THE FACEBOOK CAMPUS: EXPLORING THE

EVOLUTION OF FACEBOOK CULTURE IN

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Technological advancements and communication are an integral part of a progressive culture and society. Specific forms of entertainment and communication, such as television, telephone and talking movies that were once viewed as entertaining and innovative now serve a fundamental role within communities and the majority of public life. In a virtual world where 'stalking' is socially acceptable, 'creeping' is the norm and 'lurking' is common, Facebook is an online forum where members exercise shared language that is foreign to non-members. Technology on university campuses is ubiquitous; especially present in the communication horizon is the development of Facebook and other online social networks. Social networking websites are increasingly popular among college aged students and young adults.

Online social networking websites (OSNWs) are online communities in which students engage in communication, information gathering and peer observation. Evidence supports OSNWs are a significant trend especially within the Millennial generation (Anderson, 2001; Bugeja, 2006; Ellison, Lampe & Steinfeld, 2006; Gemmill & Peterson, 2006; Gosling, Gaddis & Vazire, 2007; Gross, Acquisti & Heinz, 2005; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Lampe, Ellison & Steinfeld, 2006; Read, 2005; Ridings, Gefen & Arinze, 2002; Ridings & Gefen, 2004); it is important to analyze the influence that social networking websites may have on a student's academic achievement and social

integration. Student achievement and retention are influenced by a variety of factors. The introduction of advanced OSNW to university communities has the potential to influence administrative thought in the future and is a topic that merits further investigation.

Studies report that the majority of users on Facebook are between the ages of 18 and 25, which is a higher membership for the reported age group than any other OSNW (Gross et al., 2005; Lampe et al., 2006). Traditional aged college students have unique needs and are a continually growing faction of OSNW users, therefore an awareness of student integration is helpful in developing processes to meet the needs of today's student. Social integration and interaction within university residential facilities is integral to student retention. Integration into the social and academic systems of an institution impacts student attrition; theories on student departure from universities are focused in the inadequate incorporation of students into campus culture, or if individual student values differ from the college the student attends (Braxton, Vesper & Hosler, 1995; Braxton, Sullivan & Johnson, 1997; Tinto, 1975).

Facebook is an OSNW where membership was originally exclusive to students at Harvard, gradually expanded membership to limited university communities, with the most recent expansion offering accounts to any member with an email address (Jesdanun, 2006). The internet software application serves a social utility function enabling users to connect and keep up with profiles of many members. Since the implementation of the Facebook.com community in February 2004 (www.Facebook.com), Facebook has undergone many changes and is bound to continue to expand to meet the developing needs of users as one of the fastest growing OSNW.

Registration to become a member of the Facebook community is relatively simple, and begins by clicking "register" on the www.facebook.com website; users are also able to explore Facebook or "take a tour," or look for friends prior to signing up. After filling in name, email address and birthday, the user is asked to select a main network; different sections are available and new members can enter either high school, college or company network. Membership is confirmed by an email sent to the provided address. After confirming membership, the user can log in using their email address and password, and join a regional network, determined based on the network closest to the user's city and state. After full membership is completed, users are able to set up profiles and connect with friends, revealing as much or as little information as they choose.

The interactions that students have with peers, faculty and other campus community members influence the impression of university commitment to, and retention of students. Campus culture shapes much of the interaction that students experience. Kuh and Whitt (1988) define campus culture as "persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs, and assumptions that shape the behavior of individuals and groups in a college or university and provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions on and off the campus" (p.1). The impact that campus culture has on student success is crucial to understanding the interactions students have across different communication channels within the university community. Faculty interaction with students provides a necessary component to integration into the campus community and student retention. Literature from Kuh and Whitt (1988, 1999), Preece (2004) and Astin (1975; 1993) supports theories regarding community development and group sharing activities that may influence retention. Preece (2004) identifies

characteristics of a successful community to include members to have shared routines, vocabulary and clear sense of purpose; as a result people communicate purpose within the community and policies established to direct members to form socially bonded members. Astin (1975, 1993) further addresses subgroups of students with a common sense of purpose having the ability to develop group identity.

Hewitt and Forte (2006) studied student perceptions of faculty presence on Facebook in two undergraduate courses instructed by professors with established Facebook accounts, and the study presents unique findings that student reaction to encounters with faculty online is varied, however two-thirds of students reported comfort with faculty membership in Facebook. Informal interaction with faculty may in fact play a significant part in student socialization and retention; influencing student persistence and withdrawal from universities, attrition issues are evident in both the social and academic elements of colleges, when students are lacking integration into systems of the institution (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975).

Integrating technology in the classroom has the ability to provide a bridge between information, resources and the intended audience (Bugeja, 2006; Campbell, 2005; Conrad, 2002). Beyond academic information seeking, technology and wide-spread internet use enables information seeking to enter the social domain. OSNWs were not necessarily created for academic purposes, but the influence is noticeable within academic environments. Facebook, like much other technological advancement, enhances modern communication on college campuses via OSNW membership. Offline relationships exist online and new connections are often made; these connections are formed under unique circumstances, overcome geographic boundaries and enable the

continuation of relationships formed in person. Campus culture has the potential to be influenced through the extension of association between users and incoming students. Questions arise within communities of shared practice, values or location as to the degree to which interacting with people of similar interests may influence individual perspectives of community. The interaction among parties with shared interests influences and reinforces belief systems among community members.

Social networking site users are a diverse population, including professors, students, and employers. Children and adults alike utilize websites like Zanga, Facebook, MySpace, Friendster, and several others (Gross et al., 2005; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Read, 2006; Ridings & Gefen, 2004). The significance of these sites and the connection of people on mass levels are still to be understood as the phenomenon is recent and dynamic. Cell phones, extensive text messaging and OSNWs are only a few areas yet to be studied in detail. In addition, omnipresent online social networking is evident in the increasing number of available sites; amplified membership poses the concern of potential over-networking. Over-networking is possible as a result of multiple OSNWs available for users to obtain membership, creating a complex social environment online; over-networked users exist as a result of an oversaturated market of opportunities to select forums through which to interact online (Rheingold, 2000).

Student affairs professionals face challenges in addressing online social networking. While some institutions actively pursue and address students utilizing Facebook, others assuredly are prone to wait, ignore or remain totally unaware of the growing environment of online communities. Various studies (e.g. Agrawal, Kiernan, Srikant & Xu, 2002; Arthur, Sherman, Appel & Moore, 2006; Gemmill & Peterson,

2006; Gosling et al., 2007; Gross et al., 2005) address the dialectic of immediate contact that is simultaneously personal and impersonal, instant and immortal that serves to communicate or project either an honest image or an avatar of how one wants to be perceived. While some experience a confusion between reality and identity projection, data supports there are many practical applications of online social networking within the campus community.

Students living in residence halls are able to use social networks to communicate immediate, timely, important information to an individual, a class or a student body. Specifically, Facebook is the most present for campus communities serving user's ability to connect established offline relationships and online university community social browsing (Lampe et al., 2006; Read, 2006). Facebook is a tool in the progression to instant information, on demand, as needed. Institutions must consider Facebook as a developing means to affect the campus community through a new path of communications affiliation opportunities (Gosling et al., 2007).

Before Facebook opened to the public in 2006 (Jesdanun, 2006), many users perceived membership as part of a safe community, virtual geography bounded to those within the academic community. User traits depend on intent of usage; however several studies reveal that most users do not change privacy settings. Only 1.2% of users in the focus of one study changed their privacy settings to make profile searchable only to peers within their university (Gross et al., 2005). All safety and potential concerns must be addressed with students, as opposed to completely discouraging use of virtual communities considering the fact that skepticism and concerns regarding Facebook are many. For administrators, addressing internet stalking, identity theft, campus security,

safety and sense of privacy are all important (Bugeja, 2006; Read, 2005; Read, 2006). The potential impact on a student's future employment, interaction with faculty and the fact that Facebook can serve as a time consumer and academic distraction have made online social networking a pressing issue for administrators.

The search options within Facebook are more restrictive in seeking users, and is becoming a standard for university student identity (Lampe et al., 2006). For this reason, Facebook serves as an excellent platform to gather information regarding high school online social networking use and interaction with the university community. To serve as a practical resource to administrators, this study aims to encourage university communities to educate students and parents of the positive and negative influences that virtual communities carry.

What defines community within individual institutions of higher education is varied, and recognizing the importance of student integration to communities is emphasized through administrative decisions. The significance of being involved in a community and integrated into the fabric of the college with which students associate have a direct correlation to student retention and matriculation rates (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tinto, 1982 & 1988). Exploring the many opportunities to utilize online communities and the possibility of influencing the actual campus community could enhance the experience for all stakeholders involved in the institution (Ellison et al., 2006; Preece, 2004; Rheingold, 2000). The digital landscape has an effect on the campus environment; research will provide an introduction to issues facing traditional college students and their evolving relationship with the institution.

Researchers interested in social networking find Facebook to be a site filled with opportunities for study as a result of heavy usage patterns and the ability to connect online and offline relationship development. Digital community networks based on shared interests rather than geographical location provide an understanding of what students associate as personal community and requires further investigation. Typically, online to offline relationship development occurs, finding that relationships that initiate online often lead to correspondents meeting in person (Ellison et al., 2006). Does this equally apply to OSNWs? Is this pattern of behavior reflected in student usage, and if so, what influence does that play on the campus community? Because communities on Facebook are often bounded to a geographic location, the environment online is prone to imitate similar patterns of offline correspondence.

The traits of users depend on the intent of utilization of internet, social networking and computers in general. The intent of users can change with age, socio economic status, technological experience and various other influences. However the trend of social networking online is growing and will continue into the future.

Statement of the problem

Do students who see Facebook as a community presence on campus prior to arrival have a more accepting response to using OSNW in college? The degree this evolving technology should be addressed is still to be determined: Should administration ignore the digital campus and focus efforts towards addressing campus safety issues in preparing students? Administration needs to determine the role and involvement of OSNWs within the institution.

Purpose of the study

The study examines the growth and development of campus culture through OSNWs. The purpose of this study is to produce a useful report of ways that students enhance their campus experience through OSNWs by investigating the trends in social integration of Facebook users at Oklahoma State University. Conducting a focus group will detail student assimilation into campus community in relation to high school involvement in the OSNW. The influence that Facebook has on the institutional culture is dependent on student use. Understanding social connections via online community involvement is necessary to addressing current student issues.

Developing a presence and influencing the depth, intensity and involvement within the campus environment online is a necessary component of an evolving institutional student communication paradigm. To what extent each institution chooses to react is dependent on many factors, but this study will provide organizations and student affairs professionals the ability to influence building campus community and supporting students.

Research Questions

There is a potential relationship between the use of Facebook in high school that has an influence on the academic and social integration of the university student and overall community. A correlation linking the communication with campus community prior to enrollment and satisfaction with university will be present, in addition to providing evidence of the relationship between campus community in person and virtual campus community participation on www.Facebook.com. Students who have visited the campus prior to attending may have added friends or developed positive impressions of

9

the University; OSNW involvement with the university campus community will aid in the facilitation of student's cultural integration as students within the institution. Should residence officials utilize OSNW programs to inform residents of programming?

Discussion may reveal the extent students are knowledgeable of safety concerns and factors impacting OSNW membership security. Defining characteristics and driving factors behind OSNW memberships influence student experiences and discussion can reveal the impact Facebook membership has on the campus community allowing university experience to be better understood. The influence that OSNW membership has on the student perspective of the institution may further affect the university response to student use.

Limitations

Limitations begin with the understanding the Facebook is constantly changing and profiles can be updated and changed several times daily. The availability of a snap shot of activity on Facebook is present, but difficulty is found is capturing the entirety of Facebook usage. The study is limited to students living in residence halls on campus and currently attending a large research institution selected in the Midwest/Southern region of the United States. Students attending the selected university were chosen due to the researcher's previous involvement in other Facebook research on campus and knowledge of available audience. The accessibility to students at the researcher's institution played a key role in demographics of selected participants because focus group attendance was necessary to participate in the study which was held on campus.

The literature suggests students in residence halls are more likely to be using OSNW; underclassmen participate more regularly in virtual communication than upper

classman and students living off-campus (Anderson, 2001; Gemmill & Peterson, 2006). The study is limited to students and not involving faculty or other potential university Facebook community members to make a statement regarding undergraduate OSNW use and student involvement. The study is also limited to students who are current and previous users of Facebook due to timeliness of topic and necessity that users have knowledge of habits and ability to share user experience.

As the study itself is notwithstanding limitations, it must be noted that the intent for the research is to provide a snapshot of student use of Facebook. Various limits exist including a small sample size, lack of randomization, and variability, resulting in focus groups that may not be sufficiently random. As with many social "attitudinal" surveys, there is a great deal of variability expected within the population of Facebook users. This could bias the initial evaluation, but the results of the initial focus groups are to be used to develop foundations for more extensive, statistically valid research.

Extraneous variable

A limitation of the study is that respondents are limited strictly to Facebook users.

Participant variables

Is there a difference in community of students using Facebook from those not involved in OSNW? The study does not address students who utilize other OSNW platforms, although participants may be members of multiple OSNWs. Another participant variable is that users of Facebook are self-selecting.

Environment variables

New technology and early innovators using Facebook are environmental variables. Facebook may be used more extensively by collegiate bound high school students than those not attending any university.

The results of this study are limited to the responses of focus group participants and will lack external validity because identifying members will not be a representative sample from the population. Research conducted in this study was guided by many resources (e.g. Bloor, 2001; Greenbaum, 1998, 2000; Patton, 2001; Robinson & Lai, 2006; Seale, 1998, 1999, 2004). In a focus group, the researcher has less control over data that emerge and is limited to the ability of the focus group directors to structure the process in an unbiased manner. Focus groups are an insecure basis to make generalizations about a population, and attempt to reproduce social structure in an unnatural way through specific, directed and monitored interaction. However, focus groups manage to surface and highlight issues that may otherwise not be considered that guide further exploration. Focus groups are often the first step in shaping a researchable question or hypothesis.

Assumptions

Focus groups seek to explore social and cultural meanings and the knowledge shared by participants through recorded dialogue is useful to theoretical research (Seale, 1998). The assumption in this study is that opinions and attitudes are socially produced and shaped through interaction with others and therefore more openly discussed regarding the topic. Focus groups are a reliable forum to generate discussion regarding Facebook development and influence on the campus community. Focus groups are an

efficient method to retrieve the most information within relatively strict time constraints (Bloor, 2001; Greenbaum, 2000). Through use of focus groups, additional information regarding social networking and building campus community can be gathered. Adapted to meet the needs of research, focus groups provide the data to generate a hypotheses regarding future Facebook use by undergraduate students.

Key assumptions of research are that the nature and sources of problems deemed of societal importance can be understood through knowledge, but have limited application context (Patton, 2001). Bloor (2001) affirms professionals can utilize qualitative research to impact the larger community by focusing attention on relevant activities that are particularly useful to practitioners. Focus group research is useful in social science as an active way to access audience and information (Greenbaum, 1998). While the researcher identifies as an observer, there is an inevitable influence on participants within social situations. However the goal of the investigator is to take advantage of the intended purpose by being present in the name of research, therefore being aware that interaction indeed influences results that would not be obtained without observation (Patton).

<div align="center">Significance of study</div>

Facebook has proven to be one of the fastest growing communication methods chosen on campus communities (Bugeja, 2006; Read, 2005). Further understanding the parallels between online communities and the physical campus community will provide administrators with the ability to use OSNWs and emerging technology effectively to enhance the student experience. This is a newly emerging trend in the communications process of the student, and the spectrum of possibilities for the academy has yet to be

fully considered or scientifically researched. Investigating the evolution of college students as Facebook users requires addressing the current uses of Facebook and comparing generational differences in user traits. Speculation and concerns, in addition to the impact on the campus community, have far-reaching implications for university officials, and further clarifying Facebook as a component of institutional community influences the future progression of the business of OSNWs.

<center>Organization of study</center>

The development of focus groups to discuss and gauge impressions is distinguished within the body of the study and appendices attached. Focus groups are summarized within the body of the study through recruitment procedures, invitation to participate, participant descriptions and the group discussion process. Chapter one also consists of an introduction to OSNWs and the development of the problem and study.

The review of literature contained within chapter two develops summaries of recent literature highlighting the importance of Facebook and online communities to the academic community. Organized within the literature review is the influence of technology and community development on the academic community. Following is the section regarding university responsibility, safety and privacy issues facing OSNW users. Overall themes conclude with community development and student integration processes influencing retention and involvement of students.

The methodology is discussed in chapter three and includes subsections covering subjects, instruments, the research design and procedure as well as descriptions of the techniques for analysis and interpretation of data. Advantages of focus groups are discussed to present a range of experiences and opinions. The discussion of findings in

<center>14</center>

chapter four includes specific quotes and findings from focus groups. The analysis and interpretation of data involves developed summaries, identification of patterns and the application of research techniques to collect data through group interaction. Discussion and comparison of data between groups suggests areas of research to support the research goal to establish a reliable conclusion to suggest areas of research that require more investigation.

Definition of terms

Application: Optional OSNW Facebook enhancements added to profiles to enhance interaction in OSNW. Third party developers now create new applications that sometimes result in 'application spam.' Applications include such options as photo sharing, chat, mobile, and many others.

Blogs (Web logs): Online journals which are sometimes accessible to the public or limited to friends, depending on user settings.

Cached: Webpage or search engine that records a catalogue of live images: tracking web pages for future reference. Creating an archive that records all possible points and times, resulting in the accessibility of items posted for a short period being dated back and traced to the specific user.

Creeping: Users log into OSNW to view profiles or photos and look through friends of friends and extended community, typically browsing for a long period of time.

Friend: To be a user's "friend" on an OSNW, a user must contact the other to invite (request the other "add as a friend") to create a newly formed relationship online. Friends are usually given more access to information on Facebook than privacy settings allow for non-affiliated members (non-friends).

Full-time student: Any student registered in more than 12 credit hours at the university.

Facebook: Online social networking website, www.Facebook.com

Group: Students can become members of groups within any network to which they belong. Global groups also exist that are open to all users. Membership is limited to a maximum of 200 groups per user.

Millennial: Term that encompasses all current traditional undergraduate students, typically referred to as being born between 1982 and 2000. This generation of college students is more racially and ethnically diverse than past generations of college students. Many Millennial students have never known life without computers, and the internet has generally been included in their education. A challenge is that most Millennial students are more technologically savvy than the professors that teach them (Carlson, 2005).

Network: Facebook consists of various networks based on shared spaces: workplace, university, high school or region.

OSNW: Online social networking website

Poke: Feature on Facebook whereby users choose to "poke" any other member of Facebook. Pokes have no exact function but can be interpreted in any number of ways, simply being a notification that the user has been "poked." Pokes are one of Facebook's original feature applications. (www.Facebook.com)

Residence hall: Living and learning communities within a university where students reside, consisting of traditional and non-traditional housing styles. Residence halls considered in this study include single and multiple occupancy rooms.

Wall: Available to post comments, the wall is visible on user sites. Individuals can remove comments from their own wall, and restrict accessibility to view their wall to specific users.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Created in 2004, Facebook was invented by students at Harvard. Membership to the networking site was originally open to members of the Harvard community and rapidly expanded, producing a significant enhancement to previous programs or opportunities to interact with campus community online (Jesdanun, 2006; Read, 2005; Ridings & Gefen, 2004).   Initially, membership was released strictly to college communities; available to participants with a university email address, Facebook eventually expanded access to any internet user with a valid email address. Student ability to keep in touch with friends, locate classmates and view university happenings is evolving and connecting communities on campus as never before. Information gathering, peer interaction, communicating or expressing personalities and seeking entertainment are perhaps some of the more pervasive uses of technology and virtual communities (Gosling et al., 2007; Lampe et al., 2006; Preece, 2004; Ridings & Gefen, 2004; Ridings et al., 2002). The social platforms through which communities are able to connect have grown in the virtual world of OSNWs and may perhaps be a window to the enhanced possibilities for student integration and social interaction (Ellison et al., 2006; Gemmill & Peterson, 2006; Lampe et al., 2006).

Research provides a theoretical background on the social integration process of students and the importance of connecting with others within environments (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975). Vital to the establishment within group identity and social integration of the university is a student's first year of college (Tinto, 1975).

Facebook's user base consists mostly of college students, and increasingly of alumni associated with institutions. Facebook is a useful communication technology that serves almost as a private tool for students within institutions to further their involvement and experience within the university. Young adults enjoy the independence of utilizing technology, including the process of researching and discovery (Arthur et al., 2006).

Social interaction among peers has made networking through OSNWs a part of universities; the social impact is far reaching and the effective inclusion and utilization by the academy remains in the early stages. Universities have the potential to benefit from making websites interactive, student driven and accessible for information exchange. Community development online occurs when users drive the operating functions, including guiding input, goals and topics (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Bonding between members encourages patrons to continue involvement in communities, therefore motivating students to continue to exchange information and enhance their ability to become socially integrated.

Social psychology provides that affiliation and belonging in a social organization aid in goal achievement, and virtual communities are a prime outlet for information exchange with a high probability of community interaction (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Virtual communities are precise and the internet guides users to socialize within a prompt

group via users seeking membership within intentional community borders. Internet and technology enable the quest for interaction within specific realms, channeling users to socialize within the ultimate place to interact with relative strangers, and gather information. The internet is becoming a social atmosphere, as motivation for use has shifted from strictly information and data gathering to making friends and social development (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

Facebook is unique from previous online communities as membership in the virtual social network is voluntary (Conrad, 2002); users are united in shared purpose, community and geography. Increased interaction online and the use of technology to communicate are current trends among college students and merit the attention of student affairs professionals. Studies have shown that an overwhelming majority of Facebook users are college students or teenagers, proving the value of further inquiry focusing on the social impact of technology, the media and networking through OSNWs (Ellison et al., 2006). Some online communities are joined in a "bandwagon" manner; seemingly that certain groups only interact within specific groups online and in person (Conrad, 2002).

Important to student development is the purpose of meeting in person within university community, and participation in online community may be disregarded by some members when given the choice between interpersonal development and online community growth. Facebook seemingly bonds university communities through commonalities and encourages innovative communication progression. College-oriented sites allow online networking to move to face-to-face interactions (Gross et al., 2005; Lampe et al., 2006).

Additional concerns include the influence that online social interaction may have on students. The confidence in the use of OSNWs may present potential over reliance issues for some (Ellison et al., 2006). Networks also carry the potential to be less used and not garner the potential benefits within certain campus communities. A university environment with a complete understanding of use by faculty, students and administrative leaders aids the progress of developing campus culture. To further benefit universities concerned with integrating technology, a complete understanding of networking through OSNWs by students is of great importance to satisfying the goals of higher education.

Undergraduate learning and personal development by students is influenced by peers (Kuh, 1995a). Socially, students on university campuses are generally secluded and tend to rely on technology to maintain social support, serving to reduce stress through contact with friends and family; technology and internet provide an outlet to cope with stress and escape the realities of the present (Anderson, 2001). Research supports this but still finds students are most likely to seek face-to-face interaction within their local community for stress alleviation rather than using technology to contact friends or family to alleviate anxiety on stressful days (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006). The entertainment and social outlet purpose of OSNW usage is apparent, yet the interaction with campus community can not be minimized.

Technology has enabled social connection and access available instantaneously; modern college students utilize mobile technology making direct contact a normal and expected part of daily lives (Arthur et al., 2006). Evidence of offline to online community development further motivates student involvement in Facebook, providing an outlet for students to assemble virtually and in person within university borders.

Facebook serves a specific geographically bound community, offering limited opportunities to belong to other communities. However, with group development and interest postings, community is generated through interaction (Rheingold, 2000). Defining the quality and meaning of interaction within virtual communities offers valuable information regarding community development and the ways in which OSNW membership may enhance campus culture for individuals.

Of 1,300 traditional college students, no less than one-tenth used the internet to an extent which it interfered with academic well-being, social performance, and general health (Anderson, 2001). Online community membership implies safety to many users; however, social conflicts that exist in reality potentially subsist online. Over reliance on virtual communities can have negative social and psychological effects (Rheingold, 2000). Rheingold (2000) further addresses the prickly relationship of communicating personal information through an impersonal mode of interaction. Exaggerated examples include the idea that views and perspectives reinforced through interaction among community members may cause dramatic changes. Changes among social order and shared ideology become less defined by geography and more by common thought and ideas. OSNWs must face the challenge to enable users to understand unfamiliar concepts and create a truly global community (Rheingold), while the purpose of sites like Facebook is to share information, reinforcing shared community.

The maintenance of connections with former classmates is a continued motivation for using Facebook and is evident through the many OSNW profiles which identify the high school Facebook members previously attended (Ellison et al., 2006). Additional reasons for seeking involvement in a virtual community included increased access to

information, exchanging facts, social support and friendship maintenance (Ridings, 2004). College students use Facebook to make social connections; often students post profiles of themselves exposing many elements of the user's personal interests and information. Friends are able to post comments on pages of friends, viewing profiles of individuals they may or may not know in person. In addition to hobbies, musical interest and relationship status, residence, phone number and favorite quotes are among other identifying fields that students present via online profile.

Sites like Facebook and MySpace are accessible to most internet users and anyone with an email address. Users provide information through creating a 'profile' with the intent of communication with others, meeting new friends and connecting with old friends. Users post self-descriptive information for dating purposes, to connect to friends, conduct career searches, receive feedback and blogging. Hundreds of thousands of new users are added daily to sites like these (Gross et al., 2005; Lampe et al., 2006). Facebook averages the highest number of users from 18-25 with over half of the user base falling in the age range, higher than any other social networking site (Bugeja, 2006; Ellison et al., 2006; Gross et al., 2005; Jesdanun, 2006). This provides the knowledge that college aged students use Facebook as a popular OSNW option. Voluntary membership in virtual groups based on common interest provides the forum to join topical social groups in addition to receiving birthday notices, messaging and sharing photographs.

Millennial students spend a significant amount of time using computers. Much of the research contains data stating the majority of the Millennial generation, especially those in a university community, overwhelmingly own cellular phones and have regular

internet access (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006). Communication and social outreach is either primary or secondary motivator for engaging in continued computer use. Significant development in technology use by students on university campuses is revealed in an overwhelming majority of students that report using technology on a regular basis, owning a cellular phone and internet service. Students often use cellular phones and internet to seek social support, however a quarter of the students surveyed in one study reported experiencing disruptions delaying schoolwork or interrupting ability to complete tasks as a result of technology (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006).

Technology and Community Development

Physical, academic and social well-being influences the exploration of the cultural meaning of collective Facebook use on university campuses. Increased accessibility to community through cellular phones and the convenience of internet access make the maintenance of virtual community important. Access is now available anywhere, anytime as the internet on mobile phones making the unification of members based on common interests a possibility at all times.

Facebook user traits vary individually, but the average user has between 150-200 "friends", and time spent on social networking websites tend to be 10-30 minutes daily; users often access Facebook for entertainment purposes rather than information gathering purposes (Ellison et al., 2006). Users frequently respond through Facebook for "social searching," seeking information regarding social contacts, classmates or new acquaintances (Lampe et al., 2006), furthering the offline-online community development. However, first year students responding in two survey based research studies reported limited use of event planning function on Facebook, overwhelmingly

reporting social searching as main purpose of use (Lampe et al., 2006). Social searching and social browsing are defined by Lampe, Ellison and Steinfeld (2006). Social searching is conducted by users to explore information about people with an offline connection while social browsing is conducted with the purpose of finding individuals or organizations with the intent of offline relationship development (Lampe et al., 2006). However, research is varied and supports that user traits are varied and difficult to generalize beyond the fact that Facebook users primarily seek information to enhance understanding of offline community rather than for the purpose of social browsing (Ellison et al., 2006; Lampe et al., 2006).

Facebook generates networks that are geographically bounded, offering users the ability to identify with a region for a network to belong to. Identifying an affiliation with a specific institution or with a geographic location, users can view profiles of other users in their region. Students often do not expect faculty, administrators or anyone outside of the university campus community to view personal profiles (Lampe et al., 2006). This serves a danger to student knowledge of personal revelation online, because Facebook enables immediate peers and others within university community to view profiles unless additional privacy measures are enabled (Agrawal et al., 2002; Read, 2006). Provided this knowledge of student discourse, the importance of enabling security measures can not be overstated through communication about OSNWs to student populations (Patil & Kobsa, 2005).

Facebook enables users to contact friends within their network, and also to connect with friends outside of their school or geographic region. Friendships within the institution and outside of the university are maintained through the same communication

tool. Social interaction plays a major role in understanding the importance of Facebook to the user sense of community. Community is created through email, instant messaging, discussion boards, groups, blogs and games (Rheingold, 2000). Creating collaborative websites that are easily created, modified and useable for online databases serve the university community to enhance structures that are already in place. Habits of online community member interaction are reflected in on-campus interaction; research provides a theoretical background on the development of campus community.

Conduct viewed as expected behaviors and acceptable is different for individual users, and a range of students use Facebook in an assortment of ways.   Preece (2004) identifies the term "lurking," used in research to describe specific interactions students have whereby not indicating to users they have viewed their personal information, but often visiting sites to seek updates on personal happenings. Social browsing is limited to those within the Facebook member's selected community, so lurking is not often viewed as a negative aspect to Facebook (Lampe et al., 2006; Rheingold, 2000). Active communities have significantly less lurking and more participation (Lampe et al., 2006; Rheingold, 2000). Online communities exist virtually as social groups of individuals forming personal relationships in cyberspace; members communicate over enough time with significant human emotion, whereby creating a social attachment (Rheingold, 2000).

The impact of OSNWs is far reaching; Facebook.com and Myspace.com are synonymous with campus culture today. Socializing is increasingly being done online, which impacts campus culture and community as a result of the shift in communication preferences of students. Facebook is a dominant presence in university community social connections, combining itself with the meaning of the college experience and enhancing

the capability of utilizing technology to support relationship development. Kuh and Whitt (1988) discuss addressing campus culture through observable forms and artifacts. Viewing OSNW use as a cultural artifact may suggest that Facebook provides information to assist in understanding and assessing campus culture. Individuals with commonalities offline are able to extend interactions within the virtual realm; OSNWs allow for alterations to existing relationships and encourages the formation of new social connections (Ellison et al., 2006).

Participation in online communities allows users to take advantage of resources available among members. Increased social capital among users improves community, develops trust among members, and increased participation in activities (Ellison et al., 2006). Undergraduate membership on Facebook within some universities is almost unanimous, regardless of gender, income or ethnicity; Facebook is a virtual community that serves as an accurate depiction of actual environment although older students are less likely to be on Facebook (Ellison et al., 2006). Social psychology offers the explanation that affiliation and belonging within a social organization is beneficial to information seeking which aids in achievement of personal goals (Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

Gosling, Gassid & Vazire (2007) examined 113 Facebook users in terms of interpersonal impressions from peers. After examining the user websites, Gosling et al., interviewed acquaintances to determine whether the user expressed personality effectively and accurately. The authors concluded that OSNWs like Facebook are a valid means of communication among peers and an effective means of personality expression.

Gemmill and Peterson (2006) surveyed student use of technology, monitoring behavior and habits. Information was gathered regarding the use of email, instant

message services, internet for academic and leisure, cell phone use and land-line phone use. The study found that college students obtain social support via cell phones and instant message, which is not surprising considering the high degree of connectedness associated with Millennial students. The study concluded that technology use surveyed was highest among freshman and lowest in seniors and, to avoid academic side effects, users need to address the role of technology within their academic progress (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006).

<div align="center">Safety, Privacy and University Responsibility</div>

Existing academic research concerning OSNWs focuses on privacy and safety concerns, information revelation and risk assessment (Gross et al., 2005). In "Think Before You Share," Read (2006), discusses the use of Facebook by school administrators at Pennsylvania State University to identify students who rushed the football field following a victory against Ohio State University. Students posted pictures of themselves and friends, in addition to starting a group within Facebook for students claiming to have charged the field after the win. Administrators identified students associated with the event as a result of students utilizing computers to further their social resources. Questions are raised as a result of this practice regarding students being unfairly implicated as involved in a crime as a result of their involvement in OSNWs. Concerns for students escalate as a result of administration's inability to implicate additional student involvement because the other rule-breaking students chose not to have Facebook accounts or to participate in the virtual group.

Patil and Kobsa (2005) studied the use of privacy controls within awareness systems, and establish that the use of privacy controls in technology is dependent on the

knowledge of security features, and the technology itself. Users of *MySpace* were presented security warnings and alerts, yet most chose not to enable additional privacy settings. The OSNW primary function was not to serve the interests of protecting members privacy (Gross et al., 2005) so the fact that an overwhelming number of users opted to use standard privacy measures and not to enable additional security is a point of apprehension; however privacy controls have now been improved in response to user concerns (Hewitt & Forte, 2006). Most users knew little of the safety and protection of privacy policies, ways to guard safety and ways that privacy might be compromised; but most users believe safety and privacy are important functions for online social networking (Agrawal et al., 2002). Online communities construct opportunities for social networking where individuals create profiles providing personal information to enormous global networks of friends and strangers. Advancements in technology and online communications release information increasing the potential for identity theft, affecting the entire campus, from faculty to students. Facebook users reportedly are willing to share vast amounts of personal information (Gross et al., 2005). Potential danger involved with information revelation requires the protection of privacy and user awareness.

Gross, Acquisti and Heinz (2005) examined 4,540 Facebook users for the type and amount of information disclosed and found that an overwhelming majority of profiles provide full access, associating the person with their first and last name, picture, birthday, and hometown. More than half provided their current residence. The majority of users provide fully identifiable information although the site does not require disclosure. The study concluded that few users change the privacy settings and seem willing to provide

personal information to the public. Facebook is perceived as a connection to both the physical and virtual community of the college campus.

As the participation in social networking sites increases, the security need of students requires attention by university administrators, especially student affairs professionals. Evidence shows that increasing awareness of privacy issues utilizing educational programs and orientation provides information to students for personal protection and controlling information that is shared within perceived community and with outside networks. University officials have the ability to construct and monitor online community, serving the culture to provide information, expanding social aspects which further motivate continued involvement in both online and physical campus community. Universities providing information to students still recognize the importance of student responsibility to protect themselves, students' limiting self revelation and creating a controlled online environment (Agrawal et al., 2002). Stanford gives information to students in orientation packets for their first year, and the website includes a URL for additional information regarding safe user habits for OSNW (Agrawal et al., 2002).

Available information on social networking sites can be used for identity theft, stalking, blackmail or lead to embarrassment for some students. Gross, Acquisti and Heinz stated, "College oriented social networking sites provide opportunities to combine online and face-to-face interactions within an ostensibly bounded domain. This makes them different than traditional networking sites: they are communities based on a shared real space" (2005, p. 74). The Millennial generation requires fast, efficient, and direct communication. Millennials are dependent on e-mail as a form of communication and

institutions must do their best to reach them at their level (Carlson, 2005). Current students use many outlets as forms of communication online. Higher education professionals need to be aware of how students are using blogs, and how they can use them to promote student communication (Gross et al., 2005).

As a result of increased access to personal information, institutions must take preventive measures to ensure the safety of confidential data. Opportunities have emerged to develop current practices that encourage a university atmosphere promoting the growth of programs and accessibility for students and faculty. Students have changed dramatically, and practices must be evaluated and addressed to ensure current student needs are met. The student experience is influenced by many factors, and with the increased presence on OSNW, research suggests an interesting dynamic.

<center>University Community and Retention</center>

Astin (1975, 1993) studied student characteristics and institutional descriptors to define variables affecting student retention. Subgroups of students with shared purpose contribute to community building through group identity and shared practices which enhance a sense of solidarity (Astin, 1975, 1993). Tinto (1975) describes student interaction with institutions and assimilation and student success. Tinto's work founded the theory that student integration is directly correlated with the likelihood of student success. Tinto's work is at the core of John Braxton's varied discussions. Research by Braxton and Lien (2000) and Braxton, Sullivan and Johnson (1997) developed modifications to Tinto's theory and contributed to the researcher's perspective as well as understanding of the underlying variables to student success. Braxton (2000) finds that student cultures are adaptable to meet the growing needs of students. Developing

<center>31</center>

predictions and defining variables regarding student retention center on concepts around Tinto's theories and Braxton's reappraisal regarding student social integration and institutional departure, suggesting varying dimensions of student retention.

Braxton et al., (1997) reviewed Tinto's theory of college student departure and the assessment concludes that social integration is significant to student retention and integration. Braxton, Vesper and Hosler (1995) conducted a longitudinal analysis of 263 first year students to assess academic and social trends in student transition. Findings support the conclusion that student experiences connecting the institution academic and socially to the individual aid in goal achievement (Braxton, Vesper & Hosler, 1995). Educational institutions influence student involvement and persistence through institutional characteristics to meet student expectations and enhance learning experiences.

Community Development and Campus Culture

Students are able to identify friends, classmates, and roommates, in turn forming a small community before stepping foot on campus through the creation of OSNW. Networking provides students with an impression of the university community through interaction with virtual community and information gathering online. The environment for universities to market and advertise events online is increasing, providing specific and direct marketing to target audiences (Arthur et al., 2006). Events and announcements are created in online communities, reducing cost to individuals and organizations, as well as meeting students at their desired form of communication. Formal student organizations can create separate groups within these networks, enhancing the distribution of information to club members and creating virtual clubs and subcultures. More informal

organizations can also be created, grouping students with common interests and allowing them to discuss and share information (Rheingold, 2000; Ridings & Gefen, 2004).

Established communities share routines and communicate in shared vocabulary that bind members together socially (Preece, 2004; Rheingold, 2000). Evidence of shared community is seen throughout the literature regarding Facebook and OSNW shared language. Terms familiar to users are foreign to non-users, such as "pokes" and "wall." Community members of Facebook enhance use by sharing information through applications that have nonspecific terms as labels. One of the original features on Facebook, where users choose to "poke" any other member of Facebook, have no exact function but can be employed in any number of ways to imply varied meanings to individual users.

A steady decline in the level of involvement in social organizations influences the potential use of technology, likely to increase with the advent of social networking and increased participation in virtual community (Gemmill & Peterson, 2006; Ridings & Gefen, 2004). Building campus community is possible through participation and involvement in one or more community subsets within the institution. Student utilization of available resources to expand and enhance the traditional academic experiences may be evaluated on a variety of levels. Research regarding extraversion tendencies and personality expression found online communities to serve as a relevant forum through which to communicate personality to enhance real on-campus interactions (Gosling et al., 2007)

Campus culture affects the overall college experience; the climate of student interaction with peers, faculty and university community is distinguished by the values

and attitudes encountered by individual students. The student perception of campus community has the potential to be influenced by a variety of factors. Inadequate integration into the college environment is attributed to insufficient interaction within the community and often cited as influencing a student's decision whether or not to continue matriculation (Braxton, 2000; Tinto, 1975 & 1988; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). Connectedness between online communities transpires when synergistic commonality exists among members and contributes to further motivating membership among participants (Conrad, 2002). Managers and leaders are responsible for communicating the needs of online communities, putting policies in place that are changeable which further support online communication (Preece, 2004); this further supports evidence that involved administrators are responsible for enhancing real and virtual university community by supporting online interaction.

Knowing that offline-to-online community involvement exists, a purpose is served in enhancing the developing online communities. Real-world interaction enhances online community, and the knowledge of people in real space can serve a purpose in creating online community (Gosling et al., 2007). Communities share information about activities, networking both in person and virtually, or a combination of the both (Preece, 2004).   Users of Facebook develop new online connections, but overwhelmingly employ the services to serve as a continuation of previously established offline relationships (Lampe et al., 2006).

Criticisms of literature available must begin by addressing the absence of longitudinal analysis; research is lacking because no college graduate has accessed Facebook throughout high school and the complete four years of college yet. As a result,

there is no current retention evidence proving a connection between high school involvement with virtual university community and institutional graduation rates.

University life is influenced by the culture, determined through aspects of interaction with peers, influencing student exposure to values and attitudes (Kuh, 1990). The potential exists for students to experience particular cultural elements and enhance understanding of university community through sustained, interactive online behavior. The knowledge of student discourse might prove sustainability of virtual communities is dependent upon the interaction of members and commitment to exploring social and cultural meaning via technological interfacing. Virtual communities emphasize content, encouraging social community development that can be monitored without explicit membership in observed groups within the virtual community (Ridings & Gefen, 2004). The presence of community is able to be sustained through regular and significant interaction of members, necessary to retention of students (Anderson, 2001).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Subjects

The sample group is a subset of students in the Millennial generation that have all lived on campus in residence halls and currently are attending a public, four year, nationally accredited, comprehensive university. The research institution focuses on senior and graduate level education and serves a student population of approximately 23,000 students. Campus residential facilities house 5,900 students: 4,400 reside in single student housing and 1,400 live in family housing. Of the users who posted residence hall addresses publicly on personal Facebook profiles in October 2007, 659 reside in traditional halls, 188 in suite style housing, 593 in deluxe suites and 249 in apartment style residence halls (not university apartments).

The primary reason for selecting Facebook as the social networking site to examine is founded in the presence of OSNW on college campuses. University communities are the inner core of the Facebook community, which is one of the largest and fastest growing web directories (Read, 2005). Since the site was created, many users identifying themselves as college students are added daily (Read, 2005). College students may perhaps have an inclination to use Facebook over other OSNWs, and provide the geographic boundaries of a university community within the virtual world. To gauge impressions and make a valid statement regarding the population, focus group

members were asked to discuss relevant topics including: locations students access Facebook, intent of use, purpose of chosen activities, whether students have met someone via OSNW (within their student community), student perception of campus community, likes and dislikes of Facebook, and motivators for continued involvement.

The sampling population consisted of Facebook users identified as traditional aged college students enrolled as full-time students during the 2007-2008 school year. Most important for research within focus groups was for participants to be students that are current users of Facebook, and have experience using the program enough to have established a credible understanding and opinions of OSNW. While the focus groups were not exactly representative of a population with identical experience, background and demographics, all participants are Millennial students and reflect a variety of responses.

Students chosen to participate in the study had to be previous and remain current members of the OSNW, Facebook. An email was sent out to users identifying their residence on Facebook (Appendix A), requesting involvement in a one hour focus group to be conducted during the Spring 2008 semester, immediately after obtaining IRB approval. Age of participant was technically irrelevant to the study as the matter at hand is the impact of time invested in using OSNWs for first year college students, but the average age of the subjects according to the Millennial generation would likely provide a sample group with ages ranging between 18 and 25.

Both in-state and out-of-state undergraduates were selected to participate, as long individual Facebook accounts indicated their being residents of traditional residence halls at Oklahoma State University. First year freshman college students were initially preferred; however, included undergraduate students ranging from freshman to recent

graduates (graduation occurred two days prior to the last focus group session). Also, transfer students, not a specific focus of this study, were present in the final group. The goal was to provide evidence that increased time spent on social networking websites has an impact on the development of campus culture, student interpretation and perceptions of the university environment.

Three separate focus groups were scheduled for college freshman living in the same residence hall. The goal was for a diverse group of OSNW users with some prior-to-college OSNW experience to enhance the study results, but a challenge came in setting specific guidelines to guarantee much more than the specific user demographics in this type of study. Initial recruiting efforts entailed emails inviting participation sent from the student investigator's university email account (Microsoft Outlook) to 137 self-identifying potential participants, current users of Facebook identifying themselves as university freshman, residing on campus in a residence hall and providing a personal email address.

As a result of timing in the semester and lack of student response to emails requesting involvement, modifications were made to recruiting participants. 177 emails were sent requesting participant involvement in focus groups to undergraduate members of the university community identifying themselves on Facebook. Two respondents attended the April 23 focus group session (see Table 1) and two respondents attended April 24 (see Table 2). A third focus group was conducted May 6 to meet the minimum set requirements for total sample group (see Table 3).

TABLE 1

Information Summary, Focus Group One, April 23, 2008

Name (alias)	Gender	Birthday (Month, Year)	Expected Graduation
Bethany	Female	May, 1985	May, 2008
Jacob	Male	May, 1988	May, 2010

TABLE 2

Information Summary, Focus Group Two, April 24, 2008

Name (alias)	Gender	Birthday (Month, Year)	Expected Graduation
Wilma	Female	August, 1988	May, 2011
Claude	Male	August, 1988	May, 2010

TABLE 3

Information Summary, Focus Group Three, May 6, 2008

Name (alias)	Gender	Birthday (Month, Year)	Expected Graduation
Trixiebelle	Female	March, 1985	Alumni 2008
Eunice	Female	21 years old	May, 2009
Shirline	Female	September, 1986	May, 2009
Lorraine	Female	March, 1986	Alumni 2008
Misty Dawn	Female	May, 1984	Alumni 2008
Mary Lou	Female	21 years old	May, 2010
Norma	Female	November, 1989	May, 2011
Garth	Male	October, 1981	May, 2009

In the end three separate focus groups were conducted; the first two focus groups consisted of two participants each, the third focus group was held to triangulate findings and had eight respondents. The total sampling population resulted in three males and nine females, all between the ages of 18 and 26. The groups of OSNW users with prior-to-college OSNW experience met in conference style rooms, signed informed consent forms upon arrival and addressed questions regarding focus group participation.

Additional information regarding social networking and building campus community was gathered through open forum discussion regarding habits and specific uses discussing current uses, comparison of user traits, speculations and concerns about

the impact on the campus community. Over the course of three one-hour focus group meetings, these 12 OSNW users shared their habits and dialogue transpired reflecting on user traits, speculation and concerns about the impact on campus community was able to reveal information from a variety of users in a relatively strict period of time.

Instruments

Focus groups were conducted; procedures examining areas of student Facebook use are defined in Appendix B and C sections. Focus groups were chosen because of the ability to allow for exploring the dynamics of attitudes and opinions in the context of participant interaction. Discussion encourages participants to express views spontaneously, providing a safe environment to express views. Group discussions foster creativity and a greater range of thought/experiences than singular interviews would provide.

The goal of the discussion groups was not to reach a group consensus; rather, it was to elicit responses on a full range of concepts by a chosen sample of respondents regarding Facebook use. Specific themes guiding questions during focus groups included: experience behavior, opinion value, knowledge, sensory, feeling and background. The question goal developed into seeking responses, not particular answers and required questioning in a manner to elicit a response from various types of group participants. (i.e. Background: Describe background use; Opinion value: Why do you value Facebook?; Knowledge: What is the make-up of your Facebook friend list?; Sensory: Why do you prefer Facebook or MySpace?; et cetera) Subject participation levels in discussion was important; high involvement overall from all subject was present, reflecting the meaning of this topic and presence inside academic communities.

Research Design and Procedure

Qualitative interviewing obtains data through the interaction and use of language shared by the interviewees, and through asking open-ended questions within a flexible outline. Valuable subject inquiry should be neutral, sensitive to subjects and clear to the interviewee (Patton, 2001).

To prepare for the focus groups an interview guide (Appendix B) was generated to prepare researchers to conduct focus groups. A pre-test of questions was conducted with a few selected convenience sampling groups of differing perspectives to guide question development. The interview guide was revised following development and critique of questions for discussion. Pre-testing also was used to remove multiple, leading, and closed response questions from the study. Upon IRB approval, the sampling frame was created to identify focus groups from residence halls based on the highest number of reporting individuals residing in a predominantly freshman residence hall. Recruitment of participants was done through email sent to researcher-identified residents who publicly disclosed their residence on personal Facebook accounts.

Logistics were managed, making arrangements to reserve a room in the researcher's office building on campus. Reservations were confirmed for three two-hour sessions, verifying meeting times and locations with room schedulers. Final dates for focus groups were Wednesday, April 23, Thursday, April 24 and Tuesday, May 6. Arrangements also included organizing equipment for recording focus groups such as note taking and digital voice recorders.

Following the scheduling of final focus groups at appropriate times, moderation of

focus group occurred. Focus groups were facilitated by the student researcher and entailed introducing participants, discussion and questions. Moderation began with explanation of the focus group, how long the process would take, what feedback participants would receive, and confidentiality was emphasized. Facilitator goals included open communication on selected topics using broad, open-ended questions, probing for additional information but keeping the discussion focused and maintaining productive conversation. Questions contained within the interviews are attached as Appendix C. Audio recording was made on a hand-held digital voice recorder and deleted once transcriptions were recorded. A doctoral student in Higher Education took a record of notes during discussion to clarify participant testimony and enhance transcript reporting. Notes taken by the doctoral student described the setting and participant imagery. The notes enhanced the data by indicating gestures and movements students made that illustrate emotions and implied meanings.

The setting of the focus group was a deliberately academic environment. The first two focus groups, with two students in attendance at each, were conducted in a conference style room, around a long table, with participants sitting across from each other near the center of the table. The third focus group with eight students in attendance was held in a classroom with students sitting at a cluster of tables.

A deliberate attempt was made to conduct focus groups using the same procedures for all three discussions; adjustments were made to individual groups based on differences in room set-up. Also, the facilitator role changed in different group settings when necessary to guide the discussion and topics within to encourage discussion or to expand upon points brought up by interviewees.

The transcriber was able to decipher voices in the two smaller focus groups and identified speakers as "male student", "female student" and "researcher" within the transcribed text. For the larger focus group the transcriber identified the interviewer within the transcript and referred to all participants as "interviewee" to clearly state when the speaker changed in the text. The interviewer later listened to the audio to ensure correct transcription and identify speakers within the larger focus group and assign pseudonyms for ease in communicating data.

Focus group discussions were transcribed to prepare data and analyze focus group data quantifying OSNW use, including a post summary paraphrasing most salient points of discussion identifying the benefits and detriments of Facebook for communications between students, student and faculty interaction, student and administrators. Transcripts and tapes from focus groups were retained in a locked file in the researcher's office. Following the end of the study all tapes and recordings were destroyed. The final steps comprise outcomes reporting, writing qualitative reports and final presentation of results.

Data Analysis Technique

The study uses appropriate statistical techniques through various applications. Each focus group discussion was thoroughly reviewed to establish themes and record content of discussions. The focus groups are summarized within the body of the study with subsections including participants, key findings, perceptions of existing conditions and what data can be collected in the future. Quotes included in the report may have been slightly edited, strictly for the purposes of removing 'ums' and 'ahs' in order to present clear and succinct concepts.

Credibility is achieved through a data check by participants in the study to conclude whether data provides a realistic description of the population. Triangulation is able to verify data using multiple sources. Interview notes, available Facebook profiles and investigator input all provide support. Peer debriefing suggests a high degree of understanding aiding in perception and analysis of data (Robinson & Lai, 2006).

The research approach established a credible conclusion to suggest areas of research requiring more focused investigation. The advantage of a focus group's ability to present a range of experience and opinions enables the researcher to collect data through group interaction. Discussion from comparing data between focus groups is beneficial. As a result, research will facilitate improved decision making and the practical management of Facebook within a college community.

Organization of Data

Focus group discussions were transcribed by a confidential professional transcription service. Observation notes, handwritten by both researcher and graduate student observer, were transferred and typed into a word document. Data were organized to analyze observation notes, focus group transcriptions and sources of data. Participant identity was kept confidential and names were not used in the research study. To protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms were used in presentation of data.

Paper copies of interviews were meticulously read and highlighted to identify themes. Careful indexing of data in coordinating different sources allowed the researcher to extract information. A carbon copy saved on the computer was then made of interviews with highlighted themes copied into a word document to capture themes and cross-reference among documents. Comments were inserted from observation notes and

thematic findings within the interview document to highlight themes across different groups. Thematic findings were highlighted and revisions required multiple readings and various perspectives and approaches to view the document entirely. Observation notes and transcriptions required many approaches to familiarize the researcher with and subsequently analyze the data. Formal and informal discussions shared through peer debriefing to test working hypotheses aided in finding alternate explanations.

Answers to questions that stress the context of how the social experience is created and given meaning through membership in OSNWs were sought. The Tinto model is especially useful as a means to identify cultural themes found in interviews, as the influence that Facebook has on the institutional culture is dependent on student use. Analysis of relationships between processes are shared to provide the reader descriptive data and generate emergent research questions. Descriptions, patterns and relationships between categories revealed similarities among groups and provide some descriptors to further address possible cause and effect patterns.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Presentation of Materials

Respondents in the focus groups offered valuable insights providing a vast amount of qualitative data that would be unavailable from paper surveys. Facebook usage can be understood better through focus group interaction by revealing the degree of emotional interest and investment. The complexities of insights available as a result of this study grant the perspective to analyze the relationship between student involvement on campus and with the Facebook community. Because of the number of respondents and their selection, the study is not representative in the statistical sense and findings are unable to be generalized beyond the sample of study.

Each focus group was unique. Tables included in the methodology section clarify student name (alias selected), gender, age and anticipated graduation date. The first group (Table 1) was two unaffiliated students: Bethany, female senior and Jacob, male sophomore. The second focus group (Table 2) was a dating couple: Wilma, freshman female and Claude, sophomore male. The third focus group (Table 3) consisted of eight students ranging from freshman to recent alumni – some participants graduated just two days before the focus group was conducted. The third focus group also included students that had attended the large regional institution since their freshman year (three students)

while the other five had previously attended a small two year institution serving as a 'gateway' program to the four year institution.

Convenience in accessing information regarding potential "friends", especially the ability to social search with ease: to locate old friends and the convenience of friend searching through mutual friends and acquaintances, were all mentioned by participants in the study. Limited phone minutes also motivates students to continue to use Facebook as communication is possible with many people for little to no cost to the user (depending on site of access). Students mentioned reaching Facebook from computers at home, work, university computer labs, libraries, public restaurants and local coffee shops, and from cellular phones. Continuations of academic and social contact are described through OSNW users reporting virtual community maintenance. Research identifies categories that reveal overlap and obvious patterns.

<div align="center">Themes</div>

Overarching categories most directly related to the research questions expose the patterns that emerged within the analysis process. The major themes that emerged include: Motivation for use; Safety; Community development, Creeping, lurking and stalking; and Evidence of community interaction prior to enrollment.

Motivation for Use

Students reported the motivation for continued use of OSNWs to include networking, socializing, projecting personalities, finding others with similar interests or activities, social searching, researching peers and finding acceptance within the university community. Entertainment, social searching and event planning are some of the more repeated specific motivators highlighted in the following discussion of findings.

Bethany and Jacob reported mutual motivation for use as social searching, peer correspondence and peer pressure in joining the OSNW communities. Bethany stated she prefers Facebook to contact "the next stage of friends that you don't really talk to that often… Facebook is a good way to keep in touch with the people that you normally wouldn't have kept in touch with." Both students addressed continuation of friendships that exist face-to-face. The types of relationships established in residence halls influenced the type of Facebook involvement, an example of the contributions that students made to conditions that shaped the development of the online community. As Jacob states, "I only got Facebook because I was kind of forced to."

Bethany addressed a challenge in changing habits of using Facebook after daily use over a four-year period of time, "It's going to be hard to stop using it after being on it everyday for four years. It's going to be nearly impossible to stop using it." Jacob addresses the fact that alumni from his fraternity continue contact with members when they graduate and get "real jobs". A challenge for both comes in the habit that using Facebook has become such a prominent choice in ways to communicate with peers; Jacob even brought up the fact that peers set Facebook as their internet homepage when the web browser appears.

All three focus groups brought up cell phone minutes and accessibility of internet as motivators for using Facebook. Technology appears to provide an outlet for limitations set by other necessary materials for Millennial students. While they use mobile phones on a regular basis, this notes the distinction that staying connected on a high level of interaction is available through the internet and OSNW. As Claude stated, "A lot of my friends from high school have gone off to colleges in other states and I don't

have half their phone numbers." Staying connected with friends in other states and family in other countries, and making connections with potential friends across the world were reported as communication users are seeking through online social networking.

Safety

Participating students identified many safety concerns, from person safety to information and identity protection. Some students were discouraged from attending parties that are posted on Facebook because of problems associated with police notification and alleged university administration monitoring OSNWs. Other concerns regarding safety included identity theft, stalking, profile manipulation by peers, employer information seeking, peer profiling and harassment.

Many discussed the feeling that Facebook is safer than MySpace or other social networking websites, but few were able to articulate legitimate or well-founded reasons why. Several expressed the belief that faculty either are not or should not be present on Facebook, yet are aware that employers may seek information via OSNWs. Most participants mentioned and were aware of faculty presence on Facebook but referred to the presence as awkward and unwelcome at times, but aware of the positive implications of membership and interaction. Cited as reasons that users may not appreciate faculty presence were the difference in community interaction and accessibility of information that students prefer faculty or university officials not see (i.e. pictures of students on vacation). Misty Dawn stated she would prefer to meet with faculty during scheduled office hours rather than through a less-formal communication style. However, Garth stated his appreciation for the less-formal interaction provided through OSNWs as a way

to communicate less pertinent matters, while Trixiebelle in the same discussion believed being Facebook friends with a current professor was "crossing the line".

An implied feeling of safety is shared among Facebook users, drawing attention to the importance of proper training among users. Both Jacob and Bethany addressed the influence that OSNW can have on employer relations through different examples. Personality projection that may be intended for private use and viewing by friends is available for the majority of the public. Anonymous searching of Facebook may yield personally identifiable information which is obtainable without being "friends" with the user. Bethany recalls her former job, "We would get on if we were interviewing someone to come and work for us, we would get on and look at their profiles…it wasn't up to us whether we hired them or not, so it really didn't matter… if you're in a position to be hiring people and you do place judgment on things like that then it's very possible to ruin your chances." Jacob added that he was aware of a student applying for a job and following an interview making a current status update (which is accessible to most users if privacy settings are not changed) stating his desire to have an easy job with minimal effort and was promptly notified by the employer of terminating candidacy for employment.

"It's frustrating if people have their profile set to private because if they have a picture of them that's from far away… you can't click on it and make it bigger. But my profile is set to private because I don't want anybody seeing mine, but if other people have theirs set to private, it's very frustrating. But I always have a picture of me so you know it's me, so you can add me if you want," said Bethany, further addressing privacy issues discussed by Jacob and Bethany about community information sharing. The

benefit of semi-private information is that friends of friends can now be notified of mutual acquaintances online. However, a sense of security is found in students like Bethany setting their profiles to private but still seeking information of friends. The larger focus group brought up the desire to have information private but accessibility to peer community members' personal data.

Trixiebelle said, "I like how you can block people. You don't want them to see your stuff, you don't want to see them." Eunice preferred the option of blocking applications in addition to people, saying, "I like…updates that show the pictures are posted, but a lot of the wall comments get old because you don't really need to see what everybody says to each other." Students indicated the preference of privacy settings and the appreciation of knowing friends' updates but would prefer if personal information was not shared. Information gathering is important to OSNW users, and the development of community is another lens through which to understand the importance of sharing information and developing community.

Community development

Focus group discussants brought up the topic that many students including student employees in the computer labs on campus can be seen using Facebook at during hours of lab operation. In addition to the presence of Facebook in campus computer labs, the presence within residence halls was discussed. Students communicate between halls through Facebook rather than traveling to meet face-to-face, and instead of telephoning. Facebook has become a preferred means of communication for many students of the focus group participants within the university community.

The inclination towards developing community through OSNWs seems natural for students within the university setting. "I added people from classes (on Facebook as friends) as an underclassmen because it was more relaxed and you saw each other more often… You spent a lot more time together so you got to know each other better and there were more, it seems like there were more like friend groups within your major or within each class. So if you knew this person, you got to know these two or three people," said Bethany.

Jacob added, "I added anyone that I know in classes. I'm in all huge classes so I don't actually sit next to the same person twice…I know a guy that all of his speech group added each other so they can communicate faster without calling. So class wise it can be good in certain situations; like if you have a project or you're with a group, add each other so you can get conversation and information relayed pretty quickly." Evident in interviews is the indicator that many students believe peers are behaving in a similar fashion and utilize OSNW to gather information rapidly. But Jacob still expressed frustration and disgust in peers that add without concern to actual face-to-face relationships, simply adding friends because they heard names in class. Beyond these facts, participants went on to explain some purposes in preference of OSNW usage rather than calling or face-to-face interaction.

The ability to save time and communicate timely material is a benefit to OSNW users. Students reportedly enjoy the convenience of communicating with large numbers of people or simply people whom users may have limited contact. Claude and Wilma especially enjoyed the new chat feature enabled during the week the focus group met. Wilma said, "I guess it can get in the way of seeing people, but if you could only spend

53

five minutes due to walking over there, or you an spend ten minutes chatting, I'd rather spend ten in chatting than five minutes walking, five minutes seeing." The ability to communicate with many people through the same venue allows students to connect with friends and exchange information in a preferred manner. Discussion also extended to community, socializing and accessibility of information.

Personal friendships have been extended to OSNW as Shirline demonstrates by the several wedding invitations she received in a short period of time. "I got five wedding invitations this past week," Shirline said. Also, organizations and student groups are able to utilize OSNW to send messages and communicate with members. "I guess a lot of times there's somebody I'm meeting with or in an organization with that I don't have their number or phone number and I can find them on Facebook then I can email them," said Eunice. Her sister, Trixiebelle went on to say, "and the people set up events on Facebook. We have a tutor BBQ to go to tonight …we all got on (Facebook) and said "This is what we're doing and this is what time. Be there or don't."" Students are able to plan study groups and organizations are able to plan and execute large events. The ability to reach friends is important, yet the ability to reach strangers that are members of a shared real community is also a prospect in OSNW. Groups also address the potential to connect with lost items and other interaction that may be deemed of an important nature.

Students were reconnected with lost items that are valuable to their academic experience. OSNW enabled both faculty and students to interact in a way that is unique for a university environment and no longer is limited to dropping items off at a lost and found and perhaps never being reunited. Lorraine gives the account, "I left a hard drive

thing in the computer lab and I guess he (a professor) found it; he had a class in there and just emailed me, "Hey, I had a class and I found this in my computer. It's going to be in my office." I thought it was pretty neat. It was a $35 thing. Just looked me up off my name." Lorraine appreciated the fact that items were returned, but students are wary of dangers associated with meeting strangers no matter how familiar they may seem. Eunice recalled a similar experience, "I got a book back, like a $150 book that someone was like, "Hey, turned in to this office. They are holding it for you." I was like, "Hey, thanks strange person." Group discussion further provides a possible example of changes in communication within communities and the accessibility of social information.

Not only are users able to keep in touch with old friends, new friendships are able to be formed and continued online. Bethany addresses changes in communication and campus social norms. "Normally, if you just meet somebody one time, you don't even remember their last name. Maybe not even the first name, so it's like you would never know how to get in contact with them and you might not even recognize them if you saw them again. So if you can remember long enough to go home and add them to Facebook, (laughter) then that's somebody that you might keep in touch with that otherwise you probably would never see again," she said. Users note the continuation of friendships over and over again in the study and the importance of social extension to users can not be overstated.

Creeping, Lurking, Stalking:

Within the study, all three groups used the term 'creeping' in a variety of ways. The word was not used in other research found, and the discussion yielded insight beyond what Preece (2004) provides regarding socially acceptable OSNW habits. "I know

people that their homepage is Facebook…and they have the password saved so every time they go turn on the internet, it's logged in Facebook. I know someone that was like, "God, it's been like an hour since I've been on Facebook." I'm like," Something's wrong with you right there. You are too much of a creeper," Jacob said. Over use of OSNW is viewed as being a 'creeper,' yet individuals may not always identify themselves as creepers, although they admit to 'creeping' on friends pages.

To continue the discussion and define the term further in regards to users that display creeper tendencies, many references are made in the transcripts to creeping, stalking and lurking. Claude discussed motivation for use in relation to safety concerns. "I mean it really wasn't until I came here to college that people said, "Oh my gosh, there's this thing called Facebook. You should totally join it." I was somewhat hesitant at first because I've heard things about MySpace and people hacking those things or people stalking you and I thought Facebook was safer because you could privatize certain aspects of it from people from seeing. Like if you have a new friend request, then you can say, "Only see my limited profile," which only shows them a few things, versus not showing you everything that you support or whatnot," Claude said.

Further discussion revealed the belief of Claude and Wilma that information can be 'creeped' on for a long period of time, regardless of removing personal information. Also the ability to present limited information gives users the desirable capacity to limit what can be creeped on within their page. The description of what a creeper is was defined clearly by focus group users who provide more data regarding how to classify a creeper. Wilma discusses turning friends down because they appeared to be a creeper. "You can get the creeper application, which detects who visits your profile everyday. Or

you just look at them and they just got that, "Hey, how you doin?" look on their face on their profile picture and you're just like, No. No. (laughter) You're weird," Wilma said. The Creeper application is a unique feature allowing users to view who might be viewing their pages on a regular basis, giving the option to make social choices through OSNW based on information not readily accessible to average users unless they download the application to their profile.

Members also discussed some of their self-proclaimed creeping tendencies. "I totally creep all the pictures (laughter by many). I'm not going to lie, I'm a creeper." says, Shirline. The application of photo sharing allows Facebook users to share an unlimited number of photos, which may be a reason many participants brought up the preference for Facebook in part due to photo sharing. This is also a great example of how the term creeping is not always used to explain a negative habit. The following quotes share the ways in which students defined creeping behavior in the third focus group.

"Looking at other people's pictures if you see they've added one," said Misty Dawn. "Being nosy," said Shirline. "Surfing," Norma said. "Silent gossip," Trixiebelle said. "Wall to walls," said Lorraine. "I was looking for somebody just the other day and Trixiebelle and I put our heads together and there he was. Found him, no problem. Surprising how easy it can be," said Eunice, referring to seeking information about a male peer she met at a party and only learned his first name. "But I knew where he was from, because I remember talking to him. I don't know why I remember," Shirline added. "It (his profile) came up and everything!" Eunice said.

The term creeping is an all-inclusive definition that includes descriptions of the ways in which users typically utilize OSNW in addition to the ways in which avid users

may enable OSNW to enhance their social experience. Students meeting in person are able to develop more complete impressions based on a profile that decisively projects desired personality and information.

More discussion provides the insight users have to share with incoming students regarding responsible OSNW use. Interestingly enough the same student that earlier proclaimed to be a creeper, Shirline, also suggests that incoming students limit their time on OSNW and specifically suggests using the site sparingly and to limit, 'creeping on other people's sites.' Trixiebelle added, "Just do it to stay in touch with friends and don't add all this stuff. You can take three hours to download music, just skip it. Add your friends, email them and be done with it." Garth's suggestion specifically reflects caution in use, "If I had advice I'd say don't just add anybody and everybody who says they are this or a member of (university)." Furthermore, Eunice added "Don't post your phone number or your address; that is the stupidest thing ever." Community is extended through participant advice and knowledge of acceptable user behavior.

Evidence of community interaction prior to enrollment

Most specifically related to the initial research question is the discussion Wilma and Claude had regarding their interaction with students prior to their enrollment at the university. "He and I were in the same group for "This is the Life," and we go out and take pictures and then they upload them on Facebook and then there was a Facebook group just for "This is the Life" and so all the high school students were part of Facebook they could find their host on Facebook, if they wanted to (prior to attending the event). Just recently he (Claude) started a Facebook group and we posted all the pictures that we took during that weekend. Sometimes we still get together for Group Two activities and

then we take those pictures and we send them to our high school kids. We are currently planning a Group Two get together for next year," Wilma said.

"Sometime when they get here next year, because they've all decided to come to (university) because they had so much fun!" Claude said. "Hey, recruiting people so the university has more money," he added. The group page created for their student group is private so only members of the group can access the page and know of the existence. "We started it so that they could see all the pictures and they could put them on their profiles from the weekend because we took pictures from every single big landmark on campus. There's pictures of us in the fountain, jumping off steps, at the stadium, just all that stuff (campus artifacts) and it's just a great way to remember. WE also had it so they could put "I have a class in this building and I have no idea where it is," or "I'm having trouble getting this figured out. How do I pick out this on rooms? So there's a way for them to kind of ask questions for one of the four of us, that were group leaders to find where stuff is," Wilma concluded.

Each student or group evolves the use of Facebook communications to meet their personal needs for information and communication within their specific community. Wilma and Claude are student leaders within the residence hall community and indicated a preference for using Facebook to reach peers on campus to program and organize activities of a social and academic nature.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Discussion of Research Questions

The evidence of new student communication with the campus community prior to enrollment is apparent, but not for all students involved in the study and is not necessarily a manageable hypotheses with the group selected to participate in the study. Facebook was not available in high school for many of the users in the study, but for those it was, there is evidence of academic and social integration. Student leaders demonstrated through discussion ways in which the physical campus is extended; OSNW enables campus community members to interact with high school students in attempts of fostering relationships with potential future university community members.

Data generated from focus groups provide descriptive and relevant information, and themes chosen highlight the maximum variation from the sampling to give the broadest range of information.

Motivation for use

Ellison, Lampe and Steinfeld's (2006) discussion is enhanced through focus groups in the understanding of the power peer influences have on OSNW usage. User appreciation for accessibility of information and habits shared provide that students will continue to seek OSNW usage for entertainment, social searching, event planning and information gathering. Students addressed a preference for Facebook over university

60

academic programs like Blackboard, as well as the regular university website. Some faculty members are aware of the preference and have enabled courses to be accessible through Facebook.

Millennials are techno-savvy consumers of education, prepared for collective learning and share the value that most everything is available instantaneously (Denham & Gadbow, 2003). Friendships are extended beyond average knowledge upon initial meetings and social information is now accessible. Peers in residence halls influence involvement. Students on university campuses engage in social searching about peers, new roommates, potential love interests, even professors. Formal interaction is almost postponeable because the university community is accessible for students in advance of enrollment at the institution. Universities can take advantage of this by ensuring pertinent information is accessible to meet student demand and engage in OSNW partnerships.

Safety

An unfounded sense of security could be thwarted by exposing users to the risks, in addition to altering current default settings to provide more privacy and require users to decide what information is disclosed and to whom. The concept that Facebook is in any way "safer" than MySpace is unfounded as safety implies a sense of privacy, which is opposite of the intent of OSWN as information revelation.

Remarkable to the findings in this study is that students were recruited based on their availability of information and by simply posting their first and last names on their Facebook profiles. "Private" profiles indeed provide enough information that members of the university community can search the shared-web directory for email addresses and

access personal information quickly. Personally identifiable data is incredibly accessible and requires the attention of university officials, especially because OSNW is influencing vast social interaction. Even considering user ability to change privacy settings and default security, the accessibility of information due to personal sharing is overwhelming. An implied feeling of safety should be of concern for users of any OSNW as information is readily accessible.

Community development

Kuh and Whitt (1988) describe persistent patterns of norms, values, practices, beliefs and assumptions that shape behavior of individuals and groups as being able to provide a reference to interpret events and actions in communities. Facebook users shared exact descriptions for shared behavior and usage patterns to describe their university Facebook community. The university environment influenced responses, and event planning was mentioned by several participants as a key feature in their OSNW habits. Such habits reinforced the findings of Rheingold (2000) and Kuh and Whitt (1988) regarding student involvement and community development.

Students in the study reportedly enjoyed applications on a limited and varying basis. Being able to plan activities socially and academically are priorities for OSNW users, and the event application on Facebook is useful for many students. Several indicated the picture application as a favorite, but many noted the frustration found in application spam, where applications are overloading and too much unnecessary information is being shared among members.

What must be noted is that students devoting energy to a variety of activities benefit the most intellectually and personally in comparison with peers that do not take

advantage of varied opportunities (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991). To enhance student learning, the institution must make classroom knowledge more useful and encourage students to expend efforts outside the classroom to educationally purposeful activities (Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Kuh, 1995b). As the classroom may be the only location where students and faculty meet (Tinto, 1993), Facebook may serve a particular function of integrating students when physical presence within the university community is not possible.

Kuh and Whitt (1988), describe the ways in which to interpret the campus culture as, "ceremonials, rites, and rituals on a college campus give form to communal life. They enrich the campus ethos and allow interpretations and meanings to be made of special events" (p. 67). As Wilma from the second focus groups said, "If Facebook wasn't there, I don't think anything would be lost necessarily, but it is like a better resource like as potential to help out in ways like it would be harder to find out things other ways. Just like posters or like word of mouth. It's like information travels a lot faster if you have Facebook than without it."

Entry into the Facebook community is much associated with becoming a member of the university, fitting as a ritual of sorts among students which define individual experiences. Tinto's 1993 model of student academic departure supports that the institution must provide opportunities for members of the community to establish social networks (Braxton, 2000), which is supported by Facebook's utility on campus. Tinto's model to retain students includes the adaptation by institutions to accommodate and incorporate students into organizational culture.

Within culture theory, shared language highlights what communities often carry out in practice (Rheingold, 2000). The community of OSNW users with whom the researcher met shared a word that may imply a different meaning to non-users, often referring to the term "creeping" within their conversations.

Creeping, Lurking, Stalking:

Creeping was described by users who identify as creepers, reinforcing the fact that persons with similar characteristics and behaviors are able to recognize those traits within their community. Creeping could be intended as a derogatory term or as a way to describe excessive OSNW usage. Participant mention of creeping influenced the addition of the term "creeping" to discussion terms included in the introduction and added an element of detail in describing student habits on Facebook.

Similar to Preece's (2004) definition of the term "lurking" on OSNWs, the expression "creeping" is frequently brought up by student users. Positive connotations of creeping include the socially acceptable activity of viewing friend's pictures and wall-to-wall conversations. The negative undertones of creeping are that some spend too much time creeping, to the extent where behavior is borderline stalking. Ways in which social rules are enforced include the creeper-application where users can identify and block unwanted OSNW users from accessing information if wanted. Expectations socially are extended virtually and are passed on within the community, which then requires members to follow guidelines. An example is Jacob's removal from MySpace as a result of misconduct on MySpace (spamming); social rules are enforced by the company to safeguard users against "spammers" while peers also make suggestions regarding acceptable behavior in peer-searching.

64

Policy Implications

The event planning function is present for students utilizing OSNW, therefore individual safety must be maintained through institutional awareness. Administrators must be knowledgeable of the student purpose in using OSNWs like Facebook to serve as a proactive guide in the virtual campus community. Suggestions for universities to manage OSNW are recommendations that support students as well as institutional goals. Students use Facebook to communicate and to seek information; OSNW enables students to access information on demand. Academic administrations may use current technology to provide bulletin type information about classes and campus activities, assignments, and many other notices to enhance the student information base. Students wish to maintain their privacy within the academic community, and institutions need to offer information within the OSNW communities while respecting student privacy and rights of expression.

Universities can make Facebook even more applicable to student lives and the university, assisting students to find peers in courses, study partners and aid in planning social engagements. Motivation for administrators to actively pursue OSNW community development is tied to the primary purpose of the device which is to facilitate open communication and dialogue. The trend of pre-existing social networks to produce participation among new community members and across environments is quickly spread by peers. University applications contribute to the popularity of OSNWs. Institutions may choose to lead community development by using networks such as Facebook to connect students and the institution.

Administrators need not be obsessive regarding OSNW use, but certainly need to be responsible for educating students regarding responsible OSNW usage regarding university policies. In addition to possible violations of university policy that may be present with increased OSNW presence, universities may maintain minimal Facebook monitoring efforts, respecting the First Amendment rights of students while maintaining the policies in place by universities regarding images, statements of illegal activities and other conduct matters.

Discussion of Limitations

Written reports of interviews struggle to fully detail interactions. Readers may be less able to interpret individual experiences that are not descriptive of overall user experience. Research supports the potential that conducting a study across various environments may yield more wide-ranging results beyond what a single institution study can provide (Braxton & Lien, 2000). The larger focus group generated less discussion and as a result provided less detailed information than those in smaller group conversation. The attempt of focus groups was to describe social interaction, yet in doing so was requiring social interaction under unusual circumstances.

Summary of Findings

Surprisingly, students in the study seem to view themselves as less-involved in OSNW compared with peers, but this perception may be distorted as there is no statistical measurement of usage patterns involved in this particular study. A challenge is found in encouraging users within a community to limit information sharing when the purpose of OSNW is to expose personal information. Management of OSNWs requires institutions be aware of student involvement but still allow students the privacy necessary in

conducting personal communications. Millennial Facebook students want to maintain privacy, while at the same time celebrate their need for timely information and instantaneous communication. Stated needs for information and the ability to communicate and "keep up" with peers, classes and social calendars all outline the role for the Academy as a significant affiliate participant in OSNWs. Facebook users emphasize that OSNW is a preferred communication venue, but embrace access by higher education when the contact fulfills specific information demands.

The indication for students to discontinue use is not present, therefore administrators must address safety and potential concerns with students. The impact on a campus community is yet to be fully understood, and simply warning or discouraging use of OSNW is a negative and useless approach for administrators to take. The same is to be said of many other situations on college campuses: Telling a student "no" may reinforce a desire to identify with personal space where "we" as administrators are not welcome. Rather, becoming a part of the community provides administrators the ability to monitor and participate, further developing campus community. If active engagement in OSNW is a choice, administration and faculty must be willing to rethink current situations and address the technological changes and evolving demands of students.

Blogging communities can be utilized by faculty to create an online collaborative learning environment, enabling students to share written works online, providing interaction with peers that in turn review and comment on projects. Faculties have the opportunity to utilize comment options to afford feedback intended for student work in progress. Study abroad students are able to remain in contact with peers and their institution as a result of technological increases and the influx of online communities.

Students are able to create travel blogs and communicate via OSNWs, blogging about travel and education could aid in recruiting efforts of study abroad programs. OSNWs proide an excellent opportunity for Millennial students to interact with the virtual university community utilizing technology they have grown up accessing. Online communities are an excellent platform for students to remain connected with the university community.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

This study explored the relationship between Facebook and OSNW use and academic and social integration, as well as identified group specific practices at a large research institution in the Midwest/South as alleged by the students selected as subjects from the institution. Most notable is the influence that peers have on student interaction with the university and the severe pressure from peers that motivates students to participate in OSNW. An important outcome in this study is the evidence of communication with the campus prior to enrollment and the relationship between campus involvement and social integration. Universities should never underestimate the significance of meeting in person and the value of interaction among students and within the larger university community. Positive change is warranted, integrating opportunities for development, with the possibility to create learning activities and communications within the boundaries of OSNWs.

The role that OSNW plays in recruiting students is present in focus group discussions but there is varying degree to which OSNW played a role for each student. A deliberate effort by the Academy to reach students prior to college enrollment may well increase enrollment success. Additionally, a calculated effort to provide information as

an affiliate of OSNW will enhance the student academic experience, which should lead to increased retention and graduation success.

<div align="center">Future Studies</div>

Future studies should include changes to address limitations identified within this study. Sample size would preferably be larger and respondents would have the opportunity to participate in focus groups that are consistent in size. Future study should provide a more random group and groups that are not affiliated prior to focus group participation. Otherwise, if the groups are not random, the study could be conducted with repeated observations of a convenience sample. The students who participated in the eight student focus group would be an excellent starting off point for a convenience sample, as several were students at a two-year school in preparation for transferring to the four-year institution. Conducting the study in another region could present different findings, including speech patterns and habits of use.

Personality projection may indeed differ from what is reported. Gosling et al. (2007) found Facebook as a valid means of expression for personalities, although there may be a variation in the way students view themselves and impressions made on peers. Because students reported personal habits and perspectives, it would be helpful for findings to evaluate what is accurately reported by participants regarding what they post on sites. Participant data verification and validation have the ability to gauge the degree to which the individual sites reflect what is 'real' and what is posted as a joke or misleading information would be most appropriate. Future studies include using research as a guide to structure survey instruments, (e.g., questionnaires). Exploration in the future should include investigation of large-scale patterns exhibited through collective

action that can not be captured in this individual study in order to characterize user behavior.

Multiple interactions with respondents would yield more detailed results than are obtained in this study. Prolonged engagement would build trust and obtain a wider scope of data. Continued inquiry would provide the opportunity for students to journal habits and reflect more on the process of research and quantify OSNW usage. However, given the length of time, the study is appropriate for purposeful investigation. Overall the most helpful would be to have more respondents in the study. A more detailed, quantitative study would follow students from post secondary education through graduation, with a statistical evaluation of nonparametric data, correlating the use of OSNW and academic recruitment, satisfaction, graduation and first employment success rates.

Summary of Conclusion

Facebook is a verb; focus group participants state they "Facebook" one another on a regular basis and will continue to do so. Shared language among users allows them to state whether they find peers to be "hot or not", replying with "no, you're ugly", "stalking" friends and "creeping pages" until dawn. Pascarella and Terenzini (1991) stated informal interaction with faculty plays a significant role in student socialization, and knowing this has an influence on the importance of faculty interaction with students via OSNW. While students may not expect faculty to be on Facebook, the students in the third focus group who had items returned to them by faculty via OSNW may have a unique appreciation for the presence and interaction of faculty.

Student attrition is related directly to the extent student integration into social and academic integration into systems of an institution (Tinto, 1975). Tinto's understanding

of student integration into university systems is reflected in patterns of student usage of Facebook. Kuh (1995b) describes student learning and development through out-of-class activities students devote their time which supports the findings that peer interaction and faculty contact are motivators for continued OSNW activity.

Social integration, connecting others with community and integrating with local environment are enhanced through OSNW networks. The Tinto and Braxton student attrition model is based within on-campus programs as influential in explaining student persistence and attrition within universities. The virtual environment is unique and separate from the physical campus but the online experience has the potential to significantly influence academic and social integration. Undergraduate integration is influenced greatly by peers, and the motivation for involvement in OSNW is often stated as peer searching and motivated by the influence of friends to become involved in virtual socializing. Peer influence on learning outcomes and university experience is supported by research (Kuh, 1995b, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991;)

The influence that peers have on college students, the impressions and commitment to the institution, affect social integration at universities (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1990, 1995a, 1995b, 1999; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Tinto, 1975). The purpose of this study was to begin the exploration of student integration and the role of Facebook as a new influence in the process of student academic and social integration. The hope was to produce active dialogue where institutions ask questions and provide opportunities for learning and growth.

Facebook appears to have a significant influence on social interaction for students involved in OSNW and is especially present at universities. The fact that students are

involved in virtual communities and enthusiastically describe the social mechanisms driving interaction on campus presents a useful starting off point from which to learn more about ways to employ OSNW to encourage student retention and success within a university. This study should inform administrative thought with knowledge of the extent to which online community does or does not affect the student integration process within the campus community. Furthermore, the study will serve professionals to discourage a reactionary response and encourage a proactive approach as an option for understanding and addressing student populations regarding social networking through the internet.

Some conclusions can be made regarding Facebook use and university involvement. Facebook will continue to be used as an information seeking tool and for a degree of social interaction among community members, and users must feel that the program is made meaningful to them and functional through messages and event planning functions. There appears to be a need to re-examine beliefs about online safety. Individuals bonded through a real community further promotes sense of purpose (Conrad, 2002; Preece, 2004), which requires online community leaders be responsible for supporting the natural progression of relationships in online community. Safe communities must be centered on learning and committed to community development for the benefit of all involved.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Email Script (Invitation to participate)

Subject: Online Communities Research Study Invitation

I am writing to ask for your help in a research study regarding student use of Facebook at Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to examine ways in which Facebook influences the campus community.

Your voluntary participation is requested in a research study of students at Oklahoma State University. You have been selected to participate in a focus group conducted on (DATE). The focus group which consists of college students living on campus will be conducted over no longer than one and a half hours and will consist of a led discussion on key topics relating to social networking sites and student involvement. You have been identified as a participant based on reporting your residence hall on your Facebook account.

Results of this study will be used for the completion of a Masters thesis for Katie Bainbridge, and may eventually result in publication or research presentations at professional conferences. All personal information will be kept strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used to protect the participants.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Katie Bainbridge at Katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu or via phone at 405.744.4715.

Sincerely,

Katie Bainbridge
Graduate Student/ Research Assistant
218 Willard Hall
OSU, Stillwater 74078

Appendix B: Interview Guide

The intent of the focus groups is to discover the extent to which increased time spent on social networking websites has an impact on the development of campus culture and student interpretations and perception of the university environment.

The tasks required of the facilitator are first to arrange the logistics of holding the groups, namely setting up the room so it can be used. The second purpose is guiding the participants to ensure contributors are receptive and attentive. Set up the tape recorder and ensure notes are taken throughout discussion.

The primary duty of the facilitator is to lead the groups following the script as a guideline; however it is important to have flexibility to allow the discussion to proceed smoothly. This is the snowball method and will allow the greatest amount of information to be gained in the short time.

Welcome!

My name is Katie Bainbridge and I have requested your participation in a focus group regarding Facebook use. I am completing my Masters thesis gathering data on the impact of social networking sites like Facebook. My interests and concerns are whether the time spent on them has an effect on your involvement on campus, interaction with campus culture and perception of the university environment. Kathleen Kennedy, a doctoral student in higher education, will be taking notes that will assist me in coding the data to answer the research question. Feel free to be open and honest with your answers and discussion, talk amongst yourselves but try to keep on track with the topic and be respectful of the others in your group. I would like to encourage this to run as a group discussion.

Any questions?

(Following snowball method- these questions may expand and change throughout discussion)

1. For what purpose do you use Facebook?
2. Where do you access Facebook from?
3. Do you use the event function on Facebook?
    a. What other 'links' do you use?
4. Where you members of Facebook in high school?
    a. What interaction with OSU did you have in high school?
5. Has Facebook impacted your perception of campus in any way?
6. Likes and dislikes of Facebook?
7. Have you make any social connections via Facebook?
8. What motivates you to continue to use Facebook?
9. Reflect on your habits of using Facebook, what typically happens?

Thank you very much for helping me in my study. Not only might your involvement help in getting this study published and/or presented to other professionals in the student affairs and higher education administration, but the research serves in developing better communication with incoming students and expands the knowledge base of information on virtual university communities.

Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Facebook

Name of student researcher: Katie Bainbridge
Address: 218 Willard Hall
    OSU, Stillwater, OK
        74078
Telephone number: 405-744-4715
Email address: katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this dissertation research for the above student researcher, a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. This form outlines the purposes of this research project and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to inform administrative professionals of Facebook use and the influences of online social networking in the social dynamics on campus as another way to positively influence the understanding of professionals and to investigate the trends in social integration of freshman Facebook users at Oklahoma State University.

Procedures: You are invited to participate in this study by agreeing to participate in a focus group that will last no longer than an hour and a half. I will audiotape our interview with your permission and transcribe the tape for the purpose of accuracy. I will give you a copy of the transcript so that you may see that I have captured your words correctly. Transcripts and tapes from focus groups will be contained in a locked file within the College of Education. At the end of the study, the tapes will be destroyed. I will assign a fictitious name on the transcript or you may choose one yourself. Your real name will not be used nor will identifying information be used in any form in the preparation of the dissertation or in possible manuscripts prepared for publication in scholarly journals.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Some participants may consider the subject matter to be of a sensitive nature.

Benefits: There are no immediate benefits of participation in this study.

Confidentiality: Participant names will not be used in the research study and all data will be kept confidential. In order to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms will be used. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The data will be kept for five years at which point paper documents will be shredded and tapes will be destroyed. The study may result in

published articles, dissertation, and/or presentations at professional conferences. Any reporting that arises from this research study will not identify individuals, places, names or specific events.

It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by thesis advisor, Dr. Jesse Mendez, responsible for safeguarding the rights and well being of people who participate in research.

Contacts: At any time, participants may contact the researcher, Katie Bainbridge, Masters student, Oklahoma State University at 405-744-4715 or Katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu. Additionally, participants may contact Dr. Jesse Mendez, Thesis Advisor, Oklahoma State University at 405-744-8064 or jesse.perez.mendez@okstate.edu. If you have questions about the research and your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participants Rights: As a participant in this research, you are entitled to know the nature of the research. You are free to decline to participate, and you are free to stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. No penalty exists for withdrawing your participation. Feel free to ask any questions at any time about the nature of this research project and the methods I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me.

Signatures: Please indicate your willingness to participate in this research process by providing your signature below. The signatures below indicate an acknowledgment of the terms described above.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT   DATE

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT   DATE
(The participant signs two copies; the participant receives a copy, and the student researcher retains a copy)

Appendix E: Institutional Review Board Documents

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board

Date : Friday, March 14, 2008   IRB Application No   ED0849

Proposal Title: Facebook: Social Networking Websites, Examining Use by College Freshman

Principal
Investigator(s) :

Katie Bainbridge   Kathleen Kennedy   Jesse P. Mendez
218 Willard   030 Student Union   312 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

Reviewed and
Processed as: Expedited

Approval Status Recommended by Reviewer(s) : Pending Revision

There are revisions to your application to the IRB, which must be completed satisfactorily before your protocol will be approved. They are listed on the following page.

Please submit a revised IRB application incorporating and HIGHLIGHTING the changes listed. The revised application does not need to be signed. If any changes are requried to your consent form, you must submit a new consent form incorporating the changes.

The material containing your revisions should be returned to the IRB Office, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078. These revisions will be reviewed by the IRB Chair and/or the review committee of the IRB. When all outstanding issues have been addressed satisfactorily, you will receive an approval letter from the Chair of the IRB.

You may not begin this research until these revisions have been made and the IRB has granted final approval to conduct research using human subjects under this protocol. You will be allowed 60 days to respond satisfactorily to the revisions required by the IRB. After that period of time, your protocol will be CLOSED.

If you have questions or wish to discuss the reviewers' comments, please contact Beth McTernan at 405-744-5700 or via e-mail at beth.mcternan@okstate.edu.

Oklahoma State University
Institutional Review Board
Reviewer Comments

Date : Friday, March 14, 2008   IRB Application No   ED0849

Proposal Title: Facebook: Social Networking Websites, Examining Use by College Freshman

---

Comment: Seems interesting given the high use of Facebook by college students. Do you think there would be differences if you used MySpace?

Revisions:
1. The invitation to participate does not tell participants that they were identified via their participation in Facebook. I cannot see that withholding this information is necessary to the research. If so, researchers should explain.

2. In your response to question 3 specify that you will be audio recording the focus groups. State where the groups will be held and discuss how you will address confidentiality of the participants. Your response in question 12 says that Dr. Mendez will observe the data collection. Does that mean he will be sitting with the focus groups?

3. #7 was marked "NO" but in the consent form, participants are told they may find some of the discussion to concern sensitive information. This box should be marked YES, and an explanation given.

4. #10 was marked, "NO" but a consent form is used. This box should be marked YES.

5. In question 12 and in the consent form please clarify where the data will be stored and who will have access to the data. There are 3 researchers listed. Whose office will be used to store data? How long will list linking names and pseudonyms be kept? Once tapes have been transcribed and verified, why is it necessary to keep them and the list linking names and pseudonyms 5 years? Please justify.

6. Please use the following language when referring to the IRB contact; If you have questions about your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

7. If someone other than the researcher will do the data transcription, a modification form requesting such must be submitted to the IRB along with a copy of the confidentiality agreement.
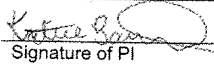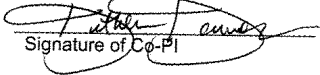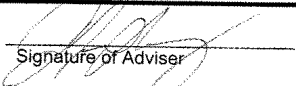
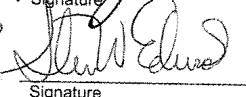Signature _____

Shelia Kennison, Chair, Institutional Review Board

Friday, March 14, 2008
Date

HANDWRITTEN FORMS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

APPLICATION FOR REVIEW OF HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH	
Submitted to the Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board Pursuant to 45 CFR 46	IRB Number FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

Title of Project:

Facebook: Social networking websites, examining use by college freshman

Is the Project externally funded? ☐Yes ☒No If yes, complete the following: ☐Private ☐State ☐Federal

Agency:　　　　Grant No:　　　OSU Routing No:

Type of Review Requested:　☐Exempt　☒Expedited　☐Expedited Special Population　☐Full Board

Principal Investigator(s): *I acknowledge that this represents an accurate and complete description of my research. If there are additional PIs, provide information on a separate sheet.*

Katie Bainbridge	*(signature)*	January 30, 2008
Name of Primary PI (typed)	Signature of PI	Date
School of Educational Studies	Educational Leadership	
Department	College	
218 Willard Hall, OSU, Stillwater, OK, 74078	970-581-7272	Katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu
PI's Address (Street, City, State, Zip)	Phone	E-Mail

Kathleen Kennedy	*(signature)*	January 30, 2008
Name of Co-PI (typed)	Signature of Co-PI	Date
School of Educational Studies	Educational Leadership	
Department	College	
030 Student Union, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078	405-744-8977	Kathleen.kennedy@okstate.edu
PI's Address	Phone	E-Mail

Adviser (complete if PI is a student): *I agree to provide the proper surveillance of this project to ensure that the rights and welfare of the human subjects are properly protected.*

Dr. Jesse Mendez	*(signature)*	January 30, 2008
Adviser's Name (typed)	Signature of Adviser	Date
School of Educational Studies	Educational Leadership	
Department	College	
312 Willard Hall, OSU, Stillwater, OK 74078	405-744-8064	Jesse.perez.mendez@okstate.edu
Adviser's Address	Phone	E-Mail

Updated: April, 2006

Concurrence:			
Dr. Bert Jacobson		February 26, 2008	School of Educational Studies
Department Head (typed)	Signature	Date	Department
Dr. Pamela Fry		February 26, 2008	Education
College Dean or Research Director (typed)	Signature	Date	College

Checklist for application submission:

X Research plan*
X Informed consent/assent forms
X Outline or script to be provided prior to subjects= agreement to participate
X Instrument(s) [questionnaire, survey, testing]
X Bio, resume or vitae for all PIs (student or faculty) and advisor
X Department/college/division signatures
X Grant Proposal

*Research plan should be a brief summary of research, the methodology, risks to subjects, and benefits. This plan is generally used for thesis or dissertation research or other unfunded research.

Number of copies to be submitted (based on type of review required):

Exempt	2
Expedited	3
Expedited Special Population	5
Full board	17

NOTE:

1. Any changes in the project after approval by the IRB must be resubmitted as a modification for review by the IRB before approval is granted. Modifications do not change the period of initial approval.

2. Approval is granted for one year maximum. Annual requests must be made to the IRB for continuation, as long as the research continues. Forms for continuation and modification are available on the web at http://compliance.vpr.okstate.edu/hsp/forms.htm

For assistance, please contact the Office of University Research Compliance at 405-744-5700.

Updated: April, 2006

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date:	Tuesday, March 18, 2008
IRB Application No	ED0849
Proposal Title:	Facebook: Social Networking Websites, Examining Use by College Freshman
Reviewed and Processed as:	Expedited

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s): Approved   Protocol Expires: 3/17/2009

Principal Investigator(s):

Katie Bainbridge	Kathleen Kennedy	Jesse P. Mendez
218 Willard	030 Student Union	312 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078	Stillwater, OK 74078

The IRB application referenced above has been approved. It is the judgment of the reviewers that the rights and welfare of individuals who may be asked to participate in this study will be respected, and that the research will be conducted in a manner consistent with the IRB requirements as outlined in section 45 CFR 46.

☒ The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during the study.

As Principal Investigator, it is your responsibility to do the following:

1. Conduct this study exactly as it has been approved. Any modifications to the research protocol must be submitted with the appropriate signatures for IRB approval.
2. Submit a request for continuation if the study extends beyond the approval period of one calendar year. This continuation must receive IRB review and approval before the research can continue.
3. Report any adverse events to the IRB Chair promptly. Adverse events are those which are unanticipated and impact the subjects during the course of this research; and
4. Notify the IRB office in writing when your research project is complete.

Please note that approved protocols are subject to monitoring by the IRB and that the IRB office has the authority to inspect research records associated with this protocol at any time. If you have questions about the IRB procedures or need any assistance from the Board, please contact Beth McTernan in 219 Cordell North (phone: 405-744-5700, beth.mcternan@okstate.edu).

Sincerely,

Shelia Kennison, Chair
Institutional Review Board

Informed Consent Document

Project Title: Facebook

Name of student researcher: Katie Bainbridge
Address: 218 Willard Hall
  OSU, Stillwater, OK
   74078
Telephone number: 405-744-4715
Email address: katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this dissertation research for the above student researcher, a graduate student at Oklahoma State University. This form outlines the purposes of this research project and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant.
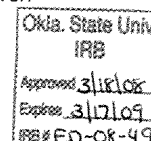
Purpose: The purpose of this study is to inform administrative professionals of Facebook use and the influences of online social networking in the social dynamics on campus as another way to positively influence the understanding of professionals and to investigate the trends in social integration of freshman Facebook users at Oklahoma State University.

Procedures: You are invited to participate in this study by agreeing to participate in a focus group that will last no longer than an hour and a half. I will audiotape our interview with your permission and transcribe the tape for the purpose of accuracy. I will give you a copy of the transcript so that you may see that I have captured your words correctly. Transcripts and tapes from focus groups will be contained in a locked file within the College of Education. At the end of the study, the tapes will be destroyed. I will assign a fictitious name on the transcript or you may choose one yourself. Your real name will not be used nor will identifying information be used in any form in the preparation of the dissertation or in possible manuscripts prepared for publication in scholarly journals.

Risks of Participation: There are no known risks associated with this project which are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Some participants may consider the subject matter to be of a sensitive nature.

Benefits: There are no immediate benefits of participation in this study.

Confidentiality: Participant names will not be used in the research study and all data will be kept confidential. In order to protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms will be used. The data will be kept in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office. The data will be kept for five years at which point paper documents will be shredded and tapes will be destroyed. The study may result in published articles, dissertation, and/or presentations at professional conferences. Any reporting that arises from this research study will not identify individuals, places, names or specific events.

It is possible that the consent process and data collection will be observed by thesis advisor, Dr. Jesse Mendez, responsible for safeguarding the rights and well being of people who participate in research.

Contacts: At any time, participants may contact the researcher, Katie Bainbridge, Masters student, Oklahoma State University at 405-744-4715 or Katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu. Additionally, participants may contact Dr. Jesse Mendez, Thesis Advisor, Oklahoma State University at 405-744-8064 or jesse.perez.mendez@okstate.edu. If you have questions about the research and your rights as a research volunteer, you may contact Dr. Shelia Kennison, IRB Chair, 219 Cordell North, Stillwater, OK 74078, 405-744-1676 or irb@okstate.edu.

Participants Rights: As a participant in this research, you are entitled to know the nature of the research. You are free to decline to participate, and you are free to stop the interview or withdraw from the study at any time. No penalty exists for withdrawing your participation. Feel free to ask any questions at any time about the nature of this research project and the methods I am using. Your suggestions and concerns are important to me.

Signatures: Please indicate your willingness to participate in this research process by providing your signature below. The signatures below indicate an acknowledgment of the terms described above.

I have read and fully understand the consent form. I sign it freely and voluntarily. A copy of this form has been given to me.

_____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT   DATE

I certify that I have personally explained this document before requesting that the participant sign it.

_____
SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH PARTICIPANT   DATE
(The participant signs two copies; the participant receives a copy, and the student researcher retains a copy)

90

Subject: Online Communities Research Study Invitation

I am writing to ask for your help in a research study regarding student use of Facebook at Oklahoma State University. The purpose of this study is to examine ways in which Facebook influences the campus community.

Your voluntary participation is requested in a research study of students at Oklahoma State University. You have been selected to participate in a focus group conducted on (DATE). The focus group which consists of college freshmen living on campus will be conducted over no longer than one and a half hours and will consist of a led discussion on key topics relating to social networking sites and student involvement. You have been identified as a participant based on reporting your residence hall on your Facebook account.
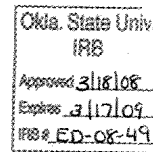
Results of this study will be used for the completion of a Masters thesis for Katie Bainbridge, and may eventually result in publication or research presentations at professional conferences. All personal information will be kept strictly confidential and pseudonyms will be used to protect the participants.

This study has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Oklahoma State University.

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this study, please contact Katie Bainbridge at Katie.bainbridge@okstate.edu or via phone at 405.744.4715.

Sincerely,

Katie Bainbridge
Graduate Student/ Research Assistant
218 Willard Hall
OSU, Stillwater 74078

Oklahoma State University Institutional Review Board

Date   Tuesday, April 22, 2008   **Protocol Expires:**   3/17/2009

IRB Application   ED0849

Proposal Title: Facebook: Social Networking Websites, Examining Use by College Freshman

Reviewed and   Expedited
Processed as: **Modification**

Status Recommended by Reviewer(s)   **Approved**

Principal
Investigator(s) :

Katie Bainbridge   Kathleen Kennedy   Jesse P. Mendez
218 Willard   030 Student Union   312 Willard
Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078   Stillwater, OK 74078

The requested modification to this IRB protocol has been approved. Please note that the original
expiration date of the protocol has not changed. The IRB office MUST be notified in writing when a
project is complete. All approved projects are subject to monitoring by the IRB

- The final versions of any printed recruitment, consent and assent documents bearing the IRB
  approval stamp are attached to this letter. These are the versions that must be used during
  the study.

Signature

Sheila Kennison, Chair, OSU Institutional Review Board

Tuesday, April 22, 2008
Date

92

VITA

Katie Gene Bainbridge

Candidate for the Degree of

Master of Science

Thesis: THE FACEBOOK CAMPUS: EXPLORING THE EVOLUTION OF

FACEBOOK CULTURE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Major Field: Educational Leadership Studies

Personal Data:
Currently working as a research assistant for the U.S. Army Defense
Ammunition Center Project with the College of Education at Oklahoma State
University.

Education:
Completed the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts in Journalism at the
University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado in May, 2005.

Completed the requirements for the Master of Science in Educational
Leadership Studies at Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, Oklahoma in
December, 2008.

Professional Memberships:
American Educational Research Association (AERA)
Association for the Study of Higher Education (ASHE)
National Association of Student Personnel Administrators (NASPA)
American College Personnel Association (ACPA)

Name: Katie Gene Bainbridge   Date of Degree: December, 2008

Institution: Oklahoma State University   Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE FACEBOOK CAMPUS: EXPLORING THE EVOLUTION OF

FACEBOOK CULTURE IN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Pages in Study: 92   Candidate for the Degree of Master of Science

Major Field: Educational Leadership Studies

Scope and Method of the Study: This study examines *Facebook* usage and the relationship online social networking has to academic and social integration. Using a focus group approach, twelve participants at a research land-grant institution were interviewed to explore how they used *Facebook* to enhance their overall social integration into collegiate life and overall campus experience.

Findings and Conclusions:
This study uncovered several emergent themes of *Facebook* usage regarding motivation of usage, safety concerns, community development, and issues regarding privacy. Lastly, the study found that student communication with the campus community and social integration with college culture may start well-before enrollment on campus. In other words, students forge communication channels with the college culture in high school through *Facebook*. The influence of online social networks like *Facebook* in the everyday social experience of undergraduate students cannot be denied, and the boundaries between the virtual world of *Facebook* and the actual campus community are not exclusive of each other. More needs to be learned of the social ramifications of *Facebook* on the college experience.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Dr. Jesse Mendez