

## **Chapter 12**

### **Toward a New(er) Sociability: Uses, Gratifications, and Social Capital on Facebook**

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Emerging convergent platforms of sociality online generate public interest and invite a reconsideration of traditional theoretical paradigms of media research. Social network sites, specifically, afford a variety of social behaviors that simultaneously expand and challenge our conventional understanding of sociability, audience activity, passivity, and involvement. Online platforms such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, or CyWorld and others provide individuals with the opportunity to present themselves and to connect with existing and new social networks. These networked platforms of socially oriented activity permit an introduction of the self via public displays of connection (boyd and Ellison, 2007; Donath and boyd, 2004; Papacharissi, 2002a&b; 2009). In doing so, they promote multimediated identity-driven performances that are crafted around the electronic mediation of social circles and status. In addition, they provide flexible and personalizable modes of sociability, which allow individuals to sustain strong and weak ties through a variety of online tools and strategies (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield and Vitak, 2010). These customized expressions of online sociability allow users to pursue social behaviors through variable levels of involvement, activity, and multi-tasking (Hargittai and Hsieh, 2010; Papacharissi, 2010).

Individuals engage the connective affordances of social network sites (SNSs) so as to combine offline and online communication strategies for interaction. These strategies employ converged media but also converge social, cultural and political practices and spheres (e.g., Walther et al., 2010). Conducting research in a converged media environment

requires that researchers develop theories and analytical tools that examine uses, effects, activity, involvement, and content across media. These tools must also recognize that in a converged environment, media use allows audiences to serve as both consumers and producers of media, frequently at the same time. The resulting confluence of emerging behaviors escapes the analytical lens of theoretical approaches that associate uses, user profiles with particular media and genres of activity. This chapter proposes a theoretical model that combines elements of the Uses and Gratifications and the Social Networks approaches so as to explicate patterns of media use, activity, and sociability emerging post convergence.

### **Uses and Gratifications**

Uses and gratifications (U&G) is a psychological communication perspective that examines how individuals use mass media, on the assumption that individuals select media and content to fulfill felt needs or wants. Contemporary U&G research is grounded in the following five assumptions: (a) "communication behavior, including media selection and use, is goal-directed, purposive, and motivated"; (b) "people take the initiative in selecting and using communication vehicles to satisfy felt needs or desires"; (c) "a host of social and psychological factors mediate people's communication behavior"; (d) "media compete with other forms of communication (i.e., functional alternatives) for selection, attention, and use to gratify our needs or wants"; and (e) "people are typically more influential than the media in the relationship, but not always" (A. Rubin, 1994, p. 420). U&G has been employed to understand various media uses and consequences, covering for instance soap operas (e.g., Alexander, 1985; Perse, 1986; A. Rubin, 1985), news programs (e.g., Palmgreen, Wenner

and Rayburn, 1980; A. Rubin, 1981), using the VCR (e.g., Levy, 1987; A. Rubin and Bantz, 1989), listening to talk radio (e.g., Turow, 1974), watching cable TV (e.g., Becker, Dunwoody and Rafaell, 1983), channel surfing (e.g., Ferguson, 1992), magazine reading (Payne, Severn and Dozier, 1988; Towers, 1987a), tabloid reading (Salwen and Anderson, 1984), the Internet (e.g., Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000), reality TV (e.g., Papacharissi and Mendelson, 2007) and religious television (Pettersson, 1986).

Specifically related to technological convergence, U&G has been used to understand how individuals employ the Internet to meet different goals, based on their socio-psychological disposition (e.g., Rubin, 1994). Scholars have examined connections between online news and civic engagement, public opinion or political behavior (e.g., Hardy and Scheufele, 2005; Kaye and Johnson, 2002) or how individuals select or combine online and offline news sources (e.g. Dimmick, Chen and Li, 2004; De Waal, Schoenbach and Lauf, 2006). Research has identified motives for using the Internet, linking them to distinct socio-psychological characteristics and types of Internet use (Perse and Ferguson, 2000; Papacharissi and Rubin, 2000; Papacharissi, 2002a and b, 2007). Consensus suggests that online media serve as functional alternatives to interpersonal and mediated communication, providing options or complements for aspects of an individual's environment that are not as fulfilling. Aligned with time and other medium displacement effects that other studies on the sociability of new media have identified (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998; 2002), these studies help explicate the place of net-based technologies within the individuals media ecology. To this end, U&G has been useful in connecting specific attributes to certain uses of the Internet, and distinguishing between uses that are more goal-oriented or instrumental versus others that are of a habitual or ritualistic nature. The

perspective has a long history of being combined with other perspectives, and more recently, it has been integrated with the expectancy value approach to understand online media adoption behaviors (Lo, Li, Shih and Yang, 2005), and with diffusion of innovations to analyze individual differences in gaming adoption (Chang, Lee and Kim, 2006).

However, U&G has not yet identified, in studies of the sociability of new media, a particular social outcome that would be the result of motives, socio-psycho predispositions and uses working together. In fact, lack of conceptual clarity on the concept of gratifications has been repeatedly raised as a theoretical limitation of the perspective (Lometti, Reeves and Bybee, 1977; Swanson, 1977). The perspective has been critiqued as being too individualistic and underemphasizing the value of interaction (McQuail, 1979). The social network approach, on the other hand, is structured around the concept of networked interaction. It focuses on the outcome of the interaction, that is, the network and the social capital generated by the network. Still, while the social networks approach is rich in its examination of structural features of networks, it is by definition not concerned with the socio-psychological profile of the individual. This presents a possible area for conceptual integration between the two approaches, so as to present a framework that examines individual orientations toward social network use online.

### **Online Social Networks and Social Network Sites**

Research on online social networks examines the formation and maintenance of online networks that support existing and new social ties (Wasserman and Faust, 1994; Wellman and Berkowitz, 1997). The unit of analysis is the interaction or relation between people, measured in terms of ties held by individuals maintaining a relation, the types of

exchanges, frequency of contact, strength of ties, intimacy, qualitative elements of relations, size of networks, global or local span of networks and numerous other variables (Haythornthwaite, 2000, 2005; Haythornthwaite, Wellman and Mantei, 1995; Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 1998).

Earlier online social network research examined communication and medium use (e-mail, phone, fax and videoconferencing) in a work network of co-located researchers, to find that pairs of individuals possessing stronger ties tended to communicate more frequently, maintain a greater number of relations and communicate more frequently (Haythornthwaite, Wellman and Mantei, 1995; Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 1998). This finding has re-surfaced in a variety of networks and context, including distance learning (e.g., Haythornthwaite, 2000), organizational contexts (e.g., Garton, Haythornthwaite and Wellman, 1997), and social support networks (e.g., Hlebec, Manfreda and Vehovar, 2006) allowing researchers to finetune the concepts of *social network relation* (type of exchange or interaction, characterized by *content*, *direction* and *strength*), *tie* (pairs who maintain one or more types of relations, developing *strong*, *weak* or *latent* ties), *network* as web of person-to-person connectivity (distinguishing between *ego-centered* or *whole* network analysis, which may examine *range*, *centrality* or *roles*), and *media multiplexity* (the tendency of more strongly tied pairs to make use of more available media). Studies focusing on *Netville*, a wired suburb of Toronto, revealed that online interaction frequently supplemented or served as an alternative to face-to-face interaction, in ways that had positive effects on social capital (e.g., Hampton and Wellman, 2000; Hampton, 2002).

Social network sites represent a natural extension of this work, as they connect networks of individuals that may or may not share a place based connection. Social

network sites are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (boyd and Ellison, 2007). They host social networks that are articulated online, and as such, they present one iteration or aspect of social network research. On most SNSs, users are not looking to meet new people or to network, but rather to sustain contact with their existing group of friends and acquaintances (boyd and Ellison, 2007). In doing so, presenting a profile and displaying connections with others publicly forms the basis for interaction on SNSs (boyd and Ellison, 2007; boyd and Heer, 2006; Donath, 2007; Donath and boyd, 2004). SNSs support varying types of interaction on diverse and differing platforms, and SNSs like Friendster, MySpace and Facebook have had a significant influence on the orientation of most other SNSs (for a timeline of SNSs, see boyd and Ellison, 2007).

### **Social Network Sites as Social Architectures**

Research on SNSs generates interdisciplinary interest and evidence of evolving social behaviors online. Self presentation online and impression management presents a common starting point for most researchers. boyd and Heer (2006) studied user profiles on SNSs as conversational pieces, and found that Friendster users display friends to suggest or “signal” aspects of their identity to potential audiences. In this context, ‘public displays of connection’ present the center of identity performance, and are typically viewed as “a signal of the reliability of one’s identity claims” (Donath and boyd, 2004: 73).

Several researchers employ the architecture of the SNS as starting point, to discuss and investigate a variety of related topics. Stutzman (2006) tracked the types of personal information most likely to be disclosed on SNSs, pointing out that lexical or architectural differences among these SNSs (Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook) contributed to tendencies or variations in personal information disclosure. Gross and Acquisti (2005) further examined how individuals disclose information and protect privacy on Facebook, finding that most users share personal information openly and few modify their default privacy settings for increased protection. For members of a YouTube community, 'publicly private' (private behaviors, exhibited with the member's true identity) and 'privately public' (sharing publicly accessible video without disclosing member's true identity) behaviors were developed within the architectural confines of the system to signal different depths of relationships and to communicate empathy, respect or inclusion among members of the network (Lange, 2007). On MySpace and Friendster, displays of interests were carefully selected and arranged so as to communicate affiliation with a particular taste culture or fabric (Liu, Maes and Davenport, 2006; Liu, 2007). These trends are reflective of behaviors that are need oriented, and are developed around the customization of social attributes of technologies, effected for the communication of social information. They suggest a confluence of user motives, media attributes, and social ties or outcomes that have been previously examined in media research within the approaches of uses and gratifications, social networks, and through a discussion of media attributes or affordances of particular media genres or platforms.

In these networks that are particularly ego-centered, individuals at the center of their own networks take charge and adapt network norms to fit personal, cultural and

social context (boyd, 2006a). Moreover, SNS users frequently interpret cues deposited in member profiles, such as message on Facebook 'walls' or pictures of member friends to make inferences about the member's character (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman and Tong, 2008). In a context that is markedly non-western, such as Cyworld, architectural SNS features are adapted to match the cultural norms of the users and the high-context relational dialectics of Koreans (Kim and Yun, 2007). These empirical data further document reappropriations of technology that cater to the fulfillment of particular needs associated with the sustenance of social ties with a variety of circles or networks.

Finally, several studies develop around Facebook, the most popular of social networks at present. In particular, studies of Facebook find that users employ the network to learn more about individuals they meet offline, thus further documenting the connection between online and offline behaviors and tendencies (Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield, 2006). Further studies reveal a strong association between bridging social capital, which expands social opportunities and enhances information sharing among primarily weak ties, and individuals reporting low satisfaction and low self-esteem (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007). These findings underline connections between user orientations and subsequent generation of social capital, which map out a credible intersection for U&G and the social networks approach.

## **Rationale**

The proposed study is based on a theoretical framework that combines U&G with the social network approach to study how motives and social-psychological traits affect Facebook use, social network structural factors (size of network, density, types of ties) and

social capital generated. The study combines concepts identified and measured by U&G and social network researchers, with a particular focus on social and psychological predispositions, motives, social ties, and social capital. The following paragraphs detail the variables studied within this theoretical framework, and how together they form the conceptual structure for the integration of the two perspectives. The study focuses on the following research questions:

RQ1: What are salient motives for Facebook use?

RQ2: How do motives and social and psychological antecedents interact with social capital generated on Facebook?

## **Method**

### **Sample**

A total of 344 students enrolled in introductory communication classes within an urban university were surveyed about their use of Facebook. Participation in the study was voluntary, and participants received extra credit in the courses. The initial sample was then snowballed, through participants asking their Facebook friends to complete the survey. An online survey, administered through Zoomerang.com, was created in order to examine individual's uses, motivations and effects of Facebook. The sample breakdown was 64.3% female ( $n = 221$ ) and 35.7% male ( $n = 123$ ); 85% of sample were current undergraduates in college. Of those 36.8% were freshman; 25.1% were sophomores; 26.4 were juniors; and, 11.7% were seniors. The majority of participants were between the age of 18 and 25 (88.4%). 73.7% of the sample was White, 14.5% African American, 7.4% Asian American, 3.6% Hispanic, and 4.1% of multiethnic origin.

### **Facebook Use**

*Patterns of Facebook use.* Participants were surveyed about their general Internet and Facebook Use. Overall, participants spent an average of 74 minutes online ( $SD = 77.53$ ) per week. More specifically, 83.7% of the participants reported checking their Facebook page daily. In fact, participants reported checking their Facebook pages an average almost 6 times per day ( $m = 5.78$ ;  $SD = 5.831$ ) and spending an average of almost 36 minutes per day on Facebook ( $m = 35.83$ ;  $SD = 127.427$ ). We wanted to get a sense of what participants did when they logged on to Facebook. A series of questions examined a number of activities (on a 1 to 5 scale; 1 = every time I log on; 5 = never). Participants most often sent messages ( $M = 2.54$ ;  $SD = .901$ ; median 2.00) and wrote on friends' walls ( $M = 2.17$ ;  $SD = .907$ ; median = 2.00). Less frequently participants posted new photographs ( $M = 3.04$ ;  $SD = .963$ ; median = 3.00), searched for additional friends ( $M = 3.16$ ;  $SD = .992$ ; median= 3.00), and tagged already posted photos ( $M = 3.16$ ;  $SD = 1.022$ ; median = 3.00). They seldom updated their own profile ( $M = 3.60$ ;  $SD = .885$ ; median = 4.00), played games ( $M = 4.37$ ;  $SD = .984$ ; median = 5.00), took quizzes ( $M = 4.26$ ;  $SD = .919$ ; median = 5.00), incorporated new addons ( $M = 3.97$ ;  $SD = .823$ ; median = 4.00) and used addons they already had ( $M = 3.97$ ;  $SD = 1.075$ ; median = 4.00).

91.3% of the participants reported having 51 or more friends. Sixty percent of the participants reported having 51 or more photos posted on their page. 55.8% reported having between one and five addons on their page, and another 30.7% reported having between 6 and 15 addons. Finally, 20% of the participants belonged to between one and five Facebook groups, another 37.9% belonged to between six and 15 groups, and 25.6% more belonged to between 16 and 30. Only 37.8% of the participants reported starting a Facebook group.

## **Motives**

We combined interpersonal (inclusion/companionship), media (entertainment, habit, information, social interaction, escape, pass time, and relaxation), newer media (coolness factor/novelty of technology, self-expression), and professional advancement motives to construct 11 a priori motive categories of possible Facebook motives: pass time, relaxation, entertainment, information sharing, professional advancement, companionship, social interaction, cool and new technology, self expression, habit, escape). Three items were used to represent each of these a priori categories, and we adapted the statements from previous research to Facebook (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Pornsakulvanich, Haridakis & Rubin, 2008). Respondents were asked to indicate how much these reasons were like their own reasons for using Facebook on a 5-point Likert scale (5 = *exactly*, 1 = *not at all*). We used principal components analysis with Varimax rotation to extract and interpret possible Facebook motive factors. We required an eigenvalue of 1.0 or greater to retain a factor, which also had to contain at least three items meeting a 60/40 loading criteria. Responses to the retained items were summed and averaged to form the scales representing each factor. The analysis accounted for 69% of the variance, and the results are summarized in response to RQ1 below.

## **Social and Psychological Antecedents**

*Contextual age.* Contextual age is a construct that was developed to account for the inaccuracies resulting from only using chronological age in communication research and was developed as "a transactional, life-position index of aging" (A. Rubin & Rubin, 1986). Depending on contextual age, people may also use mediated channels as functional alternatives (over interpersonal ones) for the fulfillment of interpersonal needs (A. Rubin &

Rubin, 1982, 1986; R. Rubin & Rubin, 1982). A. Rubin and Rubin's (1982) Contextual Age Scale was used to assess life position, consisting of the following dimensions: physical health, interpersonal interaction, mobility, life satisfaction, social activity, and economic security. The physical health and economic security dimensions were not included due to low expectation of significant variation within the population under study. Each remaining dimension—life satisfaction, mobility, social activity, and interpersonal interaction—contained five items (A. Rubin & Rubin, 1982; R. Rubin & Rubin, 1982). Respondents stated their levels of agreement with these statements on a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = *strongly agree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*). Responses to the items of each subscale were summed and averaged. The mean scores for the separate dimensions were: life satisfaction ( $M = 3.32$ ,  $SD = .75$ ,  $\alpha = .68$ ); mobility ( $M = 3.68$ ,  $SD = 0.87$ ,  $\alpha = .62$ ); social activity ( $M = 3.67$ ,  $SD = 0.70$ ,  $\alpha = .67$ ); and interpersonal interaction ( $M = 3.75$ ,  $SD = 0.66$ ,  $\alpha = .45$ ).

*Unwillingness to communicate.* Burgoon (1976) conceptualized unwillingness to communicate as “a chronic tendency to avoid and/or devalue oral communication” (p. 60). The construct has been linked to anomia and alienation, introversion, self-esteem, communication apprehension, and reticence (Burgoon 1976). It has been applied to mass media research to help explain differences in media and new technology use and has been linked to a preference for online or mediated channels of communication for individuals who did not find face-to-face channels as convenient, readily available, or comfortable. It has two dimension: (a) approach avoidance (UCAA), which indicates anxiety, introversion, and diminished participation in general communication, and (b) reward (UCR), which includes distrust, perceived isolation, and an evaluation of the overall utility of communication. We adapted Burgoon's (1976) 20-item scale to 10 items for use in this

study. The scale was coded so that high scores for UCAA imply a tendency to welcome and seek out interpersonal encounters, and high scores for UCR reflect an individual who feels valued by their environment and perceives interpersonal communication to be rewarding. We used a 5-point Likert-type scale (5 = *strongly agree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*) to be consistent with the rest of the measures in the study, and summed and averaged responses to the items. The mean for the UC-AA dimension was (M = 3.69; SD = .65,  $\alpha = .79$ ) and for the UCR (M = 4.07; SD = .52,  $\alpha = .70$ ).

### **Communication Outcomes**

*Social Capital.* Social network ties are frequently assessed by making use of the concept of social capital. Previous literature on social capital conceptualizes three different forms of social capital. Bonding social capital focuses on resources people have for strengthening the connection between people in their closely-connected groups. Bridging social capital focuses on reaching outside traditional in-groups to link with those unlike you. And maintained social capital focuses on staying connected to groups from previous moments in one's life (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). Fifteen items (five for each type of social capital), modified from Williams (2006) and Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) were included (maintained (M = 3.94; SD = .62;  $\alpha = .75$ ), bridging, (M = 3.43; SD = .63;  $\alpha = .72$ ), and bonding (M = 3.38; SD = .67;  $\alpha = .72$ ).

*Affinity* with media has been linked to many motives, such as arousal, habit, pass time, escape, entertainment, companionship, and information seeking, in the television and online context. (e.g., A. Rubin, 1981; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000). The Television Affinity Scale (A. Rubin, 1981) was adapted to assess liking for or *affinity* with Facebook. This was a 5-item Likert scale (5 = *strongly agree*, 1 = *strongly disagree*), reflecting how attached

people are to the platform, how much they might miss it if gone, or how much they depend on it for their daily routines. Responses to the items were summed and averaged. The mean for the scale was 2.50 ( $SD = 0.33$ ,  $\alpha = .88$ ).

### *Open Ended Questions*

Participants were given the opportunity to expand upon their views of Facebook through three open-ended questions. These responses were analyzed qualitatively, pulling out the major themes that arose. We asked: "In your own words, what is it about Facebook that makes it appealing? What do you like the most about Facebook? What do you like the least about Facebook? Responses are employed in the discussion section, to illuminate and substantiate quantitative findings.

## **Results**

### **RQ1: Motives for Facebook Use.**

The factor analysis of the motive statements yielded nine interpretable factors: expressive information sharing, habitual pass time, relaxing entertainment, cool and new trend, companionship, professional advancement, escape, social interaction, and new friendships. The first factor, *expressive information seeking* ( $\alpha = .85$ ), accounted for 11.39% of the variance after rotation. It combined five items from the *information sharing* and *self expression* a priori categories, pointing to a need to share both general and personal information with others, and alluding to a lack of distinction between the two that is characteristic on Facebook. The second factor, *habitual pass time* ( $\alpha = .85$ ), consisted of five items from the a priori categories *habit* and *pass time*, and explained 10.54% of the variance. The items all pointed pass time uses of Facebook of a ritualistic nature, possibly attesting to the addictive nature of the genre. The third factor, *relaxing entertainment* ( $\alpha =$

.82), combined five items from the *relax* and *entertainment* motive categories, and accounted for 9.4% of the variance. The factor indicated a passive and entertainment oriented mode of engaging with Facebook. The fourth factor, *cool and new trend* ( $\alpha = .80$ ), accounted for 7.03% of the variance contained all three items of the same a priori motive category, representing a clean loading of this factor. This motive category suggested that individuals were on Facebook because it is “the thing to do,” “it is cool,” and because “everybody else is doing it,” thus pointing to the social desirability cost of staying off Facebook. The fifth factor, *companionship* ( $\alpha = .83$ ), retained all three items from its respective a priori category, and explained 6.76% of the variance, pointing to the ability of the medium to simulate companionship in the absence of other channels. The sixth factor, *professional advancement* ( $\alpha = .80$ ), also did not deviate from its a priori conceptualization, and accounted for 6.74% of the variance. The seventh factor, *escape* ( $\alpha = .75$ ), also emerged in its a priori formation post rotation, and accounted for 6.56% of the variance. This factor suggested procrastinatory uses of Facebook, to avoid tasks or individuals. The eighth factor, *social interaction* ( $\alpha = .83$ ), explained 6.16% of the variance, but only contained two items from its a priori category, and thus was not employed in subsequent analysis. The ninth and final factor was a single item factor (“Meet new people”), explaining 4.3% of the variance. While the item attested to the importance of Facebook in making new connections, unfortunately the make-up of the factor did not meet the criteria for inclusion in statistical analysis. Future studies may try to expand and perfect these last two factors, as they appear to allude to important social needs fulfilled by Facebook.

*Habitual pass time* ( $M = 3.82, SD = .75$ ) and *relaxing entertainment* ( $M = 3.02, SD = .68$ ) had the highest mean scores, rendering them the motives more likely to be salient to most. *Expressive information sharing* ( $M = 2.75, SD = .80$ ), *escapism* ( $M = 2.54, SD = .87$ ), and *cool and new trend* ( $M = 2.50, SD = .92$ ) were also fairly salient factors, along with *companionship* ( $M = 2.35, SD = .95$ ), to a lesser extent. *Professional advancement* ( $M = 1.92, SD = .84$ ) was the least salient, indicating that it was more likely to be significant for a specific and smaller part of the study population. Most motives correlated moderately, with the highest correlations noted between companionship and escapism ( $r = .45$ ), companionship and relaxing entertainment ( $r = .40$ ), escapism and habitual pass time ( $r = .43$ ), and escapism and relaxing entertainment ( $r = .44$ ),  $p < .001$ . These tendencies sketched out rather ritualistic and socially oriented uses of the Facebook genre.

## **RQ2: Motives, Antecedents, and Social Capital**

The most significant and highest correlations were noted among interpersonal interaction and the approach-avoidance (UCAA) ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ) and the reward (UCR) ( $r = .53, p < .001$ ) dimensions of the unwillingness to communicate scale. UCAA also correlated highly with life satisfaction ( $r = .49, p < .001$ ) and social activity ( $r = .40, p < .001$ ), as did UCR with life satisfaction ( $r = .46, p < .001$ ) and social activity ( $r = .45, p < .001$ ). Maintained, bonding and bridging social capital correlated positively and significantly with all motives, with the highest and most significant relations noted between bridging social capital and expressive information sharing ( $r = .43, p < .001$ ), as well as relaxing entertainment ( $r = .38, p < .001$ ).

Four separate hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted to further investigate the nature and direction of these relationships. Facebook Affinity, bonding,

bridging and maintained social capital each served as the dependent variable for the four regressions. Variables associated with the amount of time spent online, number of times individuals check Facebook daily, estimated time spent on Facebook per week, and number of years of experience with the Internet were entered on the first step of the regression analysis. Contextual age dimensions (mobility, interpersonal interaction, life satisfaction and social activity), UC-Approach Avoidance and UC-Reward were entered on the second step, as antecedent variables. The Motives for Facebook Use scales were entered on the third step of the analysis. For *affinity*, two predictors emerged at the final step of the analysis: Total time spent on Facebook per week ( $F = 4.90, p = .03$ ) and the motive of escapism ( $F = 4.13, p = 0.5$ ), in an overall significant equation ( $R = .73, R^2 = .54, F [7, 29] = 2.02, p = .01$ ). This indicated that the more people used Facebook, the greater the affinity they developed for it, especially for uses associated with escapist needs.

The same hierarchical regression procedure was repeated for the three types of social capital. The equation for bonding social capital yielded two significant predictors, both of which increased in significance in the final step of the analysis: Total time spent online per day off work ( $F = 5.76, p = .02$ ), and the contextual age dimension of social activity ( $F = 11.13, p = .002$ ), in an overall significant equation ( $R = .81, R^2 = .66, F [7, 28] = 3.22, p = .003$ ). These results indicated stronger social ties were best served by more time spent online, for those individuals who enjoyed a greater amount of social activity. These findings support the idea that time spent online allows those social to maintain or increase their level of social connectivity.

The regression equation calculated for bridging social capital produced an overall significant equation ( $R = .86, R^2 = .74, F [7, 28] = 4.72, p = .000$ ), with four significant

predictors, all of which emerged on the final step: Mobility ( $F = 5.68, p = .02$ ), and the motives of relaxing entertainment ( $F = 5.63, p = .02$ ), cool and new trend ( $F = 5.64, p = .02$ ), and professional advancement ( $F = 6.12, p = .02$ ). The results of the equation indicated that those with increased mobility, using Facebook for entertainment, relaxation, because it is a new trend, and for professional advancement tended to increase and sustain weaker ties with distanced friends or individuals in extended or non-traditional in-groups of contact. The findings support the idea that mobile individuals tend to use Facebook to support and extend their mobility to spheres of contact that may not be readily available or accessible.

Finally, the regression equation for maintained social capital was overall not significant and failed to produce significant predictors. It is possible this is related to the variables examined or the demographic characteristics of the population surveyed.

### **Discussion**

This study focused on the social utility of Facebook, by employing a theoretical model that combined the Uses and Gratifications perspective with Social Network theory, especially centered on the concept of Social Capital. The conceptual framework proposed that antecedent variables, together with user motives, morph the Facebook experience and influence the type of social capital generated by Facebook use. In order to provide supporting evidence for this model, relationships among the included concepts were examined.

Prevalent motives that emerged from the analysis included the motives of habitual pass time and relaxing entertainment, both of which combined motive categories for traditional media. Not only did this reflect the converged nature of the services provided by Facebook, but it also suggested salient uses for most users tended to be of a ritualistic and

relatively passive nature. The more instrumental uses of expressive information seeking and professional advancement were not as salient with this sample. At the same time, escapism and companionship, two traditional media use motives usually associated with television use, were moderately salient for this population, thus confirming the ability of Facebook to converge traditional and new media needs. In the open ended responses, participants referred to the ability of Facebook to help relieve boredom or distract them from or relieve them of daily stresses. As one respondent said: “[Facebook] is entertaining enough to spend time on to get away from homework.” Another said, “It is fun, and not stressful like schoolwork can be.” This can verge on addiction, according to one user: “Its easy to get sucked into,” while another respondent added, “I think the reason Facebook is so appealing because it offers a wide variety of ways to distract people from the stress.

The regression analyses documented some substantial links between social capital, Facebook motives, and social and psychological predisposition. Overall, these tended to support an image of a user who employs this particular technology genre to amplify opportunities at his or her disposal. Unlike earlier studies of the Net in general, which pointed to the paradox of a social technology that isolates individuals in private sphere of communication, and in contrast to the popular stereotype of the anti-social computer geek, these results indicate those mobile and leading a socially activity are able to reap the social benefits of Facebook, and employ it to increase bonding and bridging social capital. Thus, this online social network sustains the social connectivity of members that are already fairly active and mobile. Interestingly enough, these users rarely have the generation of social capital in mind, as they tend to approach Facebook from the not-so-goal-directed, relatively passive, and ritualistic motives for relaxing entertainment and habitual pastime.

For these users, this becomes a daily routine that conveniently maintains and extends individuals' spheres of contact. Through the open-ended responses, participants revealed some apprehension of the addictive nature of Facebook, typically presented as a third-person effect, affecting others but not them directly. For example, one person said, "The obsessive way some people are about checking Facebook, updating their page, etc. It's annoying."

Additional responses to open ended questions further solidified our interpretations. Participants repeatedly stressed the communicative aspects of Facebook, specifying that they relied Facebook for staying connected to those they already know and for meeting new people. Participants valued Facebook for helping them keep up with people at a distance, inform others about themselves and find people with similar interests. For example, one respondent stated: [Facebook is appealing because of] "the ability to be a part of someone's everyday life no matter how far away they are." Another respondent stated: "I can connect to my friends across the country and world easily and see what they're up to which used to be somewhat of a hassle. I can stay more easily connected to friends from high school as well." One person summarized Facebook's ability to meet people in terms of building on those they already know. "The ability to meet someone randomly and make that person apart of the people you know in your life time." Participants enjoyed being able to keep up with their friends' achievements, news, relationship status and life developments. Several indicated that not being part of Facebook would equal being left out of these developments and sphere of contact, thus alluding to the social cost of not joining.

Qualitative and quantitative responses on dominant uses of Facebook pointed to a user state that palindromes between the socially active and idle, or more colloquially put,

describes a social couch potato. Users happily connect with others socially, as long as they may do so from the comfort of an electronically mediated couch, in a state that permits the stationary pursuit of social activity. This antithesis reflects the realities of our contemporary everyday routines, which blur spheres of work and play, friends and co-workers, public and private life. Future research could place social networks in the greater context of public life, and specifically examine how they support and reinforce dominant work-life patterns and routines. Beyond the point of fulfilling short-term needs for relaxation, entertainment and social contact simultaneously, these networks are telling of contemporary trends that include globalization, transnational mobility and work, social spheres that are local, global and glocal, and in general, with what Zygmunt Bauman (2005) refers to as a more liquid pace of life. Challenging our conventional understanding of sociability as an activity-driven imperative, these results suggest a contemporary interpretation of sociability that includes static social behaviors enabled through online technology. In a relaxed state that converges passivity and sociality, social network site users traverse spheres of social interaction to learn about and interact with others they connect to.

Moreover, equipped with a toy that enables social connections, individuals are able to fulfill traditional mediated and interpersonal needs simultaneously, while at the same time expanding their social connections and so-called social net worth in satellite social spheres. Relaxing entertainment also provided a way in which Facebook became useful for the generation of bonding social capital, thus reaffirming users' ties and connections to their close sphere of family and friends.

In conclusion, for communication researchers, these findings both affirm and challenge our understanding of audience activity and passivity. The relevance of traditional mediated and interpersonal motives for Facebook users confirms the permanence of these needs and their fulfillment via mediated communication. At the same time, these needs emerge in a converged state, capturing intermittently active and idle states of engagement that challenge the binary manner in which we, as communication scholars understand activity and passive uses. Future research on online media could move away from linear understandings of user motivations and social outcomes, to networked theoretical conceptualization that permit us to follow the organic generation of developing forms of sociability. The social networks approach incorporates the organic appropriation of social ties, social capital generation, and the frequently non-linear rationale of social behavior. The uses and gratifications approach, on the other hand, adopts a more conventionally linearity in its approach, but, at the same time, is particularly useful for a systematic understanding of the connections between user profiles, motivations, orientations, practices, and resulting outcomes.

A combined perspective examining the uses, networks, and affordances of convergent media would connect antecedent variables and motives to particular uses of networks, which are sensitive to the affordances of online media. Such an approach would be guided by the following, *remediated* assumptions that a) "socially motivated behaviors, including media selection and use, are both purposive and ritualistic"; (b) "a host of social and psychological factors mediate people's communication behavior"; (c) "people adopt or adapt the affordances of convergent media to satisfy felt needs and to form and maintain social networks"; (d) "media compete and converge with other forms of communication

for selection, attention, and use to gratify our individual and collective needs"; and (e) "mediated behaviors possess social outcomes, which result in a varying qualities and quantities of social capital generated." This is a socio-psychological communication perspective that examines how individuals use converged media, to fulfill felt needs or wants that are personal and collective, and generate social outcomes that permit a networked sociality.

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