

RELATIONSHIP STATUS: IT'S COMPLICATED

The Role of Narcissism in the Development of Relationships through
Facebook

Michael Saad

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Department of Communication Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Writing this thesis has provided me a sense of clarity I never thought possible.

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Mark Lowes for allowing me the freedom to discover my mistakes and realize my potential. Your encouragement and support were greatly appreciated.

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"Don't let anyone tell you what you can't do".

- John Locke

ABSTRACT

The presence of both narcissism and social capital in the digital social networking site Facebook is altering the dynamic of relationship development. Therefore, the central research question directing this study is as follows: *What role do narcissistic personality traits play in bridging social capital on Facebook?* From this, two sub-questions are raised: 1) *What are the motives for users to express narcissistic traits through Facebook?* 2) *How is narcissistic-motivated activity influencing social capital development through Facebook?* Guiding this thesis are concepts of social tie relationships (as they apply to narcissism), and digital social networks. An exploratory study of in-depth interviews was utilized to conduct such research. A key objective in this thesis is understanding motive and purpose for generating social capital in an online environment. The findings from this study suggest Facebook is a facilitator for the expression of narcissistic traits. As a result, this is influencing the disconnected and questionable value of digital social capital.

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Relationships, narcissism and digital social networks - Overview

In contemporary culture, people around the world are rapidly integrating digital forms of communication in their everyday lives (Haythornthwaite & Kendall, 2010). Specifically, individuals are logging online to communicate and interact through digital social networks. Such networks are not unlike the social communities found in the everyday, physical world. However, digital social networks are operated and maintained within the confines of the internet. This is presenting alternatives in the exchange of social interaction and perspectives of community and relationship development (Putnam, 2000; Boase, Horrigan, Wellman & Rainie, 2006).

Interpersonal relationships in particular are experiencing structural alterations with a shift to the digital world (Putnam, 2000). Specifically, the changing landscape of social communities from the physical to the digital realm appears to be developing contrasting views as to what defines a relationship. Individuals are now cultivating and maintaining online social connections alongside face-to-face relationships (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007; Putnam, 2000). As a result, the casual nature of internet communication is fostering a possible reposed structure for relationships (Ellison et al., 2007). That is to say, the frequency of physical, face-to-face interaction is potentially fleeting in the wake of communicative qualities made convenient through the internet (Putnam, 2000). This could conceivably see alterations in the establishment and subsequent treatment of relationships.

The changing nature of human interaction through online communication is seeing a gradual effect on social capital, an outcome of relationship development (Putnam, 2000; Boase et al., 2006). Social capital is a concept that describes the value and worth generated from the interchange of relationships in social networks (Putnam, 2000). This worth can be represented both on an individual and overall community level. Robert Putnam (2000) best describes social capital in stating,

“Social networks have value. Just as a screwdriver (physical capital) or a college education (human capital) can increase productivity (both individual and collective), so do social contacts affect the productivity of individuals and groups (p. 18)”.

The significance of studying social capital is it contributes to the understanding of social power and relationship dynamics between individuals in particular social structures.

In examining digital social networks, social capital is facing the potential for alterations in its makeup (Putnam, 2000; Boase et al., 2006; Steinfield, DiMicco, Ellison & Lampe, 2009). Researchers suggest digital social networking sites are a more impersonal and removed form of communication (Putnam, 2000; Rosen 2007; Ellison, 2008). This is seeing certain influence on the connectedness and quality of relationships in both online and offline social networks (Ellison et al., 2007). As facilitators of an increasing amount of social development, it is important to understand how these websites are assisting users in managing relationship dynamics.

Additionally, an issue of importance is how the social dynamics in digital social networks are altering people's expression of self. Individuals are discovering new forms of expression in a social platform that can afford them an immediate audience (Schwartz, 2010). Specifically, the prominent visual interface of online networks is inciting users to

post content more openly and freely than they would in reality (Schwartz, 2010; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). However, in certain aspects of digital social networks, the impersonal nature and lack of face-to-face communication online opens the potential for greater diversity in self-expression. That is to say, individuals are given more freedom to uniquely express themselves online as compared to reality based social situations (Schwartz, 2010). This raises questions as to how digital social networks are affecting the dynamics and motive for establishing relationships online.

Of the many behaviours facilitated through social networking sites, one of particular concern is narcissistic-related activity (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Schwartz, 2010; Recupero, 2010). Narcissism can be described as the obsession with one's self-image or extreme cases of self-involvement (Schwartz, 2010; Malikhao & Servaes, 2004; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Cain, Pincus & Ansell, 2008; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001). In contemporary media, narcissistic-related expression has risen to a certain level of prominence. From the influx of reality television shows to the intrigue of celebrity culture, the desire to see and be seen has become rather abundant. This is no different in the digital realm, where opportunities for exposure are available through a number of websites, programs and applications. Platforms such as YouTube, Instagram and Twitter are designed for users to share their lives for the world see.

An equally functional outlet for narcissistic-related expression is through digital social networking sites. With the customizable nature of such sites, individuals have a significant amount of control as to how they project their image to an audience (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). This presents an attractive forum for narcissists, as they have an open forum for self-expression (ibid). Specifically, narcissists are finding certain

fulfillment in the self-promotional functions of online expression. The visual interface of digital social networks is enabling the potential for a greater expression of narcissism (Rosen, 2007). Specifically, individuals are taking advantage of displaying self-worth and attention received from those within their social network (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Rosen, 2007).

In recent years, a significant amount of research in both online social capital development and narcissistic activity has been conducted through Facebook, one of the largest digital social networking sites on the internet (Ellison et al., 2007). Independently, these two concepts have been found to influence, and be influenced by the structure of Facebook and its capabilities for social development. What remains a question is whether narcissistic-related activity has a direct effect on social capital development through Facebook. Research suggests there is a correlation between the two concepts (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Schwartz, 2010; Ellison et al., 2007). However, a question remains of how strong a correlation exists. Specific influence and outcomes on one another in an online environment have yet to be thoroughly explored.

1.2 Thesis Objectives

The objective of this thesis is to examine the relationship between narcissistic expression and social capital development through Facebook. Specifically, how is the need for narcissistic-related fulfillment motivating users to develop social capital through the functions of Facebook's structural capabilities? Research shows that narcissists take advantage of the social structure afforded by Facebook, as they do of many other factors

in their lives (Ellison et al., 2007; Schwartz, 2010). What remains to be explored is the influence such activity is having on Facebook's relationship-building dynamics.

Narcissism is known to be a significant point of influence toward relationship development in reality. However, how does this dynamic change when placed in a digital social structure? Digital social networks, specifically Facebook, afford different functionality in relationship development to its users. Individuals can create, customize and manage their relationships in a single platform. Furthermore, they can display their collected social capital to whomever they choose. These are attractive features to narcissists, looking for avenues of self-display and social gratification. However, it remains unknown if such activity influences the social capital dynamic on Facebook.

Furthermore, social capital is known to be a flexible term in that its growth and development is largely based on its environmental circumstances (Coleman, 1988). Therefore, this thesis additionally seeks to explore how social capital develops in the structurally flexible environment of digital social networks. If Facebook affords greater freedom of expression in comparison to reality, how then, is an element such as narcissism shaping the development of social capital online? As social capital holds certain influence and worth based on its environment, a goal is to understand what form it takes online.

1.3 Research Questions

In order to address the objectives sought in this study, this thesis is guided by the following research question: *What role do narcissistic personality traits play in bridging social capital on Facebook?* From the general research question, two specific sub-questions emerge which help to frame the empirical component of this thesis. The sub-questions include: 1) *What are the motives for users to express narcissistic traits through Facebook?* 2) *How is narcissistic-motivated activity influencing social capital development through Facebook?*

1.4 Research Design and Method

An exploratory research design was used to address the questions posed in this thesis. Exploratory research is often used to define a particular topic or create a foundation of information to be used in future studies (Stebbins, 2001). For this research, the goal was to discover the relationship between narcissistic expression and social capital development through Facebook. Therefore, the research was designed for purposes of uncovering motive and intent as to user's activity in digital social networks. This involved a qualitative research design in an attempt to obtain rich, interpretive data.

The primary data-collection tool for this thesis was in-depth interviews. A sample of twelve participants was used for data-collection. Through interviews, participants were questioned as to their general personality traits, narcissistic traits and relationship building habits. Additionally, a direct analysis of participant's Facebook profiles was conducted in order to establish connections as to their narcissistic personality traits and activity taken in their profiles.

In order to measure narcissistic traits among participants, the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-40) was utilized as a supportive measurement tool alongside in-depth interviews. The NPI-40 is an instrument designed to measure narcissistic traits within the general population (Raskin & Terry, 1988). The reason for selecting to use the NPI-40 is largely due to the breadth of questions offered, its applicability to digital social networks and its effectiveness for research in non-clinical narcissism. It should be noted that throughout this study, narcissism is referenced as general personality traits rather than a clinical condition. This research does not intend to determine clinical levels of narcissism. Nor does it possess qualified professionals to so.

This thesis utilized two forms of data-collection with in-depth interviews and the NPI-40. As a result, a dual-method approach was formulated for research. Such a research design ensured data-collected would be complete and accurate without skepticism as to user's narcissistic traits or motive in expressing them. It would additionally ensure narcissistic characteristics could be properly applied to topics relating to relationship building and general personality traits.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. This chapter has briefly outlined the landscape of the research problem and the steps taken in answering the proposed questions. Chapter 2 presents, in detail, concepts pertaining to social capital development and narcissistic expression. The second chapter places additional focus on how concepts of narcissism and social capital manifest and influence the dynamic of digital social networking sites. Chapter 3 provides a critical overview of the methods utilized for this

research, including how data were collected and analyzed. The discussion in chapter 4 presents the data with observational commentary. Chapter 5 presents the analyzed data in the form of an in-depth analysis focusing on potential patterns and themes that have emerged from the analysis. Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by directly answering the primary and secondary research questions. The chapter additionally includes limitations of the research and suggestions for future study.

CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter examines the scholarly literature which concerns the dynamics and fundamental concepts of social capital, narcissism and their applicability to Facebook and digital social networks. The first part of this chapter discusses the interworking of social capital and its expansive capabilities in both offline and online communities. The second part of this chapter examines narcissistic expression as a general personality trait. Discussions on narcissism additionally explore its influence in digital social networking sites. Finally, the third part of this chapter considers the potential influence of narcissism on social capital online.

2.1 SOCIAL CAPITAL

2.1.1 *What is Social Capital?*

In its most general formulation, social capital refers to the resources acquired through relationships established between individuals and communities (Grootaert & Bastelaer, 2002; Wellman, 1999). A highly malleable term, social capital holds several meanings based on its classification (Portes, 1998; Adler & Kwon, 2002; Putnam, 2000; Coleman, 1988; Wellman, 1999). That is to say, social capital can play several roles based on what is required from the social structure it is situated in. In one sense, social capital is viewed as a *structural resource*, one which affects the rules and general conduct of a social network (Hitt, Lee & Yucel, 2002). It may also refer to a *cognitive resource* influencing norms, values, attitudes and beliefs of those living within a social structure (Krishna & Uphoff, 2002). The resources available through social capital take the form of information, individual bonds, power, influence and/or group organization. (Portes, 1998;

Putnam, 2000, Coleman, 1988; Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002). Utilization of such resources is known to influence and alter social structures in a number of ways. Such adjustments include the generation of relationships among people, development of individual power and influence, or a complete alteration of an entire social structure (Portes, 1998; Adler & Kwon, 2002; Coleman, 1988).

The worth of social capital, as with virtually any resource, is largely dependent upon its function within a specific community structure (Coleman, 1988; Putnam, 2000; Portes, 1998). For example, if a community is driven by mining or agriculture, then those jobs are extremely valuable for economic prosperity. The same could be said for social capital. If an advertising agency has employees who are well connected within the industry and can drive business to their firm, social capital becomes a valuable asset for the company's success. Consequently, factors affecting the worth of social capital include the relationships, organizations, perspectives and beliefs, which exist in any given society, group or organization (Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002; Wellman, 1999, 2002).

Social capital possesses tangible causes and effects for relationships in the particular organization within which this resource is housed (Resnick, 2001; Williams, 2006 cited in Ellison et al., 2007). For example, two people may compete for the same job. The one who attains the job will gain access to social resources, which could even further his career; the other applicant meanwhile remains limited in his resources to find employment. In this sense, social capital can be understood as a productive, valuable resource that can improve or inhibit certain individual or communal actions within a society.

2.1.2 Social Capital at the Individual Level

Social capital operates on two levels of production through collective (macro) and individual (micro) means (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003). Looking specifically at the individual level, this form of social capital is constructed by the resources collected through one's personal social network (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003; Coleman, 1988). At this micro-level, social capital enables individuals to gain personal benefit from its use. For example, those with more social capital can ostensibly use such resources to attain a better job, have greater access to information, and potentially gain entrance to powerful social circles.

Individual level social capital generally acts as a personal resource for individuals. However, it also functions as a contributor to the collective, macro structure of social networks (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003). At its core, the effects of social capital are distinguishable through macro-level aspects of social space (e.g. economic and community structures) (Lin, 2001, as cited in Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003). However, social resources generated and utilized at the individual, micro-level are what facilitate macro-level growth (Coleman, 1988; Brewer, 2003). The usage of individual resources supplies communities with social mobility in the form of collective strength, growth and economic opportunities compared to other communities (Coleman, 1988). This results in a more cohesive community structure.

Even with its vital contributions to larger social structures, individual level social capital is often overlooked. A primary reason for this neglect can be attributed to difficulties in measuring social capital at the individual level (Woolcock, 1998). As a

resource dependent on human action, micro-level social capital is less tangible in its measure of worth (ibid). Unlike other resources, social capital does not maintain a framework for measurability. For example, monetary capital is structured with bills and coins or even an estimated net worth regardless of who possesses it. The accumulation and worth of social capital is contingent on those utilizing it and for what purposes. For example, some may acquire social resources through personal gain and exploitation of others. Alternatively, people may generate social capital by contributing to a community structure, gaining social worth in economic and communal strength.

When examined at the micro level, measuring social capital becomes even further difficult to distinguish. Individual level social capital is essentially a moral resource dependent on the uncertain human variable (ibid). Essentially social capital is only measurable on a case-by-case basis, contingent on the motive and moral intention of each individual. Field (2008, p.1) explains how social capital is facilitated at individual levels, noting that:

"People connect through a series of networks and they tend to share common values with other members of these networks; to the extent that these networks constitute a resource, they can be seen as forming a kind of capital. As well as being useful in its immediate context, this stock of capital can often be drawn on in other settings. In general, then, it follows that the more people you know, and the more you share a common outlook with them, the richer you are in social capital."

Based on Field's (2008) discussion, one can observe how individual social capital is utilized to produce an outcome. This is similar to how one would pay for a vehicle or control a company. However, what must be noted is one's value in social capital does not lie in how many people they know. Rather, what matters is if these people can garner a social resource. Under such consideration, developing social capital requires collection

from both material and immaterial sources (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003). One's worth in social capital is only useful if it can be utilized to produce an outcome.

In generating worth from micro-level social capital, one must look to multiple sources for production (Putnam, 1998; Coleman, 1988). That is to say, people find social value through the informational, emotional and/or psychological support found through various encounters with others (Nahapiet & Goshal, 1998; Coleman, 1988). Such social transactions are accumulated through relationships established at work, with families or through various other associations (Coleman, 1988). This adds to their individual network, constituting a personal resource of fulfillment. Furthermore, the benefit of individual social capital reaches beyond tangible or material benefits. A number of studies report that those more abundant in social capital benefit from higher levels of psychological health, specifically self-esteem and contentedness toward everyday life (Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002; Helliwell & Putnam, 2004; Steinfield, Ellison, Lampe, 2008). As people interact with others on a face-to-face basis, there is generally an increased feeling of self-worth. Being connected to, as well as relied on as a social resource can provide feelings of importance and usefulness. Ultimately this leads to stronger involvement in a community's social structure, developing greater levels of macro-level capital.

Being a value-based resource, social capital mirrors other societal resources such as financial or ecological capital in that it is not collected or distributed equally (Edwards & Foley, 1998; Portes, 1988; Robison, 2000). Several factors contribute to the worth of social capital, including geographic and social limitations, unequal group membership and restricted access to resources necessary for social mobilization (Portes, 1988;

Robison, 2000). Essentially, people achieve access to social resources through the development of direct and indirect relationships. This creates a personal network of resources, effectively increasing one's worth in social capital. For example, politicians gain social resources through daily opportunities to interact with lobbyists, community leaders and other public figures rich in social resources. Such connections can be drawn upon when required to establish greater personal, professional and social prosperity. Compare this to blue-collar workers or retail employees who do not work in the public eye or with those who possess strong social connections. Their opportunities for social mobility are limited due largely to minimal access to required resources.

As vital as one's worth is in social capital, equally as important is how it is applied at the micro-level. Depending on its utilization, individual level social capital can potentially create an imbalance of power within a community (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003; Portes, 1998). How one positions his or herself in a social structure essentially determines his or her continuous intake of new social capital and subsequent use of it. When utilized as a function specifically for control, social capital sees both positive and negative effects (Van Der Gaag & Snijders, 2003). Positive effects can arise in the form of increased self-worth and status within a community (Portes, 1998). However, the effects of such status may cause negative connotations when embedded in a social structure. This can be attributed to the ability for social capital to be used in an almost competitive fashion (ibid). For example, rather than individuals utilizing their self-worth to strengthen a social structure, they can use such resources to gain power and authority. This essentially segregates the potential social strength produced and distributed within a

community. As a result, an imbalance is created in the usage and distribution of social capital to all actors.

2.1.3 Bridging Social Capital

The worth of social capital is contingent upon the connectedness actors hold between one another within a communal structure. However, according to Woolcock (1998) building social capital is not as simple a process. Social capital is an ever-evolving concept based on where it is located and how it is used:

"...there are different types, levels, or dimensions of social capital, different performance outcomes associated with different combinations of these dimensions, and different sets of conditions that support or weaken favorable combinations" (p. 159).

Essentially, the strength of social capital relies on the utilization and execution of its various components (Woolcock, 1998). These components serve a unique purpose in that they ultimately contribute to the overall strength of a social structure. Effective use of such components must occur in order to generate a more connected network of social resources. Putnam (2000) identifies two specific components vital to the developmental process of social capital referred to as "bridging" and "bonding". Bonding refers to social networks maintained between socially homogeneous groups while bridging refers to social networks of heterogeneous groups (Putnam, 2000; Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003; Dahal & Adhikari, 2008). For example, families and close friends constitute bonding social capital as they are tightly knit relationships tied together by a similar, consistent bond. Conversely, co-workers, social clubs and general acquaintances may constitute bridged social capital, as they are more likely to be looser, more infrequent connections.

Whereas bonding looks inward to strengthen existing relationships, bridging moves outward to connect with new and different people (Putnam, 2000; Leonard, 2004). The intention of bridging is to reach beyond one's existing social structure in an attempt to recruit new members and establish new social ties. This essentially extends the capacity and resources of a person's social network. Although bridging is able to link with a multitude of new social connections, there is little certainty their retention is strong (Putnam, 2000). The purpose of bridging is not to build upon existing relationships; rather, its focus is that of establishing new connections in an attempt to open further social resources. Building stronger relationships is a process dependent on bonding as such friendships carries an emotional foundation to be built upon and strengthened (Putnam, 2000). Due to its outward focus, bridging is thought to possess greater importance in the development of social capital (Putnam, 2000; Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003; Dahal & Adhikari, 2008). Essentially, new relationships create an increased pool of social resources. In turn, this generates strength in the personal worth of micro-level social capital.

When in balance with each other, research finds no negative connotations between bridging and bonding social capital (Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2003). Both types of connectedness essentially work in unison to establish social networks. Once new connections have been bridged, people can work to bond them into stronger, more meaningful relationships. However when one takes precedence over the other, there is a shift in priority (ibid). Either new social capital is not being generated or existing social capital is not being retained and/or strengthened.

2.1.4 Weak and Strong Ties

From a practical point of view, bridging and bonding take a more specific form of social connectedness through what are known as interpersonal ties. Such ties demonstrate tangible levels of social cohesion between people (Granovetter, 1973; 2005; Ashman, Brown & Zwick; 1998). The necessity of interpersonal ties is attributed to the tiered, categorized social structure possessed by each person (Granovetter, 1973). That is to say, relationships between one another do not hold equal weight in value, structure or purpose. For example, a close family member represents a different style of relationship when compared to a co-worker. Based on this understanding, Granovetter (1973) identifies two specific ties, which organize social networks he refers to as strong and weak ties. Strong and weak social ties describe the degree to which said connectedness of relationships exist between individuals in a given social structure (ibid).

Strong and weak ties serve a similar goal in developing social networks. However, their purpose and method for doing so differ in function. Strong social ties place emphasis on maintaining and improving close relationships such as good friends and family members (Granovetter, 1973; 2005; Steinfield et al., 2009; Putnam, 1993; Ashman et al., 1998). Within these relationships, an individual communicates, participates with, and involves others regularly in one's day-to-day life. These are people whom an individual holds a deep bond with (i.e. a strong tie) beyond a loose connection of common interests. However, strong social ties are viewed as a weakness when applied to social development (Granovetter, 1973). The reason for this is strong tie relationships communicate within the same social group. As a result, exchanged information is often repeated and derivative (Granovetter, 2005; Ashman et al., 1998; Putnam, 2000). This

limits a person's depth and ability to establish broad, outward style connections for expansion of one's social network.

Gathering novel, outward style information through relationships is a process reliant on weak social ties. Weak ties are described as “acquaintances and friends of friends who are more likely to provide new information and diverse perspectives” (Steinfeld et al., 2009: p. 2). These are people whom an individual interacts with infrequently for a specific purpose, rather than voluntarily establishing a close relationship (Putnam, 1993). Close relationships are based on a bond from an emotional level. Weak ties are regarded more as a resource than as a relationship in that they provide certain gratifications over a social bond. Additionally, weak ties provide information from social structures far beyond the current or local community individuals live in (Granovetter, 1973; 1983; Steinfeld et al., 2009). For example, business acquaintances are effective resources in developing corporate partnerships and sharing of information. However, it is questionable if a person would hold close, personal relationships with such people as they would their family.

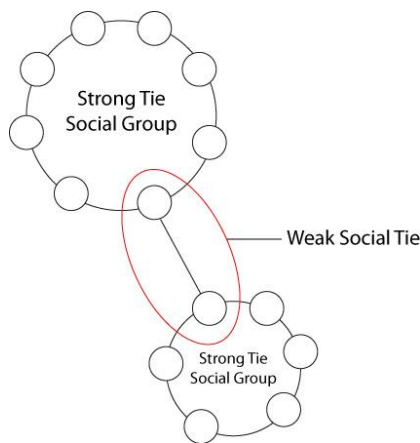


Figure 1A - Strong vs. Weak Ties

In discussing levels of social capital, Coleman (1988) notes,

“a person who is not greatly interested in current events but who is interested in being informed about important developments can save the time of reading a newspaper by depending on a spouse or friends who pay attention to such matters” (p. 104).

Essentially, individuals establish relationships based on a need and maintain such relations while they remain useful. There is little holding weak tie relationships together beyond the resources required from their initial establishment. Once the resource is no longer useful, so too is the relationship.

The importance of weak social ties lie in their contribution to the embedded information structure contained in social networks (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). Weak ties are effective for transmitting novel information through social networks (ibid). They can accomplish this as weak tie relationships generally reside outside one's regular social group (Putnam, 2000; Granovetter, 2005). Figure 1A demonstrates the transfer of information through weak ties. As one can see, weak tie relationships link separate strong tie clusters by sharing novel information. This is in comparison to strong ties, which circulate and recycle information through similar social groups. As a result, information often repeats itself in strong ties as it is already known by members of the particular social cluster.

As noted above, weak tie relationships are predominantly found between socially heterogeneous individuals (Putnam, 1993; Ashman et al., 1998). Often people find it challenging to establish deeper relationships due to a lack of common interest. Ashman et al (1998) note, “people with different values, interests, degrees of power and ways of

interacting often find it more difficult to find common bonds which will build trust” (p. 2). Weak ties are a constructive way of establishing social networks without the requirement of deeper bonds associated with strong ties. The intent of creating weak ties is to acquire novel information rather than generate a strong attachment. Thus, the challenge of establishing a deeper connection is eliminated as maintaining relationship longevity is of little concern.

Although weak tie relationships are considered less intimate than those built on strong ties, they enable the continued development of social capital (Putnam, 1993; Ashman et al., 1998). Without the flow of novel information afforded by weak social ties, individuals become isolated and reliant on limited resources (Granovetter, 2005; Putnam, 2000; Ashman et al., 1998; Kramer, Liden, Sparrowe & Wayne, 2001). Strong social ties can share only so much information before it becomes recycled and repetitive. This places individuals at a disadvantage of social integration as the ability for outreach and communication beyond one's confined strong tie cluster becomes fragmented (Wellman, 1988; Granovetter 1973; 2004). Furthermore, by alienating those who provide different perspectives and experiences, one minimizes the creation of social individualism (Granovetter, 1973; Sparrow & Linden, 2001). The lack of autonomy places limitations on individual expression of novel concepts. This ultimately inhibits the development of one's self worth as such expression assists in developing a social identity (Wellman, Carrington & Hall, 1988).

2.1.5 The Impact of Social Capital in Online Environments

With the ascension of the internet and digital networks in the past twenty years a new form of social capital has emerged in the form of ‘digital social capital’ (Putnam, 2000; Shah, Kwak & Holbert, 2001; Cummings, Butler & Kraut, 2002; Boase et al., 2006; Steinfield et al., 2009; Shah et al., 2001). Digital social capital refers to the relationships established and/or maintained through digital space afforded by the internet (Ellison et al., 2007). Housed largely through internet-based social networks such as Facebook, MySpace and Twitter, digital social capital follows similar trends as social capital obtained through physical relationships, albeit a more visually structured environment (ibid). Similar to reality-based interactions, digital social networks follow a process in terms of relationship development. Using Facebook as an example, the site maintains structures such as friend requests, designated discussion groups and reporting of unethical conduct amongst users. The same can be said for reality-based interactions, where people are restricted to various status groups, class-based interactions and abiding by social conduct expected by a particular community.

Although digital social capital is situated online, it remains a resource to be built and utilized, similar to reality-based social capital. Power and control may be achieved through digital social capital by targeting aspects of a user's online identity such as interests, influences and group associations (Kazienko & Musial, 2006). In the case of social capital's digital form, these resources may be exploited without being hindered by physical location (Leider, Mobius, Rosenblat & Do, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007). For example, a person wishing to influence cycling enthusiasts need not target organized clubs in every physical community. Rather, one can access a potentially larger group of

cyclists from all over the globe through a single internet forum. As a result, users look to these individuals as “opinion leaders” providing evident strangers with an identity and level of social power (Nair, Manchanda & Bhatia, 2010; Mak, 2008; Burt, 1999).

By developing a central location to share interests and develop relationships, the internet has essentially created its own community for new outlets in the development of social capital. Digital space affords a wider reach to communicate with a near infinite number of people. Rather than social structures restricted to villages and neighborhoods, the internet has connected not only these communities, but every person within them (Putnam, 2000; Steinfield et al., 2009). People are now able to increase the quality of social capital by relying on specific, one-to-one connections rather than collective relationships from an entire community sector (Putnam, 2000). This process is referred to as 'networked individualism' (Boase et al., 2006). The term suggests online users are relying more on social outlets of their choosing rather than entire structures, which may contain undesired social interference (ibid). This enables people to create the ideal social network tailored specifically to their needs. However, as one seeks out only specific social connections, this individual misses potential relationships from secondary group interaction (Putnam, 2000). The ideal social network comes at a cost of expanded resources from unlikely sources.

In developing relationships online, the definition of a 'friend' takes a different meaning. As Rosen (2007) notes, "friendship depends on mutual revelations that are concealed from the rest of the world, they can only flourish within the boundaries of privacy" (p. 26). However, social networking sites are visual and public in nature. They encourage users to place their lives on display for others to see. Interests, activities,

photos and even relationship status are openly available for the public viewing. The display of friendships and social connections is no exception. For example, Facebook showcases the number of 'friends' each user has and Twitter displays a total of how many 'followers' an account has accumulated. Furthermore, Facebook enables users to specify their relationship to each one of their 'friends'. This not only displays an individual's size of social capital, but what role each person plays in a particular social network.

The visual emphasis of digital social networks has turned friendships into a tangible form of social currency. The structure of relationships online is shifting into a quantity over quality approach. Rosen (2007) notes the number of displayed friends is more important on Facebook than who those friends are. Essentially, social capital has become commoditized online. That is to say relationships are no longer established based on a deep bond. Rather, friendships are created to be "collected, managed and ranked" (Rosen, 2007: p. 27). This can be attributed to the desire to be the most popular, best liked and widely viewed person online. Take the social networking site Twitter for example. The website enables users to write microblogs consisting of 140 characters or less (known as "tweets"). People can subscribe to user accounts as 'followers' of their tweets. However, user popularity of Twitter is often based on who has the most 'followers'. Little emphasis is ever given to what those users have to say.

2.1.6 The Internet and Social Ties

With focus placed on having visual representation of self-worth in digital social networks, social capital is seeing a marginal shift in the frequency and method with which it is bridged (Ellison et al., 2007; Romm-Livermore & Setzekorn, 2008; Cortis, 2008). Specifically, weak ties are surpassing stronger bonds as the primary method of relationship building online (Ellison et al., 2007; Hall & Kramer: 2009). That is to say, individuals are creating more infrequent, looser connections than consistent, in-depth relationships online. One could go far as to say that digital social networks are elevating the selectivity of weak ties. It is not enough for one to develop a relationship online; users are confining social connections to meet only their specific needs (Putnam, 2000). As Putnam (2000) describes it, the internet landscape is enabling the cyberbalkanization of relationships. For example, one can join an internet group of not just movie enthusiasts, but fans specifically of 1980's action films. Social connections previously created by the slightest level of commonality are now specific, referential resources in the digital realm.

Through this weak tie structure, the integration of strong social ties online is facing certain challenges (Boase & Wellman: 2006). Strong social ties require real, in-depth connections and communication between individuals. It should not be assumed that strong ties cannot exist online; rather they are simply more challenging to maintain through such a medium. The structure of digital social media is built around the type of activities and functions weak ties thrive on (Rosen, 2007). Such activities include rumour-mongering, gossiping, people tracking, and trending of fads and popular culture (ibid). Furthermore, digital social networks enable the development of hundreds, possibly thousands of friends. However, only a handful of those friends would one hold as strong

a relationship online as they would face-to-face (Cummings et al., 2002; Boase & Wellman, 2006).

The weak tie structure of digital social networks is not the only avenue limiting strong ties. With social capital adopting a weak tie role online, it is questioned how this is impacting physical strong tie relationships in the real world (Kraut, Patterson, Lundmark, Kiesler, Mukophadhyay and Scherlis, 1998; Boase & Wellman, 2006; Cummings et al., 2002). One view suggests the internet's emphasis on a weak tie structure is shaping traditional, existing physical relationships into weak social ties themselves (Cummings et al., 2002). Rather than enhancing it, online correspondence holds the potential to replace real world communication out of a matter of convenience (ibid). As updates on people are available online in a near hourly basis, some individuals may find it unnecessary to personally get in touch with friends. Rather, they rely on readily available information through a digital social network to provide them such information. Essentially, online communication is posing potential danger to the dynamic of offline relationships. Specifically, strong, physical bonds are facing the threat of gradually shifting online with the convenience of weak tie interaction.

Several researchers have suggested the internet landscape has developed a separate type of social tie, known as a "latent tie." Latent ties are described as connections that exist in a social network but have yet to be activated (Pearson, 2009; Haythornthwaite, 2002). In this sense, individuals are passively observing these contacts until they are elected to be active. The casual, potentially neglectful nature of the internet fosters latent ties, as individuals can search out such connections, but never feel a need to bridge them. Ellison (2008) notes how the informal nature of the internet weakens the

need to immediately form relationships. For example, Facebook boasts a user base of over 950 million users. The sheer amount of relationships available erases the urgency to establish a social connection. This is compared to a handful of people one may meet offline, infrequently over a period of time.

On an individual level, some fear the increased use of online relationships may alter the ability for one to generate new social capital (Boase et al., 2006). Although individuals are keeping informed of friend's lives online, they are potentially neglecting face-to-face communication out of a matter of convenience (ibid). Through blog posts, news feeds and e-mail notifications, users can effortlessly stay informed about the activities of those in their social network without having to ever directly converse with them. This lack of authentic, personal style of communication poses a certain risk of people developing an alienation of self (Granovetter, 1978). This includes such vital developmental characteristics as creating strong tie relationships, engaging in community activities and expanding one's social skills (ibid). The anonymity and impersonal nature of the internet is essentially causing individuals to miss opportunities for social integration.

Conversely, some researchers believe rather than replacing real world ties, the communicative abilities of digital social networks (for example, email, instant messaging, social networking) supplement and strengthen of relationships (Boase et al., 2006). The asynchronous nature of social networking sites enable increased communication, as conversations are not limited to a specific, continuous time frame (ibid). Through internet messaging, individuals are able to continue a 'conversation' at their convenience (Steinfeld et al., 2007). For example, two people corresponding by e-mail need not reply

to each other immediately to keep a continuous dialogue. Rather, either party may continue the conversation at their convenience, potentially sharing more information. Furthermore, research on such a process found communication between two people to increase, minimally influencing the frequency of physical engagement (ibid).

2.2 NARCISSISM

2.2.1 What is Narcissism?

Narcissism is a pattern of personality traits involving the fascination with oneself or a person who expresses grandiose tendencies of self-love (Schwartz, 2010; Malikhao & Servaes, 2004; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Cain, Pincus & Ansell, 2008; Westmoreland, 2009; Morf & Rhodewalt, 2001; Rosen, 2007). Those affected by narcissism seek positive and inflated self-views pertaining to traits of intelligence, power, and physical attractiveness (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). This is attributed to the fact that narcissists generally feel a sense of uniqueness and entitlement. Such selfish connotations often stem from issues pertaining to low self-esteem or unrealistic self-views (ibid). As a result, narcissists seek acknowledgement and embellishment from others exploitatively in order to feed their grandiose self-concept (ibid).

Narcissists utilize behaviour which is extroverted in nature, such as egotistical, selfish, and elitist style conduct (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008; Holtzman, Vazire & Mehl, 2010). As narcissists seek adoration and consistent praise, they must place themselves on a pedestal in order to be admired (Holtzman et al., 2010; Pinsky, 2009). That is to say, narcissists must create a personae larger than others if only to appear powerful and desirable. In so doing, they cannot accept others as equals as it would risk

taking attention away from themselves. Interaction with the public is crucial for narcissists as they are constantly on an “egotistical and ruthless pursuit of one’s gratification, dominance and ambition” (Vankin, 2008: p. 14). As a result, motives for establishing relationships are primarily exploitative, sought for reinforcement of ideal self-concepts.

The need for narcissists to develop a grandiose self-concept is due largely to a lack of self-esteem (Pinsky, 2009; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Those with low self-esteem attempt to supplement or hide a fragile inner core by exhibiting traits that mask perceived inequalities. Such examples include the need to please everyone, acting overly defensive or being a perfectionist to a fault (Noordewier & Stapel, 2011; Thewissen, Bentall, Lecomte, van Os, Myin-Germeys, 2008). In the case of narcissism, people protect their low self-esteem by seeking acknowledgement from others in a self-serving manner (Pinsky, 2009; Lubit, 2002; Cramer & Jones, 2008). They accomplish this through extreme attempts to control how others view and behave toward them. Essentially, a narcissistic individual cannot self-construct and self-regulate their personae (Twenge & Campbell, 2010). In order to compensate, they exploit relationships to construct and affirm a grandiose self-concept to mask poor self-esteem (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Pinsky, 2009). Pinsky (2009) notes those demonstrating traits of narcissism are motivated by “chronic feelings of loneliness, emptiness, and self-loathing and seek to replace that disconnection with a sense of worth and importance fueled by others” (p. 88). As narcissists cannot build adequate self-esteem themselves, they turn to others for such gratification. The cycle continues to a point where it becomes exploitative in an almost unconscious manner.

In order to develop a positive internalization of self-esteem and an ideal self-concept, narcissists rely on gratifications received from relationships with others (Vankin, 2008; Twenge & Campbell, 2010). By attaching themselves to those who will provide positive reinforcement through flattery and embellishment, narcissists can maintain greater feelings of self-worth. Such affiliations are used strategically for personal gain rather than for any sentimental, intimate or emotional elements found in long-term relationships (Twenge & Campbell, 2010). Narcissists do not seek emotional attachment as it threatens exposure of the fragile core they seek to conceal. Rather, relationships with others are continually taken advantage of in an exploitative manner. This is done in order to regulate and reaffirm a narcissist's constructed sense of self. In the pursuit of such gratifications, it matters little how others are influenced. The ultimate goal of narcissists is to satisfy themselves, regardless of how it affects others. Due to their exploitative motives, relationship longevity with narcissists is relatively low as their likeability and initial impressions fade (Foster, Shira & Campbell, 2006; Miller, Widiger & Campbell, 2010; Horton, Bleau & Drwecki, 2006). People begin to see the true nature of a narcissist as the lack of emotional bond inhibits the growth of a relationship beyond its exploitative intentions.

2.2.2 The Intent of Narcissistic Expression

Narcissism is often correlated negatively with self-involvement and exploitation. However, what must be considered is the intent with which such personality traits are expressed. Narcissism takes the form as both a maladaptive and healthy addition to one's personality (McNeal, 2008). This evokes both positive and negative expressive intentions (Campbell, Rudich & Sedikides, 2002). Under the scope of maladaptive narcissism, personality traits are dominantly self-serving, with negative connotations (Cain et al., 2007). Conversely, narcissistic style personality traits may be utilized and expressed in ways which are beneficial and psychologically healthy to an individual's personality (McNeal, 2010; Krizan & Bushman, 2011; Kohut, 1971; Emmons, 1984; Lubit, 2002; Tempny, 2010). The significant difference between these two forms of narcissistic expression fall under the motives with which they are communicated.

Maladaptive narcissism employs the more commonly known model of narcissistic expression associated with selfish and negatively driven personality traits (Cain., 2007). Such traits are found to be grandiose in nature, exhibiting an unrealistic sense of uniqueness and superiority (Cramer & Jones, 2008). For example, possessors of maladaptive narcissism appear very outgoing. These actions are taken in an attempt to bring attention to individuals through an egotistical pursuit of self-promotion. In seeking this attention traits associated with maladaptive narcissism are not subtle in nature. Rather, such traits include being selfish (specifically self-centred and self-referential) as well as pompous and arrogant (Ronningstam, 2005). Due to an innate lack of self-awareness when interacting with others, maladaptive narcissists are unable to consider

the feelings and needs of those they are exploiting. Individuals seek to exploit relationships for personal fulfillment rather than foster interactions for healthy growth.

Alternatively, narcissism may be expressed without the intent of exploitative and self-serving motives. Referred to as 'healthy narcissism', this form of the personality trait enables expressions of confidence and superiority in a practical manner (Kohut, 1971, McNeal, 2010; Tempny, 2010). Through healthy narcissism, an individual possesses a realistic self-concept (McNeal, 2010). By understanding one's strengths and weaknesses, a person can better incorporate personality traits into developing high self-esteem (Lubit, 2002). This is compared to maladaptive narcissism where one fails to understand his or her self-concept, resorting to egocentric, exploitative measures of self-representation (Lubit, 2002; Moore & Fine, 1990). Possessing the capacity to understand a practical self-concept allows an individual to communicate effectively oneself to others, creating a positive external image (Moore & Fine, 1990). For example, an individual with a stable sense of self-esteem is able to accept praise and power without craving or becoming infatuated with it. As a result, one can better interact with and support others, placing a level of value in their relationships. This is not to say an individual ceases to express grandiose style tendencies. However, one's intention is to not seek praise, but rather to support the practical and realistic self-views he or she possess.

Healthy narcissism encourages the positive development of self if only to reinforce the strengths and weaknesses of one's personality (Kohut, 1971; McNeal, 2010; Tempny, 2010). In doing so, an individual creates perceptions necessary for positively influencing self-esteem, self-assertion, and productively executing interests, ideals and

ambitions (Masterson, 1981 cited in McNeal, 2010). This may be accomplished while considering the well-being of others. McNeal (2010) suggests if narcissistic traits are not integrated into one's personality as a healthy, practical entity, one risks the development of a deceptive, split or conflicted self. That is to say one risks developing traits more in line with maladaptive narcissism. If an individual cannot negotiate his or her personality traits into a healthy, realistic self-concept, there is a risk one will remain an incomplete and conflicted self. In order to supplement, one may seek narcissistic style fulfillment to gain a sense of gratification.

Figure 1B – Healthy vs. Pathological Narcissism

Characteristic	Healthy Narcissism	Pathological Narcissism
Self-Confidence	High outward self-confidence in line with reality	Grandiose
Desire for Power, wealth and admiration	May enjoy power	Pursues power at all costs, lacks normal inhibitions in its pursuit
Relationships	Real concern for others and their ideas; does not exploit or devalue others	Concerns limited to expressing socially appropriate response when convenient; devalues and exploits others with remorse
Ability to follow a consistent path	Has values; follows through on plans	Lacks values; easily bored; often changes course

(Lubit, 2002: p. 129).

2.2.3 Narcissistic Personality Traits & The NPI-40

Narcissism is often thought of as a clinical condition, known as Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). However, alternative schools of thought (notably social psychology) view narcissism as a general personality trait (Horton et al., 2006). Currently, there is no distinction as to when an individual changes from normal to narcissistic (Miller & Campbell, 2011). Rather, it is suggested people possess narcissistic traits at varying levels rather than as a singular construct (ibid). Only those demonstrating narcissistic tendencies to a point of impairment could be considered as victims of clinical NPD (ibid).

As no current process conclusively diagnoses narcissism, researchers look to identifying specific personality traits as a primary measure of narcissistic tendencies (Emmons, 1984). Narcissistic personalities thrive on positive and amplified self-views which are dominant in traits represented through "intelligence, power and physical attractiveness" including a superior sense of uniqueness and entitlement (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008: p. 1304). Both the strength and types of such characteristics are key indicators in determining levels of narcissism-related expression. Examples of narcissistic style personality traits include, but are not limited to, arrogance, vanity, conceitedness, obsession with appearance, as well as being argumentative and confrontational (Lachkar, 2004). These attributes are closely related to outgoing behaviour, but carry poor levels of cooperation and unity with others (Miller & Campbell, 2008; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). This is generally a negative pattern, which directly influences motivations for altering an individual's self-concept (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

With personality traits being the primary variable in determining levels of narcissistic expression, Raskin and Terry (1988) developed a system to measure such attributes. Known as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI), this 40-item scale is a diagnostic tool aimed to test levels of various narcissistic traits within the general population (i.e. non-clinical) (Raskin & Terry, 1988). That is to say this scale is not an instrument designed to determine narcissistic personality disorder (NPD). Such testing is reserved for professionals at clinical levels of measure.

The NPI is regarded as the most comprehensively used and researched measure of narcissistic traits. A primary reason for this can be attributed to its basis on clinical criteria for narcissistic personality disorder set out by the Diagnostic and Statistic Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM), currently in its fifth revision (American Psychiatric Association, 2011). Using such criteria, Raskin and Terry (1988) were able to identify a comprehensive structure to measure narcissistic personality traits. Specifically, seven key factors were determined to depict what is considered the widest representation of analysis related to narcissistic personality traits (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Factors include authority, self-sufficiency, superiority, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, vanity and entitlement (ibid). Furthermore, these factors have been tested and confirmed through preliminary studies and self-report tests based on DSM-IV criteria for NPD (ibid). Please see Appendix V for a complete description of each trait as they pertain to the NPI-40.

The findings by Raskin and Terry (1988) are similar to results reported by Emmons (1984) in his factor analysis of the NPI-40. Specifically, Emmons reported that narcissistic expression is not a singular entity. Rather it is constructed by the weight of several personality factors. Using the NPI-40 for analysis, Emmons uncovered four

consistent factors in conjunction with narcissistic expression and the personality traits found in the NPI-40: leadership/authority, self-absorption/self-admiration, superiority/arrogance, and exploitativeness/entitlement. These characteristics are consistent with the behaviours identified in the NPI-40.

The classic NPI employs a 40-item, forced choice survey, which includes two self-referential statements per question (Raskin & Terry, 1988). Of the two statements, one is considered more narcissistic, and one less narcissistic. For each choice of the 'more narcissistic' answer, a subject is given a point. Points are then tallied and compared to the seven factors discussed earlier. Since its inception, the NPI has been adapted into abbreviated forms such as a 16-item version (Ames, Rose & Anderson, 2006). Abbreviated versions are found to be effective in scenarios where longer measures would be impractical for unwilling participants (ibid). For example, if respondents have attention or time issues, the NPI-16 would be considered an effective measure.

2.2.4 Narcissistic Traits expressed through Facebook and the Internet

As those with narcissistic-related tendencies aim to impact self-esteem and self-worth by external validation, the internet has become a source of gratification for such needs (Mehdizadeh, 2010; Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The structure of the social networking sites not only enables, but encourages self-promotion and external feedback. This can be viewed through such functions as photo sharing, blogging and displaying of personal information. With such a breadth of functionality, users have a substantial amount of control as to how and where self-promotion is being directed online. For example, Buffardi and Campbell (2008) note how Facebook users can completely

customize their identity online to appear a certain way stating, “one can use personal web pages to select attractive photographs of oneself or write self-descriptions that are self-promoting” (p. 1305). Essentially, a narcissistic individual can develop a profile to project an ideal self, necessary for receiving desired praise and adoration. Users can then project desired personal information in a direction, which ensures exposure and positive feedback.

Facebook’s ability for online self-promotion can be attributed to its visual interface. Aside from such functions as self-descriptions and photos, digital social networks enable users to display relationships and social connections. Facebook for instance provides users the ability to not only show their ‘friend’ list, but group relationships and even rank them through a function called ‘top friends’. Additionally, any activity by a Facebook user is archived in one's profile until he or she choose to remove it (Weigel, 2012; Facebook, 2012). For example, public and private messages, photo posts, comments and status updates, no matter how old, will remain visually available in a user’s profile until deleted. This function additionally includes user’s friend lists.

With the ability for one to showcase the volume of visually ranked relationships, self-worth has essentially become measurable (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). The more friends an individual has, the higher perceived level of importance one holds. Rosen (2007) believes for narcissistic expression in the digital age, it matters little what people are communicating to them. What matters is that they are paying attention at all. Narcissists seek to exploit social connections rather than build them into relationships. Therefore, being 'admired' by the highest volume of people possible is inevitably a

primary goal of narcissists. Buffardi and Campbell (2008) note the benefit brought by digital social networks is that narcissists can show off how many 'admirers' they have, consequently elevating their feelings of grandiosity. The researchers quote, "narcissists are boastful and eager to talk about themselves and gain esteem from public glory...personal Web pages should present a similar opportunity for self-promotion." (p. 1304).

With interactive new media placing emphasis on self-promotion, populations have developed what Elliot and Lemert (2005) describe as a 'new individualism'. This form of self-expression is based on satisfying individual needs without requiring consideration of others (ibid). Social networking sites encourage the uploading of pictures, personal blogging and creating a world tailored to the 'individual'. As a result, users are spending more time shaping and developing an ideal image through digital profiles (ibid). However, this gateway of self-promotion encourages expression of a narcissistic nature, as individuals are only required to focus on promoting themselves (Twenge & Campbell, 2010; Malikho & Servaes, 2011). This is creating an inflated sense of value and self-worth. For example, access to individual expression and customization online enables one to build and continually edit a profile to their ideal level of perfection. Whereas in physical social settings, people must consider the social norms they live under and abide by them accordingly. In order to fit in with various social groups, one must adapt to a diverse level of personality types. Through such a process, one might be required to alter or restrain aspects of his or herself in order to meet the needs of other people. The digital world erases this challenge. All that must be considered is how well a person's profile is tailored to appear as desirable as possible.

As digital social networks are fostering a 'new individualism' (Elliot & Lemert, 2005), Rosen (2007) notes how a 'new narcissism' is also emerging. The customizable nature of digital social networks provides users more for options for individual expression. However, there are consequences to spending so much time grooming, displaying and promoting oneself online (Elliot & Lemert, 2005). It develops an obsession with exhibitionism, something more suited to narcissism than individualism (Rosen, 2007). For example, Facebook enables a significant amount of freedom for people to arrange, alter and update their profile to a desired level of satisfaction. Such profiles offer in-depth interactivity that allows users to view, comment and share what themselves and others have placed on display. Essentially, there is nothing that deters someone from focusing on improving anything other than his or her self-presentation.

2.2.5 Expressing Narcissistic Traits Online

Similar to real world encounters, types of narcissistic traits used in Facebook are dependent on the motivations driving an individual's actions. Those utilizing Facebook through traits consistent with maladaptive narcissism are found to overuse certain aspects of social networking sites (Schwartz, 2010). This is not to say users misuse or abuse Facebook, as it encourages self-promotion and external interaction. However, the frequency to which particular functions of Facebook are used suggest narcissistic tendencies play a motivating factor (ibid). Research finds those with greater NPI scores had higher levels of social activity in Facebook, specifically with self-promoting content such as photos, status updates and notes (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). This is based on the hypothesis that people with strong narcissistic tendencies take advantage of

opportunities online to showcase themselves through public forums similar as they would offline (Wallace & Baumeister, 2002 cited in Buffardi & Campbell, 2008).

Further research demonstrates that Facebook users wishing to place themselves on display select what Mehdizadeh (2010) describes as a ‘show’ over ‘tell’ approach. That is to say users prefer to present an attractive external self rather than emphasizing internal qualities. For example, users are more inclined to accentuate physical attractiveness in their Facebook profiles than highlighting intelligence and accomplishments from written descriptions. Through Facebook, users seek to conceal undesirable aspects of themselves, including narcissistic tendencies (ibid). This is similar to how maladaptive narcissists attempt to hide poor self-esteem by projecting only favourable traits. External presentation of self is thought to be less flagrant as a person's qualities and strengths are not simply listed and showcased (ibid).

Although Facebook enables the unrestricted display of self, research suggests traits pertaining to low self-esteem, unmotivated by narcissistic-related needs may also be positively correlated with Facebook usage (Ellison et al., 2007). Due to the capabilities of anonymity online, individuals are able to express different types of personae that would otherwise be repressed in offline, interpersonal communication (Grasmuck, Martin and Zhao, 2008). This contributes to the psychological well-being of users experiencing low self-esteem (ibid). Although poor self-esteem is strongly correlated with narcissistic tendencies, narcissism-related expression is a result of low self-esteem, not a guaranteed outcome of it. Those with low self-esteem may seek improvement through other forms of gratification unrelated to narcissistic desires. In the case of Facebook, they may seek to express themselves in a way their particular social cluster does not allow.

2.3 SYNTHETIC CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The literature reviewed suggests that digital social networks such as Facebook provide unique insights into the relationship between different patterns of digital media usage and the production of social capital (Golder, Huberman and Wilkinson, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007). Digital social media enables individuals to manage relationships in an entirely novel process when compared to the classic, physical world model. The connected structure and functionality of digital space enables individuals to interact with acquaintances they only vaguely know, and keep informed these people whom they would likely not stay in touch with otherwise. That is to say Facebook allows social barriers to be opened that may remain closed in the real world. However, the strength of these relationships is generally based on weak tie foundations rather than an emotional bond (a process inherent to strong ties).

The functionality of social networking sites has evidently altered the developmental process of relationships. When incorporating traits of narcissistic expression into digital social space, the dynamic of social development is even further altered. Narcissists take advantage of relationships to gain praise and success rather than embracing them on a sentimental level (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Regardless of the desire to establish large numbers of relationships, narcissists rarely maintain these friendships over time (ibid). However on Facebook, unless a person is 'de-friended', a relationship and thus, a connection remains visible and available for users at the time of their choosing. As a result, a narcissist can maintain a consistent stock of weak tie relationships to be used and taken advantage of.

An additional connection between narcissistic expression and social-networking sites is the flexibility given to owners for control over self-presentation. Users can be selective about the information they present to others, allowing them to create an attractive and likeable external self. Such ability enables individuals to seek out valueless relationships for reinforcement of narcissistic desires (Mehdizadeh, 2010). Schwartz (2010) may provide a possible connection in suggesting those with narcissistic tendencies collect friends online as an “affirmation of self, almost as one would accumulate trophies or wealth for self-affirmation” (p. 22). Users are exploiting each other to gather a resource, not a relationship. This may further explain why a statistically strong connection is found between Facebook usage and self-esteem issues, a major catalyst in narcissistic development (Schwartz, 2010).

The literature reviewed in this chapter presents evidence as to how individuals take advantage of the benefits afforded by bridging social capital. However, the literature does little to explain why users are doing it. Existentialism suggests there is a motive to every action (Jackson, Gillis and Verberg, 2007). Under this reasoning, what is the motive for individuals to bridge and bond social ties online? This is where a connection to narcissistic-motivated expression potentially takes shape. Facebook is found to be an avenue for the active usage of narcissistic-style tendencies. Specifically, the customizable nature of the social networking sites encourages self-display, self-promotion and effortless reception of gratification from others (Schwartz, 2010). Facebook further enables a near endless establishment of relationships. Coincidentally, narcissists use relationships for primarily exploitative purposes of praise and adoration. Therefore,

narcissistic desires of self-display may play a pivotal role in the establishment of online friendships.

Despite the fact that both social capital and narcissistic personality traits are linked to increased weak tie relationships online, a firm correlation between the two is missing. A plausible connection has yet to be established behind narcissistic motives influencing social capital development online. Portes (1998) notes that as important as understanding the development of social capital, equally as important is understanding the motivations behind its development. In mentioning motivations, this refers to the senders and receivers of information within a social structure.

Research presents potential evidence that those seeking narcissistic expression thrive on the flexible social tie social structure afforded by Facebook (Ellison et al., 2007; Schwartz, 2010). Furthermore, the general functions of Facebook, such as comments, photos and the overall display of self are helpful additions to a narcissist's toolbox (Ellison et al., 2007; Schwartz, 2010; Recupero, 2010). What remains to be explored however, is if and how digital friends are part of that toolbox. Is there a genuine desire to bridge social capital on Facebook for purposes of sustaining relationships? Or do narcissistic tendencies dominate the virtual environment and take advantage of vulnerable weak social ties? If so, what role do narcissistic traits play in the process?

Romero (2009) suggests a potential influence on bridging social capital, which has yet to be studied in depth, is the use of narcissistic personality traits as a motivator in developing relationships. Although individual narcissistic traits are found to play a role in establishing social capital through Facebook, motive behind how and why this

phenomenon is occurring has not been fully explored. Portes (1998) notes that motives behind the senders and receivers of information is the core process social capital researchers seek to understand. Furthermore, how narcissistic expression manifests itself in Facebook as specific personality traits has yet to be extensively researched. Based on these considerations, it would be plausible to explore the role narcissistic personality traits contribute to developing social capital on Facebook. It would be beneficial so as to gain an understanding of the design and formation to which social capital is established online.

The primary intention behind this research is to discover what motivational outcomes are produced from combining narcissistic personality traits in the development of social capital on Facebook. Coleman (1988) suggests social capital is a flexible term in that it allows for several resources to be combined. This produces different behaviours and general outcomes for the individuals driving such resources (ibid). It is for this reason narcissistic-related motive will be applied to concepts of social capital.

Several researchers note major studies on Facebook have been conducted from a quantitative perspective (Schwartz, 2010; Portes, 1998). Recommendations suggest future research take focus toward qualitative outcomes (ibid). One of Raskin and Terry's (1988) conclusions suggests possible differences among individual's optimal self-concept, whether it is positively or negatively correlated is potentially dependent on qualitative reasoning. For example, the display of personality traits identified in the NPI could be motivated by narcissistic desires for self-display or a defensive mechanism protecting self-esteem. Future research regarding narcissistic expression as it pertains to

ideal self-image could benefit from understanding the qualitative differences contributing to these issues.

CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

This chapter provides a critical overview of the research design and methods employed for this study. Specifically, the use of in-depth interviews and the NPI-40 for data-collection are discussed, providing context and reasoning for their application and benefit to the overall study. Particular focus is placed on the importance of blending a narcissistic-related measurement instrument with in-depth interviews. Doing so resulted in a dual method approach to data-collection. Finally, the process for data analysis is discussed, detailing how data was organized and interpreted through codes and themes in NVIVO software.

The majority of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 evaluated narcissistic expression and social capital development as separate concepts. Therefore, the primary goal driving the research design in this study was how to combine both concepts into a singular, yet functional form of data collection, so as to measure their influence on each other. However, narcissism and social capital research embody forms of measurement representative of contrasting perspectives. Specifically, research in social capital and relationship development has predominantly qualitative roots. Research tools for narcissistic tendencies within the general population are largely statistical. A challenge faced in the design of this thesis was developing a research method that would not compromise the scholarly foundations of either concept, while still obtaining rich, interpretive data for analysis.

In light of this challenge certain steps were incorporated into the research method to accommodate this potential issue. A cohesive, dual-method form of measurement was

established, embodying both concepts of social capital development and narcissistic traits. Such approach was vital in order to retain the research foundations of both concepts without compromising the quality of collected data. A detailed outline of this method and its construction is further explained throughout this chapter.

3.1 Exploratory Research

An exploratory research design was used for this thesis. In general terms, exploration is a distinctive way of conducting social science research. It engages the researcher to think broadly in order to pursue non-specialized interests (Van Maanen, Manning & Miller, as cited in Stebbins, 2001). More specifically, Stebbins (2001) defines social science exploration as a "broad-ranging, purposive, systematic, prearranged undertaking designed to maximize the discovery of generalizations leading to description and understanding of an area of social or psychological life (p. 3)".

Exploratory methods are generally utilized for research problems that are sparse in research and lack a clear definition (Jupp, 2006). Jupp notes how exploratory research is characterized as a "methodological approach that is primarily concerned with discovery" (2006: p.110). Research conducted for this thesis sought to discover and define motive and influence of narcissistic-related activity in the Facebook community. Conclusions were general in nature in order to develop a theoretical foundation for gaining insight into Facebook's social influences. Stebbins (2001) argues that exploratory methods assist this type of research given that it does not require a definitive conclusion. Rather, exploratory research seeks preliminary information to define problems and

suggest hypotheses toward future research (ibid). This allows for drawing stronger, more robust theoretical conclusions.

With respect to scholarship on Facebook, researchers have conducted separate studies on narcissism and social capital as independent concepts (see Chapter 2). However, little research has been conducted as to their influence on each other within the social networking platform. This posed certain challenges in generating a preliminary hypothesis for study. Consequently, exploratory research was adopted, as this approach does not seek definitive conclusions from a set hypothesis. In fact, conclusions drawn from exploratory research are rarely definitive (Mills, 2000). Rather, they provide a foundational framework as to the direction more systematic and particular research on the subject should follow (Stebbins, 2001; Mills, 2000).

A major challenge confronted when researching the intersection of social capital and narcissistic traits in a single study is developing a research method which will effectively encapsulate both concepts. Taking advantage of structured approaches such as systematic or closed-ended studies would pose challenges for the research. Specifically, such approaches would not allow a flexible research method that could encapsulate the extensive concepts of both social capital and narcissism. The exploratory structure of this thesis afforded the freedom to create a research design that effectively embodied and measured the concepts of narcissism and social capital. Stebbins (2001) suggests exploratory research designs should be flexible so as to maximize on the potential for discovery. He notes, “exploration is no place for data collection formulas distilled from conventional theory and methodological practice” (p. 23). Rather, the research design of an exploratory study should be novel, flexible and imaginative, while abiding by the

scholarly guidelines of inductive reasoning (ibid). Such an approach would enable the exploration of patterns, ideas or hypotheses, without compromising either concept.

The ideology behind the design of exploratory research enabled the novel approach to data collection employed through this study. Specifically, this thesis utilized a dual method approach to data collection, consisting of qualitative-based interviews and a quantitative measurement scale (these will be further elaborated on later in this chapter). There was concern mixing qualitative and quantitative research tools would pose a risk of manipulating data beyond the initial intent of the research. However, as Stebbins (2001) notes, exploratory research favours both methods of research. In fact, a dual method approach is preferred in order to maximize on collecting useful data (ibid). In this regard, “exploration may be qualitative or quantitative, although most researchers in this area seem to favor mixing the two, with the first being primary and the second being secondary. Still, as the chain of studies lengthens, quantitative data vis-à-vis qualitative data may grow in proportion and importance” (Stebbins, 2001, p. 12).

3.2 Selecting a Sample

For this research, the data sample was comprised of university students within the 18-25 age demographic. As of 2011, this age group represented 25.8% of Facebook's total population (Social Bakers, 2012). The highest demographic of Canadian Facebook users were ages 26-34 at 26.1% (ibid). The rationale for working with a university student demographic derives from their potential for greater online social activity. University students are situated in a consistent and diverse social environment. As compared to the typical workplace, university students have the opportunity for social

involvement with a pool of thousands of other people on a daily basis. Therefore, users from this demographic are more likely to have a higher usage of Facebook due to increased social interaction. Furthermore, the 18-25 demographic was chosen as it represents 65% of the Canadian university student population (Statistics Canada, 2012).

Data samples were gathered from the student population of Nipissing University, located in North Bay, Ontario. The primary researcher was situated in this geographical location during the time of study. Thus, sampling this particular student population was the most logical choice. Formal ethics permission was obtained from the University of Ottawa and Nipissing University to conduct research with their students (see Appendix II and III).

The data-collection process utilized for this study focused on extracting rich, subjective data pertaining to narcissistic influence, general personality traits and relationship building. Therefore, twelve in-depth interviews were conducted with participants, selected through the non-probability method of snowball sampling. Snowball sampling commences with a select group of people, and expands to other people through linkages and referrals from initial participants (Neuman, 2006).

Selection of a snowball sampling method derived from a need for active Facebook users. The ideal participants for this study are individuals who are using Facebook on a consistent basis. By consistent, this refers to an individual who has logged onto Facebook for at least 20-30 minutes on a daily basis (Online Schools, 2012). The more an individual uses Facebook, the greater probability one will be able to elaborate in-depth on his or her experience in the social networking site. Rather than selecting a complete

sample of participants who may or may not use Facebook regularly it was thought to better rely on those who could recommend willing participants who have been identified as active users.

Participants were recruited through generating awareness directly within the Nipissing University community. Specifically, approved signs, handouts and class announcements were made to publicize the study this thesis is based on. It was the student's choice to respond to the recruitment requests. A total of seven participants responded to the request. Prior to data-collection, respondents were questioned as to their Facebook activity. Only four respondents met the required criteria to participate in the research. Following data-collection with initial participants, they were asked to recommend the study to other potential individuals who may be interested in partaking in the study (i.e. the snowball sampling method). Participants were asked to recommend those who could meet the specified criteria for this study. It should be noted participants were asked not to recommend close friends, coworkers or roommates so as to not sway or compromise answers provided by participants.

Participants were questioned as to their narcissistic and general personality traits as well as relationship building methods. Additionally, a direct observation of participants' Facebook profiles was conducted to examine how these traits manifested online. This involved logging on to user profiles and examining various components of his or her Facebook page. Interviews were thematically analyzed and coded. Findings and conclusions were discussed in the context of social capital development and non-clinical research in narcissism.

3.3 The Narcissistic Personality Inventory

This research investigates the influence of narcissistic-motivated activity in relationship building through Facebook. However, the primary researcher was not qualified to determine such characteristics among participants. Likewise, participants should not presume to comprehend their narcissistic traits. That is to say, narcissistic related attributes are inconsistent and unknown by most individuals (Miller & Campbell, 2011). Therefore a method of determining such traits was required. Within the general population, identification of non-clinical narcissistic traits is based on a systematic form of measurement. However, this study is rooted in qualitative reasoning; attempting to determine narcissistic traits through a non-systematic approach would result in educated guesses over definitive conclusions. A solid foundation for narcissistic measurement was crucial to the credibility of research conducted in this thesis.

If participants are expected to subjectively discuss their narcissistic traits, the researcher must first identify them. Therefore, a tool was required to accurately measure and determine narcissistic related attributes. As a result, research was guided, in part by Raskin and Terry's (1988) Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-40). Wallace and Baumeister (2002) note how nearly all recent empirical results examining the effects of narcissistic traits have relied on use of the NPI-40. Additionally, NPI-40 scores are found to be more consistent, accurate and predictive than any other narcissism-related scale or subscale (ibid). This is attributed to the inventory's ability to measure a particular set of narcissistic traits within the general population (ibid). Alternative forms of narcissism-related measurement such as the ICD-10 (World Health Organization, 2011), Millon's (1995) subtypes and Kohut (1984), Johnson (1987) and Masterson's (1993) clinical

strategies are not applicable to this study. Such tools are either niche forms of narcissistic measure, rooted in clinical style research or pertain to general personality traits with no direct focus on narcissism. The present research aims to explore general, non-clinical narcissism.

As noted previously in Chapter 2, the NPI-40 measures seven key-factors of narcissistic tendencies. With a tool capable of identifying narcissistic traits in such specificity, the NPI-40 was used to determine non-clinical traits among participants. This was a critical first step in the data-collection process. An accurate sampling of narcissistic tendencies enabled interviews to be conducted with a clear understanding of participant characteristics. For example, the NPI-40 may have identified that a participant had predominant authoritative and exhibitionist traits. Interviews were then able to elaborate on these findings to understand motive and reasoning as to why they exist. Essentially, incorporating the NPI-40 gave focus to an otherwise broad definition of narcissism.

Although the NPI-40 is a statistical form of measure, the focus of this study is qualitative, non-statistical research. Data collected from in-depth interviews was the primary source for analysis and conclusion formation. The NPI-40 was only used as a supportive tool to determine narcissistic traits and guide interviews. Numerical scores of NPI-40 results were not used to determine primary outcomes in this project.

3.4 The Dual-Method Approach

This study utilized two independent methods of data-collection, which included the NPI-40 and in-depth interviews. A component to the interviews was discussing with participants their narcissistic traits. However, as noted, neither interviewees nor the primary researcher held the capabilities to determine such traits. Thus, a second instrument was required to uncover narcissistic characteristics among participants. The NPI-40 was chosen to accomplish this task and fill a void in the research method. In chapter 2, the NPI-40 is noted as being a quantitative-based, forced-choice survey, which assists in determining narcissistic traits within the general population. Assimilating the statistically based NPI-40 into this study, which is rooted in qualitative research, resulted in a dual-method research design for data-collection.

There was consideration whether using a dual-method approach would obstruct the data-collection process. Utilizing a focused, closed-ended research instrument may potentially interfere with interviews, impairing the attainment of qualitative data. Specifically, a concern was whether integrating the NPI-40 would steer research into an objective direction. However, strategic use of the inventory created a stronger method of data-collection in avoiding potential pitfalls of creating assumptions and generalizations about narcissistic traits.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) suggest a dual-method approach is best utilized to isolate a particular aspect of research into more focused data collection. The researchers note how incorporating a closed-ended tool such as the NPI-40 creates a scenario, which removes the influence of numerous variables. This enables the researcher

to more credibly assess cause-and-effect relationships. The variables in this instance are the determining factors of narcissistic traits. How does one determine such characteristics in qualitative research? This is where the incorporation of the NPI-40, and ultimately a dual-method approach emerged.

A challenge faced was how to integrate a narcissism-related identification tool without compromising the qualitative research process. This was necessary in order to avoid incomplete and obstructed data collection. A standard practice in researching non-clinical narcissism is relying on an organized, systematic measurement instrument (Ames, Rose & Anderson, 2006). In-depth interviews do not possess such capabilities to determine narcissistic characteristics. However, interviews enable the discovery of motive, intent and elaboration, something a statistical form of measure cannot capture. Therefore, it was decided to position the NPI-40 as a supportive instrument alongside primary interviews. Combining the credible decisiveness of the NPI-40 with the expansive capabilities of interviews eliminated potential shortcomings in the research method. Specifically, data collection could focus on how narcissistic-motivated expression affects relationship building habits and social capital, without questioning how narcissistic traits were identified.

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) advocate the role of supportive elements in a dual-method approach. The researchers note that a secondary tool is most effective when employed for factors considered important to the research. In the case of qualitative observation and interview, they note how the researcher may consider supplementing their approach with a closed-ended, systematic instrument to measure such factors. For this research, the essential factors were narcissistic traits and the closed-ended instrument

was the NPI-40. It was paramount that a tool was used to determine narcissistic traits without room for doubt, questioning or variables. Otherwise, use of the NPI-40 would be no more effective than a qualitative research instrument.

Brewer and Hunter (1989) note that in a dual-method approach strategic placement of research tools can be effective. However, the researcher must be cognizant of the roles each data-collection tool plays,

"Researchers should collect multiple data using different strategies, approaches, and methods in such a way that the resulting mixture or combination is likely to result in complementary strengths and non-overlapping weaknesses" (found in Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004: p. 18).

Employing the NPI-40 as an assistive instrument alongside interviews supports Brewer and Hunter's suggestion of exercising a tool, which complements, rather than obstructs. A major research goal was to discover how narcissistic-motivated expression affects social choices in online environments. Placing the NPI-40 in a supportive role facilitated this task without compromising qualitative content. Inventory data was applied to inquiries on social capital and relationship building as an auxiliary, external resource. That is to say, narcissistic-related content was integrative to research, rather than intrusive.

3.5 The Data-Collection Process

For this research, data collection was conducted partly through a series of in-depth interviews. Interviews are considered a more structured form of exploratory research as they rely on a guide, rather than outright observation (Stebbins, 2001). However, with exploratory research rooted in preliminary observation, interviews are a suggested form of measure (ibid). All interviews took place in a private study room of the Nipissing University library. Every interview was conducted face-to-face with each participant on an individual basis. Interviews were roughly one to two hours in length.

Interview questions were based on research adapted from Raskin and Terry's (1988) *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* and Ellison, Heino and Gibbs' (2006) *Managing Impressions Online* study. Rather than a preset hypothesis, data-collection was informed by literature pertaining to social capital, strong and weak ties, relationship building habits and narcissistic tendencies. Interviews included scenario type questions such as: "How do you feel when you look at yourself in the mirror? How would you describe your level of confidence? Do you consider the majority of your friends to be strong or weak?". The basic interview guide can be found in Appendix IV.

Each participant was a member of the social networking website, Facebook. Facebook currently operates with an active user base of more than 950 million users (Social Bakers, 2012). As mentioned, the sample was taken of university students within Facebook's 18-25 age demographic. Prior to gaining access to Facebook, users must register a free account. Once registered, users may create a personal profile, add other

users as friends, and engage in the functions provided by the social network's structured environment.

Prior to interviews taking place, participants were asked to complete Raskin and Terry's (1988) Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI-40). As previously discussed, the intent of the NPI-40 was to have a tool, which definitively uncovers non-clinical narcissistic traits possessed by participants. It was taken into consideration results of NPI-40 tests would be unique to each participant. Therefore, the interview script was tailored to accommodate this possible inconsistency. Forced-choice questions from the NPI-40 were adapted into an open-ended format for the interview script. If required, questions addressed all seven narcissistic traits identified in the inventory. This enabled participants to be asked the same questions, providing answers unique to their identified traits.

In an effort to maximize data collection, interviews were split into two parts. The first series of interviews explored personality traits and relationship building habits as they pertain to narcissistic-motivated activity. Data collected from NPI-40 tests were applied to interviews, integrating with questions related to self-image, social settings, attitudes toward others and value in relationships. Responses from stage-one interviews were coded and analyzed in NVIVO 7 software. Following analysis of stage-one data, a second series of interviews took place. In this session, participants were questioned as to actions taken in their Facebook profile. To accomplish such task, a direct examination of participant's profiles occurred with the researcher. Participants were asked to login to their profile with the researcher present. This allowed the researcher to navigate and examine Facebook profiles from the participant's perspective. For example, the researcher was able to see notifications and messages participants received, photos they were tagged

in, and any other content a participant may block or limit from public viewing. This enabled a full end-user experience of participant Facebook profiles. Areas of Facebook rich in social activity were examined to uncover motive in social capital development. Examples of questions included, "How did you decide what to say about yourself in your profile?" or "How did you decide which pictures to post?"

Data gathered from initial interviews was integrated into stage-two discussions. The intent of referencing stage-one content was to connect narcissistic, relationship and social traits with motive in social capital development through Facebook. More specifically, research sought to uncover whether initially discussed personality issues influenced social action taken by participants online. For example, does the participant posting such a photo album have a direct relation to their admission of low-self esteem mentioned in stage-one interviews? Could the intent of posting such an album stem from a desire for admiration and praise?

As mentioned, Facebook profiles were examined in sections rich with social activity. This was conducted in order to maximize opportunities for observing user motive and actions taken in participant profiles. Stebbins (2001) notes using a tool that contains prior information on participants or the research topic in general afford greater context to the collected data. Stebbins notes, "...sometimes, depending on the object of study, researchers can also learn about it [participants] by examining life records and archival sources" (p. 22). The 'life record' in this case was participant's Facebook profiles. Therefore, five sections of Facebook ranked highest in social activity were chosen for the data collection process (Facebook Developers, 2012). Sections included friend lists, photo albums, status updates, comment sections and the main profile page.

These areas are standard pieces of any Facebook profile. They cannot be added or removed by the user. Screenshots of Facebook profiles are provided in Appendix III.

3.6 Data Analysis

Data collection was not considered complete until all narcissistic traits were identified and discussed by multiple participants, causing apparent data saturation. This was achieved with the initial twelve participants.

Only participant's top three identified narcissistic traits were utilized for data collection and analysis. Through trial interview sessions, a number of drawbacks were discovered when attempting to discuss all seven NPI-40 traits with individual participants. Firstly, trial participants never registered all seven narcissistic traits, and some were at very minor levels. It did not seem reasonable to question participants about narcissistic traits that were minimally representative of their personality and intentions. The intent of utilizing the NPI-40 was to identify the most prominent narcissistic traits in participants. It was not intended as a statistical form of measure. Therefore, it was not imperative to retain lesser-identified traits.

Interview sessions were conducted in person by the primary researcher. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and reviewed for accuracy. To manipulate content, qualitative analysis software NVIVO 7 was used to organize and examine data. Interview transcripts were imported to NVIVO 7 where they were analyzed and coded through a constant comparative process. In constant-comparative analysis, data collected from one participant contributes to further or previous findings from other participants (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This allows for manipulation of content in a way, which

simplifies, reduces and complicates data. As a result, codes can be further expanded, transformed and reconceptualised as necessary, enabling greater data analysis (ibid). As new codes are added, previously analyzed transcripts are re-coded to include updated themes, concepts and categories. Additionally, codes are refined or removed as necessary in order to remain consistent and accurate with data. Identical codes were either eliminated or reclassified into separate codes based on their relevance. The majority of coding concepts were referential codes (e.g. “control,” “self-esteem,” “realistic”).

For stage one interview data, coding themes were initially separated by narcissistic personality traits, general personality traits and relationship building habits. Sub-codes were added as required. A total of 69 codes and sub-codes were generated from this analysis. For stage two interview data, the initial coding themes consisted of selected sections of Facebook (see section 3.5) along with identified user motive and online relationship building habits. From analysis of this section, 63 codes and sub-codes were generated. A total of 132 codes and sub-codes were generated from analysis of both interview sessions.

Following separate analysis of stage-one and stage-two interviews, a third coding tree was created. This coding tree brought together the two previously analyzed coding trees to analyze connections between participant’s personality traits and their actions taken in Facebook. From this analysis, an additional 10 code themes were generated consisting of general participant motive online, Facebook usage, exercised personality traits and identified narcissistic motive.

CHAPTER 4 - RESEARCH FINDINGS

In this chapter, data collected during the interviews are presented through descriptive, observational commentary supported by excerpts from participant interviews and general observations made by the researcher. All participant discussions were conducted in person, allowing for a greater description of the interview experience. Sections of this chapter were organized based on patterns and consistencies of participant responses discovered through data analysis. In order to protect the identity of participants, pseudonyms are utilized in place of real names.

4.1 The Control Element

Coding associations found consistencies in the expression of authoritative narcissistic traits among participants. Specifically, linkages were uncovered between authoritative narcissism and sub-codes pertaining to control-related actions in social activities. Identified links included an expressed desire by participants to control both their social environment and those residing in it. The intent of such actions was found to revolve around regulating self-image in various forms.

Participant Jack, age 24, was one such individual found to express authority as a dominant narcissistic trait. He believed this characteristic to be derivative of his individual leadership qualities. Specifically, Jack felt as though his leadership skills manifested in an ability to control others within his social environment. As a result, he was able to regulate his image in a way conducive to his needs. Jack notes,

"I think that when you're in control of a group of people, you can do more of what you want to do rather than what other people do...You just have to make them see it your way. But in the end it's really benefitting yourself after."

Jack's command over his image was the motivating factor in exercising his authoritative traits. He felt as though controlling others was a way of managing how they viewed him. As a result, Jack was able to amplify his strengths if only to mask weaknesses. Having others look to him as a leader, enabled emphasis of his superior personality traits. This is not to say Jack's flaws were eliminated. Rather, they were redirected in an effort to be unnoticed. Therefore, Jack was adamant about masking his lesser qualities in order to sustain a greater presence of authority.

Primary Researcher – *"Are you masking anything with your leadership? Like, weaknesses you don't want anyone to see?"*

Jack – *"Well I think everyone does that."*

PR – *"So how do you do it?"*

Jack – *"I have self-doubt and insecurities like everyone else. But if someone is going to see you as a leader, that isn't something you can show them. Instead, I just amp up my stronger qualities to be bigger and more noticeable than my weaknesses."*

PR – *"But don't you think you're showing people a false side of you? That people are only seeing what you want them to see?"*

Jack – *"I think they're seeing the side that matters."*

PR – *“Matters to who? You or your audience?”*

Jack – *“My audience. If they see the right strengths from me, then they’ll form a much better opinion than seeing me as a weak, average person.”*

Jack’s amplification of authoritative traits was evident when logged onto his Facebook profile. Comments and status updates were used as a primary form of expression and communication. At least a dozen updates per day were posted on Jack’s wall. Posts ranged from his daily activities to general observations and inspirational style quotes. When questioned as to why he frequently posted comments, Jack expressed a need to remain relevant in his social circle.

PR – *“You post a lot of comments, does this relate at all to your leadership qualities?”*

Jack – *“Yeah for sure. You want to put yourself out there so people see you and look to you for information.”*

PR – *“Do you feel like you’ll just blend in with the crowd if you don’t post things?”*

Jack – *“Yeah, I think a part of me does.”*

PR – *“So is there other motives to you posting all these comments?”*

Jack – *“Well, I guess it’s to be current and always be on people’s radar. I want people to see and follow me as a leader rather than someone else. So you have to keep putting yourself out there.”*

Status updates in Jack's profile were noticeably more frequent on specific dates. According to Jack, increased postings revolved around times when he felt exposed, or saw opportunities to assert his level of authority. For example, the frequency of status updates was elevated at times when Jack graduated, broke up with his girlfriend and completed his first triathlon. Jack admitted this was a tactic in maintaining control over specific individuals or groups.

"Making a message that speaks to your ex-girlfriend tells her how great you are doing. It says to her that you are doing fine. When I talk about my accomplishments, it shows I've grown. It shows I've become a stronger person. I maintain the upper hand without having to speak to them."

In addition to leadership-style control, trends identified during the coding process found that participants expressed narcissistic traits more aggressively in a self-contained 'field of control'. That is to say, participants felt comfortable expressing themselves in an established environment of social capital. Within this structure, participants noted they were better able to develop their ideal image. This allowed them to direct how they shared their life, interests, needs and desires. Participants Claire, Daniel and Nikki were individuals who expressed narcissistic traits through varying fields of control. Although their motive was not derivative of leadership-related elements, these participants, like Jack, wished to control their environment in an effort to regulate their self-image. Claire, age 21, for example described how doing so created a comfort zone for her as she could project an image of her construction, rather than based on the creation of others.

Claire – *"I enjoy being the centre of attention. But it's more for myself."*

PR – *"So you would say that your reach of authority, reach of control is only really around those who you really know that you can control?"*

Claire – *“Yes”*

PR – *“Is that a comfort zone?”*

Claire – *“Definitely”*

PR – *“But outside foreign territory, you don’t sway out there because you don’t know if you could command a certain control?”*

Claire – *“Well I think it’s a little bit harder to. I do it on occasion, but not necessarily as much as inside the comfort zone.”*

Claire's expression of authoritative traits went only as far as her reach in social capital. As she moved further outside this circle Claire felt as though her insecurities and weaknesses became exposed, subsequently unbinding her controlled image. Participant Daniel, age 20, shared this feeling. Essentially he felt vulnerable in an environment where there were variables (i.e. people) at work beyond his control.

PR – *“It sounds like you’re constantly on edge in the real world all because you can’t control your image? It sounds a little extreme. You’re in the same position as everyone else.”*

Daniel – *“No no, I’m not on edge. That’s not what I mean.”*

PR – *“What do you mean then?”*

Daniel – *“Okay, like it’s not this constant thing on my back ruining my life. I just feel insecure at times. I feel like my weaknesses are more apparent than my strengths and that’s how people will treat me.”*

When logged onto their Facebook profiles, Claire and Daniel’s concerns over controlling their image changed significantly. Specifically, Claire no longer felt it a challenge to stay within her field of control. According to Claire, this was attributed to

Facebook's function in maintaining users as the constant centre of attention. Claire reported how Facebook filters all third-party content to centre around her profile (for an example, see Appendix III). As a result of this function, Claire continually remained at the centre of her field of control. This enabled her to better maintain an ideal self-image.

Claire - *"Whatever I do in my profile, it adapts to focus directly on me."*

PR - *"Did you make it this way? Or is this the same for everyone?"*

Claire - *"Same for everyone. It's like, it's like your own little universe and you're the sun. All the planets move around you, but you will always be in the centre."*

PR - *"So when you move, everything moves with you?"*

Claire - *"Yeah, I guess so. I mean I can control who sees my information and on the flipside, who I want to see information. "*

Daniel reported similar feelings of Facebook focusing directly on him. However, his views were of an outward focus. He did not feel as though others were judging him or viewing his weaknesses because he simply did not see it. All he saw was his profile and what occurred within it. This provided him a sense of control over his image, as he was not constantly reminded of outside influence.

PR – *"What is so different about Facebook compared to reality? What does a computer world do that your own can't?"*

Daniel – *"I guess I just don't see stuff I don't want to"*

PR – *"How do you mean?"*

Daniel – *“Well, my profile shows me all the things I need to see, and it’s usually good stuff. Whoever has a problem with it, well I never really need to hear about it.”*

PR – *“So, this sense of control is kind of fuelled by an out of sight, out of mind kind of thing? Like because you don’t see it, you don’t need to worry about it?”*

Daniel – *“Yeah, pretty much.”*

Through her engagement with Facebook, Claire admitted to exercising authoritative-style actions in order to portray the most desirable image possible. Such actions were a direct result of her increased level of control afforded by the social networking site. For example, Claire utilized Facebook's viewer permissions to regulate what content various 'friend' groups could see in her profile (See Appendix III). Additionally, she made a point of cautiously posting and arranging profile content. This primarily included uploading flattering pictures and arranging messages (i.e. comments, public messages and activity notifications) posted by both her and external 'friends'.

PR - *"We discussed earlier your authoritative traits in narcissism. Do they pop up in a different way on Facebook? I mean, you have a tremendous level of control now, something you always wanted."*

Claire - *"You could say that."*

PR - *"How do you do it? You have hundreds of friends here and a lot of activity in different areas. How do you control what everyone sees?"*

Claire - *"Well, like it's kind of a reverse way of doing things on Facebook. If I go out in the real world, I have to act a certain way based on where I am or who I see. On Facebook, I know who is seeing me and I can straight up control what*

they see. My family can only see some photos where some of my close friends can see everything."

PR - *"So Facebook gives you structure? Or rather, that level of authority that you really crave in the real world?"*

Claire - *"Yeah, exactly. Like, I can basically create a relationship. I can add this, delete that. Like I can do whatever I want on here and no one will know or really care."*

Participant Nikki, age 22, discussed a similar field of control on Facebook. However, her feelings of expressive control online appeared to derive from convenience over an actual need. Nikki's discussed an extensive amount of in-classroom success. She reported being viewed as a leader in class through her marks and various group projects. Although, unlike Richard, her identified traits did not include authority. Rather, Nikki reported traits of vanity and exhibitionism. In discussing such traits, she noted her educational strengths were something she enjoyed sharing with others.

PR - *"Why do you feel you need everyone to know you got a good grade?"*

Nikki - *"I don't know. I'm proud of it, academics are my strength, wouldn't you want people to know your strengths?"*

PR - *"Okay. So, I'm a decent runner and when I enter a race and do well, it's nice to see my name in the top results in the newspaper, but I don't walk around telling everyone how I placed. Is Facebook a similar avenue for you?"*

Nikki - *"Yeah, I think that makes sense."*

Nikki truly felt as though she could replicate her in-classroom success through Facebook. It provided her a sense of security and, like Claire, Daniel and Richard, a sense of control. Specifically, Nikki noted she could express the success of her academic achievements online without it appearing blatantly obnoxious. Consequently, she felt a greater command and validation over her actions, as the following excerpt shows:

PR - *“Your top traits were identified as exhibitionism and vanity. Is posting your marks or other achievements on Facebook fuelled by that?”*

Nikki - *“I never really thought about it that way. I guess in some way it is.”*

PR - *“Why?”*

Nikki - *“Well, Facebook’s easy. You can post really obvious things like this without getting weird looks or people thinking you’re arrogant.”*

PR - *“So there’s a sense of control maybe?”*

Nikki - *“Oh for sure.”*

The commonality amongst these participants was their desire for control. For Jack, he sought a command over others through his expressed leadership characteristics. For Claire, Daniel and Nikki, they desired control over their image and how others perceived them. Facebook appeared to accommodate these needs through providing participants a customizable space with which to express themselves. As a result, narcissistic traits such as authority, vanity and exhibitionism surfaced when the conditions of the environment were dictated directly by the user.

4.2 The Weakness of Weak Ties

When discussing relationship building, participants placed greater value in their strong tie relationships. Strong ties were cited as comfortable, easy to engage in and generally held in higher regard than weak social ties. Weak ties were thought to have required excessive effort to sustain. However, varying attitudes were expressed when social tie interaction was applied to Facebook. Specifically, participants who placed value in reality-based strong tie relationships reported assigning similar value to weak social ties in their Facebook profile.

Participant interaction toward weak social ties was not associated with a distinct narcissistic trait. Rather, identified characteristics of exhibitionism, self-sufficiency and superiority found links to activity associated with weak social ties. Specifically, motivational sub-codes in attention, exposure and self-esteem were found to be initiating factors in exercising the aforementioned narcissistic traits. Furthermore, weak tie relationship building remained a consistent theme among said codes, ultimately connecting them as influential components to one another.

Libby, age 23, was among several participants who actively sought narcissistic-related gratification from weak social ties in Facebook. Libby's dominant narcissistic traits were identified as authority, superiority and self-sufficiency. When questioned how she exercised these characteristics, Libby noted how environmental circumstances dictated her expressive dynamic. Specifically, Libby's expression of self relied on whether her social interaction occurred in reality or the digital world. In reality, Libby's natural, everyday interactions developed confidence and self-sufficiency. However, when

online, Facebook required input by Libby [the user] in order to receive similar gratifications. This dependency and lack of natural interaction made it difficult to translate her real-world personality traits to the digital realm.

Libby - *"On Facebook, I don't have school or work to be surrounded by people.*

PR - *"How does that make you feel?"*

Libby - *"Like nobody cares."*

PR - *"In what way?"*

Libby - *"Well, on Facebook, I have to put things out there to get things back from people. At least in my real life, people will come up to me and talk to me and stuff."*

PR - *"And do you think you're putting things out there because you want to? Or because you have to?"*

Libby - *"I guess it's because I have to. I don't think I'd post much if I didn't have to."*

Libby noted the current level of attention she received was indicative of her environment. In the real world, Libby was forced to interact with students, coworkers and customers. Therefore, she did not have to reach out to others for attention. Through natural circumstance, individuals came to her, feeding into her confidence. However, Facebook is a different environment, as there is no natural communication exchange. Rather, activity is generated by content volume. Whether it is a message, photo or comment, material must be posted for other users to respond. Unlike reality, one does not

simply happen upon an individual on Facebook. As a result, Libby reported how she must reluctantly post content in order to gain attention.

Through utilizing attention-seeking tactics in her Facebook profile, Libby reported a fleeting sense of self-sufficiency online. She noted the dynamic and expression of her personality traits differentiated when placed in Facebook's platform. In Facebook, Libby did not feel as secure a person, as she lacked the natural reassurance of her peers, found in reality. This forced her to seek gratification through populating her profile with photos, comments and status update posts. Essentially, Libby felt required to share content, which she would otherwise conceal or share on a limited basis. However, posting content was the only way she felt desired gratifications could be received online.

Libby - *"....so on Facebook, am I self-sufficient? Not really."*

PR - *"How so?"*

Libby - *"I think online, I'm looking for something to maintain the same feelings about myself I have in the real world. That's maybe why I want people to pay attention to me online."*

PR - *"And you feel like posting things will accomplish this task?"*

Libby - *"I think it's a necessary evil."*

PR - *"You sound unsure."*

Libby - *"I think I post more than I should. But you can get carried away on there [Facebook]."*

When navigating her Facebook profile, Libby called to attention the comments, photos and status updates she would post. She noted the majority of these posts, unsolicited by others, were not directed to strong tie connections. Rather, unsolicited posts were intended for both specific and non-specific weak tie clusters. With respect to strong ties, Libby reported being used to their comments and thus finding them unfulfilling. Communicating with weak social ties felt more gratifying as they offered novel perspectives.

Libby – *“My close friends already know what I’m up to. If they commented on a picture from the night before, it’s not as meaningful as if, say a person I haven’t heard from in months or years comments on it.”*

PR – *“What makes that meaningful? Wouldn’t it mean more coming from a close friend?”*

Libby – *“Well yeah. But for this, at least to me it means that I did something for them to notice me.”*

PR – *“Is that your goal? To have someone notice you?”*

Libby – *“More times than not, yes. I mean not necessarily someone, but a number of people I don’t talk to.”*

PR - *“If you were to post something at random, what would it be?”*

Libby - *“Like a picture or a message to someone?”*

PR - *“Let’s say both”*

Libby - *"Well, I mean I message my close friends all the time. I'm not likely going to message the people I never talk to. "*

PR - *"What about the pictures? Or even say status updates? Are those ways you communicate with weaker relationships?"*

Libby - *"I never thought of that. Probably yeah. But probably comments, I don't really write status updates. But if I want a specific person to notice me, I'd definitely put something up that 'speaks' to them in a sense."*

Under similar circumstances, participant Kate, age 23, found herself pursuing weak tie contacts through Facebook. However, Kate was not doing so through a need to maintain gratifications produced in reality. Rather, she sought to fill a void unsatisfied by everyday life interactions. In terms of narcissistic traits, Kate's most dominant were self-sufficiency and superiority. These feelings derived from her active and successful professional life.

Much like Libby, Kate felt herself a victim of circumstance in terms of expression. She was largely dependent on her physical social environment for self-esteem related gratification. The issue specific to Kate though was overcoming self-esteem issues stemming from a lacking social life. Kate's occupation and limited social activity afforded little opportunity to connect with weak ties. As a result, Kate found challenges in developing both strong and weak social ties. Therefore, Kate looked to her Facebook profile in the hopes of communicating with her weak tie sector.

Kate - *"In the real world I have no reason to talk to anyone."*

PR – *"Why not?"*

Kate – *"Well, most people I meet or run into, I usually meet once and that's it."*

PR – *"So how is that different on Facebook?"*

Kate – *"Well, at least, they're aware I exist and if I post something they like, maybe they'll comment or message me."*

Consistent with other participants, the expression of Kate's narcissistic traits relied on social activity fuelled by others. In Kate's scenario, her primary source for social activity was her professional environment. It is in this environment she was acknowledged for her professional achievements, receiving a sense of gratification. She described how it was a lonely feeling when she was not working. Therefore, Kate often looked to Facebook to fill this void. However, many of her close friends were her co-workers. There was little gratification to be gained from these strong tie interactions. They offered no social fulfillment outside the workplace. Therefore, Kate's activity on Facebook was directed at weak tie relationships. A contrasting note between Kate and Libby is their use of weak social ties. Libby was attempting to translate gratifications from reality to Facebook. Kate was utilizing Facebook to compensate for a lack of social interaction.

"There are times when I will post a picture in the hopes of being noticed by an ex-boyfriend or someone I want to talk to on my friend list, but have no common ground to. We talked once and became Facebook friends. But since then, that

little connection faded. There's no reason for me to talk to that person even if I wanted to."

Due to Kate's lacking common ground with several Facebook friends, she discussed resorting to intentional Facebook posts in the hopes of gaining attention from others. For example, Kate created a photo album consisting of random pictures of her. The photos however, were not based on a specific event or theme in comparison to her other albums. Rather, the album existed as nothing more than a series of ambiguous, unorganized photos. However, this is not to say the collection of photos did not hold a purpose. Kate notes,

Kate - "If I post a photo that remotely relates to someone in my contacts [friend list], then I know there is at least a chance they may comment on the photo or try to message me."

PR – "So you don't really post things because you like them? Or think they're fun or cool?"

Kate – "I do, but I think I post things for people to notice more."

Participant Desmond, age 21, also reported garnering attention from weak ties online. However, in comparison to Libby and Kate, his approach was different in scope. Unlike Libby or Kate's intentions to reconnect with weak ties, Desmond had an active friend-base in his profile, constantly providing him attention. Therefore, his motives were not to gain interest from dormant weak tie contacts. Rather, Desmond sought to utilize Facebook in order to maintain notoriety amongst his peers. Desmond discussed having a very active social life. He was a recognizable individual on campus and a well-known

social figure. In situations where Desmond did not know anyone, it would not take him long to develop several relationships within that setting.

Among other narcissistic traits, Desmond's most dominant was exploitative tendencies. Additionally, he had one of the largest friend lists of any participant with 835¹ (see Appendix III). When asked whether there was a connection to his volume of friends and exploitative tendencies, Desmond did not deny the possibility. He did however present an alternative explanation as to his intentions. Desmond reported how the strength of a relationship on Facebook can change almost daily. He noted how a Facebook relationship could rapidly transform from weak to strong. Desmond described the process similar to speed dating in that two people connect, interact, but ultimately move on to someone else. There are too many users to focus only on a select few individuals.

“You’re never short of people to talk to [on Facebook]. There are like, hundreds of people who haven’t paid attention to you much, ready and willing to reconnect, if only for a little bit. When they get tired of it, someone else always comes along.”

Desmond considered it debatable whether or not he was actually exploiting his weak social ties. He questioned how one could exploit an individual on Facebook if it is every person's choice to communicate with one another. Desmond felt when Facebook users reach out to other individuals, they are providing attention, regardless of their intent. Much like Libby reported, Desmond discussed how Facebook does not have

¹ This number was as of March 4, 2012

² Defining clinical levels of narcissism requires experimentation and diagnosis from qualified professionals

natural occurrences. Every user makes a conscious choice to seek out one's Facebook profile.

"It may be my intention to use them, sure. But am I singling out anyone to use them? No. I'm just posting a picture or writing a comment. It's their choice to respond."

This segment of participants represented individuals with varying social lives. Whereas Libby and Desmond had a moderate to active social life, Kate's social life was rather docile. Each of these participants appeared to use Facebook's weak tie sector to either supplement or enhance the structure of their everyday social environment. On Facebook, weak ties were reported as an abundant, impersonal source of social fulfillment. It was evident these social ties were an easy source of gratification for Libby, Kate and Desmond, who sought to express narcissistic traits of self-sufficiency, vanity and exploitation.

4.3 The Importance of Intent

The coding process identified twelve sub-codes pertaining to the motivations and intentions of narcissistic activity exercised by participants. A number of sub-codes were duplicated and categorized under coding nodes titled 'narcissistic motive' and 'realistic motive'. Based on reports provided by participants, narcissistic traits held numerous connotations in their expression. Therefore, it was necessary to duplicate the aforementioned sub-codes, as several applied to both motivational categories.

Having participants discuss specific narcissistic traits provided certain insights into their motive for actions taken online. However, it remains unclear whether traits were being indirectly exercised for self-gratification, or if participants took action out a realistic sense of self. For example, Jack was found to associate with authoritative narcissistic traits. His motive in utilizing this trait was predominantly control-based, influenced from self-serving intentions. Similarly, Desmond, Kate and Libby expressed intent in connecting with weak-social ties for personal gratification. Such actions also fell in line with egotistical-related motivations.

In addition to narcissistic intent, several participants believed their self-expression to derive from a positive, practical viewpoint. Participant Rose, age 22, reported such behaviour, even as her dominant narcissistic traits were identified as exhibitionism and entitlement. Her motives in exercising these traits were thought to be realistic, practical and open. That is to say, Rose felt as though she did not exercise personality traits with malicious intentions. She held no ulterior motive or need for gratification. Rose believed her life experiences, positive or negative, contributed to her overall development of self. Additionally, Rose discussed issues with bulimia in her early teen years. A significant part of overcoming this disorder was recognizing and exercising her strengths, rather than taking actions to compensate for her weaknesses.

Rose - *"I know what my strengths are and I put them to use."*

PR – *"Is there any motive to it? Like, when you demonstrate your leadership, do you do it to control others or something like that?"*

Rose – *"No, not at all."*

PR – *"Then why do you do it?"*

Rose – *“Because I just know I’m good at it. I mean, like I don’t have a hidden agenda if that’s what you’re getting at. I just think I’m a good leader and I want to express it. Sometimes in a bitchy, controlling way. But for the most part, I do it because I think people respond well to my lead.”*

Rose made a point of stating she had nothing to hide with her personality. This openness was evident when logged onto her Facebook. Rose’s profile was populated with an abundance of content for users to view. That is to say, she had a rather detailed personal information page, high-numbered photo albums and an unedited personal news feed (see Appendix III for examples of these sections). It is noteworthy to mention how Rose’s message wall was cluttered and unorganized. Any activity that occurred in her profile was on display and available to all her ‘friends’. This is compared to other participants who reported editing their wall to present a limited level of activity. Rose felt censoring any information was only taking away from her Facebook personae.

PR – *“You have a lot going on, on your wall.”*

Rose – *“Haha, yeah.”*

PR – *“It shows you spend a lot of time on Facebook.”*

Rose – *“Yeah, I guess it does.”*

PR – *“Does that bother you? I mean, do you want people to know you’re spending this much time on Facebook?”*

Rose – *“Well, I’m not going to edit myself. This is who I am.”*

PR – *“Do you believe Facebook is an extension of yourself?”*

Rose – *“Yeah, for sure.”*

PR – *“And you see that as a positive thing?”*

Rose – *“Yeah. Like whatever is posted only adds to my character.”*

PR – *“How so?”*

Rose – *“I can relate to more people that way. Different parts of you mean different things to different people! If I censor myself, I’m only denying people from seeing a part of me they might like.”*

Charlie, age 21, was another participant who felt realistic in his expression of narcissistic traits. He reported an awareness of his personality characteristics and discussed exercising them as effectively as possible in the real world. A fear Charlie had was how this confident image would translate to Facebook. He worried whether posting too much content on Facebook would alter his image in a way unrepresentative of himself. Therefore, rather than attempting to tailor his profile to meet a specific image, Charlie took active steps to post as little information as possible. He felt posting less than more eliminated any possibility of creating a false identity. Specifically, Charlie only posted items on Facebook, which were either required information, or would not alter his image in any way.

“I make damn sure no one takes anything I say on Facebook seriously. In my education I put that I go to DeVry University. People know who I am and what I'm good at. I don't want to risk being seen as an asshole in front of a thousand people.”

Charlie's effort to limit his information sharing was the complete opposite approach to how Rose structured her profile. This discovery prompted a re-examination of all participants who reported a realistic sense of expression. It was revealed that participants constructed their profile as either heavily populated or sparse and controlled.

There appeared to be no middle-ground in terms of profile maintenance. Both parties felt they accomplished the task of communicating a realistic, non-manufactured image. However, the manner in which it was expressed on Facebook found no pattern of consistency.

4.4 On-Demand Resources

During stage-one interviews, several participants indicated that they felt they did not possess narcissistic traits as heavily as their NPI-40 results suggested. Rather, stage-two interviews found participant Facebook profiles to better represent identified traits than real-world scenarios. That is to say, coding trends identified greater consistencies between narcissistic traits in online activity compared to reality-based interactions. A contributing factor to this was not only the ease of which participants reported being able to exercise narcissistic traits, but the near guaranteed response they expected. Facebook has an established audience with ability for instant communication. Because of these functions, participants felt greater assurance in expressing narcissistic tendencies online as compared to reality.

Claire, James and Desmond reported feeling greater assurance in Facebook as a source for personal gratification. It offered a level of immediacy and certainty unavailable in reality. This is not to say participants preferred Facebook over reality-based interactions. The social networking site was simply viewed as a more convenient form of communication. For instance, Claire resolved to use Facebook when she could not receive desired attention in the real world. She preferred receiving compliments and

feedback in real-life interactions. However, she knew when reality-based resources were not accessible, Facebook was an immediately available alternative.

PR – *“...so you feel more fulfilled on Facebook?”*

Claire – *“Well, probably fulfilled more often.”*

PR – *“Is it easier to be noticed on Facebook?”*

Claire – *“Way easier.”*

PR – *“Has that stopped you from any real-life interaction?”*

Claire – *“Umm, it hasn’t stopped me, but I definitely don’t think I’m putting myself out there as much.”*

PR – *“Why not?”*

Claire – *“Because I don’t need to. I can just go on Facebook and boom! Done.”*

PR – *“And you feel just as fulfilled receiving a message over the face-to-face interaction?”*

Claire – *“I never said that. But way more people aren’t afraid to say things on Facebook than in real life.*

PR - *“Like what?”*

Claire - *“I’ve had comments from people saying I’m beautiful and stuff. If I heard that in the real world, I might cry haha!”*

James, age 20, was another participant whose Facebook activity was more representative of his narcissistic traits than real-world actions. It should be noted that discussions with James were subtle and not overly in-depth. Expressively, James could be described as a modest individual. Despite his identified traits of superiority, exhibitionism and vanity, James did not feel as though he demonstrated grandiose

narcissistic tendencies. Rather, James spoke of how he preferred to keep to himself. He reported occasional circumstances when narcissistic traits were exercised. However, James believed his expression to be less frequent than his NPI-40 results may suggest:

PR – *“You talk about working out a lot. Do you like to show yourself off?”*

James – *“Not really, no. I think we all need a boost sometimes, but I’m not that kind of guy.”*

PR – *“So when you say you need a boost. Where do you get it?”*

James – *“When someone pays you a compliment or a girl kind of smiles at you, I probably roll with it a little.”*

PR – *“Do you do this all the time?”*

James – *“Well, it doesn’t happen all the time. So I guess when it does, I take advantage of it. I don’t really search for it though.”*

In logging onto James' Facebook profile what immediately attracted attention was a photo in which he was posing, shirtless. This image appeared unusual compared to James' timid demeanor during his stage-one interview. Furthermore, James discussed his narcissistic tendencies as more subtle and often did not exercise them. Therefore, it appeared uncharacteristic of James to post such a photo on Facebook. In response to this photo, James reported how Facebook enabled him to exercise certain personality traits at a time of his choosing. He noted it being similar to taking advantage of real-world compliments. However, on Facebook, compliments could be sought and received whenever desired:

“That was at a time when I was doing a body building competition. I looked good and I felt good. I don't need to put stuff like that on my Facebook. Sometimes

though I need a little boost. So I'll post a picture like that to hear from people. Like right now I'm really busy with school and I don't have time to workout as much. So I post a picture like that to make myself feel better, to know that I still look good even if I feel like I don't."

When questioned as to why he never sought similar gratification in the real world, James reported feeling uncomfortable in such a setting. He felt reality-based interaction was judgmental in a way, which misconstrued his expressive intentions. On Facebook, James reported a greater sense of freedom in asserting his personality traits. He felt as though he could express himself without being judged in a negative fashion. When asked specifically about narcissistic expression online, James noted how Facebook accepted such behaviour.

"I don't like looking for that attention in real life. It's embarrassing and I feel like an asshole. This way, I know people will respond and I don't really have to do anything."

James further commented on the expressive leniency of Facebook in stating,

"If some people don't like what you post, you never hear from them. You're not getting leery eyes and whispers. You only really hear from the people who want to compliment you."

With respect to Facebook affording an immediate source for positive reinforcement, participant Desmond felt there to be a certain consistency in attaining fulfillment online. He noted that what made Facebook so appealing to post content is the fact that one could always expect to receive a response. Similar to his discussion of weak

social ties, Desmond felt if one user would not respond to a post, there were potentially hundreds of others who would.

PR – *“You posted a lot of pictures of yourself with your shirt off and stuff.”*

Desmond – *“Haha yeah, well you know. This was before the girlfriend.”*

PR – *“So you posted these photos to attract women.”*

Desmond – *“Yes.”*

PR – *“Did it work?”*

Desmond – *“Sometimes it did. At the very least, there would always be a response.”*

PR – *“Did you like that? Is that what you were seeking?”*

Desmond – *“To be honest, yeah it was.”*

PR – *“Was it for anyone specific or just anybody?”*

Desmond – *“Sometimes it would be for specific girls. But later on, it was for anyone.”*

PR – *“And you know you’d always get a response?”*

Desmond – *“Yeah, I mean after a while you know that if the one person you want to comment doesn’t respond, there’s 900 other people who might. It’s inevitable.”*

As an on-demand resource, Desmond reported the abundant freedom in organizing feedback from others. He noted how one could receive and filter whatever type of content they desired. When asked how negative feedback felt, Desmond never considered them. He only recalled positive or flattering content from his ‘friends’.

Desmond - *"You never see negative comments in my profile. I always delete it."*

PR - *"What about in other people's profile?"*

Desmond - *"I never thought about it really. You just never really see bad stuff."*

PR - *"Just comments?"*

Desmond - *"Like anything. I always delete or untag myself from a bad photo. I delete wall posts and comments if I don't like them."*

Similar to Claire and Daniel in section 4.1, James reported a level of comfort in his self-expression through Facebook. He knew his exhibitionist traits in narcissism could be easily fulfilled online, as compared to reality. Furthermore, James was at ease with the knowledge that he could gain such gratification online without judgment or neglect. Desmond provided somewhat of an explanation as to James' perspective in noting the massive social base Facebook affords to every user. He discussed how individuals readily pay attention to one another on Facebook as the relationships are somewhat brief. Therefore, the need for narcissistic fulfillment appears to go unnoticed. Desmond, along with Libby and Kate reported similar opinions when discussing weak ties in section 4.2. It was easy to take advantage of weak ties in Facebook as they were abundant in number, while remaining somewhat impersonal.

4.5 SUMMARY

Responses generated from participant interviews demonstrate the connection these individuals had with Facebook's social platform. Participants saw potential in Facebook as an avenue for a greater expression of self. They compared this to their everyday lives, which faced expressive structure and limitations. In terms of exercising narcissistic traits, participants reported feeling comfortable communicating such characteristics online. They appeared to appreciate Facebook for its flexible, expansive and manipulative capabilities. Participants felt as though they could express narcissistic traits without social consequence. That is, Facebook's social structure regarded their actions as acceptable behaviour in comparison to a limited and strict reality-based setting.

Participants took advantage of Facebook's open social structure in ways unique to their needs. In this instance, narcissistic related fulfillment was the need being sought. As a result, participants took advantage of Facebook's structural features that enabled a sense of control, weaker and infrequent relationships and immediate feedback from others. They expressed a certain frustration in not having access to such elements in reality. Therefore, they looked to Facebook as a source for gratification.

What is apparent from such activity is that a need for narcissistic fulfillment is found through Facebook. There is motive and intent behind participant's activity online. Exactly what this motive is, and how it affects the social structure of Facebook's community is a key point requiring further exploration and analysis.

CHAPTER 5 – ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the review of scholarly literature and the analysis of primary data, a correlation can be established between narcissistic expression and the development of social capital through Facebook. Specifically, narcissistic activity can be described as a key contributor to the communal social structure of Facebook. However, this has occurred as a result of Facebook's acceptance and facilitation of such actions.

5.1 Facebook as a Facilitator of Narcissistic Expression

Returning to a point raised in Chapter 2, Coleman (1988) observes that social capital typically takes the form of those elements considered contributors to a particular community. "Social capital is defined by its function. It is not a single entity but a variety of different entities, with two elements in common: they all consist of some aspects of social structures, and they facilitate certain actions of actors-whether persons or corporate actors-within the structure" (p. 98). In terms of the Facebook community, development and sustainability of social capital is its primary function. That is to say, Facebook is considered a social networking site whose sole purpose is to "allow individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others" (Ellison et al., 2007: p. 2). Essentially, the purpose of a digital social networking site is to allow users to develop and maintain social mobility. Under this reasoning it can be presumed that Facebook possesses the ability to facilitate a diverse range of social capital.

In reality-based social networks, sources of social capital are restricted to the community they are housed under (Coleman, 1988). Elements affecting social mobility, such as influence, bonds and organization, are dictated by a community's structural framework (Putnam, 2000). Based on participant reports, the generation of social capital in Facebook follows a less structured approach than what is found in reality. Specifically, Facebook afforded greater freedom of expression among participants. For example, Jack's self-promoting status updates, although control-driven and exploitative in nature, did not meet disapproval as improper social action. Participant Jack's expressive and opinionated comment posts suggest Facebook does little to regulate content within its structural framework. As a result, Facebook places fewer constraints over what is considered acceptable social activity. In Putnam's (2000) examination of digital social capital development, he cites organization and understanding of structural norms as a catalyst in proper social mobility. However, Facebook lacks such elements, which may give reason as to why participant reports of online communication included expansive and broad expression of narcissistic traits.

When examining social normative expectations in Facebook, the site appears devoid of any governing body to dictate acceptable social behaviour. The site has options to report offensive or inappropriate content users find offensive (Facebook, 2012). However, it lacks 'formal institutions' of control discussed by Coleman (1988) and Portes (1998). As a result, participants in Facebook appeared expressive in an undefined, unorganized and ambiguous state. That is, their narcissistic motives produced inconsistent status updates, misdirected photo posts and excessive profile management. In a social community consisting of over 950 million users, regulating such behaviour

becomes challenging. Furthermore, with a community lacking in certain authority, social capital finds little direction in its growth. Rosen (2007) articulates this point best in stating,

"These sites makes certain kinds of connections easier, but because they are governed not by geography or community mores but by personal whim, they free users from the responsibilities that tend to come with membership in a community. This fundamentally changes the tenor of the relationships that form there, something best observed in the way social networks treat friendship" (p. 26).

Essentially, Rosen (2007) is arguing that social networking sites do not hold a particular standard compared to reality-based communities. Participants demonstrated this in an ability to express themselves on Facebook in ways considered unsuitable in physical social structures. Specifically, participant reports indicated little resistance in exercising narcissistic traits through Facebook. For example, participant James would find certain challenges in walking down the street shirtless, expecting attention and praise at a moment's notice. However, Facebook enabled this display of self without questioning it on any moral or social grounds. Researchers note the internet is not bound by a specific community structure (Putnam, 2000; Steinfield et al., 2009). Thus, its norms cannot be dictated by a singular governing body. Therefore, Facebook cannot mandate proper structures of behaviour, enabling actions considered inappropriate in reality.

As Buffardi and Campbell (2008) suggest, interaction and self-presentation, similar to the actions of participants in this research, are a norm of the internet. There is a certain encouragement, and equal reception of open expression online. For example, rather than deeming participant Desmond's exploitative behaviour as unacceptable, users

continued to pay attention to him, thinking no less of his intentions; Facebook's social community was essentially validating his actions as acceptable. This may be a key reason as to why Desmond felt he was not exploiting his contacts. There was no governing body or code of conduct to dictate otherwise. As a result, this motivated Desmond to further enact narcissistic characteristics within a structure that allowed for it. Facebook may be a facilitator of social capital; however, it is not a governing community of social responsibility.

5.2 Facebook's Perception of Control

If Facebook facilitates greater expression of narcissistic traits, its structure must be built in a way to enable such expression. Both research and participant reports suggest Facebook is constructed in a way, which enables a broad expression of self. For example, Claire described how content in Facebook centres directly on each individual user profile. In discussing her field of control she felt as though Facebook adapted content relevancy directly to her social circle. Additionally, Daniel expressed similar feelings of control through a sense of ignorance as to his social surroundings. In not having to see or interact with those who could potentially pass judgment on him, Daniel felt a certain command over his image. This prompted participants to have a greater volume of expression in Facebook, often exercising narcissistic traits more openly.

What Claire and Daniel are potentially speaking of is the effect of networked individualism on users of digital social networks. Networked individualism is a concept developed by Boase et al (2006), and discussed in Chapter 2 that describes the gradual isolation of users in digital social networks. Specifically, individuals online are

experiencing personalized social networks which cater directly to their needs. However, in the process they seem to be avoiding auxiliary social interference described by Putnam (2000). That is, Facebook's structural framework is enabling what Granovetter (1973) would describe as an alienation of self, eliminating unexpected or undesired secondary social interaction. Through this, Facebook is essentially taking active steps to focus on the individual user experience, rather than an entire community as a whole.

The manifestation of Facebook's character as a networked individualist structure presents a framework that may assist in deciphering how the expression of narcissistic traits are facilitated through the social networking site. As the literature reviewed in Chapter 2 demonstrates, social capital operates as both a collective macro-level structure as well as individual micro-networks (Coleman, 1988; Brewer, 2003). Social resources utilized at the individual, micro-level are what facilitate macro-level growth. However, in Facebook, users are only made to focus on their own social network. This concept provides context as to the overwhelming sense of control and authoritative narcissistic traits demonstrated by select participants. For example, Claire, Daniel and Nikki repeatedly expressed comfortable feelings of control and authority over their profile content. Facebook appeared to orchestrate a strictly individual user experience through embracing its networked individualist ideology. The result of this is a direct user focus on their micro-networks.

In his pioneering work on the subject, Putnam (2000) observes how individuals can modify, customize and manipulate their online social network to meet required needs. Consequently the sense of social awareness observed in reality-based communities is lacking in Facebook. Take for example participant Desmond, and his regulation of profile

content. Any undesirable feedback or information he received in his profile, he deleted. Desmond ensured those within his social network viewed only positive comments and favourable responses. Desmond essentially embraced Facebook's networked individualist concept as genuine and legitimate. As a result, a greater sense of control and subsequent narcissistic actions were manifested.

The fulfillment derived from Facebook's individualist experience only seemed applicable to the confines of the social networking site. Specifically, Nikki and Daniel expressed such concerns through challenges they had in managing their field of control outside Facebook. The feeling of control and expression of narcissistic traits was not as openly facilitated in reality. This prompted them to exercise restraint in their expression of self. Nikki and Daniel's conflicted position provides context concerning the interchange of expression based on social platform. Reality creates situations requiring individuals to interact with auxiliary contacts in potentially undesirable social networks (Putnam, 2000). Facebook's structure enables users to focus exclusively on themselves and the development of their personal micro-network (Elliot & Lemert, 2005). However, if the social mobility generated through one's personal network is not applicable elsewhere, this raises certain questions as to the level of control and fulfillment users are actually receiving online.

The expressive dynamic between online and offline social networks suggest expression of narcissistic traits are motivated by Facebook's structural capabilities. Users are embracing the emergence of a networked individualist framework. As a result, Facebook is fostering what Brewer (2003) suggests as opportunistic and self-interested behaviour. Specifically, Facebook's ability to facilitate a sense of authority and control

enabled participants to achieve what researchers suggest as narcissistic motivated dominance for individual gratification (Holtzman et al., 2010; Pinsky, 2009). Participants Daniel, Nikki and Claire all demonstrated this when describing their unique experiences within their "fields of control". In Facebook, Claire felt secure expressing herself through the controlled, customizable nature of her profile. In comparison, Daniel and Nikki felt control over themselves from not having to be witness to negative influences. Such feelings derived from an ability to create an ideal social structure and regulate its projection to a particular audience.

Participant's sense of control may only be a result of how Facebook facilitates expression. As a result, the sense of authority over their expression of self may be a perception more than anything. Through the internet and social networking sites, users are provided an individual experience in customizing their profile, image and content (Boase et al., 2006; Elliot & Lemert; 2005). Therefore, users are never made to consider others, thus providing a sense of empowerment and control. However, this is not to say other people cannot see their profiles. The hundreds of friends each participant reported in their social network can view their activity and pass judgment on it. Users fail to remember this as Facebook contains them to their micro-focused environment. Wellman (1999, p. 4) notes the individualist perception held by participants is not abnormal. Social networking sites are created in a way that fosters such expression,

"The absence of direct feedback in most CMC [computer media communication] encourages more extreme forms of communication. People input messages to screens that they would never say to another person palpably present in person or on the telephone."

By not having to engage in face-to-face communication, as noted by Wellman (1999), users retain a sense of control over their environment and the activity within it. Specifically, there is a certain confidence in how users carry themselves on Facebook. They may sometimes fail to realize their activity is constantly being viewed by a multitude of others; an effect of Granovetter's (1973) alienation of self. As users can essentially avoid direct social interactions online, they retain a sense of expressive empowerment. However, like anything posted on the internet, a user's content may spread to unknown areas of Facebook's macrostructure. Therefore, the notion that users have control over their profile, image and content may only be a perception due to Facebook's individual user experience.

5.3 Narcissistic Activity Transforming Weak Ties to On-Demand Resource

In analyzing data, Facebook's perception of control was found to facilitate narcissistic-motivated activity beyond user profile management. Specifically, narcissistic related influence had a significant effect on weak social ties. In targeting Facebook's weak tie sector, participants found an abundant pool of social contacts with which to exercise narcissistic traits for desired gratifications. However, little mention was made as to the purpose weak ties served beyond a limited resource for fulfillment. That is to say, some participants expressed a fleeting desire to engage with weak ties for purposes beyond narcissistic-related gratification. Little mention was made by participants such as Desmond or Libby about increasing strong tie relations or maintaining lines of bridged social capital. It was almost as though these factors were not a priority. Rather, weak social ties appeared to be utilized strictly based on need. Essentially, they represented the

on-demand resources participants reported as an instant, as-required supply of social gratification.

As a social tie, weak ties are considered a resource over a close, consistent relationship (Granovetter, 1973). Their purpose is to extend the flow of information between individuals, ultimately enriching one's social network with novel assets (ibid). Weak ties accomplished this through Facebook on a rather limited basis. That is to say, once weak ties served their purpose for participants, efforts to maintain bridged relationships seized to occur. Participants demonstrated the outcome of this process in reporting hundreds of 'friends' with whom they no longer communicate. This faces certain challenges if one wished to reengage a relationship. For example, participant Kate sought to reconnect with weak social ties she had since lost touch with. However, she no longer had a common ground with which to bridge the now inactive relationship.

Discussed in Chapter 2, a unique element to Facebook's user interface is its predominantly visual and archival structure. Specifically, posted content on Facebook remains situated on display in a user's profile until removed. Therefore, even if an individual ignores a once bridged relationship online, Facebook retains its existence as a point of reference. As a result, participants held assumptions that dormant relationships still contained substance, and thus could be utilized. For example, participants continued to discuss Facebook friends collectively as though there was a consistent, healthy relationship with all of them. It is through visually permanent friend lists this assumption was potentially created.

Rosen (2007) expresses concerns as to the visual structure of digital social networks; fearing relationships would become nothing more than exploitative tools for narcissistic gratification. However, in this study participant reports suggest this is the very thing occurring in Facebook. Weak social ties served little purpose beyond accessible engagement for desired social needs. This process yields evidence as to how Facebook facilitates the expression of narcissistic traits. Facebook's visual structure retained a substantial collection of contacts for users with which to seek fulfillment. As a result, participants held few expectations to maintain bridged relationships, knowing they would continually remain available. For example, when speaking of engaging with her weak social ties, Kate reported a copious amount of contacts with which she was no longer in communication. However, she continued to speak of them as though they were common, everyday friends. There was never a sense that a relationship had diminished, as Facebook's visual structure maintained relationships when users did not. Facebook is essentially acting as a repository for on-demand weak ties to be referenced by users at a moment's notice.

By enabling relationships to remain dormant and on-demand, Facebook is creating a form of social tie unrepresentative of Granovetter's (1973) framework for weak ties. That is to say, Facebook visual structure is facilitating a social tie format, which users may engage with only when required. Such a structure appears to resemble more latent-style social ties than weak ties. As discussed in Chapter 2, latent ties resemble relationships that technically exist, but are rarely active (Pearson, 2009; Haythornthwaite, 2002). Their volume of use is dependent on the medium in which they are situated. With narcissistic-motivated actions in Facebook, latent ties were only called

upon to satisfy a need. With Facebook's visual archiving of friends, users are able to 'activate' relationships again as they see fit. This process was demonstrated by Libby and Kate's desire for narcissistic fulfillment. They sought attention from contacts that they barely held any type of relationship with anymore. As Kate stated, the commonality with which the relationship was originally established had deteriorated. Their only use is to lay dormant, until activated once again to fulfill a need.

The creation of a latent, on-demand resource confirms Rosen's (2007) suggestion of relationships becoming objectified online. For example Desmond thought of contacts as resources over genuine relationships. He essentially exploited Facebook friends on an as-needed basis, rather than engaging with them through consistent, quality interaction. For example, Desmond viewed weak social ties as an exclusive source for narcissistic gratification. This was a trend exercised by several participants through varying circumstances. Libby was seeking familiarity while Kate sought supplementation. What participants did not seek from their weak tie contacts was any semblance of a relationship. However, as discussed by Putnam (2000), this is to be expected. Putnam (2000) notes how users confine online contacts to meet only their specific needs. For this particular research, the need was narcissistic-related gratification. This is not to say narcissistic motivation is the primary cause of Facebook's latent weak tie structure. However, it is a contributor.

5.4 The Depreciated Value of Strong Ties

With Facebook's use of weak ties as on-demand resources, implications are being felt on its strong tie community. Participants reported disregarding strong social ties on Facebook, as they provided limited benefits for narcissistic fulfillment and social mobility. This is not to say strong social ties lack a healthy presence in Facebook. Rather, they failed to be the focal point of most participants. For example, Kate felt unfulfilled by her strong tie contacts. They offered little in the way of facilitating desired gratification. As her motivations were in part driven by needs of superiority and self-sufficiency, she looked to the capabilities of latent weak ties. Strong social ties may hold a greater purpose for an alternative segment of the Facebook population. However, they did not meet the requirements of narcissistically driven participants.

Boase and Wellman (2006) suggest strong social ties are a challenge to maintain online due to the internet's impersonal nature. However, for participants, this was not their reasoning for neglecting strong tie relationships. Rather, strong ties resembled too much the expectations of a reality-based social structure. That is, strong ties carried with them relationship maintenance and a protocol of behaviour. Those pursuing narcissistic gratification do not seek close relationships for risk of exposing weaknesses and insecurities (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008). Alternatively, a narcissist attaches themselves to individuals who can be kept at a distance, and utilized for desired fulfillment (Twenge & Campbell, 2010). Facebook facilitated this with ease through its weak tie structure. The extensive, frequent communication with multiple online contacts made participants feel both self-assured and fulfilled in their image and self-esteem. For participant Desmond, Facebook contained literally hundreds of infrequent connections to be engaged

with at any given time. Essentially, the stipulations placed on engaging strong social ties conflicted with the needs of those seeking narcissistic gratification.

As demonstrated by participants and reviewed in Chapter 2, narcissists prefer a resource to a relationship (Foster, Shira & Campbell, 2006; Miller et al., 2010; Horton et al., 2006). Participants discussing weak social ties made little mention of converting them into meaningful relationships. Rather, for participants such as Libby, James and Desmond, Facebook friends were organized based on need. They were attracted to nothing more than a limited, impersonal resource. As a result, strong ties were essentially placed at a lower priority in participant's social queue. This is an example of digital social network's friend ranking bureaucratization discussed by Rosen (2007). Strong ties were grouped and categorized based on the needs of the user, not solely on the worth of the relationship. If a user's social needs changed from narcissistic to another requirement, a different restructuring of friends may occur.

5.5 Influence of Reality on Narcissistic Behaviour

Facebook's facilitation of narcissistic expression demonstrates a considerable difference in social capital generation between offline and online social platforms. Specifically, participants reported an ease of use in garnering social capital through Facebook compared to reality. The potential of receiving near-instant gratification online was an attractive prospect compared to seeking similar fulfillment in reality, with a risk of no return. Participant James expressed greater motivation to exercise exhibitionist traits in a platform where he knew his efforts would not only be well received, but

efficiently reciprocated. With examples such as James, it begs the question whether Facebook's facilitation of narcissistic traits impacts social capital development in reality.

Participant reports indicated Facebook accommodated, and facilitated reality-based obstacles in garnering narcissistic-related fulfillment. For example, James and Kate expressed extensive use of Facebook for primarily compensatory methods. Such reports suggest Facebook's social community exudes a greater reception for narcissistic needs than reality. This is not to say physical social structures do not accommodate such expression. Reality-based communities simply have greater standards in their structural framework. There is competition in face-to-face communication to present oneself more superior and desirable than others. However, as discussed, social obstacles such as constraints and conformity toward self-presentation do not exist online. Rather, individuals are provided a perception of control, an attractive prospect to those seeking narcissistic-related superiority.

As accepting as Facebook is for narcissistic expression, participants reported preferring face-to-face interaction for received feedback and acknowledgement. James in particular felt a more genuine reception from responses received in reality. However, reports of Facebook activity noted greater accessibility for both expression and fulfillment of narcissistic traits. This is but one reason participants reported limiting narcissistic activity in reality. Such actions also provide a working example as to the digital social shift discussed by Putnam (2000). He notes how physical communities are becoming impersonal and disconnected as they are moving to alternative social structures. Narcissistic-related action is an example of how such a shift is being facilitated.

Facebook's expressively lenient social structure motivated participants to seek narcissistic fulfillment online. However, they at no time stated it caused a greater volume of narcissistic expression. Under this consideration, Facebook's structure may not facilitate an increase of narcissistic communication. Rather, narcissistic expression is simply being transferred to a social platform that facilitates it. Schwartz (2010) suggests those utilizing Facebook through traits consistent with narcissistic expression are found to overuse the social platform. It may not be that individuals are overusing it. Rather, they are shifting narcissistic expression from one social avenue to another, taking advantage of the platform that is most facilitating.

Participants noted they often looked to Facebook for narcissistic-related indulgences unable to be attained in reality. However, Facebook was not found to manifest these traits. Rather, Facebook was an avenue, which effectively facilitated such expression. As Twenge and Campbell (2010) suggest, narcissists attach themselves to those who will provide positive reinforcement. Facebook's social community was found to be an effective source for such needs. For example, James admitted to using Facebook as he felt his efforts were better utilized in a platform delivering near instant gratification. This begs the question whether Facebook is acting as a secondary social platform for what cannot be accomplished in reality. Participants such as James looked to the social networking site for supplementation, not replacement. However, with preference to reality-based gratification, it appears Facebook acts as a supplement for social capital generation, rather than a primary resource.

5.6 Does narcissistic intent matter in the production of social capital?

Over the course of data collection, participants demonstrated a number of narcissistic traits through activity in their Facebook profiles. For example, the perception of control by participants facilitated through Facebook fostered authoritative traits of narcissistic expression. Additionally, the presence of weak ties initiated a number of traits ranging from, exhibitionism to superiority and self-sufficiency. At its core, narcissistic expression seeks various social outcomes. Some may seek approval while others may seek self-esteem. From the evidence it appears that Facebook caters to such needs. However, it remained questionable whether a specific type of narcissistic action generated greater social capital in Facebook compared to other forms.

Narcissistic traits as independent entities uncovered little consistency in social capital generation. Rather, it was the intent of such traits being expressed that found patterns of social mobility. As discussed in Chapter 3, participants fell into two separate categories of expression. Whereas some participants admitted to their actions being narcissistic, others felt their intentions to be an honest, realistic expression of self. Both forms of expression appeared representative of behaviour linked to maladaptive and healthy narcissism discussed in Chapter 2. For example, Libby, Kate and Desmond were forthright about their intentions, which was to garner attention and exposure. Alternatively, Rose, Charlie and Jacob reported a realistic sense of expression, claiming to have no ulterior motive behind their Facebook posts or profile arrangement.

Both parties exercising opposite forms of narcissistic expression generated a level of social capital. However, only participants expressing alleged maladaptive narcissistic traits posted content with the intention of receiving a response. For example, Jacob posted content because he was proud of his achievements, not because he was seeking any sort of fulfillment. Yet, he received a level of social capital comparable to Libby, who admitted to seeking social capital to satisfy her needs for self-sufficiency. It is debatable whether either approach generated a greater amount of social capital. To measure received content volume would require a method of data collection separate to the present research. Rather, what was notable is the fact that both forms of expression produced social capital.

What Facebook fails to communicate is intent, ultimately presenting challenges in measuring the quality of generated social capital. With narcissistic traits, the largest distinguishing feature between healthy and maladaptive types is their intent of expression. While maladaptive types are associated with selfish and negatively driven behaviour, healthy narcissism expresses confident, realistic and practical traits (Kohut, 1971, McNeal, 2010; Tempany, 2010; Cain, Pincus & Ansell, 2007). Unless one is to indicate this in their profile, third party viewers may not understand the intent. For example, Rose had a heavily populated profile in which she posted a large volume of content, but did not seek social capital. Jack on the other hand, had a comparably populated profile, but sought a sense of power and leadership over his Facebook friends. Looking at either profile side-by-side, it would be rather difficult to distinguish the intent of either participant. This poses a challenge in user pursuit of social power.

5.7 The True Worth of Online Social Capital

The erratic generation of social capital online represents a fundamental flaw in Facebook's social structure. The fact that some participants were able to generate unintentional social capital alongside those with intent brings into question the quality of Facebook's social mobility. Specifically, the facilitation of narcissistic traits exposed an apparent ease in accumulating social capital online. Users were able to generate a level of social capital, regardless of their intent. As a result, social worth appears less valuable online as power is distributed so openly. This brings into question Facebook's strength in social mobility.

The facilitation of narcissistic traits was a key component in questioning Facebook's social quality. Specifically, narcissistic-related actions taken by participants in Facebook's structure produced a misleading account of social worth. For example, Facebook's on-demand structure eliminated the need to cultivate genuine, engaging relationships. Yet, no participant in this study had a 'friend' list below 800 contacts. What remained further puzzling were participants admitted to hardly having any substantial relationship with most of these contacts. Rather, relationships were bridged for purposes of power and fulfillment. Cultivating a voluminous friend base provided a participant like Jack a sense of worth. What Jack could actually do with such resources beyond individual gratification remains a mystery.

With impersonal relationships and lack of regard for Facebook contacts, it is questionable whether users could produce social mobility in a digital social network. For some participants, the online display of friends represented a measurable level of self-

worth discussed by Buffardi and Campbell (2008). Those seeking narcissistic-related gratification feel a certain importance in being able to display a volume of social capital. Jack and Desmond took comfort in the fact that they had followers who apparently looked to them as leaders. However, whatever sense of power or fulfillment resonated in participants may be a component of the aforementioned perception of control. Consider if a Facebook user pursued a level of macro-level social mobility online. Could these contacts be relied on to facilitate it? Likely not. As discussed, one's perceived level of social power only serves the needs of an individual's micro-level network. Outside this environment, social power of one user holds no greater worth than another. As a result, Facebook's social power becomes a perception, rather than a tool.

CHAPTER 6 - CONCLUSION

The primary research question this thesis sought to answer is: *What role do narcissistic personality traits play in the development of social capital through Facebook?* In order to accomplish this task, the primary research question was broken down into two specific research questions:

1. *What are the motives for users to express narcissistic traits through Facebook?*
2. *How is narcissistic-motivated activity influencing social capital development through Facebook?*

The discussion in this chapter seeks to directly answer these questions based on the data collected and analyzed from the research for this thesis. From this discussion, conclusions are also presented along with a consideration of the limitations in the research design employed for this thesis. Finally, suggestions for future research are made.

6.1 Central Research Question - What role do narcissistic personality traits play in the development of social capital through Facebook?

The online relationship between narcissistic traits and social capital is largely contingent on the social structure they are housed under. Therefore, understanding the organization of Facebook's social community is a vital element in addressing the central research question. As discussed in Chapter 2, Ellison et al. (2007) classify Facebook as a social networking site which, "enables individuals to present themselves, articulate their social networks, and establish or maintain connections with others" (p. 1143). In other words, the purpose of a digital social networking site is for the production of social

capital. As a result, Facebook facilitates a diverse range of social development. This was demonstrated through the expressive freedom participants had in exercising narcissistic traits online. In reality-based communities, narcissistic expression would not find equal acceptance where standards of behaviour influenced social norms. For example, economics and industry are structural factors affecting the development of social capital in reality (Portes, 1998; Putnam, 2000, Coleman, 1988; Grootaert & Van Bastelaer, 2002). In Facebook, the factor influencing social capital development appears to be the type of content posted by its users. As the purpose of Facebook is for the production of social capital, posted content increases social volume and mobility. Thus, actions which generate social content in Facebook could be viewed as viable social contributors; holding a certain level of influence and worth.

The results of this study show that Facebook's social structure facilitates a high level of expressive freedom for its users. That is to say, the site offers users an interactive visual interface, overwhelming sense of control, and a predominant weak tie community. Such freedom enables questionable influences, such as narcissistic motivated actions, to integrate into Facebook's relationship building process. For example, participant Jack's status updates and participant Desmond's attention-seeking photos were posted based on narcissistic-motivated needs of control, superiority and self-sufficiency. Such posts ultimately contributed content to Facebook's community, increasing its volume of social capital. Therefore, it can be concluded that the role of narcissistic traits in Facebook's development of social capital is that of a contributor.

Although narcissistic-motivated action is classified as a social contributor to Facebook, it should not be deemed a primary catalyst of community development. Consider the position of narcissistic-motivated action in comparison to other forms of social mobility. Users of Facebook may be motivated to post content related to sports, hobbies or relationships with friends. Facilitated by their motivations, users are contributing social content to the site for purposes beyond narcissistic needs. For example, Granovetter (1973) notes that weak social ties are useful in generating information for job prospects. As a result, a Facebook user seeking employment may engage his or her weak tie contacts to identify job leads. In posting content such as messages, comments or new friend requests, this individual may contribute to Facebook's weak tie structure, comparable to those pursuing narcissistic fulfillment. Therefore, narcissistic-motivated activity is only a component to Facebook's growth. This is why it is concluded to be a contributor, rather than a principal facilitator of change.

6.2 Sub-Question 1 - What are user motives for exercising narcissistic traits through Facebook?

In identifying narcissistic-motivated activity as a social contributor to Facebook, it is instructive to turn to a consideration as to what motivates users to exercise such traits online. It would be logical to conclude Facebook's open social structure as the primary motivator of narcissistic expression. However, participant responses and data analyzed in Chapter 5 suggest this is not the cause. To an extent, Facebook's lenient social community encouraged and facilitated the expression of narcissistic traits. However, such expression on Facebook was primarily motivated by the depriving social expectations of reality-based communities.

Participants sought various forms of narcissistic gratification online. However, they all stated such activity was motivated by their inability to express themselves in reality's structured social environment. For example, participants Libby and Kate were motivated to use Facebook weak ties when they could not find similar fulfillment in reality. Claire sought control in Facebook, as real-world interactions made her feel insecure and exposed. Furthermore, Desmond sought gratification on Facebook as he found reality too inconsistent for gaining attention. Essentially, narcissistic expression online was not instigated by Facebook's open social facilitation. Rather, it was motivated by the expressive confines of reality-based communities.

In expressing narcissistic traits, what participants sought were real-world, 'human-like' sources of fulfillment. Such traits as image control, self-sufficiency and physical attention were social gratifications sought online. However, Facebook could only provide such fulfillment in a limited scope. That is, Facebook's sense of social gratification was not applicable beyond its own community. Outside Facebook, participants remained insecure, unfulfilled and hesitant to express themselves and exercise personality traits. Participants in this study were unable to carry a sense of narcissistic fulfillment to their real world lives. This may explain why there was ambition to seek social fulfillment from Facebook. Participants were dependent on the social structure to which they generated a satisfying level of social capital.

Facebook's function as a social facilitator offered greater freedom of narcissistic expression compared to reality-based social structures. However, the social capital generated from such communication was not applicable in reality. This was demonstrated by analyzed data in Chapter 4. Specifically, generated social worth and feelings of

control were found to be a perception in Facebook. As a result, participants still sought genuine, real-world interaction, but looked to Facebook as a supplementary source of gratification. It was noted in Chapter 2 that a narcissist is attracted to resources that provide the greatest level of fulfillment (Twenge & Campbell, 2010). Therefore it should not be assumed narcissistic expression is motivated exclusively by participant's need for social gratification. Rather, both individual needs and the social environment that can best facilitate such expression may motivate the use of narcissistic traits.

6.3 Sub-Question 2 – How is narcissistic-motivated activity influencing social capital development through Facebook?

This thesis was able to identify viable user-motive for expressing narcissistic traits in Facebook. To expand on this subject further, the second sub-question asks how such expression is influencing the development of Facebook's social structure. Based on patterns derived from primary data analysis, it could be suggested narcissistic-motivated activity is influencing the disconnected, impersonal and on-demand nature of Facebook's social community. Specifically, Facebook's social capital is being transformed into a tangible item rather than a figurative form of social worth. It is narcissistic-motivated influence that is assisting in this transformation. This was demonstrated in Chapter 4, through participant's commoditized use of Facebook contacts.

Participants discussed social contacts in Facebook as items for strategic use rather than relationships for engagement. That is, online relationships were utilized to fulfill only the required needs of participants. This was easily facilitated through the customizable functions of Facebook's social structure. However, through this process

participants manipulated Facebook's dynamic of social capital development. Specifically, narcissistic influence contributed to a disconnected, commoditized form of relationships online. As a result, such action altered what a segment of Facebook define as a relationship. Due to narcissistic influence, relationships were structured based on need, rather than a common interest or bond.

Likely the most tangible example of narcissistic influence in Facebook was its assistance in transforming weak social ties to fit that of a latent tie format. Such an alteration demonstrated not only the influence of narcissistic-motivated activity, but also how Facebook facilitates the expression of narcissistic traits within its own social structure. Essentially, participants manipulated Facebook's weak tie structure, with no governing body to question such actions. As a result, narcissistic influence assisted in creating a method of social capital development to meet specific needs, regardless of social acceptability.

Narcissistic influence on Facebook's relationship development saw additional impact on the site's overall worth and mobility of social capital. Specifically, the commoditized relationship structure indirectly contributed to Facebook's structurally flawed social community discussed in Chapter 4. For example, social capital development occurred on Facebook, regardless of intent. Furthermore, perceptions of control caused relationships to be taken advantage of or outright ignored. Essentially, Facebook offered a near infinite number of social possibilities. However, as discussed, the social worth gained from such actions is potentially a perception, rather than a tangible tool. Facebook's social capital was found to hold no worth, power or mobility beyond the confines of its social structure. Elements such as narcissistic-motivated

actions are influencing this affliction. Overwhelming feelings of control and an extreme ease in developing social capital resulted in the careless and selfish treatment of relationships. For example, social elements such as strong and weak social ties were ranked and categorized as priorities and liabilities. Narcissistic-motivated activity could likely be charged as a contributor to this organization.

6.4 Limitations of this Research

This thesis held certain limitations. One being that narcissistic-related influence could not be measured on a trait-by-trait basis. As an exploratory study, this research sought to establish a foundation for understanding the relationship between narcissistic traits and social capital through Facebook. It proved a challenge to gather rich and nuanced data for each individual narcissistic trait. A significantly larger sample would have been required, as would a different approach to the research method. Had the research focused on quantitative measurement, it would likely be more effective to compare generated social capital on Facebook with specific narcissistic traits. As a result, research may have been able to better identify specific points of influence.

Second, the sample of this thesis focused on a limited sector of the Facebook population. As discussed, narcissistic-motivated activity is but one component of Facebook's social contributions. It remains questionable how much social capital narcissistic-motivated activity generated in comparison to other contributors. It would be of value to understand factors that cause a greater development of social mobility in Facebook. Having this data would allow for comparison to social capital generated specifically through narcissistic actions and no other possible variables.

Another limitation was the measurement of narcissistic traits among participants. The NPI-40, although a proven form of measure, was not overly in-depth in exploring general narcissistic motive. Due to certain qualification²s by the primary researcher, this thesis was limited to a narcissistic-related measurement for the general population. Such a tool, although effective in identifying narcissistic traits, presented challenges in understanding in-depth motive beyond its question structure. That is to say, the primary researcher in this thesis was bound to discuss narcissistic traits within the confines of NPI-40. Moving beyond this would pose a risk of discussing narcissism in a clinical sense. This would pose a risk to the scholarly integrity of the thesis.

Despite the limitations discovered in this thesis, the information presented contributes in advancing the current knowledge of relationship development in Facebook. Specifically, this thesis assists in providing an in-depth perspective as to Facebook's social structure. Furthermore, this work demonstrates how narcissistic-related influence challenges the dynamic of social capital development among its users.

6.5 Future Research

Due to the relatively new landscape of research on relationship development through Facebook, this thesis was exploratory in nature. However, results of this study demonstrate the vast amount of information available for examination through the Facebook platform. This thesis has the advantage of providing a foundation to researchers to explore branching subjects in both the development of online social capital and online narcissistic influence. Additionally, in utilizing a dual-method approach to

² Defining clinical levels of narcissism requires experimentation and diagnosis from qualified professionals in psychology and related fields.

data collection, there are certain advantages presented to both qualitative and quantitative methods of research in this topic.

One topic in particular is further investigation of Facebook's weak tie structure. Several unanswered questions remained in this field. Specifically, with the discovery of weak ties' latent nature, how important is relationship sustainability in Facebook's social structure? A factor such as narcissistic expression altered the weak tie dynamic in a rather significant way by transforming it into a latent, on-demand resource. It would be intriguing to further explore whether specific treatment of online weak ties could strengthen the mobility of digital social capital. More specifically, could modeling weak tie development after a reality-based model generate social resources for individuals, applicable beyond their online social network? Theoretically, adopting a reality-based model for weak social ties in Facebook could develop greater cohesiveness in relationship structures. However, provisions would need to be set, forcing users to consistently engage with weak ties in order to sustain social mobility.

In regards to narcissistic expression, it would of particular importance to measure specific trait influence in Facebook's platform. Specifically, which traits are found to influence which sections of Facebook. In this thesis, participants were found to utilize sections of Facebook for narcissistic expression. However, given the exploratory nature of this research, a focused study matching specific narcissistic traits with Facebook's communication options did not occur. Understanding this relationship can better pinpoint the structural flaws of Facebook as a social community.

6.6 Closing Remarks

The analysis of the data from this thesis suggests narcissistic action acts as a social contributor to Facebook's social environment. As a result, it is influencing users to manipulate the site's social community, creating devalued social capital. However, the motivation to take such action is a consequence of structured and less facilitating reality-based communities. This ultimately begs the question of how wealthy we really are in both expression and reception of social dynamics online. Aristotle likely put it best in stating: "A friend to all is a friend to none." Unfortunately, Aristotle never had Facebook.

6.7 Epilogue

Since completing this research, Facebook, Inc. became a publicly traded company on May 17, 2012 (Financial Post, 2012). Its initial share price was negotiated at \$38 per share (ibid). This valued the company at more than \$100 billion (ibid). Within days, the stock dropped significantly, closing at \$31 per share (Nasdaq, 2012). The public perception has since casted doubt on the power and ability of Facebook as a company (Damodaran, 2; Hof, 8; Rasmussen Reports, 2012). Whereas the users were once thought to be the controlling party of Facebook's structure, public perception is placing the spotlight on shareholders. Such an occurrence further fuels the debate of who truly monitors and controls the social interest of Facebook? This was a reoccurring question throughout this thesis, and one, which is evidently still being debated.

APPENDX I

University of Ottawa Ethics Approval

File Number: 09-11-16

Date (mm/dd/yyyy): 11/10/2011



Université d'Ottawa
Bureau d'éthique et d'intégrité de la recherche

University of Ottawa
Office of Research Ethics and Integrity

Ethics Approval Notice

Social Science and Humanities REB

Principal Investigator / Supervisor / Co-investigator(s) / Student(s)

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Affiliation</u>	<u>Role</u>
Mark	Lowes	Arts / Communication	Supervisor
Michael	Saad	Arts / Communication	Student Researcher

File Number: 09-11-16

Type of Project: Master's Thesis

Title: The Role of Narcissism in the Production of Social Capital through Facebook

Approval Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Expiry Date (mm/dd/yyyy)	Approval Type
10/19/2011	10/18/2012	1 a

(1a: Approval, 1b: Approval for initial stage only, 1c: Conditional)

Special Conditions / Comments:

Ethics approval from Nipissing University submitted (Nov 10th, 2011)

APPENDIX II

Nipissing University Ethics Approval



November 10, 2011

Dear Michael:

Re: Protocol Number: **#11-10-091A** (Please quote on all correspondence)
Project Entitled: The Role of Narcissism in the Development of Social Capital through Facebook

It is our pleasure to advise you that the Research Ethics Board at Nipissing University has granted *institutional approval* for your research project entitled The Role of Narcissism in the Development of Social Capital through Facebook, which expires on 10/18/2012.

If there are any changes to the project you are required to advise the Research Ethics Board

At any time during your research should any participant(s) suffer adversely you are required to advise the Research Ethics Board at Nipissing University within 24 hours of the event.

We wish you all the success in the completion of your project.

Sincerely yours,

Dr. John Long, Chair
Research Ethics Board

cc: Research Services

APPENDIX III

The Image A and B taken from participant profiles show how users within one's social network can make comments on photo's posted. The comments from image A are based on a photo post where the user sought feedback and positive reinforcement from others. Image B is a photo where the participant expressed no intentions in their photo post. Regardless of intent, one can see both posts generated a similar amount of comments and feedback.

IMAGE A

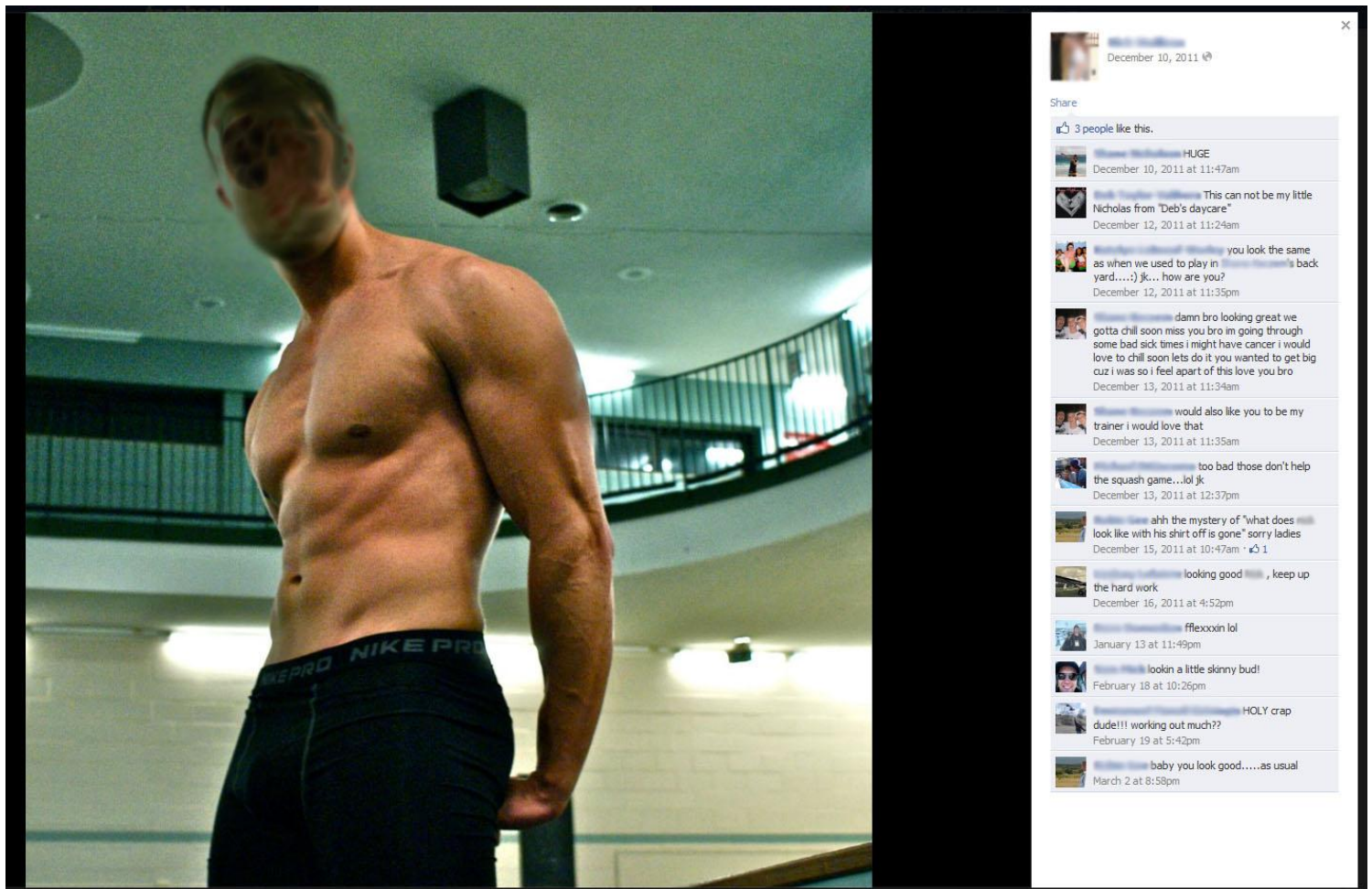
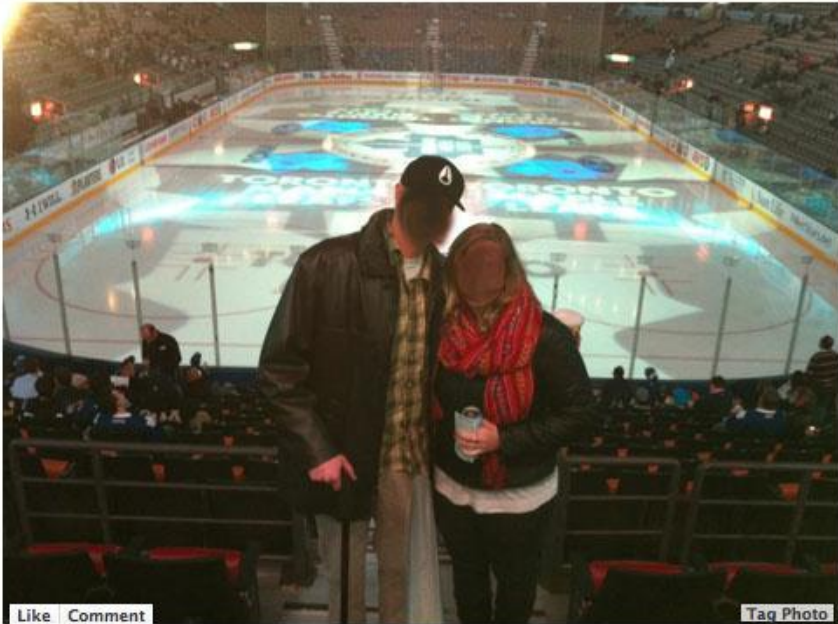


IMAGE B



Like Comment Tag Photo

Leafs jets game!
Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · Share · Edit · January 5 near Toronto, Ontario

Trinity College School

Album: Mobile Uploads · 8 of 55
Share with: Friends

Tag This Photo
Add Location
Change Date

Download
Make Profile Picture
Delete This Photo

Admissions Reception in North Bay, Wednesday, February 1, 2012. Explore what life at boarding school could mean to your child. Sponsored

like this.

is that your boyyyyyfriend?
January 5 at 7:13pm · Like

Yes! Lol
January 5 at 7:14pm · Like

hey wheres yo boyfran at?
January 5 at 7:24pm · Like

Is he tall? Is he hefty? Is he getting you mike and lke's?
January 5 at 7:25pm · Like

can i have it, can i? hahaha enjoy the game guys!
January 5 at 7:26pm · Like

Oh thanks!
January 5 at 7:27pm · Like

GO JETS GO :)
January 5 at 7:51pm · Like

im with Garrett
January 5 at 8:01pm · Like · 1

Boo to the both of you.
January 5 at 8:05pm · Like · 1

4-0 win... wool! Still in the playoff hunt.
January 5 at 10:06pm · Like

suuuuuch a cute picture... what a funny guy um but i gotta ask... why yo boy gotta pimp cane?
January 7 at 5:46pm · Like

Write a comment...

Image C shows the visual, archival structure of Facebook's friend list. The red squared area is a user's friend list. This is a permanent fixture to any user's Facebook profile. The friend list indicates a total number of friends at the top of the list and exhibits names and profile pictures of each individual 'friend'. These users will remain in one's friend list until removed by the primary user of this account.

IMAGE C

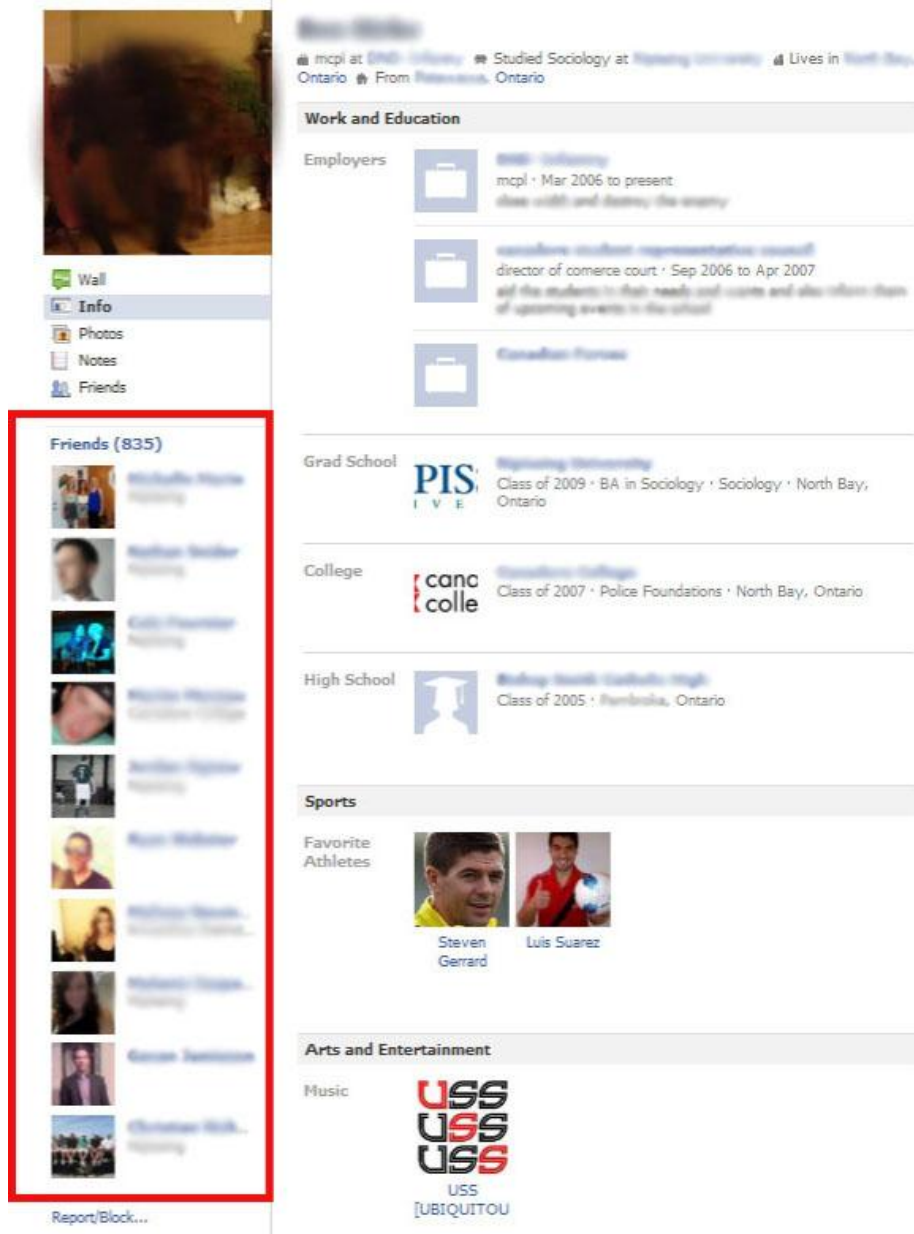
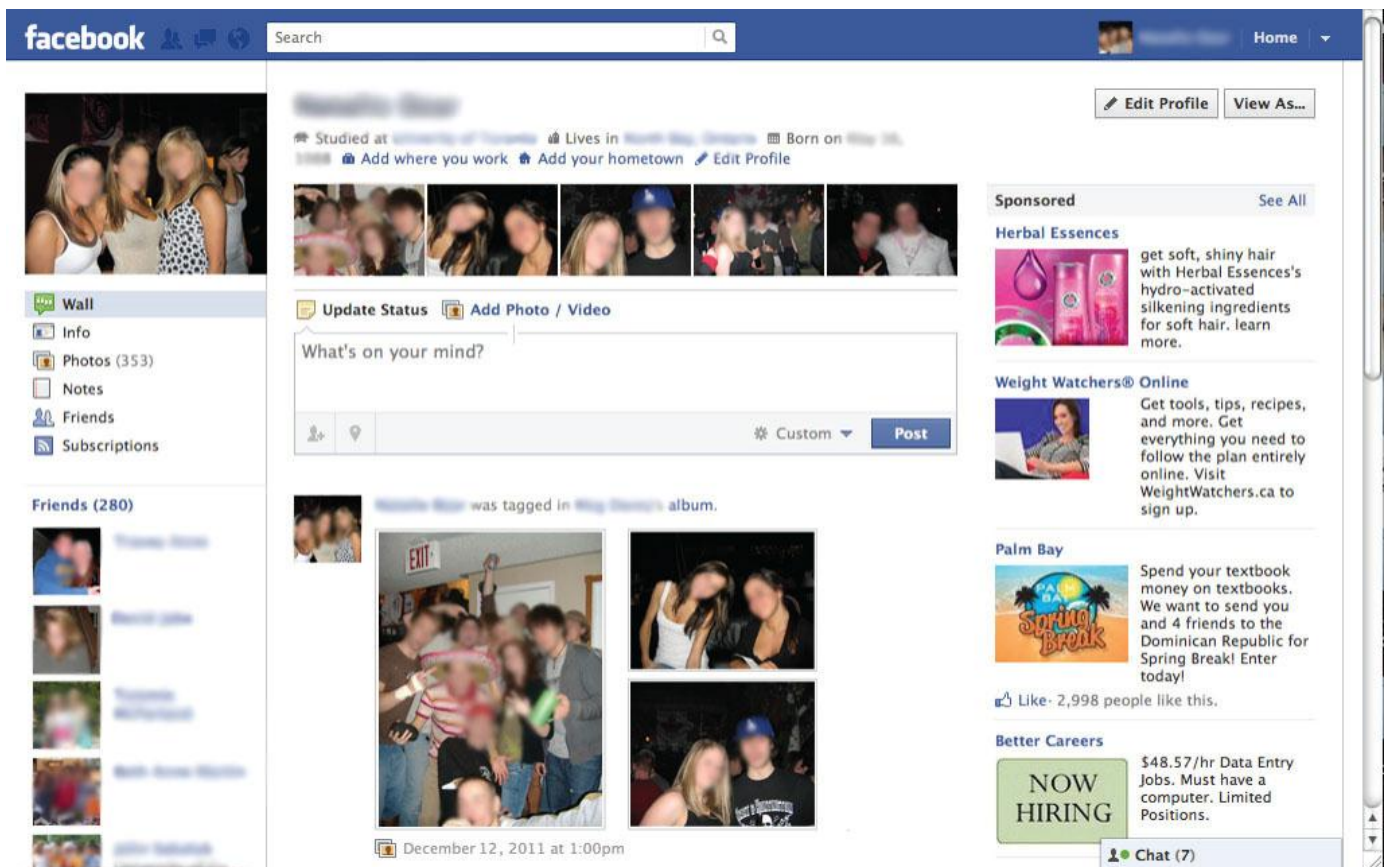


Image D showcases a user's Facebook 'wall'. The owner of this profile will be referred to as Shannon. In this section, any activity that occurs by Shannon or other users in which Shannon is involved (i.e. having a public message sent to her) shows up on this wall. However, only activity that involves Shannon in some form will show up on the wall. For example, another user posted the photos appearing on Shannon's wall. However, this user 'tagged'* Shannon in the photos she appeared in, causing them to automatically show up on her profile. The user's entire photo album was not automatically posted. Rather, only the photos Shannon was referenced in.

IMAGE D



*Tagging refers to linking a user to a post made by another user in Facebook. For example, a user can tag another user in a photo they post or a status update they're included in. When this occurs, the tagged user is notified and that content shows up on their profile 'wall'

Image E is an outline of a typical Facebook profile. Note how all content in a user's profile is organized to centre directly on them. For example, Image E shows the standard format of a Facebook profile. It is designed to display all information a user chooses to share. In the profile shown through Image E, the user chooses to show their favourite sports teams, music, activities and interests, a small blurb about themselves and the social network they belong to.

IMAGE E

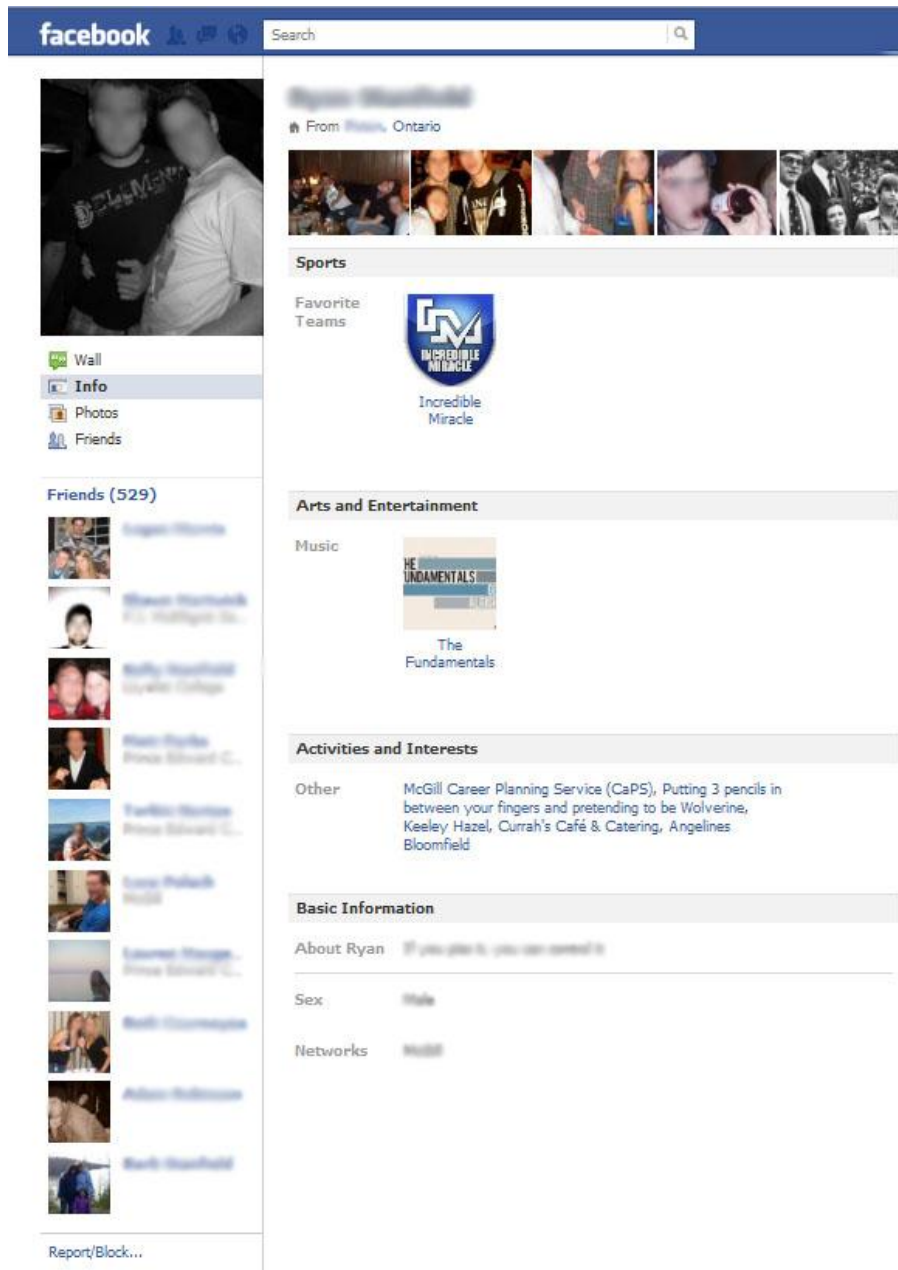
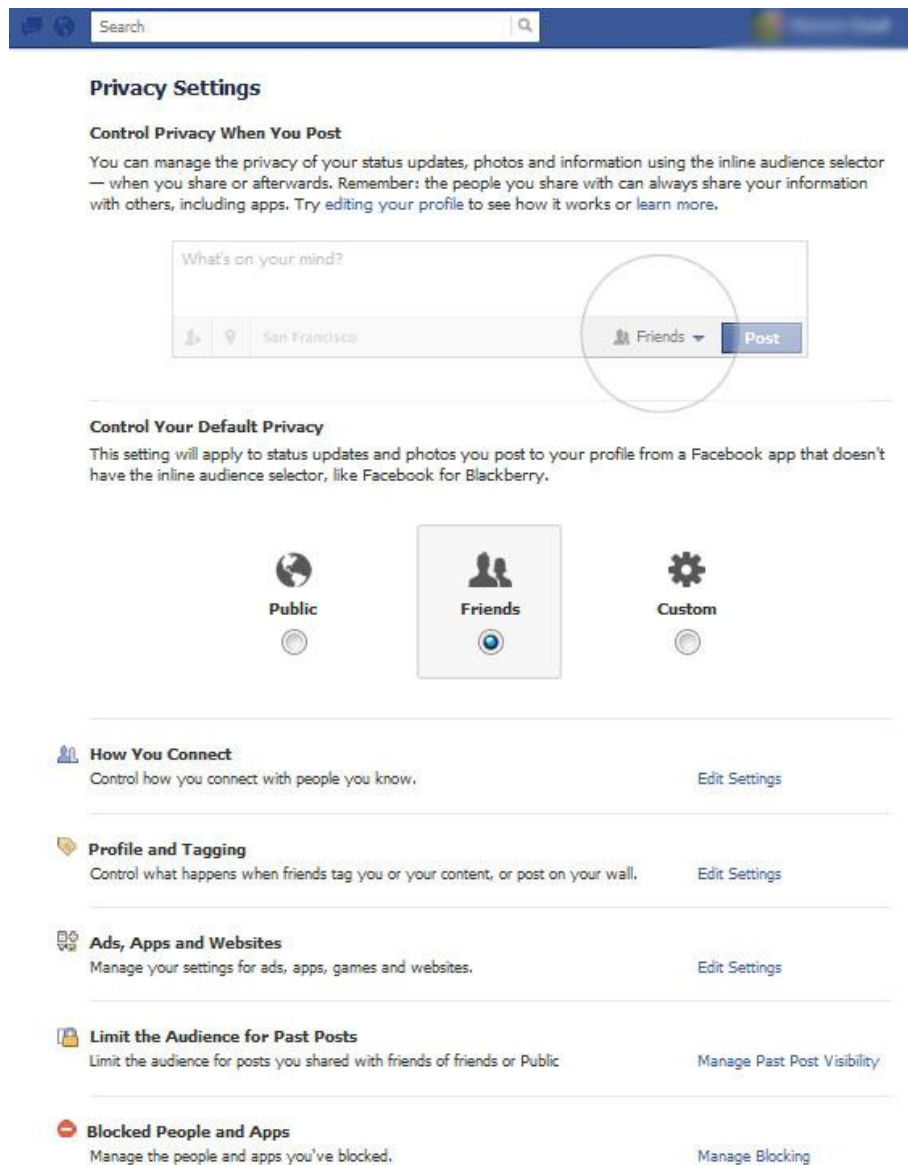


IMAGE F



Image G shows Facebook's privacy settings available to each user. A user can regulate these settings to show as much or as little content to all or specific users within their social network. One can essentially regulate who see what in their profile. Facebook offers structured privacy settings, or custom settings tailored specifically to a user's desired level of exposure.

IMAGE G



APPENDIX IV

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

PART 1 INTERVIEW

Section 1: Narcissism/Personality Traits - Adapted from the NPI (Narcissism Personality Index) and NHS (Narcissistic Hypersensitivity Scale)

NOTE: These are sample questions. Questions may be altered or added based on participant scores of the Narcissism Personality Index

Q. When you talk to others, Do you regularly fish for compliments?

Q. How would you describe being centre of attention?

Q. Can you describe how you feel about your physical appearance?

Q. How would you describe your level of confidence?

Q. When you are alone, how do you feel when looking at yourself in the mirror?

Q. Would you describe yourself as a self-sufficient person, or are you dependent on others?

Q. Describe how you compare yourself to others?

Q. If you were given the opportunity to exploit others, how would you approach the situation?

Q. Do you consider yourself to be a depressed person?

Q. Describe how you feel about your level of self-esteem

Q. If I were to ask how others view the following personality traits about you, what do you think they would say?

- | | |
|---------------------|---------------|
| - Sociability | - Extroverted |
| - Irresponsibleness | - Conceited |
| - Egocentric | - Sympathetic |

Q. Do you ever become absorbed in thinking about yourself?

Q. My feelings are easily hurt by ridicule or the slighting remarks of others.

3. When I enter a room I often become self-conscious and feel that the eyes of others are upon me.

4. I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others.

5. I feel that I have enough on my hands without worrying about other people's troubles.

6. I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people.

7. I often interpret the remarks of others in a personal way.
8. I easily become wrapped up in my own interests and forget the existence of others.
9. I dislike being with a group unless I know that I am appreciated by at least one of those present.
10. I am secretly "put out" or annoyed when other people come to me with their troubles, asking me for my time and sympathy.

Section 2: Relationship Building Offline

- Q. Do you establish relationships in a vain way?
- Q. How reliable to do you consider your close friends?
- Q. Would you describe the majority of relationships you establish to be strong or weak?
- Q. Do you maintain the majority new relationships you establish?
- Q. Do you feel more comfortable in relationships that have emotional bond, or are looser and "friendlier"?
- Q. Do you see relationships in terms of what can be gained by having certain people as friends?

Section 3: Online Relationship Building and Facebook Trends - Adapted from Ellison, Heino & Gibbs (2006) - Managing impressions online: self-presentation processes in the online dating environment

- Q. How do you think your online relationships compare to your offline relationships?
- Q. How effective do you feel Facebook is for connecting with other people?
- Q. Describe a successful experience establishing a relationship through Facebook
- Q. Describe a disappointing experience through Facebook
- Q. Since you have been on Facebook, how many new relationships established there have you met face-to-face?
- Q. Do you log onto Facebook with the intention of meeting new people?
- Q. Do you find that the internet emphasizes certain personal characteristics compared to face-to-face communication?
- Q. Think back to the last relationship you developed online. What specific stages did you go through in getting to know the person?

PART 2 INTERVIEW

Section 4: Facebook Use - Partially adapted from Ellison, Heino & Gibbs (2006) - Managing impressions online: self-presentation processes in the online dating environment

Q. What prompted you to start using Facebook?

Q. If you showed your profile to one of your close friends, what do you think their response would be?

Q. Do you build your profile with the viewer in mind?

Q. How does your personality translate into the actions you take on Facebook?

Looking at the main profile page (adapted from Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, Managing Impressions Online)

Q1. How did you decide what to say about yourself in your profile?

Q2. What kind of impression are you trying to convey of yourself with your profile?

Q3. What personal characteristics do you avoid mentioning or try to deemphasize?

Looking at the picture section

Q. How did you decide which pictures to post?

Q. What are your intentions when posting pictures?

- Is there an intent to have others see and comment on pictures posted?
- What kind of people do you want to see the pictures?
- Are there specific people?

Q. Do you tag yourself in your own photos. If so, why?

Q. How did you decide the amount of photos to post?

Looking at "the wall"

Q. How do you organize public messages sent and received?

Q. Do you try and emphasize a particular aspect of your wall?

- Interests
- Personal information
- Pictures
- Messages sent and received

Q. How do you filter public messages?

- Are you concerned about public messages that portray you in a negative light?
- Does it matter to you what is posted on your wall?

Looking at the friends list

Q. Does your facebook activity cater more to your strong or weak tie relationships?

Q. Out of your entire list of friends, what percentage do you think you would have a strong relationship with?

Q. Out of the friends you keep in weak contact with or do not ever communicate with, why do you keep them on your friends list?

Q. If you were to provide a reason(s) for establishing weak relationships with people on Facebook, what would it be?

Q. How do you view your strong relationships on facebook?

- Do you take them for granted?
- Do you feel you have to have them notice you?

Q. Why do you keep people on your friend list that you never talk to?

- Do you enjoy the audience?
- Do you hope they may view your profile and see a particular part of it?
- Does this motivate you to post certain things?

Comment/Notification Sections

Q. Why do you post comments?

Q. Do you post comments for exposure?

- To be heard?
- To have people reply
- What is it that makes you need to comment?

Q. Do you post pictures, info, messages in the hopes of others responding?

- Is there an attention seeking element to it?

Q. Why do you comment on other's wall posts and photos? Is it for acknowledgement you are reading their profile? Or is it for extended exposure of yourself?

Q. Do you feel that you need to post comments to remain relevant?

Do you post notifications with intentions of having people comment or simply to inform people of what you are thinking?

APPENDIX V

TRAIT DESCRIPTIONS FROM THE NARCISSISTIC PERSONALITY INVENTORY

Authority

The authoritative trait describes the possession of leadership and power-related characteristics. These individuals generally enjoy being in charge and having a command over others. Possessing such a trait holds little purpose beyond self-gratification. That is, people desire authority simply for the sake of having a sense of authority. Applying such feelings, however, is limited.

Self-Sufficiency

The self-sufficiency trait is a two-fold concept when examining narcissistic related personality traits. Firstly, this trait examines one's abilities to satisfy their own needs. Additionally, the self-sufficiency trait describes one's reliance on others to satisfy the same or other needs.

Superiority

Superiority refers to a person's perception as to how grandiose or exceptional they feel compared to those around them. This can take many forms such as intellectual, social, physical or any conditions an individual feels make them superior in comparison to others.

Exhibitionism

Exhibitionism describes an individual's need to place themselves on display to ideally be viewed and admired by others. It also refers to one's need to be centre of attention, generally at the expense of others.

Exploitativeness

In the realm of narcissistic personality traits, the NPI-40 measures two areas of exploitativeness. It measures an individual's general tendency to take advantage of others for personal gain. The NPI-40 additionally measures how willing one is to exploit others in order to achieve one's own needs and/or goals.

Vanity

Vanity refers to an individual's egotism or conceitedness. Essentially, this trait describes one's confidence in their abilities over others. This includes general life skills, attractiveness and social affiliations.

Entitlement

The entitlement trait refers to one's expectations (both reasonable and unreasonable) held in their lives. A predominant component to the entitlement trait is the treatment to and from others. That is to say, how much a person expects from others and how they perceive what their treatment of people in return should be.

APPENDIX VI

DATA ANALYSIS CODING CHARTS

Part 1 Interview Codes

Category 1

Control

- Leadership
- Sense of Control
 - o Fields of control
 - o Reach of control
- Authoritative Traits
- Facebook posts vs. feelings of control
 - o Self-esteem
 - o Awareness of external influence

Category 2

Facebook Posts

- Indirect motive
- Non-communicative
- Lack of self-awareness
 - o Varied profile control
- Intense self-awareness
 - o Heavy profile control
- Add/delete posts by others
 - o Wall posts, pictures, messages etc...

Category 3

Security

- Add/delete posts by others
 - o Wall posts, pictures, messages etc...
- Control
 - o Perception
 - o Reality

Category 4

Confidence

- Boost in confidence
- Self-esteem
- Acceptance
 - o Self-esteem
 - Supplementing
 - o Controlled exposure

Category 5

Online vs. Offline

- Offline influence
 - o Recreating offline scenarios online
- Offline lifestyle
 - o Academic success
 - o Professional success
 - o General social interactions
- Online confidence
 - o Manipulated identity
 - o Anonymity
- Non-transferrable
 - o Facebook self-contained
 - Transfer of information
 - Transfer of relationships
 - o Reliance to online

Category 6

Motive

- Blatant manipulation
- Non-narcissistic motive
 - o Healthy narcissism
 - o Neglecting Facebook as genuine
 - o Unclear intent
 - Intentional feedback vs. non intentional
 - o Realistic intent
 - Lack of posts
 - Influx of posts

Category 7

Weak Ties

- Manipulation
 - o Exploitation
- Resource
- Taking for granted
 - o Genuine relationship
 - o Indirect communication
- On-Demand
 - o Reliance on Facebook
 - o Guaranteed gratification
 - Guaranteed "friend" base
 - Positive reinforcement
 - o Convenience factor

Part 2 Interview Codes

Category 1

Healthy Narcissism

- Confidence
 - o Leadership
- Realistic Views
- Reliance
 - o Self-Esteem
- Sympathetic

Category 2

Motivations for Success

- Personal vs. Professional
 - o Confidence
 - Success
 - o Insecurities
 - Success
 - o Self-Esteem
- Physical Appearance

Category 3

Narcissistic-related Motive

- Attention
 - o Vanity Trait
- Compensation
- Control
 - o Authoritative trait
 - o Manipulation
- Exploitation
- Exposure
 - o Defense Mechanism
 - o Self-Esteem
 - o Exhibitionism trait
- Feeding into other's narcissistic tendencies
- Image
- Influence
 - o Manipulation
 - o Superiority Trait
- Reliance
 - o Self-sufficiency trait
- Self-Esteem
- Success
- Validation
 - o Dependency

Category 4

Online Relationship Building

- Facebook
 - o Authentic
 - o Unreliable
 - o Comfortableness
 - o Effective for Relationship Development
 - o Scapegoat
- Use of Weak Ties
 - o Valuable
 - o Easy to communicate with
- Strong Ties
 - o Always around

Category 5

General Relationship Building

- Depends on environment
 - o Work
 - o School (college)
- Weak Ties
 - o Difficult to maintain
 - Unsure how to communicate
 - Shy/Intimidated
 - Requires direct communication
- Strong Ties
 - o Ease of use
 - o Familiar
 - o Comfortable

Category 6

Common Personality Traits

- Conceited
- Egocentric
- Extroverted
- Irresponsible
- Sociable
- Sympathetic

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