STUDY?

This study will ask you to participate in no more than three interviews. You will be asked to
share your experiences as a user of Facebook. The interviews will last no longer than an hour.
The interviews will, with your permission, be taped. It is important to note that this study is
voluntary. At any time you may skip questions that you do not feel like answering.

WHAT ARE THE RISKS OF THE STUDY?

No study is risk free; therefore it is important that you are aware of the risks. There is a chance that you may feel uncomfortable answering questions the researcher asks because of your experiences with Facebook.

Such a risk is not viewed as being in excess of "minimal risk." However, if strong emotions come from the study's questions, you may choose to not answer the question and end the interview. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings, you are encouraged to contact the counseling services offered by the University ███████████.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF THIS STUDY?

You may or may not benefit from being in this study. However, your participation in the study may help you become more self-reflective with regard to your use of Facebook and that may benefit you. In addition, the researcher will learn about the uses of and beliefs of preservice teachers and early service teachers who use Facebook and the possible ways it can be used to improve student learning in teacher education.

WILL IT COST ME ANYTHING TO BE IN THIS STUDY?

You will not have any costs for being in this research study.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING?

You will not be paid for being in this research study.

WHO IS FUNDING THE STUDY?

The University ███████████ and the research team are getting no payments from other agencies, organizations, or companies to carry out this research study.

CONFIDENTIALITY

The records of this study will be kept private to the extent allowed by law. In any report about this study that might be published, you will not be identified. Your study record may be reviewed by Government agencies, the ████ Research Development and Compliance office, the ████████████████████ Institutional Review Board, and those people who audit IRB procedures. Any information that is found in this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of using a different name than your own. All documents that have your name on them will be kept in a separate and locked location from tapes and notes from the interviews. All data, including this consent form, will be retained for three years following the completion of the study. After three years the data will be destroyed. ~~The only people who will have access to the data collected by this study will be the researcher,~~

Institutional Review Board
Approved on ___OCT 2 7 2011___

Expires on ___APR 2 4 2012___

2

Date_____
Subject Initials: _____

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his advisor, the IRB, and those who audit IRB procedures. If we write a report or article about this study, we will describe the study results in a summarized way so that you cannot be identified. All tapes of interviews may be reviewed by you. They will only be used to help write out the interviews onto a word document. No one other than you, the researcher, his advisor, the IRB, and those who audit IRB procedures will have access to these tapes. The tapes will be erased three years following the conclusion of the study.

IS THIS STUDY VOLUNTARY?

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or you may stop your participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with the ▮▮▮▮▮▮▮▮

CONTACTS AND QUESTIONS?

The researcher conducting this study is Nathan Foss. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Nathan Foss at 952.556.7577 during the day and at 612.220.5308 after hours. Other contacts include the researcher's advisor, Dr. Myrna Olson. She may be reached most easily at 218.791.0580; Alternative numbers are 701.777.3188 and 701.777.1342.

If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the University▮▮▮▮▮▮ Institutional Review Board at 701.777.4279. Please call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or you wish to talk with someone else.

Your signature shows that this research study has been explained to you, that your questions have been answered, and that you agree to take part in this study. You will receive a copy of this form.

Subjects Name: _____

_____   _____
Signature of Subject   Date

I have discussed the above points with the subject or, where appropriate, with the subject's legally authorized representative.

_____   _____
Signature of Person Who Obtained Consent   Date

_____

Institutional Review Board
Approved on ___OCT 2 7 2011___   3   Date_____
Expires on ____APR 2 4 2012___   Subject Initials:_____

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE

What is your major/year in school?

How often do you log onto Facebook?

When did you first start using Facebook?

How/why do you use Facebook?

How has your use of Facebook changed over time (or has your use of Facebook remained the same)?

How many "friends" do you have on Facebook?
Of the "friends" that you have on Facebook, how many of those would you consider yourself closely connected with and how many would you consider yourself loosely connected with?

Do you have any criteria for who you will accept as a "friend" on Facebook?

Are you a part of any "groups" on Facebook? If so, what are these groups?

How important are the privacy settings provided by Facebook to you? Where are your privacy settings set on your profile?

How do you present yourself to others on Facebook? Do you think your presentation of yourself on Facebook is an accurate depiction?

Who do you think is most likely to view your Facebook profile and why?
- friends
- relatives
- significant others
- co-workers
- people who may want to date you
- your boss or employer
- teachers or professors
- others

How well do you feel you understand the various aspects of Facebook? How often do
you do any of the below?
- photo uploading
- video uploading
- wall posts
- comments on photos
- status updates
- others

How do you use others Facebook profiles?
Are there things that you feel should not be posted on Facebook?

Do you feel that you should or need to alter your use of Facebook as you prepare to
enter the teaching workforce?

What do you believe are the advantages of Facebook?

What do you believe are the disadvantages of Facebook?

Have you had any experiences with Facebook that have been really positive?

Have you had any experiences with Facebook that have been really negative?

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