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Macro And Micro Levels Of University Identification: Using Social Network Sites To Reactivate Latent Social Identities Within College Alumni

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MACRO AND MICRO LEVELS OF UNIVERSITY IDENTIFICATION: USING SOCIAL NETWORK SITES TO REACTIVATE LATENT SOCIAL IDENTITIES WITHIN COLLEGE ALUMNI

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This master's thesis sought to extend social identification research further into social network sites by examining how online interactions may affect offline behaviors. In particular, this thesis argues that alumni who interact with their university or major department via a social network site, should have an increased intention to donate back to their university or major. Despite a large body of research on both social identification and social network use, less research has combined the two in order to predict external behaviors. As such, data were collected from 277 undergraduate and graduate students at Illinois State University regarding their university and major social identification as well as their social network use. Data were analyzed using a *t*-test and multiple linear regressions. The findings from this research suggest that social network site use is a significant variable to increase an alumni's intent to donate. However, contrary to previous research, superordinate university social identification was a stronger predictor of intent to donate when compared to subordinate major social identification. The

findings support the prediction that social network interaction plays a significant role in predicting an alumni's intent to donate to their university.

MACRO AND MICRO LEVELS OF UNIVERSITY IDENTIFICATION: USING

SOCIAL NETWORK SITES TO REACTIVATE LATENT SOCIAL

IDENTITIES WITHIN COLLEGE ALUMNI

ERIC J. VARNEY

A Thesis Submitted in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements
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MACRO AND MICRO LEVELS OF UNIVERSITY IDENTIFICATION: USING

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E. J. V.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM AND ITS BACKGROUND

Statement of the Problem

Individuals have multiple group memberships that influence various behaviors.

Each membership fosters a unique social identity that defines an individual's sense of

self. Separate social identities are concurrently held, but each identity is activated

individually depending on the social context. When a social identity is activated, the

individual's attitudes and behaviors are guided based on the norms of that group and its

members. This leads individuals to act in ways that conform to their social identity.

However, when individuals are distanced, either socially or geographically, from a group;

the group's social identity becomes less salient. Social network sites (SNSs) can play a

critical role in the (re)activation of social identities because they allow users to maintain

and activate latent and weak ties over large geographic distances (Ellison, Lampe, &

Steinfield, 2007). If used properly, social network sites could be used to reactivate latent

identities by allowing individuals to reconnect with their previous social identification

group(s). This reactivates a particular social identity, making it salient once more. One

place where this may be of particular interest is with college alumni.

When students graduate college, they leave with a social identity that has been

shaped throughout their college career (Gaier, 2005). As graduates distance themselves

physically and mentally from their university, their university social identification

becomes less salient and thus, their attitudes and behaviors are guided less by their college identification. If universities can reactivate latent social identification, then alumni may subsequently shift their behavior and attitudes to act more favorably towards an institution, leading them to increasingly consider volunteerism, guest lecturing, or even providing monetary donations.

Since the late 1970s, there has been a 30 percent decrease in the amount of state appropriated funds for higher education institutions (Archibald & Feldman, 2006). This decline in state funds has led many institutions to become increasingly reliant on supplementary funding. In 2010, educational institutions nationwide received an estimated 4.6 billion dollars in charitable donations (Giving USA, 2010). However, McDearmon (2013) states, "although the amounts contributed to colleges and universities in the U.S. have seen steady increases over the years, the actual number of alumni who have contributed continues to fall" (p. 284). This presents the serious issue that the number of alumni donating is steadily decreasing. It has been noted that university social identification may not be the only vital element for alumni donation. Many researchers have argued that identifying with a specific major or major related extracurriculars could be a better predictor of alumni donations (Clotfelter, 2002; Monks, 2003; Okunade & Berl, 1997)

By using social media to activate latent social identification with a university or major, it may be possible to activate specific behaviors, such as volunteerism, guest lectures, and donation. This research seeks to understand the relationship between the use of social network sites and the reactivation of weak or latent identities, and by extension

the impact on various university-related behaviors of alumni.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

General Literature Review

Engaging Alumni

The study of alumni donation habits has been prominent over the past 30 years. Researchers suggest there are numerous factors that predict alumni engagement behavior. Some studies have found that personal characteristics such as age, income, and gender contribute to alumni engagement behaviors (Tsao & Coll, 2005; Weerts & Ronca 2007), while others state that participation in extracurricular activities such as Greek life, athletics, and clubs are strong predictors as well (Stevenson and Yerger, 2014).

However, across reviewed literature, a wealth of research found that creating a positive alumni experience by building relationships and interacting with alumni will increase university engagement (Lertputtarak & Supirchayangkool, 2013; Coltfelter, 2001). Sun et al. (2007) found that having a positive alumni experience significantly increases the likelihood of donations as compared to alumni with a negative alumni experience. Other research has concluded that alumni organizations who implement a customer relationship strategy were better able to maintain and improve the relationship between the alumni and their university, leading to more alumni engagement (Ahmadi et. al, 2012). This emphasis on relationships and interaction has caused both the creation and reinvention of alumni associations and their respective outreach programs.

Traditionally, universities seek alumni engagement in the form of time (volunteerism), talent (guest lectures/networking) and treasure (money). While many alumni consider participating in engagement behaviors, their relative distance from the university can make it challenging for them to participate in on campus engagement, making donation their primary form of alumni engagement.

Due to their respective age and income, older alumni donate more money than younger alumni (Stephenson, 2013; Clotfelter, 2001), making them prime targets for engagement opportunities. Alumni outreach programs traditionally communicate through the use of informational mailers, phone calls, newsletters, dedicated alumni webpages and email list servs. With so many options available, the frequency and quantity of communication can be overwhelming for some alumni, who may eventually view university communication as an annoyance rather than being informative (Kowalik, 2011). As the generational gap continues to grow, millennials are not responding to these traditional forms of alumni outreach (Kowalik, 2011), driving many universities to create and maintain social network accounts in an attempt to engage these younger alumni. While social network sites are an effective tool for young alumni, some older alumni may lack the comfort to navigate social networks, so traditional methods are still widely used (Zeng, Hall, & Pitts, 2012).

Social network sites allows for a level of interactivity not matched by traditional means of alumni outreach. While informational mailers can reach a large number of alumni, they lack a convenient and meaningful way to respond. Social network sites have the ability to reach thousands of alumni with one post in a very inexpensive manner

(Zeng, Hall, & Pitts, 2012). Additionally, the sharing features on social network sites allows for an even larger visibility to alumni who may not follow the university's account. By constantly interacting via social network sites, universities can maintain their relationship with their alumni and reactivate their affinity towards the university. Ford and Merchant (2010) found that reactivating nostalgic memories related to significant experiences are beneficial when attempting to solicit alumni engagement. Researchers have built on the use of nostalgia by introducing attitude accessibility, how quickly an attitude is activated, into their engagement research.

Social Identity

Social identity is conceptualized as an individual's "membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 67). By associating with a certain groups, individuals can increase their self-esteem by identifying with others who share common values and interests, which helps build their self-esteem. Tajfel & Turner (1979) built upon this concept, theorizing individuals do not have singular selves, and instead are collections of selves that correspond with different group affiliations. This idea became the foundation of Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory (SIT). At its core, SIT is used to understand how intergroup phenomena guide an individual's self-concept (Amiot & Aubin, 2013)**.** In order to have a social identification, it is necessary to have a social group consisting of more than two people sharing the same social identity (Hogg & Reid, 2006). As individuals perceive a relationship between their self-concept and their group membership(s), they begin to develop common values and interests with individuals in

that group (Hogg & Reid, 2006). Thus, SIT is used to account for how people strive to

maintain or enhance their self-esteem, and therefore identify with social groups that are

esteem boosting (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). However, developing a social identity is not as

simple as associating with various groups. Tajfel and Turner (1979) offer two specific

concepts that lead to the creation of social identities: categorization and self-

enhancement. These elements fulfill an individual's esteems needs and satisfy ingroup

favoring.

   Categorization. Categorization occurs when individuals compare themselves

with others and assess their relative similarity or dissimilarity (Stapel & Koomen, 2000).

More simply, it is the process of deciding to which group(s) an individual belongs.

Categorization helps individuals reduce uncertainty about group membership by

understanding the social contexts and behavioral norms present within a particular group.

This understanding of group norms allows individuals to make more accurate

assessments of groups and thus, reduces their uncertainty. In this way, individuals can

evaluate a group and its members by placing values on the attractiveness of group

membership (Stets & Burke, 2000). When people are categorized into groups, they are

perceived in relation to the characteristics of that specific group. For example, if someone

is categorized as a nerd, there are specific identification markers that society associates

with being in the nerd social group (i.e., spending an excessive amount of time studying,

awkward social interactions, or playing video games all weekend) and certain behaviors

and attitudes a nerd is expected to exhibit. Categorization helps individuals locate

themselves and others within their social environment (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), and

establish ingroup/outgroup bias. The ingroup/outgroup bias occurs when individuals favor members of their own social group and disaffiliate with members of other social groups based on their own groups attractiveness (Brewer, 1979).

Turner (1987) argues there are two critical factors that predict categorization: fit and accessibility. Fit and accessibility have been factors of categorization since Bruner's (1957) initial conception of the accessibility and fit formula. Bruner's formula predicts how individuals categorize themselves into salient social identities based on their perceived levels of fit and accessibility.

Fit. According to Reicher, Spears, and Haslam (2010), fit has two subcategories, comparative fit and normative fit. Comparative fit, "refers to the social organization of similarities and differences between people in a given context" (Reicher, Spears, Haslam, 2010, p. 20). This means that individuals will compare their personal beliefs and values to those of current group members in order to assess whether they could be a member of that group. Normative fit is used to reflect upon a group's shared features and how you would expect them to act based on those features. For example, in high school there are various social groups that one could belong to (i.e. athletics, theatre, band, goth). Each of these groups have their own set of norms and behaviors that one would expect to see while interacting with them. The athletic students may wear letterman jackets and talk about sports and the goth students may dress in black and be socially distant. These levels of normative fit, "arise from the (expected) content associated with similarities and differences between people" (Reicher, Spears, Haslam, 2010, p. 21).

Accessibility. After assessing fit, individuals will select a social group based on their perceived positive or negative fit. From there, individuals begin to assess the accessibility of a social group. Accessibility is the perception of how easily an individual could actually gain entrance into a social group. This perception of accessibility is usually determined by the perceivers' past experiences with similar social groups (Blanz, 1999). If individuals feel the social group's barrier to entry is too high, they will reassess their fit and potentially find another social group.

Once fit and accessibility are satisfied, individuals will begin to base their self-concept on their group affiliation, causing them to internalize the norms and values of their social group. This is the beginning of the ingroup/outgroups phenomena known as self-enhancement.

Self-Enhancement. Self-enhancement causes individuals' self-concepts to become intertwined with the values of their social identification groups. Individuals tend to identify with groups they perceive as distinct and attractive, because these memberships enhance their own self-esteem (Sluss & Ashforth, 2008) due to their perception of the ingroup as superior to the outgroup. As individuals begin to perceive their social group as the ingroup, they begin to distance themselves from other groups, firmly establishing the ingroup/outgroup bias.

When individuals identify with a social group, they tend to act in ways that correspond with their salient social identity (Edwards, 2005), resulting in numerous positive behaviors towards their social group. Self-enhancement also fulfills individuals' esteem needs. By comparing their ingroup to a perceived outgroup, individuals view their

group and themselves, in a more positive light; leading to increased group affinity and social identification.

A social identity provides an individual with a sense of self-esteem and a framework for how to act in certain social situations. When a social identity is active, it guides the behaviors and attitudes of individuals, leading them to act in ways that conform to group norms (Hogg & Reid, 2006). However, it is naive to believe individuals have only one social identity to manage, because with different group affiliations comes the development of multiple social identities. For example, a college student has many different social identities (i.e. son, brother, husband, Chicago Blackhawks fan, gamer, student, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle fan, etc.). These social identities become harder to manage as they increase in number, in part because they come to link the individual with increasingly disparate groups.

Individuals' social identities are concurrently held, but individually activated. This means that in order for a social identity to become salient, something must first trigger its activation. Once identities become salient they "increase the influence of one's membership in that group on perception and behavior" (Oakes 1987, p. 118). This identity activation is evident when examining organizations and workgroups.

Organizational Identification

SIT (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) has been used to frame organizations as social identification groups by illustrating the multiple social identities relevant to organizational members (Scott, 2007). Organizational identification (OI) is defined as, "a perceived oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's

successes and failures as one's own" (Mael & Ashforth, 1992, p. 109). Simply put, organizational identification refers to how individuals perceive themselves as a member of an organization (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008).

Like social identification, organizational identification is used to help individuals categorize themselves into an organization's structure by allowing them relate to a collective and create an ingroup favoring within an organization (Dutton et al., 1994). Organizational identification emphasizes individuals locating themselves within the confines of their organizational roles and affiliations, allowing them to understand the extent to which they identify with the organization as a whole. As individuals began to internalize the beliefs and actions of their organization, those beliefs become self-defining and contribute to the development of an individual's organizational identification (Pratt, 1998). Pratt (2001) found that organizational members who more strongly identify with their organization are more likely to engage in and make decisions that favor the organization, further resulting in a variety of positive outcomes such as increased job satisfaction and better job performance (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). Decoster et al. (2013) also found employees who identify with the organization are likely to support (i.e. trust and understand) their company in good and bad times.

The perception of the organization itself can play a crucial role in the development of strong organizational identification. Ashforth, Mael, and Dutton (1994) identify three aspects of an organization that could strengthen a member's organizational identification; 1) the organization is perceived to be highly prestigious, 2) the organization has an attractive image, and 3) identifying with the organization increases a

member's self-esteem. If one or more of these aspects are present, they could enhance an individual's social identification.

Organizational Prestige. Individuals identify with organizations for various reasons, but their association with an organization is partially driven by esteem needs. If an organization is perceived as being highly prestigious (i.e. the organization is well regarded by both employees and non-employees), there is a greater chance for an esteem boost through identification (Mael & Ashforth, 1992), which increases the likelihood of strong organizational identification (Fisher & Wakefield, 1998). However, organizational prestige is based on an individual's perception of the organization, not the actual prestige of an organization.

Attractive Image. Members of an organization often attempt to project an image of social desirability by conveying an attractive image (i.e., being a fun place to work, having good benefits, and having a good reputation). Organizational members have the ability to showcase an organization's image by rewarding employees and participating in charitable events to emphasize the positive image of the organization (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000). If an organizational member perceives their organization to be attractive, then they have an increased likelihood of having stronger organization identification.

Esteem Needs. Organizational prestige and attractive image are not the only factors in an organizational member's perceived fulfillment of esteem needs. When members' organizational identification is strong, they may begin to incorporate what the organization believes is distinct, central, and enduring into their own self-concept (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). If these beliefs become a part of an individual,

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then they should perceive their organizational identification as fulfilling their esteem needs.

Thus, the development of organizational identification is not solely an interactive process because the organization can directly affect a member's level of identification. However, concepts of identification development do not solely apply to the organization at a macro-level. There are multiple subgroups that make up the micro-level of an organization's structure with which an individual may identify; the most notable being workgroups. These workgroups have an identification process that is similar to organizational identification, but are distinct in their own right.

Workgroup Identification

Workgroup identification (WI) is the extent to which individuals define themselves in terms of a smaller, more intimate social group within the workplace (Cooper & Thatcher, 2010). Individuals in workgroups share more common interests than those who identify with the organization at a macro-level (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). While in an organization, individuals spend the majority of their time in workgroups, and thus develop high levels of familiarity and cohesion among other workgroup members (Riketta & Van Dick, 2004). This cohesion leads to more information disclosure between workgroup members (van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000). Additionally, workgroups usually have more direct and immediate influence over its members than the organization does (Riketta & Van Dick, 2004).

Vough (2011) found that workgroup identification is more strongly associated with job satisfaction, reduced turnover intentions, job involvement, and job motivation

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than organizational identification. WI also "predicts ingroup[/outgroup] bias if the ingroup and outgroups are viewed as relatively distinct, task independent, and goal independent and if the ingroup culture does not discourage such bias" (Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley, 2008, p.337). As a result, workgroup identification is better able to predict the attitudes and behaviors of the workgroup members.

In most organizational contexts, employees are likely to interact with members of their workgroup more frequently than members of other organizational groups. Thus, their workgroup identification should be more salient than their organizational identification (Riketta & Dick, 2004). Additionally, workgroups are a more proximate entity than the organization itself, leading employees to perceive a sense of control. The result is a stronger identification with their workgroup rather than to the organization as a whole (Mueller & Lawler, 1999).

University Organizational Identification

A prime example of the organization/workgroup dichotomy exists in the realm of education. By examining a university at the macro-level, one can compare it to an organization because the university has multiple large-scale goals that are executed by various individuals and groups within the university's structure. Additionally, these individuals and groups begin to develop an affinity towards the university, very similar to how employees would identify with an organization. Gaier (2005) discusses how the quality of the relationship between one's alma mater and an alumnus postgraduate plays a large role in the creation of organizational identification. The establishment of OI is mutually beneficial for both the institution and alumni for a number of reasons. By

borrowing organizational identification elements from Ashforth, Harrison, & Corley (2008) (organizational distinction, the organization's outgroups are salient, and intergroup competition exists between ingroups and outgroups), universities can begin to determine the degree to which a student or alumni will internalize the characteristics or perspectives of the university.

In terms of an organization being distinct from others, it is in a university's best interest to find ways to stand out amongst other universities. One way they can do this is by providing opportunities for their students to become entrenched within university ingroups. These include extracurricular activities, a fun social and academic atmosphere, athletics, intramurals, and clubs. The academic and social components of college work in tandem to shape a student's experience. Gaier (2005) found that student participation in on-campus groups and activities was a significant factor in both alumni giving and alumni participation. Gaier (2005) reports that, "alumni who participated in at least one formal student activity during the undergraduate experience were 87% more likely to give and 1.5 times as likely to participate as those alumni who did not participate in any student activities as undergraduates" (p. 284).

Secondly, a university must offer a salient outgroup. Outgroups are readily presented and salient in a university context due to athletic and academic rivalries. Outgroups, and their members, are considered significantly less similar when compared to the ingroup, thus creating a bias against the outgroup. This causes negative categorizations, feelings, or ideas about the people who are part of the outgroup (Jacoby-Senghor, Sinclair, & Smith, 2015). For example, one of the biggest rivalries in college

football is Oregon State vs. University of Oregon. If a group of Oregon State fans sees someone dressed in green and yellow (University of Oregon's colors) they would feel a negative bias towards that person due to their own association as an Oregon State ingroup member. This interaction will also begin to deindividuate the Oregon State fans, meaning they will no longer see themselves as individual people, rather as a collective group of Oregon State fans united in their University of Oregon outgroup bias. While having a salient outgroup is not the only antecedent of deindividuation, it helps create a greater affinity for the ingroup to which an individual then conforms. In other words, individuals begin to lose their sense of individual identity and become entrenched in the group norms.

Major Workgroup Identification

Beyond and subordinate to a university social identification as organization identification, the various college majors (i.e., Communication, Psychology, Sociology) can be considered as workgroup identification sources. The different majors are equitable to workgroup identification due to the more intimate nature of identification, created by specialized interests, as compared to university level identification. This intimacy creates opportunities for greater social identification. Kim, Chang, and Ko (2010) found that undergraduate students who identify with their academic department [major] have a stronger identification as compared to their university identification. They also found that individuals who had strong major identification were more likely to have supportive intentions.

Waning University and Major Social Identification

Once individuals graduate, they begin to distance themselves, both physically and socially, from their universities, causing their university and major identification to become less salient among their other social identities as they are replaced by new organization identities, like jobs. This identity latency reduces alumnus' likelihood to behave positively towards a university because they no longer identify as heavily with the social identity norms and beliefs of the university. As alumni spread across the country, how can a university reactivate university and major identifications despite this geographic hurdle to increase normative social identity behaviors, like donations? The answer may lie within social network sites.

Social Network Sites

boyd and Ellison (2007) define social network sites as, "web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system" (p. 211). Social network sites are prime examples of how social identity theory can operate in an online context, as social network sites allow users to create, maintain, and express social identities with various groups despite geographic distances or time constraints.

One of the clearest applications of social identity theory within social network sites has been analyzing how social identities are maintained through online interactions (Scott, 2007). Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) explain that social network sites are

used to connect individuals with preexisting relationships, rather than fostering new ones. This makes SNS a valuable tool in identification because they allow for the effective maintenance of both strong and weak ties in one location. Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) explain that individuals can also activate their different social identities by uploading photographs, updating profile information, and posting wall content. For example, if someone were to update their profile with Chicago Cubs pictures it would be safe to assume that part of their social identity is being a Cubs fan.

According to Reicher, Spears, & Postmes' (1995) social identity model of deindividuation effects (or SIDE model), when individuals become immersed in a group they begin to develop a sense anonymity and a diffusion of responsibility. By being less individualistic and engaging in more group activities, individuals can actually increase the salience of the group's identity and thereby deindividuating them. Through SIDE, "online interactions can maximize the difference between ingroup and outgroup members, thus raising the esteem of the ingroup" (Wang, Walther, & Hancock 2009, p. 61). SIDE suggests that the deindividuation from computer mediated communication propels users to identify with a group identity that is salient to them, whether it is an *ad hoc* activity group or wider social categories (Wang, Walther, & Hancock, 2009), members no longer view themselves as individuals, but as a part of the larger group as a whole. Once the group identity is salient, the personal identity becomes less important and even interchangeable with other ingroup identification (Wang, Walther, & Hancock, 2009). Referring back to the Oregon State vs. University of Oregon example used earlier, when the group of Oregon State fans saw a University of Oregon fan, they deindividuated

into a collective group. However, when using social network sites, the Oregon State fans could seek out others who share their outgroup bias against University of Oregon fans and deindividuate even more with likeminded Oregon State fans.

When considering the role that SNSs play in activating university and major social identities, one must first consider the mindset of a college graduate. Typically, college students are immersed in their collegiate career for four years, after which they graduate and transition into a career. While the newly graduated alumni are away from their alma mater, their identification begins to suffer as post-graduate life moves forward. This leads alumni to disassociate with their alma mater, making their identity latent. Using social network sites to communicate with alumni allows for a new avenue of maintaining university and major social identities.

A study conducted by Farrow and Yuan (2011) is one of the most relevant examples of how social network site use influences behavioral outcomes. Their study sought to identify the effects of alumni social network use on their attitudes towards volunteering and charitable giving. Farrow and Yuan found active members of alumni Facebook groups had a higher perceived level of emotional closeness with their university than those who were not active. This demonstrates an important relationship between social network interactions with a university and an increased emotional response from the user. Since the self-enhancement aspect of social identity theory is based around esteem needs, a parallel can be drawn between emotional closeness and the self-enhancement needed to develop social identification. While it is not a direct connection, it can be hypothesize that social network use could increase university social

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identification within alumni. However, this study in not solely concerned with how alumni interact with their university via social network sites. A second area of interest includes whether the same social network interaction could activate an alumni's major social identification. Thus,

H1a: Alumni use of SNSs to communicate with their alma mater activates social identification with their alma mater.

H1b: Alumni use of SNSs to communicate with their alma mater activates social identification with their major.

However, according to Ashforth (2001) the social identities of small units (i.e. workgroups) are richer than those of large units (i.e. the organization as a whole). This should hold true in terms of university and major identification as well. DeMarie and Aloise-Young (2003) found when students take courses related to their major, they have a greater personal investment in those courses as compared to required general education courses. This leads students to give more attention and effort in their major classes, requiring general courses to capture their interest rather than assuming that students are self-motivated to learn (DeMarie & Aloise-Young, 2003). Thus,

H2: Individuals identify more strongly with their major than with the university itself.

University and major identification cause individuals to act congruent to group norms and can activate certain behaviors. These behaviors can manifest into different actions such as donations or gifts to the university or major. Newman and Petrosko (2011) found that student involvement in major based activities as an undergraduate were predictors of alumni giving. Thus, alumni who are satisfied with their academic

experience are more likely to be involved with the university than those alumni who are not as satisfied with their academic experience (Gaier, 2005). University and major identification traditionally require some level of both time and proximity to the institution, but it can be challenging for alumni to stay involved on campus due to their geographic location. As such, many alumni prefer a monetary donation rather than on-campus participation, because a donation can be sent via mail; whereas, participating in an event requires more energy and effort (Gaier, 2005). Referring back to Farrow and Yuan's (2011) study, alumni with a strong emotional closeness to their university have stronger positive attitudes towards charitable giving to their university. So, by extending this to social identification, one could assume that alumni who have strong levels of university social identification may also have favorable donation intentions to their university. Additionally, Ashfoth (2001) shows that individuals identify stronger with smaller workgroups compared to the larger organization as a whole, so it can also be hypothesized that major social identification should influence intent to donate as well. Thus,

H3a: University social identification predicts intent to donate.

H3b: Major social identification predicts intent to donate.

There has been limited research comparing how the strength of university and major social identification affects intent to donate. However, Mael and Ashforth (1992) explain that subordinate levels of social identification (i.e. workgroups) were stronger predictors of donation behaviors than superordinate levels of social identification (i.e. organization). This is further echoed by the results of a study conducted by Kim, Chang,

and Ko (2010) that indicated when students' identified with their major, there were strong effects on their intent to support the university, explaining, "identification with [workgroups] may be as important as identification with the organization as a whole in intentions to support organizations" (Kim, Chang, & Ko, 2010, p.424).

Strong subordinate identification may be attributed to the categorization and self-enhancement processes presented in social identity theory. Alumni categorize themselves within superordinate (i.e. university) and subordinate (i.e. major) identifications while they attend college. Using self-enhancement, alumni assess the norms and values presented in both the university and their major, ultimately identifying stronger with one over the other. Whether the stronger identification is with the university or major is still debated among researchers. Farrow and Yuan (2011) found that students who had a high level of perceived emotional closeness with the university had a stronger positive attitude towards charitable donations than those who felt less close. While Weerts and Ronca (2009) found that the major field of study is a significant determinant of alumni giving as compared to university itself. Even though the results of Weerts and Ronca showed support for major social identification's impact on intent to donate, they did not look at activating university and major social identification via social network sites.

By extending the principals of organization and workgroup identification to university and major identification, one can assume that the subordinate (workgroup/major) identification may be a better predictor of donation behaviors as compared to superordinate (organization/university) identification. Thus:

H4: Major social identification is a stronger predictor of intent to donate than university

social identity.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH DESIGN

Method

Procedures

A survey was used to test the hypotheses. Respondents were graduate and undergraduate students from Illinois State University. Due to the large population of the university, an online survey instrument was created to reach the greatest number of respondents. The survey was posted on the School of Communication Research Pool page and instructors also mentioned the survey in their classes; some offering extra credit for participation. Respondents provided informed consent before completing the survey. After consenting to participate, respondents were required to answer three preliminary questions before beginning the survey: "What academic department do you belong to at Illinois State University?", "What is your college Major?", and "What social network do you prefer to use the most?" Knowing the answers to these questions would not be the same for all respondents, a piping command was used to populate each answer into specific sections of the survey, allowing each respondent to take a customized survey. From there, respondents were directed to the beginning of the survey. The survey contained items assessing university and major social identification, intensity of a respondent's social network use, a behavioral index measures, and an intent to donate measure. Respondents were required to be at least 18 years of age and be a current

student of the university.

Respondents

A total of *N* =272 respondents were recruited to take part in this research study. However, after careful vetting of the data, 15 respondent were excluded from the analysis because they did not answer the three preliminary piping questions necessary for completing the survey correctly, leaving *N*=257 viable respondents. There were 256 undergraduate (99.6%) and 1 graduate (.4%) respondents. Overall, the respondents predominantly identified themselves from one of six colleges within Illinois State University, College of Arts and Science 80% (*n*=206), with the remaining respondents representing the College of Applied Science and Technology 7% (*n*=17), College of Business 6% (*n*=15), College of Education 4% (*n*=10), College of Nursing 2% (*n*=5), and College of Fine Arts 1% (*n*=4). The sample was comprised of 26% male (*n*=68) and 74% female (*n*=189) with and average age of 20.7 years old.

Measures

The survey instrument included measures of social identification at both the university and major levels, the intensity of respondents' social network use, a social network communication index, and an intent to donate scale. See Appendix B for full items. To measure the independent variable of university and major social identification, Wang, Walther, and Hancock's (2009) social identification scale was administered twice. The first instance was to assess an individual's level of social identification with the university (α=.87). Items included: "I do not feel a part of Illinois State University's social group", and "I wouldn't care what happened to Illinois State University". The

second instance was to assess the same individual's level major identification (∞=.87). Items included: "I can see myself as a member of my Major's social group", and "My major's social group is important to me."

Three control variables were measured and tested in conjunction with the Social Identification Scale: organizational prestige, organizational attraction, and esteem needs. These variables were controlled for because research shows they may affect a student's social identification. For example, if a student went to Harvard the prestige, attractiveness, and esteem that the university provides may be greater than that of the major. This could eventually skew the data in favor of the university. Organizational prestige was operationalized with Mael and Ashforth's (1992) organizational prestige scale and adjusted to use both university (∞=.80) and major (∞=.80) prestige. Items on this scale were used to measure an individual's perception of the university's and major's prestige. Items included: "People in my community think highly of Illinois State University", "Illinois State University is considered one of the best universities", "People from other majors look down at my major", and "A person seeking to advance his career should downplay his association with my major."

Organizational and workgroup attractiveness were assessed with Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar's (2003) organizational attraction scale. The scale was modified to measure the level of attraction each respondent had towards the university (∞=.80) and major (∞=.86). Items included: "For me, ISU would be a good place to attend", "ISU is attractive to me as a place for academia", "I would not be interested in my major except as a last resort", and "A degree from my major is very appealing to me."

Finally, esteem needs were measured with Pierce, Gardner, Cummings and Durham's (1989) organizational esteem scale. Items were adjusted to apply to university ($\propto$=.96) and major ($\propto$=.97) contexts. Items included: "I count at ISU", "I am taken seriously at ISU", "I can make a difference in my major", and "There is faith in me in my major."

To assess the intensity of a respondent's social network use, a modified version of Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield's (2007) Facebook intensity scale was used ($\propto$=.87). One of the three preliminary survey questions was used to alter the scale by allowing respondents to type in their most-used social network site into an open-ended field in the web survey. A total of nine social network sites were entered, (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, Google+, Pintrest, Reddit, Snapchat, and YouTube). The measures in the scale go beyond simple frequency and duration of social network usage by incorporating an emotional aspect to the use of the self-selected social network site. Items from the scale included: [Social network site] is part of my everyday activity, [Social network site] has become part of my daily routine, I feel I am part of the [Social network site] community, I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto [Social network site] for a while.

To measure respondents' social network communication behaviors towards Illinois State University, an adaptation of Vitak et al. (2011) Political Activity on Facebook index was used. The index was modified to specifically relate to social network site behaviors that were university directed (KR20=.72). The index asked respondents to reflect on the stem prompt "In the past 12 months have you…" and included leafs:

"added or deleted University information from my personal social network site",
"became a ''fan'' of a ISU related page, discussed Illinois State University via a social
network site", "posted an update that mentions Illinois State", "joined or left a group
about Illinois State University", and "donated money to Illinois State University."

Finally, to measure the dependent variable of intent to donate, Ford and
Merchant's (2010) intent to donate scale was adapted ($\propto$=.94). Items on this scale were
modified for use with both university identification and major identification. Items
included: "I am likely to donate to [College Major] at ISU after I graduate", "It is
unlikely I will give to money to Illinois State University." Four additional hypothetical
scenarios, taken from Kramër et al (2014), were used to supplement the intent to donate
scale. In these scenarios respondents' were asked if they had a $100, how much they
would give to Illinois State University or their major and what is the largest amount of
money that they would contribute to ISU and/or their major annually.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Statistical Analysis

A regression analysis was performed to test hypothesis 1, which expects interaction with the university via social network sites predicts a) university social identification and b) major social identification. To test H1a, a regression was conducted using the independent variable, social network communication behaviors, to predict the dependent variable, university social identification. Regression results revealed social media interaction significantly predicted university social identification, $F(1,248) = 21.42, p < .001, R^2 = .08$, supporting H1a. To test H1b, a similar regression was conducted using social network communication behaviors with the university as the independent variable and major social identification as the dependent variable. The regression for H1b was statistically significant, revealing major social identification could be predicted based on social network communication behaviors, $F(1,248) = 10.41, p < .001, R^2 = .04$. Given that the independent and dependent variables were operationalized as interval-level variables, and the hypothesis predicted a linear relationship between the two, a linear regression was the appropriate to test for H1.

Hypothesis 2 predicts a respondent's major social identification would be stronger than his/her university social identification. However, previous research (Stevenson & Yerger, 2013; Holmes, 2009; Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000) showed that

organizational prestige, attraction, and esteem may play important roles in the development of social identification, so they were made control variables when testing hypothesis 2. Since a comparison of two means from the same sample was needed, a paired sample t-test was used and revealed respondents' major social identification ($M = 5.38$, $SD = 1.08$) was not significantly different from their university social identification ($M = 5.29$, $SD = 1.08$), $t(257) = -1.43$, $p = .16$, 2-tailed, even after controlling for organizational prestige, attraction, and esteem. Thus, H2 was not supported.

Hypothesis 3 predicts a) university social identification influences respondents' intent to donate to their university and b) major social identification influences a respondents' intent to donate to their college major. Since the intent to donate scale (Ford & Merchant, 2010) was adapted for both university and major intent to donate, two dependent variables were created for use when testing H3a and H3b: *university intent to donate and major intent to donate.* H3a and H3b both predict a linear relationship between interval-level variables, making a linear regression the best choice for both analyses.

To test H3a, a regression was conducted using the independent variable university social identification to predict a student's intent to donate to the university. The results of the regression analysis showed university social identification is a significant predictor of respondents' intent to donate to the university, $F(1,256) = 57.18$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .18$. This shows that students who identified with their university had a greater intent to donate, supporting H3a. The regression performed for H3b used the independent variable of major social identification and the dependent variable intent to donate to the major. The

regression analysis revealed that major social identification is a significant predictor of respondents' intent to donate to their college major, $F(1,256) = 22.55$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .08$, supporting H3b. Though the results of hypothesis 3 may seem straightforward, knowing university and major identification are significant predictors of a respondent's intent to donate creates the foundation for testing whether university or major social identification was a stronger predictor of intent to donate.

The fourth hypothesis predicts that major social identification is a stronger predictor of intent to donate than university social identification. To test this hypothesis, a linear regression was used, with university social identification and major social identification both treated as independent predictor variables, and intent to donate as the dependent variable. The regression was significant $F(2,255), = 29.04$, $p < .001$, $R^2 = .19$. However, counter to the hypothesis, university social identification was a stronger predictor of donation intention (b* = .40, $p < .001$) than major social identification (b* = .05, $p = .19$). Thus, H4 was not supported.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary of the Research and Findings

General Discussion

The questionable future of federal and state funding for universities, such as the

potential loss of the Illinois MAP Grant and the Federal Perkins Loan (Baker, 2016; Bott,

2016), has contributed to the growing need for universities to seek out additional sources

of income. To compensate for these potential losses, universities have begun to "lean on

alumni networks and foundation money" (Stevens, 2016) to remain financially viable.

However, the alumni population becomes geographically dispersed upon graduation,

causing their university social identity to be less salient and making engagement

behaviors (i.e. volunteering and donation) harder to elicit (Brenner, Serpe, Stryker, 2014;

Mael & Ashforth, 1992). While traditional means of outreach, such as phone calls and

emails, remain viable options for attempting to reengage alumni, they lack some of the

affordances granted by social network sites to help enhance alumni engagement.

According to Farrow and Yuan (2011), social network sites allow for more frequent

communication and the development of emotional closeness. Additionally, phone

numbers and emails are more likely to change during an individual's life as compared to

their social network profile page (Ellison et al., 2007) making social network sites an

easy way to reconnect with alumni who may have outdated information.

This study applied social identity theory to students' social media interactions with their university and major, finding that while both significantly predicted intent to donate, university identification was a stronger predictor of intent to donate. This finding is contrary to previous research (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005; van Knippenberg & Sleebos, 2006) that found individuals have stronger identification with workgroups as compared to organizational identification. While students have various superordinate identities, each identity has multiple subordinate identities nested within it (Carr, Varney, Blesse, in press). Since subordinate identities cannot exist without the establishment of a superordinate identity, it is understandable why students identify with their university more than their major. This is a significant finding to note because knowing that students' university social identification is stronger than their major identification will change the way universities interact with students.

The analysis of hypothesis 1 shows students who interact with Illinois State University via social network sites reported greater levels of both university and major social identification. Further, the analysis of hypothesis 3 indicated university and major social identification are both significant predictors of intent to donate. So, by increasing students' social network site interaction with Illinois State University, it is possible to increase their intent to donate which creates a greater likelihood for students to give money to help supplement the financial loss facing many universities.

Implications for Theory

The analysis of social network site use on social identification and behavioral outcomes yielded some interesting results. It was found that when students interacted

with the university via a social network site, their social identification with both their university and major increased. However, one of the most substantive findings was that although both university and major social identification increased with social network use, university identification was a stronger predictor of intent to donate. This goes against previous findings that workgroups are more salient when compared to the organization and are more important for socialization (Riketta & Van Dick, 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000).

This deviation from previous research could be explained by the two components of social identity theory: categorization and self-enhancement. Students may choose to enroll at a specific university based on their perceived fit and accessibility with the university and its values; thus categorizing themselves as a member of the university's social group. Additionally, students further categorize themselves into a major based on their personal interests and specializations. Self-enhancement builds off of the categorization process and allows students to satisfy their esteem needs and create a social identification with their university and major. The better satisfied the esteem needs are, the stronger their social identification will be (Vignoles et al., 2006). Students may have identified more with their university because they felt it satisfied their esteem needs better than their major. For example, research on organization identification states that an attractive image and prestigious reputation are used to create and enhance social identification (Gioia, Schultz, & Corley, 2000; Mael & Ashforth, 1992). Universities are better equipped to showcase their attraction and prestige because of the amenities they can provide (i.e new facilities, class sizes, or employment outcomes) while majors

programs may find it more challenging to distinguish themselves from other programs of the same major.

Since the salience of individuals' numerous social identifications shifts, latent identifications need triggers to be (re)activated (Forehand, Deshpandé & Reed II, 2002). Social network sites act as a catalyst for potentially reactivating university and major social identifications by providing users with opportunities to engage with and absorb information related to the university. The inclusion of social network sites in this study reflects the fact that they are one of the fastest-growing and most popular internet-based technology (Roblyer, 2010) and "almost 60% of students use social networking to talk about [their] education" (Karlin, 2007, p. 7). However, one aspect of identification that social identity theory neglects to consider is an individual's willingness to reactivate a latent social identity. It may not matter if alumni are given reactivation triggers, such as social network posts and pictures, if they are not willing to internalize their latent social identification.

Implications for Practice

Knowing social network interaction increases students' intent to donate. Alumni offices should adjust the way they manage their social network site use. Many universities have a social network presence, but do not allocate the appropriate resources to use it effectively (Roblyer et. al, 2010). Posts from alumni offices should be geared towards engaging alumni in a dialogic communication. Rybalko and Seltzer (2010) discuss dialogic communication as ways to engage users on social network sites managed by a company that encourage repeat visits and provide useful information. Any pictures,

comments or posts should be opportunities for alumni to engage in dialogic communication by responding directly to either the university or other alumni. Each of these interactions will be an opportunity to reactivate latent social identities within alumni to generate donations. While the interactions may not explicitly encourage or seek donations, they can increase alumni social identification which can subsequently increase individuals' intent to donate. However, the use of social network sites to increase social identification should not be reserved exclusively for alumni. As seen in this study, current students are also influenced by social network interactions.

If having high levels of university social identification predicts students' intent to donate, then universities should start building the foundation for university social identification while students are currently enrolled. This can be done by engaging students via social networks sites and providing them opportunities to grow closer to the university. Students who manage to establish a strong level of identification with the university will be more likely to advocate for it. Additionally, these students may require less effort to reengage when they become alumni. To extend this even further, admission offices should consider engaging potential students over social network sites while recruiting for future freshmen classes. If prospective students begin to interact with the university the will begin to develop a social identification towards it. This identification should cause students to feel a closer relationship to the university and thus act in ways that conform to the groups norms (i.e. apply, visit campus, etc.). Starting to build social identification before students even enrolled could make the difference between having engaged and active alumni after graduation and not. There is an opportunity here for

entities within a university (e.g. admission, marketing, alumni office) to creates some strategic partnerships in order to truly maximize the effects of social network site use on social identification. Some universities have even gone as far as creating dedicated social network monitoring centers that are used to collect and analyze social network data. The analyzed data is then distributed to the appropriate entity to help inform their decisions.

Since the purpose of this study revolved around intent to donate, these findings are not exclusive to the world of academia. Charitable organizations could use social identification and social network interaction strategies to help increase donation and fundraising dollars. It was found that individuals identify stronger with superordinate groups as compared to subordinate groups. Applying this finding to a charitable organization such as the Humane Society help increase donation dollars. If they are looking for financial donations, it would be in their best interest to get potential donors to identify with the Humane Society as an organization rather than specific special interest groups within the organization such as "Stop Puppy Mills" and "Wildlife Protection". It's not that these special interest groups are less important than the overall organization, but they are basically workgroups, which were found to be less effective at eliciting donations as compared to organizational identification

Limitations and Future Research

One of perhaps the most substantive limitations of this study concerned the respondents' capacity for selective self-inclusion. Those who participated in the study were probably compelled to do so, to some degree, by their university social identification. Social identity theory states individuals will act positively towards, and in

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congruence with, a social identity (i.e. Illinois State University) (Tajfel & Turner, 1978).

This could have lead respondents with high university identification to respond, while

potential respondents with low social identification refrained from responding. While

there is a chance that selective self-inclusion may have resulted in a Type I error, both the

university and major related hypotheses were analyzed to compare within-subject

differences, minimizing the effect of selection bias and likely providing a valid

comparison for university and major behaviors.

Building off the respondent limitation, there was also a minor change in the

population used for the study. Initially, this study sought to use an alumni sample, but due

to issues beyond the researcher's control, an undergraduate and graduate population were

sampled instead. Using this new sample of current students reduced the ability to

generalize these claims to alumni because current students are constantly entrenched in

activities that activate university and/or major identification. Alumni, however, lack the

constant stimulus to (re)activate their social identifications. This is why social network

sites were used as the medium for communication. The results are still useful, because

even though current students are not alumni, they will eventually become alumni. It is

also possible that since underclassmen responded to the survey, they may not be far

enough along in their academic career to develop major social identification, leading to

the potential for Type I error.

While this study provides ample data to support the claim that there is a

relationship between social network interaction and increased social identification, the

method of this study, a cross-sectional survey, cannot establish causality between the

two. Respondents' social network interactions and initial levels university/major social identification were not measured in a fashion that allowed for a causal claim to be established. It is possible that individuals who have previously established high levels of university and/or major social identification may already be more likely to interact with the university via social network sites. Additionally, the respondents with initially high levels of social identification may already be more inclined to donate regardless of their social network interaction with the university or major.

Lastly, there was an oversight with the social network communication behavior index. While the index was set-up to measure communication behaviors towards the university, the index was not modified to measure the same behaviors towards the major. By not having an index for major behaviors, any analyses concerning social network interaction with the major may have been skewed towards university identification. This oversight may have been an indication of why hypotheses 2 and 4 were not supported.

Future research on the alumni engagement and donation should explore the following items. First, researchers should examine what specific social network interactions increase university and major social identification within alumni. There are a multitude of social network sites, each offering a variety of ways to interact. It would be interesting to see if interaction options such as comments, pictures, news stories, etc. would be more effective at activating social identification than others. Additionally, there are many social network site users who are passive, meaning they use sites to gather information, but rarely contribute information. While these users do not interact in the traditional fashion, it would be interesting to see if passive consumption of social network

posts for the university or major increases social identification. Building off previous social identification research, future researchers should examine the impact a students' extracurricular involvement on their university and major social identification. Research has shown students who are involved in campus organizations have greater levels of social identification with their university (Gaier, 2005). However, the types and number of extracurricular activities are still up for interpretation. Some have found holding a leadership role in extracurricular activities correlated with increased charitable giving (Clotfelter, 2001) and have linked participation with athletics, student government, and Greek life to charitable giving (Dugan et al., 2000; Monks, 2003). However, Coltfelter (2003) had a contradictory finding when both participation in athletics and extracurricular involvement were not statistically significant predictors of university social identification or charitable giving. The vast majority of alumni and student social identification research has focused solely on university identification, but since major social identification is essentially a workgroup and subordinate identification, (Ashfoth, 2001; Riketta & Van Dick, 2004; van Knippenberg & van Schie, 2000) research should aim to study the impact of major social identification.

Last, there needs to be more work on whether intent to donate actually translates into tangible donation dollars. The activation of latent social identities can reignite alumnus' intent to donate, but if they fail to act on that intention, then the reactivation may have been for naught. Future studies may want to include chronemics as a variable when measuring intent to donate. After reactivating university or major social identification, there may be a limited timeframe where universities can take advantage of

their moment of identity salience and get alumni to donate. This would allow universities to better plan their communication timelines.

Conclusion

Defining oneself in terms of a relationship with a university or major is not a new concept. However, the inclusion of social network interaction changes how these social identifications are activated. By interacting with a university via a social network site, the salience of both university and major social identification are enhanced. With a stronger more salient identification, students have a higher intent to donate back to the university and their major. As universities become increasingly reliant on alumni gifts to maintain operations (Weerts, Cabrera, & Sanford, 2009), it is clear they should apply the same social network principals to their alumni outreach in order to increase alumni donations.

University interaction with alumni via social network sites should increase intent to donate among alumni; however, universities need to place a considerable amount of effort into maintaining and building relationships with their alumni on these sites. The interactivity and communication affordances social network sites offer (i.e. interaction, synchronous communication, and message reach) make it a superior tool for engaging and interacting with alumni when compared to traditional means of outreach (Farrow & Yuan, 2011). With an effective social network strategy, universities can increase alumni social identification and generate more financial gifts, making university less reliant on federal funding

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT

You have been invited to participate in a research study examining students' use of social media and its effect on social identity by Eric Varney, a graduate student completing his thesis at Illinois State University. You have been selected as a possible participant in this study because you are 18 years or older and you are an Illinois State University student. I ask that you read this consent form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to participate in this study. Your responses will be protected and remain confidential. The following is a brief description of the project and your rights as a research participant.

Purpose of the Study:
The purpose of this study is to understand how students interaction with Illinois State University (ISU) via social media affects their affinity towards ISU.

Procedures and Duration of the Study:
Participants in this project will answer a series of short survey questions. The questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. The research team will use aggregate data (in summary form only, such as averages and mean scores, with no identifying information) in the research report in order to maintain your anonymity.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:
There is a risk of psychological discomfort answering some questions about your university experiences and relations; but you are free to discontinue the survey at any time should you feel such distress. You will not receive direct benefit from participating; but your responses will help us better-understand university-student relations.

Confidentiality:
Your participation is voluntary and there is no penalty for not participating. Your responses will remain anonymous and no identifying information is being collected. Your personal information will not be linkable to you personally. The records of this study will be kept private. Data will be reported in an aggregate or summary form only.
Voluntary Nature of the Study:
Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Illinois State University. If you decide to participate, you are free not to answer questions you do not like or withdraw from the study at any time without consequences. If you feel uncomfortable, you may withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Contacts and Questions:
The primary investigator for this study is Dr. Caleb Carr. If you have any questions regarding the study, please contact him by email at ctcarr@ilstu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a research participant, you are encouraged to contact the Research Ethics and Compliance office at Illinois State University by phone at (309) 438-2520.

Statement of Consent:
I have read the above information. By clicking the hyperlink below you are consenting to the study. We want to thank you for your participation in this study and let you know that we appreciate your help.

_ _

I have voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. I understand that I may withdraw my participation at any time.
Click "Next" To Participate

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

ISU Students and Social Media Habits

Demographics

To begin, we would like to get some information about you. Your answers to these questions will help us better understand the opinions you express in other sections of this questionnaire.

1. What academic department do you belong to at Illinois State University?*
2. What is your college Major?* (If you are double majoring, please choose the one you associate with the most.)
3. What social network do you prefer to use the most? (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+, LinkedIn)*

Your Perceptions of ISU and Your Major

The following sets of questions ask about your perception of yourself in relation to Illinois State University as a college and of your undergraduate major.

4. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to Illinois State University.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I wouldn't care what happened to Illinois State University.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can see myself as a member of Illinois State	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
University's social group.							
Illinois State University's social group is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not feel a part of Illinois State University's social group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel involved in Illinois State University's social group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am pleased to be a member of this group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

5. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to your major.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am pleased to be a member of this group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The ___ major's social group is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel involved in the ___ major's social group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I do not feel like a part of the ___ major's social group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I wouldn't care what happened to the ___ major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can see myself as a member of the ___ major's social group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Social Media Use and Attitudes

6. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to the statements regarding your use of the indicated social medium.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
___ is part of my everyday activity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am proud to tell people I'm on ___.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
___ has become part of my daily routine.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel out of touch when I haven't logged onto ___ for a while.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel I am part of the ____ community.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I would be sorry if __ shut down.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

7. Approximately how many TOTAL Friends/Followers do you have? The value must be greater than or equal to 0.
8. In the past week, on average, approximately how much time PER DAY (in minutes) have you spent actively using ____?
9. Approximately how many of your current Friends/Followers do you know from college?

ISU and Major Attraction

The following sets of questions ask about your perception of yourself in relation to Illinois State University as a university and of your undergraduate major.

10. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to Illinois State University.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I was not interested in Illinois State University except as a last resort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illinois State University was attractive to me as an academic institution.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
For me, Illinois State University was a good institution to attend.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
A degree from Illinois State University was very appealing to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I was interested in learning more about Illinois State University before attending.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

11. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to your major.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
___ was an attractive major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I chose the __ major as a last resort.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I was interested in learning more about the __ major before attending.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A degree ____ in was very appealing to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
For me, ____ was a good major to choose.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ISU and Major Prestige

The following sets of questions ask about your perception of Illinois State University's prestige as a college and of your undergraduate major's prestige.

12. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to Illinois State University.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
People from other universities look down at Illinois State University.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a graduate of Illinois State University is considered prestigious.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People think highly of Illinois State University.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illinois State University is considered one of the best universities in the nation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When companies are recruiting new employees, they would not want employees with a degree from Illinois	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
State University.							
Graduates of ISU would be proud to have their children attend Illinois State University.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A person seeking to advance his career should downplay his association with Illinois State University.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Illinois State University does not have a good reputation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ISU and Major Prestige Continued

13. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Graduates of the major would be proud to have their children pursue _____.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People think highly of ____ majors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

The ___ major does not have a good reputation.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Being a ___ major is considered prestigious.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
People from other majors look down at __ majors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
When companies are recruiting new employees, they would not want employees with a degree in ____.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
___ is considered one of the best majors.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A person seeking to advance his career should downplay his association as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ISU and Major Esteem

You're almost done--just two sets of questions left. The following sets of questions ask about your personal connection in relation to Illinois State University and of your undergraduate major.

14. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to Illinois State University.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I count at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am important at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am taken seriously at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am trusted at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can make a difference at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am valuable at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am helpful at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is faith in me at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am efficient at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am cooperative at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

ISU and Major Esteem Continued

15. For the next set of items, please indicate the answer that best describes your feelings or response to each statement regarding your connection to your major.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am valuable as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

I am cooperative in the major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I can make a difference as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am efficient as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is faith in me as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I count as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am trusted as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am helpful as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am taken seriously as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am important as a major.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Interacting with Illinois State University

In the past 12 months how many times have you…

16. Added or deleted University information from my personal social network site.
17. Became a ''fan'' of an ISU related page.
18. Discussed Illinois State University via a social network site.
19. Joined or left a group about Illinois State University.
20. Posted an update that mentions Illinois State University.
21. Posted a photo that has something to do with Illinois State University.
22. Posted a photo of someone at Illinois State University.
23. Posted a wall comment about Illinois State University.
24. Posted a link about Illinois State University.
25. Posted a Facebook Note that has something to do with Illinois State University.
26. Learned about an Illinois State University event via social media.
27. Donated money to Illinois State University.
28. Read a social network post related to Illinois State University.
29. Viewed a photo of Illinois State University via a social network site.
30. Attended an ISU sponsored sporting event.
31. Attended a homecoming event.

Future Donations

32. This last set of questions...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I am likely to donate to at ISU after I graduate.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is unlikely I will give to money to Illinois State University.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I will definitely donate to at ISU in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
It is unlikely I will give to money to at ISU.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I will definitely donate to Illinois State University in the future.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am likely to donate to Illinois State University in the future	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

33. What is the largest amount of money you would consider pledging annually to Illinois State University upon graduation?

34. What is the largest amount of money you would consider pledging annually to at ISU upon graduation?

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35. Imagine that you had won a contest where you received $100 that had to be donated to various nonprofits. You could not keep any of the money for yourself. Of that $100, how much would you give to Illinois State University? The value must be between 0 and 100, inclusive.

36. Imagine that you had won a contest where you received $100 that had to be donated to various nonprofits. You could not keep any of the money for yourself. Of that $100, how much would you give to MAJOR? The value must be between 0 and 100, inclusive.

Demographics Continued

This last set of questions ask a bit more about you and your personal experiences. Again, all responses will be kept confidential and cannot be linked to specific respondents.

37. What is your biological gender?

  Male   Female

38. What was your age (in years) on your last birthday? The value must be greater than or equal to 18.
39. What year did you receive your Bachelor's degree from Illinois State University? The value must be less than or equal to 2015.
40. Approximately how many miles away from Illinois State University do you currently live? The value must be greater than or equal to 0.
41. Please list up to five extracurricular, co-curricular or sports teams you participated in while you attended Illinois State University.

  1)

  2)

  3)

  4)

  5)