ABSTRACT. The current study aimed to understand college-age Facebook® users’ perceptions of others’ self-disclosure, and additionally sought to determine what actions participants were likely to take when they perceived that a post was inappropriate. Participants (N = 150) were asked to read mock Facebook newsfeeds and to respond to items that assessed their perception of the appropriateness or inappropriateness of each user’s posts (romantic relationship drama, negative emotion, passive aggression, and frequent status updates), as well as how they would respond to such posts. Results indicated that posts related to romantic relationship drama were rated by most as inappropriate or very inappropriate (74.0%; p < .001). Passive aggressive posts were also rated as inappropriate or very inappropriate more often than the other types of posts. In addition, for participants who perceived that romantic relationship drama posts were inappropriate, they reported that they would be most likely to ignore (63%), block (19%), or defriend (10%) someone who made similar types of posts, p < .001. Further, results revealed some sex and racial/ethnic group differences in regard to perceptions and actions. The current research added to the knowledge base about the types of Facebook self-disclosure that college-age users find to be inappropriate and identified actions that users are likely to take when they have such perceptions.

College Students’ Perceptions of Inappropriate and Appropriate Facebook Disclosures
Taylor M. Roche, Dusty D. Jenkins*, Luis E. Aguerrevere*, Rebecca L. Kietlinski, and Eleanor A. Prichard
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Facebook® made its debut in 2004. Since that time, it has become one of the most popular social networking sites and currently has 1.32 billion monthly active users (Facebook, 2014). There were 140 times more Facebook users in 2011 than in 2005 (Anderson, Fagan, Woodnutt, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2012). A recent investigation of college students reported that Facebook users who participated in a study spent an average of 4.83 hr on Facebook per week while only going out with friends for an average of 3.5 hr per week (Chou & Edge, 2012). Thus, due to Facebook’s overwhelming popularity in today’s culture, particularly with young people (Anderson et al., 2012), researchers have investigated antecedents of Facebook use, how people utilize Facebook, and the effects of Facebook use (Anderson et al., 2012).

An important area that has been examined is how Facebook profiles and posts are perceived. Although research has been conducted on users’ perceptions of their own profiles and posts (Christofides, Muise, & Desmarais, 2009; Peluchette & Karl, 2010) and on how potential employers perceive potential employees’ Facebook profiles (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009), less published research has examined how Facebook users perceive other Facebook users’ posts. This is an area in need of more research because it is known that most people on Facebook spend their time examining other users’ communications (Wise, Alhabash, & Park, 2010). In addition, a recent literature review about Facebook culture suggested that an area for future research should be to investigate problematic behaviors and the consequences of such behaviors (Anderson et al., 2012).
Therefore, the current study aimed to investigate Facebook users’ perceptions of the level of appropriateness of several types of Facebook posts. In addition, the study also sought to determine what actions participants were likely to take when they perceived that a post was inappropriate.

Social acceptance is seen as a fundamental human need. A lack of social acceptance has been shown to be associated with poor outcomes such as lowered self-esteem, hurt feelings, anxiety, and depression (DeWall & Bushman, 2011). One way that people fulfill this need for social acceptance is by affiliations with others. More specifically, according to Maslow’s (1943) classic theory, individuals have a fundamental need to be affiliated with other humans and to feel a sense of belongingness. Self-disclosure has often been cited as being a critical component to forming and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004; Sprecher, Treger, Wondra, Hilaire, & Wallpe, 2013). Self-disclosure has been described as a process in which people reveal information about themselves that would not otherwise be known to others (Adler & Proctor, 2007). Self-disclosure has been found to be associated with a host of positive relational outcomes including relational esteem and satisfaction (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004).

Examining self-disclosure is particularly relevant in the Facebook environment given that self-disclosure is an integral part of Facebook interactions. Researchers have found that a greater need for popularity, defined as doing things in order to be perceived as well-liked among an individual’s peer group (Santor, Messorvey, & Kusumakar, 2000), predicted self-disclosure on Facebook (Christofides et al., 2009). Furthermore, participants in Christofides et al.’s (2009) study reported that they tended to disclose more personal information on Facebook than they did in other settings. The researchers speculated that the environment of Facebook might itself encourage self-disclosure because an individual must actively disclose information in order to be popular among their social network. Thus, popularity and self-disclosure on Facebook are inextricably linked. In addition, other research has found that the self-image a person wished to convey to others was related to the types of content that were displayed in that person’s Facebook posts; those who wished to be portrayed as hardworking, fun, or friendly did not tend to post inappropriate content on their Facebook pages (Peluchette & Karl, 2010).

Some researchers have examined how others perceived self-disclosure on Facebook. Forest and Wood (2012) conducted a series of three studies aimed at understanding how people with low self-esteem viewed social interaction on Facebook and to what extent their self-disclosure led to social rewards on Facebook. Participants’ posts were analyzed by the researchers and by strangers. The authors found that people with low self-esteem tended to post things on Facebook that were perceived by others unfavorably. This was largely because the posts were perceived by others to be low in positivity and high in negativity. Likewise, Utz (2010) found that participants rated a mock Facebook user as more popular if the user had an extraverted looking profile, defined as having a lively facial expression in the profile picture and longer text, as opposed to an introverted looking profile such as a picture of the user sitting alone facing a river with shorter text. In addition, others have indicated that users of Facebook and other social networking sites were likely to delete posted messages or not respond to posts when they perceived posts as being negative (Forest & Wood, 2012; Tokunaga, 2011).

The current study aimed to clarify what Facebook users perceived to be inappropriate types of posts made by other Facebook users as well as what actions were most likely to be taken when an individual perceived that a post was inappropriate. Further clarification was needed on this topic for several reasons. First, little research existed on the perceptions of other Facebook users’ posts and the associated actions that are likely to ensue from posts that are perceived to be inappropriate. Second, although Forest and Wood (2012) examined perceptions of Facebook users’ posts, they did so specifically within the context of examining users with low versus high self-esteem. Further, they were mostly interested in perceptions and actions taken toward posts that exhibited certain emotions. Our study went a step further by studying both emotions and specific content in posts, and how Facebook users in general might perceive and react to various types of posts. Additionally, Tokunaga (2011) examined in an open-ended format what users of various social networking sites found to be the most negative events that led to relationship strain. However, some of the results were not relevant to Facebook (e.g., ranking disparities of top friends) and so the current study aimed to focus solely on Facebook. Finally, the present study included a preliminary examination of demographic group differences in perceptions and reactions to other...
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Facebook users’ posts, one of the first known studies to do so. Thus, our study added to the literature in several important ways.

Specifically, the present study sought to answer several research questions. The first research question we examined was: What types of posts were most frequently perceived as inappropriate by Facebook users? Based on previous research (Forest & Wood, 2012; Tokunaga, 2011), we predicted that posts that expressed romantic relationship drama, negative emotion, and passive aggression would have a higher proportion of inappropriate perceptions than frequent status updates or neutral posts. Specifically, posts that portray romantic relationship drama and passive aggression may be viewed as more inappropriate than posts displaying negative emotion because raters might view the former two categories as being more intimate and thus less appropriate for public posting (Bazarova, 2012). Second, we aimed to answer the following question: What actions were most of the Facebook users likely to take when they perceived that a post was inappropriate? Based on previous research (Forest & Wood, 2012; Tokunaga, 2011), we predicted that a higher proportion of participants would take action against or ignore a post that was viewed as inappropriate as opposed to posting a positive comment. Finally, we also examined how perceptions of posts and actions taken toward posts varied as a function of age, sex, and race/ethnicity because this has not typically been included in studies that have examined perceptions of other Facebook users’ posts. Hence, due to the lack of studies on this particular topic, we had no a priori hypotheses about how age, sex, or race/ethnicity would vary in terms of perceptions or actions taken.

Method

Participants

The data were from 150 undergraduate students at a university in the southern United States who had current or past Facebook accounts. The students’ ages ranged from 18 to 33 years (M = 19.44, SD = 2.01). Seventy percent (n = 105) of participants were women. The ethnic composition was 50.0% European American (n = 75), 40.0% African American (n = 60), 6.7% Hispanic American (n = 10), and 3.3% other ethnicities, not specified (n = 5). Ninety-four percent (n = 141) of participants reported currently having a Facebook account. Most participants (74.0%, n = 111) had used Facebook for two years or longer and reported checking their Facebook account multiple times per day (64.0%, n = 96). In addition, most participants (59.3%, n = 89) reported having 400 or more Facebook friends. The sample characteristics of Facebook usage in the current study were similar to other studies about Facebook that have used college student samples (Hargittai, 2008; Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008).

Materials

Newsfeed content. To develop the stimulus materials, the researchers met as a group and conceptualized categories of the most likely posts that college-age Facebook users would find inappropriate. This was a necessary step because previous researchers had not directly examined the different types of posts that users found to be inappropriate. The categories were romantic relationship drama, negative emotion, passive aggression, and frequent status updates. As a precautionary and confirmatory step, the second author informally polled 20 college students in an open-ended fashion about what types of Facebook posts they perceived to be most inappropriate. The results of the informal poll mirrored the four distinct categories originally conceptualized by the researchers. Thus, mock newsfeeds were subsequently created to depict each category as well as an additional control category, which was labeled as neutral. In addition, two independent reviewers assessed the mock newsfeeds (i.e., correctly matched posts from the mock newsfeeds to their corresponding categories) to help address the face validity of each category.

Each newsfeed had posts from two or three simulated Facebook users, each of whom posted two or three times per mock newsfeed. The newsfeeds were developed by the researchers for use in the current study and illustrated one or more of the following types of posts: romantic relationship drama, negative emotion, passive aggression, frequent status updates, and neutral posts. We opted to use what we believed were unisex names and avoided the use of photographs for profile pictures so that we could reduce the likelihood of participants utilizing sex stereotypes in their evaluations. However, it must be noted that a few of the posts did contain sex-specific terminology.

Romantic relationship drama posts were defined as negative content that aired intimate details about a person’s romantic relationship with their partner (i.e., “My boyfriend is a lying jerk! If you see him tonight, remind him that his girlfriend is at home waiting for him.” “After all we’ve been through, my boyfriend treats me like this??” and...
“My boyfriend has time to spend with his friends, but not with ME?”). Passive aggressive posts were defined as specific negative behaviors or wrongdoing of another person without directly revealing the identity of that other person (i.e., “If you won’t give me the time of day to talk it out, then I’m not going to bother trying anymore” and “So much for being ‘best friends.’ Friends don’t ditch friends”). Negative emotion posts were defined as the expression of negative feelings such as complaining (e.g., “UGH Today sucked. EVERYTHING has gone wrong. The universe hates me” and “My front left tire is flat AND I have a parking ticket. Awesome”). Frequent status updates were defined as posts that frequently updated the detailed whereabouts of a person (i.e., “Going to dinner and then the movies,” “Just got home from the salon,” and “Getting my nails done”). Finally, neutral posts were defined as positive or neutral announcements (e.g., “Happy birthday little sister! Love you!” and “The family comes into town today. I can’t wait to see everybody”).

Measure of inappropriateness. To assess participants’ perceptions of the appropriateness for each of the mock users’ posts, they were asked to respond to items about each mock user’s posts (e.g., “In general, how would you describe Jordan’s status updates?”) on a 4-point scale (very inappropriate, inappropriate, appropriate, very appropriate). Additionally, participants were asked how they would respond to each mock Facebook user if he or she “were a friend of yours and updated his or her statuses most of the time similarly to the above.” The response options were: post positive comments, ignore, post negative comments, block (which means to hide all content that a particular Facebook user unable to view any content on or post on the person’s Facebook page).

Procedures
After receiving institutional review board approval for the present study, all participants read and signed the informed consent before participating. Participants were college students enrolled in introductory level psychology courses who completed the study materials in a classroom setting in exchange for research participation points that were a part of their course grade. Participants were asked to answer demographic questions and then read three mock Facebook newsfeeds. After reading each mock newsfeed, participants were asked to answer the questions about the newsfeed posts. Specifically, participants read a total of 18 posts and answered questions between every five to seven posts.

Results
Perceptions of Inappropriateness and Actions Toward Posts
Chi-squared tests were conducted to determine differences in the proportion of participants who chose the different perception categories (very inappropriate, inappropriate, appropriate, and very appropriate) for all five of the posts. As can be seen in Table 1, participants were statistically significantly more likely to rate the romantic relationship drama posts as inappropriate (49.3%) compared to the other three perception categories. However, for the passive aggressive posts, most were likely to be rated by participants as either inappropriate (46.0%) or appropriate (44.7%) as compared to the other perception categories. Most participants rated both the negative emotion posts (56.7%) and frequent status updates (62.0%) as appropriate compared to the other perception categories. Finally, most participants rated the neutral posts as very appropriate (48.7%) compared to the other perception categories.

Then, a number of Cochran’s Q tests were conducted to determine within-subject trends when selecting perception categories (very inappropriate, inappropriate, appropriate, and very appropriate). Cochran’s Q tests indicated that the proportion of participants who chose the inappropriate and very inappropriate categories was statistically significantly different across types of posts (please refer to Table 1 for specific statistical results). According to post-hoc comparisons (McNemar’s test, which is the appropriate post-hoc test for Cochran’s Q), romantic relationship drama was statistically significantly more often rated as very inappropriate compared to the other types of posts, followed by passive aggressive posts, which were rated as very inappropriate more often than negative emotion, frequent status updates, and neutral posts (see Table 1). Negative emotion, frequent status updates, and neutral posts did not differ from one another in the proportion of participants in the very inappropriate category. In addition, romantic relationship drama and passive aggressive posts were more likely to be rated as inappropriate by participants than the other types of posts, which were followed by negative emotion posts, then by frequent status updates, and finally...
by the neutral posts.

Chi-squared tests were conducted to determine what actions most participants were likely to take when they perceived that a post was inappropriate. To run these analyses, we first combined ratings of very inappropriate and inappropriate into one group, simply referred to as perceived inappropriate posts. Chi-squared tests indicated statistically significant differences in proportions across actions only for the romantic relationship drama posts and the frequent status updates. As can be seen in Table 2, out of the participants who perceived the relationship drama posts as inappropriate, the most likely response was to ignore them (63.1%). Note that a statistically significant number of these participants also reported that they would most likely block or defriend (28.9%, combined) someone who posted romantic relationship drama types of posts. Although most participants did not rate the frequent status updates as inappropriate, for those who did, their most reported response would be to ignore the posts (83.3%). The action choices for the negative emotion, passive aggressive, and neutral posts were selected by equal or less than 10% of the participants. We had hypothesized that a higher proportion of participants would take action against or ignore a post that was perceived as inappropriate as opposed to posting a positive comment. However, our hypothesis was only partially supported because this was not uniformly true across all types of posts.

Perceptions of and Action Toward Posts by Demographic Groups

As an exploratory step, we examined differences between age, sex, and race/ethnicity in the perception of inappropriateness of the posts. First, Spearman’s rho correlation analyses were conducted to determine the statistical dependence between age and perceptions of inappropriateness by type of post in a ranked order from 4 (very inappropriate) to 1 (very appropriate). Correlations revealed no statistically significant relationship between age and the percentage of participants who perceived the posts as very inappropriate, inappropriate, appropriate, or very appropriate, $rs(149)$ range from -0.13 to 0.05, all $p$ values > .05. Next, chi-squared tests were conducted to determine differences in the percentage of participants who perceived the posts as very inappropriate, inappropriate, appropriate, or very appropriate, $\chi^2(3)$ range 0.13 to 0.05, all $p$ values > .05. When the choices for appropriate and very appropriate were combined into one group, African American participants rated the romantic relationship drama (43.3%) and passive aggressive (70.00%) posts as significantly less inappropriate.

### TABLE 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Appropriateness by Type of Post</th>
<th>Very Inappropriate</th>
<th>Inappropriate</th>
<th>Appropriate</th>
<th>Very Appropriate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Post</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$X^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship drama</td>
<td>37 (24.7)$^{ab}$</td>
<td>74 (49.3)$^{ab}$</td>
<td>35 (23.3)$^{ab}$</td>
<td>4 (2.7)$^{ab}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion</td>
<td>3 (2.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>48 (32.0)$^{b}$</td>
<td>85 (56.7)$^{a}$</td>
<td>14 (9.3)$^{a}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive aggression</td>
<td>11 (7.3)$^{ab}$</td>
<td>69 (46.0)$^{ab}$</td>
<td>67 (44.7)$^{a}$</td>
<td>3 (2.0)$^{a}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent status updates</td>
<td>3 (2.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>15 (10.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>93 (62.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>39 (26.0)$^{a}$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>8 (5.3)$^{a}$</td>
<td>1 (0.7)$^{a}$</td>
<td>68 (45.3)$^{a}$</td>
<td>73 (48.7)$^{a}$</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cochran’s $Q$ Test: 72.44, $p$ < 0.001, $\phi$ = 0.39

Note: Given the number of comparisons conducted, the Bonferroni correction was calculated for the comparisons, and the significance level was set at $p < .01$.

### TABLE 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action Toward Post by Participants With Perceptions of Inappropriateness</th>
<th>Post positive comments</th>
<th>Ignore</th>
<th>Post negative comments</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Defriend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type of Post</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$n$ (%)</td>
<td>$X^2$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship drama</td>
<td>6 (5.4)$^{a}$</td>
<td>70 (63.1)$^{a}$</td>
<td>3 (2.7)$^{a}$</td>
<td>21 (18.9)$^{a}$</td>
<td>37.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion</td>
<td>13 (26.0)$^{b}$</td>
<td>25 (50.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>0 (0.0)$^{b}$</td>
<td>7 (14.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>8.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive aggression</td>
<td>9 (11.3)$^{a}$</td>
<td>54 (67.5)$^{b}$</td>
<td>3 (3.7)$^{a}$</td>
<td>8 (10.0)$^{a}$</td>
<td>6.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent status updates</td>
<td>1 (5.6)$^{a}$</td>
<td>15 (83.3)$^{a}$</td>
<td>0 (0.0)$^{b}$</td>
<td>2 (11.1)$^{b}$</td>
<td>19.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>7 (77.8)$^{a}$</td>
<td>1 (11.1)$^{a}$</td>
<td>1 (11.1)$^{a}$</td>
<td>0 (0.0)$^{b}$</td>
<td>7.98</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Given the number of comparisons conducted, the Bonferroni correction was calculated for the comparisons, and the significance level was set at $p < .01$. 

$^{ab}$ column means categories with the same number are not significantly different at $p < .05$ using McNemar’s as post-hoc test. 

$^{a,b}$ column means categories with the same letter are not significantly different at alpha < .05 using McNemar’s as post-hoc test.
than the other ethnic groups (European Americans and other ethnicities had percentages of ≤ 30.00% for romantic relationship drama and ≤ 50.00% for passive aggressive posts). \( \chi^2(df = 2) \) range 4.00 to 7.64, \( p = .025 \) to \( p = .012 \), and \( \phi = .12 \) to \( \phi = .34 \).

Similarly, we tested possible differences in age, sex, and race/ethnicity in the actions that participants would likely take. Age did not significantly correlate with actions toward any of the posts, \( r(s) = -0.07 \) to 0.01, all \( p > .05 \). Chi-squared tests indicated significant differences in the proportion of men and women in their response to the negative emotion, \( \chi^2(df = 1) = 17.91, p = .031, \phi = .32 \), and neutral posts, \( \chi^2(df = 1) = 11.40, p = .034, \phi = .28 \). For both of these types of posts, men were significantly more likely than women to ignore the posts (see Table 4 for additional information regarding comparisons by sex). Table 4 also shows that there were significant differences between racial/ethnic groups on the passive aggressive posts. African American participants were more likely to report that they would post positive comments on the passive aggressive posts than the other ethnicity groups, which were more likely to ignore or take a negative action (i.e., post a negative comment, block, or defriend). \( \chi^2(df = 2) \) range 3.20 to 5.70, all \( p < .05 \), \( \phi \) range .05 to .82.

**Discussion**

The purpose of the present study was to examine the proportions of Facebook users who perceived various types of posts as inappropriate and to examine the reported actions users would likely take when they perceived posts as inappropriate. Overall, the results indicated that romantic relationship drama was rated as the most inappropriate type of
Perceptions of Facebook Disclosure | Roche, Jenkins, Aguerrevere, Kietlinski, and Prichard

Post, followed by passive aggressive types of posts. Participants were most likely to rate the posts that contained romantic relationship drama as either very inappropriate or inappropriate. Participants were divided in rating the passive aggressive posts, which about half perceived as appropriate and the other half perceived as inappropriate. Negative emotion, frequent status updates, and neutral posts were all considered to be appropriate or very appropriate by most participants. Thus, our hypothesis was partially supported because two of the posts (i.e., romantic relationship drama and passive aggressive posts) had a higher proportion of participants who rated them as more inappropriate than the frequent status updates and neutral posts like we predicted. The other type of post (i.e., negative emotion) was not perceived to be more inappropriate, which was contrary to our prediction.

In response to the type of posts, participants reported how likely they would be to take action. Specifically, we were interested to know what participants would do when they perceived that a post was inappropriate. Romantic relationship drama was the most likely to lead participants to report that they would take a negative action in return, specifically, blocking or defriending someone who made posts of this nature. However, overwhelmingly, participants were most likely to simply ignore the romantic relationship drama when they perceived it as inappropriate. Although it was reported that negative and intimate public Facebook posts were typically viewed as less favorable than positive and nonintimate public posts (Bazarova, 2012), it may be that responding to a post in a negative way is avoided to minimize relational strain. Tokunaga (2011) reported that negative events on social networking sites such as denying friend requests or deleting public messages were often met with

| TABLE 4 |
| Demographic Group Analyses in Reported Action Toward Type of Post |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action by Sex</th>
<th>Post positive comments</th>
<th>Ignore</th>
<th>Post negative comments</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Defriend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M%</td>
<td>F%</td>
<td>M%</td>
<td>F%</td>
<td>M%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship drama</td>
<td>6.7</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>54.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion</td>
<td>24.4</td>
<td>36.2</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive aggression</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>64.8</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent status updates</td>
<td>28.9</td>
<td>27.6</td>
<td>71.1</td>
<td>69.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>53.3</td>
<td>77.1</td>
<td>42.2</td>
<td>22.9</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action by Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Post positive comments</th>
<th>Ignore</th>
<th>Post negative comments</th>
<th>Block</th>
<th>Defriend</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>EA%</td>
<td>AA%</td>
<td>Other%</td>
<td>EA%</td>
<td>AA%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 150</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Romantic relationship drama</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>57.3</td>
<td>63.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative emotion</td>
<td>22.7</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>60.0</td>
<td>43.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive aggression</td>
<td>9.3</td>
<td>33.3</td>
<td>13.3</td>
<td>72.0</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent status updates</td>
<td>28.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>40.0</td>
<td>70.7</td>
<td>71.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>65.0</td>
<td>73.3</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>33.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: M = Male participants; F = Female participants; EA = European American participants; AA = African American participants; Other = Hispanic, Asian, or other ethnic group participants.

Given the number of comparisons conducted, the Bonferroni correction was calculated for the comparisons, and the significance level was set at p < .01.
confrontations and relational strain. Hence, given that many people use Facebook as a way to increase social capital (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011), it logically follows that more people would ignore a post that they perceived to be inappropriate rather than taking a negative action as a way to keep relational strain at a minimum and avoid a possible reduction in social capital.

However, a significant proportion of participants reported that they would most likely take action against someone who posted romantic relationship drama on a regular basis, yet this was not the case for negative emotion or passive aggressive posts. Perhaps posts that are made about negative events in a romantic relationship are viewed as the most highly intimate, and thus the most inappropriate types of posts for public self-disclosure on Facebook. Although research has been conducted on perceptions of intimate public Facebook disclosures (Bazarova, 2012), the existing research has not fully addressed why disclosures made about romantic relationships may elicit more negative actions than other types of self-disclosures. This is an area in need of more in-depth examination.

In regard to demographic group differences, African American participants tended to perceive the romantic relationship drama and passive aggressive posts as more appropriate than the other ethnic groups. African Americans were also more likely than the other ethnic groups to report that they would post positive comments in response to a passive aggressive type of post. This may be related to the finding that African American participants were more likely than the other ethnic groups to perceive passive aggressive posts as appropriate. Our results suggested that race/ethnicity may be an important demographic variable to explore in future studies that examine perceptions of Facebook posts because we know of no published research studies that have examined differences in perceptions of other Facebook users’ posts by racial groups. However, recent work found that African Americans tended to express themselves on their Facebook profiles differently than European Americans (DeAndrea, Shaw, & Levine, 2010). Further, in another study, researchers were able to correctly identify with 95% accuracy whether a Facebook user was African American or European American based on the user’s pattern of using “likes” (Kosinski, Stillwell, & Graepel, 2013). The authors stated that liking online content varies by groups, and thus accurate predictions can be made. It may be that there are different “rules” for Facebook use by racial/ethnic groups. This is an area ripe for further exploration. In addition, we found a sex difference in type of response to posts: Men were more likely than women to ignore the negative emotion and neutral posts. A recent study found that women were more likely than men to post public messages as well as send private messages (Muscannell & Guadagno, 2012). Further, in the same study mentioned above, the researchers were able to correctly distinguish between men and women Facebook users by their patterns of “likes” with 93% accuracy (Kosinski et al., 2013). Again, it appears that there may be differences in how men and women utilize Facebook with women perhaps being more likely to take an active approach to certain types of Facebook use.

In all, although there are positive aspects associated with self-disclosure, it is not without risks (Sprecher & Hendrick, 2004). The results of the current study suggested that other users do not view all types of self-disclosure on Facebook positively. Some types of posts such as romantic relationship drama posts may be considered what has been termed by some as a Facebook faux pas (Karl, Peluchette, & Schlaegel, 2010). Facebook users who post personal information publicly (e.g., in a status update) are judged as more inappropriate than those who send personal information in private messages (Bazarova, 2011).

The results of the current study suggested that Facebook users may want to be careful about what type of information they disclose or post publicly because other users are likely to judge some types of posts harshly. Our results were in line with a growing body of evidence that Facebook users make judgments about other Facebook users on a range of variables such as the level of perceived popularity, attractiveness, and credibility (Utz, 2010; Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008) and even how happy their lives appear to be (Chou & Edge, 2012).

Our results about the perceptions of Facebook self-disclosure must also be compared to how self-disclosure is perceived in other offline contexts. The results of our study regarding perceptions of Facebook self-disclosure mirrored results from similar studies of offline self-disclosure. In general, it has been found that negative self-disclosure among casual acquaintances is perceived as inappropriate, perhaps because negative disclosures are viewed as being too intimate for casual conversations (Howell & Conway, 1990). Further, people who made positive self-disclosures were viewed as more socially and
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Outcomes have often been tested using the conceptual model of the social exchange and equity frameworks (Brandtzæg, Lüders, & Skjetne, 2010; Ellison et al., 2011), which posits that people strive to increase their social capital (i.e., the benefits accrued from social relationships) based on a system of costs and rewards, and that, generally speaking, people tend to repeat behaviors that result in positive social outcomes, or increases in social capital, while avoiding behaviors that come with too many costs (Sabatelli & Shehan, 1993). When Facebook users post statuses that deal with romantic relationship problems or display passive aggression, for example, they may not realize that they could be potentially bringing social rejection upon themselves, thereby decreasing their social capital by being ignored, blocked, or removed from other users’ friend lists. In other words, there may be too many costs associated with making inappropriate posts on Facebook. Our results mirrored another recently published study that focused on Facebook users’ reactions to others’ posts. The researchers found that more negative status updates received less social rewards, or likes, from Facebook users than positive status updates (Forest & Wood, 2012). Research has also suggested that it is common for Facebook users to have experienced a perceived social injustice through their Facebook interactions, which, in turn, has led Facebook users to report a variety of negative emotions such as confusion, anxiety, depressed feelings, and relational strain (Tokunaga, 2011). In sum, having friends on Facebook is often desired and is associated with being socially accepted (Christofides et al., 2009; Utz, 2010; Zywica & Danowski, 2008). However, users need to take care in the type of information they post to avoid potentially unfavorable outcomes.

Limitations and Future Studies

Although the results of the present study are informative, the study was not without limitations. For instance, the sample only included a limited demographic portrait, specifically, college students from the United States. Although our sample was rather limited, we believed that the sample was an adequate choice. It has been noted that there are several inherent methodological limitations to gathering accurate demographic data about Facebook users and their patterns of Facebook usage (Anderson et al., 2012; Wilson, Gosling, & Graham, 2012). However, it has also been suggested that college students in the United States can serve as an ideal population to target in studies about Facebook given that the United States has more Facebook users than any other country (Nazir, Raza, & Chauh, 2008; Wilson et al., 2012) and that young people tend to make up a substantial proportion of Facebook users (Facebook statistics by countries, 2013) and use Facebook much more frequently than older adult populations (Quinn, Chen, & Mulvenna, 2011). Indeed, Facebook originated in the United States and was initially designed exclusively for college students (Boyd & Ellison, 2008). Further, research has indicated that Facebook is the preferred social networking site among college students (Hargittai, 2008). Thus, although our findings can only potentially be generalizable to college-age Facebook users, this was an important population to study. However, future research should sample Facebook users from a wider variety of age groups and educational backgrounds because it is possible that college students differ from other groups of individuals regarding their perception of and tolerance for inappropriate Facebook self-disclosure (Karl et al., 2010).

Other limitations to the current study were related to measurement. First, the authors developed the mock newsfeeds. Although care was taken to have them evaluated by outside reviewers to help establish validity, it is possible that some of the posts could have elicited responses due to nongenital elements of the posts such as humor, writing style, or assumptions about the sex and perceived sex-typical behaviors of the mock Facebook users. Further, we did not ask participants to rate how realistic they found the newsfeeds, which could have possibly influenced participants’ responses. It was not possible to totally eliminate measurement error. However, we believe that the mock newsfeeds were adequate because the results of the study were consistent with our expectations. Additionally, in the current study, participants were asked to report their likely action if the Facebook user were a friend of theirs, but some research has suggested that other types of relationships may prompt different types of actions (Forest & Wood, 2012; Tokunaga,
Future studies should investigate how perceptions and actions vary by type of relationship between Facebook users. Despite these limitations, the current research added to the knowledge base about the types of Facebook self-disclosure that college-age users find to be inappropriate and identified actions that users are likely to take when they have such perceptions. The results of the present study can be of use not only to Facebook users, but also to those who work closely with young adults such as therapists and educators. This research addressed a need that Anderson et al. (2012) noted, specifically, that more studies examining problematic Facebook behavior should be conducted. As more studies are conducted on this topic, individuals can enhance their level of understanding of the importance of social interactions via Facebook.

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