RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE AND FACEBOOK

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ABSTRACT

Research to date on Facebook users has not included part of Generation Y, those born from 1976 through 1989. This study examined the use of Facebook to maintain relationships to extend previous work by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009) whose work served as a lens for comparison. A survey questionnaire (N=215) was administered to Facebook users to determine their uses for the site, frequency of use, and perceived closeness of Facebook friends. Results suggested Facebook has become a daily part of respondent’s lives. Questions regarding Facebook use indicated the number one motivator for using Facebook is to keep in touch with friends and family. Participants reported using Facebook has made their relationships mildly stronger. These findings indicated participants use Facebook in similar ways as reported in previous research.
We the undersigned, certify that we read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree Master of Arts.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The Importance of the Study

Communication has evolved as accessibility continues to grow with new technologies changing the way people stay connected. People have multiple modes of communication to choose from including: telephones, E-mail, instant messaging, text messaging, and social media websites.

Social media has experienced its own evolution over the past two decades. In 1997, early social media began with the launch of Sixdegrees.com (Bennett, 2011). Friendster began in 2002 with membership declining in 2008 due to the introduction of Myspace in 2003 and Facebook in 2004 (Bennett, 2011). 2003 was also the birth of the professional social site Linkedin (Bennett, 2011). Twitter was introduced to the world in 2006 and Google launched its own site, Google Plus in 2011 (Bennett, 2011). This is big business.

The number one most visited website in 2011 is Facebook (Smith, 2011). With Facebook showing no signs of slowing down, there is a tremendous amount of documented research on the site. One area includes the way college students use the site to maintain relationships. College students are part of the 70 million tech-savvy people making up Generation Y (Kane, 2011). With Generation Y’s deep interest in technology, it makes sense to study the way they use the most visited website on the Internet.

College students are only part of Generation Y. At its widest definition, Generation Y includes those born from 1976-2002. There are so many other members of this tech-savvy generation, yet there is no documented research on the way the remaining members of Generation Y use Facebook to maintain relationships. This study aimed to bridge that research gap.
Definitions of Terms

Relationship Maintenance: Personal relationships require a certain amount of maintenance (Wright, 1999). For the purpose of this study, relationship maintenance will be defined by Wright (1999). Relationship Maintenance refers to the aspects of relating which contribute to the stability and integrity of relationships and serve to keep them intact including: interdependence, equity, mutuality of relationship definition, the importance of authenticity, and the role of a wider network of others in validating and supporting personal relationships (Wright, 1999).

Computer Mediated Communication (CMC): Computer Mediated Communication refers to any human communication achieved through, or with the help of, computer technology (Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2008).

Face to Face Communication (FtF): Communication by senders and receiver in real time, allowing for body language and facial expression observations (Businessdictionary.com, 2011).

Generation Y: For the purpose of this study, Generation Y is the generation in the United States referring to those born from 1976 through 2002 (Armour, 2005; Ellis-Christensen, 2011).

Organization of Remaining Chapters

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter two is a review of previous literature. It includes information on social networking on the Internet, Generation Y, friendship, and relationship maintenance. The theoretical foundations and philosophical assumptions are included in this chapter. Chapter two also lists the research objectives for this study. Chapter three lists the scope and methodology for this study. It explains the study population and methods used. Chapter four explains the study. It examines, in depth, the survey questionnaire results, ties in the theoretical foundations, answers the research questions, and compares the
current findings to previous literature. Chapter five is the conclusion. It notes study limitations and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Generation Y, like others, has been shaped by the events, developments, and trends of its time (McCrindle, 2010). The rise of instant communication technologies made possible through use of the Internet, such as email, texting, instant messaging, and social networking sites, may explain the generation’s peer-oriented focus due to the ease of communication they experienced with them (Davie, 2008). The United States population encompassing Generation Y are those born from 1976 through 2002. A review of recent studies has provided a depth of knowledge on relationship maintenance and technology for the latter half of Generation Y, those born since 1990, also referred to as the Net-generation. No recent literature on the first half of Generation Y relative to relationship maintenance and technology has been conducted.

Many studies have indicated the ability of computer mediated communication (CMC) to maintain relationships (Dainton & Aylor, 2002; Parks & Floyd, 1996; Stafford, Kline & Dimmick, 1999). For men and women of the Net-generation, those born between 1990 and the early 2000s, their identities and relationships have been influenced by the Internet (Clark, Lee & Boyer, 2007). Recent literature sampling college students born during the aforementioned years, has defined relationship maintenance as the overwhelming motivator for Facebook use (Sheldon, 2008; Sheldon, 2009). Referring to a variety of behaviors, relationship maintenance includes actions people use to keep their relationship together (Dindia & Canary, 1993). Relationship maintenance includes sending messages to friends, communication, getting in touch and staying in touch with friends (Sheldon, 2008). This recent literature reports college students are connected with most of their closest friends on Facebook, including former classmates and childhood friends (Pennington, 2009).
This literature review will begin with the theoretical foundation and philosophical assumptions for the study. It will then examine social networking on the Internet, Generation Y as it is defined in birth years and characteristics, friendship, and relationship maintenance. Finally, it will conclude with a brief summary, rationale, and proposed research questions.

Theoretical Foundation

Overview

This study is based on the theoretical foundations of Social Information Processing Theory (SIP) and Uses and Gratification Theory (UGT). Walther’s (1992) SIP states the same relationships formed and maintained face to face can also be achieved through the use of computer-mediated communication. UGT states technology users are motivated to use a mode of communication for various reasons by examining what and why.

Social Information Processing Theory

Joe Walther (1992) published a theory which claimed CMC users can adapt to the restricted medium and use it effectively to develop close relationships. He argued that the sufficient exchange of social messages and relationship growth achieved by face to face (FtF) communication could also be achieved by CMC (Walther, 1992). SIP (Walther, 1992), suggests that people take advantage of whatever information is available within a CMC environment to form impressions, despite the absence of the nonverbal cues that typically drive impressions in offline communication (Tong, Van Der Heide & Langwell, 2008). SIP assumes communicators will use whatever social information is available and adjust messages accordingly in order to acquire and provide information needed to develop impressions and relationships (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007). In text-based environments, communicators draw upon language features such as style, word choice, and content in forming social connections (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007).
Initially relationship formation would take longer using CMC instead of FtF communication, but as messages continue to accumulate, relationship maintenance using CMC should show similar levels of development to FtF communication (Ramirez & Zhang, 2007). Research has shown support for SIP in numerous CMC contexts (Chidambaram, 1996; Parks & Roberts, 1998; Utz, 2000; Walther, 1993; Walther & Burgoon, 1992). Additionally, other studies have shown relationships formed through CMC exceeded the level of development achieved through face-to-face interaction (Walther, 1996).

**Uses and Gratification Theory**

Uses and gratification theory might be well suited to study the Internet (Newhagen & Rafaeli, 1996). This theory explains how different people use the same media messages for different purposes to satisfy their psychological and social needs and achieve their goals (Katz, 1959). UGT looks at what people do with media and why (Sheldon & Honeycutt, 2008). With origins in the 1940s, researchers became interested in why audiences engaged in various forms of media behavior (Berelson, 1949). Specifically, the theory referred to a desire to know more about an audience and an awareness of individual differences regarding their media use (McQuail, 1984).

According to UGT, audiences differ in the gratifications they seek from mass media (Sheldon, 2008). What needs and gratifications people are looking for can be grouped into the following: diversion, personal relationship, personal identity, and surveillance (McQuail, Blumler, & Brown, 1972). Researchers constantly add new gratifications related to Internet use (Sheldon & Honeycutt, 2008). Generally, UGT focuses on motives for media use, factors that influence motives, and outcomes from media related behavior (Sheldon, 2008). According to Ruggiero (2000) the Internet posses at least three attributes not commonly associated with
traditional media: interactivity, demassification, and asynchronicity. Many researchers see the Internet as a continuum between mass communication and interpersonal communication (Ruggiero, 2000).

*Internet Gratifications*

Uses and gratifications theory has been applied extensively in a variety of disciplines and forms of mediated communication (Sheldon & Honeycutt, 2008). Research by Parker and Plank (2001) has shown that exploration and entertainment were the primary motivations for Internet use. Others report people use computers to satisfy needs traditionally fulfilled by media, such as passing time and gathering information (Flaherty, Pearce, & Rubin, 1998). Additionally, avoiding loneliness, maintaining relationships, and escaping from everyday problems were found as motivators by Flanagin and Metzger (2001) and Parker and Plank (2001). Facebook studies have shown the largest portion of college students surveyed used the site to maintain relationships with people they know (Coley, 2006; Sheldon, 2008).

*Philosophical Assumptions*

Philosopher and theologian, Martin Buber said, “In the beginning is the relation,” and “The relation is the cradle of life” (1958, p.60). People are most fully human when they are in relation to others, living for others and for themselves (Buber, 1958). Buber’s work is part of the phenomenological tradition in the field of communication theory. The phenomenological tradition places emphasis on people’s perceptions and interpretations of their own experience (Griffin, 2009). Psychologist Carl Rogers (1961) took a phenomenological approach to healthy relationships and believed dialogue was within reach when both people seek it as long as three conditions are fulfilled:

1. Congruence between our words and who we generally are.
2. Unconditional positive regard for the other person.

3. Listening with empathetic understanding.

Rogers (1961) stated fulfilling these communications criteria will lead to healthier relationships. Relationships require interdependence; each person in the relationship feels a sense of personhood (Caputo, Hazel, McMahon, & Dannels, 2002). People in relationships can influence and be influenced, help and be helped by the other (Caputo et al, 2002). Relational development requires a sense of confirmation (Caputo et al, 2002). As Buber (1965) stated, people need confirmation. Relationship maintenance requires this reciprocal confirmation and social media likely aids in the process.

**Social Networking on the Internet**

The ability to network socially through the Internet exists through a variety of platforms such as: chat rooms, blogs, email, and social network sites (Pennington, 2009). Social networking sites are becoming an important part of the social fabric of young people’s social lives and a critical component of their everyday online activities (Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). Social networking sites allow users to find others with shared interests, experience support connections, and access the networks of their friends and contacts allowing for a larger and more heterogeneous network (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Donath & Boyd, 2004). Scholars suggest social networking may assist users in maintaining relationships with more individuals (Donath, 2007; Donath & Boyd, 2004). Research conducted by Walther and Boyd (2002) found individuals were validated by having larger networks due to the sheer number of their connections. Baym and Lin (2004) discovered their research participants used the Internet to maintain social networks, but the primary source of relationship maintenance was still face-to-face communication. Since then, researchers have found a much heavier reliance on computer-
mediated communication as a way to communicate (Bryant, Sanders-Jackson, & Smallwood, 2006; Ellison et al, 2007).

**Defining Social Network Sites**

Social networking began its influence in the late 1990s reaching critical mass soon after 2003 when the current major social network sites were launched (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Two early social network sites have reached unprecedented levels of popularity, Myspace and Facebook (Pennington, 2009). According to Boyd and Ellison (2007) social network sites enable individuals to do the following: construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they are connected, and view their list of connections and those made by others within the system. Profiles typically consist of the similar information: a picture of the user, the user’s name, likes and dislikes, and a list of other users they’ve connected to, which are referred to as “friends” on both Myspace and Facebook (Pennington, 2009). Social network sites do not force individuals into immediate communicative situations but rather allow them to provide information about themselves as well as connect and make comments to friends and strangers through wall posts or individual chat options (Pennington, 2009).

**Facebook**

Facebook continues to grow at astonishing rates. As of July 2010, Facebook had just over 500 million active users worldwide, currently Fall 2011, Facebook has more than 800 million users, with 350 million users also connected on their mobile device (Facebook Statistics, 2011). More than 50% of Facebook users log in every single day and have, on average, 130 friends (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Facebook has a strong global reach, is available in 70 languages, and 75% of users are outside the United States (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Facebook
was launched in 2004 by Harvard student, Mark Zuckerberg (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Originally, the site was closed meaning it was only accessible with a college email address for specific campuses (Facebook Statistics, 2011). The site went public allowing anyone with a valid email address to join in September 2006 (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Because of Facebook’s continuing dominant rise among social network sites and the Internet in general, it makes it ideal to study.

Livingstone (2008) sited the desire to belong to a community as a reason many youth become involved in social network sites, and given its popularity, Facebook is the site of choice. Research conducted by Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, and Walther (2008) found a contrast between the number of friends a user has in real life, usually around a dozen, to the high number of online friends, usually in the hundreds. It is likely participants are creating more but weaker ties as a way to elevate their perceived attractiveness and social capital to the community (Tong et al., 2008). A survey conducted at Michigan State University by Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2006) found 95% of college students were Facebook users. The respondents reported most of their Facebook interaction was with people they interacted with in person (Lampe et al., 2006) contradicting Bryant et al (2006) who reported people communicate with separate networks online and offline.

This current research shows online social networking is becoming an integral part in the social fabric of our lives. Social network sites do not force users to interact, but rather allow them to share personal information with those they choose to connect with. Facebook has and continues to grow at astonishing rates outside its original university setting giving many different users the opportunity to interact, form, and maintain relationships online.

*Generation Y*

This group is the first to come to age just as the Internet began to flourish (Ellis-Christensen, 2011). They are familiar, usually from childhood, with Internet surfing, cell phones, electronic organizers, cable television and other things which would be considered novelties by those born before (Ellis-Christensen, 2011). The rise of instant communication and social network sites, like Facebook, may offer an explanation for the generation’s reputation for being peer-oriented with the ease of communication through technology (Davie, 2008).

Research conducted by Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007) on college students born between 1982-1992 and their personality profiles, found they are frequently in touch with their parents and use the Internet more. A survey of more than 7,000 college students found 97% owned a computer and 94% owned a cell phone (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). The respondents on average spoke to their parents 1.5 times a day and included a wide range of topics (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

Generation Y offers broad and vague birth year ranges for those it encompasses. What previous research does agree on is this generation has been raised with technology. Given this
generation at its widest range spans more than a 20 year gap, it is possible both parent and child could be part of the same generation. While current research has examined the latter half of this generation, those born from 1990-2002, no research was discovered on those born from 1976-1989.

**Understanding Friendship**

Communication skills can be divided into two relationally-oriented classifications: affective communication and instrumental communication (Finn & Powers, 2002). These skills have been found to have value in relationships (Finn & Powers, 2002). Affective communication skills are those that impact the inner, emotional aspects of relationships and include comforting, conflict management and ego support (Finn & Powers, 2002). Instrumental communication skills help manage the communication between partners and relate to the external aspects that are part of the affective life of relationships (Finn & Powers, 2002). Instrumental communication involves persuasive, conversational, and narrative communication (Finn & Powers, 2002). Floyd (2009) refers to instrumental communication as the type of communication used to discuss mundane tasks. A study conducted by Finn and Powers (2002) examined college students and the importance of these two communication skills according to different types of relationships. Their findings report instrumental communication is important in all types of relationships (Finn & Powers, 2002). They also reported affective communication skills have value in developing relationships, friendships, and close relationships, but do not show value in relationships which are not expected to progress, such as acquaintances (Finn & Powers, 2002). Understanding relational communication shows a heuristic importance in relational movement, development, and maintenance.
Friendships are the most prevalent type of relationship (Blieszner & Adams, 1992). Since this study examined maintenance strategies across multiple relationships, friendship becomes an important aspect to understand. Friendships serve various social functions such as: acquiring new skills and providing a sense of support, care, companionship, emotional acceptance, connectedness, inclusion, affiliation, satisfaction, and belonging that is helpful in achieving one’s goals (Burleson & Samter, 1994). Friendships provide utilitarian benefits, helping each other achieve goals, and self-reverent benefits, affirmation of one’s identity, uniqueness, and self-worth (Wright, 1984). Maintaining friendships can be beneficial for both tangible and psychological purposes (Bryant & Marmo, 2009).

Friendship can be explained in numerous ways. Friends are people with whom one engages in shared activities with (Argyle & Furnham, 1983). According to Hays (1984), friendship involves companionship, consideration, communication, and affection. Lea (1989) explains friendship as a relationship involving voluntary or unconstrained interaction where participants respond to one another. According to Bryant and Marmo (2009), voluntary interaction can be used to differentiate friends from relationships in which partners are obligated to interact. Some people refer to their entire network as friends while others reserve the term for only close relationships (Bryant & Marmo, 2009).

**Examining Friendship**

Relationships can exist in many different forms: friends, family members, acquaintances, and romantic partners (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Bryant and Marmo (2009) note while most of the aforementioned relationships can be easily separated, it is crucial to understand and explain the different types of friendship. Casual friendships are those in the early stages of relationship development (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Many relationships never progress past this level,
however, a deeper relationship can be developed if both partners wish to do so (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Hays (1989) reported casual friendships are unstable and vulnerable to erosion because the friendship does not have a strong foundation. This base does not exist due to the nature of conversation between casual friends; it is more often factual and superficial topics without personal information (Berger & Roloff, 1982). Casual friendships can be very beneficial to maintain because they provide social capital and opportunities to network (Bryant & Marmo, 2009).

While people generally maintain a large network of casual friendships, they usually have a small core of close friendships that are distinguished from others (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). These friends cannot be replaced easily and hold special position in each other’s lives (Reardon, 1987). Close friendships often involve terms and phrases such as: love, trust, commitment, caring, stability and significant (Berscheid & Peplau, 1983). Close friendships include frequent interaction, high levels of self-disclosure, intimacy, involvement, and interdependence (Sillars & Scott, 1983). Close relationships are held in high esteem and significantly impact each other’s lives (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Close friendships demonstrate concern for long term relationship outcomes (Bryant & Marmo, 2009).

The strategies used to maintain friendships differ depending on the type and nature of the relationship (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). According to Bryant and Marmo (2009), studies aiming to understand relationship maintenance should consider the different forms of relationships, especially friendships, as unique variables by specifically studying how close and casual friendships differ in regard to relational maintenance strategies and expectations.

*Online Friendship*
Online social networking sites support the maintenance of existing social ties and the formation of new connections (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Social networking sites, including Facebook, use the term “friend” to explain connections thus creating interest in studying friendships online (Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). Some social networking sites offer a way to differentiate between their friends (Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). In December 2007, Facebook introduced a feature which enabled users to group friends into categories such as acquaintances, best friends, coworkers, romantic partners, and family but all are still classified as “friends” (Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). Boyd (2006) notes a wide range of reasons for people friending each other, and thus disputes the notion that users view “friends” as actual friends. According to Beer (2008), social networking sites may impact what friendship means, how it is understood, and how it is played out.

Steinfield and Lampe (2009), note an important motivation for online friending. The costs of adding a friend are low and the social costs of rejecting a friend request can be high, so many users have large numbers of “friends” (Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). Stern and Taylor’s (2007) research agrees, noting student survey respondents did not deny Facebook friend requests because being an online friend doesn’t mean much. Only 17% reported never connecting with a person they did not know (Stern & Taylor, 2007). Their respondents also indicated denying a friend request would make them mean or hurtful (Stern & Taylor, 2007).

Some research has expressed concern for the large number of connections. Boyd (2006) worries upcoming generations will not be able to differentiate between being a friend and being friended online. Rosen (2007) suggests social networking sites encourage users to collect as many friends as possible. Clemmitt (2006) agrees stating Facebook drives quantity over quality in friendships. The fact that users generally have anywhere from dozens to hundreds of online
friends suggests these relationships are more casual friendships (Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). Steinfield and Lampe (2009) suggest it is important to probe users’ conceptions of friendship online to discover how many of their connections are viewed as actual friends.

In a 2009 study examining college students and Facebook, Steinfield and Lampe reported respondents listed one-third of their Facebook friends are actual friends. Bryant and Marmo (2009) also examined college students and Facebook friends by conducting focus groups. They noted participants were connected to their close friends on Facebook, but the majority of their online friends were casual friends, acquaintances, and outsiders (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe’s (2007) research on college students and Facebook also reports users have more Facebook interaction with people whom they share an offline connection with suggesting students use Facebook to maintain offline relationships and solidify acquaintances.

Research undeniably shows the personal benefits of friendship. Relationships can vary in degree of intimacy and the way they are maintained. It also suggests online relationship maintenance can be a useful tool. In relation to Facebook, previous studies surveying college students show the site is used to maintain offline relationships and keep in contact with acquaintances. This body of research highlights how college students use Facebook to maintain both offline and online relationships. It does not show whether Facebook remains a viable tool for maintaining friendship with close friends and acquaintances for those outside the university setting.

**Relationship Maintenance**

Over the past decade, relational maintenance remains one of the most researched areas (Rabby, 2007). Communication scholars have suggested the process of relationship maintenance is crucial to relational satisfaction and the survival of a relationship (Ayers, 1983; Bell, Daly, &
Gonzalez, 1987; Canary & Stafford, 1994; Dainton, Zelley, & Langan, 2003) with Canary and Stafford (1994) explaining without maintenance behaviors a relationship will deteriorate. Relational maintenance is a dynamic process which requires persistent communication between partners (Dindia, 2003). The process of relationship maintenance involves performing symbolic behaviors that communicate a person’s desire to continue the relationship, often referred to as maintenance strategies (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). People spend more time maintaining relationships than developing them (Duck, 1998). Computer-mediated communication appears to be valuable to maintain relationships developed face-to-face (Rabby & Walther, 2003; Wright, 2002) in addition to relationships formed online (Stafford, Kline, & Dimmick, 1999; Parks & Floyd, 1996).

**Relationship Maintenance and Computer-Mediated Communication**

Researchers have recently begun to examine the role of computer-mediated communication and online relationship maintenance (Joinson, 2001; Rabby & Walther, 2003; Ramirez & Broneck, 2003; Wright, 2004). Social networking sites offer advantages over traditional means of maintaining relationships (Wright, Craig, Cunningham, Igiel, & Ploeger, 2008). Facebook and other social networking sites offer a cheap and convenient way to communicate messages to a large network of individuals (Wright et al., 2008). People use the Internet to stay in touch or keep up with activities of long-term friends and acquaintances (Cummings, Lee, & Kraut, 2006). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) found Facebook specifically may help college students maintain or accrue social capital in the midst of life changes. Users post updates which help their friends stay informed on their lives (Wright et al, 2008).
Online relationship maintenance behaviors have been examined by scholars. Stafford and Canary (1991) found five maintenance behaviors used to maintain romantic relationships: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks and shared tasks. This served as a basis for Canary, Stafford, Hause and Wallace (1993) to examine whether these behaviors were applicable to other relationships by asking college students to describe how they maintain different personal relationships. Canary et al. (1993) found ten strategies used by college students to maintain relationships: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, shared tasks, joint activities, cards, letters and calls, avoidance, antisocial behavior, and humor. Bryant and Marmo (2009) narrowed the focus again by examining how college students utilize Facebook to maintain relationships, which has been found to be the most common motivator for Facebook use (Park, Jin, & Jin, 2009; Sheldon, 2008; Sheldon, 2009). They found eleven total maintenance strategies among five different relationship types (Bryant & Marmo, 2009).

Bryant and Marmo (2009) found participants maintained relationships with close friends, casual friends, acquaintances, romantic partners and interests, and outsiders on Facebook by using the following strategies: positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, shared tasks, joint activities, cards, letters and calls, avoidance, antisocial behavior, humor, and surveillance. Surveillance, as previously described by Uses and Gratifications Theory, has been found to be a prominent Facebook use (Bryant, 2008; Lampe et al, 2006). This concept of being able to watch friends on Facebook and keep track of their activities without engaging in one-on-one communication was found to be conducive for the addition of surveillance as a maintenance strategy (Bryant & Marmo, 2009).

Social network sites offer some advantages to their users in regards to relationship maintenance. Relationship maintenance has been found by this previous research as the number
one reason for Facebook use, but it has not examined whether Facebook users feel the quality of their relationships have suffered.

Rationale and Summary

This literature review has examined social networking on the Internet, explained the Facebook phenomenon, reviewed the benefits of friendship, and explained relationship maintenance. The literature highlights how the Net-generation, born from 1990-2002, uses Facebook to maintain their friendships. This research shows they use Facebook more to maintain and strengthen past and current friendships and less to meet new people. By defining Generation Y, it is evident recent studies on Facebook use and relationship maintenance have only examined the latter half of this group. Current literature provides a wealth of information on those born from 1990-2002; it does not provide studies on the earlier half of Generation Y, those born from 1976-1989. Generation Y encompasses a broad range of age groups. Given the continued emergence and integration of technology in everyday life, it is important to understand how it is being used. The proposed study aims to examine the way the elders of Generation Y maintain relationships on Facebook. By conducting a survey of Facebook users born from 1976-1989, the research intends to answer the following questions:

RQ1: Do Facebook users born from 1976-1989 use the site to maintain relationships?
RQ2: What relationship maintenance behaviors are commonly performed on Facebook?
RQ3: Has the use of Facebook affected the way the early half of Generation Y maintains friendships?
RQ4: Has the frequency of offline communication been replaced by online communication through Facebook for this portion of Generation Y?
RQ5: Has this online communication affected the perceived quality of relationships for
the early half of Generation Y?

RQ6: How does relationship maintenance for the latter half of Generation Y compare to
previous research on the early half of Generation Y?
CHAPTER 3: SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Scope of the Study

The Problem and Purpose

The idea for this study emerged from two directions. First, the researcher’s personal experience maintaining relationships through the use of technology, including personal, professional, and academic relationships, sparked the initial and vested interest in the topic. Upon deeper reflection, given Facebook’s continued growth and popularity, it became the apparent choice of study. Second, after reviewing current research in the field of relationship maintenance and Facebook use, the only relevant studies were conducted with college students as the subjects.

This vast research on how specific groups of college students, part of Generation Y known as the Net-generation, use Facebook to maintain relationships sparked the question: Does the other half of this generation use Facebook in the same way? Therefore, the scope of this study examined the way the elders of Generation Y, those born from 1976-1989, use Facebook to maintain relationships. Using previous studies from Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009) as a guide, this study used previous work on college students and replicated it to see if it applied to a pilot study of subjects born from 1976-1989.

The principle in using a pilot study test allowed for replicating the measure of other researchers (Neuman, 2006). In this case, some questions were duplicated verbatim from Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009), while other questions in their studies were revised making them open ended and more appropriate for the surveyed participants. The studies conducted by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009) all examined relationship maintenance and Facebook use.
by college students. The intended accomplishments of this study suggested duplicating and building on this previous research.

Methodology of the Study

Overview

The method for this study was an Internet based survey. An online survey was designed using the website, Survey Pirate. Web-based surveys offer the advantage of being fast and inexpensive (Neuman, 2006). They offer great flexibility in design and can be conducted in a matter of hours (Neuman, 2006). The disadvantages of a web-based survey include unequal access to the Internet, protecting respondents’ online security, and software compatibility issues (Neuman, 2006). These disadvantages were considered and resolved by the following: all survey participants already have Internet access given they were identified by their current use of the Internet, a secure website was chosen to execute the survey, and the chosen website is compatible with a variety of platforms and Internet browsers.

Survey participation was completely voluntary. All respondents were current Facebook users. A quantitative approach was used to answer the current study’s research questions and compare the findings to those of past studies conducted by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009). Respondents were first asked a qualifying question defining the year they were born. If they met the target demographic they were instructed to continue. If they did not meet this initial qualifier, they were thanked for their time and dismissed.

Study Population

Survey researchers sample many respondents who answer the same questions about a number of variables (Neuman, 2006). In order to find survey participants, a snowball sample
was used. Snowball sampling, also referred to as network, chain referral, or reputational sampling, is a method for selecting the cases in a network (Neuman, 2006). It is a multistage technique beginning with a few people and spreading out to various links connected to the original participants (Neuman, 2006). The crucial feature is each person is connected with another through a direct or indirect linkage (Neuman, 2006). This does not mean each participant directly knows or interacts with every other person, but rather taken as a whole they are an interconnected web of linkages (Neuman, 2006).

The initial survey invitations were sent to the researcher’s 756 Facebook friends. Although not all of those people met the survey demographic, they were asked and encouraged to post the survey link on their own Facebook wall and invite their network to participate, and the process continued. Snowball sampling is a useful tool for social researchers interested in an interconnected network of people (Neuman, 2006).

**Design**

This study uses a cross-sectional, explanatory, quantitative survey approach. Surveys including Likert measures, produce information that is inherently statistical in nature (Groves, 1996). Surveys are appropriate for research questions regarding self-reported beliefs or behaviors (Neuman, 2006). This study was interested in discovering participants’ behavior, attitudes, beliefs, and opinions on Facebook use and relationship maintenance. Given the nature of information desired in this study, survey questionnaire was an appropriate design instrument.

The survey consisted of 15 questions. All questions were standard format, meaning they did not offer a neutral answer or an “I don’t know” response. Participants were required to choose the best possible answer. 2 of the questions were open-ended questions, allowing participants to write in their own response; 13 questions were closed-ended questions with a
fixed set of answers for the participants to choose from, including some scaled questions. A copy of the survey can be found as Appendix A.

**Measures**

The survey questionnaire sought to establish a number of measures. First, establishing basic demographics of birth year and gender the instrument moved into questions regarding the various forms of communication respondents use to keep in contact with their friends. The survey asked respondents to disclose how many close friends they have and the most common communication tool they use to keep in contact with their network. In regards to Facebook, the survey questionnaire asked how long respondents had been a member, how often they logged into the site, how many of their close friends were also Facebook friends, and what forms of connections made up their Facebook social network. Finally the survey questionnaire asked respondents to report their motivation for using Facebook, the actions they perform on the website, and if they believe the quality of their relationships has been affected by the use of Facebook. The final screen offered an optional opportunity to write freely any additional information or comments respondents wished to share about Facebook and relationship maintenance.

This study’s research questions were addressed by asking the following survey questions.

**RQ1:** Do Facebook users born from 1976-1989 use the site to maintain relationships?

Participants were asked how they keep in contact with their close friends allowing for multiple responses including face to face communication, telephone, texting, email, or instant messaging, and Facebook.

**RQ2:** What relationship maintenance behaviors are commonly performed on Facebook?
Participants were asked to choose from 10 relationship maintenance behaviors they perform on Facebook. They were instructed to choose all that apply.

RQ3: Has the use of Facebook affected the way the early half of Generation Y maintains friendships?

Participants were asked which mode of communication they use the most and which they use the least. Their options were: face to face, telephone, texting, email, or instant messaging, and Facebook.

RQ4: Has the frequency of offline communication been replaced by online communication through Facebook for this portion of Generation Y?

Participants were asked about the frequency of their Facebook use, who their Facebook friends are, and if all of their close friends are members of their Facebook friends. In conjunction with this information and the previous information about the frequency of chosen communication modes, the question can be answered.

RQ5: Has this online communication affected the perceived quality of relationships for the early half of Generation Y?

Participants were specifically asked if they believe their relationships are stronger by using Facebook. Their responses were indicated by a Likert scale.

RQ6: How does relationship maintenance for the latter half of Generation Y compare to previous research on the early half of Generation Y?

Results from this current study of participants born from 1976-1989 were compared to the findings of Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo’s (2009) results on surveyed college students.

*Data Collection*
The survey was conducted and data was collected using the web-based survey tool, Survey Pirate. Data was collected by using a web-based link posted on Facebook to access the survey. A Facebook invitation was created with a link to the survey with the researcher’s 756 Facebook friends invited. Although all those invited did not meet the study demographic, they were all asked to invite their networks as well, achieving the snowball effect. The survey questionnaire remained open for one week. All participants were anonymous. Because data collection was performed on a secure web-based, password protected system, only the researcher had access and the credentials to retrieve the results and reports.

**Ethics, Validity and Reliability**

*Research Ethics Overview*

Research ethics concerns what is right and wrong while conducting research (Rubin, Rubin, Haridakis, & Piele, 2010). All research participants provided their informed consent by actively choosing to participate in a completely voluntary survey. In order to become a survey participant, respondents had to follow a posted Facebook link to the web-based survey questionnaire where they were reminded their participation was voluntary and confidential. Survey participants were completely anonymous. Even the researcher was unaware of participants’ identities. While respondents were not informed of the research questions being evaluated by their responses, they were informed the topic of research was relationship maintenance and Facebook use.

*Validity*

Measurement validity refers to how well the conceptual and operational measures blend with each other (Neuman, 2006). This study relied on previously valid measures by duplicating and blending research by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and...
Marmo (2009). Using their concurrent measures addressing college students, or the youngest half of Generation Y, this study measured the elders of Generation Y according to the same variables. This study is a replication study of previous research, adapting the previously validated instruments.

**Reliability**

Reliability refers to a study’s dependability or consistency (Neuman, 2006). It suggests repeated or recurring results under similar conditions (Neuman, 2006). This study used representative reliability, which is reliability across subpopulations or groups of people (Neuman, 2006). A subpopulation analysis was used due to testing the other half of the population of Generation Y previous research did not address. In addition, equivalence reliability was addressed by using multiple indicators, or measuring the same construct in multiple survey questions (Neuman, 2006).

This survey questionnaire was a pilot study. Pilot study’s can improve reliability by using a pilot version to measure first (Neuman, 2006). This pilot study replicated the measures other researchers have used in analyzing relationship maintenance and Facebook. By building upon previous research by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009), the quality of the measure can improve over time.

**Summary**

The focus of this study emerged from the researcher’s initial interest in how people communicate online compared to offline. After examining this topic, relationship maintenance became the lens for study. Facebook as an online communication tool, has had stunning growth. With members almost doubling thus far in 2011, it became the clear front runner for studying a social networking site. Previous work by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and
Bryant and Marmo (2009) used survey questionnaires and focus groups to examine the way college students maintain relationships on Facebook. Pennington (2009) also used a survey questionnaire and a snowball sample to study the youngest members of Generation Y. This study relied heavily on that previous work by duplicating the questions, repeating the method of study and sampling method to discover whether or not those finding also apply to the older members of Generation Y.
CHAPTER 4: THE STUDY

Introduction

This study examined the way those born from 1976-1989 use Facebook to maintain relationships and compared it to previous work by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009). The study was performed using the online survey website, Survey Pirate. The study involved a 15 question survey questionnaire comprised of 2 open-ended questions and 13 closed questions. The link to the survey was posted on Facebook originally available on the researcher’s wall and in an event invite to the researcher’s 756 Facebook friends. The original 756 invited participants were encouraged to participate in the anonymous survey if they met the demographic, and also to share the link on their walls and invite their friends to participate in the study. The event snowballed into 1292 Facebook users invited. Of those invited, 215 people born between 1976-1989 chose to complete the survey. The respondents included 175 females and 40 males. The survey link was available and data was collected for one week.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was two-fold based on the type of questions asked. For the 13 closed-ended questions, the Survey Pirate questionnaire software generated descriptive results in the form of bar graphs for each question. The 2 open-ended questions were reported by Survey Pirate in a text-based table. These responses were categorized into larger groups according to previous research conducted by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009). After answering this study’s research questions, these descriptive results were compared to the previous works listed above.

Results
Facebook Use to Maintain Relationships

The first research question in this study asked if Facebook users born from 1976-1989 use the site to maintain relationships. According to SIP, the sufficient communication exchanges can be performed using FtF communication and CMC. Respondents were able to select multiple options to answer this question.

Table 1

Modes of Communication Used to Maintain Relationships

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Mode</th>
<th>Respondents Reporting</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Text messaging, Email or Instant Messaging</td>
<td>205</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relationship Maintenance Behaviors on Facebook

Keeping UGT in mind, the second research question sought to discover what relationship maintenance behaviors and motivators for use are commonly performed on Facebook by the respondents. Respondents were able to answer this question with multiple responses.

Table 2

Relationship Maintenance Behaviors Performed on Facebook

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maintenance Behavior</th>
<th>Respondents Reporting</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep in touch with friends and family</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be part of the information loop</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Respondents were also asked an open-ended question and instructed to write in the number one reason they use Facebook. Their responses were categorized to better understand the number one motivator. The number one answer was reported by 89% of respondents who stated keeping in touch is the primary reason they use Facebook.

**Effects of Facebook and Friendship**

The third question this study aimed to answer was whether the use of Facebook affected the way those born from 1976-1989 maintained friendships. In order to explore this topic, respondents were asked which form of communication they use the most and which they use the least. While Facebook seems to be used by respondents, it has not replaced other forms of technology used by surveyed participants. However, respondents did report using CMC to maintain relationships. These findings comply with SIP showing relationships can be maintained through FtF or CMC.

Table 3

*Most Used Mode of Communication*
Table 4

*Least Used Mode of Communication*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Communication Mode</th>
<th>Respondents Reporting</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Face to Face</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text messaging, Email or Instant Messaging</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Offline and Online Communication*

Research question four asked if the frequency of offline communication has been replaced by online communication through Facebook for this portion of Generation Y. 91% of those surveyed stated they’ve been a member of Facebook for at least 2 years. 51% of participants have been a member of the site for more than 3 years. 93% of respondents admitted to logging on to Facebook every single day.

Since people spend so much time on Facebook, this survey wanted to see who respondents are connected with. This question allowed for multiple answers.

Table 5
Respondents reported large Facebook networks. 74% of respondents said they have more than 201 Facebook friends. Respondents were also asked about their personal close friendships. When asked how many close friends they have, 33% of respondents said they have 3 to 5 close friends and 30% of participants answered 6 to 9. 61% of those surveyed said all of their close friends are also Facebook friends, while 27% said most were. These results show Facebook has become part of respondents daily lives and keeps them connected with the majority of their close friends.

**Relationship Quality**

The fifth research question asked participants directly if this online communication affected the perceived quality of their relationships. The question read: how do you feel the quality of your relationships has been affected by using Facebook? The response choices were: they are significantly stronger, they are slightly stronger, they are slightly weaker, and they are significantly weaker.

Table 6

*Relationship Quality through Facebook Use*
Relationship Quality | Respondents Reporting | %  
---|---|---  
Significantly Stronger | 30 | 14  
Mildly Stronger | 162 | 75  
Mildly Weaker | 21 | 10  
Significantly Weaker | 2 | 1  

The responses were overwhelmingly positive. The majority of those surveyed see a benefit to their relationships. These results are in conjunction with what this survey found as the primary motivator for Facebook use: keeping in contact with friends and family. These findings are also in congruence with SIP. Respondent’s feel they can develop and maintain relationships through the use of CMC.

**Discussion**

The final research question in this study asked how these findings compare to previous work on the early half of Generation Y by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009) to determine if any conclusions can be drawn between relationship maintenance and Facebook for Generation Y as a whole.

**Facebook Use to Maintain Relationships**

Facebook began as a site strictly for college students (Facebook Statistics, 2011). Previous research by Steinfield and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009) has shown college students use the site to maintain relationships. In September 2005, the site expanded to offer membership to high school students (Facebook Statistics, 2011). The original target audience for Facebook was the early members of Generation Y.
Since the site opened to offer membership to anyone in September 2006, new membership has exploded, doubling in size in the first three months of open registration. 45% of United States Facebook members are age 26 or older (Smith, 2009). Women are the fastest growing demographic (Smith, 2009). The fastest growing age group is among those age 26-34 (Smith, 2009). It is very evident the older members of Generation Y are making a big impact on Facebook’s success. This study confirmed these findings showing the elder members of Generation Y, like their Generation Y counterparts, use Facebook to maintain relationships.

**Relationship Maintenance Behaviors on Facebook**

Previous research on the youngest members of Generation Y is very similar to the findings in this study. Pennington’s (2009) research found the number one motivator for using Facebook was to keep in touch with friends, 94% of participants reported this. Research by Steinfield and Lampe (2009) and Bryant and Marmo (2009) report the same findings; keeping in touch with friends is the most common reason for using Facebook. 95% of respondents in this study’s survey questionnaire reported keeping in touch with friends as their primary motivator for Facebook use.

There are additional similarities among Generation Y users. Bryant and Marmo (2009) also discovered surveillance was a popular motivator for college students to use Facebook. This includes behaviors participants referred to as “Facebook stalking” meaning checking up on a friend without letting them know. Surveillance was also an important aspect for the older members of Generation Y, with 63% of them reporting it as a reason for use. The least common motivator for college students using Facebook was online dating (Pennington, 2009; Steinfield & Lampe, 2009). This survey also reported flirting and dating as the least common reason for using the site.
As UGT described, Facebook users have shown different motivating factors for using the site. Understanding user motivation for logging into Facebook provides insight into the perceived benefits users feel. This may also offer information as to why users remain active members of the site. The findings in this study when compared to previous research show all Generation Y Facebook users are using the site for the same reasons.

**Offline and Online Communication**

Pennington (2009) found a large variance in number of online and offline friends. More than half of Pennington’s (2009) survey participants reported having one to four close friends but more than 300 Facebook friends. Steinfield and Lampe’s (2009) respondents reported having an average of 276 Facebook friends, but only considered 100 of them people they actually knew. This study found 63% of users reported having less than 10 close friends and 74% of respondents had more than 201 Facebook friends. Over 80% of college student participants indicated that most or all of their close friends are Facebook friends (Pennington, 2009). 88% of this study’s participants reported the same. These findings implicate all members of Generation Y are using Facebook in similar ways. It also shows similarities in respondents’ offline close friendships.

Bryant and Marmo (2009) examined the types of relationships maintained on Facebook in detail. Their findings show respondents are connected with close friends, casual friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, and outsiders but use different maintenance strategies depending on the relationship. For example, respondents reported using Facebook to maintain close friendships, but only reported Facebook as beneficial for these relationships if another form of communication was also used. Participants suggested relationships with casual friends and acquaintances were comfortably maintained on Facebook without any other form of communication. Respondents also reported having romantic partners and romantic interests as
Facebook friends and using the site to flirt. Bryant and Marmo (2009) also found outsiders or strangers were connected with these participants, but with more limited access to their profiles than their close networks.

The older members of Generation Y surveyed report similar connections. The bulk of their Facebook friends are close friends, casual friends, and acquaintances. They did report less involvement with outsiders, or people they don’t know, than the younger members of Generation Y previously surveyed reported.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The findings of this study are conducive with previous research and statistics. The surveyed members of Generation Y report Facebook is integrated into their daily lives. The majority of respondents admit to logging into the site daily and using it as a tool to keep in touch with friends and family. These results are conducive with both SIP and UGT showing respondents can communicate and fulfill the gratification of relationship maintenance by using Facebook. While text messaging, email, and instant messaging are their most used modes of communication, Facebook has become an automatic daily occurrence. When compared to previous research conducted by Steinfeld and Lampe (2009), Pennington (2009), and Bryant and Marmo (2009) on college student’s Facebook use, this collected data reports all members of Generation Y are using the site in very similar ways.

Study Limitations

This study is not without limitations. First, the majority of invited participants knew the researcher directly because this survey questionnaire used a snowball sample to find its participants. Some of those invited knew the purpose of the intended study due to close contact with the researcher. This could have affected their responses. Second, this study was based on honest responses from participants. It was an anonymous, online questionnaire. There was no system for checks and balances to guarantee participants met the demographic. This could have skewed the data resulting in some participants not matching the intended sample. Lastly, a snowball sample is not easily generalized to the mass public. Even though this study used previous works for guidance, comparison, and duplication, it was a pilot study with the proposed demographic. Further testing is needed to address the validity of these results.

Recommendations for Future Studies
The results of this study show Facebook has become a major aspect for the latter half of Generation Y, just like the earliest members of the generation. Future research should continue and duplicate this pilot study examining relationship maintenance and Facebook use by the latter half Generation Y. Focus groups, in addition to a survey questionnaire, could solidify the sample population meets the desired demographic. The addition of focus groups could expand the acquired knowledge on what maintenance strategies participants use and explore additional gratifications users seek which have not been explored by college students. For example, the latter half of Generation Y could be parents using Facebook as a surveillance tool to keep track of their children. Finally, future studies could further examine what relationship maintenance strategies once performed offline are now fulfilled through CMC and Facebook.

**Conclusion**

The exponential growth of social networking makes it an area of continued study. This study examined previous research on relationship maintenance, Generation Y, Facebook, and friendship. It reinforced relevant theory because both SIP and UGT show relationships can achieve the same relationship growth using CMC, gratifying the desire for relationship maintenance through Facebook use. This study aimed to bridge the research gap in the way Generation Y maintains relationships using Facebook. It documented research of a pilot study on those born from 1976-1989 regarding Facebook behavior. This study determined while members of Generation Y have different preferred modes of communication, all those studied clearly use Facebook as a primary tool for relationship maintenance. The findings of this study open the door for continued research in this area.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your feedback will be used to complete my graduate school thesis. The survey should only take 5-10 minutes of your time. Please answer all questions with total honesty. All participation is voluntary and your answers will be completely anonymous.

1. Were you born during the years 1976-1989?
   a. Yes
   b. No

2. This survey will only use results from participants born from 1976-1989. If you do not meet with basic qualification, you may close out the survey now. Thank you for your time. If you were born from 1976-1989, please continue.

3. Please indicate your gender.
   a. Male
   b. Female

4. What forms of communication do you use to keep in contact with your close friends? Check all that apply.
   a. Face to face communication
   b. Telephone
   c. Texting, Email or Instant Messaging
   d. Facebook

5. What form of communication do you use the most to keep in contact with your close friends? Please choose one.
   a. Face to face communication
   b. Telephone
   c. Texting, Email or Instant Messaging
   d. Facebook

6. What form of communication do you use the least to keep in contact with your close friends?
   a. Face to face communication
   b. Telephone
   c. Texting, Email or Instant Messaging
   d. Facebook

7. How long have you been a member of Facebook?
   a. Less than 6 months
   b. More than 6 months, but less than 1 year
   c. More than 1 year, but less than 2 years
   d. 2-3 years
   e. More than 3 years

8. How often do you log in to Facebook?
   a. Daily
   b. Weekly
   c. Monthly
   d. A few times a year

9. How many close friends do you have?
RELATIONSHIP MAINTENANCE AND FACEBOOK

10. How many Facebook friends do you have?
   a. 0-50
   b. 51-100
   c. 101-150
   d. 151-200
   e. 201 or more

11. Are the people you indicated as your close friends also Facebook friends?
   a. Yes, all of them
   b. Yes, most of them
   c. Yes, some of them
   d. No, none of them

12. Who are your Facebook friends?
   a. Close friends and relatives
   b. Casual friends including those you interact with on occasion
   c. Acquaintances including people you met once or interact with rarely
   d. Romantic partners and interests including past and current
   e. Outsiders including people you do not like or do not know

13. Please indicate what you use Facebook for. Check all that apply.
   a. To keep in touch with friends and family
   b. To make plans with friends
   c. To flirt or find new love interests
   d. To meet new friends
   e. To track people and see what they are doing
   f. To invite people to parties or gatherings
   g. As a distraction or procrastination
   h. As a source of information: email, phone numbers and addresses
   i. To be part of the information loop
   j. To play games

14. Please indicate the number one reason you use Facebook. Type your answer below.

15. How do you feel the quality of your relationships have been affected by using Facebook?
   a. They are significantly stronger
   b. They are mildly stronger
   c. They are mildly weaker
   d. They are significantly weaker

16. Please use the space below to indicate any additional information you wish to share about using Facebook to maintain relationships. This question is optional.

Thank you for your time. Your survey is now complete.