Mom, Dad, Let’s Be (Facebook) Friends: Exploring Parent/Child Facebook Interaction from a Communication Privacy Management Perspective

A thesis submitted to the College of Communication and Information of Kent State University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

by

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Chapter I

Introduction

Facebook.com is a popular social networking site among young adults, which has recently seen rapid growth in the 35 and older demographic (Facebook, 2009). Given that the site is largely seen as a place for youth socializing by young adults (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009), parental friend requests on Facebook may be seen as unexpected. Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to explore young adults’ privacy management and decision making practices when faced with parental Facebook friend requests. Furthermore, the study examines how parents’ decisions to send Facebook friend requests to their children impact parent/child relationship quality and trust.

Facebook is a type of social network site. boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites (SNS) as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 211). SNSs, they argue, are used to maintain current relationships. Social networking sites, on the other hand, are social networks dedicated to relational initiation. As such, SNSs deserve more attention in interpersonal communication research.

Social Network Sites have also received attention from non-scholarly Internet websites as well. For instance, the wildly popular website MyParentsJoinedFacebook.com seems to highlight how young adults are frustrated and experience tension and conflict with parental disclosures on their children’s Facebook profiles. The site demonstrates the increased attention young adults give to the
ramifications of accepting parental Facebook friend requests. Daily updates submitted by fans highlight awkward or embarrassing encounters between parents and children on Facebook. The public messages are captured in an image, scrubbed to protect the identities of the posters, and then displayed with a humorous caption beneath the image. According to site owners, the intent is to lightly poke fun at parents while trying to help them avoid common mistakes when interacting with their children via Facebook (Fletcher, 2009). The popularity of such a site demonstrates that communication between parent and child occurs on SNSs such as Facebook.

Evidence of family interaction on Facebook is abundant. Facebook offers a host of 3rd party applications to connect families. Family applications are intended to provide a place for families to communicate and stay updated with each other. The existence of such applications indicates that a phenomenon is occurring regarding families connecting via Facebook. Similarly, Smith (2009) interviewed students on the receiving end of a parental Facebook friend request. One second-year student, whose mother sent such a friend request, commented, “I wouldn’t add her for about four months, but I finally did on Mother’s Day because she was so torn up about it…She said she got a Facebook to get in contact with old friends, but I know she creeps on me” (¶ 7). Parental Facebook friend requests may burden young adults as this example demonstrates and constitute a type of privacy dilemma (Petronio & Jones, 2006). Current research on disclosure and privacy management practices on Facebook does not address the complexity inherent in disclosure practices brought on by parental Facebook friend requests.
The Internet, Facebook, and Families

We are wired. Internet access is available in many households; thus, its effect on the family must be studied as parents and children become increasingly connected in the virtual world (Meszaros, 2004). In fact, 79% of all US adults reported using the Internet in 2009 (Lenhart, 2009b). In all, 63% of US adults now have a high-speed broadband connection in their home (Horrigan, 2009). A recent nationwide survey showed that in households with children, 93% owned at least one computer with 58% of those households owning multiple computers (Kennedy, Smith, Wells, & Wellman, 2008). Technology is an integrated part of many families’ communication practices on a daily basis (Kennedy, et al., 2008). However, when it comes to studying the intersection of communication, family, and the Internet, we simply do not know enough (Meszaros, 2004). Despite modest increases in scholarly pursuits related to this intersection, the research gap remains large for an area that is so closely linked to our daily lives (Meszaros, 2004).

The Internet is a common medium through which individuals and families communicate. One such method of communication in an online environment is through the use of SNSs. Major SNSs first appeared in 1997 and exploded in popularity from 2002 to 2004. Sites like MySpace.com were initially tailored to connect music bands with fans (primarily teenagers) while sites like LinkedIn.com were oriented towards business professionals (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Facebook, on the other hand, was intended for college crowds. Facebook, like other SNSs, emphasizes networking with other individuals. The site currently boasts over 500 million active members worldwide and is still growing rapidly (Facebook, 2010). An average of 50% of active users (i.e.,
log on once per month) log into Facebook in a given day, making for an active user-base (Facebook, 2010).

Founded in 2004, Facebook was designed to connect college students by allowing them to set up a personal profile that included items such as pictures, lists of likes and interests, and contact information. By use of a search tool, members can seek out others and make a Facebook friend request in an attempt to become friends with other members. Once a request is accepted each member has access to the other’s profile and has the ability to send messages, both publicly and privately. In recent years, members were given the ability to write short descriptions of their current thoughts/activities by means of status updates which can be seen by members’ friends – allowing for a sort of instant update on members’ happenings. While the functionality of Facebook has remained relatively similar to its founding days, 2006 brought about a major change in member policy. Membership was opened to all individuals – not just those enrolled in college (Facebook, 2009). Facebook currently employs this policy towards membership.

Since membership opened to all individuals, the result has been a massive influx of older individuals. Individuals 35 and older are currently the fastest growing demographic on Facebook (Facebook, 2009). As a whole, this demographic currently represents 44% of all SNS users (Lenhart, 2009a). For many years, young adults represented the only demographic on the site. They developed the culture and general patterns of the site. Young adults use Facebook to connect with friends and not with parents (Pempek et al., 2009). Specifically, young adults use Facebook to maintain relationships with face-to-face friends (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006). Now, as older adults begin to enter the culture established by young adults, this presents an
evolving dynamic to explore. Ultimately, it means that families now have the ability to connect with each other through SNSs, impacting the general use of the site. Due to its ever-increasing popularity for both young adults and older adults alike, Facebook serves as a vital area of study in regards to interaction between adults and children (Beer, 2008).

Similar to its shifting demographics, Facebook has adapted privacy options over time. Currently, users can restrict general settings such as who can view their listing in a search, what information is available to strangers, how much of their name is revealed in the search, and whether or not others can request their online friendship. Specifically related to their profile page, Facebook members can adjust which users have access to content such as pictures, wall posts (messages listed on users’ profiles that are initially set to be visible to Facebook friends), personal blog, and contact information. Users can also remove or alter content that both they have created and content that another user has created on their page. For the purposes of this thesis, anything deemed as *public* information is users’ Facebook content visible to Facebook friends. Many individuals take advantage of the ability to toggle content as private or public; when using a SNS profile, 60% of adults and 66% of teens restrict access in some way (Lenhart, 2009a).

A major decision in managing privacy and disclosure on Facebook comes in how users deal with *friend requests*. Members can search for other users and request to be their friend. If a user receives a request and wishes to make a connection, they accept the friend request. Facebook friends are granted access to each other’s profile content. Facebook, however, gives users the option of adjusting privacy and content settings for their profile page on a per-user basis. For example, if a child receives a friend request from a parent, the child may choose to accept the request but only allow restricted access
to the profile content. Thus, a young adult may choose to make adaptations to their
privacy management practices, in light of parental Facebook friend requests, through
either adjusting parental permissions or modifying their own disclosure practices on
Facebook. This thesis explores both types of variations in privacy practices.

The early years of adulthood are marked with escalating privacy tensions between
parents and their children (Petronio, 1994). Facebook friend requests may come at a
critical moment in the young adult’s privacy management practices. During early
adulthood, young adults have greater privacy needs (Petronio, 2002). However,
Facebook may also give young adults a convenient way to maintain family ties without
much direct effort. Parents, if accepted, could have updates about things going on in their
child’s life by visiting their child’s Facebook site. Consequently, relational outcomes
between parent and child may be more positive. For instance, according to Fletcher
(2009), one of the founders of MyParentsJoinedFacebook.com noted that, “her
relationship with her father has even — gasp! — grown closer since he joined Facebook”
(¶ 6).

This thesis explores how young adults’ decisions for either more independence, or
interdependence, from parents is associated with Facebook privacy management
decisions, relational characteristics, and family privacy management choices, explicating
how Facebook communication is incorporated into family functioning. This thesis
situates the Facebook friend request decision in the established parent/child disclosure
system. The consequences of young adults’ parental Facebook friend requests are
important to explore given that Facebook’s culture has been established as a place of peer
connection and sharing (Pembek et al., 2009). Thus, the culture of Facebook molded by
young adults’ may potentially be at odds with the culture of their respective families, as established by parent/child relationships.

**Parent/Child Relationships**

Families are instrumental in developing communication and relational learning (Child & Pearson, 2009). Since families serve as the primary socializing agent for children, family orientations towards privacy and disclosure are often consistent over time (Petronio, 2002). However, privacy orientations are put to the test during the emergence of young adulthood, as parents and children try to balance autonomy and connection needs (Williams, 2003). These times often result in relational turmoil between parents and children (Petronio, 2002).

Privacy is an area of communication that the family is keenly involved in developing (Petronio, 2002). In many respects, families play a positive role for privacy matters (Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). Often times, families can serve as a comforting backstage with which to try out ideas and thoughts, acting as an area in which members can be relatively free of possible ridicule and embarrassment (Berardo, 1974). As children move into young adulthood, however, the need for privacy is dramatically increased (Petronio, 2002; Williams, 2003). This need for privacy creates certain tensions as the parent attempts to adjust to the new needs of the child. Parents may fail to recognize or intentionally violate privacy expectations. This act is referred to in family communication literature as a *privacy invasion* (Petronio, 1994, 2002; Williams, 2003). Parental privacy invasions have a significant negative impact on relational quality and relational trust from the perspective of the child (Petronio, 1994).
While parent/child relationships have been studied with a host of relational outcomes, *relational quality* and *trust* have been given special attention by scholars in regards to privacy invasions and disclosure practices. Privacy invasions and disclosure in parent/child relationships have been strongly linked to perceived relational quality (Finkenauer, Engels, & Meeus, 2002; Morr Serewicz, Dickson, Morrison, & Poole, 2007; Petronio, 1994). Parental privacy invasions decrease the level of relational quality experienced by the child (Child, 2007; Petronio, 1994). Perceived relational quality assesses the way a child views the relationship they have with their parents.

Trust is another construct that is essential to examine in the parent/child relationship. Many studies have demonstrated that parent/child trust is significantly affected by the privacy and disclosure practices of both parents and children (Kerr, Stattin, & Trost, 1999; Petronio, 1994). Together, relational quality and parental trust provide a way to examine the child’s view of their relationship with their parents. As such, this thesis examines how parental Facebook friend requests are associated with parent/child relational quality and trust levels, as these constructs provide further understanding of the established parent/child relational culture. The next section explores parental Facebook friend requests couched within the theoretical framework of Communication Privacy Management.

**Communication Privacy Management Theory**

Petronio’s (1991, 2002) Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM) is a rule-based theory concerning individuals’ disclosure and privacy management systems. As social beings, individuals have both the need to maintain privacy and share or disclose private information with others (Petronio, 2002). CPM seeks to uncover the processes
used to manage this dialectic. Individuals perceive that they own private information about themselves in the same way they claim ownership rights over their other possessions (Petronio, 2002). Since individuals feel a sense of ownership regarding their private information, boundaries are developed to protect private information. CPM outlines mechanisms by which individuals form, maintain, and readjust their boundaries by permitting greater openness or claiming more protection of privacy over personal information.

As children begin to develop rules around privacy and disclosure, the family is influential in this rule formation (Petronio, 2002). CPM labels these rules as family privacy orientations (FPO). FPOs represent an especially strong set of rules that is often times more strictly adhered to by family members. Parents are instrumental in socializing their children in the ways in which they choose to disclose or conceal information both within the family and to individuals outside the family. Thus, a child learns when, with whom, and how much disclosure is expected of them. FPOs tend to continue over time and have been shown to impact a child’s feelings toward their family (Child & Pearson, 2009; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). Therefore, even as a child moves out of their parents’ house and off to a new environment such as college, rules regarding privacy and disclosure within the family will continue to exist – a culture has been established. However, FPOs are often adjusted as children continue to establish their own adult identity separate from, yet still connected to parents (Petronio, 2002). Empirical support for FPOs has primarily come from studies largely in offline environments (Child & Pearson, 2009; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio, 2002). In addition to exploring FPOs on the Internet, this study will elucidate the further understanding of the family
relational characteristics that play a role in shaping and molding the type of FPOs which families develop (Petronio, 2002).

**Boundary Turbulence**

Parental Facebook friend requests may cause young adults to readjust their current privacy management and disclosure practices. The adjustment of disclosure rules due to unexpected or unanticipated events is called boundary turbulence (Petronio, 2002). A parent’s attempt to form a collective boundary with their child via Facebook might cause turbulence for the child. Multiple studies have shown that boundary turbulence with parents can have an impact on the relationship (Child & Pearson, 2009; Petronio, 1994; Williams, 2003). However, little research explores how a parental Facebook friend request may impact disclosure rules employed on SNSs (Child & Pearson, 2009).

In relation to this study, CPM can be used to analyze the tension that exists between privacy and disclosure when a parent attempts to be directly included as a child’s Facebook friend. When a parental Facebook friend request is received, young adults may coordinate their response in a number of ways. For instance, young adults may accept/reject the friend request, accept/reject the friend request and alter privacy settings, accept/reject the request and confront parents, or take no action (likewise, rejecting the friend request for all intents and purposes). This management process is influenced by the fact that young adults are attempting to gain an individual identity and therefore experience a shift in the goals of their coordination processes. However, young adults may feel pressure to either accept or reject parental Facebook friend requests given established levels of disclosure between family members cultivated within the family culture. In some cases, parental Facebook friend request may be seen by young adults as
parental privacy invasions with negative ramifications for the relationship between parent and child (Petronio, 1994).

This study examines how young adults handle parental Facebook friend requests for each parent. Specifically, it seeks to uncover if the way a request is handled (e.g., accept, reject, ignore) is related to the family privacy orientations guiding interaction norms within the family. Finally, this thesis explores the relationship between how the requests are handled and current privacy management behaviors and relational outcomes. Facebook is an important part of many young adults’ lives and may potentially carry major ramifications for parental relationship maintenance and privacy management processes. Research supporting the different components reflected in the model and the expected relationships will be explored more fully in the next section of this thesis paper.
Chapter II

Review of Literature

This section provides a review of relevant literature as it applies to the processes and outcomes associated with parental Facebook friend requests. First, computer-mediated-communication research involving Facebook is reviewed. Then, Petronio’s (1991, 2002) theory of communication privacy management is elucidated and aspects of the theory which help to understand the mechanisms at work during children’s decisions regarding parental Facebook friend requests are discussed. Rule management processes of CPM are also explored. Next, family privacy orientations are explored in terms of their impact on family interaction norms. The different ways private information is managed with others through collective boundary coordination is also explored. Finally, relational quality and parental trust as relational outcomes are expounded from a young adults’ perspective as they intersect with parental Facebook friend requests. Research questions and hypotheses are included at the culmination of each section.

Computer-Mediated-Communication Facebook Research

Computer-mediated-communication (CMC) research centered on Facebook is diverse and expanding rapidly. Drawing from a network analysis framework, Lewis, Kaufman, and Christakis (2008) explored cultural criteria and individual differences as they relate to Facebook privacy settings. Participants’ management of privacy settings were influenced by both social influences and individual factors. Participants who had friends or roommates with restricted privacy settings and individuals who spent more time on Facebook were more likely to restrict their privacy settings than those who had friends with more open privacy management practices. Women also restricted their privacy...
setting more than did men. As such, peer socializing practices represent norms influencing privacy setting and disclosure practices (Petronio, 2002).

Christofides, Muise, and Desmarais (2009) explored information control needs and disclosure on Facebook. Young adults’ information control needs and personal disclosure needs operated independently of each other. Face-to-face disclosure practices were significantly related to Facebook disclosure practices. The need for popularity predicts Facebook disclosure practices. Trust and self-esteem levels predict information control needs. It is postulated that individuals with lower levels of trust and self-esteem are interested in weak ties viewing their posted information and thus, have lower need for information control. On the other hand, individuals with higher levels of trust and self-esteem are more focused on strong ties within their network and experience higher need for information control.

In a study of personality traits and motivation as they relate to Facebook, personality traits (such as neuroticism, extraversion, and openness to experience) and communication patterns did not predict Facebook use (Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, and Orr, 2009). Ross et al. suggest this may be due to the unique environment of Facebook in that it represents an offline-to-online model of social networking. Instead, higher levels of motivation to communicate and Facebook skill competency strongly predicted Facebook use and the amount of time spent on Facebook each day.

Wang, Moon, Kwon, Evans, and Stefanone (2010) found support for the hyperpersonal model (Walther, 1996) of CMC in young adults’ Facebook use. Specifically, individuals were motivated to interact and initiate friendships with members
of the opposite sex who they deemed as attractive. Furthermore, individuals were more willing to interact and initiate friendships with strangers who had no profile picture rather than those with a picture they deemed as unattractive. Thus, perceived attractiveness impacts Facebook members’ friendship and privacy management practices.

While recent research points to variations in Facebook privacy management practices, it has not employed a CPM framework. As such, the next section addresses the constructs tied to CPM theory and establishes connections to Facebook disclosure and privacy management practices.

**Communication Privacy Management Theory**

CPM (Petronio, 2002) provides a useful theoretical framework germane to understanding the interaction between the parent/child dyad when considering parental Facebook friend requests. The theory contains many parts which help detail the processes at work when an individual is managing their privacy. CPM theory offers a framework for conceptualizing how young adults may incorporate parental Facebook friend request decisions in family communication practices and relational assessments.

To illustrate how individuals care for their private information, CPM posits that metaphorical boundaries encapsulate an individual’s private information (Petronio, 1991, 2002). The theory is rooted in six propositions, illustrating how privacy is managed in both individual and collective boundaries (Child, Pearson, & Petronio, 2009; Petronio, 2002). CPM’s propositions provide the theoretical lens framing private disclosures on Facebook within this study. Proposition 1: Individuals have two distinct boundaries types. Personal boundaries reflect information not disclosed with others. Collective boundaries, on the other hand, are created when information is disclosed to others.
Likewise, as other individuals are often included on a Facebook profile, it functions as a type of collective boundary where the individual relinquishes some control to the collective when disclosing information to the collective. Therefore, any information that an individual contributes to their own Facebook profile they associate with a sense of ownership. Even information shared about others will still be perceived with a sense of individual ownership. Proposition 2: Since we associate private information with a feeling of ownership, we also claim the right to control such information. Likewise, the child asserts the right to control the content of their Facebook page. This control is usually manifested by establishing parameters around our private disclosures and subsequent third party disclosures (Petronio, 2002).

Proposition 3: To manage our private information, we utilize different types of privacy rules. Rule management processes guide the formation and execution of personal privacy boundaries (i.e., cultural, gendered, motivational, contextual, and risk-benefit ratio criteria) and collective privacy boundaries (i.e., linkage, permeability, and ownership rules). Personal privacy boundaries impact the degree to which an individual either opens up their own privacy boundary and moves information into various types of collective boundaries with others or decides to restrict access to their private information. The family is one such influence as children begin to develop rules that guide their privacy and disclosure mechanisms (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio, 2002). Other factors can influence an individual’s rules for disclosure and privacy management as well. Child (2007), for instance, found that gender was a major factor in privacy management processes when using blogging-based SNSs. Women displayed more concern for privacy management practices and protected information in collective
boundaries more than did men, who had a more public orientation when blogging. Therefore rule management processes are crucial in the way a child controls their Facebook content and their decision to accept or reject their parent’s friend request.

Proposition 4: When private information is disclosed to another individual, it moves from an individual to a mutual obligation as the information no longer resides in an individual privacy boundary, but has been shared and contributed to a collective boundary. Confidants or receivers residing in collective boundaries are considered co-owners of the information when disclosure occurs. The recipient is expected to manage the private information with a certain level of responsibility. For those on Facebook, a collective boundary is established with all who have been accepted as friends and anyone that has access to the profile content (Child et al., 2009). CPM also posits that others can become co-owners of private information without intentional disclosure (Petronio, 2002). If a parent views their child’s Facebook profile via a search, they are able to see at least some basic details of their child’s page. Depending on the Facebook privacy settings instated by the child, the parent may be able to access information ranging from name and network of the profile, all the way to unbridled access of the entire profile and its content. Thus, a parent may be able to access their child’s Facebook profile collective boundary, regardless of whether or not the child intends for their parent to be included in the boundary.

Proposition 5: Information that we hold collectively with others is subject to coordination operations (Petronio, 2002). We either implicitly or explicitly negotiate rules for the information at hand. These rules stipulate disclosure practices to those outside of the boundary. Petronio (2002) lists three boundary coordination rules. To
determine who is granted access to co-owned information we coordinate *linkage rules*. *Permeability rules* dictate the depth and breadth of co-owned information that can be shared with those outside the collective boundary. Lastly, *ownership rules* are a way of determining the latitude of control to which the recipient of private information is given. As such, ownership rules specify the amount of executive power the co-owner has to manage the information. Rules for linkages, permeability, and ownership are established in ways that either allow more public access of private information in a collective boundary or stipulate more protection of private information. The parent as co-owner is then expected to abide by the determined rules of the child. Child et al. (2009) extended these three collective boundary management processes to blogging-based SNSs and established a measure to capture the extent to which individuals employ practices related to these three mechanisms.

Proposition 6: Often, we do not “consistently, effectively, or actively” negotiate boundary coordination rules (Child et al., 2009, p. 2081). This results in what CPM labels *boundary turbulence* (Petronio, 2002). When we encounter “bumps in the road,” violations, or unexpected blunders with our boundary coordination processes we must work to correct these missteps and oversights by re-negotiating rules (Petronio & Caughlin, 2006, p. 41). Turbulence can erupt for many reasons. For example, others may assert more ownership over our information than was given (boundary ownership rules), rules may not sufficiently address who can know our private information (boundary linkage rules), or more personal and private information be revealed by others (boundary permeability rules) than we anticipate (Child, Pearson, & Petronio, 2009). Turbulence causes reevaluation of established privacy rules and the creation or adaptation
of new rules (Petronio, 2002). If a young adult adjusts their disclosure practices within the collective boundary or limits their parents’ ability to be co-owners of parts of their Facebook profile content (boundary ownership rules), then boundary turbulence occurs. When a child receives their parent’s friend request, it may signal an unwanted linkage (boundary linkage rules) to their Facebook collective boundary and trigger boundary turbulence. Boundary turbulence may also occur when a young adult readjusts and updates their privacy management practices (boundary permeability rules) to address evolving concerns about the amount of information they share with others as a result of a parental Facebook friend request.

Boundary turbulence may also signal that the parent wants greater access to the child’s profile content and desires more openness by being included as a co-owner of the Facebook collective boundary. The child may choose to deny the friend request as a result of the turbulence. Young adults may accept parental Facebook friend requests, yet experience turbulence by altering the amount of access that their parent has to the collective boundary. These are just two of the many ways that turbulence may occur with parental Facebook friend requests. Given that this thesis examines how family disclosure practices influence Facebook boundary coordination, rule management processes are explored next.

Boundary turbulence in the collective handling of private information is sometimes apparent as soon as it takes place as evidenced by explicit changes to individuals’ privacy rules (Petronio, 2002). Other times, co-owners are unaware of their discrepancy in disclosure management and it takes a disruptive episode to alert the parties involved of asynchronicity. In other words, individuals’ may not realize that their
Disclosure rules do not match the rules employed by those with whom they share private information. Disruptions in collective boundary management can be thought of as self-correcting processes (Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). When we experience turbulence, we seek to correct disharmony to regain a sense of order in the way our private information is handled (Petronio, 2002). When young adults readjust their privacy management rules as a result of a parental Facebook friend request, they will be changing the boundary rules shared with parents. In addition to the possible boundary disruptions experienced from a parental Facebook friend request, young adults may also make changes to boundaries with peers. Put another way, parental Facebook friend requests may disrupt boundaries between parents and children as well as children and their peers.

**Rule Management Process**

The rule management process of CPM is concerned with how we learn and develop privacy rules that guide disclosure (Petronio, 1991, 2002). Throughout our lives, there are moments when we must be socialized to know existing rules for a situation or context, form new rules, or negotiate our rules with others (Petronio, 2002). CPM lists five factors that underpin the rule management process (i.e., cultural, gendered, motivational, contextual, and risk-benefit ratio criteria). These criteria can operate singularly or in concert with one another. This study examines potential factors within the cultural rules category that may impact individual disclosure processes.

CPM states that “each culture has privacy values that are the basis for judging levels of disclosure and privacy” (Petronio, 2002, p. 39). Culture socializes and transmits values about disclosure over time. Previous research has established how families impact disclosure and privacy management culture (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Child &
Pearson, 2009). The term can include macro-level cultures in society such as ethnic cultures, to micro-level cultures such as family cultures. Culture teaches us what is acceptable and appropriate when engaging in disclosure practices.

**Young Adults and Facebook**

Young adults may perceive parental Facebook friend requests as an invasion of privacy. Petronio (1994) conducted four studies examining parental privacy invasions in parent/child relationships. The studies were carried out before the Internet gained widespread use, but still reflect the dynamics of privacy at work in the parent/child relationship. In study one, young adults identified the specific methods parents utilize when they perceive a privacy invasion (e.g., open children’s mail, listen to telephone conversations, ask personal questions). The defensive actions taken by young adults as a result of perceived parental privacy invasions were also detailed (e.g., locking bedroom door, confronting parents, hiding personal belongings). Using a larger sample, study two further assessed the categories identified by young adults in study one. Perceived parental privacy invasions were divided into direct and subversive tactics. Young adults’ defensive responses were divided into confrontational and evasive tactics. Study three analyzed the relationship between the types of invasion tactics and defensive actions delineated in study two. When a parent used direct tactics, such as asking personal questions, to invade a young adults’ privacy, children used measures to evade privacy invasions or confronted parents directly. Children confronted parents who used subversive invasion tactics since subversive tactics did not allow for proactive means of evasion. Study four examined the relational outcomes associated with parental privacy
invasions. Overall, privacy invasions had a negative impact on children’s perceptions of relational quality and parental trust.

As Facebook is largely a peer based source of interaction, most young adults may perceive parental Facebook friend requests as a violation and experience boundary turbulence. During boundary turbulence they may adjust current privacy management practices as a result of the request to retain or reclaim more privacy and ultimately allow less disclosure to occur within the collective boundary. Conversely, young adults may also perceive that maintaining family relationships might be more easily managed through Facebook rather than heading to use other mediums to maintain the relationships. Thus, research question one addresses how young adults handle parental Facebook friend requests and if they readjust their Facebook content in light of the request (see Figure 1):

**RQ1a.** Is any particular way of handling a parental Facebook friend request more common for young adults (accept, reject, take no action, accept with modifications, reject with modifications, or take no action with modifications)?

**RQ1b.** Do young adults tend to experience turbulence in the form of making modifications to private information posted on their Facebook sites when they receive a parental Facebook friend request from their parents (i.e., accept with modifications, reject with modifications, or take no action with modifications) or not (i.e., accept, reject, or take no action)?
Figure 1. Parental Facebook friend request decisions and experiencing turbulence
Family Privacy Orientations

CPM stipulates that rule acquisition is part of the rule management process (Petronio, 1991, 2002). We do not constantly formulate new rules about our privacy; contrary, we often rely on rules from which we have been socialized over time (Petronio, 2002). A powerful force in the socialization of privacy rules is the family (Child & Pearson, 2009; Golish & Caughlin, 2002; Petronio, 1991, 2002; Williams, 2003). As children grow, the family aids in constructing their privacy rules (Petronio, 2002). Since the family is such a dominant influence on rule development, the consistency of privacy rules leads to a set of privacy values within the family called *family privacy orientations* (FPOs). FPOs represent a continuous point of reference to family privacy rules from which we are expected to adhere and respect. In a sense, FPOs are an outward expression of the privacy interaction norms that a family develops (Petronio, 2002). Even when a child leaves for college and is away from home, family interaction norms continue to exert influence over privacy processes and decision making (Petronio, 1994). Interaction norms remain relatively stable over time but adolescence and young adulthood are usually infused with changes in privacy needs as young adults experience major life transformations, such as heading off to college (Petronio, 2002; Williams, 2003). Therefore, examining the processes of family privacy orientations (i.e., family privacy interaction norms) presents a more robust and astute look at the impact of parent/child connections via Facebook.

CPM stipulates two different types of FPO boundaries – *exterior* and *interior* family boundaries (Petronio, 2002). Exterior family boundaries symbolize the regulation of private information that is shared with non-family members. Interior family
boundaries, on the other hand, involve the family’s privacy values regarding disclosure within the family unit. In a study of young adults’ reports of FPOs and family satisfaction, interior family privacy orientations (IFPO) were found to be significantly correlated with family satisfaction. Families with more permeable IFPOs were more likely to score higher levels of family satisfaction with relational maintenance strategies acting as a mediating variable (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). Thus, families who were open and expected greater levels of disclosure were more satisfied with their family unit when using relational maintenance strategies of positivity and network maintenance than families who were less open and expected less disclosure (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). Both exterior and interior family privacy orientations can be further categorized into three privacy rule orientations, high, moderate, and low levels of permeability. For instance, families with a low privacy rule orientation have minimal permeability and thus disclose within the family at nominal levels. Permeability, therefore, is an essential component of FPOs.

Interior boundaries can form in a number of ways around dyads or multiple family members. For instance, boundaries can form between mother and son, daughter and mom/dad, or brother and sister. Within families, balancing and maintaining rules related to multiple interior boundaries occurs (Golish & Caughlin, 2002). Caughlin, Golish, Olson, Sargent, Cook, and Petronio (2000) examined IFPOs in different family configurations. The researchers found that differences between nuclear, blended, and single-parent families in terms of number of perceived family secrets, topics that were avoided, and functions of secrets kept were minimal. However, young adults reported that original parents and siblings were more likely to know family secrets than blended
family members. In a related study, Golish and Caughlin (2002) looked at topic avoidance in blended families and nuclear families. Young adults were more likely to avoid topics with stepparents, then fathers, and then mothers. Young adults were most likely to avoid talking about sexual matters. Research dealing with young adults topic avoidance within families indicates variation exists for the functioning of permeability levels of IFPOs. Avoidance is a way that young adults establish or assert more ownership and control over their parent/child collective boundary. Often times, interior boundary rules are complex and difficult to manage (Caughlin et al., 2000). In spite of their complexity, IFPOs become concretized over time and difficult to change (Berardo, 1974).

Facebook represents a unique interaction context and environment that drives rule formation norms in young adults’ disclosure practices, helping inform their decisions about what to share, how much to share, and with whom to share information (Petronio, 2002). Similarly, interior family privacy orientations inform young adults’ decisions about what and how much information to share with other family members (Petronio, 2002). When a young adult uses Facebook and receives a parental Facebook friend request, socialized privacy norms, or IFPOs, could clash with disclosure rules developed on Facebook. In other words, the family’s interaction norms might very well be at odds with young adults’ existing Facebook privacy interaction norms. For instance, family interaction norms may tell young adults to freely share information within the family. However, since young adults in general have established interaction norms on Facebook that privileges sharing of private information with peers, a parental Facebook friend request may cause boundary turbulence.
Young adults must manage who is allowed to access to their Facebook profile. The factors used to guide young adults’ Facebook privacy rules must be understood in order to make the case for why a clash between IFPOs and Facebook privacy practices may exist. Facebook was developed to connect college students and initially catered to that sole demographic (boyd & Ellison, 2008). Pempek et al., (2009) used a diary-like measure followed by a survey to explore young adults’ experiences on Facebook. The researchers found that young adults incorporate Facebook into their daily routine, spending 30 minutes a day on average. Participants were more likely to observe others’ content than to produce their own content. Just under 85% of young adults indicated Facebook is used to communicate with friends. As is corroborated by other research (Lampe et al., 2006), young adults rarely use Facebook as a way of meeting new friends. Instead, users primarily maintain existing friendships through Facebook (Pempek et al., 2009). Communicating with parents was absent from young adults’ responses.

Facebook now sees its largest growth in the demographic of those 35 and older and since 2006 parental adoption of Facebook has dramatically increased (Facebook, 2009). Parents are assuredly part of the deluge of older adults joining Facebook and they now represent 44% of all SNS users (Lenhart, 2009a). CPM states that cultural criteria can influence rule development (Petronio, 1991, 2002). Assumably, online interaction between parents and children is subject to the same type of FPOs experienced in offline communication. However, IFPOs have primarily been studied in offline settings (Caughlin et al., 2000; Golish & Caughlin, 2002; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio, 1991, 2002) so this study will help to explore how parental Facebook friend request decisions are impacted by perceived permeability levels in young adults’ IFPO. Given
that Facebook disclosure practices are geared toward peer interaction (Pempek et al., 2009; Tardy, Hosman, & Bradac, 1981), young adults may be hesitant to allow general disclosure practices reflected in their IFPO to impact the way they handle a parental Facebook friend request. Given that young adults may allow family privacy and interaction norms (reflected in IFPOs) to impact the way they deal with a parental Facebook friend request or, instead, peer related Facebook interaction norms to influence parental Facebook friend request decisions, the second research question addresses (see Figure 2):

RQ2. Will young adults’ parental Facebook friend request decisions (accept, accept w/ modifications, reject, reject w/ modifications, ignore, ignore w/ modifications, take no action on the request, or take no action on the request w/ modifications) reflect different permeability levels of the interior family privacy orientation?
Figure 2. Interior family privacy orientation and parental Facebook friend request decisions
Collective Boundary Coordination

To understand young adults’ rule management processes in action, CPM provides a useful component – collective boundary coordination (Petronio, 2002). Collective boundary coordination is driven by the balance of the need to maintain privacy and control of personal information in contrast with the need to occasionally share private information with others. When information moves from the private sphere to a collective boundary with others, there must be agreed upon rules regarding how the now co-owned information is handled. In other words, sharing private information with others also involves the implicit or explicit sharing of rules that guide how others are to handle such information as it is passed on to them. Boundary coordination is an ongoing process that often requires reexamining and readjusting privacy rules between those who possess the information (Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). When private information is shared with another individual(s) linkage, permeability, and ownership comprise the rules which must be managed (Petronio, 2002). Linkages represent the rules for with whom others can share information. Permeability rules dictate how much of the information may be shared with others. Ownership rules represent the amount of control that recipients of private information have over that information. These three rules may be adjusted and readjusted as privacy needs change.

Child et al. (2009) extended measurement of these components to blogs. Findings indicated that current privacy rule processes on blogs are related to public and private self-consciousness. In other words, private information and content that individuals post on personal blogs is closely linked to levels of self-consciousness. The amount of awareness that individuals have about their personal thoughts (private self-consciousness)
and the way in which others may view disclosures (public self-consciousness) affect privacy management practices on blogs. Higher levels of private and public self-consciousness translated into a more public orientation toward blogging privacy management practices. Therefore, bloggers with high self-consciousness levels are more likely to disclose more and pursue greater amounts of feedback about blog postings with more relaxed boundary coordination rules.

In a similar study, Child and Agyeman-Budu (2010) examined self-monitoring as a motivating influence on blogging privacy management practices and blogging frequency. In terms of blogging privacy management practices, high self-monitoring individuals were more guarded and private in their blogging privacy management practices than were low self-monitors. Despite being more private in blogging privacy management practices, high self-monitors tended to blog at a greater frequency than did low self-monitors. Thus, even if individuals are cautious about the information they disclose on their blogs by means of using coded language, issuing less permeability, and creating fewer linkages, they still blogged more often than did lower self-monitoring individuals.

The family is a major player in the formation and development of privacy rules and family communication behaviors according to CPM research (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio, 2002). Families with more permeable interior family privacy orientations enjoy more satisfying family relationships (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). Child (2007) investigated whether or not IFPOs impacted the way in which individuals managed privacy when blogging. Young adults’ blogging privacy management practices were not impacted by IFPOs. Thus, young adults who were socialized to disclose less between
family members did not tend to disclose less amongst peers while blogging. However, research does not discuss how current privacy management practices vary as a result of the way parental Facebook friend requests are dealt with by young adults. Thus, individuals’ online disclosure practices do not seem to be impacted by IFPOs, yet it is unclear whether or not young adults’ willingness to accept parental Facebook friend requests will be impacted by their privacy management practices. Therefore, research question three addresses if differences exist in current Facebook privacy management practices by the way the young adults deal with parental Facebook friend requests (see Figure 3):

**RQ3.** Do differences exist in young adults’ current Facebook privacy management practices in relation to disclosures among the different ways that they may deal with a parental Facebook friend request?
Figure 3. Facebook privacy management practices and parental Facebook friend request decisions
Relational Outcomes

CPM argues different contexts impact privacy management practices (Petronio, 2002). For example, family privacy norms may place higher risks or benefit on developing inclusiveness and sharing norms. One way to understand the context in which young adults make decisions about the way they situate a parental Facebook friend request is to examine key relational considerations. Thus, this thesis examines parent/child relational quality and trust as way to more fully understand the parent/child relational context framing parental Facebook friend request decisions. This section explores privacy in the family, parent/child trust, and relational quality.

privacy in the family. When examining privacy in the family, many studies explore family satisfaction as an outcome variable (Caughlin et al., 2000; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Vangelisti, 1994). Vangelisti (1994) examined the relationship between perceived number of family secrets and family satisfaction. She found an inverse relationship between perceived number of family secrets and family satisfaction. The form, topic, and function of the secret, however, influenced this relationship. Also, family members who suspect their family of keeping secrets regarding taboo topics perceived lower levels of family satisfaction. Overall, the perception of secrecy in the family was met with lower levels of family satisfaction.

The number of family secrets in different family configurations (e.g., blended, nuclear, single-parent) is consistently related to family satisfaction (Caughlin et al., 2000). As young adults perceive their families keep more secrets, family satisfaction declines. In addition, IFPOs are predictors of family satisfaction with relational maintenance strategies as a mediating variable (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007). The more
families shared, they found, family satisfaction increased. These studies demonstrate a consistent relationship between IFPOs and family satisfaction.

Studies often examine family satisfaction as a global measure when studying privacy issues (Caughlin et al., 2000; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Vangelisti, 1994). Consequently, to better understand the parent/child relationship this thesis employs a more focused approach. A global measure of family satisfaction would only provide a broad perspective without examining the unique feelings toward each parent. In addition, global measures may hide individual differences in each parent that potentially impact the parent/child relationship. Concentrating specifically on parent/child dyads is the most effective way to understand the impact of children’s characteristics on parent/child relationships (Lye, 1996). Assessing child/mother and child/father relationships as unique relationships improves the usefulness of data that this thesis collects. Therefore, this study examines the outcomes of trust and relational quality from the young adult’s perspective as more refined indicators of the type of relationship young adults have with their parents.

**parent/child trust.** Trust is a construct present in all relationships (Sheppard & Sherman, 1998). Between parent and child, trust is vital and necessary for maintaining the quality of the relationship (Shek, 2005). Despite the importance of trust in the parent/child relationship, the construct has received little attention from scholars concerned with family relationships (Noack, Kerr, & Olah, 1999). Despite the limited scholarly research on parental trust, definitions for the construct abound, yet lack consensus for a definition (King, 2002). King (2002) defines trust as “an individual’s expectations and beliefs about the reliability of others” (p. 642). In a comprehensive
review of trust literature, Sheppard and Sherman (1998) state that trust is the assumption and acceptance of risks associated with the interdependence of a relationship. Since trust between the parent and child is negotiated over the course of the relationship (Shek, 2005), this thesis employs King’s (2002) definition of trust.

Separate from definitions tailored to specific interpersonal relationships, many scholars study trust from an individual’s belief in the generalized other. For instance, Rotter (1980) developed a measure to study trust as “an expectancy held by an individual or group that the word, promise, verbal or written statement of another individual or group can be relied upon” (p. 651). While Rotter’s definition of trust may sound similar to King’s (2002), the two vary greatly. Rotter’s operationalization of trust is global belief in other individuals. Trust in others can then be used to study individual differences such as pro-social behavior (Rotter, 1980). King, on the other hand, focuses on trust in specific, concrete interpersonal relationships. Likewise, this thesis predicates the operationalization of trust as beliefs about specific individuals.

Parent/child trust has received most of its scholarly consideration in the study of life changes/transitions. Transitions include topics such as divorce, child’s departure from home, adolescence, and parental illness. Understandably, divorce has received a lot of attention due to the way the reconfiguration changes the previous and evolving family systems. King (2002), for example, found that children often experience lower levels of trust in their fathers following a divorce. Adolescence is a crucial time for the development of trust, regardless of parents’ marital status. Gender does not seem to impact children’s trust levels after a divorce (Franklin, Janoff-Bulman, and Roberts, 1990). However, children of a divorce tend to trust their parents less overall. Conflict
between married couples can also reduce children’s trust in their parents. The effects of divorce and conflict on trust, however, can be mitigated or reduced by the establishment of higher quality relationships between children and parents (Franklin et al., 1990; King, 2002). It appears as if trust levels are strongly tied to children’s relationship with their mother (King, 2002). This may be due to the cultural roles assigned to parents with mothers assuming a nurturing and caring example which inspires trust.

The journey from childhood to adolescence has also been studied in terms of parent/child trust. Shek (2005) found that during adolescence, children from Hong Kong perceived mothers as being more trustful than fathers. Once again, this discrepancy was attributed to the social norms of the culture. In addition, trust was identified as a contributing dimension of overall relational quality as perceived by the child. Parent’s trust of child, child’s readiness to communicate and responsiveness, and child’s satisfaction of parental control were included in determining the quality of parent/child relationship.

**parent/child relational quality.** In a comprehensive review of relational quality in parent/child relationships, Lye (1996) conceded that there is no single measure employed by family scholars. That is to say that many different operationalizations exist. Despite this variability in operationalization from study to study, results indicate high levels of relational quality between parents and children. This finding held true across racial lines as well. Blacks and Whites have similar levels of parent/child relational quality with Hispanics reflecting lower levels. Differences in relational quality with mothers and fathers seem to exist as well. Overall relational quality between child/mother dyads is slightly higher than with child/father dyads (Lye, 1996). Once again, social
roles may be relevant as females are often expected to be more expressive and focused on relationship building than males, resulting in higher levels of relational quality between mothers and children.

Lye (1996) notes that lower levels of communication exchange between parent and child often leads to a decrease in relational quality. Contact, it seems, is instrumental in maintaining satisfactory levels of relational quality. SNSs like Facebook allow for physical space to be bridged with messaging capabilities. Therefore, use of Facebook among parents and young adults could provide a means for maintaining high quality parent/child relationships. However, young adults who reject or alter their parents’ access to their Facebook page in response to parental Facebook friend requests may minimize the amount of exchange between them and, in turn, decrease relational quality.

Kaufman and Uhlenberg (1998) found that distance decreases son/mother relational quality. On the other hand, distance increases daughter/mother and daughter/father relationship quality. This may be due to sons’ lack of initiative in familial relationships. Daughters, the researchers suggest, may not need physical contact to maintain quality relationships. Kaufman and Uhlenberg also suggest that parents may continue to “act like parents” with geographic distance providing a chance for daughters to feel less constrained by their fathers (p. 935).

Like trust, relational quality between parent/child has been studied as it is impacted by transitions/life changes such as divorce and adolescence. Decline in parents’ health has been shown to decrease parent/child relational quality (Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998). Divorce and widowhood have also been shown to decrease relational quality (Aquilino, 1994; Booth & Amato, 1994; Kaufman & Uhlenberg, 1998; King, 2002).
Accordingly, divorce and widowhood affected children’s relational quality with their father more than with their mother. Aside from divorce, changes in marital quality may also play a role in parent/child relational quality. Higher levels of marital quality may lead to higher levels of relational quality for young adults with both their parents (Booth & Amato, 1994). When marital quality is low between parents, children tend to only be close with one parent. However, supportive parental communication during adolescence has a tendency to mediate the effects of low marital quality and divorce.

**parental privacy invasions and trust/relational quality.** Scholars have demonstrated that the constructs of trust and relational quality, as they relate to parent/child relationships, are highly related (Franklin et al., 1990; King, 2002; Shek, 2005). Parent/child trust is sometimes viewed as a significant indicator of relational quality (Shek, 2005). Children with lower levels of trust in their parents may have potential negative outcomes mitigated if they possess higher levels of relational quality (King, 2002).

The constructs of relational quality and trust are related, but also maintain independent qualities. In this thesis, trust is conceptualized as the belief in parents’ reliability. On one hand, trust will most likely impact the amount of information that is shared between family members (Petronio, 2002). Yet, trust levels will not necessarily dictate relational quality levels. Relational quality is more concerned with feelings of happiness and contentment with parents. If events between parent and child severely reduce the amount of trust a child feels towards their parent, relational quality often suffers (Petronio, 1994). *Parental privacy invasions* are usually met with a precipitous drop in trust (Petronio, 1994, 2002).
Parental privacy invasions often occur as young adults begin to forge a separate identity from their parents. It is not uncommon for parents to struggle with the balance of connection and autonomy experienced as their child is becoming an adult (Williams, 2003). Adolescence and young adulthood mark a confusing time for many individuals (Petronio & Caughlin, 2006). Children begin to claim ownership over space, possessions, and information during adolescence and young adulthood (Petronio, 1994). During this time, parents must learn to balance this dialectic as well (Finkenauer et al., 2002). Parents who invade children’s privacy potentially send mixed messages that signal a hesitance to grant independence during what is expected to be a time of autonomy (Petronio, 1994). If a child feels that his or her privacy is not being respected, it can lead to negative relational outcomes (Child & Pearson, 2009; Petronio, 1994; Williams, 2003). From the perspective of the child, privacy invasion can have a significant impact on parent/child trust and relational quality. At this point, trust and relational quality are related as the decrease in trust affects relational quality as well (Petronio, 1994). In response to the privacy invasion, the child will restrictively adjust their privacy boundaries (Petronio, 1994).

Trust between parent and child is at stake when it comes to privacy invasions (Williams, 2003). Invasions have a significant negative impact on parental trust (Kerr et al., 1999; Petronio, 1994, 2002; Williams, 2003). Likewise, perceived relational quality is threatened by privacy invasions (Finkenauer et al., 2002; Petronio, 1994, 2002; Williams, 2003). When it comes to parental privacy invasions and college student’s perceptions of trust and relational quality, both outcomes are negatively associated with privacy invasions (Petronio, 1994). It appears that a positive model for the parent/child
relationship during the young adult years is one where the young adult feels a sense of autonomy, yet is also enmeshed in a supportive relationship with parents (Williams, 2003). Therefore, it is possible for some young adults to view a parental friend request as a gesture of connective support from the parent, which, may in turn, spur positive relational outcomes. Young adults could potentially greet a parental Facebook friend request as a chance to remain linked with their parents as they move into another phase of their life. In spite of the potential for positive outcomes, the interaction norms of Facebook as a place to connect with teens may override the importance to stay connected with parents (Pempek et al., 2009). In light of these arguments regarding relational outcomes, this thesis posits the following hypothesis about trust (see Figure 4):

**H1.** Young adults who perceive a parental friend request as a parental privacy invasion (i.e., restricting Facebook privacy settings in some way) will reflect lower levels of trust than those who do not experience turbulence from a parental Facebook friend request.
Figure 4. Parental Facebook friend request decisions and parental trust
Similarly, this thesis argues support for the following relationship about relational quality (see Figure 5):

**H₂.** Young adults who perceive a parental friend request as a parental privacy invasion (i.e., restricting Facebook privacy settings in some way) will reflect lower levels of relational quality than those who do not experience turbulence from a parental Facebook friend request.
H2

Young adults make no modifications when receiving a parental Facebook friend request

- Accept parental Facebook friend request
- Reject parental Facebook friend request
- Take no action

Higher levels of relational quality

Young adults make modifications when receiving a parental Facebook friend request

- Accept parental Facebook friend request
- Reject parental Facebook friend request
- Take no action

Lower levels of relational quality

Figure 5. Parental Facebook friend request decisions and parental relational quality
To address parental Facebook friend requests from a CPM perspective this thesis explores the common ways that young adults may handle the request for each parent, how family interaction norms influence parental Facebook friend request decisions, if Facebook privacy management practices vary for the way the request was handled, and relational characterizations of trust and relational quality association with the way the request was handled. The next section discusses the methodology of the study.
Chapter III

Methods

Participants

Participants were solicited through a purposive convenience sampling technique and supplemented by snowball sampling techniques carried out on Facebook. Subjects were recruited through an undergraduate course at Kent State University and directly on Facebook. Subject participation was completely voluntary. Prior to data collection, the Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study.

To remain uniform with the analysis portion of this thesis, the demographics are listed for overall participants, those who have received a friend request from their mother, and those who have received a friend request from their father. Overall, the sample consisted of 235 participants. The average age of participants was approximately 20 years old ($M = 20.39; SD = 3.04$). This age range represents young adults working to establish an identity separate from, yet connected to, parents (Williams, 2003). The sample contained 67.7% female ($n = 159$) and 32.3% male participants ($n = 76$).

The study was limited to young adults that could be considered active Facebook users. An active Facebook user is defined as someone who makes at least one modification to their profile, posts new content (such as photos or status updates), or posts content or messages to other Facebook users at least once per week (Child et al., 2009). On average, participants logged into Facebook over 25 times per week ($M = 25.47; SD = 70.14$) and spent over two hours ($M = 2.43; SD = 3.55$) per day on the site. In all, 62.6% of participants lived away from their parents ($n = 279$) whereas 36.8% lived with their parents ($n = 164$). Overall, most participants (93.2%) had Internet access
through a personal computer they owned \((n = 219)\), 5.1\% used a shared home computer \((n = 12)\), and 1.7\% used a public (e.g. library) computer for their Internet access \((n = 4)\).

For those who had received a Facebook friend request from their mother, the sample was a total of 127 participants. The average age of this subsample was approximately 20 years old \((M = 20.11; SD = 2.39)\). The subsample contained 70.1\% female \((n = 89)\) and 29.9\% male participants \((n = 38)\). On average, these participants logged into Facebook over 28 times per week \((M = 28.55; SD = 92.29)\) and spent over two hours \((M = 2.29; SD = 3.14)\) per day on the site. Overall, 61.4\% of participants who had received a request from their mother lived away from their parents \((n = 78)\) whereas 38.6\% lived with their parents \((n = 49)\). Most of these participants also had Internet access \((95.3\%)\) through a personal computer they owned \((n = 121)\), or through a shared home computer \((n = 6, 4.7\%)\).

Among participants who had received a parental Facebook friend request from their father, the sample consisted of 42 participants. The average age of this sample was 21 years old \((M = 21.00; SD = 4.31)\). The subsample contained 59.5\% female \((n = 25)\) and 40.5\% male participants \((n = 17)\). On average, these participants logged into Facebook over 22 times per week \((M = 22.50; SD = 22.86)\) and spent just under two hours \((M = 1.98; SD = 1.71)\) per day on the site. Overall, 59.5\% of participants who had received a request from their father lived away from their parents \((n = 25)\) whereas 40.5\% lived with their parents \((n = 17)\). Most of these participants also had Internet access \((85.7\%)\) through a personal computer they owned \((n = 36)\), 7.1\% used a shared home computer \((n = 3)\), and 7.1\% used a public (e.g. library) computer for their Internet access \((n = 3)\).
**Procedures**

Participants were solicited by receiving credit for research participation in an undergraduate introductory human communication course upon completion of the survey. Young adults were directed to a website containing a full explanation of the study and a standard IRB consent form. The remaining participants were recruited through the use of a Facebook group called “KSU Facebook Research.” Anyone with a Facebook account had the ability to join. Within the group’s profile, an explanation of the study was posted on the main page that detailed all participation was voluntary with the ability to stop the survey at any time without penalty. Finally, a link was posted to the survey. After participants navigated to the survey URL and provided consent, the survey was administered via the website (Qualtrics.com).

Since the reception of a parental Facebook friend request was not a prerequisite for participation in this study, an initial question sorted subjects based on whether or not they had received a parental friend request. The data analyzed in this thesis consists solely of subjects who had received a parental Facebook friend request. If the subject indicated that they had not received such a request, they were given similar questions posed in a hypothetical manner – this data is not utilized in this study. Upon completion of the survey, participants were awarded credit towards their course grade. After the survey had closed, two participants were selected to receive $10 Amazon.com gift cards.

**Measures**

Participants completed five measures with questions regarding parental Facebook friend requests, parental relational quality, and parental trust separately for each parent if they had received a parental Facebook friend request from that parent. Then, family privacy
orientation and Facebook privacy management measurements were completed only once since they represent more general constructs not specific to one parent or the other.

**parental Facebook friend request action.** To assess the response of young adults’ to parental Facebook friend requests, a series of categorical questions were administered (see Appendix B). The questionnaire was designed to explore how young adults respond to Facebook friend requests from each parent by examining their disclosure patterns – in particular, disclosure patterns indicating willingness to share Facebook profile content with parents. Questions assessed (a) whether or not participants had received a parental Facebook friend request from each parent, (b) whether the request was accepted with no modifications, rejected with no modifications, ignored\(^1\) with no modifications, accepted with modifications, rejected with modifications, or ignored with modifications for each parent, and (c) what specific restrictive actions (if any) were taken after the participant decided to accept, reject, or ignore the request (e.g., alter privacy settings or restrict/delete/refrain from posting content on Facebook profile). Questions 4, 5, and 6 cover these issues (see Appendix B). The remaining questions in this section will be used for content analysis and future analysis not pertaining to this thesis.

\(^{1}\) In addition to accepting or rejecting a parental Facebook friend request, young adults have the option to ignore a request. Ignoring a request means that the young adult does not address the parental Facebook friend request. The request remains in a notification area of the profile visible only to the young adult. Facebook users may let a friend request lay dormant for as long as desired. The individual who sent the request will only receive feedback regarding the status of their request if it is accepted. Rejecting or ignoring the request does not notify the individual who made the request.
**interior family privacy orientation measure.** Participants answered four items regarding personal perceptions of disclosure patterns and level of permeability within the family (Morr, 2002). The interior family privacy orientation scale is a privacy construct of CPM (Petronio, 2002). On a 7-point Likert-type scale participants indicated their agreement or disagreement with statements such as “Family members are very open with each other” and “Family members do not discuss private information with one another” (see Appendix C). Studies have demonstrated high levels of reliability for the construct. Child and Pearson (2009) and Morr Serewicz et al. (2007) found the scale to be reliable (respectively, $\alpha = .83$, $M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.21$; $\alpha = .80$, $M = 4.68$, $SD = 1.18$). The current study maintained acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .72$, $M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.22$). Results indicated that participants were above the conceptual midpoint for interior family privacy orientation.

CPM theory states that privacy orientations can be divided into three levels or permeability (i.e., low, moderate, and high). Therefore, this study computed the FPO variable as categorical in addition to continuous. To accomplish this, participants within one standard deviation of the mean score ($M = 4.62; SD = 1.22$) were defined as moderate permeability, those above one standard deviation of the mean were defined as high permeability, and those below one standard deviation were defined as low permeability. In the form of a categorical variable, the following information describes participants reporting high permeability ($n = 80; M > 5.83$), moderate permeability ($n = 290; M = 3.4 – 5.83$), and low permeability ($n = 73; M < 3.4$).

**relational quality.** The parent-child relationship quality measure (Petronio, 1994) is an eight-item scale concerned with children’s perceived level of satisfaction with
parents (see Appendix D). Many studies examining disclosure and privacy practices have utilized a modified version of the Marital Opinion Questionnaire designed to measure Family Satisfaction (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Vangelisti, 1994). However, the family satisfaction measure represents global feelings towards the family. To ensure that this thesis remains focused on parent/child relationships, the parent-child relationship quality measure (Petronio, 1994) was employed for each parent in light of how individuals may choose different responses to Facebook friend requests for each parent in an attempt to see the impact of a parental Facebook friend request on parent/child relational quality. Petronio (1994) utilized the measure to explore the relational outcomes of parental privacy invasions. The parent/child relationship quality measure also examines specific outcomes that show the impact of children’s privacy rules. The relational impact of privacy rules are not necessarily predicted in CPM (Petronio, 2002).

The measure is based on a 7-point Likert-type scale where participants choose from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” for each item. Sample statements of the measure include, “I frequently feel satisfied about the relationship with my mother/father” and “I frequently feel that nothing goes right in the relationship with my mother/father.” The parent-child relationship quality measure (Petronio, 1994) demonstrated excellent reliability ($\alpha = .94$). In the current study, the measure displayed excellent reliability for both mothers ($\alpha = .91, M = 5.81, SD = 1.27$) and fathers ($\alpha = .95, M = 5.52, SD = 1.55$).

**Parental trust.** Trust is an outcome greatly affected by disclosure and privacy practices (Petronio, 1994, 2002). CPM predicts that level of parental trust is shaped by child-parent disclosure patterns (Petronio, 2002). The effects of parental privacy
invasions can manifest in reduced levels of parental trust (Kerr, 1999; Petronio, 1994; Williams, 2003). Therefore, to examine levels of parental trust, the parental trust scale is employed with each parent separately as well (Petronio, 1994). The six item measure is based on a 7-point Likert-type scale where participants choose from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” for each item. Sample items of the measure include, “I trust my mother/father” and “My mother/father does not show much consideration.” (see Appendix E). The measure demonstrates a high level of reliability in previous research ($\alpha = .87$) (Petronio, 1994). The current study also found high reliability levels for both mothers ($\alpha = .88$, $M = 6.16$, $SD = 1.17$) and fathers ($\alpha = .91$, $M = 5.92$, $SD = 1.40$).

**Facebook privacy management scale.** The 18-item Facebook privacy management scale identifies the way in which young adults manage privacy on Facebook (see Appendix F). The measure is adapted from Child et al.’s (2009) Blogging Privacy Management Measure (BPMM). As outlined in CPM, BPMM measures the dimensions of ownership, permeability, and linkages within individuals’ privacy rules. Participants answer questions on a 7-point scale Likert-type scale ranging from “never true” to ‘always true.” Sample items from the scale include, “When I face challenges in my life, I feel comfortable talking about them on Facebook” and “I have limited the personal information posted on Facebook.” Across three studies (Child et al., 2009), BPMM demonstrated strong reliability scores ($\alpha = .80, .76, .72$). In addition, Child et al. (2009) tested and found support for divergent, convergent, and predictive validity of the measure. In this thesis, the overall reliability of the modified Facebook privacy management scale was good ($\alpha = .83$, $M = 2.89$, $SD = .85$).
Analysis

Given that young adults may respond differently to each parent when receiving a parental Facebook friend request, research questions one and two as well as hypotheses one and two were analyzed separately for each parent (if young adults have received a friend request from each parent). A one-way chi-square test addressed how young adults responded to a parental Facebook friend request and whether or not young adults modified their privacy settings more often than making no changes when they receive a parental Facebook friend request (RQ1a-b). A two-way chi-square test and a one-way ANOVA were conducted to see if young adults’ decisions regarding parental Facebook friend requests reflect differences in interior family privacy orientations (RQ2). The two-way chi-square test measured young adults’ level of interior family privacy orientation as a discreet variable (high, moderate, low) as it points to one standard deviation out from the mean against the six categories of parental Facebook friend request responses. The one-way ANOVA measured interior privacy orientations as a continuous variable.

To explore whether or not differences exist in how young adults coordinate their collective boundaries on Facebook when receiving a parental Facebook friend request (RQ3) a one-way ANOVAs tested for difference in Facebook privacy management disclosures related to the six categories of parental Facebook friend request responses.

This thesis predicts that when parental Facebook friend requests are perceived as parental privacy invasions (as evidenced by increasing privacy restrictions) perceived trust with that parent will be lower than young adults who do not perceive parental Facebook friend requests as parental privacy invasions (as evidenced by no change / relaxing privacy restrictions). Hypotheses one and two were analyzed using two separate
statistical methods. First, a t-test was conducted to measure the difference in relational trust between young adults who experience turbulence during a parental Facebook friend request and those who do not experience turbulence. The same test was then used to analyze relational quality. Next, an ANOVA was used to further understanding of young adults’ decision making processes regarding parental Facebook friend requests (i.e. accept, accept w/ modifications, reject, reject w/ modifications, ignore, ignore w/ modifications) and their impact on relational trust. Likewise, relational quality was examined in the same manner.
Chapter IV

Results

Research Question 1

Research question one addressed what is the most common response to parental Facebook friend requests for young adults with each parent and if young adults tend to experience turbulence when they receive a parental Facebook friend request or not. A one-sample chi-square test (assuming uniform distribution across all categories) was conducted on the six categories of parental Facebook friend request actions (accept with no turbulence, accept with turbulence, reject with no turbulence, reject with turbulence, ignore with no turbulence, ignore with turbulence) to answer research question 1a. For mothers, the results of the test were significant, \( \chi^2 (5, N = 193) = 349.77, p < .01, ES = .36 \). The effect size indicates a small to moderate difference in the results for mothers’ requests. The proportion of young adults who accepted a parental Facebook friend request from their mother and experienced no turbulence (\( n = 121, P = .63 \)) and those who accepted the request with turbulence (\( n = 52, P = .27 \)) were significantly greater than the hypothesized proportion of .17. The remaining categories were all lower than the expected proportion of .17. Young adults who rejected the request with no turbulence (\( n = 8, P = .04 \)), rejected the request with turbulence (\( n = 3, P = .02 \)), ignored the request with no turbulence (\( n = 5, P = .03 \)), and ignored the request with turbulence (\( n = 4, P = .02 \)) were lower than expected. In summary, these results show that the most common ways of dealing with a parental Facebook friend request from a mother is to accept the request, while rejecting or ignoring the request is less frequent.
In order to answer research question 1b for mothers, a one-sample chi-square test assessed whether a parental Facebook friend request for mothers led young adults to experience boundary turbulence or not. The presence of turbulence is operationalized as changes in privacy settings or changing/deleting content as a result of a parental Facebook friend request that is either accepted, rejected, or ignored. For mothers, the results were significant $\chi^2 (1, N = 193) = 29.15, p < .01, ES = .15$. The effects size indicates a small difference in the results. The proportion of participants who did not experience turbulence when receiving a parental Facebook friend request from their mother ($n = 134, P = .69$) was significantly higher than the expected proportion of .50. The proportion of young adults who experienced turbulence when receiving a friend request from their mother was smaller ($n = 59, P = .31$) than expected. Results indicate that young adults are likely to accept a parental Facebook friend request from their mother and not make changes to their privacy settings and/or modify their existing content.

A separate one-sample chi-square test was conducted to explore how young adults responded to a parental Facebook friend request from their fathers to answer research question 1a. The results of the test were significant $\chi^2 (5, N = 108) = 234.78, p < .01, ES = .44$. The effects size indicates a small to moderate difference in the results for fathers’ requests. The proportion of young adults who accepted a parental Facebook friend request from their father and experienced no turbulence ($n = 74, P = .69$) and those who accepted the request with turbulence ($n = 26, P = .24$) were significantly greater than the hypothesized proportion of .17. The remaining categories were all lower than the expected proportion of .17. Young adults who rejected the request with no turbulence ($n$
= 3, \( P = .03 \)), rejected the request with turbulence \((n = 2, P = .02)\), ignored the request with no turbulence \((n = 2, P = .02)\), and ignored the request with turbulence \((n = 1, P = .01)\) were lower than expected. Ultimately, these results reveal the most common ways of dealing with parental Facebook friend requests from fathers is to accept the request, while rejecting or ignoring the request is less frequent.

In order to answer research question 1b for fathers, a one-sample chi-square test assessed whether a parental Facebook friend request for fathers led young adults to experience boundary turbulence or not. The presence of turbulence is defined as changes in privacy settings or changing/deleting content as a result of a father’s parental Facebook friend request that is either accepted, rejected, or ignored. For parental Facebook friend requests received from fathers, the results were significant \( \chi^2 (1, N = 108) = 23.15, p < .01, ES = .21 \). The effects size indicates a small difference in the results. The proportion of participants who did not experience turbulence when receiving a parental Facebook friend request from their father was significantly greater \((n = 79, P = .73)\) than the expected proportion of .50. The proportion of young adults who experienced turbulence when receiving a friend request from their father was significantly smaller \((n = 29, P = .27)\) than expected. Results indicate that young adults are likely to accept a parental Facebook friend request from their father and not make changes or deletions to their privacy settings.

**Research Question 2**

Research question two explored whether IFPOs impact young adults’ decisions to accept, reject, or ignore parental Facebook friend requests. Originally, the analysis included the six categories of parental Facebook friend request actions (accept with turbulence, accept
with no turbulence, reject with turbulence, reject with no turbulence, ignore with
turbulence, ignore with no turbulence). However, due to the limited number of responses
in the reject with turbulence, reject with no turbulence, ignore with turbulence, and ignore
with no turbulence categories, the categories were combined into reject and ignore. This
provided more individuals in each category when conducting follow-up tests. The
analysis then included two separate tests. The first was a two-way chi-square test that
examined high, moderate, and low permeability levels (as delineated by one standard
deviation above and below the mean score) with four categories of parental Facebook
friend requests. For requests from mothers, the results were significant $\chi^2(6, N = 193) =$
13.91, $p = .03$. The Cramér’s V follow up test revealed a small effect size (.19). The
largest discrepancy between expected and observed frequencies existed in the accept with
no turbulence cells (see Table 1). Participants with low permeability accepted requests
with no turbulence from mothers less frequently than expected and accepted the request
more frequently than expected when the IFPO reflected high permeability. Overall, the
results indicate that IFPOs impact young adults’ decision making processes when faced
with a parental Facebook friend request from mothers.

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels of permeability for mother Facebook friend request decision variables and interior family privacy orientation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The expected frequency follows the observed frequency*
The second test consisted of a one-way analysis of variance that examined whether there is a relationship between the four categories of response and IFPOs as a continuous variable. The independent variable was the parental Facebook friend request actions (accept request with no turbulence, accept with turbulence, reject, ignore) with the dependent variable as the level of permeability reflected in the IFPO. The ANOVA was significant for mothers $F(3, 189) = 3.73, p = .01$. A test for homogeneity of variance was not significant and the Tukey test for post hoc follow-up test was used. Young adults who accepted parental Facebook friend requests from mothers with no turbulence had a significantly higher level of permeability in their IFPOs ($M = 4.88, SD = 1.12$) than young adults who accepted requests and experienced turbulence ($M = 4.33, SD = 1.20$) (see Table 2). Results of the ANOVA demonstrate that parental Facebook friend request actions for mothers contain significantly different IFPO levels for those that accept requests without turbulence in comparison to those who accept the request while experiencing turbulence.

### Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for mother Facebook friend request decision variables and interior family privacy orientation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>4.88*</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>4.33*</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>1.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.89</td>
<td>1.11</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* *significant pairwise comparison at $p < .05$

For requests from fathers, the results were not significant $\chi^2(6, N = 108) = 7.29, p = .30$. Overall, the results indicate that IFPOs do not impact young adults’ decision
making processes when faced with a parental Facebook friend request from fathers (see Table 3).

**Table 3**

*Levels of permeability for father Facebook friend request decision variables and interior family privacy orientation*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>Low Permeability</th>
<th>Moderate Permeability</th>
<th>High Permeability</th>
<th>Total Permeability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>9 (13.7)</td>
<td>52 (48.6)</td>
<td>13 (11.6)</td>
<td>74 (68.5%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>8 (4.8)</td>
<td>15 (17.1)</td>
<td>3 (4.1)</td>
<td>26 (24.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>2 (.9)</td>
<td>2 (3.3)</td>
<td>1 (.8)</td>
<td>5 (4.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>1 (.6)</td>
<td>2 (2.0)</td>
<td>0 (.5)</td>
<td>3 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall total</td>
<td>20 (18.5%)</td>
<td>71 (65.7%)</td>
<td>17 (15.7%)</td>
<td>108</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The expected frequency follows the observed frequency*

The second test consisted of a one-way analysis of variance that examined whether there is a relationship between the four categories of response and the permeability level of IFPOs as a continuous variable. Parental Facebook friend request actions served as the independent variable (accept request with no turbulence, accept with turbulence, reject, ignore) with level of IFPO as the dependent variable. For fathers, the one-way analysis of variance was not significant $F(3, 104) = 2.05, p = .11$. Thus, the permeability level of the interior family privacy orientation was not significantly different for the different ways that young adults chose to handle Facebook friend requests from their fathers (see Table 4).
Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for father Facebook friend request decision variables and interior family privacy orientation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>4.66</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>1.01</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 1

A one-way ANOVA was used to analyze Hypothesis 1, which predicted that participants who experienced turbulence when receiving a parental Facebook friend request will display lower levels of relational quality. Analyses were separated into requests received from the mother and father. For mothers’ requests, the results of the ANOVA were significant, \( F(3, 187) = 4.31, p < .01 \). A Tukey follow-up test displayed a significant main effect between individuals who accepted the request without turbulence and those that ignored the request. Individuals who accepted the request and did not experience turbulence had a significantly higher level of relational quality (\( M = 6.04, SD = 1.13 \)) in comparison to individuals who ignored the request from their mother (\( M = 4.78, SD = 1.36 \)). The remaining categories were not significant as main effects (see Table 5).

Overall, young adults that accept a mother’s Facebook friend request without making changes to their privacy or deleting content tend to have higher levels of relational quality than those that ignore requests from mothers.
Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for young adults’ relational quality with mother by the way the request was handled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>6.04a</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.63</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.67</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.78a</td>
<td>1.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: “significant pairwise comparison at p < .05

For fathers’ requests, the results of the test were not significant, $F(3, 103) = .52, p = .67$. Results suggest that young adults’ perception of relational quality with their fathers did not significantly vary across the different ways that a young adult could handle parental Facebook friend requests from fathers (see Table 6).

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for young adults’ relational quality with father by the way the request was handled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5.62</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.03</td>
<td>1.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.13</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hypothesis 2

A one-way ANOVA was utilized to assess Hypothesis 2, which predicted that participants who experience turbulence when receiving a parental Facebook friend request will demonstrate lower levels of trust. Once again, analyses were conducted for requests from both mothers and fathers. For mothers, the results of the test were significant, $F(3, 187) = 4.89, p < .01$. A Dunnett C post hoc test showed a significant
main effect between individuals that accepted requests with no turbulence and those who experienced turbulence when accepting requests. Individuals who accepted mothers’ parental Facebook friend requests with no turbulence had a significantly higher level of trust ($M = 6.39, SD = .95$) when compared to individuals who accepted the request from their mother but experienced turbulence ($M = 5.88, SD = 1.13$). The remaining categories were not significant as main effects (see Table 7). Overall, young adults who accepted a mother’s Facebook friend request without making changes to their privacy or deleting content tended to have higher levels of trust than those that accept requests from mothers but made changes to their privacy settings and/or deleted content.

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for young adults’ trust with mother by the way the request was handled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>119</td>
<td>6.39$^a$</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>5.88$^a$</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>5.74</td>
<td>1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.50</td>
<td>1.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: $^a$ significant pairwise comparison at $p < .05$

For fathers, the results of the ANOVA were not significant, $F(3, 103) = .13, p = .94$. Results demonstrate that young adults’ perception of trust with their fathers did not significantly differ among the four categories of response to parental Facebook friend requests from fathers (see Table 8).
Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations for young adults’ trust with father by the way the request was handled

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>5.95</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.88</td>
<td>1.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5.73</td>
<td>1.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.33</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research Question 3

To see if young adults’ Facebook privacy management practices differed in the handling of a parental Facebook friend request, a one-way ANOVA was used to analyze Research Question 3. Separate tests were conducted for requests received from the mother and father. The results of the test for mothers were not significant, $F(3, 189) = 2.46, p = .06$. Results suggest that young adults’ privacy management practices do not significantly differ across parental Facebook friend request decisions when receiving mothers’ requests (see Table 9).

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations for young adults’ privacy management practices when receiving a parental Facebook friend request from mothers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For fathers, results of the test were not significant, $F(3, 104) = .27, p = .85$.

Results indicated that young adults’ privacy management practices did not significantly
differ across parental Facebook friend request decisions when receiving fathers’ requests (see Table 10).

Table 10

*Means and Standard Deviations for young adults’ privacy management practices when receiving a parental Facebook friend request from fathers*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Young adults friend request decisions levels of permeability</th>
<th>$N$</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accept with no turbulence</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accept with turbulence</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reject</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ignore</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V
Discussion

The goal of this thesis was to explore young adults’ Facebook privacy management practices and on-line interaction norms with parents. Findings indicate that young adults tended to accept parental Facebook friend requests. In addition, they generally refrained from making restrictive modifications or deleting personal content as they connected, or chose to not connect, with parents. When receiving parental Facebook friend requests from mothers, privacy norms were significant in young adults’ decision making. Specifically, young adults raised in a family that valued open, disclosive communication between members were likely to accept parental Facebook friend requests from moms. On the other hand, young adults that came from families with restricted privacy norms were less likely to accept parental Facebook friend requests from moms. Privacy orientations were not significantly related to young adults’ decisions when faced with parental Facebook friend requests from fathers. The constructs of relational quality and trust were important relational characteristics for young adults’ parental Facebook friend request decision with mothers. For fathers, these relational characteristics did not significantly factor into young adults’ decision making processes. Finally, young adults’ Facebook privacy management practices for mothers and fathers were not significantly different as a product of how the child decided to handle a Facebook friend request for either parent (i.e., accept, reject, or ignore parental Facebook friend requests).

Overall, this chapter provides both theoretical and practical contributions of the investigation. This section explores two specific areas informed by this thesis. First, implications for Facebook as a new communication technology are explored. Next,
contributions to family privacy management practices are elucidated. Finally, directions for future research, strengths, and limitations are explored.

Facebook as a New Communication Technology

Facebook has exploded in popularity since its inception in 2004, with the total number of users topping 500 million (Facebook, 2010). While the site was originally intended as a means for college students to connect with others in their school, access to membership was incrementally opened up to more individuals, allowing parents to create a Facebook page for the first time in 2006, if desired. Since membership restrictions have been loosened, the makeup of Facebook members drastically changed with the quickest growing demographic on the site as individuals aged 35 and over. In fact, this age group now constitutes 44% of all SNS users (Lenhart, 2009a).

Shifts in the composition of Facebook’s members raise questions about who is connecting with whom on the site. Previous research regarding young adults’ Facebook use shows a clear pattern. Facebook is utilized to maintain relationships with face-to-face friends (Lampe et al., 2006; Pempek et al., 2009). In contrast, young adults scarcely use the site to seek out new acquaintances (Pempek et al., 2009).

Similar to the way that young adults’ face-to-face friendships are continued through Facebook, recent research confirms workplace relationships are also more frequently being established and maintained through Facebook. An examination of privacy management practices in the workplace revealed that co-workers are forming connections with each other via Facebook (Dennis Frampton, 2010). This thesis adds to the growing body of knowledge about the different networks of individuals who are connecting to one another through Facebook. Specifically, results indicate that young
adults are connecting with their parents. This finding demonstrates that Facebook is becoming a space where individuals willingly connect with face-to-face friends, co-workers, and family. As such, this evolution presents implications for the ways individuals use Facebook and engage in their privacy management practices.

The inclusion of different face-to-face groups on one’s Facebook space presents interesting questions for how the site is used. Initially, young adults would not have expected to encounter anyone but peers or social ties on Facebook (Pempek et al., 2009). However, this growing body of evidence suggests young adults are by and large allowing different networks of individuals (i.e., friendship, family, and workplace ties) to commingle on their Facebook sites (Dennis Frampton, 2010; Pempek et al., 2009). Now that it is known that such diverse people are all using consistent applications at the same time, do young adults differentiate their privacy practices for each group on Facebook? This study confirms that young adults’ Facebook use is influenced by parent/child relational quality as well as interaction norms developed through the interior family privacy orientation in the home. Relational ties and organizational privacy norms also impacted individuals’ Facebook friend request behaviors organizational settings (Dennis Frampton, 2010). The inclusion of various individuals from diverse groups on Facebook, may give rise to situations where competing privacy needs for different individuals must be addressed on an individualized basis.

With 500 million plus users on Facebook, individuals likely have the ability to connect with a large portion of their diverse networks and are taking the opportunity to make wide-ranging connections on Facebook. With the possibility of encountering so many different social groups within Facebook, users may experience situations where
managing their privacy between groups becomes complicated and messy (Child & Petronio, 2011). Current research points to impression management, safety, relational, and disciplinary triggers as motivations for making deletions and restrictive privacy management modifications, causing individuals to readjust their on-line privacy management practices by asserting more privacy protection behaviors (Child, Petronio, Agyeman-Budu, & Westermann, 2010). In relation to these triggers, young adults were more proactive in managing their on-line privacy. As is the case with blogging privacy management (Child et al., 2010), proactive privacy management can lead to fewer situations where an individual experiences distress over personal information that has moved into a more public space because of faulty privacy rules. Therefore, individuals who establish privacy rules with an eye to potential issues will be less likely to encounter situations where private information is exposed against their wishes. For young adults, proactive management of privacy could mean the difference between having well-coordinated Facebook interactions and having a parent post embarrassing childhood pictures on their page (Fletcher, 2009).

With respect to the current study, proactive privacy management may prevent some unwanted conversations with mom or dad about their child’s college misadventures. Given that many young adults made few changes to their privacy management practices when faced with parental Facebook friend requests, they either have not given much thought to previously disclosed information on Facebook and its availability of access or they are interacting through the medium in such a way that they do not perceive any risk to the commingling of different groups (including parents) given current disclosure practices. Proactive privacy management may help to create an
environment where young adults can interact with disparate face-to-face groups on Facebook while avoiding pitfalls that cause them to overhaul their privacy management practices. As diverse individuals comingle on Facebook, exploring individual’s expectations for privacy and their use of proactive privacy management practices will provide a more complete understanding of the interactions occurring on social media sites.

Facebook, like other SNSs, presents a unique environment for on-line communication. Unlike a phone call or face-to-face interaction, users are not pressed to actively communicate with other individuals when active on their Facebook account. Instead, users, among other activities, can browse others’ profiles, play games, or generate their own content in the form of blogs or digital media (Facebook, 2010). When users do interact with others on Facebook, communication is through wall posts, which are set as visible to that user’s friends by default. Therefore, much of the communication between Facebook users is observable to an audience of individuals. This privileged on-line community of individuals can witness and, if they choose, participate in conversations taking place between friends over Facebook wall posts (Child et al., 2010). Coupled with the public nature of many Facebook interactions, the ability to have a constant connection to such personal information about another individual through their Facebook profile without having to engage in direct contact with that person presents interesting complexities for young adults’ privacy management practices. However, this thesis helps to demonstrate that the growing number of groups, such as peers, co-workers, and, in the case of this study, families, connecting on Facebook is an indication that individuals enjoy connecting and communicating in the unique communicative medium
Facebook offers. Individuals are seeking to connect with diverse groups of people in a way that allows them instant access to a host of personal information, but permits them the choice to directly communicate or not. Thus, sophisticated and thoughtful privacy management practices enable young adults to balance and maintain their connections with diverse groups that may have different privacy norms (e.g., parents and peers) with the propensity for volatile boundary turbulence when they cross paths on Facebook.

Recent studies have examined personality variables as predictors of Facebook use with mixed results (Orr, Sisic, Ross, Simmering, Arseneault, & Orr, 2009; Ross et al. 2009). A study examining the relationship between personality variables and Facebook use found personality variables only partially predictive of Facebook use (Ross et al., 2009). For instance, extroversion was tied to joining more Facebook groups. This study adds greater understanding to interaction on Facebook. For instance, young adults’ decisions to accept or reject friend requests sent from their mothers were impacted by family privacy norms, relational quality, and level of trust experienced with mothers. Overall, young adults are influenced by relational characteristics and existing privacy norms in their use of Facebook. The importance of relational characteristics and existing privacy norms underscores the value of studying Facebook use from a communication standpoint (Petronio, 2002).

Other recent studies have focused on attractiveness as an indicator of Facebook use (Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008; Wang et al., 2010). Facebook cues, such as having attractive friends and the messages they publicly post on an individual’s wall, impact the perceived attractiveness of individuals (Walther et al., 2008). Individuals are more likely to befriend and interact with Facebook users they
deem attractive based on the profile picture (Wang et al., 2010). In contrast, this thesis adds to a growing body of literature that suggests individuals are using Facebook to connect with face-to-face ties (Child & Petronio, 2011; Dennis Frampton, 2010; Flanagin, 2005; Pempek et al., 2009). Given that more Facebook users are commingling many of their face-to-face networks, young adults who also choose to interact with potential dating partners and attractive others potentially have the greatest need to actively manage SNS disclosures, so that they, their parents, or their co-workers are not surprised by disclosures occurring in the collectively owned SNS space. Therefore, studying strangers’ perceptions of attractiveness might not capture the context in which current Facebook use is grounded – the transition of, and commingling by, face-to-face groups on Facebook.

Since the inception of the Internet, diametrically opposed camps have argued what constitutes its underlying nature (Mesch & Talmud, 2010). The two sides consist of technological determinism vs. social constructivism. Technological determinism posits that the Internet impacts its users and shapes their behaviors and interactions. The culture created by the Internet’s force is removed from reality – where individuals can form new identities and explore new expressions of self (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002). On the other hand, social constructivism argues that individuals are the agent shaping the Internet (Mesch & Talmud, 2010). Therefore, the Internet is seen as a cultural artifact which is placed within the context of the social world of individuals (Katz & Rice, 2002). While there was, and in some cases, still is, much disagreement between camps, recent research has incorporated both perspectives (Mesch & Talmud, 2010). In light of this study and other recent scholarly work suggesting Facebook users tend to connect with a
wide range of different face-to-face friends and unknown others, (Child & Petronio, 2011; Dennis Frampton, 2010; Flanagan, 2005; Pempek et al., 2009) social constructivism standpoints exploring how users shape the medium are warranted given the diverse types of individuals and possible interactions occurring through Facebook.

The current state of the Internet presents a host of platforms that are driven and shaped by the user – the ethos of Web 2.0 (Mesch & Talmud, 2010). Web 2.0 has the basic underlying assumption that users are tasked with creating and sculpting the Internet in their likeness. Exploring social media platforms as the clay for young adults to mold is essential in understanding the way in which such technologies impact young adults (Sassen, 2002). Even more importantly, the Web 2.0 and the push for user created content implore the use of a communication perspective. An Internet shaped by the social world in which it is nested highlights the role that communication plays in its construction. Privacy management practices may also be adjusted to meet the preferences of the individual in the same social constructivism manner. Although, more research is needed to further explore this point.

On the other hand, if technological determinism was coming into play when young adults use Facebook, individuals would take advantage of all the features and interaction opportunities Facebook provides to connect with ‘like-minded’ strangers. The advent of the Internet was seen as an opportunity to do just this – individuals could share information and create new personas separate from their offline identities due to the limited number of cues on-line (Sproull & Kiesler, 1986; Tidwell & Walther, 2002). In essence, communication on the Internet was greatly impacted, and in essence, controlled by the technology itself during this period. While socially active users shape interaction
and privacy norms on-line, family privacy orientations and relational qualities influence the SNS interaction environment.

**Family Privacy Management Practices**

Families develop rules for privacy management that serve as guideline for how much members share with each other (Child & Pearson, 2009; Petronio, 2002). These privacy norms are established over time and tend to become lasting in nature (Berardo, 1974). In other words, family privacy norms stay relatively stable for most family units. Past research has explored family privacy norms as they impact young adults’ on-line privacy management with peers (Child, 2007). The public or private nature of family privacy norms did not impact the way in which young adults managed their on-line privacy when interacting with peers. Relevant research indicates that young adults developed distinct privacy norms as they interacted with their peers on the Internet (Child et al., 2009; Child et al., 2010). These privacy norms are specialized for on-line interaction with offline friends. In addition, employees are connecting with co-workers on Facebook with organization privacy norms developed in face-to-face settings influencing SNS interaction decisions and practices (Dennis Frampton, 2010). The amount of public or private information normally shared with co-workers in a face-to-face setting is related to the way SNS ties occur or not via Facebook (Dennis Frampton, 2010). Furthermore, when organizational ties are stronger, more sharing of the Facebook space occurs. When organizations stressed interaction and privacy environments where openness is normative, greater willingness to allow a commingling of co-workers with established Facebook sites communicating without restrictions occurs.
This thesis confirms that family privacy norms also extend to Facebook. These norms, developed by the family over time, impact the way in which families communicate on Facebook. Therefore, family relational ties influence the on-line behaviors of individuals when they interact with their family on SNSs. Specifically, mother/child Facebook communication is affected by family privacy norms. Young adults in families that value openness and transparency were more likely to connect with their mothers on Facebook. This finding is valuable as it begins to answer questions about family characteristics that influence individuals’ social media use. Previously, family privacy norms had not been tested in this particular context.

The indication that family privacy norms continue to exert influences in allowing family SNS communication informs the way that the medium is influenced by considerations and norms from face-to-face environments (Child et al., 2009; Dennis Frampton, 2010). Family privacy norms shape interaction expectations in Facebook. As such, the family is more influential in shaping the way in which young adults manage their Facebook privacy when communicating with their family in a variety of place (e.g., face-to-face, on-line). As Facebook is a place where individuals engage in communicating with diverse groups within their offline networks, this thesis helps make the case that individuals are managing different, and potentially disparate, privacy norms for each group with which they communicate in a social media environment, yet the family is influential in shaping family social media interaction (Child & Petronio, 2011).

Relational indicators are important aspects of young adults’ privacy management practices with their parents. Parental trust, or the degree to which children believe in the reliability of their parents, is often associated with privacy management practices (Kerr et
al., 1999; Petronio, 1994). In addition, relational quality, or children’s satisfaction with their parents, is another construct associated with young adults’ privacy management (Finkenauer et al., 2002; Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio, 1994). Past studies have examined these constructs in face-to-face settings (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007; Petronio, 1994, 2002). However, it was unclear whether or not these constructs were associated with young adults’ privacy management practices with family members on Facebook. This thesis revealed that trust and relational quality are related to the way that young adults handle Facebook friend requests from their mothers. Interestingly, these constructs were only significant for young adults’ relationships with their mothers and not their fathers. In the end, the way in which young adults’ privacy management practices impact relationships with their mothers appears to be similar for both for face-to-face and on-line mediums of communication (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007).

The discrepancy in results between mothers and fathers may be explained by the roles they each tend to play. To investigate sex-based differences between parents, scholars have adopted a number of theoretical frameworks (Bem, 1974; Hosley & Montemayor, 1997). However, role theory has emerged as a leading framework from which to study parenting styles (McKinney & Renk, 2008). Role theory works from the idea that parents adopt certain parenting tendencies based on traditional roles which are socialized over time (Hosely & Montemayor, 1997). Mothers are often socialized to be caregivers. As a result, they tend to show more warmth and experience closer relationships with children than fathers (Hosely & Montemayor, 1997; Phares, 1999; Tein, Roosa, & Michaels, 1994). During the late adolescent years in particular, fathers are more likely to be authoritarian in nature – their role is often characterized as the
disciplinarian (Conrade & Ho, 2001; McKinney & Renk, 2008). Based on the results of this study, it appears as if mothers’ (and potentially fathers’) traditional roles have an impact on whether young adults allow them into their Facebook space. Young adults who experienced closer, more trusting relationships with their mothers were more likely to accept their friend requests. When it came to fathers, closeness and trust were not important factors in young adults’ Facebook friend request decisions. Perhaps young adults were more concerned about how their fathers may bring typical role-based interactions to what they read and experience on their children’s Facebook sites. For instance, young adults may fear reprisal from their fathers as they tend to be the parent charged with disciplining their children. Overall, these results seem to mirror the traditional gender roles given to each parent. Thus, some aspects of traditional gender roles may extend to SNS interactions.

Parental roles, as they relate to parent-child communication in particular, may also elucidate sex-based differences between parents. Mothers often serve as the family’s nexus of communication (Lye, 1996) and are seen as being more open to communication (Holmbeck, Paikoff, & Brooks-Gunn, 1995). When taken with the fathers’ proclivity for employing an authoritarian role, a young adult’s decision to reveal private information to mothers may involve a certain level of risk (McKinney & Renk, 2008). In other words, disclosing sensitive information to mothers could result in mothers communicating the information to fathers, where fear of reprisal may ensue. Young adults who were closer and more trusting of their mothers were more willing to accept and share private information with them on Facebook. On the other hand, perceptions of relational quality and trust for fathers were not associated with young adults’ privacy management.
decisions. This imparts further inquiry about exploring possible factors and constructs that may be associated with young adults’ allowing their fathers to connect and interact with them through social media.

Network analysis adds further insight into these findings (Mesch & Talmud, 2010). An individual’s friends in any given network can be categorized as being weak or strong ties. Communication with weak ties is characterized as surface level interaction with limited disclosure centering on only a few topics. On the other hand, strong ties incorporate a deeper level of involvement and sharing between individuals who see each other as linked in a significant way. Strong ties tend to use more mediums to communicate with each other than do weak ties (Haythornthwaite, 2002). Since parents are generally considered to be strong ties, adding them on Facebook as another medium through which to communicate makes sense. More specifically, this could explain why fathers are allowed into young adults’ Facebook space despite relational quality and trust not having a significant impact on their decisions.

The power differential inherent in parent/child relationships represents another possible explanation for the factors related to young adults’ decisions for whether to accept parental friend requests. Young adults may experience a clear lack of ability to decline friend requests from either parent because of the inherent power issues associated with the parent-child relationship. The repercussions of declining such requests from parents may motivate young adults’ parental Facebook friend request decisions. Young adults may feel an obligation to allow parents into their Facebook space simply because the request came from an authority figure. As such, future research might explore a power-based analysis of communication on social media and decision-making practices
with parents. Power may also offer another explanation for the factors related to young adults’ decisions when dealing with fathers’ friend requests as the variables studied in this thesis do not speak to this issue. Power embedded within interpersonal relationships highlights the complexity of studying topics like social media interaction and decision-making practices.

The intricacies involved in studying parent/child communication on Facebook reflect the complexities of studying family communication in face-to-face settings. It can be difficult to examine communication between isolated members without considering the remaining family members or all of the ways those individuals interact with one another as an entire integrated system. This thesis captures parent/child communication on Facebook, but cannot account for face-to-face communication between other family members, which might impact young adults’ decisions regarding parental Facebook friend requests. For example, a child may decide to allow their parent to be a part of their SNS and instead of changing their privacy management rules for the social media space they may respond to the request by establishing new rules for their parents and negotiating with their parents face-to-face about the types of appropriate and inappropriate interactions that they expect to occur and be avoided as a new member of their privileged online community created through Facebook (Child & Petronio, 2011).

This thesis began exploring this topic by considering what occurred between children and their parents on Facebook. Further research examining exploring parent-child conversations about social media privacy management is warranted. Still, this study advances valuable insight about family communication and social media, a topic about which little is known overall.
The results of this thesis also contribute to Communication Privacy Management theory, which states that individuals and groups form rules for managing private information (Petronio, 1991, 2000, 2002). One of the foundations on which privacy rules are created is through contextual criteria. Contextual criteria represent situations and events in an individual’s life that become influential in rule development (Petronio, 2002). These criteria can include traumatic events, but can also include the more mundane situations an individual encounters. This thesis demonstrates that young adults’ relationships with their mothers, as indicated by the constructs of relational quality and trust, are important contextual factors in privacy rule formation for allowing Facebook interactions to occur or not. Parental trust and relational quality are important contextual and relational factors for young adults as they make decisions about whether or not to interact with parents through the Facebook medium in a more public or private manner. This provides further understanding of the relational factors which comprise the contextual criteria for privacy rule development from CPM theory when considering social media interactions with parents (Petronio, 2002).

**Practical Implications**

This thesis offers a number of suggestions for parents as they initiate or continue contact with their children in an on-line medium. First, the importance of family privacy norms is apparent. The degree to which a family is open and shares information with each other will likely impact the willingness of children to communicate with their parents, and mothers in particular, on SNSs such as Facebook. For example, children who come from families who are more open with each other will be more willing to continue sharing with their mothers on Facebook. This thesis helps to demonstrate how parents can impact how
their children communicate with them on-line. Creating more open, sharing privacy norms in the family will aid in knowing what to expect from children when engaging in on-line communication. The mother serves as the gatekeeper for access to their child’s Facebook communication as it relates to the established family privacy environment. In assessing the privacy norms for their family, parents can help to gradually shift and alter the norms to establish a more open climate. Additionally, families who share more with each other often experience more satisfying relationships with family members (Morr Serewicz et al., 2007).

As young adults begin to find a balance between being connected to, and autonomous from, their parents, relational quality and trust are important factors (Petronio, 1994; Williams, 2003). Mothers should take special note of these characteristics if deciding to communicate with their children on-line. Relational quality and trust serve as indicators as to whether or not children will be receptive to SNS communication with their parents. For fathers, these factors do not appear to be indicative of children’s willingness to communicate on-line.

**Strengths and Limitations**

The number of cases per category with certain variables represented a limitation for this study. Specifically, young adults’ actions upon receiving a parental Facebook friend request (i.e., accept the request with turbulence, accept the request with no turbulence, reject the request with turbulence, reject the request with no turbulence, ignore the request with turbulence, ignore the request with no turbulence) had very few responses in a number of categories. To address this limitation, *reject with turbulence* and *reject without turbulence* as well as *ignore with turbulence* and *ignore without turbulence* were
combined into the categories of *reject* and *ignore*, respectively. This increased the number of responses for these categories, but did not completely alleviate the relatively low number of cases for analysis with this variable. More data collection would likely allow for the separation of the variables that were combined in the analysis of this study, providing a deeper understanding of the way in which young adults deal with parental Facebook friend requests.

Many studies in the social sciences, and the communication discipline in particular, utilize convenience samples which compromise the ability to generalize results to larger populations. Often times, these samples use college students to make assumptions about larger populations where students likely constitute a poor representation of the experiences and communication phenomena of other demographic groups. However, one of the strengths of this study was its sample. While it was a convenience sample by nature, it managed to represent the desired demographic of young adults ages 18-22 who were active Facebook users. However, it is important to note that the use of Facebook directly as a way to collect potential participants strengthened the validity of the study. The results are not generalizable beyond the sample.

**Future Research**

Future research should explore young adults who have not received parental Facebook friend requests. Studying this group will help to present a clearer picture of the impact of parents and children connecting on Facebook. Being able to juxtapose the results from this thesis with a study examining young adults who have not received a request would help to lend more understanding to young adults privacy management practices on
Facebook. In addition, the roles of IFPOs and relational characteristics on young adults’ decisions regarding parental Facebook friend requests can be compared between studies.

Exploring young adults who have not received a parental Facebook friend request may also answer questions about how older adults adopt new technologies and its affect on young adults’ privacy management practices (Rogers, 1995). For instance, some young adults know their parents are slow or unwilling to adopt new communication technologies such as Facebook (i.e., laggards) and will never receive a request. In contrast, young adults with tech savvy parents (i.e., early adopters) could have received friend requests much earlier than others with parents slower to adopt. Hence, how does the proclivity of parents to adopt new technologies impact young adults’ privacy management practices? This would likely shed a light on some of the dynamics at play when young adults connect, or do not connect, with parents on Facebook.

Future studies may also utilize longitudinal methods for data collection. This type of study would provide greater insight into the evolution of young adults’ on-line privacy management practices over time. This thesis collected cross-sectional data, which only provides a snapshot into how rapidly and completely new technologies are evolving and impacting the ways in which families communicate and manage privacy on-line. Hence, empirically analyzing young adults’ privacy management practices over time can help to provide a more dynamic picture of young adults’ on-line privacy management.

**Conclusion**

The thesis examined young adults’ Facebook privacy management practices and Facebook interaction norms with parents, resulting in many findings. Results indicate that when faced with a parental Facebook friend request, young adults most often choose to
accept the request. When accepting friend requests, young adults frequently choose to avoid making restrictive modifications to their privacy settings. When faced with parental Facebook friend requests from mothers, young adults’ family privacy norms were significant in young adults’ decisions. In particular, young adults that come from families valuing open communication between family members were likely to accept friend requests from moms. Conversely, young adults with families that have constrained privacy norms were less likely to accept friend requests from moms. Decisions for requests from fathers are not significantly related to family privacy orientations. The relational characteristics of relational quality and trust are important for young adults’ friend request decisions for mothers. These constructs are not related to young adults’ friend request decisions regarding fathers. Finally, young adults’ Facebook privacy management practices are not significantly different as a product of how the parental Facebook friend request is managed for either parent (i.e., accept, reject, or ignore parental Facebook friend requests). These specific findings can then be put into the context of Facebook and SNSs on the whole.

As Facebook continues to grow in popularity, with almost 1 in 10 individuals alive today owning a profile (Facebook, 2010), studying the phenomenon from a communication standpoint is important. This thesis probes Facebook’s impact on family communication and the way that children and parents interact through the medium by demonstrating that young adults are choosing to connect with their parents on Facebook. Yet just as germane, this thesis adds understanding to the ways in which families shape Facebook as a medium. In particular, this voice joins with a growing chorus of scholarly Facebook research demonstrating that individuals are connecting with a host of different
face-to-face social networks through social media (Dennis Frampton, 2010; Pempek et al., 2009). However, more research is needed to form a more complete picture of how individuals are shaping SNS technologies and the ways in which they communicate and interact in the Facebook paradigm.
## Appendix A

### Demographic and Descriptive Information

1. **Gender**
   - Female
   - Male

2. **Ethnicity:**
   - Black
   - Asian
   - White
   - Hispanic
   - Native American
   - Other _________

3. **Age:**


5. On average, how many hours do you spend on the Internet per day? ___________

6. On average, how many times a week do you log into Facebook? ___________

7. On average, how many hours do you spend actively using Facebook per day? ___________

8. What type of Internet access do you normally use?  
   - At home, personal computer
   - At home, shared computer
   - Public computer (e.g. library)

9. In addition to your Facebook account, do you maintain a blog (Y or N): ___ or a Twitter account (Y or N): ___?

10. What best describes your family?  
    - Single-parent mother household  
    - Single-parent father household  
    - Two-parent household  
    - Non-parent household

11. How many siblings do you have? ___________

12. (Please check the item that applies to your living situation) Do you live with your parent(s) ___ or away from your parent(s) ___?
Appendix B

Parental Facebook Friend Request Action

1. From whom have you received a Facebook friend request?
   - Mother  
   - Father  
   - Both Mother/Father  
   - Neither
   
   Mother/Father

2. To whom have you sent a Facebook friend request?
   - Mother  
   - Father  
   - Both Mother/Father  
   - Neither
   
   Mother/Father

3. Think about when you have received a parental Facebook friend request and were deciding how to deal with the request. Please describe how you handled the request and any thoughts, revelations, or information to help better understand your decision making process?

4. When you received a parental Facebook friend request, how did you respond?
   - I accepted the request  
   - I rejected the request  
   - I ignored the request, letting the request go unanswered.

5. Think about when you received the parental Facebook friend request, did you make any modification(s) to your privacy settings when deciding how to deal with the request?
   - Yes  
   - No

6. Think about when you received the parental Facebook friend request. Did you delete any content when deciding how to deal with the request?
   - Yes  
   - No

7. Please indicate the area(s) of your Facebook account in which you have altered your privacy settings or deleted content:
   - Profile  
   - Basic info  
   - Personal info  
   - Status updates and links  
   - Photos tagged of you  
   - Videos tagged of you  
   - Friends  
   - Wall posts by friends  
   - Education info
Work info

8. How often do you make changes to your Facebook privacy settings?
   None of the time  Most of the time
   Very rarely      All of the time
   Some of the time

9. Do you place certain Facebook friends into privacy categories?  Yes  No
   a. If so, please list some examples of the categories that you place Facebook friends into

*Note: Those answering ‘no’ to Question 1 will get the same questions addressing how they would handle parental Facebook friend requests. These individuals will be examined further in comparative analysis not directly tied to this thesis.*
Appendix C

Interior Family Privacy Orientation Measure (Morr, 2002)

Directions: Please consider how your family handles private information WITHIN your family. Answer each question by indicating how much you agree that each statement currently describes your family.

1=Strongly Disagree/ 7=Strongly Agree

1. Family members are very open with one another.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

2. Family members do not discuss private information with one another.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

3. Within the family, everybody knows everything.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7

4. There are specific groups within the family that keep information from one another.  
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appendix D

Parent/Child Relational Quality Measure (Petronio, 1994)

Directions: Please consider your relationship with your mother/father. Answer each question by indicating how well the following statements describe your feelings towards your mother/father.

1=Strongly Disagree/ 7=Strongly Agree

1. I frequently feel satisfied about the relationship with my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. I frequently feel happy with the relationship with my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I frequently feel the relationship with my mother/father is rewarding. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. I frequently feel comfortable in the relationship with my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. I frequently feel there are problems in the relationship with my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I frequently feel glad that I have my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. I frequently feel that nothing goes right in the relationship with my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
8. I frequently feel worried about the relationship with my mother/father. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appendix E

Parent/Child Trust Measure (Petronio, 1994)

Directions: Please consider your level of trust with your mother/father. Answer each question by indicating how well the following statements describe your feeling of trust towards your mother/father.

1=Strongly Disagree/ 7=Strongly Agree

1. I trust my mother/father.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
2. I distrust my mother/father.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
3. I can count on my mother/father.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
4. My mother/father does not show much consideration.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
5. My mother/father seem to distrust me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
6. I will always be there for my parents.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7
Appendix F

Modified Facebook Privacy Management Measure (Child, 2007)

Directions: Please consider how you handle private information on Facebook. Each statement below describes potential Facebook habits and patterns. Answer each question by indicating how well the following statements describe your current Facebook activities.

1=Strongly Disagree/ 7=Strongly Agree

1. When I face challenges in my life, I feel comfortable talking about them on Facebook.
2. I like my Facebook profile to be long and detailed.
3. I like to discuss work concerns of Facebook.
4. I often tell intimate, personal things on Facebook without hesitation.
5. I share information with people whom I don’t know in my day-to-day life.
6. I update my Facebook status or content frequently.
7. I have limited the personal information posted on Facebook.
8. I use shorthand (e.g. pseudonyms of limited details) when discussing sensitive information so others have limited access to know my personal information.
9. If I think that information I posted really looks too private, I might delete it.
10. I usually am slow to talk about recent events on Facebook because people might talk.
11. I don’t post certain topics on Facebook because I worry who has access.
12. Seeing intimate details about someone else on Facebook makes me feel I should keep their information private.
13. I use Facebook so that others can link to me with similar interests.
14. I try to let people know my best interest on Facebook so I can find friends.
15. I allow people with a profile or picture I like to access my Facebook profile.
16. I comment on Facebook profiles to have others check out my Facebook profile.
17. I allow access to my Facebook profiles through directories and key word searches.
18. I regularly link to interesting websites or fan pages to increase traffic on my Facebook profile.
References


