

**Jesus is My Friend:
Religiosity as a Mediating Factor in Internet Social Networking Use**

By

Rob Nyland
Brigham Young University
Department of Communications
Graduate Student

Chris Near
Brigham Young University
Department of Communications
Graduate Student

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Please direct all correspondence to:

Rob Nyland
547 E. 200 N.
Provo, UT 84606
(801) 885-0745

Abstract

Social Networking sites such as MySpace and Facebook have become behemoths both in the world of Internet commerce as well as in the lives of American youth. While these sites are popular with a younger demographic, there have been growing fears from religious leaders about the safety and content of these sites. This suggests that those individuals who are more religious will restrict their own exposure to these sites. In this study we explore the relationship between individual religiosity and the use of social networking.

An internet survey was administered to a convenience sample of 184 individuals through message boards and social networking messages. Respondents were asked questions about individual religiosity as well as how they use social networking. No relationship was found between religiosity and overall exposure. The results from an exploratory factor analysis indicate that there are 5 main uses for the use of social networking sites: meeting new people, entertainment, maintaining relationships, learning about social events, and sharing media. These uses were then developed into subscales so that the relationship between religiosity and each of these uses could be explored. Results indicate that more religious individuals are more likely to use social networking to maintain already existing relationships. In a post hoc analysis a positive relationship was found between religiosity and using to maintain relationships and to learn about social events for users under 24. Among women, a positive relationship was found between religiosity and using to learn about social events.

These results indicate that although religiosity is not a good predictor of overall social networking use, by taking a multi-modal approach, religiosity can predict certain uses. Members who are more religious may be using these sites to maintain the many relationships that can be fostered in a church community. Also, younger users may be more willing to integrate new technologies in their faith.

Introduction

The popularity of online social networking sites with American youth is undeniable in the current age. Websites such as Myspace, Facebook, Friendster and Xanga allow users to upload photos of themselves, create their own profiles, and then invite other users to be their “friend” – a part of their online social network. This online process may be so popular because it coincides with the process of identity construction among young adults (Internet Child Predators, 2006). This popularity is manifest in the market share that these websites produce: Myspace is the second most popular website on the web often ranking above such sites as Google (Duffy, 2006) and in a recent market study of College Students, the website Facebook.com tied in its coolness factor with the perennial college favorite, beer, both of them trailing behind the ipod (Survey: Ipods more popular, 2006).

In fact, through the power of social networking, Facebook.com has taken over the electronic landscape of college campuses. The site, which was modelled after the directories that incoming freshman were given when entering college now boasts an 85% registration rate at the schools in which it is set up for (Arrington, 2005). And of those students, each is using the site for an average of 18 minutes per day (Green, 2005).

This new generation— or what some would consider the “Myspace generation”—has moved away from the utilitarian approach to the Internet that their parents have. Hempel (2005) comments,

“Most adults see the web as a supplement to their daily lives. They tap into information, buy books or send flowers...but for the most part, their social lives remain rooted in the traditional phone call and face-to-face interaction. The Myspace generation, by contrast, lives comfortably in both worlds at

once...[using] social networks as virtual community centers to go and sit for a while (sometimes hours) (p. 89).

The amount of time that youth, and even adults, have been spending with these social networks has caused a wave of concerns about the safety, and content of these sites, as well as the effects of these on social relationships. On the safety front, parents have been concerned with the ability of predators to log on to the sites and to make contact with youth (Hempel, 2005). On the moral front, parents are concerned about the prevalence of pornographic material on these sites (Social networking sites are porn directories according to ChristianNet study, 2006). These concerns may not be unwarranted, in a recent content analysis of Myspace profiles, Pierce (Sex, Myspace: Fresno State Professor Finds Links, 2006) found that 59 percent of photographs on the site contained risqué or sexual poses, and that 54 percent contained profanity.

Such fears about content have also come from the religious realm. Recently, student congregations of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) at Brigham Young University (BYU) were warned against usage of social networking tools by their leaders (Coppins, 2006). While this decision does not reflect a policy decision of the church as a whole, it shows that some church leaders are carrying the same fears about social networking that are held in the public sphere.

Although leaders of the LDS church have previously talked about the benefits of the uses, much in the discourse of the church regarding the media has focused on its negative effects (Stout, 1996). The media policy of the church for youth states: “Whatever you read, listen to, or look at has an effect on you” (For the strength of youth, 2006). The leaders of the church have come out several times in recent years against the effects of pornography, urging members to

stay away from it (Hinckley, 2004; Oaks, 2005). Additionally, they are encouraged to stay away from any media “that is vulgar, immoral, violent, or pornographic in any way” (For the strength of Youth, 2006).

This feeling towards the internet and social networking sites in general does not seem to be centered within the LDS faith. Leaders of other churches have encouraged parents within their congregations to monitor their children’s MySpace page, and that users should use these sites for information seeking only, not for prolonged communication (Bird, 2006). Although many forward-thinking youth pastors are beginning to embrace social networking sites (Bird, 2006), it would seem that the general attitude from these churches is somewhat antagonistic. This relationship was empirically shown in a study by Armfield & Holber (2003). Using a combination of secularization theory and uses and gratifications, they found a negative relationship between religiosity and Internet use. They claim that,

“All forms of mass media are theorized to reflect the move toward greater secularization, presenting a predominantly secular image of the world we live within. Subsequently, strong religious affiliation will be negatively related to all forms of mass media use because a vast majority of media content does not reflect traditional religious values” (p. 130).

The purpose of our study is to determine if such a relationship between religion and the Internet carries over into the world of social networking. How does one’s level of religiosity affect their use of these sites? Additionally, as with any media, internet social networking serves a variety of uses. Are religious individuals more likely to use these sites for different purposes? Such a study will help us understand how one’s religious beliefs moderate their exposure to a new medium.

Literature Review

Social Networking

Because the internet social networking phenomenon is so new, few studies have addressed it. Studies that have done so have looked at issues of safety and privacy, also looking at some of the reasons that students use social networking tools. Govani & Pashley (2005) performed a survey of students Facebook profiles at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) and found that 80% of the students had not read the privacy policy for Facebook, and generally felt safe about giving out personal information in a campus environment. They also found that most users join Facebook because their friends pressure them into it, or to meet and socialize with others at their school. Another study of students at CMU found that very few students changed their privacy settings on Facebook, and as a result were ripe for stalking (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). In a survey of MIT students about their Facebook usage, Jones and Soltren (2005) found that users who are more involved (have more friends) are more likely to disclose more personal information, and that although students may be aware that Facebook has privacy features build in, they choose not to use them.

In a study perhaps more useful to our current discussion, Anton et. al (2006) performed a framing analysis of student and mainline newspapers in order to reveal college students' and adults attitudes toward social networking. By using concept mapping, they found that student newspapers tended to focus on the more utilitarian aspects of Facebook usage. The most common topics being sex & games, and relationships. Mainline newspapers, on the other hand, concentrated on the history and business of Facebook, as well as issues with online security.

Both student and mainline newspapers equally discussed using Facebook, and stalking – although each of these issues may have been framed differently, depending upon the audience.

Currently, no studies that have systematically looked at individuals' use of social networking tools could be found. The aim of this study is to look at how religiosity is a mediating factor in describing the way that individuals use online social networking tools.

Religion and Media Usage

Several scholars have helped shape our view of how various religions and their members interact with the media. The recent boom of computer technology has overshadowed use of more traditional media like newspapers. However, many studies have been done pointing out an important relationship between religiosity and newspaper use. Sobal and Jackson-Beeck (1981) showed that people with regular church attendance were more likely to read the newspaper as opposed to those not attending any church. Another study on newspaper use and religiosity by Finnegan and Viswanath (1998) showed that those who belonged to a church were more likely to read the daily newspaper as well as smaller weekly newspapers. In sum, church attendance is positively associated with higher levels of any type of newspaper usage (Armfield and Holbert, 2003).

In a study by Tankard and Harris (1980), they discussed the relationship between religion and television use and found that contrary to studies on magazines and newspapers the higher the use of television the less likely the viewers were to be involved in church related activities. This may be a function of religious conservative values, and how religious individuals may avoid exposure to media that they perceive to have secularizing content (Armfield and Holbert, 2003).

The internet, of course, has brought a whole new dynamic to the study of religion and media use. Through the use of a national survey involving more than 1300 respondents (Hoover et. al., 2004), it has been shown that in the U.S. there are approximately 82 million people that use the Internet for religious or spiritual purposes. These users are found to be more devout and more likely to be connected to religious institutions and practices than other Internet users. They also found that half of the religious internet users go to church at least once a week. These religious online users were found to be using the internet for purposes such as sending and receiving emails, receiving and sending online greeting cards, learning about religious events and affairs, information about religious holidays, and finally information on where they could attend religious services. This study showed that religious internet users are on the rise and it helped to pinpoint the specific uses of these religious users. A similar study was conducted by Bedell (2000) involving the collection of several convenience samples of people visiting religious websites. Like Hoover, this study found the use of religious sites by religious persons to be on the rise, citing that users are finding religious information on the web to be quite abundant and the users themselves are expecting much from this new and growing technology.

Contrary to the above findings, a study by Armfield and Holbert (2003) on religion use and the internet has found that as religiosity increases there is a decrease in internet usage. Basing their study on secularization theory, Armfield and Holbert found that although past research has shown an increase in religious internet use religious persons are still less likely to use mass media, in particular the internet. They admit that religion is a weaker predictor of internet usage when compared to age, education, and income, but nonetheless their study showed a distinct negative correlation.

One final study looked at the direction that the internet is taking religion and looking at the impact a global communication tool is having on religions world-wide (Hackett, 2006). In this paper it identifies 10 separate uses religions are finding through the internet including: communication, proselytizing, informing, experiencing, practicing, seeking, commodifying, advocating, healing, and problem solving. Hackett goes on to cite a Rabbi who points out that through the internet you no longer have to be a large operation to reach out (or be reached) on a global level. The author goes on to argue that because of the many options the internet is offering large and small-scale users its popularity is growing on an international level with no signs of slowing down.

Uses and Gratifications

The present study seeks to explore the uses of internet social networking and how those uses are mediated by religious beliefs. The idea of uses and gratifications first came about in 1959 in an article written by American sociologist Elihu Katz. Katz mentioned that the field of communication research was on the verge of dying out because researchers had simply been focusing on what the media did to people. In order to save the field of communications Katz suggested that the focus shift to what people do with the media (Severin and Tankard, 2001). Over the years this idea has grown and evolved to what we know today as uses and gratifications theory. This theory “seeks to explain the uses of media and the satisfactions derived from them in terms of motives and self-perceived needs of audience members.” (McQuail, 2005). This theory demonstrates that different people can use the same mass medium or message for widely different purposes (Severin and Tankard, 2001). This theory is based on research that shows the media users as active and aware of their choices and decisions in relation to their media

interaction (Ko et al, 2005). Media users have motivations and needs and they use the media to satisfy those demands. Also, according to Ko et. al (2005) uses and gratifications theory is considered an axiomatic theory meaning that its main beliefs are generally accepted and relevant to a range of situations involving media effects communications.

According to the University of Twente (2006), uses and gratifications, as researched in the 1970s, was a reaction to traditional mass communication research that focused on the sender and the message. Uses and gratifications teaches that there is an active audience and user. Psychological orientation looks at motives and gratifications of media users as the main point of departure. Particularly, audiences' psychological processes through exposure to a variety of types of mass media have been examined by many recent and past studies of uses and gratifications (Swanson, 1987). More specifically, the theory looks to explain how individuals use mass communication in order to gratify their needs. It looks at what people do with the media to discover fundamental motives for individuals' media use. Finally, uses and gratifications looks to recognize the positive and the negative consequences of individual media use

Since the advent of this theory uses and gratification approach has been applied to nearly all forms of media. Studies have been done related to newspaper, radio, magazine, television, and Internet among others. The past few decades have born witness to an immense technological boom that has lead to even more forms of medium including email, text messaging, instant messaging, blogging, and other social networks related to the Internet. With so many new technologies it has become increasingly important to understand what users are doing with these mediums and how personal factors such as religious beliefs mediate their usage.

Uses and Gratifications of the Internet

Several studies have attempted to apply the uses and gratifications approach to the Internet. Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) identified 5 different uses of the Internet in their study: for information seeking, for interpersonal utility, to pass time, convenience, and entertainment. They also found that those people that viewed the internet as being more socially present (that it is warm, social and active) were more likely to use it to pass time, because it was convenient, for entertainment and for interpersonal utility. Additionally, those users who found face to face interaction to be less rewarding and who found their social environment to be less valuable were more likely to use the internet for social interaction, while those who found their social environment as more valuable were more likely to use the internet as primarily an information tool.

LaRose and Eastin (2004) identify 6 different expected outcomes of internet use, many of which are very similar to those identified in earlier gratifications studies. These are: Activity outcomes (similar to entertainment uses), monetary outcomes (using the internet to get money), novel outcomes (obtaining information), social outcomes (similar to interpersonal utility), self-reactive outcomes (using to pass time, relax), and status outcomes. These uses were found to be significant predictors of total internet use, with status uses ($r = .53$) being the heaviest predictor.

Studies have also looked at other aspects of the online experience. Flanagine (2005) identified four significant usage factors in the use of instant messaging by college students: Social entertainment, social usefulness, Entertainment and Task accomplishment. Additionally, the researchers compared the relative gratifications that were fulfilled by different media. They found that while face-to-face communication was seen as the most useful and versatile channel of communication, instant messaging and Cellular phones followed closely behind.

Most of the studies that have utilized a uses and gratifications approach to the internet have done so with the intent of identifying the reasons which individuals are using it. As we have seen from these studies, the uses tend to be similar. Focusing around issues such as interpersonal utility, entertainment, and information gathering. Because social networking is a new facet of the internet experience, we expect its uses to be similar to the ones from the previous studies. However, it will be interesting to see if any new uses can be derived from our research.

Social Networking and Uses and Gratifications Research

With the popularity of the Internet growing exponentially; combined with new technologies, many new mediums of communication have been created. One in particular that has swept the U.S. and even the world is social networking. According to the Cyber Safety Glossary website Internet social networks are;

Places on the Internet where people meet in cyberspace to chat, socialize, debate, and network. Some examples include MySpace, Friendster, and Facebook.

Regardless of the language, culture, or the nation where the Social Networking Site originates, all of them share the same feature of helping people connect with others who have similar interests.” (Social Networking, 2006).

In the past, social networking has existed through the forms of letter writing, phone networks, and face-to-face communication among others. The aforementioned networks were generally self-motivated and self monitored unlike today’s networks that have become million dollar industries linking millions of people around the world. With this growing popularity, uses and gratifications theory becomes even more relevant in understanding why users are signing up

at such a rapid pace and what they hope to get out of this online network connection.

Korgaonkar and Wolin (1999) conducted psychological research to uncover uses of general Internet use. They broke up the uses into seven main categories that include social escapism, transactional security and privacy, information, interactive control, socialization, nontransactional privacy, and economic motivation. The above motivations are crucial in understanding why people are using the Internet.

The use of social networking, however, is even more specific. One online business magazine quoted a user as saying “It's where you go when you need a friend to nurse you through a breakup, a mentor to tutor you on your calculus homework, an address for the party everyone is going to” (Cieslak, 2006). Social networks such as Myspace, Friendster, and Facebook are designed to be a meeting platform for people with similar interests whether it be friendship, music, or business. Social networks are also a place for people to express their views and opinions on virtually any subject (Venturelli, 2006). The BBC online page posted an article about the power of social networks and why they have become so successful. They cite the versatility of these sites as one of the reasons for success as users are not only able to communicate and find friends, but they are able to publicize their music, their books, and even their films and at the same time receive valuable feedback (Cieslak, 2006). Another site mentioned was Beautifulpeople.net. This site is characterized by its stringent regulations allowing only the most “beautiful” people to join based on current members’ votes. Even this seemingly superficial site displays networks forming with members helping others to find apartments and to form huge parties.

The above research shows how uses and gratifications theory explains why people are joining virtual networks at such a fast pace and what it is that they hope to be gaining from their memberships.

Hypotheses

As was shown above there are four main reasons for using social networks. Studies have shown that religious users are using the Internet with the intent of bolstering their own religious beliefs and helping others rather than for personal use such as finding dates. A religious study on internet use among church goers and non-church goers called Cyberfaith, indicated that non church goers were more than twice as likely to use social networks with the intent of meeting new people as opposed to active church goers (Larsen, 2001). As our study is based on religiosity and social network use it is reasonable to assume that as religiosity increases use of social networks with intent of forming new relationships will decrease. Also, among teachings of most religions is the importance of family and face-to-face social interaction. Thus it is reasonable to assume that more religious people will use these networks to further their already existing relationships and to coordinate face-to-face activities.

From our literature we form the following hypotheses:

H1: As religiosity increases, time spent on social networking sites will decrease.

H2: As religiosity increases, the amount of contacts on social networking sites will decrease.

Because there have been no uses and gratifications studies on internet social networking, and for the purpose of developing a measurable scale of these uses, we also ask,

RQ1: What are the different uses for social networking?

H3: As religiosity increases use of Internet social networks for making friends will decrease.

H4: As religiosity increases use of Internet social networks for keeping in touch with previously established relationships like friends and family will increase.

RQ2: What is the relationship between religiosity and other social networking uses?

Sample

Data was collected via a survey administered on Qualtrics.com. The purposive sample was collected through two primary methods: 1) By posting the link to the survey on various message boards (available in several directories including Google, Yahoo, and Big-Boards.com) and 2) By sending the link to the survey via message to randomly selected members of social networking sites. The survey was available for approximately 3 weeks. Only those respondents who were 18 years and older were invited and allowed to take the survey.

Because of the nature of a survey administered over the internet, an exact response rate cannot be assessed. However, out of approximately 5000 invitations sent out for the survey over MySpace, and various message board postings, only 202 surveys were completed, resulting in a total of 184 usable respondents. This indicates a response rate of less than 5 percent. Such a low response rate to MySpace messages may indicate that users are accustomed to large amounts of spam, and it may be difficult to do survey research in such an environment.

184 people responded to the survey. Of the respondents, distribution was split evenly between males (N=93) and women (N=91). The average age of respondents was 27 years old (which is higher than the average social networking user – 18-24), 81.5% (N=150) were white,

2.2% (N=4) were African-American, 5.4% (N=10) were Asian, 3.3% (N=6) were Hispanic and 7.6% (N=14) were categorized as other.

Respondents were asked to list their highest level achieved in education. 3.8% (N=7) of the respondents had less than a High School diploma. 38% (N=70) had only a High School diploma, 45.7% (N=84) had a Bachelor's Degree, 9.8% (N=18) had a Master's Degree, and 2.7% (N=5) had Doctoral Degrees.

Of the 184 respondents who took the survey, 79.3% (N=146) used some form of social networking. Of those respondents who used social networking sites, 81.5% (N=40) had accounts on MySpace, 33.6% (N=40) had accounts on Facebook, 9.6% (N=14) had accounts on Friendster, 3.4% (N=5) had accounts on Xanga, and 31.5% (N=46) had accounts on other social networking sites.

Measures

Independent Measures

Religiosity. Respondents were asked several questions to determine their level of religiosity. Questions were based on an additive scale designed by Wallace and Williams (1997) and adapted by Thomsen and Revke (2003) to measure two different components: behavior (participation in religious meetings) and attitude (how important religion is in one's life). Religiosity was measured by adding the scores from a three-question scale. The first two questions measured religious behavior: The first question, "About how often do you attend Sabbath day religious services?" had 3 possible points for responses ranging from 0 (never) to 3 (about every week). The second question, "How often do you attend weekday religious services?" had 4 possible points with responses ranging from 0 (never) to 4 (more than once a

week). The last question measured the attitudinal component of religiosity. The question asked, “How important is religion in your life?” Responses ranged from 0 (not very important) to 2 (very important). The reliability for the scale was good ($\alpha = .878$).

Dependent Variables

Social Networking Exposure. Respondents were asked several descriptive questions about their social networking use. Exposure and involvement in social networking sites was measure by answering two questions: The first question asked the respondent on average how much time in a day they would spend on social networking sites. The second question asked how many distinct contacts (“friends” who do not overlap from site to site) the individual had on all of their social networking accounts.

Social Networking Uses. Respondents were given a list of 23 uses and gratifications for the use of social networking sites (see table 1). The uses were compiled from the measures utilized in general internet uses studies (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Recchiuti, 2003). Additional uses particular to functions on social networking sites were also added (How often the respondent uses social networking to upload photos and videos, blog, etc). To assess social networking uses, respondents rated how often they had used social networking for the listed purpose by responding to a 5-point Likert scale with responses ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very frequently).

Demographic Variables. Respondents also answered questions regarding several traditional demographic variables, which could be used as controls in the analysis. These include: Gender, Age, Education, and Ethnicity.

Results

Religiosity. The responses to the three questions that measured religiosity were combined to create a scale. Those individuals who scored higher on the 12-point scale were considered as more religious. The overall mean score for the religiosity variable was 6.7 (SD=3.2, range = 3-12). These scores were then used to test the first two hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1 predicted that as religiosity increases, time spent on social network sites would decrease. From the results of the correlation ($p=ns$) this hypothesis was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that as religiosity increases total number of contacts (“friends”) on social network sites would decrease. From the results of the correlation ($p=ns$) this hypothesis was not supported.

Social Networking Uses. Research Question 1 looks for the main uses for Internet social networking. In order to determine these uses, an exploratory factor analysis was performed on the items measured in social networking uses matrix. Results from the factor analysis are displayed in Table 1. This exploratory factor analysis produced 5 factors, which explain 70.8% of the variance: The first factor, *Use to meet new people*, (eigenvalue = 4.636) was comprised of 5 items which describe uses for meeting and communicating with people that users didn’t know in real life. The second factor, *Use to entertain*, (eigenvalue = 2.470) consisted of 3 items which describe social networking uses for passing time and entertaining oneself. The third factor, *Use*

to maintain relationships, (eigenvalue = 2.070) describes uses related to maintaining already existing relationships outside of social network sites. The fourth factor, *Use for social events*, (eigenvalue = 1.691) describes uses related to learning about social activities and music. The fifth factor, *Use for media creation*, (eigenvalue = 1.169) describes the user generated media capabilities of social networking sites such as uploading music and videos.

The scores of each of the uses from each factor (from 1 to 5) were combined to create an additive scale which measure the frequency of use for that certain factor. For the first factor, *Use to meet new people*, scores ranged from 5 to 25 (M=12.68, $\alpha=.844$). For the second factor, *Use to entertain*, scores ranged from 3 to 15 (M=10.74, $\alpha=.927$). For the third factor, *Use to maintain relationships*, scores ranged from 3 to 15 (M=10.65, $\alpha=.834$). For the fourth factor, *Use for social events*, scores ranged from 3 to 15 (M=7.5, $\alpha=.729$). The final factor, *Use for media creation*, although weak statistically was included because of its uniqueness to Internet social networking. Scores ranged from 3 to 13 (M=5.26, $\alpha=.567$).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that as religiosity increases use of social networking sites for keeping in touch with families and friends will increase. In order to test this hypothesis, a correlation was performed using the religiosity scale, and the *Use to maintain relationships* scale that was created through the factor analysis. This hypothesis was supported ($r=.175$, $p < .05$).

Hypothesis 4 predicted that as religiosity increases use for forming new relationships through social network sites would decrease. Through a correlation between religiosity and *Use to meet new people*, the hypothesis was not supported ($p=ns$).

Research Question 2 asks if there is a relationship between religiosity and a persons use of social networking for any other specific use. No significant relationship was found between

religiosity and *Use to entertain* ($p=ns$), *Use for social events* ($p=ns$), and *Use for media creation* ($p=ns$).

A post hoc analysis was performed to determine if gender mediated the relationship between religiosity and specific uses of social networking. A significant relationship was found between religiosity and *Use for social events* among women ($r=.249$, $p<.05$).

Because it is theorized that younger generations are using the internet for more social purposes than older generations, a post hoc analysis was also performed using age as a mediating variable. The media age was used to collapse the sample into two groups, those below 24 years of age and those 25 and older. Correlations between religiosity and specific uses of social networking among users below 24 reveal a significant relationship in *Use to maintain relationships* ($r=.291$, $p<.01$) and *Use for social events* ($r=.343$, $p<.01$).

Discussion

From our findings, no relationship was found between an individual's religiosity and their activity on social networking sites. There are several possible explanations for this relationship: One is that no relationship actually exists – that religion is not a mediating factor in determining social networking use. The other possibility is one that we planned for in our original hypotheses: that religiosity is not a good predictor of overall exposure to social networking sites. Moy et al. (2005) argues that rather than looking at overall exposure to the internet as a predictor of behavior, researchers need to adopt a multi-modal usage model. According to their study, certain uses of the Internet predicted outcome behaviors – in their case, whether the individual was civically engaged. In using this approach, we could argue that

religious users are using social networking for different purposes than individuals who are less religious. This multi modal usage model is explored in the remaining results.

In order to measure the relationship between religiosity and social networking use, we performed a factor analysis. Results from the exploratory factor analysis indicate that there are 5 main uses for Internet social networking. Confirming our hypothesis, there was a significant correlation found between more religious individuals and their use of social networking to maintaining existing relationships. This may be because churches are known to promote family and community interaction. Members of churches may use such tools to keep in touch with members of their church community and family. In fact, religious individuals may have a larger social network, and they are using social networking tools to keep in touch with them.

Religious individuals were found to be just as likely to use social networking to meet new people. This may indicate that religious beliefs do not influence an individual's desire to meet new people, no matter what venue. It may be that more religious individuals are using social networking sites to reach out to those individuals who share similar religious beliefs. However, these results may also indicate that religious individuals, despite the urging of their leaders, find no danger in social networking sites, and are using it in many of the same ways that non-religious individuals are.

The post hoc analysis has several interesting implications. Among women, a relationship was found between religiosity and the use of social networking to keep updated on social events. This may be that religion fosters social interaction among women, and that in many cases women hold organized social events within a church context. They are then more likely to use social networking tools to keep up to date with these events.

Another analysis revealed that the correlation between religiosity and use of social networking is stronger for those users that are under 24 years of age. This suggests that younger religious individuals are more likely to use the internet for such purposes as keeping in contact with social events and maintaining relationships. The younger generation may be more likely to embrace new technologies and using them to socialize in a variety of contexts.

Overall, our research suggests that while religiosity may not be a good predictor of overall use of social networking tools, it is a significant mediating factor in looking at the individual purposes of use, and those uses may be used to enhance religious experiences and community.

Limitations and Directions for Further Study

While this study has been useful in helping us understand the relationship between religion and new uses of the Internet, there are several limitations that prevent us from drawing more substantive conclusions. These limitations are mostly related to our choice to administer an internet. For the survey, the researchers had a difficult time getting respondents. As mentioned previously, the response rate to the survey was incredibly low.

Ultimately, having a higher N is essential for a study like this where the relationship between the variables is very slight. A higher amount of respondents would help us find more subtle relationships.

Other limitations that come from an internet survey is self-selected bias: the final description of the survey shows that respondents are more older and more educated than the average social network user. Having a sample that is closer to the average user of social networking sites would help us better understand the role that religion has in their use. Also,

because much of the survey was administered through Myspace, the final description is bound to lean towards users of that site. Facebook is popular among many youth because they feel that it is safer than MySpace. Users of this site may be more religious in nature or use the site in different ways than one would use MySpace. Future studies should be more proactive in obtaining a sample that is closer to the proportion of social networking users.

In future studies, we suggest a pen and paper survey approach. Because the current survey was administered on the internet, respondents may already be inclined to use the internet more and have less problems engaging in internet socializing. By utilizing a written survey, researchers would be able to compare individuals' religiosity with their use of the internet in general, as well with their usage of social networking websites. This would help us further isolate religiosity as a mediating influence on social networking use.

Conclusion

This study argues, like Moy (2005), that in studying the relationship between behavioral variable and internet usage, a multi-modal model to internet use must be taken. Although no relationship was found between religiosity and overall usage and exposure to this technology, small relationships were found between religiosity levels and the individual uses of social networking sites. More particularly a relationship was found between an individuals level of religiosity and their use of these sites to maintain relationships. Suggesting that religious individuals are using this new technology to maintain bonds with those around them.

Religiosity is only one variable however, and future studies should explore how other personal attributes shape the way that we are using this new technology.

Table 1. Factor Analysis for Social Networking Uses

Scale Item Totals and Items	Factor Loading	Mean	SD
<i>Use to meet people</i> (eigenvalue=4.636, $\alpha=.844$)		12.68	4.59
To meet new people	.827	2.34	1.14
To keep in touch with people I've met online	.805	2.48	1.27
To find others who have the same interests	.760	2.44	1.13
To share ideas and opinions	.733	2.97	1.19
To help others	.703	2.24	1.09
<i>Use for entertainment</i> (eigenvalue=2.470, $\alpha=.927$)		10.74	3.26
To occupy my time	.931	3.35	1.27
To entertain myself	.886	3.61	1.11
To pass time when bored	.878	3.78	1.09
<i>Use to maintain relationships</i> (eigenvalue=2.070, $\alpha=.834$)		10.65	3.12
To keep in touch with friends	.872	3.73	1.10
To keep in touch with friend or relatives who live far away	.872	3.59	1.29
To keep in touch with people you don't have time to see in person	.804	3.32	1.19
<i>Use for social events</i> (eigenvalue=1.691, $\alpha=.729$)		7.50	3.16
To learn about social events	.880	2.61	1.25
To publicize events that I am holding	.732	2.23	1.30
To learn about new music	.711	2.67	1.37
<i>Use for media</i> (eigenvalue=1.169, $\alpha=.567$)		5.26	2.31
To post videos that I have created	.811	1.48	.90
To post music that I have created	.780	1.57	1.13
To watch uploaded videos	.484	2.19	1.12
<i>Items not included in scales</i>			
To communicate with people who I am interested in romantically		2.13	1.21
To give or receive information with people you know		3.41	1.08
To show others encouragement		2.66	1.14
To post pictures that I have taken		2.97	1.22
To look at photos others have taken		3.36	1.06
To keep a blog (online journal)		2.21	1.33

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