

## ABSTRACT

Status, Likes and Pokes: Self-disclosure and Motivations for Using Facebook

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Facebook provides a unique online environment where the social networking site user engages in facets of self-disclosure, meanwhile having control over information in a reciprocal, interactive communication environment. This study examined the relationship between factors of the uses and gratifications perspective and the Revised Self-Disclosure scale for Facebook users ( $n = 624$ ). Significant relationships were found between intended disclosure, honesty/accuracy, depth, and Facebook disclosures. Age, time spent, and gender were also significant predictors. Reported social connection received from Facebook usage was a significant pattern throughout the results, providing further support of the user's social gratifications received from social media use and emphasis of the social factor as a motivation for using Facebook.

Status, Likes and Pokes: Self-disclosure and Motivations for Using Facebook

by

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A Thesis

Approved by the Department of Communication

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## CHAPTER ONE

### Introduction

Facebook integrates everyday communication with online information. Facebook was not the first social networking site to combine online profiles and searchable friend pages; however, it is the current leader in social media (Block, 2012; Boyd & Ellison, 2008; Cheung, Chui & Lee, 2011). The site, which launched in 2004, now reports one billion monthly active users (“Basic Information,” 2011; “Key Facts,” 2012). More than ever, the investigation of Facebook is needed to better understand how and why people are using social media. Due to the disclosure driven functionality of Facebook, the combination of uses and gratifications and self-disclosures is needed to provide a better understanding of Facebook and social media, which was previously ignored (Smock et al., 2011). This study will also provide an extension to prior content-based self-disclosure research.

#### *Facebook Overview*

Facebook meets the social networking site criteria because it contains profiles within a controlled system, includes a defined list of connected users, and the user list is available to a defined organization (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Because Facebook is based on defined groups such as companies and individuals (Nosko, Wood & Molema, 2010; Pempek, Yermolayeva & Calvert, 2009), voluntary user involvement is encouraged creating an environment for self-disclosure (Nosko et al., 2010). Interaction between users is encouraged through multiple features such as the internal messaging system and

the status update option. The timeline profile offers another organizational tool where information is arranged through a pictorial catalogue and imbedded features, such as an interactive geographical map (“Overview,” 2011). Considering the available functions and activity on the site, Facebook’s mission “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected” (“Facebook Profile,” 2012, Info section, para. 4) inspires study of online self-disclosures from Facebook’s wide and diverse audience (“Fact Sheet,” 2012).

Facebook distinguishes itself from other social networking sites. The website holds 92% of the audience share (Brenner, 2012; Hampton et al., 2011) and is regarded as the most popular social media site according to usage and site visitors (Hunt et al., 2012; Lipsman, 2011). Additionally, Facebook users may differ from other social media users. Researchers found that Facebook users are more politically active, have a more trusting outlook, and more close relationships (Hampton et al., 2011). In addition, the use of social media suggests that usage motivations are dependent on the user’s purpose of visiting the website (Wang, Tchernev & Solloway, 2012). Thus, by isolating Facebook, this study aims to limit the broad variance in uses and gratifications of social media research. This study will add to previous research, which assessed motivations from other social media sites (Chen, 2011; Hollenbaugh, 2011) and provide clarity as to how Facebook is gratifying the needs of its users through the available avenues of communication (Tosun, 2012).

## CHAPTER TWO

### Review of Literature

#### *Uses and Gratifications*

The present study is framed within the uses and gratifications perspective, which represents the shift toward media's limited influence over the audience and the ability of media gratification to meet the needs of the consumer (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1973; Sparks, 2010). Early work on uses and gratifications also predicted a necessary extension to other forms of media (Katz et al., 1973) thus providing the grounds to investigate social networking sites. This perspective also draws parallels between interpersonal and mass communication where usage rationalizes the influence and reasons behind media consumption (Rubin & Rubin, 1985).

Under this approach, Facebook users are defined as “goal-directed and active” (Hollenbaugh, 2011, p.14). Specifically, past research has investigated Facebook through the lens of the uses and gratifications perspective (Cheung et al., 2011; Hunt, Atkin & Krishnan, 2012; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Sheldon & Honeycutt, 2009; Smock et al., 2011; Urista et al., 2008); yet, the convergence of disclosive communication's influence over Facebook usage remains to be examined. Furthermore, research has suggested that escape or diversion was the primary motivation for entertainment use (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Facebook usage, however, challenges these results with the inclusion of decisive interactivity and social interaction. Thus, based on the extant literature, the following research question was developed:

RQ<sub>1</sub>: How will self-disclosure relate to Facebook usage motives?



## *Self-Disclosure*

Self-disclosure is weaved into Facebook's communicative process, and by evaluating disclosure; predictors of Facebook usage are formulated. Self-disclosure is described as the revelation of personal information (Jourard, 1971) but also acts as an intrinsic personal disposition that enhances interpersonal relationships (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011; Wheelless, 1976). Disclosive communication requires reflective self-awareness (Lombardo & Fantasia, 1976), which is key in Facebook disclosures. Early in disclosure research, self-disclosure was described as a determinant of a healthy personality and ability to establish relationships (Jourard, 1971). The prevalence of online relationships reflects the current research emphasis on online disclosures (Attrill & Jalil, 2011; Back et al., 2010; Livingstone, 2008; Thorbjørnsen, Pedersen & Nysveen, 2007; Young, Dutta & Dommety, 2009; Zhong, Hardin & Sun, 2011).

When discussing online communication, it is important to clarify between self-disclosure and self-description. For example, the revelation of self-descriptive traits was found to influence the disclosure of information (Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002). Self-description has also provided disclosure categories for online interactions (Attrill & Jalil, 2011), suggesting that self-description is part of the disclosure process. It was also found through online religious affiliations that disclosure represented implications beyond the actual self-descriptions, which ultimately reflected the user's religious perspective in other online postings (Bobkowski & Pearce, 2011). This is consistent with further disclosive conclusions being drawn from what was explicitly shared on Facebook (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Young et al., 2009), as well as self-descriptions labeled as self-expression in regard to a user's favorite lists (Pempek et al., 2009). The online self-

descriptions become disclosed information on social media sites because of the user's awareness of their disclosures and the transfer of interactively shared communication.

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) categorizes online communication as a progressive revelation of information (Attrill & Jalil, 2011). The Internet has changed how disclosure is studied, with computer-mediated communication resulting in more disclosure than face-to-face (Bargh et al., 2002; Joinson, 2001). Facebook encompasses many aspects of disclosure including the ability to share information at an individualized tempo, disclosure discernment, options of anonymity, and privacy settings. This includes the relational familiarity between users that influences the amount and type of communication occurring (Pempek et al., 2009). The disclosures were also adjusted based on the user's relationship with the recipient (Park et al., 2011). The quantity and quality of a message has also been evaluated as a determinant of disclosure (Park, Jin & Annie Jin, 2011). The news feed feature represents a concentration of Facebook disclosures, where a Facebook friend's activities and status updates are highlighted ("News Feed Basics," 2012). This tool has been used in past research as an organization of a user's social network, visually representing the frequency of disclosures (Rettberg, 2009).

In past research, self-disclosure has been explored in a number of interpersonal and intrapersonal contexts (Chiou, 2006; Greene, Derlega & Mathews, 2003; Nosko et al., 2010; Park et al., 2011; Park, Jin & Jin, 2009; Serovich, Grafsky & Reed, 2010; Wheelless, 1976). The wide scope of topics was corroborated by a dyadic self-disclosure experiment that found consistent disclosure themes (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011). Additionally, much research has critically evaluated the type of online information

disclosed (Bobkowski & Pearce, 2011; Bond, 2009; Nosko et al., 2010; Attil & Jalil, 2011; Park et al., 2011). However, these studies concentrated on the content of the message and topic (Derlega et al., 2008), overlooking the motivations behind the disclosures. In the present study, the multi-dimensional nature of disclosure (Wheless, 1976) will be addressed through a categorical approach to the Facebook disclosure process, rather than isolating a specific tenant of disclosure's influence.

### *The Present Study*

#### *Intentional Disclosure*

The intent to disclose information may influence which Facebook usage motives are engaged. Facebook users are being classified as either active or passive observers (Tosun, 2012). Although online interactions have been labeled anti-social, research indicates that virtual interactions encourage online communication, thereby increasing pro-social behavior (Lüders, 2009; Urista, Dong & Day, 2008). Additionally, users who favorably viewed online relationships were more likely to participate in online self-disclosure practices (Attrill & Jalil, 2011). Long distance relationship maintenance was also a primary reason for Facebook usage (Tosun, 2012). From past research, the most significant determinant for usage was the social factor (Cheung et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2012); however, Hollenbaugh (2011) suggested a wider range of socially motivated factors, beyond motivations to socially connect with others.

By examining a larger scope of usage factors, support for the uses and gratifications perspective can be found, especially if users are aware of their needs (Cheung et al., 2011). In a study by Thorbjørnsen, Pedersen and Nysveen (2007), the

researchers analyzed multimedia-messaging services and found expressiveness as a strong indicator of usage intention, further supporting the social link between intention and disclosure. These examples highlight intentionally focused studies that are based on the content produced or communication exchanged; however, disclosure may differ among the social strategies of the user. Thus, the following is hypothesized:

H<sub>1</sub>: Users with higher levels of self-disclosure intention will be more likely to report using motivation strategies than users with lower levels.

### *Gender and Facebook*

Males and females differ in their disclosure practices (Bond, 2009; Cho, 2007; Dindia & Allen, 1992; Foubert & Sholley, 1996). For example, females were more likely to engage in organizational motives when blogging (Hollenbaugh, 2011). Similarly, males and females have also been found to use social media features differently: with females reporting more online friends (Pempek et al., 2009), using more entertainment features on Facebook, and having higher privacy settings than males (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). Females also disclosed a wider scope of topics on social media (Bond, 2009). When considering the recipient of the information, more was disclosed to females than males (Forgas, 2011). Thus, it is posited that gender will be a major determining factor in Facebook usage motivations. The evidence from the research literature supports the following hypothesis:

H<sub>2</sub>: Reported motivations for using Facebook will be different between men and women.

### *Influence of the Amount of Disclosure*

It is suggested that interaction on social networking sites are in a “one-to-many ... style” of communication between users (Pempek et al., 2009, p. 227). More specifically, online communication exemplifies the reciprocal relationship between consuming and producing media content with opportunities for expressed self-revision (Hollenbaugh, 2011; Lüders, 2009). However, Facebook is not limited to personally self-disclosed communication (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). Facebook “friends” help define and connect the Facebook environment (“Facebook Profile,” 2012) by allowing users to engage in multiple elements of disclosure with their “friends.” Thus, it is proposed that, as the amount of communication increases on social networking sites, the more predictable the communication becomes (Rubin & Rubin, 1985).

Many factors must be discussed when addressing amount of disclosure and Facebook usage. For example, a connection between the number of Facebook friends and positive social wellbeing was found (Kim & Lee, 2011). This proposes more friends creates more social capital and therefore, higher amounts of disclosure. Additionally, the amount of Facebook friends was linked to social popularity status (Urista et al., 2008). The way a user presents his or herself on Facebook was also significant to the amount of friends, with ‘true self’ expressions linked to higher frequency of use (Tosun, 2012). Higher amounts of self-disclosure also contributed to user satisfaction of Facebook (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). Age was not a determining factor in the number of Facebook friends but influenced the motivations for having online friendships (Christofides, Muise & Desmarais, 2012). In conclusion from the literature, it is hypothesized:

H<sub>3</sub>: The reported number of Facebook friends a user has will be positively related to the amount of disclosure.

### *Control of Disclosure Depth*

When comparing personal details shared in online and offline relationships, no difference was found in the control of informational depth (Mallen, Day & Green, 2003). Facebook's disclosure mode includes non-face-to-face and third party interactions (Greene et al., 2003), which allow for multiple disclosive opportunities to exist. Another study found a relationship between expressive communication and use of status updates (Smock et al., 2011), further supporting the influence of Facebook feature use in the control over disclosures.

Privacy settings are one example of control of depth within social networking sites. This includes default options or user-selected preferences, which limit the access to profiles and information (Ong et al., 2011). Gender influenced the type of information disclosed, with men more likely to disclose contact and basic information than women. Control of depth was also found with 81% of participants sharing occupational and educational details (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). Additionally, 87.8% of the profiles reviewed listed the user's phone number and 50.8% displayed the home address (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). These findings suggest there is user discernment in the control over information based on the type of disclosure. Moreover, Canadian Facebook users demonstrated discretion in the type of information posted with approximately 25% of users reporting a specific decision to limit disclosure (Nosko et al., 2010). These control-based decisions are key to disclosure depth and maybe influencing the way Facebook is

being used. Therefore, questions concerning the amount of control are evaluated as potential predictive factors for self-disclosure. Thus, it is posited:

H<sub>4</sub>: Users with higher levels of self-disclosure depth will be more likely to report use of motivation strategies than users with lower levels.

### *Influence of Age Differentiation*

Research has found the age of the user to influence the type of information shared on social networking sites (Nosko et al., 2010). Age has also been linked to differences in concern over privacy (Joinson et al., 2010). However, the appeal of Facebook is not limited to younger populations, as participants of all ages are active in social media (Attrill & Jalil, 2011). Other differences were found between age groups including: adolescents disclosing more, using less privacy settings, spending more time, and sharing more personal information on Facebook than adults (Christofides et al., 2012).

Consequently, it is postulated that age will be a determining factor:

H<sub>5</sub>: Younger Facebook users will report a) more self-disclosure and b) more motivation strategies than older Facebook users.

### *The Positive and Negative Spectrum*

The emotional state of the user influences the valence of the disclosures (Forgas, 2011). In particular, self-disclosure has been frequently framed within a negative context as an emotional output (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011). For example, an experiment found negative disclosures, such as neuroticism, to be linked to self-criticism levels in online social environments. Conversely, it concluded that positivity is linked to the openness of a user. Kim and Lee (2011) also found that happier users engage in positive self-presentation on Facebook. Disclosure is also influenced by intimacy, with positive

affect resulting in more intimate disclosures than negative affect (Forgas, 2011).

Additionally, negatively-expressed content through Facebook posts was influenced by lower reported self-esteem (Forest & Wood, 2012). In consequence, it is hypothesized:

H<sub>6</sub>: Users with positive self-disclosure will be more likely to report use of motivation strategies than users with negative disclosure.

### *Honesty and Accuracy of Disclosures*

Honesty and accuracy encompasses many different subsets, including personal privacy (Baek et al., 2011; Wheelless, 1976). Gross and Acquisti (2005) found that “some ... are willing to indicate anyone as Friends, and others stick to a conservative definition, ... [that] list[s] anyone who they know and do not actively dislike” (p. 2-3).

Additionally, users were found to feel less constrained and more expressive during online interaction due to the lack of face-to-face exposure and pressure (Lüders, 2009). A relationship between honesty and social support was also suggested from Facebook disclosures (Kim & Lee, 2011), as well as a link between more self-disclosure and perceived certainty of others (Palmieri et al., 2012). This suggests the honesty/accuracy of disclosures may be influenced by the communication occurring within social media.

Thus, it is predicted:

H<sub>7</sub>: Users higher in honest/accurate disclosures will be more likely to report use of motivation strategies than users with lower levels.

### *The Influence of Time*

Facebook has compressed the timeframe between communicated disclosures, the expectations of reciprocal feedback, and the mutuality of disclosure (Greene et al., 2003). For example, the ease and informality of mass messaging was a primary motivation for



Facebook usage (Urista et al., 2008). Time allotment is also significant; 30 minutes per day was spent checking Facebook, regardless of a user's schedule limitations (Pempek et al., 2009). Additional research upholds this finding as Zhong et al. (2011) found that 72.2% of participants reported less than 3 hours on social media per day, with no indication of zero usage. Facebook is frequented multiple times per day, suggesting it is part of a user's daily routine (Hampton et al., 2011; Special & Li-Barber, 2012; Tosun, 2012; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). A correlation was also drawn between posting motivations of a user and higher amounts of time spent (Hollenbaugh, 2011). Usage has also been described as a distraction from academics (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). Yet, Facebook use enhanced social interactions and developed personal networks for its users (Pempek et al., 2009).

No gender difference was found in time spent or frequency of use (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). However, the amount of time spent on Facebook was significant in predicting pass time Facebook usage motivations (Sheldon & Honeycutt, 2009). Past research has also found time as a significant predictor for social connection motives for bloggers (Chen, 2012) and virtual community motivations for Facebook users (Sheldon & Honeycutt, 2009). Frequencies of a user's wall postings were also established as a predictive motivational factor for habitual time usage (Smock et al., 2011). As previous research has demonstrated:

H<sub>8</sub>: More reported time spent on Facebook will be related to a) more self-disclosure and b) more motivation strategies used.

## CHAPTER THREE

### Methods

#### *Procedures*

To test the above hypotheses, the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale or RSDS (Wheeless, 1976) and the Facebook motive scale (Hollenbaugh, 2011), were used to construct a 23-question survey. The original five-interval usage motive scale was adapted for Facebook usage from Hollenbaugh's (2011) blogging study and adjusted to correspond with the seven-interval disclosure scale. The survey also included questions of time spent and number of Facebook friends. Frequency of Facebook usage was also examined though a seven point Likert-type scale (Vagias, 2006).

#### *Participants*

Out of the 746 respondents who participated, 624 participants completed the survey (83.6% response rate). Respondents were excluded from the data set either because they did not have a Facebook account ( $n = 43$ , 5.8%) or because of missing data ( $n = 122$ , 16.4%). Participant classification breakdown consisted of Freshman ( $n = 159$ , 25.5%), Sophomores ( $n = 153$ , 24.5%), Juniors ( $n = 136$ , 21.8%), Seniors ( $n = 111$ , 17.8%), Graduate students ( $n = 35$ , 5.6%), and other ( $n = 25$ , 4.0%). The gender split consisted of ( $n = 237$ , 38.0%) males and ( $n = 387$ , 62.0%) females. Reported age ranged from 18 to 63 years old ( $M = 21.27$ ,  $SD = 5.87$ ), time spent in minutes per day ( $M = 47.8$ ,  $SD = 54.58$ ), and number of friends ( $M = 705.1$ ,  $SD = 592.70$ ).

Participants were invited to complete the online survey delivered via SurveyMonkey.com, an online survey tool. An IRB-approved consent form was included as a requirement to begin the survey. Data collection took place during September and October of 2012, and survey distribution consisted of email requests and Facebook wall posts. The majority of sample respondents were from the Communication department, as well as the recreational department of a mid-sized research university in the South Central United States. Respondents were also recruited through the Sociology department of a mid-sized community college from the same region. An incentive of extra credit was given in accordance with the professor's approval, as well as an optional randomized drawing, with a total of five \$20.00 gift cards secured prior to the study and distributed once data collection was complete.

### *Measures*

For purposes of this study, disclosure was based on five dimensions of the Revised Self-Disclosure Scale: amount, positive-negativeness, consciously intended disclosure, honesty-accuracy, and control of the general depth or intimacy of the disclosure (Wheless, 1976; Wheless & Grotz, 1976). These factors of self-disclosure allowed for measurements of high and low disclosures (Rosenfeld, 1979). Uses and gratifications were also measured by seven Facebook usage motive factors: helping/informing, social connection, pass time, exhibitionism, archiving/organizing, professionalism, and feedback (Hollenbaugh, 2011).

Each multi-item scale was evaluated for an acceptable Cronbach alpha level ( $\alpha > 0.70$ ) to indicate internal consistency of the items in the scale (Gliem & Gliem, 2003; Kirk, 2008). The Revised Self-Disclosure Scale had seven-interval Likert-type

responses, ranging from (1) “strongly disagree” to (7) “strongly agree” (Wheless, 1976, p. 57-58). Intended disclosure was measured with four items,  $\alpha = 0.90$ , (e.g., “When I reveal my feelings about myself, I consciously intend to do so”). Amount was measured with seven items, including four reversely coded statements,  $\alpha = 0.76$ , (e.g., “I do not often talk about myself”). Positive/Negativeness,  $\alpha = 0.78$ , was measured with seven items, including 3 reversely coded statements (e.g., “I usually disclose positive things about myself”). Control of depth,  $\alpha = 0.89$ , included one reversely coded statement with six items (e.g., “I intimately disclose who I really am, openly and fully in my conversation”). Honesty/accuracy,  $\alpha = 0.77$ , was measured with eight items, including four reversely coded statements (e.g., “I am not always honest in my self-disclosure”).

For the Facebook usage scale, the responses had seven-interval Likert-type responses ranging from (1) “not at all” to (7) “exactly like my own reasons for using Facebook” (Hollenbaugh, 2011, p. 16-17). Each of the factors was juxtaposed with the question, “How much does each item describe your reasons for using Facebook?” Helping and informing,  $\alpha = 0.90$ , was measured with six items (e.g., “to motivate others”). Social connection motivation,  $\alpha = 0.77$ , included four statements (e.g., “to communicate to my friends and family”). The pass time motivation,  $\alpha = 0.82$ , included three statements (e.g., “to occupy my time”). Exhibitionism,  $\alpha = 0.90$ , included three statements (e.g., “to gain fame or notoriety”). Archiving/organizing motive,  $\alpha = 0.91$ , included three statements (e.g., “to record my thoughts and feelings so I can reflect on them”). Professionalism,  $\alpha = 0.80$ , included three statements (e.g., “to help me get a job”), and the feedback motive,  $\alpha = 0.90$ , included three statements (e.g., “to get more points of view”).

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Results

Hypothesis 1 predicted higher intentional disclosure to be related to more Facebook usage. A linear regression analysis tested this model with high scores indicating more intended disclosure. Significance ( $p < .05$ ) was found for three of the Facebook usage motives, thus supporting  $H_1$  (see Table 1). Results indicated a positive relationship with helping/informing and social connection. A negative relationship was found with professionalism. Pass time, exhibitionism, archiving/organizing and feedback were not significant for this model. Intended disclosure (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.081$ ) accounted for 8 percent of the variance in reported usage motives.

Table 1

<i>Regressions of Facebook Usage Motives on Intended Disclosure</i>			
<i>Variables Regressed</i>	<i>Standardized <math>\beta</math></i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Helping/Informing	0.231	4.614	0.000
Social Connection	0.151	3.556	0.000
Pass Time	-0.025	-0.627	0.531
Exhibitionism	-0.025	-0.556	0.579
Archiving/Organizing	0.023	0.459	0.646
Professionalism	-0.103	-2.428	0.015
Feedback	-0.027	-0.509	0.611

Hypothesis 2, which predicted gender differences in Facebook usage, was tested using a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA). In order to run this test, Facebook motives were averaged to create an overall Facebook usage factor ( $M = 3.392$ ). As  $H_2$  predicted, a significant difference,  $F(1, 622) = 5.319, p = 0.021$ , between gender was

found in overall motive level, males ( $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ) and females ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 0.89$ ).

Hypothesis 3, which predicted the number of Facebook friends to be related to more disclosure, was tested using a linear regression analysis. Higher scores indicated more disclosure. Results found the number of friends ( $M = 705.06$ ,  $SD = 592.70$ ) was positively related ( $\beta = 0.108$ ) to the amount of disclosure ( $r = 0.108$ ,  $t(622) = 2.714$ ,  $p = 0.007$ ), supporting H<sub>3</sub>. The amount of disclosure (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.010$ ) accounted for 1 percent of the variance in number of Facebook friends.

Hypothesis 4 predicted control of depth to be related to Facebook usage and was tested using a linear regression analysis. Higher levels of depth indicated more control over the disclosures. Results found significance in four of the Facebook usage motives (see Table 2), supporting H<sub>4</sub>. Of the significant variables: exhibitionism, archiving/organizing, and professionalism were positively related to disclosure depth and social connection was negatively related. Helping/informing, pass time, and feedback were not significant for disclosure depth. Depth accounted for 19 percent of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.192$ ) in reported Facebook usage motives.

Table 2

<i>Regressions of Facebook Usage Motives on Control of Depth</i>			
Variables Regressed	Standardized $\beta$	$t$	$p$
Helping/Informing	0.053	1.131	0.259
Social Connection	-0.098	-2.454	0.014
Pass Time	0.070	1.860	0.063
Exhibitionism	0.186	4.451	0.000
Archiving/Organizing	0.222	4.634	0.000
Professionalism	0.128	3.200	0.001
Feedback	0.019	0.385	0.700

Hypothesis 5 predicted age to be related to more disclosure and more Facebook usage motives. Two linear regression analyses tested this model. Results indicated age was negatively related to depth and to amount of disclosure, supporting H<sub>5a</sub> (see Table 3). Intended, positive/negative, and honest/accurate disclosure factors were not significant for age. Results also indicated helping/informing was positively related and pass time was negatively related to age, supporting H<sub>5b</sub> (see Table 4). Additionally, social connection, exhibitionism, archiving/organizing, professionalism, and feedback usage motives were not significant for age. Age accounted for 6 percent of the variance (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.06) in depth and 3 percent (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.030) of the variance in amount of disclosure. Age also accounted for a very small percent of the variance (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.005) in helping/informing, and 3 percent of the variance (adjusted R<sup>2</sup> = 0.032) in pass time.

Table 3

*Regressions of Age on Self-Disclosure Factors*

Variables Regressed	Standardized $\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Positive/Negative	-0.021	-0.533	0.594
Depth	-0.086	-2.162	0.031
Honesty/Accuracy	0.062	1.560	0.119
Intended Disclosure	0.045	1.121	0.263
Amount	-0.179	-4.526	0.000

Hypothesis 6 predicted positive disclosure to be related to overall Facebook usage. This model was tested using a linear regression. Higher scores indicated positive disclosure and lower scores indicated negative disclosure. Results indicated that the positive/negative valence of the disclosure was not significant ( $r = 0.054$ ,  $t(622) = 1.361$ ,  $p = 0.174$ ) to the overall motive level, rejecting H<sub>6</sub>.

Hypothesis 7, which predicted higher honesty/accuracy to be related to more Facebook usage motives, was tested using a linear regression analysis. Higher honesty/accuracy scores indicated more honest/accurate disclosures. Honesty/Accuracy was significant for four Facebook usage motives, supporting H<sub>7</sub>. Helping/informing and social connection were positive predictors, and exhibitionism and professionalism were negative predictors (see Table 5). Pass time, archiving/organizing, and feedback motives were not significant in this model. Honesty/accuracy accounted for 9 percent of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.090$ ) in self-disclosure factors.

Table 4

*Regressions of Age on Facebook Usage Motives*

Variables Regressed	Standardized $\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Helping/Informing	0.082	2.040	0.042
Social Connection	0.033	0.820	0.413
Pass Time	-0.182	-4.612	0.000
Exhibitionism	-0.044	-1.108	0.268
Archiving/Organizing	-0.032	-0.803	0.422
Professionalism	-0.050	-1.240	0.215
Feedback	0.035	0.880	0.379

Table 5

*Regressions of Facebook Usage Motives on Honesty/Accuracy*

Variables Regressed	Standardized $\beta$	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Helping/Informing	0.214	4.304	0.000
Social Connection	0.144	3.413	0.001
Pass Time	-0.048	-1.214	0.225
Exhibitionism	-0.171	-3.842	0.000
Archiving/Organizing	-0.002	-0.038	0.969
Professionalism	-0.127	-3.003	0.003

Hypothesis 8 predicted time spent would be significant in relation to self-disclosure and Facebook usage. Two linear regressions tested this model, with higher



numbers signifying more time spent on Facebook, as well as more disclosure and Facebook usage motives reported. Results found time spent ( $M = 47.80$ ,  $SD = 54.58$ ) to be positively related to positive/negative and amount of disclosure, supporting  $H_{8a}$  (see table 6). Time was also positively related to pass time and archiving/organizing Facebook usage motives, supporting  $H_{8b}$  (see table 7). However, time spent was not significant for depth, honest/accurate, or intended disclosure factors or helping/informing, social connection, exhibitionism, professionalism, and feedback Facebook usage motives. Time spent accounted for 3 percent of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.034$ ) in self-disclosure factors, and 9 percent of the variance (adjusted  $R^2 = 0.088$ ) in Facebook usage motives.

Table 6

*Regressions of Time Spent on Self-Disclosures*

Variables Regressed	Standardized $\beta$	$t$	$p$
Positive/Negative	0.105	2.244	0.025
Depth	0.032	0.694	0.488
Honesty/Accuracy	0.016	0.324	0.746
Intended Disclosure	-0.023	-0.488	0.626
Amount	0.173	3.921	0.000

Table 7

*Regressions of Time Spent on Facebook Usage Motives*

Variables Regressed	Standardized $\beta$	$t$	$p$
Helping/Informing	0.041	0.819	0.413
Social Connection	0.020	0.485	0.628
Pass Time	0.108	4.529	0.000
Exhibitionism	0.058	1.299	0.194
Archiving/Organizing	0.127	2.485	0.013
Professionalism	-0.027	-0.628	0.530
Feedback	0.064	1.206	0.228

## CHAPTER FIVE

### Discussion

The uses and gratifications perspective allows usage predictions to be made based on reported uses of a particular form of media (Katz et al., 1973). In this study, Facebook represents an emerging medium that facilitates disclosed communication. Because the disclosures help create the network of socially connected users and the user's needs are gratified through the use of the site, Facebook is the ideal social media website to assess the relationship between self-disclosure and reported usage motivations. The results from this investigation support the reciprocal role of Facebook usage motives with disclosures and suggests that Facebook is gratifying needs of the user by encouraging active disclosures and purposeful usage.

The results indicate reported time spent on Facebook is positively related to higher amounts and positively based disclosures. The amount of reported time spent is consistent with past usage research (Baek et al., 2011; Pempek et al., 2009; Zhong et al., 2011). However, the relationship with Facebook usage and reported time spent may be more complex than previously suggested. One explanation of more time spent on Facebook may be attributed to users multitasking during Facebook use (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). For example, users may be reporting time spent when continuously logged into Facebook or using the Facebook cell phone application. Results also indicate increases in the number of reported Facebook friends is predictive of higher amounts of reported disclosures and more reported time spent on the site, which is consistent with previous findings (Hampton et al., 2011). Essentially, more Facebook friends provide

more potential opportunities for users to communicate with one another (Urista et al., 2008). Motivations behind friendships may also account for higher amounts of disclosure and more time spent because of the need to maintain established relationships (Pempek et al., 2009). One example of increased usage may be attributed to a user commenting on another's status update that prompts other "friends" to do the same, exponentially increasing the disclosures, time spent, and further connecting the users by their usage of Facebook.

Results also found reported time spent positively related to pass time and archiving/organizing motivations. This suggests that users are cognizant of reported time spent because of the intentionality required to access Facebook, through a username and password login. Reported time spent encourages archiving/organizing on Facebook, conceivably due to the preset organizational tools available ("Overview," 2011). The ease of sharing, such as the ability to upload multiple pictures synchronously in a photo album, increases the disclosures of the user and may promote additional reported time spent with the disclosure options, such as tagging the picture to a Facebook friend.

The findings from this study also indicate males and females use Facebook differently, as was found in past research (Bond, 2009; Hunt et al., 2012; Pempek et al., 2009; Special & Li-Barber, 2012). Males were more likely to report the polarized answer choices (exactly matching or not at all) for using Facebook, suggesting that males are more diverse in their usage. Additionally, the gender differences in usage motivations may be understood by gender differences in disclosures. For example, past research found that males disclose more sexual information (Chiou, 2006) and share more

personally identifiable information than females (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). Previous research also found women to open up more to female friends (Hatch & Leighton, 1986).

Age of the Facebook user is also a significant finding from this research, with older users more likely to report less control over the informational depth. Since younger users are in the process of establishing their online identity and are motivated by Facebook friend collecting (Christofides et al., 2012), they may be more selective with information disclosed than older users. Older users are also less aware of the consequences for sharing information, suggesting less inhibited disclosures because of the reliance on higher privacy settings. Older users report sharing smaller amounts of disclosure and are less likely to use Facebook to pass time. For example, younger users more frequently update Facebook (Hampton et al., 2011), increasing their disclosures and likelihood of leisurely passing time on Facebook. Older users are also more likely to report helping/informing motives, suggesting deliberate disclosures and specific engagement with Facebook. This is supported as the helping/informing motive includes using Facebook to encourage others (Hollenbaugh, 2011) and supports the maintenance of established friendships (Ledbetter et al., 2011).

Overall, reported motivations of social connection for Facebook users is consistently significant for intentional disclosure, control of informational depth, age of the user, reported honesty/accuracy (H<sub>1</sub>, H<sub>4</sub>, H<sub>5</sub>, H<sub>7</sub>) and provides further indication of a Facebook user's social support (Hampton et al., 2011). Past research found social needs was the primary motivation for using social media (Wang et al., 2012) and this study suggests users are attempting to meet those needs through the exchange of disclosures.

Results from this study indicate that increased intended disclosure by the user predicts more helping/informing usage and higher levels of social connection motivations. This suggests that users are continually connecting with their friends through communication that focuses on reaching specific types of audiences. A possible explanation for the negative relationship with professionalism includes this separation of disclosures based on the Facebook user's relationship with their audience (Derlega et al., 2008). For example, these users may be intentionally selective with work "friend" approvals. Potentially other social media sites, like LinkedIn, may be used for such job related disclosures.

Likewise, reported honesty/accuracy of disclosures also predicts use of helping/informing usage and social connection motivations. This finding is consistent with openness as a predictor of disclosures (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011). This suggests that users may be honest in communication that asks their opinion or preference, reinforcing the connection with other users. However, findings suggest that as reported honesty increases, users are likely to report less exhibitionism and professional usage motives. Less accuracy in exhibitionism and professionalism may be attributed to users filtering and editing information shared in order to maintain a particular online persona. The inaccuracy of disclosures may stem from an alteration of the user's real personality instead of an idealized-self portrayal (Back et al., 2010). Inconsistencies with a user's online versus offline portrayal may indicate that Facebook users recognize the need to create a consistent presentation of self.

This study also presents the relationship between more control over information shared and less reported social connection motivations. For example, past research found

relationships influenced by control over online impressions (Cho, 2007). Therefore, impression management could be attributed to control measures like privacy filters and settings. These perceptions of disclosure control also influence the amount and type of information shared (Christofides et al., 2012). This suggests a user's awareness of the controlled release of information may be based on the potential consequences of disclosing communication. Additionally, control over informational depth requires decisive user regulation that in turn, generates the needs met by exhibitionism, archiving/organizing, and professionalism. For example, a Facebook user may be selectively choosing which profile picture is used, as well as limiting their tagged pictures.

Contrary to H<sub>6</sub>, the hedonic valence of the disclosures is not related to Facebook use. A possible explanation may be due to the link between personality and the valence of the disclosure (Bareket-Bojmel & Shahar, 2011) and to the user's mood (Forgas, 2011). Past research found positive presentation predictive to the overall well being of the user, despite the potential for a positive façade of self (Kim & Lee, 2011). However, past research differs from this study's findings as it found positive disclosures to be associated with intimacy and need of positive self-portrayals (Park et al., 2011).

### *Limitations*

The results from this study are not generalizable due to the use of a convenient sample of students that excluded a major portion of the Facebook population (Attrill & Jalil, 2011). A random sample and controlled distribution would be desired to accommodate all Facebook users. Race and educational background could also be explored in future investigations as possible predictive factors. For example, research has

found a user's education to influence the type of information shared on Facebook (Baek et al., 2011). Communication outside online interactions, including cell phone and face-to-face, could also be explored as potential predictors of Facebook disclosures (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011), as well as a user's ease of technology as a potential predictor for usage (Mallen et al., 2003).

Subsequently, a combined analysis of other social media websites is needed. Distinction between online and off-line friends may also be necessary to understand the differences the environment plays in the disclosure process. Research could also be extended as a longitudinal study assessing the motivations and disclosures for Facebook users versus non-users. This research could also investigate potential reasons for non-usage of social media sites. Furthermore, a scale specifically developed for Facebook usage would also provide clarification when assessing the uses and gratifications for this medium.

Further research is also needed to assess the influence of personality on usage and disclosure, as personality factors have been found to predict the type of communication (Brunet & Schmidt, 2008; Zhong et al., 2011) and personal disclosures online (Attrill & Jalil, 2011). The online identity may also influence the user's personality, which is developed through social media feedback opportunities (Pempek et al., 2009) and embodied in self-narratives created from online self-disclosed information (Rettberg, 2009). Additionally, self-esteem may influence Facebook usage (Forest & Wood, 2012).

### *Conclusion*

Facebook is more than a hub for social connection. It represents the complex way the Internet is facilitating the evolution of online communication. If social media

continues to grow and maintain high levels of popularity, then online self-disclosure may be able to reflect changes in usage motivations and provide further insight into how these sites are being incorporated in a person's everyday life. Notwithstanding the uncertainty of Facebook's enduring popularity, new media and consumer consciousness have been altered by the contributions of this social networking site. This study highlights the domination of online social networks in disclosive communication and garners the continued investigation of potential societal and cultural usage effects.



## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

The 25-item Facebook Usage Motive Scale (Hollenbaugh, 2011, p. 16-17). How much does each item describe your reasons for using Facebook?

- (1) = Not at all
- (2) = Not like my own reasons for using Facebook
- (3) = Somewhat not like my own reasons for using Facebook
- (4) = Neutral
- (5) = Somewhat like my own reasons for using Facebook
- (6) = Like my own reasons for using Facebook
- (7) = Exactly like my own reasons for using Facebook

1. To motivate others
2. To help others
3. To share information that may be of use to others
4. To share my knowledge and skills
5. To show others encouragement
6. To communicate about a special interest or issue that I care about
  
7. To share information with my friends and family who do not live near me
8. To communicate to my friends and family
9. To share information with people that I don't talk to on a regular basis
10. To communicate to many people at once, rather than telling one at a time
  
11. To pass time
12. To occupy my time
13. Because I have nothing better to do
  
14. For attention
15. To gain fame or notoriety
16. Because I like when people read things about me
  
17. To record my thoughts and feelings so I can reflect on them
18. Because it helps me to organize my thoughts and feelings
19. Because I can read what I wrote in previous posts
  
20. To help me get a job
21. To put my professional resume on the Web
22. Because I have to for class or job

23. To get more points of view
24. To get advice from my readers
25. To get feedback from others who have similar experiences

## APPENDIX B

The 32-item Revised Self-Disclosure Scale (Wheeless, 1976, p. 57-58). Please mark the following statements to reflect how you communicate on Facebook.

- (1) = Strongly Disagree
- (2) = Disagree
- (3) = Somewhat Disagree
- (4) = Neutral
- (5) = Somewhat Agree
- (6) = Agree
- (7) = Strongly Agree

1. I usually disclose positive things about myself
2. On the whole, my disclosures about myself are more negative than positive\*
3. I normally reveal “bad” feelings about myself\*
4. I normally reveal “good” feelings about myself
5. I often reveal more undesirable things about myself than desirable things\*
6. I usually disclose negative things about myself\*
7. On the whole, my disclosures about myself are more positive than negative
  
8. I intimately disclose who I really am, openly and fully in my conversation
9. Once I get started, my self-disclosures last a long time
10. I typically reveal information about myself without intending to
11. I often disclose intimate, personal things about myself without hesitation
12. I feel that I sometimes do not control my self-disclosure of personal or intimate things I tell about myself
13. Once I get started, I intimately and fully reveal myself in self-disclosures
  
14. I cannot reveal myself when I want to because I do not know myself thoroughly enough\*
15. I am often not confident that my expression of my own feelings, emotions and experiences are true reflections of myself\*
16. I always feel completely sincere when I reveal my own feelings and experiences
17. My self-disclosures are completely accurate reflections of who I really am
18. I am not always honest in my self-disclosure\*
19. My statements about my own feelings, emotions and experiences are always accurate self-perceptions
20. I am always honest in my self-disclosures
21. I do not always feel completely sincere when I reveal my own feelings, emotions, behaviors or experiences\*

22. When I wish, my self-disclosures are always accurate reflections of who I really am
23. When I express my personal feelings, I am always aware of what I am doing and saying
24. When I reveal my feelings about myself, I consciously intend to do so
25. When I am self-disclosing, I am consciously aware of what I am revealing
  
26. I do not often talk about myself\*
27. My statements of my feelings are usually brief\*
28. I usually talk about myself for fairly long periods at a time
29. My conversation lasts the least time when I am discussing myself\*
30. I often talk about myself
31. I often discuss my feelings about myself
32. Only infrequently do I express my personal beliefs and opinions\*

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