Chapter 1
Facing Facebook in Higher Education: How and Why Students Use Facebook in College

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ABSTRACT
This chapter draws upon nine months of qualitative, netographic (Kozinets, 2010) research conducted both online and in face-to-face contexts on college student use of Facebook and explores the impact this online platform has on students by studying behaviors, experiences, and perspectives of undergraduate students at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. The primary question guiding this research is: How do college students use Facebook to fulfill social needs in the creation and maintenance of community while attending college? The data consists of an analysis of transcribed interviews, email communications, and the interactive content of student Facebook users’ Facebook walls. The results indicate that students use Facebook to undertake particular tasks and toward particular ends. These include, but are not limited to: fostering and maintaining community, nurturing relationships, making public statements and protecting privacy, establishing a personal identity, building social capital, establishing cultural competency, coping, and critiquing their peers and campus.

INTRODUCTION
Social media has become ubiquitous in the lives of college students. This research explores the impact Facebook has on college students, by studying the behaviors, experiences, and perspectives of undergraduate students at the University of Dayton in Dayton, Ohio. The primary question guiding this research is:

- How do college students use Facebook to fulfill social needs in the creation and maintenance of community while attending college?

The methodology used in this qualitative study is a blend of netography (Kozinets, 2010) and face-to-face individual interviews. It examines their cultures as mediated and articulated online.
and in person. The data consists of an analysis of transcribed interviews, email communications, and the interactive content of student Facebook users’ Facebook Walls.

This study explores how Facebook shapes students’ experience of community on campus. It examines how community is defined, understood, mediated and influenced by students; and how Facebook influences their social lives as a part of the campus community. Going away to college has always been a time when young adults stepped out of the comfort zone of home and into a new community: both physically and socially (Kenny, 1987). Residential students turn their focus from their parents’ rules and programs, and begin to experience daily life among peers. They invest themselves in the community of the campus and foster new relationships (Tinto, 2006). But we also know that students need to stay connected to their home communities, as for many students, the connection to friends, family, and church is important for their persistence (Attinasi, 1989; London, 1989; Nora, 2001; Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo, 1994; Tierney, 1992; Tinto, 2006; Torres, 2003; Waterman, 2004). Today, these relationships, new and already established, are fostered both in face-to-face engagement as well as online through social networking sites (SNSs) such as Facebook.

The Problem

In today’s technological environment, students’ social lives are not limited to face-to-face engagement with peers and faculty (Holeton, 1997; 2008). With online social networking, student communities expand far outside the campus walls. According to Arrington (2005), 85% of all college students use Facebook. It is the most popular website among college students (Schaffhauser, 2008). People credit Facebook, like some other extracurricular involvements, with negative academic outcomes (Grabmeier, 2009). Yet Internet use is known to increase civic engagement and community involvement for about a fifth of Internet users (Kavanaugh, 1999). In her analysis of 38 studies and 166 effects testing the relationship between Internet use and political engagement, Boulianne (2009) established that the “effect of Internet use on engagement is positive” (p. 205). With conflicting findings from various studies on the effects online interaction has on lived community (Boulianne, 2009; Grabmeier, 2009; Kavanaugh, 1999), it is unknown exactly how involvement with Facebook affects students’ experience of community on campus.

Because community can mean different things to different people, this study employs an operational definition of community as a group of people united through a shared set of interests. This study provides data that illustrate how the students in this study understand community, and how they identify it in their lives. It also explores how students use Facebook toward the end of negotiating, fashioning, and enhancing their experience of community on a highly residential, religiously affiliated campus. Adopting an existential or phenomenological epistemological perspective in data collection, rooted in an exploration of the experience of technology by humans, this project permits students to define, explain, and analyze their experience of community on their college campus in relation to their engagement with Facebook (Jackson, 2002).

Phenomenological anthropology acknowledges that philosophy and anthropology ask similar questions. Phenomenology provides data from a first person point of view (Smith, 2008). Yet, anthropology demands that these structures be examined through the empirical data of ethnography (Katz & Csordas, 2003). Drawing upon the theoretical and methodological approaches to anthropology of Jackson (1996; 2002; 2005; 2009), this study provides concrete, individual, lived situations as they are perceived and experienced by students, through first person accounts. With ethnography as the primary methodology, this study elucidates the lived experience of college
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