

USER MOTIVATIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: ROLE OF
ENTERTAINMENT, INFORMATION GATHERING, AND INTERPERSONAL UTILITY

By

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To my husband, Dave, my inspiration

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Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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USER MOTIVATIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: ROLE OF
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This study examines the primary motivations for social networking sites, specifically Facebook. Of researchers' previously identified motivations for use of the Internet, three dimensions of these motivations play a fundamental role in this research: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. Under the uses and gratifications approach, the motivations of entertainment and information gathering have repeatedly been applied to traditional media use, and then later to Internet use. Interpersonal utility, which incorporates such needs as to "participate in and belong to a group, to express oneself freely, to give input, and to find out what others say," was found by researchers to be more prevalent in newer media, such as the Internet, and, later, in social networking sites. When combined, this study reveals that these three motivations create a uses and gratifications formula that is *specific* to the social networking site Facebook.

In this study, respondents were asked a series of questions that outlined specific reasons why they use Facebook. From these 17 questions, the three dimensions of motivations were formed – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. The relationship among these three dimensions for use of Facebook proved to be

strong and played a significant role in the findings of this research. Essentially, this study demonstrates quantitative support that *all three dimensions* are primary motivations for users of the social networking site Facebook.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

Social networking sites have changed the way people communicate and interact in today's society. These social platforms are now considered part of the milieu of modern social interactions, and are used as a primary medium for communication and networking (Back et al., 2010; boyd & Ellison, 2007). In the last decade, research on the intricacies of the social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace, has delved into the motivations behind their use, such as the benefits of "social capital," issues of hyperpersonal, self-expression, voyeurism, exhibitionism, and identity. As the popularity of social networking sites (SNS) – particularly Facebook – continues to flourish, it is vital that mass communication researchers continue to keep track of the motivations that draw users to these social media platforms.

The choices that SNS users make – and the motivations behind those choices – in selecting a social networking site on which to interact fall under the umbrella of the uses and gratifications approach, which seeks to explain the uses of media and the satisfactions found in them. This theoretical approach allows researchers to examine the how and why of media use and, specifically, focus on how media are used to satisfy cognitive and affective needs involving personal needs and entertainment needs (Rubin, 2002; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004). As the use of social network sites continues to increase across all demographics, this study aims to provide significant data on the most current motivations for using social networking sites and determine the primary motivations found for their use (Pew Internet, 2010a).

Taking a step back from what draws people to linger on these sites, research today has only begun to brush the surface of examining the societal implications of

popular social networking sites. With millions of users of social networking sites across the nation and globe, the decision to use either MySpace or Facebook could potentially be a divisive way in which people are segregated according to socioeconomic status. Initial findings by new media researcher danah boyd¹ indicate that America's youth are signaling a clear divide based on class when selecting social networking sites. Further, recent marketing statistics suggest that more affluent members of society are more likely to frequent Facebook, while less affluent members are more likely to connect on MySpace (Hare, 2009). The questions raised from these preliminary findings are of profound importance in the way in which members of our society choose to associate with one another virtually and how the media industry interacts with users of social networking sites. Are these social networking sites creating a division between users based on socioeconomic status? Specifically, does socioeconomic status affect which social networking site a user selects? How can the media industry identify and target these seemingly self-segregated online audiences?

Facebook and MySpace are both online social networking sites, a service that allows its users to construct a public or semi-public profile, create a list of other users with whom they share a social connection, and view others' profiles on their "friends" list and those made by others within the Web site (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Their rapid growth suggests that social networking sites fill a deep-seated human desire: to communicate with, and keep track of the activities of, a wide circle of others (Donath, 2007; Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2010; Tufekci, 2008). As a result of their established (and growing) popularity, there have been many concerns about the social impact of social networking

¹ Social media researcher danah boyd does not capitalize her name; therefore, all references will appear in lower case throughout this study.

sites and research is needed to understand them more fully (Brake & Livingstone, 2010; Mitchell & Ybarra, 2008; Thelwall & Wilkinson; Wang & Wellman, 2010).

Social computing applications, led by social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, have flourished in the past few years; however, scholarly research on the societal effects of socializing online has not caught up (Tufekci, 2008). To explain how, over the course of the last five years, social networking has begun to stratify in line with socioeconomic status, a number of reasons have been suggested. In the timeline of events for these two Web sites, early adoption might play a role in that MySpace came out first and quickly attracted urban 20-somethings, while Facebook began at Harvard and spread to the Ivy Leagues before expanding to the general public (boyd, 2009). Some researchers have argued that, in the beginning, the major lure of Facebook was its initial exclusivity, since it required a .edu e-mail account to register (Raskin, 2006). Since Facebook was slow to open its virtual doors from universities to, first, high schools, and then the general public, some users might see MySpace as more democratic from the outset. Other researchers suggest that people most prefer what they first encountered and enjoyed (Levinson, 2009).

However, it is not clear why some users choose to close accounts on MySpace and join Facebook instead, while others do not. boyd (2009) suggests an uncomfortable explanation: modern-day “white flight.” Educated, wealthy, white users from the suburbs were more likely to leave or choose Facebook in a decision “wrapped up in their connections to others, in their belief that a more peaceful, quiet, less-public space would be more idyllic” (boyd, 2009, para. 38). Digital migration, in other words, reveals the same social patterns as urban white flight (boyd, 2009). The popular press – which

often reflects the lives of a more privileged sector of society – perhaps furthered this dynamic with news stories suggesting that MySpace was the “dangerous underbelly of the Internet while Facebook was the utopian savior” (boyd, 2009, para. 39). Webster (2010) found that users of Twitter, a microblogging site with SNS features, are well-educated and more likely to live in higher income households. Twitter has emerged as a favored channel for private communication among the most popular, technology-savvy, and high-income American communities, who protect their accounts by making them available to only a small group of friends (Mediashift, 2011). Hispanic users of Twitter are also on the rise, making up roughly 17% of overall users (Webster, 2010). These early findings signal an intertwining of race and socioeconomic status that open up room for research on why users are motivated to choose one social networking site over another.

For the purpose of this study, socioeconomic status (SES) can be conceptually defined as a group or individual’s social and economic position within a hierarchical social structure. Most theories explain that research involving social inequalities between groups include indicators of socioeconomic status with the individual, such as income, education level achieved, or occupation (Kennedy, Glass, & Prothrow-Stith, 1998). Whether users’ socioeconomic status plays a role in preference is important for the industry to examine given what little is known of audience demographics within this popular new form of online interaction. These users are seemingly dividing themselves based on affluence in unprecedented ways (Hare, 2009; Sydell, 2009), and this research is a launching pad for advertisers and researchers in the media industry to understand and reach target audiences online.

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in mass communication research about social networking sites by questioning users of popular social networking sites about their motivations for use. The uses and gratifications model provides the theoretical framework of understanding on which this research is based. Essentially, this study aims to examine whether users of Facebook and MySpace divide themselves according to socioeconomic status and determine primary motivations for using social networking sites. While the results from this research prove to be successful in revealing primary motivations for the social networking site Facebook, the question of socioeconomic status playing a role in user choice between MySpace and Facebook is left unanswered. The vast majority of social networking site users in this study are on Facebook and not MySpace, which left no room for comparison of socioeconomic status. Ultimately, this study reveals that research on social networking sites in 2009 has been invalidated only two years later and that social media is, essentially, a moving target for researchers.

Chapter 1 has introduced the key concepts surrounding social networking sites and the outlined the purpose of this study. Chapter 2 will review relevant research on social networking sites and fill in the academic gaps on initial examinations of socioeconomic division online, motivations for the use of social networking sites, and the application of the uses and gratifications approach in this research. Of particular importance will be an examination of the predominant motivations for use of social networking sites, such as Facebook and MySpace. Ultimately, three primary dimensions of social networking motivations – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – will provide the foundation of this study.

Chapter 3 will outline the justification of the method used – survey research – and explain the selection of the sample, collection of data, notable challenges, and limitations found. Additionally, this chapter will outline the frequencies and patterns found in this study’s survey results and provide measurements demonstrating how participants use Facebook, in particular. Chapter 4 will outline the results found from testing this study’s two research questions (outlined at the end of Chapter 2). Chapter 5 will provide discussion of this study as well as the problems found within and outline the conclusion and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

More than 700 million people across the world currently have profiles on social networking sites, which are now considered part of the milieu of modern social interactions and are widely used as a primary medium for communication and networking (Back et al., 2010; boyd & Ellison, 2007). In the United States, the use of social networking sites has risen significantly across all demographics in the last five years. Seventy-three percent of American teens with Internet access now use social networking sites, compared to 55% in November 2006 and 65% in February 2008 (Pew Internet, 2010b). Meanwhile, 47% of online adults use social networking sites, up from 37% in November 2008 (Pew Internet, 2010b). Specifically, 72% of online 18- to 29-year-olds use social networking (nearly matching teen rates), a number that is well above the 39% of social networking users ages 30 and above (Pew Internet, 2010b). In many ways, college students were the pioneers of online social interaction, as their platform preferences have traditionally determined which ones gain mainstream popularity and which ones fall by the wayside (King, 2009).

Facebook is currently the most commonly used social networking site among adults, as 73% of adults online have a profile on Facebook, 48% have a profile on MySpace and 14% have a profile on LinkedIn (Pew Internet, 2010b). As more adults join social networking, teens have shown a tendency to code their public messages in private language, such as song lyrics or personal jokes, that are decipherable only to those friends who are the intended recipients of the message (Mediashift, 2011). Adults appear to be fragmenting their social networking use, as 52% of those who use SNS report that they have two or more different profiles, up from 42% in May 2008 (Pew

Internet, 2010b). Compared to adults, young profile owners are more likely to maintain a profile on MySpace (66%, compared to 36% of those 30 and older), and less likely to have a profile on the professionally oriented LinkedIn (7% versus 19%) (Pew Internet, 2010b). Meanwhile, adults who use social networking sites and are under 30 and those over 30 are equally as likely to maintain a profile on Facebook – 71% of young profile owners do so, compared with 75% of older profile owners (Pew Internet, 2010b).

Social networking site use among users ages 50 and older nearly doubled in 2010, jumping from 22% to 42% (Pew Internet, 2010a). While the use of social networking has expanded dramatically across all age groups, older users (age 50 and older) have been actively embracing new networking tools (Pew Internet, 2010a). Although e-mail continues to be the primary means of communication with others, many now rely on social networking tools to manage daily communications, such as sharing links, photos, videos, news and status updates with a growing network of contacts (Pew Internet, 2010a). While social networking site users ages 18-29 are the heaviest users of sites like Facebook and LinkedIn, their growth was small compared to that of older users. Between April 2009 and May 2010, Internet users ages 50-64 (who said they use a social networking site like Facebook, MySpace or LinkedIn) grew 88%, and those 65 or older doubled in their adoption, compared with a growth of only 13% of those ages 18-29 (Pew Internet, 2010a).

Facebook and MySpace

In the year 2010, social networking use continued to significantly increase, with 9 out of every 10 U.S. Internet users visiting a social networking site within a month's time (ComScore, 2011). Among the many social networking sites that have developed in the United States in the past decade, two in particular, MySpace and Facebook, have been

among the most popular and arguably the most significant. The average Internet user spends more than 4 hours on SNS each month, and nearly 1 out of every 8 minutes online is spent on Facebook (comScore, 2011).

In October 2010, the top-20 most visited Web sites included Facebook (No. 2); YouTube (No. 4, has SNS features, but predominantly used for video sharing); Twitter (No. 7); and MySpace (No. 18, though this ranking has fluctuated between Nos. 7 and 18 in 2010) (Alexa, 2010; Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2010). Facebook's (2011) Web site states that the company provides a "digital mapping of people's real-world social connections" and the site now claims to have more than 500 million active users – more than half of whom log onto the site daily.

Facebook began in 2004 at Harvard University, where users (students) were required to have a harvard.edu e-mail address in order to sign up. Eventually, the social networking site branched out to other universities (also requiring a .edu e-mail address) before expanding offerings in 2005 to high school students, businesses, and, finally, to anyone with a valid e-mail address (boyd & Ellison, 2007). While Facebook is now available to everyone, some researchers argue that it contains a demographic bias in that "its initial user base was structured around privileged educational institutions and thus carries an American bourgeois element" (boyd, 2007; Papacharissi, 2009, p. 204). This theme of Facebook's initial aura of elitism was even popularized by the 2010 film *The Social Network*, a partially fictionalized version of Facebook's founding. Facebook, which surpassed MySpace in April 2008, is known as the world's most popular social networking site (Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2010).

Facebook is used primarily to maintain existing offline relationships instead of meeting new people online (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). It is in this capacity that the community of Facebook appears to be based more on the real-life community of individual users. Ellison et al. lauded Facebook for its “heavy usage patterns and technological capacities that bridge online and offline connections” and argued that the social networking site “represents an understudied offline to online trend in that it originally primarily served a geographically-bound community” (p. 1144).

Meanwhile, MySpace is one in a growing number of social networking sites on which users create and view personal profiles (Booth, 2008). The social networking site is a self-proclaimed technology company that connects people through “personal expression, content and culture” and that “empowers its global community to experience the Internet through a social lens by integrating personal profiles, photos, videos, mobile, messaging, games and the world’s largest music community” (MySpace, 2010).

Originally launched in January 2004, MySpace now claims more than 100 million monthly active users around the globe – half of whom are in the United States (MySpace, 2011b). The SNS was acquired by News Corp. in October 2005 and remains a division of it today (MySpace, 2010; News Corporation, 2010). However, nearly half of the profiles on MySpace have been abandoned, “meaning that the overall growth and explosive rate of user interest in social networks may need to be tempered” (Caverlee & Webb, 2008, p. 36). The SNS claims to be a leading social entertainment destination aimed at a Generation Y audience that “drives social interaction by providing a highly personalized experience around entertainment and connecting people to the music, celebrities, TV, movies, and games that they love” (Myspace, 2011a). With a general

audience, MySpace is well known for its emphasis on politics and music. The social networking site houses MySpace Music, which offers a catalogue of “freely streamable audio and video content to users and provides major, independent, and unsigned artists alike with the tools to reach new audiences” (MySpace, 2011a).

Mayfield (2007) notes the role that community plays in becoming a member of a social networking site like MySpace:

People joining a social network usually create a profile and then build a network by connecting to friends and contacts in the network, or by inviting real-world contacts and friends to join the social network. These communities retain the interest of their members by being useful to them and providing services that are entertaining or help them to expand their networks. (p. 14)

Two of the most popular features on both Facebook and MySpace are their photo-sharing tools and ongoing news feed (or real-time posts from “friends”) that refreshes and rejuvenates content, which creates a draw for users (Cassidy, 2006). The mechanics of Facebook and MySpace are similar in that users present themselves through an online profile, which contains self-descriptions and photos, and communicate largely by commenting on users’ profiles (Aubrey, J., Chattopadhyay, S., & Rill, L., 2008, p. 3). Both Facebook and MySpace provide users some control in terms of who may access their profiles, and both contain advertisements on the right side of each page. While Facebook allows users to determine what is made public and what remains private (such as individual photo albums posted to “friends only” or “public”), the SNS has sporadically opened up its site to third parties, thus jeopardizing user privacy until manually altered to custom privacy settings (Papacharissi, 2009). Dwyer, Hiltz, and Passerini (2007) argue that trust and usage goals may affect what information people are willing to share. Facebook users expressed greater trust in Facebook than

MySpace users did in MySpace and were thus more willing to share information on the site (boyd & Ellison, 2007, p. 222). Similarly, people are more likely to “divulge information using e-mail or on-line instant messages, or while blogging, than when they communicate face-to-face” (Alter & Oppenheimer, 2009, p. 1414).

Besides listing basic information about oneself, Facebook encourages its users to also publish contact information, details about personal interests and activities as well as information about educational background and work (Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris & Arsoy, 2010). Facebook uses this information to place users into socially structured “networks” defined by their location, education, special interests, employer, etc., which make it easier for users to find their existing friends and people who have similar interests in their area (King, 2009).

In both Facebook and MySpace, there is a private message section organized like an e-mail account with an “inbox” to view and read the messages received; a “sent messages” feature to view the messages that the profile owner has sent; and a “new message” button to write new messages (Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris & Arsoy, 2010). These private messages are like e-mail in that only the person who received the message is allowed to view it (Taraszow et al.). And both Facebook and MySpace offer an instant messaging (IM) feature – also known as chat – so that real-time conversations can take place (Taraszow et al.). One feature that is exclusive to Facebook is the “like” button, which, when clicked by the user, can be applied to friends’ postings as well as a wide variety of categories, from movies to music to brands. Many online Web sites have even customized their pages to include a “like” option for Facebook users that, when clicked, appears on the homepage of the users and the

news feeds of that user's Facebook friends. Although social networking sites – often referred to in today's popular press as social media – have branched out to users of all ages, the young still dominate the sector. Generation Y – the 82 million Americans who were born between 1980 and 2000 – has a unique relationship to brands that is part of a broader shift in social norms ushered in by digital communications (Mediashift, 2011). In other words, when young users choose to “like” a brand on Facebook using the “like” button, that badge helps define themselves among their peers (Mediashift, 2011).

Despite similarities in profile offerings, when it comes to visual layout, Facebook and MySpace are extremely different. Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook founder and CEO, reported that when he was designing Facebook, he did not want the site to look “showy or cool,” but wanted it “to work” (Cassidy, 2006). Facebook's white background is standardized and unalterable, so that each user's page is nearly identical at first glance, except for the selected profile photo. While Facebook's background is not customizable for users, this design leads to less content needing to be loaded on each page, which makes it run faster and less prone to phishing and spamming (King, 2009).

MySpace offers a feature in which the user's homepage background can be customized according to preference, either by entering in HTML code or choosing a theme from a wide variety of pre-designed backgrounds. Mayfield (2007) states that MySpace “allows members to create vivid, chaotic home pages (they've been likened to the walls of a teenager's bedroom) to which they can upload images, videos and music” (p. 14). MySpace has been called the Las Vegas of social networking software for its bright colors and flashiness, and loyal users argue that its offbeat tackiness adds to the charm (King, 2009). King (2009) argues that younger teenagers begin in MySpace to

experiment with self-image through customization, but as they grow older, they migrate from MySpace to Facebook for social networking purposes. MySpace, however, remains an important part of a teenager's online experience as a provider of music, video, and other media-related content (King, 2009).

Socioeconomic Division Online

Research suggests that social networking sites are used to maintain existing offline relationships instead of meeting new people online (Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007). Ellison et al. lauded Facebook for its "heavy usage patterns and technological capacities that bridge online and offline connections" and argued that the social networking site "represents an offline to online trend in that it originally primarily served a geographically-bound community" (p. 1144). These findings would suggest that social networking sites mirror, at least to some extent, the way in which people group themselves offline.

Whether early users of Facebook already knew each other before meeting on Facebook, or met in person after meeting on Facebook, the result was the same: "an online community directly grounded in the real world" (Levinson, 2009, p.122). After Facebook became open to the public and grew to become a most fierce competitor to MySpace, "this real-world grounding continued even as it went far beyond students" (Levinson, p. 122). With this in mind, new media experts are beginning to notice trends in social networking sites that are perhaps reflections of the "real world," more specifically, affecting the ways in which wealth (or lack of wealth) is represented online. Preliminary research into the real-life implications of Facebook and MySpace reveals dramatic socioeconomic fragmentation (boyd, 2007, para. 1).

In investigating why teens select either Facebook or MySpace, boyd (2009) suggests that, on the surface, one can reasonably conclude it to be a matter of individual choice, and she found a variety of responses, from personal preference to the features or functionality offered. Choosing one site over the other for these reasons, such as the colorful design layout options offered on MySpace, would be acceptable in society if “friendships and aesthetics and values weren’t inherently intertwined with issues of race, socio-economic status, education, and other factors that usually make up our understanding of ‘class’” (boyd, 2009, para. 24).

Choice, in other words, is not about features or functionality but about the social categories in which society exists and choosing sites online that reflect the user’s background (boyd, 2009). In addition to choosing a site that reflects “people like me,” it is also about “seeing the ‘other’ site as a place where the ‘other’ people go” (boyd, 2009, para. 26). Both teens and adults use social categories and labels to identify people with values, tastes and social positions, and as teens choose between MySpace and Facebook, the social networking sites served as frames for those social categories (boyd, 2009). For example, one teen, in explaining his reason for choosing Facebook over MySpace, said the following in a 2007 interview:

Craig (17, California): The higher castes of high school moved to Facebook. It was more cultured, and less cheesy. The lower class usually were content to stick to MySpace. Any high school student who has a Facebook will tell you that MySpace users are more likely to be barely educated and obnoxious. Like Peet’s is more cultured than Starbucks, and Jazz is more cultured than bubblegum pop, and like Macs are more cultured than PC’s, Facebook is of a cooler caliber than MySpace. (boyd, 2009, para 29)

A few outlets in the popular press have recently begun to notice this societal perception among young social networkers. Both CNN and National Public Radio ran stories in 2009 suggesting that today’s youth were signaling division based on wealth

(or lack of wealth) in their decisions to represent themselves on either MySpace or Facebook (Hare, 2009; Sydell, 2009). According to Nielson data, MySpace users tend to be from middle-class, blue-collar neighborhoods and perhaps not college educated (Hare, 2009). By contrast, Facebook “goes off the charts in the upscale neighborhoods,” which are represented by white or Asian married couples between the ages of 45 and 64 with children and high levels of education (Hare, para. 8). Marketing research firm Nielsen Claritas found in 2009 that “people in more affluent demographics are 25% more likely to be found friending on Facebook, while the less affluent are 37% more likely to connect on MySpace” (Hare, para. 5). Furthermore, almost 23% of Facebook users earn more than \$100,000 a year, while 37% of MySpace members earn less than \$50,000 annually (Hare).

boyd (2010) explored a division found between MySpace and Facebook among American teens during the 2006-07 school year. In the beginning of the year, students asked “Are you on MySpace?” before shifting to asking, “Are you on MySpace or Facebook?” (boyd, 2010, p. 3). As Facebook gained momentum, some teens switched from MySpace to Facebook, others joined Facebook without having experienced MySpace, and others chose to become users of both (boyd, 2010). While MySpace was not losing traction at the time, as teens continued to frequent the site, some teens who had started out with MySpace profiles began to switch completely to Facebook (boyd, 2010). A distinction began to emerge as it became clear that “those who adopted MySpace were from different backgrounds and had different norms and values than those who adopted Facebook” (boyd, 2010, p. 3). boyd found that white and more affluent individuals were more likely to choose and move to Facebook. Specifically,

“subculturally identified teens appeared more frequently drawn to MySpace while more mainstream teens tended towards Facebook” (boyd, 2010, p. 9). In other words, teens from less privileged backgrounds were more likely to set up profiles on MySpace while teens headed toward elite universities appeared to be setting up on Facebook (boyd, 2010).

Eszter Hargittai (2007) found that there is a significant relationship between the level of parental education of users and their choice of social networking sites. Students whose parents obtained a college degree are significantly more likely to use Facebook than those whose parents have some college education, but not a degree (Hargittai). On the other hand, students whose parents have less than a high school degree are considerably more likely to use MySpace than those with some college education. Essentially, Hargittai (2007) found a positive relationship between parental education level and the use of Facebook and a negative relationship between parental education level and the use of MySpace.

Stepping back from analyzing patterns of established users, why are these social networking site users first choosing to visit either Facebook or MySpace? What is it about either social networking site that makes it more appealing than the other? What is appealing about social networking sites in general? Are there underlying socioeconomic factors encouraging users to gravitate toward one or the other? What are the primary motivations that lead users to spend so much time on social networking sites? With the uses and gratifications framework, these questions surrounding why users of social networking sites select either Facebook or MySpace can be examined.

Uses and Gratifications Approach

More than ever before, the act of using media means creating as well as receiving, with user-control extending far beyond selecting ready-made, mass produced content (Livingstone, 2008). The choices that users make in selecting a social networking site on which to interact fall under the umbrella of the uses and gratifications approach. This theory seeks to explain the uses of media and the satisfactions found in them in terms of the motives and self-perceived needs of audience members. With the uses and gratifications approach, researchers can examine the how and why of media use and, specifically, focus on how media are used to satisfy cognitive and affective needs involving personal satisfaction and entertainment (Rubin, 2002; Stafford, Stafford, & Schkade, 2004).

In the early days of communications, researchers studied the gratifications that attracted and held audiences in addition to the kind of content that satisfied social and psychological needs (Cantril, 1942). Some of the first critics of the uses and gratifications approach argued that it relied heavily on self reports; was lacking in the social origin of audience needs brought to media; was not critical enough of potential dysfunction of certain types of audience satisfaction; and was too focused on diversity of audience instead of constraints of the text (Ruggiero, 2000; Katz, 1987). In the 1950s and 1960s, researchers sought to identify and operationalize social and psychological variables that were thought to be the beginnings of patterns of media consumption of gratifications (Wimmer & Dominick, 1994).

Prior to the 1970s, researchers focused on the effects of mass communication on readers. While past research of uses and gratifications focused on the cause and degree of motives for selecting media (and content), audiences were permitted to

explain the meaning of their selective behavior (Blumler & Katz, 1974). Uses and gratifications researchers then began looking at audience motivations and the uses people made of the media for social and psychological needs (Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin, 1994; Ruggiero, 2000). Over the next two decades, researchers began to reevaluate the notion of an active audience, and some scholars sought to explain the effects of mass communication by recognizing the potential for audience initiative and activity (Rubin, 1994; Ruggiero, 2000).

With the rise of the Internet, and social networking sites in particular, this framework of media examination became more complex and interactive (unlike media use seen in older forms, such as television). This theory can be viewed as a psychological communication perspective that examines how individuals use media and other forms of communication to satisfy their wants and needs (Rubin, 2002).

The uses and gratifications framework also shifted from looking at users as passive audiences to viewing them as active audiences, and research visibly shifted from how the media affect users to what users do with the media (Rubin, 1994). The uses and gratifications approach assumes the following four tenets: “1) the audience is active and goal-oriented; 2) motivations help explain media use; 3) people form intentions and expectations for media use; and 4) people choose a medium based on their sought motives” (Beaudoin, 2008, p. 552). According to the uses and gratification framework, media use can be defined by a group of key elements, including “people’s needs and motives to communicate, the psychological and social environment, the mass media, functional alternatives to media use, communication behavior, and the consequences of such behavior” (Rubin, 1994, p. 419).

While mass communication models traditionally create a linear, sender-to-receiver approach in disseminating information, the Internet demands a reshaping of these conventional models to make room for new forms of communication (Chung & Nah, 2009). Passive audiences are dwindling as today's media audiences gather information online in ways that are both interactive and individually catered. Chung and Nah state that the Internet can now be considered a mass medium, and the public no longer relies strictly on older information sources (print newspaper, television news programs) to deliver the daily news. Some researchers have argued that new media technology has blurred the lines between mass and interpersonal media, particularly social networking sites such as Facebook (Westerman, 2008). Stafford and Gonier (2004) have identified several gratifications from Internet use that motivate users' behaviors, including Web searching, the acquiring of information, the ability to engage in interpersonal communication, and socialization.

Recent studies have shown "that news audiences find the immediate back-and-forth communication valuable with interactive features, such as e-mail links and chat functions, offering the potential to recreate community" (Chung & Nah, 2009, p. 860). However, critics of social networking sites and other forms of "virtual communities" (Rheingold, 1994) formed online argue that these forums isolate people from their offline lives. Contentions that the Internet fragments community, still under scrutiny in empirical research, fall in line with similar accusations against users of television and a loss of civic engagement. Putnam (2000) concluded that news and entertainment are becoming more and more individualized, no longer requiring users to "coordinate [their] tastes and timing with others to enjoy the rarest culture or the most esoteric information"

(p. 216). Putnam also argues that electronic technology promotes isolation and “allows us to consume this hand-tailored entertainment in private, even utterly alone” (p. 217). However, more recent research has proven that online interactions, instead of removing people from their offline worlds, are “used to support relationships and keep people in contact” (Ellison et al., 2007, p. 1165). This ongoing research suggests that people are not only using online interaction to maintain relationships with family and close friends (both geographically near and far), but they are “using the Internet largely at the expense of television, and that this exchange is a good one from the perspective of social ties” (Benkler, 2006, p. 15). Studies have concluded that time spent online is “positively related to traditional community engagement: civic participation, public attendance, and informal social interactions” (Moy, Manosevich, Stamm, & Dunsmore, 2005, p. 772).

Gratifications found in media use are seen as a motivating factor for seeking information (Graber, 1984), and many researchers have determined that reasons for using the Internet include information, entertainment, and passing time (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Ferguson & Perse, 2000). Papacharissi and Rubin determined information seeking and entertainment as primary motivations for using the Internet, in addition to other motivations, which included convenience, passing time, and interpersonal utility. Flaherty, Pearce and Rubin (1998) explored whether Internet and face-to-face communication channels are functional alternatives for each other and found correlations between the motivations for face-to-face communication and the motivations for Internet in information, entertainment, and passing time. These researchers also outlined the motives of interpersonal utility, including inclusion,

affection, control, relaxation, escape and pleasure, and determined that people used computers to gratify these interpersonal needs. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) relied on interpersonal motives to examine computer-mediated communication and determined that affection, inclusion, and control were seen as more interpersonally oriented needs. Flaherty et al. (1998) determined that needs traditionally fulfilled by media (social interaction, passing time, habit, information-seeking, entertainment-seeking) are fulfilled by new media, such as social networking.

Motivations for Social Networking

Social networking sites have revolutionized the act of online communication, providing diverse features that support a large variety of interests and practices (boyd and Ellison, 2007). Industry and academic researchers have kept pace with examining the trends of social media, such as how people create personal profiles, network with familiar and new contacts and participate in various forms of online community (boyd and Ellison; Livingstone, 2008). Social networking sites play host to millions of users who socialize with others, including and sometimes supplanting traditional socialization agents, such as family, school, peer groups, and environment (Urista, Dong & Day, 2009). These SNS allow individuals to play an active role in the socialization process and in constructing their own identity (Urista et al.).

Past research has provided a wide range of motivations behind the use of social networking, including the benefits of “social capital,” issues of hyperpersonal, self-expression, community, intimacy, voyeurism, exhibitionism and previously mentioned identity (Beaudoin, 2008; Booth, 2008; boyd & Ellison, 2007; Chen, 2010; Cho, de Zuniga, Rojas & Shah, 2003; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Livingstone, 2008; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Rubin, 2009; Urista, Dong, & Day, 2009; Westerman,

2008). Social networking sites allow individuals to “present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others” in a variety of contexts, from work-related, romantic initiation, shared interests or basic connection in a group, such as college (Ellison et al., p. 1143).

One of the most initially popular motivations for SNS found among researchers is social capital, defined as the resources accumulated through the relationships among people (Ellison et al.; Coleman, 1988). The motivation of social capital refers to the ability to draw on resources from other members of a network to which the person belongs, such as useful information, personal relationships, or the capacity to organize groups (Paxton, 1999). Researchers have continued to emphasize the importance of Internet-based linkages and social media for “the formation of weak ties, which serve as the foundation of bridging social capital” (Ellison et al., p. 1146).

Social networking sites make it easier to connect with others by integrating digital communication and publishing, which allows users to create a digital identity and gives them access to tools for communication across time and space (Dwyer, Hiltz, & Passerini, 2007). These sites’ tools are particularly attractive to users, such as walls (comment sections on a user’s profile that can be written on by friends within the user’s network), profiles, blogs, bulletins, private messaging, and photo albums (Urista, Dong & Day, 2009)

The main characteristic of a social networking site that allows detailed profiles (like MySpace and Facebook) is a visible profile that displays a user-selected list of friends and detailed personal disclosure of personal information (boyd and Ellison, 2007). Upon signing up for a SNS, users are asked to provide information such as name, age, birth

date, current location, hometown, political affiliation, religious interests, contact information, and an “about me” section in which the user is free to describe one’s self in a few sentences. Most SNS encourage the user to provide a profile photo that will appear on the user’s home page. All connections to other members are displayed in a list of friends, contacts or fans and are viewable to all connected, pre-approved users. The public display of this list, which contains links to each friend’s/contact’s/fan’s profile, is a crucial component of social networking sites (boyd and Ellison, 2007).

Perhaps one primary motivation behind social networking sites is connecting online, specifically, interaction with others and maintaining current relationships (Dwyer, Hiltz, & Passerini, 2007). Users predominately connect with people they already know in real life, but there are also connections with completely new people (Tarazow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris & Arsoy, 2010). Favored uses of SNS include looking up existing friends, networking, or looking for new acquaintances; extending one’s network; updating current information (such as location and favorite activities); sharing information, photos, video and music; receiving updates on friends and events; sending private messages; and presenting an idealized presentation of one’s self (Tarazow et al., 2010); boyd and Ellison, 2007; Dwyer et al., 2007). However, other researchers have since argued that users are not using SNS to promote an idealized virtual identity. Instead, these sites are considered “an efficient medium for expressing and community real personality, which may help explain their popularity” (Back et al., 2010, p. 374).

The application of the uses and gratifications approach to these motivations for using social networking sites will directly apply to the quantitative examination of socioeconomic status of users of Facebook and MySpace in this study. Based upon the

literature review above and the conceptualization of SNS motivations and socioeconomic status for users of Facebook and/or MySpace, the following research questions and hypotheses were developed:

- RQ1: Does socioeconomic status indicate user preference for either social networking site, Facebook and/or MySpace?
- H1a: Users of the social networking site Facebook will have a higher average (2010) socioeconomic status than users of the social networking site MySpace.
- H1b: Users of the social networking site MySpace will have a lower average (2010) socioeconomic status than users of the social networking site Facebook.
- RQ2: What are the predominant motivations for use of social networking sites such as Facebook and MySpace?

Specifically, the first research question will examine whether socioeconomic status serves as a dividing factor for audiences of these two social networking sites. Other researchers have mapped the relationship between uses and gratifications and socioeconomic status. Cho, Gil de Zuniga, Rojas, and Shah (2003) found notable differences in uses and gratifications across subgroups. For example, younger individuals (mean age: 27) with a high SES were most likely to use the Internet to satisfy their motivations strategically (with computer-mediated interaction, surveillance, and consumption) and were more efficient at fulfilling their needs in this way. However, younger individuals (mean age: 29) with a low SES were more likely to employ multiple Internet behaviors to meet their needs and were still learning and experimenting with ways in which to satisfy basic needs (Cho et al.).

While controlling the variables of income, education, race and age, Chen (2010) found that active Twitter use was the “the strongest predictor of a gratification of a need to connect with other people on Twitter” (p. 5). Because it focuses on users’ psychological and social needs, the uses and gratifications model is particularly suited

for explaining the interpersonal aspect of social media in social networking sites like Twitter, Facebook and MySpace (Rubin, 2009).

For the purpose of this study and the first research question, individual income will be conceptually defined as the money or other gain received in a given period (2010) by an individual for labor, services, or allotted spending. Socioeconomic status will be conceptually defined as a group or individual's social and economic position within a hierarchical social structure based on income, occupation, and education. The socioeconomic indicators of income, occupation, and education will be used to provide further support for the initial findings that users of Facebook and MySpace are choosing their social networking site based on socioeconomic status.

The second research question – “What are the predominant motivations for use of social networking sites Facebook and MySpace?” – will examine which motivations users most associate with in the specific realm of SNS. Of the five previously identified motivations for use of the Internet, three dimensions of these motivations play a fundamental role in this study: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility (Papacharissi & Rubin 2000). The motivations of entertainment and information gathering have repeatedly been applied to traditional media use, and then later to Internet use. Both motivations have proven as mainstays in the uses and gratifications approach (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). Interpersonal utility, which incorporates such needs as to “participate in and belong to a group, to express oneself freely, to give input, and to find out what others say,” was found by researchers to be more prevalent in newer media, such as the Internet, and, later, in social networking sites (Kindred & Mohammed, 2005, para. 10). When combined, these three motivations create a uses

and gratifications formula that is specific to the social networking site Facebook, as will be established in this study.

For the purpose of this study, entertainment will be defined as a motivation that involves the following: occupying users' time, passing users' time when bored, and providing users with an activity of amusement and/or leisure. This motivation includes many forms of activity, such as escapism, browsing social networking sites for fun, and looking for humor or excitement in user or "friend" profiles.

Information gathering will be defined as a motivation that involves the following: users' seeking feedback and/or details about other people, places, events, or things. This includes many forms of activity on social networking sites, such as seeking information about events or activities, products or services, or about other users or "friends."

And, finally, interpersonal utility will be defined as a motivation that involves the following: users' seeking of affection, inclusion and/or control (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). This motivation include activities like actively seeking out a community of friends, crafting one's identity through self-expression, and trying to understand other users or "friends" better through SNS.

The present study will incorporate data on socioeconomic status and motivations for use of social networking sites collected from college-age students and examine how time is spent on social media sites. This research aims to determine the degree to which users' time spent on social networking sites can be categorized into three major motivations: entertainment, information-gathering, and interpersonal utility. Based on the uses and gratifications framework, with this study, new media scholars should have

a better understanding of the predominant motivations behind the use of social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Survey research is defined as a procedure used to collect information about conditions, events, opinions, people, and organizations from a sample in order to describe a population (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis & Piele, 2010). This type of research, in which a researcher finds a sample of respondents and administers a uniform questionnaire, is often used as a method of observation in today's social sciences. Survey research is the best method available to social researchers when individual people are the units of analysis, as seen in this study, and when the larger population is too large to observe directly. Strengths of survey research include the ability to describe characteristics of a large population, make large samples feasible, and measure uniformly; however, weaknesses include the standardization of questionnaire items, inflexibility and artificiality (Babbie, 2010).

Selecting a Sample

For this study, survey-based research was selected to extract information on socioeconomic status and primary motivations for social networking site use because the larger population (all users of Facebook and MySpace) is too large to observe directly. This type of research was also selected for the ability to measure uniformly. The data for this study were collected from a self-administered online survey that was designed, first, to determine motivations for use of and user preference for either MySpace or Facebook, and second, to outline the income level, occupation, and education of participants in an effort to determine overall socioeconomic status.

This study required that a user currently have or previously had an account with either Facebook or MySpace. The sample (N=196) was selected from a survey

distributed via e-mail in introductory classes at Santa Fe College in the spring of 2011, starting on January 5, 2011, and running until February 13, 2011. Santa Fe College was selected over the University of Florida in an effort to obtain a wider-ranging pool of socioeconomic data. The University of Florida, which is one of the nation's five largest universities, is a major, public, land-grant, research institution located in Gainesville, Florida, with an enrollment of roughly 50,000 students. Santa Fe College – formerly a community college – is a smaller Florida college with an enrollment of about 17,500 students that has many technology and applied sciences programs. Many students first obtain two-year degrees at Santa Fe and then apply to The University of Florida for a four-year degree.

The sample (N=196) comes from the 15 Santa Fe courses that took part with approximately 25 students per class. Eleven responses were not included due to incomplete surveys. This survey had a 52.2% response rate out of those contacted. Survey participants were asked to answer a series of questions regarding, first, their use of/user preference for MySpace and Facebook, second, their (2010) socioeconomic status, and, third, their demographics (age, gender, education level, etc.). Also, according to The University of Florida's academic protocol, this study received Institutional Review Board approval.

In following with Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines, an alternate extra credit assignment was made available for those students who chose not to participate in the study. A total of 40 Santa Fe professors were contacted via e-mail, and 10 instructors (25%) agreed to take part in the data collection for a total of 15 classes. Eight out of the 10 instructors arranged for students to receive a small amount of extra

credit (no more than 2% of the final grade) in exchange for completing the questionnaire. Introductory courses in the associate of arts degree programs and courses in the technical certificate programs were selected to allow for a wide cross-section of students throughout the college. The participating classes were: General Psychology (PSY2012); four sections of State and Local Government (POS2112); four sections of U.S. History to 1877 (AMH2010); Molecular Biology (PCB3134C); College Composition (ENC 1101); two sections of Introductory Sociology (SYG 2000); Reading (REA2205); and Building Construction Materials (BCN 1210).

A wide range of more technical classes were recruited for this survey, such as a nursing foundation course, a clinical laboratory course, a basic orientation to dentistry course, an automotive technology course, and an introductory welding course. However, Building Construction Materials was the only course that took part in this study and without the offer of extra credit.

To increase the response rate, customized e-mails were sent to each instructor who agreed to take part in the research and followed with periodic reminders. After excluding responses that were less than half completed, a total of 196 cases (89.9%) were analyzed. After data collection was complete, the survey data was entered into SPSS, a statistical program specifically designed for analysis of social science data. For the survey software, the University of Florida's College of Journalism and Communication's subscription to the Web-based Qualtrics Research Suite was used. Qualtrics is a comprehensive Web-based survey system that can be used to design and conduct surveys/polls online and offline.

Survey Design Challenges

One challenge with this particular sample was determining individual income among younger Santa Fe students, for whom family might still contribute substantially. A few questions were implemented in order to isolate their income, such as whether others contributed to the participant's individual income in 2010 or whether the participant is receiving federal or state grant money to attend school.

Another challenge with designing the survey for this study was the requirement of social networking site use. Because the focus of this study is based around the use of social networking, respondents who do not participate on either Facebook or MySpace were not able to contribute data on user preference, a question that ended up only applying to one participant. Those who have not used social networking (n=1) were asked to fill out the demographic portion of the survey for further analysis. If a respondent indicated that they do not currently use MySpace, they were asked whether they previously had a MySpace account.

In addition to examining motivations for using social networking sites, this study aimed to simultaneously determine whether the socioeconomic status indicators of income, occupation, and education level played a role in respondents choosing either MySpace or Facebook. Upon gathering data after the survey's completion, it was determined that there was not a proper comparison for Facebook vs. MySpace users (185 on FB, only 13 on MS) and an examination of the socioeconomics behind choosing one or the other SNS. Therefore, any socioeconomic findings would not be valid in terms of a comparison.

Only the second research question, "What are the predominant motivations for use of social networking sites Facebook and MySpace" is addressed, and only for the social

networking site Facebook. In the results portion of this study, motivations for using Facebook – specifically, entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – provide the foundation for this study’s findings.

Variable Construction: Entertainment, Info Gathering, Interpersonal Utility

As outlined above and in the literature review, this study’s second research question examines which motivations users most associate with while using SNS. The three primary motivations for use of Facebook (only) – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – will prove to be significant in the results section below. In this study’s survey, respondents were asked to determine on a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is not true at all and 5 is definitely true, to “please outline which of the following are true about your views and uses of Facebook.” [See Figure 9, p. 68.]

For the purpose of this study, entertainment was operationally defined by using the following responses that were determined to fall under the “entertainment” category and will be statistically explained in the results section of this study: I use Facebook to put off doing other things; it’s entertaining to browse through Facebook; I’m addicted to Facebook; I use Facebook out of habit; Facebook helps me escape from stress; and, I use Facebook because I’m curious about what others are up to.

For the purpose of this study, information gathering was operationally defined by using the following responses that were determined to fall under the “information gathering” category and will be statistically explained in the results chapter: If I meet someone interesting, I’ll look them up on Facebook; I use Facebook to keep in contact with people; I use Facebook to find out about parties or other events.

For the purpose of this study, interpersonal utility was operationally defined by using the following responses that were determined to fall under the “interpersonal

utility” category and will be statistically explained in the results chapter: Facebook lets me craft my identity; Facebook allows others to understand who I am; I use Facebook to understand certain people better; I like to see how other people react to my profile; I’m interested in seeing how many friends I have on Facebook; I feel like part of a community on Facebook; I make friends with people through Facebook. Measurement for these variables will be discussed later.

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Profile of Respondents

Out of 185 respondents who answered that they currently use Facebook, the majority was female (61.3%) between 15-20 years of age (48.6%). The typical Facebook user in this study (n = 185) experienced high enjoyment (mean: 5.76) when asked “how much do you enjoy Facebook” on a 0-7 point scale. Most reported an occupation of student (79.7%) and self-identified themselves as white (63.4%).

Facebook users did not usually have a MySpace page in addition to their Facebook account (n = 2). Most Facebook users (72.6%) did not hold a job for more than six months in 2010, but more than half (55.2%) held a part-time job. More than half (56.1%) received federal or state grant money to attend school in 2010 and made less than \$10,000 (53.3%). Twenty-four and one half percent of Facebook users made between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in 2010 and more than half of all Facebook users (51.4%) reported that others contributed to their overall income last year.

More than half of respondents (63.8%) reported visiting social networking sites on a daily basis, and nearly all (95.4%) indicated that they had visited a social networking site in the previous week. In response to a question asking how much time per day respondents spend on social networking sites, the responses were as followed: 1.5% spent 5 hours or more; 5.1% spent 3-5 hours; 24.5% spent 2-3 hours; and 68.9% spent 1 hour or less. Most respondents indicated a high level of enjoyment (mean: 5.66) of social networking sites on a 0-7 point scale.

Of the 196 respondents who were asked to “name of the social network you use most frequently,” 93.9% reported Facebook; 4.1% reported Twitter; 1.5% reported

MySpace; and 0.5% reported Tumblr. Out of the 196 respondents, 94.4% reported currently using Facebook, while only 6.6% reported currently using MySpace. Of the 185 respondents who said they currently have a Facebook page but did not currently have a MySpace page, 83.1% reported previously having a MySpace account. Only two respondents had both a Facebook and a MySpace account.

Respondents were asked a series of questions that outline specific reasons why they use Facebook, the heading for which stated, “Using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is not true at all and 5 is definitely true, please outline which of the following are true about your views and uses of Facebook.” [Not true for me = 1; Rarely true for me = 2; About halfway true for me =3; Mostly true for me = 4; Definitely true for me = 5]. (Table 4-1, 4-2, 4-3)

Measurements

Each of the three variables of the three main dimensions of Facebook motivations – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – plays a significant role in the statistical findings of this study. When categories such as seen in this research are used to form a scale, they should have internal consistency, or measure the same and be correlated with one another (Bland & Altman, 1997). A useful coefficient for assessing this measurement of internal consistency is Cronbach’s alpha (Bland & Altman). In order to demonstrate how participants used Facebook, three variables of the three main dimensions of social media motivations were determined: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility.

A factor analysis is a statistical approach used to analyze correlating relationships among a number of variables and determine their common underlying dimensions, or

factors (Harman, 1976). Individually, the variables had a wider range of Cronbach's alphas, as seen in the following measurements:

The dimension of entertainment (M=17.20, s.d.=5.59) – defined as a motivation that involves occupying users' time, passing users' time when bored, and providing users with an activity of amusement and/or leisure – had an alpha of 0.83. (Table 4-4)

The dimension of information gathering (M=14.07, s.d.=5.88) – defined as a motivation that involves users seeking feedback and/or details about other people, places, events, or things – had an alpha of 0.62. The alpha of 0.62 for information gathering is lower than ideal (generally expected to reach 0.70 or higher); however, when combined, all three variables loaded very highly together and are internally consistent together as will be explained below. (Table 4-5)

The dimension of interpersonal utility (M=10.06, s.d.=2.84) – defined as a motivation that involves users seeking of affection, inclusion and/or control – had an alpha of 0.86. (Table 4-6)

Bivariate correlations, which measure the relationship between two variables, were used to measure the strength of the relationship among these dimensions. These bivariate correlations were conducted for each of the three variables, and all were significant at $p < .01$ and all measured at least $r = 0.32$ or higher.

Independent Variable Measurement

A number of variables were used in testing relationships of the three main dimensions of Facebook motivations – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – including: mother's education, father's education, income, time spent online, time spent on social networking sites, enjoyment of Facebook, and level of student (full or part time). Each will be outlined below with the correlating survey

question, the percentages of respondents' answers, how it was coded, and how it was measured.

In order to determine the level of education for the mother's and father's education level of survey respondents, the following questions were asked: "What is your mother's (or guardian's) highest education level," and "What is your father's (or a second guardian's) highest education level." After noting multiple responses in the "other" category indicating an associate's degree, the data were recoded to include associate's degree as a level of education. (Tables 4-7, 4-8)

In order to categorize the users into testable groups, the respondents who answered "less than high school," "some high school," "high school diploma," and "GED" were determined to be in the low education grouping. And respondents who answered "technical degree," "associate's degree," "bachelor's degree," and "graduate degree" were determined to be in the high education grouping.

In order to gauge income of respondents in this study's survey, the following question was asked: "How much personal income did you receive in 2010?" The following options were provided as potential answers: less than \$10,000 (53.3%); \$10,000-\$20,000 (24.5%); \$20,000-\$30,000 (10.4%); \$40,000-\$50,000 (2.8%); \$50,000-\$60,000 (.5%); \$60,000-\$70,000 (.5%); \$70,000-\$80,000 (.5%); and \$90,000-\$100,000 (.5%). In order to break down the responses into usable categories (after responses reported lower incomes), the data were collapsed into the following four groups: less than \$10,000; \$10,000-\$20,000; \$20,000-\$40,000; and \$40,000 and above.

In order to gauge how often users spent time online in general, survey respondents were asked the following question: "On average, how much time do you spend online during a typical day?" The following were provided as potential responses: "1 hour or less; 2-3 hours; 3-5 hours; 5-7 hours; and more than 7 hours." In order to categorize the users into testable groups, the answers of "1 hour or less" (29.6%) and "2-3" hours (36.2%) were grouped together and determined to be "low users." Likewise, the answers "3-5 hours" (26.0%), "5-7 hours" (5.6%), and "more than 7 hours" (2%) were grouped together and determined to be "high users."

In order to gauge how often users spent time on social networking sites, survey respondents (who were self-indicated users of Facebook) were asked the following question: "On average, how much time do you spend on social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace during a typical day?" The following were provided as potential responses: "1 hour or less; 2-3 hours; 3-5 hours; 5-7 hours; and more than 7 hours." In order to categorize the users into testable groups, the respondents who answered "1 hour or less" (68.9%) were determined to be "low users." Likewise, the respondents who answered "2-3 hours" (24.5%), "3-5 hours" (5.1%), "5-7 hours" (.5%), and "more than 7 hours" (1%) were grouped together and determined to be "high users."

In order to gauge how much respondents who use Facebook enjoy using the social networking site, the following question was asked: "On a scale of 0 to 7 (0 being the least amount and 7 being the highest amount), how much do you enjoy Facebook?" A scale of 0 to 7 was provided to record potential responses. In order to categorize the users into testable groups, the respondents who answered 0 (1.1%), 1 (3.3%), 2 (6%), and 3 (13.7%) were grouped together and determined to be "low enjoyment," and

respondents who answered 4 (10.9%), 5 (23%), 6 (22.4%), and 7 (14.8%) were grouped together and determined to be “high enjoyment.”

In order to determine whether respondents were full-time students or part-time students, the following question (along with others) was asked: “Under which category would your occupation fit best?” The following were provided as potential answers: student (full-time) (79.7%); administrative (0.5%); engineer/technology (0.9%); instructor/education (1.9%); legal profession; management/business (1.4 %); medical (3.8%); retired (0.5%); sales/marketing (1.9%); service industry (3.3%); trade/labor (2.8%); unemployed (1.9%); other: please specify. In order to categorize the users into testable groups, the respondents who answered “student (full-time)” were placed in one category, while those who answered one of the other 13 choices were placed in another.

Data Analysis

In this study, the second research question – “What are the predominant motivations for use of social networking site Facebook and MySpace?” – examines with which motivations users most associate while using Facebook. The three dimensions of motivations defined under the theoretical umbrella of the uses and gratifications approach – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – play a fundamental role in results found in this study. In order to test this research question, independent sample T-tests, which are used to compare the mean scores of two groups within a given variable, were conducted on each of the three dimensions.

Time Spent Online

An independent sample T-test was conducted on each of the three dimensions: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. In a comparison of means

(high to low) of time spent online, the following was found: respondents who spent more time online also spend more time information gathering ($p < .01$); and respondents who spent more time online also spent more time seeking entertainment ($p < .01$). However, there was no significant finding for respondents who spent more time online and time spent seeking interpersonal utility. (Table 4-9)

Time Spent on Facebook

An independent sample T-test was conducted on each of the three dimensions: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. Differences between high and low users were discovered in a comparison of means for respondents' time spent on Facebook in all three dimensions. The following was concluded: respondents who spent more time on Facebook also spent more time information gathering ($p < .001$); respondents who spent more time on Facebook also spent more time seeking entertainment ($p < .001$); and respondents who spent more time on Facebook also spent more time seeking interpersonal utility ($p < .001$). (Table 4-10)

Enjoyment of Facebook

An independent sample T-test was conducted on each of the three dimensions: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. Differences were found in a comparison of means for respondents' high enjoyment of Facebook in all three components. The following was concluded: respondents who expressed a higher enjoyment of Facebook spend more time gathering information ($p < .001$); respondents who expressed a higher enjoyment of Facebook spend more time seeking entertainment ($p < .001$); and respondents who expressed a higher enjoyment of Facebook spend more time seeking interpersonal utility ($p < .001$). (Table 4-11)

Full-time Students, Parents' Education

An independent sample T-test was conducted on each of the three dimensions: entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. The comparison of means showed no difference for any dimension in why people use Facebook if they are either a full-time student or not a full-time student. Additionally, the comparison of means showed no difference on any of the dimensions for either the mother's education or the father's education.

Three Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted in order to gauge the influence of these predictors on motivations for using Facebook: mother's education, father's education, total income, whether the respondent was a full-time student, time spent online, and enjoyment of Facebook. The study's primary dimensions (entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility) were put into ANOVAs to determine the degree of difference or similarity among the groups of data.

For the dependent variable entertainment, father's education had a role ($p < .05$): as the father's education increased, the respondent spent less time seeking entertainment on Facebook. This inverse relationship is particularly interesting, as the opposite was shown for the role of mother's education. Also under the dependent variable entertainment, time spent on social networking sites had a role ($p < .01$): as respondents spent more time on social networking sites, more time was spent seeking entertainment. Enjoyment of Facebook had a role ($p < .01$): As respondents enjoyed Facebook more, more time was spent seeking entertainment. (Table 4-12) A Scheffe Post Hoc Test was also conducted on the variable income and no significant differences were found among groups.

For the dependent variable information gathering, mother's education had a role: as the mother's education increased, the respondent spent more time information gathering ($p < .05$). In addition, the father's education had a role ($p < .05$): as the father's education increased, the respondent spent less time information gathering. Again, this inverse relationship is particularly interesting. Perhaps educated fathers indicated in this population spend more time with their children (ie: respondents), which allows them less time to gather information – a motivation that involves users' seeking feedback and/or details about other people, places, events, or things. In addition for this variable high enjoyment meant more time spent information gathering ($p < .001$). (Table 4-13) A Scheffe Post Hoc Test was also conducted on the variable income and no significant differences were found among groups.

For the dependent variable interpersonal utility, enjoyment of Facebook had a role ($p < .001$): as the respondent enjoyed Facebook more, more time was spent seeking interpersonal utility. Whether or not the respondent was a full-time student played a role with marginal significance ($p = .069$): if the respondent was a student, than he or she spent more time seeking interpersonal utility. Income had a role with marginal significance ($p = .064$): the middle bracket for income (\$10,000-\$20,000) spent more time seeking interpersonal utility. (Table 4-14) A Scheffe Post Hoc Test was also conducted on the variable income and no significant differences were found among groups.

Table 4-1. (Entertainment) Facebook survey questions and statistics

Motivation	Survey question	Mean	Std. Dev.
Entertainment	I use Facebook to put off doing other things.	2.70	1.33
Entertainment	It's entertaining to browse through Facebook.	3.70	1.12
Entertainment	I'm addicted to Facebook.	2.21	1.23
Entertainment	I use Facebook out of habit.	3.04	1.40
Entertainment	Facebook helps me escape from stress.	2.02	1.27
Entertainment	I use Facebook because I'm curious about what others are up to.	3.55	1.17

Table 4-2. (Information gathering) Facebook survey questions and statistics

Motivation	Survey question	Mean	Std. Dev.
Information gathering	If I meet someone interesting, I'll look them up on Facebook.	3.08	1.40
Information gathering	I use Facebook to keep in contact with people.	4.30	.95
Information gathering	I use Facebook to find out about parties or other events.	2.68	1.37

Table 4-3. (Interpersonal utility) Facebook survey questions and statistics

Motivation	Survey question	Mean	Std. Dev.
Interpersonal utility	Facebook lets me craft my identity.	1.86	1.06
Interpersonal utility	Facebook allows other people to understand who I am	2.11	1.13
Interpersonal utility	I use Facebook to understand certain people better.	2.30	1.16
Interpersonal utility	I like to see how other people react to my profile.	2.25	1.27
Interpersonal utility	I'm interested in seeing how many friends I have on Facebook.	1.70	1.02
Interpersonal utility	I feel like part of a community on Facebook.	1.96	1.43
Interpersonal utility	I make friends with people through Facebook.	1.73	1.13

Table 4-4. Six-item index factor loading matrix for “entertainment” variable and the specific survey questions/motivations that make up “entertainment”

Survey question/motivation	Factor loading
I use Facebook to put off doing other things	.74
It’s entertaining to browse through Facebook.	.73
I’m addicted to Facebook	.81
I use Facebook out of habit.	.77
Facebook helps me escape from stress.	.70
I use Facebook because I’m curious about what others are up to.	.67

$\alpha = 0.83$

Table 4-5. Three-item index factor loading matrix for “information gathering” variable and the specific survey questions/motivations that make up “information gathering”

Survey question/motivation	Factor loading
If I meet someone interesting, I’ll look them up on Facebook.	.74
I use Facebook to keep in contact with people.	.73
I use Facebook to find out about parties or other events.	.74

$\alpha = 0.62$

Table 4-6. 7-index factor loading matrix for “interpersonal utility” variable and the specific survey questions/motivations that make up “interpersonal utility”

Survey question/motivation	Factor loading
Facebook lets me craft my identity	.80
Facebook allows others to understand who I am.	.81
I use Facebook to understand certain people better.	.74
I like to see how other people react to my profile.	.79
I’m interested in seeing how many friends I have on Facebook.	.67
I feel like part of a community on Facebook.	.68
I make friends with people through Facebook.	.66

$\alpha = 0.86$

Table 4-7. Survey responses for mother (or guardian's education level)

Level of education	Percent
Less than high school	3.1
Some high school	4.1
High school diploma	29.5
GED	4.1
Bachelor's degree	25.9
Graduate degree	15.5
Technical degree	4.7
Associate's degree	6.2
Don't know	0.5

Table 4-8. Survey responses for father (or a second guardian's education level)

Level of education	Percent
Less than high school	5.7
Some high school	4.2
High school diploma	31.3
GED	3.6
Bachelor's degree	21.4
Graduate degree	12.5
Technical degree	6.8
Associate's degree	12
Don't know	2.6

Table 4-9. Time spent online and three dimensions of social media

	High	Low	Mean diff.	t
Info gathering	15.81 (n=59)	13.22 (n=120)	2.59	2.83**
	(SD) 6.42	(SD) 5.42		
Entertainment	19.19 (n=61)	16.19 (n=120)	3.00	3.52**
	(SD) 5.82	(SD) 5.21		
Interpersonal Utility	10.52 (n=61)	9.83 (n=121)	.698	1.57
	(SD) 2.72	(SD) 2.88		

** $p < .01$

Table 4-10. Time spent on Facebook and three dimensions of social media

	High	Low	Mean diff.	t
Info gathering	17.17 (n=56)	12.66 (n=123)	4.52	5.09**
	(SD) 6.23	(SD) 5.15		
Entertainment	21.21 (n=57)	15.36 (n=124)	5.85	7.46**
	(SD) 4.78	(SD) 4.95		
Interpersonal Utility	11.21 (n=58)	9.52 (n=124)	1.68	4.36**
	(SD) 2.12	(SD) 2.98		

** $p < .01$

Table 4-11. Enjoyment of Facebook and three dimensions of social media

	High	Low	Mean diff.	t
Info gathering	15.92 (n=108)	10.84 (n=62)	5.08	6.66**
	(SD) 6.06	(SD) 3.88		
Entertainment	19.07 (n=108)	13.61 (n=64)	5.46	7.05**
	(SD) 5.12	(SD) 4.57		
Interpersonal Utility	10.90 (n=109)	8.70 (n=64)	2.12	4.85**
	(SD) 2.41	(SD) 3.12		

* $p < .001$

Table 4-12. ANOVA: Predictors of entertainment dimension on Facebook.

Source	M (High/Low)	df	MS	F	Sig.
Mother's education	H: 16.46 L: 16.49	1	.031	.002	.968
Father's education	H: 15.63 L: 17.31	1	79.35	4.19	.043*
Income	H: 15.87 M: 17.39 L: 16.15	2	23.24	1.13	.296
Student	H: 17.12 L: 15.82	1	32.14	1.70	.195
Time spent online	H: 16.38 L: 16.56	1	.563	.030	.863
Time spent on SNS	H: 18.14 L: 14.80	1	165.87	8.77	.004**
Enjoy Facebook	H: 18.90 L: 14.05	1	666.16	35.20	.000**
Error	127		18.92		
Corrected total	135				

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 4-13. ANOVA: Predictors of information gathering dimension on Facebook.

Source	M	df	MS	F	Sig.
Mother's education	H: 14.91 L: 12.73	1	138.59	4.93	.028*
Father's education	H: 12.61 L: 15.03	1	162.31	5.77	.018*
Income	H: 14.06 M: 14.46 L: 12.94	2	28.68	1.02	.364
Student	H: 14.14 L: 13.50	1	7.61	.270	.604
Time spent online	H: 14.22 L: 13.42	1	10.50	.373	.542
Time spent on SNS	H: 14.85 L: 12.79	1	62.65	2.23	.138
Enjoy Facebook	H: 16.17 L: 11.47	1	621.13	22.07	.000**
Error	125		28.14		
Corrected total	133				

* $p < .05$

** $p < .001$

Table 4-14. ANOVA: Predictors of interpersonal utility dimension on Facebook.

Source	M	df	MS	F	Sig.
Mother's education	H: 9.61 L: 9.60	1	.005	.001	.979
Father's education	H: 9.44 L: 9.78	1	3.29	.455	.501
Income total	H: 9.03 M: 10.46 L: 9.32	2	20.34	2.81	.064
Student	H: 10.17 L: 9.04	1	24.24	3.35	.069
Time spent online	H: 9.92 L: 9.29	1	6.58	.910	.342
Time spent on SNS	H: 9.88 L: 9.34	1	4.35	.601	.440
Enjoy Facebook	H: 10.74 L: 8.47	1	146.68	20.29	.000**
Error	128		7.23		
Corrected total	136				

** $p < .001$

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Research Question 1 – Does Socioeconomic Status Indicate User Preference for Either Social Networking Site, Facebook and/or MySpace?

The first research question was not statistically examined in this study due to a lack of enough MySpace users for a comparison of socioeconomic status. The basis of this examination depended on having a closer to equal number of MySpace users to Facebook users in order to determine whether socioeconomic status affected whether users chose one or the other for membership. After the survey's completion, there were 183 respondents who were on Facebook, but only 13 MySpace users. Without a proper comparison, any socioeconomic indicators are not known, and quantitative support for previous, qualitative reports of high-income, well-educated users favoring Facebook and low-income, less educated users favoring MySpace remains lacking.

Research Question 2 - What are the Predominant Motivations for Use of Social Networking Sites Such as Facebook and MySpace?

This quantitative study examined users' primary motivations for use of social networking sites like Facebook. The findings from this research directly correlate with motivations for social networking sites found by many other researchers over the last decade, including a uses and gratifications emphasis on entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. This study's findings match up with other researchers' results, such as Park, Fee and Valenzuela (2009) who found four primary needs for participating in groups within Facebook: entertainment, information, self-status seeking, and socializing. Similarly, Ancu & Cozma (2009) found that the most SNS user gratification came from information-seeking, entertainment, and social interaction.

While there is a wealth of past studies examining motivations behind Internet use, there is a dearth of information investigating modern primary motivations under current trends – specifically, Facebook’s domination of the social media platform. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) first brought the motivation of interpersonal utility into play when they examined social presence and Internet use. However, the present study goes one step beyond past research that determined entertainment, information and interpersonal utility as motivations for the Internet and identifies interpersonal utility as a third predominant motivation *exclusively for SNS use*.

In this study, respondents were asked a series of questions that outlined specific reasons why they use Facebook. From these 17 questions, three dimensions of motivations were formed – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility. The relationship among these three dimensions for use of Facebook proved to be strong and played a significant role in the findings of this research. Essentially, this study demonstrates quantitative support that *all three dimensions* are primary motivations for users of the social networking site Facebook.

Entertainment

The motivation of entertainment, which includes such motives as passing the time and finding activities of amusement, has long fallen under the traditional uses and gratifications approach with traditional media, such as television (Chung & Nah, 2009). As the use of the Internet has become more widespread, the goal of entertainment fell in line as a primary motivation time after time in media research. Like past findings, this study found that users who spend more time online spend more time seeking entertainment. As social networking sites become a major hub of online activity, the motivation of entertainment continues to dominate in terms of reasoning behind site

visitation. Contributing to this research on social networking, this study also found that users who spend more time on Facebook spend more time seeking entertainment. Taking it one step further, respondents who expressed a higher enjoyment of Facebook reported spending more time seeking entertainment. This falls in line with previous research indicating users' attraction to SNS walls, profiles, blogs, bulletins, private messaging, and photo albums (Urista, Dong & Day, 2009). It is not surprising, then, that users seek entertainment on Facebook, which provides these tools and more with which users can occupy their time on the site.

Information Seeking

The second primary motivation, information seeking, which involves users' seeking feedback and/or details about other people, places, events, or things, has long been a traditional goal under uses and gratifications of traditional media use, such as newspapers or television (Chung & Nah, 2009). Over the past two decades, many researchers have determined that reasons for using the Internet include information seeking. Similar to past findings, this research revealed that users who spent more time online spend more time seeking information. However, moving past the well-researched examination of motivations for Internet use, this study also found that respondents who spent more time on Facebook also spent more time information gathering. Similar to the findings behind the motivation of entertainment, those currently using Facebook who expressed a higher enjoyment of the social networking site also reported spending more time gathering information. This finding falls in line with previous research indicating a wealth of information provided by users on Facebook, such as personal interests, educational background, current employers, and upcoming events (King, 2009; Taraszow, Aristodemou, Shitta, Laouris & Arsoy, 2010). Further, respondents in this

study indicated (on a 0-5 scale) that they were likely to use Facebook to keep in contact with people (m=4.30), look up interesting people (m=3.08), and find out about parties or other events (m=2.68). These results suggest that Facebook serves as a hub of information about other users and events, thus fulfilling the motivation of information gathering for the respondents in this study.

This study, and past research, has provided direct results that support traditional motivations for Internet use found under the uses and gratification approach – that users who spend more time online spend more time gathering information and spend more time seeking entertainment. However, the fascinating third motivation – interpersonal utility – allows for an examination of more socially focused needs that are specific to social networking sites (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Interpersonal Utility

This third primary motivation, interpersonal utility, which includes users' seeking of affection, inclusion and/or control, is particularly interesting when examining goals behind the use of social networking sites. The present study found that respondents who spent more time on Facebook also spent more time seeking interpersonal utility, which includes activities and information that fulfill their social networking needs, such as seeking out a community of friends, crafting one's identity through self-expression, or trying to understand other users or "friends" better through SNS. Taking it one step further, and similar to the more traditional motivations of entertainment and information seeking, respondents who use Facebook and expressed a higher enjoyment of the social networking site spent more time seeking interpersonal utility.

Notably, this study found no evidence that those respondents who spent more time online (from the question "on average, how much time do you spend online during

a typical day”) also spent more time seeking interpersonal utility. This unique finding suggests that interpersonal utility goes beyond motivations for Internet use and indicates a motivation exclusive to social networking sites, in this case, Facebook. Essentially, individuals are fulfilling a motivation particular to their social networking site that includes such desires as the need to belong to a group, to express oneself freely, to give input, and to find out what others say. SNS allow individuals to play an active part in constructing their own identity (Urista, Dong & Day, 2009). In fact, “Facebook lets me craft my identity” and “Facebook allows others to understand who I am” were the highest loading factors for the variable of interpersonal utility. These findings suggest that SNS is an area of personal expression that is not available in other Internet forums.

Further, this study equates time spent on Facebook with time spent seeking information, entertainment, and interpersonal utility, suggesting that these motivations are part of the draw that attracts users to signing onto the site so frequently. The findings indicate not only how users are spending their time on Facebook, but why. It is not surprising, then, that this study’s findings indicated that if a user enjoys Facebook more, then that user spent more time seeking these three dimensions. These findings suggest that social networking sites – in this case, Facebook – are unique from other Internet locations in that they are equipped to provide all three motivations for users.

With 72% of 18- to 29-year-olds (who are online) using social networking and the reported use across all demographics skyrocketing each year, it is imperative that research such as this study exists (Pew Internet, 2010a). This study not only confirms two traditional uses and gratifications motivations (entertainment and information gathering), but it incorporates a third, more modern motivation (interpersonal utility) that

proved to play an equally important role in why social networking users frequent the site Facebook. Facebook, in particular, is leaving other SNS behind in terms of level of use. As previously mentioned, self-identified social networking users reported spending nearly 1 out of every 8 minutes online on Facebook (comScore, 2011). This level of use demands careful and prolonged attention to the motivations and reasoning behind users' decisions to frequent Facebook to such an extent.

In addition to the primary findings about these three motivational dimensions, this study also found that when users' fathers' education level increases, users spend less time seeking both entertainment and information. However, as one's mothers' education level increases, users spend more time gathering information. Perhaps educated fathers indicated in this population spend more time with their children (ie: respondents), which allows them less time to seek entertainment. This finding suggests that fathers have a larger role in fulfilling the motivational needs of their children in this population. These findings could also suggest an active seeking of information about the absent parent by the children or, perhaps, indicate a lack of contact between the child and absent parent.

In regards to education level, respondents reported that their mothers' highest education level was predominantly a high school diploma (29.5%), a bachelor's degree (25.9%), or a graduate degree (15.5%). Meanwhile, fathers' education was predominately a high school diploma (31.3%), a bachelor's degree (21.4%), or a graduate degree (12.5%). In regards to occupation, respondents reported their fathers were predominantly engineers/in technology (12.6%), in management/business (12.6%), or retired (12.6%). Respondents' mothers, meanwhile, were largely

unemployed (19.3%), in the field of medicine (18%), or in management/business (9.3%). The high level of unemployment among mothers in this population – in addition to the majority of fathers employed in technology/business – might account for the fathers' education level increases, leading to users spending less time seeking both entertainment and information.

It is important to note that the data in this study match other researchers' findings that SNS are prevalent and well incorporated into the lives of young adults, as more than half of respondents (63.8%) reported visiting social networking sites on a daily basis, and nearly all (95.4%) indicated that they had visited a social networking site in the previous week. Notably, the typical Facebook user experienced high enjoyment (mean: 5.76) when asked "How much do you enjoy Facebook" on a 0-7 point scale.

This study also supported claims that Facebook is the currently most popular SNS among adults in the United States (Pew Internet, 2010b). Of the 196 respondents asked, 93.9% reported using Facebook most frequently, while 4.1% reported Twitter and 1.5% reported MySpace. Notably, 83.1% of respondents who currently use Facebook, but do not currently use MySpace, reported that they previously had a MySpace page, indicating that they switched social networking sites at some point in their history of social media use. This is a significant general finding that indicates an overall preference for Facebook that is supported by the many reports suggesting explosive trends across all demographics toward use of the popular social networking site (Pew Internet, 2010a; Pew Internet, 2010b). At present time, Facebook has taken the lead in the battle for America's favorite social networking site. As such, it is

imperative that researchers continue to examine the use of and motivations for the use of this social networking site.

This study also aimed to gather quantitative data that would support qualitative claims that there exists a socioeconomic division between SNS users on Facebook and MySpace, using information from social media use and socioeconomic make-up. Ultimately, the results found for this study focus on the use of Facebook, which will be discussed further in the “study limitations” section below. It is imperative to note that the sample is predominately composed of similar demographics: young, white, full-time students who are receiving federal or state grant money to attend school. While college-age students are often examined in studies involving social networking sites, a socioeconomic comparison requires a level of diversity not found in this sample.

Notably, income was tested for each of the three motivations and was not found to be influential. This demonstrates a lack of support, at least in part, for H1 under the first research question that predicted that users of Facebook will have a higher average (2010) socioeconomic status than users of the social networking site MySpace. Although socioeconomic status proved ineffective in predicting why respondents use Facebook in this population, many (79.7%) indicated that they were full-time students, more than half (53.3%) who made less than \$10,000 last year.

Study Limitations

Despite efforts to encourage respondents of all backgrounds by incorporating trade classes, such as welding, auto repair, etc., respondents were predominately young, white, full-time students. This, in turn, created a niche of findings that, while significant on their own, are not necessarily applicable for all social networking site users.

One particularly difficult part of developing the demographics portion of this study's survey was the way in which to address "parents." The survey phrased questions as "mother or guardian" and "father or a second guardian"; however, it is impossible to predict a family's actual structure. Hence, it is worth noting that some of the findings about father's education and mother's education might not necessarily be indicative of the respondents' real-life situations. In hindsight, these questions could have included options such as, "I don't live with my mother/father," or a fill-in-the-blank parental clarification. Additionally, this study's survey did not provide an opportunity for explanation as to why users who previously had a MySpace page decided to leave the social networking site. The study should have included a question that addressed the possible reasons (including a fill-in-the-blank option) for respondents to answer this unknown.

Another limitation is the narrow scope of population, which includes 196 respondents from one university in one state. Further, the respondents are all college students, which limits the perspective and background sought for a wide-reaching examination of social networking site use and socioeconomic status. In hindsight, a location more diverse in demographics, such as a public library, might have provided a wider range of data.

This study also reveals that the dynamics of social networking sites can change drastically in a short amount of time. Since danah boyd's initial 2009 qualitative study, use of MySpace has significantly decreased. Essentially, in two year's time, research on social networking sites has been invalidated. Therefore, it should be noted that the moving target of social media proves to be an especially difficult obstacle, particularly in

the comparison of two different social networking sites. The most recent trends of social media have recently suggested that Facebook continues to be in the top 5 most visited Web sites (No. 2 in 2010), while MySpace has fallen in rank to just under the top 20 (Alexa, 2010; Thelwall & Wilkinson, 2010). In hindsight, this study was, perhaps, roughly one to two years too late in examining Facebook versus MySpace under the lens of socioeconomic status.

Conclusion

Facebook has revolutionized the way in which people spend time online. The average Internet user spends more than 4 hours on SNS each month and nearly 1 out of every 8 minutes online is spent on Facebook (comScore, 2011). The uses and gratifications approach implies that audiences are active and goal-oriented. This research supports this tenet and takes it one step further in suggesting that users are actively seeking three goals in social networking use: entertainment, information, and interpersonal utility. As implied in the foundation of this theory, this study directly supports with quantitative evidence that Facebook audiences are active and goal oriented; that their motivations help explain their media use; that people form intentions and expectations for media use; and that Facebook users choose a medium based on their sought motives.

To date, there continues to be a strong academic interest in social networking sites, as social media platforms like Facebook (and, currently, Twitter) continue to climb the charts in use and pervasiveness. There have been many concerns about the social impact of social networking sites, and research will likely continue to flourish as the need to understand them even more fully remains. As outlined in the literature review, social networking sites have changed the way people communicate and interact, are

now considered part of the milieu of modern social interactions, and are used as a primary medium for communication and networking (Back et al., 2010; boyd & Ellison, 2007). Based on the findings in this study, this will likely continue to be the trend for the unforeseeable future.

Future Research

Further research is needed in determining why social networking site users favor one site over another - whether it is MySpace and Facebook, or the latest trend in SNS, such as Twitter or Tumblr. It would appear that the socioeconomic factors behind selecting either MySpace and Facebook – and the reasons behind leaving one for the other – leaves room for qualitative study. Research suggests that nearly half of all profiles created on MySpace have been abandoned (Caverlee & Webb, 2008). There is a gap in the research as to why these SNS users have chosen to leave MySpace *in exchange for other social media*, in particular, Facebook.

One of this study's most interesting findings is that 83.1% of current Facebook users previously had a MySpace account. Why did they switch over? Why not keep both accounts? What is Facebook offering that MySpace is not? Continuing danah boyd's initial research among high school SNS users, future researchers could examine the intricacies of social networking site users in their 20s who abandoned MySpace for Facebook. However, this research has a fast-approaching expiration date, as MySpace seems to be slipping into the background as Facebook (and Twitter) continue to make massive gains in membership.

This study found that nearly 94% of users surveyed use Facebook most frequently. Based on this research and other current social networking site trends, it appears that Facebook is here to stay – or, at least, until “the next big thing.” The next

step for researchers examining social networking sites and Facebook might include 1) the specific reasons behind many users' decision to leave MySpace for Facebook; 2) further study into the amount of time users spend on Facebook; and 3) the element of assumed privacy, as civil litigations surrounding Facebook content and increased media use of Facebook profiles in coverage continue to increase.

In Closing

The use of social media sites such as Facebook is on the rise and continued study is necessary. As indicated in the literature review, Internet users ages 50-64 who reported using a social networking site grew 88% last year, while those 65 or older grew 100% in their use (Pew Internet, 2010a). The trends of social networking sites are not only growing, but are spreading out across all demographics. Early academic research on social networking sites concentrated on motivations of the young and the college-aged, which correlated with the early restrictions of Facebook and the general youth-first cultural trends of social media. However, more recent findings suggest that the older demographics might become a focus when studying motivations of SNS like Facebook until the next major social networking trend.

Ultimately, this study offers an in-depth, quantitative examination of the found motivations behind the use of Facebook – entertainment, information gathering, and interpersonal utility – and the many intricacies that arrived within that realm. Other social media and mass communication scholars should take this research as a supportive finding of the uses and gratifications approach applied to social networking sites. It should be used as both a leg supporting the foundation of the uses and gratifications theory as well as a jumping-off point for the next examination of Facebook motivations.

APPENDIX
SURVEY: E-MAIL AND SCREENSHOTS

INFORMAL E-MAIL TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS FOR SURVEY

[This e-mail was sent to 40 Santa Fe College instructors inviting them to take part in this research.]

Dear Mr./Ms./Dr. _____,

My name is Ginny Lawrimore and I am currently a masters' student of journalism at the University of Florida. I was hoping that students from any of your _____ course(s) could receive a survey that I am conducting regarding the use of MySpace and/or Facebook for my thesis work. Ideally, this research will determine the degree to which social networking sites' users are self-segregating based on socioeconomic status.

If you were willing, I would ask you to provide a small portion of extra credit for your students (no more than 2% of the final grade) for their participation and send them an e-mailed link of my survey. (I would later provide you with a list of student IDs of those who participated.)

I hope that you consider assisting me in this endeavor and thank you very much for your time. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Ginny Lawrimore
University of Florida graduate student

E-MAIL-BASED SURVEY

[The following are screen shots of the e-mail-based survey.]

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study.

Purpose of the research study: The purpose of this study is to determine whether users of Facebook and MySpace divide themselves according to socioeconomic status.

What you will be asked to do in the study: You will be asked to participate in an online survey describing your use of social networking sites, specifically, MySpace and/or Facebook, and some basic information about your occupation, education and income level. You can take it from any computer with Internet access.

Time required: 15 minutes

Risks and Benefits: There are no anticipated risks involved with this study. We do not anticipate that you will benefit directly by participating in this study.

Compensation: You may receive extra credit for the class in which you were recruited for your participation in this study. The extra credit will not exceed 2 percent of your final grade in the course and can only be applied toward one course.

Confidentiality: Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. You will be asked to provide your Sante Fe College ID number to provide your information to your instructor for extra credit, but it will not be linked with your answers, nor will your name or email address, so your responses will be anonymous.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study: You have the right to withdraw from the study at anytime without consequence.

Whom to contact if you have questions about the study: Ginny Hoyle Lawrimore, Department of Journalism, University of Florida, P.O. Box 118400, Gainesville, FL 32611 or ghoyle@ufl.edu

Whom to contact about your rights as a research participant in the study: UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; ph 392-0433. (IRB Approval #2011-U-0037)

Agreement: I have read the procedure described above. I voluntarily agree to participate in the procedure. I understand that I may print this page for my own records.

I agree

I do not agree. I will not participate in the study.

Figure A-1. First screen of survey

Which best describes how often you visit social networking sites like MySpace or Facebook? (*Social networking sites include sites such as Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, LinkedIn, QQ, etc.*)

Never Less than Once a Month Once a Month 2-3 Times a Month Once a Week 2-3 Times a Week Daily

Figure A-2. Second screen of survey

Did you visit any social networking sites in the past week?

- Yes
- No

Did you visit any social networking sites yesterday?

- Yes
- No

On a scale from 0 to 7, (0 being the least amount and 7 being the highest amount) how much do you enjoy social network sites in general?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

What is the name the social networking site you use most frequently?

- Facebook
- MySpace
- Twitter
- QQ
- LinkedIn
- Other (Please Specify

Figure A-3. Third screen of survey (part A)

On average, how much time do you spend online during a typical day?

- 1 hour or less
- 2-3 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 5-7 hours
- more than 7 hours

On average, how much time do you spend on social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace during a typical day?

- 1 hour or less
- 2-3 hours
- 3-5 hours
- 5-7 hours
- more than 7 hours

Do you currently use MySpace?

- Yes
- No

Figure A-4. Third screen of survey (part B)

On a scale from 0 to 7 (0 being the least amount and 7 being the highest amount), how much do you enjoy MySpace?

- 0
- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7

Figure A-5. Fourth screen of survey

The following questions outline specific reasons why people use MySpace. Using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is not true at all and 5 is definitely true, please outline which of the following are true about your views and uses of MySpace :

	Not true for me (1)	Rarely true for me (2)	About halfway true for me (3)	Mostly true for me (4)	Definitely true for me (5)
I use MySpace to put off doing other things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's entertaining to browse through MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm addicted to MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use MySpace out of habit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MySpace helps me escape from stress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use MySpace because I'm curious about what others are up to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I meet someone interesting, I'll look them up on MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MySpace lets me craft my identity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
MySpace allows other people to understand who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use MySpace to understand certain people better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to see how other people react to my profile.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm interested in seeing how many friends I have on MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like part of a community on MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use MySpace to keep in contact with people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use MySpace to find romance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make friends with people through MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use MySpace to find out about parties or other events.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare myself to other people on MySpace.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure A-6. Fifth screen of survey

Do you currently use Facebook?

- Yes
 No

Figure A-7. Sixth screen of survey

On a scale from 0 to 7 (0 being the least amount and 7 being the highest amount), how much do you enjoy Facebook?

- 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Figure A-8. Seventh screen of survey

The following questions outline specific reasons why people use Facebook. Using a 1 to 5 scale, where 1 is not true at all and 5 is definitely true, please outline which of the following are true about your views and uses of Facebook.

	Not true for me (1)	Rarely true for me (2)	About halfway true for me (3)	Mostly true for me (4)	Definitely true for me (5)
I use Facebook to put off doing other things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It's entertaining to browse through Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm addicted to Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use Facebook out of habit.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook helps me escape from stress.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use Facebook because I'm curious about what others are up to.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
If I meet someone interesting, I'll look them up on Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook lets me craft my identity.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Facebook allows other people to understand who I am.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use Facebook to understand certain people better.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I like to see how other people react to my profile.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I'm interested in seeing how many friends I have on Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel like part of a community on Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use Facebook to keep in contact with people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use Facebook to find romance.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I make friends with people through Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I use Facebook to find out about parties or other events.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I compare myself to other people on Facebook.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Figure A-9. Eighth screen of survey

Did you hold a full-time job (more than 35 hours per week) for more than six months in 2010?

- Yes
- No

Did you hold a part-time job (35 hours or less) for more than six months in 2010?

- Yes
- No
- I held more than one part-time job.

Are you receiving federal or state grant money to attend school?

- Yes
- No

Figure A-10. Ninth screen of survey

How much personal income did you receive in 2010? (*Income* is defined as the money or other gain received in 2010 for labor, services, and/or allotted spending from a parent, guardian, or spouse).

- Less than \$10,000
- \$10,000-\$20,000
- \$20,000-\$30,000
- \$30,000-\$40,000
- \$40,000-\$50,000
- \$50,000-\$60,000
- \$60,000-\$70,000
- \$70,000-\$80,000
- \$90,000-\$100,000
- More than \$100,000

Did others contribute to your overall individual income in 2010 (e.g., parent(s), spouse)?

- Yes
- No
- N/A

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say

Figure A-11. Tenth screen of survey

What was your age on your last birthday?

- 15-20 21-25 26-30 31-35 36-40 41-45 46-50 51-55 56-60 61 or above

Under which category would your occupation best fit?

- Student (full-time)
- Administrative
- Engineer/Technology
- Instructor/Education
- Legal profession
- Management/business
- Medical
- Retired
- Sales/Marketing
- Self-employed
- Service Industry
- Trade/Labor
- Unemployed
- Other: please specify

Figure A-12. Eleventh screen of survey

How many total years of schooling have you completed? (Through high school is 12 years and add one more year for each additional year of college.)

- # of years
- Don't know

How many college credits are you taking this semester?

- # of credits
- Don't know

What is your mother's (or guardian's) highest education level?

- Less than high school
- Some high school
- High school diploma
- GED
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Technical Degree
- Don't know
- Other (Please specify)

Figure A-13. Twelfth screen of survey

What is your father's (or a second guardian's) highest education level?

- Less than high school
- Some high school
- High school diploma
- GED
- Bachelor's Degree
- Graduate Degree
- Technical Degree
- Don't know
- Other (Please specify)

Which of the following races do you consider yourself? You may select more than one and/or specify another racial group.

- White/Caucasian
- Black/African-American
- Hispanic American
- Asian Indian
- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Chinese
- Filipino
- Japanese
- Korean
- Vietnamese
- Other (Please specify)

- Prefer not to answer

Figure A-14. Thirteenth screen of survey

In order to provide extra credit (when applicable), please provide your name, Santa Fe ID number and the class you would like credit for. If your instructor is not offering extra credit, please type "Not applicable." Reminder: This information will not be linked with your answers, so your responses will be anonymous.

Figure A-15. Fourteenth screen of survey

We thank you for your time spent taking this survey.
Your response has been recorded.

Figure A-16. Fifteenth screen of survey

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Virginia Hoyle Lawrimore received her Bachelor of Arts in journalism from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, where she graduated in 2005. Upon graduation, she worked as both a copy-editor and a reporter for The Herald-Sun in Durham, NC, until moving to pursue a Masters of Arts in Mass Communication at the University of Florida. She lives in Gainesville, FL, with her husband, Dave, and their dog, Baxter.