

Lori E. Harris. When and Where They Enter: African American Women and Their Use of Social Network Sites. A Master's Paper for the M.S. in L.S degree. November, 2013. 58 pages. Advisor: Claudia J. Gollop

This study investigated African American women's use of social network sites (SNS) with a primary focus on Facebook. Eight African American women from the University of Chapel Hill campus were interviewed to determine how African American women use SNS, what their information seeking needs were when using SNS and what facilitators or barriers they encounter.

Based on the results of the study, the data revealed that African American women are prolific users of SNS. There are a variety of reasons that African American women use SNS which include fulfilling both personal and professional needs. Furthermore, participants expressed an overwhelming concern about privacy issues inherent in Facebook as well as advertisements that have no relational or added value to their lives as African American women. These findings demonstrate the importance of expanding the range of study as it relates to the everyday use by African American women of social network sites.

Headings:

African American Women

Information Technology -- Management

Marketing -- Social media marketing

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WHEN AND WHERE THEY ENTER: AFRICAN AMERICAN WOMEN
AND THEIR USE OF SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

by
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Introduction

Social network sites (SNS) gained recognition in 1997 with the creation of the social network site -- SixDegrees.com. (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) Although Six Degrees.com closed in 2000 there were a number of SNS that began to attract users. Many of the sites contained the same basic components which would allow users to create profiles for dating and also personal and professional use. Three of the most popular SNS included Facebook, Friendster and MySpace. All three companies had a large impact on the growth of social networking sites as it relates to research, business and personal networking; and were instrumental in changing the ways in which we communicate with one another via the Internet. (Boyd & Ellison, 2008) For my research purposes I used Facebook as my primary SNS research tool. In researching SNS statistics, Facebook has a more diverse user group that includes women and African Americans than other SNS such as MySpace or Friendster. Created in 2004 for use at Harvard, Facebook's popularity skyrocketed and within a matter of two years they quickly broadened their reach to include high school and corporate networks, finally opening their markets in 2006 to include everyone else. (Boyd and Ellison, 2008). The number of individuals who use Facebook has increased in the past few years and continues to grow.

According to the Pew Internet & American Life Project, as of 2011, 65%¹ of adults who used the Internet also used some form of a social networking such as Facebook, LinkedIn or MySpace. These numbers indicate that there has been a surge in social network usage from only three years ago until current day, and this trend is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. One of the key areas of growth among users of social networking sites is that of women. Although there does not appear to be any significant differences among users who come from other ethnicities or have diverse household incomes; education levels or geographic locations; it is important to note that this report supports the premise that social networking sites not only have an impact on users but specifically enhances the way women live their daily lives. (Madden & Zickuhr, 2011).

¹ The Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, April 26 – May 22, 2011 Spring Tracking Survey. n=2,277 adult internet users ages 18 and older, including 755 cell phone interviews. Interviews were conducted in English and Spanish.

Purpose

The goal of my research was to gain a better understanding of the ways in which African American women utilize SNS and to determine if there are any common experiences of use among this group. My research will also address the dearth of scholarly research regarding this phenomenon. Practitioners who work in the field of Information and Library Science and serve a diverse demographic could use this information to determine whether there are unique information seeking behaviors within this group that could be used to better enhance their needs as it relates to other library services. Also, information systems professionals who create user design studies could use this information to determine the marketing trends of African American women in an effort to enhance their overall information seeking behavior as it relates to the use of SNS.

Research Questions

Following are my research questions:

1. How frequently do African American Women use SNS?
2. What are their information seeking needs when using SNS?
 - a. Searching for Health Information
 - b. Communicating with family and friends
 - c. Interacting with professional organizations
 - d. Interacting with social organizations
 - e. Personal shopping and other commercial activities
 - f. Other
3. What are the facilitators and barriers to SNS use?
 - a. History of use with SNS
 - b. Motivations for using SNS
 - c. Facilitators for using SNS
 - d. Barriers to using SNS
 - e. Most popular and least popular SNS
 - f. Things they would like to see more of when using SNS
 - g. Things they would like to see changed on SNS

Literature Review

My primary research questions center on the use of SNS by African American women. This section provides a critical analysis of the literature regarding the study of African American women within the field of Information and Library Science from the mid-1990s to present day. The literature review highlights some of the challenges researchers face when attempting to locate research material on under-studied populations and sets forth one of the first studies conducted on African American women and their information seeking behavior.

Conducting several search strategies and using a variety of databases within multiple disciplines, the author located several studies conducted on the information seeking behavior of African American women as it relates to health. Included in my literature review is one particular study that is similar to one of my sub-questions that investigates whether libraries are helpful with the information seeking needs of African American women. To assist in determining the information seeking needs of African American women when using SNS, my research questions seek to determine if there are facilitators and barriers to SNS among African American women. To fully understand and analyze what those facilitators and barriers of use could be, the author examined the history of SNS and current trends and changes. In reviewing the trends and changes of SNS use the author wanted to gain a clear understanding of the breakdown of user demographics especially as it relates to women and the African American community.

Creswell (2009) notes that an important factor in determining whether a topic should be researched is determining whether the research topic will “add to the pool of research knowledge.” (Creswell, 2009, p. 24). In order to determine the importance and future use of SNS by African American women, the researcher located literature that highlights the ways in which SNS can help to enhance both the personal and social lives of the user by assisting them to find information that best fits their lifestyle. In this way, the researcher posits that this study will both aid in adding to the research pool and improve the overall SNS use of African American women.

The Study of African American Women within the Field of Information and Library Science

One of the challenges that researchers will face when conducting research on African American women, especially as it relates to information seeking behavior and the utilization of social network sites, is the scarcity of available literature. Because my research focused on how African American women use SNS in their everyday lives, it was important to be able to locate similar studies on African American women that could serve as examples to be used within my research. The researcher was able to locate such examples through the work of Dr. Elfreda A. Chatman. Chatman’s (1991) gratification theory looked at the information-seeking behavior of African American women from a lower socio-economic group. Her ground breaking theory development and her focus on the lives of ordinary people remain relevant today and provided examples of how researchers, through the study of ordinary people can better “increase [our] knowledge of information steeped in everyday reality” (Chatman, 1991, p. 447-448).

Another resource that was useful in examining African American women and their information seeking behavior was research conducted by Nottingham (2001) which looked at the information seeking behavior of African American women attending a business school at a predominately white southern University. Nottingham (2001) found that African American women depended on the school's African American community when choosing information sources rather than seeking the assistance of other non-Black students, professors or administrators when seeking to fulfill their information needs. Nottingham's (2001) research was instrumental in giving me a broader understanding of some of the cultural and social norms among African American women as a group. Some of these norms were present within the focus group which the researcher will discuss further on in this paper.

What the researcher found particularly interesting in Nottingham's (2001) work was some of the barriers that participants in her study expressed as it related to their race as African Americans and how these barriers could sometimes impede asking for information. An example used was feeling as if one had to prove their credibility. As African Americans in a predominately White institution, the "participants felt that they had to justify their position within the business school, dispel stereotypes associated with African Americans and combat rumors of special treatment. (Nottingham, 2001, p. 76). Although Chatman's (1991) research looked at gratification theory and also used participants who were African American, Nottingham's (2001) study differs along socio-economic lines and specific racial elements experienced by her participants. One of the key questions that could have been asked in Chatman's (1991) study was whether or not the participants were more reluctant to seek out information that could be useful for their

everyday lives because of experiences (perceived or real) that had to do with their race. Recent studies are beginning to look at the intersection of gender, race and class as added stressors to an individual's life which could act as barriers to information seeking.

Information Seeking Behavior and Health

Chatman's (1991) gratification theory research lead the way for other researchers who began taking an interest in and conducting research on the information seeking behavior of African American women. My literature search located many studies from the early 1990's that began looking at information-seeking behavior as it related to African American women and health. Gollop's (1997) study investigated the health information seeking behavior of older African American women in urban areas specifically as it relates to areas in which this group receives their information. One of the subsets of my research questions focuses on how participants in my study gain information from members within their social group and how they define their social networks. Gollop (1997) determined in her analysis that women who participated in her study received their information from "members of their social networks." (Gollop, 1997, p. 141) Participants also had a "positive perception" of public libraries. (Gollop, 1997, p. 141) Although my study is not designed to look at health information behavior, one of my sub-questions will look at whether or not the participants in my study have found libraries helpful when it comes to providing assistance with SNS use. Finally, Chatman (1991), Gollop (1997), and Nottingham (2001) are scholars who conducted research on communities where all three were cultural insiders. Analyzing their work was helpful as it allowed the researcher to focus on any limitations or biases that could occur due to the researcher's own cultural insider status.

Social Networking Sites

The history of SNS is an important component of my research topic. Because of its diverse user groups, ease of accessibility and popularity both researchers and academics from a variety of disciplines and organizations are beginning to look at SNS among diverse user groups. Boyd and Ellison (2008). In addition, the history of SNS takes into consideration the various new developments and changes that have occurred over the past several years, especially as it relates to African American and Latino SNS users. Boyd and Ellison (2008) highlight current trends in SNS use and their research allowed me to determine whether these trends were used amongst my study participants and to locate themes of trends within my own study. In addition, the recorded history of SNS contains a wealth of information on a diverse range of groups; especially as they relate to race and ethnicity.

Current literature that examines the use and demographics of social networking sites tout the benefits of SNS for all communities. Researchers such as Madden and Zickhur (2011) present data that suggests that the digital divide is closing, especially as it relates to issues of accessibility, computer use and purchasing power. Their research measures the rise in SNS such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter and notes that there was a rise in usage from 2005-2008. This report was an important addition to my research as it contained some of the latest data available on SNS and African Americans. Areas of the report which were helpful for me to form some of my research questions were: (i) information on women's use of SNS; (ii) a breakdown of SNSs by gender, age, race/ethnicity, household income, education level and geographic location; and (iii) information about social networking sites used by adults from 2005-2011. Also, this

report indicates that African Americans use their mobile phones at a higher rate than other groups and that a majority of African Americans have mobile phones versus a computer.

Importance and Future of Social Networking Sites

Using social networking sites as a point of reference for information seeking behavior among African American women, the researcher used evidence that highlighted the impact and importance that SNS has when used by individuals, groups and organizations. Baym (2010) reinforces the importance of social networking by explaining how the new types of digital electronics enhance both our interpersonal and societal relationships. Baym (2010) also challenges current perspectives in this field by asking researchers to envision geographic place as more than just a physical space but encourages all of us to begin to view online groups as communities. If, as Baym (2010) surmises online communities are “everything from occupational, education and recreational groups” (Baym, 2010, p. 77) my research questions should be able to determine if African American women identify with Baym’s (2010) assertion or if the ways in which African American women identify community online are unique.

As the use of SNS continues to grow, more studies will be conducted that include not only African American women but other groups not yet included in the literature. Rainie & Wellman (2012) argue that being a part of an online network is revolutionary. In this case the revolution consists of social networks, internet and mobile technologies. If we are to believe that “technology does not determine human behavior; [but] humans determine how technologies are used” (Rainie & Wellman 2012, p. ix) then the work of

Rainie & Wellman will give me further insight into how internet use has impacted African American women, their families and other social and professional relationships.

Whether we use SNS to find a referral for a doctor, begin dating, or to connect with high school friends, Rainie & Wellman (2012) emphasize the importance of social networks and note that SNS such as Facebook have become an essential part of the ways in which individuals interact and gain information. (Raine & Wellman, 2012, p.140). As indicated in my abstract, the use of SNS could have positive marketing outcomes for any business that is attempting to market to the African American community. Learning the SNS behavior of this group, and perhaps adapting marketing proposals could not only add to a company's economic bottom line but could foster positive consumer relationships with African American women.

Social Constructivist Worldview²

Black women, whose experience is unique, are seldom recognized as a particular social-cultural entity and are seldom thought to be important enough for serious scholarly consideration. This invisibility, however, means that the opportunities for creative research are infinite.

-- Barbara Smith, *In The Black Woman's Gumbo Ya-Ya*

Patricia Bell Scott (1989) contends that African American women, due to their experiences of oppression and resilience have a unique set of experiences as it relates to their own political and economic standing. The places where African American women work; the communities that they inhabit; and the relationships that they build are different on many levels than any other group. (Bell Scott, 1989) This thinking also reinforces Creswell's (2009) reiteration of a social constructivist worldview whereby he states "individuals seek understanding in the world in which they live and work." (Creswell, 2009, p. 8). The researcher's goal was to conduct scholarly research that would add to the dearth of literature on African American women as it relates to social networking sites but also give participants an opportunity to seek a better understanding regarding how the use and/or non-use of social network sites impacts the world in which they live. As an African American woman with similar cultural traditions and an historical context as it relates to community, relationships and communication, the researcher anticipated

² As defined by Creswell "social constructivists hold assumptions that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences—meanings directed toward certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of the research is to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied. . ."

that her *insider status* would allow the participants to talk more openly and would allow them to divulge a variety of experiences and behavior specifically located within the African American community.

Research Design and Qualitative Methods

Ethics Approval. Before interviewing participants, the researcher obtained approval (See Appendix I) to interview human subjects from the UNC Office of Human Research Ethics Institutional Review Board (OHRE) on October 2, 2013. The researcher provided information to the OHRE that included but was not limited to: background information on the study; inclusion/exclusion criteria; study design; methods and procedures; benefits to subjects and or society; risks and measures to minimize risks; data and safety monitoring; data analysis; confidentiality of the data; methods of recruiting; and signed and dated informed consents from participants. (Appendix V)

Data Collection

Procedure. The researcher used a qualitative research method in order to explore the information seeking behavior of African American women who use social networking sites in their everyday lives. Fisher, Durrance & Hinton (2004) cautions researchers to realize that “current quantitative approaches and tools fail to reflect the depth and breadth of impact.” (Fisher, Duarrance & Hinton, 2004, p. 755) Patton (2002) states that “What such statistics cannot do. . . is show the human faces behind the numbers.” (Patton, 2002, p. 152) Qualitative research can be used to “explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem.” (Creswell, 2012, p. 4). Using a qualitative method will allow participants of the study to speak in their own voices thereby gaining a better understanding of current information seeking behavior within this community.

Participants. The researcher conducted a focus group that consisted of African American women from the University of Chapel Hill North Carolina community. The researcher obtained approval to submit my e-mail request (See Appendix II) for participants via the UNC Mass E-mail system on September 16, 2013. The e-mail contained the title of my research study, including my IRB # and a brief description of the study. The email also contained my contact information such as telephone number and e-mail addresses so that respondents could contact me with any questions or concerns regarding the study. The e-mail was sent to 4,626 UNC Employees and 3,301 UNC Students. The participants were selected based on their status as African American women, ages 23-56 and who had familiarity using social sites with a primary use on Facebook.

Over 200 women responded to the UNC Mass E-mail that was distributed on September 16, 2013. In order to allow as many women to respond as possible, the researcher waited 8 hours before selecting participants and after that time period selected every 10th e-mail. Because the respondents were all from within the UNC Chapel Hill community, the researcher made a point to only look at their names and whether or not they met the criteria to participate. After selecting ten respondents, the respondents were contacted by the researcher via telephone and email, thanking them for their interests and asking them whether or not they could participate. After the participant expressed her interest in participating, they were sent them a second email (See Appendix III) attaching a copy of the formal email request, and also asking them to confirm their participation in the study by replying via email in the affirmative. Included in the e-mail was the date,

time and location of the study. A reminder e-mail was sent to each participant a few days before the actual focus group session. (Appendix IV)

Focus Group Interview. The researcher interviewed at least 8 women from ages 23-56, who had a basic knowledge and understanding of computers, SNS and the internet. According to Wildemuth (2009), the most efficient way to conduct a study is to work with a small sample size. The sample size of 8 women was small enough to keep the study efficient but would allow the researcher to locate themes within the study to the point of saturation. The focus group, from introduction, explanation and signing of consents to the completion of the study lasted about 1 hour and a half. A digital audio tape was used to record the responses from the focus group participants and also relied on side notes that the researcher took in long hand. For ease of identification in analyzing the data, each participant was assigned a number. For example, participant 1 was P1; participant 2 as P2 and thereon.

Taping the interviews allowed the researcher to focus on the participants and ask pertinent follow-up questions. Participants had an option to either choose to use their first name or replace it with a pseudonym. Any personal information such as name, phone numbers and e-mail addresses obtained by the principal investigator was collected from the focus group participants at the beginning of the focus group and placed within a sealed envelope and placed in a bag maintained by the principal investigator. As the principal investigator the researcher was the only person who had access to the personal information of the participants. Names and references to specific geographic locations were omitted when the researcher conducted the final analysis of the data. Although a confidential list containing participant's names and contact information was maintained

during the duration of the study, once the research has been completed, this confidential list with any identifying markers will be destroyed.

Interview Questions. (See Appendix VII). The researcher began the focus group discussion using an interview guide. (See Appendix VI) The researcher obtained the participant's written consent to participate in the focus group study. (See Appendix V) The researcher started the interview process by asking a general question in order to make the participants feel comfortable and build up a level of trust, then began asking the specific interview questions which were open-ended questions that gave participants an opportunity to express their experiences from their own perspective. Some of the questions that the researcher initially planned to ask were answered during general feedback. Questions from this study's original interview question list are located in Appendix VII. However, not every question was asked because participants addressed the topic earlier by expounding on an earlier question. This is also reflected in the analysis of the focus group study questions which sets forth only those questions that participants specifically responded to.

Interview Location. The focus group was held on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill North Carolina in Manning Hall in one of the classrooms. Manning Hall serves as the primary residence of the School of Information Library Science.

Expected Benefits and Limitations

A potential limitation of this study rests in the author's status as an African American woman. As a cultural insider I had an opportunity to work with the participants in a close setting which fostered an atmosphere of familiarity and trust. Participants felt comfortable sharing their SNS experiences with me not only as an African American woman but also as a SNS user. Being a cultural insider may limit my ability to be as objective as I would like and therefore was mindful of soliciting unnecessary answers that did not fit in line with the participants' experiences. (Nottingham, 2001) Another limitation may be similarities in information seeking behavior among myself and the participants. I made a point of keeping my information seeking experiences separate from those of the participants especially as I began to analyze the data and interpret the responses from the participants. Lastly, my experience as a novice researcher may impact the overall outcome of the study results. Although I have conducted interviews in the past for research purposes, I recognize there is much more to learn and experiences to gain as a researcher.

As mentioned throughout this study, the primary benefit to conducting this research is that it will add to the empirical literature on the information seeking behavior and SNS use of African American women. SNS companies such as Facebook and MySpace consistently collect marketing data to enhance the needs of users on SNS and could use this information to specifically target this group as it enhances its website for

Consumers. Also, information professionals such as librarians, archivists and digitization specialists would be able to better structure services that meet the specific needs of African American women. Lastly, a study conducted by the Nielson research firm indicates that African American buying power “will reach \$1.1 trillion dollars by the year 2015.” (Huffington Post Online Article, 2012) A major part of this spending is influenced by “technology, social media and online connectivity.” (Huffington Post, 2012) Industries who are looking to market to this type of consumer spending power will be able to use this study to investigate to what extent African American women use SNS to make purchases of consumer goods.

Results

The research questions focused on three primary areas of information seeking behavior while using Facebook with sub-questions that fall within the purview of the primary question areas. This chapter will discuss the participants' responses to focus group questions asked during the focus group session and will also determine other ways in which African American women seek information when using Facebook specifically and other social networking sites in general.

Focus Group Questions

Question 1: Use and Frequency of Social Network Sites

Focus group question one asks, what social network sites have participants used? Analysis of the data indicates that among the eight participants in the focus group, Facebook was used by everyone, while Twitter came in second with five participants having used Twitter. Three participants use Instagram; two participants used LinkedIn; and two participants used Google Plus. One participant mentioned past use on the social network sites such as MySpace and Black Planet.

Question 2: Information Seeking Needs

Focus group question two asks, how are you accessing social network sites? Analysis of the data reveals that participants access social network sites in a variety of ways, through an iPad, mobile phones, work computers and home computers. Although participants initially appeared to be reluctant to state that they access Facebook while at work, participant P8 framed her answer diplomatically:

“I use Facebook on breaks at work.”

This statement seemed to make other participants feel more comfortable because three of the participants who had initially only mentioned accessing Facebook at home restated that they too used Facebook at work while on their breaks.

Question 3: Length of Time using Facebook

Focus group question three asks, how long have you used Facebook? This section focuses on the number of years that each participant had been using Facebook from time of inception to current day. The analysis of the data reveals that the average time was 5 years with the shortest years of use being 3 years and the longest use of Facebook had been 8 years. The youngest participant of the group had been on Facebook the longest while the participant who had used Facebook for only 3 years, stated that she only used it occasionally and it was something that her children had to set up for her.

Question 4. Use of Facebook

Focus group question four asks, when on Facebook, what are you using it for? This section will discuss the content of the information that participants were seeking when using Facebook. The two primary categories of use on Facebook by participants were to communicate and stay connected with family friends, and to interact with social organizations that they are affiliated with.

P2: “. . .primarily for social reasons – a lot of times I want to see what other people are doing. . .its a chance to connect with friends that I don’t get to see often.”

P7: “I use Facebook to keep up with family and friends, to see pictures of my nephews and nieces, and I also use it . . .to meet up for social stuff.”

Another area of use mentioned by participants was to stay abreast of the activities of different groups that they are affiliated with:

P6: “I use it to create events, send invitations to do things and watching what my friends are doing.”

P8: “I’m on my church’s marketing team and our pastor allows us during service to post things that he’s saying so I post on Facebook during the service.”

One area that garnered a lot of responses was using Facebook as a means to be positive and to send out positive messages on their personal Facebook Page.

P3: “. . .a lot of it is for motivational quotes that I use and steal for screen savers and put in cards for friends.”

P7: “. . .its a place to send out some positive messages, something that inspired me.”

P8: “I post a lot of motivational things. . .”

The analytical data gathered for this question confirms earlier speculation that African American women primarily use Facebook to communicate and stay in touch with family and friends. However, an unexpected phenomenon was the seeking out and sharing of motivational and inspiration messages. Also, all of the participants indicated that they use Facebook Chat frequently.

Question 5. Facebook Training

Focus group question five asks, have you had training on how to use Facebook and if so, what type of training? Six of the eight participants had no training on how to use Facebook. There was general discussion back and forth about this question and the majority of the participants agreed that you just pretty much picked up how to use the features on Facebook or you ask someone how to use a specific feature. Two of the participants had training. Participant P4 indicated that her children set up her Facebook account and if she has any questions that one of them will show her how to maneuver to get an answer or information that she needs. Participant P3 stated:

P3: “I had a 14-year old niece who made me a handbook for Facebook language. It was very helpful.”

P3 also shared this handbook with her husband who she recently convinced to join Facebook.

Question 6. Frequency of Use

Focus group question six asks, how often do you use Facebook? The analysis of the data indicates that there were varying degrees of use amongst the participants. Four of the participants leave Facebook open continuously.

P5: “I leave mine up, but continuously I’m probably on there for about 10 minutes when I first get up, then in the afternoon and then at night I’m on it until I go to bed.”

P3: “I do an hour in the morning when I first get up, check in and playing my games. Then on my lunch break. Then 2 hours at night . . .so 4-5 hours per day.

P8: “When I get out of the bed and after my morning quiet time I’m on for about 15 minutes. . .for the remainder of the day its continuous – if someone pings me, if its on my phone, if I get a new notification, my phone is buzzing. I could be on Facebook 4-5 hours a day.

The other participants expressed moderate use of Facebook on a daily basis while

Participant P4 stated that she used Facebook infrequently:

P4: “I’m actually not really a big social media person at all. I use it very rarely. Maybe I am on Facebook every couple of weeks for 10 minutes or so. If someone lets me know something was posted and I need to check it. . . if people want to contact me they email me or text me.”

The majority of the participants used Facebook every day although the amount of time spent on Facebook varied from person-to-person. Those who used Facebook infrequently indicated that they used other modes of communicating to touch base with family and friends which indicates that Facebook was used in combination with other communicating apparatus to stay current in reference to information.

Question 7. Barriers Encountered

Focus group question seven asks, what barriers have you encountered when using Facebook? One participant indicated that she learned how to use everything on Facebook and therefore she did not experience any type of barriers. However, the remaining participants expressed some type of barrier while using Facebook. The barriers ranged from the inability to control closing down one's Facebook page without having to go through so many prompts to removing pictures that participants posted when they first began using Facebook or a picture in which they are tagged.

P4: "One of the barriers that I've encountered is actually shutting down your Facebook account. . .I tried to shut down my account, they [Facebook] keep it active for a while so you can't login. It's still up for a certain amount of time -- trying to shut it down was a barrier."

However, two of the largest barriers that participants experience in using Facebook were issues related to privacy and advertisements on their Facebook page. Some of the participants stated that they felt as if they had no control over their privacy in terms of trying to remove certain items, especially if you did not originally post an item and were tagged in someone else's photo. Also concern was expressed regarding the privacy of friends' information and whether or not Facebook as a third party could access information from a participant's list of Friends.

P7: ". . .the barriers are with the privacy settings. When I first got on Facebook I was like 'yeah, lets do it!' . . .Then I had trouble trying to untag myself and take a picture down. I was so frustrated because I just wanted to remove the pictures of me from my cite."

P5: "First it was the privacy stuff . . .I didn't know about the picture thing but I stopped posting pictures a long time ago. People were tagging me the other day in a picture and I was like -- how did you get a picture of me? I said 'take that down.' That's the part that I don't like, tagging things. I've got to figure out how to fix it."

P8: “I just thought of something . . . sometimes when you’re trying to get to applications . . . it will say Facebook would like to access your friends profile. I’m like no, I just like to go to wherever I’m going. . . my friends will start not wanting to be my friends because . . . this third party is getting my friends’ information.”

Similarly, the lack of control regarding what advertisements (if any) appeared on one’s Facebook page was mentioned as another barrier to using Facebook.

P8: “I get tired of the ads, especially when I’m commenting and sometimes the ads are in the way and I can’t get to where I’m trying to get to.

P2: “When Facebook first started off it was real subtle – at first you really didn’t recognize it unless you were paying attention, but now recently they changed it . . . it just throws you off and a lot of it for me is irrelevant.”

All of the participants talked about a learning curve when it came to privacy settings on Facebook. When they initially signed up as members on Facebook they were not as concerned about issues related to privacy. However, when they ran into problems trying to either close their Facebook account or remove photos that were posted either by them or other people, was when they began to take more notice of what types of controls they had over their own Facebook page and who has access to their information. After having mastered Facebook and used it for a while, participants believed that the best way to combat issues surrounding privacy was to be aware of whom you are friending:

P6: “. . . I don’t know you, just because you know my friends, I don’t know you.”

Participants also suggested that one way to strengthen one’s privacy on Facebook was to learn your privacy settings and to ask family and friends to get permission from you before you post or tag them in a photo that you are in.

Question 8. Facilitators to Using Facebook

Focus group question eight asks, what do you like about using Facebook? This question seeks to learn from the participants what it is about Facebook that works for

them in reference to their day-to-day lives. The overarching theme that was present in the answers focused on the ways in which Facebook allowed participants to keep in touch with family and friends, its convenience and the way in which participants could stay up-to-date on current events.

P1: "I would say to connect to people."

P2: "I got involved in Facebook through my high school reunion. . .It was a way to plan something major. . .if you don't have peoples' phone numbers and emails, it's a good way to connect with people."

P3: "I've lived in six states and four countries. . .Facebook allows me to bring all of my lives together."

P4: "I just like catching up with people that I've lost contact with."

P5: "It was a way for me to get in contact with high school and college people that I had not seen or heard from. . .from there I went on to plan our family reunion and finding my family members."

P6: Just the convenience of having everything you need to know in just one news feed or timeline. . .I don't have to search through each person to find out what's happening."

P7: "I like being able to keep up with my friends and family. . . I just like the fact that I'm able to remain connected to people."

P8: "Facebook provides me the opportunity to be personable. . .the ability to communicate one thought to all of my friends on Facebook."

Overwhelmingly, participants appreciated the ease with which they have been able to reconnect with past family members and friends and being able to communicate with people, no matter the geographic distance or how many years had gone by. One of the participants also mentioned that for her Facebook was cost effective. The more she uses Facebook, the less time she has to use her cell phone. Being on Facebook has helped her to save money on her cell phone costs.

Question 9. Facebook Use in Libraries

Focus group question nine asks, have you used Facebook in a library setting?

Only one of the participants answered in the affirmative to this question.

Question 10. Increase in Facebook Use

Focus group question ten asks, what would motivate you to increase your use of Facebook? This question generated laughter from all of the participants. The general discussion from the participants following this question surrounded their overall feelings relating to their use of Facebook. They believe that they are using Facebook enough already and are not interested in increasing their use.

Question 11. Decrease in Facebook Use

Focus group question eleven asks, what would cause you to decrease your use of Facebook? The data analyzed from this question showed that an overarching theme that would cause participants to reduce or stop their use of Facebook was if posts and information coming into their news feeds were to become any more negative. Participants expressed concern about the way in which Facebook is turning into a medium for bullying among high school teenagers and how there is a preponderance of profanity. Another area that generated unanimous agreement was in the area of costs. All the participants agreed that if Facebook began to charge for use – then they would no longer use it.

P7: “. . .the thing that makes me not check it as much is because of the negativity. . . people use Facebook as their own open journal and there is some stuff you can’t put on there . . .that makes me think about using it less.”

P2: “. . .in terms of the negativity, it has become an issue to where I ‘ve had to delete and unfriend people.”

P5: “I agree with everybody about the negativity. . .I told some of the people [who were being negative] I’ll give you two chances, clean up your post or I’ll delete you.”

P8: “What would make me use it less – if I had to pay for it.”

Question 12. Performance on Facebook

Focus group question twelve asks, do you ever feel any type of pressure to perform? When asked, the researcher clarified this question by reframing the question: Do you ever feel a need to compete with friends or family who posts things on Facebook or experience any type of pressure to show yourself in a positive light on Facebook? One of the participants stated that she believed Facebook mirrored real life. In real live people feel pressure to present themselves in the best like or compete with one another and express her feelings that this is an attitude that has “trickled into social media.”

P6: “I don’t feel any kind of way as far as a need to complete with other people but the thing is that I do not that so many people will *Facebook Frontin*³. . .a lot of performance on Facebook.”

P7: “. . . in the beginning when I got on I felt the need to complete. . . I think that I no longer feel the need to compete which is why I don’t put as many pictures up. . . all this sharing doesn’t seem real.”

P8: “I have felt that at times, but some of the people I know . . . what you’re posting is your public persona and what’s not really going on at the house. . .just because you’re posting on Facebook I don’t know all of the dynamics on how you arrived at that place.”

³ When the researcher asked this participant where she heard the term “Facebook Frontin” she indicated that she just made it up as she was talking in the focus group. When I asked her how she would define it, she explained: “my definition of Facebook Frontin’ is when someone, whom you know personally, uses Facebook to create an online persona that is drastically different from whom they are or the way that they act in person. Usually, this online persona is a false representation of self. This is Facebook Frontin”.

Another participant expressed a different perspective. Although she admitted to posting on Facebook infrequently, when she does post she wanted to make sure that it was accurate because she believed that the items that you post on Facebook reflects you.

P1: “. . .when I do [post] I have to check it three or four times to make sure all the spelling is right and the pictures look good because you don’t want to put out something that could potentially be harmful to you. Not trying to be fake or anything – you want to put your best foot forward.”

Discussion

The results of this study helped to determine how African American women use social networking sites, primarily Facebook. The purpose of the study was to add to the overall literature on the information seeking behavior as it relates to African American women using social networking sites and to determine whether there were similar or divergent themes that presented within the focus group. Also, the results of this study helped to highlight specific barriers of use that African American women face when using social networking sites as well as facilitators to use. In this chapter the author discusses the significant findings of the study and draws conclusions about African American women who use Facebook; and discusses future research. Participants expressed that they mainly use Facebook as a means to connect with family and friends that they do not see often. More specifically, participants stated that they like to view and post pictures, chat with people from their friends list, read updates posted by other people and to also post updates about things events happening in their lives.

Facebook as a Cultural Space

Although gender has been researched by scholars who are interested in studying gender and technology, Baym (2010) argues that the literature is lacking when it comes to research on cultural identity. Work conducted by Nakamura (2002) and Silver (2000) (as cited in Baym 2010) focuses on how race is made invisible in online spaces and interfaces. They use as an example online sites that often request the gender of a user but rarely will they ask a user their race. Nakamura (2002) and Silver (2000) suggests that it

could be seen as a divide in reference to social division but it could also indicate that there is an assumption present that the majority of users online are White. (Nakamura, 2002 and Silver, 2000). This suggestion is played out in the responses of some of the participants especially as it related to advertisements on Facebook and how within that space, the participants felt that the advertisements did not adequately represent or take into consideration who they were as African American women using Facebook.

Positive and Negative Postings

One of the overwhelming themes located within the analysis of the responses was the ways in which participants used Facebook to disseminate what they considered to be positive and inspirational messages. Some participants indicated that part of their regular routine was to post some type of inspirational message on their news feed while others sought out and were drawn to people who posted positive messages that they could relate to or could share with others. Conversely, the focus group participants also expressed their concern and dissatisfaction with Facebook postings that they viewed as “negative” and unflattering. Negativity was described as the use of too much profanity and also posts that seemed to put-down or bully specific individuals or groups. Participants stated that the continued postings of negative subject matter, crude language and overly-aggressive postings would be a cause to “unfriend” someone who was part of their initial friend network.

Ease of Use Among Participants

All of the participants who used Facebook also used a number of other social network sites as well. Many of the participants stated that when they first began using Facebook they taught themselves. This could indicate that Facebook’s functionality is

easy to learn and navigate, or it could also point out that participants, who use more than one social network site, can easily navigate other sites. There was only one participant who had not created her own Facebook account. This participant indicated that her children helped to create the page and if anything ever goes wrong with the page or if something occurs that she does not understand she will ask one of her children to come by and take a look at her Facebook page. Although this participant primarily uses Facebook to look at pictures posted by her family and friends, it does indicate that even for individuals who may not be that familiar with Facebook's functionality capabilities that they still have the ability to interact and navigate their Facebook page.

Gaming

During the focus group discussion there was a running commentary from participants regarding their "obsession" with Facebook. This was especially noted around the question that asked participants how long they stayed on Facebook in a 24-hour period. Another theme that came out of that question was the obsession with games, specifically the "gaming" feature on Facebook entitled "Candy Crush"⁴. According to Rainie and Wellman (2012), online games began in the 1980s. Although they note that gaming was initially more popular with "boys and young men" (Rainie and Wellman, 2012, p. 69) they do contend that more women became interested in online games especially when gaming began to include "such things as online card games and board games." (Rainie and Wellman, 2012, p. 69). This could be indicative of yet another use of Facebook that perhaps people overlook when they think about African American

⁴ "***Candy Crush Saga*** is a game that was released on April 12, 2012 for Facebook, and then released on November 14, 2012 for smartphones. It was developed by King, a social-games company. As of March 2013, Candy Crush Saga surpassed FarmVille 2 as the most popular game on Facebook, with 46 million average monthly users."

women and how they use social network sites. Participants expressed that gaming allowed them to connect with people by fostering “friendly” competition and was viewed as a relaxing form of recreational activity that they found both fun and stimulating.

Privacy Concerns

Another theme that was concurrent throughout the discussion among participants was the topic of privacy issues on Facebook. As mentioned earlier in the research analysis, participants viewed privacy issues as a barrier to their use on Facebook. There were various issues mentioned in relationship to privacy which included participants’ expressing concern about *friending* people that they did not know. Participants shared experiences where they received *friend request* from people that they were not friends with or who were friends with a family member or another friend. All agreed that the best way to combat this barrier was to be aware of whom you were friending but also to be careful about the types of messages that you post on your Facebook page as this could garner the “wrong” types of friends.

Participants also shared first-hand accounts where they were “tagged” in photos that showed them in a photo but they had not posted the photo nor did they give their permission to have their photo tagged. When asked how they dealt with this type of barrier to use, participants stated that they would contact the owner of the post who had tagged them in the photo and request that they “untag” them or remove the photo. Participants agreed that there were certain personal photos that they would rather not have on Facebook or would like to have the full authority and control regarding how, when and who can posts personal images. There ensued a lively discussion about the reality of being on Facebook or any other social networking site. All of the participants

acknowledged that the idea of one's privacy and control becoming compromised was one of the realities of participating on a social networking. Part of that reality for the participants is that if you were going to participate on Facebook that you should be aware that what you post would more than likely not remain private. Even within private groups, there seemed to be a sense that what we share on the internet, regardless of privacy settings still does not solely belong to us and those organizations such as Facebook, Google and LinkedIn, once they get you to be active on their system, they have complete ownership of your information.

Performance on Facebook

Although a good number of the participants stated that they did not feel a need to compete with what others were doing or posting on Facebook, some participants indicated that they were familiar with friends and family members who "performed" on Facebook. Some participants also noted that when they first joined Facebook that they did feel an unspoken pressure to put their best foot forward but the longer they stayed on Facebook the more the need to perform and/or compete lessened. One participant labeled this type of behavior as a form of performance that she called "Facebook Frontin'" a state by which an individual's actual life is totally different from the persona that they present to the Facebook world. Baym (2010) argues that in social networking communities, people are generally "aware that their friends and colleagues are looking at their self-presentation." (Baym, 2010, p. 86) This awareness taps into the group norms that are present in every group dynamic and are associated with normative behavior. In a study conducted by Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim and Westerman (2008) (as cited in Baym, 2010), Facebook profiles of individuals were changed to mimic good and bad

behaviors. They found that most of the people followed the social norms set on the Facebook profiles. This could explain why some of the participants felt the need to perform when they first started using Facebook – they were mimicking the social norms of what their Facebook counterparts were doing. However, as time went by, participants stated their desire to *perform* became less and less as they became more relaxed and familiar with being on Facebook.

Advertisements

All of the participants contributed to the dialogue regarding advertisements on Facebook. Some mentioned the inconvenience of having pop-ads appear right in the middle of something a user is either posting or reading. The biggest takeaway from this discussion was how the participants felt that none of the ads seem to target them as African American women. They consensus was that perhaps ads would be better tolerated if they were ads that had some type of relevance or importance to their lives. It appears that the ads that appear on the Facebook pages of the participants are not ads that specifically have African American women in mind. Perhaps this is a marketing issue that could be better addressed in future research.

Future Research

Future research on African American women and their information seeking behavior on SNS is limitless. Whether researching gaming trends; using Facebook Chat; or looking at social performance within African American communities -- there are many new areas of research that this study has advanced. For example, although Baym (2010) indicates that Facebook does not ask for demographics as it relates to race, gathering this information could be used to compare differences and similarities between African

American women and other groups as it relates to SNS behavior. For example, do other groups or ethnicities have the same concerns and issues relating to privacy or is this a concern that is unique to African American women? Is the fact that Facebook does not collect demographics as it relates to race an indicator that the creators of Facebook are assuming that African American women either do not use Facebook as much as White users; or that focusing on the needs of African American women as it relates to Facebook is a low priority?

Another study area to consider would be looking at other SNS that are used by African American women. As was indicated in this study, African American women are using more than one SNS. Determining what other SNS are popular among African American women; the ways they are using other SNS; and how that use differs or is similar to the way that they use Facebook could be useful information for information organizations and professionals who may be working in predominately African American communities, especially when it comes to disseminating that information to users within these communities.

Further studies could be conducted on what types of devices are being used to access SNS within the African American community. Although the participants in this study had access to both work and home computers, a majority of their use and interaction on Facebook took place via their mobile phones. According to a Pew Research report conducted on mobile use by adults in the United States, “63% of adult cell owners used their phones to go online.” (Brenner, 2013, p. 1) This report also indicated that African Americans were the largest group in the study that owned cell phones or smart phones. Again, how African American women are accessing

information plays an important role in ensuring that specific information geared toward this group can reach them in ways that are not only timely, but in line with the types of devices African American women are using to access information.

Future research would benefit both African American women in their role as consumers and the companies and organizations who are interested in servicing the needs of this group. The participants in this study stated that if ads were specifically geared toward them as African American women, the likelihood of them purchasing or buying products would possibly increase. Whether this includes ads that feature African American women or products (such as hair or skin care products) specifically targeted to African American women is unclear. However, there is an opportunity for companies to determine whether using ads that feature African American women would possibly help to successfully market products or information to this community.

Conclusion

My research study emphasizes the need for further study of African American women in reference to their use of social network sites specifically surrounding information seeking behavior. Although participants encountered specific barriers while using Facebook, the desire to stay in touch with friends, family and personal/professional organizations far outweighed these issues. When faced with barriers to use, participants overwhelmingly demonstrated an uncanny ability to create methods that reduced or eliminated those barriers. Using a qualitative research method gave participants an opportunity to express in their own voices what their experiences are when using SNS.

This study used a social constructivist worldview as defined by Creswell (2009) (see p. 13). This worldview contends that an individual's worldview is created by her social relationships and the ways in which she interacts within those relationships. There was evidence of this behavior as was expressed by the participants throughout the focus group discussion. The sense of support and shared identity was a concurrent theme expressed by participants. Baym (2010) suggests that social support in online environments provide many benefits to participants and can consist of emotional, esteem and informational support systems. (Baym, 2010, pp. 83-84).

How we interact with one another, whether it is personally, professionally or socially, has taken on new meaning with the new technological landscape. The very definition of ‘community’ has changed to include those communities that are being developed online. African American women are similar to other groups in this country – they are technologically savvy, are using the latest devices to access information, but would also like their uniqueness as African American women to be taken into consideration as it relates to information accessibility, dissemination and overall marketing. Studying how African American women navigate online spaces; use and change social norms that specifically relate to African Americans; and build and redefine communities are important factors for scholars, librarians and informational professionals to consider as methods that can be used to better improve opportunities and outcomes for African American women who are active participants in using SNS.

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APPENDIX I: Formal IRB Notice of Approval (via email)

IRB <irb_no_reply@mailserv0.isis.unc.edu>

Thu 9/5/2013 9:24 AM

To: lorihe@email.unc.edu;

Cc: Gollop, Claudia;

To: Lori Harris

School of Information and Library Science

From: Non-Biomedical IRB

Approval Date: 9/03/2013

Expiration Date of Approval: 9/02/2014

RE: Notice of IRB Approval by Expedited Review (under 45 CFR 46.110)

Submission Type: Initial

Expedited Category: 7.Surveys/interviews/focus groups,6.Voice/image research recordings

Study #: 13-2935

Study Title: When and Where They Enter: African American Women and Their Use of Social Network Sites

This submission has been approved by the IRB for the period indicated. It has been determined that the risk involved in this research is no more than minimal.

Study Description:

Purpose: The purpose of this research study to gain a better understanding of the ways in which African American women utilize social networking sites (specifically Facebook); and to determine if there are any common experiences of use. This research could also assist professionals who work in the field of Information and Library Science determine whether there is unique information seeking behaviors among African American women when utilizing social network sites. This research could also be used to better enhance the needs of this group as it relates to other library services.

Participants: 6-8 individuals

Procedures (methods): Focus Group/Qualitative

Investigator's Responsibilities:

Federal regulations require that all research be reviewed at least annually. It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to submit for renewal and obtain approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without IRB approval. Failure to receive approval for continuation before the expiration date will result in automatic termination of the approval for this study on the expiration date.

Your approved consent forms and other documents are available online at http://apps.research.unc.edu/irb/irb_event.cfm?actn=info&irbid=13-2935.

You are required to obtain IRB approval for any changes to any aspect of this study before they can be implemented. Any unanticipated problem involving risks to subjects or others (including adverse events reportable under UNC-Chapel Hill policy) should be reported to the IRB using the web portal at <http://irbis.unc.edu>.

Researchers are reminded that additional approvals may be needed from relevant "gatekeepers" to access subjects (e.g., principals, facility directors, healthcare system).

This study was reviewed in accordance with federal regulations governing human subjects research, including those found at 45 CFR 46 (Common Rule), 45 CFR 164 (HIPAA), 21 CFR 50 & 56 (FDA), and 40 CFR 26 (EPA), where applicable.

CC: Claudia Gollop, School of Information and Library Science

IRB Informational Message—please do not use email REPLY to this address

APPENDIX II: Formal E-mail Participation Recruitment Form

Date: _____

Dear Participant:

I am requesting your participation in a research study that I am conducting to investigate the use of Social Network Sites (SNS) among African American women. This study is part of my master's research project at The School of Information and Library Science at The University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC. If you choose to take part in this study you will be asked to sign a consent form in order to be audio taped. Your participation in this study is confidential. None of the information related to the study will identify you by name or geographic location. The information gathered during the interview process will be kept in a locked filing cabinet within the offices of The School of Information and Library Science Department, Manning Hall at UNC Chapel Hill, NC. Participation is voluntary; however there is no direct benefit to you for your participation. Nevertheless, a larger benefit is that your participation in this study and the subsequent data collection will enrich and add to the literature about the information seeking behavior and SNS use of African American women while at the same time allowing participants to give voice to their own individual experiences. The interview will be held at a location on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. The estimated time of each interview from point of introduction, explanation of focus group process, signing consent forms and the focus group interview will be 2 hours. The decision to participate in this study is entirely up to you. You may refuse to take part in the study *at any time* without affecting your relationship with the researcher of this study or The University of Chapel Hill, NC. You have the right not to answer any single question, as well as to withdraw completely from the interview at any point during the process; additionally, you have the right to request that the interviewer not use any of your interview material.

Thank you for taking the time to read this e-mail. Should you wish to take part in the study or have any further questions you would like to ask before making a decision, please feel free to contact me directly at XXX-XXX-XXXX. I can also be reached at the following email addresses: lorihe@email.unc.edu; and leh301@msn.com. Your input is greatly appreciated and I thank you in advance for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori E. Harris

Graduate Student, School of Information and Library Science

University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC, lorihe@email.unc.edu

APPENDIX III: Email Requesting Confirmation of Participation Form

Date:_____

Good Afternoon_____:

Pursuant to our telephone/email conversation on_____, 2013, I am attaching for your information my formal 'Email Participation Letter' which gives more detail about my study and the process of the focus group. Again, I will be conducting the Study on October 1, 2013 at 5:15pm in Manning Hall, Room 303 which is on the main campus of UNC Chapel Hill. If you are still interested in participating in the focus group, please reply in the affirmative to this email.

Sincerely,

Lori E. Harris, MSLS Candidate '13
Graduate Student, School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
XXX-XXX-XXXX
lorihe@email.unc.edu

Attachment

APPENDIX IV: Email Reminder to Participants

Good Afternoon:

This email will serve as a reminder that you have volunteered to participate in my focus group study IRB #13-2935 entitled: *When and Where They Enter: African American Women and Their Use of Social Network Sites*. The study will be held, Tuesday, October 1, 2013 at 5:15pm, Manning Hall, Room 303 on the Campus of UNC Chapel Hill (see link below for directions). Manning Hall is the red brick building directly across from Lenoir. If you enter from the basement, please follow the posted signs to the elevator and come to the third floor. If you enter Manning Hall from the front, come up the steps and the elevator is located in the library. Signs will be posted directing you to Room 303. Again, the focus group discussion will take about 1 ½ to complete. Light refreshments will be available. I am looking forward to meeting you on Tuesday afternoon and feel free to contact me directly 240-676-1616 if you have any questions prior to Tuesday.

Sincerely,

Lori E. Harris, MSLS Candidate '13
Graduate Student, School of Information and Library Science
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC
XXX-XXX-XXXX
lorihe@email.unc.edu

Detailed directions to Manning Hall
<http://sils.unc.edu/about/visit>

APPENDIX V: University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Consent to Participate in a Research Study Form

IRB Study # 13-2935

Consent Form Version Date: October 1, 2013

Title of Study: When and Where They Enter: African American Women and Their Use of Social Network Sites

Principal Investigator: Lori E. Harris
UNC-Chapel Hill Department: School of Information and Library Science

Faculty Advisor: Claudia J. Gollop
Frances Carroll McColl Term Professor
Summer School Director
919/962-8362
Manning Hall, Room 215
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
gollop@email.unc.edu

Funding Source: Carnegie Grant Application
Expenses Associated with Master's Paper
Purpose for Grant: Incentive
Amount of Grant: \$200.00
(which will be used to purchase \$25.00 gift cards from Target or Walmart)

Study Contact: Lori E. Harris
XXX-XXX-XXXX
lorihe@email.unc.edu

What are some general things you should know about research studies?

You are being asked to take part in a research study. To join the study is voluntary. You may refuse to join, or you may withdraw your consent to be in the study, for any reason, without penalty.

Research studies are designed to obtain new knowledge. This new information may help people in the future. You may not receive any direct benefit from being in the research study. There also may be risks to being in research studies. Details about this study are discussed below. It is important that you understand this information so that you can make an informed choice about being in this research study. You will be given a copy of this consent form. You should ask the researcher named above, or staff members who may assist them, any questions you have about this study at any time.

What is the purpose of this study?

The purpose of this research study is to gain a better understanding of the ways in which African American women utilize social networking sites (specifically Facebook); and to determine if there are any common experiences of use. This research could also assist professionals who work in the field of Information and Library Science determine whether there is unique information seeking behaviors among African American women when utilizing social network sites. Also research in this area could be used to better enhance the needs of this group as it relates to other library services.

How many people will take part in this study?

If you decide to be in this study, you will be one of approximately 8 people in this research study, which is being conducted in Chapel Hill, NC. The 8 people will participate in one focus group discussion. All participants were chosen from an e-mail list-serv and after an interview with the principal investigator.

How long will your part in this study last?

Your participation in this focus group will last approximately one hour and 30 minutes.

What will happen if you take part in the study?

The group will be asked to discuss how they use Facebook (socially, professionally, personally) and if they experience any facilitators or barriers to use and what would increase their use of Facebook. Other questions will be posed in reference to Facebook use. No questions will be directed to you individually, but instead will be posed to the group. You may choose to respond or not respond at any point during the discussion. The focus group discussion will be audiotaped so we can capture comments in a transcript for analysis.

What are the possible benefits from being in this study?

Research is designed to benefit society by gaining new knowledge. You may not benefit personally from being in this research study.

What are the possible risks or discomforts involved from being in this study?

The risks associated with this research are rare. However, I will explain, step-by-step how the study will be conducted; give the subjects an opportunity to ask questions, reiterate the importance of extending confidentiality to all other subjects, and reassure

them that if at any time during the group discussion they feel uncomfortable they have the right to either stop or leave the study without repercussions from the PI or sponsoring institution. I will also give the subjects an opportunity to use either a pseudonym or their first name during the discussion to help ensure confidentiality. We will emphasize to all participants that comments made during the focus group session should be kept confidential; it is possible that participants may repeat comments outside of the group at some time in the future. Therefore, we encourage you to be as honest and open as you can, but remain aware of our limits in protecting confidentiality.

How will information about you be protected?

Every effort will be taken to protect your identity as a participant in this study. You will not be identified in any report or publication of this study or its results. Your name will not appear on any transcripts; instead, you will be given a code number. The list which matches names and code numbers will be kept in a locked file cabinet. After the focus group tape has been transcribed and the research paper written, the tape will be destroyed, and the list of names and numbers will also be destroyed.

Will you receive anything for being in this study?

You will receive a \$25.00 gift card from either Walmart or Target for taking part and completing the study. If for any reason any of the participants feel that they cannot continue with the study, they have the right to stop and leave. If a participant has participated in the study for 45 minutes, they will receive a \$10.00 gift card. If a participant has participated in the study for an hour, they will receive a \$15.00 gift card. Participants who complete the full hour and 30 minutes will receive a \$25.00 gift card.

Will it cost you anything to be in this study?

There will be no costs for being in the study.

What if you are a UNC employee?

Taking part in this research is not a part of your University duties, and refusing to participate will not affect your job. You will not be offered or receive any special job-related consideration if you take part in this research.

What if you have questions about this study?

You have the right to ask, and have answered, any questions you may have about this research. If you have questions, or concerns, you should contact the researchers listed on the first page of this form.

What if you have questions about your rights as a research participant?

All research on human volunteers is reviewed by a committee that works to protect your rights and welfare. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a research subject you may contact, anonymously if you wish, the Institutional Review Board at 919-966-3113 or by email to IRB_subjects@unc.edu.

Participant's Agreement:

I have read the information provided above. I have asked all the questions I have at this time. I voluntarily agree to participate in this research study to be audio-taped during the focus group discussion.

Signature of Research Participant

Date

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

Date

Printed Name of Research Team Member Obtaining Consent

APPENDIX VI: Focus Group Guide & Questions Form (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 11).

I would like to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Lori E. Harris and I would like to talk to you about your experiences using social network sites (SNS). I will be assessing your overall SNS use specifically as it relates to personal, professional and social use. This collected information will be helpful in studying both the information seeking behavior of African American women as it relates to SNS and looking at ways that SNS websites, libraries and other service providers may assist in enhancing the overall SNS experience for African American women. This focus group should take 2 hours. In order to capture your responses as fully and accurately as possible, I will be taping our discussion. You may also notice me writing down information during the interview process. These are notes that I use to alert myself to follow-up questions about our discussion or further clarification on a point. Your responses during the focus group will be kept confidential and will only be shared with those individuals who comprise the research team. I am the principal investigator and I will be the only person compiling the results of the focus group for data analysis. After the compilation of the data analysis I will provide a report of my findings in a master's paper. The report will not identify you as a participant and any information included in the report will have any identifying markers such as geographic location and names removed. During the focus group discussion, you do not have to answer any questions

that you do not want to answer and you may end your participation in the focus group process at any time. Do you have any questions about what I have just explained? Are you willing to participate in this focus group?

APPENDIX VII: Interview Questions Form (Boyce & Neale, 2006, p. 12).

1. What social network sites have you used?
 - ___ Facebook
 - ___ Twitter
 - ___ My Space
 - ___ Other _____
2. Why/How are you accessing SNS?
 - ___ Home Computer
 - ___ Laptop
 - ___ Library Computer
 - ___ Work Computer
 - ___ Mobile Phone
 - ___ Tablet
 - ___ Other _____
3. When on a SNS what areas of use to you utilize?
 - ___ Search for health information
 - ___ Communicate with family and friends
 - ___ Interact with professional organizations
 - ___ Interact with social organizations
 - ___ Personal shopping and other commercial activities
 - ___ Other _____
4. How computer literate do you consider yourself?
5. What training (if any) have you had on using a computer?
6. Have you had training on how to use SNS?
 - ___ Job
 - ___ Library
 - ___ Friend or Family member
 - ___ Self-taught
7. How often do you use SNS?
8. What barriers have you encountered when using SNS?
 - ___ Accessibility

- ___ Ease of Use
- ___ Unable to locate what you needed
- ___ Lack of technical assistance

9. How did you overcome these barriers?

10. What do you like about using SNS?

11. Have you ever used SNS at a library?

- ___ If yes, explain circumstances
- ___ If no, explain why not

12. Did you have questions about the SNS website while at the library?

Please elaborate: _____

13. Do friends and family members use SNS?

14. What would motivate you to use SNS more?

15. What has caused you to use SNS less?

16. Is there anything more you would like to add?