ABSTRACT

TO FRIEND OR NOT TO FRIEND: STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTION ON FACEBOOK

by Justin Gus Foote

The purpose of this study was to begin research based on students’ perceptions of student-teacher interaction on the social networking site Facebook. Specifically, whether interaction on Facebook between students and teachers could increase the social dimension of the student-teacher relationship, in turn increasing the task dimension. The study focused on understanding the role a teacher’s sex and age plays in student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Additionally, the research examined student perceptions regarding whether students or teachers should initiate interaction on Facebook. Finally, the study allowed students to share their ideas regarding what types of information teachers should and should not share with students through Facebook. Although few significant results were found, the results indicated that students were open to a small increase in student-teacher interaction on Facebook, but that such interaction should remain mostly task oriented. Discussion of the results and suggestions for future research are also provided.
TO FRIEND OR NOT TO FRIEND: STUDENTS’ PERCEPTIONS OF STUDENT-TEACHER INTERACTION ON FACEBOOK

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Justin Gus Foote
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Advisor__________________________________
Dr. Lawrence B. Nadler

Reader___________________________________
Dr. Todd T. Holm

Reader___________________________________
Dr. Judith L. Weiner
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Introduction

Communication between students and teachers has always been an important aspect of academia. Many aspects of student-teacher interaction have been researched, but little academic research has focused on student-teacher interaction occurring within social networking sites. The ability to understand and interpret student-teacher interaction is a primary concern for educators, and the increased use of social networking sites has recently complicated student-teacher interaction. While student-teacher interaction is unique in that the relationship has defined conditions on which it is based (within an academic institution and predetermined power dynamics), there are aspects of the interaction that coincide with most interpersonal relationships.

Burgoon and Hale (1984) identified twelve fundamental topoi of relational communication. Some of these topoi have importance in student-teacher relationships however; this research will focus on the task-social orientation dimension of the student-teacher relationship. By increasing the social dimension of the relationship, teachers may also be able to help students increase the task dimension of the relationship (i.e. learning). Social networking sites provide students and teachers with another avenue to create a social connection that otherwise may have been absent from the student-teacher relationship. The creation of this social aspect of the student-teacher relationship may, in turn, be able to increase the task aspect of the relationship and allow for greater student motivation (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 1999). Because student and teacher scripts are currently being negotiated concerning interaction on Facebook, research must be done to identify and examine emerging patterns and how students perceive these emerging script characteristics.

There is little doubt that social networking has become an important topic within the communication field (Rubel, 2007) and one of the most utilized aspects on the Internet (NielsonWire, 2010). This exponential growth, along with the constant creation and reshaping of norms, has led scholars to ponder the perceptions that individuals hold toward communication on social networking sites (Ellison, Steinfield, Lampe, 2007; Mazer, Murphy, Simonds, 2007; Mitchell & Watstein, 2007; Patton, 2007; Pempek, Yermolayeva, Calvert, 2008; O’Malley, 2010). There are a number of prominent social networking sites, such as MySpace, LinkedIn, Twitter, Friendster, and Facebook. Facebook, which began solely for the use of individuals in
academia, provides an optimal base for student-teacher interaction because of the site’s increased popularity among college students.

Over time, some norms have been created and maintained between peers on social networking sites and these norms have helped individuals follow and understand some basic guidelines while communicating. Consequently, some of the issues surrounding communication on social networking sites has already been questioned and researched. However, one aspect that has been overlooked is interaction between students and teachers on social networking sites. With the increase in non-students using social networking sites—almost 51 percent of adults have a profile on at least one social networking site—the chances of students and teachers to interact on social networking sites has also increased (O’Malley, 2010). This area deserves consideration because the increase of teachers participating in social networking has brought forth areas of frustration concerning interaction between students and teachers (Glater, 2006; Lipka, 2007).

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to begin research based on students’ perceptions of student-teacher interaction on the social networking site Facebook. Originally created for users within an academic institution, Facebook maintains a vast appeal to college students (Lupsa, 2006). Eillison et al. (2007) found that 94 percent of their sampled college students had a Facebook account. As the largest and most influential social networking site (Gross, 2009), Facebook has become the logical choice for research concerning student-teacher interaction over social networking sites. Minimal research has focused on student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Prior research focused mainly on the perceptions of teachers. Because of the differences in communication between male and female teachers, this study will focus on understanding the role a teacher’s sex plays in student-teacher interaction. Specifically, whether students show a preference toward interaction with either male or female teachers. This study will also examine student perceptions that a teacher’s age has within this student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Additionally, this research will examine student perceptions regarding whether students or teachers should initiate interaction on Facebook. Finally, the study will allow for students to share their ideas regarding what types of information teachers should and should not share with students through Facebook.
Chapter 1: Review of Literature

Social Dimension of Student–Teacher Relationships

To fully understand student-teacher relationships, the characteristics of these relationships must be analyzed. As student-teacher relationships are interpersonal in nature they hold many of the same attributes found in interpersonal communication (Frymier & Houser, 2000; Prentice & Kramer, 2006). Burgoon and Hale (1984) wrote, “relational messages are those verbal and nonverbal expressions that indicate how two or more people regard each other, regard their relationship, or regard themselves within the context of the relationship” (p.193). Furthermore, Burgoon and Hale (1984) found and defined 12 relational topoi (i.e., trust, dominance-submission, intimacy, affection-hostility, intensity of involvement, inclusion-exclusion, depth-superficiality, emotional arousal, composure, similarity, formality, and task-social orientation) fundamental to interpersonal communication. Nadler and Nadler (2000) examined six of the topoi that were relevant to student-teacher relationships (immediacy/affection, similarity/depth, receptivity/trust, dominance, equality, and task orientation). This research will focus on task-social orientation and its importance to student-teacher relationships.

Defining and examining the dynamics of the student-teacher relationship will help increase understanding of how student-teacher interaction on Facebook can enhance the social dimension of the student-teacher relationship, and in turn increase the task dimension. Burgoon and Hale (1984) argue that an individual strives to find balance between a task-orientation, focused on a desirability to work, and a social-orientation, focused on an individual as a social partner. This can also be true for student-teacher relationships, which appear often as largely task-oriented relationships. A task-only dynamic in relationships focuses on the ability to get tasks accomplished. Most of the time the student-teacher relationship should be task-oriented, because a teacher needs to help the student understand the content being taught. At the core, a strong task orientation emphasizes the very basis of the student-teacher relationship. Where a task-only orientation would focus solely on the ability to accomplish what is needed between the student and the teacher, a task-social orientation goes beyond that type of relationship. In fact, some research supports the benefits of an increased social orientation within the student-teacher relationship (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 1999).
A task-social orientation to the student-teacher relationship can be beneficial for both the student and the teacher. While maintaining a professional tone, students and teachers can begin to better understand each other. Improved understanding results when the student and teacher are able to see and know each other as individuals. Ryan and Patrick (2001) state that, “classrooms are inherently social places,” with students interacting with both other students and teachers (p.438). Wentzel (1993) found that those students who pursue both academic and social goals in the classroom with other students, as well as the instructor, often maintain a higher GPA than students who do not pursue social goals in the classroom. This research demonstrates that students value both the task and social dimensions of an academic setting. Cartledge and Milburn (1978) state, “academic curriculum are usually clear, but along with the acquisition of intellectual skills, there is another, mostly unarticulated, “hidden” curriculum that has to do with social behaviors, attitudes, and values” (p. 134). Students are looking for a social dimension in the classroom and academia has begun to realize this social importance. Research also demonstrates that by increasing the social dimension of the student-teacher relationship, students can benefit from an increased task orientation (Ramsden, 1979). The increased task orientation and teachers acting as social agents can help increase students’ motivation and learning (Baker, 1999; Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Davis, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 1999), providing students the opportunity to develop a stronger education.

The burden of this social dimension is shared by both the teacher and student. The student must be willing to begin the social relationship and the teacher would need to be able to make time to develop the relationship. Teachers may be hesitant to initiate interaction with individual students as they may feel such behavior would be showing favoritism to particular students. Teachers may also believe that initiating interaction with a student may be over-stepping their boundaries since most student-teacher interaction takes place within an academic setting. Maintaining a social relationship with many students can be difficult for a teacher, even when expanding these relationships to out-of-class communication. However, student-teacher interaction over computer-mediated communication can help in alleviating this problem. Social networking allows for teachers and students to interact with ease compared to previous traditional methods of communication. Rather than individually responding to individual student emails, often a time consuming process, social networking sites keep all recent updates in a main section. In Facebook the “news feed” contains all recent updates and is the first page that
appears to a user upon login. Choosing to comment or chat with a student would take more effort and time, but the essential details to maintain a social aspect for the relationship can be established with ease. Social networking is then able to help maintain and develop a social aspect to the student-teacher relationship, where it may have been difficult in previous years. The ease of social networking interaction would allow teachers to expand the creation of a social dimension to an increased number of students. Increasing the social dimension and subsequent task dimension of the student-teacher relationship would allow students increased in-class participation and lead to an increased sharing of information (Ramsden, 1979).

The increase of the social dimension to the student-teacher relationship may also produce some negative elements. Increasing a social aspect of the student-teacher relationship creates the opportunity to over-extend teachers in terms of personal time and student interaction. The amount of student-teacher interaction has always been of concern for educators. The source of this concern arises because of transparency of positive benefits and negative harms of student-teacher interaction. The teaching profession offers a vast opportunity to positively affect students; but there are times when teachers find themselves, as Schwarz and Alberts write, “unwittingly involved in the cross fires of events in our students’ lives” (1998, p. 147). The increased use of CMC, specifically social networking sites, increases a teacher’s potential to be caught in this “cross fire.” Along with being caught between a student’s school and personal life, teachers working to increase a social relationship to the student-teacher relationship may find that a student may become more dependent on the teacher (Anderson, 2003; Bloch, 2002; Hansford, Tennent, Ehrich, 2003.).

A minority of students already attempt to utilize student-teacher interaction as a means to avoid personally studying and understanding course concepts and material. These students instead rely on trying to interact with their teachers (i.e., attending office hours) as a means to increase understanding directly from the teacher. Students who are successful in this behavior find themselves lacking study and critical thinking skills, instead relying on the teacher for information (Anderson, 2003). Teachers utilizing social networking sites would be providing students a chance to increase this type of behavior. Teachers’ use of social networking, lastly, would increase students’ ability to access a teacher’s personal life that before may have been kept out of the student-teacher relationship (Mazer, Murphy, Simonds, 2007; Shapira, 2008; Mazer, Murphy, Simonds 2009). The use of social networking sites to increase a social
relationship between a teacher and a student allows for a sharing of information, information that may not have been intended for sharing between the two parties. Although these negative elements exist, social networking sites still remain a beneficial means to increase the social dimension of the student-teacher relationship.

**Computer Mediated Communication and Social Networking**

Computer-mediated communication (CMC), especially social networks, has become an increased area of research for academic scholars (Mazer, Murphy, Simonds, 2009; Mitchell & Watstein, 2007; O’Malley, 2010; Patton, 2007; Pempek, Yermolayeva, Calvert, 2008). However, the ways in which CMC influences student-teacher relationships has only recently become a central topic in research. The increased use of CMC has allowed students to create and maintain student-teacher relationships at a far greater pace, and depth, than previous student generations. Face-to-face communication can often be limited in student-teacher relationships. Walther (1995) explains that students who choose to utilize CMC have a greater opportunity to create relationships than students who choose not to use CMC. This can also be found in student-teacher interaction. Tidwell and Walther (2002) also found that individuals using CMC used direct uncertainty reduction strategies, through question asking and self-disclosure, and were able to reach a connection level similar to those using face-to-face (FtF) communication. This indicates that students who utilize CMC should be able to create and maintain a student-teacher relationship similar to those students who only use FtF communication. At the same time, the students using CMC can overcome some of the limitations, such as time, that non-CMC users face when trying to maintain student-teacher relationships.

Rheingold (1994) found that the ability to connect with others on virtual networks allowed individuals to create social capital, which is the ability to find and share information as well as show support for others. This social capital stems from allowing people to reach those who they would normally have difficulty finding, such as a teacher that may be constrained due to availability. This may indicate that students who use CMC to interact with their teacher will be able to create a strong social connection, at the same time relieving the face-to-face pressure some students may feel in the classroom. The creation of social capital and social connection for students would allow students to create a sense of connection that might otherwise be missing from a classroom setting and may help students realize their potential in academic interests. Increasing student-teacher interaction may allow students who normally avoid joining classroom
discussion a chance to communicate with their teacher. This CMC interaction may give a
student who is not comfortable speaking up in the classroom the opportunity to develop a sense
of connection and comfort with the teacher, and this comfort may transfer back into the
classroom. This sense of comfort may help the student begin to feel more at ease joining in class
discussion and would then help the student reach a higher potential in the classroom. As the
student builds confidence using CMC with teachers, they may feel more confident toward
voicing their thoughts and opinions in classroom discussion. This increase in participation
would give both the student and the class greater breadth and depth in class discussion and help
facilitate increased learning.

CMC allows a person the opportunity to immerse him/her self in a situation before
making a first impression. Susan Barnes (2003) describes this type of activity as “lurking” and
describes it as “becoming familiar with individuals and the group’s dynamic before joining the
conversation” (p. 351). This type of behavior is important as it allows a person to develop their
communication without the pressure of immediate reaction found in face-to-face communication
(Barnes, 2003). This means allowing students who do not feel comfortable participating in class
the opportunity to develop a response and/or inquiry to issues brought forth in in-class
discussion. With this extra opportunity for students to examine their thoughts, they may be able
to find an enhanced cognitive ability to articulate their response and as such, become more
comfortable participating in class discussion.

CMC also allows a student and teacher to interact in a less formal environment. Rather
than communication taking place in a formal classroom or office setting, communication can
take place wherever the two can access a computer and Internet connection. Because of the
informal nature of CMC based interaction, students have a chance to build a relationship with
their teacher that they may not have been able to develop in typical student-teacher settings. The
formal aspect of the student-teacher relationship helps in maintaining the formal-informal
dimension of the student-teacher relationship, as described by Burgoon and Hale (1984).
Research has provided evidence that informal interaction between students and teachers acts as a
vital contribution to the formation of student’s knowledge and ideas, as students do not always
want a formal classroom setting (Pascarella, 1980; Rossi, 1966). As mentioned before, social
connection with their teacher has been seen to allow students a greater sense of motivation and
learning in the classroom (Baker, 1999; Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Davis, 2003; Ryan &
Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 1999). Having identified the benefits of CMC, it is important to analyze how social networking can influence the student-teacher relationship.

**The Influence of Social Networking**

Social networking has become an exceedingly prevalent aspect of everyday life. Social networking sites (SNS) allow users to communicate with other users within a singular website in order to build and maintain relationships. While commonly used by adolescents and college students, adults are a currently increasing demographic of users actively participating on social networking sites (Pempek, Yermaolayeva, Calvert, 2009; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, Espinoza, 2008). Most mainstream media coverage of SNS has focused on the privacy issues that arise because of the blurred line between public and private life on these sites (boyd, 2008; Christofides, Muise, Desmarais, 2009; Livingston, 2008). Because of this mainstream media portrayal, interaction on SNS has been viewed with caution. Academic research on SNS has primarily been concerned with the benefits and harms of creating an online identity, self-disclosure (Mazer, Murphy, Simonds, 2007), relationship creation and maintenance (Ellison, Steinfield, Lampe, 2008; Patton, 2007) and motivation (Ellison et al. 2008; Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering, Orr, 2009). Only recently have researchers begun to examine the effects SNS can have on student-teacher interaction and how social networking can be effectively used in an academic setting (Hewitt and Forte, 2006; Kwong, 2007; Lipka, 2007).

As the number of teachers utilizing SNS continues to grow, questions have risen concerning the interaction between students and teachers on social networking sites. SNS operate in a different manner than previous methods of online student-teacher interaction. Prior to SNS, the three main arenas of online student-teacher interaction have been email, instructor websites, and virtual learning environments (e.g. Blackboard). As with these previous avenues of student-teacher interaction, SNS is asynchronous communication. Unlike FtF communication, which is synchronous, allowing for continual message creation and reception, asynchronous communication allows for individuals to create and send messages without constant interaction. The ease with which a number of users can share information with each other separates SNS from these previous forms of student-teacher interaction. Unlike message boards, which can be hard to follow as users have to sort through which thread contains the proper information, SNS allows users to easily disseminate and organize information.
With this increase of student-teacher interaction taking place on social networking sites, it is important to begin to analyze and discuss both the student and teacher’s perceptions of this interaction. Problems have already been identified because students and teachers have more access to each other (Abel, 2005; Gross, 2009; Hewitt, Forte, 2006; Lipka, 2007; Releford, Xiong, Rand, Brown, 2008; Shapira, 2008). For example, when a teacher should be accessible to their students has already become an issue that many teachers have had to address. Students have begun to expect their teachers to respond immediately upon receipt of the student’s email. Teachers have begun to set limits on what should be an acceptable time period for the student to expect a response to their inquiry.

Often these lines blur on what could be perceived as “acceptable” behavior. On social networking sites, teachers not only have access to what their students post on their sites but also what the students’ friends post. Having this indirect access to their student’s interaction with other individuals can create situations that previously have been overlooked (Lipka, 2007). Students posting on social networking sites are not usually restricting their language or thoughts to that which would be considered acceptable classroom communication. Reading that a student is currently in the midst of a drinking binge may not be something that a teacher cares to know about their students, but that information may be accessed since Facebook places a user’s friend updates on their homepage. This page is accessed as soon as an individual logs onto their Facebook account. Most of the time these updates are trivial in substance. However, if a teacher finds behavior that may be a sign of an occurring problem, ethical questions may arise.

Because of an increase of student-teacher interaction and the benefits and harms that arise, social networking has become an important, and controversial, topic amongst educators (Mazer et al., 2007). Discussion has begun regarding what is appropriate student-teacher interaction as well as what information should be made available to each group, but most of this discussion has focused around the teacher’s perspective (Abel, 2007; Lipka, 2007; Sturgeon & Walker, 2009). Studies ranging from how librarians can effectively use social networks to how teachers can use social networking to help develop out-of-class communication (Chu & Meulemans, 2008; Kwong, 2007; Mazer et al., 2007; Mitchell & Watstein, 2007) have begun to help teachers navigate this ever-changing landscape. However, very little work has been done considering a student’s perception of this interaction. This research will look at ways in which students’ perceptions vary based on the age and sex of the teacher. Understanding students’
perceptions of student-teacher interaction on social networking sites will aid educators in utilizing this tool to create stronger student-teacher relationships and determine what benefits can be derived from such interaction.

Although there are a number of social networking sites available for research (Friendster, LinkedIn, MySpace, Twitter) Facebook is the one that began as a tool for those in academia. When first launched, only individuals with educational institution emails (i.e., .edu) were able to join the site. The criterion for membership has changed and individuals no longer need an educational email address. Facebook still maintains a vast appeal to college students (Lupsa, 2006). Eillison et al. (2007) found that 94 percent of their sampled college students had a Facebook account. Being the largest and most influential social networking site (Gross, 2009), Facebook is the logical choice for such research concerning students and teachers. The new privacy restrictions have also made Facebook the logical choice because individuals can now control who has access to each part of their profile (Richmond, 2009; Richmond, 2010).

Previous academic research concerning Facebook and student-teacher relationships has focused on privacy and self-disclosure (boyd, 2008; Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds, 2007). Mazer et al. (2007) tested whether teacher self-disclosure (on Facebook) would have an impact on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. Mazer et al. created three different Facebook profiles with different levels of disclosure available for the same teacher. They concluded that higher levels of disclosure might have led to “higher levels of anticipated motivation and affective learning and lead to a more comfortable classroom climate” (Mazer et al., 2007, p. 12). This research showed that students who interacted with their teacher were able to build a social connection and “may feel more comfortable communicating in the classroom” and such interaction “may have a positive influence on important learning outcomes” (Mazer et al., 2007, p. 13). This research shows the importance social networking may have on student-teacher interaction. As such, an examination of out-of-class communication (OOC) must also be included, as characteristics of OOC are important to understanding student perceptions of the role of social networking in the student-teacher relationship.

**Out of Class Communication**

Although in-class communication is the dominant form of communication between students and teachers, out-of-class communication has been shown to be extremely important in helping to build student-teacher relationships. Nadler and Nadler (2001) described out-of-class
communication (OCC) as, “interactions outside the formal classroom that may be initiated by students or faculty” (p. 242). Considering out-of-class communication is valuable because student-teacher interaction on social networking will primarily occur in an out-of-class context. The benefits of increased OCC include increased GPA and the overall quality of the college experience (Pascarella, 1980; Nadler & Nadler, 2001). While the benefits of OCC have been documented, student use of OCC has been much more infrequent than anticipated (Frymier & Dobransky, 2004; Jaasma & Koper, 1999, Nadler & Nadler, 2001). Social networking has the opportunity to increase the frequency of OCC between students and teachers.

Traditional forms of OCC typically involve the student and/or teacher engaging in more effort (scheduling an appointment, traveling to a meeting place), but student-teacher interaction on social networking sites can be almost spontaneous and involve little effort, as long as both parties are willing to participate simply by friending the other person. The extreme interactivity of social networking allows for students and teachers to not only share information with each other but for people outside this dyad to add information as well. This again can help in balancing the task-social relational dimension set forth by Burgoon and Hale (1984), because both the student and teacher now have another avenue to both accomplish work and be more sociable toward each other. Interaction on social networking sites also allows the student and teacher the opportunity to experience more breadth and depth to their conversations.

This can be understood through Altman and Taylor’s (1973) social penetration theory. Altman and Taylor (1973) describe that breadth reflects the scope of one’s personality and depth leads from the peripheral level of an individual’s personality into a more private and unique sense of self. The increase in knowledge shared by individuals provides each with a better understanding of the other’s self. Through social penetration theory, students and teachers can increase both the amount of information (breadth) and their understanding of the other individual (depth). Research also found that students desire more personal attention and concern for their feelings (Aylor, 2003; Fusani, 1994). The ease with which social networking can allow students and teachers to share personal information can promote a greater sense of social connection that otherwise would take more effort to create.

In line with the properties of CMC, interaction on SNS does not offer the same detail as face-to-face interaction. Student-teacher interaction on social networking sites is limited to verbal communication; each party has to rely on the content of the message. However, there are
some tools to help inject non-verbal cues into CMC. Acronyms (i.g. lol, laugh-out-loud; jk, just kidding; ttyl, talk to you later), as well as the use of emoticons (characters to show emotion, i.g. 😊, ;), :D), have helped individuals share a sense of non-verbal interaction in CMC. This interaction allows a student and teacher a means to gather information from each other without having to rely solely on face-to-face communication. Interaction on SNS allows users to gather small bits of information without going in-depth in the type of information they are trying to find. This occurs for one of two reasons. First, either the student or the teacher can limit the amount of information they want to share with the other party. Second, students and teachers determine the amount of information they want to actively find about the other party. Social networking allows for this difference in traditional OCC.

Baxter (1988) found that interpersonal relationships have dialectical tensions and how individuals deal with these tensions depends on the other person and the type of relationship. Because student-teacher relationships are interpersonal in nature (Frymier & Houser, 2000) we would expect dialectical tensions to be found within these relationships. Social networking can help manage these tensions, especially the need for openness and closedness, as well as autonomy- connectedness, because students and teachers now have another route to gather information from each other that also allows the individual to choose how much they want to participate.

Specific classroom tensions have also been researched and student-teacher interaction on social networking can also help manage these tensions. Prentice and Kramer (2006) argue that three dialectical tensions are found within a classroom setting pertaining to students. The three tensions are: student’s desire to participate and their desire to remain silent; student’s desire for predictable and novel classroom activities; and a student’s management of personal time and class time (Prentice & Kramer, 2006).

Particular to this research is the tension concerning a student’s desire to participate versus their desire to remain silent during in-class discussion. Allowing students another avenue for OCC, as well as the ability to participate in asynchronous communication, should help in building a social relationship with their teacher as the pressure of FtF communication is alleviated. The increase of the social dimension in the student-teacher relationship would help students build confidence in their learning ability and help increase the student’s in-class participation. The increase of a student’s in-class participation could also lead to increased
learning (Baker, 1999; Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Davis, 2003; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 1999). Being able to develop this social aspect should help both students and teachers in developing relationships that extend beyond the typical classroom by creating a more personal and understanding relationship.

Two key variables influencing student-teacher relationships are sex and age, of both the teacher and the student. Differences between male and female students and male and female teachers have been found within research on emotional and task communication (Floyd, 2009; Westmyer & Myers, 1996; Wood, 2010), OCC (Nadler and Nadler, 2000, 2001), immediacy (Frymier and Houser, 2000), teacher evaluations (Basow and Silberg, 1987) and in-class communication (Basow & Distenfeld, 1985; Bennett 1982). Age is also an important factor in student-teacher relationships, especially through CMC. How age differences effects interaction between individuals on CMC has been reported by Prensky’s (2001) research on digital natives and digital immigrants. Mazer et al.’s (2007) research on Facebook interaction utilized a confederate of a young female graduate teaching assistant and suggests investigating whether age has an effect on student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Because of this past research (the questions and suggestions raised) this research will begin to focus on sex and age of both the student and the teacher to a greater degree concerning interaction between students and teachers on Facebook.

**Influence of sex on Facebook interaction**

Interpersonal communication has focused heavily at times on the communication differences between males and females and these differences cannot be ignored when researching student-teacher interaction on Facebook. By first analyzing how students perceive the interaction of male and female teachers on Facebook, research will then be able to focus on students’ perceptions of interaction between same-sex or opposite-sex teachers on Facebook. To begin to understand the role sex plays within interaction between students and teachers on Facebook, previous research on the role that a teacher’s sex plays within the instructional realm needs to be analyzed.

The differences between male and female teachers are prevalent and extend beyond the differences between males and females. In today’s society males are viewed as being task-oriented in communication, whereas females are seen as more relationship-oriented (Wood, 2009). Female teachers are commonly expected to be more empathetic to students, nurturing, and
devote more of their time to students than what is expected of male teachers (Nadler & Nadler, 2000). These differences arise because of communication differences that we see between males and females. Because students already expect more from female teachers, students may be more inclined to interact with female teachers. As students do not expect male teachers to be as empathetic, or social, students may not perceive interaction with male teachers to be as frequent as they do female teachers. Because of these differences that are expected between male and female teachers, research should examine what students prefer, or expect, when interacting with a teacher of a certain sex.

Research indicates that males and females rate different aspects of communication with more importance, such as females rate emotional and relational communication higher than males and males often rate active and task communication higher than females (Floyd, 2009; Westmyer & Myers, 1996; Wood, 2010). This difference in communication styles also carries over to teacher evaluations as male and female teachers are rated differently by students (Basow & Silberg, 1987). Basow and Silberg (1987) concluded male students generally evaluated female teachers lower than their male counterparts. However, both male and female students rated female teachers lower in instructor-individual student interaction (Basow & Silberg, 1987). Additionally, research indicates that both male and female students feel that female teachers should be more empathetic, take a more personal interest in their students, and be more supportive of students than male teachers (Bennett, 1980; Nadler & Nadler, 2001). As students carry these expectations for female teachers, students may be more inclined to interact with female teachers on Facebook as a way to create this empathy and support. In conjunction with this information, Frymier and Houser (2000) found that female students viewed immediacy-building behaviors as more important than did male students. This theoretical construction may lead research to find that female students would be more inclined to interact with teachers on Facebook in order to help build immediacy between the student and teacher. Also, male and female students may expect female teachers to interact on Facebook, more so than male teachers, as a way to continue increased OCC and empathy building.

However, Nadler and Nadler (2001) found that more male students than female students participated in OCC with teachers. While this sets a precedent showing men may be more inclined to interact with teachers on Facebook based only on sex, there are other factors that may allow for different results. Male students also tend to rate male teachers as more concerned and
likable (Basow & Distenfeld, 1985). Male students may then expect more interaction with male teachers on Facebook as a way to continue, and increase, this sense of concern and likability. The findings of Basow and Distenfeld (1985) contradict Bennett (1982). Bennett (1982) found that male students do not differentiate significantly between male and female teacher’s interaction. This result leads researchers to believe that male students may not show a preference interacting with either male or female teachers. However, research also shows that male teachers are perceived by students to have more dominance and power than female teachers (Basow & Distenfeld, 1985). Because of this information, students may not expect interaction on Facebook with male teachers, as male teachers enjoy a preconceived notion of power and are not viewed as equals. With these two pieces of information, this study will examine what role sex plays concerning student-teacher interaction on Facebook.

Because of the contradiction with these findings comparing males and females, the following research question is proposed:

R1: Would students prefer to interact on Facebook with a male or female teacher?

Influence of age on Facebook interaction

Another question that needs to be analyzed is whether students’ perceptions of teacher interaction change with differences in teacher age. The typical Facebook user has 130 friends and most of these “friends” are usually within the same age range as the user. (Facebook Statistics, 2010). In the previously mentioned research conducted by Mazer et al. (2007), “the confederate was a young, female graduate teaching assistant” (p.6). The stimulus person in the study, at first glance, would appear to be a typical person that the majority of Facebook users would expect to encounter on the SNS. As more teachers begin to utilize Facebook it is important to understand how students’ perceptions change when encountering these users on Facebook.

Understanding the perceptions students place on interaction with faculty between similar and different age groups will help determine how teachers, in both age groups, can utilize Facebook as a tool to increase the social aspect found in student-teacher relationships. With the age difference between teachers varying widely, some students may be more inclined to interact with teachers closer to their age on Facebook rather than a teacher who falls within a different age group. One reason to believe that students would place a negative perception toward interaction on Facebook with teachers of a different age range could be found using Expectancy
Violation theory. Expectancy Violation theory (Burgoon, 1978) posits that individuals have an expectation, created from past experiences, in which they perceive the exchange of information. When these expectations are violated individuals evaluate the violation and place either a positive or negative perception on the other person depending on the level of liking for the exchange. This explanation of expectancy violation theory (Burgoon, 1978), and the idea that teacher interaction may be violating a personal space, could help explain the negative perception students may place on teacher interaction on Facebook. The expectancy for students on Facebook is to interact with users within a similar age range. Interaction from an older teacher may violate this expectancy and the student may make a negative attribution toward interaction with that teacher on Facebook. An example of this may be a student who is more inclined to interact with a graduate teaching assistant on Facebook but not a tenured professor. Another way to understand how teacher age affects student perceptions is through Prensky’s idea of digital natives and digital immigrants.

Prensky (2001) identifies digital natives and digital immigrants as two distinct classes of technology users during the recent technological boom. Digital natives are those who have grown up with and have an understanding of the surrounding technology. Digital immigrants are the older generations who have had to adapt to the increase in technology and often have not taken the time to fully immerse themselves in technology. Digital immigrants entering Facebook have, only recently, become an increasing phenomenon. At times, digital natives and immigrants often have conflicting ideas toward interaction on Facebook. These ideas arise over a number of issues. Digital immigrants often feel that what has worked before will work again in the new setting (Prensky, 2001). Digital natives often find it cumbersome to try and teach digital immigrants the new technology and do not understand when digital immigrants are unable to keep up with changing ways (Prensky, 2001, Prensky, 2005). Students (digital natives) may be more inclined to interact with younger teachers, as they see themselves being from the same group, rather than older teachers, as they may be perceived as being from a different group (digital immigrants). This may carry over into student-teacher interaction on Facebook.

Students may also feel more comfortable interacting with younger teachers because they understand and realize that younger teachers have been using Facebook longer. Students can easily approximate the age of their teachers and can assume that younger teachers have used Facebook throughout their college experience. Because of their similarity within the group of
digital natives, students may feel that younger teachers have a better opportunity and ability to use Facebook to increase student-teacher interaction than older teachers. As younger teachers may be more comfortable utilizing Facebook, they may be able to create more opportunities to create asynchronous interaction, through the use of online discussion groups or pages. This asynchronous interaction allows students to manage the tension of classroom participation and remain silent, as asynchronous communication allows students greater time to develop their response (Prentice & Kramer, 2006). Students would have time to formulate their response and then share their views with the teacher. Affirmation through this type of interaction may motivate students to increase in-class participation. Tenured teachers, usually with more experience in the classroom, may feel that they do not need to change the techniques they have utilized over time. Students may then see younger teachers as having a greater ability to adapt and be more comfortable using Facebook to interact with students.

On this basis the following hypothesis is proposed:

H1: Students will be more inclined to interact with a teacher of similar age, rather than a teacher from a different age group.

**Interaction Initiation and Sharing Information on Facebook**

Another area of research that arises surrounding student-teacher interaction on Facebook involves whether students or teachers should initiate interaction, as well as what information teachers should share on Facebook. Facebook, as a company, is guided by the principle that people want to share information (McCarthy, 2010; Zuckerberg, 2010). Facebook’s ability to allow users to instantaneously share information is what has made Facebook the premier social network. However, this instantaneous sharing of information is both a rewarding attribute and a severe downfall. Privacy issues on Facebook continually appear as an important discussion for Facebook users (Kaste, 2010; Vascellaro, 2010). Because Facebook users often feel that their page is a connection of their personal space (Abril, 2007; Dwyer, Hiltz, & Passerini, 2007) and use Facebook primarily to manage friendships (Ellison et al., 2007; Joinson, 2008) student-teacher interaction on Facebook can be fraught with difficulty.

This research will focus on two areas of student-teacher interaction on Facebook. The first area of student-teacher interaction pertains to “friend requesting.” The second area pertains to what information students should share with their instructors during Facebook interaction. The aspect of “friend requesting” concerns who initiates the “friend request.” Researching
whether students or teachers should initiate Facebook interaction will help clear up some misconceived notions that both students and teachers share toward Facebook interaction. These misconceptions stem from previous research solely focusing on teacher’s perceptions of Facebook interaction. This aspect of appropriate “friend requesting” will help teachers understand students’ perceptions of what they find appropriate within the realm of who should initiate interaction on Facebook.

The shift in process is complicated in light of the different status and power given to teachers and students. While interaction on Facebook may help in leveling some of the equality and formality tension (Burgoon and Hale, 1984) within the student-teacher relationship, this tension does exist before Facebook interaction takes place. Research has shown that teachers have a distinct power dimension in the classroom setting (Kearney, Plax, Richmond & McCroskey, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1983). The coercive power the teacher holds may keep the student from initiating interaction with a teacher on Facebook. Kearney et al. (1985) describe coercive power as being based, “on student perceptions that he/she will be punished by the teacher if he/she fails to conform to the teacher’s influence” (p. 21). Because of the power the teacher holds, students may not initiate interaction on Facebook from fear of not conforming to the teacher’s norms for interaction. This power influence may cause students to be hesitant to interact with teachers on Facebook while at the same time, teachers may not initiate interaction on Facebook based on a belief that the teacher would be invading the privacy of the student. Therefore, investigating the perceptions that students hold for initiating contact on Facebook may be able to clear up this conundrum and help teachers understand some of the thought process students hold toward initiating interaction on Facebook.

The second area of appropriate behavior will focus on what information should be shared between the student and teacher. Students have already seen Facebook information used as evidence for suspension (Relerford, Xiong, Rand, & Brown, 2008) and teachers need to regulate what type of information they disseminate to students. Complicating the matter, Mazer et al. (2007) found that teacher self-disclosure on Facebook helped increase student motivation and affective learning. The need for regulation and the increased importance of self-disclosure creates a problem concerning what information teachers should share on Facebook. In a classroom setting, both students and teachers develop norms to regulate behavior (Spillman, 1980) and the majority of these norms are consistent from class to class. Norms for student-
teacher interaction on Facebook have yet to be created and shared, as student-teacher interaction has yet to be fully developed on SNS. Research that mainly focuses on what teachers perceive as appropriate information shared on Facebook does not allow for collaboration leading to a shared meaning and the formation of norms that will further guide student-teacher interaction. Allowing students to answer the question—what do students perceive as appropriate information shared between students and teachers on Facebook—will help in the creation of norms for student-teacher interaction on Facebook.

An analysis of student perceptions concerning whether students or teachers should initiate interaction, as well as what information students believe teachers should share, will allow researchers to better understand student-teacher interaction on Facebook. In this regard, the following research questions are proposed:

R2: From the student’s perspective, is there a difference in desirability of students versus teachers initiating interaction on Facebook?

R3: From the student’s perspective, what information should be shared between students and teachers on Facebook?
Chapter 2: Methodology

Participants

Participants consisted of students from Miami University enrolled in either the Introduction to Communication or Public Expression and Critical Inquiry courses. Participants completing the survey \((n = 294)\) consisted of 128 males and 166 females.

Procedure

Instructors of the introductory Communication courses (Intro to Communication and Public Expression and Critical Inquiry) during the spring semester of the 2010-2011 school year were sent an email notifying them of a research opportunity for their students (Appendix A). A portion of this email included a call for participants, which instructors posted on their class Blackboard site, or emailed to their students. Students enrolled in the aforementioned course are required to complete outside participation. Fulfillment of this requirement includes participation in research projects. Any student not eligible, or interested, in this research project has a variety of other opportunities to fulfill this course requirement. The email included a brief description of the research, as well as a link directing them to the online survey.

Once participants reached the survey, they were informed of their rights as a participant and asked to give informed consent (Appendix B). After giving consent, participants were directed to complete the first part of the survey. The first page asked them to identify the month in which they were born. Their answer separated students into four groups depending on the month of their birth. The months were divided into four sections and the month in which the participant was born determined which of the four scenarios they received. The scenarios included a description of the teacher’s sex, as well as the teacher’s age. Participants placed within the first group were asked to answer the RCS questions concerning how they perceive interaction on Facebook with a male teacher that the students were told was approximately 27 years old. Participants placed within the second group were asked to answer the same RCS questions concerning their perceptions of interaction on Facebook with a female teacher who participants were told was approximately 27 years old. Participants placed within the third group were asked to answer the RCS questions concerning their perceptions of interaction on Facebook with a male teacher who participants were told was approximately 47 years old. Participants placed within the final group were asked to answer the RCS questions concerning their
perception of interaction on Facebook with a female teacher who participants were told was approximately 47 years old.

Next, participants were asked to complete Burgoon and Hale’s (1987) Relational Communication Scale (RCS) items concerning how they would perceive interaction on Facebook with a teacher whose description they were given in one of the four different scenarios (Appendix C). The scenarios then asked the students to think in general terms of the described teacher in order for participants to answer the following RCS questions. The results given from these four scenarios were compared to determine student perceptions of student-teacher interaction through Facebook depending on teacher sex and age.

After completing the RCS for one of the four scenarios given, students were directed to complete the semantic differential questions aimed at measuring the appropriateness of either a teacher or student initiating interaction on Facebook (Appendix D). Students were asked to answer two questions by responding to the semantic differential questions. After this section, students were asked to give their response to two open-ended questions concerning what information teachers should and should not share on Facebook (Appendix E). Finally, students were taken to a page where they were asked to give their demographic information, as well as their approximate number of Facebook friends and how much time they spent on Facebook daily. After completing the survey, students were taken to a debriefing page with a brief overview of the research objectives (Appendix F). Once participants observed the debriefing page, they were then directed to a separate survey, where they were able to input their identifying information and the name of their instructor in order to receive credit for participating in the research (Appendix G).

**Measures**

*Student Perceptions of Facebook Interaction.* To answer RQ1 (would students prefer to interact on Facebook with a male or female teacher) and H1 (students will be more inclined to interact with a teacher of similar age, rather than a teacher from a different age group), Burgoon and Hale’s (1987) Relational Communication Scale (RCS) was utilized to measure student perceptions of interaction with male and female teachers, as well as teachers of similar and different age. RCS is effective in measuring the relational topoi found in interpersonal relationships. As the current research looks to analyze whether Facebook can be utilized to increase a social orientation in an effort to increase the task orientation in the student-teacher
relationship the RCS is a valid measure for the current research. The task-social orientation topos items and responses were the main focus of the current research. As the original four items for task-social orientation focus on a student’s interpretation of a teacher’s behavior, four questions were added in order to gauge student perceptions of their own behavior when interacting with teachers on Facebook. Because the RCS questions were originally created to measure interaction in the past tense, to fit the context of the current study, questions were modified to reflect future tense. In addition each of the eight topos (immediacy, similarity, receptivity, composure, formality, dominance, equality, and task-social) were also measured to investigate any effect on student perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook. (Appendix C).

With the modifications, the final RCS measure was composed of 35 items separated into eight different dimensions consistent with the relational topos. Of these 35 items (Appendix C), 6 are related to immediacy, 4 with similarity, 4 with receptivity/trust, 3 with composure, 3 with formality, 4 with dominance, 3 with equality, and 8 with task/social orientation. Students were asked how they would perceive interacting with a teacher through Facebook. Students were asked to report their perceptions of how their teacher would interact over Facebook on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). The scale reliabilities were: immediacy ($\alpha = .707$, after dropping item 2), similarity ($\alpha = .813$), receptivity/trust ($\alpha = .777$), composure ($\alpha = .797$), formality ($\alpha = .798$), dominance ($\alpha = .476$), equality ($\alpha = .545$), and task/social ($\alpha = .848$). The responses for dominance and equality were subsequently dropped due to their low reliabilities.

Interaction Initiation. To answer RQ2 (from the student’s perspective, is there a difference in appropriateness between students and teachers initiating interaction on Facebook) participants were asked to answer a set of questions focusing on the appropriateness of student’s and teacher’s initiation of interaction on Facebook. Along with the term appropriateness, four synonyms for appropriateness were added and a semantic differential scale was created made up of these five bipolar items (See Appendix D). The five item semantic differential had anchors of 1 (Very i.e. appropriate) and 7 (Very i.e. inappropriate). Two sets of questions were provided, one set for teachers initiation of interactions with students and one set focusing on students initiating interaction with teachers. Students were asked to report their perceptions of how appropriate each action was, whether a student or teacher should initiate interaction over
Facebook. The semantic differentials for a teacher initiating interaction ($\alpha = .790$) and a student initiating interaction ($\alpha = .769$) were both reliable.

*Information Sharing.* To gain further insight into RQ3 (from the student’s perspective, what information should be shared between students and teachers on Facebook), participants were asked to answer two open-ended questions. The first question was, “What information do you feel teachers should share while interacting with students on Facebook?” The second question was, “What information should teachers avoid sharing while interacting with students on Facebook?” The open-ended responses provided information for a qualitative inductive analysis of participant answers to be conducted in order to understand student perceptions regarding what information teachers should share during interaction with students on Facebook. Utilizing this method, emergent themes that surfaced in analyses were compared and contrasted (Baxter & Babbie, 2004). Emergent constructs were compared, categorized, and analyzed to determine student perceptions toward what information should be shared by teachers during Facebook interaction (Lindlof and Taylor, 2002).

*Demographic Information.* Demographic information was gathered from participants at the end of the survey in order to gain information necessary for data analysis. The demographic information included participants’ sex, age, number of Facebook friends, and the amount of time a participant spends on Facebook daily. Participants’ sex and age were collected to analyze student perceptions of interaction on Facebook with both male and female teachers, as well as teachers of similar and different age. Participant’s estimated number of Facebook friends and the amount of time spent on Facebook were collected to identify possible differences in student perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook. To ascertain how much time students spent on Facebook daily, they were asked to select one of the following seven groups: less than one hour, one to two hours, two to three hours, three to four hours, four to five hours, five to six hours, and more than six hours.
Chapter 3: Results

Data Analysis

Before running the MANOVA, the dependent variables were analyzed to make sure they fit the criteria for the MANOVA procedure. First, the dependent variables were conceptually related and therefore satisfied the first criterion. The multidimensional dependent variable, relational communication, was created using the dimensions: Immediacy, Similarity, Receptivity, Composure, Formality, Dominance, Equality, and Task/Social orientation. These dimensions are eight of the twelve relational topoi identified by Burgoon and Hale (1984) and used in the Relational Communication Scale created by Burgoon and Hale (1987). They have all been previously tested, conceptually and operationally, for reliability. Second, the average correlations for the dependent variables were significant as was Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity, $\chi^2 (20) = 538.433, p < .001$. These procedures support the decision to run a MANOVA rather than several ANOVA tests.

A two-way MANOVA was conducted with sex of student and sex of teacher as the independent variables and immediacy, similarity, receptivity, composure, formality, dominance, equality, and task/social orientation as the dependent variables. At the multivariate level, Box’s M test for homogeneity of variance violates our assumption of homogeneity, however, the violation was small, $F(147, 64443.70) = 1.38, p < .001$, and the MANOVA was rather robust to this violation. There were no statistically significant results found on the multivariate level. However, there were two significant results at the univariate level.

At the univariate level, Levene’s Test for Equality of Error Variance was not significant for any of the dependent variable, thus not violating our assumption of homogeneity of variances. First, significance was found concerning task/social orientation based on sex of participant, $F = (1, 260) = 14.71, p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$. Analysis of the means revealed that male students ($M = 4.64; SD = .88$) reported a lower task/social orientation than female students ($M = 5.04; SD = .96$). In other words, female students preferred higher task orientation than male students when interacting with a teacher on Facebook. Also, statistical significance was found between older female teachers and younger female teachers, $F (3, 260) = 3.17, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$. A Post Hoc LSD test revealed that students preferred a greater task orientation with older female teachers ($M = 5.04, SD = .96$) than with younger female teachers ($M = 4.67,$
In other words, students would prefer a higher task orientation when interacting with older female teachers than they would younger female teachers when interacting on Facebook.

The second research question queried whether there was a difference in student perceptions of appropriateness toward students or teachers initiating interaction on Facebook. A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted using interaction initiator (either the student or the teacher) as the independent variable and desirability as the independent variable. Because students were asked to answer both questions (a teacher initiating interaction and a student initiating interaction) a dummy variable was created in order to separate the two sets of data and allow for a comparison of participant responses. Doing this doubled the number of responses analyzed (\(N = 588\)). Significance was found concerning whether the student or the teacher initiated interaction, \(F(1, 581) = 10.30, p = .001\). Analysis of the means revealed that it was more desirable for teachers to initiate interaction (\(M = 3.74, SD = 1.09\)) than students (\(M = 4.04, SD = 1.14\)) on Facebook. Students preferred a teacher initiating interaction rather than a student initiating interaction on Facebook. No other significant results were found.

**Open-Ended Responses**

Research question three inquired about what information students thought *should* and *should not* be shared between students and teachers during interaction on Facebook. Analysis of the open-ended participant responses involved coding and categorizing responses, elucidating both major and minor themes. Once all of the responses were coded and categorized, those categories were then combined to create major and minor themes. Major themes were themes given by participants that warranted their own category but also encompassed more detailed concepts. Minor themes were the themes that participants gave that were characterized within the concepts of the major themes. For example, classroom information was a major theme that arose and the secondary themes were those themes that fell within this major theme (i.e., discussion of class content/clear up concepts and class logistics). The major themes that emerged regarding information teachers should share with students on Facebook were classroom information, basic personal information, and light social conversation.

Ninety-four percent of the students (\(N = 277\)) identified an area of classroom information as one item that would be acceptable for teachers to share with students on Facebook. The minor themes for classroom material/concepts were identified as discussion related to class material/clear up concepts, further in-depth discussion, ideas for study, and logistics. The vast
majority of students \((N = 215)\) mentioned discussion related to class material/clear up concepts as one area of classroom information ideal for teachers to share with students. Comments given included “opinions on relevant class topics, discussion on class subject matter” and “the discussion should be about assignments and school in general”. Twenty-one percent of the students \((N = 61)\) identified further in-depth discussion (add-ons, interesting ideas/articles/websites) as another source of information teachers should share on Facebook. Comments such as, “they should share any relevant information or anything that is supplementary to the class or interesting topics discussed in class (article/websites)” and “ideas for links, articles, videos pertinent to course content” were given as information that teachers should share with students. Logistics—scheduling/office hours/due dates/reminders—\((N = 53)\) and ideas for study \((N = 31)\) were the next most prevalent ideas given for classroom information. One student response included “reminders on what to bring to class, test dates, homework due” as an example of the minor theme logistics, while another response “tips and advice for making a student better at giving speeches and taking tests” was given as an example of ideas for study. 

Discussion of grades received few responses but it is worth noting that responses about grades were found both as information teachers should and should not share with students on Facebook. A surprisingly low number of students \((N = 9)\) identified discussion of test grades as acceptable information for teachers to share with students over Facebook.

Another major theme that developed under information for teachers to share with students over Facebook was basic personal information, as a little over a third of the students \((N = 101)\) gave some response surrounding this theme. The two minor themes that emerged were teacher’s background and interests/likes/favorites. Both minor themes received a similar amount of responses with teacher’s background \((N = 55)\) slightly out-numbering teacher’s interests/likes/favorites \((N = 51)\). Responses for teacher’s background included “where they went to school, area of study, and where they are from.” Responses for teacher’s interests/likes/favorites included responses such as “It’s okay to have information listed like favorites movies, bands, books, and quotes.” A separation between the two themes was created as teacher’s background involves a sense of past accomplishments and information while interests/likes/favorites is a more current and fluid theme.

The last major theme identified by students as appropriate information for teachers to share with students on Facebook was light social conversation. Thirty-three percent of students
\((N = 97)\) indicated that teachers should share some sense of conversation with their students on Facebook. The minor themes identified were conversation similar to in-class conversation and education/career advice. Conversation similar to that occurring in class was identified by twenty-three percent of the students \((N = 66)\). Example responses were “small talk would be appropriate but nothing too personal or deep” and “anything a teacher would feel comfortable with sharing in class.” Education/career advice was also identified by students \((N = 40)\) as important information that could be shared over Facebook. Responses included “advice about career paths, how to improve resumes, research opportunities” and “future career goals and advice.”

The major themes that emerged for what teachers should not share with students on Facebook were personal matters, social conversation, classroom managerial aspects, unethical behavior, and violation of Facebook norms. “Personal matters” by far the greatest concern for students regarding what information teachers should not share over Facebook. Eighty percent of students \((N = 236)\) mentioned personal matters as something they would not want to teachers to share. Minor themes emerging within personal matters included personal information, relationships, photos, and family issues. Personal information was of greatest concern for students with the most \((N = 147)\) responses. Student responses included “personal or private things shouldn’t be shared between students and teachers” and “teacher should not share a lot of personal information because they don’t know how students might react.” Relationships were the second greatest area of concern among student responses \((N = 75)\). Students comment that teachers should avoid “any conversation about significant others,” “anything involving their relationships,” and “romantic relationships should not be discussed.” Sharing photos was an unexpected concern that students \((N = 41)\) felt teachers should not share through Facebook, although only fourteen percent of students responded with this concern. Finally, a small number of students also noted that “family issues” was another concern with a little under ten percent \((N = 23)\) mentioning that teachers should avoid sharing any family issues with students. Response such as “personal family issues and/or problems” and “marital problems or child problems not be shared” were given for what family issues should not be shared by teachers.

Social conversation was the second largest major theme for information not to share by teachers with over a third of all responses \((N = 92)\) garnering attention to the subject. Student responses included “teachers should stay away from sharing social plans,” “social experiences
should not be shared,” “social events and activities going on outside the classroom,” and “student’s and teacher’s social lives.”

Another major theme that emerged for information that teachers shouldn’t share with students was classroom managerial aspects. Although only fifteen percent of student responses \(N = 44\) mentioned classroom managerial aspects, two important minor themes emerged. Student responses \(N = 37\) indicated criticism about other students/teachers/school/classes as a minor theme that teachers should not share on Facebook. Comments included “teachers should avoid talking about other students or administrative type subjects with students” and “a professor talking about his wage or dissatisfaction with other professors.” As previously noted, discussion of grades received response both as information to share and information not share with students through Facebook. The number of responses for discussion of grades as information not to share was slightly higher \(N = 14\) than the number of responses indicating that discussion of grades was information that should be shared between students and teachers on Facebook.

Unethical behavior was a major theme identified by student responses \(N = 43\). Although none of the following minor themes were reported in over ten percent of the responses, they are worth reporting as most violate traditional student-teacher interaction. The largest minor theme under unethical behavior was interest in students. Student responses \(N = 23\) included “indications of unprofessional interest in the student or students” and “any interaction that may be considered flirting or translated as such by a student.” The second minor theme reported under unethical behavior was discussion of drugs/alcohol/underage consumption \(N = 19\). Some comments reported were “I do not think it is appropriate for a teacher to discuss alcohol consumption with a student that is underage” and “any illegal activity such as drug use.”

Violating Facebook norms was another major theme that arose when analyzing student responses \(N = 30\). Again, although the following minor themes were reported on less than ten percent of the total responses they are worth reporting as following constructed norms are important for appropriate and efficient interaction. The first minor theme responses indicated was no awkward comments/status/photo comments \(N = 28\). Students answered that “teachers should make sure that they do not comment on or like any part of a student’s Facebook page” and that teachers should avoid “awkward comments on student’s photos or status updates.” The last minor theme reported by students \(N = 12\) is that teachers should avoid any sort of Facebook “stalking”. Comments such as “that they (teachers) are watching their (students) posts to make
sure that when they are sick that they are not out screwing around” and “no Facebook creeping,” were reported by students.
Chapter 4: Discussion

The goal of this research is to begin to understand the perceptions students have toward interaction with their teachers on the social networking site, Facebook. With increased integration of teachers into the realm of Facebook, norms are still being created and modified concerning interaction with students (Ellison, Steinfield, Lampe, 2007; Mazer, Murphy, Simonds, 2007; Mitchell & Watstein, 2007; Patton, 2007; Pempek, Yermolayeva, Calvert, 2008; O’Malley, 2010). These norms must be identified and mediated by and between both students and teachers. As little research has been done surrounding student perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook, this study looked to identify four major areas of importance surrounding student-teacher interaction on Facebook. First, this research examined student perceptions toward interaction differences based on the sex of the instructor. Second, this study examined student perceptions that a teacher’s age has on student-teacher interaction. Third, the study analyzed student perceptions regarding whether students or teachers should initiate interaction on Facebook. Finally, the study took a qualitative approach to identify emergent themes for types of information that teachers should and should not share with students over Facebook. The varying results and corresponding implications of the current study warrant further in-depth discussion.

Data analysis in the current study found significant results in two areas. First, the study found that female students would be more task oriented than male students when interacting with teachers on Facebook. Second, students showed greater social orientation with younger female teachers than with older female teachers while interacting with teachers on Facebook.

Research Question 1

Although the results do indicate that female students would want a greater task orientation than male students when interacting with a teacher on Facebook, further analysis revealed that both male and female students showed a greater task orientation over a social orientation during this interaction. Analysis of the means revealed that male students and female students still reported higher task orientation responses than social orientation responses. This data shows that students still are hesitant to interact with teachers in a social manner on Facebook. One reason for this hesitation may be explained by looking at student’s motivation toward OCC. Fusani (1994) concluded that most OCC took place to describe classroom matters. Accordingly, Martin, Myers, and Mottet (1999) found that one of the primary motivations for
students to communicate with teachers was functional communication. The main reasons for functional communication are to gather information, form a better understanding of the material, and to understand the teacher’s requirements (Martin et al., 1999). Functional communication is important to student-teacher interaction, as it is key to developing strong cognitive learning (Richmond & Gorham, 1998). The analysis of the means established in the current research show that students are still looking to maintain this functional communication on Facebook in the same manner they establish communication in the classroom. The results suggest that students would not use Facebook as a way to build a social connection with their teachers but instead as “virtual office hours.”

There were no other significant findings regarding the sex of the student and the sex of the teacher in the current study for interaction on Facebook. The results that students did not prefer interaction with teachers of either sex appear to contradict past research. These findings would seem to be consistent with previous findings such as past research has shown that females are more relationship oriented and female teachers are commonly expected to be more empathetic to students, more nurturing, and devote more of their time to students than what is expected of male teachers (Bennett, 1980; Nadler & Nadler, 2000, Wood, 2009). Research finds that male and female students rate different aspects of communication with more importance (Westmyer & Myers, 1996) and that students rate male and female teachers differently (Basow & Silberg, 1987). Both male and female students rated female teachers lower in instructor-individual student interaction (Basow & Silberg, 1987). Frymier and Houser (2000) also found that female students viewed immediacy-building behaviors as more important than did male students. In a separate study, Nadler and Nadler (2001) found that more male students than female students participated in OCC with teachers. Also, male students tend to rate male teachers as more concerned and likable (Basow & Distenfeld, 1985).

However, in the current study these past results did not substantially impact student perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook concerning the sex of the student or the sex of the teacher. A major difference between the current and past research is in the medium in which the interaction takes place. The current research has taken communication that normally happens face-to-face and examined it in an online medium context (chat sessions/comments/wall posts). Due to the often-fragmented nature of computer-mediated communication (Hale, 1996) CMC has been noted to take more time than face-to-face (FtF) communication in developing
impressions and relational goals between individuals (Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2006; Walther, 1993). This fragmented nature of CMC may result in students having a different perception of in-class and out-of-class communication than they do interaction through Facebook.

One major factor that may explain why students did not show a preference to interaction with either male or female teachers is the idea that students view Facebook as a personal space and the invasion of privacy was not seen so much as interaction by male or female teachers but as “teachers” in general. The power dynamic seems to trump issues of sex in a social networking medium. Some of the open-ended responses seem to defend this concept (e.g., “I don’t think teachers and students should interact on Facebook until they are no longer in class together,” “I don’t think teachers and students should share information on Facebook while the student is still in the class of the teacher,” and “None, a student-teacher relationship is a professional one”). The responses that mention information about a student’s current enrollment show that while this professional relationship exists there should not be an interaction between any students and any teachers.

Further explaining this idea, and also extending the reasoning for the lack of significance in the current study, might be the underestimation of the relational topoi equality and formality dimensions of the student-teacher relationship. Responses from the open-ended questions appear to help confirm this assumption. Along with a sense of coercive power students afford teachers; there is also an element of inequality and formality to the student-teacher relationship (Jaasma & Koper, 2002; Kearney et al., 1985; Nadler and Nadler, 2001). Consequently, the current research found no significant results relating to a change in either of these dimensions regardless of student-teacher sex or age. Martin et al. (1999) reported relational communication as a motivating factor for students to communicate with teachers. Students often use relational communication to see their teachers as real people (Martin et al., 1999). In turn this relational communication may lower the sense of inequality and formality between the students and the teachers, creating a more in-depth social relationship (Cartledge & Milburn, 1978; Ryan & Patrick, 2001; Wentzel, 1999). If students had reported a reduction in either dimension of formality and equality, the current research may have been able to better predict student perception of student-teacher interaction on Facebook.
However, student response in the open-ended questions contradicted a need for decreased formality within the student-teacher relationship. Responses such as “students should continue to see teachers as an authority figure in order to maintain a working relationship,” “only formal conversation should be exchanged,” and “students and teachers should never interact on Facebook as the relationship is professional and not one of friendship” show that some students want a sense of formality to their relationships with teachers. Because Facebook is viewed as a “personal space,” a teacher invading this space is unwanted by students. The responses indicate that students have come to expect a sense of formality and inequality with their teachers and Facebook interaction should be no different than in-class or out-of-class communication. This furthers the idea that students did not perceive the interaction on Facebook differently between male and female teachers but as a larger general concept of a teacher.

**Hypothesis**

An interesting implication can be found from the results of the current research to help understand the hypothesis (students will be more inclined to interact with a teacher of similar age, rather than a teacher from a different age group). Although no significant results were found directly related to the current research hypothesis based solely on teacher age, we do find results leading to the conclusion that students would be more inclined to interact with younger teachers than interact with older teachers. The current research finding is consistent with Prensky’s (2001) identification of digital natives and digital immigrants and the friction between the two groups. A significant difference was found among student interaction on Facebook with older and younger female teachers as students were more inclined to sustain a social dimension with younger female teachers than with older female teachers. As digital natives often find it cumbersome to interact with digital immigrants and do not understand why digital immigrants are unable to keep up with changing technological progress (Prensky, 2001, Prensky, 2005) we begin to see why students may show a significant difference regarding preferences for interacting with younger and older teachers through Facebook. Specifically, in the current research we see that students (digital natives) are open to greater social conversation with younger rather than older female teachers (digital immigrants). This result provides warrant for future research to further analyze and identify the effects of teacher age on student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Since the results only showed a significant difference within female teachers future research should continue to explore student’s gender-based preferences.
Research Question 2

Perhaps the most interesting results surround the data found for research question two. The findings from the current research are similar to the fact that students afford teachers an amount of derived power and students do not want to violate any norms created by the teacher. Current results show that students may be hesitant to initiate interaction with a teacher on Facebook as such behavior may violate teacher norms. This may be because of the fear of upsetting a power figure. Previous research has shown that teachers have a distinct power dimension in the classroom setting (Kearney, Plax, Richmond & McCroskey, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1983). Coercive power in the student-teacher relationship can be described as the student’s perception that the students will be punished for not conforming to the teacher’s norms (Kearney et al. 1985). The coercive power the teacher holds may keep the student from initiating interaction with a teacher on Facebook.

The current research furthers the defense of this assumption. Students view Facebook as a personal space, a sort of online identity (Ellison et al., 2007). Because students view their own participation on Facebook with this sense of personal expression we can assume that students would also attribute the same concept to a teacher’s Facebook page; it would be a teacher’s personal space. Students appear wary of invading a teacher’s private space because of the coercive power in the student-teacher relationship. A student sending a friend request to a teacher could be seen as a violation of ingratiation. Whereas, a student relying on a teacher to send a student a friend request would remove any risk from the student. As the figure with more power, the teacher, is sending the friend request to the person with less power, the student, there is less chance of the student violating the norms of the student-teacher relationship.

While the results of this research question are significant and the discussion on power and norms between the student and teacher are interesting and warrant future examination, there is a logistical problem to students preferring that teachers initiate interaction on Facebook. A student may only have a few teachers each semester, but teachers could have upwards of 300 students. Instructors who teach large lecture classes would then be responsible for “friending” a large number of students on Facebook, although students would only be responsible for “friending” approximately five or six teachers. Student populations at large universities tend to have some students with similar or identical names, adding to the difficulty of teachers trying to initiate
interaction on Facebook. Overall, the preference of students to rely on teachers to initiate interaction increases the responsibility of teachers to create interaction on Facebook.

**Research Question 3**

Open-ended data was also collected to help identify emergent themes that students reported as information teachers should and should not share through Facebook interaction. The responses have also been used to help explain some of the statistical data. The themes classroom material, basic personal information, and light social conversation were prominent throughout the responses as information that teachers could share with students. These responses helped establish the belief that although students are willing to interact with teachers on Facebook, they would still prefer an interaction similar to what they would experience in the classroom. Also, the responses align with the findings of Fusani (1994) as most of the open-ended responses focused around using Facebook interaction as a type of OCC to help explain classroom material. The responses lead to an understanding that Facebook interaction between students and teachers should not vary from the typical interaction between students and teachers through both in-class and out-of-class interaction.

In addition, the themes personal matters, social conversation, classroom managerial aspects, unethical behavior, and violation of Facebook norms were prominently identified as information that teachers should not share with students through Facebook. These themes also indicate that Facebook interaction should not delve any farther than FtF in-class and out-of-class interaction. The themes of “personal matters” and “social conversation,” as information not to share, further support the belief that students view Facebook as a personal space and do not welcome teacher intrusion. Students do not want teachers to be able to share, or discover, information that would not be available through classroom interaction.

Most of the comments surrounding answers/grades as information that should not be shared between students and teachers were usually accompanied with a qualifier such as “or anything that would give one student an advantage over another.” The only other times grades were reported as information not to share, the comment appeared solely as “grades,” with no further explanation. These responses show that while some students may be open to interaction with teachers on Facebook it should not put those students who do not approve of such interaction at a disadvantage. Some responses gave options to help alleviate this concern. One response indicated that the formation of a “class Facebook page that students could join” might
be a worthwhile experiment as students would be able to check the page of their own volition without the violation of privacy. Another response indicated, “teachers may want to create a professional Facebook profile”. Both of these actions prevent the teacher, or the student from having, full access to the other individual’s primary Facebook page, thus minimizing some of the concerns about privacy.

It was interesting to see the open-ended responses concerning Facebook norms that students have already developed on Facebook. The two minor themes were no awkward comments/status updates/picture comments and no Facebook “stalking”. While the awkward comments theme is simple to understand, the second theme no Facebook stalking, deserves discussion. The open-ended responses given concerning Facebook “stalking” were similar to the idea of “lurking” noted by Susan Barnes (2003). However, the two terms are explained through different connotations. All of the student comments implied a negative connotation to their responses. Examples such as “teachers should not spend time stalking students on Facebook” and “no Facebook creeping” defend this negative connotation. Susan Barnes (2003), however, explains lurking as a positive method to help an individual get to know a person before advancing interaction. The negative meaning given by students can be attributed to the power difference between students and teachers. Lurking involves allows individuals to familiarize themselves with a group’s dynamic before interacting with the group. In this description the individual and the group entertain a balanced power dynamic. Because of the unequal power dynamics in student-teacher relationships (Kearney, Plax, Richmond & McCroskey, 1985; McCroskey & Richmond, 1983) students may see the “lurking” of a figure in power as a negative invasion of their privacy. These responses, again, help explain how students appear to be more concerned with their individual privacy than they are concerned with using Facebook as a way to develop social interaction with a teacher.

Some of the open-ended responses alluded to previous interaction between the student and teacher as being key to how students would perceive student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Responses of this nature (e.g., “I don’t think teachers and students should communicate via Facebook unless they are friends outside of class or involved in a club or other activity” and “the amount of interaction depends on the relationship between the student and teacher”) indicate that Facebook interaction should be guided based on the interaction that has previously taken place between the student and teacher. These responses, as well as those stating
that Facebook interaction between students and teachers should take place only after the student is not currently enrolled in the teacher’s class, postulate that interaction between the student and teacher needs to take place within the classroom before any student-teacher interaction through Facebook.

**Limitations**

Although the research provides a start to analyzing students’ perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook, there were some limitations to the current study that need to be discussed. One limitation to the study is that the questionnaire could have been more effective in collecting a sample of responses for the difference between student perceptions concerning teacher age. To properly analyze the hypothesis (students will be more inclined to interact with a teacher of similar age, rather than a teacher from a different age group) the participant sample needs a wider range of ages. While the sample \( n = 294 \) was an adequate sample size, the age range of the participants needs greater equality. The range of participant’s age (18 to 49) appears to be substantial. However, only one participant was over the age of 23. This limitation of participants over 23 does allow for the current research to generalize student perceptions of a typical college population but the sample would need to include more non-traditional college age participants in order to be able to generalize whether non-traditional students’ perceptions of interaction with teachers change based on the age of the teacher.

Another limitation surrounds research question 2 (from the student’s perspective, is there a difference in desirability of students versus teachers initiating interaction on Facebook) and contains two main components. The first limitation to the analysis of research question two was found in the operation of the questions. The participants were given directions to answer the following two questions as to how they would perceive the initiation of interaction between students and teachers on Facebook: a teacher initiating interaction by sending a student a friend request and a student initiating interaction by sending a teacher a friend request. Because all participants were asked to answer the same questions it was difficult to separate how the participants compared the two different actors initiating interaction. The responses for these two questions were compiled into a single set of responses and a dummy variable was created in order to separate the two sets of data and allow for a comparison of participant responses. Although the sample size was doubled, the magnitude of the effect was small. It would have been more effective to separate the participants so they were only answering the question based
on one initiator and not have the participants answer for both initiators. This change in operation would have allowed for an easier analysis of the data, as two definitive groups would have been identified.

The second limitation to the analysis of research question two was found in the measurement created to measure “appropriateness”. The measure was created by using synonyms of the word “appropriate” and then designing a 7-point semantic differential. Although this measure does begin to attain the basic concept of “appropriateness,” the created scale may in fact be measuring a different, more elaborate, concept. The current study finds similarities with the concept of “liking.” The research of Rubin (1970, 1973) describes liking as an undifferentiated positive regard. Similarities between the current research measure and the concept of liking can be found through the use of the terms “good,” “satisfying,” and valuable but they do not represent a strong operational measure. Rubin’s measure of liking (1970), however, would not have been a viable scale for the current study as the liking measure asks about a specific individual teacher and the current research was looking at a general abstract of the teacher.

An analysis of Westmyer, DiCioccio and Rubin’s (1998) study on the appropriateness and effectiveness on communication channels, and the measure used, could offer a more transparent explanation to student perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook. The questionnaire created by Westmyer et al. (1998) contained items measuring the appropriateness and effectiveness of different communication channels used for different types of communication. Future research could not only utilize this measure to gauge student perceptions of who should initiate interaction on Facebook, but also to measure student perceptions on what type of information should be shared on Facebook. The analysis of information sharing through different communication channels could be very effective in advancing an understanding of student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Another measure that may have been appropriate is McCroskey and McCain’s (1974) interpersonal attraction scale. The use of McCroskey and McCain’s (1974) interpersonal attraction scale may have allowed for a stronger measurement of student perceptions of interaction initiation, at least through the dimensions of social and task attraction. However, the interpersonal attraction scale also has a physical attraction dimension that is not consistent with the scope of the current research.
Suggestions for Future Research

Although some topics for future research have been previously noted, there are areas worth expanding upon. First, as the current research focused on students in a traditional four-year college, future research could expand into the realm of community and technical colleges. This expansion would help research include more non-traditional college student participants. Expanding the sampling frame to include non-traditional students would allow for greater generalizability of student perceptions toward interaction on Facebook between teachers of similar or different ages, as well as provide expanded information toward interaction with male or female teachers. Non-traditional students may be more open to interaction with teachers on Facebook as oftentimes there are other circumstances (i.e., jobs, family) that may diminish their ability to develop significant out-of-class communication with a teacher.

Second, future research should be expanded to include new areas of analysis. Future research should look to include student perceptions on when students feel it would be more beneficial to interact with a teacher on Facebook. The current study assumes that interaction will take place while the student is currently enrolled in the teacher’s class. However, a student may feel that a teacher’s out-of-class availability, as well as in-class interaction, meets their expectation of student-teacher interaction while currently enrolled in the class. When the class has concluded, and the student no longer has consistent interaction with the teacher, the student may then feel that Facebook would be a viable option to maintain interaction with the teacher. Also, future studies should increase the amount of qualitative research done on student-teacher interaction on Facebook to help understand student perceptions. Future qualitative research on the topic could help increase understanding of whether students view Facebook interaction with teachers positively or negatively, explore student opinions of how teachers could effectively interact with students on Facebook, and identify how this interaction should take place between the student and the teacher.

Conclusion

Facebook has become a 50 billion dollar company (Ortutay, 2011) and its influence on academia should only increase. Facebook’s popularity among students shows fertile ground for teachers to try and utilize this social networking site to help stimulate students’ education. The current study was able to identify that students were open to a small increase in student-teacher interaction on Facebook, but that such interaction should remain mostly task oriented. Any
social interaction between students and teachers on Facebook should be limited to the peripheral level of personal information (Altman and Taylor, 1973). The current research has found that students would tend to use Facebook interaction with teachers as a form of “virtual office hours” rather than a tool to foster increased social interaction. The current study, specifically, shed light on whether students or teachers should initiate such interaction and began to identify themes as to what information teachers should and should not share with students through Facebook. Also, the current study found significance in the perceptions some students hold toward interaction with teachers of differing sex and age.

This study points to some directions to help navigate future research. There can be multiple reasons for the creation of certain student perceptions of student-teacher interaction on Facebook and the current research only begins to scratch the surface. Teachers need to understand student perceptions of Facebook interaction to further utilize Facebook as a tool to help increase student education.
References


Appendix A
Survey Participation Announcement

Dear Student:

My name is Justin Foote and I am a Graduate Student in the Department of Communication at Miami University and I am conducting a research project on student perceptions of student-teacher interaction over the social network Facebook. Participating in this research project will satisfy the research requirement in your COM 135 class. To participate in this research project, just click on this link [https://survey.muohio.edu/Checkbox/StudentTeacherFacebook.aspx] and follow the directions. After completing the survey you will have the option of going to a second survey where you will have the opportunity to provide your name and instructor’s name so that your instructor can be notified that you participated in this research project. It would be difficult to link the research survey with your personal information so your responses on the survey will be completely confidential. Participation in this survey is not required and other research opportunities will be available to ensure ample opportunity to fulfill the research requirement for your class.

To fulfill this research survey you must have a Facebook account. To participate in this research project, just click on this link [https://survey.muohio.edu/Checkbox/StudentTeacherFacebook.aspx] and follow the onscreen instructions.

If you have questions about this research please call or email me or my faculty advisor, Dr. Todd Holm at 513-529-2278 or holmtt@muohio.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as participants in a research study please contact Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship (OARS) at 513-529-3600. Thank you for your time and effort, it is much appreciated.

Sincerely,

Justin Foote
Graduate Student
Department of Communication
Appendix B
Department of Communication Research Consent Form

Description of Project: The purpose of this study is to begin research based on students’ perceptions of student-teacher interaction on the social networking site Facebook. The study will examine whether students show a preference toward same-sex or cross-sex student-teacher interaction, as well as, examine student perceptions that a teacher’s age has within this student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Additionally, this research will examine student perceptions regarding the initiation of interaction on Facebook, as well as the timing of initiation and allow students to share their ideas of what information should be shared between students and teachers on Facebook.

Safeguarding your Identity: This questionnaire does not contain any identifying information and is anonymous. The responses you provide today are being collected with online questionnaire software that is designed to secure your data and provide you with confidentiality. Nevertheless, despite these safeguards, there is always a remote possibility of hacking or other security breaches that could compromise the confidentiality of the information you provide. Thus, you should remember that you are free to decline to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable for any reason.

1. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I have the right to withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.
2. I understand that I can refuse to answer specific questions.
3. The purpose of this research has been explained to me, and I understand the explanation.
4. I understand that I have the right to have this study explained to my satisfaction upon completion of the questionnaire.
5. I understand that the information I give in this study will be held in confidence and no identifying information will be presented in the research.
6. All IP addresses will be removed from individual response to ensure that information cannot be traced to any computer used to complete the survey. The experimenter will have no way of determining which responses are mine.
7. I understand that a copy of the research report for this study will be made available to me upon request. A copy of the research can be obtained by sending your permanent address to Justin Foote at footejg@muohio.edu and request that a copy be sent to you once the data has been analyzed.
8. I am over 18 years of age. Anyone younger than 18 should not participate in the research.
9. I have an active Facebook account.
If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Office for the Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 513-529-3600. If you have questions regarding this research project, ask the researcher, Justin Foote at 513-529-2524 or footejg@muohio.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Todd Holm at 513-529-2278 or holmtt@muohio.edu.

Given these statements, I freely consent to participate in this research project within the Department of Communication.

  Agree   Disagree

1                      2
Appendix C
Relational Communication Scale Questions

*Students will be given a general description of a teacher based on one of four scenarios, in which they will be randomly placed. The four scenarios include male teachers, female teachers, a teacher in a similar age group, and a teacher in a different age group.

**Situation 1**: You are currently enrolled in a class in which the teacher is a male approximately 27 years old. During the class you and the teacher begin communication over Facebook. This communication includes chatting, sending messages, and sharing information on each other's Wall.

**Situation 2**: You are currently enrolled in a class in which the teacher is a female approximately 27 years old. During the class you and the teacher begin communication over Facebook. This communication includes chatting, sending messages, and sharing information on each other's Wall.

**Situation 3**: You are currently enrolled in a class in which the teacher is a male approximately 47 years old. During the class you and the teacher begin communication over Facebook. This communication includes chatting, sending messages, and sharing information on each other's Wall.

**Situation 4**: You are currently enrolled in a class in which the teacher is a female approximately 47 years old. During the class you and the teacher begin communication over Facebook. This communication includes chatting, sending messages, and sharing information on each other's Wall.

Instructions: Using the previous general description of teachers, answer the following questions based on interaction with a teacher fitting the description given on Facebook.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Disagree Somewhat</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Agree Somewhat</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Immediacy/Affection**

1. He/she would be involved with our conversation.
2. *He/she would not want a deeper relationship between us.*
3. He/she would find the conversation stimulating.
4. *He/she would create a sense of distance between us.*
5. He/she would be interested in talking to me.
6. He/she would show enthusiasm while talking to me.

**Similarity/Depth**

7. He/she would make me feel that he/she was similar to me.
8. He/she would try to move the conversation to a deeper level.
9. He/she would desire further communication with me.
10. He/she would seem to care that I liked him/her.

**Receptivity/Trust**

11. He/she would be sincere.
12. He/she would be interested in talking to me.
13. He/she would want me to trust him/her.
14. He/she would be willing to listen to me.

**Composure**

15. *He/she would seem very tense talking to me.*
16. He/she would be relaxed talking to me.
17. He/she would be comfortable interacting with me.

**Formality**

18. He/she would make the interaction very formal.
19. *He/she would want the discussion to be casual.*
20. *He/she would want the discussion to be informal.*

**Dominance**

21. *He/she would not attempt to influence me.*
22. He/she would not try to control the interaction.
23. He/she would try to gain my approval.
24. He/she would have the upper hand in the conversation.

Equality
25. He/she would consider us equals.
26. *He/she would not treat me as an equal.*
27. He/she would want to cooperate with me.

Task Orientation
28. He/she would want to stick to the main purpose of the interaction.
29. *He/she would be more interested in social conversation than the task at hand.*
30. He/she would be very work-oriented.
31. He/she would be more interested in working on the task at hand than having a social conversation.
32. I would want to stick to the main purpose of the interaction.
33. *I would be more interested in social conversation than the task at hand.*
34. I would be very work-oriented.
35. I would be more interested in working on the task at hand than having a social conversation.

*Italicized questions need to be reverse coded.*
Appendix D
Appropriateness of Interaction Semantic Differential

**Interaction Initiation**

Focusing on interaction between students and teachers on Facebook, how would you perceive the following interaction?

1. A teacher initiating interaction by sending a student a friend request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Very</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Appropriate</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Useless</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Inappropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Valuable</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Unsatisfying</strong></td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Useful</em></td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
<td>Invaluable</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfying</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

2. A student initiating interaction by sending a teacher a friend request.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
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<tbody>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Useless</strong></td>
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<td>Invaluable</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfying</strong></td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Italicized items need to be reversed coded*
Appendix E
Information Sharing Open-ended Questions and Demographic Information

**Information Sharing**

1. What information do you feel teachers should share while interacting with students on Facebook?
2. What information should teachers avoid sharing while interacting with students on Facebook?

**Demographic Information**

1. Participants’ sex:
2. Participant’s age:
3. Participant’s approximate number of Facebook friends:
4. Participant’s frequency checking Facebook per day:
Appendix F
Debriefing Page

Dear Participant,

The purpose of this study is to begin research based on students’ perceptions of student-teacher interaction on the social networking site Facebook. The study will examine whether students show a preference toward same-sex or cross-sex student-teacher interaction, as well as, examine student perceptions that a teacher’s age has within this student-teacher interaction on Facebook. Additionally, this research will examine student perceptions regarding the initiation of interaction on Facebook, as well as the timing of initiation and allow students to share their ideas of what information should be shared between students and teachers on Facebook.

As a participant, you are given the option of being able to receive a copy of the research after the information has been gathered and analyzed. If you would like to receive a copy of the research please send your permanent address to Justin Foote at footejg@muohio.edu and request that a copy be sent to you once the data has been analyzed.

Again, Thank you for your participation,

Justin Foote
Graduate Student
Department of Communication
Miami University
513-529-2524
footejg@muohio.edu
Appendix G
Student Credit Survey

The following information allows the researcher to keep track of who completes this research project for credit in their communication class. The identifying information you provide here is an independent survey and is therefore not connected to the responses you gave on the preceding questionnaire.

Please provide the following information:
First name: ____________________________
Last name: ____________________________

Please provide the following information for the communication classes in which you are currently enrolled.
Com 134 Instructor: ____________________________
Com 135 Instructor: ____________________________