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Relationship maintenance differences in close and casual friendships on Facebook

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Relationship maintenance differences in close and casual friendships on Facebook

Brittany N. Legg

Thesis submitted to the College of Education and Human Services at West Virginia University in
partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

In

Educational Psychology with an emphasis in in Child Development and Family Studies

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Theory, Friendship, Positivity, Openness, Assurances, Social Networking, Shared Tasks

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ABSTRACT

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Brittany N. Legg

Social media, notably Facebook, has become ubiquitous in American life. There is a great deal of anecdotal evidence that a primary use of this technology is the maintenance of relationships with friends and family. The extent to which relationships can be maintained, and the type of relationships that can be maintained, in America, by using social media is an unresolved question. Using the reciprocity expectations inherent in Social Exchange Theory, the behavior of young adults was examined. Students were asked to rate their Facebook usage across the five maintenance strategies of positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, and shared tasks with both close and casual friends who lived both on and off campus. This study was conducted via an internet survey and consisted of 232 graduate and undergraduate level students. Four relationship types were identified; on-campus/close, on-campus/casual, off-campus/close, off-campus casual. The survey results suggested (1) That all of these strategies were being used on Facebook to maintain casual relationships both on and off-campus; (2) Only shared tasks and openness were used to maintain close relationships off-campus, while openness was used with close friends who lived off campus. These findings suggest that while Facebook plays a major role in college student's lives, their use of relationship maintenance strategies on it differ by relationship type.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Overview

Nearly two-thirds of all Americans who are on-line use social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) and report doing so in order to stay in touch with their friends and family members (Smith, 2011); women are more likely to be involved in social networking than men. Social network sites enable people to “friend” family members, acquaintances, and work associates, or strangers. As a result, their “friends list” includes individuals with whom the person shares strong interpersonal ties with as well as individuals who are considered to be acquaintances. The average American has 634 social ties (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011). Facebook users tend to have more close relationships and get more social support than those who did not utilize the social networking site (Hampton et al., 2011). Further, Facebook users tend to experience less social isolation, more involvement in diverse discussion groups, increased engagement in public and semipublic spaces, and more political engagement than the average internet user (Hampton, Goulet, Her, & Rainie, 2009).

Currently, social networking sites have become wildly popular, attracting millions of users and billions of venture capital dollars. Many researchers and social observers, however, remain concerned that technology has led to a reduction in the number of social ties the average American maintains (Hampton et al., 2009). Given the explosive growth of social networking site memberships, the possibility of diminished relationship numbers, quality, and social isolation need investigation. Bryant and Marmo (2009) explored the role that Facebook plays in

relationship maintenance across relationship types and concluded that more research was necessary to test the reliability of their findings.

The online communication role that Facebook plays in this new media age can be viewed through the lens of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). Social Exchange Theory (SET) helps explain how and why exchanges between individuals occur, and why people maintain relationships with some individuals while exiting relationships with others. SET postulates that all human relationships are developed and maintained by an individual's use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and a comparison of alternative relationships in order to ultimately advance their self-interest (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958).

Statement of Purpose

It is clear that use of the Internet, mobile connectivity (e.g., cell and smart phones), and social networking sites (e.g., Facebook) has significantly increased over the last several years. Researchers have also increased their interest in understanding how online communication influences individuals. Hampton et al. (2009) as a part of the *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, found that individual's use of mobile phones and the Internet was associated with having a larger and more varied discussion network. Acquisti and Gross (2006) found that young people utilized social networking sites to maintain strong ties with their friends and develop ties with new individuals. For example, although the primary reason adults over the age of 50 use social networking sites is to stay in touch with family members, adults under the age of 50 use them to stay in touch with existing friends or to re-connect with old ones (Hampton et al., 2011).

A wealth of research dating back several decades exists on what maintenance strategies are and how they are used to foster relationships and friendships. Stafford and Canary (1991) identified a list of five different types of relational maintenance strategies. Galvin, Bylund and Brommel (2008, p. 108) describes them in the following way: “Positivity (e.g., being cheerful and supportive; giving gifts of compliments; being upbeat when talking; and avoiding criticism); Openness (e.g., self-disclosure, as well as explicitly discussing the relationship and sharing thoughts and feelings about relational problems); Assurances (e.g., stressing love, support, and commitment); Social networks (e.g., involving family and friends in activities as well as sharing interconnected networks); Sharing tasks (e.g., jointly performing one’s “fair share” of the work).” Many researchers generally believe that the five relational maintenance behaviors originally identified by Stafford and Canary (1991) are used across all relational contexts. Canary, Stafford, Hause, and Wallace (1993) developed one of several taxonomies of relational maintenance strategies. These researchers formed a list of ten strategies which was comprised of the above listed five plus joint activities, cards, letters, and calls, avoidance, antisocial behavior, and humor.

Dindia and Canary (1993, p.163) indicate that relational maintenance involves keeping a relationship “(1) in existence, (2) in a state of connectedness, (3) in satisfactory condition, and (4) in repair.” They suggest that the types of relational maintenance strategies that people use differs based on the type of relationship, meaning that strategies used to maintain spousal, parent-child, peer, sibling, romantic, and friendship relationships likely use different types of relational maintenance strategies.

These and other maintenance strategies have been applied to the study of internet communication on relationship maintenance, and in the last few years have begun to be applied to the new forum of social networking. Recent research such as that conducted by Bryant and Marmo (2009) found that college students used Facebook to maintain casual and acquaintance relationships but found it to be lacking when it came to close relationships.

This research, which is at times contradictory, and often very general, has yet to fully examine the critical social networking in young adults. There has yet to be a study that examines how students use specific Facebook maintenance behaviors such as those defined by Bryant and Marmo (2009) to maintain different types of friendships (i.e., close, casual) and across locations via this particular social network.

Research Contributions

Just as face-to-face communication allows us to express our thoughts and feelings in order to enhance our relationships with others, college and university students now find themselves in a situation where it is necessary to use other methods of transmitting those same messages of sharing and support through these new technologies. Findings from this study will allow these young adults a better understanding of which of these communicative behaviors are being utilized by their peers to maintain these important relationships. A clearer picture of these Facebook users would be of benefit to students, parents, and colleges and universities. Understanding how Facebook can assist students in maintaining their social ties could potentially lead to higher student retention levels, better academic performance, and decreased incidence of mental health problems such as mood disorders. Further, colleges and universities might use the

results of this study to help students who have difficulty being away from home maintain important connections to friends and family.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Social Networking and Facebook

Social network sites have been in existence for almost fifteen years (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The nature, purpose, and roster of these sites has changed, and expanded, over time. Now, through social networking a business can be created, a patent applied for, and of course there is always blogging, and content posting.

The now, nearly universal, social networking site Facebook was created in 2004 by Harvard University student Mark Zuckerberg as an online yearbook for Ivy League students. Soon thereafter it was expanded to Stanford, Columbia, Yale, and a few British universities (Clark, Lee, & Boyer, 2007). Although Facebook was originally designed to be a closed community for college students, its membership diversified over the years to include not only college students, but also high school students, school faculty and staff, members of professional organizations, and professionals inside corporate networks (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). By 2006, it was opened up to anyone who was age 13 or older and possessed a valid email account. Nearly 92% of all social networking site users subscribed to Facebook (Hampton et al., 2011).

Facebook allows users to create individual profiles, compile a friends list and subdivide that list in different ways. To be friends, is a matter of mutual consent requiring a “friend request” sent from one user to be approved by the invitee. This allows both users access (though access may be restricted) to the other person’s page. Users may use the “search” tool to look up any variety of acquaintances, using filters such as employer, hometown, or school, it is not even

strictly necessary that the people have met at all. Users can even search for friends based on interests, activities, or pre-existing Facebook groups. A typical profile usually includes a picture of the user as well as personal information such as date of birth, gender, where they live, various types of interests and activities. Facebook allows users to interact with each other in a manner of ways. There is a private mail system, very similar to traditional email, users can write messages on other user's walls (available for viewing by that user's friends), they can message each other through an in-browser instant messaging device, they can "tag" that users in photos or videos poster to their own pages, they can even "check-in" a user who happens to be in the same location as they are. Third party providers also host games on Facebook, which often have a cooperative inducement to involve one's friends in the game.

Currently, Facebook has over 800 million active users worldwide, 75% of users are outside of the United States (Facebook.com). The average college student spends one to two hours on Facebook per day, and has between 200-250 friends (Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris, 2011). The average Facebook user (including college student data) has 229 friends with 22% of them being people from high school, 20% being immediate or extended family members, 10% coworkers, 9% college friends, 7% voluntary groups, and 3% neighbors (Hampton et al., 2011). The majority of Facebook subscribers use the site to maintain existing offline relationships, such as friends who met during a shared class at school or a former colleague, as opposed to meeting new people (Ellison et al., 2007; Steven, 2008). In other words, Facebook users rarely send friend requests to strangers who share common interests. Thus, Facebook users' friends lists are used to maintain current relationships as well, develop acquaintances, and renew relationships

with friends. Overall, this data indicates that Facebook is being used the majority of the time to maintain existing relationships.

Facebook and the College Student

Freshman college students are thrust into a new physical and social environment when they enter college. Many are physically separated from their parents, siblings, and high school friends. For students who go away to college, they essentially become part-time residents of two communities. Millera, Parsons, and Lifer (2010) found that Facebook use was an important tool for students to stay in touch with family and high school friends as well as a way to identify study partners at college. Conversely, West, Lewis, and Currie (2009) found that within a sample of college students that parents were not typically Facebook friends with their children; college students suggested that they did not wish to be Facebook friends with their parents because they felt embarrassed about comments and pictures posted by themselves and their friends.

Conflicting conclusions have been drawn with regard to the social and psychological impact of Facebook use. Moorman and Bowker (2011) examined how the use of Facebook impacted relationship quality as well as psychological adjustment in college. In general, they found that amount of time spent utilizing social networking sites did not impact one's self-esteem or depression levels. Kalpidou et al. (2011), however, found that there was an inverse relationship between Facebook use and the psychological well-being of users. They found that the more time spent using Facebook, the lower users' self-esteem tended to be. Furthermore, the number of Facebook friends was also related to lowered academic adjustment. It is possible that the more time spent making acquaintances that will later add, or be added as a friend, necessitates reduced academic focus. It is likely, that a high number of Facebook friends

in this case, simply emblematic of a problem of priority. Despite these findings, this study also found that as students progressed through college, the relationship between Facebook use and adjustment to college becomes more positive over time meaning that Facebook positively influenced students' adjustment to school. This could be an indication of more study partners, class partners, and overall higher levels of peer social support.

From the perspective of the Facebook user, users generally respond that Facebook is a useful and valued social tool, but one with limitations. Kujath (2011), for example, suggests that the use of social networking sites should not be a substitute for face-to-face interaction, but rather an extension of communication with others. This supposition was based on results that indicated that use of social networking sites tended to strengthen social relationships and led to larger social circles. Young (2011) found that Facebook users believed the website to be of great convenience in facilitating face-to-face communication. Participants believed it helped them keep contact with friends that they had not seen in years. Facebook was considered to be an important social tool but not a replacement or an alternative to social activities.

User reports on the broader implications of social networking also support this notion of Facebook as a convenient addition to the social toolbox. As indicated Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2008) examined how Facebook usage, perceptions, and attitudes changed over a period of three years. Users consistently reported that they normally used Facebook in order to maintain "lightweight" contact with people they had met offline. Finally, Smith (2011) found that on-line adults used social networking sites only about 9% of the time with the intent of forming new relationships and only 3% of the time in an attempt to find potential romantic partners. The rest of the time, adults used social networking sites to communicate with already-

existing friends (Smith, 2011). At present, this is the generally accepted thesis for how Facebook is used as a tool; to maintain and strengthen existing relationships (Bonds-Raacke & Raacke, 2010; Ellison et al., 2007; Kujath, 2011; Millera et al., 2010; Smith, 2011; Steve, 2008; Young, 2011). That is not to say that there is no dissent (Kalpidou et al., 2011; Moorman & Bowker, 2009; West et al., 2009).

Maintenance Strategies

Relational maintenance has been defined in a number of ways with regard to different goals and outcomes. Dindia and Canary (1993) found that relational maintenance could be defined in four ways: (1) keeping a relationship in existence (2) keeping a relationship in a specified state or stable condition (3) keeping a relationship satisfying (4) keeping a relationship in repair (1993). Stafford and Canary (1991) identified a list of five different types of relational maintenance strategies. Galvin, Bylund and Brommel (2008, p.108) describes them in the following way: “Positivity (e.g., being cheerful and supportive; giving gifts of compliments; being upbeat when talking; and avoiding criticism); Openness (e.g., self-disclosure, as well as explicitly discussing the relationship and sharing thoughts and feelings about relational problems); Assurances (e.g., stressing love, support, and commitment); Social networks (e.g., involving family and friends in activities as well as sharing interconnected networks); Sharing tasks (e.g., jointly performing one’s “fair share” of the work)”.

Canary et al. (1993) developed one of several taxonomies of relational maintenance strategies. These researchers formed a list of ten strategies which was comprised of the above listed five plus joint activities, cards, letters, and calls, avoidance, antisocial behavior, and humor. This research found that although people reported using many of the same maintenance

behaviors with friends, romantic partners, and family members. On the whole, however, fewer maintenance strategies were used with friends than romantic partners and family members.

Canary et al. (1993) found that openness was the top strategy used by college students, followed by assurances, joint activities, positivity, cards/letters/calls, avoidance, sharing tasks, antisocial behaviors, social networks, and humor. Based on the results of this study, maintenance strategies were found to vary according to the type of relationship under consideration. In general, family and romantic partner relationships used positivity, openness, assurances, sharing tasks, and cards/letters/calls more often than friendships.

Johnson, Haigh, Becker, Craig, and Wigley (2008) attempted to gain a better understanding of how maintenance behaviors were utilized in e-mails and whether geographic separation was a factor. The e-mails were coded using Canary and Stafford's (1994) list of maintenance strategies which included: positivity, openness, assurances, social network, joint activities, and cards, letters, and calls. Results indicate that e-mails sent to friends and family members were found to contain the maintenance strategies of positivity, openness, and discussions of social networks. Friends were less likely than family members to use assurances. Only very minimal differences were found in emails between geographically close and long-distance interpersonal relationships.

In order for friendships to continue to positively function, friends need to consistently employ the maintenance behaviors and strategies previously listed (Adams, Blieszner, & DeVries, 2000; Kunz, 2011). Although the characteristics of close friends have been studied in detail, there has not been an examination of how social media sites maintain both close friendships and casual friendships.

Friendship

A friendship can be defined as “a relationship between two people meaning that the relationship involves a certain degree of closeness and mutual affection” (Kunz, 2011, p. 81). Friendship can also be defined based on certain behaviors, including self-disclosure and shared activities, and can include characteristics, such as trust, empathy, loyalty, and compatibility of interests. Adams et al. (2000) found that friendship was defined more often in terms of behavioral processes (self-disclosure, sociability, assistance, shared activities) and less often in cognitive processes (loyalty, trust, acceptance, empathy). Neither Kunz (2011) nor Adams et al. (2000) differentiated among different types of friendships, however, so we are not aware if their definitions depend on the closeness of the friendship. Therefore, this study seeks to understand how college students use Facebook to maintain both their close friendships and their casual friendships. Based on research by Bryant and Marmo (2009), college student participants defined a *close friend* as a best friend or someone you interact with frequently and a *casual friend* as someone, such as a coworker or classmate that one interacts with on an occasional basis. For the purposes of this study, these definitions will be used.

Oswald and Clark (2003) examined the ways in which high school best friendships change during the first year of college. Existing friendships experience declines in satisfaction and commitment over the course of the first year of college, and maintenance behaviors were, in fact, a good predictor of best friendship stability throughout the first year. Maintenance behaviors linked to maintaining best friendships included: self-disclosure, interaction, positivity and supportiveness. Communication, and quality of communication, was identified as a major factor that contributes to whether or not best friendships will remain stable. Participants who

remained close with their high school best friend reported experiencing less loneliness during their first year of college. It is evident that maintenance behaviors are important in terms of friendships satisfaction, especially for adolescents who are new to college.

Relationship Maintenance and the Internet

Wright (2004) examined the use of relationship maintenance strategies and perceptions of relational partners within exclusively Internet based as well as primarily Internet based relationships. Participants were asked to state whether they were involved in a relationship that was Exclusively Internet Based (EIB) or a relationship that was partially maintained or based upon internet and contained face-to-face contact at times, Partially Internet Based (PIB). These researchers drew upon, the previously discussed, Canary et al.'s (1993) relational maintenance strategy typology. The strategies that were examined in this study included: openness, positivity, assurances, joint activities, routine communicative activities, and avoidance. Results suggested that openness and positivity were the most frequently used strategy for both EIB and PIB relationships. The researchers felt that these strategies were perhaps the most utilized due to the fact that email and chat applications used to interact with others allow expression in written format and that those involved in online relationships may feel more free to express the two strategies in this format. Additionally, it was found that avoidance strategies were found to be ineffective in online relationships. While a few joint activities; such as playing games or group chatting may or may not help maintain relationships.

Ledbetter (2009) examined face-to-face and online relational maintenance behaviors as mediators of family communication patterns and closeness with a same-sex friend. Evidence was found that closer adult friendships were a product of families in which children were able to

openly communicate and discuss various topics with members of the family. There was a positive relationship identified between online and face-to-face maintenance behaviors and close friendships and both were found to mediate the association between family conversation orientation and friendship closeness. Although this particular study provides evidence that communication behavior modeled within family settings has significant carryover to other relationships, it is important to note that face-to-face maintenance strategies are more influential upon friendship closeness than are those that are online maintenance strategies.

Relationship Maintenance and Facebook

Bryant and Marmo (2009) conducted a qualitative study in an attempt to gain a better understanding of how college students utilize Facebook to maintain close friends, causal friends, acquaintances, romantic partners, and outsiders. The researchers asked participants to describe how they use Facebook to maintain a variety of different relationships and found that participants used a total of 58 different relational maintenance behaviors while using Facebook. These findings were then assigned to the relational maintenance categories defined by Canary et al. (1993) of positivity, openness, assurances, social networks, shared tasks, joint activities, cards, letters and calls, avoidance, antisocial, and humor. Interestingly, participants in the Bryant and Marmo (2009, p.7) reported an additional strategy - surveillance - meaning that they used the website to “keep track of friends,” “Facebook stalk people,” and “monitor changes to other people’s pictures and walls.” They found that those eleven relational maintenance strategies differed across relationship types. Further, participants generally reported that Facebook was a useful tool in maintaining long-distance friendships, but that they expected their close friends to

also use other more personal means of communication; phone calls and face-to-face interactions, to maintain those relationships.

Statement of Hypotheses

Scholars presume there may be some differences between online and offline friendships (Kunz, 2011). Bryant and Marmo have advanced this field of study by qualitatively assessing the various strategies young adults report using to maintain a variety of different relationships. Thus far, however, there has not been a study that examines how these students use different relational maintenance strategies to maintain their close and casual friendships, nor do we know how these strategies are used to maintain on-campus and off campus relationships. Therefore, this study sought to understand how these students use Facebook to maintain their friendships. The research hypotheses that guide this study are as follows:

Hypothesis 1: Participants will use more relational maintenance strategies to maintain on-campus close friendships compared to their on-campus casual friendships.

Hypothesis 2: Participants will use more relational maintenance strategies to maintain off-campus close friendships compared to their off-campus casual friendships.

Hypothesis 3: Participants will use more relational maintenance strategies to maintain on-campus close friendships compared to their off-campus campus close friendships.

Hypothesis 4: Participants will use more relational maintenance strategies to maintain on-campus casual friendships compared to their off-campus campus casual friendships.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

Introduction

The individuals that we interact with influence our views, choices, and behaviors. Our frequent use of the Internet and social networking sites to exchange information continues to drive this process. These technologies help us collect, judge, and act on economic and other types of information about things such as careers, goods and services, political opinions, finances and relationships. Whether we realize it or not, each and every time we use the Internet, a series of communication exchanges occur. This is especially true with social networking sites such as Facebook.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) attempts to explain how and why exchanges between individuals occur, and why people maintain relationships with some individuals while exiting relationships with others. SET postulates that all human relationships are developed and maintained by an individual's use of a subjective cost-benefit analysis and a comparison of alternative relationships in order to ultimately advance their self-interest (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). These concepts will be explained in more detail below.

Social Exchange Theory

While Homans (1958), the author of SET, attempted to explain the social behavior of humans in terms of economic concepts. Blau (1964) proposed that social exchange differs from pure economic exchange in a number of ways. Namely, social exchange involves: (1) unspecified obligations (unlike formal contracts); (2) creates diffuse future obligations (the expectation of reciprocation even in terms of gratitude); (3) generates trust in others; (4)

engenders the expectation of the return of some type of favorable treatment. The fundamental difference is that economic exchange involves humans dealing with a market while social exchange requires humans to deal with humans. Emerson (1962, p.11) specifically noted that economists “views actors (person or firm) as dealing not with another actor but with a market” while Blau (1964, p. 91) viewed the exchange relationship between humans as “actions contingent on rewarding reactions from others.”

A closer examination of this theory must include the contributions of social psychologists John Thibaut and Harold Kelley. Both postulated that humans try to maximize the rewards in a relationship while attempting to minimize its costs (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). The concept assumes that people are constantly calculating costs (e.g., time, money) and benefits (e.g., social, financial gains) in their relationships. This basic assessment of benefits minus costs results in an outcome. Because each of us has different expectations in relationships, our satisfaction with each must be the result of more than just the outcome. This notion of satisfaction is referred to as the *Comparison Level* (CL) (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). In essence, the CL is a ratio of the benefits individuals believe they should receive and the costs they foresee incurring from an interaction or relationship. This ratio is used to determine the overall worth of a particular relationship by comparing the actual benefits and costs from a relationship to the CL. CL assessments are subjective, as individuals may consider the same behavior differently. As an example, if two friends frequently dine out and one person repeatedly buys dinner for the other but never receives an expression of gratitude or an offer of reciprocation (e.g., the other friend offers to pay), then the buying friend may believe that going out to dinner results in many costs with few benefits (poor satisfaction). If, however, the individual especially values this friend’s

time, then the buying friend may believe that the benefit of spending time and money far outweighs the financial costs (high satisfaction).

A related concept is the *Comparison Level for Alternatives* (CLOA) (Thibaut & Kelly, 1959). Why is it that some people stay in unhappy relationships while others leave happy ones? SET asserts that in addition to making a subjective assessment of satisfaction in a particular relationship, we also assess what alternative relationships are available that could result in greater satisfaction and less dependence. Roloff (1981, p. 48) defines CLOA as “the lowest level of relational rewards a person is willing to accept given available rewards from alternative relationships or being alone.” At the CLOA stage, individuals consider more profitable relationships relative to the ones they are presently in or the benefits to remaining alone. Continuing with the example listed above, the “buying” friend could choose to continue in this relationship, but may also believe that he or she has other, more desirable, relationships and become less invested in the current friendship. Howard and Hollander (1997, p. 47) note that the best relationships “take place when it is mutually rewarding to the parties involved.” Similarly, Knapp (1978, p. 56) stated that “equality is the name of the game” in relationships. In other words, both parties ideally should feel that the rewards significantly outweigh the costs.

SET makes several other key assumptions about human behavior that have been borrowed from the fields of economics and psychology. The concept of *self-interest* (Roloff, 1981) is assumed to be the driving force in interpersonal relationships, and social exchange theorists assume that individuals interact with one other with their own self-interest in mind. Roloff (1981, pg. 14) indicated that “The guiding force of interpersonal relationships is the advancement of both parties’ self-interest.” Roloff (1987) claimed that each person’s

expectations of a particular relationship are used as the basis of their judgment for what a fair exchange is. He postulates that exchange involves repayment; this repayment is based on the individual's past and present experiences. Roloff suggested that this process of exchange is completed through a series of negotiations and involves norms of reciprocity. He believed that in order for a relationship to satisfy one's needs, the reciprocal exchanges that occur must be fair, equitable, and timely. Stafford and Canary (1991) noted that individuals would continue to be involved in relationships if they are rewarding: "As their relationships develop, persons invest time, energy and other resources, and expect reciprocation on such investments" (p. 219). From a social exchange standpoint, those authors also believed that a satisfying relationship was one in which "the distribution of rewards is equitable and the relational rewards outweigh costs" (p. 225).

Another key assumption in SET is that individuals are *rational*. Rational individuals make sensible decisions based on information that they have available at the time. It is assumed that their decisions will result in the greatest rewards with the least amount of costs. Individuals tend to assign a material (e.g., things linked to money or gifts) and non-material (e.g., the giving of one's time or advice) value to their interactions with others. The way that interactions are valued, however, vary from person to person and over time depending on the particular situation.

Social Networking Sites and Social Exchange Theory

Through the use of qualitative focus groups, Bryant and Marmo (2009) asked college students to identify how they maintain different types of relationships (e.g., close friends, casual friends, romantic partners) using Facebook. They found that the majority of their college student participants reported that Facebook was a powerful tool for maintaining long distance, casual,

and acquaintance relationships, but was not, by itself, an adequate means of maintaining their more physically and emotionally intimate relationships. Students expected higher levels of satisfaction and more rewards (e.g., personal interaction, phone calls, texts) in order to maintain those relationships.

College students' satisfaction, or lack thereof, with how a particular relationship could be maintained using Facebook may have been the result of comparisons made between benefits, costs, satisfaction level, and a comparison of relevant alternative relationships. Although the research of Bryant and Marmo (2009) was focused primarily on relational maintenance, the tenants of SET could be applied to their findings that college students used Facebook to maintain casual and acquaintance relationships but found it to be lacking when it came to close relationships.

Individuals may have difficulty feeling satisfied when socially, emotionally, and psychologically supportive relationships are being primarily maintained online because they may feel as if they are unable to receive all of the potential benefits of those relationships, while experiencing increased costs associated with maintaining them. On the other hand, casual relationships likely carry fewer benefits and costs, so spending time composing and sending an email to a casual friend results in a satisfying benefits-to-costs ratio.

Although Bryant and Marmo (2009) attempted to qualitatively understand the varied maintenance strategies college students used via Facebook, no study has tested whether or not college students use different relational maintenance strategies (e.g., positivity, openness, assurances) with their close and casual friends. We are aware, however, of the importance of

quality friendships for college-aged individuals, especially for adolescents who are new to college. Oswald and Clark (2003) examined the ways in which high school best friendships change during the first year of college. Results from this study found that investments made in maintaining friendships declined during the first year of college, and previously formed friendships declined in both satisfaction and commitment over the course of the first year of college. When participants remained close with their high school best friends, however, they reported experiencing less loneliness during their first year of college.

Social Exchange Theory and the Current Study

It is through SET, which is largely based on the ratio of benefits and costs, that helps explain the social exchanges (e.g., networking, sharing tasks) found on Facebook. Benefits can be calculated, which can take the form of gains in social status by adding friends to your social network or gains in emotional support by sending or receiving cheerful, motivational, or assuring messages. While each person's perception of the benefits they receive or the costs they bear in a social exchange is vital to sustaining that relationship, people will make differing judgments about how to reciprocate based on their rational self-interest. Bryant and Marmo (2009) postulated that strategies college students used to maintain friendships differed depending on the type and nature of the relationship. Those researchers suggested that more studies should be conducted in order to better understand relational maintenance on how friendships differ, especially between close and casual friends. It is within this arena that the present research is conducted.

Chapter 4

Method

Participants

Participation in this survey was anonymous. Students were encouraged to participate in the anonymous survey if they met the requirements: currently enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate college or university; a Facebook user; and at least 18 years of age. They were informed that the survey would take approximately ten minutes to complete and would not significantly interrupt their routine activities or cause significant distress. Two hundred and eighty four people began the survey with 232 (82%) choosing to complete the survey. Demographic data indicates that the preponderance of these students were between the ages of 18 and 22 (60%) with the second largest group being between the ages of 23 and 26 (23%). The majority was female (69%). Graduate students comprised the largest group when it came to college ranking (28%) with an approximately equal number of students in the sophomore, junior, and senior categories (19%, 20%, and 18% respectively). Freshman comprised the smallest category of respondents (13%).

The race of the students was predominately White (85%) with multi-racial being the next largest category (6%). This higher mean age can be explained by the inclusion of graduate students and undergraduate students who have not finished within four years. Sixty percent of the participants reported using Facebook up one hour each day. Twenty four percent used it from one to two hours daily and 16% reported using it for two or more hours daily. Eighteen percent of participants reported having between zero 200 Facebook friends, 26% percent between 200

and 400 friends, 25% percent between 400 and 600 friends, and 31% percent reported having 600 or more Facebook friends.

Procedures

After this study received West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board approval, a link to the Relationship Maintenance Survey (RMS) was posted on Facebook. Additionally, an ad for the study was also posted on the researcher's University website so that both undergraduate and graduate students could read the ad and potentially agree to participate. Both links were active for approximately three weeks.

After potential participants read the recruitment letter on page one of the survey (Appendix A) and clicked the link to access the survey, which signified individuals' consent to participate, they were asked to complete the demographic items first. Six demographic items (Appendix B) preceded the questionnaire and were used to determine college level, gender, age range, race, Facebook usage, and number of Facebook friends. Subjects were not required to answer every question on either the demographic portion or the RMS itself.

Students were asked to read each statement while thinking about a close friend (someone whom they would consider to be a best friend) or a casual friend (someone whom they would consider to be an acquaintance). They were instructed to write "how true "each statement was while thinking about that particular person using a five point scale (Appendix C).

Measure

The 23 survey items on the RMS were taken directly from Bryant and Marmo's (2009) research findings on college student Facebook usage. Those researchers used focus group data to develop a list of 58 Facebook relational maintenance behaviors which they organized using Canary et al.'s (1993) relational maintenance typology. This present study examined only the relevant portions of this survey, using 23 of the 58 behaviors across five of the 11 categories presented by Bryant and Marmo (2009). These items were chosen as many researchers generally believe that these five relational maintenance behaviors originally identified by Stafford and Canary (1991) are used across all relational contexts.

The six subscales reflected the customary categories of relational maintenance strategies defined by Canary et al. (1993) and coded by Bryant and Marmo (2009). Subscale #1 contained 6 uses that are assumed to represent acts of Positivity (e.g., being cheerful and supportive; giving gifts of compliments; being upbeat when talking; and avoiding criticism). Some examples were "Posting on a friend's wall to make him/her feel special", "Sending cheerful messages as a fun way to say you are thinking of a friend", and "Sending motivational comments to friends that are preparing for important events".

Subscale #2 was Openness (e.g., self-disclosure, as well as explicitly discussing the relationship and sharing thoughts and feelings about relational problems) and contained six statements. Some examples were "Using your profile to share good or bad news with friends", "Updating your status and profile so friends stay up-to-date on your life" and "Sharing poetry or personal notes you wrote". The remaining subscales of Assurances, Social Networking, and Shared Tasks contained five, four, and two statements respectively (see Appendix D). Two

of the uses defined by Bryant and Marmo (2009) categorized under assurances were omitted as they pertained only to romantic partners.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was completed for the 23 items as the Survey Monkey questionnaire software tabulated the raw scores for each item subset. Participant responses were then saved into an excel file and uploaded into SPSS. Listwise deletion was used to account for missing variable data from the original sample. Data was analyzed using *t*-tests for paired samples. Each of the six subscales consisted of the paired comparisons listed in Table 1.

Initial analysis began with determining the internal consistency of the five strategy subscales by performing Cronbach's alphas on the measures, which are all presented in Table 2. Each of the five scales was tested for reliability according to internal consistency. The Cronbach's alphas ranged from "Acceptable" to "Excellent" for 11 of the 20 measures. 9 fell in the "Questionable" range ($.7 > \alpha \geq .6$).

Chapter 5

Results

This study examined how students use relationship maintenance behaviors to maintain different types of friendships (i.e., close, casual) both on and off campus via Facebook. Significant differences were found by relationship type; however, this data did not lend support to any of the four study hypotheses.

Maintenance Strategy Analysis

Positivity. As indicated in Table 2, there was a significant difference in positivity scores for friends at the same college, $t(227) = -16.08, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of positivity for casual friends ($M=3.56, SD=.61$) than close friends ($M=3.07, SD=.73$). There was a significant difference found as well in positivity scores for friends at different colleges, $t(227) = -16.36, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of positivity for casual friends ($M=3.59, SD=.60$) than close friends ($M=3.0, SD=.67$).

Openness. As indicated in Table 3, there was a significant difference in openness scores for close friends at both the same college as well as at a different college, $t(227) = -3.72, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of openness for close friends at a different college ($M = 3.74, SD = .65$) than for close friends at the same college ($M = 3.66, SD = .70$). There was a significant difference in openness scores for friends at the same college, $t(227) = -12.66, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of openness for casual friends ($M=3.93, SD=.68$) than close friends ($M=3.66, SD=.70$). There was a difference in openness scores for friends at different colleges, $t(227) = -9.35, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of openness for casual friends ($M=3.92, SD=.65$) than close friends ($M=3.74, SD=.65$).

Assurances. As indicated in Table 4, there was a significant difference in assurances scores for friends at the same college, $t(227) = -12.81, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of assurance scores for casual friends ($M = 3.97, SD = .68$) than close friends ($M = 3.62, SD = .75$). There was a significant difference in assurances scores for friends at different colleges, $t(227) = -13.09, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of assurance strategies for casual friends ($M = 3.98, SD = .68$) than close friends ($M = 3.57, SD = .71$).

Social Networks. As indicated in Table 5, there was a significant difference in social network scores for friends at the same college, $t(227) = -10.20, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of social network scores for casual friends ($M = 4.09, SD = .75$) than close friends ($M = 3.82, SD = .83$). There was a significant difference in social network scores for friends at different colleges, $t(227) = -10.53, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of social network scores for casual friends ($M = 4.13, SD = .73$) than close friends ($M = 3.83, SD = .81$).

Shared Tasks. As indicated in Table 6, there was a significant difference in shared task scores for close friends at both the same college as well as at a different college, $t(227) = -8.15, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of shared tasks for close friends at a different college ($M = 4.24, SD = .95$) than for close friends at the same college ($M = 3.79, SD = 1.17$). There was a significant difference in shared task scores for casual friends at both the same college as well as at a different college, $t(227) = -8.62, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of shared tasks for casual friends at a different college ($M = 4.39, SD = .86$) than for casual friends at the same college ($M = 3.92, SD = 1.11$). There was a significant difference in shared task scores for friends at the same college, $t(227) = -3.94, p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of shared tasks for casual friends ($M = 3.92, SD = 1.11$) than close friends ($M = 3.79, SD = 1.17$). There was a

significant difference in shared task scores for friends at different colleges, $t(227) = -4.95$, $p = .001$. Participants reported higher levels of shared task strategies for casual friends ($M = 4.39$, $SD = .86$) than close friends ($M = 4.24$, $SD = .95$).

Chapter 6

Discussion

The goal of the current study was to provide a better understanding of how these young adult students used five specific strategies to maintain the status quo in their close and casual relationships via Facebook. Many studies show that the vast majority of college students use Facebook to maintain relationships with people they know (Coley, 2006; Sheldon, 2008). Other studies, such as Pennington (2009), indicate that college students remain in touch with most of their closest friends on Facebook (2009). Bryant and Marmo (2009) concluded that a closer examination of how social networking sites are being used to maintain various types of relationships was needed and suggested that college students use different maintenance strategies for various types of Facebook relationships.

This study attempted to build on Bryant and Marmo's (2009) research by specifically examining how relationship maintenance strategies differ by friendship type on Facebook. They reported that college students used Facebook to maintain friendships. These same students, however, reported that the use of Facebook was beneficial for their close relationships only if they used additional forms of communication (Bryant & Marmo, 2009). The basis of the hypotheses put forward in this study was designed to test how college students use different maintenance behaviors with their close and casual, and on and off campus, friends.

It was hypothesized that these young adults would use more relational maintenance strategies with both on and off campus close friends than on and off campus casual friends. It was also hypothesized that these same students would engage in more relational maintenance strategies with on campus close and casual friends than off campus close or casual friends. None

of the four hypotheses were supported in a statistical analysis of data drawn from an internet survey comparing the five types of relational maintenance strategies by relationship type and campus location.

While these results failed to confirm any of the four study hypotheses, these non-significant findings are consistent with many prior studies. Bryant and Marmo (2009) postulated that the strategies college students used to maintain friendships differed depending on the type and nature of the relationship. Those researchers found that while Facebook was a useful tool in maintaining friendships, students likely used other more personal means of communication, such as phone calls and talking face-to-face, to maintain their close relationships (Bryant and Marmo, 2009).

These results are also consistent with those of Ellison et al., (2009) and Steven (2010) who found that the majority of Facebook subscribers use the site to maintain existing offline relationships, such as friends who met during a shared class at school or a former colleague, as opposed to meeting new people. Kujath (2011) concluded that the use of social networking sites was not a substitute for face-to-face interaction, but rather an extension of communication with others. Millera, Parsons, and Lifer (2010) found that Facebook use was an important tool for students to stay in touch with family and high school friends as well as a way to identify study partners at college. Young (2011) found that Facebook users believed the website to be of great convenience in facilitating face-to-face communication. Participants believed it helped them keep contact with friends that they had not seen in years. Facebook was considered to be an important social tool but not a replacement or an alternative to social activities.

On the other hand, these findings are somewhat inconsistent with Ellison et al.'s (2007) research which showed that college students tended to have more Facebook interaction with people whom they shared an offline connection (i.e. friends on-campus, family members back home). These particular findings suggested the possibility of a greater likelihood that students, regardless of the nature of their relationship type, would use more Facebook strategies to maintain their offline relationships and to solidify those connections while living and studying on the same campus.

Implications

No one would deny that there are many benefits in having friendships of different types. It is also a given that friendships vary in terms of frequency and quality of interaction. Overall, the findings of this particular study are significant in that there appears to be a strong preference for the use of these maintenance strategies with students' casual friends regardless of campus location. These results suggest that students' use positivity (being cheerful and upbeat, not criticizing the partner), openness (directly discussing the nature of the relationship), assurances (stressing one's commitment and love), social networks (attempts to involve friends and family in various activities), and shared tasks (doing one's fair share of chores and other work that needs to be done) more frequently on Facebook with their casual friends regardless of whether these friends were on the same or a different campus. This data suggests that online relationship maintenance is a convenient tool to keep in touch with casual friends and acquaintances but not necessarily a practical tool for use with one's close friends.

This behavior can be at least partially explained by Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1958). Social Exchange Theory maintains that people gauge the overall worth of a

relationship by subtracting its costs from the rewards it provides. SET argues that people calculate the overall “worth” of each particular relationship. One must assume that students who report having casual friends have likely already judged the “worth” of those relationships to be a positive number that likely varies in each particular relationship.

Facebook certainly allows students to maintain friends in their social network without having to expend much energy or experience significant costs to stay in touch. In practice, students keep up with some friends often while others less so. While these casual relationships likely carry fewer benefits and costs, spending time composing and sending a Facebook post to a casual friend could result in a more satisfying overall benefit minus cost relationship calculation. By definition it could be viewed as a helpful tool in maintaining causal relationships. Facebook, for example, might allow friends who were high school best friends and who have gone years without personal contact, to find out that the other is passing through their town one day soon and result in them planning to spend the day together. This tool allowed them to get together in person and strengthen that relationship with little or no cost. Facebook as one element of relational life offers a real bargain with its low costs and potentially high rewards.

The lack of reported significant use of many of these strategies with close friends can also be partially explained by Social Exchange Theory. One must also assume that students who report having close friends has already judged the relationship “worth” to be a positive number. The “worth” of a relationship is postulated to influence its outcome with positive relationships expected to sustain themselves. While these survey participants reported that they used Facebook daily to stay in touch with their friends, it does not appear that they used these strategies on Facebook as often with their close friends as they did with their casual friends. It seems that the

use of these particular strategies on Facebook may not play as significant a role as other types of maintenance behaviors in changing the calculation of the “worth” outcome. While close relationships potentially carry more benefits and costs, simply spending frequent and short periods of time sending messages or posting a comment on a close friend’s Facebook page resulted in minimal positive changes in the overall “outcome” calculation.

This study found that shared tasks were being used to maintain close relationships off-campus. This finding is consistent with that of Guerrero, Eloy, and Wabnik (1993) who concluded that individuals whose relationships was either evolving or was already established reported using several strategies including shared tasks more frequently than those whose relationships were diminishing. When it came to the use of this strategy with close friends, it was used more often with those who lived off campus than with those who lived on campus. Canary et al. (1993) found that while levels of openness varied by relationship type, it was the most frequently used strategy of the ten they identified. The results of the present study appear consistent with previous research findings and are likely the result of direct attempts to maintain core close friendships not nearby that cannot be replaced easily. Maintaining close friendships on campus may be perceived to require more frequent personal interaction involving these higher levels of communication, self-disclosure and sharing of thoughts and feelings.

Dindia (2003) postulated that relational maintenance is a vibrant process that requires continual communication between relational partners. Thirty five percent of the participants in our study reported they used Facebook up to an hour each day with the majority (26%) of users having 200 to 400 Facebook “friends.” So, while Facebook allows for frequent and short periods of time to communicate and maintain larger and more complex social networks, it does not seem

to be a sufficient stand-alone tool to meet the relational demands of close relationships. On the other hand, there is no data from this study to indicate it has any type of detrimental effect on close friendships either on or off campus.

This study's results are consistent with what we already know about social networking sites. These sites allow users to share personal information with those they choose to connect with. Much of the time this eliminates the need for personal interaction. Face-to-face interaction is still the primary foundation of relationship maintenance. Steinfield and Lampe (2009) suggested that since users report hundreds of online friends, most of their relationships are more casual in nature. Wright, Craig, Cunningham, Igiel, and Ploeger (2008) suggested that Facebook was not only a cheap but also a useful way to communicate messages to a large network of individuals. One important motivation for having online friends was noted by Steinfield and Lampe (2009) who reported that the reason most users have large numbers of friends was due to the low "cost" of adding a friend to their list. Conversely, they indicate that the social costs of rejecting a friend request could potentially be very high. These research findings can in part help explain the findings of this study.

Study Limitations & Future Directions

The results of this study show that Facebook plays a major role in these student's lives given their reported frequency and duration of use. Despite advancing our understanding of how these relational maintenance strategies are used by these young adults, the current study has several notable limitations. First, this study was limited by the type of sampling strategy. Sampling was done by convenience, and not randomly. Secondly, this study was based on an anonymous, online questionnaire. There was no systematic way to guarantee participants met the

demographic. This could have resulted in skewed data. Thirdly, this type of sampling and anonymity does not allow for generalization of its findings.

Even though this study used previous work completed by Bryant and Marmo's (2009) for guidance and duplication, further testing is needed to address the validity of these results. Future research should attempt to duplicate the results of this particular study. The use of focus groups or other objective data collection measures would ensure that the participants met the required demographic. A further examination of other relational maintenance strategies as well as a more precise definition of friends such as the one used in this study is in order. Particular attention should be paid to the possibility that sex and age differences might exist in the use of different maintenance strategies. Future research using a non- college student sample would also be helpful for generalization purposes.

While future research is certainly needed, the present study sought to examine the relational maintenance strategies used by young adult students with their close and casual friends across locations. These findings suggest that while Facebook plays a major role in college student's lives, their use of relationship maintenance strategies vary by relationship type. These findings support the contention that Facebook plays a valuable online communication in this new media age.

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Appendix A

Participation Consent Form



Dear Participant,

This letter is a request for you to take part in a research project to assess what strategies college students use to maintain their close and casual friends using the social networking site Facebook. This project is being conducted by Brittany Legg, graduate student in the Child Development and Family Studies program at WVU with the supervision of Dr. Jessica Troilo, an assistant professor in the College of Human Resources, for a Master's Degree in Educational Psychology. Your participation in this project is greatly appreciated and will take approximately 10 minutes to complete a survey on [surveymonkey.com](https://www.surveymonkey.com). This survey includes a series of statements that I would like you to rate based on how you use the social networking site Facebook to maintain contact with your close and casual friends who live both on and off your college campus.

Your involvement in this project will be kept as confidential as legally possible. All data will be reported in the aggregate. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. You must also be enrolled in a college or university and be a Facebook user. I will not ask any information that should lead back to your identity as a participant. Your participation is completely voluntary. You may skip any question that you do not wish to answer and you may discontinue at any time. If you are a student at WVU your class standing will not be affected if you decide either not to participate or to withdraw.

There is one possible exception to this rule. If you choose to participate in this internet survey, you can become eligible to win one of four \$50 Visa gift cards to be given away as participation incentives. This drawing will be done randomly at the conclusion of my data collection and will require your e-mail address for notification purposes only. After all four winners have been notified your e-mail address will be destroyed. Participation in this incentive drawing is completely voluntary. West Virginia University's Institutional Review Board acknowledgement of this project is on file.

I hope that you will participate in this research project, as it could be beneficial in understanding the impact of social networking sites to maintain friendships. Thank you very much for your time. Should you have any questions about this letter or the research project, please feel free to contact me at blegg@mix.wvu.edu or my thesis chair, Dr. Jessica Troilo at JETroilo@mail.wvu.edu.

If you wish to participate, please use the following link:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/8JGRF69>

Thank you for your time and help with this project.

Sincerely,

Brittany Legg

Phone: 304-293-3049
Fax: 304-293-9424

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Appendix B

Demographic Questionnaire

Please answer each of the following questions.

1.) What is your age?

18-22

23-26

27-30

31 and older

2.) What is your gender?

Female

Male

3.) What is your college ranking?

Freshman

Sophomore

Junior

Senior

Graduate Student

4.) What is your race?

White

Black or African American

Asian

Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

From Multiple races

5.) How much time you spend on Facebook on a typical day?

0-30 minutes

31-60 minutes

1 to 2 hours

2 to 3 hours

More than 3 hours

6.) How many Facebook "Friends" do you have?

0 – 100

101 -200

200 – 400

400 – 600

600 or more

Appendix C

Typical item on The Relationship Maintenance Survey (RMS)

Read each statement below while thinking about a CLOSE FRIEND (someone whom you consider to be a BEST friend) or a CASUAL FRIEND (someone whom you consider to be an ACQUAINTAINCE). As you think about that person, write HOW TRUE each statement is using the scale below. For example, if you post on your CLOSE FRIEND’S wall daily, then you would choose “A” for that statement. For example, if you post on your CASUAL FRIEND’S wall once every few months, then you would choose “R” for that statement.

Rate these statements for both CLOSE and CASUAL friends that you have ON and OFF campus using the following system:

A = ALWAYS (daily) F = FREQUENTLY (every few days) U = USUALLY (once every week or two)

R = RARELY (no more than once a month) N = NEVER (you have never done)

10. Sending motivational comments to friends that are preparing for important events

A = ALWAYS (daily)	F = FREQUENTLY (every few days)	U = USUALLY (once every week or two)	R = RARELY (no more than once a month)	N = NEVER (you have never done)
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**CLOSE FRIEND
WHO ATTENDS
THE SAME
COLLEGE AS YOU**

**CLOSE FRIEND
WHO DOES NOT
ATTEND THE SAME
COLLEGE AS YOU
DO**

**CASUAL FRIEND
WHO ATTENDS
THE SAME
COLLEGE AS YOU**

**CASUAL FRIEND
WHO DOES NOT
ATTEND THE SAME
COLLEGE AS YOU
DO**

Appendix D*5 Categories of Facebook Maintenance Behaviors Identified by Bryant and Marmo (2009)***Positivity**

- RMS 8: Posting on a friend's wall to make him/her feel special
- RMS 9: Sending cheerful messages as a fun way to say you are thinking of a friend
- RMS 10: Sending motivational comments to friends that are preparing for important events
- RMS 11: Using Facebook's birthday reminders so you remember to wish a friend happy birthday
- RMS 12: Responding to friends' messages in a timely manner even if you never initiate contact
- RMS 13: Using Facebook as non-stressful way to flirt with romantic interests

Openness

- Self-Disclosure
 - RMS 14: Using your profile to share good or bad news with friends
 - RMS 15: Updating your status and profile so friends stay up-to-date on your life
 - RMS 16: Sharing poetry or personal notes you wrote
- Maintaining Non-Intimate Communication
 - RMS 17: Keeping in touch with friends that live far away by messaging each other
 - RMS 18: Looking at a friend's profile to find contact information such as their phone number
 - RMS 19: Making a group to obtain friends' phone numbers when you lose or break your phone

Assurance Strategies

- Providing Assurances
 - RMS 20: Congratulating friends when they post exciting news

- RMS 21: Offering support when a friend posts that something bad has happened
- RMS 22: Listing your best friends as “top friends” so they know they are special
- Seeking Assurances
- RMS 23: Updating your status to provoke friends into talking to you
- RMS 24: Posting emotional information (e.g. that you are sad or worried) to seek social support

Social Networks Strategies

- RMS: 25 Adding the friends of a new romantic partner to strengthen your shared network
- RMS: 26 Looking up a friend’s romantic interest to learn more about them
- RMS: 27 Looking up people that share mutual friends
- RMS: 28 Using Facebook to negotiate a new social network

Shared Tasks Strategies

- RMS: 29 Conducting group projects over Facebook chat or messages
- RMS: 30 Coordinating meetings for class events, study groups, or group presentations for work

Table 1*Paired comparisons made on each of the 5 Strategy Subscales*

Close friend/Same location	Close friend/Different location
Casual friend/Same location	Casual Friend/Different location
Close friend/Same location	Casual friend/Same location
Close friend/Different location	Casual Friend/Different location

Table 1*Cronbach's alpha for the 5 Strategy Subscales*

Strategy	Example of item	On campus Close	Off campus Close	On campus Casual	Off campus Casual	Number of Items
Positivity	Posting on a friend's wall to make him/her feel special	.766	.728	.667	.659	6
Openness	Using your profile to share good or bad news with friends	.730	.683	.689	.636	6
Assurances	Offering support when a friend posts that something bad has happened	.738	.721	.734	.732	5
Social Networking	Adding the friends of a new romantic partner to strengthen your shared network	.693	.669	.689	.685	4
Shared Tasks	Conducting group projects over Facebook chat or messages	.904	.819	.892	.835	2

Table 2*Positivity T-tests, Means, and Standard Deviation Statistics*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
On campus/Close	3.07	0.73	1.914	227	0.057
Off campus/Close	2.99	0.67			
On campus/Casual	3.56	0.61	-0.866	227	0.387
Off campus/Casual	3.58	0.6			
On campus/Close	3.07	0.73	-16.075	227	0.0*
On campus/Casual	3.56	0.61			
Off campus/Close	2.99	0.67	-16.358	227	0.0*
Off campus/Casual	3.59	0.6			

* $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 3*Openness T-tests, Means, and Standard Deviation Statistics*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
On campus/Close	3.66	0.69	-3.175	227	0.0*
Off campus/Close	3.74	0.65			
On campus/Casual	3.93	0.68	.216	227	0.829
Off campus/Casual	3.92	0.65			
On campus/Close	3.66	0.70	12.656	227	0.0*
On campus/Casual	3.93	0.68			
Off campus/Close	3.74	0.65	-9.35	227	0.0*
Off campus/Casual	3.92	0.65			

* $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 4*Assurances T-tests, Means, and Standard Deviation Statistics*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
On campus/Close	3.62	0.75	1.915	227	0.057
Off campus/Close	3.57	0.71			
On campus/Casual	3.97	0.68	-0.207	227	0.836
Off campus/Casual	3.97	0.68			
On campus/Close	3.62	0.75	-12.811	227	0.0*
On campus/Casual	3.97	0.68			
Off campus/Close	3.57	0.71	-13.090	227	0.0*
Off campus/Casual	3.98	0.68			

* $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 5*Social Networking T-tests, Means, and Standard Deviation Statistics*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
On campus/Close	3.82	0.83	-1.044	227	0.298
Off campus/Close	3.83	0.81			
On campus/Casual	4.09	0.75	-3.809	227	0.002
Off campus/Casual	4.13	0.73			
On campus/Close	3.81	0.83	-10.204	227	0.0*
On campus/Casual	4.09	0.75			
Off campus/Close	3.83	0.81	-10.534	227	0.0*
Off campus/Casual	4.13	0.73			

* $p < .001$ (two-tailed).

Table 6*Shared Tasks T-tests, Means, and Standard Deviation Statistics*

	Mean	Standard Deviation	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2 tailed)
On campus/Close	3.79	1.17	-8.145	227	0.0*
Off campus/Close	4.24	0.99			
On campus/Casual	3.92	1.11	-8.623	227	0.0*
Off campus/Casual	4.39	.86			
On campus/Close	3.79	1.17	-3.936	227	0.0*
On campus/Casual	3.92	1.11			
Off campus/Close	4.24	0.95	-4.949	227	0.0*
Off campus/Casual	4.40	0.86			

* $p < .001$ (two-tailed).