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How Do You Like Me Now? An Examination of College Students' Use of Social Media Sites

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Bridgewater State University

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Running Head: How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

How Do You Like Me Now?: *An Examination of College Students' Use of Social Media Sites*

James D. Wheeler III  
Sociology Honors Thesis  
December 2017  
Advisor: Dr. Jodi Cohen

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

### **Abstract**

The digital era and the rise of new technology within everyday experiences has led young adults to seek out social media sites as a means of socializing, identity building, self-expression, and seeking validation from peers and friends. The previous work of scholars expresses how social media sites have become a predominate form of communication amongst young adults, and are a social hub for establishing communities that foster particular ideals and online behavior of 'digital natives' (those born right before and after the general introduction of digital technologies). This research project contextualizes young adults' use and behaviors on social media by focusing on the self-reported behaviors of college students. This research examines the ways in which college students use social media sites, and the role that they play in their social lives. Data was collected through 156 online surveys. While the findings did not fully support the prediction that social media sites are as central to the social lives of college students as previously suggested, it was found that college students construct their online identities around their offline self-concepts and that they find forms of validation on social media sites as seen with receiving multiple 'Likes' on their posts. This research contributes to the literature of sociological discourse of young adults and social media sites by shedding light on the relevance of social media in the lives of college students.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

## **Introduction**

Technology, in all its numerous forms and manifestations, has become ubiquitous in contemporary society, and a pronounced presence of accessible technology has fostered a new digital era in which those brought up in it have become 'digital natives'. This term is defined as the generation born right before and after the general introduction of digital technologies and have grown up immersed in and are familiar with those technologies (De Ridder and Ellison 2013). This seemingly inexorable march of new technology has also forged an era of digital dependence by these digital natives.

Digital natives, the young adults of contemporary society, have been brought up accustomed to and reliant on the presence of digital technology within their everyday experiences. Such affinity towards technology lays beyond the physical cellphone, tablet, or cutting-edge laptop. Rather it is the vast and boundless digital world of interconnection and instantaneous communication that these devices transport young adults to, these being social media sites. In this work, social media sites are defined as internet-based applications that allow people to create a public profile and interact with other users through means of posting pictures, statuses, and messaging (boyd 2014).

In other words, social media sites are an online platform that allow for users to create a public profile and interact with other users within the context of a digital community that are constructed through these sites. Some notable social media sites that are frequently used by young adults include Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram (Gardener and Davis 2014). The wide availability of social media sites has influenced the way these young adults build and maintain social networks, as well as how they consume and share information. According to surveys of US adolescents by the Pew Research Center, the proportion of young adults with internet access

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

has increased from 87% in 2004 to 95% in 2012, and the proportion of young adults engaging in some form of social media sites has increased from 55% in 2006 to 83% in 2012 (Houston, English, Kennedy, Knight, and Seo 2014).

Young adults are living within an age of varying means of communication within the rapidly changing technological landscapes with increased integration of social media in the daily experiences of young adults of the digital era (Gardener and Davis 2014: 102). The growing relevance and daily implication of technology and social media sites has elevated scholarly discussion and deliberation around the topics of social media in relation to young adults.

The actions of young adults and the dynamics of social media sites have been studied in numerous contexts including: the significance of these sites within young adult's social, the construction of identity within these sites, self-presentation within social media sites, young women and social media, social media in the context of social theory, online bullying and the use of 'safe spaces', and the fear of missing out. To extend the previous discourse, this body of research seeks to specifically examine the ways in which college students use social media sites, and the role that it plays in their social lives, online identity building, and for validation from their peers.

## **Literature Review**

### **Social Media Sites and Social Lives**

For young adults, social media sites are more than a tool for communication, it is a vital social lifeline that enables them to stay connected to peers, friends, and significant others (Houston et al. 2014). In other words, it is the place they want and need to be. As expressed by one female interviewed by boyd (2014) in her study of young adults and social media sites "if

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

you're not on (fill in social media site: Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, etc.) then you do not exist" (p. 14). What this conveys is that social acceptance is predicated on the ability to socialize with one's peers in the "cool" place. Each cohort of young adults delineates the cool place over the generations.

What the diner and drive-in was to youth in the 1950's and the mall of the youth in the 80's and early 90's, are what social media sites are to youth now (boyd 2014). Although young adults still congregate at physical domains like youth in generations past, the introduction of social media has not altered the landscape of where young adults hang out. Rather, it has enabled them to create a "cool space" without having to physically transport themselves anywhere (boyd 2014). Social media has become an important public space where young adults socialize broadly with peers and friends in an informal way. Young adults seek a place of their own to make sense of the world beyond their schools, bedrooms, homes, and towns. This engagement between young adults on social media is done within the domain of 'networked publics' or the digital communities that are constructed through these sites (boyd 2014)

Social media sites form these networked publics that allow for young adults to see themselves as a part of a broader community where they can gather and connect. Young adults are passionate about finding their place within the greater context of society. Engaging within network publics produced by social media sites has become routine behavior for many high school and college students in the United States (Eberhardt 2007).

The use of social media sites and engagement within network publics has developed into a central feature of the social lives of young adults (Kirsh 2010). An example of this vital role that social media plays is that college freshmen are reliant on social media due to their transitional period from high school to college as expressed by Eberhardt (2007). They use social

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

media in order to establish themselves within the campus community and culture as well as to stay connected with friends and family back home (Eberhardt 2007).

Young adults possess an intrinsic desire to gossip, complain, flirt, share passions, express their personal troubles, and engage informally. They embrace social media sites roughly for the same reasons earlier generations congregated in parking lots, colonized front stoops, and talked endlessly on landlines (boyd 2014). Social media is the arena in which young adults can exhibit and engage in their need for social connections. The social media tools that young adults use today are the direct descendants of the former hangouts and public spheres in which youth have congregated for decades (boyd 2014).

The discussion of the implications of social media sites within the everyday experiences of young adults is through the notion of the app-mentality (Gardener and Davis 2014). The app-mentality evokes the on-demand nature of social media sites and apps (specialized program downloaded onto mobile devices) in daily practice and the way they are used in discrete tasks such as finding a restaurant, shopping, and the ability to communicate with others. The app-mentality is an algorithmic way of thinking “any question or desire one has should be satisfied immediately and definitively” (Gardener and Davis 2014: 102). It is the reliance on the instantaneous and the unambiguity of results within daily practices which in turn impacts young adults approach to their schoolwork, friendships, creative pursuits, and personal expression.

The app-mentality creates such powerful identifying features through striking such icons as the Twitter bird or the Amazon shopping chart (Gardener and Davis 2014). It is expressed that this app-mentality towards social media sites of young adults is neither inherently benign nor inherently bad (Gardener and Davis 2014). Rather, it is how young adults use social media that defines these good or bad outcomes. There is often pejorative input by generations who fall

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

outside the digital era that young adults use of social media sites erodes their ability to socialize. But rather it is argued that these sites endow young adults with the agency to become informed, thoughtful, and engaged citizens through their online interactions (Gardener and Davis 2014). It is stated in the previous research that social media sites are deeply rooted, as well as essential, to the social lives and everyday experiences of young adults of the digital era.

### **Online Identities**

The perennial desire for social connection and self-expression among young adults within network publics is expressed through the construction of online identities. It is argued that young adults build online identities within networked publics that are similar to their own offline self-concepts (such as personal interests and personal ideals) in order to connect and communicate with others who share these similar interests or ideals (Livingstone 2008). In other words, young adults build their online identities around their offline identities in order to connect with those who hold mutual interest and ideals.

Social media sites have developed into the underpinnings of political expression, commentary of social issues, and discussion of popular cultural interests given that it provides a venue to do so (Houston et al. 2014). It is through the construction of online identities that young adults voice their opinions on such matters based on their offline self-concepts (Livingstone 2008). The development of online identities of young adults also brings up the matter of privacy within the venue of social media sites.

The contemporary concept of privacy is a highly individualistic ideology that legitimates private property relations and social inequality (Fuchs 2014). It is a universal ideal that finds its own limit and its critique in capitalism's immanent tendencies for the surveillance of workers

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

and consumers in the economy and the surveillance of individuals by the state, companies, and other citizens (Fuchs 2014). This contemporary concept permeates into the realm of social media sites and has stimulated much debate over privacy of young adults in the vast public sphere of the internet. Young adults devote attention to the presentation of their identities on social media sites while the older generational onlookers (those who fall outside the digital era) express concerns of such presentation regarding their privacy (Jordan and Romer 2014). Young adults construct their 'profile', make it 'public' or 'private', they 'comment' or 'message' their 'friends', post thoughts and interests on their 'wall' or 'feed', as well as 'block' or 'add' people to their network (Livingstone 2008)

Social media sites have introduced a new dimension to the well-worn fights between the generations within the digital era over private space and personal expression (Livingstone 2008). It is found that the online identity building of young adults is constituted through interaction with others and self-actualization which includes a careful negotiation between the opportunities (for identity, intimacy, sociability) and risks (regarding privacy) afforded by social media sites (Livingstone 2008). For young adults who are focused on identity construction and display, online risks of privacy may occur from the individual's willing self-display of personal information to a wide circle of contacts, not all of whom are close friends (Jordan and Romer 2014).

To avoid potential risks of displaying too much personal information, young adults are consistently aware of the people they are connecting and sharing information with (Livingstone 2008). Young adults are attentive to what they share and whom they share it with when constructing their online identities within network publics. Livingstone (2008) states that

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

although to exist online “one must write oneself, and one’s friendships and community, into being this does not mean one must include every aspect of oneself” (p. 409).

Deciding what not to say about oneself online is, for many young adults and users of social media sites, a means to protect their identity and their spaces of intimacy. Young adults construct online identities in order to engage within network publics, these identities are based on their offline self-concepts (comprised of their personal interests and ideals) (Livingstone 2008). These are seen within the content that they post (whether it be political expression, commentary of social issues, and discussion of popular cultural) and do so in order to connect with those that share mutual thoughts and beliefs, but it is done so with keeping privacy in mind.

### **Self-Presentation and Validation**

Young adults are at an age in which self-presentation is particularly important, predominantly through social media sites. Through the construction of online identities and the focus of self-presentation on social media sites by young adults, there is an inherent need to gain a sense of validation and acceptance from the peers whom they engage with (Sherman, Payton, Hernandez, Greenfield, and Dapretto 2016:1028). Social media sites embody a vital social context for young adults to establish a sense of commonality that allows for both existence and validation (Sherman et al. 2016).

Much, if not all, of this sense of validation is gained through the act of ‘Liking’ and providing positive comments on an individual’s post. Young adults perceive information and validation on social media sites through a quantitative means that inform their value and sense of acceptance within network publics by peers (Sherman et al 2016). Sherman et al. (2016) furthers the discussion with the emotional draw young adults gain from receiving ‘Likes’ on their posts

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

through a study conducted on responses to 'Likes' on the social media site of Instagram.

Sherman et al. (2016) assert that 'Likes' on Instagram are a quantifiable form of social endorsement and are a major influence on young adult's validation and sense of acceptance among their peers. Young adults underwent the process of viewing photos ostensibly submitted to Instagram.

Through their study, it was found that young adults were more compelled to 'Like' photos based on: the physical attractiveness of the individual reflected in the photos, those post depicted with many 'Likes' than photos with few 'Likes', and photos of risky behaviors (e.g., drinking, smoking) these findings showed the influence of virtual peer endorsement (Sherman et al. 2016:1029). Such a study highlights a new and unique way in which peer influence occurs on social media: through quantifiable social endorsement. The conclusion presented showed that young adults are more inclined to 'Like' a photo of an individual based on the physical attractiveness of the individual in the post and the popularity of a photo as expressed through multiple 'Likes'. The more 'Likes' a picture accrued, the more participants felt inclined to take part in 'Liking' given the influential social force of peer approval on the post due to the multiple 'Likes' (Sherman et al. 2016:1029). These factors have a significant effect on the way a post is perceived by young adults.

The power of the 'Like' and the act of 'Liking' draws an emotional appeal for young adults and such an act is prompted by the social forces to gain peer approval. These social forces are the categories of gender norms and sexual pursuits of young adults which are tied up in self-presentation on social media sites (Sherman et al. 2016). Even outside the realm of social media sites, such social forces guide the way in which young adults: perceive the world, confer with others, how they dress, and the way in which they act (Pinsky 2010). One of the most intimate

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

forms of self-presentation (the form that most directly seeks to garner 'Likes' and positive comments) is the posting of self-pictures or "selfies" (Pinsky 2010).

What prompts one to 'Like' or comment positively on a selfie post is explained by Sherman et al's. (2016) findings of physical attractiveness and the number of 'Likes' the post has accrued. The inclination to 'Like' and comment on an individual's selfie is driven by gender norms and sexual pursuit of young adults within a hetero-normative framework (De Ridder et al. 2013). Much of the culture of social media is comprised of the ongoing expression of "hot or not", the 'Liking' or rejecting of individuals based on physical appearance, this is found to be particularly true for young women (Sales 2016).

It is suggested that males tend to 'Like' posts and engage within social media sites based on their pursuit of sexual interests and hetero-normative romance (Pinsky 2016) and are therefore more compelled to 'Like' selfies based on physical attractiveness. The act of 'Liking' and making positive comments on a post works within the framework of hetero-normative ideals and gender norms which are perpetuated in popular media (namely in movies, magazines, television and shows) (De Ridder et al. 2013).

Regarding selfies, young adults reproduce culturally dominant ideologies of gender as reinforced by popular media images such as women being submissive and scantily clad, while males exude virility through assertiveness and muscular physic (Kapidzic, Sanja, and Herring, 2015). Kapidzic et al. (2015) attribute such results to the internalization of cultural norms, socialization processes, and popular media to explain these trends. As discussed prior, the cultural dynamics of social media accounts is guided by the overriding desire of being 'Liked' which is generally predicated on one's physical attributes shown within their pictures, and is often weighs heavy on young adults.

### **Young Women and Social Media**

When we address the matter of cultural dynamics of social media, it is vital to consider the presentation and attitude toward young women and where this is rooted within the cultural landscape. The common reproach expressed by the generations prior to the digital era, is that young adults are tethered to social media sites. Such an affinity towards one's presence and engagement on social media sites is especially true for young women (Sales 2016).

In 2015, 88 percent of young American women had access to a mobile phone, and a total of 73 percent had smartphones, according to the Pew Research Center (Sales 2016:7). A total of 92 percent of these women were going online from their mobile devices daily, and 24 percent were online "almost constantly" (Sales 2016:7). Given how central social media sites are to the lives of young adults, it is important to take into account how social media sites impact the way in which young women perceive their world. This includes how they think and act, and how they establish social relations with friends and peers, how they negotiate intimate relationships, and how they are introduced to sexual relationships (Sales 2016).

When young adults talk about their use of social media sites they state that they are "going on it" (Sales 2016). Such a statement alludes to a belief that one is being transported to another dimension, but this is not a place, rather it is an environment forged by businesspeople (Sales 2016:19). One cannot deliberate on the topic of the culture of social media without extending the discussion to where these sites stem from and the culture that is rooted within this environment.

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

According to the Department of Labor in 2012, a total of 70 percent of the workforce at the top ten Silicon Valley firms were male and 63 percent of that demographic were white; the top executives and managers of these firms were 83 percent male and white (Sales 2016:18). A 2015 study conducted by LinkedIn (a business and employment-oriented social networking service) found that “software engineering teams in technical fields have proportionally fewer women than several non-tech industries: namely, healthcare, retail, government, education and non-profits” (Sales 2016). The National Center for Women & Information Technology in 2009 found that a total of 56 percent of woman with STEM (an interdisciplinary education in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics) expertise leave the industry midway into their career (Sales 2016:21).

In the digital era, which has produced countless job opportunities and has been the impetus behind many businesses, men are the ones availing the benefits and profit while woman struggle to procure jobs and executive positions in Silicon Valley. The culture of Silicon Valley is a male-dominated (a microcosm of greater society and the hegemonic rule of paternalism that is predicated on the system of the disadvantage of woman) deemed by Sales (2016) as place of “frat boy” culture, populated by “brogrammers” and “tech bros” (p.21). A work environment that is also fraught with sexist jokes, casual misogyny, sexual harassment lawsuits, gender guided firing and hiring, and a financing system that rewards young men and shortchanges young women (Sales 2016:21).

The cultural dynamics of Silicon Valley have an immediate impact of the structuring of social media sites and their implications. Not every social media site reflects the “frat house” atmosphere of the tech industry, yet one cannot negate from the fact that the most popular social media sites (Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter) are directly impacted by this

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

atmosphere (Sales 2016). It is not as though women have not been exploited prior to the introduction of social media, such a theme is rooted in the systemic patriarchy of American society, but the sexualization of woman has become a prevailing mode within the context of social media sites. This influences the way in which young women see themselves, as well as how they present themselves. The concept of “hot or not” is the basis for much of social media and is a product of the frat house atmosphere of the tech industry (Sales 2016).

### **“Hot or Not”: Body Image and Social Media**

The concept of “hot or not” is a prevailing social media trend that made its first appearance in 2000 with the launch of the photo-rating site *Hot or Not* by James Hong and Jim Young, two Silicon Valley engineers (Sales 2016:22). Sales (2016) discusses how these two engineers created a site in which users could look at a picture of a woman’s face and vote on how she measures up based solely on physical attributes. Such a concept was the basis for Mark Zuckerberg’s site “Facemash”, a precursor to Facebook, a campus rating site in 2003 (Sales 2016). Much of the culture of social media sites are an ongoing expression of the concept of “hot or not”, the notion of rejecting or accepting based on physical appearance through the act of ‘Liking’.

Comments like “sexy”, “beautiful”, “gorgeous”, and “hot” are conventional responses to posts or selfies in the culture of social media (Sales 2016:23). Such responses are sought after by young women as they spend hours of their day preparing themselves to be photographed or to photograph themselves in a way that will garner “Likes” and approving comments (Sales 2016:23). For many young women, the desire to be perceived as “hot” is felt on a continual basis. When they post selfies and pictures of themselves (whether this be on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, or Facebook) they will invariably be judged on their physical attributes,

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

namely their “hotness” in a quantifiable manner in the form of ‘Likes’ and comments (Sales 2016). These social media incite and encourage an undue focus on appearance for both young men and women. They call for those viewing the post to engage with the pictures by employing the ‘Liking’ feature with which those viewing can judge the appearance and rate the posting (Sales 2016).

Body image is central to both young men and women’s self-definition, given that they have been socialized to believe that appearance is an important basis for self-evaluation and for evaluation by others (Clay, Vignoles, and Dittmar 2005). Physical attractiveness is associated with a number of positive outcomes, including social and personal rewards such as positive perceptions from others, and a higher self-esteem (Pinsky 2016). The “hot or not” notion is infused within the cultural dynamics of social media, which causes young adults to be confronted with the intrinsic need to feel attractive and social media culture amplifies such a desire (Sales 2016). Perceptions of appearance and validation are inextricably linked, such that perceived appearance consistently emerges as a strong predictor of one’s sense of validation and acceptance among their peers for both male and female young adults (Clay et al. 2005).

### **Social Media Sites in the Context of Social Theory**

Cooley’s concept of the Looking Glass Self, states that a person’s self grows out of their social interactions with others. The view of ourselves comes from the contemplation of personal qualities and impressions of how others perceive us (Lemert 2013). The main point being that people shape their self-presentation based on their understanding of how others perceive them (Lemert 2013). Cooley asserts that individuals form their self-images through the responses and evaluations of others in their social environment (Lemert 2013).

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

The concept of the Looking Glass Self-theory holds a primary base for the process of socialization. The idea is that people in our close environment serve as the “mirrors” that reflect images of oneself (Lemert 2013). According to Cooley, this process has three steps. First, individuals imagine how we appear to another person. Sometimes this imagination is correct, but may also be wrong since it is merely based on assumptions. Second, individuals imagine what judgments people make of us based on appearance. Lastly, we imagine how other feel about us, based on the judgments made (Lemert 2013).

Such a concept relates to young adults through their self-presentation within social media sites and seeking validation through ‘Likes’. The amount of ‘Likes’ on a post can dictate how that individual perceives themselves in relation to their peers and friends (Sherman et al. 2016). If a post receives minimal ‘Likes’, or commentary, this is a reflection of how peers and friends view the individual. Minimal ‘Likes’ are perceived by young adults that their peers and friends think lowly of them and/or the content of their post, which can lead to negative feelings for that individual (Sherman et al. 2016). Much of what guides the actions of ‘Liking’ posts are under the notion of ‘hot or not’ where young adults validate one another through their physical attractiveness (Sales 2016). The focus of physical attractiveness by young adults directly impacts their sense of body image and how they portray themselves on their social media accounts (Clay et al. 2005). The dynamics of social media (relating to the act of posting to gain ‘Likes’ and commentary) has a connection to Cooley’s concept of the Looking Glass Self, where young adults use social media sites as mirrors to gain feedback and acceptance from peers.

## **Online Bullying and ‘Safe Spaces’**

One cannot discuss social media and young adults navigating emotions without discussing online bullying. Bullying and victimization constitute a serious social concern for

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

young adults and are pervasive in online and offline worlds (Jun Sung, Jungup, Espelage, Hunter, Patton, and Rivers 2016). According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, in 2011, about 23% of public schools reported that bullying occurred in school daily and weekly, and about 28% of 12 to 18-year old students nationwide reported being bullied at school (Kowalski and Limber 2013).

Approximately 5%-10% of students aged 12-18 report being cyberbullied (Kowalski and Limber 2013). Of these students, 4% report that another student posted hurtful information on the Internet, and another 4% report being harassed via text messages (Jun Sung et al. 2016). Considering the possibility of non-disclosure, it is likely that this figure is a low estimate. Regarding college students, on average about 20–25% of students reported non-cyberbullying victimization during college and 10–15% reported cyberbullying victimization (Lund and Ross 2017).

Overall, these results indicate that online bullying occurs with the experience of social media for all young adults. Although the matter of cyber-bullying is present within the practice of social media use by young adults, it is argued that social media sites provide a 'safe space' for those who endure online victimization. Young adults have developed 'safe spaces' within networked publics through their social media sites (Craig, McInroy, McCready, Cesare, and Pettaway 2015).

Craig et al. (2015) found that social media sites and communication technologies provide emotional benefits for sexual minority youth and young adults. Their findings articulated two major themes regarding sexual minority youth and their use of social media sites, these being that their offline experiences of bullying generate more fear than online experiences and that social media sites facilitate connection with other sexual minority youth who are enduring the

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

similar marginalization and online harassment through the use of safe spaces. They emphasized their ability to validate and express themselves openly by sharing their identities, thoughts, and opinions online, that would be generally met with disparagement offline (Craig et al. 2015).

## **The Fear of Missing Out**

The central role social media sites play in the social lives of young adults, as well as the constant need to feel validated and accepted by their peers, elicits a sense of anxiety when they see peers and friends posting about social events from which they were absent. This is a relatively new phenomenon termed Fear of Missing Out, popularly referred to as 'FoMO' (Alt 2015). This phenomenon has been defined as a "pervasive apprehension that others might be having socially rewarding experiences from which one is absent, FoMO is characterized by the desire to stay continually connected with what others are doing" (Przybylski, Murayama, DeHaan, and Gladwell, 2013:1841).

A study on college students regarding FoMO in their everyday experiences was carried out by Przybylski et al. (2013). As discussed, college students are heavy users of social media sites extensively for communication with peers, family and friends to obtain social support (Przybylski et al. 2013). It was found that FoMO is associated with higher levels of behavioral engagement with social media and FoMO was robustly linked to higher levels of social media engagement (Przybylski et al. 2013).

In other words, those who are frequently active and engaged with social media sites are confronted with anxiety brought on by FoMO. This due to their belief that they may have missed out on the opportunity to engage with peer causing them to feel isolated from the acceptance of the social community. This relatively new phenomenon of FoMO is reflective of the role social

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

media sites play in the social lives of young adults and how such a role draws a need for validation from peers which could be hindered through an absence of engaging with them at social events.

## **Methodology**

### **Research Design**

This research employs a quantitative research method through online surveys. According to Schutt, quantitative methods take the form of survey data and experiments: “data that are treated as quantitative are either numbers or attributes that can be ordered in terms of magnitude” (Schutt 2009: 17). Surveys have the advantage of being relatively easy to implement, particularly in an online setting, which increases the potential number of respondents. For this project, a survey instrument was initially deemed the most appropriate means of gathering data, due to its relative ease of construction and distribution. Quantitative surveys are advantageous since they have the potential to reach a wider sample and are less labor intensive than semi-structured interviews. Employing online surveys allowed for a wider sample of the online population to be captured for this study.

### **Sample**

The participants in this study were 156 undergraduates from Bridgewater State University (approximately 1.4% of the undergraduate population at Bridgewater State University). The sample population that was acquired was made up of varying majors, years, ages, and races. The ages of the participants were ordered accordingly: 18 (21.8%), 19 (14.7%), 20 (17.31%), 21 (23.7%), 22 (7.1%), 23 (5.1%), and 24+ (10.3%). The age distribution of the sample population is displayed in Table 1 (*Age*).

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 1: Age (Appendix A: Question 5)**

<b>Age</b>	<b>N=</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>18</b>	34	21.8%
<b>19</b>	23	14.7%
<b>20</b>	27	17.31%
<b>21</b>	37	23.7%
<b>22</b>	11	7.1%
<b>23</b>	8	5.1%
<b>24+</b>	16	10.3%

The gender breakdown of the sample is 77% female, 22% male, and 1% listed as unknown as displayed in Table 2 *Gender*. This imbalance may be due to the fact that 59% of Bridgewater State University undergraduate population is female.

**Table 2: Gender (Appendix A Question 2)**

<b>Gender</b>	<b>N=</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Female</b>	114	76.9%
<b>Male</b>	33	22.4%
<b>Not Available</b>	0	0%
<b>Unknown</b>	1	1.03%

The ethnicity of the sample consisted of 91% Non-Hispanic or Latino, and 9% Hispanic or Latino. The make-up of this sample included 79% White, 12.4%, Black or African American, 3.3% Asian, 3.3% Cape Verdean, 1.3% Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and 1% American Indian or Alaska Native as shown in Table 3 (*Race*).

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 3: Race (Appendix A Question 4)**

<b>Race</b>	<b>N=</b>	<b>Percentages</b>
<b>White</b>	122	79%
<b>Black or African American</b>	19	12.4%,
<b>Asian</b>	5	3.3%
<b>Cape Verdean</b>	5	3.3%
<b>Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander</b>	2	1.3%
<b>American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	1	1%

### **Setting**

Bridgewater State University is public university (the 10<sup>th</sup> largest four-year college or university in Massachusetts) located in Bridgewater Massachusetts. The number of undergraduates enrolled is approximately 9,562 as of Fall 2016. Bridgewater State University also has graduate education, the number of students enrolled is approximately 1,436 as of the Fall 2016. The undergraduate head count consists of 41% male, 59% female, 22% are students of color, and 1% are international. Class distribution of undergraduates is comprised of 18% freshman, 22% sophomores, 26% juniors, 32% seniors, and 2% unclassified undergraduates (Office of Institutional Research 2016).

### **Instruments**

Appendix A: Online Survey. For this study, I administered one online survey that I created for undergraduate students who use social media sites. The survey consists of 30 questions in total. The first part of the contained a statement of research and consent to participate page which requested that students check yes to consent to participate in the survey

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

and subsequent research. The next section of the survey began with background questions. Students were asked about their gender, ethnicity, race, and age. After the set of background questions, the survey contained questions about students' online behaviors. These questions consisted of the types of social media sites the students used (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, VSCO, Tumblr, Tinder, and Yik Yak), how many hours a day they spent on their social media accounts, and how many times a day they posted on their social media accounts. The next section of questions on the survey were for those who stated they had an Instagram account. These questions asked about the feelings students had about receiving 'Likes' on a post, how many 'Likes' is a good and bad number for a post to have, what makes a 'good' selfie, and asking whether they 'Like' posts based on the physical appearance of the individual who posted it. The next set of questions asked about students' feelings about the role social media sites play in their social lives, seeing friends post about social events (campus events, sports games, parties, etc.) they did not attend, whether social media sites objectify the appearance of woman, and questions pertaining to their online identities. The majority of the questions listed on the survey had an ordinal response (Likert Scales) ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree and never to always.

### **Procedure**

This research was done collected an online survey. I created this survey through the online survey development website Qualtrics. This survey was distributed throughout the campus through snowballing. I sent to the survey link to professors via email asking if they would share it with their classes. The professors who agreed to do so forwarded the link to their students via email or posted it on the website Blackboard (this is website used by Bridgewater State University in which faculty uses for their course to post resources and assignments that their

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

students can access). I also sent out the survey link to peers and those in my class through email.

The students were told that the survey was voluntary and completely anonymous; to maintain anonymity names were not recorded. The survey was active for about two weeks. The survey data collected was placed in the computer program Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for analysis. Once the data was entered into SPSS, I ran frequencies, correlations, and crosstabulations to further investigate the relationship of variables that existed within the research.

### **Research Question**

This body of research seeks to specifically examine the ways in which college students use social media sites and the role that it plays in their social lives, online identity building, and for validation and acceptance from their peers.

### **Hypotheses**

H1: College students will indicate that their social media accounts are a central part of their social lives.

H2: College students will indicate that their social media accounts are reflective of their off-line identities.

H3: College students who use Instagram are emotionally dissatisfied when something that they post receives fewer than 100 'Likes' on a post.

H4: College students who use Instagram are more likely to 'like' selfies by peers and friends whom are physically attractive.

H5: Female college students feel that social media sites often objectify the appearance of woman.

H6: College students whom have experienced online bullying or harassment have utilized their social media accounts as a 'safe space'.

H7: College students will indicate that they regularly feel jealous and/or anxious when their peers and friends post pictures at social events that they did not attend.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

## **Definitions**

*Digital Natives*: The generation right before and after the introduction of digital technologies (De Ridder & Ellison 2013).

*Social Media Sites*: Online applications that allow for individuals to create a public profile through which they can engage with others by means of posting, sharing, "Liking", commenting, and messaging (boyd 2014).

*Network Publics*: The domain or digital communities that are constructed from social media sites in which individuals engage within (boyd 2014).

*Online Identities*: Identities that are constructed within network publics that are reflective of an individual's offline self-concepts (this being their personal beliefs, ideals, and interests) (Livingstone 2008).

*'Like'*: A quantifiable expression of social endorsement from others on an individual's post. (Sherman et al. 2013).

*'Hot or Not'*: The notion that young adults 'Like' posts and accept peers within the context of social media based on the physical attractiveness (Sales 2016).

*Safe Spaces*: An environment that social media sites provide in which a person or category of people feel as though they will not experience emotional harm (Craig et al. 2015).

*FoMO*: The fear of missing out, it is a pervasive apprehension felt among young adults that others are having socially rewarding experiences that they are absent from. It is the desire to continually stay connected with what others are doing through social media sites (Przybylski et al. 2013).

## **Social Media Sites Included in this Study**

*Facebook*: A social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues.

*Instagram*: An internet-based photo-sharing application and service that allows users to share pictures and videos either publicly, or privately to pre-approved followers.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

*Twitter*: A social networking service where users post and interact with messages.

*Snapchat*: An image messaging and multimedia mobile application.

*Tinder*: A location-based social media app that allows users to chat. The app is most commonly used as a dating app.

*Tumblr*: A microblogging and social networking website and allows users to post multimedia and other content to a short-form blog.

*VSCO*: An internet based photography mobile app that allows for users to upload personal photos.

*Yik Yak*: A social media application that allowed people to create and view discussion threads within a 5-mile radius.

### **Limitations**

The data in this study is a non-probability sample. The sample was obtained by convenience and availability and therefore did not have a wide range of students from various disciplines, year in school, and ages as desired. The sample size is based on my access to surveying in all departments and grades was limited, and therefore does not give all the individuals in the population at Bridgewater State University an equal chance of being selected. Although it would have been intriguing to have comparisons of gender, one clear limitation is that the ratio of females to males is imbalanced as females represent 77% of the sample. Also, Bridgewater State University has a large commuter population which could potentially have had an effect on the findings. It should also be noted that students may not be entirely truthful or forthcoming with their answers on the surveys and some did not answer all of the questions in the survey. This may have been in part of the stigma of young adults being addicted to their phones and use of social media sites which may have influenced their answers due to denial of how much they actually use their phones and are on social media. In knowing this we can take

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

into account that the students may not have answered honestly when assessing their behaviors as well as personal feeling with their use of social media sites.

## Findings and Discussion

### H1: College students will indicate that their social media accounts are a central part of their social lives

The literature suggest that social media sites are central to the social lives of young adults. As was said in prior research, social media sites are an integral part of daily experiences (Gardener and Davis 2014) and connect young adults to network publics (boyd 2014). As expressed by Eberhardt (2007), social media sites are an immense virtual community that consist of subcommunities which students consistently seek to join and interact more frequently than the physical campuses that they inhabit. Table 4 (*Do you have or use social media account(s)?*) shows findings that social media sites are frequently used by students, with 94.9% answering “Yes” when asked if they have or use social media sites. We can infer that social media sites are present within the daily experience of students which does support my hypothesis.

**Table 4: Do you have or use social media account(s)? (Appendix A Question 6)**

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Yes, I have/use social media account(s)</b>	94.9	96.7	96.7
<b>No, I do not have/use social media account(s)</b>	3.2	3.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	98.1	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	1.9		
<b>Total N= 145</b>	100.0		

Yet when students were asked whether these social media sites are a major part of their social life, they were more ambivalent. Table 5 (*My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life*) displays a frequency table of statement presented of on the survey “My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life”. Here students responded with 14.1% who

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

answered 'Agree' and 20% who answered 'Disagree'. The uppermost valid percentage was 25.2% for those students who answered 'Somewhat Agree'.

**Table 5: My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life (Appendix A Question 25)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	7.1	8.1	8.1
<b>Disagree</b>	17.3	20.0	28.1
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	6.4	7.4	35.6
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	15.4	17.8	53.3
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	21.8	25.2	78.5
<b>Agree</b>	12.2	14.1	92.6
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	6.4	7.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	86.4	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

These percentages do not directly support my hypothesis due to the lower percentages for 'Agree' or 'Strongly Agree', which was the anticipated finding. Given the range of categories within the question, I wanted to group the values of "Disagree" and "Somewhat Disagree" as well as "Agree" and "Somewhat Agree" to see if more conclusive percentages could be drawn that would better reflect my hypothesis.

Table 6 (*Recoded Variable My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life*) displays the recoded variable with the grouped values "Disagree" and "Somewhat Disagree" as a collective "Disagree" and "Agree" and "Somewhat Agree" as a collective "Agree".

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 6: Recoded Variable My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	7.1	8.1	8.1
<b>Disagree</b>	23.7	27.4	35.6
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	15.4	17.8	53.3
<b>Agree</b>	34.0	39.3	92.6
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	6.4	7.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	86.5	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

The recoded variable presented a greater percentage for 'Agree' with 39.3% which was the highest percentage and is to some extent more reflective of the previous literature. But it must also be noted that a "Disagree" drew 27.4% with 8.1% for "Strongly disagree" as compared to 7.4% for "Strongly Agree". In other words, there is still a notable percentage of those students who overall disagree that social media sites are central part of their social lives, which does not entirely fit my hypothesis.

Taking into account that previous research does include studies of younger populations (namely high school students) and lacks in research on older student populations such as those 24-25 years or older, which makes up over 16% of Bridgewater State University's age distribution according to the Fall 2016 undergraduate population (Office of Institutional Research 2016), I wanted to see if a student's age influenced the significance of social media sites in their social lives. Previous literature suggests that the younger demographic of student's (namely freshman and sophomores) utilize social media sites to assist in their transition into college by facilitating an initial sense of connection with the campus community as well as to stay in touch with family or hometown friends (Eberhardt 2007).

Table 7 (*Crosstabulation of Age/Recoded My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life*) displays a crosstabulation with percentages of student's ages and the recoded variable of 'My social media accounts is/are a major part of my social life'. From the

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

crosstabulation we can see a slight contrast of the older demographic of 23 years old and 24 years old and older, although they only account for 3.0% to 9.6% of the total 135, and the younger of demographic 18-22 years old. It was found that 50% of those who were 23 years old answered to "Agree" and 38.4% of those 24 years old or older who answered to "Agree".

**Table 7: Crosstabulation of Age/Recorded My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life**

	18	19	20	21	22	23	24+	Total
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	3 10.3%	2 9.1%	2 8.3%	1 3.0%	1 10.0%	0 0.0%	2 15.4%	11 8.1%
<b>Disagree</b>	8 27.6%	5 22.7%	8 33.3%	10 30.3%	2 20.0%	1 25%	3 23.1%	37 27.4%
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	5 17.2%	4 18.2%	2 8.3%	8 24.2%	2 20%	1 25%	2 15.4%	24 17.8%
<b>Agree</b>	11 37.9%	9 40.9%	9 37.5%	12 36.4%	5 50.0%	2 50%	5 38.4%	53 39.3%
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	2 7.0%	2 9.1%	3 12.5%	2 6.1%	0 0.0%	0 0.0%	1 7.7%	10 7.4%
<b>Total N=135</b>	29 100%	22 100%	24 100%	33 100%	10 100%	4 100%	13 100%	135 100%

This was unexpected given that those 24 years and older, with the average age of part-time students being 28 at Bridgewater State University as of Fall 2016 (Office of Institutional Research 2016: 69), fall outside the digital generation and are not of the 'digital native' population meaning that they were not brought with social media (De Ridder & Ellison 2013). It should be noted that because this age demographic makes up a small percentage of the total sample and that these findings are not generalizable to Bridgewater State University and the population of older students.

Regarding those students ages 18-22 who fall more into the digital native population there is some slight contrast but not to the extent that was anticipated. Of those students who are

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

18 years old, 37.9% answered to "Agree" and 7.0% answered to "Strongly Agree" which is a higher percentage than the results presented in Table 5 and 6. Although, it should be noted that 27.3% who answered to "Disagree" and 17.2% who answered to "Neither Agree nor Disagree". Those students who are 19 years old did have a noticeably higher percentage with 40.9 % answering to "Agree" but it should also be noted that 22.7% answering to "Disagree" and 18.4% answering to "Neither Agree nor Disagree".

Although these are higher percentages of "Agree" from these particular age groups, it does not fully support my hypothesis suggesting freshman are reliant on social media sites to become more connected with the campus community or stay in touch with hometown friends or family. Taking into account that Bridgewater State University is primarily a region school where most students live locally in southeastern Massachusetts, younger students (such as freshman) many not feel the need to connected with the campus community because they have access to home frequently, and they may not feel compelled to use social media sites to stay connected with hometown friends or family. This trend can also be noted for the other ages, those students who are 21 years of age (and who make up the majority of the total count) 36.4% answered to "Agree" while 30.3% for "Disagree" and 24.2% for "Neither Agree nor Disagree".

I ran a correlation to confirm that a student's age does not play a role in social media sites being a central part of student's social lives. There was no correlation between student's age and whether social media is central to their social lives. From this we can infer that age does not influence whether social media sites are central to the social lives of students.

Although my findings do not fully support my hypothesis that social media sites are central to the social lives of college students, I did hypothesize that young adults are dependent on apps for everyday tasks namely communicating with friends, finding directions, or for

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

searching for information through online search engines. When asked if they used apps to carry out daily tasks 33.3% answered that they “Often” and 29.6% answered that they “Always” do (Table 8 *I use apps to carry out daily tasks*).

**Table 8: I use apps to carry out daily tasks (Appendix A Question 29)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Never</b>	4.5	5.2	5.2
<b>Rarely</b>	6.4	7.4	12.6
<b>Sometimes</b>	21.2	24.4	37.0
<b>Often</b>	28.8	33.3	70.4
<b>Always</b>	25.6	29.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	86.5	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N= 134</b>	100.0		

My findings do support my hypothesis of the app-dependence and mentality as suggested by Gardner and Davis (2014). From this we can infer that although social media sites may not be entirely central to the social lives of college students, technology and apps are frequently relied upon for college students' everyday experiences.

My findings do not fully support my hypothesis that social media sites are central to social lives of college students. For those students who fall more into the digital native population (the demographic of younger students) there was clear ambivalence with the responses and lack higher percentage of those answering to “Agree” or “Strongly agree” which was anticipated. From this we can infer that social media sites do play a role in social lives of students but not to the extent as suggested. There are a few factors that can attribute to this outcome. As expressed before much of the previous literature examines the experiences of high school students. High school students have limited geographic freedom, and socialize in a physical context due to fearmongering and excessive protectionism from parent's social media is the catalyst that allows socialize beyond their confinement (boyd 2014).

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

College students are not fettered in such away and can physically engage with peers or friends and are not necessarily reliant of their social media. Another matter that can attribute to this is the amount of time spent on social media sites. Of the student's surveyed 44.6% expressed that they spend between 1-3 hours on them. This makes sense given that a student's day is occupied with class, work, sports, or clubs/organizations in which students are socially engaging with peers and friends. Social media sites are present within the everyday lives of students as hypothesized and they do play a role in college student's social lives but not to the extent as was predicted.

### **H2: College students will indicate that their social media accounts are reflective of their off-line identities**

When asked if their social media accounts were reflective of their off-line identities (such as personal interests or political affiliation) students frequently agreed that this was the case. As displayed in Table 9 (*Who I am in the "real" world is who I am online*), 37% of students answered to "Agree" compared to the 3% of those who "Disagree".

**Table 9: Who I am in the "real" world is who I am online (Appendix A Question 30)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1.3	1.5	1.5
<b>Disagree</b>	2.6	3.0	4.4
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	5.1	5.9	10.4
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	10.3	11.9	22.2
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	19.2	22.2	44.4
<b>Agree</b>	32.1	37.0	81.5
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	16.0	18.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	86.5	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

When recoded (recoding entailed the grouping the values "Disagree" and "Somewhat Disagree" as a collective "Disagree" and "Agree" and "Somewhat Agree" as a collective "Agree"), 59.3% of students "Agreed" that their online identities were reflective of their

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

identities offline as displayed in Table 10 (*Recoded Who I am in the “real” world is who I am online*) Such findings supports my hypothesis that college students' build online identities that are similar to their own offline selves in order to communicate, share, and discuss ideas with peers sharing similar interests.

**Table 10: Recoded variable Who I am in the “real” world is who I am online**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1.3	1.5	1.5
<b>Disagree</b>	7.7	8.9	10.4
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	10.3	11.9	22.2
<b>Agree</b>	51.3	59.3	81.5
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	16.0	18.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	86.5	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

As discussed in previous literature, students who use social media sites communicate through the “network publics” and in order to connect with those who hold similar interest and ideals they must build their online identities around their offline selves.

Regarding political discourse on social media accounts, only 8.2% expressed that they often discuss their views and 31.5% expressing that the never discuss their political views (as displayed in Table 11 *I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss political opinions*). Although this does not fully support my hypothesis, such a finding can be attributed to politics being seen as a contentious topic, and fear of being reprimanded or rejected by those who do not share such views. It should also be noted that 26.9% express that they sometimes express their political views.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 11: I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss political opinions (Appendix a Question 26)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Never</b>	30.1	35.1	35.1
<b>Rarely</b>	19.9	23.1	58.2
<b>Sometimes</b>	23.1	26.9	85.1
<b>Often</b>	7.1	8.2	95.3
<b>Always</b>	5.8	6.7	100.0
<b>Total</b>	85.9	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

Regarding the discussing of social issues on social media sites: 22.6% express that they never do so, 38.3% express that they sometimes do so and only 6% express that they always do so (as displayed in Table 12 *I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss current social issues*). Although 22.6% never discuss social issues, a higher percentage express that they sometimes discuss such issues. This again is important to note given that students are still expressing that they discuss these matters through their social media even though it is not as frequent as hypothesized.

**Table 12: I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss current social issues (Appendix A Question 27)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Never</b>	19.1	22.6	22.6
<b>Rarely</b>	17.9	21.1	43.6
<b>Sometimes</b>	32.7	38.3	82.0
<b>Often</b>	10.3	12.0	94.0
<b>Always</b>	5.1	6.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	85.3	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	13.5		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

Regarding the discussion of pop culture trends and interests: 25.4% expressed that they never do so, 38.1% expressed that they sometimes do so, and 13.4% expressed that they often do

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

so (as displayed in Table 13 (*I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss popular culture trends*)).

**Table 13: I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss popular culture trends (Appendix A Question 28)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Never</b>	21.8	25.4	25.4
<b>Rarely</b>	16.0	18.7	44.0
<b>Sometimes</b>	32.7	38.1	82.1
<b>Often</b>	11.5	13.4	95.5
<b>Always</b>	3.8	4.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	85.9	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	14.1		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

Although it does not fully support my hypothesis, from this we can see that the online identities that students establish on their social media sites reflect their personal self-offline. In other words, students are building identities to connect with others who share mutual interests and ideals. We can gather that students are still engaging within network publics through their online identities and are nonetheless sharing personal thoughts and interests that are reflective of their offline identities.

### **H3: College students who use Instagram are emotionally dissatisfied when something that they post receives fewer than 100 'likes' on a post**

The previous literature suggests that self-presentation is particularly important on social media and that young adults tend to focus on self-presentation on their social media sites. (Sherman et al. 2016). The power of the 'Like' and liking on social media sites, namely Instagram which accounted for 21.55% of the social media sites students stated they used (the second most next to Facebook at 21.89%), draws an emotional appeal that reflects peer approval. A number of 'Likes' that are unsatisfactory and a number of 'Likes' that are satisfactory on an Instagram post is too subjective to express what is a definitive 'good' and 'bad' number.

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

A student with over thousand followers on their Instagram account could be dissatisfied with a post that garners 100 'Likes' compared with a student who has two hundred followers would be quite satisfied with post that garnered 100 'Likes'. In order gauge an understanding of what is deemed a 'bad' and 'good' number of 'Likes' I asked students on the survey answer this question through a text entry in which the students wrote what they felt good and bad numbers were. Of the responses, I found the average number of 'Likes' that was deemed as a good number was about 110 (106.2) and the average number of 'Likes' that was deemed as a bad number was a little over 50 (51).

Although this does not provide a clear number of what number of 'Likes' are deemed bad or good/minimal or multiple, it does provide us with a basic grasp of what is thought to be a satisfactory and unsatisfactory number of 'Likes' for a post. When asked if they were dissatisfied with receiving minimal likes (less than 100 based on the averages presented by the students) on a post, only 11.8% "Agreed" and 21.8% "Somewhat Agreed" compared to 20.2% who "Disagreed" and 9.2% who "Somewhat Disagree" as displayed in Table 14 (*I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'Likes' on an Instagram post*).

**Table 14: I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'likes' on an Instagram post (Appendix A Question 13)**

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	3.8	5.0	5.0
<b>Disagree</b>	15.4	20.2	25.2
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	7.1	9.2	34.5
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	14.1	18.5	52.9
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	16.7	21.8	74.8
<b>Agree</b>	9.0	11.8	86.6
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	10.3	13.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	76.3	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	23.7		
<b>Total N=119</b>	100.0		

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

There was an overall ambivalence with the student responses to the question but the recoded variable (recoding entailed the grouping the values “Disagree” and “Somewhat Disagree” as a collective “Disagree” and “Agree” and “Somewhat Agree” as a collective “Agree”) aids in drawing a clearer conclusion with 33.6% who “Agreed” and 13.4% who “Strongly Agreed” (a combined 44%) compared to 29.4% who “Disagreed” and the 5% who “Strongly Disagreed” (a combined 34.4%) as displayed in Table 15 (*Recoded variable: I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'likes' on an Instagram post*).

**Table 15: Recoded variable: I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'likes' on an Instagram post**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	3.8	5.0	5.0
<b>Disagree</b>	22.4	29.4	34.5
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	14.1	18.5	52.9
<b>Agree</b>	25.6	33.6	86.6
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	10.3	13.4	100.0
<b>Total</b>	76.3	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	23.7		
<b>Total N=119</b>	100.0		

These percentages do not fully support my hypothesis that dissatisfaction comes with receiving minimal 'Likes' on an Instagram post. It was predicted that students would be in agreement that a post should be taken down due a lack of 'Likes' given the suggestion that students would feel invalidated by their peers and friends, but such results were not found. When asked if an individual should take down a post because it received too few 'Likes' (an assumed less than 100) 93.3% answered no (as displayed in Table 16 *Do you think a person should take down a post because it received too little 'likes'?*)

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 16: Do you think a person should take down a post because it received too little 'likes'?**  
(Appendix A Question 14)

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Yes</b>	5.1	6.7	6.7
<b>No</b>	71.2	93.3	100.0
<b>Total</b>	76.3	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	23.7		
<b>Total N= 119</b>	100.0		

These results are consistent with the dissatisfaction frequencies. I did find a correlation between the variables for 'Dissatisfaction for receiving minimal 'Likes'' and 'should an individual take down a post for receiving minimal 'likes' on a post?' as displayed in Table 17 (*Correlation*).

**Table 17: Spearman Correlation**

<b>I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'likes' on an Instagram post</b>		<b>I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'likes' on an Instagram post</b>	<b>Do you think a person should take down a post because it received too little 'likes'?</b>
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.286**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	119	119
<b>Do you think a person should take down a post because it received too little 'likes'?</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.286**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	119	119

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

This is an interesting find given that we can infer that students who receive minimal 'Likes' on a post are dissatisfied to the point where they feel compelled to take down said post which, does support my hypothesis on college students' sense of validation being impacted by 'Likes'. As displayed in Table 18 (*I feel satisfied or glad when I receive multiple 'Likes' on an Instagram post*), 31.1% of students "Agreed" and 29.9% (a combined 61%) "Strongly Agreed" that they

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

were satisfied with multiple 'likes' compared to the 1.7% who "Disagreed" and 1.7% (a combined 3.4%) who "Strongly Disagreed".

**Table 18: I feel satisfied or glad when I receive multiple 'likes' on an Instagram post (Appendix A Question 12)**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1.3	1.7	1.7
<b>Disagree</b>	1.3	1.7	3.4
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	1.3	1.7	5.0
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	10.3	13.4	18.5
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	17.9	23.5	42.0
<b>Agree</b>	23.7	31.1	73.1
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	20.5	26.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	76.3	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	23.7		
<b>Total N=119</b>	100.0		

Table 19 (Recoded *I feel satisfied or glad when I receive multiple 'Likes' on an Instagram post*) displays the recoded variable (recoded the same as the other 'satisfaction & likes' variable) which shows 54.6% who "Strongly Agreed" and 26.9% (a combined 71.5%) that they satisfied with receiving multiple 'Likes' on an Instagram post compared to 3.4% who agreed and 1.7% who "Strongly Disagreed".

**Table 19: Recoded variable: I feel satisfied or glad when I receive multiple 'likes' on an Instagram post**

	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	1.3	1.7	1.7
<b>Disagree</b>	2.6	3.4	5.0
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	10.3	13.4	18.5
<b>Agree</b>	41.7	54.6	73.1
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	20.5	26.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	76.3	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	23.7		
<b>Total N=119</b>	100.0		

These percentages support my hypothesis that receiving multiple 'Likes' on an Instagram post draws an emotional appeal given students gain a quantifiable means of approval from peers

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

or friends by presenting themselves through posts on these sites. My findings both agree and disagree with my hypothesis. Although students are not dissatisfied with receiving minimal 'Likes' (an assumed less than 100 based on the averages presented by the students). On the other hand, a high percentage of students expressed that they were satisfied with receiving multiple 'Likes' (an assumed more than 100 based on the averages presented by students) which supports my hypothesis.

#### **H4: College students who use Instagram are more likely to 'Like' selfies by peers and friends whom are physically attractive**

One of the main forms of self-presentation on social media sites, namely Instagram, is through posting of self-pictures or "selfie" (Kirsh 2010). The act of 'Liking' and commenting on selfies is guided by the perennial expression of "hot or not", the 'Liking' or rejecting of people through physical appeal, this is particularly true of woman and girls (Sales 2016). Students were asked what makes a 'good' selfie the options presented were: using a picture that focuses on the face, tilting your heading and using the best side of your face, using natural lighting, using filters and editing apps, wearing fashionable and revealing clothing, having an interesting background, and taking multiple selfies before finding the right one to post. These options were based on popular culture magazines that discussed the topic of elements that comprise a 'good' selfie. The most frequent of these were using natural lighting at 23.13%, followed by, using a picture that focuses on the face at 21.40%, and taking multiple selfies before finding the right one to post at 16.47%. as displayed in Table 20 (What makes a 'good' selfie?).

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 20: What makes a 'good' selfie? (Appendix A Question 17)**

Elements of a 'good' selfie	N=	Percentage
Using a picture that focuses on the face	74	21.4%
Tilting your head and using the best side of your face	42	12.1%
Using natural lighting	80	23.1%
Using filters and editing apps	32	9.2%
Wearing fashionable/ revealing clothing	15	4%
Having an interesting background	46	13.3%
Taking multiple selfies before finding the right one to post	57	16.5%

These elements that comprise a 'good' selfie is grounded in physical appearance of the individual and are not necessarily influenced by other forces. When asked if they have 'Liked' a peer's or friend's selfie on Instagram based on the individual's physical appearance and attractiveness, 29.7% expressed rarely did but a notable 41.5% expressed that they sometimes do so as displayed in Table 21 (*I 'Like' a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance*).

**Table 21: I 'like' a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance (Appendix a Question 18)**

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	9.0	11.9	11.9
Rarely	22.4	29.7	41.5
Sometimes	31.4	41.5	83.1
Often	31.4	11.0	94.1
Always	8.3	5.9	100.0
Total	4.5	100.0	
Missing system	75.6		
Total N=117	100.0		

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Although these percentages do not fully support my hypothesis, it does show that the act of doing so is occurring and this action is not completely irrelevant to students. It was predicated that males would more frequently 'Like' posts based on physical appearance given that it is suggested that they engage with social media sites based on pursuing sexual interests and heteronormative romance. Therefore, they would feel more compelled to 'Like' selfies based on physical attractiveness. I did find a correlation between the gender of a student and 'Liking' their peers or friend's selfie based on physical attractiveness which an interesting finding (Table 22 *Correlation*).

**Table 22: Spearman Correlation**

<b>I 'like' a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance in the photo</b>		<b>I 'like' a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance in the photo</b>	<b>Gender</b>
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.219*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.018
	N	118	117
<b>Gender</b>	Correlation Coefficient	.219*	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.018	
	N	117	155

\* **Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).**

It is important to note that the ratio of my sample was uneven and that 77% of participants are females. My findings showed that males generally expressed that they "Sometimes" and "Often" 'Like' a selfie based on physical attractiveness with (Table 23 *Crosstabulation of Gender/ I 'like' a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance in the photo*) which does not fully support my predictions.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 23: Crosstab Gender/ I 'like' a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance in the photo**

	Female	Male	N=
Never	13	1	14
Rarely	31	4	35
Sometimes	38	10	48
Often	8	5	13
Always	5	2	7
<b>Total</b>	95	22	117

From this I can conclude that students do 'Like' selfies of peers or friends on Instagram based on physical appearance but it is not as strongly as I had hypothesized, it is still an occurring action, there is not an absence of it among college students. Also, males were not as compelled to 'Like' a selfie based on physical appearance as was suggested in the literature.

**H5: Female college students feel that social media sites often objectify the appearance of woman**

Self-presentation through selfies and other posts are important to the dynamics of social media, and the previous literature suggests that this forces females, in particular, to be confronted with the intrinsic need to appear attractive. It is suggested that the culture of social media amplifies such a desire leading to the objectification.

I wanted to focus on responses from my female sample so I split the variable of gender (which contained the labels of Male, Female, and Unknown) when running my frequencies so that only responses were from female. My findings showed that 37.9% "Agreed" and 35% "Strongly Agreed" that social media sites can objectify the appearance of woman as seen in Table 24 (*I think social media sites can objectify the physical appearance of woman*).

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**Table 24: I think social media sites can objectify the physical appearance of woman (Appendix A Question 24)**

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	.9	1.0	1.0
<b>Disagree</b>	.9	1.0	1.9
<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	0	0	0
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	2.6	2.9	4.9
<b>Somewhat agree</b>	19.7	22.3	27.2
<b>Agree</b>	33.3	37.9	65.0
<b>Strongly agree</b>	30.8	35.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	88.8	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	12.0		
<b>Total N= 136</b>	100.0		

Gender=Female

The recoded variable (recoding entailed the grouping the values “Disagree” and “Somewhat Disagree” as a collective “Disagree” and “Agree” and “Somewhat Agree” as a collective “Agree”) further strengthens these results with 60.2% who “Agree” and 35.0% who “Strongly Agree” as displayed in Table 25 (*Recoded I think social media sites can objectify the physical appearance of woman*)’

**Table 25: Recoded variable: I think social media sites can objectify the physical appearance of woman**

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	.9	1.0	1.0
<b>Disagree</b>	.9	1.0	1.9
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	2.6	2.9	4.9
<b>Agree</b>	53.0	60.2	65.0
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	30.8	35.0	100.0
<b>Total</b>	88.0	100.0	
<b>Missing system</b>	12.2		
<b>Total N=136</b>	100.0		

Gender=Female

From this I can conclude that social media sites are seen to objectify the appearance of women which fully supports my hypothesis. Here self-presentation and physical appearance is inextricably tied into validation with peer approval in the context of social media sites as suggested in the previous literature. It can be noted that women are cognizant of this present objectification in social media.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

**H6: College students whom have experienced online bullying or harassment have utilized their social media accounts as a 'safe space'**

When asked if they have experienced online bullying or harassment 34.6% that they have (Table 26: *I have experienced online bullying or harassment*) which exceeded my predictions given that it is suggested that 10%-15% of college students have experienced online bullying.

**Table 26: I have experienced online bullying or harassment (Appendix A Question 22)**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	34.6	39.4	39.4
<b>No</b>	50.6	57.7	97.1
<b>Do not wish to answer</b>	2.6	2.9	100.0
<b>Total</b>	87.8	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	12.2		
<b>Total N=136</b>	100.0		

This higher percentage could be attributed to students counting the times in which they have experienced online bullying in high school, especially among the younger demographic of freshman who have recently transitioned to college, rather than the experience with online bullying in college. A total of 41.7% of students expressed that they use social media accounts as a form of safe space (Table 27 *I use my social media account(s) as a form of 'safe space'*) which supports what I hypothesized.

**Table 27: I use my social media account(s) as a form of 'safe space' (Appendix A Question 21)**

<b>Valid</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
<b>Yes</b>	41.7	47.4	47.4
<b>No</b>	46.2	52.6	100.0
<b>Total</b>	87.8	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	12.2		
<b>Total N=136</b>	100.0		

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

I did not find a correlation between the populations who have experienced online bullying and those who utilize social media sites as a form of safe space which does not support my hypothesis. Although, it should be noted that a significant percentage of students still utilized their social media accounts as a form of safe space which does support my prediction. Safe spaces within the realm of social media allows for students to expose their personal online identities and validate themselves amongst those who are accepting of such individuals.

I ran a crosstabulation on the age of students and whether they use social media sites as a form of safe space to see what ages agreed that they use social media as a safe space. Table 28 (*Crosstabulation on Age and I use social my social media accounts as a form of 'safe space'*) shows that students who are 18 to 21 years old tend to agree more that they use social media sites as a form of safe space, specifically students who are 18 years old and 21 years old. These finding make sense given that these are the ages of the digital natives.

**Table 28: Crosstabulation of Age and I use social my social media accounts as a form of 'safe space'**

	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24+</b>	<b>N=</b>
<b>Yes</b>	16	9	12	18	4	1	5	65
<b>No</b>	14	13	12	15	7	3	8	72
<b>Total</b>	30	22	24	33	11	4	13	137

### **H7: College students will indicate that they regularly feel jealous and/or anxious when their peers and friends post pictures at social events that they did not attend**

It is suggested that college students often experience the fear of missing out (FoMO) on social events given they miss out on the opportunity to engage with peer or friends can feel isolated from the acceptance of the community. It is suggested that social media sites augment these anxieties. My research does not support my hypothesis given that 8.6% "Agreed" when asked if they regularly feel jealous or anxious when they see peers or friends post pictures at

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

social events in which they did not attend, compared to 26.6% who “Disagreed” along with the 23% who “Strongly Disagreed” (Table 29 *I regularly feel jealous and/or anxious when my peers post pictures of themselves at social events that I did not attend*).

**Table 29: I regularly feel jealous and/or anxious when my peers post pictures of themselves at social events that I did not attend (Appendix A Question 20)**

	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Strongly Disagree</b>	20.5	23.0	23.0
<b>Disagree</b>	23.7	26.6	49.6
<b>Somewhat Disagree</b>	9.0	10.1	59.7
<b>Neither Agree nor Disagree</b>	7.7	8.6	68.3
<b>Somewhat Agree</b>	14.7	16.5	84.9
<b>Agree</b>	7.7	8.6	93.5
<b>Strongly Agree</b>	5.8	6.5	100.0
<b>Total</b>	89.1	100.0	
<b>Missing System</b>	10.9		
<b>Total N=135</b>	100.0		

Although I did find that there was a correlation between the population who agree that social media sites are a central part their social lives and those who regularly feel jealous or anxious.

(Table 30 Correlation)

**Table 30: Spearman Correlation**

<b>I regularly feel jealous and/or anxious when my peers post pictures of themselves at social events that I did not attend</b>		<b>I regularly feel jealous and/or anxious when my peers post pictures of themselves at social events that I did not attend</b>	<b>My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life</b>
	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.464**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
<b>My social media account(s) is/are a major part of my social life</b>	N	139	135
	Correlation Coefficient	.464**	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	135	135

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

## How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

This outcome is interesting given that we can infer that a percentage of students within the sample do experience jealousy or anxiety when it comes to peers posting about social events they did not attend because they feel left out and were worried about not gaining peer approval due to their absence. My findings on student's feelings of anxiety and jealousy when missing out on a social event posted on social media did not fully support my hypothesis.

## **Conclusion**

This work has contributed to the previous discourse by furthering the understanding of young adults and their use of social media sites through an examination of college students. My research found that social media sites are a part of the everyday experiences of college students although they do not play a central role in their overall social lives to the extent that was hypothesized. It was found that college students are reliant on the use of social media sites and apps to carry out daily practices such as communication, finding directions, and looking up information as was hypothesized.

Regarding online identity building, my research found that students construct identities that are reflective of their offline self-concepts in order to connect with those who hold similar interests and ideals within networked publics. Although students did not express they discuss the topics of politics, social issue, and popular culture to the extent as anticipated, it should be noted that students are deliberating on such topics within networked publics through their constructed online identities which are reflective of their offline self-concepts, and with those share their interests.

On the matter of emotional dissatisfaction regarding 'Likes' on Instagram, my research found college students are not typically dissatisfied with minimal 'Likes' (an assumed less than

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

100) on a post but were overwhelmingly satisfied with receiving multiple 'Likes' (an assumed more than 100). From this it can be gathered that college students do gain a sense of validation through receiving multiple 'Likes' on a post as was hypothesized given that 'Likes' are a form of social endorsement among young adults. A correlation was found between those who are dissatisfied with minimal 'Likes' and taking down a post because it received few 'Likes'. It can be concluded that 'Likes' do have an impact on student's emotions and sense of validation among peers and friends as was hypothesized and can even drive some students to take down posts.

My research found that college students have tendencies to 'Like' a selfie of peer or friend based on the physical attractiveness of the individual posting but it not as strong as was predicted. But it can be noted that it does occur, there is not an absence of doing so among college students. Also, males are not as compelled to 'Like' a selfie based on physical appearance which was predicted due to the dynamics of heteronormative romance within the culture of social media sites based on societal gender norms as was suggested in the literature. From all of this, it can be concluded that self-presentation (physical appearance) plays a role in validation of students within the context of social media sites.

Regarding the physical appearance and body images of woman within social media sites, it was found that female college students are in agreement that social media sites can objectify the appearance of women which agrees with my hypothesis. On the matter of online bullying and safe spaces, although there was no correlation between experiencing online bullying and using social media sites as a safe space, it can be noted that social media sites are used by college students as a form of safe space which allows for them to validate themselves by exposing their personal online identities.

### How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Regarding FoMO (the fear of missing out), students did not express to the extent as anticipated that they are jealous or anxious when they see posts from peers and friends of social events that they did not attend. There was a correlation between those who agree social media sites are central to their social lives and feeling jealous or anxious when they see posts from peers and friends of social events they did not attend. From this we infer that students who engage with social media sites frequently for their social lives do experience jealousy or anxiety when it comes to peers posting about social events they did not attend because they feel left out and are worried of not gain peer approval due to their absence as was predicted.

Overall my research found that social media sites play a role in the everyday experiences of college students. This was seen through: playing a part in their social lives (although it is not central to their social lives as hypothesized), being reliant on social media and apps within their daily practices, constructing online identities that are reflective of their offline self-concepts to express personal interests and ideals to connect with those who share these mutual interests, gaining a sense of validation from peers and friends through garnering of 'Likes' on a post and do 'Like' posts based on physical appearance (although not to the extent as predicted but such actions can cause the objectification of woman on social media sites), using social media sites as a safe space to express themselves through their online identities, and finding that some students do fear missing out on experiences with peers and friends of social events they post (although not it is not to the extent as predicted). To further this discussion, additional research should be conducted on young adults and their use of social media sites with a primary focus on college students to more conclusively understand the relevance of social media sites and its impact on their lives in the digital era.

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

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How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

*Appendix A Online Survey*

Question 1

You are invited to participate in an online survey about the use of social media sites by college students. If you decide to participate in this study, your participation will involve answering the following survey questions. Although you may not personally benefit, this study is important because it helps in gaining a greater understanding of how social media is used by young adults. There are no foreseeable risks, and you may refuse to answer particular questions or withdraw from this study at any time. Your confidentiality will be kept to the degree permitted by the technology being used. You will have the option to leave the study at any time without penalty.

- YES, I do consent to participate in this survey
- NO, I do not consent to participate in this survey

Question 2

Gender

- Female
- Male
- Not Available
- Unknown
- NA

Question 3

Ethnicity

- Hispanic or Latino
- Non-Hispanic or Latino

Question 4

Regardless of your answer to the prior question, please check one or more of the following groups in which you consider yourself to be a member.

- Cape Verdean
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Question 5

What is your age?

- \_18
- \_19
- \_20
- \_21
- \_22
- \_23
- \_24+

Question 6

Do you have or use social media account(s)? (Social Media account/sites are defined as online sites that allow users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website through posting pictures, statuses, or videos)

\_Yes, I have and use social media account(s)

\_No, I do not have or use social media sites

Question 7

Which social media account(s) do you have? (check all that apply)

- \_ Facebook
- \_Twitter
- \_Instagram
- \_Snapchat
- \_VSCO
- \_Yik Yak
- \_Tinder
- \_Tumblr
- \_Myspace

Question 8

If applicable, type in other social media account(s) that you have and use which were not listed

(Please fill in box) [            ]

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Question 9

How many hours in a day do you spend on social media?

- 1-59 mins
- 1-3hours
- 4-7hours
- 7-10hours
- 11-14hours
- 15-18hours
- 18+hours

Question 10

On average, how times each day do you post on any of your social media account(s)?

- 0 times
- 1-2times
- 3-4times
- 5-6times
- 7-8times
- 9-10+times

Question 11

Do you use Instagram?

- Yes
- No

Question 12

I feel satisfied or glad when I receive multiple 'likes' on an Instagram post.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Question 13

I feel dissatisfied or upset when I receive minimal 'likes' on an Instagram post.

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Somewhat disagree
- Neither agree or disagree
- Somewhat agree
- Agree
- Strongly agree

Question 14

Do you think a person should take down a post because it received too little 'likes'?

- Yes
- No

Question 15

How many 'likes' is a GOOD number of 'likes' on an Instagram post (type number in the box below)

[      ]

Question 16

How many 'likes' is a BAD number of 'likes' on an Instagram post (type number in the box below)

[      ]

Question 17

What makes a good selfie (check all that apply)

- Using a picture that focuses on the face
- Tilting your heading and using the best side of your face
- Using natural lighting
- Using filters and editing apps
- Wearing fashionable and revealing clothing
- Having an interesting background
- Taking multiple selfies before finding the right one to post

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Question 18

I like a peers and/or friends Instagram post based on their physical appearance in the photo

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

Question 19

I have felt jealous and or anxious when my peers post pictures of themselves at social events that I did not attend (ex. sporting events, parties, club gatherings, etc.)

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

Question 20

I regularly feel jealous and or anxious when my peers post pictures of themselves at social events that I did not attend (ex. sporting events, parties, club gatherings, etc.)

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

Question 21

I use my social media account(s) as a form of 'safe space' (a place or environment in which a person or category of people can fell confident that they will not be exposed to discrimination, criticism, harassment, or any other emotional harm)

- \_Yes
- \_No

Question 22

I have experienced online bullying and or harassment

- \_Yes
- \_No
- \_Do not wish to answer

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Question 23

I have participated in online bullying and or harassment

- \_Yes
- \_No
- \_Do not wish to answer

Question 24

I think social media sites can objectify the appearance of woman

- \_Strongly Disagree
- \_Disagree
- \_Somewhat disagree
- \_Neither agree or disagree
- \_Somewhat agree
- \_Agree
- \_Strongly agree

Question 25

My social media account(s) are a major part of my social life

- \_Strongly Disagree
- \_Disagree
- \_Somewhat disagree
- \_Neither agree or disagree
- \_Somewhat agree
- \_Agree
- \_Strongly agree

Question 26

I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss political opinions

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

How Do You 'Like' Me Now?

Question 27

I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss current social issues

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

Question 28

I use my social media account(s) to express and discuss pop culture trends

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

Question 29

I use apps to carry out daily tasks (ex. Get directions, find a place to eat, banking, communicate with peers/family/friends, find out information about something)

- \_Never
- \_Rarely
- \_Sometimes
- \_Often
- \_Always

Question 30

Who I am in the "real" world is who I am online

- \_Strongly Disagree
- \_Disagree
- \_Somewhat disagree
- \_Neither agree or disagree
- \_Somewhat agree
- \_Agree
- \_Strongly agree