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Melissa S. Plew  
*Georgia State University*

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FACEBOOK FRIENDSHIPS BETWEEN COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTORS AND  
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COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS, AND THE INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES THAT  
INFLUENCE INSTRUCTORS' IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT ON FACEBOOK

by

MELISSA S. PLEW

Under the Direction of Dr. Cynthia Hoffner and Dr. Jaye Atkinson

ABSTRACT

This research examined Facebook friendships between college/university instructors and students. Based on the development of instructor-student dual relationships, this study described instructors' Facebook use with students. This included explanations for allowing/not allowing students, communication with students, and ethical concerns. Rooted in the theories of impression management, self-monitoring and role conflict, plus the concept of ambient awareness, hypotheses predicted relationships between instructors' individual differences and Facebook use: (1) self-monitoring would be positively related to role conflict; and (2) self-monitoring, (3) role conflict, and (4) ambient awareness would be positively related to instructors' self-presentation, impression management behaviors, and privacy management. Emails were sent to faculty at 270 colleges/universities throughout the U.S. and 331 instructors completed the online survey. Of these, 56.2% allowed students as friends. Open-ended answers

revealed that instructors allowed students as friends to communicate, to facilitate learning about each other, and because it was difficult to decline requests. Some instructors did not allow certain students (e.g., problematic students, undergraduates). They communicated by commenting on and liking posts on students' pages, and had ethical concerns about negative consequences. Open-ended answers revealed that instructors did not allow students as friends to maintain the professional divide and avoid favoritism, which explained their ethical concerns.

Hierarchical regression analyses tested the predicted relationships. Results revealed that self-monitoring approached significance as having a positive relationship with role conflict and a negative relationship with privacy management, but was not related to self-presentation or impression management behaviors. Role conflict was not related to impression management. Awareness of students was positively related to self-presentation and impression management behaviors, but unexpectedly, perception of students' awareness of instructors was negatively related to privacy management. A partial correlation analysis tested high/low self-monitors separately and not only replicated the results, but also revealed that high self-monitors' perception of students' awareness was positively correlated with self-presentation and impression management behaviors.

These findings indicate that ambient awareness is related to online communication and should be studied further. This is especially intriguing since the two types of ambient awareness related differently to the three types of impression management studied in this research.

**INDEX WORDS:** Facebook, College/university instructors, Instructor-student relationships, Self-monitoring, Role conflict, Ambient awareness, Impression management, Ethics

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MELISSA S. PLEW

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2011

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Melissa S. Plew  
2011

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Ahmet Atay was a graduate teaching assistant in 2006 when he received his first Facebook friend request from a student. He admitted that he accepted the request with some reservations. I thought rejecting his Facebook friendship request would have easily changed or damaged the dynamic of our student-teacher relationship. He would have easily felt rejected because of my actions. Even though adding him as a friend challenged my ideas about teaching, new media technologies, and their role in educational settings, I was also intrigued by this new aspect of human communication and relationships (Atay, 2009, p. 72).

Atay (2009) made a choice that many college/university instructors are facing. Should they allow students as friends on Facebook? Some instructors think these relationships have positive qualities; however, other instructors feel these interactions are a dangerous way to communicate with students, as well as a new way to breed inappropriate relationships between instructors and students (Simon, 2008). As a student, Theresa Turner (2010) was shocked the first time a professor offered to friend his students on Facebook and now wonders what the rules are when instructors and students are friends on these sites. While the concerns about the relationships developed on these sites are valid, technology scholars seem to side with Atay (2009). Prensky (2001) asserted that today's students are "... digital natives. Our students today are all 'native speakers' of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet" (p. 1). He believes that instructors, who he calls digital immigrants, need to assimilate into the digital age and incorporate new technology into their classrooms and as a communication method. According to Prensky (2001), digital natives were born after 1980, so it is possible that younger instructors are part of the digital native group. However, since the oldest digital natives are 30 years old, it is reasonable to believe that digital native instructors are in the minority. Richardson (2009) agreed with Prensky, stating that students can only learn how to properly use web-based technology,

including online social network sites (SNSs) like Facebook, if taught. He thinks that instructors have the responsibility to use technology with their students as a means of showing them the safe way to incorporate the Internet into their lives.

Becoming friends with students on Facebook can also have a positive influence on learning outcomes. The National Communication Association (2010) posted a press release that encouraged students to friend their instructors. Based on research by Joseph Mazer, NCA argued that students who are friends with instructors on Facebook can find similarities between themselves and their instructors, which may help them feel more comfortable approaching the instructors with questions and concerns. Instructors can also use Facebook to become closer to their students and create a more positive learning environment. A national organization's endorsement of instructor-student relationships moving to Facebook suggests that these friendships may be becoming more accepted in academic circles.

Online social network sites are one of the newest Internet technologies most widely used by adolescents and college students; and Facebook is the most popular of them all. As of October 2010, Facebook had more than 500 million users ("Statistics," 2010). In May 2010, Facebook became the most visited website in the world, with more than 540 million unique visitors and 570 billion views a month, reaching 35% of the Internet population (Ionescu, 2010). Atal (2007) claimed that over half of the users on Facebook are over 35 years old, so this site is not just for adolescents or young adults. In fact, according to a Facebook spokesperson, approximately 297,000 members identify themselves as faculty or staff at a college or university (Robyler, McDaniel, Webb, Herman & Witty, 2010). These numbers clearly indicate that Facebook provides a popular way for people of all ages, including instructors, to communicate with their social circles, which may be why Atay's (2009) student sent him a friend request.

The popularity of this online communication is not surprising. Computer-mediated communication (CMC) is not new. In 1992, Walther defined CMC as “synchronous or asynchronous electronic mail and computer conferencing, by which senders encode in text messages that are relayed from senders’ computers to receivers’ [computers]” (p. 52). Parks and Floyd (1996) revealed that individuals reported that they socialize, maintain relationships, play games and receive social support through e-mail, suggesting that CMC provided a new avenue of communicating with others. As the Internet developed new ways for individuals to meet and communicate with others, relationships formed on channels other than e-mail. Peter, Valkenburg and Schouten (2005) claimed that adolescents commonly form relationships through online chat rooms and instant messaging. Walther and Parks (2002) discussed another opportunity for CMC when they asserted that the Internet “must be judged as a fabulously successful medium for social support” (p. 545). Online support venues provide emotional support for topics as benign as shyness or as horrific as sexual abuse (Harris, 2006). These examples show that individuals have been turning to the Internet to communicate with others in a variety of ways for a number of years and online social network sites are just the newest platform for CMC.

Computer-mediated communication may occur between strangers, but in many cases, it happens between individuals in existing relationships. Rabby and Walther (2003) maintained that most individuals use CMC to supplement face-to-face communication with people they already know. They made the claim that “CMC serves as a supplemental medium that allows relational partners familiar to each other in a variety of contexts to stay in touch” (Rabby & Walther, 2003, p. 153). This suggests that instructors and students can use CMC channels to communicate with each other beyond the classroom and office environments.

Mediated communication channels are not only useful for individual interpersonal relationships, but for the relationships of communities as well. Wellman (2005) defined community as “networks of interpersonal ties that provide sociability, support, information, a sense of belonging and social identity” (p. 53) and claimed that communities are often using CMC to stay in touch. Sociologists have discovered that thanks to technologies such as phones and planes, a person’s overall community can extend beyond the boundaries of a neighborhood, which changed the definition of community from one concerned with space to one concerned with social networks (Wellman, 1988a, 1988b). In other words, individuals no longer have to rely on others in physical proximity for companionship, but can now find others with similar interests or needs for communication. Wellman and Gulia (1999) asserted that “as social beings, those who use the Net seek not only information but also companionship, social support and a sense of belonging” (p. 173). In 1999, Wellman and Gulia listed the possible online communities as email, bulletin boards, Multi-User Dungeons, newsgroups and Internet Relay Chat. Now, online social networks have joined the list.

Thanks to these technologies, people can communicate with others without being in the same physical space. This gives students more opportunities to communicate with their instructors since they no longer have to talk to them before/after class or find them in their offices. The academic and classroom communities can move online. While moving these communities online may seem beneficial, instructors need to consider a number of issues before allowing their students to become their friends on Facebook. Theresa Turner (2010) suggested that

If instructors are dead set on adding students on Facebook, they should meticulously gauge their responses and interactions with each student. Although it can be damaging to an instructor’s credibility for a student to view pictures of a drunken night of fun, it’s still that instructor’s personal page. It’s unfortunately expected, and almost cliché, to view a

college student partaking in such activities, so why then must an instructor's life remain so hidden and controlled? They're human too and they deserve to enjoy the life for which they've worked so hard. Regrettably, however, to cross such lines could diminish the principles of the teacher-student relationship, despite the fact that we live in a more modernized society (p. 18).

While Turner is still a college student, she gets to the heart of the matter. Instructors deserve to post the photos and information they want on their own personal page; but, if they are going to allow students as Facebook friends, they have to think about how that information impacts the instructor-student relationship. Instructors must think about how they present themselves on Facebook. Does their impression management of their personal identities on Facebook match the identities they present as a college faculty member? Kitchener (1988) argued that when students witness their instructors acting in ways that are inconsistent with their instructor identity confusion can occur. This confusion can lead to unsatisfactory instructor-student relationships and ultimately cause ethical problems.

The interactions between college instructors and students involve more than just teaching and learning in the classroom. Rawlins (2000) suggested that teaching is relational and that instructors have to care about their students, while still being aware that they cannot become too intimate. This can become problematic when one realizes that many college instructors form dual relationships with their students. These relationships involve engaging in interactions beyond the professional instructor-student one (Bowman & Hatley, 1995). Today's students are digital natives and often want to communicate with instructors beyond the traditional meetings after class or during office hours. With the advent of new technologies students are increasingly turning to e-mail, texting and instant messaging to contact instructors (Bloch, 2002; Hassini, 2006; Hinkle, 2002; Stephens, Houser, & Cowan, 2009). Communicating with instructors

through Facebook is the next logical step and means that instructors have to be aware of their online communication behaviors.

### **The Present Study**

Facebook has become increasingly popular as it provides a convenient way for individuals to communicate with others in their social networks. As digital natives are entering the college classroom, instructors have to decide whether or not to use this site to communicate with their students. As Simon (2008) indicated, some faculty members see these sites as a positive way to interact with their students, while other faculty members view them as a breeding ground for dangerous affiliations. While there may be negative aspects of communicating with students on Facebook, Prensky (2001) and Richardson (2009) asserted that technology is an important part of the lives of today's youth and instructors need to help their students learn how to use it safely. Millions of people of all ages use Facebook (Atal, 2007; "Statistics," 2010) and students and instructors are becoming friends on the site (Atay, 2009; Robyler et al., 2010; Simon, 2008; Turner, 2010). The National Communication Association (2010) even encourages instructors and students to become Facebook friends. Since this site is fairly new, there is little research looking at how college/university instructors use the site, especially with students. This study seeks to address this gap in the literature.

The overall purpose of this research is two-fold. The first part of the study seeks to create a descriptive picture of how college/university instructors avoid or create Facebook relationships with students. This includes discovering the instructors' reasons for allowing or not allowing students as Facebook friends, the types of students who are allowed as friends, how instructors communicate with the students they have allowed as Facebook friends, and what ethical concerns they considered in these decision making processes. This descriptive picture is

created by asking college/university instructors about their Facebook use. The options provided to the instructors were based on the dual relationship literature (Bowman & Hatley, 1995; Ei & Bowen, 2002; Holmes, Rupert, Ross, & Shapera, 1999; Kagel & Giebelhausen, 1994; Kitchener, 1988; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007; Rupert & Holmes, 1997) and typical Facebook communication behaviors (“Help Page,” 2010; “Privacy Policy,” 2010). The ethical guidelines set forth in the dual relationship literature (Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Congress, 1996) were used to reveal what concerns instructors considered when deciding whether or not to allow students as friends on Facebook and deciding how to communicate with students once they were friends.

The second part of this study seeks to identify the variables that influence instructors’ impression management behaviors on Facebook. Impression management is a key element of Facebook use. Hewitt and Forte (2006) argued that “because social networking communities are built to support presentation of self, identity management is likely to be a significant issue for participants in communities whose membership crosses perceived social boundaries and organizational power relationships” (n.p.). Instructors, like other users, are likely to feel the need to present multiple impressions on the site. This has the potential to lead to greater use of impression management on Facebook, making impression management an important feature of Facebook use to study. All users make specific decisions about what to post and what not to post to create a specific image of themselves on the page. As previously noted, instructors should have the ability to share their lives on Facebook and present any image they wish, but when they invite or accept invitations from students, the rules may change. Instructors can present themselves through specific impression management behaviors or they can keep certain information private in order to maintain a specific image. The way instructors decide to manage



their impressions on Facebook may be influenced by a number of factors, including role conflict, self-monitoring, and ambient awareness.

First, individuals have multiple identities (Stryker, 1980) and when more than one identity is required at any given time, confusion and conflict can occur. Miller and Arnold (2001) argued that many people struggled with a conflict between personal and professional identities when they created websites. These people often wanted to share their personal lives with others, but were concerned about colleagues visiting the site, which caused them to experience conflict. This same conflict may be present when instructors allow their students as friends on Facebook. The instructors will probably want to be themselves and communicate in ways that are consistent with their personal identities, but when students enter the picture, that communication may no longer be appropriate and conflict can occur. This conflict may be linked to one's level of self-monitoring, which Snyder (1979) defined as one's desire to regulate his/her impression management behaviors in social situations. Meyer (2001) explained that high self-monitors are likely to present what they consider to be the correct image for any particular situation, while low self-monitors are likely to present what they consider to be their true identities regardless of the context. High self-monitors might feel more role conflict because they are aware of what behaviors are considered proper for each role and know that it is difficult to communicate in ways that are considered suitable for everyone when more than one audience is present. On the other hand, low self-monitors tend to use the same behaviors in any situation, so they may not perceive as much role conflict as high self-monitors do.

While one's level of self-monitoring may influence the role conflict s/he feels on Facebook, both of these variables may also impact how s/he decides to present him/herself on Facebook. Instructors who perceive a high level of role conflict may be concerned with

presenting an image that is appropriate for all Facebook friends. Goffman (1959) argued that when multiple audiences are present at the same time, individuals will attempt to communicate in ways that are appropriate for all audiences, which suggests instructors may attempt to manage their impressions so that they are appropriate for all the different types of friends on Facebook. High self-monitors who are concerned with the ideal behaviors for any given situation might be more aware of what type of communication is appropriate on Facebook to present the image expected by specific audiences, including students. This may lead to more effort in managing their impressions to communicate in ways that are considered ideal for all of their Facebook friends. Low self-monitors tend to communicate in the same ways for all audiences, so they will probably put less effort into specifically managing their impressions on Facebook.

Finally, the ambient awareness, or the ability to pick up on others' moods and thoughts through the information posted to SNSs (Thompson, 2008), instructors feel on Facebook is likely to influence their impression management. Goffman (1959) argued that "when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilize his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey" (p. 4). Therefore, when instructors are aware of students as an audience, they may be more likely to communicate in ways they think are appropriate given the image they want to project to students.

To accomplish the two goals of this research, college/university instructors who use Facebook were invited to complete an online survey. The responses provided by both instructors who have allowed students as Facebook friends and those who have not allowed students were analyzed to create the descriptive picture of instructor Facebook use and to determine the influences on their impression management.

This dissertation is organized as follows. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature for this project. It begins with an explanation of two foundational background areas. The first area is the student-instructor relationship, which includes a discussion of interpersonal ethics as they relate to the decision making processes of becoming Facebook friends with students and determining how to communicate with them. The second area is online social network sites, including Facebook. The second part of chapter two describes the conceptual background of the project, which includes the concepts of role identity and conflict, self-monitoring, impression management and privacy, and ambient awareness. Chapter two ends with an explanation of the current study, which presents the rationale for the research questions and hypotheses. Chapter three describes the method used in this project. It explains the procedures used to recruit participants and collect data, as well as details the measures used on the questionnaire. Chapter four provides a description of the data analyses and reports the results of the study. Chapter five discusses the conclusions and interpretations of the findings, provides theoretical and practical implications of the findings, explains the limitations of the study, and suggests possibilities for future research.

## Chapter 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature concerning the key concepts of this research. The first main section explores two foundational background areas. The first area is the student-instructor relationship, including an exploration of the ethical considerations associated with these relationships. The second area discusses online social network sites, focusing primarily on Facebook. The second main section explains the conceptual background of the project. The concepts include role identity and conflict; self-monitoring; impression management, including how privacy is used to manage one's impressions; and ambient awareness. Finally, the present research study is described.

#### **Foundational Background**

To gain insight into the possible Facebook friendships between college/university instructors and students, it is necessary to understand two key foundational areas. First, the instructor-student relationship needs to be addressed. While instructors can form relationships with any student, much of the research on these associations used undergraduate students as participants. It should be noted that relationships with graduate students may possess some of the same qualities, but there may be differences that have not been articulated in the research. The relationships instructors form with their students may impact how they communicate in specific situations, such as on Facebook; therefore the second area examined is online social network sites, detailing what they are and how they work.

#### **Instructor-Student Relationships**

Individuals tend to develop relationships with the people they come into contact with on a regular basis. While instructors will generally form some type of relationship with their students

based on this regular contact, they may actually form interpersonal relationships with students because they know there is more to teaching than passing along knowledge. Rawlins (2000) suggested that “teaching is a physical, visceral, intellectual, and emotional activity. It is also inherently relational” (p. 5). While the relationship between instructor and student is obviously important, it is also complicated. Rawlins (2000) asserted that instructors can “care deeply and significantly about our students without desiring an exclusive intimate connection with them, either as a close friendship that might imply unwarranted favoritism, or as a sexual relationship that involves exploitation and abuse of power differences” (p. 6). Instructors have to find ways to communicate with their students that show respect and caring, without crossing the line and becoming too personal.

Two models of relational development exist for this student-instructor relationship. DeVito (1986) asserted that instructors and students follow seven stages, including the first two that encompass the expectations the student and instructor have of each other before they even meet. Stages three and four involve the first contact and testing each other to determine the actual expectations of the relationship. Intimacy, the fifth stage, involves a significant expansion of breadth and depth in communication. The final two stages are the deterioration and dissolution of the relationship as the course comes to an end. Cooper and Simonds (2003) used Knapp and Vangelisti’s (1992) stages of relational development to explain the four stages they claimed students and instructors follow while developing relationships. The first two stages involve the initiation of the relationship, as well as experimenting to determine the expectations of the relationship. Intensifying, the third stage, happens when the breadth and depth of communication increases. The final stage occurs at the end of the course when the relationship begins to deteriorate and dissolve. While the dissolution of the relationship may happen once the

class ends, Cooper and Simonds (2003) asserted that it is possible for the instructor-student relationship to continue after the course is over. Some students stay in contact with instructors for various reasons, including taking other courses, being involved in extra-curricular activities, and mentoring opportunities. In a college or university setting, the relationship with undergraduate students is more likely to end, while the relationship with graduate students tends to continue since these students work more closely with faculty members. Both DeVito (1986) and Cooper and Simonds (2003) stated that the interpersonal relationship between the teacher and students intensifies when the breadth and depth of communication increases. This indicates that to build relationships, students and instructors must get to know each other in some fashion. Both parties must be willing to interact with each other and share information that allows the other to get to know them. This may happen in the classroom, or it may happen in other spaces. When the relationship moves beyond mere teaching, a dual relationship is formed.

**Dual relationships.** People may think that the relationship between instructors and students mainly takes place in the classroom; however, research has found that numerous students and teachers have relationships outside the classroom. These dual relationships are defined as “engaging in one or more types of relationships in addition to a professional relationship with an individual at a given time” (Bowman & Hatley, 1995, p. 232). In the academic world, this means that an instructor may have a relationship with a student that goes beyond classroom teaching. Owen and Zwahr-Castro (2007) stated that boundaries in professional relationships, such as instructors and students, dictate rules that establish the professional role as the primary role and separate from all others. In other words, an instructor’s primary job is to teach students. The problem with this is that instructors are not just teachers. Faculty, especially at the college level, can play a number of specific roles in their students’

lives: academic advisor, curriculum planner, research advisor, employer, therapist, and/or friend (Congress, 1996; Holmes et al., 1999; Rupert & Holmes, 1997). While roles such as advisor, curriculum planner, and research advisor are an important part of an instructor's job, they are different than teaching a group of students in a classroom. In the classroom, the instructor plays the same role for all students enrolled in the course. When the instructor moves from teacher to another role, such as academic advisor, the role is only pertinent to specific students. While discussing the possibility of dual roles compromising the primary role of teaching, Blevins-Knabe (1992) asserted that there are a number of questions an instructor must ask him/herself. First, the instructor must make sure there is no loss of objectivity. Second, the instructor must make sure that evaluations of the student are not tainted due to the dual relationship. Finally, the instructor must make sure the student is held to the same standards as other students.

Relationships that cross into friend territory provide the most potential for these negative consequences, but roles such as academic/research/curriculum advisor can become problematic as well. Without realizing it, instructors may favor their advisees or provide more course opportunities for students they work with outside the classroom. Bowman and Hatley (1995) argued that "other students may become jealous and resentful as they witness close faculty-student relationships and perceive that mentored students receive preferential treatment" (p. 232). Congress (1996) added that instructors need to be aware of how students view their relationships with other students. If some students feel slighted or that the student in a dual relationship with an instructor is getting special treatment, the resentment and jealousy may lead to a feeling of discontent in the classroom. When looking at instructor-student relationships, the instructor needs to realize that in most cases, teaching is the primary role and all others are secondary.

While a dual relationship can happen between any student and instructor, Baggio, Paget and Chenoweth (1997) explained that graduate students offer a special case of dual relationships because they are encouraged to interact with faculty outside the classroom at events such as conferences and social events. Atay (2009) agreed by stating that “graduate students are encouraged to build working and lasting academic relationships and friendships with their mentors and academic advisors” (p. 72). These activities and relationships are meant to socialize students into the discipline and are crucial to the students’ professional development. Instructors are expected to work with graduate students as mentors and spend more time with them outside the classroom due to research projects and advising opportunities. Since graduate students may work with faculty who are not their classroom instructors, these relationships become the primary role and other relationships, such as employer or friend, become secondary.

Guidance for professors about dual relationships tends to focus on sexual relationships (Congress, 1996; Ei & Bowen, 2002; Holmes et al., 1999; Kagle & Giebelhausen, 1994; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007). But nonsexual dual relationships are more common; and although they can be rewarding, they do provide opportunities for problematic interactions. Since it appears that the instructor-student relationship does not end at the classroom door or with academic work, it is necessary to look at the consequences of these relationships.

The literature on dual relationships tends to focus on the risks and problems of these additional interactions instead of the possible rewards. The risk discussed most often is that of exploitation (Holmes et al., 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Kitchener, 1988; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007). Kagle and Giebelhausen (1994) stated that the influence an instructor has over a student carries over into the dual relationship, whether it be advisor or friend. This influence may unintentionally be used to exploit students, from convincing the student to babysit for the



professor to demanding extra hours of research. Kitchener (1988) also mentioned that social roles, including that of instructor, have specific expectations. The student will expect the professor to act in specific ways, usually in ways that reflect his/her role as instructor. When those expectations are not met in other interactions, such as in social situations, confusion can occur. Rupert and Holmes (1997) stated that multiple relationships can erode the professional nature of the student/instructor relationship and lead to a compromise of objectivity, as also noted by Blevins-Knabe (1992). The erosion of the professional relationship and the loss of objectivity are just two consequences that might encourage instructors to consider the ethical dimensions of their dual relationships with their students.

**Ethical communication.** Ethical interpersonal communication is important, but difficult to define. In 1990, Deetz argued that in the *Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*, the word ethical appeared twice and the word ethics was absent. This implies that the ethics of interpersonal communication are seldom discussed. Harral (1979) posited that “the ethics of interpersonal communication . . . have to do with our attitudes toward the other person in any relationship. To accept the other person and the range of his/her choices and in so doing to accept our own range of choices – that is the challenge of an interpersonal ethic” (p. 45). This argument suggests that communicating ethically means simply accepting the other’s communication behaviors. However, Johannesen (2002) stated that

Potential ethical issues are inherent in any instance of communication between humans to the degree that the communication can be judged on a right-wrong dimension, that it involves possible significant influence on other humans, and that the communicator consciously chooses specific ends sought and communicative means to achieve those ends (p. 2).

This indicates that ethics are a part of any communicative act and that the specific behaviors chosen can be viewed as right or wrong; but, little research has looked at what makes behaviors

right or wrong. Jensen (1985) argued that communication cannot be judged on the binary assumption of ethical or unethical, but rather each interaction should be judged on a continuum ranging from highly ethical to highly unethical. This argument points to the idea that interpersonal communication behaviors can be placed anywhere on the continuum depending on the factors involved and how the individual feels about those factors. Jensen's (1985) assertion may explain why Christians and Lambeth (1996) found that communication instructors introduce possible ethical issues, but provide little guidance on how to identify, evaluate or respond to them. Jensen (1985) also argued that communication ethics need to be based on as many sources as possible including the (1) political perspective, (2) human-nature perspective, (3) dialogical perspective, (4) situational perspective, (5) religious perspective, (6) utilitarian perspective, and (7) the legal perspective. While these approaches may provide guidance to those trying to communicate ethically, Deetz (1990) argued that it is nearly impossible to construct ethical principles that are appropriate for all situations and contexts. He added that one of the established ways of looking at communication ethics is through "situational or contextual morality arising out of specific communities" (Deetz, 1990, p. 227). In other words, individuals are going to decide for themselves what it means to communicate ethically depending on the specific situation, which makes a standard ethical principle for interpersonal communication difficult to discern. This may explain why there are differing views on the ethics of instructor-student relationships.

People have varying viewpoints about the possible relationships that can develop between instructors and students. Some believe that relationships that become more personal can be appropriate while others feel that the relationship should stay professional (Simon, 2008). Although ethical behavior in these situations is difficult to define because everyone has a

different idea of what it means to have an ethical relationship, the best course of action is for the instructor to analyze the relationship and its consequences. Congress (1996) set forth six questions the instructor need to ask when engaging in a relationship outside the instructor/student one. First, the instructor needs to determine the role being assumed in the dual relationship. Is that role friend, advisor, therapist, or sexual partner? Each role has its own risks and rewards and the instructor needs to be aware of those. Second, the instructor must be aware of the potential for exploitation or harm. If there is the slightest possibility of hurting the student in any way, the relationship should not continue. Third, the instructor needs to realize whether or not the relationship takes undue advantage of his/her greater power in the relationship. Is the instructor asking the student to do things that might make the student uncomfortable, but due to the power differential feels unable to speak up? Fourth, the instructor must decide if the relationship has an impact on other students. If other students feel slighted or that the student in the relationship is getting special treatment, then there will be a feeling of discontent in the classroom. Fifth, it is important to look at whether the relationship is with a current student or former student. Current students pose a greater risk than do former students. Finally, instructors should think about how other colleagues view the relationship. If others see the relationship as inappropriate, there might be a problem.

These questions are valuable for instructors who may become friends with students on Facebook. For instance, if the instructor only friends certain students, others may feel as if they are not as important as the students who are friends. Also, friending former students may pose fewer problems than friending students who are currently working with the instructor in a professional manner, such as taking classes or being advised. Extending the instructor-student

relationship into personal territory can be a risky decision and instructors have to be aware of the ethical consequences associated with it.

When asked, students have definite opinions of what types of relationships with their instructors are appropriate versus inappropriate. Bowman and Hatley (1995) conducted telephone interviews with graduate students enrolled in counselor preparation programs accredited by the Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Counseling Related Educational Programs. The sample included 247 graduate students from every geographic region of the United States and represented large and small training programs. Each student was asked to rate specific situations as ethical or unethical. Participants heard seven specific scenarios and then were asked if they found twenty-six specific behaviors from the scenarios to be ethical or unethical (it was a forced choice between the two). Financial interactions were considered appropriate only when the student was doing specific work for the money (e.g., research, babysitting). Direct lending was considered inappropriate by 77% of the participants. Socializing at conferences with a mentor and working closely on research projects were considered appropriate, while most felt it was inappropriate to share a hotel room (92%), perform office duties (57%) and deny authorship to students who have contributed to a project (92%). The study found that 80% of respondents felt that a professor and student describing themselves primarily as friends was unethical, and more than half of respondents considered it unethical to attend public events together (62%), share personal information (57%), host parties for students (68%), gossip (98%), and become intoxicated with students (94%). It is important to note that the students who responded to these scenarios were graduate students, which shows that students who are expected to have outside relationships with their professors do not always feel comfortable doing so. Most graduate students appear to only want a relationship with the faculty

when it is considered professional and not personal. This suggests that graduate students may not feel comfortable being friends with their instructors on Facebook. Being able to see their instructors' personal information may make students uncomfortable. This relates back to Congress' (1996) questions about dual relationships. Do students feel uncomfortable, but feel unable to speak up due to the power differential? Instructors need to be mindful of their students' feelings when thinking about friending them on Facebook. It is important to note that since this research focused on graduate students in one particular type of program, it is difficult to generalize the results to all graduate students; however, the fact that students from across the country and enrolled in programs of different sizes were surveyed does give the results more validity. The results may not be true for all graduate students, but they do provide information important for instructors to consider.

While graduate students seem to be apprehensive about building outside relationships with their instructors, undergraduate students appear to have a more favorable opinion of them. Ei and Bowen (2002) surveyed undergraduate students and through a factor analysis found five primary types of relationships between students and faculty. Sexual/romantic relationships were considered the most inappropriate. Most participants reported feeling neutral to negative about students and instructors doing favors for each other. Spending time alone with instructors was rated as generally neutral, with a slight leaning toward a negative view. Participants were neutral about forming business relationships with their instructors (e.g., babysitting, taking the student on as a client). The most appropriate relationship appeared to be group interactions (meeting for coffee/drinks, playing sports, having lunch) between students and instructors. It seems that undergraduate students feel that a personal relationship can be appropriate, but only when others are a part of it. A one-on-one relationship with an instructor is considered unwise. This makes

the decision to friend students on Facebook a tough call. Are these relationships unethical because they can be seen as one-on-one; or are they appropriate because Facebook constitutes a group of friends and group activities are seen as acceptable? Once again, instructors need to be mindful of their students' feelings when thinking about friending them on Facebook.

Instructors may be uncertain about what constitutes ethical behavior, but it should be helpful to know that their concept of ethics often corresponds to the students' ideas. Keith-Spiegel, Tabachnick and Allen (1993) found that instructors and students often have similar ideas of what it means to be an ethical professor. Students were asked to rate the acceptability of 107 acts in which professors might engage (e.g., dating a student, asking a small favor of the student, giving pop quizzes, accepting a student's invitation to a party) and a comparison of students' ratings and the professors' self-ratings "suggest that students and professors are generally similar in their views of what constitutes ethical and unethical conduct for professors" (Keith-Spiegel et al., 1993, p. 149). Much of the literature on instructor ethics relates to teaching issues (e.g., not giving unfair advantages to athletes, grading everyone fairly, not giving a hard test early in the semester to encourage students to drop the course); ethical behavior in terms of relationships between instructors and students is seldom addressed (Folse, 1991; Matthews, 1991; Scriven, 1982). In terms of friendly interpersonal relationships, there are no ethical codes for academics, so instructors are on their own when deciding what type of relationships are appropriate (Birch et al., 1999).

Instructors may have to come to their own conclusions when it comes to communicating with their students, but there is research that can guide their decision-making progress. Birch et al. (1999) surveyed faculty at the University of Montana and compiled a list of behaviors considered unethical and ethical by the instructors. Participants were asked to rate 64 behaviors

in terms of perceived ethical appropriateness on a five-point scale (1 = unquestionably unethical; 5 = unquestionably ethical). The most unethical behaviors (80% of the faculty rated the items as unquestionably unethical or not likely ethical) involve specific teaching practices (e.g., giving lower grades to students who oppose the professor's views, lowering course demands for minority students, relaxing rules so students will like the professor, and grading on an unfair curve). Behaviors considered ethical (less than 30% of the faculty rated the items as unquestionably unethical or not likely ethical) include going to a bar with students, accepting students' invitations to parties, hugging students and beginning a relationship with students in the professor's class that may continue after the course ends. Birch et al. (1999) do caution that the results should "be viewed with care" as many of the participants commented on the difficulty of deciding whether a situation was ethical without a specific context. Although this research lacks context and includes only one university, thus limiting its generalizability, it provides an interesting look at what faculty may find appropriate and inappropriate.

The previously discussed research suggests that dual relationships are not taboo. As mentioned earlier, group activities, socializing at academic events and working on research are considered ethical behaviors (Bowman & Hatley, 1995; Ei & Bowen, 2002). As long as the professor is not alone with a particular student, relationships beyond instructor-student are accepted. These behaviors indicate that friending students on Facebook would be an acceptable relationship.

The dual relationship literature revealed that interpersonal relationships with students are acceptable and anecdotal evidence indicated that instructors are moving these relationships to Facebook; but, instructors may still have qualms about actually having this type of relationship due to the possible ethical problems. In these cases, the instructors should consider what other

faculty at the college/university are doing. Bruhn, Zajac, Al-Kazemi and Prescott (2002) asserted that ethical citizenship is crucial to the tenure of professors. This ethical citizenship is defined as “a role in an organization that is shaped by the values, norms, traditions and culture of the organization or broader community” (Bruhn et al., 2002, p. 466). In essence, each university has its own norms and values, so each professor needs to act in ways that are in accordance with what his/her university expects. Charnov (1987) argued that different institutions have different ethical standards and Baum (1991) added that practicing good ethical citizenship is open to the interpretation of the organization’s culture. These arguments suggest that instructors should be aware of what others at the institution or within the department consider appropriate. This is crucial information since most universities have policies against romantic relationships between faculty and students but are silent when it comes to friendly relationships. For instance, Georgia State University (2008) said

The integrity of academic and work relationships is the foundation of the University’s educational mission. These relationships vest considerable trust in persons with authority whether as mentor, educator, evaluator and/or administrator. The unequal institutional power inherent in University academic and work relationships heightens the vulnerability of those in subordinate positions . . . Consequently, people in positions of authority within the University community must be sensitive to the potential for conflict of interest as well as sexual harassment in amorous relationships with people over whom they have a professional power/status advantage (section N).

In other words, the university is concerned about romantic relationships, but makes no mention of friendly interactions. While academia as a whole constitutes the broader community, the American Association for University Professors (AAUP) does not get involved in individual cases, so there are no standards set by the broader community (Bruhn et al., 2002). Professors often have guidance about romantic relationships spelled out in their school’s faculty handbook, but are on their own when making the decision about whether or not to become friends with their students. This is why the norms and values of the particular school at which the instructor works



are important. The administration and faculty at each school may have different views on outside relationships and it is suggested that instructors should abide by those (Baum, 1991; Bruhn et al., 2002; Charnov, 1987).

Dual relationships can pose a number of ethical concerns, but Baggio et al. (1997) asserted that “an ethical relationship with a student is one in which three conditions are met: (a) educational standards are maintained, (b) educational experiences are provided for the student and (c) exploitative practices are absent” (p. 187). It is possible to have a relationship outside of the traditional instructor-student one, but the instructor needs to remain mindful of the consequences, including exploitation due to the power difference between the student and instructor. With the emergence of digital natives, instructors not only have to consider the face-to-face dual relationships they may form, but also the relationships they may form through the use of technology, such as Facebook, one of many available online social network sites.

### **Online Social Network Sites (SNSs)**

boyd and Ellison (2007) defined online social network sites as “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (p. 2). The people on the list of users with whom the individuals share a connection are called *friends*. This is often a troubling term because people have a preconceived notion of what a friend should be. boyd (2007) asserted that individuals would normally only give the label of friend to people with whom they have close ties, but on online social network sites, the term actually refers to any member of an imaginary audience. This audience includes the people who users see as part of their world on the site. These individuals may be actual friends, they may be part of one’s peer group (students

in the same classes, members of the same organizations), or they may just be people the user has allowed to see his/her page (boyd, 2007). In essence, these friends may not be friends at all, but simply other users of the site. In this research, the term friend refers to anyone a user has added to his/her list of connections on an SNS.

boyd and Ellison (2007) as well as Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe (2007) described the typical use of an online social network site. First, a user creates a profile that usually contains a picture and often includes personal information such as relationship status, political/religious views, and interests such as favorite movies/music/television shows. The user then creates a list of friends who are also on the site. Once the page is set up, users can do numerous things on the site, such as update their statuses, visit their friends' pages, leave comments for their friends, join groups for specific interests, check up on their ex-girlfriends/boyfriends, advertise social events, ask classmates about courses, add photos, and add applications that allow them to play games, take quizzes, or display certain graphics on their sites (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007; Stern & Taylor, 2007).

The specific ways of communicating with friends on these sites often depend on the type of friends one has. Fono and Raynes-Goldie (2007) found that users of LiveJournal (a SNS focusing on blogging) had seven different types of friends. The first type is friend as content. Some users friended others just to be able to look at the information posted on their profile. The second type is friend as offline facilitator. These are offline friends who use the site to maintain their face-to-face relationships. The third type is friend as online community. Some users find individuals who have common interests and develop a community of like minds. These are often friends with whom the user does not have a face-to-face relationship. The fourth type is friend as trust. By friending someone, the user is telling him/her that s/he is trusted enough to see the

user's information. The fifth type is friend as courtesy. These are friends that the user allows so as not to offend them. The sixth type is friend as declaration. These friends want the world to know they have a relationship. The final type is friend as nothing. Users who are considered serial frienders and have hundreds, or even thousands, of friends have friends who are nothing more than a collection. boyd (2007) asked participants of Friendster and MySpace why they friend others and found similar incentives, which included: friending actual friends, family members and colleagues; friending others because it would be socially inappropriate to say no if you know the person; a sense that having lots of friends makes one look popular; a sense that one's friends list reveals who s/he is; it is the only way to see a private profile; allowing others to see private postings; and it is easier to say yes than no. When individuals actually know each other, they are usually more willing to actively take part (leaving comments, liking statuses) on their friends' pages. When the friendship is based only on collecting people or simply wanting to see another's profile, there is usually little communication between the users beyond seeing updates on their home pages.

**Facebook.** Users have several options as to what SNSs to use. In 1997, sixdegrees.com became the first online social network site and Live Journal followed in 1999. Between 2003 and 2006, approximately 30 new online social network sites joined the fray (boyd & Ellison, 2007). While there are a number of online social network sites available, Facebook and MySpace dominate the popular press (Atal, 2007; Fox, 2007; Levy, 2007a, 2007b). While MySpace was originally popular with many SNSs users, Facebook now dominates the online social network landscape with over 500 million users and ranking as the number one visited SNS ("Statistics," 2010). In May 2010, it became the most visited website in the world with more than 540 million unique visitors and 570 billion views a month, reaching 35% of Internet users (Ionescu, 2010).

Facebook is the most popular SNS in terms of numbers, as well as the most popular SNS referenced by instructors and students. Atay (2009) and Schwartz (2009) discussed friending students on Facebook and Theresa Turner (2010) mentioned that her instructors have offered to accept friend requests from students on the site. The few research studies that have looked at instructor-student use of SNSs have focused on Facebook as well (Barber & Pearce, 2008; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007). Based on Facebook's popularity, as well as its pervasiveness in the popular press and in research, it will be the online social network site studied in this research.

Facebook was created in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg as a way for Harvard students to connect with each other (Ellison et al., 2007). Zuckerberg claimed that the site was not meant to be a social network site but rather a tool to facilitate information exchange between friends, family and professional contacts (Levy, 2007a). In fact, until 2005, Facebook only allowed college students, but its popularity was so great that the founder decided to open it up to high schools students. In early 2006, the site was opened to commercial organizations and later the same year, it became public and allowed anyone to join (boyd & Ellison, 2007). What started as a simple site to encourage Harvard students to connect with each other has become a place for everyone and anyone to connect with their friends.

Facebook members use the site in numerous ways. Stutzman (2006) claimed that users flock to Facebook to hang out, waste time, learn about their friends or simply to keep a directory of people they know. More specifically, the Facebook help page ("Help Center," 2010) provides users with information on how to use the site. Users can easily add friends; join networks that represent their geographical area or school; add information to their profile, such as demographic information and favorite movies, music, books or quotes; send personal e-mail messages to

friends; post public messages to others' walls; and chat with other users through an instant messaging feature. Facebook's help page also lists possible applications including the ability to add photos and videos to one's page; joining groups of people with similar interests; creating invitations to events; creating blog-like notes; providing links to other websites; becoming fans of pages related to famous people, places and things; and using the 'like' button to tell friends they approve of specific postings ("Help Center," 2010). Groups unaffiliated with Facebook often add applications such as quizzes and games to help users pass the time.

While there are a myriad of ways one can use Facebook, individual users decide what they want to do with the site and how much information they want to provide. Clark, Lee and Boyer (2007) found that most college students provide basic demographic information that is visible to anyone who visits their page. They reported that the majority of students in their study provide their name (99%), gender (99%), names of their friends (94%), age (92%), college affiliation (98%), their hometown (90%) and their e-mail addresses (87%). It is apparent that many users feel comfortable providing basic information to anyone who visits their profile. Of these students, 55% posted photos of themselves in a state of intoxication and 54% posted photos of themselves in romantic situations (Clark et al., 2007). Providing demographic information and photos are not the only ways people use Facebook. Griggs (2009) asserted that users often update their statuses numerous times a day, spread good news, inform others of negative news, and promote their favorite causes. Other users just lurk; they enjoy seeing what their friends are doing, but are not very active on their own pages.

Research has shown that there are specific motivations for using Facebook, as well as positive outcomes that keep users coming back for more. Sheldon and Honeycutt (2008, 2009) argued that individuals use Facebook to pass time (using the site when one is bored or to occupy

one's time when nothing else is going on), as a virtual community (meeting new people and decreasing loneliness) and for relational maintenance (keeping in touch and maintaining ties with existing relational partners). Users appear to use Facebook as a virtual community in ways that increase their social capital. Stevens, Chattopadhyay, and Rill (2008) argued that individuals who actively use Facebook have higher offline bridging social capital. Putnam (2000) stated that bridging social capital consists of weak-tie relationships that are "better for external assets and for information diffusion" (p. 22). Ellison et al. (2007) suggested the college students form bridging social capital with other students as a way to get help in classes or ask for needed information. These relationships may not be strong, but they provide what the student needs. Users also appear to believe that Facebook is a convenient way to maintain their offline relationships. Wright, Craig, Cunningham, Igiel and Ploeger (2008) found that college students commonly use the same relational maintenance strategies on Facebook as individuals do in face-to-face relationships, indicating that Facebook is a satisfactory way to communicate in on-going relationships. Using Facebook as a virtual community and to maintain existing relationships suggests that the online communication through Facebook allows users to not only nurture offline relationships, but also make connections with people who can help them when needed. No matter the type of connection made on Facebook, the interactions with other users can provide positive outcomes. Wright, Craig, Cunningham and Igiel (2007) discovered that students who received emotional support on Facebook reported less perceived stress in real life. This emotional support can come from offline friends using Facebook to maintain a connection, or from the online friends made to increase one's social capital, suggesting that all Facebook friends can provide positive experiences. These findings may help explain why instructors and students are willing to become friends on Facebook.

**Instructor-student use of Facebook.** Individuals have found ways to use Facebook that meet their unique needs. Instructors and students are no different. Robyler et al. (2010) surveyed faculty and students at one university and found that 73% of the faculty had a Facebook page. According to Simon (2008) and Theresa Turner (2010) at least some of these instructors are adding their students to their Facebook profiles. Robyler et al.'s (2010) study found that while students tend to check their email accounts and Facebook pages at equal rates, instructors check their email more often than their Facebook pages, suggesting that even if instructors have a Facebook page, they may not check it often. Of the faculty who responded to Robyler et al. (2010), only four (6.5% of the sample) mentioned using the site for educational purposes, while 62.9% reported using Facebook to keep in touch with friends, 29.0% reported using Facebook to let others know what is happening in their lives and 43.5% reported using Facebook to connect with people with whom they have lost touch. If instructors do not view Facebook as an education tool, but are allowing students as friends on Facebook, it is likely that they are doing so for more personal reasons.

Previous literature indicates that students have used technology to communicate with their instructors, and are now adding Facebook to existing technologies. Much of this research focused on e-mail. Bloch (2002) suggested the e-mail reduces pressure on students. They do not have to worry about keeping a constant stream of communication with the instructor and have the ability to edit if necessary. D'Souza (1992) claimed that e-mail promotes learning because it enhances classroom communication and gives students another venue to access information. Atamian and DeMerville (1998) conducted a study in which professors substituted e-mail for office hours and found that students felt the faculty members were more accessible. It appears that e-mail has a positive effect when used as a communication tool, but there are other

technologies available for instructor-student interactions. Bimling (2000) asserted that the largest group of computers on most college campuses is located in the residence halls, which suggests that today's students are connected and instructors need to find ways to use this technology when communicating with their students.

Richardson (2009) recounted a story in which he talked to high school teachers about online social network sites. The principal commented after the presentation that he knew how his students used the sites because he had to call a number of them into his office to discuss the content. Richardson asked the principal how the students should learn the proper way to use online social network sites and after a brief pause, the principal responded, "Parents!" Richardson (2009) felt that this answer demonstrates what is wrong with the use of technology in education. For students to become technologically literate, he argued, they have to be taught how to use the technology that is available. He suggested that instructors incorporate web-based technology, such as Flickr, wikis and online social network sites into their curriculum. By using the technology on a regular basis and in situations where they are provided guidance, students can learn how to use it correctly.

Richardson (2009) suggested using web-based technology in the classroom, but as seen with dual relationships and the use of e-mail, these technologies can be used outside of the classroom and in personal ways as well. Schwartz (2009) asserted that her students contact her through e-mail, instant messaging, text messaging and Facebook. She views Facebook as a new commons that has the potential to keep students and instructors connected "given the financial strains that limit students' discretionary time on campus and increased enrollment in flexible-format programs" (Schwartz, 2009, n.p.). She views these multiple ways of communicating as a way to keep her metaphorical office door open, but admits that boundaries must be set. While



those boundaries are unique to each faculty member, her students do admit that “Facebook is a way for us to be together outside of the classroom” and “If we didn’t want your help, we wouldn’t have friended you in the first place” (Schwartz, 2009, n.p.). Atay (2009) recounted his decision to accept students as friends on Facebook. He argued that “as a teaching assistant, I struggled with finding the most appropriate way of representing myself on Facebook. I was trying to maintain a healthy and ethical balance between being a teaching assistant and creating an online persona while I was also working on distancing myself from teaching responsibilities when I was on Facebook” (p. 71). He finally accepted his student’s friend request because he was aware that rejecting it might damage the student-teacher relationship. While Atay (2009) agreed that there were consequences, such as allowing more access to his personal life, he also admitted that the new student-teacher relationship enabled them to get to know each other better and build a stronger relationship.

Instructors’ anecdotal experiences with online social network sites appear to indicate that using them can provide positive outcomes in the instructor-student relationship (Atay, 2009; Richardson, 2009; Schwartz, 2009). Schwartz (2009) seemed to use the site in a way that gives students additional support, which may lower their stress levels about class, as Wright et al. (2007) indicated in their discussion of emotional support. Atay (2009) seemed to friend students to nurture the instructor-student relationship outside the classroom, as Wright et al. (2008) suggested in their discussion on relational maintenance. However, there is no current research indicating to what extent college instructors do allow students as friends on their personal Facebook pages and what criteria they use to make that decision. Knowing why instructors allow, or in some cases do not allow, students as friends on their personal Facebook pages is the first step in discovering how instructors and students use Facebook to interact with each other.

The second step is examining how instructors communicate on Facebook. Online communication is often studied using the same concepts utilized in face-to-face interactions, so those concepts are likely play a role in Facebook communication as well.

### **Conceptual Background**

When instructors allow students as friends on Facebook, their specific communication with them and their communication on the site in general may be influenced by a number of factors. Hewitt and Forte (2006) argued that “because social networking communities are built to support presentation of self, identity management is likely to be a significant issue for participants in communities whose membership crosses perceived social boundaries and organizational power relationships” (n.p.). Instructors, like all individuals, have a number of role identities that may become salient on Facebook. The specific communication of these identities through impression management, and the possibility of role conflict due to the perceived need to communicate in ways considered appropriate for each identity, may be influenced by the instructors’ levels of self-monitoring and ambient awareness. The theories and concepts outlined in this section include: role identity and conflict; self-monitoring; impression management, including how privacy is used to manage one’s impression; and ambient awareness. Finally, the present research study is described.

### **Role Identity**

Impression management is based on the identity an individual wants to present at any given time. The similarities and differences between instructors’ personal and professional identities may play a large role in how they manage their impressions online. In the case of Facebook, any individual may find him/herself needing to enact multiple identities based on the roles s/he plays with his/her friends on the site. Any member may be a spouse, parent, child,

friend, colleague, or in the case of instructor-student relationships, person in a position of power. According to Cast (2003), Stryker and Statham (1985) argued that “identity theory was developed to address how social structure organizes and constrains actors in social interaction” (p. 43). The theory comes out of symbolic interactionism, which asserts that society is created through the ways individuals act in specific contexts. “Actors identify the things that need to be taken into account, they act on the basis of those identifications, and they attempt to fit their lines of action with others in the situation to accomplish their goals” (Stets, 2006, p. 88). One of the key concepts that needs to be identified in interactions is the specific identity appropriate for the situation. Burke and Reitzes (1981) defined identities as “meanings one attributes to oneself in a role (and that others attribute to one)” (p. 84).

Burke and Reitzes (1981) suggested that there are three characteristics of an identity. First, identities are social products, which are created and maintained through interactions with others. For instance, an instructor’s identity as an instructor is created through interactions with students, just as his/her identity as a parent is created through interactions with his/her child(ren). Second, multiple identities are organized hierarchically to create a sense of self (Stryker, 1968). Depending on the situation, the most salient role on the hierarchy can change. This indicates that the professional identity of instructor and the personal identities of the individual (parent, spouse, child, etc.) may be deemed most important at different times depending on which one is higher on the hierarchy. The final characteristic suggests that identities are

symbolic and reflexive in nature. It is through interaction with others that their self meanings come to be known and understood by the individual. In role relevant situations others respond to the person as a performer in a particular role. The meanings of the self are learned from the responses of others to one’s own actions. One’s actions develop meaning through the responses of others, and over time, call up in the person the same responses that are called up in others. One’s actions, words, and appearances thus become significant symbols (Burke & Reitzes, 1981, p. 84).

In other words, individuals have identities for each role they hold, which are known as role identities. Each role identity an individual possesses has specific meanings based on society and culture and those meanings indicate the behaviors that are associated with the role (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). In short, society expects certain behaviors based on the role an individual is portraying. Being an instructor has meaning, and that meaning determines the communication used by instructors. However, personal identities have meanings as well. A parent's role often has socially-constructed meanings and behaviors associated with the role, just as spouse, friend or colleague have specific meanings and behaviors associated with them.

There are three basic tenets of identity theory. McCall and Simmons (1978) stated that the heart of role identity is the individual's "imaginative view of himself as he likes to think of himself being and acting as an occupant of the role" (p. 65). Specifically, role identities include the expectations of society. Additionally, there is an idiosyncratic dimension that includes the individual's interpretation of the identity and the unique behaviors associated with that interpretation. For example, while society may expect instructors to communicate with their students in certain ways, each individual instructor will have his/her own specific style of enacting this communication.

Stryker's (1968, 1980) belief that because humans have a number of different role identities, a salience hierarchy is created is the second tenet of identity theory. Identity salience is defined as "the probability, for a given person, of a given identity being invoked in a variety of situations" (Stryker, 1968, p. 560). The hierarchy is important when individuals find themselves in situations that invoke multiple identities. The identity that is more salient will be activated and the individuals will use behaviors more germane to that role. This salience is influenced by one's commitment to the role (Stryker & Serpe, 1982). This commitment has a quantitative

dimension, which is concerned with the number of people one is related to through the identity, and a qualitative dimension, which is concerned with how deep the ties are to the people associated with the identity. Callero (1985) asserted that people are commonly known by their most salient role identity, and for many individuals, that identity is related to their occupation. This means that instructors are often seen as simply instructors and expected to act in ways appropriate to that role. Since role identities are created through social interactions with others (Burke & Reitzes, 1981), instructors may find that identity activated more often. However, the instructor's specific commitment, or lack thereof, to that role may mean that it is not the most salient for the individual.

The final tenet of identity theory is Burke's (1980) argument that identity and behavior are linked. Behaviors can be predicted based on the meaning of the salient identity. Charon (1995) stated that individuals make an attempt to present themselves to others in ways that indicate the identities they have chosen for themselves. Hecht (1993) suggested that identities have layers. The enactment layer, which declares that identities are performed, puts communication at the heart of an identity. The relational layer focuses on the idea that identity is formed through relationships. Behaviors are an important part of any identity and "people's social behaviors are shaped by the roles they occupy" (Schlenker, 1980, p. 67). Each of these roles has expected behaviors and the individuals who play these roles enact these behaviors in public. "People typically come to view themselves in terms of the attributes and behavior patterns dictated by their roles" (Schlenker, 1980, p. 68).

While all people have multiple identities, Stets (2006) argued that very little research has focused on this fact. Stryker's (1968) assumption that identities form a hierarchy suggests that only one identity at a time is activated. However, Burke (2003) has hypothesized that identities

can co-occur, but will only do so if they have similar meanings, as well as similar levels of salience and commitment. This suggests that if an instructor's professional and personal identities are similar in salience and commitment, they may co-occur on Facebook.

**Role identity on Facebook.** An instructor's professional identity can play a significant role in his/her Facebook communication when students have been added as friends. Individuals have multiple identities and any one of them may become salient at any given time (Stets, 2006). Depending on whom the instructor has friended, it is possible that s/he may have to enact behaviors associated with the identities of parent, spouse, child, colleague, friend and even instructor when using Facebook. Specific role identities are activated when one is communicating with an audience who expects that role to be played (Burke & Reitzes, 1981), so it stands to reason that if instructors have students as friends on Facebook, they may feel compelled to enact the behaviors associated with the role of instructor for that specific audience.

While there are societal expectations of instructor communication behaviors, the specific identity has an idiosyncratic dimension as well (McCall & Simmons, 1978). Each instructor is going to communicate with his/her students in different ways, which may explain why some instructors think it is acceptable to friend students on Facebook, while others do not. The unique behaviors of each instructor may also explain differences in specific communication on Facebook.

The identities of individuals are ranked in a hierarchy (Stryker, 1968, 1980) that determines which identity is most salient at any given time. While using Facebook, instructors may find themselves wanting to enact the behaviors of their personal roles, or they may feel the need to enact the behaviors of their professional role. The behaviors of each identity are

probably different and if more than one identity needs to be salient or if the commitment to various roles is similar, role conflict may occur.

**Role conflict.** Sarbin (1954) suggested that intra-role conflicts “occur when a person occupies two or more positions simultaneously and when the role expectations of one are incompatible with the role expectations of the other” (p. 228). Goode (1960) claimed that because each individual must play multiple roles in life, contradictory behaviors may be required or conflicts of time, space and resources may challenge the individual.

Instructors may face many role conflicts when interacting with their students in general. Grace (1972) asserted that the main role conflict for instructors is in terms of values. Grace (1972) argued that American instructors had been expected to exhibit moral virtues in their own lives and transmit these values to their students. “Teachers who hold ‘traditional’ values and who attempt to transmit them may find unexpected resistance and even ridicule. Teachers who hold ‘emergent’ values may find themselves in conflict with the expectations of [administration]” (Grace, 1972, p. 25). McPherson (1983) expanded this argument when he said that a “college education should contribute as well to the quality of life of its students and to their political awareness and capabilities. Research and scholarship should embody the disinterested pursuit of truth and a concern for cultural values and not only the pursuit of technologically applicable knowledge. And, in this society especially, colleges and universities are looked to as safe harbors for social and political criticism and dissent” (p. 247). He went on to argue that potential value conflicts arise when instructors attempt to foster desirable political and moral values. In other words, conflicts occur when instructors attempt to push their own values onto students.

Most of the research done on role conflict for instructors has focused on the role conflicts between instructors and coaches (Dunn & Dunn, 1997; Locke & Massengale, 1987; Sage, 1987). Locke and Massengale (1987) used Grace's (1972) three areas of occupational conflict (value, status, and self/other conflicts) and found that instructors who also coach students experienced widespread role problems. Dunn and Dunn (1997) surveyed students who also worked as athletic coaches at the school they attended and found that one of the conflicts they felt was role ambiguity. Coaches found themselves wanting to be friends with the athletes, but knowing it was frowned upon because of their position. The coaches had to balance the desire to be friendly with their athletes with the professional boundaries created by being a coach. This type of conflict easily translates to the relationships faculty and students may form on Facebook.

**Role conflict on Facebook.** If instructors allow students as friends on Facebook, they are allowing them into their personal lives. This means that the instructor may face the challenge of enacting more than one role in the same space. If an individual cannot meet the specific role expectations, s/he may be found ineffective (Gretzels & Guba, 1954), which indicates that instructors who have to communicate using the behaviors associated with two or more roles at any given time may find themselves struggling. This struggle can lead to others viewing them as ineffective in any of the roles they are attempting to play.

If students are expecting instructors to communicate in ways associated with the professional role, they may find the instructor ineffective when communicating on Facebook because the personal role may be more salient than the professional role and the communication behaviors will reflect that identity. As Kitchner (1988) posited, if the student expects the professor to act in specific ways and those expectations are not met, confusion can occur.



Students may expect their instructors to consistently act as instructors, but if the students see a more personal side on Facebook, there may be problems. Barber and Pearce (2008) found that students may view instructors who used Facebook as less competent and attractive than those who did not. They created a mock Facebook page featuring a fictitious instructor. Half of the participants viewed the Facebook page and half of the participants viewed identical information in a paper biography of the fictitious instructor. Participants who viewed the mock Facebook page ranked the instructor lower in credibility and attractiveness than the participants who read the information on a piece of paper. These findings may not explain how students feel about seeing their own instructors on Facebook, but the study does raise the question of whether or not instructors are able to fulfill the professional role their students expect if they are friends on Facebook, and suggests that there is the possibility of a role identity conflict for the instructor.

When Schwartz (2009) friended her students on Facebook, she encountered this role conflict. She was not sure if she should comment on student statuses. She felt like she should acknowledge them, but was afraid she would overstep her bounds as an instructor. Atay (2009) added weight to this argument by noting that there were ethical concerns about “crossing the widely practiced borders of the student-teacher relationship or completely challenging my role as an educator by establishing online friendships with students through Facebook” (p. 72). These boundaries are at the core of the dual relationships instructors may form with students (Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007). As posited by Rawlins (2000), instructors have to walk a fine line of forming relationships with students and maintaining a professional distance. This line is easy to cross if an instructor friends students on Facebook. As Theresa Turner (2010) asserted, professors should have the ability to share their personal identities on Facebook, but when they

decide to friend students, the information provided on the profile may damage their professional identities.

When allowing students as friends on Facebook, instructors are blurring the boundaries between their personal and professional identities. Since these identities have specific behaviors associated with them, the instructors may be concerned with the communication strategies they use on Facebook. Communicating in ways that manage the impressions of the personal identity may cause conflict with the professional identities, just as communicating in ways that manage the impressions of the professional identity may cause conflict with the personal identity. The interactions on Facebook are all tied to the identity one is most committed to and/or finds most salient at the time and wishes others to accept. Instructors need to think about the communication behaviors they use on Facebook and how those behaviors might impact their relationship with their students.

While presenting one's identity is one of the most important facets of Facebook use, there are a number of factors that may impact how one uses impression management to communicate that identity. One's level of self-monitoring, the desire to manage one's impressions in specific ways, the desire to manage one's privacy, and the ambient awareness one feels on Facebook have the potential to influence the individual's use of impression management, as well as the potential to influence the perceived role conflict one might feel on Facebook. The first factor is the individual's level of self-monitoring.

### **Self-Monitoring**

While all individuals have multiple identities, some people manage the impressions of each identity very differently and others use similar behaviors for all of their identities. This use of behaviors is based on the concept of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring focuses on individuals'

desires to regulate their impression management behaviors in social situations (Snyder, 1979). Those who want to present what they consider the correct image for a particular situation are known as high self-monitors, while those who present what they consider to be their true identities regardless of the context are known as low self-monitors (Meyer, 2001). The two types of self-monitors have very different ways of communicating.

Snyder (1979) asserted that high self-monitors have “a concern for the situational and interpersonal appropriateness of his or her social behavior,” while low self-monitors are “not so vigilant to social information about situationally appropriate self-presentation” (p. 89). In short, high self-monitors are concerned with presenting an image that is consistent and appropriate for the given context, while low self-monitors are more concerned with presenting their true selves. Snyder and Gangestad (1982) provided justification for this view when they argued that individuals look at two primary sources of information when determining how to present themselves in social situations. First, they are concerned with the situational and interpersonal specifications of appropriate behavior and second, they are concerned with their own inner states, attitudes and dispositions. Individuals who are more concerned with the situational and interpersonal appropriateness are high self-monitors while those who are more concerned with their own dispositions are low self-monitors.

Snyder (1979) argued that high self-monitors have a wide variety of communication behaviors to choose from and subsequently use these behaviors to create what they consider the appropriate image in specific situations. One of the reasons that high self-monitors have a larger repertoire of communication behaviors is that they are more adept at learning new ways of communicating (Ickes & Barnes, 1977). On the other hand, low self-monitors are more consistent, using similar behaviors in a wide variety of contexts, often because they are guided

by their internal dispositions and personal principles (Snyder, 1979). These dispositions and principles have specific behaviors associated with them, so there is little need to learn new ways of communicating. While self-monitoring is often discussed in terms of the dichotomy between high and low self-monitors, Snyder and Gangestad (1986) placed individuals into one of four categories: very high self-monitors, high self-monitors, low self-monitors and very low self-monitors. This indicates that there is some variation within the dichotomy.

High self-monitors have been found to have greater flexibility in the ability to adjust their behaviors to present specific identity characteristics (Rowatt, Cunningham, & Duren, 1998), so it appears that high self-monitors may find themselves involved in more identity conflicts because they wish to present the appropriate image at all times. Leone and Corte (1994) found that high self-monitors were “more likely to experience conflicts involving problems of audience segregation” (p. 311). In short, high self-monitors appear to face more conflict when they are expected to portray more than one identity in a specific context. If two identities become salient at the same time, the high self-monitor may have trouble deciding which identity is the most appropriate and which behaviors need to be utilized. Low self-monitors do not appear to have this problem. They are content to enact behaviors that correspond to their true selves and often use the same behaviors regardless of the situation or salient identity. This finding suggests that Facebook may provide high self-monitors with more conflict because they have to decide which identity behaviors they consider appropriate to portray. Low self-monitors will probably not face this conflict since their behaviors tend to be stable across different identities.

**Self-monitoring on Facebook.** Little research has been done concerning online self-monitoring. Child and Agyeman-Budu (2009) conducted one of the few studies looking at how bloggers’ levels of self-monitoring influence their use of privacy management. Child et al.’s

(2009) blogging privacy management scale was used to determine how comfortable bloggers were sharing information. Higher scores on the measure indicated that individuals were less likely to be concerned with who saw the posted information; lower scores indicated that individuals were concerned with the audience and were more willing to hide certain information to preserve a specific image. When discussing the results of how bloggers, including those who indicated their site of choice was Facebook, managed their privacy, Child and Agyeman-Budu (2009) found that high self-monitors blogged more frequently, were more flexible in their blogging practices and were more likely to adapt their impression management style through privacy management than low self-monitors. This shows that low self-monitors were more rigid in how they communicated in their blogs and infrequently changed their communication behaviors. These results are consistent with Snyder's (1979) argument that high self-monitors have more communication behaviors to choose from, while low self-monitors are dependent on the few behaviors that fit their personal dispositions and principles. While it seems like high self-monitors will also be able to adapt their behaviors on Facebook, there is no research that indicates whether or not that is the case. What research does suggest is that high self-monitors may have more difficulty segregating their audiences (Leone & Corte, 1994) online. Since the average Facebook user has over 130 friends, and any of those friends might be expecting the individual to perform a different role, it is possible that Facebook users might have problems segregating their audiences, which could lead to problems deciding what information to post in order to present what they consider to be the correct identity for the context.

Since individuals may need to enact several roles on Facebook, high self-monitors may frequently face role conflict due to the different types of friends they may have. Since low self-monitors tend to use similar behaviors to present their true identity in different contexts, they will

probably feel less role conflict while communicating on Facebook when they have students as friends. Low self-monitors will be more concerned with communicating their true inner states and attitudes, so different identities will probably have less influence on how they communicate, even after they have friended students on Facebook.

High self-monitors will probably face more difficulty communicating on Facebook when students are present as friends. Based on the number of identities that could possibly be present, high self-monitors are likely to have more than one salient role; therefore, they have to decide how to effectively manage the impressions of those different identities. This desire to present a specific image and the process of this impression management is the core behavior used on Facebook.

### **Impression Management**

Impression management refers to the idea that individuals communicate in specific ways in order to create a certain image for others to see (Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Nezleck & Leary, 2002). Impression management can be accomplished by providing information to other communicators (self-presentation) or by hiding information from others (privacy).

**Self-presentation as impression management.** Everyone creates and presents an image of him/herself to the world, and impression management theory (Leary, 1995; Leary & Kowalski, 1990) explains how individuals create these images, as well as why. In Goffman's (1959) seminal work on self-presentation, he claimed "if unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean cues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him" (p. 1). In other words, individuals are judged on the image

they present. An individual can *give* an impression through purposeful symbols such as language; or an individual can *give off* an impression, which happens when others judge his/her actions to be part of his/her personality (Goffman, 1959). Since individuals are aware that they will be evaluated based on these behaviors, they attempt to create an image that is beneficial to them. Leary and Kowalski (1990) stated that individuals “monitor others’ reactions to them and often try to convey images of themselves that promote their attainment of desired goals” (p. 34). This conveyance is known as impression management (also referred to as self-presentation).

Leary and Kowalski (1990) defined impression management as “the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them” (p. 34). These impressions are often linked to one’s identity since individuals choose to use behaviors that signify the identity they wish others to accept at the time. While individuals want to create specific impressions, they are often bound by the norms of the situation or identity they wish to present. Leary (1995) suggested that there are two types of norms that influence how individuals present themselves. First, impression management can be prescriptive, meaning that there are certain situations that call for certain presentations. For instance, an instructor may be required to wear a suit to present the image of a professional. Second, impression management can be restrictive, meaning that there are some situations that constrain the image one can present. For instance, an instructor may be required to avoid certain language in the classroom in order to avoid presenting an unprofessional image.

Although impression management is often used to create specific images, there are general characteristics that individuals want to express. Nezlek and Leary (2002) claimed that people manage their impressions to appear likable, friendly, socially desirable, competent, skilled, intelligent, ethical, moral, principled, physically attractive, handsome and/or pretty.

These impressions can be created through intentional tactics such as verbal self-presentation, expressive behaviors, artifactual displays, and purposeful behaviors (Schneider, 1981). These direct tactics allow individuals to create the precise image they want the world to see. For instance, if someone wants others to know s/he is married, s/he will use an artifactual display and wear a wedding ring. It is also possible to create an image through indirect tactics, which involve the “presentation of information not about oneself, but about the things to which one is connected, even in quite remote and tenuous ways” (Richardson & Cialdini, 1981, p. 42). For example, an individual may brag about being at an important event as a way to make him/herself appear important. Schlenker (1980) added that personal appearance and the use of props, scenery, and symbols are other ways to create impressions. Individuals often dress in specific ways for specific events, such as job interviews or a night on the town. Based on these tactics there are numerous ways one can create an image to present to others. These specific behaviors have been found effective in offline impression management (e.g., Baumeister, 1982; Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989; Goffman, 1959; Nezelek & Leary, 1982; Nezelek, Schutz, & Sellin, 2007), but do they transfer to online impression management as well?

***Posting as impression management on Facebook.*** Individuals manage their impressions online, but do so in slightly different ways than they do offline. Walther and Burgoon (1992) claimed that online communication environments enable a more active engagement of impression management strategies because Internet technology allows users more freedom in creating and presenting an image to others. This freedom changes the tactics used to present oneself to other online users. Tactics used to manage one’s impressions online include linguistic codes, paralinguistic cues, time, biographical information and photographs.



Switzer (2007) suggested two ways people create impressions in an online environment: linguistic codes and paralinguistic cues. Linguistic codes include language intensity, verbal immediacy and lexical diversity (Jacobson, 2006; Walther, 1993). Lea and Spears (1992) found that the number of words, length of words, and spelling errors all contributed to impression formation. Spelling errors and short words were considered characteristics of uneducated people, so individuals who want to appear intelligent often take more time to construct their Facebook posts so that they appear intelligent, which might include choosing specific words and taking the time to proofread them. Paralinguistic cues include typographical marks, use of capital and lowercase letters, ellipsis, exclamation marks, and emoticons (Lea & Spears, 1992). In other words, paralinguistic cues are anything beyond the words chosen to communicate. Sherman (2001) argued that the use of emoticons and acronyms contributed to impression formation. In terms of Facebook, users can use emoticons to demonstrate the emotion attached to the post, such as putting a smiley face at the end to indicate they are joking.

Time is another factor associated with online impression management. Walther and Tidwell (1995) found that a complex pattern of content, time of day the message was sent and the speed of the reply contributed to one's sense of the sender. Liking a status within seconds of its posting or replying quickly, as well as doing these things at odd hours may create the image of someone who has nothing better to do than spend his/her time on Facebook.

Tanis and Postmes (2003) found that social cues (photographs and biographical information) also determined impression formation. They asked participants to sit at a computer and view suggestions provided by other students. Some of the suggestions included a photograph of the other student, some included biographical information about the other student, some provided both, and some provided neither. Participants formed more positive impressions

about the users when both social cues were present. Facebook users can provide different types of biographical information on their pages. The site allows users to provide their education and work history; hometown and current place of residence; favorite movies, television shows, music and books; and indicate their political and religious views (“Help Page,” 2010). Members often discuss political issues and their current lives through status updates and comments left on others’ pages. Strano (2008) found that Facebook users purposefully chose the photographs they posted on their pages to create a specific image. While men and women both use photographs of family and romantic relationships, women are more likely to choose pictures that demonstrate friendship. Both genders reported choosing pictures that made them look good. They are obviously concerned with the image they are presenting to other users. Jung, Vorderer and Song (2007) found that individuals who have a greater desire to manage their impressions deliberately posted specific text and picture messages on their blogs. Individuals stated that they purposefully posted these items to appear likable and competent. The use of biographical information and photographs is similar to Schneider’s (1981) expressive behaviors and artifactual displays, as well as Schlenker’s (1980) personal appearance, props, scenery and symbols.

It appears that online self-presentation strategies are similar to the ones used offline, but technology gives online users an advantage over their offline counterparts. The hyperpersonal theory of online communication states that “the absence of nonverbal cues, as well as editing capability, identity cues and temporal characteristics may prompt CMC users to engage in selective self-presentation . . .” (Tidwell & Walther, 2002, pp. 319-320). Individuals are able to create the image they wish others to see by presenting only certain information. Individuals are able to spend more time backspacing, deleting, inserting, rearranging, and selecting specific text

when communicating online (Walther 1997, 2007). Bellur, Oeldorf-Hirsch, and High (2008) posited that online users have the advantage to edit negative cues and enhance positive ones. This allows individuals to express identity important characteristics more easily online than in face-to-face settings (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002).

Online impression management strategies may be very important for instructors who choose to friend students on Facebook. The use of linguistic codes is one impression management tactic that may cause conflict. When instructors are communicating with their friends in mind, using shorthand net speak may seem appropriate, but that same language may appear unprofessional to students. As all users do, instructors probably post information and photos that correspond to the image they wish to present to their visitors. However, if they are aware of the multiple identities they are expected to enact on Facebook, they may find themselves involved in more role conflict. Their friends may want to see pictures from last weekend's party, but those photos may not be appropriate for students to see. Instructors may wish to indicate their political and religious views, but they may be in opposition to students' views, which can not only cause the value conflicts addressed by Grace (1972) and McPherson (1983), but may lead to discomfort in the relationship as well. Bradley (2008) addressed this discomfort in his blog after being unfriended by numerous people because of his political views. Sixteen readers commented saying they were unfriended because of their views as well. While this is anecdotal evidence, it is something of which instructors need to be aware. If their views are different than students, the students may view the instructor differently after finding out about the difference.

The aforementioned examples are all instances that may result in role conflicts for the instructor. Theresa Turner (2010) argued that instructors have the right to post what they wish

on their Facebook pages, but as a student, she does not want to know this information. She wants to view the instructor in terms of his/her professional identity. By posting this information when they have students as friends, instructors may be crossing the boundary lines of the professional and personal roles (Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007; Rawlins, 2000). However, the instructor's level of self-monitoring may impact what they decide to post. As stated earlier, low self-monitors tend to present the same identity regardless of the situation (Snyder, 1979), so instructors who are low self-monitors may not be presenting any new information to students through their Facebook page. On the other hand, high self-monitors manage their impressions to present a specific identity to specific audiences (Snyder, 1979) and have the ability to adapt the information they present online to do so (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2009). While high self-monitors may face more role conflict on Facebook due to the inability to segregate their audiences (Leone & Corte, 1994), they will probably be more aware of the information they post and what that information says about them.

As Tidwell and Walther (2002) stated, online impression management has the added advantage of allowing the user to selectively decide what cues to present while communicating. This advantage allows instructors to make the choice of what to present and what to keep private.

**Privacy as impression management.** While impression management often refers to the behaviors one uses to present a specific image, the information one chooses to keep private is just as important in the process. Westin (1967) defined privacy as the ability to control how personal information is provided to others. In other words, individuals should be able to decide who discovers their personal information and how they do so. Individuals are able to manage their impressions by providing information that supports the image they wish to present and conceal the information that contradicts that image. The decision of what to present and what to

conceal is often made through boundary management, which Petronio (1991) defined as a rule-based management system that regulates the amount of information individuals are willing to share with others. Petronio (2002) argued that “people make choices about revealing or concealing [information] based on criteria and conditions they perceive as salient” (p. 2). These criteria and conditions form the rules individuals use to decide whether to reveal personal information or keep it private. Since managing one’s impressions can be done through specific verbal and nonverbal expressions (Schneider, 1981), not expressing oneself, or keeping information private, is another form of impression management. This relates to Leary’s (1995) assertion that impression management can be based on restrictive norms, or the idea that there are certain things one should not do or say. To present a specific image, individuals may partake in boundary management to decide what information contradicts the desired image and should be kept private.

Research reveals that instructors engage in boundary management; they have created their own rules and decided what is appropriate for disclosure to students and what should be kept private. McBride and Wahl (2005) found that teachers tend to disclose information about family, personal feelings/opinions, daily outside activities, personal history, current students/class, personal qualities/characteristics, personal scholarship, stories about friends, life events, and past students. Teachers tended to conceal sensitive personal information, negative personal relationships, sexual activities, negative aspects of character/image, irrelevant/off topic information, negative feelings, and negative thoughts about students. Essentially, instructors are willing to share positive information about themselves, but conceal the negative information. While this research focuses on what instructors are willing to share in the classroom, it makes sense that the choices of what to share and what to conceal are activated on Facebook as well.

*Privacy as impression management on Facebook.* Individuals, including instructors, form their own rules for deciding what to conceal from others, but when relationships move online, the issue of privacy becomes more complicated. On Facebook “self-disclosure is no longer a reciprocal action; it simply becomes something that each person chooses to do as they represent themselves on Facebook. Information that was considered private is exchanged openly, and often” (Pennington, 2008, p. 17). In essence, individuals normally decide what information to disclose to a specific person in a specific context. On Facebook, the same information is available to the friends the user has designated. While it is possible to place friends into groups and allow only certain groups to see the information, the choice to provide the information or hide it from certain individuals is much more difficult to enact. This suggests that Facebook users need to be aware of their own boundary management on the site.

Child, Pearson, and Petronio (2009) argued that blog users do create privacy boundaries based on criteria important to them. Bloggers decide what they find acceptable information to share with others; however, once the information is made public, turbulence may occur as third-parties do not always abide by the same privacy rules. Some of this turbulence may come about because online groups, including SNSs such as Facebook, are considered mediated publics and these groups have four unique properties that make privacy difficult (boyd, 2007). First, there is persistence, or what one posts sticks around. If someone posts pictures of a drinking party from college, there is a good chance those pictures will be available for his/her grandchildren to find. The second property is that information posted on the Internet is searchable. A Google search can find almost any mention of someone’s name within cyberspace. Replicability is the third property. Most information can be copied and shared by others. This can become problematic on Facebook as anyone may post photos and not necessarily have the permission of those in the

pictures. Once those photos are online, anyone can copy them. The final property is invisible audiences. It is impossible to know everyone who views information one posts on the Internet. While individuals might typically assume that only their friends view their Facebook pages, this is not always the case. Cellan-Jones (2009) argued that there are two groups of people on Facebook. The first are the broadcasters, who do not want to use privacy settings and want the world to know all about them. The second group is the whisperers, who want their information kept quiet. The problem is that not all the whisperers know about the privacy settings available on Facebook. In an informal poll, Cellan-Jones (2009) found that between 15-20% of people had never looked at the privacy settings until Facebook forced them to in December 2009. Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, and Hughes (2009) supported this argument by asserting that 91% of users were familiar with Facebook's privacy settings, but only 69% reported actually changing the default settings. If users do not change their privacy settings to reflect who they want to view their information, anyone can access their Facebook page, making it impossible to know who is visiting the site. These properties of the mediated public are all detrimental to online privacy. One thinks that his/her information is only accessible to certain people, but that is not always the case.

Barnes (2008) claims that there is an illusion of privacy online and that illusion allows people to share personal information online that they might not otherwise disclose. Users of Facebook learned this lesson the hard way. In 2006, Facebook launched its *news feed*, a list of every action taken by each user's friends (boyd, 2008). Users complained, saying that those actions were not meant to be broadcast. Facebook responded by telling users that those actions had always been available to all of their friends, the site was just making it easier to see what their friends were doing (boyd, 2008). The Facebook news feed made users realize that all

information posted to their pages was seen by everyone who has access to the page and the illusion of privacy was lost. Once the illusion was lost, Facebook users began utilizing the site's privacy settings. Users are able to dictate whether (1) everyone can see their profile, (2) friends of friends can see their profile, or (3) only friends can see their profile (Zuckerberg, 2009). The Facebook help page (2010) explains that users can also create 'groups,' which are subsets of the individuals' friends. It is possible to make certain information accessible to only certain groups. Zuckerberg (2009) also asserted that each piece of information could have different privacy settings, indicating that any information posted on Facebook could only be seen by the specific people the user indicated.

Research conducted after the news feed went into effect demonstrated that users not only used Facebook's privacy settings, but also created privacy boundaries for the information they were willing to post on Facebook. Catlett (2007) discovered that users created personal rules about what they revealed and how they revealed it based on their personal beliefs. This shows support for Petronio's (1991) idea that individuals create privacy rules for the information they are willing to disclose to others. Catlett's (2007) findings may lack external validity though, as the study focused on only female students at one university. Gender may play a role in whether or not individuals set privacy boundaries. Lange and Lampe (2008) helped Catlett's argument by asserting that "users clearly understood where their 'privacy zones' were and tended not to disclose information that could put them at risk" (p. 20). While they only looked at students from one university, the sample was still more diverse than Catlett's (2007), which provides some support for the claim that Facebook users are aware of what they want others to see and what they do not want others to see. These findings suggest that Facebook users are willing to



hide certain information in order to avoid tarnishing the image they are trying to present on the site.

Privacy is an important facet of the instructor-student friendship on Facebook. As Schwartz (2009) stated, she is never sure whether she should respond to students who post about having problems in class or mention negative life situations. She is leery of crossing the professional boundary line. Turner (2010) argued that she does not want to learn about her professors' personal lives because it may lead to a loss of respect for them in the classroom. Mazer et al. (2007) found that students think communicating with instructors on Facebook might be beneficial since they can see previous students' questions and the instructors' answers, as well as ask their own, but students also thought there were some down sides to seeing an instructor's Facebook page. In Mazer et al.'s (2007) study, students were asked to view a mock Facebook page and rate the instructor based on her self-disclosure. Participants who viewed the page considered high in self-disclosure thought that the teacher would be easy to get along with, but noted that the page was unprofessional for a college-level instructor. This suggests that students do want to learn about their instructors, but are also worried about the professional boundaries. The new Facebook privacy settings may help eliminate some of the role conflict issues. It is now possible to make most information on one's Facebook page private. The users' name and profile picture are the only information considered public and cannot be hidden ("Privacy Policy," 2010), but users can choose who they want to see the rest of their information: only their friends, friends and people in their networks, friends of friends, or everyone (Zuckerberg, 2009). It is now also possible to create friend groups. Instead of choosing only friends, one can choose only a certain group of friends to have access to specific information (Zuckerberg, 2009). Instructors may want to use Facebook as another communication tool to stay in contact with their students,

but they have to be careful how much information they share, or they may find they have inadvertently crossed a boundary line with students.

The choice to share or hide information may be based on the instructors' perceived level of role conflict and their level of self-monitoring. Instructors who perceive a high level of role conflict may be more willing to conceal information on Facebook, either by not posting it or by using Facebook's privacy settings to have more control over who is allowed to see the private information. Instructors who are high self-monitors will probably be more concerned with managing their impressions, whether that means providing or hiding certain information, while low self-monitors may feel less need to closely manage their impressions since they tend to present the same image regardless of the situation.

Although role conflict and self monitoring may help explain how instructors manage their impressions on Facebook, they can become more or less relevant depending on the awareness instructors have of certain audiences. Since the average user has 130 friends ("Statistics," 2010), it is difficult to be aware of every friend who might view one's page. If there is little ambient awareness of students, then the instructor's professional identity may not be a factor in the way s/he communicates on Facebook.

### **Ambient Awareness**

An individual may only feel the need to manage his/her impression at certain times when using Facebook. Impression management is typically activated when people are aware of an audience who expects a specific image to be presented (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). This means that an instructor would have to be aware of specific audiences to feel the need to manage his/her impressions on Facebook. This awareness through CMC channels is often discussed in terms of social presence. While social presence is typically defined in terms of the presence provided by

the medium, it has been reconceptualized to also refer to the aspects of the communication itself (Biocca, Harms & Burgoon, 2003). Harms and Biocca (2004) argued that “social presence in a mutual interaction with a perceived entity refers to the degree of initial awareness, allocated attention, the capacity for both content and affective comprehension and the capacity for both affective and behavioral interdependence with said entity” (p. 1). In other words, social presence occurs when one user notices other users, pays attention to them and understands both the physical and emotional content of the information. In online communication, symbolic representations of availability, such as appearing online or having recently posted something, may be sufficient to allow others to feel the communicator’s presence (Schroeder, 2007). This indicates that there does not need to be interaction between the two users. As long as there is information that suggests the other user can reply at some point, presence can be felt.

Researchers (Biocca et al., 2003; IJsselsteijn, de Ridder, Hamberg, Bouwhuis, & Freeman, 1988) have posited that sensory awareness of others can be achieved through self-presentation features such as the amount and type of information placed on personal profiles. Dillon, Keogh and Freeman (2002) added to these arguments by stating that the feeling of social presence varies based on the media content, which suggests that Facebook users may feel more or less presence depending on the information posted on others’ pages. It is the information that the Facebook user can see on others’ pages that creates a feeling presence.

Social presence has led to the idea of ambient awareness, which comes from Markopoulos’ (2007) definition of awareness systems that help “individuals maintain a mental model of the activities and statuses of other people . . . [through] a continual ‘trickle’ of information” (p. 1). Bodker and Christiansen (2006) argued that this trickle of information is like virtual breadcrumbs; it leaves information that other users can trace back to the person who

left it. Heeter (1992) defined simple awareness as the extent to which a user believes other users appear to exist and are able to react, which is similar to Schroder's (2007) assertion that representations of availability are all that is needed to produce a feeling of presence. As with social presence, Facebook users feel an awareness of other users when they see information that confirms the others' existence on the site. Arbanowski et al. (2004) confirmed this idea when they defined ambient awareness as "sensing and exchanging the ambient information of a user in the human communication space" (p. 66). Although Arbanowski et al. (2004) discussed ambient awareness in terms of creating new mobile devices, their discussion of the term is fitting. They claimed that "in ambient awareness, a key aspect is situation sensing in which a sensing device detects environmental states of different kinds and passes them on to the context interpreter" (Arbanowski et al., 2008, p. 66). In terms of Facebook, the user is the sensing device. The user detects information from other users and interprets what it means, in terms of both content and emotion. This interpretation then creates an awareness of other users.

Popular press coverage of online social network sites has claimed that individuals using these media do have a sense of the other users and that sense varies based on the others' activity levels on the site. Seeing the information posted to individuals' profiles creates a sense of awareness (Biocca et al., 2003; Dillon et al., 2002; IJsselsteijn et al., 1988; Schroeder, 2007). Thompson (2008) posited that communication through SNSs creates ambient awareness, which he describes as the ability to pick up on others' moods through the little things present on the sites. "Each little update – each individual bit of social information – is insignificant on its own, even supremely mundane. But taken together, over time, the little snippets coalesce into a surprisingly sophisticated portrait of your friends' and family members' lives." (Thompson, 2008, n.p.). In short, awareness systems allow individuals to provide information that makes

them more present to the people with whom they are communicating. In terms of SNSs such as Facebook, users can post pictures, write status updates, take quizzes, comment on other users' posts, and a myriad of other behaviors that appear on their news feeds for their friends to view. Each behavior makes that user more visible and makes other users more aware of him/her as a friend, just as argued in the research (Arbanowski et al., 2004; Dillon et al., 2002; Heeter, 1992; IJsselsteijn et al., 1988; Schroeder, 2007).

This ambient awareness appears to have many positive relational outcomes. Markopoulos, IJsselsteijn, Huijnen, and de Ruyter (2005) asserted that when watching a sporting event with individuals in a different location, increasing awareness information (seeing the other participants in real-time on a video screen) increased social presence. The increase in social presence led to greater attraction to the other participants, which supported the idea that awareness can lead to positive relationships. Vetere, Howard and Gibbs (2005) supported this claim by asserting that awareness systems inspire more communication between individuals because of the increased social presence. Recent research indicated that increased awareness often equals greater connectedness between communication partners (Bodker & Christiansen, 2006; Markopoulos, 2007; Markopoulos, et al., 2005; Miller, 2008; Romero, Markopoulos, van Baren, de Ruyter, IJsselsteijn, & Farshchian, 2007; Thompson, 2008; Vetere et al., 2005). These outcomes suggest that the more aware one is of another individual, the more willing s/he is to communicate with them and form deeper relationships.

Thompson (2008) interviewed danah boyd about her research on social media and was told that ambient awareness is creating a new type of relationship on the sites. SNSs users can follow other users and become aware of their day-to-day lives without the observed being aware of it. In other words, a Facebook user can read his/her news feed and follow his/her friends'

every move without the friends' immediate knowledge. This means that students can follow instructors' every move, just as the instructors can follow students' every move; however, with an average of 130 friends ("Statistics," 2010), noticing every item on one's news feed is unlikely to happen. Users may focus on specific friends' items and ignore those of little interest to them. Depending on how often the instructors notice students' items, they may have a strong ambient awareness of them as friends or forget that the students are on their friends' list. This awareness of students is one factor that may influence instructors' use of impression management on Facebook.

### **The Present Study**

Facebook has only been open to the public since late 2006 and did not become part of the public consciousness until the popular press started comparing it to MySpace in 2007 (Atal, 2007; boyd & Ellison, 2007; Fox, 2007; Levy, 2007a, 2007b). Since it is a fairly new method of communication between students and instructors, there is little research addressing what factors determine whether instructors allow students as friends, what type of students they allow as friends, how they communicate once they are friends, or what ethical concerns they consider when making these decisions. Anecdotal evidence does suggest that instructors are using Facebook to communicate with their students (Atay, 2009; Schwartz, 2009; Turner 2010), and what research does exist has found that students have mixed feelings about this use (Barber & Pearce, 2008; Mazer et al., 2007). Hewitt and Forte (2006) studied how students reacted to their own professors' Facebook sites. Although they cautioned that there may be a ceiling effect because "the professors used for the study were highly respected and extremely well-liked regardless of their online activities," no students reported a negative effect due to Facebook use (Hewitt & Forte, 2006, n.p.). When asked if professors should be on Facebook, 67% of the

respondents in this study indicated that it was acceptable. The 33% who found it unacceptable mentioned concerns with privacy and impression management (Hewitt & Forte, 2006). In a study by Mazer et al. (2007), 33% of students felt that an instructor using Facebook was somewhat inappropriate, 35% found it somewhat appropriate, 6% found it very appropriate, 4% found it was very inappropriate, and 22% were undecided about the appropriateness of an instructor using Facebook. These findings suggest that students think it is acceptable for instructors to use Facebook. This study aims to find out if instructors feel the same way.

While there is research that has looked at instructor-student relationships on Facebook, except for the Hewitt and Forte (2006) study, this research used mock pages (Barber & Pearce, 2008; Mazer et al., 2007). These studies were not looking at actual instructor Facebook use, so it is difficult to know how valid the results would be if the students responded to the Facebook pages of their own instructors. This research study seeks to find what is actually happening when instructors have Facebook pages in order to fill that gap in the literature.

There is also little research explaining what variables influence instructors' impression management on Facebook. Mazer et al. (2007) looked at how instructors' self-disclosure on Facebook influenced students' learning outcomes, and there are a number of studies that have examined how individuals present themselves online (e.g., Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2009; Jung et al., 2007; Strano, 2008; Switzer, 2007; Tanis & Postmes, 2003), but there is no current research that specifically explores how instructors' individual differences influence their impression management choices. This research study also attempts to fill that gap in the literature. Instructors hold the power in these relationships and it is their responsibility to maintain relationships that do not exploit their students (Holmes et al., 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Kitchener, 1988; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007). Therefore, it is important to study this new

form of communication from the instructors' point of view to discover how they feel about Facebook and how they use it to interact with their students.

This study has two main goals. First, this study aims to explain why and how instructors avoid or create Facebook friendships with students. This includes understanding why instructors make the decision of allowing or not allowing students as Facebook friends, what types of students they are willing to allow as friends, how they communicate with these students, and what ethical concerns they consider when making these decisions. Second, this study aims to explore the individual differences that influence instructors' impression management on Facebook, including self-monitoring, role conflict, and ambient awareness. These goals were met by utilizing a cross-sectional survey of current college/university faculty.

### **Deciding Whether or Not to Allow Students as Facebook Friends**

Instructors and students have always formed relationships, but some instructors go further than the traditional classroom interactions and develop dual relationships with their students (Holmes et al., 1999; Owen & Z wahr-Castro, 2007; Rupert & Holmes, 1997) and now it seems that these dual relationships are moving to Facebook. Anecdotal evidence (Atay, 2009; Richardson, 2009; Schwartz, 2009; Turner, 2010) suggests that instructors are friending their students, but there is no hard evidence to support these claims. Even with evidence of these friendships, there is little explanation of why instructors are willing to become friends with students on Facebook. The first set of research questions explore the reasons why instructors make the decision to allow or not allow students as Facebook friends, as well as the ethical concerns associated with this decision-making process.

**Why instructors allow students as Facebook friends.** Allowing students as Facebook friends can provide benefits for both the student and the instructor. Much of the literature on



dual relationships focused on the positive outcomes for students (Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Birch et al., 1999; Bowman & Hatley, 1995; Congress, 1996; Ei & Bowen, 2002). Some instructors believe that the dual relationships formed on Facebook provide new avenues of communication that offer college students a more comfortable way of interacting with their instructors (Prensky, 2001; Richardson, 2009; Schwartz, 2009). Previous research has indicated that students feel more comfortable communicating with their instructors through technology (e.g., e-mail) and even view their instructors as more available when physical office hours are replaced with e-mail office hours (Atamian & DeMerville, 1998; Bloch, 2002; D'Souza, 1992). It is possible that students may feel more comfortable communicating with instructors on Facebook as well. Schwartz (2009) argued that friending students on Facebook gives them opportunities to contact her without being on campus, as well as allowing them to communicate with her using a medium they have already incorporated into their lives. In short, Facebook friendships with instructors give students new and more comfortable ways to communicate with faculty members.

While there are advantages for students in dual relationships, instructors need to feel that allowing students as Facebook friends is advantageous for them as well. There are a number of possible benefits for instructors who allow students on their personal Facebook pages. First, Facebook may allow instructors to form more personal relationships with their students. Since teaching is seen as relational (Rawlins, 2000), it is possible that instructors are looking for ways to form connections with their students outside the classroom and Facebook gives them that opportunity. Atay (2009) argued that by allowing students as Facebook friends, he was able to build a relationship with the students beyond the one created in the classroom. Some colleges and universities may even expect their faculty to form these relationships. NCA (2010) argued that students should friend their instructors on Facebook as a way to build interpersonal

relationships. As Deetz (1990) argued, the guidelines for interpersonal communication ethics are often formed based on the norms of the specific community; so departments that encourage outside relationships will probably see friending students on Facebook as a positive instead of a negative. In other words, instructors who are members of a school or department that encourage outside communication may see Facebook as a way to facilitate these interactions. A second benefit for friending students on Facebook relates to Presnky's (2001) argument that many college/university instructors are digital immigrants who need to incorporate new technologies into their interactions with students. Hewitt and Forte (2006) found that students did not report any negative feelings towards instructors who had Facebook profiles, so by using the same technology as their digital native students, instructors may feel as if they are viewed more positively because they are using the students' preferred communication method. Finally, instructors may feel that Facebook is a good medium for sharing information with their students, as well as managing their impressions. McBride and Wahl (2005) asserted that instructors do want to share information about their personal lives with students. Facebook may be a viable way to do this. Since online social network sites give users the ability to selectively manage the information they provide (Tidwell & Walther, 2002), instructors may find Facebook an effective tool for offering personal information, while managing their impressions at the same time. Instead of worrying about what they say in the classroom on a moment's notice, instructors can spend time creating what they consider the appropriate image on Facebook. Friending students on Facebook may provide instructors with a way to develop the precise relationship they desire.

There are many reasons why instructors might want to friend students on Facebook. They may see advantages for the students or even themselves. Knowing why instructors make

the decision to allow students as friends is an important step in understanding the instructor-student relationship on Facebook; therefore,

**RQ1:** Why do instructors allow students as friends on Facebook?

**Why instructors do not allow some students as Facebook friends.** Although instructors may feel comfortable allowing students as Facebook friends, there is the possibility that they only allow some students. There are many reasons why instructors may want to exclude some students from their Facebook pages. As Congress (1996) argued, current students pose more of a risk than former students; so, instructors may feel more comfortable not allowing students as friends until they have finished the course or have graduated. Baggio et al. (1997) stated that graduate students are encouraged to form outside relationships with instructors due to the expectation of being socialized into the field; however, most undergraduate students do not have this expectation, so it is possible that instructors may feel that is acceptable to add graduate students as friends, but not undergraduate students. In the same vein, Cooper and Simonds (2003) asserted that instructors may end the relationship with students once the course has ended, or they may continue the relationship. If instructors want to end the relationship with students after the course has ended, they are probably less likely to want to add the students to their Facebook friends; however, if they want to continue the relationship, Facebook may be the way to do that since Sheldon and Honeycutt (2008, 2009) posited that one of the key reasons to use Facebook is to maintain existing relationships. Instructors who have decided to allow students as Facebook friends may still feel uncomfortable allowing certain students; therefore:

**RQ2:** Why do instructors decide not to allow some students as friends on Facebook?

**Why instructors do not allow any students as Facebook friends.** While dual relationships may have positive outcomes, some believe that they pose numerous risks, such as

exploitation of the student and frustration among students not involved in the relationship (Congress, 1996; Ei & Bowen, 2002; Holmes et al., 1999; Kagle & Giebelhausen, 1994). When the dual relationship moves to Facebook, the same concerns are raised. While the discussion of these risks often centers on the students, instructors face risks as well. Some students, like Turner (2010), are concerned with the possibility of learning too much about their instructors and losing respect for them. Kitchener (1988) argued that students have specific expectations of their instructors and when these expectations are not met, confusion may occur. If instructors are aware of this, they may be concerned with their communication on the site. If they wish to communicate in ways their students expect, they may have to carefully manage their impressions. Attempting to manage their impressions in ways that are appropriate for their professional and personal roles may increase the feeling of role conflict. Miller and Arnold (2001) argued that individuals often encounter conflict between their personal and professional identities when they create websites. People are unsure what they should post because some information may be appropriate for those who interact with their personal identities, but inappropriate for those who interact with their professional identities and vice versa. Instructors may feel this conflict when they friend their students on Facebook. There may be information that is appropriate for friends from their personal lives, but not for the students from their professional life. This also brings ethics into play. Bowman and Hatley (1995) found that graduate students felt that a professor and student describing themselves primarily as friends is unethical. Friending a student on Facebook may be seen as calling attention to the personal relationship (Fono & Raynes-Goldie, 2007) and therefore viewed as inappropriate. It is also possible that instructors may follow Congress' (1996) advice and be concerned about how others view the relationship. The necessity to manage one's impression, the possibility of role conflict

and the potential ethical dilemmas are sound reasons for instructors not to friend their students on Facebook, but there is no research to substantiate these claims; therefore, another research question is posed to determine what factors influence instructors' decision to not friend students:

**RQ3:** Why do instructors decide not to allow any students as friends on Facebook?

**Ethical considerations when deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends.** As just noted, moving the instructor-student relationship to Facebook may provide ethical dilemmas for some instructors. Bowman and Hatley (1995) found that becoming friends with an instructor is often viewed as unethical, so some instructors may take time to think about friending students on Facebook because they are concerned about the consequences. When deciding whether or not to allow students as friends, instructors may attempt to follow the guidelines posed for ethical relationships with students. Congress (1996) asserted that instructors need to be mindful of the role being assumed in the relationship (e.g., friend, mentor, boss), the possibility of exploitation, the power differential, possible effects on other students, how others view the relationship, and whether the student is currently working with the instructor or not. Blevins-Knabe (1992) argued that instructors must make sure there is no loss of objectivity and that all students are treated equally when the instructor forms a dual relationship with one or more students. Baggio et al. (1997) added that these relationships can be ethical as long as educational standards are being met and exploitive practices are absent. All of these considerations are important aspects of keeping instructor-student relationships ethical and instructors may use them as a basis for deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends. While all these considerations are worth following, individuals do have different ideas of what it means to be ethical and often abide by the guidelines set forth by the community of which they are members (Deetz, 1990). In this case, instructors might view some of the

suggestions as more applicable based on guidelines set forth by the college/university at which they teach or from the department of which they are a member. Jensen (1985) argued that communication ethics cannot be defined in a binary way. Some communication may be seen as more ethical than other communication, but that does not mean that one type is ethical and the other is not. This suggests that the ethical reasons used when deciding whether to friend students on Facebook may all be important, but some considerations may be more important than others. Instructors probably think about the ethical considerations posed by Blevins-Knabe (1992), Congress (1996), and Baggio et al. (1997), but might find some of the suggestions more essential than others. Knowing what ethical considerations instructors find important when making the decision to friend students on Facebook is part of the larger picture of this relationship; therefore, **RQ4:** What ethical concerns do instructors report considering when deciding whether to allow students as friends on Facebook?

### **Description of Instructor Facebook Use with Students**

Deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends is just the first decision instructors have to make. After instructors decide that having students as friends is appropriate, they then have to decide which students can be friends and how they will communicate with these students. The next set of research questions explore the types of students allowed as Facebook friends and the types of Facebook behaviors instructors have decided to use to communicate with them, as well as the ethical concerns associated with that decision.

**Types of students allowed as Facebook friends.** Finding out which students instructors allow as friends is the first step in creating the picture of instructor-student Facebook interaction. The dual relationship literature suggests that graduate students find themselves in dual relationships more often than undergraduate students because they are expected to have

continuing relationships with instructors due to research and mentoring opportunities, as well as being socialized into the profession (Baggio et al., 1997), so instructors may friend graduate students more often than undergraduate students due to this expectation. Research has also claimed that dual relationships with former students pose fewer problems than relationships with current students because objectivity in the classroom is no longer an issue (Congress, 1996), so instructors may be more willing to friend students after they have finished the instructors' courses. Instructors may also be more willing to accept friend requests versus sending them to students as a way to avoid the perception of trying to exploit students into becoming Facebook friends. To find out exactly which students instructors are friending on Facebook, a research question is posed:

**RQ5:** What types of students do instructors allow as friends on Facebook?

**Communicating with students on Facebook.** Becoming friends on Facebook is only the beginning. Once instructors have added students as friends, they have to decide how they are willing to communicate with them. When explaining how instructor-student relationships are generally formed, DeVito (1986) and Cooper and Simonds (2001) indicated that students and instructors often get to know each other in ways that increase the breadth and depth of their relationship. Facebook was created as a way for friends to exchange information with others (Levy, 2007a), so it appears that instructors can use the site to communicate with students in ways that increase the breadth and depth of their relationship. Stutzman (2006) argued that individuals use Facebook to learn more about their friends, again suggesting that the site can facilitate these relationships. There are many ways one can communicate on Facebook to strengthen a relationship, such as commenting on posts/photos, liking specific posts/photos, leaving a post of their own or even playing games with each other ("Help Center," 2010).

While instructors might want to use Facebook to deepen their relationships with their students, the fear of overstepping the boundary line may impact how they communicate on the site. Dunn and Dunn (1997) found that coaches were apprehensive about becoming friends with the student athletes they worked with because they knew it was frowned upon based on their professional role. Turner (2010) argued that she does not want to know what instructors do with their free time because the information may change her view of them. Instructors may feel the same way, and thus their communication with their students on Facebook may be limited. Schwartz (2009) said that she was unsure whether she should comment on student statuses, but her students told her that they would not have accepted her as a friend if they did not want her to communicate with them on the site. She did argue that boundaries have to be set and individuals have to decide for themselves what they consider appropriate when communicating with students on Facebook. These boundaries may be different for undergraduate and graduate students due to the different expectations of the relationship (Baggio et al., 1996). Since there are numerous ways that instructors can communicate with their students on Facebook (e.g., commenting on posts, posting on students' walls, etc.), it is important to answer two questions:

**RQ6a:** How do instructors communicate with undergraduate students on Facebook?

**RQ6b:** How do instructors communicate with graduate students on Facebook?

Just as instructors must think about the ethics associated with friending students on Facebook, they must also think about the ethics of communicating with students on the site. Instructor-student relationships are complicated and people have varying opinions on how personal that relationship should be. Some (Prensky, 2001; Richardson, 2009; Schwartz, 2009) argue that personal relationships on Facebook are acceptable. Prensky (2001) argued that students want to use the medium they are most comfortable with to communicate with



instructors, which often includes computer-mediated communication such as e-mail and Facebook. Schwartz (2009) asserted that her students have said they would not have friended instructors if they did not want to communicate with them on the site. Others think these relationships go too far. Turner (2010) maintained that she does not want to know about instructors' personal lives. She is afraid she will lose respect for the instructors and the classroom relationship will suffer. Both sides have valid arguments, but the dual relationship literature contends that these relationships can be appropriate if they are ethically maintained (Baggio et al., 1997; Kitchener, 1998; Rupert & Holmes, 1997).

Interpersonal communication ethics are difficult to define. Christians and Lambeth (1996) argued that people are not taught how to identify, evaluate or respond to ethical dilemmas, which makes it even more difficult for instructors to decide what types of communication are appropriate with students on Facebook. However, Deetz (1990) argued that one of the established ways of looking at communication ethics is through "situational or contextual morality arising out of specific communities" (p. 227). This suggests that using the guidelines presented in the dual relationship literature is an appropriate way to determine whether instructors are communicating ethically with students on Facebook. The guidelines suggested by scholars (Baggio et al., 1997; Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Congress, 1996; Kitchener, 1988; Rupert & Holmes, 1997) all indicate that instructors need to be concerned with the potential for harm/exploitation, making the student feel uncomfortable due to the power differential, the impact on other students, how colleagues may view the relationship and the possible erosion of the professional nature of the relationship. Just as these are important considerations when making the decision to friend students, they may be considered when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook as well; therefore,

**RQ7:** What ethical concerns do instructors report considering when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook?

### **The Impact of Instructors' Individual Differences on Facebook Impression Management**

The descriptive picture of how instructors use Facebook is an important starting point in looking at instructor-student relationships on the site, but there is more to how instructors use Facebook, such as their impression management on the site. Looking at the instructors who have allowed students as Facebook friends, the second part of this study seeks to discover how self-monitoring, role conflict and ambient awareness influence the instructors' impression management use, including using impression management by self-presentation, using specific impression management behaviors and managing their privacy.

**Self-monitoring and role conflict.** While individuals' levels of self-monitoring and their perceived role conflict on Facebook may influence their impression management, it is important to first look at how self-monitoring may impact role conflict. Individuals often manage their impressions to present specific identities to certain audiences (Goffman, 1959). These audiences are usually segmented and different behaviors are used for each one. Instructors may separate their students into one audience (professional) and their friends and family into another (personal). The problem with this segmentation is that on Facebook, the audiences are not really separate. "When audience segmentation fails and an outsider happens upon a performance that was not meant for him, difficult problems in impression management arise" (Goffman, 1959, p. 139). Due to the need to enact different behaviors for different audiences, individuals with higher levels of self-monitoring often segregate those they communicate with into different groups and use the behaviors appropriate for each one when the need arises (Leone & Corte, 1994). On Facebook, it is more difficult to separate one's friends and if the behaviors associated

with the multiple audiences are incompatible with each other, role conflict may occur (Sarbin, 1954). On the other hand, individuals with lower levels of self-monitoring tend to use behaviors that present the same image regardless of the audience with whom they are communicating (Snyder, 1979). Since those with lower self-monitoring levels do not change their communication behaviors and present what they consider to be their true images at all times, regardless of who is present, they will probably feel a lesser need to segregate their friends (Leone & Corte, 1994). This implies that different audiences are probably not expecting different types of communication from instructors who exhibit lower levels of self-monitoring, which suggests that there will be less role conflict for these instructors. Conversely, different audiences may expect different types of communication from instructors who exhibit higher levels of self-monitoring. If those communication behaviors are incompatible with each other, role conflict may occur; therefore,

**H1:** The higher the instructors' level of self-monitoring, the more role conflict they will feel on Facebook.

Although the instructors' level of self-monitoring may influence the amount of role conflict they feel on Facebook, the two variables are often individual predictors of people's use of impression management. This influence is likely to translate to instructors' use of impression management on Facebook as well.

**Self-monitoring and impression management.** An individual's level of self-monitoring is a personality characteristic that is stable across contexts (Snyder & Gangestad, 1986) and has been found to be a predictor of the extent to which individuals engage in impression management (Allen, 1986; Leone & Corte, 1994). While low self-monitors are concerned with presenting their true identities, high self-monitors are concerned with presenting the appropriate

image for the specific audience (Snyder, 1979). Those with high levels of self-monitoring are very aware of the behaviors that are considered appropriate for any given situation, and to enact these behaviors they use impression management strategies. Leary and Kowalski (1990) argued that individuals monitor their surroundings and use impression management in an attempt to convey information about themselves that might help achieve their goals, including presenting a specific image. On Facebook, individuals can present specific images through their communication behaviors, such as the language they use, the information they choose to share and the pictures they post on their page (Strano, 2008; Switzer, 2007; Tanis & Postmes, 2003). Child and Agyeman-Budu (2009) found that individuals' levels of self-monitoring impacted how they communicated on their blogs. Low self-monitors infrequently changed their communication behaviors, suggesting that they were enacting behaviors they use on a regular basis, regardless of the audience. High self-monitors were more adept at changing their communication behaviors, suggesting that they are familiar with using various impression management strategies. These findings could translate to Facebook as well. Individuals who are lower in self-monitoring may not be concerned with the specific image they are presenting, so their communication behaviors will probably not change just because there are multiple audiences. Individuals who are higher in self-monitoring might be very concerned with the image they are presenting to specific audiences, so they will probably use impression management strategies more often than those who self-monitor less; therefore,

**H2:** The higher the instructors' level of self-monitoring, the more impression management they will use on Facebook.

**Role conflict and impression management.** The difference in perceived role conflict when communicating on Facebook may also be a factor influencing one's use of impression

management strategies. Goode (1960) asserted that each individual plays multiple roles in life, and when those roles overlap, but call for contradictory behaviors, role conflict can occur. When individuals experience role conflict, they feel the tension of needing to enact the behaviors and provide the information of two (or more) identities at once (Sarbin, 1954). On Facebook, instructors may feel the need to enact the behaviors associated with multiple roles, including parent, spouse, friend, and instructor. If these roles call for different communication behaviors, role conflict may occur.

There are a number of ways that role conflict may occur for instructors who have students as friends on Facebook. Locke and Massengale (1997) argued that school coaches faced wide-spread role conflict because they wanted to become friendly with the athletes, but were concerned with the consequences of overstepping the line between coach and friend. Instructors may experience this type of role conflict on Facebook because the site is set up to provide personal information, but sharing that information may cross the line between instructor and friend. Grace (1972) argued that instructors often feel a role conflict because their values may be different than students' values. Facebook users can provide value information, such as religious and political views ("Help Page," 2010), on their Facebook page. Instructors with students as friends on Facebook might experience role conflict because this information may be considered appropriate for their friends, but not for students.

Goffman (1959) argued that when audiences overlap, individuals often begin to use communication behaviors and present information that is appropriate for both groups. To do this on Facebook, instructors will need to use impression management to present only the specific image cues that are appropriate for both identities. If instructors feel a role conflict between the

different images they wish to enact on Facebook, they may use impression management to perform only the behaviors suitable to both; therefore,

**H3:** The more role conflict instructors feel on Facebook, the more impression management they will use.

**Ambient awareness and impression management.** The awareness of students on Facebook is the final factor this research explores as an influence on the instructors' use of impression management on the site. Ambient awareness is a fairly new term and Romero et al. (2007) argued that the exact nature of the feeling and how it occurs remain unexplored. However, based on research focusing on awareness systems and popular press discussions of awareness on social media, ambient awareness can be conceptualized as the mental state of being aware of individuals as an audience, based on thinking about the other people and feeling in touch or involved with them through a peripheral awareness of their activities (Markopoulos et al., 2005; Romero et al., 2007; Thompson, 2008; van Baren et al., 2004). This definition relates to what Harms and Biocca (2004) termed co-presence, or the "level of peripheral or focal awareness of the other" (p. 1). This definition suggests that Facebook users become aware of certain friends, based on noticing their posts or activities, most likely through the News Feed feature (boyd, 2008; Thompson, 2008; Zuckerberg, 2009).

Leary and Kowalski (1990) argued that individuals monitor their surroundings to determine the appropriate impression management strategies needed in the specific situation. In other words, individuals become aware of whom they are communicating with and make choices based on what is suitable for that audience. This indicates that Facebook users might monitor who they are communicating with on the site to determine which communication behaviors are most fitting for everyone involved. However, being aware of all one's friends on Facebook is

difficult or impossible. The average user has more than 130 friends (“Statistics,” 2010), which means that individuals might not think about who those 130 people actually are when using Facebook. It is possible that instructors are only aware of a select few Facebook friends and students may or may not be part of that awareness. If instructors are more aware of personal friends, they may not feel the need to manage their impressions in ways that are suitable for multiple audiences and feel comfortable communicating in the ways they normally would in day-to-day life. However, if instructors are aware of students as an audience, the need to manage their impressions to present an image that is appropriate for all audiences may intensify.

While the instructors’ awareness of students may increase their use of impression management strategies, there is another side to ambient awareness. In Harms and Biocca’s (2004) discussion of co-presence, they indicated that awareness is based on individuals noticing other users as well as the individuals’ perception of other users noticing them. This indicates that the instructors’ recognition of their students on Facebook is not the only way awareness can influence impression management. If instructors are conscious of the fact that students might be aware of them on Facebook, they may use more impression management strategies. Wallace (1999) argued that tinkering with a home page can “promote an increased focus on the self and a heightened, and perhaps exaggerated, sense that others are watching us with interest” (p. 34). This perception of an invisible audience often causes users to become more conscious of the image they are presenting. The sense of being watched while updating personal information could transfer to Facebook as well. Based on Harms and Biocca’s (2004) conception of awareness, if instructors are aware of students, they may assume that students are just as aware of them. As discussed above, if instructors do not think about whether students are aware of them, they may feel comfortable communicating in the same ways they do in face-to-face

interactions with their personal friends; however, if instructors do consider the fact that students may be aware of their presence, then they may be more likely to manage their impressions. Both types of ambient awareness should lead to more impression management; therefore:

**H4a:** The more ambient awareness instructors feel of students on Facebook, the more impression management they will use on Facebook.

**H4b:** The more instructors' perceive that students' have an ambient awareness of them, the more impression management they will use on Facebook.

While each facet of awareness is likely to lead to greater use of impression management, there is no indication as to which might have the greater influence. Wallace (1999) argued that adding information to a website can heighten one's awareness of being watched and lead to a more conscious effort of managing his/her impressions, suggesting that the instructors' perception of students' awareness of them might be more influential. On the other hand, Leary and Kowalski (1990) argued that individuals manage their impressions based on who they think is watching them, suggesting that instructors' awareness of students might be more influential. Since both types of awareness may influence instructors' impression management, but there is no indication as to which will have a greater influence, a final research question is posed:

**RQ8:** Is instructors' use of impression management on Facebook influenced more by the instructors' ambient awareness of students or the perception of students being aware of them?



## Chapter 3

### METHOD

This chapter describes how the study was conducted. It describes the sample, explains the procedures used to recruit the participants, specifies the procedure for collecting data, and details the measures used on the survey.

#### **Participants**

The 331 participants in this study were college/university instructors who have a personal Facebook page. The sample was 60.4% female and 39.6% male. The participants ranged in age from 26 to 69 years old ( $M = 45.04$ ,  $SD = 10.19$ ). The participants identified themselves as 89.4% White, 4.2% African American/Black, 1.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1.2% Native American, 1.0% Hispanic/Latina(o), and 2.4% identified as other. The majority of the participants (54.4%) taught at a private school. Participants who taught at a small university made up 31.4% of the sample while 24.8% taught at a small college, 20.8% taught at a medium university, 17.2% taught at a large university, 3.6% taught at a medium college, and 1.8% taught at a large college. One person, .03% of the sample, did not indicate the type of college/university at which s/he taught. Of the participants, 76.1% held a Ph.D., 8.2% held a M.S., 6.0% held a M.A., 4.5% held a M.F.A. 1.5% held a J.D., 0.6% held a M.B.A., and 0.3% held a Bachelor's degree. Another 2.7% did not indicate their level of education. Assistant professors comprised 36.3% of the sample, associate professors accounted for another 29.0%, full professors for 18.4%, lecturers, part time, or visiting instructors for 12.3%, administrators for 1.2% ,and 0.6% of the participants marked other. Another 1.2% did not indicate their rank. The participants represented a large number of disciplines, including 16.9% in a social sciences department, 13.6% in an education department, 12.7% in a natural sciences department, 12.1% in a humanities department, 8.8% in a health/human science department, 8.5% in an arts

department, 7.9% in a business department, 5.7% in a communication department, 3.9% in a technology department, 3.6% in a math/engineering department, 1.5% in an architecture department, 1.2% in a family and consumer sciences department, 1.0% in a law department, 1.0% in a religion department, 0.3% in the library, and 1.2% in another type of department.

The participants indicated they had used Facebook for anywhere from one month to eight years. For those who reported their Facebook use in months, responses were rounded to the nearest year. Thus, answers of less than six months were coded as zero years, and the range was 0 to 8 years ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ,  $MDN = 2.0$ ). The participants had between 0 and 1500 total friends on their Facebook pages ( $M = 181.07$ ,  $SD = 184.10$ ,  $MDN = 130.0$ ). Just over half of the sample (56.2%) indicated that they had students as Facebook friends. The other 43.8% did not have students as Facebook friends.

### **Sample Selection and Recruitment**

Participants were recruited through a two-step, systematic, random sampling procedure. The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching (2010) classifies colleges and universities in a number of distinct groups including Baccalaureate colleges (three categories based on major programs), master's colleges and universities (three categories based on size), and doctorate-granting universities (three categories based on research output). The lists of colleges and universities found on The Carnegie Foundation's website for each of these nine categories provided the population for this study. The first step of the sampling procedure randomly selected four schools from each of the nine categories by systematically choosing every 15<sup>th</sup> school starting with the first one on each of the nine lists. The second step of the sampling procedure randomly selected fifteen faculty members from each sampled school's public, online directory by systematically choosing every 10<sup>th</sup> faculty member starting with the

first individual listed in the directory. If a college or university did not have a public online directory, or if the directory specifically noted that email addresses were only for school business, the college or university was eliminated and a new school was chosen following the same sampling procedures.

The first set of recruitment and reminder emails did not result in enough participants, so the same sampling procedures were followed an additional seven times. For each additional recruitment, four new schools were chosen from each category on the Carnegie website and fifteen instructors from each school were selected from the public, online directories. Recruitment took place between May 22, 2010 and August 25, 2010. In the end, thirty schools from each of the nine categories were selected for a total of 270 schools. These schools represented all regions of the United States and were a mixture of private/public and large/medium/small colleges and universities. From these 270 schools, 4,050 faculty members were sent recruitment emails inviting them to participate in the study. These faculty members represented different instructor ranks and departments. Of those faculty members who received the recruitment email, 413 who were eligible chose to participate. Of course, only faculty who had a Facebook profile were eligible to participate, and it is not possible to know how many of those who received a recruitment email had a Facebook profile. After the incomplete surveys were eliminated, 331 participants remained.

### **Procedure**

The selected instructors were sent an email explaining the study, asking them to participate and providing a link to the survey on surveymoneky.com (see Appendix A). The email told recipients that to be eligible for the study, they had to have a personal Facebook page and could not be a student at the university at which they taught. Asking students to refrain from

participating was done to exclude graduate students who teach, but might have relationships with upper-level undergraduate students as peers due to taking classes or working on projects together. If the instructors chose to participate and clicked the link, they were taken to an informed consent page that detailed the procedures and ethical measures in place for the project (see Appendix B). If they clicked the button indicating they were at least 18-years-old and agreed to voluntarily participate, they were taken to the survey (see Appendix C), which is described below. Approximately one week after the initial email, a reminder email was sent to all selected instructors (see Appendix D).

### **Measures**

This section describes the measures used on the questionnaire (see Appendix C). An item asking participants if they had students as friends on Facebook was used to separate participants into two groups based on whether or not they had students as friends and skip logic directed instructors to the appropriate part of the survey. The instructors who did not allow students as friends completed the demographic section and Part I, while the instructors who did allow students as friends completed the demographic section and Part II. Table 1 indicates which group(s) completed each specific measure.

**Reasons for allowing/not allowing students as Facebook friends.** To determine why instructors did or did not allow students as friends on Facebook, three open ended questions and two clarifying questions were posed. Instructors who indicated they did not friend students on Facebook were asked to provide their own responses to the question “What are your reasons for not having students as friends on Facebook?” A second item asked if their primary reason for not having students as friends was due to a conscious decision or because the opportunity had not

**Table 1****Measures Completed by Instructors With/Without Students as Facebook Friends**

Measure	Instructors With Student Friends	Instructors Without Student Friends
Reasons for Allowing/Not Allowing Students as Facebook Friends		
1a. What are your reasons for not having students as friends on Facebook?	NO	YES
1b. Is your primary reason for not having students as friends on Facebook a conscious decision or because the opportunity has not presented itself?	NO	YES
2. What are your reasons for friending students on Facebook?	YES	NO
3a. Have you ever decided to not friend some students on Facebook?	YES	NO
3b. If you answered yes to the previous question, what are your reasons for not friending students on Facebook?	YES	NO
Ethical Concerns Considered When Deciding Whether or Not to Allow Students as Facebook Friends	YES	YES
Types of Students Allowed as Facebook Friends	YES	NO
Communicating with Students on Facebook	YES	NO
Ethical Concerns Considered When Deciding How to Communicate with Students on Facebook	YES	NO
Self-Monitoring	YES	YES
Role Conflict	YES	YES
Ambient Awareness	YES	NO
Measures of Self-Presentation	YES	NO
Impression Management Behaviors	YES	NO
Privacy Management	YES	NO
Demographics	YES	YES

presented itself. Instructors who indicated they did friend students on Facebook were asked to provide their own responses to the question “What are your reasons for friending students on Facebook?” Since it was possible that instructors may have decided not to friend certain students on Facebook, a clarifying item read “have you ever decided to not friend some students on Facebook?” and asked for a yes/no answer. The final open-ended question asked these instructors to provide their own responses to the question “If you answered yes to the previous question, what were your reasons for not friending students on Facebook?”

**Ethical concerns considered when deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends.** The ethical concerns instructors considered when deciding whether to allow students as friends on Facebook were measured with eleven items created from the ethical guidelines for dual relationships set forth by Blevins-Knabe (1992) and Congress (1996). These guidelines focused on the role the instructor would assume in the student’s life, whether the potential friend was a current or former student, whether the student would expect special treatment, how other students would view the Facebook friendship, whether evaluations of the student would be influenced by the friendship, the possibility of exploitation, the power differential between instructors and students, and the potential consequences for other faculty members. The same eleven items were used to measure the concerns considered by participants who did allow students as friends on Facebook and those who did not. When used to determine the concerns the instructors who did allow students as Facebook friends, each item began with the stem, “when thinking about whether to friend a student on Facebook, I think about.” Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree) and the scale was reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .93$ ). When used to determine the concerns the instructor who did not allow students as friends considered when making the decision, each item began with the

stem, “when deciding not to friend students on Facebook, I thought about.” This scale was reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .91$ ).

**Types of students allowed as Facebook friends.** A number of items were used to determine the types of students instructors allowed as friends on Facebook. Three items asked participants to indicate how many undergraduate, master’s and doctoral students they had as friends on Facebook. Another two items asked participants to mark the students they had accepted friend requests from (undergraduate, master’s, doctoral, haven’t accepted) and the students they had sent friend requests to (undergraduate, master’s, doctoral, haven’t sent). There were three items that asked participants to mark all the types of undergraduate/master’s/doctoral students they had as friends on Facebook. The possible choices were: (1) students who are currently enrolled in one of their courses, (2) students who are working with them in an advisor/mentor capacity, (3) students with whom they have a different type of academic relationship, and (4) they do not have students of that level as friends.

**Communicating with students on Facebook.** To determine what Facebook behaviors instructors use to communicate with students on the site, the survey provided a list of commonly used Facebook behaviors taken from the Facebook help page (“Help Center,” 2010) and asked the participants to mark each behavior they had used. The behaviors included: (1) commenting on something a student has posted, (2) commenting on a student’s status update, (3) commenting on photos, (4) ‘liking’ something a student has posted, (5) playing a game with a student, (6) suggesting a student partake in a specific activity, (7) inviting a student to an event through Facebook, and (8) I have not communicated with students on Facebook in any of these ways. This list of behaviors was presented twice. The first time, participants were asked to mark the behaviors they had used to communicate with undergraduate students and the second time,

participants were asked to mark the behaviors they had used to communicate with graduate students. Participants were asked to mark all the behaviors they had used with each group of students.

**Ethical concerns considered when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook.** The eleven ethical concerns previously discussed were also used to determine what the group of instructors who did allow students as friends on Facebook considered when deciding how to communicate with them on Facebook. The stem read, “when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook, I think about whether the communication is.” Each item was rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree) and the scale was reliable (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Self-monitoring.** Self-monitoring levels for participants in each group were measured with Snyder and Gangestad’s (1986) Measure of Self-Monitoring. The measure consisted of eighteen items requiring a true/false response (i.e., “I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them,” and “I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people”). The measure was scored by giving participants one point for each true response to items 4, 5, 6, 8, 10, 12, 17 and 18; and one point for each false response to items 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 15, and 16. In the traditional scoring of the measure, points are added together and participants scoring 13 or higher are labeled very high self-monitoring, 11-12 are labeled high self-monitoring, 8-10 are labeled low self-monitoring and 0-7 are labeled very low self-monitoring (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985). For this research, points were added together to give each participant a score that indicated their level of self-monitoring with higher scores indicating higher levels. The scale was marginally reliable for participants who do not allow students as friends on Facebook (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .66$ ) and for participants who do allow students as Facebook friends (Cronbach’s  $\alpha = .69$ ).



**Role conflict.** Role conflict was measured for participants in each group with a scale adapted from Carlson et al.'s (2000) Work-Family Conflict Scale. The scale consisted of six items that asked participants to indicate how much they agreed that the information they posted on Facebook that is appropriate for one type of friend may not be appropriate for a second type of friend. The three types of friends were family, personal friends and students; each type of friend was compared to the other two types (appropriate for: family/not students; friends/not students; family/not friends; friends/not family; students/not friends; students/not family). Each item was rated on a 7-point, Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The group of instructors who had students as Facebook friends were presented all six items, but the group of instructors who did not have students as Facebook friends were not presented with the two items that measured the appropriateness of the information for students/not friends and students/not family. These two items were excluded because this group of instructors did not have students as friends and therefore would not post information for them on Facebook. To compute role conflict scores for both groups, the two items that read “information I post on Facebook that is appropriate for my family may not be appropriate for students” and “information I post on Facebook that is appropriate for my friends may not be appropriate for students” were averaged, with higher scores indicating higher role conflict. The scale for the group of instructors who did not allow students as Facebook friends was reliable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .89$ ), as was the scale for the group of instructors who did allow students as Facebook friends (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Ambient awareness.** The group of instructors who indicated that they had students as Facebook friends were presented with ten items that measured two types of ambient awareness. The first type was the instructors' awareness of students on Facebook and the second type was

the instructors' perception of the students' awareness of them. Six of the items were taken from Harms and Biocca's (2004) Networked Minds Social Presence Measure. Three of these items specifically measured the participants' awareness of students. Examples of these items included "I notice students on Facebook" and "Students' presence on Facebook is obvious to me." The other three items specifically measured the participants' perception of students' awareness of them. Examples included "I think about whether students will notice me on Facebook" and "I think about whether my presence on Facebook is obvious to students." The other four items were created based on the conceptual definition of ambient awareness, which focused on the individuals' sense of other users' emotions and thoughts. The items measuring the instructors' awareness of students read "I pick up on students' emotions through Facebook," and "I pick up on students' thoughts through Facebook." The items measuring the instructors' perception of students' awareness of them read "I think about whether students pick up on my emotions through Facebook," and "I think about whether students pick up on my thoughts through Facebook." All ten items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree).

To make sure the ten items reflected two distinct variables, they were factor analyzed using Principal Component Analysis as the extraction method and Varimax with Kaiser Normalization as the rotation method. The factor analysis confirmed that the items did create two factors. The first factor (five items having factor loadings that exceeded .70, with no cross-loadings over .37) measured the participants' awareness of the students (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ) and the second factor (five items having factor loadings that exceeded .70, with no cross-loadings over .37) measured the participants' perception of students' awareness of them (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .91$ ). An average of the scores from the five items on the factor indicating awareness of students

was computed, as was an average of the scores from the five items on the factor indicating the instructors' perceptions of students' awareness of them. For both variables, higher scores indicated higher awareness.

**Impression management on Facebook.** The participants who indicated they had students as Facebook friends completed three measures to determine their use of impression management on Facebook. The measures of self-presentation scale measured the participants' desire to communicate on Facebook in ways that helped them appear in a specific manner. The impression management behaviors scale measured the participants' use of specific Facebook communication behaviors. The privacy management scale measured how the participants' managed their privacy on Facebook.

**Measures of self-presentation.** The measures of self-presentation used nine items that were adapted from Nezleck and Leary's (2002) Measures of Self-Presentation scale. Park, Jin and Jin (2009) found success with the scale when they modified the items to read "I want the other users on Facebook to perceive me as . . ." and filled in the blank with specific terms: likable, friendly, socially desirable, competent, skilled, intelligent, moral, principled, and ethical. For this study, the items were worded as "I communicate on Facebook in ways to make others perceive me as" and filled in the blanks with the appropriate terms. Participants rated each item on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). An average of the nine scores was computed to measure participants' use of impression management, with higher scores indicating more impression management. The scale was reliable (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Impression management behaviors.** The impression management behaviors measure asked participants whether they communicated on Facebook using specific strategies documented as online impression management tactics. Participants responded to eight items on

a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Three items related to the linguistic cues one can use to present a specific image (Switzer, 2007). These items refer to proofreading posts for spelling errors, thinking about specific word choice, and making changes before posting (Jacobson, 2006; Lea & Spears, 1992; Walther, 1993). Three items related to the paralinguistic cues one can use to present a specific image (Switzer, 2007). These items referred to using emoticons, providing personal information to create a specific image, and providing photos to present a specific image (Sherman, 2001; Strano, 2008; Tanis & Postmes, 2003). Two items related to the use of time as an impression management strategy (Walther & Tidwell, 1995). These items referred to noting the time one posts or comments on others' posts. Using all eight items, reliability for the scale was low (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .59$ ). Dropping the items "I use emoticons to show emotion" and "When I post photos, I consider the specific image they present of me" provided a slightly higher reliability score ( $\alpha = .64$ ). Reliability could not be improved further by dropping any additional items. The average for the retained six items was computed to measure the participants' use of impression management, with higher scores indicating more impression management.

***Privacy management.*** Since impression management can include omitting certain information (keeping it private), the third measure of impression management focused on the participants' privacy management on Facebook. To determine whether participants declined to post certain information on Facebook, the items from the boundary permeability and boundary ownership subscales of Child et al.'s (2009) Blogging Privacy Rule Measure were used. Example items included, "When I face challenges in my life, I feel comfortable talking about them on my blog," "If I think that information I posted really looks too private, I might delete it," and "I update my blog frequently." The word blog was replaced with Facebook and the twelve

items were rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = never true; 7 = always true). The six items that measured a lack of concern for privacy (e.g., willing to post specific information) were reverse-coded. The original 12-item scale had low reliability (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .49$ ), but dropping two items ["I share information with friends on Facebook whom I don't know in my day-to-day life" and "I use shorthand (e.g., pseudonyms or limited details) when discussing sensitive information so that other have limited access to know my personal information"] improved the reliability slightly (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .55$ ). Reliability could not be improved further by dropping any additional items. Scores from the retained ten items were averaged to create a privacy score, with higher scores indicating a greater desire for privacy on Facebook. As another indicator of privacy management, participants were also asked if they have blocked students from seeing specific information. The item required a yes/no response.

**Demographics.** Demographic information included sex, age, ethnicity, highest level of education completed, size/type of school taught at (public/private, small/medium/large, college/university.), emphasis on teaching/research at the school (7-point scale; 1 = primary research emphasis, 7 = primary teaching emphasis), types of degrees granted by the institution, type of department a member of (arts, humanities, etc.), rank (assistant professor, professor, lecturer, etc.), and level of student taught (undergraduate, master's, doctoral). An item asked participants to mark how technologically literate they considered themselves on a 7-point scale (1 = not at all technologically literate, 7 = very technology literate).

Questions also asked about the participants' use of Facebook. One item asked how many years they had used Facebook, while a second item asked how many total friends they had. Two items collected data concerning the participants' familiarity with and use of the privacy settings on Facebook. Specifically, one item asked participants to indicate how familiar they were with

Facebook's privacy settings on a 7-point scale (1 = very unfamiliar, 7 = very familiar). The second item asked participants to mark who could see the majority of their Facebook page. The five possible answers matched Facebook's privacy options (Zuckerberg, 2009). They were (1)everyone, (2)friends of my friends, (3)only my friends and networks, (4)only my friends, and (5)I restrict certain parts of my Facebook profile so that only specific people can see it. The last demographic item asked participants if they had created a Facebook page specifically for students (yes/no).

## Chapter 4

### RESULTS

This chapter reports the results of the data analyses. Each of the five sections describes the data analysis methods used to address the research questions and/or hypotheses for a specific portion of the research study and reports the results of these analyses. The first section focuses on the descriptive data for instructors with and without students as Facebook friends, including how the two groups differ. The second section provides the reasons instructors indicated they had for allowing/not allowing students as Facebook friends. This section also reports the ethical concerns they consider when making that decision. The third section describes the instructors' Facebook use with students. This section includes the types of students allowed as friends, how instructors communicate with these students, and what ethical concerns they consider when deciding how to communicate with them. The fourth section reports the influences of instructors' individual differences on their impression management use on Facebook. The final section of this chapter provides supplemental analyses that look at how high and low self-monitors differ in terms of using impression management on Facebook.

#### **Descriptive Data for Instructors With and Without Students as Facebook Friends**

The 331 instructors who participated in this study were placed into two groups based on whether or not they had allowed students as Facebook friends. The group of instructors who had allowed students as friends was comprised of 186 participants (56.2%) and the group of instructors who had not allowed students as friends was comprised of 145 participants (43.8%). Table 2 presents the descriptive data for both groups, as well as indicates where the two groups differed per chi square and t-test analyses.

**Table 2****Demographic Variables for Instructors With and Without Students as Facebook Friends**

	Instructors with Student Friends		Instructors Without Student Friends		Significant Difference
	Mean/ Percentage	SD	Mean/ Percentage	SD	
Gender (Percent Male)	40.3%		38.6%		
Age	44.09	10.35	46.31	10.54	
Teaches at a Private (vs. Public) Institution	57.5%		50.3%		
Teaches at a Small Institution	41.3%		57.2%		
Teaches at a Medium-Sized Institution	26.9%		22.2%		
Teaches at a Large Institution	18.3%		20.1%		
Schools' Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	4.99	1.58	4.74	1.62	
Teaches Undergraduate Students	95.2%		91.7%		
Teaches Masters Students	39.8%		44.2%		
Teaches Doctoral Students	14.5%		29.3%		
Technological Literacy	5.56	1.12	5.46	1.07	
Years Used Facebook	2.75	1.35	2.08	1.36	***
Total Number of Facebook Friends	238.84	212.90	111.30	100.76	***
Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	5.16	1.48	4.61	1.75	**
Created a Specific Page for Students	14.5%		5.6%		**
Self-Monitoring	8.70	3.42	8.45	3.27	
Role Conflict	3.12	2.18	5.27	2.01	***
n range	143-186		133-145		

*Note.* The mean/percentage column contains means for interval/ratio data and percentages for nominal data. Self-monitoring scores ranged from 1-18. All other scores ranged from 1-7. Emphasis on teaching/research was scored so that higher scores reflect greater emphasis on teaching. Differences between the two groups were calculated by chi square (for categorical data) or t-test.

\*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .



The data were tested to discover if the groups differed from each other on any of the demographic variables. Chi square analysis was used to test for differences between the groups on variables that were measured nominally. These variables included: gender (male/female); type of institution (private/public); size of school (small/medium/large); whether the participants taught undergraduate students, master's students and/or doctoral students (yes/no); and whether the instructors had created a specific Facebook page for students (yes/no). Independent sample *t*-tests were used to test for differences between the groups on interval or ratio variables. These variables included: age, emphasis on teaching or research, technological literacy, years on Facebook, total number of Facebook friends, understanding of Facebook's privacy settings, self-monitoring, and role conflict.

The two groups of instructors differed on five variables. The number of years the participants had used Facebook differed between the two groups. Instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends had used the site longer than those who did not allow students,  $t(325) = 4.50, p < .001$ . The total number of Facebook friends the participants had differed between the two groups as well. Instructors who allowed students as friends indicated that they had more total friends than the instructors who did not allow students,  $t(322) = 6.30, p < .001$ . Understanding of Facebook's privacy settings also differed between the two groups. Instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends reported having a greater understanding of the policy than the instructors who did not allow students as Facebook friends,  $t(329) = 3.09, p < .01$ . Instructors in the two groups differed in whether or not they created a specific Facebook page for students. The group of participants who allowed students as Facebook friends created these specific pages more than the group of participants who did not allow students as friends,  $\chi^2(1, N = 330) = 6.87, p < .01$ . The final difference was in the instructors' level of role conflict.

Instructors who did not allow students as Facebook friends felt more role conflict than instructors who did allow students,  $t(327) = -9.18, p < .001$ .

Although the two groups of instructors did not differ significantly from each other when the full self-monitoring scale was employed, prior research has split participants into low and high self-monitoring groups to look at the differences between them (Greenwade, 2001; Jawahar, 2001; Larkin & Pines, 1994; Tardy & Hosman, 1982). Thus, participants were classified as low or high self-monitors based on Gangestad and Snyder's (1985) criteria. Scores of 10 or below on the self-monitoring scale were coded as "0" to represent low self-monitors and scores of 11 or above were coded as "1" to represent high self-monitors. A chi square analysis was then conducted to see if the groups differed in the division of low and high self-monitors. The percent of low self-monitors in the group of instructors who had students as Facebook friends (69.9%) was not significantly different from the percent of low-self monitors in the group of instructors who did not allow students as Facebook friends (73.8%),  $\chi^2(1, n = 331) = .61, n.s.$

### **Making the Decision about Whether or Not to Allow Students as Facebook Friends**

This section focuses on how instructors decided whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends. Content analysis of open-ended responses was used to answer the first three research questions, which asked about the instructors' reasons for making this decision. A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA answered the fourth research question, which asked what ethical concerns instructors considered when making the decision. Chi square analysis was used to determine if the two groups differed in the number of instructors who agreed that they had considered each ethical concern when deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends.

### **Reasons for Allowing Students as Friends on Facebook**

Research Question 1 asked why instructors allow students as friends on Facebook. To answer RQ1, a qualitative content analysis was conducted on the answers all 186 of the participants who have students as friends on Facebook provided to the open-ended item asking why they friended students. The content analysis was done using Hsieh and Shannon's (2005) three-step process. The first step involved reading through the responses and making a list of key words and phrases provided by each participant. The second step grouped similar key words and phrases together to form categories. The third step defined the categories based on their characteristics, named them to form specific themes and placed each response into the appropriate theme to make sure all possible reasons for friending students on Facebook were accounted for. Once the themes emerged, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to count the specific number of participants who gave that reason for friending students on Facebook. To make sure the count was reliable, an assistant coded fifty responses (27% of the sample) and the coding was compared to the researcher's coding to calculate percent agreement and Scott's  $\pi$  for each theme. The results are presented in Table 3. The fifty items were chosen by a systematic random sample in which every tenth response was used. The assistant was trained to use the code book (see Appendix E) by the researcher and practiced coding with ten responses that were eliminated from the study due to being a part of incomplete questionnaires. The qualitative content analysis found eleven emergent themes to explain why instructors allow students as friends on Facebook. Each theme is described below.

**Keeping in touch.** The "keeping in touch" theme refers to the idea that instructors use Facebook to keep in touch with students once they are no longer at the same college or university. This may be because of graduation or moving to a new school. Participant 145

**Table 3****Intercoder Reliability and Percent of Participants Who Cited the Emergent Themes Explaining Why Students are Allowed as Facebook Friends**

Theme	Percent of Participants Citing Theme	Percent Agreement between Coders	Scott's $\pi$
Keeping in Touch	28.5%	98.0%	.96
Another Form of Communication	22.0	92.0	.84
If Student Wants to, Why Not?	19.9	96.0	.92
Learning about the Students	11.3	100	1.00
Having Nothing to Hide	11.3	100	1.00
Mentoring/Advising/Networking	10.8	88.0	.76
Difficult to Decline Requests	7.5	100	1.00
Liking Students	6.9	96.0	.92
Personal Support	4.8	96.0	.92
Student Groups	4.8	92.0	.81
Shared Interests	4.3	98.0	.96
n = 186			

exemplified this theme by saying, “I have friended some of my previous students who have graduated so I can keep in touch with them and see how they are doing in their lives/careers.”

Participant 385 suggested that graduation is not the only reason to keep in touch when s/he noted that “they are students who have transferred to another institution and I have mentored and would like to keep in touch with, mostly.” Participant 448 added that s/he friended students “mainly to keep in contact with students who I know will be leaving the area and I want to maintain a relationship and encourage them to continue their graduate careers.” These statements attest to the fact that instructors want a way to keep in touch with students when they

move on from the college or university at which they have had an academic relationship and Facebook provides a way to stay in contact.

**Another form of communication.** The use of Facebook as “another form of communication” refers to the idea that instructors use Facebook as a way to facilitate communication with their students beyond traditional channels, such as email, office hours or phone calls. Participant 20 exemplified this theme by stating that “some of them [students] do not use email, and if I need to contact them, I can message them through Facebook.” Participant 131 added that s/he used Facebook “as a means of communication with the student outside the school assigned email address” and participant 137 argued that Facebook can create “ease of contact in a pinch.” These instructors are indicating that they use Facebook as a new way to contact students when traditional channels are unavailable or unreliable.

**Learning about students.** The “learning about students” theme refers to the idea that instructors use Facebook to learn more about their students. This can include learning about who the students are as people, what they are interested in or how their generation thinks and feels. Participant 69 exemplified this theme by stating that s/he used Facebook “to keep up with their [students] lives and interests, to better understand their culture to help with teaching,” while participant 117 said “I can learn more about their personal lives which helps to understand their needs.” Participant 161 “enjoy[s] keeping up with what is going on in my students’ lives.” These statements reveal that instructors want to know more about their students and find they can do so by being friends on Facebook.

**Having nothing to hide.** The “having nothing to hide” theme relates to the idea that instructors have no problems with students seeing the information posted on their Facebook pages. These instructors view the information on their profiles as no different than the

information they would share in class. Participant 87 summed up the theme when s/he said “I don’t put anything on my Facebook that I would not share with students in class, so I don’t worry about friending them.” Participant 204 added “I use the page in a professional manner for the most part. While there is personal information on the page, I believe it humanizes me as a person (not just a professor).” Participant 31 said “if students are interested in who [sic] I am as a person outside the classroom, I am happy to share that with them.” These instructors suggest that the information they post on Facebook is appropriate for the students to see, whether it is information that would be provided in other venues or information that shows the instructor is a person too.

**Mentoring/advising/networking.** The “mentoring/advising/networking” theme refers to the idea that instructors find Facebook to be a good channel for additional academic support, such as mentoring students or networking with them. Participant 178 said that Facebook “gives me opportunity to mentor beyond the classroom or my office.” Participant 236 added that “I have in the past used FB for study sessions and answering questions from students via the chat feature.” Participant 272 stated that “I friend them as a mentor/advisor.” These instructors reveal that Facebook is a good channel for academic support beyond the classroom or office hours.

**Personal support.** While the “advising/mentoring/networking” theme emphasizes academic support, the “personal support” theme refers to the idea that participants find Facebook to be a good communication channel for offering personal support to students. Participant 89 commented that “sometimes it has helped students who are facing difficulties in relationships and to encourage them during times of stress. Other times, it is just to let them know I care.” Participant 324 stated that “I mostly work with adult students and therefore am often confronted

with issues that traditional students do not have such as aging parents or sickly children. I feel, in order for a student to succeed, he needs all of the support that is possible. Faculty support is on the same level as fellow student support.” Participant 443 simply said s/he uses Facebook so students “feel support from me.” It is apparent that faculty members want to provide personal support to students and find that Facebook allows them to do so.

**Student groups.** The “student groups” theme refers to the idea that instructors find Facebook to be a good communication tool for the student groups they advise. They may keep in contact with members, announce upcoming events or advertise the group. Participant 296 provided a summary of this theme when s/he wrote “I run an organization on campus that heavily involves students and the community. I originally set up my Facebook account as a way to communicate with those students and to use the social marketing aspects of Facebook for events relevant to other students.” Participant 364 noted that “most of the students on my Facebook page are also members of an academic organization I advise.” Participant 392 said s/he is friends with “students involved in student organizations that I advise.” These instructors argue that Facebook is a good channel for communication with student groups. The site allows for contact among group members, as well as a means for announcing events to all members at once and advertising the group to others on Facebook.

**Liking students.** The “liking students” theme refers to the idea that instructors like their students and consider them to be friends outside the instructor-student relationship. Participant 9 simply stated that students “are my friends,” while participant 125 said that “some students look at me as more family than faculty.” Participant 284 had “a very friendly and close relationship with all of the doctoral students in my research group and several of the M.S. students that work

in my laboratory.” Instructors who already view their students as friends appear to be willing to move that relationship to Facebook and be friends there as well.

**Shared interests.** The “shared interests” theme relates to the idea that instructors have things in common with students, such as experiences, television shows, music or movies. Participant 129 noted that “we have shared experiences together such as mission trips or other university activities.” Participant 438 stated that “we were both fans of the same TV show and liked to discuss it and set up viewings/plans that way.” These instructors reveal that Facebook is a good way to share the common interests they have with their students outside of the classroom.

**If the student wants to, why not?** The “if the student wants to, why not” theme refers to the idea that participants are willing to accept the requests sent by students. Participant 15 argued that “if a student is not ashamed to have his/her professor as a FB buddy, that’s good enough for me.” Participant 34 added that “personally, I am OK if they friend me, that way the decision is theirs.” Participant 73 said “I NEVER send Facebook friend requests to students. However, if students send me a friend request, I always accept them.” These instructors establish the idea that as long as the student has initiated the friendship, they are happy to have them as friends.

**Difficult to decline requests.** While some instructors happily accept all friend requests, there are others who accept them begrudgingly. The “difficult to decline requests” theme refers to the idea that instructors often find it hard to say no to friend requests from students because they are worried about offending them. Participant 218 said it well when s/he stated that s/he “would prefer NOT to. But it was too awkward to decline.” Participant 295 added that “I actually prefer not to friend them, but I feel bad if they request it and I ignore them.” Participant 399 corroborated these statements by noting that s/he doesn’t “want to be rude by not accepting



friend requests from students.” This theme is different than the others in that it shows that instructors do not always want to be friends with their students, but do not know how to say no. Two of the examples specifically note that the instructors would prefer not to be friends, but are afraid of offending the students.

### **Reasons for Not Allowing Some Students as Friends on Facebook**

Research Question 2 asked why instructors who do have students as friends on Facebook decide not to allow some students as friends. A total of 82 participants with students as friends indicated that they had decided not to allow some students as friends. These participants answered an open-ended item asking why they had made that decision. The analysis was conducted in the same way described for the previous content analysis. Again, once the themes emerged, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to count the specific number of participants who gave that reason for not friending some students on Facebook. To ensure the counts were reliable, an assistant coded twenty-two (27% of the sample) responses. The assistant’s coding was compared to the researcher’s coding to calculate the percent agreement and Scott’s  $\pi$  for each theme. The results are presented in Table 4. As in the previous content analysis, the twenty-two responses were systematically sampled, using every tenth response. The assistant was trained to use the code book (see Appendix G) and practiced on ten responses eliminated from the study due to being a part of incomplete questionnaires. Nine themes emerged from the data and are described below.

**No relationship with the student.** The “no relationship with the student” theme refers to the idea that participants do not friend students with whom they do not have a relationship with outside of the classroom or that they do not know. Participant 283 noted that s/he does not friend “students who are not in my classes or I have not advised.” Participant 383 said that s/he

**Table 4****Intercoder Reliability and Percent of Participants who Cited the Emergent Themes Explaining Why Some Students are Not Allowed as Facebook Friends**

Theme	Percent of Participants Citing Theme	Percent Agreement between Coders	Scott's $\pi$
Students are Still Enrolled	34.1%	90.9%	.82
No Relationship with the Student	25.6	86.4	.72
Separation of Professional/Personal Life	20.7	86.4	.72
Need for Trust	13.4	95.5	.90
Not Wanting to Know about Students' Lives	13.4	90.9	.82
Problematic Students	9.8	95.5	.89
Students are not 'Friends'	7.3	95.5	.90
No Undergraduate Students	5.9	100	1.00
Having Other Ways to Communicate	3.7	100	1.00
	n = 82		

does not friend “students whom I did not know personally or from class.” Participant 17 mentioned that “though they attend my institution, I do not know them.” These instructors indicate that a Facebook relationship has to come from an already existing relationship with students.

**Problematic students.** The “problematic students” theme refers to the idea that participants will not friend students who have caused problems in the past. These problems may have occurred on Facebook, in the classroom or in the department/university. Participant 131 wrote that “there is only one student whose request I have not accepted. I had earlier accepted a friend request from him, but I received obscene messages from that account, so I had to unfriend

him.” Participant 191 mentioned that “I chose not to friend students who are doing poorly in my classes. No need to give them more ammunition to dislike me.” Participant 236 stated that “if I had a bad experience with a student or had been warned about a student’s behavior with other faculty I would likely refuse the request.” These instructors are aware of the problems that may arise when friending students on Facebook, so they attempt to avoid them by not friending students who have caused problems in the past.

**Need for trust.** One of the reasons that instructors do not friend problematic students may stem from the “need for trust” theme, which refers to the idea that participants have to trust the students to be mature enough to handle the relationship. This means the students will not expect favoritism, use the information on Facebook in unseemly ways or act in inappropriate ways on Facebook. Participant 269 claimed that “There are certain students who I may not friend . . . or I may unfriend, if they do or say inappropriate things on my wall. Who those students are can vary, but if the student has shown personal integrity, then I am willing to stay connected with them in this social game they like to play.” Participant 343 noted that “I must have a certain level of trust to become friends with anyone on Facebook. Students are no different. I trust some more than others.” Participant 356 said “I make the decision on an individual basis based on maturity and attitude and there are some I would not friend.” Once again, these instructors identify the potential for problematic relationships on Facebook and attempt to avoid them by not friending students who they do not trust to act in appropriate ways.

**Students are still enrolled (specific course/university).** The “still enrolled” theme refers to the idea that participants will not friend students until they have finished the course taught by the instructors or have graduated from the university. Participant 145 argued that “I do not friend current students or those I may have in class in the future. I see this as a conflict of

interest. I do not want anything (i.e., something they write, post, etc.) to cause me to judge my students. I only friend previous students/advises who have graduated.” Participant 232 added that “I only accept friend requests from students after they have completed my class. All current student requests are not accepted.” Participant 327 believed that “it is generally a good idea to not friend any current students. I am generally only friends with students who have graduated recently with whom I have a mentorship relationship.” These instructors understand the role they play in students’ lives. They are not willing to move into a friendship role until the initial role of instructor is finished.

**No undergraduate students.** The “no undergraduate students” theme refers to the idea that participants will not friend undergraduate students; they will only friend graduate students. Participant 6 said “I do not accept undergrads as friends to protect myself.” Participant 144 noted that “undergraduate students are not friended.” Participant 284 said “I do not friend undergraduate students as a matter of principle.” These instructors have realized that relationships with undergraduate students are different than those with graduate students and therefore are less willing to friend undergraduate students on Facebook.

**Separation of personal/private life.** The “separation of personal/private life” theme refers to the idea that there are some students with whom the participants do not want to disrupt the boundary line between their professional and personal lives. They want to keep their personal lives private; they do not want some students to see the information they have posted on Facebook. Participant 6 stated “I do not feel it is appropriate to share personal information, pictures, statuses, etc. with my undergraduates. I do this to protect the teacher/student relationship. Even though I am close with some of my undergrads (and some who have graduated are now my friends on Facebook), I think being friends on Facebook oversteps the

professional boundary.” Participant 100 added “separation between personal and professional life, even though Facebook is not truly personal.” Participant 371 said “I like to keep a personal and professional divide between me and my students. I limit the amount of information I put on Facebook already, but I do not want my students having access to information about my personal life. As a young, female tenure-track professor, I feel that giving students personal access to my life would detract from my authority.” These statements reveal that instructors are concerned about crossing the line between their professional lives and their personal lives. Keeping students off Facebook as friends is one way to preserve this line. While this theme may seem to be more of a reason to not allow any students as friends on Facebook, it is crucial to note the language the participants use. Participant 6 specified that s/he did not want to share personal information with undergraduate students, suggesting that it is acceptable for graduate students to see it. While not all the participants used this language, due to the fact that the question was only asked of instructors who indicated they allowed students as friends on Facebook, one can assume that the responses refer to specific students and not all of them.

**Not wanting to know about students’ lives.** Instructors are not only worried about students seeing their personal information; they are also concerned with learning too much about the students’ personal lives. The “not wanting to know too much about students’ lives” theme refers to the idea that participants do not want to see the information students post on Facebook. These participants do not see a need for knowing what students do in their free time. Participant 125 noted that s/he “didn’t want to know that they are doing in their private lives that might compromise me, such as underage drinking.” Participant 267 argued that “students are entitled to an identity outside of the one I know in my classroom. I have in fact turned down friend requests from students with a message stating that as a rule I do not friend current students.

There are some things I do not want to know. This is in part because I teach at a very conservative institution, and I feel I may be pressured to ‘turn in’ students who are engaging in behavior or comments my institution would deem unacceptable.” Participant 351 said s/he “do[es] not wish to know about the private lives of many students.” These statements suggest that instructors understand the fact that students may engage in inappropriate acts outside the classroom and they do not want to be privy to these. The instructors may want to avoid worrying about their students or may want to avoid being in a position of judging the student for those actions. To prevent these situations, instructors find it better to not friend these students on Facebook. Again, this theme may seem out of place, but when the language of the participants is considered, it makes sense. Participant 351 suggested that s/he did not want to know about the personal lives of many of his/her students. This suggests that knowing about the personal lives of some students is fine.

**Students are not ‘friends.’** One of the reasons that instructors may not want to know what students are doing outside the classroom is that they do not view the students as friends. The “students are not ‘friends’” theme refers to just that idea. These participants view students as just that, students. Participant 112 simply said, “they are not my friends” as did participant 367. Participant 445 argued that “I do not want to become a ‘pal’ to the students in my classes.” These instructors do not friend certain students on Facebook because they do not want to take the chance of the students becoming too friendly with them or expecting special treatment because of the Facebook friendship. While instructors might not consider any students as friends, these instructors appear to place students into groups that are friends and groups that are not. Participant 445 argued that s/he did not want to become a pal to the students in class, suggesting that once the course was over, a friendship could be considered.

**Having other ways to communicate.** The “having other ways to communicate” theme refers to the idea that Facebook is not a preferred way of communication between the instructor and student. The participant prefers to use other modes of communication, such as email, phone calls, or office visits. They do not want students to rely on Facebook as a way to contact them. Participant 50 noted that s/he “do[se] not want the students to come to depend on it as a mode of communication with me.” Participant 166 said “I don’t want them to expect to be able to contact me through Facebook.” Participant 210 said there is “no reason to connect with them in this way.” These instructors are cautious about the interaction they have with students. They want to make sure that students are using more appropriate communication channels and not relying on Facebook as a way to contact them. As with the previous three themes, this one may seem to be more of a reason not to allow any students as friends on Facebook; however, since the question was only asked of instructors who indicated they had allowed some students as friends, it can be argued that they only feel this way about some students.

### **Reasons for Not Allowing Any Students as Friends on Facebook**

Research Question 3 asked why instructors do not allow any students as friends on Facebook. To answer RQ3, a qualitative content analysis on the item asking “what are your reasons for not allowing students as friends on Facebook” was conducted in the same manner as described for the previous two analyses. This item was answered by the 145 participants who indicated they did not have any students as friends on Facebook. Again, once the themes emerged, a quantitative content analysis was conducted to count the specific number of participants who gave that reason for not friending any students on Facebook. To make sure the count was reliable, an assistant coded forty responses (27% of the sample). The assistant’s coding was compared to the researcher’s coding to calculate the percent agreement and Scott’s  $\pi$

for each theme. The results are presented in Table 5. As in the first two content analyses, the responses were systematically sampled, using every tenth response. The assistant was trained to use the code book (see Appendix F) and practiced on ten responses eliminated from the study due to being a part of an incomplete questionnaire. Seven unique themes emerged from the data and are described below.

**Table 5**

**Intercoder Reliability and Percent of Participants who Cited the Emergent Themes Explaining Why No Students are Allowed as Facebook Friends**

Theme	Percent of Participants Citing Theme	Percent Agreement between Coders	Scott's $\pi$
Separation of Personal/Private Life	37.9%	95.0%	.90
Privacy	37.2	85.0	.70
Professionalism/Appropriateness	22.1	87.5	.76
Students are Not 'Friends'	8.9	92.5	.86
Not Wanting to Know about Students' Lives	7.6	97.5	.96
Having Other Ways to Communicate	5.5	97.5	.96
Fear of Favoritism	4.8	100	1.00
n = 145			

**Separation of personal/private life.** The “separation of personal/private life” theme refers to the idea that participants do not want to disrupt the boundary line between their professional and personal lives. Participant 38 said that “I feel it is too personal. It is important for me to separate my personal and professional life.” Participant 111 added that “Facebook is a place for me to communicate with family and friends (now and from my past). It is part of my personal, not professional life.” Participant 74 noted that it is “a boundary issue for me.” These



instructors indicate that Facebook is part of their personal lives and see no reason for students to be a part of that when they are actually part of their professional lives.

**Privacy.** The “privacy” theme is an extensive of the “separation of personal/profession lives” theme and refers to the idea that participants want to keep information about their personal lives private. They do not want students to see the information they have posted on Facebook. Participant 22 exemplifies this theme by noting that “I go out of my way to never tell my students any of my personal, religious or political beliefs as I feel this inhibits student discussion and critical thinking. If I allowed students on my personal Facebook, they’d quickly figure out my beliefs.” Participant 66 added “I do not want to share my personal life with my students. I am young and single as are many of my students so it’s important to me that they remain separate from my personal life and all it entails. I just would not feel comfortable with my students viewing photos of a ‘girl’s night out’ or my family Christmas photos, etc. There is a whole world I exist in outside my professional life and I like to keep it that way.” Participant 65 said “My Facebook page is part of my private life.” These statements indicate that instructors want to keep information about their personal lives private. If they allowed students on their Facebook pages, that information would no longer be private.

**Not wanting to know about students’ lives.** Just as some instructors do not want students to know about their personal lives, some do not want to know about the students’ personal lives. The “not wanting to know about students’ lives” theme refers to the idea that participants do not want to see the information students post on Facebook. These participants do not see a need for knowing what students do in their free time. Participant 306 argued that “I do not feel my students’ day-to-day life is my business” and participant 278 added “I don’t want to know what students are doing in their personal lives.” Participant 197 mentioned that “I also

do not want to be able to see their pages and all the things they might post there. I also am not friends with my own college age children.” These responses reveal that instructors see no reason to know what students are doing outside the classroom. Being friends with students on Facebook would provide too much information about their personal lives.

**Students are not ‘friends.’** One of the reasons instructors do not want to know about their students’ lives may be that they do not consider students to be friends. The “students are not ‘friends’” theme refers to the idea that participants do not view their students as friends. These participants view their students as just that, students. Participant 3 stated that “I had high school, college, family, other professors as friends. I did not want to confuse them [students] into thinking they were my buddies.” Participant 113 argued that “I use Facebook to communicate with friends. I do not consider students to be friends.” Participant 156 said “I am not their friend, I am their professor.” These statements attest to the idea that instructors do not see their students as friends; therefore, they do not allow them into a context where friendship is expected.

**Professionalism/appropriateness.** The “professionalism/appropriateness” theme refers to the idea that participants do not think it is appropriate or ethical to have a friendship with their students; nor do they feel it is professional. Participant 14 stated that “I want to maintain some sense of professionalism between us.” Participant 51 does not “consider being friends with them on Facebook or any other social network to be a professional behavior.” Participant 50 believed “that it is important to keep my relationship with my students on a professional level.” These statements indicate that instructors feel that being friends with students on Facebook is an inappropriate and unprofessional act; therefore, they do not do it.

**Having other ways to communicate.** The “having other ways to communicate” theme refers to the idea that Facebook is not a preferred channel of communication between the instructor and students. The participants preferred to use other modes of communication, such as email, phone, or office visits. The participants did not want students to rely on Facebook as a way to contact them. Participant 42 believed that “professors should only communicate with students using school email accounts.” Participant 78 stated “I don’t want present students to communicate with me via FB because I would rather they email me or come to office hours.” Participant 293 argued that “I communicate sufficiently in class, during office hours and during extra-curricular activities I serve as an advisor to. Students have access to my cell number as well and I prefer face to face or phone contacts.” These comments verify that instructors feel there are other, more appropriate, ways to communicate with students. These instructors argue that email, office visits and phone calls are more acceptable ways to communicate.

**Fear of favoritism.** The “fear of favoritism” theme refers to the idea that participants do not want students to feel like they might get special treatment because of the Facebook friendship. Also, participants do not want some students to feel left out, and feel that if they allow one student as a friend, they will have to allow all students. Participant 39 stated that “I don’t want to risk the possibility of playing favorites.” Participant 159 added that “I don’t want to say yes to some and no to others.” Participant 203 noted that “I feel that it is inappropriate to have current students as friends as it may show favoritism.” These instructors are very aware of the message it sends when they friend students on Facebook and wanted to make sure that no student felt left out or as if others were getting special treatment.

### **Ethical Concerns when Deciding Whether or Not to Allow Students as Facebook Friends**

Research Question 4 asked what ethical concerns instructors considered when deciding whether or not to allow students as friends on Facebook. This question was answered by looking at the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed that they thought about eleven specific ethical concerns when deciding whether to allow students on Facebook. All 331 participants responded to these items, but the ethical concerns of instructors who had students as friends on Facebook and the ethical concerns of those who did not have students as friends on Facebook were analyzed separately. The data for each group were entered into a one-way repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the eleven ethical considerations treated as the within-subjects factor. The results for each group are presented in Table 6. To gain more insight into the instructors' ethical considerations, responses to each item were also rescored to indicate whether or not instructors agreed that they considered each ethical concern. Ratings of 5 or above (on the 7 point scale) were coded as "1" for "agreed," and ratings of 4 or below were coded as "0" for "did not agree." Agreement with each concern in the two groups was compared using chi square analyses. These results are also presented in Table 6.

**Ethical concerns for instructors who have students as friends on Facebook.** For instructors with students as friends on Facebook, the one-way repeated-measures ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences in their ratings of the eleven ethical concerns when deciding whether to allow students as friends,  $F(10, 170) = 29.84, p < .01$ . A Tukey post-hoc analysis compared the eleven means. See Table 6 for the significant differences between individual means.

The concern about whether the potential friend was a current or former student was the highest rated ethical concern and was significantly higher than all other concerns. The ethical

**Table 6**

**Means, Standard Deviations and Percent Agreements for Ethical Concerns Instructors Consider when Deciding Whether to Friend Students on Facebook**

Ethical Concerns	Faculty with Student Friends		Faculty With No Student Friends		Significant Difference
	Mean (SD)	Percent Agreement	Mean (SD)	Percent Agreement	
Current/Former Student	5.04 <sub>f</sub> (2.12)	66.7%	5.30 <sub>e</sub> (2.04)	68.9%	
Role Assumed in Students' Lives	4.28 <sub>e</sub> (2.01)	45.2	4.56 <sub>d</sub> (2.14)	57.2	*
Potential to Exploit/Harm Student	4.21 <sub>e</sub> (2.83)	46.8	3.57 <sub>a</sub> (2.25)	37.5	
Impact on Other Students	4.00 <sub>de</sub> (2.09)	43.5	4.09 <sub>abcd</sub> (2.22)	47.6	
Potential to take Undue Advantage of Greater Power in the Relationship	3.92 <sub>cde</sub> (2.21)	43.5	3.91 <sub>abc</sub> (2.28)	43.4	
Capacity for Objective Evaluation	3.86 <sub>cde</sub> (2.19)	41.9	4.09 <sub>abcd</sub> (2.22)	46.2	
Student will Expect Special Treatment	3.72 <sub>cd</sub> (2.18)	37.1	4.16 <sub>bcd</sub> (2.21)	47.9	
All Students Have the Same Opportunity	3.64 <sub>cd</sub> (2.20)	37.6	3.96 <sub>abcd</sub> (2.29)	46.5	
Others Feel Like Student is Getting Special Treatment	3.46 <sub>bc</sub> (2.08)	31.7	4.39 <sub>cd</sub> (2.26)	52.7	***
Consequences for Other Faculty	3.12 <sub>ab</sub> (2.04)	25.8	3.65 <sub>ab</sub> (2.19)	37.9	*
Future Evaluations Influenced by Facebook Relationship	2.89 <sub>a</sub> (2.02)	21.5	3.61 <sub>ab</sub> (2.22)	37.2	***
n range	183-185		143-145		

*Note.* Ratings could range from 1 to 7. Means within each subsample (faculty with student friends/faculty without student friends) with no subscripts in common differ significantly per a Tukey post hoc test,  $p < .05$ . Percent agreement was calculated by dividing the number of participants who agreed with the concern by the total number of participants. Chi squares compared the percentages in the two groups and the significant difference column indicates where the two groups differed.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

considerations related to the part the instructor will play in the friendship were the focus of the next highest rated group of concerns, which all had similar ratings. The role the instructor will assume in the students' life through the Facebook friendship, the potential to exploit/harm the student through the friendship, friendship's potential impact on other students, the potential for the instructor to take undue advantage of his/her greater power in the relationship, and the instructors' capacity for objective evaluation of the student comprised this group of ethical concerns. The next highest rated group of concerns, which all had similar ratings, related to the influence the Facebook relationship might have on others. The possibility that the friended student will expect special treatment, wanting to make sure that all students have the same opportunities for this type of relationship, that other students might feel the friended student is getting special treatment, and the possible consequences for other faculty members are the ethical concerns comprised this group. The final ethical concern, which had the lowest rating, was the concern that future evaluations of the student might be influenced by the Facebook friendship.

**Ethical concerns for instructors who do not have students as friends on Facebook.**

For faculty without students as friends, the one-way repeated-measures ANOVA revealed significant differences in their ratings of the eleven ethical concerns considered when deciding whether to allow students as friends on Facebook,  $F(10, 130) = 14.26, p < .001$ . A Tukey post-hoc analysis compared the eleven means, and the results are reported in Table 6.

The concern about whether the potential friend was a current or former student was the highest rated concern and differed significantly from all other concerns. The next group of ethical concerns was related to being fair to all students, not just the ones involved in these relationships. These concerns included: (1) the role the instructor would assume in the students'

lives through the Facebook relationship, (2) the concern that other students might think the friended student was getting special treatment, (3) the friended student actually expecting special treatment, (4) the potential to lose the capacity for objective evaluation of the friended student, (5) the potential impact the Facebook friendship might have on other students, and (6) wanting to make sure all students had the same opportunities for this type of relationship. These six concerns were similarly rated. The final group of concerns, which were the lowest rated, all related to the consequences the Facebook friendship might have on the instructor or other faculty members. These concerns included the potential for the instructor to take undue advantage of his/her greater power in the relationship, the consequences for other faculty members, the possibility of future evaluations of the student being influenced by the Facebook friendship and the potential for the friendship to exploit or harm the student.

**Comparing the ethical concerns of instructors with and without students as Facebook friends.** Eleven chi square analyses were conducted to compare the two groups of instructors on their agreement with each of the eleven ethical concerns. The two groups differed in their agreement with four ethical concerns related to deciding whether or not to allow students as friends on Facebook. In all cases, instructors who did not have students as friends were more likely than those who did have students as friends to agree that they had considered the concern. These considerations included: (1) the concern about the role the instructor would assume in the students' lives through the Facebook friendship,  $\chi^2(1, n = 331) = 5.31, p < .05$ , (2) the concern about possible consequences for other faculty members,  $\chi^2(1, n = 330) = 5.80, p < .05$ , (3) the concern about the possibility that others might feel like the friended student was getting special treatment,  $\chi^2(1, n = 328) = 14.10, p < .001$ , and (4) the concern that the potential for future evaluations of the student might be influenced,  $\chi^2(1, n = 330) = 10.19, p < .001$ .

### **Description of Instructor Facebook Use with Students**

This section provides the description of instructor Facebook use with students. This description answers the next four research questions, which asked what type of students instructors allow as friends; how instructors communicate with undergraduate and graduate students on Facebook; and what ethical concerns are considered when deciding how to communicate with students. Descriptive statistics, primarily frequencies, were computed to determine the types of students instructors allowed as Facebook friends, as well as the ways in which instructors communicated with students on the site. A one-way repeated-measures ANOVA determined if there were differences in the instructors' ratings of the ethical concerns considered when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook.

#### **Types of Students Instructors Have as Facebook Friends**

Research Question 5 asked what types of students instructors have as friends on Facebook. To answer RQ5, descriptive statistics were computed for the data instructors provided to the questionnaire items that asked what students they sent friend requests to/accepted friend requests from, how many students of each level (undergraduate, master's, doctoral) they had as friends, and the specific types of students within each level they had as friends. The possible responses for the types of students the instructors had as friends within each level included: those enrolled in a course, those with whom the instructor had an advisor/mentor relationship, and those with whom the instructor had a different type of academic relationship. Instructors were asked to mark all that applied.

Of the 186 participants who indicated that they had students as friends on Facebook, 29% had sent friend requests to students and 97% had accepted friend requests from students. The



specific breakdown is presented in Table 7. The rest of this section discusses the specific types of students allowed as friends at each level.

**Table 7**

**Frequencies and Percentages of Instructors who Accepted and Sent Facebook Friend Requests**

Friend Requests Accepted/Sent by Instructors	Frequencies	Percentage
Accepted Friend Requests from Undergraduate Students	164	88.2%
Accepted Friend Requests from Master's Students	84	45.2
Accepted Friend Requests from Doctoral Students	47	25.3
Had Not Accepted Friend Requests from Any Students	5	2.7
Sent Friend Requests to Undergraduate Students	34	18.3
Sent Friend Requests to Master's Students	20	10.8
Sent Friend Requests to Doctoral Students	14	7.5
Had Not Send Friend Requests to any Students	132	70.9
n = 186		

*Note.* Participants were asked to mark all that apply; therefore, percentages do not equal 100.

**Undergraduate students.** Of the 186 participants who indicated that they allowed students as Facebook friends, 163 reported allowing undergraduate students and had between 1 and 300 friends of this level ( $M = 29.25$ ,  $SD = 44.80$ ,  $MDN = 15.0$ ). The breakdown of the number of undergraduate students these instructors have as friends is as follows: 44.2% of instructors had between 1 and 10 undergraduate students as Facebook friends, 24.5% had between 11 and 25 undergraduate students as friends, 17.8% had between 26 and 50 undergraduate students, 5.5% had between 51 and 100 undergraduate students as Facebook friends, 4.9% had more than 100 undergraduate students as Facebook friends, and 3.1% did not provide a number of undergraduate students as friends.

Table 8 presents the frequencies for each type of undergraduate student the instructors indicated they had as friends on Facebook. Students with whom the instructors had a different academic relationship (not teaching or advising) were the largest group of undergraduates allowed as Facebook friends. Students whom the instructors advised or mentored were the second largest group of undergraduates allowed as Facebook friends and students who were enrolled in the instructors' courses were the smallest group of undergraduates allowed as Facebook friends.

**Table 8**

**Frequencies and Percentages of the Types of Undergraduate Students Instructors Have as Friends on Facebook**

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Enrolled in a Course	95	58.3%
Advisor/Mentor	110	67.5
Other Academic Relationship	128	78.5
n = 163		

*Note.* Participants were asked to mark all that apply; therefore, percentages do not equal 100.

**Master's students.** Of the 186 participants who indicated that they allowed students as Facebook friends, 84 reported allowing master's students and had between 1 and 100 friends of this level ( $M = 9.49$ ,  $SD = 13.87$ ,  $MDN = 5.0$ ). The breakdown of the number of master's students these instructors have as friends is as follows: 75.0% of the instructors had between 1 and 10 master's students as Facebook friends, 14.3% had between 11 and 25 master's students as Facebook friends, 3.6% had between 26 and 50 master's students as Facebook friends, 1.2% had 100 master's students as Facebook friends and 5.9% of the instructors did not provide a number of master's students as friends.

Table 9 presents the frequencies for each type of master's student the instructors have as friends on Facebook. Students with whom the instructors have a different type of academic relationship (not teaching or advising) were the largest group of master's students allowed as Facebook friends. Students whom the instructors advised or mentored were the second largest group of master's students allowed as Facebook friends and students whom were enrolled in the instructors' courses were the smallest group of master's students allowed as Facebook friends.

**Table 9**

**Frequencies and Percentages for the Types of Masters Students Instructors Have as Friends on Facebook**

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Enrolled in a Course	23	27.4%
Advisor/Mentor	39	46.4
Other Academic Relationship	62	73.8
n = 84		

*Note.* Participants were asked to mark all that apply; therefore, percentages do not equal 100.

**Doctoral students.** Of the 186 participants who indicated that they allowed students as Facebook friends, 44 reported allowing doctoral students and had between 1 and 100 friends of this level ( $M = 9.76$ ,  $SD = 16.14$ ,  $MDN = 5.0$ ). The breakdown of the number of doctoral students instructors have as friends on Facebook is as follows: 72.7% of instructors had between 1 and 10 doctoral students as Facebook friends, 20.5% had between 11 and 30 doctoral students as Facebook friends, 2.3% had 100 doctoral students as Facebook friends and 4.5% of instructors did not provide a number of doctoral students as friends.

Table 10 presents the frequencies for each type of doctoral student the instructors have as friends on Facebook. Students with whom the instructors have a different type of academic

relationship (not teaching or advising) were the largest group of doctoral students allowed as Facebook friends. Students whom the instructors advised or mentored were the second largest group of doctoral students allowed as Facebook friends and students whom were enrolled in the instructors' courses were the smallest group of doctoral students allowed as Facebook friends.

**Table 10**

**Frequencies and Percentages for the Types of Doctoral Students Instructors Have as Friends on Facebook**

Type of Relationship	Frequency	Percentage
Enrolled in a Course	9	20.5%
Advisor/Mentor	23	52.3
Other Academic Relationship	36	81.8
n = 44		

*Note.* Participants were asked to mark all that apply; therefore, percentages do not equal 100.

**Communication with Students on Facebook**

Research Questions 6a and 6b asked how instructors communicated with undergraduate and graduate students on Facebook. Instructors who reported having undergraduate students as friends (n = 163) were the basis for the percentage of instructors who have used these behaviors with undergraduate students and the instructors who reported having graduate students (master's, doctoral, or both) as friends (n = 95) were the basis for the percentages of instructors who have used these behaviors with graduate students. The percentages are presented in Table 11. When looking at the specific ways instructors communicated with students on Facebook, the pattern of use is was similar for both graduate and undergraduate students. Commenting on a wall post was the most commonly used communication behavior. Commenting on a status and liking something the student has posted were popular ways of communicating as well. Commenting on a photo and inviting the student to an event were sometimes used to communicate on Facebook,

while playing a game and suggesting an activity for the student were seldom used when communicating with students.

**Table 11**

**Percentages of Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends who have used Specific Communication Behaviors with Undergraduate/Graduate Students on Facebook**

Communication Behavior	Percentage of Instructors Who Have used Each Behavior With <b>Undergraduate Students</b>	Percentage of Instructors Who Have used Each Behavior With <b>Graduate Students</b>
Commented on Wall Post	50.3%	57.9%
Liked Something	47.2	53.7
Commented on Status	46.0	54.7
Commented on Photo	39.3	50.5
Invited the Student to an Event	26.9	27.4
Played a Game	6.7	6.3
Suggested the Student Take Part in an Activity	3.1	6.3
NOT Communicated in Any of These Ways	22.7	13.7
	n = 163	n = 95

*Note.* Participants were asked to mark all that apply; therefore, percentages do not equal 100.

**Ethical concerns when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook.**

Research Question 7 asked what ethical concerns instructors considered when deciding how to communicate with students. This question was answered by looking at the extent to which participants agreed or disagreed that they thought about eleven specific ethical concerns when deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook. The data was entered into a repeated-measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) with the eleven ethical considerations treated as the within-subjects factor. The analysis revealed that there were significant differences in how the instructors rated the eleven ethical concerns,  $F(10, 168) = 45.44, p < .001$ . The results are

presented in Table 12. Tukey post-hoc tests were conducted to compare the means. To gain more insight into the instructors' ethical considerations, responses to each item were also rescored to indicate whether or not instructors agreed that they considered each ethical concern. Ratings of 5 or above (on the 7 point scale) were coded as "1" for "agreed," and ratings of 4 or below were coded as "0" for "did not agree." These results are also presented in Table 12.

**Table 12**

**Means, Standard Deviations and Percent Agreement for Ethical Concerns Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends Facebook Consider when Deciding How to Communicate with Students**

Ethical Concerns	Mean	Standard Deviation	Percent Agreement
Role Assumed in Students' Lives	5.81 <sub>e</sub>	1.67	81.6%
Current/Former Student	5.17 <sub>d</sub>	2.03	67.9
Potential to Exploit/Harm Student	4.81 <sub>cd</sub>	2.12	58.2
Potential to take Undue Advantage of Greater Power in the Relationship	4.49 <sub>c</sub>	2.26	53.0
Impact on Other Students	4.46 <sub>c</sub>	2.14	54.6
All Students Have the Same Opportunity	4.06 <sub>b</sub>	2.26	44.8
Student will Expect Special Treatment	4.05 <sub>b</sub>	2.25	42.9
Capacity for Objective Evaluation	4.03 <sub>b</sub>	2.29	44.3
Others Feel Like Student is Getting Special Treatment	3.83 <sub>ab</sub>	2.21	38.4
Future Evaluations Influenced by Facebook Relationship	3.60 <sub>a</sub>	2.31	36.8
Consequences for Other Faculty	3.52 <sub>a</sub>	2.17	30.8

n = 178

*Note.* Ratings could range from 1 to 7. Means with no subscripts in common differ significantly per a Tukey post hoc test,  $p < .05$ . Percent agreement was calculated by dividing the number of participants who agreed with the concern by the total number of participants.

Instructors indicated that the role they would assume in the students' lives through the Facebook communication was the highest rated concern. This concern differed significantly from all other concerns. The next group of concerns related to the power differential between the instructor and students. The concerns were similarly rated and included the consideration of whether the friend was a current or former student, the potential for the communication to exploit/harm the student, the potential for the instructor to take undue advantage of his/her greater power in the relationship, and the impact the communication would have on other students. The third set of concerns focused on the opportunities and expectations created through the communication. These concerns were similarly rated and included whether all students would have the same opportunity for this type of communication, whether the student would expect special treatment because of the communication, whether other students would think the student was getting special treatment, and whether the instructor's capacity to objectively evaluate the student would be compromised because of the communication. The two concerns with the lowest ratings were the possibility that future evaluations of the student might be compromised and the potential consequences for other faculty.

### **Facebook Impression Management and Instructors' Individual Differences**

This study proposed five hypotheses and one research question related to the influence of the instructors' individual differences on their use of impression management on Facebook. A hierarchical regression analysis was used to address the influence of self-monitoring on role conflict. Three hierarchical regression analyses were used to address the influence of role conflict, self-monitoring, and ambient awareness on the instructors' impression management. One of these regressions looked at the influence of the variables on the instructors' use of self-presentation. A second regression looked at the influence of the variables on the instructors' use

of specific impression management behaviors. The final regression looked at the influence of the variables on the instructors' privacy management. These analyses only looked at the individual differences of the instructors who indicated they did allow students as Facebook friends.

The means and standard deviations for each variable used in the regressions are presented in Table 13. The sample size varies from 174 to 186 due to missing data, especially in the age variable. This missing data causes a drop in the sample size for the hierarchical regressions as well.

**Table 13**

**Means and Standard Deviations for Variables Used in the Regression Analyses to Test the Influences of the Individual Differences of Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends on their Impression Management**

Variables	Mean	SD
Age	44.09	9.82
School's Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	4.99	1.58
Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	5.16	1.48
Role Conflict	3.12	2.18
Self-Monitoring	8.70	3.42
Instructors' Ambient Awareness of Students	4.24	1.64
Instructors' Perception of Students' Ambient Awareness of Them	2.99	1.52
Self-Presentation	5.49	1.16
Impression Management Behaviors	5.07	.99
Privacy Management	5.57	.74
n range	174-186	

*Note.* Self-monitoring scores ranged from 1-18, with higher scores indicating higher self-monitoring levels. The emphasis on teaching/research had scores ranging from 1-7 (1 = emphasis on research; 7 = emphasis on teaching). Except for age, all other variables had scores that ranged from 1-7.



The zero-order correlations between all the variables used in the regression analyses are presented in Table 14. The school's emphasis on teaching versus research was negatively correlated with both institution type and institution size, indicating that private and smaller universities had a greater emphasis on teaching than public and larger universities. Emphasis on teaching versus research also had a negative correlation with role conflict, suggesting that those who teach at a university with an emphasis on teaching felt less role conflict. Self-monitoring was negatively correlated with both age and understanding of Facebook's privacy settings. These correlations indicate that younger instructors are higher self-monitors and higher self-monitors have a better understanding of the privacy settings on Facebook. Age was negatively correlated with understanding of Facebook's privacy settings, suggesting that younger instructors have a better understanding of the policy. The instructors' ambient awareness of students was moderately correlated with their perception of students' ambient awareness of them. Finally, self-presentation was positively correlated with the use of impression management behaviors, but negatively correlated with privacy management. Self-presentation and the use of impression management behaviors were both positively correlated with age, suggesting that older participants were more inclined to use impression management.

### **The Influence of Self-Monitoring on Role Conflict**

Hypothesis 1 posited that instructors would feel more role conflict on Facebook when they possessed higher levels of self-monitoring. The hypothesis was tested using a hierarchical regression analysis predicting instructors' level of role conflict. In the first step of the model, gender, age, the school's emphasis on teaching (vs. research), and one's understanding of Facebook's privacy settings were entered as control variables. Self-monitoring was entered in the second step as the predictor variable to test H1. Gender and age were used as control

**Table 14****Zero-Order Correlations Between Variables Used in the Regression Analyses for Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Gender	-											
2. Age	-.14	-										
3. Institution Type	.02	.05	-									
4. Institution Size	-.02	-.03	.54**	-								
5. School's Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	.00	.05	-.26***	-.59**	-							
6. Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	.07	-.19*	.11	.06	-.13	-						
7. Role Conflict	.08	-.01	-.06	.01	-.17*	.03	-					
8. Self-Monitoring	-.09	-.20**	.07	.01	.04	.18*	.04	-				
9. Instructors' Ambient Awareness of Students	-.06	.12	-.03	-.01	.16*	.04	.08	-.00	-			
10. Instructors' Perception of Students' Ambient Awareness of Them	.12	.04	-.10	-.09	.08	.07	.12	.12	.56***	-		
11. Self-Presentation	.17*	.06	-.09	-.07	.14	.00	-.10	-.06	.22**	.17**	-	
12. Impression Management Behaviors	.18*	-.12	-.01	-.00	.09	.18*	.04	.13	.30***	.21**	.40***	-
13. Privacy Management	.13	.07	-.00	-.04	.08	-.10	-.06	-.17*	-.09	-.21**	.19**	.14

*Note.* Gender (1 = male; 2 = female). Institution type (1 = private; 2 = public). Emphasis on teaching/research was scored so that higher scores reflect greater emphasis on teaching.

\* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$

variables because previous research has found that computer-mediated communication is influenced by these two variables (Krohn, 2004; Walther, 2007). The school's emphasis on teaching (vs. research) was used as a control variable for two reasons. First, it was significantly correlated with role conflict in this study. Second, emphasis of teaching or research is likely to influence the role instructors play in students' lives. Students sometimes feel as if they are neglected when instructors spend more time on research; while high quality teaching, which includes interactions that students find satisfactory, often occurs at institutions where faculty members conduct little research and focus more on teaching (Blackburn, 1974; Ramsden & Moses, 1992). This suggests that instructors who focus on teaching are likely to have more personal relationships with students than those who focus on research. Having more personal relationships with students may reduce the role conflict one feels when they are Facebook friends. One's understanding of Facebook's privacy settings was used as a control variable because it was correlated with self-monitoring in this study. The results of the regression are presented in Table 15.

The first step of the model was significant, indicating that the control variables influenced how much role conflict was felt on Facebook. The two variables that specifically predicted one's level of role conflict were gender and the school's emphasis on teaching (vs. research). Females felt more role conflict than males when they had students as friends on Facebook. Instructors who work at institutions with a greater emphasis on research felt more role conflict than instructors who work at schools with a greater emphasis on teaching. The second step of the model was not significant; indicating that self-monitoring was not a predictor of perceived role conflict. Therefore, H1 was not supported. However, self-monitoring did approach significance ( $p = .08$ ).

**Table 15****Summary of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Role Conflict Among Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Standardized β</i>	$\Delta R^2$
Step One				.05
Gender	.69	.34	.15*	
Age	.00	.02	.02	
School's Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	-.24	.11	-.17*	
Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	-.03	.11	-.02	
Step Two				.02†
Self-Monitoring	.09	.05	.14†	

*Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .04 *F* (5, 165) = 2.39, *p* < .05

*Note.* Gender (1 = male; 2 = female). Emphasis on teaching/research was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = primary emphasis on research, 7 = primary emphasis on teaching). Reported betas are from the variables' entry points.

†*p* < .10. \**p* < .05.

**Influence of Role Conflict, Self-Monitoring, and Ambient Awareness on Impression****Management**

Hypothesis 2, Hypothesis 3, Hypothesis 4a, Hypothesis 4b, and Research Question 8 were addressed using three regression analyses. The three dependent variables were the three variables looking at the specific aspects of impression management. The first regression used self-presentation; the second regression used impression management behaviors; and the third regression used privacy management as the dependent variables. For all three regression equations, the first step included the control variables of gender, age, school's emphasis on teaching (vs. research), and the instructors' understanding of Facebook's privacy settings. These control variables were used for the same reasons as described in the first regression. Self-

monitoring was entered in the second step as a predictor variable to test H2. Self-monitoring was entered as the first predictor variable because it is a stable personality trait. Role conflict was entered in the third step as a predictor variable to test H3. It was entered next because it was measured as perceived role conflict regardless of whether the instructor actually had students as Facebook friends. The instructors' ambient awareness of students and their perception of the students' ambient awareness of them were entered in the fourth step as predictor variables to address H4a, H4b, and RQ8. These two variables were entered last because they measured the instructors' actual awareness of the students they have as Facebook friends. The results for the first regression are presented in Table 16; the results of the second regression are presented in Table 17; and the results of the third regression are presented in Table 18. The results of all three regressions will be discussed together.

**Influence of control variables.** Two control variables influenced the instructors' use of impression management. The instructors' understanding of Facebook's privacy settings was a positive predictor of self-presentation. Instructors who had a greater understanding of the privacy settings were more likely to use self-presentation. In addition, females reported greater use of self-presentation and impression management behaviors than did males. None of the other control variables were significant predictors for the three types of impression management.

**Influence of self-monitoring on impression management.** Hypothesis 2 posited that the higher the instructors' level of self-monitoring, the more they would manage their impressions on Facebook. Based on the three regressions, there was no support for H2. The instructors' level of self-monitoring did not impact self-presentation, impression management behaviors or privacy management on Facebook. However, contrary to H2, self-monitoring was a

**Table 16****Summary of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Self-Presentation Among Instructors Who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends**

Predictor Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Standardized β</i>	$\Delta R^2$
Step One				.05
Gender	.37	.18	.15*	
Age	.01	.01	.07	
School's Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	.09	.06	.13	
Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	.03	.06	.04	
Step Two				.01
Self-Monitoring	-.03	.03	-.10	
Step Three				.01
Role Conflict	-.04	.04	-.08	
Step Four				.06**
Instructor's Ambient Awareness of Students	.13	.06	.19*	
Instructors' Perception of Students' Ambient Awareness of the Them	.07	.07	.10	

*Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .08, *F* (8, 162) = 2.85, *p* < .01

*Note.* Gender (1 = male; 2 = female). Emphasis on teaching/research was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = primary emphasis on research, 7 = primary emphasis on teaching). Reported betas are from the variables' entry point.

\**p* < .05. \*\* *p* < .01.

**Table 17****Summary of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Use of Impression Management Behaviors Among Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Standardized B</i>	$\Delta R^2$
Step One				.05
Gender	.21	.15	.11***	
Age	-.01	.01	-.06	
School's Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	.04	.05	.07	
Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	.09	.05	.15*	
Step Two				.00
Self-Monitoring	.02	.02	.06	
Step Three				.00
Role Conflict	.03	.03	.06	
Step Four				.12***
Instructors' Ambient Awareness of Students	.20	.05	.34***	
Instructors' Perception of Students' Ambient Awareness of Them	.01	.05	.02	

*Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .13 , *F*(8, 162) = 4.22, *p* < .001

*Note.* Gender (1= Male; 2 = Female). Emphasis on teaching/research was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = primary emphasis on research, 7 = primary emphasis on teaching). Reported betas are from the variables' entry points.

\**p* < .05. \*\*\**p* < .001.

**Table 18****Summary of Hierarchical Regression Predicting Privacy Management Among Instructors who Have Allowed Students as Facebook Friends**

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	<i>Standardized <math>\beta</math></i>	$\Delta R^2$
Step One				.04
Gender	.23	.12	.15	
Age	.01	.01	.08	
School's Emphasis on Teaching (vs. Research)	.02	.04	.03	
Understanding of Facebook's Privacy Settings	-.05	.04	-.10	
Step Two				.02†
Self-Monitoring	-.03	.02	-.14†	
Step Three				.00
Role Conflict	-.01	.03	-.03	
Step Four				.05*
Instructors' Ambient Awareness of Students	.03	.03	.06	
Instructors' Perception of Students' Ambient Awareness of Them	-.13	.04	-.27**	

*Adjusted R*<sup>2</sup> = .06, *F*(8, 162) = 2.46, *p* < .05

*Note.* Gender (1 = Male; 2 = Female). Emphasis on teaching/research was measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale (1 = primary emphasis on research, 7 = primary emphasis on teaching). Reported betas are from the variables' entry points.

†*p* < .10. \**p* < .05. \*\**p* < .01.

marginally significant negative predictor of privacy management (*p* = .08). Surprisingly, this suggests that lower self-monitors may use more privacy management than higher self-monitors.

**Influence of role conflict on impression management.** Hypothesis 3 posited that the more role conflict instructors felt on Facebook, the more they would manage their impressions on the site. Based on the three regressions, there was no support for H3. The instructors' level



of role conflict did not impact self-presentation, impression management behaviors or privacy management on Facebook.

**Influence of ambient awareness on impression management.** Hypothesis 4a posited that the higher the instructors' ambient awareness of students on Facebook, the more they would manage their impressions on the site; and Hypothesis 4b posited that the higher the instructors' perception of students' ambient awareness of them, the more they would manage their impressions on Facebook. Hypothesis 4a was partially supported, while hypothesis 4b was not supported. The instructors' ambient awareness of students (H4a) was related to greater self-presentation and impression management behaviors, but not related to privacy management. In contrast, their perceptions of students' awareness of them (H4b) was not related to self-presentation or impression management behaviors, but was unexpectedly associated with lower (not higher) privacy management. In sum, the more awareness the instructors felt of their students, the more likely they were to use self-presentation and impression management behaviors; however, the more instructors perceived that students were aware of them, the less likely they were to use privacy management.

**Which type of ambient awareness had more influence on impression management?**

RQ8 asked if instructors' impression management on Facebook would be more influenced by their ambient awareness of students or their perceptions of students' ambient awareness of them. As just described, the instructors' ambient awareness of students was related to a higher use of self-presentation and impression management behaviors, whereas the perception of students' awareness of instructors was related to lower use of privacy management. This suggests that instructors' awareness of students had a greater influence on impression management than their perception of student's awareness of them.

### Supplemental Analyses

Although self-monitoring (a stable personality trait) was not a significant predictor of any of the impression management variables, it seemed possible that the other three predictor variables – role conflict and the two measures of ambient awareness – might have a stronger impact on impression management among higher self-monitors. Thus, the interactions between self-monitoring and those three variables were entered as predictors in a fifth step for all three hierarchical regressions. None of the interactions were significant. However, given the small percentage of high self-monitors in the group of instructors who allow students as Facebook friends (30.1%), the interactions in the full sample may not have captured the associations in that subgroup. Thus, for high and low self-monitors separately, partial correlations examined the relationships of role conflict, instructors' ambient awareness of students, and instructors' perception of students' ambient awareness of them with the three types of impression management. The original four control variables (gender, age, school's emphasis on teaching versus research, and understanding of Facebook's privacy settings) were controlled for in this analysis. As in the regression analyses, role conflict was not correlated with any of the impression management variables for either low or high self-monitors. For the ambient awareness measures, the same pattern found in the regression analyses was observed for the group of low-self-monitors. Instructors' ambient awareness of students was positively correlated with self-presentation ( $r = .20, p < .05$ ) and impression management behaviors ( $r = .36, p < .001$ ), and instructors' perception of students' ambient awareness of them was negatively correlated with privacy management ( $r = -.22, p < .05$ ). For the group of high self-monitors, the results found in the regression analyses were replicated, but additional correlations were also observed. As previously found, instructors' ambient awareness of students was positively

correlated with self-presentation ( $r = .36, p < .05$ ) and impression management behaviors ( $r = .37, p < .05$ ), whereas instructors' perception of students' ambient awareness of them was negatively correlated with privacy ( $r = -.33, p < .05$ ). In addition, however, instructors' perception of students' ambient awareness of them was also positively correlated with self-presentation ( $r = .31, p < .05$ ) and impression management behaviors ( $r = .34, p < .05$ ), which were not found in the original regressions.

## Chapter 5

### DISCUSSION

Facebook is the most visited website in the world (Ionescu, 2010) and previous anecdotal evidence has suggested that instructors are using the site with students (Atay, 2009; Schwartz, 2009; Turner, 2010). However, up to this point, there has been little research that looked at these relationships (Barber & Pearce, 2008; Hewitt & Forte, 2006; Mazer et al., 2007; Robyler et al., 2010). This research study sought to fill that gap in the literature by examining these friendships from the instructors' point-of-view. The study accomplished two main goals by creating a description of how instructors used Facebook with students, and revealing how instructors' individual differences influenced their use of the site. A brief overview of these findings are presented first and then discussed in more detail.

Based on the dual relationship literature (Baggio et al., 1997; Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Bowman & Hatley, 1995; Congress, 1996), how instructor-student relationships develop (Cooper & Simonds, 2003; DeVito, 1986), and the ethics associated with instructor-student relationships (Ei & Bowen, 2002; Folse, 1991; Holmes et al., 1999; Kagle & Giebelhausen, 1994; Keith-Spiegel et al., 1993), this research was able to create a descriptive look at instructors' use of Facebook with students. This use starts with deciding whether or not to allow students as friends. The findings showed that just over half of the instructors in this study allowed students to become Facebook friends. Most of the reasons instructors provided to explain their decisions were unsurprising. Those who allowed students as Facebook friends cited reasons relating to creating or maintaining relationships with the students; however, some of these instructors did admit that they would rather not have students as friends, but found it difficult to decline the requests. The instructors who did not allow students cited reasons relating to maintaining the boundary line between their personal/professional lives and avoiding the perception of

favoritism. These reasons were supported by the ethical concerns the instructors reported considering during the decision-making process.

After looking at why instructors decided to allow students as Facebook friends, this study then looked at which students they allowed and how they communicated with them on the site. Rooted in their ethical concerns about the difference between current and former students, and possible consequences, some of these instructors chose not to allow certain students to become friends. Beyond that, students at all three levels (undergraduates, masters, and doctoral students) were allowed as friends, and the majority of these students had an academic relationship different than teaching or advising with the instructor. Worried about the ethical concerns related to possible negative consequences, many of these instructors chose to communicate with students primarily by commenting on and/or liking posts already on the students' pages.

The second part of this study examined influences on instructors' Facebook communication, using impression management theory as a framework (Leary, 1995; Switzer, 2007). Surprising, individual differences based on the theories of self-monitoring (Snyder, 1979) and role conflict (Sarbin, 1954) provided little explanation for instructors' impression management on the site. Self-monitoring was marginally related to role conflict and privacy management, and when high and low self-monitors were analyzed separately, ambient awareness had more influence on impression management for high self-monitors than it did for low self-monitors. The individual difference based on the concept of ambient awareness (Thompson, 2008) was the only predictor that was related to impression management for the entire group. Interestingly, instructors' ambient awareness of students was positively related to their self-presentation and impression management behaviors, whereas their perceptions of students' awareness of them were negatively related to their privacy management.

Throughout the rest of this chapter, the preceding findings are discussed in more detail. The implications of these results, as well as the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are also explored.

### **Description of Instructors' Use of Facebook with Students**

The first part of this study was concerned with creating a description of how instructors used Facebook with students. This description includes the reasons for deciding to allow or not allow students as friends, the types of students allowed as friends, communicating with students on Facebook, and the ethics associated with these decisions. Throughout the next section, these aspects of instructors' use of Facebook with students are integrated to provide an overall look at the descriptive picture.

Just over half of the participants in this study allowed students as Facebook friends. Past anecdotal evidence (Atay, 2009; Schwartz, 2009; Turner 2010) focused primarily on the instructors who did allow students, but this finding suggests that there are almost as many who refused to allow students into their personal space on Facebook. When looking at the demographic information between the two groups, there were few differences, but the ones that did exist related to actual Facebook use and may help explain why instructors made the decision they did. Those who allowed students as Facebook friends had used the site longer, had more friends, and reported that they had a better understanding of the site's privacy settings. This may mean that instructors who allowed students as friends have a better understanding of Facebook in general, which may have come from using it longer than the instructors who did not allow students. The instructors who allowed students had used the site for an average of almost three years, which is just over half the time the site has been open to the public (boyd & Ellison, 2007), whereas the instructors who did not allow students had used the site for an average of two

years. The instructors who did not allow students as friends may not have used the site long enough to feel comfortable allowing students. The understanding of Facebook's privacy settings may have influenced the instructors' decisions as well. The two groups significantly differed in their understanding of Facebook's privacy settings, with instructors who did allow students as friends reporting a greater understanding than those who did not allow students. Since Facebook's privacy issues are consistently discussed in the popular press (Steel & Fowler, 2010; Vascellaro, 2010) and this makes some users wary of using the site, it is possible that instructors who did not allow students as friends did so out of fear of unintentionally providing too much information.

It is also possible that the instructors who did not allow students as Facebook friends may not use the site regularly. As Robyler et al. (2010) argued, instructors still rely on email and do not check Facebook as often as students. One participant even mentioned that s/he joined the site purely to keep in touch with younger relatives, but did not use it much him/herself. These instructors may have felt that they had to join Facebook, but might not actually use it as a communication tool. If they do not use the site regularly, they probably do not want students to think they can rely on it as a form of communication, which was one of the reasons cited for not allowing students as friends.

Some instructors who did not allow students to become Facebook friends indicated that they made that decision based on not wanting to cross the line between their personal/professional lives and to avoid the perception of favoritism, which explained the ethical concerns they considered as well. These findings support Rawlin's (2000) assertion that instructors can build relationships with students without crossing a line that makes the relationships too personal. The findings also support Bowman and Hatley's (1995) argument

that students who suspect others are getting special treatment might become jealous and may feel unhappy in the classroom. Some of these instructors did mention that they have allowed former students to become friends, which explains why the highest-rated ethical concern was the one that focused on whether the potential friend was a current or former student. These instructors appeared to understand that relationships with students can be difficult and there are a number of questions to keep in mind as posited in the dual relationship literature (Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Congress, 1996). Many of these instructors seemed to want to keep the professional role of instructor as the primary role and avoid the consequences associated with taking on too many roles in the students' lives.

One of the more interesting findings in this part of the research was that instructors who did allow students as Facebook friends did not always want to. Some of these instructors claimed that they would rather not have students as Facebook friends, but found it difficult to decline the requests, which actually happens to many individuals who use Facebook (boyd, 2007; Fono & Raynes-Goldie, 2007). Atay (2009) argued that he was hesitant to allow students as friends on Facebook, but was more concerned with not making the student feel rejected and damaging the existing relationship between them. This may help explain why instructors allowed students at all three levels (undergraduate, masters, doctorate) as friends. It is important to note that instructors were Facebook friends primarily with students at the levels (undergraduate, masters and/or doctoral) that those instructors taught. This suggests that the desire to maintain the existing relationships with students is the core reason instructors allow students on their personal Facebook pages.

The instructors who did allow students as Facebook friends did so for reasons that supported the relationship developmental process (Cooper & Simonds, 2003; DeVito, 1986).



This process often involves increasing the breadth and depth of the communication between relational partners to help the relationship become more personal. To do this, individuals need to get to know each other on a more personal level, which researchers (Honeycutt & Sheldon, 2008, 2009; Stutzman, 2006; Wright et al., 2008) have claimed is one of the main functions of Facebook. By using the site to learn more about students and allowing students to learn more about them, instructors were helping to develop and maintain the personal relationship, which supports Wright et al.'s (2008) claim that Facebook is often used to maintain existing face-to-face relationships. The personal nature of these Facebook friendships makes sense since many of the instructors had relationships with students that appeared to be more than instructor or advisor. The largest group of students that many instructors allowed as friends were ones with whom they had an academic relationship other than teaching or advising. This type of relationship was not clearly defined on the questionnaire, but based on the reasons instructors provided for allowing students as Facebook friends, it seems that this type of academic relationship probably relates to working with student groups, having shared interests with students and considering students friends already. These relationships with students are referred to as secondary roles in the dual relationship literature (Bowman & Hatley, 1995; Owen & Zwahr-Castro, 2007). Since the primary role the instructor should play in students' lives is professional (instructor or advisor), these secondary roles are possibly seen as more personal, and may explain why they were more likely to move to Facebook.

Part of maintaining a relationship is offering support. In the case of instructor-student relationships, this support can be both academic and personal, which were other reasons some instructors offered to explain why they allowed students as Facebook friends. Wright et al. (2007) argued that individuals who receive support on Facebook feel less stress offline. This

may relate to academic or personal stress. Mazer et al. (2007) asserted that students have increased learning outcomes when instructors are willing to self-disclose on a Facebook page, since this makes the instructors appear more approachable and allows students to feel more comfortable talking to them about academic questions. NCA (2010) argued that Mazer's research demonstrated that instructors who used Facebook with students were essentially telling students that they wanted to build more personal relationships with them. This may make students more willing to communicate with the instructors about academics and has the potential to lessen the academic stress students feel about the course. Some of the instructors in this study suggested that they also offer personal support to students on Facebook because they feel some students need to know that the instructor cares about how their personal lives influence their academics. This may also lessen the students' stress as suggested by Wright et al. (2007). The instructors in this study who offered academic and personal support on Facebook may have provided students with communication that helped them feel less stress about life in general and in the classroom. These prosocial behaviors have been shown to lead to increased learning outcomes (Mottet, Richardson, & McCroskey, 2006), so instructors may be allowing students as friends in hopes of helping them succeed.

While many of the instructors in this study allowed any student who sent a friend request to become a Facebook friend, some of the instructors indicated that there were certain students whom they did not allow. The types of students not allowed make sense based on the ethical concerns considered by these instructors. The highest-rated ethical consideration was whether the potential friend was a current or former student, which explains why some of these instructors did not allow students who were still enrolled in the university or in a class they were currently teaching. This indicates that some instructors are hesitant to become friends with

current students, possibly because of the potential problems that may cause. This supports Congress' (1996) argument that former students pose fewer problems than current students. The potential problems associated with certain types of students are also the focus of the next group of students not allowed as Facebook friends. The other highest-rated ethical concerns related to the possible negative consequences of the Facebook relationship, which explains why these instructors did not allow problematic students or students whom they did not trust to become Facebook friends. Anderson (1999) argued that many college/university instructors feel unprepared to manage problems such as verbal abuse, passive aggressiveness, and violence in the classroom. This unpreparedness may have extended to Facebook. Since instructors are not required to allow students as Facebook friends, they may have found it easier to avoid problematic students instead of trying to manage their behaviors in a personal space. Fono and Raynes-Goldie (2007) argued that online social network site users must trust others before they will allow them to become friends, which was seen with some of these instructors as well. While these instructors often want to build relationships with students, they also appeared to want to avoid possible problems, so they did not allow students who might cause them.

One of the main reasons many instructors provided for allowing students as Facebook friends was as another way to communicate with them. When looking at the Facebook behaviors instructors used to communicate with students, it becomes clear that they are worried about taking undue advantage of their power in the relationship. Researchers (Holmes et al., 1999; Jacobs, 1999; Kitchener, 1988) were concerned with the possible exploitation of students due to the instructors' greater power in the relationship. Even if students are uncomfortable with an instructor's request, they may be hesitant to say no because of fear of retribution. Instructors appeared to be aware of this and attempted to avoid exploitation (however unintentional) by not

putting students in a position to have to say no. Many instructors did this on Facebook by not sending friend requests, but being willing to accept them, and by not inviting students to play games, attend events, or partake in certain activities on the site. The most common behaviors many instructors indicated that they used when communicating with students on Facebook were commenting on or liking posts (information or photos) that were already on the students' pages. However, it should be noted that, due to an oversight, the survey did not ask if the instructors had ever posted something to the students' wall. While the results suggest that instructors typically did not initiate communication with students, it is possible that they actually did so by posting something to the students' wall, but were not given the opportunity to say so.

The descriptive look at instructors' use of Facebook with students shows that instructors used the site in various ways. There is not a 'right' way to use Facebook with students. Depending on their ethical concerns and whether or not they wanted to build more personal relationships with students, most instructors made their own decisions when it came to allowing students to become friends, who they allowed as friends, and how they communicated with those friends. However, when looking at the instructors who did allow students as Facebook friends, there are some common variables that were related their general Facebook use.

### **Influence of Individual Differences on Instructors' Facebook Use**

This study predicted that self-monitoring, role conflict, and ambient awareness would be related to instructors' Facebook use, primarily focusing on their impression management. While ambient awareness was related to impression management, role conflict and self-monitoring were not. The possible reasons for the lack of findings for self-monitoring and role conflict are examined first and then the relationship between ambient awareness and impression management is discussed.

## **Self-Monitoring**

Self-monitoring turned out to have a complex relationship with the other variables in this study. First, it was marginally associated with greater role conflict on Facebook. Mehra and Schenkel (2008) found that high self-monitors often feel more role conflict in the workplace because they tend to hold positions that require them to cross boundaries and interact with individuals who expect different types of communication, which is similar to what happens when instructors allow students as Facebook friends. It makes sense that instructors who are higher self-monitors should feel (marginally) more role conflict when they have students as Facebook friends since they would be expected to communicate in different ways for their personal friends, their families, and students. The fact that the relationship between self-monitoring and role conflict only approached significance may be explained by the fact that instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends felt significantly less role conflict than the instructors who did not allow students. Once again, Goffman's (1959) argument that individuals choose to use communication in ways that are appropriate for everyone involved when multiple audiences are present may explain why self-monitoring was not more strongly associated with role conflict. Higher self-monitors have a wide range of communication behaviors to choose from (Ickes & Barnes, 1977; Snyder, 1979) and since they often have problems segregating their audiences online (Leone & Corte, 1994), higher self-monitors may assume everyone is part of one audience and choose the communication behaviors that work for all of the friends they have on Facebook in order to decrease their feeling of role conflict.

Self-monitoring was not associated with the use of impression management on Facebook. This may be explained by considering the hyperpersonal theory of online communication, which suggests that the editing capability of CMC allows all users to selectively manage their

impressions (Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Walther, 1996). Online users have the ability to edit out negative cues and express the positive information they want others to see more easily than they can in face-to-face communication (Bargh et al., 2002; Bellur et al., 2008; Walther, 1997, 2007), which suggests that all individuals, regardless of self-monitoring levels, may take the time to create the image they wish to present. While lower self-monitors do tend to present the same identity regardless of the context (Snyder, 1979), they still have an image they wish others to see and they use specific communication behaviors to do so. It is possible that the behaviors asked about on the impression management behaviors scale (proofreading posts, being aware of the time of a post, and considering the specific image a photo or information presents) are behaviors that are already part of the instructors' repertoire of behaviors, so they use them on Facebook, as well as in face-to-face settings. The same may be true for the self-presentation scale. The scale asked if the instructors communicated in ways that would present them in a positive light (i.e., likable, attractive, moral, and intelligent) and research has shown that most individuals want to appear in these ways (Nezleck & Leary, 2002). It makes sense that the instructors would communicate in ways to encourage others to perceive them in these ways regardless of their self-monitoring levels.

It is also possible that self-monitoring was not associated with impression management because of Facebook's lack of situational cues. Higher self-monitors decide what the appropriate communication is in any situation by observing the context and changing their impression management behaviors based on cues present (Goffman, 1959; Snyder, 1979). These cues often come from the behaviors of others (Meyer, 2001) and on Facebook, it is difficult to know who is communicating, or how they are specifically relating to other users. Facebook users can see others' status updates or what they have posted to their walls (boyd & Ellison, 2007), but they do

not know what influenced those communication choices. Facebook's lack of situational cues may mean that self-monitoring is next to impossible on the site, so the communication behaviors associated with impression management are used in the same ways by both high and low self-monitors.

The final reason that may explain why self-monitoring was not associated with impression management on Facebook is the illusion of privacy felt online. Barnes (2008) claimed that because users cannot see the other communicators online, they feel as if the information they post is relatively private and therefore reveal information they may otherwise not disclose. Many of the instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends indicated that they felt they had a strong understanding of Facebook's privacy settings. Facebook allows people to choose which users can see their information (Zuckerberg, 2009) and since these instructors felt that they understood the settings, many of them may have felt that they had protected their information. This illusion of privacy might have caused them to post information they normally would not share publicly. Higher self-monitors who are more concerned with presenting a specific image to a specific audience may have felt that the information they posted on their pages was only able to be viewed by those who they wanted to see it, so they were not as concerned with managing their privacy as they would be in other situations.

The main reason self-monitoring had such complex relationships with the other variables was because there was a significantly larger percentage of lower self-monitors in this group of instructors. Due to the difference in size between the groups of low and high self-monitors a second look at self-monitoring involved separating the two groups and examining how role conflict and ambient awareness were related to impression management for each group. Role conflict was not related to impression management for either group. Ambient awareness was

differentially related to impression management among low and high self-monitors. These findings will be explained in more detail in the discussion of ambient awareness. But briefly, it is interesting to note that among high self-monitors, instructors' perception of students' ambient awareness of them was related to all three types of impression management for high self-monitors, whereas it was only related to privacy management for low self-monitors. This suggests that one's level of self-monitoring can influence how their ambient awareness is associated with the use of impression management online.

### **Role Conflict**

In this study, role conflict was unrelated to impression management. There are a number of possibilities for this. First, the instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends reported feeling less role conflict than the instructors who did not allow students as friends, so it is possible that a low level of role conflict is a predecessor to allowing students to become Facebook friends. Research has found that some instructors feel role conflict when they are trying to decide when the professional relationship can become more personal (Dunn & Dunn, 1997; Locke & Massengale, 1987; Sage, 1987). Since the instructors who had decided to allow students as Facebook friends had already decided to allow the relationship to become more personal, it makes sense that they were likely to feel less role conflict when they had students as friends on their personal pages. Since they felt less role conflict, impression management to create images for different groups may not be a priority for many of these instructors.

The second reason that may explain why role conflict had no relationship with impression management is that role conflict was measured based on the information instructors actually posted on Facebook. The scale asked if the information instructors posted on Facebook that was appropriate for friends/family was appropriate for students. Goffman (1959) argued that



when multiple audiences are present, individuals will communicate in ways that are appropriate for all of them, so it is possible that instructors who had students as Facebook friends were posting information that they considered appropriate for all of their friends, including students. This suggests that some instructors may already be using impression management to alleviate the potential role conflict. By engaging in greater impression management, these instructors may not have reported that the information they posted on Facebook was inappropriate for students. This indicates that instructors who use more impression management may feel less role conflict because of their current Facebook behaviors. It was predicted that instructors who felt high role conflict would engage in more impression management, but the reverse may be true in that instructors actually feel less role conflict because of the impression management they already use. A cross-sectional survey does not have the ability to determine the order of behaviors, so it is unknown if impression management leads to less role conflict or if role conflict leads to more impression management.

### **Ambient Awareness**

As expected, ambient awareness was related to instructors' use of impression management; however, some interesting differences for the two types of ambient awareness emerged. The details will be discussed shortly; but first, it is important to note how these findings make sense in light of the users' relationship to their audience. Scheidt (2006) argued that blogs are created for an audience, and it can be argued that Facebook pages are created for the same reason. Without friends as an audience, Facebook is meaningless. However, it is this audience that causes tension for users. Lenhart (2005) argued that "while on one hand a blog is a personal space, it is also a public space that is created with an expectation of an audience" (p. 102). She goes on to state that bloggers are continually navigating "the line between being

authentically themselves (or a version thereof), protecting their privacy and entertaining their readers” (Lenhart, 2005, p. 102). While Facebook users may not be focused on entertaining their audiences, they do have to manage the line between posting information about themselves and protecting the privacy of that information. On Facebook, there is typically an audience present (the users’ friends), and when the users have an ambient awareness of that audience they may feel the need to manage their impressions (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Liu and LaRose (2008) found that when bloggers were aware of their audiences “they [could] take efforts to achieve the outcomes they desire” (p. 17). This is likely to be true for Facebook users as well. Instructors probably have the desire to remain true to themselves on Facebook, but they also have to figure out a way to protect their privacy, as noted by Lenhart (2005). When instructors are aware of students as an audience, navigating this line may become more difficult and impression management becomes the way for them achieve the desired outcome, or the image they wish to present to students.

The relationship between ambient awareness and impression management on Facebook was among the most interesting findings of this study. Three types of impression management were measured. Self-presentation and impression management behaviors were concerned with what instructors posted on Facebook to create an image, while privacy management was concerned with what instructors declined to post on Facebook in an effort to protect their information. Instructors’ ambient awareness of students was related to their use of self-presentation and impression management behaviors, but not privacy management. In contrast, instructors’ perceptions of students’ awareness of them was negatively related to their privacy management, but not related to the other two measures of impression management. In addition, when the relationship between ambient awareness and impression management was analyzed

separately for low and high self-monitors, additional findings emerged for high self-monitors only.

The first set of findings discovered that instructors' ambient awareness of students was related to their use of self-presentation and impression management behaviors, but not their privacy management. This supports Leary and Kowalski's (1990) assertion that impression management tends to be activated when an individual is aware of an audience that expects a certain image. Instructors are likely to want to appear in ways that students expect (Kitchener, 1988), which often includes being intelligent, likable, and moral. These were the basis of self-presentation, so it makes sense that instructors would want students to see them in these ways. As Liu and LaRose (2008) argued, bloggers who are aware of their audiences take the time and effort to cultivate their desired outcome, which is the basis of impression management behaviors (Leary, 1995), so it also makes sense that instructors who are aware of students on Facebook would take the time to manage their posts in order to create a specific image.

The second set of findings revealed that instructors' perceptions of students' awareness of them on Facebook were negatively related to their use of privacy management, but not related to their self presentation or their use of impression management behaviors. This lesser use of privacy management by instructors who were more sensitive to students' awareness of them was an unexpected finding and is contrary to much of the research on privacy management. Petronio (1991, 2001) argued that individuals create boundary management rules for the information they feel comfortable sharing with specific audiences, and some research has suggested that Facebook users are no different (Catlett, 2007; Lange & Lampe, 2008). However, even though Lange and Lampe (2008) found that Facebook users who were concerned with their privacy on the site did use boundary rules, 43% of the participants in their study indicated that they were not concerned

with privacy issues. Plus, Debatin et al. (2009) found that many Facebook users provided large amounts of personal information. This may be because the typical use of any online social network site includes providing personal information the users deem appropriate for their friends to see (boyd & Ellison, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007), and Fono and Raynes-Goldie (2007) argued that SNS users often friended others that they trusted enough to see this private information. By allowing students as Facebook friends, instructors may be acknowledging that they trust the students with this information and even when they feel that students are watching them, are not hesitant to post it. In fact, some of the instructors argued that they allowed students because they had nothing to hide from them and wanted the students to see them as people, not just professors. This implies that instructors may actually want students to see their personal information, which helps explain why they manage their privacy to a lesser extent when they perceive that students are aware of them. In this study, instructors were not asked to indicate the personal information they posted on Facebook, so it is possible that in order to allow students to see them as people, they choose specific personal details to present a human image when they felt as if students were aware of them. This is supported by McBride and Wahl's (2005) assertion that while instructors do not want to disclose all of their private information, they are willing to provide some personal details to build a rapport with students. This personal information is usually positive in nature, which would make sense in light of the findings that instructors do use self-presentation and impression management behaviors to create specific images when they are aware of their students as an audience. In other words, although the relationship between ambient awareness and privacy management was contrary to what was predicted, the private information instructors chose to reveal when they sensed students were aware of them may have been an extension of their impression management on Facebook.

While these findings are interesting on their own, what makes them especially intriguing is that the types of impression management instructors used on Facebook differed depending on the type of ambient awareness they felt. If instructors are picking up on students' moods and thoughts through their Facebook postings, they become aware of the students as an audience. Being aware of students as an audience is probably what makes them perceive that students are watching them as well, as supported by Wallace's (1999) claim that a heightened sense of the audience promotes a feeling of being observed. What makes this interesting is that although the two types of ambient awareness are clearly linked, they are related to different types of impression management. According to scholars, being aware of an audience is what causes individuals to manage their impressions through self-presentation and impression management behaviors (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1995), which was supported by these findings. However, a feeling that someone is watching them is what typically causes individuals to enact privacy boundaries (Petronio, 1991, 2002), which was not supported by these results. As previously argued, some instructors wanted to share personal information with students. To facilitate this disclosure, they would need to decrease their privacy boundaries instead of enacting them when they perceived that students were aware of them. This helps to explain why the findings were different than what was predicted based on previous research; however, due to the unexpected nature of these findings, further research is needed to confirm this interpretation.

Additional findings regarding the relationship between ambient awareness and impression management were discovered when low and high self-monitors were looked at separately. The relationships found for the entire sample were replicated (ambient awareness of students was positively related to self-presentation and impression management; perception of students' awareness was negatively related to privacy management); however, it was also

revealed that the instructors' perception of students' awareness of them was positively related to self-presentation and impression management behaviors for the high self-monitors, but not for the low self-monitors.

Both low and high self-monitors used more self-presentation and impression management behaviors when they had a higher ambient awareness of students. This is not a surprising finding in terms of high self-monitors. Research has consistently found that high self-monitors are acutely aware of their audiences and manage their impressions to be socially appropriate for the situation (Leary, 1995; Snyder, 1979). The surprising finding is that low self-monitors manage their impressions as well. As argued earlier, most people want to appear likable, friendly, moral, and attractive (Nezleck & Leary, 2002), so it does make sense that low self-monitors would use self-presentation to appear in these ways. Also mentioned earlier, while low self-monitors consistently present the same image of themselves, they do so through specific communication behaviors, which may include the behaviors used on the impression management behaviors measure.

When instructors perceived that students were aware of them on Facebook, the use of self-presentation and impression management behaviors differed between low and high self-monitors. However, privacy management did not differ between the two groups as it was negatively related to this type of ambient awareness for both low and high self-monitors. This suggests that self-monitoring did not play a role in the instructors' privacy management as measured in this research.

Self-presentation and impression management behaviors were related to instructors' perception of students' awareness of them for high self-monitors, but they were not related for low self-monitors. This makes sense in terms of self-monitoring theory. The theory states that

low self-monitors present their true selves regardless of the situation (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985; Meyer, 2001; Snyder, 1979). On Facebook, low self-monitors should still want to present their true selves, so there is no need to manage their impressions, regardless of whether they perceive that students are watching them. On the other hand, self-monitoring theory states that high self-monitors are very aware of the situation and manage their impressions to fit the expectations of the audience (Gangestad & Snyder, 1985; Meyer, 2001; Snyder, 1979). On Facebook, high self-monitors should still want to present the appropriate image to the appropriate audience, so it makes sense that they would manage their impressions if they perceived that students had an awareness of them.

### **Theoretical Implications**

The theoretical implications of this study are associated with how the instructors' individual differences related to impression management on Facebook. Impression management has been extensively used to study CMC (e.g., Jacobson, 2006; Lea & Spears, 1992; Switzer, 2007; Walther & Burgoon, 1992), and based on the claim that impression management is a hallmark of Facebook's use (Hewitt & Forte, 2006), it makes sense to extend the research to look at how individuals, in this case specifically instructors, use impression management on the site. Prior research has shown that individuals use impression management differently in different online venues, such as blogs (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2009; Jung, Vorderer, & Song, 2007) online dating sites (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Hall et al., 2010) and email (Corrigan & Stephens, 2007; Rains & Young, 2006). Since the medium changes the way one presents him/herself, it stands to reason that individuals may manage their impressions differently on Facebook than they do in other CMC venues. In fact, Walther and Ramirez (2010) argued that "online social networking systems are novel with respect to more established forms of CMC

because the information displayed about an individual includes both information provided by the profile creator as well as by others – the creator’s friends” (p. 278). This suggests that Facebook users may have little control over their impression management on the site since they are not the only ones posting information or photos related to their lives. Online communication, which includes Facebook, is changing rapidly and due to these changes, CMC theories do not always provide the same ability as they have in the past to study how individuals communicate online (Walther & Ramirez, 2010). Because of this, it is important to look at how interpersonal theories and concepts related to both CMC and FtF communication, specifically self-monitoring, role conflict, and ambient awareness, are changing in terms of online communication, especially in relationship to impression management.

This study examined how self-monitoring was related to instructors’ use of impression management on Facebook. While computer-mediated communication research has often applied the same theories used in FtF communication research, self-monitoring has seldom been used. A search of the literature only found two published studies that looked at how self-monitoring was related to online impression management (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2009; Hall, Park, Song & Cody, 2010). Child and Agyeman-Budu (2009) found that higher self-monitors used more impression management behaviors while blogging, and Hall et al. (2010) found that higher self-monitors used more impression management to misrepresent themselves on online dating sites. While both studies found a relationship between self-monitoring and impression management, that relationship was not observed in the present research. Since the two previous studies and the present study looked at three different CMC platforms (blogging, online dating sites, and Facebook), it is possible that each type of online site has different characteristics that influence how one can use self-monitoring, especially concerning the presence of situational cues. Meyer



(2001) claimed that individuals with higher levels of self-monitoring watch how others are communicating and reacting to others, and then adapt their communication behaviors to be in line with what appears to be situationally appropriate. This means that higher self-monitors need to be aware of the situational cues, which are often nonverbal, in order to manage their impressions. Cooley (1902) coined the term reflected appraisal (or looking-glass self) to explain that individuals form part of their self-concept in response to how they think they are seen by others. These perceptions of others' views are formed from their nonverbal reactions to the communicator's behaviors. In terms of self-monitoring, if instructors who have higher levels of self-monitoring notice that others in the same situation are reacting negatively to them, they are likely to feel they are communicating inappropriately and will use impression management to change their behaviors to elicit a more positive response. However, if instructors cannot see other Facebook users' reactions to their communication, they may not realize that their communication is not situationally appropriate; and therefore, not manage their impressions to present the appropriate image. While most CMC channels are missing these types of nonverbal cues (Walther & Parks, 2002), Facebook may be missing more than the others. Much of the information that Facebook users receive comes from the list of other users' personal actions noted in their Newsfeeds (boyd, 2007). While users do comment on other users' posts (boyd & Ellison, 2007), it is almost impossible to communicate one-on-one with every other user considering the average Facebook user has more than 130 friends ("Statistics," 2010). It is possible that much of the communication instructors use on Facebook never receives any feedback, so higher self-monitors are missing the nonverbal feedback cues that alert them to inappropriate communication and often encourage their impression management. This suggests that self-monitoring may be next to impossible on Facebook and therefore will not be related to

how instructors communicate on the site, especially in terms of their impression management, on the site.

This study also examined how role conflict was related to instructors' use of impression management on Facebook. As with self-monitoring, role conflict has seldom been used in research related to CMC. After reviewing the articles from three leading journals in mass communication research from 1990-2007, Dunn (2008) argued that identity, which is at the core of identity role conflict studied in this research, has been examined in terms of CMC in four ways: (1) the differences between one's true identity and the created online identity, (2) protective anonymity, (3) role play with identities, and (4) how online identity impacts online communication. None of these studies looked at the possibility of conflict between the different role identities one may have when communicating online. The only mention of identity role conflict comes in Miller and Arnold's (2001) examination of personal website creation. They claimed that website creators do feel role conflict between their personal and professional lives, but do not explain how these individuals attempted to alleviate this conflict. This argument would make it seem likely that the instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends would feel role conflict on the site since they have allowed individuals from their professional lives into their personal spaces, but that was not found in this study. In fact, instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends felt significantly less role conflict than the instructors who did not allow students. This suggests that instructors who have allowed students as friends do not feel the need to enact multiple roles on Facebook. This may be because similarly to self-monitoring, role conflict is activated through external cues. Sarbin (1954) argued that role conflict occurs when individuals feel as if they have to enact two different role identities that have contradictory behaviors. These role identities are activated through social interactions with others and

individuals know what behaviors are appropriate for the role through the others' feedback (Burke & Reitzes, 1981). This means that instructors can only feel the need to behave in ways appropriate for multiple roles if they perceive nonverbal cues suggesting different Facebook users are expecting them. As previously noted, most CMC is lacking nonverbal cues that provide feedback (Walther & Parks, 2002) and Facebook appears to be missing even more of these cues due to the lack of one-on-one communication. This lack of cues that provide feedback on Facebook may make it difficult for role conflict to occur on the site since individuals are not receiving the feedback that activates certain roles, suggesting that role conflict may not be an individual difference that influences impression management on Facebook.

The final theoretical implication of this study relates to ambient awareness' relationship with instructors' impression management on Facebook. These implications are based on the relationships that the ambient awareness of students has with self-presentation and impression management behaviors, as well as the relationship between instructors' perception of students' awareness and their privacy management. Ambient awareness has previously been discussed in conjunction with awareness systems (IJsselsteijn et al., 1998; Markopoulos, 2007; Markopoulos et al., 2005; Romero et al., 2007), but it is just now being talked about in terms of online social network sites. In the popular press, Thompson (2008) has discussed ambient awareness as it relates to SNSs and interviewed scholar danah boyd, who is interested in its uses. Ambient awareness is based on social presence, which Mitra (2010) claimed can be created on Facebook through what she calls narrative bits (i.e., text, pictures, and video). However, social presence tends to focus on the feeling of being present when two (or more) people are communicating simultaneously in different physical spaces. Ambient awareness refers to the ability of

understanding what is happening in another's life intellectually and emotionally through the bits of information they leave on SNSs over a period of time (Bodker & Christiansen, 2006; Markopoulos, 2007; Thompson, 2008). This study found that Facebook users do have an ambient awareness of other users and that it is related to impression management on SNSs.

Instructors who were more aware of students on Facebook were more likely to use self-presentation and impression management behaviors. This suggests that the bits of information students leave on Facebook are observed by the instructors and lead them to feel as if the student is present within the communication context. When the instructors were aware of students as an audience, they increased their self-presentation and impression management behaviors to present the image they felt was appropriate, which supports the argument that individuals tend to manage their impressions when they are aware of a specific audience (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1995). Although this argument has been used in terms of face-to-face communication, the findings of this study suggest that it happens online, specifically on Facebook, as well.

Being aware of an audience is not the only way impression management is activated. As Wallace (1999) argued, when online users become aware of an audience, they often have a heightened sense of being observed by that audience. In the case of ambient awareness, this sense of being observed is the instructors' perception of the students' awareness of them on Facebook. Instructors who felt that students were aware of them were less likely to manage their privacy on the site. This may be due to the finding that some instructors allowed students as Facebook friends in order to allow the students to see them as people. By using less privacy management when they perceived students' awareness, instructors may have been using different privacy rules than they would use in face-to-face situations. This implies that the privacy boundaries individuals create for communicating with certain audiences in face-to-face

communication may be different than the rules they use during online communication. This suggests that privacy is another theoretical area that differs depending on the context and deserves more attention.

All of these findings give credence to the idea that ambient awareness is an important part of communicating on online social network sites, especially in terms of how Facebook users manage their impressions. Being aware of an audience leads Facebook users to manage their impressions in a way that presents a specific image, while feeling that an audience is aware of them helps users determine what personal information to reveal. Ambient awareness appears to be an important aspect of online social network site use and should continue to be studied.

In sum, impression management is a common communication behavior (Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 1980) and it has been argued that impression management is heavily used on Facebook (Hewitt & Forte, 2006). While self-monitoring and role conflict seem to relate to impression management in FtF communication (Goffman, 1959; Leary, 1995), those relationships were absent in this research. The previously discussed reasons may explain why they were absent, but it is possible that due to the rapidly changing technological landscape (Walther & Ramirez, 2010), the theories related to these individual differences do not hold up online. On the other hand, ambient awareness was related to instructors' use of impression management on Facebook, which suggests that it is a concept important to further CMC research.

### **Practical Implications**

As an exploratory study, this research provides practical implications for the world of academia. Facebook is a fairly new technology and the research on its uses is slowly catching up to its popularity. Facebook has over 500 million individual users ("Statistics," 2010) and

Robyler et al. (2010) claimed there are approximately 297,000 college and university faculty and staff members registered on the site. In their study of one university, 73% of the faculty reported having a Facebook account. The present findings show that over half of the participants who had a Facebook page had allowed students to become friends on the site. Instructors and students are moving their relationships to Facebook and it is important to understand the complexities of those relationships.

Rawlins (2000) argued that instructors have to walk a fine line between forming relationships that show students they care and not becoming too intimate. This is true in face-to-face relationships as well as in Facebook relationships. One of the reasons some instructors provided for allowing students as friends was that they already had a relationship with those students. Research (Blackburn, 1974; Ramsden & Moses, 1992) has shown that high quality teaching, which includes interactions that students find satisfactory, often occurs at institutions where faculty members conduct little research and focus more on teaching; therefore, instructors who are employed at an institution with a greater emphasis on teaching may have already formed personal relationships with students. Since these relationships may already exist in face-to-face contexts, the instructors who have them may be less worried about crossing the line between their professional and personal lives on Facebook. In fact, the school's emphasis on teaching versus research was negatively correlated with role conflict, suggesting that instructors who work at an institution that has a greater emphasis on teaching felt less conflict about what information they considered appropriate for their family/friends and what they considered appropriate for students. The school's emphasis on teaching versus research was also positively correlated with ambient awareness of students, suggesting that instructors who work at an institution with a greater emphasis on teaching have a stronger awareness of students on

Facebook. These instructors may be more aware of students because they already have relationships with them offline due to the characteristics of the type of institution at which they teach. If face-to-face relationships are leading to Facebook relationships, it is important to understand how instructors and students communicate in offline contexts as well.

Although Facebook relationships may be a result of existing offline relationships, becoming friends on Facebook is blurring the line Rawlins (2000) discussed and some are concerned that inappropriate relationships may develop or instructors might lose credibility (Simon, 2008; Turner 2010). It is important to note that although this can happen, the findings of this study suggest that most of the instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends were aware of the possible consequences and took steps to avoid them. Even though these instructors indicated that they allowed students as friends, many of them also mentioned that there are certain types of students they did not allow. The types of students instructors refused to accept friend requests from included undergraduate students, students who are still enrolled, problematic students, students with whom they did not have an existing relationship, and students whom they did not trust. Many of these instructors decided not to become friends with those types of students in order to avoid negative consequences that may be associated with them. Knowing that some of the instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends made the decision not to allow certain students indicates that while there is nothing inherently wrong with allowing students as Facebook friends, there are ways to alleviate some of the problems associated with these relationships. Instructors who are currently deciding whether or not they think it is appropriate to allow students as friends should consider these consequences as well. The ethical concerns laid out in the dual relationship literature (Blevins-Knabe, 1992; Congress,

1996) provide a solid framework for the issues instructors should consider when making their own decisions.

The findings of this study revealed that there are diverse viewpoints when it comes to deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends. Many of the instructors who participated in this study were very adamant about their personal decision to allow or not allow students and often questioned the decision of the other side. Instructors in each group made that decision for their own reasons, primarily because of what they viewed to be an ethical relationship. On a similar note, Deetz (1990) argued that ethical standards tend to arise from the norms of the community, which suggests that instructors who allowed students as Facebook friends may be part of a community (i.e., institution or department) that views these relationships as appropriate, while instructors who did not allow students as friends may be part of a community that holds the opposite view. Instructors should be aware of the norms of the community of which they are a part. If the institutions or departments in which the instructors teach have opinions about engaging in Facebook friendships with students, they should work to understand the reasons for the stance and consider following the institution/departments' lead.

Some of the instructors in this study indicated that they wanted to learn more about their students and wanted to allow their students to learn more about them, which is part of the relationship development process between instructors and students (Cooper & Simonds, 2003; DeVito, 1986). The instructors who provided these reasons felt that Facebook was an acceptable way to do this. The National Communication Association (2010) has even encouraged these friendships, arguing that they allow the instructors and students to form more personal relationships that can lead to improved learning outcomes. This study showed that many instructors are following the accepted patterns of relationship development; they are just doing



so in a new way. As digital natives are entering the college classroom and bringing new technology with them, instructors are adapting and using that technology as well. Having proof that these relationships are happening means that instructors and administrators at colleges/universities need to be aware of how instructor-student Facebook friendships are impacting the educational process. The findings of this study suggest that most of the instructors who have allowed students as Facebook friends have found ways to keep the relationships appropriate. Many of the instructors in this study reported that they communicate in ways that attempted to avoid exploiting the student; and the instructors who were more aware of their students as an audience made a greater effort to manage their impressions on the site. This suggests that most instructors may be aware of how they communicate on Facebook and attempt to do in ways that are appropriate for all audiences, including students. Institutions can use these findings to create guidelines that suggest appropriate behaviors for instructors who engage in Facebook relationships with students.

Although this study focused on instructor-student relationships on Facebook, it raised questions about how instructors and students communicate in other mediated contexts. Some of the instructors noted in the open-ended answers that they have more appropriate ways of communicating with students, such as email and university learning systems (e.g., Blackboard and uLearn). These university sanctioned technologies provide ways for instructors to manage their impressions as well. Cunningham and Green (2002) argued that email is treated as a way “to put your best foot forward” (p. 20), suggesting that impression management is often used in that context. Switzer’s (2008) research focused on how individuals managed their impressions during an online MBA course, which was given through the university’s online course delivery system, and found that the participants used many of the previously discussed online impression

management behaviors. This previous research, as well as the findings of the present study, suggests that instructors may manage their impressions when communicating with students through any type of technology and in face-to-face situations, so impression management could be the focus of any discussion of communication between instructors and students.

### **Limitations**

As with any research, there were limitations to this study. These limitations are associated with the sample, the use of self-report measures in general, the use of specific scales, and the information not examined in this study.

The two-step, systemic, random sampling procedure used to recruit participants was a strong method. Using the Carnegie Foundation's website, this study was able to recruit instructors who represented different ranks and departments from diverse colleges/universities in all fifty states. However, the sample of any study often has limitations. First, although it was impossible to know what percent of those targeted met the requirements of the study, the response rate was very low. The survey was sent to 4,050 instructors, but only 331 completed it for a response rate of 8.2%. There are at least two reasons this occurred. First, it is likely that many instructors who received the invitation did not have Facebook pages. Approximately 122 instructors replied to the recruitment email saying that they wished they could help, but did not have a personal Facebook page. Second, recruitment took place over the summer. The recruitment emails garnered a number of automated replies from instructors indicating that they were out of the office or had limited access to email. The second limitation associated with the sample is self-selection bias. In this research, instructors were given the opportunity to participate and those who self-selected to take part were volunteers, which Frey, Botan, and Kreps (2000) argued tend to have more interest and motivation. It is possible that the

participants in this study had more interest in the subject of instructor-student Facebook relationships and/or were motivated to share their opinions. The open-ended responses from both groups of instructors contained strong language supporting or opposing Facebook friendships with students, so it is possible that the instructors in this study represent those with strong opinions on the topic. While this provides a lot of information, it means that the study may be missing the opinions of those who are undecided on this issue. Those instructors might have added another view of these relationships. Finally, while the sample was fairly diverse in terms of most demographics, the participants' ethnicity lacked diversity because the sample was predominately White. DeAndrea, Shaw and Levine (2009) looked at how African Americans, Asian Americans, and Caucasians communicate on Facebook and found that African Americans expressed more self-descriptions and affiliations with relationships and groups on Facebook, while Caucasians posted more pictures of themselves with others. This suggests that instructors may communicate differently depending on their ethnicity, but without a representation of different ethnicities, it is difficult to discuss. The limitations associated with this sample lower the generalizability of the results.

The use of self-report measures is another limitation of the study. Singleton and Straits (2005) argued that memory problems can be a limitation in survey research and cite Cannell and Kahn (1968) who claimed that respondents may not remember information that happened too long ago, is not significant, or is not relevant to their lives at the moment. Depending on the importance of the Facebook relationships these instructors have with students, they may or may not have been able to accurately recall the way they communicate with them on the site. Because of this limitation, future research should consider alternative methods of data collection. Survey methodology could be still be used, but the questionnaire might ask participants to

indicate the behaviors they have used in the last week in an effort to eliminate the memory problems cited by Cannell and Kahn (1968). Another method may be to ask participants to keep a diary of their Facebook use with students over a period of time. The diary could then be content analyzed for specific behaviors.

Another set of limitations relates to the scales used to measure the variables. First, two of the impression management measures were problematic. The impression management behaviors scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .59$ ) and the privacy management scale (Cronbach's  $\alpha = .55$ ) had low reliability, which means the validity of the results may be questionable. One reason for this low reliability may have been the way impression management was measured. There are a myriad of ways for one to manage his/her impressions online, but the survey asked about only a small number of these. Haferkamp and Kramer (2009) argued that Facebook users carefully choose the groups they join in order to influence their impressions on other users. Kramer and Winter (2008) studied StudiVZ (the German equivalent of Facebook) and asserted that impression management behaviors on the site included: number of friends, number of groups, number of photos, number of completed fields (e.g., favorite movies, birth date, hometown, etc.), revealing political orientation, and revealing relationship status. The impression management behaviors scale used in this study did not include items referring to the groups instructors may belong to, the number of photos posted to their pages, or the information they provided in the fields that Facebook encourages users to fill out (relationship status, political status, religious affiliation, etc.). Instructors may manage their impressions in these ways, but there are no data to substantiate this. Also, the impression management behaviors scale asked about Facebook use in general, not specifically with students. Instructors may be managing their impressions to present an image to any specific group of friends, not just students. The low reliability of the impression

management behaviors scale suggests that it did not tap into instructors' actual use of impression management, so the lack of findings may be due in part to the scale used. Child et al.'s (2009) privacy scale has been successfully used to measure privacy boundaries in online blogs, including Facebook, but the participants in their study were college students. Students may have different privacy boundaries than instructors. Also, the instructors who allowed students as friends indicated that they understood Facebook's privacy settings. This may mean that by using the site's privacy controls to set boundaries, instructors were not as concerned with their own privacy rules. The scale used to measure role conflict may have had limitations as well. Carlson et al.'s (2000) Work-Family Conflict scale measured the role conflict individuals felt when work and family obligations become salient at the same time. Part of this conflict is in terms of sharing appropriate information in the two roles, but only using two items from the scale may not have tapped into the actual conflict instructors felt between their personal and professional roles. Participants in this study mentioned that they did not want students to see their families' information or photos, so only asking about the instructors' information may not have been enough to understand the conflict felt on Facebook.

The final set of limitations is associated with the information not collected in this study. First, there are many individual differences that can influence one's communication on Facebook. Previous research has looked at how the tendency to self-disclosure is used to reveal personal information online (Mesch & Becker, 2010; Schouten, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2007), how shyness relates to online communication (Chak & Leung, 2004; Orr, et al., 2009), and how loneliness influences online communication (Hu, 2007; Morahan-Martin & Schumacher, 2003). These are just a few of the individual differences that have been used to study how individuals communicate online. Given that there are other factors related to CMC use, it is likely that there

are other variables that influence instructors' communication on Facebook. It is impossible to look at all variables in one study, but it is important to note that there may be other factors that can help explain how instructors use Facebook. Second, this study looked at instructor-student Facebook relationships from the instructors' perspective only. The Youth and Media Project in Harvard's Berman Center for Internet and Society (2010) has studied digital natives and found that these individuals, including many of today's college/university students, are a culture of "connectivity, of public display, of sharing, of feedback, of constant availability, and of global citizenship" (n.p.). This suggests that students have different rules for using Facebook, especially in terms of the information they are willing to post and the ways in which they are willing to communicate. These behaviors are likely to carry over into their communication with instructors on Facebook. These issues will be discussed more in the suggestions for future research.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

This study is a solid starting point for research on instructor-student relationships on Facebook, and its findings lead to new research possibilities. First, the emergent themes that explained why instructors did or did not friend students should be turned into closed-ended scales and used to gain a more solid understanding of how instructors make the decision to friend students on Facebook. Once these themes are used to construct a scale, it can be used to look at how individual differences influence the instructors' decisions about allowing/not allowing students as Facebook friends. As noted in the limitations section, there are a number of individual differences that influence individuals' online communication (e.g., tendency to self-disclosure, shyness, loneliness). Any of these differences may help explain why instructors decided to allow/not allow students as Facebook friends. Having a scale that quantitatively

measures the instructors' reasons would allow future research to test hypotheses about the relationships between individual differences and the reasons important to the instructors' decisions.

This study looked at the Facebook relationship from the instructors' point-of-view, but the students' point of view is just as important. As mentioned in the limitations, the digital natives in today's college/university classrooms use technology in different ways than digital immigrants (Youth and Media Project, 2010). These students use digital media at higher rates and have fewer problems sharing their personal details through online communication. Tufecki (2008) even argued that these users want to be seen on online social network sites and are not concerned with privacy. This suggests that students use Facebook differently than instructors do. Since instructors tended to accept friend requests more often than send them, it appears that students want to friend instructors on Facebook. Schwartz (2008) claimed that her students argued that they would not have allowed her as a friend if they did not want to communicate with her, which is in direct opposition to Turner's (2010) assertion that she does not want to know too much about her instructors in fear of losing respect for them. These anecdotal statements make one wonder how students really feel about becoming Facebook friends with instructors. If students really want to share their lives and are in fact sending friend requests to instructors, it is important to look at the issues discussed in this study from the students' point of view.

While this exploratory study did provide a descriptive picture of how instructors are using Facebook with students, there is little to indicate what instructors and students are gaining from these relationships or what problems arise because of them. The National Communication Association (2010) suggested that instructors and students should be Facebook friends because of the ability to build more personal relationships, but Turner (2010) argued that she did not want

to be Facebook friends with her instructors because she is afraid of losing respect for them based on what they post. Mazer et al. (2007) found that learning outcomes improved when instructors self-disclosed on Facebook, while Barber and Pearce (2008) found that instructors who used Facebook were viewed as less credible. However, both of these studies were conducted with mock Facebook pages. The present study did find that instructors allowed students as friends in order to communicate with them and to offer support, which appear to be advantages of the relationships. However, the instructors in this study who did allow students as Facebook friends were still concerned with the possible consequences of these relationships, suggesting that there are disadvantages to allowing students as Facebook friends. Research needs to look at what these advantages and disadvantages actually are.

Since ambient awareness emerged as the only individual difference related to impression management on Facebook, it needs to be studied further. As noted earlier, this is a fairly new concept. While ambient awareness is connected to social presence (Biocca et al., 2003; Harms & Biocca, 2004), it is a different concept. Social presence is concerned with feeling the presence of the other communicator when communication is happening in different physical spaces (Biocca et al., 2003), whereas ambient awareness is concerned with feeling the presence of the based on the cues they leave on SNSs over a period of time (Thompson, 2008). Schroeder (2007) argued that symbolic representations of availability, such as appearing online, or having recently posted something, are sufficient to create an awareness of the other communicator. However, the exact nature of this ambient awareness and how it occurs still remain unexplored (Romero et al., 2007). Thompson (2008) argued that researchers are looking at how ambient awareness is understood as it relates to online social networking sites. Although this study found that ambient



awareness is related to impression management, it is a new direction in the research and should continue to be explored, both on Facebook and in other contexts (e.g., blogs, Twitter).

Researchers also should continue to examine self-monitoring as an influence on online communication. Although self-monitoring was not related to instructors' use of Facebook in this research, once high and low self-monitors were analyzed separately, it became evident that ambient awareness did have more influence on impression management for high self-monitors than for low self-monitors. This suggests that self-monitoring may be related to the way individuals communicate online, but the results were masked due to the large percentage of low self-monitors in the sample. A search of the literature found only two studies had looked at the influence of self-monitoring on online communication, specifically in blogs and online dating sites, (Child & Agyeman-Budu, 2009; Hall et al., 2010) and both found self-monitoring to be a significant predictor. As noted in the theoretical implications, Facebook appears to provide a different type of online communication venue. Blogs and online dating sites may provide more specific feedback that would allow high self-monitors to gauge the situation and decide what type of communication is appropriate, so self-monitoring may have been related to impression management in those previous studies because of their functional characteristics. This study did find that low and high self-monitors used impression management differently when they perceived that students were aware of them, suggesting that there are characteristics of Facebook that may be similar to blogs and online dating sites. The three online communication channels (blogs, dating sites, and Facebook) are very different, which makes it difficult to determine whether impression management and self-monitoring are related in online communication in general or if there are differences in the relationship due to the communication context, so more research is necessary.

Although it was unexpected, the finding that instructors use less privacy management when they think students are aware of them on Facebook was interesting and leads to another suggestion for future research. The survey asked instructors if they posted personal information on Facebook, but did not ask about the specifics of that information. Privacy management was positively correlated with self-impression and impression management behaviors, suggesting that all three were ways that instructors managed their impressions on Facebook. One of the ways individuals can manage their impressions is through self-disclosure. Schlenker (1980) argued that self-disclosure can be viewed as a strategic form of impression management because individuals can control how they appear in social interactions by regulating the disclosure of specific information about themselves. In other words, individuals can decide what personal information they want to disclose in order to form a specific image. For instance, Cayanus and Martin (2004, 2008) found that teacher self-disclosure is a positive classroom behavior because it helps students see them as human beings. When instructors are willing to share personal information, students can see how they react to situations, which may lead students to assume that the instructors are compassionate and understanding. This can lead to more relational communication both in and out of the classroom. By deciding what personal information to disclose to students, instructors can create the image of a real person, not just a professor, and this was one of the reasons some of the participants in this study provided for allowing students as Facebook friends. It is possible that when instructors think students are aware of them on the site, they provide specific personal information to create an image that shows them as people, not just instructors. This makes sense in light of Derlega and Grzelak's (1979) argument that one aspect of self-disclosure is reward value, or what the individual gains from disclosing the information. By disclosing specific personal information that allows them to look human,

instructors may be rewarded through positive communication with students, which is supported by Mazer et al.'s (2005) study that found students react positively to instructors who self-disclose on Facebook. This suggests that instead of looking at privacy in general, future research should study the specific personal information instructors do and do not post on Facebook, especially when they perceive that students are aware of them.

### **Conclusion**

This research study provided what may be the first look at college/university instructor-student Facebook friendships. Through the descriptive look at instructors' use of Facebook with students, there is now an understanding of the reasons instructors have for deciding whether or not to allow students as Facebook friends, as well as who they allow and how they communicate with them. By testing the influence of instructors' individual differences on their Facebook use, it was revealed that ambient awareness is significantly related to how instructors manage their Facebook impressions. Overall, there is now research that describes how instructors feel about the relationships and how those friendships influence Facebook use. Atay (2009) stated that "even though adding [students] as friend[s on Facebook] challenged my ideas about teaching, new media technologies, and their role in educational settings, I was also intrigued by this new aspect of human communication and relationships" (p. 72). As an instructor, he gets to the heart of the matter. Allowing students as Facebook friends does pose many questions about its appropriateness and usefulness, but these questions are intriguing. They are also bound to be part of the conversation about education and online social network site use for years to come.

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## Appendix A

## RECRUITMENT EMAIL

SUBJECT LINE: Dissertation Research Study on Faculty use of Facebook

Dear Faculty member:

I am a doctoral student at Georgia State University, pursuing a Ph.D. in communication. As a critical part of my doctoral dissertation work, I am conducting a survey about faculty communication on Facebook.

We are seeking 450 faculty participants for this study. To that end, at least 30 colleges and universities were randomly chosen, and faculty emails were randomly selected from the public, online faculty directory at each school. If you are an instructor who is not a student at the college/university at which you teach, you are invited to complete this survey. Only faculty members who have a Facebook profile are eligible to participate in this research study.

Your voluntary participation is requested. The questionnaire will take approximately 20-25 minutes. Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire, no identifying information is requested, and your responses will be kept confidential.

I would really appreciate it if you could take time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. This research will help us understand how college/university faculty use Facebook and how the possibility of students as friends impacts this communication.

The survey is available at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/B8K38YG>

If you have any questions pertaining to this study, please contact me at [mplew1@student.gsu.edu](mailto:mplew1@student.gsu.edu).

Thank you for your assistance.

Melissa Plew

## Appendix B

## INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Georgia State University  
Department of Communication  
Informed Consent

Title: Instructor-Student Communication on Facebook

Principal Investigator: Cynthia Hoffner

Student Principal Investigator: Melissa Plew

I. Purpose

You are invited to participate in a research study. The purpose of this study is to discover how college/university faculty members communicate on Facebook when they have students as friends. You are invited to participate because you are at least 18 years old, are a college/university instructor who is not a student at the college/university where you teach and have a Facebook profile. We are seeking at least 450 people to take part in this study. Participation will take approximately 20-25 minutes of your time.

II. Procedures

If you decide to participate, you will fill out an online survey. This survey will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete.

III. Risks

In this study, you will not have any more risks than you do in a normal day of life.

IV. Benefits

Participation in this study may not benefit you personally; however, it may help researchers understand more about why college/university instructors friend or not friend their students, as well as how college/university instructors communicate on Facebook when they do have students as friends.

V. Voluntary Participation and Withdrawal

Participation in this research is voluntary. You have the right to not be in this study. If you decide to take part in the study and change your mind, you have the right to drop out at any time. You may skip questions or stop taking part at any time. Whatever you decide, you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

## VI. Confidentiality

We will keep your responses private to the extent allowed by law. The questionnaire does not ask for any identifying information about you. Your results will be kept completely confidential. Only the researchers will have access to the data. Information may also be shared with those who make sure the study is done correctly (GSU Institutional Review Board). The results will be summarized and reported in group form. You will not be identified personally.

## VII. Contact Persons

Contact Dr. Cynthia Hoffner (404-413-5650 or [joucah@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:joucah@langate.gsu.edu)) or Melissa Plew (404-413-5600 or [mplew1@student.gsu.edu](mailto:mplew1@student.gsu.edu)) if you have any questions about this study. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this research study, you may contact Susan Vogtner in the Office of Research Integrity at 404-413-3513 or e-mail her at [svogtner1@gsu.edu](mailto:svogtner1@gsu.edu).

## VIII. Copy of Consent Form to Subject

You can print out a copy of this consent form for your records. If you are willing to volunteer for this research, please check the box below.

By checking this box, you confirm that you are at least 18 years old, and wish to participate in this study.

## Appendix C

## SURVEY: COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY FACULTY USE OF FACEBOOK

**DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

This part of the survey asks for some information about you, the school you teach at and your Facebook use. Please answer all the questions to the best of your ability.

1. What is your sex?  
 Male  
 Female
  
2. How old are you?  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. What is your ethnicity? Please mark all that apply.  
 Asian/Pacific Islander'  
 Black/African American  
 Hispanic/Latina(o)  
 Native American  
 White/Caucasian  
 Other (please specify)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
4. What is your highest level of education?  
 Bachelor's Degree  
 Master of Arts Degree  
 Master of Science Degree  
 Master of Fine Arts Degree  
 J.D.  
 Doctoral Degree  
 Other (please specify)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
5. How would you characterize the type of institution at which you teach?  
 Private  
 Public  
 Other (please specify)  
 \_\_\_\_\_
  
6. How would you characters the size/type of institution at which you teach?  
 Small College  
 Small University  
 Medium-Sized College  
 Medium-Sized University  
 Large College  
 Large University

7. How would you characterize the relative emphasis that your college/university places on faculty involvement in teaching and research?

	Research			Teaching			
The emphasis is on	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

8. What degrees does your college/university grant? Please mark all that apply.
- Doctorate Degrees
- Master's Degrees
- Bachelor's Degrees
9. In what type of department do you teach? Please choose the one that fits your department best.
- Arts (music, theater, visual arts, etc.)
- Business
- Communication
- Education
- Family and Consumer Sciences
- Health and Human Sciences
- Humanities (languages, philosophy, etc.)
- Law
- Natural Sciences
- Policy Studies
- Social Sciences (psychology, sociology, etc.)
- Technology (computers, aviation, etc.)
- Other (please specify)
- \_\_\_\_\_
10. What is your rank at the college/university at which you teach?
- Visiting Instructor
- Part Time/Adjunct Instructor
- Lecturer/Senior Lecturer
- Assistant Professor
- Associate Professor
- Full Professor
- Other (please specify)
- \_\_\_\_\_
11. What level of students do you teach? Please mark all that apply.
- Undergraduate
- Master's
- Doctoral



12. How technologically literate do you consider yourself?

	<b>Not at all technologically literate</b>						<b>Very technologically literate</b>
I consider myself to be	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

13. Approximately how many years have you used Facebook?

\_\_\_\_\_

14. Approximately how many TOTAL friends do you have on Facebook?

\_\_\_\_\_

15. How familiar are you with Facebook's privacy settings?

	<b>Not at all familiar with the settings</b>				<b>Very familiar with the settings</b>		
I am	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>

16. Who can see the majority of your Facebook profile?

Everyone can see the majority of my Facebook profile.

Friends of my friends can see the majority of my Facebook profile.

Only my friends can see the majority of my Facebook profile.

I restrict certain parts of my Facebook profile so that only specific people can see it.

17. Have you created a Facebook page specifically to communicate with students?

Yes

No

18. Do you have any students as friends on your PERSONAL Facebook page (e.g., NOT a page you have created specifically for classroom use)?

Yes (taken to Part II)

No (taken to Part I)

## PART I

### NOT FRIENDING STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

We are interested in why you do not have students as friends on Facebook. Please provide as much information as you feel comfortable sharing.

19. What are your reasons for not having students as friends on Facebook?

20. Please mark the primary reason you do not have students as friends on Facebook.

I have made a conscious decision not to allow students as friends on Facebook.

The possibility of having students as friends on Facebook has not presented itself to me.

### MAKING THE DECISION NOT TO FRIEND STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

Although you have confirmed that you do not have students as friends on Facebook, we are still interested in knowing how you made the decision not to friend students.

Individuals consider many things when deciding to allow students as friends on Facebook.

Think about what YOU considered when deciding to not friend students on Facebook. For each of the following items, please mark how much you agree with the statement.

### WHEN DECIDING NOT TO FRIEND STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK, I THOUGHT ABOUT

	Strongly Disagree							Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
21. The role I would assume in the students' lives on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
22. Whether the Facebook friendship has the potential to exploit or harm the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
23. Whether the Facebook friendship may have had an impact on other students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
24. Whether the Facebook friendship had the potential to take undue advantage of my greater power in the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
25. Whether I would lose my capacity for objective evaluation of the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		
26. Whether the Facebook friendship was with current or former students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7		

27. Whether the students would expect special treatment based on the Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
28. Whether the Facebook friendship would have consequences for other faculty members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
29. Whether other students would feel these students were getting special treatment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
30. Whether my future evaluations would be influenced by the Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
31. Whether all students would have the same opportunity for a Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

### **APPROPRIATE INFORMATION TO POST ON FACEBOOK**

Individuals are often Facebook ‘friends’ with many different people, including family members, personal friends, and/or students. The items below address whether you consider information that you post on Facebook to be appropriate for some types of your ‘friends’ but not others. Each statement compares different TWO types of friends, so please read each statement carefully.

### **THE INFORMATION THAT I POST ON FACEBOOK**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
32. That is appropriate for my FRIENDS, may not be appropriate for STUDENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
33. That is appropriate for my FAMILY, may not be appropriate for my FRIENDS.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
34. That is appropriate for my FRIENDS, may not be appropriate for my FAMILY.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
35. That is appropriate for my FAMILY, may not be appropriate for STUDENTS.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

## PERSONAL RESPONSES TO SITUATIONS

You are almost done – this is the last page!

The following statements concern personal reactions to a number of different situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so consider each statement carefully before answering. If a statement is true or mostly true as applied to you, mark TRUE. If a statement is false or not usually true as applied to you, mark FALSE.

**Please mark whether each statement is true or false for you.**

- |  |             |              |
|--|-------------|--------------|
| 36. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 37. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to say things that others will like.                | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 38. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 39. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.                 | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 40. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 41. I would probably make a good actor.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 42. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention.   | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 43. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.            | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 44. I am not particularly good at making other people like me.   | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 45. I'm not always the person I appear to be.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 46. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor. | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 47. I have considered being an entertainer.  | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 48. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting.                               | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 49. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.                 | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |
| 50. At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going.   | <b>True</b> | <b>False</b> |

51. I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite as well as I should. **True False**
52. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for the right end). **True False**
53. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them. **True False**

## PART II

### FRIENDING STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

We are interested in the types of students you have friended on Facebook. Please answer the questions to the best of your ability.

19. Approximately how many UNDERGRADUATE students do you have as friends on Facebook?  
\_\_\_\_\_
20. Please mark ALL the types of UNDERGRADUATE students you have as friends on Facebook.  
**I am friends with undergraduate students:**  
 who are currently enrolled in one of my courses.  
 who I work with as an advisor or mentor.  
 who I have a different type of academic relationship with (i.e., students I do not advise/mentor or currently have in class).  
 I do NOT have any undergraduate students as friends on Facebook.
21. Approximately how many MASTER'S students do you have as friends on Facebook?  
\_\_\_\_\_
22. Please mark ALL the types of MASTER'S students you have as friends on Facebook.  
**I am friends with Master's students:**  
 who are currently enrolled in one of my courses.  
 who I work with as an advisor or mentor.  
 who I have a different type of academic relationship with (i.e., students I do not advise/mentor or currently have in class).  
 I do NOT have any undergraduate students as friends on Facebook.
23. Approximately how many DOCTORAL students do you have as friends on Facebook?  
\_\_\_\_\_

24. Please mark ALL the types of DOCTORAL students you have friends on Facebook.

**I am friends with doctoral students:**

- who are currently enrolled in one of my courses.  
 who I work with as an advisor or mentor.  
 who I have a different type of academic relationship with (i.e., students I do not advise/mentor or currently have in class).  
 I do NOT have any undergraduate students as friends on Facebook.

25. Please mark ALL the students you have ACCEPTED friend requests from.

- Undergraduate Students  
 Master's Students  
 Doctoral Students  
 I have NOT accepted friend requests from any students.

26. Please mark ALL students you have SENT friend requests to.

- Undergraduate Students  
 Master's Students  
 Doctoral Students  
 I have NOT sent friend requests to any students.

**REASONS FOR FRIENDING/NOT FRIENDING STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK**

We are interested in your reasons for friending/not friending students on Facebook. Please provide as much information as you are comfortable sharing.

27. What are your reasons for friending students on Facebook?

28. Some faculty members have made the decision to NOT friend certain students on Facebook. Does this statement describe you?

- Yes  
 No

29. If you answered yes to the previous question, what were your reasons for NOT friending students on Facebook?

### MAKING THE DECISION TO FRIEND STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

Individuals consider many things when deciding to allow students as friends on Facebook. Think about what YOU consider when deciding to friend students on Facebook. For each of the following items, please mark how much you agree with the statement.

#### WHEN DECIDING WHETHER TO FRIEND STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK, I THINK ABOUT

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
30. The role I will assume in the students' lives on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
31. Whether the Facebook friendship has the potential to exploit or harm the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
32. Whether the Facebook friendship may have an impact on other students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
33. Whether the Facebook friendship has the potential to take undue advantage of my greater power in the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
34. Whether I will lose my capacity for objective evaluation of the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
35. Whether the Facebook friendship is with current or former students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
36. Whether the student will expect special treatment based on the Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
37. Whether the Facebook friendship will have consequences for other faculty members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
38. Whether other students will feel this student is getting special treatment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
39. Whether my future evaluations will be influenced by the Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
40. Whether all students will have the same opportunity for a Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK**

Facebook allows users to communicate with their friends in a number of ways. We are interested in how you use these ways to communicate with students.

The following items contain a list of commonly used ways to communicate with others on Facebook. For each item, please mark ALL of the ways you have used to communicate with students.

41. The ways I have communicated with UNDERGRADUATE students on Facebook include:
- Commented on something they have posted on their walls (game updates, links, etc.)
  - Commented on their status updates.
  - Commented on photos they have posted.
  - "Liked" something they have posted.
  - Played a game with them.
  - Suggested they partake in specific activities on Facebook.
  - Invited them to an event through Facebook.
  - I have NOT communicated with undergraduate students on Facebook in any of these ways.
42. The ways I have communicated with GRADUATE students on Facebook include:
- Commented on something they have posted on their walls (game updates, links, etc.)
  - Commented on their status updates.
  - Commented on photos they have posted.
  - "Liked" something they have posted.
  - Played a game with them.
  - Suggested they partake in specific activities on Facebook.
  - Invited them to an event through Facebook.
  - I have NOT communicated with graduate students on Facebook in any of these ways.



## COMMUNICATING WITH STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

Individuals consider many things when deciding how they will communicate with students on Facebook. Think about what YOU consider when deciding how to communicate with the students you have as friends.

### When deciding how to communicate with students on Facebook, I think about whether the communication

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
43. Is appropriate for the role I have assumed in the students' lives on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
44. Will exploit or harm the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
45. Will have an impact on other students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
46. Will take undue advantage of my greater power in the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
47. Will influence my capacity for objective evaluation of the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
48. Is appropriate for whether the students are current or former students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
49. Will give the students an expectation of special treatment based on the Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
50. Will have consequences for other faculty members.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
51. Will cause other students to feel these students are getting special treatment.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
52. Will influence my future evaluations of the students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
53. Will give all students the same opportunity for a Facebook friendship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**IDENTITY**

Please consider your identity as a COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY INSTRUCTOR in responding to the following items.

Please mark how much you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
54. Overall, being an instructor has very little to do with how I feel about myself.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
55. Being an instructor is an important part of who I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
56. Being an instructor is UNIMPORTANT to my sense of what kind of person I am.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
57. In general, being an instructor is an important part of my self-image.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**APPROPRIATE INFORMATION TO POST ON FACEBOOK**

Individuals are often Facebook 'friends' with many different people, including family members, personal friends, and/or students. The items below address whether you consider the information that you post on Facebook to be appropriate for some types of your 'friends,' but not others. Each statement compares TWO types of friends, so please read each statement carefully.

**The information that I post on Facebook**

	Strongly Disagree						Strongly Agree	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
58. That is appropriate for my FRIENDS, may not be appropriate for STUDENTS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
59. That is appropriate for my FAMILY, may not be appropriate for my FRIENDS.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
60. That is appropriate for my STUDENTS, may not be appropriate for my FRIENDS.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
61. That is appropriate for my FRIENDS, may not be appropriate for FAMILY.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
62. That is appropriate for my FAMILY, may not be appropriate for my STUDENTS.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
63. That is appropriate for my STUDENTS, may not be appropriate for my FAMILY.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

## PERCEPTION OF FACEBOOK USERS

We are interested in what you notice about students, as well as what you think students notice about you, on Facebook.

**Please mark how much you agree with each statement.**

	<b>Strongly Disagree</b>						<b>Strongly Agree</b>	
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	
64. I notice students on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
65. Students have caught my attention on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
66. I think about whether students pick up on my thoughts through Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
67. I pick up on students' emotions through Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
68. I think about whether I catch students' attention on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
69. Students' presence on Facebook is obvious to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
70. I pick up on students' thoughts through Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
71. I think about whether students notice me on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
72. I think about whether students pick up on my emotions through Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
73. I think about whether my presence on Facebook is obvious to students.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

## GENERAL COMMUNICATION ON FACEBOOK

We are interested in how you communicate on Facebook in general (i.e., with ALL of your friends, NOT just students), as well as the type of information you feel comfortable sharing on the site.

Next, we are interested in the impressions you may try to convey to others when communicating on Facebook.

**I make an effort to communicate on Facebook in ways that will lead others to perceive me as**

	Never True							Always True
74. Ethical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
75. Likable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
76. Intelligent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
77. Friendly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
78. Skilled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
79. Socially Desirable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
80. Principled	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
81. Competent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
82. Moral	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

**Please mark how true you believe these statements are for you.**

	Never True							Always True
83. I am aware of how long ago a post was made before I comment on it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
84. When I face challenges in my life, I feel comfortable talking about them on Facebook.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
85. If I think the information I posted really looks too private, I might delete it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
86. I use emoticons to show emotions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	

- |  |          |          |          |          |          |          |          |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| 87. I often tell intimate, personal things on Facebook without hesitation.   | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 88. I usually am slow to talk about recent events because people might talk.   | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 89. When I post photos, I consider the specific image they present of me.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 90. I share information with friends on Facebook whom I don't know in my day-to-day life.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 91. I post on Facebook regularly.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 92. I proofread my posts/comments to make sure there are spelling/grammar mistakes.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 93. I have limited the personal information posted on Facebook.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 94. I provide information that presents a specific image of myself.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 95. I like my Facebook entries to be long and detailed.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 96. I use shorthand (e.g., pseudonyms or limited details) when discussing sensitive information so others have limited access to know my personal information. | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 97. I don't post about certain topics because I worry who will see it.   | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 98. I find myself deleting what I write and making changes before I post something.  | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |
| 99. I like to discuss work concerns on Facebook.   | <b>1</b> | <b>2</b> | <b>3</b> | <b>4</b> | <b>5</b> | <b>6</b> | <b>7</b> |

100. Seeing intimate details about someone else makes me feel I should keep their information private.     **1     2     3     4     5     6     7**
101. I am aware of the time of day that I post or comment on something.     **1     2     3     4     5     6     7**
102. I think about the words I choose to use in my posts.     **1     2     3     4     5     6     7**
103. Have you ever blocked information on Facebook from your students?  
     \_\_Yes  
     \_\_No

### **PERSONAL RESPONSES TO SITUATIONS**

You are almost done – this is the last page!

The following statements concern personal reactions to a number of different situations. No two statements are exactly alike, so consider each statement carefully before answering. If a statement is true or mostly true as applied to you, mark TRUE. If a statement is false or not usually true as applied to you, mark FALSE.

**Please mark whether each statement is true or false for you.**

104. I find it hard to imitate the behavior of other people.     **True   False**
105. At parties and social gatherings, I do not attempt to say things that others will like.     **True   False**
106. I can only argue for ideas which I already believe.     **True   False**
107. I can make impromptu speeches even on topics about which I have almost no information.     **True   False**
108. I guess I put on a show to impress or entertain people.     **True   False**
109. I would probably make a good actor.     **True   False**
110. In a group of people, I am rarely the center of attention.     **True   False**
111. In different situations and with different people, I often act like very different persons.     **True   False**

112. I am not particularly good at making other people like me. **True False**
113. I'm not always the person I appear to be. **True False**
114. I would not change my opinions (or the way I do things) in order to please someone or win their favor. **True False**
115. I have considered being an entertainer. **True False**
116. I have never been good at games like charades or improvisational acting. **True False**
117. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations. **True False**
118. At a party, I let others keep the jokes and stories going. **True False**
119. I feel a bit awkward in company and do not show up quite as well as I should. **True False**
120. I can look anyone in the eye and tell a lie with a straight face (if for the right end). **True False**
121. I may deceive people by being friendly when I really dislike them. **True False**

## **THANK YOU!**

You're done!

Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. Your participation is a valuable part of this research.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact Melissa Plew at [mplew1@student.gsu.edu](mailto:mplew1@student.gsu.edu) or Cynthia Hoffner at [joucah@langate.gsu.edu](mailto:joucah@langate.gsu.edu)

## Appendix D

## REMINDER EMAIL

SUBJECT LINE: Reminder: Dissertation Research Study on Faculty use of Facebook

Dear Faculty Member:

This is a reminder that you have been invited to complete a questionnaire regarding your Facebook use and how that use is influenced by the possible presence of students as friends.

If you have completed the survey, thank you! You may disregard the rest of this message.

We are seeking 450 faculty participants for this study. To that end, at least 30 colleges and universities were randomly chosen, and faculty emails were randomly selected from the public, online faculty directory at each school. If you are an instructor who is not a student at the college/university at which you teach, you are invited to complete this survey. Only faculty members who have a Facebook profile are eligible to participate in this research study.

If you haven't completed the survey, you still have the opportunity to do so. Your participation is voluntary. The questionnaire will take approximately 20-25 minutes. Your name will not be recorded on the questionnaire, no identifying information is requested, and your responses will be kept confidential.

I would really appreciate it if you could take time from your busy schedule to complete this questionnaire. This research will help us understand how college/university faculty use Facebook and how the possibility of students as friends impacts this communication.

The survey is available at: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/B8K38YG>

If you have any questions pertaining to this study, please contact me at [mplew1@student.gsu.edu](mailto:mplew1@student.gsu.edu).

Thank you for your assistance.

Melissa Plew



## Appendix E

## WHY DO INSTRUCTORS FRIEND STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK CODE BOOK

*DIRECTIONS: Read each of the responses provided by the participants of the study. For each of the individual responses, decide which of the eleven categories explains the participant's reason(s) for friending their students. Some responses may provide reasoning that fits into more than one category; some may not fit into any of the categories. Place a mark in the box corresponding to the category (or categories) that explains the participant's reasoning.*

**CATEGORY ONE: Keep in touch**

This category refers to the idea that participants use Facebook to keep in touch with students once they are no longer at the same university. This may be because of graduation or moving to a new university.

**CATEGORY TWO: Another form of communication**

This category refers to the idea that participants use Facebook as a way to facilitate communication with their students beyond traditional channels (email, office hours, etc.).

**CATEGORY THREE: Learn about students**

This category refers to the idea that participants use Facebook to learn more about their students. This can include learning about who the students are as people, what they are interested in or how their generation thinks/feels.

**CATEGORY FOUR: Difficult to decline**

This category refers to the idea that participants find it difficult or awkward to decline friend requests from students. They may be worried about offending the students.

**CATEGORY FIVE: Mentoring/Advising/Networking**

This category refers to the idea that participants find Facebook to be a good channel for additional **academic** support, such as mentoring students or networking with them.

**CATEGORY SIX: Student groups**

This category refers to the idea that participants find Facebook to be a good communication tool for student groups they advise. They may keep in contact with members, announce upcoming events or advertise the group.

**CATEGORY SEVEN: Liking students**

This category refers to the idea that participants genuinely like their students and consider them to be friends.

**CATEGORY EIGHT: Nothing to hide**

This category refers to the idea that participants are fine with having students see the information posted on their Facebook pages. They have nothing to hide from their students.

**CATEGORY NINE: Shared interests**

This category refers to the idea that participants have things in common with the students, such as music, television or movies.

**CATEGORY TEN: If student wants to, why not?**

This category refers to the idea that participants are willing to accept the requests sent by students.

**CATEGORY ELEVEN: Support**

This category refers to the idea that participants are willing to use Facebook as a way to offer **personal** support to students.



## Appendix F

## WHY DO INSTRUCTORS NOT FRIEND STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK CODE BOOK

*DIRECTIONS: Read each of the responses provided by the participants of the study. For each of the individual responses, decide which of the seven categories explains the participant's reason(s) for not friending their students. Some responses may provide reasoning that fits into more than one category; some may not fit into any of the categories. Place a mark in the box corresponding to the category (or categories) that explains the participant's reasoning.*

**CATEGORY ONE: Keep personal/professional lives separate**

This category refers to the idea that participants do not want to disrupt the boundary line between their professional and personal lives.

**CATEGORY TWO: Privacy**

This category refers to the idea that participants want to keep their personal lives private. They do not want students to see the information they have posted on Facebook.

**CATEGORY THREE: Professionalism/Inappropriate**

This category refers to the idea that participants do not think it is appropriate or ethical to have a friendship with their students. Participants also feel that is not considered professional to have a friendship with their students.

**CATEGORY FOUR: Students are not 'friends'**

This category refers to the idea that the participants do not view their students as 'friends.' These participants view all students as just that, students.

**CATEGORY FIVE: Not wanting to know about the students' lives**

This category refers to the idea that participants do not want to see the information students post on Facebook. These participants do not see a need for knowing what students do in their free time.

**CATEGORY SIX: Other ways to communicate**

This category refers to the idea that Facebook is not a preferred way of communication between the instructor and student. The participant prefers to use other modes of communication, such as email, phone, office visits, etc. They do not want the students to rely on Facebook as a way to contact them.

**CATEGORY SEVEN: Fear of Favoritism**

This category refers to the idea that participants don't want students who they might friend to feel like they might get special treatment. Participants do not want some students to feel left out and feel that if they friend one, they'll have to friend all.

## CODING SHEET

	Cat. 1	Cat. 2	Cat. 3	Cat. 4	Cat. 5	Cat. 6	Cat. 7
Participant 1							
Participant 2							
Participant 3							
Participant 4							
Participant 5							
Participant 6							
Participant 7							
Participant 8							
Participant 9							
Participant 10							
Participant 11							
Participant 12							
Participant 13							
Participant 14							
Participant 15							
Participant 16							
Participant 17							
Participant 18							
Participant 19							
Participant 20							
Participant 21							
Participant 22							
Participant 23							
Participant 24							
Participant 25							

## Appendix G

## WHY DO INSTRUCTORS NOT FRIEND SOME STUDENTS ON FACEBOOK

## CODE BOOK

*DIRECTIONS: Read each of the responses provided by the participants of the study. For each of the individual responses, decide which of the nine categories explains the participant's reason(s) for not friending some of their students. Some responses may provide reasoning that fits into more than one category; some may not fit into any of the categories. Place a mark in the box corresponding to the category (or categories) that explains the participant's reasoning.*

**CATEGORY ONE: No relationship with the student**

This category refers to the idea that participants do not have a relationship with the students outside of the classroom. They may not even know the student who has sent the friend request. These participants want to friend students they advise, mentor, or work with in other capacities; in other words, students they have a relationship with that goes beyond classroom teaching.

**CATEGORY TWO: Student is still enrolled (specific course or university)**

This category refers to the idea that participants will not friend students until they have finished the course taught by the participant or have graduated from the university.

**CATEGORY THREE: Keep personal/professional lives separate**

This category refers to the idea that participants do not want to disrupt the boundary line between their professional and personal lives. They want to keep their personal lives private; they do not want students to see the information they have posted on Facebook.

**CATEGORY FOUR: Not wanting to know about the students' lives**

This category refers to the idea that participants do not want to see the information students post on Facebook. These participants do not see a need for knowing what students do in their free time.

**CATEGORY FIVE: Problematic students**

This category refers to the idea that participants will not friend students who have caused problems in the past. These problems may have occurred on Facebook, in the classroom or in the department/university.

**CATEGORY SIX: No undergraduates**

This category refers to the idea that participants will not friend undergraduate students. They will only friend graduate students.

**CATEGORY SEVEN: Students are not 'friends'**

This category refers to the idea that the participants do not view their students as 'friends.' These participants view all students as just that, students.

**CATEGORY EIGHT: Need for trust**

This category refers to the idea that participants have to trust the students to be mature enough to handle the relationship. This means the students will not expect favoritism, use the information on Facebook in unseemly ways or act in inappropriate ways on Facebook.

**CATEGORY NINE: Other ways to communicate**

This category refers to the idea that Facebook is not a preferred way of communication between the instructor and student. The participant prefers to use other modes of communication, such as email, phone, office visits, etc. They do not want the students to rely on Facebook as a way to contact them.

