FACEBOOK AND THE CHURCH: GRATIFICATIONS SOUGHT AND
GRATIFICATIONS OBTAINED

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FACEBOOK AND THE CHURCH: GRATIFICATIONS SOUGHT AND
GRATIFICATIONS OBTAINED

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ABSTRACT

There is no denying the enormous influence of social media on society as a whole. Researchers are beginning to realize the impact of social media as communication tools as well as their role in changing the way communication is performed among small and large cultural subsets. This research uses Facebook and churches as context to begin to offer a foundational understanding of motivations for church members to use Facebook and, to a limited degree, the Facebook pages that are associated with a church. Quantitative data was derived from a questionnaire to identify and measure four previously-established gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. The data suggest varying levels of relaxation, inclusion, information and entertainment. The data further suggest that frequency of church Facebook pages and frequency of church attendance are factors.

*Keywords:* Facebook, church, uses and gratifications, gratifications sought, gratifications obtained
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There were additional hurdles to overcome by waiting 19 years between earning a bachelor’s degree and beginning an advanced degree program. Working one full time job and two part time jobs, plus graduate school at two-thirds load was challenging. My sons, Michael, Steven and Daniel, deserve a portion of my achievement. Sometimes Dad was at school or preoccupied at home. Pre-teen and teenage boys have little interest in communication theory, so it was difficult for them to understand why this endeavor was important. It was important, but so are they. I appreciate their obvious understanding.

I also appreciate the advice of my undergraduate academic advisor, Dr. Kathleen Endres. She told me something in 1991 that surprised me: Working in my field will help me earn a master’s degree more than a master’s degree will help me obtain a job in my field. I don’t think she meant for me to wait nearly two decades, but she was correct. Endres never steered me in the wrong direction and always had my best interest in mind, even when I did not realize it.

Endres has been a constant during and between my college lives, always available for advice. She did not stand alone. Dr. Young Lin’s approach to teaching quantitative research erased my fears. Dr. Tang Tang’s infectious enthusiasm for research, theory in particular, prompted momentum. Dr. Val Pipps has a way of keeping things calm when emotions are high. Dr. Mary Triece made me think about things in ways that I never considered; those considerations have helped to make me a stronger journalist. Dr.
Kathleen Stansberry brought context to the use and study of social media. Dr. Phil Hoffman included humor and realism in his approach without losing grasp of the tasks at-hand. Dr. Patricia Hill helped teach me that finding the forest is fantastic – but you can’t ignore the individual trees within it. This paper is one tree in that forest.
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Communication from the pulpit is timeless and has history on its side. Communication through social networking sites is timely and has the future at its disposal. This research offers an important look at this intersection of old and new – an intersection that is becoming extremely busy.

The Internet is a must-have tool that people use for business, education, entertainment and socializing. Among its subgenres are social networking sites (SNS), which have created new uses for the Internet and new ways to communicate. SNS are defined by boyd (2008) as Internet sites that allow people to display profiles with varying amounts of privacy and allow people to connect with others who have shared interests, whose connections can also be realized. People are responding to this form of computer-mediated communication. According to Brenner and Smith (2013), 72% of adult Internet users are connecting with others through SNS. Facebook is the most widely accessed among all SNS, including Twitter and LinkedIn (Alexa, 2012).

Facebook was not originally intended for the 1.1 billion people or entities (Facebook, 2013) that are currently members. In fact, Facebook was created as an online student directory for exclusive use at Harvard University. It is now the product of a publicly-traded corporation that allows free memberships to anyone over 13 years of age. Users, usually referred to as members, can establish pages that include biographical
profiles; connect with other Facebook users; write about events in their lives; create invitations to real or virtual events; and post images, videos or links to virtually anything on the World Wide Web.

Facebook is not limited to individuals. Businesses and nonprofit organizations, which can include churches, quickly realized the potential. In fact, marketing experts urged churches to use SNS, including Twitter and Facebook, to create new relationships and strengthen existing ones (Bulik, 2009). While scholarship is emerging, little attention has been paid to the specific relationship between Facebook and the church, although it is often acknowledged as something that does exist (Hutchings, 2010). This relationship must be explored, measured and, eventually, defined. Scholars may then be able to assist religious leaders who want to take advantage of the nuances of SNS as those distinctions are discovered, categorized and aligned in ways that may suit church communication plans.

It is important to recognize that some church leaders have made a strategic choice to avoid Facebook (Brachear, 2011; Reyes-Chow, 2009; Henry, 2010). Discouragement of Facebook or other SNS may be based on morality (Anonymous, 2009). Facebook users sometimes post inappropriate images, use foul language, include sexual innuendo or other communications that are opposite of the types of exchanges that organizations rooted in Christianity, Islam or other religious ideals would advocate. There is also debate about whether people who engage in online communication with a church would be less likely to attend church in person (Cassata, 2012). Campbell (2004), however, referenced and summarized numerous works to suggest that, overall, attendance at traditional churches was down, while participation in online religious activity was on the
rise; however, there did not appear to be a causal relationship between those phenomena. In fact, Campbell’s (2004) work included indications that online religiosity prompted church members to become more engaged in traditional as well as newer, non-traditional ways although the research was conducted prior to a large emergence of SNS.

Others suggest that churches consider the use of SNS to be favorable (Butters, 2010; Christian Century, 2008; Ferré, 2012; Goodmansan, 2010; Graham, 2011; Lourde, 2009; Melhaff, 2008; Michael, 2009; Reichart, 2009, Schlumpf, 2011). Facebook could be an effective tool for Catholics to evangelize (Cassata, 2012) and some even offer guides to help churches navigate SNS (Bulik, 2009; Clark & Hertz, 2012; Steed, 2008). A Content analysis by Jeffress (2008) suggested that the benefits of interaction among Christian teens that use MySpace, another SNS, are more plentiful than the potential risks. Gould (2013) suggested that Facebook and other SNS can be populated with secular messages to advance a church communication plan.

This research examined gratifications sought and gratifications obtained from Facebook users who are connected to a Facebook page that is administered by a religious institution. The study will add to the foundation of research that hones in on this virtual phenomenon upon which future research can massage for further testing. The results also have a normative application by offering new guidance to church leaders who may be struggling with various approaches to marketing and communication.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

Discussion of the use of Facebook among churches has not escaped the attention of journalists and bloggers. Useem (2008) determined through a mixture of scholarly research and analogies that churches are bringing technology into the sanctuary and that people are embracing the integration without abandoning traditional church attendance. Scholars also have taken notice, mainly in a broad sense, and have begun to probe relationships between religion or churches and new media or social network sites.

Research suggests that a multidisciplinary approach should be considered for studies that involve religion and new media (Cho, 2011). Cho (2011) argued that scholars need to set aside personal agendas and collaborate from communication, religion, sociology and other perspectives to begin framing what is a newer research area. According to Cho, this can be done without abandoning individual areas of interest. Campbell (2006) also called for a variety of disciplines to embark on researching the crossroads of religion and the Internet in an article that served as a sort of clearinghouse of research that explored the history of research that involved the two major variables. Scholars that include German (2007) argue that research conducted under the guidance of uses and gratifications theory already includes elements of research rooted in communication, psychology and anthropology. Campbell’s (2006) work also identified
predictions for future research that, if fulfilled, would help to build a stronger foundation, although one that shifts away from definitions. Instead, Campbell (2006) saw refined context that could lead to new theory development. That foundation, however, is particularly important when studying components of the Internet and, specifically, SNS, because their histories show quick emergence and extremely rapid growth. Arguments by Cho (2011) and Campbell (2006) should be held in high regard; however, researchers may want to continue to employ balance. An immediate need remains to establish baseline research to help lead scholars to multidisciplinary approaches that are logical and necessary. For example, Pinterest is among the newer SNS. Does it make sense for scholars to integrate other disciplines before foundational research is established that is specific to Pinterest?

Measurement of the presence, interface and offerings of church websites is important because it may give researchers clues about whether churches will follow the same approach as they integrate Facebook or other SNS into their communication strategies. The introduction of web-based technology among churches can be traced back more than a decade. Veenker (2001) found that the presence of church websites is common. Correlations were found by Sturgill, Engibous, Holmes, Jongsuwanwattana and Purohit (2003) between physical and virtual church bulletin boards. Research also suggested that organizational tools dominated evangelical tools in a content analysis of 251 church websites (Sturgill, 2004) and little evidence that participation was important.

More recent research suggested that churches continued to lag in offering more modern, dynamic and interactive websites (Waters, Friedman, Mills & Zeng, 2011; Tropf & Moore, 2010). Waters, Friedman, Mills and Zeng (2011) were guided by relationship
management theory to conduct a content analysis of 270 church websites to find that most of the information on the websites was similar to a brochure and offered little in the way of multimedia components or interactivity.

Tropf and Moore’s (2010) content analysis of 146 church websites sought to identify the presence of organization (contact information, names of staff members or leaders, logos, service times), evangelism (audio streaming of worship services, archived sermon scripts, materials for church education programs), and social networking (prayer requests, church calendars, sign up forms). Elements of organization were strong, but fewer websites showed signs of evangelism and even fewer, only 87, were engaged in social networking. Tropf and Moore’s (2010) analysis did not specify whether the churches were engaged with Facebook but did suggest that most churches were paying more attention to websites, even though they still lacked some sophistication.

Rosch (2011) found that nearly half of Protestant churches use Facebook but a study by Keppler (2012) suggested that many churches with a Facebook presence put very little effort into regular updates. Frye (2012) compiled literature to offer an overview of how churches are using various forms of social media, including Facebook, YouTube, blogs, podcasting and other methods as educational tools and methods of distance learning. Frye predicted that smaller congregations will also embrace the simple and often free technology to better spread their messages. Calderon’s (2010) non-scholarly approach included a sample of various Facebook pages belonging to Christian, Jewish, Muslim and Buddhist organizations to explain the types of communication that can be found by people who access their Facebook pages. Much of the information was organizational; however, Muslims used Facebook more than others to evangelize. Others
included varying, but undefined levels of evangelism, donation requests, prayer requests
and other messages that pertain to either religious faith or the needs of that individual
organization (Calderon, 2010).
CHAPTER III
THEORETICAL INTEGRATION

Uses and Gratifications

The study was guided by the uses and gratifications (U&G) approach which can be used to help rationalize why people are attracted to subgenres of media, such as SNS. U&G, as summarized by Katz, Blumler and Gurevitch (1973) is “concerned with: (1) the social and psychological origins of (2) needs, which generate (3) expectations of (4) the mass media or other sources, which lead to (5) differential patterns of media exposure (or engagement in other activities), resulting in (6) need gratifications and (7) other consequences, perhaps mostly unintended ones” (p. 510). In essence, U&G is concerned with learning what motivates media consumers to use media and how those consumers use media. The theory makes basic assumptions that consumers are active and motivated to seek media that fulfill specific, definable needs (Katz, 1959; Littlejohn, 1992; Rubin, 1993). Beyond the use of media lie the gratifications associated with that use. Gratifications, as applied to U&G, can be broken down to examine the process by which media consumers select media as well as the actual use of the media (Stafford, Stafford & Schkade, 2004).

Rubin (1993) argued that the simple assumption that media consumers are active is not enough; heavy consideration must also be given to their specific motivations that can be defined as gratifications sought (GS) and gratifications obtained (GO). Simply put,
these are the umbrellas under which researchers store the reasons why people seek certain media and whether those reasons were satisfied; however, it is important to further discuss the second set of roots from which GS and GO were cultivated. GS and GO are often associated with expectancy-value theory which, itself, is often melded into U&G (McQuail, 2010; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985). Expectancy-value theory suggests that GS are based on GO, and media consumers use experience with specific media to predict GO, then formulate GS accordingly (McQuail, 2010; Palmgreen & Rayburn, 1985). Rubin (2009) clarified that expectancy-value theory relies on the belief, or probability, of a valued reward, or expectation, while GO is an actual outcome. Leenheer (2009) further suggested in mobile device usage research that expectancy and GO are terms that should not be used interchangeably. According to Rubin (2009), media consumers may have multiple motivations that simultaneously prompt media consumption at various levels. Subsequently, the types of GS have been revised and reformatted as part of the evolution of U&G (Heath & Bryant, 1992; McQuail, 1983; Tan, 1985). Models to support statistical correlations between GS and GO have been designed (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980), although they don’t always match and the relationships are not necessarily causal. GO can occur through exposure to selected media, even if those are not the GS by the consumer (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rosengren, 1985). In other words, people sometimes realize gratifications that were not intended.

Specific to religion, Abelman (1987) found that viewers of religious television programming were motivated by their dissatisfaction with other television offerings, and not because they were seeking programs that satisfied their religiosity. Companionship, entertainment, escape and interaction were identified by Armfield, Dixon and Dougherty
(2006) as GS by religious people who use the Internet. Furthermore, the study suggested a relationship between the “belief” factor in religiosity determination and entertainment as a GS, although Facebook was not a research variable. German (2007) tied U&G to religion in research that suggested mainly weak relationships between the way major and minor religious groups use newspapers.

Uses & Gratifications and New Media

U&G has evolved from research that focused on earlier forms of mass media communication, such as radio and television, to new media that include the Internet and mobile devices (McQuail, 2010). Ruggiero (2000) acknowledged criticisms of U&G through its history that include whether audiences are actually active and whether the motivations that prompt media selection are based on their environment as well as their existing knowledge and feelings about their media choices. Ruggiero (2000), however, argued in favor of the usefulness, reliability and relevancy of U&G, particularly as it is applied to computer-mediated communication. Ruggiero (2000) further suggested that new life infused into U&G through the newer applications could potentially strengthen the theory through the components of interactivity, demassification and asynchronicity. These ideas, combined, suggest that media consumers can make choices based on the available options that they initiated, have the power to manipulate those choices and control over the range of available media, and it is all done at the convenience of the user. LaRose and Eastin (2004) applied U&G to the Internet with consideration to social cognitive theory to begin cultivating updated motivations of media use. Stafford, Stafford and Schkade (2004) applied U&G to develop an Internet social gratification model.
The integration of Facebook into U&G has grasped the attention of scholars. Research destined to compare GO between Facebook and users of instant messaging suggested that Facebook GO of pastime, affection, fashion, problem sharing, sociability and social information made it amenable to being social vehicle among friends (Quan-Haase & Young, 2010). In that study, instant messaging was geared more toward developing and maintaining deeper friendships than those cultivated through Facebook. Steinfield, Ellison and Lampe (2008) used U&G to suggest a positive relationship between a high rate of Facebook use and Facebook users’ belief in their connectedness with strangers. The same theory guided Chen (2011) to determine that frequent use of Twitter, another SNS, as well as high frequency of interactions on Twitter gratifies the need for connectedness.

U&G acknowledges that habit can play a role in media selection, but it is considered to be nonrandom (Perry, 2002). This concept may coincide with the way people use Facebook because Facebook users can choose which friend or fan pages they want to view. They also have the option to block certain postings or make their Facebook accounts invisible to others.

Papacharissi & Mendelson (2008) focused on social capital to test a new model that identified and measured motivations for using Facebook, with U&G and social network theory in mind. Papacharissi & Mendelson concluded that while social capital and other social needs serve as motivators, Facebook is a source for non-social GS.

Scholars are also being challenged to adapt media gratifications to better reflect the nuances of new media, and not simply depend on gratifications that, while widely tested, have not moved beyond traditional media (Sundar & Limperos, 2013). Sundar and
Limperos (2013) did not suggest a haphazard approach to identifying and measuring the motives of media consumers, but one that is not locked into the most generic identifiers by incorporating factors such as navigation and interactivity. An argument can be made to suggest that the more basic approach still has relevance. For example, Joinson (2008) suggested that revised gratifications for SNS may include more specific tags that are related to activities, such as posting images or keeping in touch. Individual benchmarks certainly have meaning but categorizing them offers context and can be used to suggest generalizations.

Scholars have categorized and tested various types of questions that seek to fulfill interpretations of U&G (Leung, 2001, Nyland & Near, 2007; Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Thomsen & Rekve, 2003; Wenner, 1974), and, specifically, GS and GO. Leung (2013) identified and applied several GS to social media, including: showing affection, venting negative feelings, gaining recognition, entertainment and cognitive needs. The socio-psychological needs identified by Leung (2013) do not fully support German’s (2007) claim that media consumers seek positive feelings through the use of media.

Based on a review of the literature, the current research will not only add to what is, essentially, a foundation of research using churches and Facebook as variables, but it will further test U&G theory. Specifically, this study attempts to offer a preliminary comparison between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained as they pertain to the use of church-administered Facebook pages. While relationships may be present, the current research did not attempt to suggest that Facebook has replaced the brick and mortar structures that we call “church.” The literature suggested that most research hones
in on perspectives to help explain if, how and why churches are using Facebook. Little attention has been paid to if, how and why media consumers are responding; therefore, the following research questions were posed:

RQ1: What are the differences between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained through the use of Facebook by church members?

RQ2: What are the relationships between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained in relation to the use of Facebook by church members?

RQ3: What are the gratifications sought and gratifications obtained through the use of church Facebook pages?

RQ4: Are there relationships between the use of Facebook and church members’ connectedness with their church?
CHAPTER IV
METHODOLOGY

Data was needed from Facebook users who were also members of a church or otherwise attendees of a church to attempt to answer the research questions. A questionnaire was designed and submitted, along with the research questions and a summarized methodology, to the institutional review board of a large Midwestern university. Approval was received in January, 2014. The survey was created in Qualtrics, a web-based service designed for scholarly and professional use. A pretest was conducted utilizing Facebook-using, church-going friends of the researcher to ensure that the survey was clear from navigational and cognitive standpoints. No problems were detected. The questionnaire, as it appeared to respondents, is included (Appendix A).

Variables

The questionnaire for this study contained questions adapted from prior research that categorized and tested various types of questions to test and expand U&G, and, specifically, GS and GO (Leung, 2001, Nyland & Near, 2007; Park, Kee & Valenzuela, 2009; Quan-Haase & Young, 2010; Thomsen & Rekve, 2003; Wenner, 1974). Additional questions that add specificity for the purposes of this study were also introduced. Most of the Facebook-related questions were drawn from four major motivations: Relaxation/escape, inclusion/social, information/education, and entertainment.
The following statements questions were used to measure GS and GO as applied to the use of Facebook by church members. GS and GO were determined by asking respondents to indicate their level of agreement regarding reasons that they access Facebook and the self-determined outcome by using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The items linked to the first two research questions are illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1
Measurement Items for Facebook Motivations

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<th>Gratification</th>
<th>GS</th>
<th>GO</th>
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<tr>
<td>Relaxation/escape</td>
<td>relax, break daily grind, ignore responsibilities</td>
<td>feel refreshed, stressful, a good way to spend “me time,” sense of accomplished, complete the day, wasted time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>connection with church, involvement with others, share things about my life, make new friends, stay in touch with old friends and relatives, seek emotional support, search for people I know, comment on others’ pictures or posts</td>
<td>made friends, feel good about sharing, enjoyed commenting on others, enjoyed seeing friends’ activities, helped strengthen church relationships, socialized with church friends, prefer in-person socializing, helped me through rough times, feel distant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inclusion/social</td>
<td>learn new things, find information about my church, see religious messages</td>
<td>stay informed about important things, often learn, learn about my church, too much religion, mundane information, nothing new</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information/education</td>
<td>relieve boredom, entertain myself</td>
<td>fun, enjoy</td>
<td></td>
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attendees ($M = 4.71, SD = .698$). Using a five-point Likert scale ($1 = \text{strongly disagree}$ to $5 = \text{strongly agree}$), the respondents considered themselves to be religious ($M = 4.12, SD = 1.43$).

Again, for the purposes of this research, the term “church” is intended as a generic label that could include churches, mosques or synagogues. Churches were first selected from a list used by Keppler (2012) and based on three criteria: presence on Facebook, amount of Facebook activity and number of Facebook friends, fans or followers. Leaders of the churches selected were invited via email and phone calls to send a survey link to their membership databases. Religious institutions that practice Christianity, Judaism and Islam were included. The response was dismal so more churches were added to the list from the same city in addition to some surrounding cities. Paper-pen surveys were distributed to two church leaders who made such a request. The online version of the questionnaire was available for approximately three weeks.

The survey was accessed online by 159 people. There were 13 questionnaires excluded because respondents indicated that they were not members of Facebook even though questions about their interaction with Facebook were completed. One additional survey was excluded because the respondent indicated being only 17 years of age. The total usable sample was then 145.

Descriptive Characteristics

The sample skewed female with 71% ($n = 103$) and 29% male ($n = 42$) respondents. The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 77 years with a mean of 45.76 ($SD = 15.03, n = 144$). There was one missing value for age. Nearly all the respondents had internet access at home (98.6%, $n = 143$) or at work (63.4%, $n = 92$). Questions were
included to gauge the number of hours (1 = zero, 2 = up to one, 3 = one to two, 4 = two to three and 5 = three or more) the respondents use the Internet on a daily basis ($M = 3.62$, $SD = 1.01$), and how many hours per day (1 = zero, 2 = up to one, 3 = one to two, 4 = two to three and 5 = three or more) are spent using Facebook ($M = 2.38$, $SD = .76$). Most of the respondents spend some time using Facebook each day (94.5%, $n = 137$) but most access the SNS for less than one hour per day (63.4%, $n = 92$).

A large portion of the respondents (71.7%, $n = 104$) came from a single non-denominational church, followed by another non-denominational church (9.6%, $n = 14$). A total of five of the 39 invited churches actually participated. Ten responses included the names of churches other than those invited to participate, presumably from people who are included on the email database of one church but consider themselves to be members of a different church. There were no responses from Jewish or Muslim institutions.

Data Analysis

Factor analyses were conducted to measure the strength of GS and GO as each related to relaxation/escape, inclusion/social, information/educate and entertain. The data suggest sampling adequacy in the minimally acceptable to strong range. Paired samples $t$-tests were conducted to compare the GS and the GO for each motive category. Finally, a Pearson Product-Moment Correlations test was conducted to identify correlations, using GS and GO as independent variables and four other measurements as dependent variables: hours per day on internet and hours per day on Facebook (1 = none, 2 = between 0 and 1, 3 = 1–2 hours, 4 = 2–3 hours, 5 = 3 or more hours); my church Facebook page is updated regularly (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree); I
consider myself to be a religious person (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree);

How often do you attend church (1 = one to two times per year, 2 = six times per year, 3 = one time per month, 4 = two to three times per month, 5 = every week).
CHAPTER V
RESULTS

The differences between GS and GO were needed to answer the first research question: What are the differences between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained through the use of Facebook by church members? The paired samples t-tests were used to draw comparisons between GS and GO for each motive category. Overall, the results suggested that the desires of relaxation/escape, inclusion, information/education and entertainment were all GS and GO; however, there were significant differences within each motivation category. First, there was a significant difference between GS relax/escape ($M = 3.08, SD = .84$) and GO relax/escape ($M = 2.75, SD = .64$); $t(130) = 4.18, p = .0005$. These results suggest that church members who seek relaxation from Facebook are finding it to a lesser degree. The next t-test compared GS inclusion to GO inclusion. There was a significant difference between GS inclusion ($M = 3.11, SD = .66$) and GO inclusion ($M = 3.20, SD = .59$); $t(127) = -2.84, p = .005$. This finding suggests that the sample is seeking Facebook to satisfy a need to feel included and that feeling is gratified to a greater degree. Next, there was a significant difference between GS inform ($M = 3.23, SD = .73$) and GO inform ($M = 3.34, SD = .51$); $t(130) = -2.45, p = .016$. Finally, there was a significant difference between GS entertainment ($M = 3.47, SD = .78$) and GO entertainment ($M = 3.70, SD = .64$); $t(130) = -3.56, p = .005$. Respondents rated GS significantly higher than GO.
The second research question (What are the relationships between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained in relation to the use of Facebook by church members?) was answered by drawing correlations between the GS and GO motivations and other variables. The Pearson Product-Moment Correlations tests found several statistically significant correlations. All of the correlations were positive with one exception, which was the relationship between GO entertain and hours spent on the Internet: \( r(132) = -.01, p < .91 \) This finding was not statistically significant but could otherwise suggest that the more time people spend on the Internet the less they feel gratified in terms of entertainment. There was a significant correlation between the numbers of hours respondents reported spending on the Internet and GO entertainment: \( r(131) = .20, p < .02 \) and only insignificant correlations with GS relax/escape: \( r(143) = .09, p < .19 \); GO relax/escape: \( r(131) = .002, p < .98 \); GS inclusion: \( r(130) = .12 p < .08 \); GO inclusion: \( r(130) = .10, p < .25 \); GS inform/education: \( r(132) = .10, p < .27 \); and GO inform/education: \( r(131) = .13 p < .14 \).

There were significant correlations between the number of hours spent on Facebook each day and GS relax/escape: \( r(143) = .19, p < .02 \); GS inclusion: \( r(130) = .12, p < .08 \); GO inclusion: \( r(130) = .39, p < .0005 \); GS inform/educate: \( r(132) = .21, p < .02 \); and GO inform/educate: \( r(131) = .19, p < .02 \).
and GO entertainment: $r(132) = .25, p < .003$. These results suggest positive relationships between the amount of time spent on Facebook and all four of the GS motivations as well as all four of the GO motivations, although the relationship between GO entertainment and hours on Facebook was not statistically significant: $r(131) = .14, p < .12$

The next three sets of correlations are linked to church attendance. There were four statistically significant correlations between the frequency of church attendance and the motivation factors of GS relax/escape: $r(143) = .17, p < .04$; GS inclusion: $r(130) = .19 p < .0005$; GO inclusion: $r(130) = .21, p < .001$; and GO entertainment: $r(132) = .15, p < .09$

The remaining correlations between frequency of church attendance and the motivation factors were not statistically significant: GO relax/escape: $r(131) = .09, p < .33$; GS inform/educate: $r(132) = .11, p < .22$; GO inform/educate: $r(131) = .05, p < .57$; and GS entertainment: $r(131) = .15, p < .09$. These data suggest positive relationships among all the Facebook motivation factors used in this study and the frequency of respondents’ church attendance.

The strongest correlation of all was that between GS relax/escape and the respondents’ determination of whether they consider themselves to be religious: $r(145) = .45, p < .0005$. The remaining correlations were not statistically significant: GO relax/escape: $r(131) = .01, p < .93$; GS inclusion: $r(130) = .07, p < .47$; GO inclusion: $r(130) = .05, p < .56$; GS inform/educate: $r(132) = .11, p < .22$; GO inform/educate: $r(131) = .07, p < .40$; GS entertainment: $r(132) = .09, p < .32$; and GO entertainment:
These findings uncover almost no significant relationships between Facebook motivations and basic religiosity.

The final set of correlations involving the Facebook motivations were used to answer RQ3. There were several statistically significant relationships when GS and GO were measured against the frequency of church Facebook page updates. GS relax/escape: \( r(130) = .24, p < .006 \); GS inclusion: \( r(130) = .27, p < .002 \); GO inclusion: \( r(128) = .30, p < .001 \); GS inform/educate: \( r(130) = .26, p < .003 \); GO inform/educate: \( r(129) = .22, p < .01 \) as well as two correlations that were not statistically significant: GO relax/escape: \( r(129) = .15, p < .09 \); GS entertainment: \( r(129) = .09, p < .23 \); and GO entertainment: \( r(130) = .17, p < .05 \). These data suggest significant relationships between people who reported their church Facebook page was regularly updated and those who used Facebook for relaxation, inclusion and information. The correlations are displayed in Table 3.

Table 3
Correlations between Motivation Factors and other Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Escape</th>
<th></th>
<th>Inclusion</th>
<th></th>
<th>Inform</th>
<th></th>
<th>Entertain</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GS</td>
<td>GO</td>
<td>GS</td>
<td>GO</td>
<td>GS</td>
<td>GO</td>
<td>GS</td>
<td>GO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours on Internet</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.20*</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours on FB</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.31**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.28**</td>
<td>.29**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church FB update</td>
<td>.24**</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>.26*</td>
<td>.22*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church attend</td>
<td>.17*</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.19*</td>
<td>.21*</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.19*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).
* correlation is significant at the .05 level (2-tailed).
The fourth research question asked if there are relationships between the use of Facebook and church members’ connectedness with their churches. Additional data from the Pearson Product-Moment Correlations test were extracted to answer the question. There were significant relationships between the frequency of church Facebook updates and whether the respondents were friends or fans of their church Facebook page: \( r(129) = -.30, p < .001 \). This negative relationship suggested that fans of church Facebook pages are not cognizant of page updates. Next there was a negative relationship between the page updates and whether updates appeared on respondents’ Facebook walls: \( r(130) = -.23, p < .008 \). According to that data, as the frequency of updates decreased, so did the information from those pages appearing on respondents’ walls. There were other correlations that were not statistically significant. Respondents who identify as religious correlated positively with those who noticed church Facebook updates: \( r(130) = .01, p < .92 \). The number of hours spent on Facebook correlated with church Facebook updates: \( r(130) = .14, p < .11 \); church attendance: \( r(143) = -.05, p < .58 \); whether the respondents were religious: \( r(143) = .11, p < .20 \). These data suggest that church Facebook updates are negatively correlated with church attendance but positively correlated with religiosity and church Facebook updates. There were negative relationships between church attendance and whether the respondents were fans or friends of their church’s Facebook page: \( r(142) = -.03, p < .76 \); and whether church Facebook postings appeared on respondents’ walls: \( r(143) = -.05, p < .53 \). The correlations suggested that there are mainly weak relationships between church Facebook pages, religiosity and church attendance.
CHAPTER VI
DISCUSSION

The information derived from the data, while not generalizable, provides additional clarity to scholars about the reasons people use Facebook but it also has practical value to church leaders who are trying to use social media to engage their congregations. Church leaders should consider posting items to Facebook that tap into the motivations highlighted throughout this study. Those posts could help to increase GS and GO and, perhaps, encourage their Facebook followers to associate positive GS and GO with their church. The data did not suggest that escape, inclusion, information and entertainment are not among their motivations for using Facebook which supports previous findings (Armfield, Dixon & Dougherty, 2006; Heath & Bryant, 2002; Kaye, 2000; Kaye & Johnson, 2013; Leung, 2013; McQuail, 1983; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Tan, 1985). However, all of the factored GS fall into the neutral category, so the respondents, overall, are not strongly motivated or strongly unmotivated to fulfill those feelings through Facebook.

The research suggests that Facebook is exceeding the expectations in three of the four motivation factors that were measured, a concept supported by previous research (Palmgreen, Wenner & Rayburn, 1980; Palmgreen, Wenner & Rosengren, 1985). The most significant finding involves the motivation to use Facebook to relax or escape.
Respondents are neutral (although close to disagreeing) that they use Facebook for that purpose but they do disagree that the gratification is being met. There were also statistically significant relationships that suggest the more people self-identify as religious, the more often they attend church. In addition, the more often church Facebook pages are updated, the more likely people are to use Facebook to relax or escape. The people who are seeking relaxation or escape are not finding it, and there are no statistically significant relationships to support GO relax/escape. In other words, people who are religious, attend church and recognize regular Facebook updates are looking for relaxation but are leaving the SNS unsatisfied.

The results were different for the other three motivation factors. The respondents were neutral in terms of their desire to use Facebook to feel included, to gain information or to be entertained but the gratification obtained in those areas, while still neutral, all leaned closer to the agree category. In other words, people found more inclusion, information and entertainment than they were seeking. It is worth noting that there are statistically significant correlations between frequent church Facebook updates and the inclusion and information motivations for both GS and GO. The more respondents think their church Facebook pages are updated, the more likely they are to seek and realize gratifications of inclusion/sociability and information/education. This finding could indicate that church leaders are helping to gratify both motivations by keeping up with Facebook updates that appeal to those motivations. Still, the data remain in the neutral category which tells us that the survey respondents could have stronger feelings of gratification than they currently report.
Finally, the greatest difference between GS and GO was found in the motivation of entertainment. The GS measure was about midway between neutral and agree; the GO was more than midway between those two points on the scale. This data suggest that people are more strongly motivated to use Facebook for entertainment than they are for the other three motivation factors. The respondents also reported feelings of entertainment to a greater degree than the GO for the other factors as well as a greater difference between GS and GO than the differences between GS and GO associated with the other motivations. The entertainment factor also produced another interesting finding: The more likely people were to report GO for entertainment, the more likely they were to attend church regularly.

The research offers some clues that could be operationalized by people who administer church Facebook pages. Churches could tap into their congregations’ desires to use Facebook for escape, inclusion, information and entertainment, especially considering the most basic research finding: People are neutral about using Facebook to seek the aforementioned motivations but the levels of gratification they report are higher, even if they are still mainly neutral. Church leaders may want to consider Facebook posts with information that would be positive or inspirational and require little thought, energy or action. Postings that contain information about the church or sermons could help their followers to feel informed. Postings that ask for opinions or other responses in addition to reminders or invitations to church events may add to feelings of inclusion and sociability. Church leaders could also help strengthen entertainment GS and GO by including information that is whimsical without compromising religious values, as recommended by Gould (2013). Respondents reported that they do get satisfaction from reading their
church Facebook page ($M = 3.09$, $SD = 1.05$) and that they use Facebook to look for information about their church ($M = 3.03$, $SD = 1.09$).

It stands to reason that a Facebook page representing a church would likely contain information that is supportive of the church or religion but there is a call for that type of information from the respondents as well. While not isolated for the correlations or other statistical tests, respondents reported that they like to see religious messages on Facebook ($M = 3.75$, $SD = 1.05$), disagreed that there are too many religious messages ($M = 2.12$, $SD = .78$).

There could be a shift in the frequency and duration of Facebook access if people find greater or lesser amounts of satisfaction than they seek. Facebook users may access the SNS less often or for lesser amounts of time if the gratifications they are seeking are not fulfilled, and the opposite scenario may emerge for those whose GO exceeds GS. The communications that Facebook users see is dominated by other users, so it is up to each account administrator, including those directed by church associates, to drive the type of content that they want others to see.
CHAPTER VII
LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There were some limitations to this study. First, the ease of finding prospective respondents was overestimated. Church leaders who reciprocated contact by the researcher were overwhelmingly enthusiastic about the nature of the research, and most of them did attempt to distribute a link to the questionnaire. Unfortunately, the sample size was still lower than anticipated and certainly too small to begin to consider the results generalizable. Future researchers may want to focus on face-to-face contact or work with associations of churches to approve, endorse and assist with distribution. Friends and relatives who attend church may also become excellent sources to help researchers introduce the prospectus to religious leaders. A larger, similar study should be conducted to add to the body of scholarly research but also to offer a more detailed normative application to assist church leaders as they refine communication strategies. Although attempted here, future researchers should take the time that is necessary to develop the described relationships or otherwise find more ways to add more diversity to the sample. There has been little research to separate the use of Facebook by faith among churches, mosques, synagogues or other religious institutions in addition to pinpointing relationships that may be different among sects within Christianity. There may be vast differences of GS or GO as well as other factors when comparing Catholics, Lutherans, Baptists and the many other Christian persuasions as well as the similarities or
differences among those who follow Christianity, Islam or Judaism. This information could help scholars better define the uses and gratifications of Facebook or other social media but also add to the ways that various religious followings are categorized and defined.

Another weakness involved the questionnaire that was used to gather data among church members. More questions that related to the specific use of church Facebook pages may have helped provide insight that could be beneficial to church leaders. Although it was already reported that churches may not be aggressive about updating SNS (Keppler, 2012), slightly different questions may produce important data to better isolate motives of media consumers to access church Facebook pages, specifically, rather than Facebook, in general. Furthermore, similar concepts could be used to uncover motives that are used to access other genres of Facebook – pages or groups that are dedicated to schools, nonprofit organizations, businesses, etc. Scholars may be interested to know if there are different motivations for accessing church Facebook pages among those that are regularly updated compared to those that are not.

Another limitation was pinpointed to a particular question: I consider myself to be a religious person. Several respondents did not answer the question and comments were received indicating that the term “religious” was inappropriate. Some suggested that the word “spiritual” should have been substituted. It is interesting that those comments and non-responses all came from people associated with one church. While it may not have had a significant impact on this research, scholars may want to research religious terminology and review it with the appropriate religious leaders to create questionnaires that use institutionally personalized language without changing the context of the
questions. A single question to determine a person’s commitment to religion or strength of faith falls far short of a more comprehensive measurement. A more complete measurement of religiosity could provide valuable insight about the role religion plays in the use of Facebook or other SNS.

There is a lack and, perhaps, a corresponding call for more research that investigates the use of Facebook and other SNS among churches. Which SNS are being used and in what ways? Are church leaders stating goals and formulating strategies for SNS use? Are those goals being achieved? Scholars of communication, religion and business may find it useful to further examine the use of current popular SNS, including Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest to better predict the uses and gratifications of new SNS that are being developed or yet to be discovered. Despite Campbell’s (2004) suggestion that the Internet is not having an overall negative relationship with church attendance, people have become more dependent on web-based or mobile-based communication in the last decade. Previous research has been conducted to determine if the Internet was a functional alternative to other media, such as television (Ferguson & Perse, 2000). Future researchers may want to further investigate functional alternatives among media, given the enormous growth in new media but also consider whether SNS and other new media are functional alternatives to traditional forms and settings of group communication, such as churches.

Scholars predict that Facebook membership will decline by 80% no later than December 2017 (Cannarella & Spechler, 2014). SNS such as MySpace, which has virtually vanished from the SNS landscape and, perhaps, Facebook in the near future, will be replaced with new SNS (Sebastian, 2013). Scholars can consider this, along with other
exploratory and foundational research, as they begin to investigate and make predictions about emerging SNS.


APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle/write your response to the following questions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0 - 1</th>
<th>1 - 2</th>
<th>2 - 3</th>
<th>3+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Do you have access to the Internet at your current residence?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do you have Internet access at your current job?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you a member of Facebook?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Name of the church/synagogue/mosque you attend?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Does your church have a presence on Facebook?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are you a “fan” or “friend” or your church/synagogue/mosque Facebook page?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Do postings from your church Facebook page appear on your Facebook newsfeed?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please mark your response to the following questions using the scale provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>0 - 1</th>
<th>1 - 2</th>
<th>2 - 3</th>
<th>3+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How many hours do you spend on the Internet each day?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many hours to you spend on Facebook each day?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often do you attend worship services?</td>
<td>1 - 2 times/year</td>
<td>6 times per year</td>
<td>1 time/month</td>
<td>2 - 3 times/month</td>
<td>Every week</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Please proceed to the next page
Please mark your response to the following questions using the scale provided:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I consider myself to be a religious person</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I access Facebook to relax</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to break the daily grind</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook when I want to ignore responsibilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have made new friends through Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel good about sharing my achievements on Facebook</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy telling my Facebook friends how I feel about their achievements</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel refreshed when I use Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook is a good way to spend “me time”</td>
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<tr>
<td>I attend my place of worship to escape</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook is stressful</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to feel more connected with my place of worship</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to feel like I am involved with others</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I look forward to sharing things about my life on Facebook</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please proceed to the next page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy seeing what my Facebook friends are doing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to make new friends</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to stay in touch with old friends/relatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel a sense of accomplishment when I have spent time on Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>I seek emotional support from my Facebook friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>I search Facebook for people that I know</td>
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<tr>
<td>My friends at my place of worship are among my Facebook friends</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook has helped me strengthen relationships with other church members</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to stay in touch with my place of worship between services</td>
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<tr>
<td>Using Facebook helps make my day feel complete</td>
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<tr>
<td>I enjoy socializing on Facebook with my friends from church/synagogue/mosque</td>
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<tr>
<td>I use Facebook to relieve boredom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attending worship services is relaxing to me</td>
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<tr>
<td>Facebook is good</td>
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<tr>
<td>I look for posts or pictures on Facebook to “like” or comment on</td>
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<tr>
<td>I turn to Facebook to learn new things</td>
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<tr>
<td>I would rather socialize with my church/synagogue/mosque friends in person</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Please complete the survey on the following page
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Facebook helps me to stay informed about things important to me</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I look on Facebook for information relating to my place of worship</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>My Facebook friends help me get through rough times</td>
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<tr>
<td>I often learn something new through Facebook</td>
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<tr>
<td>I feel like I have wasted time when I access Facebook</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I get satisfaction from reading my church/synagogue/mosque Facebook page</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like to see religious messages on Facebook</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I learn about my place of worship through Facebook</td>
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<td>Facebook has too many religious messages</td>
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<td>Facebook usually has mundane information</td>
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<td>I rarely see anything on Facebook that I don’t already know</td>
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<td>I use Facebook for entertainment</td>
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<td>Facebook makes me feel distant from friends/family</td>
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<td>Using Facebook is fun</td>
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<td>I enjoy using Facebook</td>
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<td>My church/synagogue/mosque Facebook page is updated regularly</td>
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</table>

Thank you for completing the questionnaire!
APPENDIX B
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

Office of Research Administration
Akron, OH 44325-2102

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

January 16, 2014

Cristopher Keppler
Royal Liverpool Drive, 3970 A
Uniontown, Ohio 44685

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator

Re: IRB Number 20140109 "Facebook and the Church: Gratifications Sought & Gratifications Obtained"

Thank you for submitting your IRB Application for Review of Research Involving Human Subjects for the referenced project. Your application was approved on January 15, 2014. Your protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 - Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☒ Exemption 2 - Research Involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 - Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 - Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 - Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 - Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study's design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master's thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Cc: V. Plopp - Advisor
Cc: Valerie Callanan - IRB Chair

☒ Approved consent form/s enclosed