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Factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support

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ABSTRACT

The present study sought to learn about the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support. The population of interest was individuals born in the years 1980 to 1994, also known as "Generation Y". Inclusion criteria included being at least age 18, born in or between the years 1980 to 1994, literacy in English, and having a Facebook account. An anonymous, online survey was used to collect quantitative data, including demographic information, perceived financial need, social support, coping behavior, Facebook intensity, Facebook satisfaction, emotional support received and provided on Facebook, and categories of Facebook use. The researcher emailed 95 friends, requesting that they send the survey link to at least 10 of their own friends, unknown to the researcher. Recruitment efforts yielded a sample of 167 individuals, primarily Caucasian (83.1%) and female (76.5%), with a mean age of 25.7.

Findings indicate that being female, having a "seeking social support" coping style, Facebook intensity, and Facebook satisfaction were all positively associated with use of Facebook for both receiving and providing emotional support. Additionally, "general emotions" and "friendships" were the only two of 12 possible categories of Facebook use for which the majority of participants reported seeking emotional support on Facebook. Further examination of these and additional findings is provided. The implication of findings for social work practice, policy, and research is discussed. Greater emphasis is needed on expanding our understanding of the relationship between social work, social networking sites, emotional support, and mental health.

FACTORS ASSOCIATED WITH YOUNG ADULT

USE OF FACEBOOK FOR EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

A project based upon an independent investigation,
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Social Work.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Emotional support can be defined as information which leads one to believe that they are cared for and loved as a person (Cooke, Rossmann, McCubbin, & Patterson, 1988, p. 213). Feeling emotionally supported may be the key to happiness; in fact, Ambriz, Izal, and Montorio (2012) found that coping aimed at seeking emotional support, among other factors, can mediate the negative effects of stress on individuals. One can argue that one of the purposes of mental health professionals is to provide emotional support to clients and patients, a demonstrable key to mediating stress and making them feel supported.

In light of a rapidly changing technology that characterizes the present, avenues to receiving, providing, and seeking emotional support may look different in the digital age. Young adults of today, also known as "Generation Y", are growing up in a more technologically advanced world that affects their accessibility to other people and things; they are also experiencing a difference in cultural norms (Coontz, 2009, as cited in The Editors, 2009). Generation Y is the first generation to grow up with Facebook and other social networking sites (SNSs) and online communication tools – a reality that has clear implications for the development of communication behavior unique to this generational cohort. Generation Y has also been stereotyped as being impatient due to their having grown up with the ability to access things that they may want or need with the tap of a screen (Rampell, 2011). Emotional support -

an arguably universal human need - may increasingly come to be met through the use of SNSs, providing greater avenues for connection to others, even if only virtually.

SNSs are a relatively new phenomenon, but their impact has been significant. The literature is now replete with research about the effects of Facebook and other SNSs on individuals, who uses these forms of communication, and for what purposes. Having come of age in the time of Facebook, Generation Y individuals provide an important cohort for the study of factors associated with use of Facebook for emotional support. Such study presents an avenue through which mental health professionals may expand their understanding of the unique needs of this generational cohort. In an effort to understand the interface between young adult emotional health and a changing face of technology, the research question this study seeks to explore is what are the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support? The researcher hypothesized that there would be differences in the level of emotional support received and provided by participants based on demographic information, perceived financial need, social support, coping behavior, Facebook intensity and satisfaction, and categories of Facebook use.

Social connections are critical to human biology, and loneliness and social isolation can negatively impact one's health (Cacioppo, 2008, as cited in Shute, 2008). Social workers and mental health professionals have been counseling and providing support to individuals on their social lives, phobias, anxieties, concerns, and struggles for years. However, as changes in the way humans connect and socialize with one another continue to occur, it is important to stay abreast of people's social habits and methods of receiving, providing, and seeking emotional support. It is the hope of the researcher that findings will provide a basis for greater insight into the emotional support needs of this and future generations of SNS users, among social workers

and other mental health professionals. It is further hoped that study findings will inform current and future professional practice aimed at integrating knowledge of the impact of social media usage with supportive intervention for young adults.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

This study explores whether and in what ways social online communication is used to garner and provide emotional support around issues faced by young adults of today, also referred to as "Generation Y". Specifically, this study seeks to explore the use of Facebook, a popular social networking site (SNS), for emotional support and the factors that may be associated with this form of usage, including but not limited to differences in demographic characteristics, social situations, types of stressors, coping styles, and intensity of usage. While much has been written on Facebook usage patterns in general and/or among select populations, less is known about the use of this online medium, specifically for emotional support, among the current generation of young adults.

It is hoped that study findings may shed light on: the areas of concern or stress identified by young adults as achieving expression in online communication; the expectations and experience of Facebook users in both providing and receiving online emotional support; and factors that may be associated with patterns of Facebook use among young adults. In this way, the profession may be better informed regarding a range of issues facing young adults, and their experience with and perceptions of social media as an effective forum in which to express and receive support for emotional concerns. In addition, as a popular forum for online communication, Facebook may be a new avenue for young adults to receive and/or provide emotional support to/from online "friends", possibly replacing telephone, in-person, or other

non-digital forms of communication. As communication patterns continue to change and advance technologically, the mental health field will benefit from understanding how SNSs and online communication may impact its users as individuals begin to use the internet or technology to discuss their feelings.

Findings will provide social workers and other mental health professionals clues as to how and in what areas social networking media - specifically Facebook - is used as a source of emotional support, and the experience of those who make use of this medium for that purpose. As this generation is likely to come to the attention of the helping professions, social workers would benefit from greater understanding of the issues that concern this generation, and the use of social networking, a hallmark of this age cohort, as a new way that people may access emotional support.

This chapter will examine the literature in key areas related to young adult use of Facebook for emotional support. These topical areas include: (a) definitions of "Generation Y" and description of the unique characteristics attributed to this generation of young adults; (b) discussion of Eriksonian concepts of psychosocial development as applicable to Generation Y; (c) theories of coping; (d) review of empirical studies of online communication, including Facebook and social networking sites, focusing on user well-being, feelings of social support, self-disclosure, mental health, personality traits, communication and gender differences, and student engagement; and (e) discussion and application of the uses and gratifications theory as a lens through which to view study findings.

"Generation Y" and Young Adults of Today

Definitions. Chronological designations and definitions of "young adult" vary widely in the researching lens. One definition places young adults within the 18 to 29 year-old age group

(Arnett & Tanner, 2005), while other young adult age groupings range from 18 to 35 (McGinnis, Goss, Tessmer, & Zelinski, 2008), and 18 to 23 (Horhota, Lineweaver, Ositelu, Summers, & Hertzog, 2012). "Generation Y" - also known as the Millennial Generation - is the cohort following "Generation X". Despite some inconsistencies, social researchers generally define "Generation Y" as the group of individuals born between 1980 and 1994 (Hills, Ryan, Smith, & Warren-Forward, 2012), or aged 18 to 33 in 2013. As such, this cohort exists squarely within the broad age grouping of the "young adult" population, as defined in the literature. Therefore, for purpose of the current study, the terms "Generation Y" and "young adult" are synonymous and will be used interchangeably. This study accepts Hills et al.'s (2012) definition of Generation Y as those born in or between the years 1980 to 1994.

The term "Generation Y" is applied to a cohort demonstrating certain social and cultural cohesion, born in the 1980s and 1990s (Howe & Strauss, 2000), for whom the use of online social media is a defining characteristic (Rampell, 2011). Other defining characteristics commonly attributed to members of this generation have included: global awareness and racial diversity (Lower, 2008); technological sophistication (Busch, Venkitachalam, & Richards, 2008); ambition and optimism, along with high expectations (Hughes, 2011); and preference for open, collaborative styles of management in the workplace (The Economist, 2008). The economic and social realities that frame the experience of a generational cohort also serve to define that generation culturally and socially. Challenges connecting to the workforce, for example, are a defining reality for this generation: According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, the unemployment rate among people in their 20s increased significantly in the two most recent recessions in the United States (The Economist, 2008).

The particular social and economic reality of Generation Y serves to underscore the ways in which the experience of the current generation of young adults differs from previous generations. Henig (2010) states that there is currently a shift in adolescence as young people take longer to reach adulthood, and the timetable for adulthood is being pushed further and further into an individual's twenties. According to Stephanie Coontz (2009, as cited in The Editors, 2009), in the 1960s, two-thirds of all men and more than three-quarters of all women had already attained financial and residential independence by age 30; in contrast, today less than half of all women and less than one-third of men aged 30 have completed these life transitions. Coontz (2009, as cited in The Editors, 2009) attributes this change to shifts in this generation's cultural values and reduced economic prospects for young workers.

Defining characteristics. This section will discuss specific characteristics that define members of Generation Y, including access to digital technology, changing work culture, and changing marriage, family, and social norms.

Access to digital technology. We currently live in a digital world, with almost 75% of teens and young adults being members of at least one social networking site, and Facebook being one of the most widely used (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012). In addition, according to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012), 85% of children had access to a computer in their home in 2010. Today's young adults born in Generation Y have had access to communication tools during key developmental stages, unlike previous generations of young adults. Modes of communication, staying in touch, and requesting or providing others with emotional support in the digital age differ from those of previous generations. For example, Facebook is one of the most popular ways to communicate online, as it is the single most trafficked website in the world (Alexa, 2012).

Young adults today have some similar life stressors as previous generations, but the avenues to communicate with others about these stressors, a possible coping mechanism, have expanded with the advent of online communication. For example, through the use of SNSs, there are now ways to communicate with a larger number of friends and strangers (Pollet, Roberts, & Dunbar, 2011). One of the most popular SNS, Facebook, reached over 750 million active members internationally in late 2011 (Anderson, Fagan, Woodnutt, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2012). The reality of this age group is that their communication experiences are different from previous generations. A defining aspect is the massive use of social media to mediate and engage in communication of all kinds. Manago, Taylor, and Greenfield (2012) claim that "the most striking aspect of the socialization environment in Western cultures in the early part of the 21st century is that adolescents and emerging adults have a variety of communication technologies at their disposal to manage quickly and efficiently very large webs of social connections" (p. 369).

It has been argued that technology has made life easier for Generation Y in comparison with previous generations, in that this cohort has been able to access any resource, product, or service from the tap of a screen (Rampell, 2011). Busch et al. (2008) claim that Generation Y is technologically savvy because of the growth of the internet and increased level of user accessibility in the past decade. Busch et al. (2008) describe this time frame as coinciding with critical developmental years among members of Generation Y, impacting their high level of familiarity and comfort with technology, the internet, and social networking sites.

Some have suggested that parents of Generation Y members tended toward the use of constant praise, resulting in a self-absorbed, self-important, but also confident generation (Twenge, 2009). Rampell (2011) states that this generation is stereotyped as being entitled,

coddled, disrespectful, narcissistic, and impatient. Since Generation Y has grown up learning to

access resources instantaneously from the tap of a screen (Rampbell, 2011), their lack of

tolerance for things that take time may result from receiving immediate attention to any "needs"

they might have. In light of the current study, the potential need for immediate gratification may

manifest in the desire for immediate emotional support through instantaneous access to a social

networking tool. Beyond offering emotional support, instantaneous need fulfillment through

social media may be beneficial for practical reasons. For example, in the wake of Hurricane

Sandy that destroyed parts of the Northeast in fall 2012, Facebook was used extensively by those

advertizing or seeking vacant homes and as a means of "spreading the word" about organized

help efforts. Facebook posts included requests for help, as well as offers of help to others

(Noveck, 2012).

 Changing work culture. Compared to previous generations, young adults in the U.S.

today change jobs more frequently and are less likely to remain at a specific company or in a

specific career out of loyalty to their employer. Instead, they are more characteristically driven

to change jobs in order to develop themselves and their career (Recruitgroup, 2009). Cennamo

and Gardner (2008) found that within the range of generation of employees currently in the

workforce, the younger generations of employees (such as Generation X and Generation Y)

placed more importance on their status at work than did employees of the Baby Boomer

generation. Older generations have been found to place the highest importance on altruistic

work values, while the most recent generation places the least importance on this workplace

value, favoring instead social values (e.g., interacting with others), and prestige work values

(Lyons, Duxbury, & Higgins, 2005, as cited in Hansen & Leuty, 2012).

The work environment to which this generation of young adults is accustomed places far more emphasis on equality than previous generations, with strict rules currently in place regarding harassment and nondiscrimination based on race, religion, sexuality, and gender. In their cross generational study of workplace values, Hansen and Leuty (2012) found that young adults placed a higher emphasis on equality than on rate of pay, reflective of the changing work environment and cultural landscape. This emphasis is particularly notable in the case of gender equality. Cultural norms regarding women in the workplace have changed significantly from the norms of previous generations. In 1955, women earned approximately 64% of male earnings for comparable work; today, estimates of women's earning compared with men's range from 77% (Clark, 2011) to 82% (Klotz, 2011). In only 10 years, the share of women in wage and salaried work, internationally, increased from 42.8% in 1999, to 47.3% in 2009 (International Labour Organization, 2010). Women are also entering graduate study programs at a higher rate: Between 2000 and 2010, the number of female post baccalaureate students increased by 62%, compared with only a 38% increase in males (U.S. Department of Education, 2012).

In the work place, women now hold positions previously reserved for men, including Congress, the judiciary, professional sports, the military, local, state, and national politics, top-level corporate positions, etc. (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). In 2012, Yahoo's hiring of a pregnant female CEO, Marissa Mayer, was a first for a publicly traded Fortune 500 company (Henneberger, 2012). It has been argued that a high-profile hiring practice at the CEO level in a prominent company like Yahoo can have a trickledown effect on other companies (The Editors, 2012). Mayer's state of California is one of the few to guarantee paid maternity leave, and the program is said to be a successful model for other states to follow, citing Mayer as an example for women in her company, her industry, and across the country (The Editors, 2012). There is

still a long way to go in achieving gender equality in the workplace: The National Committee on Pay Equity (NCPE) was founded in 1979 with the purpose of closing the wage gap (National Committee on Pay Equity, 2012), and this gap exists yet today. However, the fact that women are changing the landscape of today's work environment and potentially affecting policy as a result, represents shifting cultural norms in this particular aspect of the lives of young adults of today.

The workplace was not always a welcoming environment for diverse groups, although gains have been made over the past several decades. In 2012, the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission ruled that employers who discriminate against an employee or potential employee based on their gender identity is in violation of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibits discrimination based on sex (The Huffington Post, 2012). This ruling came about at a time when many Generation Y individuals entered the work force, making them the first generation to experience a legal ruling towards equality for transgender individuals. Rulings such as this demonstrate a trend towards greater equality in the workforce, as much inequality still remains. The Williams Institute on Sexual Orientation Law and Public Policy aggregated a number of surveys to examine gay and transgender workplace discrimination, and found that 15% to 43% of gay and transgender workers report being passed over for a job or fired because of their sexual orientation or gender identity, while seven to 41% of gay and transgender workers were verbally or physically abused or had their workplace vandalized (Burns & Krehely, 2011). However, with new rulings taking effect presently, it appears that Generation Y individuals will likely experience and be part of a progressively changing work culture.

Additionally, the work environment can be argued to be very stressful for young adults today due to the employment rate. Leonhardt (2013) claims that over the past 12 years, the U.S. has gone from having the highest share of employed 25 to 34 year-olds among wealthy economies to having among the lowest. In fact, as of October 2012, the U.S. unemployment rate was 7.9%, with a rate of 7.7% for women and 8% for men (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012). For women age 20 to 24, the unemployment rate was 12.3%, and for women age 25 to 34, it was 8.4%; for men age 20 to 24 the unemployment rate was 12.9%, and for men age 25 to 34, it was 8.3%. As a result, not only is the work culture changing for Generation Y individuals, but the ability to find a job poses additional changes in the work force for this particular generation. Further evidence demonstrates that the unemployment rate (for the month of January) of individuals 16 years of age and older in 1960 was 5.2% (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In 1970, the unemployment rate for the month of January was 3.9%, in 1980 is was 6.3%, in 1990 it was 5.4%, and in 2000 it was 4%. However, the unemployment rate for the month of January in 2010 was 9.8%, nearly double the previous five decades (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2013). In 2010, Generation Y individuals would have been age 16 to 30, prime years for entrance to the work force and the accompanying, exposure to changes in employment and workplace culture. Also, Schoneboom (2011) states that Twitter (another social networking tool) and Facebook both present people with new and irresistible opportunities to talk about work – it may also be an avenue to discuss possible employment and work concerns of this generation as well.

Changing marriage, family, and social norms. In additional to work culture change, the current cultural value of marriage is vastly different from that of previous generations. For example, the Pew Research Center analysis of U.S. census data shows that barely half of all adults in the U.S. are married, and the median age at first marriage is at the highest it has ever

been at 26.5 years old for women, and 28.7 years old for men (Cohn, Passel, Wang, &

Livingston, 2011). In 1960, 72% of all adults age 18 and older were married, while today only

51% are married. Among young adults today, only 20% of people age 18 to 29 are married, a

significant decrease from 59% in the 1960s (Cohn et al., 2011).

Additionally, more than half of births to American women under age 30 occur outside of

marriage (Tavernise, 2012), indicating growth in social acceptance of birth outside of wedlock.

The rise in out-of-wedlock birth rates can also be a result of concurrent trends including decline

in marriage rates for young adults and a divorce rate of 40 to 50% (American Psychological

Association, 2013).

Furthermore, same-sex marriage is rapidly becoming a more socially accepted norm,

evidence by changing laws in several states. As of November 2012, three states (Maine,

Maryland, and Washington) joined six other states and the District of Columbia in legalizing

same-sex marriage through court or legislative decisions (Eckholm, 2012), demonstrating a

cultural shift in American's attitudes and changing definitions of marriage and family (Markoe,

2012). In further support of changing norms around marriage equality, Minnesota voters

rejected a ballot measure that would allow for an anti-gay marriage law in their constitution, and

Wisconsin voters elected the country's first ever openly-gay U.S. senator, Tammy Baldwin

(Markoe, 2012).

The concept of same-sex marriage was not legalized in any form until 2000, when

Vermont became the first state in the country to legally recognize civil unions between gay or

lesbian couples, but still stopped short of referring to same-sex unions as marriage (Pearson

Education, Inc., 2013). Members of Generation Y would have been anywhere from around six

or seven years old to around 19 or 20 years old (depending on when exactly their birthday fell in

the calendar year) when civil unions were recognized for the first time by one state. They are

therefore the first generation to grow up, come of age, and reach adulthood during a time when

people of their generation were surrounded by a different mentality around marriage norms than

every generation before them. Furthermore, in only a little over a decade, that initial one state

has increased ten times over to now including nine states and the District of Columbia, all of

which occurred during prime developmental years of the Generation Y cohort.

In his article, "Generation LGBTQIA", Michael Schulman (2013) posits that the current

generation of students in higher educational settings is seeking a more radical change in gender

roles beyond the binary of male/female. According to Schulman (2013), the new generation is

demanding that a more encompassing term (LGBTQIA - to include "queer, "intersex", "ally", or

"asexual") to replace the traditional "LGBT" term.

Although more encompassing, the term "LGBTQIA" may still not be inclusive enough.

According to Schulman (2013), a newer trend among young adults on college campuses is the

use of networking sites such as Facebook to start "non-cisgender" (meaning gender identity not

conforming to biological sex) online groups to represent "everyone else" who may not fall into

the LGBTQIA category. As further illustration of the trend toward greater inclusiveness among

younger students, Schulman (2013) points to the University of Pennsylvania where, a decade

ago, the LGBT Center was rarely used, and today this university has been ranked as one of the

top 10 trans-friendly universities in the country. As newer generations come of age at a time

with changing societal and social norms, we can begin to see large changes on school campuses,

workplaces, and other areas across the country. In addition, this generation now has access to

countless ways to connect with others like them, and is using sites like Facebook to spread the

word and create change.

Eriksonian Theory of Psychosocial Development and Generation Y

Erik Erikson was an ego psychologist who examined how the ego responds over the course of an average human life (Berzoff, Flanagan, & Hertz, 2008). The ego is defined as the part of oneself that maintains psychological cohesion and stability in the face of conflictual forces of one's desires and aggressions, and one's moral and civil behavior (Berzoff et al., 2008). Erikson theorized that the ego is shaped and transformed by not just biological and psychological forces, but also social forces, which gave way to his psychosocial developmental theory of the eight stages of man (Berzoff et al., 2008). Using Erikson's conceptual framework, young adults, also referred to as "Generation Y" in the current study, are within the "Young Adulthood: Intimacy vs. Isolation" developmental stage.

Within this developmental stage, a solid sense of identity is needed in young adulthood in order to achieve intimacy in relationships (Berzoff et al., 2008). Young adults in this stage explore relationships that lead to long-term commitments with those other than family members, and successful completion of this stage can lead to healthy relationships with a sense of commitment, safety, and care (McLeod, 2008). Without the ability to share intimacy with loved ones and friends, individuals may lean towards isolation (Berzoff et al., 2008). Conquering this stage involves maneuvering one's way through intimacy and isolation, however "real intimacy requires having ego boundaries that are strong enough so that one is able to temporarily suspend them in service of connection to others" (Berzoff et al., 2008, p. 113).

Erikson locates the "initiation vs. guilt" phase as a crisis that occurs in early childhood, where the child targets its "jealous rage" and "anticipatory rivalry" towards its parents and siblings (Capps, 2004). Capps (2004) proposes that Erikson's stages of development repeats itself again in later stages in life. For example, he makes reference to this psychosocial crisis of

"initiation vs. guilt" as also being contained within the traditional "intimacy vs. isolation" stage of young adult development, the population the current study explores. Capps (2004) states that in young adulthood, the initiation vs. guilt crisis now requires other targets for such rage, including peers or near-peers that one competes with for recognition (p. 19).

Initiation refers to the experience of young adults in their twenties who are beginning new careers, marriages, and other lasting relationships (Capps, 2004). This is an eventful period, full of new and exciting experiences. However, Capps (2004) proposes that the negative side of this initiation is "a sense of guilt", typically a result of manipulation and coercion. As a result, this phase includes competition with peers, as well as with one's supervisors. This desire to eventually take one's supervisor's place may create a sense of guilt, especially if the individual relies on their supervisor for advice (Capps, 2004). "The sense of guilt experiences in this stage of life can therefore lead to emotional paralysis, an inability to take initiative due to fear of unleashing aggressive actions against those who occupy the field, to which they, in turn, may retaliate" (Capps, 2004, p. 18).

Positive aspects of this stage include eagerness, cooperativeness, and combining with others to construct and plan, as well as a willingness to learn from teachers and others with more experiences and to emulate their styles of initiative (Capps, 2004). Capps (2004) argues that this stage is a period of cooperative effort and planning, which takes form through marriage, having a family, and engaging in the professional work force. As a result, those within this life stage have the capacity for initiative that if directed for constructive purposes can enrich human community.

According to Capps' (2004) conceptual framework of Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, young adults are maneuvering their way through both the intimacy vs. isolation stage as well as the initiative vs. guilt phase. This developmental framework is critical to an

understanding of today's young adults in that it sheds light on the ways in which their social lives are marked by communication, relationship building, and emotional paralysis, as they endeavor to successfully pass through this stage. This notion takes on additional meaning for Generation Y, a generation that has transformed the way they communicate and build relationships through online social networking. Due to the clear need for cooperation but also guilt and competiveness of this stage as referenced above, exploring the emotional support needs of this population in light of Facebook, a more modern tool for young adults specifically in today's society, may shed light on possible avenues they use to navigate through this challenging life stage of development.

Coping Behavior: A Theoretical Framework

All humans, regardless of age or generation, develop ways of coping to help them mediate through life-stressors. A person's coping style plays an important role in their physical and psychological well-being. For example, inadequate coping styles can increase stress and contribute to a higher likelihood of burnout (Endler & Parker, 1999, as cited in Wilkerson, 2009). While coping is not a new concept, the introduction of online communication and Facebook as a possible means of emotional support is recent in its development, and is relevant to mental health professionals today in better understanding avenues of support for this generation.

Amirkhan (1990) states that researchers studying stress have sought to delineate the set of "strategies" that define the array of coping responses people use to assist with their life's problems. Pearlin and Schooler's (1978) seminal work on coping behavior refers to coping as a set of behaviors that protect people from being psychologically harmed by a problematic experience, mediating the impact of society on its members. These authors refer to coping as:

"…the things that people do to avoid being harmed by life-strains. At the very heart of this concept is the fundamental assumption that people are actively responsive to forces that impinge upon them. Since many of these impinging forces are social in their origins, the understanding of coping is a prerequisite for understanding the impact that societies come to exert on their members" (Pearlin & Schooler, 1978, p. 2).

The work of Lazarus and Folkman (1984, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007) identifies two types of coping, problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. In problem-focused coping, people try to manage or change the environment that causes them stress. This form of coping is used when the situation is appraised as amenable to being changed. In emotion-focused coping, people handle the emotional responses to the problem by reducing emotional stress and trying to maintain hope by refusing to acknowledge the worst in a situation. Because emotion-focused coping is related directly to the individual, it is more stable. Lazarus (1999b, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007) also describes a specific form of emotion-focused coping called cognitive coping, in which relations between oneself and the environment are reappraised and given new meaning.

In their examination of Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) theoretical work on the function of coping behavior for individuals in stressful situations, Giske and Gjengedal (2007) state that "the key to understanding what is at stake in a situation is an understanding of how we appraise it" (p. 88). Cognitive appraisal consists of primary and secondary appraisal (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007). Primary appraisal is the continuous categorization of situations through the evaluation of their meaning and significance to one's well-being. A stressful situation may be appraised as harmful, a threat, a challenge, a benefit, or even a combination of these (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007).

The emotional outcome of the primary appraisal is multi-dimensional because we appraise and reappraise a situation, and negotiate between opposite frames of reference. While a realistic assessment facilitates effective coping, primary appraisal may also involve placing as favorable a "spin" as possible on the situation in order to strengthen hope and protect ourselves (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007).

Secondary appraisal refers to what can be done about a stressful situation, such as assessing situational factors and personal factors, environmental coping resources, and coping options as available (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007). Stress is defined as an appraisal of a relationship between oneself and the environment as taxing in a way that may endanger one's well-being (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007). Coping refers to managing one's stress, and the act of constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts in order to manage specific external or internal demands. The strategies we use to cope are based on the appraisal of the conditions and relationships of our lives (Lazarus, 1999a, as cited in Giske & Gjengedal, 2007).

Vitaliano, Russo, Carr, Maiuro, and Becker (1985) expanded on previous work to assess six different types of emotion-focused coping. Using the concept of problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping, these authors explicate six different types of emotion-focused coping: wishful thinking, growth, minimizing threat, seeking social support, blaming self, and mixed scale. These categories of emotion-focused coping are separate and apart from problem-focused coping.

In an effort to develop a coping scale that was more generalizable, Amirkhan (1990) found that the three coping strategies of Problem Solving, Seeking Social Support, and Avoidance were the best described coping strategies across a varied mix of individuals and

stressors. These three coping strategies were the ones utilized in the current study. Amirkhan (1990) built on these three coping styles in creating the Coping Strategy Indicator (CSI). The CSI is a thirty-three item self-report questionnaire, measuring the use of the three main coping strategies in response to a specific stressor. The coping strategy of "Problem Solving" is defined as a direct assault strategy, and is derivative of primitive "flight" tendencies that involves using an instrumental, problem-orientated approach to actively manage stressors (Desmond, Shevlin, & MacLachlan, 2006). Second, "Seeking Social Support" refers to the basic human need for human contact in times of distress, and is manifested by actively turning to others for comfort, help, and advice. Lastly, "Avoidance" is characteristic of escape responses that are derivative of "fight" tendencies involving physical and/or psychological withdrawal, such as through distraction or fantasy (Desmond et al., 2006).

Of additional relevance to the current study in terms of Facebook and its potential interface with young adults' relationship to work and workplace, several studies have looked at coping behavior as a mediator of stress in the workplace. In his study of 177 mental health workers, Leiter (1991) found that controlled coping thoughts and actions, such as problem-oriented coping strategies initiated to enact change, were associated with decreased burnout, while escapist or avoidant coping strategies were associated with increased burnout. In his study of 482 school counselors, Wilkerson (2009) demonstrated that both perceived levels of organizational stress and an individual's approach to coping have strong predictive values for burnout. Wilkerson (2009) states that different coping strategies in individuals may actually moderate the effects of burnout, and that the relationship between stress and the onset of burnout may depend on the presence, absence, or level of various coping strategies used by an individual.

The Role of Online Communication in the Lives of Young Adults

Methods of communication, staying in touch, and developing social relationships have also changed in recent decades and years, incorporating communication available through the internet, including email, SNSs such as Facebook, text messaging, and instant messaging.

Several studies have looked at the role of online communication in young adults' lives. Arnett (2004, as cited in Van Zalk, Branje, Denissen, Van Aken, & Meeus, 2011) describes young adulthood in most industrialized countries as being characterized by a period of changes and transitions, including moving out of the parental home, going away to college, and starting a job. Young adults moving through these transitions may experience physical distance from old friendships and social networks, creating a need to forge new friendships while also remaining in touch with previous friends (Van Zalk et al., 2011). In today's virtual society, people are using online communication resources to chat online with peers in a way that previously occurred through phone conversations or in-person gatherings.

On the one hand, online communication is argued to be helpful (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009); on the other hand, some argue that it may have negative effects on individual adjustment and developmental growth (Van Zalk et al., 2011). Van Zalk et al. (2011) discuss concerns that have been raised about the possible negative effects of online chatting on emotional adjustment. Two contrasting perspectives regarding the role of internet use in adolescent emotional adjustment include the stimulation perspective and the displacement perspective (Van Zalk et al., 2011). According to the stimulation perspective, online communication involving people with whom one has an existing in-person friendship, as well as chatting with online-exclusive peers, can have beneficial effects on adolescent emotional adjustment. Valkenburg and Peter (2009) state that online communication and online self-disclosure can stimulate adolescent social

connectedness and well-being. These authors also state that online self-disclosure mediates the relationship between online communication and the quality of friendships, and internet-enhanced self-disclosure accounts for a positive effect of online communication and quality of friendships.

The displacement perspective states that chatting with online-exclusive peers is more superficial than in-person conversation because it lacks depth (Yang & Tung, 2006, as cited in Van Zalk et al., 2011) and nonverbal cues used through in-person communication (Weiser, 2001). It is argued that chatting with online-exclusive peers may displace time spent with friends in offline communication, since there is less time available to spend on maintaining these offline relationships (Van den Eijnden, Meerkerk, Vermulst, Spijkerman, & Engels, 2008). Therefore, as Van Zalk et al. (2011) argue, this activity can be detrimental to young adults who require time to develop and adapt to new in-person social situations. These authors argue that such adaptation may not occur or develop if proportionately greater time is spent chatting online, leaving less time to engage in offline communication and maintaining in-person relationships.

Studies have also been done with younger age groups in the area of online communication and emotional health. Findings from a study of 663 students age 12 to 15 over a six-month period showed positive associations between both instant messaging and chat room use and compulsive internet use, and between instant messaging and depression (Van den Eijnden et al., 2008).

In sum, the displacement perspective holds that chatting with online-exclusive peers leads to low supportiveness, which is suggested to have detrimental effects on self-esteem and depressive symptoms (Van Zalk et al., 2011). In light of this perspective, and relevant to the current study, concerns are also raised with regard to the opportunity for young adults to develop

social contexts of real-life community and group activities, which might include opportunities for communication with individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.

Online chatting. In the same vein, additional research has looked at the positive vs. detrimental effects of online chatting (Van Zalk et al., 2011). Van Zalk et al.'s (2011) study of 197 psychology freshmen at a medium-sized university aimed to gain more insight into the role of online chatting in contributing to young adult self-esteem and depressive symptoms. Findings indicated that chatting did not affect emotional adjustment; rather, online communication with friends and peers stimulated the development of supportiveness. Furthermore, findings pointed to the possible role of chatting with online-exclusive peers in reducing depressive symptoms by improving supportiveness for less extraverted individuals.

These authors argue that during transitional phases, young adults may feel the need to be in control of new social situations, and chatting with online-exclusive peers may offer a safe way to test out, adjust, and reflect on their supportiveness. This form of "training" may help them gain the necessary skills to increase contacts with others, online and even offline as well. The study provided no support for the displacement perspective, in that chatting was not found to have detrimental effects on emotional adjustment. While chatting was not shown to have an impact on more extraverted individual's emotional adjustment, this may be because more extraverted individuals possess sufficient confidence to engage in greater offline interaction and therefore may gain social supportiveness skills in offline communication (Van Zalk et al., 2011). Yet given the wide-spread use of online communication today (Ahn, 2011), it is likely that both introverted and extroverted personality types use the internet to communicate online with in-person peers and online friends.

Facebook and social networking sites. Facebook is a social networking website intended to connect friends, family, and coworkers. Facebook users create a profile page that shows their friends and networks information they wish to share about themselves, including information, status, friends, photos, notes, groups, and their wall, where people can post messages (Myers, 2012). As the single most trafficked website in the world (Alexa, 2012), Facebook is one of the most popular ways to communicate online. Almost 75% of teens and young adults are members of at least one social networking site, with Facebook being one of the most widely used (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012).

Facebook may portray an image on the internet, but the high levels of "Facebook friends" do not necessarily increase offline social relationships. Pollet et al. (2011) found that time spent using social media was not associated with larger offline networks (face-to-face friendships), or feeling emotionally closer to offline networks. Another study found that SNS use *facilitates* offline social interaction, but does not *replace* it (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). These results demonstrate that while participants may have many "Facebook" friends, their offline network is generally unchanged, and SNSs do not necessarily replace the need for face-to-face communication.

Generation Y has been named a "tech-savvy" generation (Busch et al., 2008), at the forefront of social networking sites. Although this may not replace the need to see people in person, it still affects their time spent using technology for various needs. Known as an "impatient" generation (Rampell, 2011), it is possible that Generation Y members may need to express emotions immediately on a SNS, or seek out immediate assistance through these sites. In this section, the current literature is examined regarding the role of Facebook and other social networking sites in people's lives, as well as how it has affected them.

Effects of social networking sites on well-being. Numerous studies have looked at the effect of social networking and media use among young people and adolescents, many of which represent a younger cohort than Generation Y. Pea et al. (2012) sampled a total of 3,461 female respondents (age 8 to 12) through a survey link advertised in the Discovery Girls magazine. The researchers sought to examine the relationship between social well-being and young girls' media use, including SNSs such as Facebook. Results found a positive association between participants' negative sense of self and levels of use of media that are centrally about interpersonal interaction, such as online communication. Conversely, face-to-face communication was strongly associated with positive social well-being (Pea et al., 2012). It is noteworthy that 95% of study respondents had a computer in their home, which is higher than the national average of 85% of children who had access to a computer in their home in 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012), thus representing a limitation of the study. Pea et al.'s (2012) study findings are indicative of the need for further studies looking at the nature and impact of emotional support received, provided, and sought by users of Facebook in other age cohorts.

The correlation of high media or SNS usage with lower levels of well-being or self-esteem is further addressed in a study of 70 undergraduate students at a small, Catholic liberal arts institution in the Northeast. Facebook usage, self-esteem, and adjustment to college were measured to determine a relationship between all three factors (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). Results indicated that spending a lot of time of Facebook was related to low self-esteem. However, although the number of Facebook friends was negatively associated with emotional and academic adjustment in first-year students, it was positively related to social adjustment among upper-class students. The authors suggest that the relationship becomes positive later in college life when students may use Facebook more effectively to connect socially with their

peers. This study sample consisted of students at one college, with 67% of respondents identifying as female, limiting the generalizability of findings for all college under and upper-classmen (Kalpidou et al., 2011). A further limitation included that almost 90% of participants identified as Caucasian, despite the fact that studies have shown relatively similar rates of participation on SNSs among different races (Brenner, 2013; Tynes & Markoe, 2010).

Common themes in these findings relevant to the current study include those indicating a more negative relationship between Facebook or media usage and perceived well-being among a younger cohort, with a shift to more constructive use of SNSs in later, young adult years. A more constructive use of SNSs that supports one's sense of positive well-being might include utilizing Facebook for emotional support, in a manner that could be argued as constructively meeting one's own needs. In Kalpidou et al.'s (2011) study, older students were able to use SNSs more constructively; the current study also assesses age as a variable to determine how different aged participants within the 'young adult' cohort are utilizing Facebook for their emotional support needs.

Muise, Christofides, and Desmarais (2009) argue that Facebook is a rapidly expanding phenomenon and is changing the nature of social relationships (p. 441). In a random sample web-based survey study of 2,603 college students in the state of Texas, researchers found a positive relationship between intensity of Facebook use (amount of time spent on Facebook, number of friends, etc.), and student's life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation (Valenzuela, Park, & Kee, 2009). This study had nearly a 20% minority response rate, which is higher than that of other studies (Kalpidou et al., 2011). Limitations of this study include a small control group of non-Facebook users, and the limited geographic area from which the sample is drawn. However, findings of a correlation between Facebook intensity

rating and level of perceived life satisfaction lends support to the goal of further study looking at patterns in Facebook use among young adults.

   Social networking sites and social support. Social media is an avenue to help utilize social support. In an interview with Health Day (2013), an online journal, Sonja Lyubomirsky, a professor of psychology at the University of California, Riverside, argues that feeling that you have social support for your actions influences how much positive behavior will boost your happiness. Lyubomirsky states that gaining support through social media works as well as face-to-face support (Health Day, 2013), reflecting the intense effect that SNSs can have on individuals' feelings of support: It is just as effective as in-person demonstrations of support.

   Manago et al. (2012) surveyed a sample of 88 undergraduate students from the University of California, Los Angeles, asking them a series of questions regarding their Facebook usage, life satisfaction, self-esteem, and perceived social support. They found that the size of Facebook friend networks predicted level of life satisfaction and perceived social support on Facebook, with larger size audiences predicting higher levels of perceived social support (Manago et al., 2012). The sample in this study was ethnically diverse, with only 27% of participants identifying as European American. However, there was less than a 25% male respondent rate. The finding that previous high numbers of contacts predicts perception of Facebook as a useful tool for procuring social support is of interest in light of the argument that SNSs can help youth satisfy psychosocial needs for permanent relationships in a mobile world (Manago et al., 2012).

   Kim and Lee's (2011) quantitative study of 391 college undergraduates at a Midwestern university found a positive association between the number of Facebook friends and level of subjective well-being, although this was not mediated by perceived social support. It could be inferred that sense of well-being derived from number of Facebook friends may be due to the

visual reminder of social connections, which can enhance feelings of self-worth. Less than 30%

of respondents in Kim and Lee's (2011) study were males, which is not an accurate

representation of the population as a whole, or the Facebook population, 46% of whom were

male in 2010 (Arbitrage, 2011). The researchers call for further investigation of non-college-age

young adult Facebook users (Kim & Lee, 2011, p. 363).

Social support and emotional support: conceptual understanding. Feelings of support

are an important way to understand Facebook usage. While the current study seeks to

understand support in the e*motional* realm, previous studies have focused on the area of *social*

support. There are important distinctions between these two areas of support. The definition of

social support varies: It has been defined as support provided by other people in the context of

interpersonal relationships (Hirsh, 1981, as cited in Cooke et al., 1988), and support that is

accessible to others through social ties to individuals, groups, and the larger community (Lin,

Simeone, Ensel, & Kuo, 1979, as cited in Cooke et al., 1988). Emotional support may

encompass varying definitions as well, but generally can be defined as information which leads

one to believe that they are cared for and loved as a person (Cooke et al., 1988, p. 213). Both

forms of support require other individuals or groups of people; however, the distinction lies in

social support being accessible through social relationships, while emotional support is derived

from feeling loved and cared for.

In their study of emotional support, negative interaction, and major depressive disorder

among African Americans and Caribbean Black population, Lincoln and Chae (2012) describe

the components of *emotional support* as feelings of being loved and cared for, having problems

listened to, and having others express concern for one's well being. Manago et al. (2012)

measure *social support* as level of close connections, maintained connections, superficial

connections, and network size, with self-esteem as a covariate. Honing in on emotional support for the purpose of the current research study provides data that is different and unique from social support.

   Self-disclosure and support. Self-disclosure of personal information on Facebook appears to have a large impact on users' feelings of support. Generally, the two types of "self-disclosure" on Facebook include one that involves checking off ready-made "characteristics" that become "public", such as basic demographic information, and one that involves disclosing personal things on their own or their friends Facebook wall in messages, wall posts, pictures, status updates, etc. Facebook friends are more likely to provide support when they know other users are in need of support, through those users' self-disclosure (Kim & Lee, 2011). Only when this need for support is properly communicated through self-disclosure facilitated by honest self-presentation, are users likely to receive support from their Facebook friends (Kim & Lee, 2011).

   Self-disclosure on Facebook can include a user disclosing information about different categories such as basic information (sex, birthday, hometown, etc.), personal information (favorite activities, interests, music, etc.), contact information, and work and educational information (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). In a quantitative study with a computer-based questionnaire of 127 undergraduate students from a small southeastern university, Facebook users that have a high level of self-disclosure on Facebook were more satisfied with Facebook's ability to entertain, which likely came from browsing through friends profiles and reading mini-feed updates; as well, they may have appreciated when others also provided disclosure about themselves (Special & Li-Barber, 2012). As with other studies on college students, the male participant rate was approximately 30%.

Status updates and news-feeds provide a forum for Facebook users to self disclose and express what is on their mind. This may be an opportunity for warning signs of depression, anxiety, sadness, and other mental health concerns to present themselves. In a study that selected 200 public profiles from sophomore and junior undergraduates, 25% of Facebook profiles of the college students displayed depressive symptoms and 2.5% met the criteria of a major depressive episode (Moreno et al., 2011). Ten percent of college students report having sought care and been diagnosed with depression (Association ACH, 2009, as cited in Moreno et al., 2011), which is higher than the rate of 6.7% of the entire U.S. population who suffers from depression (National Institute of Mental Health, 2012).

Individuals with these symptoms who received positive online reinforcement from their friends were more likely to discuss their depressive symptoms publicly on Facebook (Moreno et al., 2011). Moreno et al.'s (2011) study examined Facebook profiles that were 56% male yet the study did not report any findings on racial or ethnic demographics of the participants. An additional limitation includes that researchers were using a subjective lens to assess depressive symptoms without direct input from the participants: Depressive symptoms were assessed using content of wall-posts rather than through participant direct report. Moreno et al. (2011) also found that students who displayed more recent Facebook activity were more likely to reference depression. The authors hypothesized that students experiencing depressive symptoms may be more dependent on social networking sites as a communication outlet, viewing this form of communication as a safe outlet for emotions (p. 453).

As communication patterns continue to change and advance technologically, the "face" of mental health may also change as individuals begin to use the internet or technology to discuss their feelings, even disclosing symptoms of depression in their Facebook statuses (Moreno et al.,

2011). Rogers, Griffin, Wykle, and Fitzpatrick (2009) found that nearly 20% of young-adult

internet users preferred internet therapy over face-to-face therapy. Generation Y young adults

are stereotyped as preferring to communicate through email and text messaging rather than face-

to-face communication (Kane, 2012), which is relevant to their potential use of online sources

for emotional support. Consequently, the current study seeks to explore the use of Facebook as

an emotional support tool.

     Facebook and mental illness. As stated previously, in a study by Moreno et al. (2011),

25% of Facebook profiles of the college students displayed depressive symptoms and 2.5% met

the criteria of a major depressive episode. In an effort to learn more about the interface of

Facebook use and mental health concerns, Van Grove (2013), an online reporter, asks "can

social-media activity be used as a tool in psychological diagnosis?" Van Grove cites a study by

Martin, Bailey, Cicero, and Kerns (2012) that examined a relationship between Facebook

profiles and schizotypy in a sample of 211 college students at a large, Midwestern University.

These authors measured subjects' social anhedonia, perceptual aberration and magical ideation,

extraversion, and paranoia tendencies, and also studied their Facebook profiles.

     Martin et al. (2012) found that social anhedonia was associated with a decrease in social

participation variables, such as a decrease in number of Facebook friends and photos, an increase

in length of time since communication with a friend, and an increase in profile length.

Perceptual aberration and magical ideation was associated with an increase in the number of

pieces of information participants chose to black out on print-outs of their Facebook information,

a measure of paranoia. In summary, social anhedonia and extraversion was associated with

decreased social participation, while perceptual aberration and magical ideation was associated

with increased paranoia related to information on social networking sites (Martin et al., 2012).

Van Grove (2013) argues that the Martin et al.'s (2012) findings imply that therapists will be able to understand more about their patients by reviewing their Facebook activity, rather than relying solely on patient self-report, and quotes Elizabeth Martin, one of the lead authors of this study as stating: "The beauty of social-media activity as a tool in psychological diagnosis is that it removes some of the problems associated with patients' self-reporting" (Martin et al., 2012, as cited in Van Grove, 2013). On the other hand, in an interview with Jason Goldman, Ph.D. candidate in developmental psychology, argues that while there is a statistically predictive relationship between Facebook activity, social anhedonia, and extraversion, such correlations should be utilized more as a "hint" that something interesting may be going on for the patient rather than interpreted systematically and reliably by clinicians (Van Grove, 2013). Whether or not one agrees with Van Grove's interpretation of the study implications, significant findings of a correlation between specific Facebook activities/profiles, and symptoms of schizotypy, demonstrate a new wave of information that may be relevant to mental health providers and patients. In line with the goals of the current study, future research examining the relationship between use of SNSs and mental illness may shape and affect the future of patient care.

Personality traits and Facebook use. On June 3rd, 2013, Facebook had a global audience of over 985 million people (Checkfacebook.com, 2013), which can lead one to question what type of people are on Facebook? In regards to personality, Ryan and Xenos (2011) sought to investigate how personality influences usage or non-usage of Facebook. The researchers recruited 1,324 Australian internet users, ages 18 to 44, through advertisements on six popular Australian online discussion forums, as well as Facebook. Ryan and Xenos (2011) found that Facebook users were more likely to be extraverted and narcissistic, and also have stronger feelings of "family loneliness" (not defined by the author) than non-users. Extraversion was

positively related to the use of the communicative features of Facebook, such as writing on other's "walls", and "chatting" with Facebook friends while online (p. 1662).

On the other hand, Facebook non-users were more likely to be conscientious, shy, and socially lonely (Ryan & Xenos, 2011). Additionally, extraverted people were more likely to use Facebook, including such features as the Facebook wall and chatting online with others who are on Facebook at the same time, than introverted people. Furthermore, Facebook users had higher levels of total narcissism, exhibitionism, and leadership than Facebook non-users, with the researchers arguing that Facebook may gratify the need of narcissistic individuals to engage in self-promoting and superficial behavior.

No significant relationship was found between shyness and frequency of Facebook use in this study. This particular finding was contradictory to that found by Orr, Sisic, Ross, Simmering, Arseneault, and Orr (2009). These researchers found that shyness significantly predicted the number of Facebook friends added to one's profile. Orr et al. (2009) suggested that shy individuals have fewer friends in this specific online forum relative to non-shy individuals. Shy individuals also reported spending more time on Facebook and had more favorable attitudes toward Facebook than non-shy individuals (p. 339). The researchers suggest that although shy individuals do not have as many Facebook contacts, they still find Facebook an appealing tool for communication, spending more time on it than non-shy users. Additionally, they suggest that the anonymity of online communication and removal of verbal and nonverbal cues may appeal to shy individuals.

Similar to Ryan and Xenos' (2011) findings, in a study of 128 undergraduate students, Buffardi and Campbell (2008) found that participants who were assessed as having narcissistic qualities (based on Facebook page content) had a higher number of social relationships. These

participants also demonstrated greater self-promoting behavior and self-presentation (such as intelligence, power, and physical attractiveness) on Facebook. Measurement of personality was carried out by undergraduate research assistants who rated Facebook entries in individuals' "About Me", "Quotes" and "View Photos of Me" sections on the basis of specified codes. Coded categories in "About Me" section included self-absorption, self-consciousness, self-importance, and self-promotion; categories in the "Quotes" section included arrogance, cleverness, entertainment, and self-promotion; profile photographs were coded for amount of clothing worn, modesty, provocativeness, self-centeredness, and self-promotion. Response anchors on a seven point Likert scale ranged from 1 *(not at all)* to 7 *(very much)*. Although research assistants met to clarify and agree on definitions for the coding, limitations of this study include the subjective nature of the rating process. Additionally, the study was limited only to college students.

While the current study does not look directly at personality traits, findings of previous studies in this area provide a lens through which to view findings of the current study, as well as implications for further research.

Facebook, communication and gender differences. Given the influential role of social network communication in young people's lives, some studies have noted the importance of learning to use media in healthy and intelligent ways (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011). Studies indicate that women are more sensitive than men to the interpersonal meanings that lie "between the lines" in the messages they exchange with their partners. Societal expectations make women responsible for regulating intimacy in communication, while men are expected to negotiate hierarchy (Tanner, 1990, as cited in Torppa, 2010; Wood, 2009, as cited in Torppa, 2010).

Although less is known about gender difference in online communication (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012), one study revealed that women and men use communication media differently, with women using telephones for relationship maintenance more than men, and men tending to use telephones only for a specific purpose (Lacohée & Anderson, 2001). Furthermore, women were found to consider communication with friends and relatives through email as more gratifying than did men, and more likely to use it to stay in touch with people living far away (Boneva, Kraut, & Frohlich, 2001). It is important to note that voice tone and body language are not available when using social networking sites. Despite the fact that previous research demonstrated positive feelings towards telephone and email use for women, Thompson and Lougheed (2012) hypothesized that the lack of physical body information when using Facebook may cause more distress in women compared to men because the communication skills that they have evolved over time are unavailable to them.

Thompson and Lougheed (2012) surveyed 238 college students in a study exploring gender differences in Facebook usage. Although no significant differences were found in the time spent on Facebook per day between males and females, researchers found that females were significantly more likely than males to report spending more time on Facebook than intended, and often losing sleep because of Facebook. They also were more likely to report the following: feeling closer to Facebook friends than those seen daily; feeling that Facebook pictures cause negative self-body image; feeling that Facebook use sometimes causes stress; and sometimes feeling addicted to Facebook (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012).

Facebook and student engagement. Utilizing a survey questionnaire, Junco (2012) examined the relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and student engagement, among students in a medium sized, four-year public,

primarily residential institution in Northeast United States, with a total of 2,368 participants.

Results showed that the amount of time participants spent on Facebook, as well as the number of

times participants "checked" Facebook each day, negatively predicted their level of student

engagement. Additionally, frequency of playing games and checking up on friends on Facebook

was negatively predictive of student engagement, while commenting on content or RSVP'ing to

events on Facebook was positively predictive of student engagement. There was also a

significant negative relationship between frequency of engaging in Facebook chat, and time

spent preparing for class.

In a more positive view of Facebook usage, the amount of time participants spent on

Facebook was positively related to time spent participating in co-curricular activities, as well as

commenting on content, creating or RSVP'ing to events, and viewing photos. On the other hand,

frequency of playing games, checking up on friends, and posting photos were negatively

predictive of time spent in co-curricular activities. Results from Junco's (2012) study

demonstrate that time spent on Facebook is both positively and negatively related to student

engagement. In addition, specific Facebook activities are stronger predictors of student

engagement, time spent preparing for class, and time spent in co-curricular activities than actual

time spent on Facebook. Junco (2012) argues that when left unguided in a natural setting,

students will use Facebook in ways that are both positively and negatively related to their

engagement, studying, and on-campus involvement (p. 169).

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Uses and gratifications (U&G) theory provides a conceptual framework through which

study findings will be viewed. The U&G theory is a paradigm for media use that inquires into

the reasons why people use certain media, as well as the gratifications derived from usage (Luo,

Chea, & Chen, 2011). It states that using media is purposeful in that users actively seek to fulfill their needs through a variety of different uses (Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974, as cited in Luo et al., 2011). The principle elements of the U&G theory include individual psychological and social needs, and the ways in which media use gratifies needs and motives to communicate (Rubin, 2009, as cited in Chen, 2011). The U&G theory is concerned with how individuals actually use the media (for example, through social networking sites), which emphasizes the importance of the role of the individual within this theory (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008). This theory holds that numerous media sources compete for users' attention, and audience members select the medium that meets their needs, including the desire for information, emotional connection, and status (Tan, 1985, as cited in Chen, 2011).

As social networking sites are in and of themselves communication techniques, conceptualizing their use as a way to gratify the need to communicate with others is a concept rooted in U&G theory. In their study of SNS use among college students, Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that users spent a significant amount of time on Facebook (about three hours a day), which seemed to help them meet personal and social needs. For example, popular uses and gratifications accessed through SNS, such as "to keep in touch with old friends," "to keep in touch with current friends," and "to make new friends," indicated that users are meeting a "friend" need (p. 174). Similarly, uses and gratifications such as "to learn about events," and "to feel connected" indicated that users are meeting a need by using the site for information (Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008).

Social networking appears to be both an important means to feeling "connected" with others, as well as a potential space to express emotions or feelings. In her explication of the U&G theory as relevant in understanding the use of social networking, Chen (2011) argues that

another SNS, Twitter, allows individuals to gratify their intrinsic need to form relationships

through the habitual process of sending tweets and direct messages, re-tweeting, following

people, and gaining followers. Chen (2011) posits that the longer an individual is active on

Twitter, the greater is their gratification of the need for a connection with other users. Chen

(2011) describes "use" as being active on Twitter, and "gratification" as the need to connect with

others through media usage.

In a web-survey of 1,715 college students that was conducted to examine the gratification

of users of Facebook groups, researchers found that there were four primary needs for

participating in groups within Facebook, including socializing, entertainment, self-status seeking,

and information (Park, Kee, & Valenzuela, 2009). These gratifications varied depending on the

users demographics, such as gender and year in school. When looking at the uses and

gratifications of Facebook groups and civic and political engagement offline, Park et al. (2009)

found that users who seek information are more likely to participate in civic activities. Students

who use Facebook groups for recreational reasons tended to be more involved in hobby clubs or

environmental groups, as opposed to political causes. The authors argue that Facebook groups

can provide platforms through which young adults, who are not as interested in politics in

general, can socialize with others through these groups. Thus, Facebook can become a powerful

tool for drawing more young adults' attention to societal issues they may not already be drawn

to. As a result, even though the uses of the Facebook groups tool may be different for each user,

the gratification of socialization and civic and political engagement may be widespread (Park et

al., 2009).

Quan-Haase and Young (2010) explored the concept of gratifications by defining

gratifications "sought" and gratifications "obtained". Gratification sought refers to users'

expectations of gratification from a computer mediated communication (CMC) technology *before* *it is used*. Gratification obtained refers to users' experience of gratification *in the act* *of* *using* a specific CMC technology (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010).

Using a survey questionnaire, Ku, Chu, and Tseng (2013) investigated participant motives for using multiple CMC technologies concurrently, since many of these technologies have overlapping functions. The three main CMC technologies studied were SNSs, instant messenger (IM), and email. In relation to SNS usage, such as Facebook and MySpace, the researchers found five major factors that contributed to gratifications sought for SNS usage, including relationship maintenance, information seeking, amusement, style, and sociability. For all three CMC technologies assessed, relationship maintenance was the main gratification that people sought from those technologies (Ku et al., 2013).

Ku et al. (2013) found that people will individualize their gratifications sought through CMC technologies, depending on what kind of gratification they are seeking to obtain. For example, results of their research indicated that when people seek the "relationship maintenance" gratification, they will choose either SNSs or IM, rather than email, as the technology they use to try to obtain that specific gratification. Ku et al.'s (2013) findings that people will use different CMC technologies depending on what gratification they seek follows the theoretical framework of the U&G theory around why people use certain media outlets in relation to what gratification they are seeking to obtain.

Nie (2001) argues that time spent on the internet displaces time spent socializing and carrying out face-to-face activities. However, given the popularity of social networking as a primary means of communication, such usage may increase user awareness of social activities, thereby gratifying a need rather than inhibiting one (Nie, 2001). Although use of SNSs may be

an effective way to stay socially connected, the current study explores its use in gratifying the "need" of emotional support. The U&G theory is relevant to the current study in looking at the gratification of emotional support as a potential need that can "sought" through CMC technology in the form of SNS usage. Given the high percentage of Facebook and internet users, specifically within the Generation Y population (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012), the current research study seeks to explore the concept of emotional support as a "sought after" gratification, and Facebook as the potential "usage" avenue to obtain this need.

Summary

The above literature provides insight into the unique characteristics of young adults of today, in light of their technological skills and new forms of communication. Additionally, it sheds light on different coping patterns and how this may play a role in people's use of Facebook for emotional support, especially for a generation that has access to this method in a way that previous generations did not. The reviewed literature also highlights potential benefits and limitations in the use of online communication to obtain social support and achieve well-being. Finally, it provides greater understanding of the different uses of Facebook and its effects on young adults and other users.

Findings are notable for demonstrating a correlation between higher media use and negative well-being (Pea et al., 2012), as well as a negative relationship between number of Facebook friends and emotional and academic adjustment to college for first-year students, with a shift to a positive relationship between these variables for students in higher grades (Kalpidou et al., 2011). Yet some literature points to a positive relationship between number of Facebook friends and a positive subjective well-being (Kim & Lee, 2011), as well as a positive relationship between number of Facebook friends and perceived social support on Facebook (Manago et al.,

2012). Individuals are also utilizing Facebook to self-disclose, and others are more likely to provide support when self-disclosure insinuates a need for support (Kim & Lee, 2011). Self-disclosure on Facebook can also give insight into strong emotions people are having, oftentimes symptomatic of a mental illness such as depression (Moreno et al., 2011).

The findings of previous research pointing to evidence of social support and willingness to self-disclose help to inform the exploratory goals of the current study with regard to the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support. Much of the literature and research surrounding use of SNSs pertains to teenage and college-aged students (Ahn, 2011; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011). These individuals fall within the "identity vs. role confusion" stage, according to Erik Erikson's theory of ego development. In this schema, adolescence presents a pivotal crisis around the development of a sense of a personal identity, which is affected by their social world (Berzoff et al., 2008). However, as we begin to see a shift in adolescence as young people are taking longer to reach adulthood (Henig, 2010), we must be aware of the biases and assumptions in these studies mostly around teenagers as using SNSs for social support. Gaps in the literature include that many of these studies focus on respondents limited to a specific college or university, or a specific grade level, as well as a smaller male percentage of respondents, and a lack of racial diversity, or no racial discussion at all. Additionally, social support and well-being are tied-in and related to emotional support, but gaps in the literature do not specifically identify emotional support in Facebook usage.

The current study seeks to fill a gap in the literature by understanding the factors associated with the way young adults' of today, within the Generation Y cohort, utilize Facebook, specifically in relation to their emotional support needs. By spanning an age range of

15 years, we can provide insight into an entire generation, rather than a limited pool of college-aged students at a particular university.

The methodology for the current study surrounding study design and sampling, data collection, sample characteristics, and data analysis will be discussed in further detail in the methodology chapter below.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The current study explores the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support. The purpose of this study is to better understand in what ways Facebook is possibly being utilized as an emotional support tool, in order to have greater insight into the best ways to support this unique cohort of individuals who have grown up with different communication styles due to the onset of social networking sites during their key developmental years. This chapter will discuss the study design, and will describe sampling and data collection methods. It will then provide a summary of the sample characteristics. Finally, it will discuss the methods of data analysis used.

Study Design and Sampling

This is a descriptive study using quantitative methods to examine the research question: What are the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support? The research utilized an online survey accessible on a survey page created in SurveyMonkey.com.

The current study utilized a non-probability snowball sampling method. Inclusion criteria were that participants must be literate in English, have an active Facebook account, be at least 18 years old, and born in or between the years 1980 to 1994. Age inclusion criteria corresponded to the designation of "Generation Y" cohort in the literature. Literacy in English was required as the survey was in English, only. Having a Facebook account was required because the survey specifically inquired about the participant's own patterns of Facebook use.

The researcher emailed 95 friends from a variety of aspects of life: high school, college, employment, graduate school, etc. In an effort to achieve diversity in the final sample, the researcher deliberately emailed racially/ethnically diverse friends, as well those of different ages and gender. The researcher sent a blind carbon copy email to these individuals using a scripted email (Appendix A) requesting friends to send the survey link with explanatory material (Appendix B) to at least 10 friends each (individually or as a group through a blind carbon copied email) who were not friends of the researcher, rather than taking the survey themselves. The email addressed to the initial group of 95 friends informed the recipients of the inclusion criteria, and requested that they send the recruitment announcement and survey link to individuals who they believed met that criteria. Additionally, the email to the researcher's friends requested that they email the survey link to as diverse a group of friends as possible, in terms of age, race/ethnicity, and gender.

In order to participate in the survey, the recipients of these emails clicked on the survey link, which led them to an online SurveyMonkey page that served as a screening tool. This page asked potential participants questions that determined eligibility, based on inclusion criteria (Appendix C). The questions were as follows: Are you at least 18 years old?; Were you born in or between the years 1980 to 1994?; Are you literate in English?; Do you have a Facebook account? If they answered "no" to any question, they were sent to a new disqualification page and thanked for their time. If they answered "yes" to every question, they were automatically taken to the Informed Consent Form (Appendix D). The Informed Consent Form explained the purpose of the research, inclusion criteria, and the types of questions included in the survey. Risks and benefits of participation were explained, as well as participant anonymity. Finally, the voluntary nature of their participation and the contact information for the researcher and Smith

College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee were provided should the participant have any questions. Participants were also requested to print a copy of the Informed Consent Form for their records. At the end of the Informed Consent Form, if potential participants clicked on the "I do not agree to participate" box, they were sent to a new disqualification page and thanked for their time. If they clicked on the "I agree to participate" box, they were automatically taken to the survey instrument (Appendix E). The survey instrument was accessible for three weeks following the initial email to the researcher's friends; after three weeks, it was not longer accessible to any potential participant.

Data Collection

The 56-item survey instrument included several items from previous measures as well as items created by the researcher for the purpose of this study. An online survey data-collecting tool, called SurveyMonkey was used to collect data. This tool creates a unique survey link on which potential respondents can click to be taken directly to the survey. Data can then be downloaded into an excel spreadsheet and analyzed using other computer software tools. The data from the survey was downloaded directly to the researcher and shared with the Smith College School for Social Work Data Analyst, who assisted with the data analysis. Survey responses were in a structured form. Most questions were answered by checking the best possible response from the list provided; a choice could also be made to not answer the question. Within the survey, there was limited opportunity for unstructured response or for participants to type responses in the "other" tab if they felt that listed responses did not reflect an accurate response.

The survey took approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete. Participants had the opportunity to skip any of the questions in the survey they did not wish to answer. Participants

could complete the survey in the privacy of their own home, or any other area where internet usage was possible.

The first nine items collected demographic data including age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, student status, employment, community setting, relationship status, and living situation. The remaining 47 items measured: perceived financial need, social support, coping behavior, Facebook intensity, Facebook satisfaction, categories of Facebook use (how often participants sought emotional support in specific areas such as romantic relationships, family issues, friendships, work/jobs, and others), and emotional support received and provided on Facebook, to and from the participant's Facebook network.

Demographic questions. Participant age, gender, race/ethnicity, educational level, and student status were measured due to the relevance of these variables to the study question. Previous studies have noted associations between these variables and Facebook use (Kalpidou et al., 2011; Moreno et al., 2011; Thompson & Lougheed, 2012; Valenzuela et al., 2009). Employment status was included in the demographic questions given the concerns around the employment level for this generation (Leonhardt, 2013), and Schoneboom's (2011) discussion of Facebook presenting new opportunities for young people to discuss work.

Community setting, relationship status, and living situation. Data was collected regarding participants' community setting (rural/country, suburb/small town, urban/city), relationship status (married or in a committed relationship, not in committed relationship), and living situation (living alone, living with another person[s]) as measurement of these variables could provide information about the proximity and presence of others in the participants' lives. The current research sought to learn whether participant opportunity for face-to-face contact was a factor in their use of Facebook for emotional support.

Perceived financial need. Due to its association with work status (Major, Klein, &

Ehrhart, 2002) and ability to meet one's financial obligations, perceived financial need was

explored as a possible factor in the use of Facebook for emotional support and was measured

with one item from the seven-item Perceived Financial Needs Scale (Major et al., 2002). The

Perceived Financial Need Scale has an overall reliability of .84 in a racially mixed sample

(Major et al., 2002). A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 *(strongly*

agree) was used to measure responses to the following statement: "If I earned any less money, I

would have difficulty paying my bills".

 Social support. This study sought to learn if there is a relationship between participant's

level of social support and utilization of Facebook for emotional support. Kim and Lee (2011)

found a negative curvilinear association (an inverted U-shape curve relationship) between

number of Facebook friends and perceived social support, implying that Facebook friendships

may serve as a meaningful source of social support, but only up to the point in which Facebook

users can devote a sufficient amount of time and effort maintaining close connections with those

friends.

 Level of social support was measured with three items from the 12-item

Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS; Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley,

1988). Scoring was calculated by finding the average of the total responses to the three

questions with a higher score indicating a higher perception of social support. The MSPSS has a

Cronbach's coefficient alpha of .91 for significant other, .87 for family, and .85 for friends, with

a total scale reliability of .88 (Zimet et al., 1988). The seven-point Likert scale response format

in the original measure was modified in this study as a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1

(strongly disagree) to 5 *(strongly agree)*. The three items included: "I can talk about my

problems with my family", "There is a special person who is around when I am in need", and "I can count on my friends when things go wrong". In the present study, these three items achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .71.

Coping behavior. This study sought to learn about the possible role of coping behavior as a factor in the use of Facebook for emotional support. Coping behavior was measured using 15 items from Amirkhan's (1990) 33-item Coping Strategy Indicator Scale (CSI). The full-version of the CSI has a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of .928 for Seeking Social Support, .894 for Problem Solving, and .839 for Avoidance (Amirkhan, 1990). Five items were selected from each of the coping strategy types in the original scale. The scale that was created using these 15 items is of unknown psychometric strength.

The CSI measures three different styles of coping: seeking social support, problem solving, and avoidance (Amirkhan, 1990). The full version of the scale was demonstrated as being generalizable across population, cultural, and situational variation (Desmond et al., 2006). Participants are asked to think of a stressful event that occurred for them in the last six months and consider the manner in which they had coped with it (Desmond et al., 2006). A three-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 3 (*a lot*) was used to measure responses. Examples of items include: "Tried to solve the problem", and "Thought of many ideas before deciding what to do" were measured by participant rating of "not at all", "a little", or "a lot".

Coping behavior was scored by taking a sum of the scores of the three coping styles (seeking social support, problem solving, and avoidant), and then finding the mean for each of the coping behaviors; grouped scores were then used separately in the analysis. In the present study, Cronbach's alpha for items in each of the three coping styles was .77 for seeking social support, .67 for problem solving, and .60 for avoidant.

Facebook intensity and Facebook satisfaction. The eight-item Facebook Intensity Scale (FIS; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007) was used to measure participant's Facebook intensity, the content of which is conceptualized as time spent on Facebook, number of Facebook friends, and attitudes toward Facebook. Sample questions included: "Facebook is part of my everyday life" and "Facebook has become part of my daily routine." A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *(strongly disagree)* to 5 *(strongly agree)* was used to measure responses. The FIS was computed by calculating the mean of all of the items in the scale (Ellison et al., 2007), with a higher mean score representing a higher intensity of Facebook usage by the participant. The last two items of the FIS are measured by selecting the number of Facebook friends and amount of time (in minutes and hours) in response to the questions: "Approximately how many TOTAL Facebook friends do you have", and "In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using Facebook". The responses to these items were modified to include responses reflecting a greater number of friends and longer periods of time. Cronbach's alpha for the Facebook intensity measure in the present study was .82.

One item from Ross, Orr, Sisic, Simmering, and Orr's (2009) 28-item Facebook Questionnaire was used to measure participants' overall satisfaction with Facebook: "How satisfied are you with Facebook, overall?" A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not satisfied at all*) to 5 (*very satisfied*) was used to measure responses, with higher scores representing greater levels of Facebook satisfaction.

Categories of Facebook use. This study sought to learn about the types of issues for which participants may seek emotional support through Facebook. Thirteen items were developed by the researcher to determine how often participants sought emotional support on Facebook for specific issues. Emotional support was defined for the participants as follows:

"*Emotional support* can be defined by <u>one or more</u> of these aspects: (a) feeling that others care for you; (b) feeling that you are listened to; (c) feeling that others express interest and/or concern for your well-being". A four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*) was used to measure responses to the following question, for each category of Facebook use: "In your use of Facebook (i.e. updating your status, posting photos, commenting on others' walls, photos, status updates, etc.), how often do you seek emotional support in the area of…". The categories included: romantic relationships, family issues, friendships, work/jobs, school, finances, physical health, mental health, religion/spirituality, politics, general emotions, and death/loss. Participants could also indicate "other" with the opportunity to type in an open-ended response offered as an option.

These items reflect common areas of stress for this age cohort, as noted in the literature. For example, according to Coach (2011), common stressors for young adults of today include jobs (categorized for the current study as "work/jobs"), marriage, and relationships (categorized for the current study as "romantic relationships"). The Women's and Children's Health Network (2011) describes common stressors for young adults as including exams, homework (categorized for the current study as "school"), being left out of a group ("friendships"), going to the dentist ("physical health"), taking on a new responsibility, and arguments ("general emotions").

In a study of 601 young Californians designed to better understand what young adults feel are the primary issues impacting their lives, participants included the breakdown of family (categorized in the current study as "family issues"), personal finances ("finances"), and neighborhood violence ("death/loss") as key stressors (Demee-Benoit, 2007).

The category "mental health" was included based on Moreno et al.'s (2011) research finding that 25% of college students' profiles demonstrated depressive symptoms. "Politics"

was included in light of a finding in a recent study of Facebook users indicating politics dominated the discussion among posters on Facebook in that this medium was used to transmit important information related to candidates' campaign, issues, and announcements of public appearances more than for other social purposes (Johnson & Perlmutter, 2010).

According to a survey of "millennial values" from the Public Religion Research Institute and the Berkeley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs at Georgetown University, unemployment and finding a job are the greatest concerns of the millennial generation (America Press Inc., 2012). Their survey also found that among the millennial generation, more than 25% describe themselves as religiously unaffiliated, which is higher than the 15% of Americans who check the "none" box when asked about religious affiliation (American Press Inc., 2012). This demonstrates a drop in religious affiliation between millennial aged Americans when compared with the rest of the American population. Additionally, among the millennial individuals who indicated that Christianity is relevant in their lives, nearly two-thirds also considered it to be too judgmental, anti-homosexual, and hypocritical (America Press Inc., 2012). Due to this information about the specific generation of individuals the current study is researching, the survey included a question on "religion/spirituality" as a discussion item for Facebook usage.

Emotional support received and provided on Facebook. Lastly, emotional support received and provided on Facebook was measured using a modified version of Lincoln and Chae's (2012) three-item measure of Perceived Frequency of Emotional Support. This measure was tested with an African American and Caribbean Black population and achieved a Cronbach's alpha of .76 for African Americans and .75 for Caribbean Blacks. Items from the original measure asked participants how often family members made the participant feel loved and cared for, listened to their problems, and expressed concern for their well-being (p. 365).

These items were modified by replacing "family" with "people in your Facebook network", replacing "problems" with "problems or concerns", and replacing "concern" with "interest or concern". Three additional items were created that asked questions in reverse (how often they convey love and care to the people in their Facebook network, how often they listen to the people in their Facebook network's problems or concerns, and how often they express interest or concern for the people in their Facebook network). Responses were measured using a four-point Likert scale ranging from 1 *(never)* to 4 *(very often)*, with higher scores reflecting greater levels of emotional support received and provided on Facebook. In the present study, items measuring emotional support received and provided on Facebook achieved Cronbach alphas of .82 and .83, respectively.

Sample Characteristics

The study sample (*N*=167) identified primarily as Caucasian (83.1%, *n*=138) and female (76.5%, *n*=127). The mean age was 25.7 with an age range of 18 to 33. The majority had at least a four-year college and/or post graduate education (84.9%, *n*=141). A minority of participants were current students (28.7%, *n*=47), and the large majority was currently employed (89.0%, *n*=146). The majority of participants reported living in an urban setting (74.5%, *n*=123). Slightly over one-half of the sample reported being married or in a committed relationship (53%, *n*=87), and most reported living with at least one other person (86.6%, *n*=142).

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were used in the analysis of demographic data. Inferential statistics were used to explore relationships between two variables, such as to assess relationships between descriptive data and levels of emotional support received and provided on Facebook. T-tests were used to assess whether there was a relationship between the demographic variables (age,

gender, race, education, student status, employment, community setting, relationship status, and living situation) and emotional support received/provided on Facebook. The t-tests looked at whether the mean scores on the emotional support received/provided variables were different between two categories, such as males and females, Caucasians and all other races, etc. Analysis of the relationship of other variables to emotional support received and provided on Facebook was also carried out. A one-way anova was run to determine if there was a difference in emotional support received/provided on Facebook by perceived financial need. A Pearson correlation was run to determine if there was a relationship between emotional support received/provided on Facebook and social support, and to determine if there was a relationship between emotional support received/provided on Facebook and coping behavior.

A Pearson correlation was also run to determine if there was a relationship between emotional support received/provided on Facebook and level of Facebook intensity. A Spearman rho correlation was run to see if there was a relationship between Facebook satisfaction and emotional support received/provided on Facebook.

A Spearman rho correlation was run to look at the relationship between each of the categories of Facebook use and emotional support received/provided on Facebook, coping behaviors, Facebook intensity, and social support. Finally, crosstabulations were run to analyze the 12 categories of Facebook use by each of the demographic variables, perceived financial need, and Facebook satisfaction.

Variable recoding. As less than 15% of participants were under age 23, age was converted into a dichotomized variable (age "18 to 22", and age "23 to 33") for the purpose of analysis. Measurement of race/ethnicity yielded values too small to permit analyses that would yield significant results and was also dichotomized ("Caucasian" and "non-Caucasian").

Additional demographic variables converted for purposes of analysis include education level ("some high school through two-year degree" and "four-year or graduate degree"), and employment status ("working" and "not working"). Only one participant indicated living in a rural setting; this participant was removed from analyses using community setting as a variable of interest.

Five-point Likert scale responses for measures of perceived financial need and Facebook satisfaction were collapsed into three categories ("strongly disagree/disagree", "neutral", "strongly agree/agree" and "not/barely satisfied", "neutral", "very satisfied/satisfied", respectively). Finally, as the majority of participants indicated "never" using Facebook for emotional support in a number of categories, the four-point Likert scale responses to the measure of Facebook use for emotional support in a range of categories was collapsed into two categories ("never" and "not too often/fairly often/very often").

Chapter IV below will outline the findings of the current study, including details of the sample characteristics, followed by analyses of the associations explored in this research.

CHAPTER IV

Findings

In this study, the researcher sought to learn about the use of Facebook for emotional support among young adults age 18 to 33. To explore this question, a web-based survey collected data from a sample of 167 participants in a number of areas, including demographic information, perceived financial need, social support, coping behavior, Facebook intensity, Facebook satisfaction, emotional support received and provided on Facebook, and categories of Facebook use, which were issue-specific categories for which respondents might seek emotional support on Facebook. This chapter will outline the findings of the current study. First, sample characteristics will be described, followed by analyses of associations.

Sample Characteristics

Age. There were 162 participants who answered the question about their age. Participant mean age was 25.7, with an age range of 18 to 33, median age of 25.5, and modal age of 26. For the purpose of data entry and analysis, age was made into a dichotomous variable reflective of college and post-college age divisions, with 14.8% (*n*=24) aged 18 to 22, and 85.2% (*n*=138) aged 23 to 33 (see Table 1).

Gender. Of the 166 participants who answered this question, males accounted for 23.5% (*n*=39) and females 76.5% (*n*=127; see Table 1).

Race/ethnicity. Of the 166 participants who answered the question about race/ethnicity, 83.1% (*n*=138) identified as Caucasian or White, 3% (*n*=5) identified as African American or

Black, 2.4% (*n*=4) identified as Hispanic or Latino(a), 4.8% (*n*=8) identified as Asian or Pacific

Islander, 6% (*n*=10) identified as Multiracial, and 0.6% (*n*=1) identified as "Other" (see Table 1).

Table 1

Age, Gender, and Race/Ethnicity

Variable	Values	*n*	Percent	Valid Percent
Age	18-22	24	14.4	14.8
M=25.7	23-33	138	82.6	85.2
	Total	162	97.0	100.0
	Missing	5	3.0	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Gender	Male	39	23.4	23.5
	Female	127	76.0	76.5
	Total	166	99.4	100.0
	Missing	1	.6	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Race/ Ethnicity	Caucasian or White	138	82.6	83.1
	African American or Black	5	2.9	3.0
	Hispanic or Latino(a)	4	2.4	2.4
	Asian or Pacific Islander	8	4.9	4.9
	Multiracial	10	5.9	6.0
	Other	1	.6	.6
	Total	166	99. 3	100.0
	Missing	1	.6	--
	Total	167	99.9	--

Note: All percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding error.

Education. There were 166 participants who answered the question about their level of

completed education. For the purpose of data entry and analysis, education was made a

dichotomous variable with two values, with 15.1% (*n*=25) of participants reporting completion

of some high school through a two-year degree, and 84.9% (*n*=141) of participants reporting

completion of a four-year college or graduate degree. Prior to creating these two values, 0.6%

(n=1) of participants reported they had completed less than high school, 1.8% (n=3) reported they had completed high school or their GED, 10.8% (n=18) reported completing some college, 1.8% (n=3) reported completing a two-year college degree, 58.7% (n=98) reported completing a four-year college degree, while 25.7% (n=43) reported completing a graduate degree (see Table 2).

Student status. Of the 164 participants who answered the question about student status, only 28.7% (n=47) were currently students, while the remaining 71.3% (n=117) indicated a non-student status (see Table 2).

Employment. Of the 164 participants who answered the question about employment, 74.4% (n=122) of participants reported currently working full-time (35 hours or more per week), 14.6% (n=24) reported currently working part-time (less than 35 hours per week), 9.7% (n=16) reported being unemployed, and 1.2% (n=2) reported being temporarily laid off, on sick or other leave (see Table 2).

Community setting. Of the 165 participants who answered the question about community setting, only one identified as living in a rural/country community setting. Of the remaining 164 participants, 24.8% (n=41) reported living in a suburb/small town setting and the largest group 74.5% (n=123) reported living in an urban/city community setting (see Table 2).

Relationship status and living situation. Of the 164 participants who answered the question about relationship status and living situation, most (53%, n=87) identified as being married or in a committed relationship, and 86.6% (n=142) identified as living with another person[s] (see Table 2).

Table 2

Education, Student Status, Employment, Community Setting, Relationship Status, and Living Situation

Variable	Values	*n*	Percent	Valid Percent
Education	Some HS thru two-year degree	25	15.0	15.1
	Four-year or graduate degree	141	84.4	84.9
	Total	166	99.4	100.0
	Missing	1	.6	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Student Status	Yes	47	28.1	28.7
	No	117	70.1	71.3
	Total	164	98.2	100.0
	Missing	3	1.8	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Employment	Working	146	87.4	89.0
	Not Working	18	10.8	11.0
	Total	164	98.2	100.0
	Missing	3	1.8	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Community Setting	Rural/Country	1	.6	.6
	Suburb/Small Town	41	24.6	24.8
	Urban/City	123	73.7	74.5
	Total	165	98.8	100.0
	Missing	2	1.2	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Relationship Status	Married or in a committed relationship	87	52.1	53.0
	Not in a committed relationship	77	46.1	47.0
	Total	164	98.2	100.0
	Missing	3	1.8	--
	Total	167	100.0	--
Living Situation	Living alone	22	13.2	13.4
	Living with another person(s)	142	85.0	86.6
	Total	164	98.2	100.0
	Missing	3	1.8	--
	Total	167	100.0	--

Perceived financial need. Of the 165 participants who answered the question measuring perceived financial need, the majority (54.5%, *n*=90) indicated that they either agreed (*n*=53) or strongly agreed (*n*=37) with the statement: "If I earned any less money, I would have difficulty paying my bills". Of the remaining participants, 13.9% (*n*=23) were neutral, 24.2% (*n*=40) disagreed, and 7.3% (*n*=12) strongly disagreed with this statement (see Table 3).

Table 3

Perceived Financial Need

Variable	Values	*n*	Percent	Valid Percent
Perceived	Disagree or Strongly Disagree	52	31.1	31.5
Financial	Neutral	23	13.8	13.9
Need	Agree or Strongly Agree	90	53.9	54.5
	Total	165	98.8	100.0
	Missing	2	1.2	--
	Total	167	100.0	--

Social support. Responses of the 159 participants who answered the three questions about their perceived levels of social support yielded a mean score of 4.33 (*Mdn*=4.67, *SD*=.73), demonstrating an average high score of social support (see Table 4).

Coping behavior. There were 159 participants who answered the questions about their coping behavior. The highest mean score (*M*=12.33, *Mdn*=13, *SD*=2.21) was found in the "Seeking Social Support" coping style, in comparison to the remaining two coping styles, with the lowest mean score (*M*=8.6, *Mdn*=8, *SD*=2.29) found in the "Avoidant" coping style (see Table 4).

Facebook intensity. There were 157 participants who answered the questions about their Facebook intensity. Frequencies for this data include a range of 1.38-5.50, with a mean score of 3.77 (*Mdn*=3.88, *SD*=.82), indicating an average Facebook intensity level that is just

over the midway/neutral point, or a moderate level of Facebook intensity among participants in the sample (see Table 4).

Facebook satisfaction. There were 157 participants who answered this question, and higher scores represent greater levels of Facebook satisfaction. A mean score of 3.73 (Mdn=4.00, SD=.69) was reached among the 157 participants who answered this question, representing a moderate level of Facebook satisfaction among participants in the sample (see Table 4).

Table 4

Social Support, Coping Behavior, Facebook Intensity, and Facebook Satisfaction

Variable	*n*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Social Support	159	4.33	4.67	.733	1	5
Seeking Social Support Coping Style	159	12.33	13.00	2.21	5	15
Problem Solving Coping Style	159	12.05	12.00	2.14	4	15
Avoidant Coping Style	159	8.60	8.00	2.29	5	15
Facebook Intensity	157	3.77	3.88	.82	1.38	5.50
Facebook Satisfaction	157	3.73	4.00	.69	1	5

Categories of Facebook use. The researcher was interested in learning about the types of issues for which young adults may seek emotional support using Facebook. Thirteen questions were developed which asked participants how often they seek emotional support on Facebook for 12 specific issues, including: romantic relationships, family issues, friendships, work/jobs, school, finances, physical health, mental health, religion/spirituality, politics, general emotions, and death/loss, and "other".

The large majority of participants reported "never" seeking emotional support for most of the items listed. Only two items, general emotions and friendships, yielded a majority of responses in the "not too often" thru "very often" category (61.8%, *n*=97 and 52.2%, *n*=82, respectively). Responses to three other issues yielded at least one-third of participants reporting some level of seeking emotional support on Facebook. These included: work (43.3%, *n*=68), politics (39.4%, *n*=61), and school (35.3%, *n*=55; see Table 5).

Six participants used the item titled "other" to list additional categories of Facebook use. Qualitative responses included: "acknowledgement", "food (when I cook, I like to see if people think it's cool), Art (same as food)", "I would say that I observe a lot I participate minimally", "learning how to raise a family while working full-time. I use Facebook to connect to my 'Mommy Network' of people I know who have kids similar ages to mine", "sports", and "travel".

Table 5

Frequency of Category of Facebook Use

Variable		Never	Not too often Thru Very often	Total	Missing	Total
Romantic Relationships	*n*	126	31	157	10	167
	Percent	75.4	18.6	94.0	6.0	100.0
	Valid Percent	80.3	19.7	100.0	--	--
Family Issues	*n*	128	29	157	10	167
	Percent	76.6	17.4	94.0	6.0	100.0
	Valid Percent	81.5	18.5	100.0	--	--
Friendships	***n***	**75**	**82**	**157**	**10**	**167**
	Percent	**44.9**	**49.1**	**94.0**	**6.0**	**100.0**
	Valid Percent	**47.8**	**52.2**	**100.0**	**--**	**--**
Work/Jobs	***n***	**89**	**68**	**157**	**10**	**167**
	Percent	**53.3**	**40.7**	**94.0**	**6.0**	**100.0**
	Valid Percent	**56.7**	**43.3**	**100.0**	**--**	**--**
School	***n***	**101**	**55**	**156**	**11**	**167**
	Percent	**60.5**	**32.9**	**93.4**	**6.6**	**100.0**
	Valid Percent	**64.7**	**35.3**	**100.0**	**--**	**--**
Finances	*n*	140	17	157	10	167
	Percent	83.8	10.2	94.0	6.0	100.0
	Valid Percent	89.2	10.8	100.0	--	--
Physical Health	*n*	111	44	155	12	167
	Percent	66.5	26.3	92.8	7.2	100.0
	Valid Percent	71.6	28.4	100.0	--	--
Mental Health	*n*	125	32	157	10	167
	Percent	74.9	19.2	94.0	6.0	100.0
	Valid Percent	79.6	20.4	100.0	--	--
Religion/ Spirituality	*n*	126	31	157	10	167
	Percent	75.4	18.6	94.0	6.0	100.0
	Valid Percent	80.3	19.7	100.0	--	--
Politics	***n***	**94**	**61**	**155**	**12**	**167**
	Percent	**56.3**	**36.5**	**92.8**	**7.2**	**100.0**
	Valid Percent	**60.6**	**39.4**	**100.0**	**--**	**--**
General Emotions	***n***	**60**	**97**	**157**	**10**	**167**
	Percent	**35.9**	**58.1**	**94.0**	**6.0**	**100.0**
	Valid Percent	**38.2**	**61.8**	**100.0**	**--**	**--**
Death/Loss	*n*	114	42	156	11	167
	Percent	68.3	25.1	93.4	6.6	100.0
	Valid Percent	73.1	26.9	100.0	--	--

Emotional support received and provided on Facebook. Among the 157 participants who answered these items, the mean score for "emotional support received" was 2.47 (*Mdn*=2.67, *SD*=.64), and for "emotional support provided" it was 2.44 (*Mdn*=2.33, *SD*=.65), indicating moderate levels of both receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook (see Table 6).

Table 6

Emotional Support Received and Provided on Facebook

Variable	*n*	*M*	*Mdn*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Emotional Support Received	157	2.46	2.67	.64	1	4
Emotional Support Provided	157	2.44	2.33	.65	1	4

Analyses of Associations

For the current study, the researcher hoped to gain a better understanding of the type of people who utilize Facebook for emotional support. As a result, the researcher was interested in exploring the relationship between emotional support received and provided on Facebook by several variables including age, gender, race/ethnicity, education, student status, employment, community setting, relationship status, living situation, perceived financial need, social support, coping behavior, Facebook intensity, and Facebook satisfaction. The researcher was also interested in exploring the relationship between seeking emotional support on Facebook for issue-specific categories of Facebook use, by this same group of variables. The 12 issue-specific categories of Facebook use were romantic relationships, family issues, friendships, work/jobs, school, finances, physical health, mental health, religion/spirituality, politics, general emotions, and death/loss.

The researcher expected to see differences in use of Facebook for emotional support overall as well as in the categories of Facebook use based on the variables listed above.

Emotional support received and provided on Facebook by gender. Among the demographic variables analyzed, only gender yielded significant results in the analysis. Females had greater levels of receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook than males. There was a significant difference in emotional support received on Facebook by gender (t[155]=4.652, p<.001, two-tailed). Males had a lower mean score on emotional support received (M=2.06) than females (M=2.59).

There was also a significant difference in emotional support provided on Facebook by gender (t[155]=4.574, p<.001, two-tailed). Males had a lower mean score on emotional support provided (M=2.04) than females (M=2.57; see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7

Emotional Support Received and Provided on Facebook by Gender

Variable	Gender	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*Std. Error Mean*
Emotional Support Received	Male	36	2.01	.58	.10
	Female	121	2.59	.61	.06
Emotional Support Provided	Male	36	2.04	.63	.11
	Female	121	2.57	.60	.06

Table 8

Independent Samples Test by Gender

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t*-test for Equality of Means							
										95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
		F	Sig.	*t*	*df*	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Diffe-rence	Std. Error Diffe-rence	Lower	Upper
Emotional Support Received	Equal Variances Assumed	.68	.41	-4.65	155	.000	-.53	.11	-.75	-.31
	Equal Variances Not Assumed	--	--	-4.78	59.86	.000	-.53	.11	-.75	-.31
Emotional Support Provided	Equal Variances Assumed	.77	.38	-4.57	155	.000	-.53	.12	-.76	-.30
	Equal Variances Not Assumed	--	--	-4.45	55.22	.000	-.53	.12	-.76	-.29

Emotional support received and provided on Facebook by coping behavior.

Findings indicate a positive correlation between seeking social support coping style and use of Facebook for both receiving and providing emotional support. A significant positive weak correlation was found (r=.275, p<.001, two-tailed) between seeking social support coping style and emotional support received on Facebook. A significant positive weak correlation was found (r=.205, p=.010, two-tailed) between seeking social support coping style and emotional support provided on Facebook, although these findings must be considered in the light of the unknown psychometric strength of the coping behavior measure (see Table 9).

Table 9

Emotional Support Received and Provided on Facebook by Coping Behavior

Variable	Correlations	Emotional Support Received	Emotional Support Provided	Coping Seeking Social Support	Coping Avoidance	Coping Prob. Solv.
Emotional Support Received	Pearson Correlation	1	.855**	.275**	.065	.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)	--	.000	.000	.421	.242
	N	157	157	157	157	157
Emotional Support Provided	Pearson Correlation	.855**	1	.205**	.151	.111
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	--	.010	.058	.165
	N	157	157	157	157	157
Coping Seeking Social Support	Pearson Correlation	.275**	.205**	1	.026	.224**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.010	--	.747	.005
	N	157	157	159	159	159
Coping Avoidance	Pearson Correlation	.065	.151	.026	1	.055
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.421	.058	.747	--	.491
	N	157	157	159	159	159
Coping Problem Solving	Pearson Correlation	.094	.111	.224**	.055	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.242	.165	.005	.491	--
	N	157	157	159	159	159

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Emotional support received and provided on Facebook by Facebook intensity.

Facebook intensity was positively associated with both receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook. A significant positive moderate correlation was found (r=.429, p<.001, two-tailed) between emotional support received on Facebook and Facebook intensity. A

significant positive moderate correlation was found ($r=.438$, $p<.001$, two-tailed) between emotional support provided on Facebook and Facebook intensity (see Table 10).

Table 10

Emotional Support Received and Provided on Facebook by Facebook Intensity

Variable	Correlations	Emotional Support Received	Emotional Support Provided	Facebook Intensity
Emotional Support Received	Pearson Correlation	1	.855**	.429**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	--	.000	.000
	N	157	157	157
Emotional Support Provided	Pearson Correlation	.855**	1	.438**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	--	.000
	N	157	157	157
Facebook Intensity	Pearson Correlation	.429**	.438**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	--
	N	157	157	157

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Emotional support received and provided on Facebook by Facebook satisfaction.

Facebook satisfaction was positively associated with both receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook. A significant weak to moderate positive correlation was found ($r=.387$, $p<.001$, two-tailed) between Facebook satisfaction and emotional support received on Facebook. A significant weak to moderate positive correlation was found ($r=.399$, $p<.001$, two-tailed) between Facebook satisfaction and emotional support provided on Facebook (see Table 11).

Table 11

Emotional Support Received and Provided on Facebook by Facebook Satisfaction

Variable	Spearman's rho	How satisfied are you with Facebook, overall	Emotional Support Received	Emotional Support Provided
How satisfied Are you with Facebook, overall	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	1.00 -- 157	.387** .000 157	.399** .000 157
Emotional Support Received	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.387** .000 157	1.00 -- 157	.847** .000 157
Emotional Support Provided	Correlation Coefficient Sig. (2-tailed) N	.399** .000 157	.847** .000 157	1.00 -- 157

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Categories of Facebook use by coping behavior. Although findings must be considered in light of unknown psychometric strength of the coping behavior measure, results of analysis indicate a weak positive association between seeking emotional support on Facebook in the category of "friendships" and mean score on the avoidant coping style ($r=.213$, $p=.007$, two-tailed), and a negative association was found between seeking emotional support on Facebook in the category of "school" and mean score on the problem solving coping style ($r=-.245$, $p=.002$, two-tailed; see Table 12).

Table 12

Categories of Facebook Use by Coping Behavior

Variable	Spearman's rho	Seeking Social Support	Avoidance	Problem Solving
Romantic Relationships	Correlation Coefficient	.078	.037	-.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.334	.648	.348
	N	157	157	157
Family Issues	Correlation Coefficient	-.006	.001	-.079
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.940	.986	.322
	N	157	157	157
Friendships	Correlation Coefficient	.099	.213**	-.013
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.219	.007	.876
	N	157	157	157
Work/Jobs	Correlation Coefficient	-.127	.054	-.020
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.112	.505	.801
	N	157	157	157
School	Correlation Coefficient	-.067	.114	-.245**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.403	.157	.002
	N	156	156	156
Finances	Correlation Coefficient	-.040	-.021	-.082
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.617	.792	.305
	N	157	157	157
Physical Health	Correlation Coefficient	.028	-.034	-.037
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.733	.674	.646
	N	155	155	155
Mental Health	Correlation Coefficient	.045	.042	-.039
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.579	.599	.624
	N	157	157	157
Religion/ Spirituality	Correlation Coefficient	-.003	.088	.010
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.975	.273	.896
	N	157	157	157
Politics	Correlation Coefficient	-.065	-.007	-.093
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.422	.936	.249
	N	155	155	155
General Emotions	Correlation Coefficient	.049	.040	-.034
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.543	.616	.672
	N	157	157	157
Death/Loss	Correlation Coefficient	.087	.067	.019
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.280	.404	.816
	N	156	156	156

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Categories of Facebook use by receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook. Significant positive correlations were found between seeking emotional support in all of the 12 categories of Facebook use and emotional support received and provided on Facebook (see Table 13).

Categories of Facebook use by Facebook intensity. Significant positive correlations were found between Facebook intensity and seeking emotional support in 11 of the 12 categories of Facebook use. Only the category of "religion/spirituality" was not significantly associated with Facebook intensity (see Table 13).

Table 13

Categories of Facebook Use by Emotional Support Received and Provided on Facebook and Facebook Intensity

Variable	Spearman's rho	Emo. Sup. Received	Emo. Sup. Provided	Facebook Intensity
Romantic Relationships	Correlation Coefficient	.344**	.369**	.291**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	157	157	157
Family Issues	Correlation Coefficient	.306**	.300**	.171*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.032
	N	157	157	157
Friendships	Correlation Coefficient	.441**	.438**	.267**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001
	N	157	157	157
Work/Jobs	Correlation Coefficient	.338**	.363**	.264**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001
	N	157	157	157
School	Correlation Coefficient	.228**	.198**	.176*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.004	.013	.028
	N	156	156	156
Finances	Correlation Coefficient	.313**	.340**	.264**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.001
	N	157	157	157
Physical Health	Correlation Coefficient	.330**	.305**	.025*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.011
	N	155	155	155
Mental Health	Correlation Coefficient	.406**	.427**	.311**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	157	157	157
Religion/ Spirituality	Correlation Coefficient	.204*	.281**	.073
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.010	.000	.361
	N	157	157	157
Politics	Correlation Coefficient	.272**	.292**	.277**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	.000	.000
	N	155	155	155
General Emotions	Correlation Coefficient	.444**	.475**	.334**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	157	157	157
Death/Loss	Correlation Coefficient	.333**	.399**	.241**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.002
	N	156	156	156

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)

Crosstabulation analysis: Categories of Facebook use by demographic and

descriptive variables. A crosstabulation analysis was used to analyze the relationship between seeking emotional support on Facebook for specific issues, by demographic variables (age, gender, race, education level, student status, employment, community setting, relationship status, and living situation), perceived financial need, and Facebook satisfaction. The results of these analyses are reported in Tables 14 through 30.

Age. Age differences in level of seeking emotional support on Facebook were found in the areas of school, general emotions, death/loss, and religion/spirituality. Younger participants were more than twice as likely to report seeking emotional support for school-related issues (69.9%, $n=16$) than their older counterparts (29.5%, $n=38$). Younger participants were also more likely than older participants (78.3%, $n=18$ compared with 59.2%, $n=77$, respectively) to report seeking emotional support on Facebook for general emotions. Further, nearly twice the percentage of younger participants (43.5%, $n=10$) compared with older participants (23.3%, $n=30$) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for issues concerning death/loss.

On the other hand, nearly three times the percentage of older participants (22.3%, $n=29$) compared with younger participants (8.7%, $n=2$) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for religion/spirituality (see Table 14).

Table 14

Age by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for School, Religion/Spirituality, General Emotions, and Death/Loss

Variable	Age		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
School	18-22	*n*	7	16	23
		% within Age	30.4%	69.6%	100.0%
	23-33	*n*	91	38	129
		% within Age	70.5%	29.5%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	98	54	152
		% within Age	64.5%	35.5%	100.0%
Religion/ Spirituality	18-22	*n*	21	2	23
		% within Age	91.3%	8.7%	100.0%
	23-33	*n*	101	29	130
		% within Age	77.7%	22.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	122	31	153
		% within Age	79.7%	20.3%	100.0%
General Emotions	18-22	*n*	5	18	23
		% within Age	21.7%	78.3%	100.0%
	23-33	*n*	53	77	130
		% within Age	40.8%	59.2%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	58	95	153
		% within Age	37.9%	62.1%	100.0%
Death/Loss	18-22	*n*	13	10	23
		% within Age	56.5%	43.5%	100.0%
	23-33	*n*	99	30	129
		% within Age	76.7%	23.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	112	40	152
		% within Age	73.7%	26.3%	100.0%

Gender. Differences in categories of Facebook use by gender demonstrate that females were more likely than males to report seeking emotional support on Facebook in six of the 12 categories, including family issues, romantic relationships, friendships, work/jobs, mental health, and general emotions.

Greater than twice the percentage of females (23.1%, *n*=28) compared with males (8.3%, *n*=3) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for romantic relationships. Similarly, nearly twice the percentage of females (20.7%, *n*=25) compared with males (11.1%, *n*=4) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for family issues. Females (57.9%, *n*=70) were also more likely to report seeking emotional support on Facebook for friendships than males (33.3%, *n*=12; see Table 15).

Table 15

Gender by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Romantic Relationships, Family Issues, and Friendships

Variable	Gender		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Romantic Relationships	Male	*n*	33	3	36
		% within Gender	91.7%	8.3%	100.0%
	Female	*n*	93	28	121
		% within Gender	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	126	31	157
		% within Gender	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
Family Issues	Male	*n*	32	4	36
		% within Gender	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	Female	*n*	96	25	121
		% within Gender	79.3%	20.7%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	128	29	157
		% within Gender	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
Friendships	Male	*n*	24	12	36
		% within Gender	66.7%	33.3%	100.0%
	Female	*n*	51	70	121
		% within Gender	42.1%	57.9%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	75	82	157
		% within Gender	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%

Furthermore, greater than twice the percentage of females (49.6%, *n*=60) compared to males (22.2%, *n*=8) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for work/jobs, as well as

mental health (23.1%, *n*=28, and 11.1%, *n*=4, respectively). Females (67.8%, *n*=82) were also

more likely to seek emotional support on Facebook for general emotions than males (41.7%,

n=15; see Table 16).

Table 16

Gender by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Work/Jobs, Mental Health, and General Emotions

Variable	Gender		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Work/Jobs	Male	*n*	28	8	36
		% within Gender	77.8%	22.2%	100.0%
	Female	*n*	61	60	121
		% within Gender	50.4%	49.6%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	89	68	157
		% within Gender	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%
Mental Health	Male	*n*	32	4	36
		% within Gender	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	Female	*n*	93	28	121
		% within Gender	76.9%	23.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	125	32	157
		% within Gender	79.6%	20.4%	100.0%
General Emotions	Male	*n*	21	15	36
		% within Gender	58.3%	41.7%	100.0%
	Female	*n*	39	82	121
		% within Gender	32.2%	67.8%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	60	97	157
		% within Gender	38.2%	61.8%	100.0%

   Race/ethnicity. A crosstabulation analysis of race/ethnicity by seeking emotional support

on Facebook for specific issues yielded noteworthy differences in the areas of romantic

relationships and friendships, with a larger percentage of Caucasian participants reporting

seeking emotional support on Facebook for romantic relationships than was true for all other

race/ethnicities (21.2%, *n*=28 and 12%, *n*=3, respectively), as well as for friendships (55.3%,

n=73, and 36%, *n*=9, respectively; see Table 17).

Table 17

Race/Ethnicity by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Romantic Relationships and Friendships

Variable	Race/Ethnicity		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Romantic Relationships	All other races	*n*	22	3	25
		% within Race	88.0%	12.0%	100.0%
	Caucasian	*n*	104	28	132
		% within Race	78.8%	21.2%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	126	31	157
		% within Race	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
Friendships	All other races	*n*	16	9	25
		% within Race	64.0%	36.0%	100.0%
	Caucasian	*n*	59	73	132
		% within Race	44.7%	55.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	75	82	157
		% within Race	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%

Education. In crosstabulation analysis, school emerged as the only category in which

there were differences by educational level in seeking emotional support on Facebook, with

those who had achieved lower educational levels reporting greater use of Facebook for support in

this area. Over twice the percentage of participants who had completed some high school

through a two-year degree (66.7%, *n*=16) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for

school than did participants who had completed a four-year or graduate degree (29.5%, *n*=39; see

Table 18).

Table 18

Education by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for School

Variable	Education Level		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
School	Some HS thru two-year degree	*n*	8	16	24
		% within Education	33.3%	66.7%	100.0%
	Four-year or graduate degree	*n*	93	39	132
		% within Education	70.5%	29.5%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	101	55	156
		% within Education	64.7%	35.3%	100.0%

Student status. Not surprisingly, participants who indicated current status as a student were more than three times as likely as non-students (72.7%, *n*=32 and 20.0%, *n*=22, respectively) to report seeking emotional support on Facebook for school. On the other hand, nearly twice the percentage of non-students (12.6%, *n*=14) compared to students (6.8%, *n*=3) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for finances. Lastly, greater than twice the percentage of non-students (24.3%, *n*=27) compared to students (9.1%, *n*=4) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for religion/spirituality (see Table 19).

Table 19

Student Status by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for School, Finances, and Religion/Spirituality

Variable	Student Status		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
School	Yes	*n*	12	32	44
		% within Stud Stat	27.3%	72.7%	100.0%
	No	*n*	88	22	110
		% within Stud Stat	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	100	54	154
		% within Stud Stat	64.9%	35.1%	100.0%
Finances	Yes	*n*	41	3	44
		% within Stud Stat	93.2%	6.8%	100.0%
	No	*n*	97	14	111
		% within Stud Stat	87.4%	12.6%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	138	17	155
		% within Stud Stat	89.0%	11.0%	100.0%
Religion/ Spirituality	Yes	*n*	40	4	44
		% within Stud Stat	90.9%	9.1%	100.0%
	No	*n*	84	27	111
		% within Stud Stat	75.7%	24.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	124	31	155
		% within Stud Stat	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Employment. Several differences in categories of Facebook use were seen by employment status in the crosstabulation analysis. These included: romantic relationships, family issues, work/jobs, school, finances, mental health, and religion/spirituality. In all categories except school, working participants were more likely than their non-working counterparts to report seeking emotional support on Facebook.

Nearly four times the percentage of working participants (21.9%, *n*=30) compared to not working participants (5.6%, *n*=1) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for romantic relationships, and nearly two times the percentage of working participants (19.7%, *n*=27)

reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for family issues, when compared to not

working participants (11.1%, *n*=2; see Table 20).

Table 20

Employment Status by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Romantic Relationships and Family Issues

Variable	Employment Status		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Romantic Relationships	Working	*n*	107	30	137
		% within Employ	78.1%	21.9%	100.0%
	Not working	*n*	17	1	18
		% within Employ	94.4%	5.6%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	124	31	155
		% within Employ	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
Family Issues	Working	*n*	110	27	137
		% within Employ	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
	Not working	*n*	16	2	18
		% within Employ	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	126	29	155
		% within Employ	81.3%	18.7%	100.0%

Participants who were working were more likely than those not working to report seeking

emotional support on Facebook for work/jobs (46.0%, *n*=63, and 27.8%, *n*=5, respectively).

However, greater than twice the percentage of not working participants (66.7%, *n*=12) compared

to those working (30.1%, *n*=41) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for school,

suggesting a possibility that many who reported a "not working" status were students.

Surprisingly, none of the not working participants reported seeking emotional support on

Facebook for finances, compared to 12.4% (*n*=7) of those who were working.

Nearly twice the percentage of working participants (21.9%, *n*=30) compared to not

working participants (11.1%, *n*=2) reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for mental

health. Similarly, nearly twice the percentage of working participants (21.2%, *n*=29) compared

to not working participants (11.1%, *n*=2) also reported seeking emotional support on Facebook

for religion/spirituality (see Table 21).

Table 21

Employment Status by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Work/Jobs, School,
Finances, Mental Health, and Religion/Spirituality

Variable	Employment Status		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Work/Jobs	Working	*n*	74	63	137
		% within Employ	54.0%	46.0%	100.0%
	Not working	*n*	13	5	18
		% within Employ	72.2%	27.8%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	87	68	155
		% within Employ	56.1%	43.9%	100.0%
School	**Working**	***n***	**95**	**41**	**136**
		% within Employ	**69.9%**	**30.1%**	**100.0%**
	Not working	***n***	**6**	**12**	**18**
		% within Employ	**33.3%**	**66.7%**	**100.0%**
	Total	***n***	**101**	**53**	**154**
		% within Employ	**65.6%**	**34.4%**	**100.0%**
Finances	Working	*n*	120	17	137
		% within Employ	87.6%	12.4%	100.0%
	Not working	*n*	18	0	18
		% within Employ	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	138	17	155
		% within Employ	89.0%	11.0%	100.0%
Mental Health	Working	*n*	107	30	137
		% within Employ	78.1%	21.9%	100.0%
	Not working	*n*	16	2	18
		% within Employ	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	123	32	155
		% within Employ	79.4%	20.6%	100.0%
Religion/ Spirituality	Working	*n*	108	29	137
		% within Employ	78.8%	21.2%	100.0%
	Not working	*n*	16	2	18
		% within Employ	88.9%	11.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	124	31	155
		% within Employ	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%

Community setting. Crosstabulations of categories of Facebook use by community setting yielded noteworthy differences between those living in a suburb/small town and those living in an urban/city community setting, in the areas of school, finances, and politics. Participants living in urban/city settings were more likely than their suburban/small town-dwelling counterparts to report seeking emotional support on Facebook in all three areas (see Table 22).

Table 22

Community Setting by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for School, Finances, and Politics

Variable	Community Setting		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
School	Suburb/	*n*	31	10	41
	Small town	% within Com Set	75.6%	24.4%	100.0%
	Urban/City	*n*	69	45	114
		% within Com Set	60.5%	39.5%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	100	55	155
		% within Com Set	64.5%	35.5%	100.0%
Finances	Suburb/	*n*	38	3	41
	Small town	% within Com Set	92.7%	7.3%	100.0%
	Urban/City	*n*	101	14	115
		% within Com Set	87.8%	12.2%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	139	17	156
		% within Com Set	89.1%	10.9%	100.0%
Politics	Suburb/	*n*	29	12	41
	Small town	% within Com Set	70.7%	29.3%	100.0%
	Urban/City	*n*	64	49	113
		% within Com Set	56.6%	43.4%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	93	61	154
		% within Com Set	60.4%	39.6%	100.0%

Relationship status. In a crosstabulation analysis, relationship status did not appear to be a strong variable in determining differences in participant's seeking emotional support on Facebook in identified areas. The one exception was school, with greater than twice the percentage of participants not in a committed relationship (49.3%, *n*=35) compared to those married or in a committed relationship (23.8%, *n*=20), reporting seeking emotional support on Facebook for this issue (see Table 23).

Table 23

Relationship Status by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for School

Variable	Relationship Status		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
School	Married or in A committed relationship	*n*	64	20	84
		% within Rel Stat	76.2%	23.8%	100.0%
	Not in a committed relationship	*n*	36	35	71
		% within Rel Stat	50.7%	49.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	100	55	155
		% within Rel Stat	64.5%	35.5%	100.0%

Living situation. When living situation was compared with the categories of Facebook use, only the areas of romantic relationships and finances yielded noteworthy differences. Those living alone were more likely to report seeking emotional support on Facebook for both issues than participants who were living with another person[s] (see Table 24).

Table 24

Living Situation by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Romantic Relationships and Finances

Variable	Living Situation		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Romantic Relationships	Living alone	*n*	15	7	22
		% within Living Sit	68.2%	31.8%	100.0%
	Living with another person(s)	*n*	110	24	134
		% within Living Sit	82.1%	17.9%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	125	31	156
		% within Living Sit	80.1%	19.9%	100.0%
Finances	Living alone	*n*	18	4	22
		% within Living Sit	81.8%	18.2%	100.0%
	Living with another person(s)	*n*	121	13	134
		% within Living Sit	90.3%	9.7%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	139	17	156
		% within Living Sit	89.1%	10.9%	100.0%

Perceived financial need. Those who answered "agree" or "strongly agree" to the question: "If I earned any less money, I would have difficulty paying my bills", were considered to have higher perceived financial need, while those who answered "neutral", "disagree", or "strongly disagree" were considered to have neutral or lower financial need. Differences by level of perceived financial need were notable in six of the 12 categories, including family issues, work/jobs, school, finances, mental health, and religion/spirituality. Findings indicate that a greater percentage of participants with higher financial need compared to those with lower or neutral financial need reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for all six issues listed above except for school, which was more highly populated by those in the neutral financial category (see Tables 25 and 26).

Table 25

Perceived Financial Need by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Family Issues,
Work/Jobs, and School

Variable	Perceived Financial Need		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Family Issues	Disagree or strongly disagree	*n*	46	4	50
		% within Fin Need	92.0%	8.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	17	3	20
		% within Fin Need	85.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	Agree or strongly agree	*n*	65	22	87
		% within Fin Need	74.7%	25.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	128	29	157
		% within Fin Need	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
Work/Jobs	Disagree or strongly disagree	*n*	33	17	50
		% within Fin Need	66.0%	34.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	14	6	20
		% within Fin Need	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	Agree or strongly agree	*n*	42	45	87
		% within Fin Need	48.3%	51.7%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	89	68	157
		% within Fin Need	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%
School	Disagree or strongly disagree	*n*	42	7	49
		% within Fin Need	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	8	12	20
		% within Fin Need	40.0%	60.0%	100.0%
	Agree or strongly agree	*n*	51	36	87
		% within Fin Need	58.6%	41.4%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	101	55	156
		% within Fin Need	64.7%	35.3%	100.0%

Table 26

Perceived Financial Need by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Finances, Mental Health, and Religion/Spirituality

Variable	Perceived Financial Need		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Finances	Disagree or strongly disagree	*n*	49	1	50
		% within Fin Need	98.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	19	1	20
		% within Fin Need	95.0%	5.0%	100.0%
	Agree or strongly agree	*n*	72	15	87
		% within Fin Need	82.8%	17.2%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	140	17	157
		% within Fin Need	89.2%	10.8%	100.0%
Mental Health	Disagree or strongly disagree	*n*	47	3	50
		% within Fin Need	94.0%	6.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	17	3	20
		% within Fin Need	85.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	Agree or strongly agree	*n*	61	26	87
		% within Fin Need	70.1%	29.9%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	125	32	157
		% within Fin Need	79.6%	20.4%	100.0%
Religion/ Spirituality	Disagree or strongly disagree	*n*	44	6	50
		% within Fin Need	88.0%	12.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	17	3	20
		% within Fin Need	85.0%	15.0%	100.0%
	Agree or strongly agree	*n*	65	22	87
		% within Fin Need	74.7%	25.3%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	126	31	157
		% within Fin Need	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%

Facebook satisfaction. Results of crosstabulation analysis indicate a strong association between Facebook satisfaction and seeking emotional support on Facebook for 10 of the 12 categories of Facebook use (see Tables 27 through 30). None of the participants who fell into the lowest category of Facebook satisfaction reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for mental health issues (see Table 29). Exceptions were in the areas of finances and religion/spirituality, where differences based on level of Facebook satisfaction were not impressive. This finding echoes the analysis indicating a positive correlation between Facebook satisfaction and levels of receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook, as illustrated in Table 11.

Table 27

Facebook Satisfaction by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Romantic Relationships, Family Issues, and Friendships

Variable	Facebook Satisfaction		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Romantic Relationships	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	7	0	7
		% within Fb Satis	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	36	4	40
		% within Fb Satis	90.0%	10.0%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	83	27	110
		% within Fb Satis	75.5%	24.5%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	126	31	157
		% within Fb Satis	80.3%	19.7%	100.0%
Family Issues	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	7	0	7
		% within Fb Satis	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	35	5	40
		% within Fb Satis	87.5%	12.5%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	86	24	110
		% within Fb Satis	78.2%	21.8%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	128	29	157
		% within Fb Satis	81.5%	18.5%	100.0%
Friendships	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	4	3	7
		% within Fb Satis	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	23	17	40
		% within Fb Satis	57.5%	42.5%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	48	62	110
		% within Fb Satis	43.6%	56.4%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	75	82	157
		% within Fb Satis	47.8%	52.2%	100.0%

Table 28

Facebook Satisfaction by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Work/Jobs, School, and Physical Health

Variable	Facebook Satisfaction		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Work/Jobs	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	5	2	7
		% within Fb Satis	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	28	12	40
		% within Fb Satis	70.0%	30.0%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	56	54	110
		% within Fb Satis	50.9%	49.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	89	68	157
		% within Fb Satis	56.7%	43.3%	100.0%
School	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	5	1	6
		% within Fb Satis	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	33	7	40
		% within Fb Satis	82.5%	17.5%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	63	47	110
		% within Fb Satis	57.3%	42.7%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	101	55	156
		% within Fb Satis	64.7%	35.3%	100.0%
Physical Health	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	5	1	6
		% within Fb Satis	83.3%	16.7%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	32	8	40
		% within Fb Satis	80.0%	20.0%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	74	35	109
		% within Fb Satis	67.9%	32.1%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	111	44	155
		% within Fb Satis	71.6%	28.4%	100.0%

Table 29

Facebook Satisfaction by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for Mental Health and Politics

Variable	Facebook Satisfaction		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
Mental Health	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	7	0	7
		% within Fb Satis	100.0%	0.0%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	37	3	40
		% within Fb Satis	92.5%	7.5%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	81	29	110
		% within Fb Satis	73.6%	26.4%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	125	32	157
		% within Fb Satis	79.6%	20.4%	100.0%
Politics	Not or barely satisfied	*n*	5	2	7
		% within Fb Satis	71.4%	28.6%	100.0%
	Neutral	*n*	29	11	40
		% within Fb Satis	72.5%	27.5%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	*n*	60	48	108
		% within Fb Satis	55.6%	44.4%	100.0%
	Total	*n*	94	61	155
		% within Fb Satis	60.6%	39.4%	100.0%

Table 30

Facebook Satisfaction by Seeking Emotional Support on Facebook for General Emotions and Death/Loss

Variable	Facebook Satisfaction		Never	Not too often thru very often	Total
General Emotions	Not or barely satisfied	n	4	3	7
		% within Fb Satis	57.1%	42.9%	100.0%
	Neutral	n	20	20	40
		% within Fb Satis	50.0%	50.0%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	n	36	74	110
		% within Fb Satis	32.7%	67.3%	100.0%
	Total	n	60	97	157
		% within Fb Satis	38.2%	61.8%	100.0%
Death/Loss	Not or barely satisfied	n	6	1	7
		% within Fb Satis	85.7%	14.3%	100.0%
	Neutral	n	33	7	40
		% within Fb Satis	82.5%	17.5%	100.0%
	Satisfied or very satisfied	n	75	34	109
		% within Fb Satis	68.8%	31.2%	100.0%
	Total	n	114	42	156
		% within Fb Satis	73.1%	26.9%	100.0%

As Tables 27 through 30 demonstrate, over twice the percentage of participants who were satisfied or very satisfied, versus those who were not or barely satisfied, reported seeking emotional support on Facebook in the areas of romantic relationships, family issues, school, mental health, and death/loss.

Chapter V below will offer a discussion of these relevant findings in the current study, including an application of the U&G theory, limitations, and implications of study findings for social work policy, practice, and research.

CHAPTER V

Discussion

This chapter discusses the study findings in greater detail, including sample

characteristics, associations between several variables and use of Facebook for emotional

support. This is followed by discussion of the application of uses and gratifications (U&G)

theory to salient findings. The limitations of the study will then be discussed, followed by

implications for social work policy, practice, and research.

Sample Characteristics

The purpose of the study was to explore the factors associated with young adult use of

Facebook for emotional support. Emotional support was explored in a series of questions that

asked participants how often they feel emotionally supported by their Facebook network

(emotional support received), how often they actively offer emotional support to the people in

their Facebook network (emotional support provided), and how often they seek emotional

support on Facebook for specific issues (categories of Facebook use). Importantly, this study

found that Facebook is being used to some degree for receiving and providing emotional support:

Study participants indicated moderate levels of frequency in both receiving and providing

emotional support on Facebook, to and from individuals in their Facebook network.

Despite moderate levels of receiving and providing emotional support in general to and

from their Facebook network, participants more frequently reported *never* seeking emotional

support for the majority of the 12 categories of Facebook use, as listed. The exceptions were the

categories of "general emotions" and "friendships", which yielded a majority of positive responses. Despite the relevance of all these issues for young adults, it appears that Facebook is not a vehicle through which participants sought emotional support regarding most of these issues. It may be that general emotions and friendships are broad and general in their scope; therefore, more participants reported using this social networking site to seek emotional support for these issues due to the universal, as opposed to individual, nature of the concerns they represent. It is also possible that general emotions and friendships may actually be the primary concerns of this sample population, and they may use Facebook for emotional support in those areas because it is a quick, easy, and accessible tool that can provide them almost instant gratification.

Furthermore, it is also possible that concerns related to personal issues such as general emotions and friendships may fluctuate to a greater degree than concerns related to religion/spirituality, politics, and other categories of Facebook use listed in the survey. In other words, it may be that Facebook is the communication avenue of choice for seeking emotional support related to rapidly fluctuating concerns because it can be accessed immediately. An individual struggling in these areas could immediately receive support for their concerns by accessing Facebook, in lieu of making plans to meet face-to-face with friends or family, reach others by telephone, or speak with a professional provider. A more detailed discussion of the significant findings regarding receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook, as well as seeking emotional support for the categories of Facebook use, will be presented below.

Receiving and Providing Emotional Support on Facebook

Gender. In comparisons of Facebook use by demographic characteristics, only gender yielded significant results, with female participants demonstrating significantly higher levels of

receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook. This finding supports Thompson and Lougheed's (2012) findings of gender differences in Facebook usage. Although they did not look specifically at Facebook usage for emotional support, Thompson and Lougheed (2012) found that females were more likely than males to be "heavy" Facebook users, spend more time examining other's Facebook profiles, and report that Facebook use causes them to feel stress, but they are also more likely to report feeling anxious or upset if they cannot access Facebook (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012).

Thompson and Lougheed (2012) also found that females were more likely than males to report that Facebook helps them express their feelings, cause them to feel excited and energized, and feel closer to friends on Facebook than those they see everyday. Previous research shows that Facebook helps females express their feelings; the current study demonstrates that Facebook also appears to help females receive and provide emotional support.

Coping behavior. The current study also found a significant positive relationship between demonstrating a "seeking social support" coping behavior style and both receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook. Pearlin and Schooler (1978) state that patterns of coping usage suggest some concomitant patterns of differential coping advantage (p. 17). Based on these authors' conceptualization of coping behavior, it is possible that individuals with a "seeking social support" coping style may have coping advantages within their use of social networking sites. Their use of these sites may greatly assist their coping strategies and tendencies in ways that may inhibit or distract those exhibiting the alternative coping styles ("problem solving" and "avoidant"). However, any such explanation must be viewed in light of the limitations of findings regarding an association between coping style and Facebook use, given the unknown psychometric strength of the 15-item coping style measure used.

Facebook intensity. The finding that Facebook intensity was positively associated with levels of receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook supports findings from the work of Ellison et al. (2007). These authors found that less intense Facebook use was associated with reported low satisfaction with college life, lower bridging social capital, and lower scores on measures of self-esteem. These authors argue that Facebook use may be helping students to overcome barriers related to low satisfaction and low self-esteem, and that bridging social capital provides benefits such as increased information and opportunities in that participants who use Facebook in this way can get more out of their college experiences (p. 1163).

Similarly, a possible explanation for the current study finding may be that Facebook provides an avenue for emotional support through the connections it sets up for people; as a result, higher intensity of usage provides greater opportunity for receiving and providing emotional support.

Facebook satisfaction. In addition, the current study found that participants who reported greater levels of Facebook satisfaction were more likely to report greater levels of receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook. It is possible that participants who had greater levels of satisfaction with Facebook were simply more likely to use it in general, and perhaps their satisfaction with the site also led them to use it for more personal purposes, such as emotional support.

Categories of Facebook Use

Coping behavior. The finding of positive association between "avoidant" coping style and seeking emotional support on Facebook for friendships suggests that online communication may be a way for people who tend to avoid direct contact with others to share concerns and/or stay connected. This finding echoes the work of Manago et al. (2012), who suggest that social

networking sites help youth to satisfy enduring needs for permanent relationships in a mobile world (p. 369). It is also possible that on-going contact with a larger network of virtual acquaintances and friends might lead to increased opportunity for issues to arise among and between individuals in these networks. Facebook might then be an avenue for those who tend towards an avoidant coping style to seek emotional support around these issues, whereas those tend towards "seeking social support" and "problem solving" coping styles may utilize more direct or in-person strategies to seek emotional support around friendships as they arise.

The finding that use of Facebook for emotional support concerning school-related issues was negatively associated with a "problem solving" coping style raises the question as to whether Facebook provides the type of support normally sought by those with this coping style. For example, it is possible that time addressing problems related to school through direct sources of support, such as homework or tutoring, might be felt to provide more optimal support by this group, than would sharing concerns on Facebook. Although this study did not examine associations between coping style and Facebook intensity, it is possible that those with a "problem solving" coping style may be more averse to spending additional time on Facebook, especially in areas where rewards may be limited. This explanation receives some support through the work of Thompson and Lougheed (2012) who found that 77% of females and 50% of males say that they are sometimes on Facebook longer than they intend to be. Again, any explanation associated with this finding must be viewed in light of the limitations posed by the unknown psychometric strength of the coping style measure used in this study.

Receiving/providing emotional support on Facebook and Facebook intensity. The current study found a positive relationship between seeking emotional support on Facebook for all 12 of the listed issues and receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook in general.

Similarly, a positive relationship was found between Facebook intensity and seeking emotional support on Facebook for all issues except religion/spirituality. These findings appear to be self-explanatory, in that those who report greater levels of seeking emotional support on Facebook for a range of issues would also be more likely to use Facebook for receiving and providing emotional support in general. It is possible, as well, that higher levels of Facebook intensity reflect greater use of Facebook in all respects, including for receiving and providing emotional support in a range of areas.

It is unclear why religion/spirituality is the one issue that is not correlated with higher levels of Facebook intensity. Research shows lower rates of religious affiliation among the millennial generation in the U. S. compared with the rest of the American population (America Press Inc., 2012), while almost 75% of teens and young adults are members of at least one social networking site (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012). It is possible, therefore, that this finding reflects the comparatively higher rates of Facebook intensity and lower levels of interest in religion/spirituality found among this age group.

Age. The current study found that the younger cohort of participants (age 18 to 22) were more likely to seek emotional support for school-related issues, general emotions, and death/loss than the older group of participants within Generation Y. Because younger participants fall into the typical age range of college students, they may be more likely than their older peers to seek emotional support for school-related issues than their older counterparts (age 23 to 33). The association between youth and seeking emotional support on Facebook for general emotions raises questions as to whether there is an increasing tendency among younger cohorts to find online methods a satisfactory venue for discussion of emotional issues; as well, it could also point to the possibility of increasing levels of emotional stress among younger cohorts. Greater

use of Facebook for emotional support regarding death and loss among the younger cohort raises similar questions with regard to the younger groups' capacity to cope with significant loss, and their use of newer media forms for emotional processing of these issues.

The older cohort was more likely to seek emotional support around religion/spirituality, suggesting that they may continue to maintain religious ties while their younger counterparts may be more disengaged from religion/spirituality, a previously-mentioned trend.

Gender. The current study found that females were more likely than males to seek emotional support on Facebook for half of the issues presented to participants, including family issues, romantic relationships, friendships, work/jobs, mental health, and general emotions. This finding supports previous research depicting differences in use of Facebook by gender (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012). Thompson and Lougheed's (2012) findings also demonstrated that females were more likely than males to report that Facebook makes them feel stressed. Taking into account the findings of Thompson and Lougheed (2012) along with findings from the current study, Facebook use appears to both generate more stress, as well as provide emotional support around issues that arise. Greater use of Facebook, as well as differential use by gender, are important areas for further understanding among social workers in the context of continual change and development in digital communication.

Race/ethnicity. Although the study sample was relatively lacking in diversity, some differences were seen by race/ethnicity in terms of seeking emotional support for specific issues. A larger percentage of Caucasian/white participants, compared to other groups, reported seeking emotional support on Facebook for romantic relationships and friendships. Tynes and Markoe (2010) found that European Americans and African Americans have similar rates of participation

on SNSs, so the fact that differences were found among this sample is of interest, arguing for further study.

Education. The current study found that participants who had completed some high school through a two-year degree reported greater levels of seeking emotional support on Facebook for school than did participants who had completed a four-year or graduate degree. This finding was most likely because participants who had completed a four-year or graduate degree were no longer in school and therefore this issue was less of a concern for them.

Student status. Unsurprisingly, current students in the present study were more likely than non-students to report seeking emotional support on Facebook for school. This was most likely due to their present school enrollment, resulting in greater need for support in this area. On the other hand, non-students were more likely to seek emotional support on Facebook for finances and religion/spirituality than current students. Finances may be more of a concern for non-students because they may be more likely to be either working or looking for work, activities that present financial burdens in a difficult job market. It is possible that current students are still financially dependent on their parents or other individuals, and have fewer financial concerns than those who are expected to be self-supporting. Furthermore, students and graduates have amassed more than one trillion in student debt, and many are currently struggling to pay their bills (Martin, 2013). Paying off student loans does not occur until after students graduate, when they are in the "non-student" status, which may be the time they struggle the most around finances, and thus seek emotional support on Facebook for that specific concern.

Seeking support for religion/spirituality among non-students could be a function of their being members of an older age cohort, as discussed earlier.

Employment. The current study found that employment status was a significant factor in the use of Facebook for emotional support with a range of issues. Non-working participants sought emotional support on Facebook for school at greater levels than working participants, possibly because they were in school and not working as a result. The researcher did not carry out analysis exploring the relationship between non-working and student status in this sample; however, crossover among participants with these characteristics might be a plausible factor in explaining this finding.

Additionally, working participants reported higher rates of seeking emotional support on Facebook in the areas of romantic relationships, family issues, work/jobs, finances, mental health, and religion/spirituality than non-working participants. This finding was surprising to the researcher, as it had been anticipated that non-working participants would make greater use of Facebook for support with stressors related to unemployment. A possible explanation for this finding is that use of Facebook reflects a time-saving measure among those who are employed. Another possible explanation might be the possible crossover between non-working and student status, as mentioned above, with differences found between students and non-students in their use of Facebook echoed in this finding.

Community setting. Another unanticipated finding was the reported greater use of Facebook for support in the areas of school, finances, and politics among participants living in urban/city settings, as compared to suburban/small town dwellers. This finding raises questions with regard to proximity to others - more likely true for city dwellers - and its possible effect on use of SNSs in general. Analysis was not performed to learn of the possible relationship between community setting and employment status; however, it is possible that differences in working status by community setting might also offer an explanation for this finding.

The finding that community setting appears to make a difference in the use of Facebook for emotional support around political issues points to a question about possible differences in political engagement between urban dwellers and their suburban-dwelling counterparts. This question requires further study of differences in political engagement among Facebook users by community setting.

Relationship status. Also of interest was the finding that the issue of school was the only one in which differences were found by relationship status, with those reporting single status more likely to use Facebook for emotional support in this area than their "committed relationship" counterparts. The lack of difference between single and "committed relationship" participants in other areas of Facebook use may point to a varied use of Facebook for emotional support that is independent of relationship status. This finding also raises further questions suitable for study regarding expectations of emotional support in relationships in light of current patterns of SNS use. For example, what is the impact of the immediacy of SNS-provided emotional support on one's expectations for emotional support from a partner in a committed relationship? Will there be a shift in one's expectations of significant others to provide emotional support in view of such immediacy of online emotional support? Or, does the support that is available to online users serve a different function from that which can be provided in a committed relationship?

Living situation. Differences by living situation were found only in the areas of romantic relationships and finances, with those living alone reporting greater use of Facebook for seeking emotional support in these areas than their counterparts who lived with others. It is possible that these differences were reflective of associations between living situation and

another status, for example student, relationship, or working status; however, further study is required to learn what factors might explain this difference.

Perceived financial need. An important finding is that participants with high perceived financial need were more likely than those with lower or neutral perceived financial need to report use of Facebook for seeking emotional support in several areas, including family issues, work/jobs, finances, mental health, and religion/spirituality. This finding is possibly indicative of greater levels of stress associated with their financial status. As financial need increases, the ability to access Facebook quickly without additional cost may serve for the emotional support needs of those experiencing financial strains, thus serving an important function in difficult economic times. A difference was in the area of school, with those reporting "neutral" financial need more likely than those with high and low financial need to report seeking emotional support on Facebook in this area.

Facebook satisfaction. The strongest association was found between Facebook satisfaction and seeking emotional support on Facebook, with participants who reported being satisfied or very satisfied with Facebook also reporting greater use of Facebook for seeking emotional support in all areas except finances and religion/spirituality. This strong association points to the possible value placed on Facebook as a tool for emotional support, with satisfaction of this medium going hand-in-hand with its usefulness as a means of obtaining support.

Discussion of Findings Through the Uses and Gratifications (U&G) Theory Lens

The U&G theory states that using media is purposeful in that users actively seek to fulfill their needs through a variety of different uses (Katz et al., 1974, as cited in Luo et al., 2011). The principle elements of the U&G theory include individual psychological and social needs, and the ways in which media use gratifies needs and motives to communicate (Rubin, 2009, as

cited in Chen, 2011). This theory holds that people select the media use that meets their needs, such as the desire for information, emotional connection, and status (Tan, 1985, as cited in Chen, 2011).

Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008) found that users who spent a great deal of time on Facebook were helped by this medium to meet personal and social needs; viewed through the lens of the U&G theory, participant "use" was Facebook, while participant source of "gratification" was in having their personal and social needs met. In the current study, the particular media "use" explored was Facebook, and the "gratification" explored was emotional support received, provided, and sought. Study participants with higher rates of Facebook intensity and Facebook satisfaction also reported greater levels of *receiving* and *providing* emotional support on Facebook, and greater levels of *seeking* emotional support on Facebook for specific issues.

In examining findings of the current study through a U&G theoretical lens, it appears that Facebook users indicate seeking emotional support in general, rather than for specific issues or categories as listed. There were also important differences among participants in their Facebook use, as those who were more likely to use Facebook to fulfill their gratification of receiving and providing emotional support tended to be female, have higher levels of seeking social support coping style, and report greater levels of Facebook intensity and satisfaction.

Importantly, however, most participants did not report seeking emotional support on Facebook for specific issues with potential relevance to their generation. Viewed from the perspective of U&G theory, this finding may indicate that young adult gratification from use of Facebook may be primarily derived from areas other than its capacity to meet emotional needs. It is also possible that participants were reluctant to admit to this form of gratification from their

use of Facebook. Or, they may be seeking other gratifications that this study did not explore.

The demographic among those who did report seeking emotional support for these issues varied

by issue, possibly indicating that, despite being the most trafficked website in the world (Alexa,

2012), Facebook holds a unique role, purpose, and gratification for every user.

Some do, however, report seeking emotional support on Facebook - an important and

relevant finding. Facebook and other SNSs are likely to continue to attract numerous users and

the emotional gratifications received by this media tool may grow, develop, change, and

advance. Such support will need to be viewed in the context of changing societal norms and

expectations regarding immediate gratification for a range of different needs. Or, users may find

this medium to be inadequate as a forum for meeting emotional supportive needs, and revert

back to more traditional methods of seeking emotional support, using SNSs for other

gratifications.

Study Limitations

A chief limitation of the current study is the lack of diversity in the sample. As has been

true in other studies in this area of research, this sample was primarily well-educated, female,

and Caucasian. The snowball method of recruitment, dependent on the researcher's own social

network for recruitment of participants, may have been partly responsible for this limitation.

Beyond pointing to limitations in the generalizability of the sample, the lack of diversity in this

sample raises questions regarding the population of young adults that may be drawn to

Facebook, or even to participation in online surveys regarding Facebook use. This limitation,

along with the relatively small sample size, significantly restricts the generalizability of these

findings to a larger and more diverse population. Notably, analysis of relationships between

demographic variables and aspects of Facebook use was also limited by the lack of diversity in the sample.

A further limitation of the sample includes potential bias towards those inclined to give of their time without tangible reward, to participate in a study of Facebook; there is the possibility that these may be individuals for whom use of Facebook provides greater gratification to begin with.

Additionally, findings in one of the areas of interest of this study – the relationship of coping behavior with Facebook use – were limited by the unknown psychometric strength of the 15-item measure used.

Lastly, findings reflect a subjective measure of participants' Facebook use. Participants may not have wanted to admit to using Facebook for the purposes provided as choices in the survey, or they may not perceive that they are using it in these ways.

Implications of Study Findings for Social Work Practice, Policy, and Research

There are competing arguments in the field regarding whether online chatting, SNSs, and internet use can have negative effects on individual adjustment and developmental growth (Van Zalk et al., 2011), or be helpful by stimulating social connectedness and well-being (Valkenburg & Peter, 2009). It may be that it depends on the person using the sites and the purposes for which it is being used. Regardless of these differences, the impact of SNSs such as Facebook, whether positive or negative, requires further study to inform professional work. The findings of this study have shed some light on the demographic and descriptive characteristics associated with the use of Facebook for emotional support.

Although participants reported moderate levels of receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook, the vast majority reported "never" seeking emotional support for a range

of specific issues of concern. In terms of social work practice, Facebook may be an emotionally supportive tool for general needs in that it is easy and accessible quickly. However, while Facebook appears to be an emotionally supportive avenue for members of this generation, it does not appear to have replaced the support that can best be provided by social workers and other helping professionals for issues of concern.

Social workers may view the use Facebook as an avenue through which to connect more generally with others, such as locating individuals who have similar interests and/or needs, as a potential benefit for young adult clients. A focus on specific issues of concern, as opposed to general emotional needs, continues to be the domain of social work intervention and, based on study findings, it is in this area that Facebook and other SNSs may provide inadequate support. Facebook use also requires monitoring by helping professionals, given the potentially stressful nature of overuse (Thompson & Lougheed, 2012).

Further research is needed to determine the best use of Facebook and other SNSs as supportive, non-stressful tools that can compliment professional services. Specifically, study is needed regarding the varied use of Facebook by professionals to support positive connections with others, including supportive and self-help group processes. Whether the use of in-person support groups has diminished in the age of digital communication is also a question deserving of further study.

The finding of gender differences in receiving, providing, and seeking emotional support speaks to a focus on emotional needs and supportive services specifically for males. Social workers may need to tailor their services and interventions to meet the needs of young adult males, including the development of individual and group services capable of addressing issues impacting young males' willingness to seek out avenues for emotional support.

The younger cohort of Generation Y (18 to 22 year-olds) sought emotional support on Facebook more often in some of the categories of Facebook use than their older counterparts, with the issue of religion/spirituality as an exception to this trend. This finding speaks to potential differences between the youngest cohort of Generation Y and those who are 10 or 15 years older, both in terms of use of SNSs as well as emotional support needs. More social workers are needed in counseling centers at colleges and universities, the typical setting for many 18 to 22 year-olds, to help with these needs. Social workers are typically trained to work with children, adolescents, and adults; education regarding the needs of this "younger" cohort of young adults may be missing in social work education. More education and awareness around this age group of individuals who are not quite adolescents and also still not facing the same concerns of all "adults" may be necessary within the social work curriculum, as this group appears to be more highly represented among those seeking emotional support online.

There were differences found in seeking emotional support on Facebook between working and non-working participants in this study. Consequently, employment appears to be an important factor in utilization of Facebook for emotional support. The findings that more employed than unemployed participants sought emotional support on Facebook implies that support is needed not only for those who are without employment, but also for those who are employed. This is a difficult economic time, especially for members of this generation (Leonhardt, 2013). While social workers traditionally maintain a focus on the importance of full employment, implications of this study demonstrate that employment status can impact when and how people seek emotional support. Being employed may ease some financial burdens, but it also can create of host of other new and different stressors for young adults. Future advocacy can focus on improving mental health care coverage, particularly for employed young adults.

While we know that employed participants are using Facebook more often to seek emotional support, we do not know how well this is working for them, thus constituting a question worthy of future study.

The finding that those with greater financial need reported greater use of seeking emotional support on Facebook speaks to the possibility of creating ways to tag-team social work need-based services with the possible benefits of an online emotional supportive tool. For example, for clients who may have difficulty making appointments or prefer the ease of finding support online, it may be worthwhile for social workers to provide some of their services through Facebook groups online. Perhaps they can post relevant information to clients through a private (or public) Facebook group, or at least offer this as an alternative if clients cannot make an appointment. Most importantly, differences found in the financial need of this population are reported in their search of emotional support on Facebook for certain issues, raising the question of how social workers can maximize their efforts and assistance to individuals with higher financial need. If Facebook is now an avenue to receive emotional support, then the social work profession may need to look into arranging online support avenues in addition to in-person sessions for their clients.

Additionally, access to social media is a policy issue relevant to social workers, as people do not have the same access to computers and education around these sites. The use of Facebook for emotional support by participants of this study speaks to the need for advocacy efforts around access to computers beyond the formal educational setting, as computers may also provide people with a network of online emotional supportive tools.

Due to the lack of diversity in this sample, the researcher wonders what findings may have been true in a more diverse sample. Demographic differences among participants in

seeking emotional support for specific issues speak to the need for future research to learn more about Facebook and emotional support within a more diverse sample. Findings of such research could further inform and direct social work intervention with diverse populations.

Specifically, more research is needed to learn what is working in terms emotional support derived from online use. Are there ways in which Facebook provides greater levels of support than in-person meetings, and vice versa? Furthermore, in light of their findings related to stress and anxiety from Facebook use, Thompson and Lougheed (2012) argue that encouraging time-outs from computer use, increased activity, and face-to-face interactions may help decrease anxiety from Facebook usage. They argue that young adults should be encouraged to keep a sense of balance that includes some socialization online, but not to the point of neglecting mental well-being or sleep (p. 97). Therefore, it is important for future research to explore the positive and negative effects of Facebook for emotional support in order to inform our work with clients of all ages.

Given that this study showed the majority of this sample "never" sought emotional support for a range of issues, there is a continued need for social workers to become aware of the issues of concern, as well as the orientation to such issues, of young people today. It is possible that the issues selected for inclusion in the survey are simply not those for which online emotional support is sought. We know that Generation Y is the first generation to grow up with SNSs; therefore, social workers should incorporate a more complete understanding of SNSs, their usage, how it is affecting clients, and how it may even be useful as a supportive intervention in practice. Social work curriculum could include material regarding social media, patterns of use, and the interface of social work and online communication.

Conclusion

Facebook is only one example of a technological creation that has heralded vast changes in the way people connect and socialize with one another – a key component of human nature, and a critical understanding for social workers and other mental health professionals. Young adult participants in this study reported moderate levels of receiving and providing emotional support on Facebook, but the majority reported "never" seeking emotional support on Facebook for specific issues. These findings imply that Facebook may be a quick and easy tool to garner and receive some form of overall/general emotional support, but when it comes to specific issues, it may be inadequate as a source of emotional support. Social workers are still needed to provide in-person services, and their emotionally supportive role cannot be replaced by online communication alone.

However, if ways of staying "socially connected" to others is changing, it is likely that such change may eventually impact the way in which we provide services to clients. While there is no quick fix to the concerns of our clients and no replacement for in-person psychotherapy, social workers can consider the potential benefits of digital communication for clients. Ideally, social workers and other professionals will continue to carry out research on Facebook, emotional support, and mental health to explore ways of providing quality services in a changing social environment. Such research may yield results pointing to the positive use of online social media as a compliment to current services, including through the provision of additional services, psychoeducation, or even emotional support.

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Email Message to Researcher's Friends

Dear friends,

As many of you may know, I am currently working on a thesis for my Master of Social Work at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. My thesis explores the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support. I am in need of assistance to recruit participants to take my survey, and would sincerely appreciate your help in this process. I am asking you to please email at least 10 of your friends requesting their help in completing my survey.

When thinking about to whom to send this survey, please choose people who you are certain DO NOT KNOW ME, as I am looking for people to respond to the survey who are not friends of mine. As a result, <u>please do not take this survey yourself</u>. In an effort to achieve as much diversity as I can in participants, <u>please try to email as many diverse friends as possible</u> who are of varying age, race/ethnicity, gender, etc. Also, please ONLY email friends/acquaintances of yours who you believe to fit the following criteria: is literate in English, has an active Facebook account, is born in or between the years 1980 to 1994 (aged 18 to 33), and is at least 18 years old, as these are the inclusion criteria questions to be able to participate in the survey.

The survey takes approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete. It is conducted online and is completely anonymous. No names are on the data results, and participation cannot be tracked. Participant may also withdraw from the study at any time during the survey and may refuse to answer any of the questions listed.

<u>When emailing your friends, please use the email version below my signature</u>. Please email each of your friends separately or, if you prefer, blind carbon copy them, so that others are not aware of the group being emailed. Also, please do not tell me whom you emailed.

Thank you so much for your help in this process, and if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me at my Smith email address.

Thanks again for your support,
Marissa

> Dear friends,
>
> I am emailing you on behalf of a friend of mine who is currently working towards her Master of Social Work from Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA, and is working on her Master's Thesis. *Her research explores the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support.* She is looking for people to participate in her online survey, and I am hoping that you will please consider participating in her study.

The survey takes approximately 20 to 25 minutes to complete. It is conducted online and is completely anonymous – there will be no way to know who has actually completed the survey. No names are on the data results, and participation cannot be tracked. You may also withdraw from the study at any time during the survey and may refuse to answer any of the questions listed.

Although there is no compensation provided for participation in this study, personal benefits of participating include the opportunity to reflect on your use of Facebook and contribute to a body of knowledge on this emerging research topic.

Please click on this link to take the survey:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6J6DRNP

Thank you!

Email Message from Researcher's Friends to Possible Participants

Dear friends,

I am emailing you on behalf of a friend of mine who is currently working towards her Master of Social Work from Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA, and is working on her Master's Thesis. *Her research explores the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support.* She is looking for people to participate in her online survey, and I am hoping that you will please consider participating in her study.

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Although there is no compensation provided for participation in this study, personal benefits of participating include the opportunity to reflect on your use of Facebook and contribute to a body of knowledge on this emerging research topic.

Please click on this link to take the survey: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/6J6DRNP

Thank you!

Appendix C

Inclusion Criteria Questions

1. Are you at least 18 years old?
2. Were you born in or between the years 1980 to 1994?
3. Are you literate in English?
4. Do you have a Facebook account?

Informed Consent Form

Dear Participant,

My name is Marissa Zanno and I am a graduate student pursuing my Master of Social Work at Smith College School for Social Work in Northampton, MA. The focus and purpose of this research is to explore the factors associated with young adult use of Facebook for emotional support. The data will be used specifically for my Master of Social Work thesis, as well as possible publications and presentations.

To be eligible to participate in this study, you must be at least 18 years old, be born in or between the years of 1980 to 1994 (aged 18 to 33), be literate in English, and use a Facebook account. Participation consists of filling out an online survey, which takes about 20 to 25 minutes to complete. You will be asked questions about your demographic information, social support, and patterns of Facebook usage.

Possible risks associated with involvement in this study are minimal to nonexistent. There is no compensation provided for participation in this study, however personal benefits of participating include the opportunity to reflect on your use of Facebook and contribute to a body of knowledge on this emerging research topic.

The survey is conducted online and is completely anonymous. No names are on the data results, and your participation cannot be tracked. All data will be stored electronically in a password protected account and will be protected for a period of three years as required by Federal guidelines. Should I need the data beyond the three year period, it will continue to be protected, and will be destroyed when no longer needed.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may withdraw from the study at any time during the survey by simply closing out of the survey before submitting it at the end. You may also refuse to answer any of the questions listed. Once you press the "submit" button at the end of the survey, data cannot be withdrawn because the information was anonymously submitted. If you have any concerns about your rights, please call the Chair of the Smith College School for Social Work Human Subjects Review Committee at (413) 585-7974. If you have questions as a participant or about the study itself, you are encouraged to email me at xxxxx@smith.edu.

BY CHECKING THE "I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE" OPTION BELOW, YOU ARE INDICATING THAT YOU HAVE READ AND UNDERSTAND THE INFORMATION ABOVE AND THAT YOU HAVE HAD AN OPPORTUNITY TO ASK QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, YOUR PARTICIPATION, AND YOUR RIGHTS AND THAT YOU AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Marissa Zanno
MSW Candidate 2013, Smith College School for Social Work, Northampton, MA

__ I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

__ I DO NOT AGREE TO PARTICIPATE

If you agree to participate, please print a copy of this page for your records before submitting the survey

Appendix E

Survey Instrument

<u>Demographic Information</u>
1. What is your age?
-18
-19
-20
-21
-22
-23
-24
-25
-26
-27
-28
-29
-30
-31
-32
-33

2. Which of the following best describes your gender?
-Male
-Female
-Transgender
-Other

3. Which of the following best represents your racial/ethnic identification?
-African American or Black
-Caucasian or White
-Hispanic or Latino(a)
-American Indian or Alaskan Native
-Asian or Pacific Islander
-Multiracial
-Other

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
-Less than High School
-High School/G.E.D.
-Some College
-2-year College Degree
-4-year College Degree
-Graduate Degree

5. Are you a student?
-Yes
-No

6. What is your employment status?
-Currently working full-time (35 or more hours a week)
-Currently working part-time (less than 35 hours a week)
-Unemployed
-Temporarily laid off, on sick or other leave
-Disabled

7. How would you best describe the community setting in which you currently live?
-Rural/Country
-Suburb/Small Town
-Urban/City

8. What is your current relationship status?
-Married or in a committed relationship
-Not in a committed relationship

9. How would you describe your living situation?
-Living alone
-Living with another person(s)

On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate your response to the following question:
10. If I earned any less money, I would have difficulty paying my bills.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate your response to the following questions:
11. There is a special person who is around when I am in need.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

12. I can talk about my problems with my family.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral

-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

13. I can count on my friends when things go wrong.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

Please think of a stressful event that occurred for you in the last six months, and consider the manner in which you coped with it.
14. Thought of many ideas before deciding what to do
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

15. Accepted sympathy and understanding from someone
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

16. Talked to people about the situation because talking about it made me feel better
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

17. Set some goals for myself to deal with the situation
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

18. Daydreamed about better times
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

19. Tried different ways to solve the problem until I found one that worked
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

20. Talked about fears and worries to a relative or friend
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

21. Watched television more than usual
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

22. Avoided being with people in general
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

23. Went to a friend for advice about how to change the situation
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

24. Identified with characters in movies or novels
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

25. Tried to solve the problem
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

26. Wished that people would just leave me alone
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

27. Sought reassurance from those who know me best
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

28. Tried to carefully plan a course of action rather than acting on impulse
-Not at all
-A little
-A lot

On a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), please rate your response to the following questions:
29. Facebook is part of my everyday activity.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree

-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

30. I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

31. Facebook has become part of my daily routine.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

32. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

33. I feel I am part of the Facebook community.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

34. I would be sorry if Facebook shut down.
-1 Strongly Disagree
-2 Disagree
-3 Neutral
-4 Agree
-5 Strongly Agree

35. Approximately how many TOTAL Facebook friends do you have?
-1   10 or less
-2   11-50
-3   51-100
-4   101-250
-5   251-500
-6   501-750

-7 751-1000
-8 Over 1000

36. In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent actively using Facebook?
-1 0-14 minutes
-2 15-29 minutes
-3 30-44 minutes
-4 45-59 minutes
-5 1 hour – 1.5 hours
-6 1.5 hours – 2 hours
-7 Over 2 hours

37. How satisfied are you with Facebook, overall?
-Not satisfied at all
-Barely satisfied
-Neutral
-Satisfied
-Very satisfied

The following questions (#38-49) ask about your experience seeking *emotional support* through Facebook. *Emotional support* can be defined by <u>one or more</u> of these aspects: (a) feeling that others care for you; (b) feeling that you are listened to; (c) feeling that others express interest and/or concern for your well-being.

On a scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Very Often), please rate your response to the following questions:

In your use of Facebook (i.e. updating your status, posting photos, commenting on others' walls, photos, status updates, etc.), how often do you seek emotional support in the area of…

38. Romantic relationships?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

39. Family issues?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

40. Friendships?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often

-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

41. Work/jobs?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

42. School?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

43. Finances?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

44. Physical health?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

45. Mental health?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

46. Religion/spirituality?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

47. Politics?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

48. General emotions (for example: happiness, sadness, anger, etc.)?

-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

49. Death/loss?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

50. Are there any other items for which you seek emotional support in your use of Facebook? (If not, you may skip this question)

On a scale from 1 (Never) to 4 (Very Often), please rate your response to the following questions:
51. How often do you feel that the people in your Facebook network make you feel loved and cared for?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

52. How often do you convey love and care to the people in your Facebook network?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

53. How often do you feel that the people in your Facebook network listen to your problems or concerns?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

54. How often do you feel that you listen to the people in your Facebook network's problems or concerns?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

55. How often do you feel that the people in your Facebook network express interest or concern for your well-being?
-1 Never

-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

56. How often do you feel that you express interest or concern for the people in your Facebook network?
-1 Never
-2 Not too often
-3 Fairly often
-4 Very often

Approval Letter from the Smith College Human Subjects Review Committee

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January 10, 2013

Marissa Zanno

Dear Marissa,

You have done a very nice and complete job in responding to all the Committee's concerns and requests. We thank you. Your project is now approved by the Human Subjects Review Committee.

Please note the following requirements:

Consent Forms: All subjects should be given a copy of the consent form.

Maintaining Data: You must retain all data and other documents for at least three (3) years past completion of the research activity.

In addition, these requirements may also be applicable:

Amendments: If you wish to change any aspect of the study (such as design, procedures, consent forms or subject population), please submit these changes to the Committee.

Renewal: You are required to apply for renewal of approval every year for as long as the study is active.

Completion: You are required to notify the Chair of the Human Subjects Review Committee when your study is completed (data collection finished). This requirement is met by completion of the thesis project during the Third Summer.

Happy New Year and good luck with your study!

Sincerely,

Marsha Kline Pruett /Phw

Marsha Kline Pruett, M.S., Ph.D., M.S.L.
Vice Chair, Human Subjects Review Committee

CC: Beth Lewis, Research Advisor