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# Social Media, Friendship, and Happiness in the Millennial Generation

Adriana M. Manago and Lanen Vaughn

An important component to psychological health and well-being in lifespan development is learning to build meaningful relationships outside the family during the transition to adulthood (Erikson 1968). Adolescents and emerging adults growing up in digital age societies are accomplishing this psychosocial task using Internet technologies that give them historically unprecedented access to their social networks 24-7, at the click of a mouse. Does the convenience of Facebook and the ability to accumulate hundreds of Facebook “friends” alter paradigms for understanding the meaning of friendship in young people’s lives and its role in healthy psychological development? In this chapter, we review research to demonstrate how social media shape practices surrounding friendship in the Millennial generation and argue that social networking sites offer young people in the digital age a kind of *customized sociality*, which is shifting the way they mobilize social resources. We then explore the implications of these sociocultural changes on the link between friendship and happiness.

## Friendship on Social Networking Sites in Digital Age Societies

There are an exceptional variety of social networking sites, but youth as well as adults favor Facebook, the second most visited website globally after Google.com (Alexa.com). Adults over 35 are the fastest growing U.S. demographic on Facebook, however adolescents and emerging adults still predominate on the site (Hampton et al. 2011), particularly 18–29 year-old women (Duggan and Brenner 2013). Eighty-six percent of all online emerging adults ages 18–29 (Duggan and Brenner 2013) and 75 % of adolescents ages 12–17 (Brenner 2012) use Facebook.

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Although extraverted individuals low in conscientiousness seem to be especially drawn to the social networking site, there seem to be few personality differences between users and non-users, perhaps because Facebook is becoming commonplace in the fabric of everyday social life (Anderson et al. 2012). Indeed, 52% of adult Facebook users are on the site every single day (Hampton et al. 2011). According to Facebook, the site has over 618 million daily active users and over 81% of the monthly active users are from outside the U.S. and Canada. These figures attest to the mass appeal of Facebook on a global scale.

Facebook is widespread because it taps into basic human needs. In a series of studies with undergraduates, Sheldon et al. (2011) demonstrated that Facebook is used to meet the basic human need for relatedness, which involves interpersonal closeness, connection, belonging, and acceptance. Many studies demonstrate that the desire to connect to others in some form or another is what drives Facebook use (e.g. Bonds-Raacke and Raacke 2010), with some studies adding the need for self-presentation (Nadkarni and Hofmann 2012) and the need for information (Park et al. 2009) as additional motives. Because Facebook provides a convenient forum for a particular kind of sociality, one that emphasizes personal self-expression, reputation management, and efficient access to expansive networks of social information, it may actually resonate with all three fundamental psychosocial needs: relatedness, autonomy, and competency. Each prong of this universal triad of basic human needs is considered necessary for well-being, but they vary in salience and meaning across cultures and in different social contexts (Ryan and Deci 2000). Facebook is a cultural tool that affords particular opportunities for action, thus could extend in new directions human impulses to feel connected, autonomous, and competent. As such, the tool may be part of broad sociocultural shifts in the ways basic human needs are manifested, prioritized, and how they are satisfied within relationships to promote happiness.

Three opportunities for action on Facebook include the following capabilities: (1) maintain a catalogue of close and distant social contacts and follow their activities, (2) choose whether to broadcast self-expressions to everyone in the network at once or to exchange private digital communications, and (3) manicure a digital representation of the self to others. To participate in a social networking site such as Facebook, one must construct a profile and build a network by adding "friends," which means articulating a tie through the digital medium that establishes a channel by which information can be transferred between two users. Friends have mutual access to each other's profiles, which is now organized as a chronological display of a user's history on a timeline that marks key life events, such as weddings. Although privacy controls can be used to regulate who sees what content and the chat feature allows private communications, the most popular Facebook feature is the status update, which allows users to communicate publicly to their entire network at once. Users tend to portray accurate impressions of themselves on Facebook (Back et al. 2010), yet users *project* who they are onto screens, strategically presenting a certain shade of the self for an audience (Manago et al. 2008; Zhao et al. 2008; Walther 2007). The authenticity of online projections partly depends on Facebook being a "nonymous" context; that is, online social networks overlap with offline networks.

This overlap exists because the website is largely geared to coordinating of-line connections, although one's Facebook network tends to be larger than one's sphere of face-to-face social interactions (Ellison et al. 2007). The average number of Facebook friends for the general user is 229 (Hampton et al. 2011). Adolescents tend to acquire more friends than older adults (Pfeil et al. 2009), however they still report having interacted face-to-face with 95 % of their social networking site friends (Reich et al. 2012). College students have networks averaging in the 300–400 range (Steinfeld et al. 2008), growing their friend lists by disproportionately adding "loose ties" such as acquaintances from class, sports teams, or summer camps (Manago et al. 2012). Thus, network expansion comes at a cost of decreasing group level intimacy and college students report that about 21 % of their networks are close friends and family (Manago et al. 2012). In effect, Facebook provides an easy and efficient platform for building "social supernets" (Donath 2008), very large networks consisting of a spectrum of tight and loose ties, the majority representing relatively loose ties known in the offline world.

Because social networking sites are used to connect with close friends and relatively more distant acquaintances, differentiating between online Facebook friends and offline friendships may not be as useful as examining how Facebook functions within different layers of intimacy. A range of intimacy levels is acknowledged in the classic definition of friendship from Hays (1988 p. 395):

voluntary interdependence between two persons over time, which is intended to facilitate the socio-emotional goals of the participants and may involve varying types and degrees of companionship, intimacy, affection, and mutual assistance.

Acquaintanceship on Facebook could be understood at the latter end of the intimacy spectrum, a less interdependent and more ephemeral form of social connection. As social networking sites increase the human capacity to maintain and communicate with larger webs of loose ties, acquaintances may become more accentuated in the mosaic of human sociality. That is, acquaintances provide not close bonding, but they do provide bridging social capital (Ellison et al. 2007), defined as the sense that one is linked to and can effectively derive resources from a broad and heterogeneous community. The acquisition of bridging capital may become more valued in a culture where digital social networking tools permeate social lives, shifting the ways in which needs for autonomy, relatedness, and competency are met, and presumably how happiness would be achieved.

The value of online acquaintances elicits skepticism. It has been noted that online only social connections lack the kind of depth, authenticity, and genuine trust that derives from face-to-face, intimate self-disclosures and from un-manicured self-expressions in a physical world of spontaneous social experiences (Fröding and Peterson 2012; Soraker 2012). The very standards by which the quality of a social connection is judged hinge on closeness and interdependence: companionship, help, intimacy, trust, loyalty, validation, encouragement, comfort, and reassurance (Demir and Özdemir 2010). These qualities of closeness and interdependence are what enable the satisfaction of basic human needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competency, thereby making friendship closeness a critical source of happiness.

High quality face-to-face friendships furnish opportunities to give and receive authentic and consistent affective care and concern, to experience a secure context for personal volition, and to feel capable in social interactions, all of which promote happiness (Demir and Özdemir 2010). Social media technologies can be used as another channel for enacting these kinds of behaviors with close, offline, friendships (Valkenburg and Peter 2007; see also Haythornthwaite 2005). However, social supernets of networked publics comprised of numerous acquaintances may be best optimized for the acquisition of bridging social capital, which, as we will outline, emphasizes a kind of autonomy in social relations particularly suited for the adolescent and emerging adult periods of the lifespan in post-modern societies.

Broad and diverse social networks that feature the autonomy of individual agents are part of larger sociological trends in the post-industrialized world. Wellman (2002) theorizes that the Internet reflects and amplifies social and technological changes in the twentieth century that have promoted individual mobility within increasingly expansive networks of loose social ties. Thus, social relationships are premised on assumptions of individual autonomy to a larger degree than was the case in pre-modern times. Evolutionary psychologists have posited that departures from tight knit interdependent communities and consistent face-to-face interaction with permanent members of a kin group create discrepancies between modern and ancestral ways of living, which interfere with human happiness (Buss 2000). Others suggest that our brains are not biologically equipped to manage social communities over approximately 150 people regardless of communication technologies such as social networking sites (Dunbar 2012). Certainly the need for close and enduring intimate connections is still very much relevant in the digital age, and in fact, communication technologies are most often employed to tether us to close face-to-face relations in a busy, achievement-oriented, capitalistic society. For example, even though there are a disproportionate number of acquaintances versus close relationships on Facebook, most social interactions on the site happen between close friends (Hampton et al. 2011; Manago et al. 2012).

Yet, alongside the persisting need for intimacy and interdependence in the digital age is evidence of change, in the form of the increasing salience of autonomy in a wider social community of acquaintances. A shift toward networked individualism in the digital age is about the emergence of personalized communities that position the individual, rather than the group, as the unit of connectivity so that the individual is responsible for mobilizing social resources, such as information or support, customized to meet their own unique needs, desires, or ambitions (Wellman 2002). Social networking sites are befitting for this form of sociality. In her multi-method analysis of the nature of community on MySpace and Facebook, Reich (2010) concluded that networked individualism is an apt description for social networking sites. She found little evidence of common group goals or feelings of group membership among adolescents and college student users of Facebook or MySpace. Instead, their descriptions and feelings about their social networking site activities suggested they were operating as independent nodes within personalized webs of connections.

Although youth do sometimes use Facebook to be part of an interest group (Valenzuela et al. 2009), they primarily traverse on their own through their networks (Pempek et al. 2009) in a process of “social grooming” (Donath 2008; Tufekci 2008). Social grooming is about the individual nurturing their social connections through online exchanges, navigating through the announcements and photos friends post, and maintaining a personal reputation via the digital residue of those network excursions. Communications on social networking sites often reference the self, in contrast to communications addressing a superordinate group’s goals and interests, which are more common in online content communities such as Wikipedia (Schwammlein and Wodzicki 2012). Essentially, social networking sites emphasize individuals as the center of their social worlds, managing their connections, expressing themselves to their audiences of friends, and embarking on personalized expeditions through vast landscapes of gossip and social information. The individual creates his or her own social experience based on personal preferences and proclivities. In this way, we propose that personal customization is a useful concept for understanding implications of the shift away from close face-to-face communities to digital societies that afford efficient and convenient tools for building social networks comprised of both close and distant social ties.

### **Procuring Resources via Social Networking Sites: Customized Sociality**

Initial theories about the impact of Internet use were centered on the displacement effect, suggesting that online interactions would displace offline relationships and offer few resources for psychological well-being in exchange (e.g. Kraut et al. 1998; Mesch 2001; Sanders et al. 2000). Ten years later, studies demonstrate that adolescents use online tools such as chat or bulletin boards to reach out to wider realms of youth in order to acquire more social support and information (Subrahmanyam and Smahel 2011; Valkenburg and Peter 2011). Hogan and Wellman (2012) argue that the Internet is increasingly used as a tool to add to, rather than detract from, social resources. Moreover, they argue that technologically mediated connections are thoroughly entangled with offline connections in such a manner that it would be inappropriate to treat them as discrete processes. Indeed, the hallmark of the rise of social networking sites, among other forms of social media online, is that they introduced “anonymous” social contexts in which online friends are anchored in offline relationships (Zhao et al. 2008). Communication technologies such as social networking sites are designed in the digital age to empower individuals to meet their personal needs and preferences by customizing a social life characterized by interactive digital and face-to-face modalities.

Social networking sites constitute part of the digital age infrastructure that enable adolescents and emerging adults to conveniently acquire social resources in ways that transcend offline-online dichotomies. For adolescents, this means more access to close friends and acquaintances than had been possible in the days before

the Internet. Peers are an important source of social support and belonging as adolescents move out of childhood and experience more independence from parents (Furman and Buhrmester 1992). However, those relationships are at the mercy of societal and parental limitations. For example, peer relationships may be restricted by curfews, lack of transportation, or a paucity of social spaces outside the prying eyes of adults. In the digital age, adolescents forge and nourish peer friendships from the convenience of their own homes, day or night (Clark 2005). In fact, Clark dubs millennial youth the "constant contact generation." Similarly, Boyd (2007) argues that social networking sites enable adolescents to transcend physical and regulatory constraints to connect with one another in public or semi-public spheres, lending increased power to their interactions for the construction of youth culture.

Another aspect of customized sociality on social networking sites involves the asynchronicity of computer-mediated communications, which endows adolescents with more control in social interactions than is possible in face-to-face situations (Davis 2012; Schouten et al. 2007). Asynchrony means that adolescents can edit themselves and reflect on what they want to say before transmitting their messages. In addition, screen-to-screen interchanges reduce inhibitions, affording increased self-disclosure and enhanced comfort when discussing sensitive or potentially embarrassing topics. Asynchrony and the shroud of screens are useful for shy or socially anxious youth, who now have digital tools at their disposal to accommodate their needs. Youth can use chat features when they want to discuss intimate or emotionally difficult issues, explore bulletin boards anonymously to learn about sexuality and relationships, or use social networking sites to maintain friendships and promote flattering images of themselves to large online audiences of peers. Unfortunately, computer-mediated communications can also accommodate teenagers' urges to cyberbully, with some studies showing victimization rates as high as 53% (Tokunaga 2010). Both risks and opportunities are entailed in the increasing customization of sociality via the Internet.

In emerging adulthood, social networking sites can be customized to manage the flux and flow of unstable social connections common during this transition to adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a time in the lifespan when instability and exploration reign prominent (Arnett 2004). This life period often involves experimenting with different career opportunities, living environments, and relationships prior to settling down into an adult life. Facebook allows young people to maintain attachment to family, friends, and other former support communities while they embrace the experimentation and mobility appropriate to their age in post-modern societies (Ellison et al. 2007; Stephenson-Abetz and Holman 2012). Emerging adults can move to new cities or backpack through Europe all while preserving digital ties that require relatively little maintenance but are conveniently just a click away.

With past or physically distant attachments adequately secured, emerging adults can also use Facebook to integrate into new communities, traversing seamlessly through broader social expanses than was previously possible. As young people move away to college, to a new city, or seek involvement in new interest groups, the large amounts of social information that can be gleaned from Facebook are quite useful. Indeed, Facebook use predicts college students' integration into university

life (Ellison et al. 2007). Typical Facebook activities, such as creating a profile and posting public comments, expose preferences and other social information that are valuable for gaining insights into new acquaintances (Brandtzaeg et al. 2010; Ellison et al. 2011; Livingstone 2008; Tufekci 2008). Social events are often posted on Facebook, and because it is a non-invasive way to extend invitations, Facebook gives young people an effective tool for gathering new friends and acquaintances (Barkhuus and Tashiro 2010). In other words, Facebook scaffolds engagement with offline social networks.

Finally, because convenient access to information in social supernets generates readily available perspectives from diverse others, it could foster increased social competence, that is, more confidence in one's ability to coordinate needs and actualize resources in a wider, more heterogeneous, social universe. This is the essence of bridging social capital, feeling effectively connected to a broader society, which is highly adaptive in a society of networked individualism where the onus is on the individual to maneuver seamlessly through various social webs. The development of bridging social capital is one of the more robust implications of social networking sites use among college students (Ellison et al. 2011; Lampe et al. 2013). It reflects a more instrumental form of social relatedness that emphasizes the autonomy of the individual within a diverse network of loose ties. However, very little research has investigated whether Facebook does actually promote heterogeneity in one's friendships online. A large scale longitudinal study in Norway suggest that it does (Brandtzaeg 2012), whereas another study with college students in the U.S. illuminates how homophily continues to be a factor online, motivating youth to gravitate to similar others (Craig and Wright 2012).

Enhanced capacities for bridging capital in the digital age is also relevant earlier in development, during adolescence, when youth may want to seek information about other cliques at school or even beyond, to better understand who they are in a broader and diverse social world (Antheunis et al. 2010; Courtois et al. 2012; Ito et al. 2010). By fostering expeditions into peer groups outside established social circles, bridging capital via Facebook could provoke more elaborate identity explorations, a central task during adolescence. Minority youth may particularly benefit from access to wider social spheres. Gray (2009) observed that lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in rural areas of the United States use social networking sites to find other sexual minority youth and gain a better understanding of who they are. Similarly, ethnic minority adolescents use Facebook to connect with older adolescents who scaffold their ethnic identity explorations with new insights into issues of race and ethnicity (Tynes et al. 2010). Awkward, shy, or socially anxious youth use Facebook as a tool for gathering information about popular peers or companions at school with whom they would like to get to know better (Antheunis et al. 2010).

In sum, social networking sites engender customized sociality by providing youth with an additional mode to communicate with offline peers, tools to achieve enhanced control in social interactions, access to an extensive range of social information, and technological capacities to maintain contact with distant others and manage unstable community memberships. This is a form of relatedness accom-



modated to personal needs, preferences, and desires. Technological change that empowers young people to tailor their social environments according to their own inclinations may exemplify the kind of sociocultural change that Twenge (2013) proposes is propelling a self-centered, narcissistic occupation with the self and decreased well-being in the millennial generation. Twenge argues that over the past few decades, self-focus and inflated self-views have increased among emerging adults, while empathy for others and overall happiness has declined. Arnett (2013) disputes Twenge's evidence for increasing narcissism in the millennial generation and argues that optimistic self-views are adaptive for navigating a time of life that is unstable, shifting rapidly, and filled with new possibilities. In the following section, we explore whether technological affordances that endow young people with increased autonomy in social relationships may foster pursuit of happiness or whether it may backfire, leading to a form of self-gratification that may not be conducive to real happiness.

### **Customized Sociality and Happiness**

Feeling socially connected is perhaps the most essential ingredient to the cultivation of happiness, specified as positive appraisals of one's life, high positive affect and low negative affect (Demir et al. 2013; Diener and Seligman 2002). It would therefore seem reasonable that having tools at your disposal to augment your social connectivity would only increase your happiness. Indeed, studies tend to find that Facebook use is associated with various measures of happiness (Kim and Lee 2011; Kalpidou et al. 2011; Manago et al. 2012; Valenzuela et al. 2009). Yet, it is often difficult to disentangle whether those who are already socially connected and happy are more likely than those who are disconnected and unhappy to use Facebook, or whether Facebook promotes increased connection and happiness. Further, what is the nature of the happiness Facebook engenders? There are also certain aspects of Facebook use associated with negative psychological outcomes, such as depression (Locatelli et al. 2012; Davila et al. 2012) and addiction (Smahel et al. 2012). From a uses and gratifications theory perspective (Rubin 2002), the effects of any form of media depend on what you are using it for, how you use it, and the characteristics and qualities that you bring to the table. To help clarify matters, we ground our understanding of Facebook in terms of the technology's affordances, its opportunities for action within social relationships, which offer both risks and opportunities for happiness. In the following discussion, we consider research on Facebook and happiness in terms of three main affordances previously outlined, capabilities to (1) maintain a catalogue of close and distant social contacts and follow their activities, (2) choose whether to broadcast self-expressions to everyone in the network at once or to exchange private digital communications, and (3) manicure a digital representation of the self to others.

**Affordance 1: Catalogue and follow close and distant contacts** *Do increased opportunities to quickly and easily catalogue and follow many kinds of diverse friendships scaffold friendship and happiness?* A recent study found that among various dimensions of relatedness in Facebook use, including the need for social stimulation, need for belonging, and desire to learn about what friends are doing, the need for popularity was the most potent predictor of undergraduates' Facebook use (Utz et al. 2012). Because it is so easy to add friends to the network, some youth use Facebook to increase their popularity and self-esteem (Lee et al. 2012; Zywicki and Danowski 2008). Interestingly, having too many Facebook friends can decrease the social attractiveness of a user because the credibility of so many associations is dubious and makes the user appear desperate to masquerade as someone who is popular (Tong et al. 2008). Indeed, one study found that accumulating friends rather indiscriminately was actually associated with low self-esteem, but only among those with higher levels of concern about how others view them (Lee et al. 2012). Another study suggests that users with high self-esteem and offline popularity use Facebook to maintain their popularity, whereas those with low self-esteem and offline popularity use Facebook to increase their popularity (Zywicki and Danowski 2008).

The question of whether popularity in terms of quantity of Facebook friends promotes happiness is not straightforward. One study with college students showed that, controlling for self-esteem, Facebook network size predicted more life satisfaction (Manago et al. 2012). Another study found that number of friends on Facebook predicted personal-emotional adjustment among upper class college students, but was negatively associated with personal-emotional adjustment among first year students (Kalpidou et al. 2011). Kalpidou and colleagues inferred from their findings that this difference was due to older students using Facebook more effectively to engage in social life at college. Clearly, face-to-face connectedness remains important for happiness in digital societies. For example, a large-scale study with a general population of Canadians (ages 16–65 years old) showed that, although the size of offline social networks predicted subjective well-being, the size of online networks did not contribute to happiness beyond this association (Helliwell and Huang 2013).

Network size could promote happiness if users mobilize Facebook to facilitate social support from both close friends and acquaintances. Deriving social support from Facebook, both bonding (i.e. trusting someone close to you to help solve your problems) and bridging social capital, requires active social grooming. A variety of large scale studies comparing users and non users, and passive versus active users of a variety of ages, demonstrate that social networking site users have more bridging social capital than non-users but particularly if users are active socializers on the site (Burke et al. 2010; Lampe et al. 2013; Ryan and Xenos 2011). One study showed that passive observations of others predicted lower levels of both bridging and bonding social capital and that frequency of direct interactions between pairs predicted higher levels of bonding social capital (Burke et al. 2010). Ellison and colleagues, who have exerted considerable effort to understand connections between Facebook use and social capital, show that using the website to keep up with close friends and learn more about acquaintances in offline social spheres mediate

associations between Facebook use and bridging and bonding social capital (Ellison et al. 2011). Further, they posit that weak ties on Facebook offer very little in the way of social capital if that tie is not articulated in some way offline. Yang and Brown (2012) confirm these results with a study showing that college students who use Facebook to meet new people, rather than to maintain established face-to-face relationships, show less psycho-social adjustment and more loneliness. Indeed a number of studies with adolescents, emerging adults, and adults reveal that social uses of the Internet can lead to more social support and less loneliness when it is specifically used to augment offline relationships (Bessiere et al. 2008; Blais et al. 2008; Burke et al. 2010; Desjarlais and Willoughby 2010; Kim et al. 2009; Valkenburg and Peter 2011).

There is also evidence that the bridging and bonding social capital derived from active Facebook use is directly associated with life satisfaction (Burke et al. 2010; Ellison et al. 2007). However, Facebook seems best optimized for achieving a kind of life satisfaction that derives from the acquisition of bridging capital, rather than bonding capital, the latter perhaps more effectively achieved with close face-to-face interactions (Ellison et al. 2011; Vitak et al. 2011). A longitudinal study with college students found that intensity of Facebook use in year one predicted bonding and bridging capital, but most strongly predicted bridging capital in year two, which was associated with higher levels of life satisfaction (Steinfeld et al. 2008). In this study, the association between Facebook use and bridging social capital was particularly notable for those with low self-esteem in year one, suggesting that Facebook may be a tool especially useful for shy or socially awkward youth to connect to wider social spheres to achieve more life satisfaction. However, it's important to note here that according to Smahel et al. (2012), shy and socially awkward youth who prefer online communication to expand their social networks are at a higher risk for Internet addiction. The life satisfaction that derives from bridging capital via Facebook may be about a more abstract feeling of belonging to society compared to offline belonging to more intimate communities (Grieve et al. 2013). For example, the centrality of Facebook to one's social life predicts college students' life satisfaction and also predicts the belief human beings in general are good and can be trusted (Valenzuela et al. 2009).

In addition to bridging and bonding capital, Facebook is conducive to maintained social capital, defined as connection to ties from past communities (Ellison et al. 2007). First year college students sometimes suffer from friendsickness or homesickness (Paul and Brier 2001) but staying in contact with best friends during this time via phone or e-mail has been shown to help combat social loneliness (Cummings et al. 2006; Oswald and Clark 2003). Facebook is another component of the digital age toolkit for staying connected to friends from high school, helping young people satisfy their needs for connection to both old and new communities in a mobile world (Stephenson-Abetz and Holman 2012). Best friends who are drawn to opportunities in distant locales may be able to preserve their precious relationship through Facebook and other communication technologies such as cell phones. College students who have higher proportions of high school friends in their Facebook networks tend to be more convinced that Facebook is a tool useful for social support

and also report higher levels of life satisfaction (Manago et al. 2012). These findings illustrate how Facebook represents a new route to happiness within friendships, one that is adapted to a more mobile post-modern society.

Unfortunately, there are also new routes to potential unhappiness within the sociality of Facebook. As previously mentioned, more passive Facebook users have lower social capital outcomes and more loneliness than active users (Brandtzaeg 2012; Burke et al. 2010). Viewing social content broadcasted in the network might draw passive users' attention to social interactions in which they are not involved, inducing loneliness. Additionally, passive observation could provoke upward social comparison. Qualitative work with adolescents and college students (Livingstone 2008; Manago et al. 2008) and a large scale international survey of over 1000 Facebook users of various ages (McAndrew and Jeong 2012) suggest that social comparison is quite common on social networking sites. Chou and Edge (2012) concluded that time spent on Facebook looking at content posted by distant acquaintances, including their online exchanges with friends, predicts college students' beliefs that other people have better lives than they do. Youth don't properly attribute self-promotional communications on Facebook to the norms and context of the site, and instead, imagine a rosy picture of acquaintances' lives. Haferkamp and Kramer (2011) found that observing a physically attractive, compared to an unattractive, Facebook user led to lower body image and less positive emotions. Exposure to attractive peer presentations online could have a more powerful effect than exposure to beautiful celebrities because the former are more relevant standards for self-evaluation. These findings point to the importance of examining the nature of the interactions happening on Facebook, which may further complicate our understanding of the connections between Facebook friendship and happiness. Next we consider the second affordance of social networking sites, capabilities for digital communications to the network.

**Affordance 2: Broadcast self-expressions or privately chat** *Do increased opportunities for self-expression in friendships promote happiness?* Much of the research on social networking sites has focused on public broadcasts to the network; however, Facebook also allows for private chatting between friends. Valkenburg and Peter (2011) propose that private Internet chatting between adolescent close friends can actually foster emotional closeness because the disinhibiting effects of computer-mediated communication provokes self-disclosure and thus intimacy (see also Walther 1996). A number of studies confirm this proposition, showing that online peer communications among adolescents encourage both self-disclosure and intimacy (Bonetti et al. 2010; Davis 2012; Schouten et al. 2007). However, whether these online experiences of intimacy promote happiness has not been clearly examined; it could depend on how these online interactions intersect with, inform or influence, offline interactions.

Research has focused on self-disclosures via the status update feature on Facebook, which broadcasts communications to the entire network at once. A one-to-many style of communication to vast expanses of acquaintances could be a convenient way to call forth social support or companionship, which may lead to increased

happiness. Barkhuus and Tashiro (2010) demonstrated that “peripheral” friendships or “light” friendships could be a source of life satisfaction for college students in the digital age because it fosters ad-hoc socializing accommodated to mobile and busy lives. For example, college students broadcast comments such as “I need caffeine” to everyone in the network, which reaches another person in the network needing coffee, thus facilitating a meet-up. In fact, social networking site users across a variety of age ranges actually have more face-to-face interactions than non-users (Brandtzaeg 2012). Another qualitative study demonstrated that college students post emotional comments via status updates and though they admit that some comments may be rather glib, they feel a sense of satisfaction knowing that someone out there cares how they are doing (Vitak and Ellison 2013).

Quantitative studies confirm that self-disclosures via status updates may be a new route to happiness in the digital age. In a survey study with South Korean college students about their use of the social networking site Cyworld, self-disclosure on the site was positively correlated with subjective well-being (Lee et al. 2011). In an experimental study with American college students, participants who were randomly assigned to increase the frequency of their status updates reported reduced loneliness compared to participants in a control condition (Deters and Mehl 2012). The decrease in loneliness was associated with increases in feelings of social connection, and this effect was independent of whether or not people in the network responded to participants’ posts. These authors suggest that perhaps simply imagining that people are reading your posts, and thus paying attention to you, is a quick fix to feelings of disconnection. Similarly, college students commonly use the status update for emotional self-disclosure and the more people they estimate to be regularly reading their status updates, the higher their life satisfaction (Manago et al. 2012).

The content of these self-disclosures could also be a factor in the association between status updates and happiness. Some studies suggest that posting about one’s negative emotional state is akin to rumination, which fosters indulgence in that negative emotional state, and thus low levels of subjective well-being (Locatelli et al. 2012). In contrast, college students who report presenting themselves favorably using status updates (i.e. “I only show the happy side of me”), also report feeling good about themselves and their lives (Kim and Lee 2011). However, this same study found that college students who disclosed more about their emotional needs on Facebook and received social support in the form of comments, reported higher subjective well-being. Other studies show that positive feedback via comments on Facebook can lead to higher levels of self-esteem (Valkenburg et al. 2006) and decreased anxious-depressive symptoms (Szwedo et al. 2012).

The relative intimacy of the network may be a moderating factor in the association between public emotional self-disclosure on Facebook and happiness. Yang and Brown (2012) found that the frequency of status updates was associated with poor psycho-social adjustment and loneliness only among college student participants who reported using Facebook to meet new people, and thus likely had less intimate networks. Other studies confirm that those with smaller, tight-knit Facebook networks are more likely to emotionally disclose via status updates and report higher levels of emotional social support from Facebook (Kim and Lee

2011; Stutzman et al. 2012). These findings as a whole suggest a tradeoff between large and close social networks. More intimate networks can provide a more supportive environment for more authentic, less promotional self-expressions in the pursuit of happiness; for larger, less intimate networks, it may be more adaptive in the pursuit of happiness to promote a positive self-image. Self-image is clearly a salient issue for social media users in the millennial generation. Social experiences online require and provide tools for crafting a digital image of the self, the topic of the next section.

**Affordance 3: Manicure Digital Self-Presentations** *Do increased opportunities to project a favorable image of the self in friendships promote happiness?* In the shift from offline to online self-presentations, the individual faces the task of projecting an image representing one's identity onto a digital screen. This involves increased self-consciousness in crafting a self for others' consumption, meaning increased attention to, and control over, one's appearance (Kramer and Winter 2008; Manago et al. 2008; Salimkhan et al. 2010; Zhao et al. 2008). Face-to-face self-presentations are alive in the moment; they arise out of spontaneous, synchronous, and enriched social cues. In contrast, Facebook self-presentations entail strategic self-presentation. They often involve selecting flattering photos, posting premeditated clever comments, sharing only noteworthy life events, engineering social exchanges to advertise social attractiveness, and associating oneself with esteemed audio-visual content recycled from other online sources. Research demonstrates that simply observing one's own Facebook profile boosts self-esteem because one is experiencing a favorable, manicured reflection of the self, manifested into a social reality (Gentile et al. 2012; Gonzales and Hancock 2011). Thus, circulating socially desirable images of the self to an audience of friends represents a new route by which positive self-views could be enhanced through digital friendships.

Yet, public presentations of the self in social interactions could also increase the pressure to create a self-image that will appeal to the masses. In this way, the tyranny of demands to be successful and attractive amidst the propagation of self-promotional content on social networking sites could have adverse effects on happiness. Because attention to the self is very much experienced and sought after on social networking sites (Donath 2008; Livingstone 2008; Manago et al. 2012; Tufekci 2008), youth may be socialized to seek attention and feedback from others in order to feel happy about who they are. In fact, university students who reported higher levels of photo sharing on Facebook also showed higher levels of public-based contingencies of self-worth; that is, they derived their self-worth from their appearance and approbation from others (Stefanone et al. 2011). Private based contingencies of self-worth, such as virtue and family closeness, were associated with less frequent social networking site use. Although more research is needed, there is some evidence to suggest that while Facebook provides new opportunities to circulate a positive self-image among one's network of friends and acquaintances, and thus achieve higher levels of self-esteem, the use of social networking sites may also foster a more fragile sense of self, where happiness is dependent on image. In

fact, a study addressing a spectrum of psychological disorders showed that more frequent impression management on Facebook was associated with more depressive symptoms (Rosen et al. 2013).

New affordances for crafting a digital self in online social interactions seem to offer both risks and opportunities for happiness. On the one hand it may provide new opportunities to be the best that you can be and reify that ideal self in social interactions. Alternatively, an emphasis on external appearances and manicured selves marketed to diverse networks online could present young people with an impossible quest for perfection, especially during this sensitive period for identity development.

## Conclusions

Sociocultural changes associated with the proliferation of communication technologies are vast. In this review, we have illustrated some of the ways in which social networking sites represent a cultural tool designed for customized sociality adapted to a society of networked individualism. One obvious implication of customized sociality for future research on friendship and happiness can be summed up by the idea of instant gratification: social stimulation, companionship, affection, support, when you want it, how you want it. Gratification of needs may support positive affect and life satisfaction in the short term, but perhaps the question moving forward is whether this form of happiness is sustainable. We conclude this chapter with provocative studies that speak to this issue.

In a series of experimental studies addressing the paradox that Facebook use is associated with feelings of connection and disconnection, Sheldon et al. (2011) determined that disconnection motivates Facebook use. They further found that although Facebook use does increase feelings of connection, it does not reduce feelings of disconnection. The authors propose that their data demonstrate how Facebook is a temporary fix for loneliness, "a source of transient positive affect" that does not fully satiate our need for deeper forms of social connection. Deters and Mehl (2012) conclude from their study of status update activity that Facebook represents a form of "social snacking," a temporary form of social interaction to tide one over until a more substantial meal of social interaction is available. There is physiological evidence for this perspective. An experimental study measuring a host of psychophysiological effects of Facebook use, including skin conductance, pupil dilation, blood volume pulse, respiration, and brain activation showed that Facebook evokes a core flow state characterized by high positive valence and high arousal (Mauri et al. 2011). These findings present evidence of the benefits of Facebook use for happiness. However, this core flow state could also induce a psychosocial hedonic treadmill, an arousal state that is highly pleasurable and rewarding but also self-focused and one that leaves us feeling depleted rather than fulfilled. Facebook could hook youth into easy forms of relatedness that provide instant pleasure and

moment-to-moment reward that distracts from stable friendships based on mutual-ity and consistency.

Future research must employ more experimental and longitudinal studies that consider the intersections between youths' online and offline friendship experiences over time. Cultural developmental approaches that examine the meaning and practices surrounding friendship, intimacy, and acquaintanceship in various contexts and the ways social skills are acquired and developed within friendships will be needed to understand both the risks and opportunities young people face as they seek to build quality relationships to thrive and find happiness in a society of networked individualism.

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