

Self-disclosure on Facebook:

Social capital generation and the match between appropriate media channel and type of disclosed information

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Self-disclosure and social capital

-self-disclosure on SNSs important for relationship maintenance and access to social capital (Steijn & Schouten 2013; Trepte & Reinecke 2013)

-self-disclosure (SDC) dependent on gender (Haferkamp et al 2012), the relation between communication partners (Rains & Brunner 2014), personality (Seidman 2013), and loneliness of the user (Lee, Noh, & Koo 2013)

SDC and social capital: questions

- distinction between different types of SDC neglected: intimate vs. non-intimate (“superficial”) SDC
- distinction between private vs. public communication channel
- how does the communication channel affect the degree and type of SDC?
- how do type of channel and type of SDC affect access to social capital?

Type of SDC and channel: what do we know?

- users strategically choose what information to reveal (Qiu et al 2012); context collapse is problematic for users (Vitak 2012)
- U.S. Facebook users regard SDC of intimate info in public (wall postings) as less appropriate than in private (Chat) (Bazarova 2012)
- SDC of private info in public reduces social attractiveness of discloser, when compared to SDC of private info in private (Bazarova 2012)
- effect mediated by perceived appropriateness

Hypotheses

H1: Users are more likely to disclose intimate information in Facebook Chat than in Facebook Groups and Facebook Status Updates.

H2: Users are more likely to disclose non-intimate information than intimate information in FB Chat/Groups/Status Updates.

H3: Users perceive intimate SDC as less appropriate in public than in private media channels.

Hypotheses

H4: The more appropriate users regard public intimate SDC the more likely they disclose intimate info about themselves in public media.

H5: Users who self-disclose more **intimate** info in a **private** channel have access to **more** online **bonding** social capital.

H6: Users who self-disclose more **intimate** info in a **public** channel do **not** have access to **more** online **bonding** social capital.

Research design

Experimental and survey data for hypotheses testing

424 U.S. and Dutch Facebook users (380 cases after data cleaning)

H1/H2: experiment 1: 3x2 mixed design:

- random assignment of users to 1 of 3 channels: FB Chat/ FB Group / FB Status updates
- SDC of intimate and non-intimate information

Experiment 1

Imagine that you are talking to a **GOOD FRIEND** via **FACEBOOK CHAT**. Please choose what best describes how intensively you would share the following types of information with him/her via **FACEBOOK CHAT**.

Table 2 Items for Categorical SDC based on the Pretest Results

Category	Items	Mean of Perceived Intimacy	Standard Deviation
High SDC	Intimacy I open myself wholeheartedly. I talk about my life goals. I talk about my personal insecurities. I talk about the things in the past or present that I feel ashamed of. I talk about how concerned I am for a particular person.	4.96	1.637
		4.70	1.460
		5.39	1.877
		5.00	1.784
		5.00	1.784
Low SDC	Intimacy I talk about the style of clothes I want. I talk about the kind of party or social gathering I like best. I talk about my personal standards of attractiveness about men and women. I talk about my interests and hobbies. I talk about my problems in a form of a joke.	2.57	1.619
		2.87	1.842
		3.61	1.644
		3.17	1.899
		3.65	1.229

H3 - Experiment 2

2x2 factorial design

- Disclosure channel: FB chat vs FB Status update
- SDC intimacy: high vs low

For each combination 3 scenarios, each with a specific message

Please read the message from your good friend Robin posted via FACEBOOK STATUS
UPDATE:



This message is appropriate.

This message is suitable to the situation.

This message is normal to share in this context

This message is proper.

Bonding social capital

There are several people on Facebook I trust to solve my problems

When I feel lonely, there are several people on Facebook I can talk to.

There is someone on Facebook I can turn to for advice about making very important decisions

I do not know people on Facebook well enough to get them to do anything important

Hypotheses testing: H1 / H2 / H3

H1: more intimate SDC in FB chat (M=2.39, SD=.74) than in FB Group (M=1.9, SD=.72): $t=4.72, p<.001$ and in FB status updates (M=1.75, SD=.77): $t=6.27, p<.001$

H2: more non-intimate SDC than intimate SDC

-in FB chat: $t=4.86, p<.001$ -in FB Groups: $t=11.30, p<.001$ -in FB status updates: $t=8.5, p<.001$

H3: appropriateness of intimate SDC in public vs private channel:

$t(178)=11.38, p<.001$

Table 4 Mean Levels of Perceived Appropriateness of Messages Based on the Message Intimacy (7-Point Likert Scale)

Message Intimacy	Context	Mean	SD	Obs
High intimacy	Private	4.53	1.27	179
	Public	3.45	1.18	179
Low intimacy	Private	5.52	1.11	201
	Public	5.13	1.16	201

Note. These variables were measured with a 7-point Likert scale, with 7 standing for “very appropriate”, 4 standing for “neither appropriate nor inappropriate”, and 1 standing for “very inappropriate”.

Hypothesis testing: H4

Table 5 Linear regressions for testing Hypothesis 4 (Unstandardized coefficient followed by standard errors)

Model (DV: The natural logarithm of the amount of intimate self-disclosure in public media)	I (Facebook Status Update)	II (Facebook Status Update and Facebook Group)
Perceived appropriateness	0.104* (0.040)	0.076* (0.033)
Narcissism	0.046 (0.054)	0.094* (0.039)
Facebook usage time	0.113* (0.054)	0.056 (0.041)
Age	- -	0.003 (0.004)
Constant	-0.515 (0.315)	-0.309 (0.257)
Adjust R²	0.121	0.093
N	55	103

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$.

Hypothesis testing H5 / H6

Table 6 Linear regressions for testing Hypotheses 5 and 6 (Unstandardized coefficient followed by standard errors)

Model (DV: The bonding social capital online)	III (Facebook Chat)	IV (Facebook Group)	V (Facebook Status Update)
Intimate self-disclosure (IV)	0.630*** (0.125)	0.215 (0.162)	-0.181 (0.165)
Non-intimate self-disclosure	-0.170 (0.127)	0.069 (0.142)	0.606** (0.170)
Interest in forming online relationships	-0.051 (0.103)	0.063 (0.110)	0.286* (0.109)
Narcissism	0.055 (0.105)	-0.204† (0.107)	-0.117 (0.113)
Extroversion	0.135† (0.079)	0.216* (0.105)	-0.026 (0.099)
Dispositional trust	0.312** (0.096)	0.200† (0.109)	0.069 (0.102)
Number of Facebook friends (6 categories)	.067 (.056)	.078 (.065)	.305*** (.079)
Constant	0.98 (0.650)	1.846** (0.655)	.294 (0.663)
R squared	0.3138	0.1685	0.2767
N	119	102	117

*** $p < .001$, ** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$, † $p < .10$.

Summary & discussion

Users attribute different affordances to different channels

Specific rule of appropriateness about SDC

Users who do not take into account rule of appropriateness experience limitations in access to social capital

Not just quantity of SDC (Trepte & Reinecke 2013) or directed communication (Ellison et al 2013) affects access to social capital, but also the quality (type) of info and the channel