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<div align="center">Group Midterm: Is Social Media Really Social?</div>

1. Introduction/Research Impetus

There are many conflicting ideas about the importance of social media in modern society. With all of the various social media sites, it is important to understand the effect that social media has on social development of young people. People ages 18 through 29 are the most frequent users of social media ("Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States" 1). It has never been easier to communicate with family and friends than in the age of technology and media. Whether you use Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, or Twitter, meeting new people is just a click away, and connections can be made instantly. However, these communications are often through status updates, sharing photos, and liking posts (The Effects of Social Media on Communication Skills 1). In this research, we want to unravel whether these surface level communications affect the user's desire or need to communicate outside of the app. Our research hopes the answer the question of whether social media satisfies college-aged people's desire to communicate and whether certain social media platforms breed a inherently less social environment than others.

2. Theoretical Rationale

2.1 Uses and Gratification

This theory assumes individuals are aware of their needs, can evaluate which media best suit those needs, and make choices accordingly (Webster 32). Our research includes uses and gratification in its theoretical approach because social media, texts, and phone calls require media users to decide on the appropriate channels they believe will satisfy their needs at a given time. We focus on the need for social companionship.

In 1974, sociologist and media scholar Katz wrote "Patterns of media use are shaped by more or less definite expectations of what certain kinds of content have to offer the audience member" (511). This research applies Katz's theory to communications media today. We think people make active decisions to use social media versus texts or calls depending on their present circumstances. We separate social media into one category and texts and calls into another based on the perceived differences in uses between the two. We hypothesize a greater amount of time spent on social media increases the number of outgoing text messages and phone calls a person sends. This research identifies enhancing one's social presence as the reason for using social media, sending texts, and making phone calls.

2.2 Social Presence

Social presence theory was defined in 1976 as "the degree of salience of the other person in the interaction and the consequent salience of the interpersonal relationships," and has since been used as the justification for much of social media research (Short et al. 65). Social presence accounts for how well media can evoke a feeling of in-person communication within the user and includes its capacity to transmit vocal and visual cues. Social presence varies between different types of communication, with face-to-face incurring the highest feeling, and a medium

such as a business letter rating relatively low (Short et al. 69). Different modes of communication exist on a spectrum of social presence. We believe varying degrees of social presence constitute the need individuals look to satisfy when they use social media, make phone calls, or send text messages.

Phone calls and text messages provide users with a high degree of social presence due to their synchronous nature. Social media sites like Facebook and Instagram are asynchronous and passive, and users act more as observers than participants in a real-life conversation. Individuals look to social media as a first step that signals a desire for more personal interactions, such as texts and phone calls. We argue text messages and phone calls, respectively, create a similar but greater sense of social presence than Facebook and Instagram.

If we focus on a social media user's one most preferred platform within their total social media use, differences may present which are perhaps contradictory to the original hypothesis. Snapchat provides users with the most social presence of any social media in this study. Users engage in synchronous conversation with one another, and they are able to send photo and video messages back and forth. This allows for Snapchat to better transmit facial expression, dress, and direction of looking in a present moment more effectively than Instagram or Facebook (Short et al. 65). We also hypothesize Snapchat-preferring participants will initiate fewer text messages and phone calls, relative to people with a different preferred social media, because it has the highest degree of social presence, and users are able to satisfy the need for human interaction within the app itself. Whereas Snapchat alone may discourage additional methods of telecommunication, social media as a whole encourages it.

3. Variables of Interest

This research will include three variables of interest, an independent variable, a dependent variable and a control group. These variables will help explain whether social media use, specifically Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter, have an impact on the quantity of telecommunication outside of social media. For this research we are defining telecommunication as texts and calls sent or received outside of the social media platform.

The independent variable for this research will be the social media platform that is most used by the participants and their most preferred platform. The participant's most preferred platform will be self-reported and their most used platform will be determined through observation over a week-long period. Both the preferred platform and most used platforms will be recorded to account for participants whose most used platform differs from their most preferred platform.

The dependent variable of this research will be the amount of telecommunication interactions the participants have outside of social media. For this research, that will be, the number of texts and calls sent by the participants within a week.

This research will also include a control group in which the participants will have no social media use. Participants in this group will be non-social media users or minimal users asked to refrain from using social media for a week.

4. Research Design

Our research is limited to college students in order to examine the behaviors of a group that will have relatively similar technology consumption and behaviors. Firstly, participants will

be asked to identify their preferred social media platform. We ask this because participants might not accurately know which platform they spend the most time on every day, but they will be able to answer their preferred platform. Initially, we assumed that terms "preferred" and "most used" were mutually inclusive, but this may not be the case. Over the study, we will observe the amount of time the participants spend on their preferred social media platform. This will allow us to differentiate any discrepancies between the two and account for any variances in affection for a platform and actual usage. If there are discrepancies between a participant's preferred and most used platform, we will prioritize the most used social media platform in order to monitor heavily used social media platforms.

Due to their popularity amongst young people, four social media platforms will be analyzed in this study (Edison Research 1). These platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat. These platforms have varying levels of social presence and appease one's desire for social salience in different ways. By limiting to these four independent variables, we can look at the effects of social presence on social salience and interaction outside of the preferred platforms.

Over the course of a week, participants will complete a daily survey. The duration of the experiment is one week because it will provide an idea of each participant's communication behaviors while limiting the potential for survey fatigue. Firstly, in order to have a better picture of social media usage and test our first hypothesis, participants will report the amount of time spent per day on social media. This includes their preferred platform and the other three platforms. To ensure accurate reports of time spent on social, participants will be asked to use features built into their phone's operating system that analyzes time spent on each application.

Furthermore, the survey will track the participants' communication outside of their preferred social media applications. Participants will report the amount of phone calls they have made and received as well as the number of text messages sent. Instead of measuring *all* outside communication, our research is limited to text messages and phone calls.

The control group will not identify a prefered social media platform and will be asked to stay off of social media for the duration of the experiment. We will still monitor the amount of phone calls and text messages through the same daily surveys.

5. Implications

From this experiment, we expect that consumers who use social media platforms the most will communicate the most through telecommunication channels, i.e. text messages and phone calls a person sends. This is due to our understanding that social media sites result in a desire for more personal interactions. A recent cultural phenomenon that underlines this cue of desire for personal interactions among college age students is the fear of missing out, defined as "the uneasy and sometimes all-consuming feeling that you're missing out-that your peers are doing, in the know about, or in possession of more or something better than you." Nearly three quarters of young adults reported experiencing this (Przybylskia, 2013).

With this in mind, we predict that users who prefer and use more passive, observatory social media sites like Facebook and Instagram will send more text messages and phone calls, followed by users who prefer and use Twitter, and lastly users who prefer and use Snapchat. We hypothesize that users who prefer and use Snapchat the most will send the least amount of text messages and calls because of the functioning of the app. In contrast to the Facebook and

Instagram apps that prompt users to be more passive, Snapchat involves the user actively taking pictures of themselves and messaging other users in a more conversational manner that is likely to fulfill their social needs.

If our hypotheses are true concerning increased social media use leading to increased telecommunications and that, specifically, Snapchat users will be the least telecommunicative, then we have a clearer understanding of the influence of social media on communication. This indicates that social media use may positively affect our lives, pushing us to be more communicative with others. In addition, we'll also have have a clearer understanding concerning which app features make us more or less communicative, i.e. pictured based apps versus direct messaging apps. However, if our hypotheses are false, then the evidence may point to the negative effects of social media on lives, including isolation and negative self image perception. If social media use makes users less social, then we should consider following up the study with additional studies concerning how being less social affects general life satisfaction and productivity. In addition, if our understanding of which social media platforms result in the greatest telecommunication is wrong, then we should consider following up the study by further defining what deeper aspects of the app's functioning we didn't consider in this study may be influencing telecommunication.

In identifying previous research to inform and shape our study, we analyzed research studies related to how social media peer communication impacts purchase intention and how social media and the fear of missing out connect. In both of these studies, the common thread was how peer representation on social media platforms influences the individual in some manner, whether that drives the individual to purchase or affects them motivationally,

emotionally, or behaviorally (Wang 2012). Similarly, our study focuses on how social media platforms and which specific social media platforms affect individuals to be telecommunicative. Our study is different from these two studies in that their research focuses on a specific type of content: peer reviewed products and peers on social media, whereas we don't specify content but simply measure time on social media related to number of telecommunications. This is another avenue of research we can consider in future studies. We can expand upon the study of fear of missing out and motivation, emotion, and behavior by measuring what types of content prompt users to be more telecommunicative, ex. are users exposed to content of their friends without them versus content of their friends individually lead to the user being more telecommunicative? Further, whether the study results support or don't support the proposed hypotheses, we understand that more clarity is needed concerning social media and communication outside the social media sphere and whether this effect is positively or negatively impacting us and future social media generations.

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