

An investigation into the impact of social networking platforms of adolescent identity formation

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Abstract

This research aims to develop an understanding of the impact of social networking sites on adolescent identity formation and self-esteem. It aims to explore whether different personality types, measured using the Ten Item Personality Inventory, will be found to vary in usage of social networking sites. User types will be defined as 'basic users' who use social networking sites for purposes such as interacting with others and knowledge acquisition, users who 'seek positive affirmation' through their online posts and users consistency between their online and offline personalities.

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The psychoanalyst Erik Erikson proposed a lifespan model of development taking up to eight stages, which he termed psychosocial stages (McLeod, 2008). Emphasis was on the ego and the role of cultural and social aspects of development. Erikson's theory sets out a lifespan of development enveloped in eight stages that begin from infancy until late adulthood. According to Erikson, each stage must be confronted and a new challenge mastered. The ego develops as it successfully resolves and masters these crises, each stage builds on the successful completion of the previous one, this is known as the epigenic principle. Aligned with Freudian thinking, if stages are not completed successfully, they are likely to reappear as problems in the future. This paper is concerned with Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development, during adolescence aged between twelve and eighteen years old. This stage highlights the role of identity versus role confusion. Erikson placed particular importance on this stage of development as he believed it was a crucial stage for identity development. Upon entering the fifth stage, a child becomes more independent, begins to look to the future and wishes to fit into society. There is a shift from the importance of the role of the parents and family in moulding their identity towards the role of peers. The child must learn roles they wish to play as they emerge adulthood. The adolescent explores possibilities and begin to form their own identity based upon the outcome of their explorations (McLeod, 2008) the nature of the feedback obtained from their peers, whether positive or negative, will help form their sense of identity. This paper is particularly concerned with this notion of explorations and their outcomes, which will be discussed later. Role confusion occurs when identity exploration is not integrated or successful; this leads to a lack of sense of self and place in society.

Social networking sites intersect with the key tasks of adolescent psychosocial development by offering peer affiliation, friendship quality and identity development (Shapiro & Margolin,

2013). Adolescents are now using social networking sites (SNS) as a convenient medium for exploring aspects of one's self as they facilitate identity exploration and reflection (Bloomfield Neira & Barber, 2012). They provide a platform to receive peer feedback and an opportunity to practice social skills by observing others (Ellison & Boyd, 2008). In today's generation of adolescents, SNS offer the primary ways of communicating and acquiring information about their social networks (Shapiro & Margolin, 2013). This paper aims to explore how this process of online identity exploration and formation may be incorporated into their offline selves. Moderators for online identity formation are personality type, self esteem and the nature of the feedback obtained from peers, whether positive or negative, this will influence the incorporation of that online self into their offline selves and self-esteem (Ganda, 2014; Pempek et al., 2009).

When assessing the processes of identity formation, it may be relevant to apply to the concept of social networking sites, the Goffman's model for identity formation, first mentioned in his paper "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1959). This is concerned with the "way in which the individual in ordinary situations presents himself and his activity to others" (Goffman, 1990). He uses the analogy of theatre to help provide a clearer understanding of how a person will actively work to give a desired impression(s) to others. This is provided by what is known as the Dramaturgical Model of Social Life (Goffman, 1959). It uses theatre as a means of depicting the importance of human and social interaction and in particular highlights the impression the actor is making on others (Messinger et al., 1962). Individuals who observe the performance and react to the role play are referred to as the 'audience'. Every individual is trying to convince the audience to believe their character and in order to do this, they must deliver a performance. How information is displayed to the individual's audience is termed the actor's front. It aims to define the situation for the audience, it is the impression the actor gives to the audience. This can be conveyed via the

setting or the physical layout, scenery and props. Different setting will have different audiences and thus the actor will be required to alter his performance accordingly (Ganda, 2014; Goffman, 1956). Teams are the group of people who work together to stage a performance (Ganda, 2014). According to Goffman, there are front stage and backstage regions which affect the actor's performance. When on the front stage, the actor performs what he wishes the audience to see, in order to be valued by upholding consistency between his front and settings. Backstage refers to where the performance is off, they may behave differently compared to that on the front stage. The individual is not playing a role and can truly be themselves (Miller, 1995, Ganda, 2014, Goffman, 1956). Goffman's dramaturgical model suggests that each individual constructs and maintains a performance which is a presentation of the values of the society, through the use of setting and props. The individual makes conscious and unconscious choices on how they wish to project themselves (Miller, 1995).

This paper will employ Goffman's model as a means of gaining an understanding of online interactions amongst adolescents in relation to social networking sites and their usage. Social networking sites are described as a “web based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Ellison & Boyd, 2007). It allows others within the online community to see the user's social networks and aspects of life that they would not in real life. It is the responsibility of the user to decide what information and aspects about themselves they wish to share.

The notion that individuals guide the audience to create a desired impression of themselves to obtain information about them; this can be seen in the Hyper-personal Model developed by Walther and colleagues in 2001. This model suggests that adolescents engage in the selection of self-presentation (Shapiro & Margolin, 2013). The adolescent wishes to create an impression which

is believed to be desired by the audience. A SNS user may create a social resume by sharing interests, hobbies and pictures as a means of self-presentation and a way to connect with like-minded people (Bloomfield Neira & Barber, 2014; Larson et al., 2002) thus, providing a stage for identity formation. The audience in this context refers to the individuals' network of online 'friends' or people who may view the actor's profile. Goffman's model is used in a dichotomous way, where the actor also plays the role of an audience member by reacting to inputs (posts) made by others. When considering teams in this context, the role can be applied to those with whom the individual interacts with regularly online (Ganda, 2014). A study carried out in Australia in 2009 found that adolescents who use SNS claimed that the main purpose for doing so was to stay in contact with existing friends (Bloomfield Neira & Barber, 2014; Ellison et al., 2007; Pempek et al., 2009). In an online context of SNS, front stage and back stage can be understood by front stage referring to the self-presented individual, the actor who is performing the role of the desired self to the audience. Back stage may be comparable to the 'offline' self, where one is not performing a role. This may be referred to one's 'true self'. This concept facilitates identity formation as SNSs provide a platform, a space, a location to explore their identities deeper and be visible to peers (Shapiro & Margolin, 2013; Livingstone, 2008). SNSs act as an identity testing ground where users seek validation from their online community (Livingstone, 2008). Adolescents may use SNSs to try out new aspects of identity which they wish to explore, which may be more difficult for them to do in face-to-face interactions (Davis, 2012). SNSs make it possible to connect with like-minded people which may not be possible in the local peer networks, therefore aiding identity formation. Users are inviting viewers to not only look, but to respond to the self-presented life online through feedback. A developing issue in the virtual world is the digital manipulation of user's own lives and photographs (Sweeney, 2014). This process gives rise to an increasing gap between the online and offline self. If

the online self is considerably different in contrast with the offline self, it may be unobtainable to try to recreate the virtual self into the real-life, offline self (Sweeney, 2014).

Peer feedback is integral in adolescence. In the online world feedback comes in the form of comments or 'likes' (Rosen, 2007). Through the feedback obtained, whether positive or negative this projection of the self online is said to be incorporated into their offline identities (Sweeney, 2014; Rosen, 2007; Ganda, 2014). This concept could be stated in the comical acronym of 'I share therefore I am' surely a variant that Decarte ["I think therefore I am?"] never imagined. A primary motivation for adolescents' use of SNS is to receive peer feedback on the content they share (Schouten et al., 2005). This phenomenon is understood when assessing the social comparison that occurs online. In the online realm there is reported to be constant analysis of popularity based upon quantity of 'friends' or 'followers' one has (Ganda, 2014) and the volume of positive feedback others receive on posts. More Facebook friends has been positively associated with well-being, in a study carried out on university students (Kim & Lee, 2011) Through this reflective lens, the user may look to others as a way of measuring whether their own online identity will generate the same success (Livingstone, 2008). The user will in turn, internalise these observations and incorporate them into themselves by consciously picking the best information to convey to their audience. The status that is created on the SNS's stage is then incorporated into the backstage (offline) self by taking aspects of their popular posts and integrating them into their 'true self' (Ganda, 2014), individuals may be acutely aware of any lack of peer feedback and integrate it as fault (Bloomfield Neira & Barber, 2012). This will most likely not be employed in the offline setting as the post did not gain the volume of feedback necessary for it to be integrated into the true self (Pempek et al., 2009). The true self is presented to people who already have an informed idea about the individual based on the presentation of self made in the virtual setting, thus an identity has been formed

(Ganda, 2014)

By only presenting the positive aspects of one's life online, users are sharing what they believe to be socially desirable. This may lead to in-direct effects on self-esteem for SNS users. A study carried out in 2013 by Krasnova and colleagues investigated how users felt after using a SNS. Many respondents reported feeling frustrated, exhausted and overwhelmed (Krasnova et al., 2013; Rosen, 2007). This may be caused by the constant demands to collect (friends and feedback), the sheer volume of information shared and the high stakes to perform and to self-present themselves in a way that they understand to be socially desirable (Rosen, 2007; Sweeney, 2014; Madden, 2013). Krasnova and colleagues' study concluded that social networking sites indirectly induced envy in users, these findings highlight the social upward comparisons that occur in SNS use (Krasnova et al., 2013).

The Stimulation hypothesis put forward by McKenna and Bargh (2000) claims that it is easier for SNS users to self-disclose online compared to face-to-face interactions (Shapiro and Margolin, 2013). This may be caused by the individual's lack of confidence in the backstage/offline setting, because of difficulties they may have in face-to-face interactions, SNSs offer social compensation for such individuals who may lack offline relationships (Barker, 2009; McKenna & Bargh, 2000; Williams et al., 2012). Individuals who may use SNS as a social substitute tend to be uncomfortable with interpersonal interactions and are better able to meet their social needs online. They feel they are able to express themselves online and form close relationships with people who are met through SNS to create offline relationships (Enli & Thumim, 2012).

The current study aims to examine the impact of social networking sites on identity formation in adolescents aged between twelve and seventeen. Much of the research in this area is carried out on university students and suggests there is a lack of research concerning individuals

under eighteen (Ellison et al., 2008). The Pew Research Center in the USA provides live and up-to-date statistics of internet use amongst the American population. In a study carried out in 2014, it suggest that Facebook is still the most popular site being used by internet users (71%) and they are the most active users compared to other social networking sites (Ellison et al., 2014). Lenhart et al, (2014) found that sixty-four percent of adolescents between the ages of twelve and seventeen are engaging in content sharing on these social networking platforms. The research suggests that there are gender differences for the purpose of usage (Lenhart et al., 2014). Lenhart and Madden claim that their research exposed boys as using SNSs as a platform to flirt through public or private messages, and girls supposedly use them as a means of keeping in contact with friends (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). This study will examine whether there is a gender difference in SNS use amongst Irish adolescents.

Accessibility to the internet is now easier than ever before (Sweeney, 2013). In 2013, Purcell and colleagues (2012) reported that thirty-seven percent of adolescents have a smartphone, Madden and colleges report that this statistic has risen to forty-seven percent in 2014. The intensity that adolescents use their smartphones can be seen in daily interactions, they are constantly multitasking between their mobile device and the interpersonal interactions (or lack of) happening in front of them (Foehr, 2006). The Social Response theory may lend itself as a means of understanding this phenomenon (Kim, 2013). This theory suggests that when a technology device represents a set of characteristics that are associated with humans, such as communication and interactivity, the user will respond by exhibiting social behaviours (Kim, 2013). This study will investigate adolescent's frequency and investment in social networking sites by utilizing the standardized Facebook Intensity Scale developed by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007). It measures frequency and duration of a visit to an individual's profile, and their investment in the SNS by measuring their

emotional connectedness to the site and its integration into their daily activities (Ellison et al., 2007). Self-esteem will also be measured in this study using Rosenberg's standardized Self-Esteem scale. As mentioned before, online self-presentations invite peers to look and respond to the content that is being shared (Rosen, 2007). Depending on the nature of the feedback obtained, whether positive or negative, the individual will integrate this with the offline (backstage) self, therefore fostering identity formation. Aspects of the self which are socially approved by peers affect an individual's self esteem in their social network (Valkenburg et al., 2006). It is hypothesised that more positive feedback reported by participants will have an effect on their score on the self-esteem measure. Personality traits are said to be a predictor on intensity of SNS use and the information chosen to be presented online (Williams et al., 2012). It is believed that individuals who score high on introversion will use SNSs as a social substitute, as a means for compensating for their lack of offline relationships, integral to the Social Compensation hypothesis (Williams et al., 2012; Zywicki & Danowski, 2008). In the present study, it is hypothesised that a high score on introversion will lead to a low score on self-esteem and high score on the Facebook intensity scale (Valkenburg et al., 2005). This result should show that individuals with a lower-self esteem score will score high on introversion, they will frequent online interactions more to compensate for their willingness to communicate offline and lack of offline relationships, thus scoring high on the Facebook intensity scale (Valkenburg et al., 2005; Williams et al, 2012; MacIntyre et al., 2015). MacIntyre and colleagues suggests that lower self-esteem and introversion play an important role in an individual's willingness to communicate in real-life settings (2015). The literature suggests that social networking sites offer a platform for identity formation through the integration of social comparisons and external validation into the offline self. If this is so, a follow-up study may be appropriate for future research to compare whether introvert participants who scored lower on self-

esteem and high SNS frequency, will score higher on self-esteem and extroversion on the personality scale should the said integration take place. This study aims to bridge the gap in the literature surrounding the topic of social networking site's impact on identity formation amongst adolescents in Ireland, similar to research conducted in the USA and Australia. A study conducted in Australia revealed that eighty percent of twelve to thirteen year olds report using social networking sites (ACMA, 2009), despite the terms of service of Facebook restricting its use to thirteen years of age or older (Shapiro & Margolin, 2013). The amount of time being spent engaging in SNSs has risen from an average of thirty-three minutes a day to fifty-four minutes a day in the space of a year amongst American adolescents (Ellison et al., 2008). The results from the current study will be compared to the results from similar studies. Ganda designed a survey which aimed to investigate whether SNS users internalized the positive peer feedback which their online identity generated and present it offline (Ganda, 2014) in adult subjects. The aim was to establish whether the positive feedback has an effect on the user's internalisation and offline presentation. The results from this study rejected this notion, it was suggested that more appropriate means for measuring the variables involved be used (Ganda, 2014). It is also mentioned that the participants involved ranged from eighteen to forty-five and over, this resulted in outliers which caused issues in the analysis. The current study aims to address the limitations in Ganda's study by utilizing standardised questionnaires to measure the variables appropriately. The participants used in this study range from twelve to seventeen years of age, this facilitates categorical groupings of results which are comparable to each other.

Research Question & Hypotheses

H1: Extroverts will have a low score on the Facebook Intensity scale as they will not need to extend their personality into the online realm.

H2: Personality type will have an effect on SNS usage.

H3: Participants will seek positive affirmations online as a means of incorporating popular posts into their offline identity.

H4: More Facebook friends (social capital) will result in higher self-esteem.

H5: There will be a difference in usage patterns between young adolescents and later adolescents.

Null Hypothesis: There will be no significant relationship between SNS use, levels of self-esteem and identity formation.

Participants

The target population for this study was secondary school pupils between the ages of twelve and eighteen inclusive. The aim was to assess adolescents born from 1997 and up as this period is considered where the internet saw the biggest growth spurt (Kantor, 2003). The interest in adolescents within this time-line is due to the time in which they grew up where the internet and SNS were part of their growing up, they are familiarized with social networking sites as they played a role in the socialization process and will therefore provide an accurate reading of the impact it has on their development. Participants were recruited through convenience sampling using a co-education secondary school in Athlone, County Westmeath. As the participants were eighteen years of age and under, consent forms were issued to students who were chosen to take part in the study. The aim of this study was to obtain a sample size of 100: 120 'opt out' consent forms were issued to

students in first year, fourth year and sixth year, 34 were unreturned, incomplete or denied consent. The remaining 86 was the sample size used in this study and preceded to the next stage of this study.

DEMOGRAPHICS

(N=86) Males: 41.9% Females: 58.1%

Young adolescents (12-15): 36%

Late adolescents (16-18): 64%

Materials

Consent forms were issued to the selected participants. They were required to return them signed by a parent either granting or denying permission to participate in the current research (refer to Appendices item 1). This study utilizes three standardized questionnaires. The Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison et al., 2007) is employed as a representative for all social networking sites the sample may use (see appendices 2). It aims to investigate emotional connectedness to SNSs, duration and frequency to the SNSs. Rosenberg's (1965) self-esteem survey is used to measure self esteem amongst participants, this measure has shown high ratings in reliability with alpha coefficients ranging from 0.72 to 0.87 (see appendices item 3). The Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) developed by Gosling and colleagues (2003) is used to measure whether the participant's score on the Big 5 personality types. These include extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability. Participants were then divided into groups based upon whether they scored high or low in the given personality type (refer to appendices item 4). Madison Ganda's questionnaire is not standardized and is used as a comparison for results in this study.

Ganda's survey aims to establish whether one incorporates the online identity into their offline interactions (Ganda, 2014), refer to appendices item 5. Participants are also given a cover sheet which will inform them of the nature of the study being conducted, that their participation is completely voluntary and assuring anonymity. Students will be asked to tick a box on this cover sheet to confirm their understanding of the research being carried out and willingness continue with the study (refer to appendices item 6). Once surveys are collected from all participants, a final information sheet will be distributed (refer to appendices item 7). This contains contact information of relevant services, should this study evoke distress or unsettling emotions in participants. It also contains researcher contact information, should they desire any further information regarding the current research. Item 8 in the appendix contains the statutory declaration signed by P. C. Moore and Co. Solicitors. The thread of emails exchanged containing the contact between Athlone Community College principal, Eileen Donoghue, and the researcher granting permission to use students for the purpose of the research, can be seen in appendices item 9.

Design

The variables in this study include duration, frequency and emotional connectedness to SNSs using the Facebook Intensity Scale (Ellison et al., 2007). Personality type will be measured using the Ten Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) developed by Gosling based upon McCrae and Costa's 'Big Five' personality traits. The TIPI is used to determine whether a participant scores high on extroversion, openness, agreeableness, conscientiousness and emotional stability. Personality traits will then be used to examine whether they influence investment in SNSs. Rosenberg's self esteem measure is used to obtain a score for each participant. Their score will be assessed in relation to their FBI score and personality traits to determine if there is a relationship amongst the

variables.

The final measure used in this research is a survey designed by Madison Ganda (2014). The current study will divide Ganda's survey into three segments based upon the nature of the questions. The first segment will be determine a 'Basic User', those who fall into this category will use SNSs for basic purposes such as interacting with others, frequency and knowledge acquisition. The second category is concerned with seeking positive affirmation and validation; it consists of questions regarding positive feedback received on posts made online. The third division addresses consistency between a user's online and offline personality.

The dependant variable is identity formation and the independent variables are personality type, self esteem score and Facebook Intensity scale scores. This study employs a within-subjects design as it involves dependant observations.

Procedure

Permission was obtained from the Board of Ethics, project supervisor and the principal of the school chosen to carry out this research. 'Opt out' consent forms were issued initially. Participants who returned consent forms incomplete were excluded from the study, students who did not reproduce the consent form were also excluded. The data was collected from first year, fourth year and sixth year students attending mixed Athlone Community College drawn from a population of approximately 900. The elapsed period of time between the completion of consent forms and questionnaires was one week. Questionnaire completion was conducted in the classroom with a staff teacher present. Students were provided with their own consent form on the cover of the questionnaire which contained information regarding the nature of the current study. Students were instructed to read this before completing the questionnaire and indicate their comprehension of the

study and willingness to continue with the study by ticking a box which stated so. To ensure anonymity, participants were required to abstain from writing their name on the surveys. Subjects were first asked descriptive information, including age, gender and whether they have an account on a social networking site. Following this, subjects were asked to indicate on the self-esteem and Facebook Intensity scale which statements closely apply to them (1= strongly agree to 6= strongly disagree). Finally, participants were required to indicate from a scale of 1 to 7 (1= strongly disagree, 7= strongly agree) which personality traits applied to them. Subjects were asked to refrain from conferring with each other. Misunderstandings during the completion time were rectified by the staff teacher present. Upon completion and collection of the surveys, participants were issued a further information sheet containing contact information of the appropriate organisations available, should any participant experience distress at any point as a result from the study (this included Barnardos helpline, Childline and TeenLine). The researcher's student email address was also provided, should anyone require any following information regarding this research.

Pearson's correlations were used throughout the analysis on the results from the survey. The aim of the research is to demonstrate whether there is a relationship between the variables. The final questionnaire in the survey, developed by Madison Ganda was sectioned into three part in order to distinguish SNS user types. Questions 1, 2, 6 on the online experience measure are questions relating to a basic user (including interaction with others, frequency of usage and to gain knowledge about a subject being discussed online). Questions 3,4 and 5 related to SNS users seeking positive affirmation or validation through popular posts, and questions 7 and 8 measure consistent personalities between one's online and offline self.

Once the input of data into SPSS was complete, personality type scores, self esteem scores and FBI scores were separated into high and low. Once able to establish which personality types

are most likely to have a relationship with SNS use, the next step was to examine what was the purpose of their usage, by correlating the personality type with the divided Online Experience questions outlined above to determine whether different personality types will use SNS for different purposes.

Results

In this section, the data gathered and analysed results from the survey will be shown in the respective tables. Tables 1, 2 and 3 will illustrate the demographics and sample characteristics of the participants.

Table 1 Shows the division of the cohorts based on participant's age.

Variable	Frequency
12-15	31
16-18	55
N	86

Early adolescents fall under the 12-15 category. Late adolescents are considered as 16-18 years of age. N indicates the overall number of participants.

Table 2 Shows the gender demographics in the current study.

Variable	Frequency
Male	36
Female	50

Gender

Table 3 Indicates the number of participant who claim to have an account on a social networking site.

Variable	Frequency
Yes	83
No	3

SNS possession

Table 4 This table provides the number of participants who scores high or low on the self esteem measure.

Variable	Frequency
High SE score	77
Low SE score	9

Score on self-esteem scale

Table 5 demonstrates the number of participants who obtained high or low scores on the Facebook Intensity scale.

Variable	Frequency
High FBI score	55

Low FBI score	31
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The Facebook intensity scale measures frequency to one's Facebook account, the duration of time spent on the site and the emotional connectedness on possesses towards the site.

Table 6 *Correlation tables for self esteem scores and FBI scores*

(i)

	High SE	High FBI
High SE	1	-.035
High FBI	-.035	1

(ii)

	Low SE	Low FBI
Low SE	1	.168
Low FBI	.168	1

(iii)

	High SE	Low FBI
High SE	1	-.113
Low FBI	-.113	1

(iv)

	Low SE	High FBI
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Low SE	1	-.098
High FBI	-.098	1

Results from these tables show there is no significant relationship between any level of self-esteem and scores on the Facebook Intensity scale. The null hypothesis must be accepted.

Table 7 Pearson's correlation carried out to seek a relationship between high extraversion and low FBI score

	High Ex	Low FBI
High Ex	1	.056
Low FBI	.056	1

These results show there is no relationship between high extraversion and low FBI score, H1 must be rejected.

Table 8 Pearson's correlation executed to investigate a relationship between agreeableness and FBI score.

(i)

	High Agree	High FBI
High Agree	1	.287
High FBI	.287	1

This table shows there is a significant positive relationship between individuals who scored high in agreeableness and scored high on the Facebook Intensity scale (*sig* .287).

(ii)

	Low Agree	High FBI
Low Agree	1	-.291
High FBI	-.291	1

There is a significant negative relationship between individuals who scored low on agreeableness on the TIPI and high on the Facebook Intensity scale (*sig* -.291)

Table 9 (i)(ii)(iii) *Pearson's correlation used to investigate a relationship between conscientiousness and FBI scores.*

(i)

	High Consc	High FBI
High Consc	1	.038
High FBI	.038	1

This table indicates there is no significant relationship (*sig* .038) between participants who scored high on conscientiousness and high on the Facebook Intensity scale.

(ii)

	Low Consc	Low FBI
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Low Consc	1	.251
Low FBI	.251	1

There is a positive relationship between participants who scored low on conscientiousness and low on FBI (*sig* .251), as indicated in the table above.

(iii)

	High Consc	Low FBI
High Consc	1	-.188
Low FBI	-.188	1

There is a significant negative relationship between individuals who scored high on conscientiousness and low on the Facebook Intensity scale (*sig* -.188).

Table 10 *Pearson's correlation was utilized to determine a relationship between high scores on openness and Facebook Intensity scores.*

	High Openness	High FBI
High Openness	1	.189
High FBI	.189	1

A positive correlation was found between participants who scores high on openness and the

Facebook Intensity scale (*sig* .189). No relationships were found in any other variation of the above variables.

Table 11 (i)(ii) *A Pearson's correlation was used to investigate a relationship between the two cohorts and scores of agreeableness.*

(i)

	12-15	16-18	Low Agree
12-15	1	-1.000	.215
16-18	-1.000	1	-.215
Low Agree	.215	-.215	1

(ii)

	High Agree	OEq1	OEq2	OEq6	16-18
High Agree	1	.200	-.004	.191	.202
OEq1	-.200	1	-.101	-.004	.061
OEq2	-.004	-.101	1	.220	.079
OEq6	.191	-.004	.220	1	.088
16-18	.202	.061	.079	.088	1

Table 11(i) shows early adolescents are positively correlated with low agreeableness (*sig* .215).

Table 11(ii) indicates there is a significant relationship between late adolescents and high agreeableness (*sig* .202). It also shows there is a positive correlation between them and their answers on questions 1 and 6 relating to their Online Experience (OEq1 *sig* .200, OEq6 *sig* .191),

indicating they scored their answers highly on these particular questions relating to their basic usage of social networking sites. No significant relationships were found for the opposing cohort or division of user types.

Tables 12(i)(ii) *A Pearson's correlation was used to determine a relationship between the two cohorts and their scores on the self esteem measure.*

(i)

	12-15	High SE
12-15	1	.273
High SE	.273	1

(ii)

	16-18	Low SE
16-18	1	.189
Low SE	.189	1

Tables 12(i) and 12(ii) show positive relationships between self esteem scores. Early adolescents are seen to be positively correlated with high self esteem. Late adolescents are shown to be positively correlated with low scores of self-esteem. There are no significant relationships between the two cohorts or gender and self esteem.

Table 13 *A Pearson's correlation was used to establish is there is a relationship between the two*

cohorts and their scores on the Facebook Intensity scale.

	16-18	High FBI
16-18	1	.513
High FBI	.513	1

The results from this table indicate a positive relationship between late adolescents and a high score on the Facebook Intensity scale (*sig* .513). Similarly, there is a negative correlation between early adolescents and high FBI scale scores. There is no significant relationship to report on early adolescents and low scores on the FBI scale.

Once the input of data into SPSS (version 21) was complete, personality type scores, self esteem scores and FBI scores were separated into high and low. Both levels of self esteem were correlated with both levels of FBI scores. There was no significant relationship between any of these variables.

High and low values of extroversion were correlated against FBI scores. There was no significant relationship found between the extroverted personality type and FBI scores. When levels of agreeableness were correlated with FBI scores, a positive relationship was found between individuals who scored high on agreeableness and high on the Facebook intensity scale (*sig* .287). A significant negative relationship was found between those who scored low on agreeableness and high on the FBI scale (*sig* -.291). No significant relationship was found varying levels of emotional stability and FBI scores. A significant positive correlation was found between low conscientiousness and a low FBI score (*sig* .251), not surprisingly a negative correlation was found between high conscientiousness and a low FBI score (*sig* -.188). Individuals who scored high in

openness were also found to score high in the FBI measure (sig .189), there were no other significant relationships found between any other variations of the variables. Once able to establish which personality types are more likely to have a relationship with SNS use, the next step was to examine what was the purpose of their usage. As outlined above, this was found by the division of the Online Experience questions which differentiated uses and users. High scores in questions 1, 2, 6 represent a basic user, questions 3, 4 and represent a user seeking positive affirmations, and questions 7 and 8 depict consistency between online/offline personalities. It was discovered that high agreeableness was positively correlated with questions 1 (sig .200) and 6 (sig .191) on the Online Experience measure. There are no other significant relationships between personality types and the online experience measures.

Further correlations were carried out to investigate whether there were relationships between personality types and the two cohorts. Late adolescents (16-18) were found to be positively correlated with high agreeableness (sig .202) and young adolescents (12-15) with low agreeableness (sig .215).

Young adolescents were seen to have a significant positive correlation of 0.273 with high-self esteem, the correlation is negative in late adolescents. Late adolescents are positively correlated with low self esteem with a significance of 0.189. There was no significant relationship found between gender and self esteem.

A significant positive relationship was uncovered between late adolescents and high scores in the FBI scale. Those who scored high in agreeableness and high on the FBI scale were significantly correlated with question 8 in the Online Experience measure (sig 0.229) regarding their online/offline personality consistency, there were no similar findings in young adolescents.

Discussion

The aim of this study was to identify if self esteem would have an impact on social networking site usage. The results from the current study suggest there is no such relationship. Perhaps social networking sites are so integrated into the socialization process of emerging adolescence that it is important to be and feel connected on these sites, regardless of self-esteem. Therefore, the null hypothesis must be accepted.

It was hypothesised that personality type will have an effect on social networking site usage. This study found that individuals who obtained a high score in agreeableness also obtained a high score in the FBI scale which measures frequency, duration, approximate number of friends online and emotional connectedness to the site. It is not surprising that a personality dimension which expresses trust, friendliness, altruism and other pro-social behaviours would have a positive relationship with high scores on the FBI measure. These participants frequent the site often, have large numbers of online friends highlighting their trustfulness and friendliness to invite others to their profile and interact. This is demonstrated in the significant positive relationship found with questions 1 and 6 on the Online Experience measure including high correspondence with statements such as "I use SNS as a way to interact with other people" and "If a topic is being discussed on a SNS, I will look into the topic". They are what this study considers to be a basic user who do not seek positive affirmations online and or possess inconsistent online/offline personalities. Low agreeableness was positively correlated with the younger cohort of ages between 12 and 15. Those who scored low in agreeableness have a significant negative relationship with high FBI scores. This highlights that those who have low agreeableness, low trust and low pro-social behaviour are also exhibiting those personality traits online. High conscientiousness was seen to have a negative

relationship with low scores on the FBI measure. Conscientiousness is said to consist of characteristics such as high levels of thoughtfulness, goal orientated behaviours, organised and mindful of detail. Participants who display high conscientiousness are not seen to direct their impulses of planning and achieving to the online realm but rather work on achieving their goals offline, resulting in less investment in their online profiles. Low scores in conscientiousness are associated with impulsive behaviour without thinking of consequences and lack will power, struggle with laziness with an inability to focus. In the present study, low scores in conscientiousness are positively correlated with low scores in the FBI scale. This demonstrates that low scorers of conscientiousness are projecting their laziness, lack of direction and focus inability behaviour to their online behaviour. The ability to scroll through the constant stream of consciousness known as a 'news feed', aimlessly without purpose or cause may be integral to the laziness and inability to focus on their offline activities. It is important to note, that there was no relationship found between low conscientiousness scores and user patterns (basic user, seeking positive affirmations and online/offline personality consistencies), this may demonstrate the characteristic nature of low conscientiousness. Openness to new experiences is associated with individuals who have a broad range of interests, curiosity and possess a drive for cognitive exploration (Kaufman, 2013). Perhaps, it is not surprising that high scores in openness are positively correlated with high scores in the Facebook Intensity scale. Social networking sites offer a platform for cognitive exploration; they offer the inherent properties of openness (Chorley et al., 2015). Highly open individuals may be highly invested in SNS as they broaden the world of discovery compared to real life. This study did not find a relationship between high openness and levels of computer mediated communication (basic user), seeking positive validation from peers or consistency of online/offline personalities. It may be assumed that participants who are highly

invested in social networking sites may be using them for other purposes than stated in the questionnaire. This notion will be addressed in the limitations section of this study. Thus, the hypothesis stating personality will have an effect on SNS usage may be accepted. There were no relationships found when investigating whether individuals seek positive affirmations online as a means of incorporating popular posts into their offline personalities, therefore H3 must be rejected also. A possible cause for this result may be the segment of the surveys regarding SNS user types (as basic, seeking positive affirmations and consistency between online and offline personalities) was not a competent measure to assess these profiles.

The majority of scores on the self esteem measure were high (89.5%), this is not uncommon amongst adolescents of this age group. Low implicit self esteem (such as defensiveness) is expressed as high explicit self esteem, the individual may have negative feelings but is unaware of them (Brinthaup and Ipka, DATE). The younger cohort have a significant positive relationship with high explicit self esteem, this was found to be negatively correlated with high FBI scores. Perhaps due to the age restrictions on the social networking site, individuals who have a profile on the site may not have many friends on the site. This suggest that high self esteem in the 12-15 cohort may be due to factors other than SNS investment which were not measured in this study. High self esteem is not a result of SNS investment. A significant positive relationship was discovered between late adolescents and high scores on the FBI scale. The investment, frequency to and duration on social networking sites increased from early adolescence to later adolescence. This result may suggest that SNS are becoming an important part of the socialization process as adolescence progresses, further follow-up analysis of the younger participants may lead to a better understanding of this phenomenon. As it was found that late adolescents have a positive correlation with high FBI scores, it was worth investigating what their purpose for high usage was. There were

no significant relationships found between this group and the 'basic user' type or seeking positive affirmations online. However, there was a significant positive relationship uncovered between this group and question 8 in the Online Experience measure, stating consistency between their online and offline personality. The stated findings support the hypothesis (H5), claiming there will be a difference between the two cohorts and SNS usage. Perhaps, there are unconscious processes incorporating of the self they aim to convey to their audience online and the real, offline, self. Further study into this phenomenon may provide a more accurate explanation. There were no significant findings between high social capital and high self esteem, thus the hypothesis (H4) must be rejected.

There are a number of limitations in the present study. A large limitation to this research was the way in which the data was collected. The survey was used to gather data which was valuable, considering the type of information needed in this study, perhaps qualitative measures may have yielded richer information and form a better understanding of adolescent's use of social networking sites and therefore build more accurate results.

A further limitation of this research was not stating to participants that when answering the Facebook Intensity scale, to generalize their response to any social networking site they use. Many participants did not use Facebook but used other social networking sites such as Instagram, Twitter and Tumblr. Not stating this prior to participants of the survey led to fewer responses in this section which measured frequency to SNS, duration of time spent on SNS, social capital and emotional investment. It would have been beneficial to generalise these results across any form of social networking sites being used, which may have led to more accurate conclusions in the results.

A further improvement for future research would be an alteration of the questionnaire. As few significant findings were obtained through the Online Experience segment, it has led to the

belief that adolescents are using social networking sites for reasons other than basic usage and seeking positive validation through popular posts.

The limitation of using adolescents in this research is they may not have fully understood the questions being asked in the survey. This was found to be true as many of the participants did not understand the words used in the TIPI and requested a definition from the teaching staff who were present in the classroom. This may have led to a skew in responses and therefore inaccurate results of personality types. A potential improvement for further research would involve using simplified wording which would be better understood by adolescent participants.

Participants may not have felt obligated to respond attentively to the surveys as no incentive was offered for participating in this study. An improvement to further research would involve the implementation of a reinforcing factor such as a pass from homework for that evening or another type of inherent reward, if feasible.

The results of the present study show both positive and negative relationships between personality types, social networking sites and their usage. In order to obtain more accurate results, future research in this area would require the implementation of the changes as discussed above.

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Appendix

Appendices 1

Dear parent/guardian,

I am conducting a study in Athlone Community College for my final year psychology thesis in DBS. My study aims to identify whether social networking sites effect adolescent's psychosocial development.

Researcher: Amanda Reddan, 10169527 **Supervisor:** Dr. Cathal O'Keefe: Cathal.okeefe@db.s.ie

Background and Purpose: In my research I am interested in finding out whether the use of social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Ask.fm have an effect on the development of identity formation. I will be conducting this research through distributing questionnaires to students in first year, fourth year and sixth year. I am doing this research as part of my studies at DBS, and I am working with Dr. Cathal O'Keefe whose contact details are included above.

What happens if my child takes part? I will be visiting your child's school during class time on a date arranged with Eileen Donoghue. I will be asking students to participate in completing a standardized questionnaire. If you decide your child will not take part they will be asked to read quietly until the others are finished the questionnaire.

What will happen the results of the study? The information gathered by the questionnaires will

tell us about identity status, self-concept and self-esteem amongst the students and the nature of their social networking site usage (if any). The study's results will be published as part of my final year thesis. However, at no stage will the participants be identified.

How will my child's information be protected? The student's answers will remain confidential. No participant will be asked to identify themselves in their questionnaires; however they will be asked their gender and age. Once the study is completed all of the data will be destroyed.

Voluntary Participation: It is up to you and your son/daughter to decide whether they wish to take part or not. Participation is completely voluntary. Your child is free to withdraw from the study at any stage. I will remind the students of this when I meet them.

Important: The consent form! *Please see the consent form at the bottom of this page. Every student must have a consent form returned and signed stating whether they wish to take part in the study or not. Please note, research guidelines do not allow me to make any exceptions, and verbal permission cannot replace signed consent.* It is important to remember to return the signed consent form to the school as without it your child will not be allowed to take part.

Further Information: We hope that you will agree to let your child to participate in the research being conducted. If you require and assistance or have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 10169527@db.s.ie.

Consent Form:

I understand the nature of the study being conducted. I

_____ wish / do not wish to allow my child to
participate in this research

Signed

Parent/ Guardian

Appendices 2

Facebook Intensity (FBI)

The Facebook Intensity scale is used to measure Facebook usage beyond simple measures of frequency and duration, incorporating emotional connectedness to the site and its integration into individuals' daily activities.

Below is a list of statements. Please rate how closely these statements apply to you (1= Strongly

Disagree 2= Disagree 3= Neither Agree or Disagree 4= Agree 5= Strongly Agree)

25. Facebook is part of my everyday activity

1 2 3 4 5

26. I am proud to tell people I'm on Facebook

1 2 3 4 5

27. Facebook has become part of my daily routine

1 2 3 4 5

28. I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto Facebook for a while

1 2 3 4 5

29. I feel I am part of the Facebook community

1 2 3 4 5

30. I would be sorry if Facebook shut down

1 2 3 4 5

31. Approximately how many TOTAL Facebook friends do you have?

1= Less than 50 2= 50-100 3= 151-200 4= 201-250 5= 251-300 6= More than
300

**32. In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY have you spent
actively using Facebook**

1= Less than 20 minutes 2=21 mins-30 mins 3= 31 mins - 1 hour 4= 1
hour- 1.5 hours 5= 1.5 hours - 2 hours 6= 2 hours or more

Computing the Scale

The Facebook Intensity score is computed by calculating the mean of all of the items in the scale.

Appendices 3

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The scale is a ten item Likert scale with items answered on a four point scale - from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. If you

strongly agree, circle SA. If you agree with the statement, circle A. If you disagree, circle D. If you strongly disagree, circle SD.

Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself. Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each statement.

5. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. At times I think I am no good at all.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I am able to do things as well as most other people.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. I certainly feel useless at times.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. I feel that I'm a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. I wish I could have more respect for myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. I take a positive attitude toward myself.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

Scoring: SA=3, A=2, D=1, SD=0. Items 2, 5, 6, 8 and 9 are reverse scored, that is, SA=0, A=1,

D=2, SD=3. Sum the scores for the 10 items. The higher the score, the higher the self esteem.

Appendices 4

Ten-Item Personality Inventory-(TIPI)

Here are a number of personality traits that may or may not apply to you. Please write a number next to each statement to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with that statement. You should rate the extent to which the pair of traits applies to you, even if one characteristic applies more strongly than the other.

1 = Disagree strongly 2 = Disagree moderately 3 = Disagree a little 4 = Neither agree nor disagree
5 = Agree a little 6 = Agree moderately 7 = Agree strongly

I see myself as:

1. _____ Extroverted, enthusiastic.
2. _____ Critical, quarrelsome.
3. _____ Dependable, self-disciplined.
4. _____ Anxious easily upset.
5. _____ Open to new experiences, complex.
6. _____ Reserved, quiet.
7. _____ Sympathetic, warm.
8. _____ Disorganized, careless.
9. _____ Calm, emotionally stable.
10. _____ Conventional, uncreative

Scoring the TIPI

1. Recode the reverse-scored items (i.e., recode a 7 with a 1, a 6 with a 2, a 5 with a 3, etc.). The reverse scored items are 2, 4, 6, 8, & 10.
2. Take the average of the two items (the standard item and the recoded reverse-scored item) that make up each scale.

Appendices 5

Please answer the following about your ONLINE experience. Please rate them on a scale from 1 to 5 (1=Strongly Agree 2=Somewhat Agree 3=Agree 4=Disagree 5=Somewhat Disagree 6=Strongly Disagree).

33. I use social networking sites as a way to interact with other people.

1 2 3 4 5 6

34. I use social networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram and Tumblr on a daily basis.

1 2 3 4 5 6

35. If I get positive feedback on a post, I feel good about my interest in the subject.

1 2 3 4 5 6

36. If I post something online that is well received, I feel confident discussing it with others offline.

1 2 3 4 5 6

37. I feel good about myself when I get alot of “Likes” and comments on something I post.

1 2 3 4 5 6

38. If I see a topic is being discussed on social networking sites, I will look into the topic.

1 2 3 4 5 6

39. My posts on social networking sites are an accurate reflection of who I am.

1 2 3 4 5 6

40. Do you feel that your online personality is similar to your offline personality?

1 2 3 4 5 6

All items were reverse coded. Questions 1, 2 and 6 were categorised as a 'basic user'. A high score in items 3,4 and 5 indicates a SNS user who seeks positive affirmations online. A high score in items 7 and 8 determines users' consistency between their online and offline personalities.

Appendices 6

Dear Participant:

My name is Amanda Reddan and I am a final year student in Dublin Business School. For my final year project, I am seeking to obtain information on the impact of the social networking sites on adolescent identity formation.

Because you are between the ages of 12-17, I am inviting you to participate in this research study by completing the attached surveys.

The following questionnaires will take less than ten minutes to complete. All responses will be anonymous and completely confidential. You are not required to write your name on your responses. Your participation is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw from this study at any stage.

By ticking the box below, you are indicating your willingness to participate in this study.

Thank you for your time. If you have any concerns, do not hesitate to contact me.

I am aware of the nature of this study and I wish to continue

Amanda Reddan

10169527@dbs.ie

Project Supervisor: Cathal O'Keeffe

Appendices 7

Thank you for taking part in this study. Your contribution to this research is greatly appreciated.

If you would like any further information regarding this study, please do not hesitate to contact me via email. I would be happy to answer any questions. My email is 10169527@dbs.ie.

If any of the questions in this survey causes you to experience any distress or upset here are a number of services available in your area.

TeenLine Ireland: (FreePhone) 1800-833-634 or text "TEEN" to 50015

ChildLine: 1800-66-66-66 or text "TALK" to 50101

Appendices 8

Statutory

Declaration

Appendices 9

Contact exchanged between Eileen Donoghue and researcher.



Survey participants for final year psychology project.

To: info@athlonecc.ie

As requested on the phone, here is an outline of the study I aim to carry out for my final year project. I am currently in my third and final year of Psychology in DBS. I initially wanted to use students in Athlone Community College as I am a past pupil.

I am carrying out an evaluation of the impact of social networking platforms on the psychosocial dynamics operating within the adolescent community. This investigation aims to understand what exactly adolescents are using social media, and how/if the kind of feedback obtained from the various content shared has a relationship with their level of self-esteem. Erikson's psychosocial model of development suggests that adolescents rely on positive and negative peer feedback in order to become a socialised being in the community. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, are a new and popular way that adolescents are carrying out this stage of development.

My study will use two standardised questionnaires: Rosenberg's questionnaire on Self-Esteem, and The Facebook Intensity scale, which measures the amount of visits to their online profile and the nature of the content shared, as standardised by Ellison et al.

I would ideally like to use a group of first years, a group of T.Y's and a group of sixth year students as I would like to investigate whether there is a difference between adolescent age groups on the content shared. This would compensate for the inability to conduct a longitudinal study. I understand that this may disrupt the day's flow for you, so if this is a problem I will be happy to settle for a group of transition year students.

Of course, the relevant ethical procedures will be carried out such as "Opt Out" permission slips informing parents of the nature of the study which will need to be signed by parents and furthermore, a cover sheet on the questionnaires informing students of the nature of the study and anonymity. They may withdraw from the study at any stage.

If you have any further questions I would love to hear from you!

Kind regards,

Amanda Reddan

Sent from my iPad

(No Subject)

To: mandireddan@hotmail.com

Thats fine Mandy just let me know when you plan to visit you can use all 3 groups

Eileen

Sent from my iPhone

SPSS Output