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**College Students' Values for Self-Expression, their Facebook Use,  
and Bridging Social Capital**

By

Chelsea J. Melton

Accepted in Partial Completion  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Chair, Dr. Adriana M. Manago

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## **MASTER'S THESIS**

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Chelsea J. Melton  
June 23, 2017

**College students' values for self-expression, their Facebook use,  
and bridging social capital**

A Thesis  
Presented to  
The Faculty of  
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science

by  
Chelsea J. Melton  
June 2017

## Abstract

Emerging adults are coming of age in social worlds permeated by social media. Communication with others on social media can provide access to bridging social capital, defined as social resources embedded in relationships with acquaintances which promote access to new information. Grooming ties through self-expression and masspersonal communication in networked publics is important for acquiring bridging social capital, behaviors complicated by context collapse. When engaging in masspersonal communication, social media users must balance their desire to express themselves with their desire to maintain positive impressions to multiple audiences. Recent research suggests an important strategy for navigating context collapse is the use of privacy controls. However, using privacy controls could inhibit relational maintenance with acquaintances who offer novel information. The current study investigates how college students are adapting to masspersonal communication on Facebook by examining their bridging social capital, privacy control behaviors, values for self-expression, and network diversity. Confirming previous research, bridging social capital was associated with frequency of Facebook use and relationship maintenance behaviors, however, it was not associated with privacy control behaviors or network diversity. Value for self-expression, relationship maintenance behaviors, Facebook use, and network size each uniquely predicted bridging social capital. Further, strength of self-expression endorsements differed across masspersonal communication topics. Qualitative analysis of college students' reasoning about the appropriateness of various masspersonal communication topics provides insights into the values and priorities young people are bringing into their social constructions of online norms in response to new tensions created by context collapse. Implications of findings are discussed.

**KEY WORDS:** Bridging social capital, self-expression, privacy, network diversity, Facebook.

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College students' values for self-expression, their Facebook use, and bridging social capital

Emerging adults are coming of age in social worlds permeated by the Internet and social media. Recent statistics suggest that 90% of college students in the U.S. use a social network site such as Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter (Perrin, 2015). Communication with friends on Facebook and other social media can be a source of emotional bonding and can also provide access to bridging social capital, defined as social resources embedded in relationships with acquaintances which promote access to new information and diverse perspectives (Ellison, Vitak, Gray, & Lampe, 2014). The importance of self-disclosure to intimacy development in close relationships has long been documented both offline (Altman & Taylor, 1973; Collins & Miller, 1994; Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998) and in online personal interactions (Craig & Wright, 2012; Davis, 2012), but as interpersonal relations move into masspersonal communication contexts with hundreds of acquaintances, new tensions and complications are introduced.

Masspersonal communication, which is defined as a one-to-many style of communication common on various social media (O'Sullivan & Carr, 2017), introduces context collapse – the convergence of multiple distinct audiences into one. Anthropologist Michael Wesch (2009) first used the term context collapse in observations of YouTube Vloggers recording messages that could be stored and potentially transported to an infinite number of diverse audiences. When engaging in masspersonal communication via status updates or tweets, social media users must balance their desire to express their true and authentic selves with their desire to maintain positive impressions to diverse, ambiguous, and even unknown audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Recent research suggests an important strategy for navigating context collapse is the use of privacy controls, adjusting profile settings to direct the content of a status update or photo to a

particular audience (Ellison, Vitak, Steinfield, Gray, & Lampe, 2011; Yang, 2016). Yet, the use of privacy controls to limit audiences exposed to personal self-disclosures could inhibit relational maintenance with acquaintances, who offer novel information and bridging social capital. Thus, the aim of the current study is to better understand how college students are adapting to masspersonal communication on Facebook by examining their bridging social capital, their privacy behaviors, values for self-expression, and also the ethnic/racial, political, and religious diversity of their networks. In addition to these quantitative analyses, I present results from a qualitative analysis of college students' reasoning about the appropriateness of various topics of masspersonal communication, which will provide insights into the values and priorities young people are bringing into their social constructions of online norms in response to new tensions created by context collapse.

### **Social Relations and Networked Individualism**

Networked individualism is a concept useful for distinguishing contemporary social life in Western technological societies from social life in which people construct identities tied to physical locale, ascribed roles, group membership, and permanent social ties (Wellman, 2001). For much of human history around the world, daily interactions occurred within groups, amongst fellow in-group members, in their own place and time. What's more, very little overlap existed between groups that did not share a physical locale. As such, social networks prior to networked individualism of the digital era were collections of small homogenous groups.

With the transition into the information age came increasing integration of digital communication into daily life, marked by the technological innovation of social network sites (Castells, 2011). Introduced in the beginning of the 21st century, social network sites created a new way for individuals to engage in social activities that transcend space and time. Social

network sites also provide a platform for endless self-expression, a value associated with ideals of personal choice and freedom, which become increasingly prevalent in modern, industrialized societies (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). Importantly, social network sites such as Facebook reduce the time and energy costs of maintaining a weak tie — social connections such as acquaintances, friends-of-friends, or work connections who may not be included in regular face-to-face interactions. Given the ability to digitally articulate a weak tie with very little investment, individuals' webs of social relationships became more expansive and dynamic. Indeed, researchers have found that college students expand their social networks on Facebook by adding loose relationships that can be easily formed, maintained, and dissolved (Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012).

Granovetter's (1973) concept of the strength of weak ties helps us to understand the particular social capital resources found in loosely-bounded, diverse networks made possible by social network sites. Weak ties provide opportunities to cultivate bridging social capital through access to novel information and diverse perspectives by connecting different clusters within a network. In turn, these weak ties help propagate novel information across clusters (Ellison et al., 2014). Weak ties and bridging social capital are important for young people in networked individualistic societies who are less rooted in physical locales and who are transitioning to knowledge work roles in the information age that are increasingly versatile and impermanent. Negotiating adulthood in a networked individualistic society entails the creative management of large sums of information in expansive, loosely bounded social networks facilitated by digital tools such as Facebook (Wellman, 2001).

## **Facebook and Bridging Social Capital**

Researchers have confirmed the utility of Facebook involvement for the accumulation of bridging social capital (Brandtzaeg, 2012; Brandtzaeg, Lüders, & Skjetne, 2010; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008). Ellison and colleagues (2007) created a self-report scale to measure college students' bridging social capital in terms of their feelings of a positive connection and sense of belonging to the broad college campus community. The researchers found that the more active college students were on Facebook, the greater their perceived bridging social capital and connection to their college community. These findings were replicated in a longitudinal study using the same self-report scale to measure bridging social capital (Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008). Their evidence suggests that Facebook is a useful social tool for acquiring access to novel information and diverse perspectives when adapting to a new community such as a college campus.

Yet, evidence also suggests that acquiring bridging social capital requires more than just frequency of use. Ellison and colleagues (2014) found that relational maintenance behaviors such as commenting on status updates, liking posts, and posting on others' profiles also uniquely predicted perceived bridging social capital. However, in this study, they measured bridging social capital using a new scale with items about access to diverse perspectives, new information, and feelings of belonging to large amorphous networks on Facebook. The researchers proposed that active posting on Facebook helps students maintain connections with many different kinds of people by providing a platform to efficiently groom ties via masspersonal communication. In other words, those who are expressing themselves in online networked publics are more likely to derive the bridging social capital benefits from the tool.

## **Self-Expression in Networked Publics**

Self-expression in networked publics entails sharing information, thoughts, and opinions that enable the manifestation of a unique online self. This differs from self-disclosure, which only concerns sharing private or intimate details. Self-expression is a broader construct, in that it captures all shared aspects of a person – not only the private or intimate details. As such, self-expression online refers to personal choice in how people want to present themselves and be seen in networked publics.

Acquiring bridging social capital requires masspersonal communication (Ellison et al., 2014), behaviors that are complicated by context collapse. Erving Goffman (1959) argued that we present ourselves based on the situation, the people present, and the atmosphere of the scene. The collapsing of multiple, distinct audiences into one online audience in networked publics problematizes this context-specific self-presentation. How do people assess the online social scene, and their role in it, when they communicate in networked publics? Scholars have described how those engaging in masspersonal communication on social media strategically balance presenting themselves in ways that feel authentic, but also suitable and appealing to ambiguous audiences (Marwick & boyd, 2011; O’Sullivan & Carr, 2017). In their qualitative analysis of Twitter users, Marwick & boyd (2011) described how the desire to be seen for who one really is can compete with priorities for mass appeal and the desire to avoid alienating particular audiences. Their findings reveal new value tensions introduced by masspersonal communication in the digital age: Does one prioritize values for the freedom to express oneself as one is? Or does one prioritize maintaining a palatable reputation to a multiplicity of potential audiences?

## **Navigating Context Collapse**

One important way social media users can express themselves however they want, while maintaining a positive and appropriate online presence with particular audiences, is through privacy controls. College students report using Facebook privacy settings on photos and status updates to hide certain content from parents on Facebook (Yang, 2016). One study found that college students who report using privacy controls on Facebook had greater perceived bridging social capital (Ellison et al., 2011), suggesting they were able to engage in self-expression specifically targeted to different kinds of audiences to maintain connections within large and diverse online networks. Yet, restricting certain individuals from accessing one's masspersonal communication could also interfere with the maintenance of acquaintances and bridging social capital. Yang and Brown (2013) argue that those who are more contained and strategic about sharing only positive status updates, such as information related to hobbies or activities, receive more audience supportive feedback and therefore greater social connectivity from their posts. Thus, successful social media use in the digital age, as indexed by accumulating bridging social capital online, may require enthusiasm for self-expression but also a sense of discernment about topics appropriate for masspersonal communication.

In other words, in order to effectively maintain expansive and diverse networks, users must curate masspersonal self-expressions that align with online social norms. Indeed, publics are where norms are manifested and reinforced (boyd, 2007), as they are heavily influenced by the feedback of others (Kelman, 1974). One could argue that emerging adults, who have grown up in the digital age and who are often regarded as the most savvy users of social network sites, are constructing these social norms around appropriate and inappropriate masspersonal communication. The literature suggests common online self-expression via masspersonal

communication include ideology (Bakshy, Messing, & Adamic, 2015), emotions and moods (Manago, Taylor & Greenfield, 2012), photos of oneself (Siibak, 2015), symbols of social connectivity (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009), and updates about everyday life, romantic partners, and accomplishments (Marshall, Lefringhausen, & Ferenczi, 2015). Yet, very little is understood about how young people reason about appropriate self-expressions via masspersonal communication on Facebook. Qualitative analyses of college students' reasoning can yield important insights into young peoples' social constructions of online norms for masspersonal communication and their value priorities as they weigh risks, opportunities, and consequences of self-expression in networked publics.

### **The present study**

The current study is a mixed-method analysis of college students' perceived bridging social capital, their privacy behaviors, values for self-expression, and levels of ethnic/racial, religious, and political diversity in their Facebook networks. Previous research has used the perceived bridging social capital scale as a proxy for individuals' connection to large and diverse communities (e.g., Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Ellison et al., 2014; Yoder & Stutzman, 2011) but it is not clear how accurately it measures actual access to diverse perspectives via one's Facebook newsfeed. It would seem that networks rich in diverse political, religious, and/or ethnic/racial identities would provide valuable access to non-redundant information and alternative points of view, constructs at the heart of bridging social capital. To gain a better understanding of this issue, I measured network diversity by asking participants to count the number of contacts in their Facebook networks who differ from them ethnically/racially, politically, and religiously and test whether the proportions of each of these three measures of diversity are associated with participants' perceived bridging social capital.

In addition, I test whether the use of privacy settings and values for self-expression each uniquely predict bridging social capital. Previous research on issues related to self-expression have employed either semi-structured interviews (e.g., Livingstone, 2008) or survey scales that tap into overall privacy concerns of self-expression only in terms of self-disclosure (e.g., Stutzman, Capra, & Thompson, 2011). For example, Ellison and colleagues (2011) used a weak two-item measure for self-disclosure, which included “When I’m having a bad day, I post about it on Facebook” and “When I receive a good grade in class, I post about it on Facebook.” The researchers called for better measures of this online behavior. In the current study, I broaden the investigation from estimates of personal self-disclosure to values for self-expression, an all-encompassing and thus more accurate construct in capturing online sharing norms, behaviors, and values that motivate these behaviors. I take a unique approach, qualitatively and quantitatively examining participants’ views on six vignettes in which two characters disagree about whether it is appropriate to express/post: 1) emotions, 2) political views, 3) religious views, 4) professional achievements, 5) social life activities, and 6) sexy photos online.

I analyze participants’ responses to the vignettes in three ways. First, I add the frequency of times participants sided with the character in the vignette who endorsed a self-expression point of view to create a composite score of overall value priorities for self-expression. Then, I assess whether value for self-expression predict bridging social capital, over and above ethnic/racial, political, and religious network diversity and the use of privacy controls. In addition, I compare which of the six topics of masspersonal communication are deemed more versus less appropriate. I hypothesize that more positive topics such as professional success and social life activities will be more highly endorsed as appropriate for self-expression compared to more controversial topics such as religious/political views.

Finally, to gain deeper insights into how college students are thinking about masspersonal communication and self-expression, I qualitatively examine prevalent themes in participants' explanations for their endorsements in each of the six vignettes. In this way, I document college students' perceptions of potential benefits and consequences of self-expression via masspersonal communication so as to lend insights into possible norms, meanings, and values college students are constructing to adapt to a networked individualistic world of social network sites.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

A total of 208 (110 women, 95 men,  $M_{age} = 20.28$ ,  $SD_{age} = 1.70$ ) undergraduate students were recruited at Western Washington University to participate in the study. Participants were recruited through an online study recruitment system (SONA) and received one (1.0) hour research credit for their participation. The selection criterion included active users (at least one login per month) of Facebook. Data were collected from January 14, 2016, through March 6, 2017. Complete demographics, including ethnicity/race, religious affiliation, and political ideology can be found in Table 1.

### **Procedure**

Participants convened in computer labs, where they were directed to the online survey. Participants responded to six vignettes in which two characters disagreed about whether it is appropriate to post: 1) emotions, 2) political views, 3) religious views, 4) professional achievement 5) social life, and 6) sexy photos on social network sites. After the vignettes, participants indicated how many years they owned a Facebook account, how frequently they used the account, and their knowledge and use of Facebook privacy settings. Participants also completed the Facebook Relationship Maintenance Behaviors (Ellison et al., 2014) and

Facebook Bridging Social Capital scales (Williams, 2006; Ellison et al., 2014). Participants were then directed to login to their Facebook, where they provided their network size (e.g. friends). To measure the extent to which networks were comprised of diverse perspectives, participants counted how many “friends” in their network were of a different ethnicity/race, political ideology, and religion than them. Lastly, participants provided demographic information, including age, sex, ethnicity/race, and political and religious identity.

## Measures

**Social Media Vignettes.** The social media vignettes aim to capture the value priority one places on self-expression via masspersonal communication. Each vignette focuses on a common topic for masspersonal communication, including 1) emotions, 2) political views, 3) religious views, 4) professional achievement 5) social life, and 6) sexy photos. The vignettes begin with a brief scenario about the content in question and two characters articulating opposing opinions – one in favor of posting the content online, and another against it. Participants were asked to select which opinion they agreed with most (dichotomous variable) and how strongly they felt about their choice on a 3-point sliding scale (1 = *Somewhat strongly*, 2 = *Strongly*, 3 = *Very strongly*). A composite value for self-expression score was calculated by adding the total frequency of times out of six that participants selected the self-expression character in the vignettes. To compare strength of endorsements against or in favor of self-expression, sliding scale scores were transformed into a 6-point scale (1 = *Against Self-Expression: Very strongly*, 2 = *Against Self-Expression: Strongly*, 3 = *Against Self-Expression: Somewhat strongly*, 4 = *In Favor of Self-expression: Somewhat strongly*, 5 = *In Favor of Self-expression: Strongly*, 6 = *In Favor of Self-expression: Very strongly*). Participants also responded to an open-ended prompt where they explained the reasoning behind their choice. These open-ended responses were

coded to gain deeper insight into the norms college students are constructing around appropriate and inappropriate self-expression online. After participants responded to the open-ended prompts, they indicated how frequently their online behavior aligned with their opinion on the vignette using a 4-point scale (1 = *Not at all frequently*, 2 = *Not so frequently*, 3 = *Fairly frequently*, 4 = *Very frequently*). Participants were also asked to consider their observations of posting behavior in their network, and indicate the extent to which they believed other people in their network would agree with their opinion using a 4-point scale (1 = *Hardly anyone would agree with me*, 2 = *Some people would agree with me*, 3 = *A lot of people would agree with me*, 4 = *Almost everyone would agree with me*).

**Facebook use and privacy settings.** Two items captured overall Facebook use information. The first item asked participants to provide the number of years they owned a Facebook account. The second item asked how frequently participants used their account on a 6-point scale (1 = *Never or almost never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *A few times a month*, 4 = *A few times a week*, 5 = *Once a day*, 6 = *Multiple times a day*). Four items captured participants' knowledge or use of Facebook privacy settings. Participants were asked how familiar they were with Facebook privacy settings on a 4-point scale (1 = *Not at all familiar*, 2 = *A little familiar*, 3 = *Familiar*, 4 = *Very familiar*) and who could view their profile on a 4-point scale (1 = *Anyone (My profile is set to public)*, 2 = *Friends of friends*, 3 = *Only my friends*, 4 = *Customized (I block certain individuals from viewing my profile)*). Lastly, participants reported how frequently they used customized privacy settings for status updates and photo uploads on a 5-point scale (1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Very often*).

**The Facebook Relationship Maintenance Behaviors (FRMB) scale.** The Facebook Relationship Maintenance Behaviors (FRMB) scale is a 5-item scale that assesses engagement in

social grooming behaviors on Facebook (Ellison et al., 2014). Participants report on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*) the extent to which they engage in certain relationship maintenance behaviors, with items such as “When I see a friend or acquaintance sharing good news on Facebook, I try to respond.” Although previous research found the scale highly reliable (Ellison et al., 2014), Cronbach’s alpha revealed the scale was just under the reliability threshold ( $\alpha = .69$ ). Upon removing the item “When a Facebook friend has a birthday, I try to post something on their wall” the scale met reliability ( $\alpha = .73$ ). This item was excluded from the scale for all analyses.

**Facebook Bridging Social Capital scale.** Perceived bridging social capital was measured using a modified version (Ellison et al., 2014) of Williams’ bridging social capital scale (Williams, 2006). The scale is a 9-item measure in which participants report on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *Strongly disagree*, 5 = *Strongly agree*) the extent to which they feel connected to informational resources and have a sense of belonging to a broad and diverse network of social contacts. Sample items include “Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town,” and “Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking.” Cronbach’s alpha revealed the scale is reliable ( $\alpha = .76$ ).

**Network diversity.** Network diversity was measured by the proportion of people within one’s network who differed in ethnicity/race, religious affiliation, and political ideology than the participant. Participants counted the number of “friends” in their network who identified with a different ethnicity/race, religion, and political ideology. Of these people, participants indicated the number of people whose status updates they read. A time requirement of at least four minutes was enforced before proceeding to ensure accurate reporting.

### **Vignette coding**

Because the examination of students' reasons behind their choices was exploratory in nature, we employed an inductive approach. As such, themes were identified based on content analysis. To do so, a portion (50%) of responses were used to identify common themes for each vignette. Upon finalizing codes and creating the codebook, the first author and a trained research assistant coded all vignette responses as either having or not having themes present in the response. To determine reliability, a subset of narratives (30%) were coded separately, and a reliability score was calculated using a percent agreement score to determine interrater reliability. Percent agreement for all codes was above 80%, with an overall percent agreement of 97.8%. Kappa value was not calculated due to low frequency of some codes.

### **Results**

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for Facebook use, privacy settings use, value for self-expression, network diversity, and bridging social capital. On average, participants owned a Facebook account for over 6 years ( $M = 6.56$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ) and used their account at least once a day ( $M = 5.30$ ,  $SD = 1.10$ ). They regarded themselves as at least somewhat familiar with Facebook privacy settings ( $M = 2.58$ ,  $SD = .084$ ), and rarely used customized privacy settings for both status updates ( $M = 1.91$ ,  $SD = 0.90$ ) and photo uploads ( $M = 2.18$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ). Additionally, participants indicated that their actual online behaviors matched their endorsements of online self-expression fairly frequently, on a 1 to 4 scale ( $M = 3.21$ ,  $SD = .062$ ). They also indicated the majority of people within their network would agree with their endorsements of self-expression on a 1 to 4 scale ( $M = 2.74$ ,  $SD = 0.37$ ). On average, 23.54% ( $SD = 25.92\%$ ) of participants' network contacts were of a different ethnicity or race than them, 18.14% ( $SD = 24.85\%$ ) were of a different religion, and 14.55% ( $SD = 22.80\%$ ) were of a different political

ideology than the participant. Ethnic/racial network diversity was greater among participants who were not white ( $M = 43.18$ ,  $SD = 34.78$ ) compared to white ( $M = 14.93$ ,  $SD = 13.99$ ) participants  $t(197) = 8.18$ ,  $p < .001$ . Religious network diversity was greater among those who identified as religious ( $M = 21.84$ ,  $SD = 29.26$ ) compared to non-religious ( $M = 13.21$ ,  $SD = 18.02$ ) participants  $t(164) = 2.31$ ,  $p = .022$ . Political network diversity did not differ between participants who identified with a political party and those who did not ( $p = .141$ ). Value for self-expression, as measured by the frequency of times out of six that the participant sided with the character in the vignette who endorsed posting content online, yielded higher values of self-expression on average ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = 1.28$ ).

*Associations between privacy, self-expression, and bridging social capital*

Correlations between Facebook use, privacy settings, self-expression, and bridging social capital scales are captured in Table 3. Bridging social capital was associated with frequency of Facebook use,  $r(205) = .305$ ,  $p = .0001$ , network size,  $r(205) = .227$ ,  $p = .001$ , and Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors  $r(205) = .374$ ,  $p = .0001$ , replicating previous findings. Value for self-expression was also associated with bridging social capital  $r(204) = .280$ ,  $p = .0001$ , as well as Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors  $r(207) = .202$ ,  $p = .003$ . However, none of the privacy behaviors were associated with average bridging social capital scores ( $p$ 's  $> .05$ ). We then conducted a median split, dividing participants into two groups based on their use of privacy controls to correspond with Ellison and colleagues' analyses of privacy settings and bridging social capital. There were no significant differences in average perceived bridging social capital scores between people who were familiar with privacy settings versus those who were not ( $p = .90$ ), those who employed profile privacy settings versus those who did not ( $p = .66$ ), nor those who customized their privacy settings on status updates ( $p = .54$ ) and

photo uploads ( $p = .08$ ) versus those who did not. Additionally, we placed all participants who employed either profile, status, or photo privacy settings into one group, and compared their average perceived bridging social capital scores against participants who did not employ any privacy settings. There were no significant differences in average perceived bridging social capital scores between people who employed privacy settings and those who did not ( $p = .30$ ).

A multiple regression was run to predict bridging social capital from value for self-expression, Facebook relationship maintenance scores, frequency of Facebook use, and network size. Controlling for gender, ethnicity/race, and religiosity, these variables statistically significantly predicted bridging social capital,  $F(7, 192) = 9.20$ ,  $p < .0005$ ,  $R^2 = .224$ . All four variables added statistically significantly to the prediction,  $p < .01$ , and are listed in Table 4.

*Associations between network composition, bridging social capital, and self-expression*

Correlations between network composition, bridging social capital, and self-expression are captured in Table 5. Perceived bridging social capital was not associated with any of the network diversity measures, nor was it associated with reading more status updates from ethnically/politically/religiously diverse contacts ( $p$ 's  $> .05$ ). On the other hand, network size was associated with the number of status updates read that were posted by racially/ethnically diverse  $r(199) = .237$ ,  $p = .001$ , religiously diverse  $r(202) = .251$ ,  $p < .001$ , and politically diverse  $r(197) = .243$ ,  $p = .001$ , network contacts.

*Analysis of self-expression endorsement across domains*

Cronbach's alpha revealed strength of endorsements across vignettes was not internally reliable ( $\alpha = .48$ ), indicating the vignettes are not suitable for a scale. A repeated measures ANOVA with a Greenhouse-Geisser correction determined that the strength of endorsements of self-expression differed statistically significantly between topics of masspersonal communication

( $F(4.43, 674.00) = 110.65, p < .001$ ). Post hoc tests using the Bonferroni correction revealed specific differences of strength of self-expression endorsements between topics, captured in Table 6. The vignette with the strongest endorsement of self-expression on average was social life, followed by professional success, religion, politics, emotion, and sexy photos.

We investigated whether self-expression endorsement for the political and religious vignettes differed by political and religious identity. An independent-samples t-test revealed significant differences for the political vignette,  $t(182) = 3.18, p = .002$ . Specifically, those who identified with a political party ( $M = 3.65, SD = 1.69$ ) more strongly endorsed posting political content online compared to those who did not identify with a political party ( $M = 2.77, SD = 1.76$ ). In addition, a one-way ANOVA comparing self-expression endorsement among those who identified as religious, atheist, or non-religious was significant ( $F(2, 172) = 6.38, p = .002$ ). A Tukey post hoc test revealed that the strength of self-expression endorsement for the religious vignette was higher among those who identified as religious ( $4.31 \pm 1.47$ ), compared to those who identified as either atheist ( $3.17 \pm 1.69, p = .003$ ) or as non-religious ( $3.66 \pm 1.57, p = .032$ ). The difference between those who identified as atheist versus those who identified as non-religious was not significant ( $p = .335$ ).

### *Qualitative Coding*

Categories or themes of participants' reasoning about their endorsements for or against posting content are listed in the codebook found under *Appendix B*. While some themes were unique to specific vignettes, the majority of themes transcended topics of masspersonal communication. Percentages of themes by vignette are listed in Table 7. Percentages of themes by benefits and risks of vignette-specific masspersonal communications are listed in Table 8. The categories or themes most commonly present in participants' responses were ineffective

communication, information control, negative impact on network, positive impact on network, self-expression, relationship maintenance, context-dependent, and tolerance-dependent.

*Ineffective Communication:* When explaining their endorsements of the character in the vignette arguing against posting content, participants frequently made statements concerning the ineffectiveness of masspersonal communication. They described ineffectiveness in terms of dysfunction and poor solutions to problems, and as potentially initiating arguments within their network. Ineffective communication was a common theme in responses to topics regarded as controversial or personal, including politics (33.8%), emotions (22.7%), and religion (14.6%). Regarding posting about emotions on Facebook, one participant said:

*“Personal problems are not solved by posting on social media. I believe it is a false way to vent problems and in order to adequately deal with these problems people should seek alternative methods.”*

*Information Control:* Participants also commonly cited the potential risks and consequences associated with posting content online. These consequences and risks included damage to one’s reputation, exposing one’s vulnerabilities, the breadth of people who can access the content, and the permanency of posted content. Information control was a common category across multiple topics, including sexy photos (35.5%), emotions (19.3%), and social life (5.8%). Although previous research has regarded youth and emerging adults as unaware of the consequences associated with privacy infractions (e.g., Barnes, 2006), many participants identified them as reasons against posting content online. For example, when discussing their reasoning against posting sexy photos online, one participant said:

*“I think people should have the confidence to do whatever they want with their bodies, but the photos on the internet are forever and could affect [your] career if your employ[er] sees it.”*

Another participant outlined the potential risks of posting social life events online:

*“This leads to identity theft, and also puts you in danger. Updating where you are and [who] you are with makes you extremely vulnerable to predators.”*

College students are not only concerned with who has access to the information they post online, but also the dangers associated with sharing information online.

*Negative Impact on Network:* When explaining their reasoning against posting certain content online, participants frequently cited the potential negative effects masspersonal communications may have on other people within their network in terms of being upsetting, annoying, or attention-seeking. Acknowledging the impact masspersonal communications may have on people within their network, this theme emerged for the majority of topics including sexy photos (28.0%), politics (16.4%), emotions (14.5%), religion (11.7%), and professional success (7.2%). When discussing their reasoning against posting emotions online, one participant said:

*“Expressing negative feelings such as hatred and anger can have a serious effect on those reading about those feelings...”*

*Positive Impact on Network:* While participants acknowledged certain topics may negatively impact people within their network, they also frequently cited potential positive effects masspersonal communications can have on people within their network. Participants cited posting content as being beneficial to others in terms of spreading information, educating others, facilitating important dialogue, and being enjoyable for others to see/read in many cases,

including politics (30.0%), religion (16.5%), professional success (11.1%), and social life (10.6%). In their response supporting professional success online, one college student stated:

*“Suc[c]ess motivates others seeking out the same goals...”*

*Self-Expression:* In their endorsements of posting content, participants frequently cited the right to self-expression, a value that is associated with modern, industrialized societies (Inglehart & Oyserman, 2004). Explicitly stating the value and importance of self-expression was a common way students reasoned about masspersonal communication across the majority of topics, including professional success (40.6%), sexy photos (37.2%), religion (33.5%), politics (24.6%), and emotions (21.3%). For example, when providing their reasoning for endorsing posting political content online, one participant said:

*“I think it's great that we have a tool in our society to express our thoughts about political issues. This kind of expression did not exist before social media, and I think it's powerful...”*

Often, values for self-expression were not contingent upon whether participants agreed with the posting behavior. For example, when explaining their reasoning for endorsing posting sexy photos online, one participant wrote:

*“Personally I would never post a sexually provocative picture online, and it makes me slightly uncomfortable when others d[o] based upon the degree to which it is revealing. Still though I believe people should have the freedom to post almost anything they want and I know a lot of people are into that.”*

Some respondents affirmed their values for sharing freely but attenuated their position by articulating the importance of being conscious of the effect one has on people in their network.

*“I think it's important to share our feelings and opinions, but sometimes people can go too far, and that's when it becomes disruptive to others or can be harmful.”*

*Relationship Maintenance:* Sharing content as a means of maintaining ties was a frequent theme in college students' reasoning about the professional success (44.4%) and social life (32.9%) topics, the domains with the highest masspersonal communication endorsements on average. One participant stated the following as their reasoning for sharing social life events:

*“I think that sharing what you've been doing and time with friends is what social media is for. When I'm geographically absent from friends' lives I can still feel some sense of community through seeing what they're up to.”*

Not only was relationship maintenance highlighted as a purpose of social media, but also its usefulness in managing large social networks.

*“I do not see any problem with posting about career achievements online. It's an easier way to let most of your family and close friends know the same exciting news without having to call 10 people sep[a]rately. There's nothing wrong in my eyes with being pr[o]ud of your accomplishments.”*

Providing life updates in terms of professional success and social life activities is an important type of self-expression in the digital age that appears particularly useful for maintaining ties in expansive, amorphous communities on Facebook.

*Context-Dependent:* Across all topics of masspersonal communication, participants described being unwilling to make an overall endorsement for or against posting content online without knowing the particularities of the online sharing behavior in question. In other words, their support for self-expression depended on various factors involved in specific situations. An

overarching context-dependent theme was identified in participants' responses to four of the six masspersonal communication topics, the emotion (26.6%), social life (17.4%), professional success (22.2%), and sexy photos (11.1%) vignettes. This category captured a breadth of factors identified by participants that would impact their decisions. For example, one participant stated the following about sharing emotions online:

*"There are certain emotions that are okay to post on social media but the more personal things should be kept to yourself and the people you care about."*

*Tolerance-Dependent:* In contrast to this general context-dependent category, a very specific tolerance-dependent category manifested for religion (38.3%), and politics (15.5%). In response to these topics of masspersonal communication, participants explicitly stated that the appropriateness of posts was dependent upon respect and acknowledgement of differing perspectives and beliefs. In regard to posting about religion online, another participant said:

*"I think it's good to promote whatever you have faith in, as long as it's not to condemn other people's beliefs along the way."*

Overall, qualitative analyses revealed that college students are navigating tensions between the consequences, risks, and benefits of masspersonal communication in networked publics that are situation-specific. The prevalence of the context-dependent and tolerance-dependent category in college students' reasoning about masspersonal communication also suggests that their decisions were also influenced by situational nuances, contextual cues, and individual differences around how thoughts, feelings, ideas, and personal information are shared on Facebook.

## Discussion

Confirming previous research, bridging social capital was associated with frequency of Facebook use and Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors, however, it was not associated with any of the privacy control behaviors or network diversity measures. On the other hand, value for self-expression was correlated with both bridging social capital and Facebook relationship maintenance behaviors. Multiple linear regression showed that self-expression, Facebook relationship maintenance, Facebook frequency of use, and network size each uniquely predicted college students' perceived bridging social capital on Facebook.

Previous research has used bridging social capital as a proxy for network diversity (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Ellison et al., 2014; Yoder & Stutzman, 2011), in that those with greater bridging social capital are assumed to have access to more diverse perspectives. However, in the current study, bridging social capital was not associated with increased proportions of ethnic/racial, religious, or political diversity in U.S. college students' Facebook networks, nor was it associated with the proportion of different ethnic/racial, religious, political diversity appearing in their newsfeeds. One potential reason for the lack of association is the weakness of the scales, which relied on participants' being able to evaluate large numbers of individuals relative to their own identifications. Indeed, we excluded a portion of responses capturing the number of diverse contacts whose status updates were read by participants (4.3% ethnically/racially diverse, 2.9% religiously diverse, and 5.3% politically diverse) from analyses due to inaccurate reporting. Another possibility is that the bridging social capital scale measures college students' perceptions that they can tap into different cliques of people associated with different offline social contexts, but not necessarily different ethnic/racial, political, or religious social contexts. A previous study found that Japanese social network site users have smaller

online networks and lower bridging social capital than American social network site users (Thomson, Manago, & Melton, under review). These differences were explained by cultural differences in relational mobility, defined as the freedom and opportunity individuals in a society have to select interpersonal relationships based on personal preferences. Given our results showing value for self-expression uniquely predicted perceived bridging social capital on Facebook, we speculate that the perceived bridging social capital construct is more about freedom and choice than it is about engagement with a diversity of ideologies and identities.

Social network sites such as Facebook are considered to have endless access to diverse perspectives and novel information, yet scholars are increasingly noting phenomena such as echo-chambers (Schmidt et al., 2017) and filter bubbles (Pariser, 2011) that point to the ways in which Internet use can narrowly channel the information we are exposed to. Pariser (2011) argues that individuals of the information age construct webs of informational resources and perspectives in alignment with their own viewpoints through informational filter bubbles. These filter bubbles are created by usage patterns that are influenced by psychological preferences for confirmatory and consistent information, as well as technological algorithms that run the Internet. Indeed, in this study frequency of Facebook use was negatively correlated with all three diversity measures. Moreover, people tend to form relationships with people who are similar to them in terms of sociodemographic characteristics, beliefs, and values, which influences the informational content provided by one's social networks (Manago & Vaughn, 2015). In the current study, we found networks were more ethnically/racially and religiously diverse among non-white and religious participants. Networked publics are useful for expanding one's bridging social capital resources to new horizons, especially when adapting to new offline

communities, but they still represent manifestations of offline human motivations that guide behavior.

In addition, our null findings related to the use of privacy controls also depart from the findings of Ellison and colleagues (2011), who found that users who limit their audience by using privacy settings reported greater bridging social capital. They reasoned that those who were technologically savvy in circumnavigating context collapse would be better equipped to maintain higher levels of social resources among acquaintances and multiple cliques in their diverse social networks. Perhaps the reason for this discrepancy in findings is related to differences in analyses. Ellison and colleagues divided participants into two groups, those who employed privacy settings and those who did not, and compared average bridging social capital scores. In the current study, we tested for a correlation between bridging social capital, level of familiarity with privacy controls, degree of public access to one's profile and frequency of privacy settings for status updates and photos. By not truncating variability, we were able to test the relationship between bridging social capital and privacy measures without running the risk of distorted analyses. To further investigate our null findings, we conducted a set of analyses similar to Ellison and colleagues (2011) by dividing participants into two groups - those who employed privacy settings and those who did not, and compared average bridging social capital scores. We conducted analyses by individual privacy setting behavior, comparing average bridging social capital scores by privacy each behavior, as well as collapsing all privacy behaviors into one group and comparing average bridging social capital scores between participants who employed any privacy setting and those who did not employ any privacy settings. In all our analyses, we did not find any differences between groups in terms of use of privacy controls and average bridging social capital scores.

Another potential reason why we did not find the use of privacy settings to be associated with bridging social capital is that the use of privacy controls can sever opportunities to groom ties and maintain an online reputation to a large number of followers. Utilizing privacy settings to limit the scope of one's audience could inhibit interpersonal communication with acquaintances who offer novel information and bridging social capital. Instead, a better predictor of students' bridging social capital was the extent to which they prioritized self-expression across a series of topics for masspersonal communication. In other words, those who value self-expression on Facebook are likely to be more motivated to share information, thoughts, and opinions to wider audiences (greater relational maintenance) and therefore derive more social capital resources from Facebook.

The current study provides evidence that value priorities are an important factor for understanding social engagement and social resources on Facebook. Values have been defined as beliefs and ideals that motivate our behaviors and evaluations across a variety of different situations (Schwartz, 1994). Inglehart and Oyserman (2004) have argued that value for self-expression is rising around the world as modern technological conditions and global market economies bring greater options and possibilities in people's lives. In industrialized societies, people value having a positive and unique sense of self and possessing distinctive personal attitudes. Inglehart (2008) further found that millennials place greater emphasis on the value of self-expression than do older generations, a value seemingly amplified by the creation of social network sites where users can share thoughts, opinions, and beliefs that enable the manifestation of a unique self. Rather than conceptualizing the Internet as having some kind of effect on psychological functioning, this study suggests that value for self-expression is a psychological

adaptation to social media use and the resources available in large and loose social networks filled with flexible forms of social connection.

Interestingly, we did not find an association between value for self-expression and network diversity, perhaps because participants' networks were not tremendously diverse. First, it is important to consider that Facebook is a particular kind of social network site, widely used across generational cohorts and families, and tends to index friends, acquaintances, and contacts from one's offline social contexts (Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008), which are also likely to be segregated by ethnic and racial identities in the United States. Researchers studying Twitter, a social network site that has "followers" rather than "friends" found that people with many followers will engage in self-censoring to avoid certain topics that might offend or alienate others within their network (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Perhaps the more that one's network actually includes individuals with different ethnic/racial identities, political, and religious beliefs, the more thoughtful one is in curating or limiting self-expression in a way that is appealing and appropriate. Indeed, when we broke out the six vignettes, we found that greater religious diversity in the network was associated with *decreased* strength of endorsement for sexy photos ( $r(180) = -.15, p = .039$ ) and professional success ( $r(185) = -.20, p = .007$ ), perhaps related to concerns for purity and humility. College students' value for self-expression could be attenuated among those with higher levels of ethnic/racial, political, and religious diversity in their online networks. Interestingly, we found participants with religious and political identities more strongly endorsed religious and political self-expression online. Endorsements for self-expression seem to be influenced by users' own identities, perhaps because they are personally relevant.

Quantitative and qualitative analyses of each of the self-expression vignettes did show that college students are balancing self-expression with other concerns that can sometimes dim how strongly they feel about freedom of expression. Indeed, when we converted vignette responses to 6-point scales across all vignettes we found poor internal reliability, suggesting that values for self-expression are situation-dependent and influenced by a number of factors. Emerging adults are navigating a multitude of risks, consequences, and benefits associated with masspersonal communication. Quantitative comparisons of strength of endorsement of self-expression across topics supported our first hypothesis that positive topics are more strongly endorsed than controversial topics. The domains with the strongest endorsements of self-expression were social life and professional success. Qualitative analyses revealed more benefits than risks were associated with these masspersonal communication topics, specifically their function in maintaining ties. College students perceive Facebook as an online space dedicated to maintaining social ties by updating others about social and professional life events. Sharing life updates serves a specific relational-maintenance purpose, whereby users can strengthen ties that promote a sense of community and personal connectivity.

We expected that posting content about controversial topics such as religion and politics would be least strongly endorsed, but it was emotional disclosure and sexy photos that were perceived as the most risky topics for self-expression. For these two topics, information control, ineffective communication, and negative impact on network were among the top themes supporting reasoning against self-expression, suggesting that risks to one's reputation, privacy, and network harmony played a role in students' considerations and reduced the strength of their endorsement for self-expression in these instances. Context-dependent was the top theme for emotion, whereby participants frequently stated the appropriateness of the masspersonal

communication was dependent upon the emotion. This finding replicates previous research that expressing positive emotions online is more appropriate than negative emotions (Waterloo, Baumgartner, Peter, & Valkenburg, 2017).

Qualitative analyses of the religious and political vignettes provide some insights as to why these topics were not the least strongly endorsed. While participants cited a number of risks and consequences associated with posting about these topics online including ineffective communication and negative impact on network, they also identified benefits such as positive impact on network and the right to self-expression. In these instances, emerging adults' evaluation of the risks associated with these topics did not outweigh the benefits, again highlighting their value for both self-expression and network harmony.

In addition to values, endorsements for or against self-expression seem to be influenced by online norms. The norms that distinguish how personal information is shared are dependent upon a number of contextual factors including the content, how the information is share, who shared the information, and with whom (Nissenbaum, 2010). Across all domains, endorsements of self-expression were contingent upon the presence or absence of certain factors, suggesting that college students are navigating very complex social constructions of norms around masspersonal communication and self-expression in networked publics that vary by person and situation. Unique and particular circumstances can distinguish appropriate versus inappropriate masspersonal communication and influence endorsements for or against self-expression.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

The network diversity measures represent an important limitation of this study. We asked participants to count the number of people within their network that were of a different religion, political ideology, and ethnicity/race than the participant. It is a difficult task to identify

these different social group identities simply by scrolling through one's Friend list and it is unlikely participants know the ethnicity/race, religious affiliation, or political ideology of everyone in their network. What's more, we measured network diversity from the individual perspective rather than overall differences from the perspective of the network as a whole. As such, it is difficult to disentangle whether those who reported greater network diversity had greater variations of people with differing ethnicities/race, political, and religious ideologies in their networks or whether the participant was a minority in a rather homogenous network. Future research should use more accurate methods, such as social network analysis capturing Facebook users' profile information, to investigate network composition and its association with bridging social capital.

Recently, researchers have called for investigations of user actions around masspersonal communication (O'Sullivan & Carr, 2017), a communication context created by digital technologies offering a new way of engaging in self-expression. We have provided some insights into the norms and values at play in the negotiation of one-to-many masspersonal communications, future research should more specifically examine the functions of one-to-one personalized yet public masspersonal communications (i.e., interpersonal exchanges between people on a public post). Extending investigations into the utility and norms of one-to-one masspersonal communication where users are aware their conversations are observed will further extend our knowledge into the uses, values, and gratifications of social media use.

In their analysis of online expression of emotions, Waterloo and colleagues (2017) found that appropriateness of expression differed between social media sites. Expressing certain negative emotions was deemed more appropriate on platforms such as WhatsApp compared to Facebook. In the current study, our context-dependent code captured some of this nuances in

participants' reasoning, stating professional success may be more appropriate for LinkedIn and sexy photos for Instagram or Tumblr. Further research should extend their investigation to other topics of self-expression.

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Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics of Demographics*

Variable	Mean/Proportion	SD
Age	20.28	1.70
Mother Ed	3.90	1.64
Father Ed	4.01	2.01
Race/Ethnicity		
White	68.5%	
Black/African American	1.5%	
Latino	3.9%	
Asian	11.8%	
Pacific Islander	0.5%	
Native American	0.5%	
Multiracial	8.9%	
Other	4.4%	
Religiosity		
Christian	24.5%	
Jewish	1.9%	
Hindu	0.5%	
Muslim	1.0%	
Buddhist	2.9%	
Agnostic	17.8%	
Atheist	15.4%	
Other	7.7%	
My religious identity is not important to me	25.5%	
Political Ideology		
Democrat	42.3%	
Republican	5.3%	
Libertarian	7.2%	
Socialist	6.3%	
Other	6.7%	
My political identity is not important to me	30.8%	

Table 2  
*Descriptive Statistics of Facebook Use, Privacy Settings, Self-Expression,  
 and Network Composition*

Variable	Mean/Proportion	SD
FB Use Years	6.56	1.43
FB Freq	5.30	1.10
Network Size	545	371
FB Relation Maint	3.06	0.72
Bridge Soc Capital	3.19	0.56
Total Self-Express	3.50	1.28
FB Priv Familiar	2.58	0.84
FB Profile Privacy	2.47	0.88
FB Status Privacy	1.91	0.90
FB Photos Privacy	2.18	1.19
Ethnic Net Div	23.54%	25.92%
Religious Net Div	18.14%	24.85%
Political Net Div	14.55%	22.80%

Table 3

*Correlations between Facebook Use, Privacy Settings, Bridging Social Capital, and Self-Expression*

	FB Freq	Network Size	FB Priv Familiar	FB Profile Privacy	FB Status Privacy	FB Photo Privacy	FB Relation Maint	Bridge Soc Capital	Total Self-Express
FB Freq	-								
Network Size	<b>.17*</b>	-							
FB Priv Familiar	<b>.15*</b>	.12	-						
FB Profile Privacy	-.01	-.09	<b>.33**</b>	-					
FB Status Privacy	.11	-.09	<b>.43**</b>	<b>.25**</b>	-				
FB Photo Privacy	<b>.15*</b>	.05	<b>.42**</b>	<b>.27**</b>	<b>.66**</b>	-			
FB Relation Maint	<b>.25**</b>	.04	.13	-.02	.13	.10	-		
Bridge Soc Capital	<b>.31**</b>	<b>.23**</b>	.05	-.03	-.04	.07	<b>.37**</b>	-	
Total Self-Express	.09	.04	-.04	-.05	-.06	-.05	<b>.20**</b>	<b>.28**</b>	-

Table 4

*Regressions: Facebook Use, Self-Expression, and Bridging Social Capital*

STEP ONE	Perceived BSC
Gender	.067
Ethnicity/Race	.017
Religiosity	-.010
<b>STEP TWO</b>	
FB Relation Maint	<b>.270**</b>
Total Self-Express	<b>.196**</b>
FB Freq	<b>.177**</b>
Network Size	<b>.173**</b>
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	.224
Equation F	<b>F(7, 192) = 9.20**</b>

Table 5  
*Correlations between Network Composition, Bridging Social Capital, and Self-Expression*

	FB Freq	Network Size	FB Relation Maint	Bridge Soc Capital	Total Self- Express	Ethnic Net Div	Religious Net Div	Political Net Div	Ethnic Div Read	Religious Div Read	Political Div Read
FB Freq	-										
Network Size	<b>.17*</b>	-									
FB Relation Maint	<b>.25**</b>	.04	-								
Bridge Soc Capital	<b>.31**</b>	<b>.23**</b>	<b>.37**</b>	-							
Total Self-Express	.09	.04	<b>.20**</b>	<b>.28**</b>	-						
Ethnic Net Div	<b>-.18**</b>	-.11	-.02	-.09	-.01	-					
Religious Net Div	<b>-.15*</b>	-.02	-.05	.06	-.09	<b>.14*</b>	-				
Political Net Div	-.13	-.07	-.04	-.06	-.10	<b>.21**</b>	<b>.47**</b>	-			
Ethnic Div Read	.02	<b>.24**</b>	.05	.09	.07	<b>.59**</b>	.08	.10	-		
Religious Div Read	-.07	<b>.25**</b>	.05	.13	.01	.03	<b>.58**</b>	.11	<b>.18*</b>	-	
Political Div Read	.05	<b>.24**</b>	.04	.08	.01	<b>.15*</b>	<b>.26**</b>	<b>.45**</b>	<b>.39**</b>	<b>.43**</b>	-

Table 6  
*Self-Expression Means across Vignettes*

Vignette	Mean	SD
Social Life	5.13 <sup>a</sup>	0.08
Prof Success	4.99 <sup>a</sup>	0.09
Religion	3.87 <sup>b</sup>	0.13
Politics	3.41 <sup>c</sup>	0.14
Emotions	2.62 <sup>d</sup>	0.11
Sexy Photos	2.41 <sup>d</sup>	0.13

*Notes:* Subscripts indicate differences between means.

Table 7  
*Descriptive Statistics of Frequency of Themes by Vignette*

	Emotions	Social Life	Prof Success	Sexy Photos	Religion	Politics
Self-Expression	21.3%		40.6%	37.2%	33.5%	24.6%
Relation Maint		32.9%	44.4%			
Memories		11.1%				
Pos Net Impact		10.6%	11.1%		16.5%	30.0%
Ineffect Comm	22.7%				14.6%	33.8%
Info Control	19.3%	5.8%		35.5%		
Neg Net Impact	14.5%		7.2%	28.0%	11.7%	16.4%
Context-Dep	26.6%	17.4%	22.2%	11.1%		
Frequency-Dep	5.8%	10.1%			6.8%	
Tolerance-Dep					38.3%	15.5%

*Notes:* Only codes with a 5% frequency rate or greater were reported.

Table 8  
*Percentages of Common Themes by Benefits, Risks, and Vignette*

	Emotions	Social Life	Prof Success	Sexy Photos	Religion	Politics
<b>Posting Benefits</b>						
Self-Expression	21.3%		40.6%	37.2%	33.5%	24.6%
Relation Maint		32.9%	44.4%			
Pos Net Impact		10.6%	11.1%		16.5%	30.0%
<b>Posting Risks</b>						
Ineffect Comm	22.7%				14.6%	33.8%
Info Control	19.3%	5.8%		35.5%		
Neg Net Impact	14.5%		7.2%	28.0%	11.7%	16.4%
Context-Dep	26.6%	17.4%	22.2%	11.1%		
Tolerance-Dep					38.3%	15.5%

*Note:* Only codes with a 5% frequency rate or greater were reported.

## Appendix A: Vignettes, Measures, and Prompts

Please read the following stories and answer the following questions.

### Vignette 1: Emotions

Kim and Jodie are discussing their friends' online behavior. Some of their friends have been posting on social media about their emotions and moods.

Kim says that it is good to express your feelings online.

Jodie argues that expressing feelings online is not a good idea.

1. Who do you agree with more?
  - Jodie.
  - Kim.
  
2. How strongly do you feel about your choice? (Please slide the bar)
 

Somewhat strongly	Very strongly
----- -----	
  
3. Please explain the reasons for your choice.
  
4. How frequently does your online behavior align with your opinion of the situation discussed above?
  1. Not at all frequently.
  2. Not so frequently.
  3. Fairly frequently.
  4. Very frequently.
  
5. Based on your observations of status updates on social media, to what extent do you think people in your network would agree with your opinion on this situation?
  1. Hardly anyone would agree with me.
  2. Some people would agree with me.
  3. A lot of people would agree with me.
  4. Almost everyone would agree with me.

### Vignette 2: Social Life

Toby and Rachel have noticed that some of their friends frequently post pictures of themselves on social media having fun with friends.

Toby thinks it is great when people post photos of their social life online, such as photos of them hanging out with their friends.

Rachel thinks it is foolish to display your social life on social media.

1. Who do you agree with most?
  - Rachel.
  - Toby.
  
2. How strongly do you feel about your choice? Please slide the bar.
 

Somewhat strongly	Very strongly
----- -----	
  
3. Please explain the reasons for your choice.
  
4. How frequently does your online behavior align with your opinion of the situation discussed above?
  1. Not at all frequently.
  2. Not so frequently.
  3. Fairly frequently.
  4. Very frequently.
  
5. Based on your observations of status updates on social media, to what extent do you think people in your network would agree with your opinion on this situation?
  1. Hardly anyone would agree with me.
  2. Some people would agree with me.
  3. A lot of people would agree with me.
  4. Almost everyone would agree with me.

### Vignette 3: Politics

Beverly and Maria have noticed that some of their friends commonly post about their political beliefs on social media.

Beverly thinks it is great that people use social media to express their political views.

Maria thinks it is not a good idea to express political views online.

1. Who do you agree with most?

Maria.

Beverly.

2. How strongly do you feel about your choice? (Please slide the bar)

Somewhat strongly

Very strongly

|-----|-----|

3. Please explain the reasons for your choice.

4. How frequently does your online behavior align with your opinion of the situation discussed above?

1. Not at all frequently.

2. Not so frequently.

3. Fairly frequently.

4. Very frequently.

5. Based on your observations of status updates on social media, to what extent do you think people in your network would agree with your opinion on this situation?

1. Hardly anyone would agree with me.

2. Some people would agree with me.

3. A lot of people would agree with me.

4. Almost everyone would agree with me.

### Vignette 4: Sexy Photos

Kaitlyn and Cheyenne are scrolling through their social media newsfeeds together and notice that some of their friends post sexually provocative picture of themselves on social media.

Kaitlyn likes it when people post sexy pictures of themselves online.

Cheyenne does not like it when people post sexy pictures of themselves online.

1. Who do you agree with most?

Cheyenne.

Kaitlyn.

2. How strongly do you feel about your choice? (Please slide the bar)

Somewhat strongly

Very strongly

|-----|-----|

3. Please explain the reasons for your choice.

4. How frequently does your online behavior align with your opinion of the situation discussed above?

1. Not at all frequently.

2. Not so frequently.

3. Fairly frequently.

4. Very frequently.

5. Based on your observations of status updates on social media, to what extent do you think people in your network would agree with your opinion on this situation?

1. Hardly anyone would agree with me.

2. Some people would agree with me.

3. A lot of people would agree with me.

4. Almost everyone would agree with me.

### Vignette 5: Professional Success

Chris and David are discussing how some of their friends post status updates on social media about their career achievements.

Chris says it is a great idea to share your successes online.

David says it is bad form to announce your successes online.

1. Who do you agree with most?

David.

Chris.

2. How strongly do you feel about your choice? (Please slide the bar)

Somewhat strongly

Very strongly

|-----|-----|

3. Please explain the reasons for your choice.

4. How frequently does your online behavior align with your opinion of the situation discussed above?

1. Not at all frequently.

2. Not so frequently.

3. Fairly frequently.

4. Very frequently.

5. Based on your observations of status updates on social media, to what extent do you think people in your network would agree with your opinion on this situation?

1. Hardly anyone would agree with me.

2. Some people would agree with me.

3. A lot of people would agree with me.

4. Almost everyone would agree with me.

**Vignette 6: Religion**

Ashley and Dan have friends who commonly post about their spiritual or religious beliefs on social media.

Ashley believes it is good to express spiritual beliefs online.

Dan believes it is wrong to express spiritual beliefs online.

1. Who do you agree with most?

Dan.

Ashley.

2. How strongly do you feel about your choice? (Please slide the bar)

Somewhat strongly

Very strongly

|-----|-----|

3. Please explain the reasons for your choice.

4. How frequently does your online behavior align with your opinion of the situation discussed above?

1. Not at all frequently.

2. Not so frequently.

3. Fairly frequently.

4. Very frequently.

5. Based on your observations of status updates on social media, to what extent do you think people in your network would agree with your opinion on this situation?

1. Hardly anyone would agree with me.

2. Some people would agree with me.

3. A lot of people would agree with me.

4. Almost everyone would agree with me.

### **Social Media Network Frequency**

1. How many years have you owned a Facebook account?
2. How often do you use Facebook?
  1. Never or almost never.
  2. Rarely.
  3. A few times a month.
  4. A few times a week.
  5. Once a day.
  6. Multiple times a day.
3. How familiar are you with Facebook's privacy settings?
  1. Not at all familiar.
  2. A little familiar.
  3. Familiar.
  4. Very familiar.
4. Who can see your Facebook profile?
  1. Anyone (My profile is set to public).
  2. Friends of friends.
  3. Only my friends.
  4. Customized (I block certain individuals from viewing my profile).
5. How frequently do you customize who can see your status updates on Facebook?
  1. Never.
  2. Rarely.
  3. Sometimes.
  4. Often.
  5. Very often.
6. How frequently do you customize who can see your photographs on Facebook?
  1. Never.
  2. Rarely.
  3. Sometimes.
  4. Often.
  5. Very often.

**The Facebook Relationship Maintenance Behaviors (FRMB) Scale**

1. When I see a friend or acquaintance sharing good news on Facebook, I try to respond.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
2. When I see a friend or acquaintance sharing bad news on Facebook, I try to respond.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
3. When I see someone asking for advice on Facebook, I try to respond.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
4. When a Facebook friend has a birthday, I try to post something on their wall.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
  
5. When I see someone asking a question on Facebook that I know the answer to, I try to respond.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree

### Facebook Bridging Social Capital Scale

For the next series of questions, think about your Facebook network, including relatives, close and distant friends, coworkers and acquaintances.

1. Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me interested in things that happen outside of my town.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
2. Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me want to try new things.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
3. Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me interested in what people unlike me are thinking.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
4. Talking with people in my Facebook network makes me curious about other places in the world.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
5. Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me feel like part of a larger community.
  1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
6. Interacting with people in my Facebook network makes me feel connected to the bigger picture.

1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
7. Interacting with people in my Facebook network reminds me that everyone in the world is connected.
1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
8. Interacting with people in my Facebook network gives me new people to talk to.
1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree
9. Through my Facebook network, I come in contact with new people all the time.
1. Strongly disagree
  2. Disagree
  3. Neither agree nor disagree
  4. Agree
  5. Strongly agree

## **Network Diversity Prompts**

### **Religion**

For the next 4 minutes, please carefully look through your Facebook friends list and count how many people you are certain identify with a different religion than you. You may use the scratch sheet of paper you have been provided with. You will not be able to advance to the next question until 4 minutes have passed.

Now think about these people who identify with a different religion than you. How many of these people's status updates do you read?

### **Ethnicity/Race**

For the next 4 minutes, please carefully look through your Facebook friends list and count how many people you are certain identify with a different ethnicity than you. You may use the scratch sheet of paper you have been provided with. You will not be able to advance to the next question until 4 minutes have passed.

Now think about these people who identify with a different ethnicity than you. How many of these people's status updates do you read?

### **Political Ideology**

For the next 4 minutes, please carefully look through your Facebook friends list and count how many people you are certain identify with a different political ideology than you. You may use the scratch sheet of paper you have been provided with. You will not be able to advance to the next question until 4 minutes have passed.

Now think about these people who identify with a different political ideology than you. How many of these people's status updates do you read?

## Appendix B: Codebook

### Emotions Vignette

Code Category	Description
Ineffective Communication	Response clearly states posting such content is maladaptive, dysfunctional, provides no benefit to the person posting, or is an ineffective solution to a problem. Response may also state that posting is a poor form of communication and/or such posts may result in misunderstanding/misinterpretation. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, that such content is intimate, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Information Control	Response clearly states posting such information would result in negative consequences to someone's reputation and/or that sharing such information may expose someone's vulnerabilities. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Self-Expression	Response clearly states people have the right or freedom to express themselves however they choose and/or posting such content is personally beneficial to the user (i.e. therapeutic, healthy, an outlet etc.).
Public Conversation	Response clearly states users must be open to receiving feedback and/or responses from their network when posting such content.
Impact on Network: Positive	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may positively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as helpful, interesting, or enjoyable to others.
Impact on Network: Negative	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may negatively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as attention-seeking, annoying, or upsetting to others.
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Publicity	Response simply states such content is appropriate and/or belongs on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Privacy	Response simply states such content is inappropriate and/or does not belong on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Context-Dependent	Response states the appropriateness/inappropriateness of post is dependent of certain factors including the content of the post, the type of emotion, and other factors aside from frequency.
Frequency-Dependent	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the frequency or magnitude of posts (i.e. excessive, only to a certain extent, too much, etc.).

## Social Life Vignette

Code Category	Description
Information Control	Response clearly states posting such information would result in negative consequences to someone's (the poster or others) reputation and/or that sharing such information may expose someone's vulnerabilities. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, that such content is intimate, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Relationship Maintenance	Response clearly states posting such content allows the individual to stay connected with people in their network and/or keep people in their network updated with what they are doing.
Memories	Response clearly states posting such content allows user to look back on memories (for other people, code under Impact on Network).
Impact on Network: Positive	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may positively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as helpful, interesting, or enjoyable to others. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Impact on Network: Negative	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may negatively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as attention-seeking, annoying, or upsetting to others. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Publicity	Response simply states such content is appropriate and/or belongs on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Privacy	Response simply states such content is inappropriate and/or does not belong on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Context-Dependent	Response states the appropriateness/inappropriateness of post is dependent of certain factors including the content of the post, the emotion, and other factors aside from frequency.
Frequency-Dependent	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the frequency or magnitude of posts (i.e. excessive, only to a certain extent, too much, etc.).

### Professional Success Vignette

Code Category	Description
Information Control	Response clearly states posting such information would result in negative consequences to someone's reputation and/or sharing such information may expose someone's vulnerabilities. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, that such content is intimate, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Relationship Maintenance	Response clearly states posting such content allows the individual to stay connect with people in their network and/or keep people in their network updated with what they are doing.
Self-Expression	Response clearly states people have to right to express their excitement/pride in their success. Responses may also state people deserve to be proud and/or congratulated by others in their network.
Impact on Network: Positive	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may positively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as helpful, interesting, or enjoyable to others. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Impact on Network: Negative	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may negatively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as attention-seeking, annoying, or upsetting to others. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Publicity	Response simply states such content is appropriate and/or belongs on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Privacy	Response simply states such content is inappropriate and/or does not belong on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Context-Dependent	Response states the appropriateness/inappropriateness of post is dependent of certain factors including the content of the post, the emotion, and other factors aside from frequency.
Frequency-Dependent	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the frequency or magnitude of posts (i.e. excessive, only to a certain extent, too much, etc.).

### Sexy Photos Vignette

Code Category	Description
Information Control	Response clearly states posting such information would result in negative consequences to someone's reputation and/or sharing such information may expose someone's vulnerabilities. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, that such content is intimate, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Self-Expression	Response clearly states people have the right or the freedom to express themselves however they choose. May also state posting such content cultivates positive body image for the person posting and/or might make the person feel empowered.
Disrespectful/Demeaning to Self	Response clearly states posting such content is demeaning/disrespectful to one's self.
Impact on Network: Positive	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may positively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as helpful, interesting, or enjoyable to others. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Impact on Network: Negative	Response clearly discusses how posting such content may negatively impact others in the network. May include responses that discuss behaviors as attention-seeking, annoying, or upsetting to others. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Publicity	Response simply states such content is appropriate and/or belongs on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Privacy	Response simply states such content is inappropriate and/or does not belong on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Context-Dependent	Response states the appropriateness/inappropriateness of post is dependent of certain factors including the content of the post, the emotion, and other factors aside from frequency.
Frequency-Dependent	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the frequency or magnitude of posts (i.e. excessive, only to a certain extent, too much, etc.).

**Religion Vignette**

Code Category	Description
Ineffective Communication	Response clearly states posting such content is maladaptive, dysfunctional, provides no benefit to the person posting, or is an ineffective solution to a problem because it will specifically lead to arguments/fights.
Information Control	Response clearly states posting such information would result in negative consequences to someone's reputation and/or sharing such information may expose someone's vulnerabilities. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, that such content is intimate, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Self-Expression	Response clearly states people have the right or the freedom to share and/or express their beliefs. They have the right to choose what they post.
Public Conversation	Response clearly states users must be open to receiving feedback, responses, and/or opposing opinions from their network when posting such content.
Impact on Network: Positive	Response clearly states posting such content can spread important information, educate others, facilitate important dialogue, or bring about greater understanding. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Impact on Network: Negative	Response clearly states that posting such content might make others feel uncomfortable. Responses may also state such posts might offend, annoy, or alienate others in their network. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Publicity	Response simply states such content is appropriate and/or belongs on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Privacy	Response simply states such content is inappropriate and/or does not belong on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Context-Dependent: Positive Content Only	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on if the post contains positive content that is regarded as inspirational, uplifting, etc.
Context-Dependent: Tolerance	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends if the post is not demeaning or disrespectful to others or the beliefs of others. May also state appropriateness depends on if posts comes across as pressuring others to convert or subscribe to poster's beliefs.
Frequency-Dependent	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the frequency or magnitude of posts (i.e. excessive, only to a certain extent, too much, etc.).

## Politics Vignette

Code Category	Description
Ineffective Communication	Response clearly states posting such content is maladaptive, dysfunctional, provides no benefit to the person posting, or is an ineffective solution to a problem because it will specifically lead to arguments/fights.
Information Control	Response clearly states posting such information would result in negative consequences to someone's reputation and/or sharing such information may expose someone's vulnerabilities. May also state the breadth of people who might have access to such information, the permanency of posts, that such content is intimate, or that they only wish to share information with people they trust.
Self-Expression	Response clearly states people have the right or the freedom to express themselves however they choose. They have the right to choose what they post.
Public Conversation	Response clearly states users must be open to receiving feedback, responses, and/or opposing opinions from their network when posting such content.
Impact on Network: Positive	Response clearly states posting such content can spread important information, educate others, facilitate important dialogue, or bring about social change. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Impact on Network: Negative	Response clearly states that posting such content might make others feel uncomfortable. Responses may also state such posts might offend, annoy, or alienate others in their network. <i>Use this code when the participant positions themselves as audience member.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Publicity	Response simply states such content is appropriate and/or belongs on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Standards of Behavior/Norms: Privacy	Response simply states such content is inappropriate and/or does not belong on the Internet <i>and no other information/reasoning is provided.</i>
Context-Dependent: Tolerance	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on if the post is respectful and/or is not demeaning to the opinions of others.
Context-Dependent: Well-Informed Post	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the accuracy of the information shared and/or how well-informed the person posting is.
Frequency-Dependent	Response clearly states appropriateness of posting depends on the frequency or magnitude of posts (i.e. excessive, only to a certain extent, too much, etc.).