



Facebook and the Maintenance of Social Capital



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Abstract

- This study examines the usage of Facebook by University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire students.
- The study looks at the relationship between Facebook usage and maintenance of pre-existing social capital on three levels: bonding, bridging, and high school social capital.
- **Social Capital**-An economic idea that refers to the connections between individuals and entities that can be economically valuable. (Also known as “Having Friends”)
- The survey used a scale that measured the intensity of and motivations for Facebook usage and a modified version of the Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield (2006) scale measuring social capital and Facebook intensity.

Introduction

- Originally Facebook was designed for the use of communication between students. Now Facebook has spread beyond the boundaries of just students attending a University. What this research aims to illustrate is the use of Facebook in the maintenance of social capital.
- The significance of this study is to show not only the uses of Facebook but the extent that it used to maintain relationships.

H1: Facebook is utilized in the maintenance of social capital.

Method

- **Participants**
Participants were 105 undergraduate students Attending University of Wisconsin Eau Claire that used Facebook. The participants of the study were 26 males, 78 females with an average age of 21.3.
- **Procedure**
Students participated in an online survey which was distributed through Facebook. The researchers administered the survey through a link in Facebook.
- **Measurements**
The survey contained 59 statements measuring participants’ Facebook intensity and motivations for Facebook usage, social capital (including bridging, bonding and high school social capital) and basic demographics. We used a modified version of a survey from Lampe, Ellison, and Steinfield (2006).

Results

H1 stated that Facebook is utilized by college students in the maintenance of social capital offline.

- Pearson correlations coefficients
- See Table 1
- Given the many significant correlations between Facebook usage (as measured by intensity and motivations) and social capital, H1 was largely supported.

Table 1

Cronbach's Alphas and Pearson Correlation Coefficient

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. INTENSITY	(.80)							
2. MOTFUN	.74**	(.85)						
3. MOTINFO	.33**	.30**	(.61)					
4. MOTOFF	.64**	.55**	.37**	(.73)				
5. MOTMASS	.62**	.44**	-.13**	.53**	(.77)			
6. BRIDGE	.11	.16	.23*	.26**	.28**	(.87)		
7. BOND	.32**	.29**	-.09	.36**	.66**	.55**	(.84)	
8. HIGHSCHL	.30**	.30**	.17	.44**	.40**	.40**	.44**	(.90)

Note. N = 104. Reliability coefficients appear in parentheses along the diagonal
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (1-tailed).

Conclusion

- There is a positive relationship between Facebook usage and the maintenance of social capital.
- Facebook is utilized much more significantly in the maintenance of pre-existing social capital instead of the formation of new social capital or other motivations such as information. In fact, the portion of our survey used to measure the motivations of Facebook usage found information seeking to be the lowest correlation, whereas the motivations for fun and offline connections were much stronger.

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