A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACEBOOK MESSAGES FROM
FEMALE FRIENDS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS AND THE
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EFFECT ON SELF-ESTEEM

by

Eileen Elizabeth Hegel

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Liberty University
2015
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACEBOOK MESSAGES FROM
FEMALE FRIENDS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS AND THE
MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EFFECT ON SELF-ESTEEM

by Eileen Elizabeth Hegel

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

Liberty University, Lynchburg, VA
2015

APPROVED BY:

Rebecca S. Harrison, Ed.D., Committee Chair
Melissa H. Lannom, Ed.D., Committee Member
Sandra K. Winn, D.A., Committee Member
Scott Watson, Ph.D., Associate Dean, Advanced Programs
ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study investigated positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends to middle school girls and the multi-dimensional effect on self-esteem. This study also examined what role these messages play in female friendships. Purposeful sampling was used to recruit nine participants, 13 years old, the minimum age to have a Facebook account or 14 years old, in the 7th or 8th grade in the South Atlantic region of the United States. Gilligan’s theory of moral development underpinned this study. Data collection included a descriptive survey, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale, semi-structured interviews, journals, and site artifacts. The questions framing the research: (a) RQ 1. How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends? (b) RQ 2. How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem? (c) RQ 3. How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships? The data was analyzed using Ryan and Bernard’s eight techniques and the PANAS-X as major guidelines. The findings showed that positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends to middle school girls can have a positive and negative multi-dimensional effect on self-esteem and play a role in their friendships. This study fills a gap in the literature regarding qualitative research on teens and technology. Hence, this study can benefit future research, encourage education, and provide an adventure of middle school girls’ experiences with Facebook and friendships. Recommendations have been made for those concerned with the overall, health and well-being of adolescent girls.

Keywords: self-esteem, teens and technology, Facebook, digital health and wellness
Dedication

To my parents, Edward and Margaret, thank you for the inspiration to run my race even when I zigzagged my course.
Acknowledgements

Of course, no marathon gets completed without ups and downs, and the assistance of a skilled team. To begin with, I want to thank my committee, a great group of educational leaders who gave me as God did Solomon “wisdom, very great insight, and a breadth of understanding” (1 Kings 4:29 New International Version) as I dashed and darted through the ever-present dissertation obstacles. Thank you, team captain aka Chair, Dr. Rebecca Harrison, as our adventure proved an interesting one that helped me understand the peaks and valleys of my participants. Many times, I know we looked like we may not have been on the same page, we hit a few bumps, and got some bruises but our spirits prevailed. In the words of 1 Peter 4:8 New International Version, “Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude…. ” Besides our passion for God, we have a love for education and the next generation of girls and women, thus, we looked ahead and not behind. Thank you, Dr. H. Next, words cannot express the gratefulness I feel for Dr. Sandra Winn, whom I imagine on the sidelines with a banner and wearing a t-shirt that says, “Go Team Eileen!” Regarding Dr. Melissa Lannom, I could always count on a “Hoorah!” Thank you committee for your inspiration to higher ways.

This study with girls, by a female, and overseen by women, would not be complete without the guidance of a wise man, Dr. Frederick Milacci, my research consultant. Furthermore, a shout out to Dr. Beth Ackerman who gave me my start. Thank you to Dr. Cheryl Lossie, who encouraged me to “keep moving” and Dr. Gregg Mowen, who said, “the sense of completion, is something that you just, you can’t uh, underestimate.” Amen!

Finally, a heartfelt thank you to those who pushed, prayed, and popped along my path. Unfortunately, I lost my head cheerleader, “Mr. Ed” (ironically and affectionately named after the television program, Mister Ed), my Dad, midway through the process. Yet, I know you’re
still here. Again, thank you to my Mom, “My Little Margie” (another television program term of endearment), who has always inspired me to excellence. My brother, Edward (Eddie), often called my twin whom also has passed to glory. I think this self-esteem journey also really began in part with you and your adolescent struggles. Thank you to one of the best people that I know, my sister, Patricia (“Peppermint Patty”), who made me laugh along the way and to my nephews who always give a loud “Weenie” to or should I say, “at” their crazy aunt. Words cannot express my gratefulness to the Altizer family who gave me a home away from home. Thank you to Ralph Grano for some meals with my favorite meatballs. For the likeminded ways of Rebecca Duncan and Val Callahan, I am forever grateful. Last but not least, thank you to Jeff Marden, as you thought about this work even when I didn’t know you were on the sidelines. Most importantly, thank you to each girl and her parent(s). To the girls particularly, I have heard your voices and they will always be a beat of my heart. I truly love you and thank you for the smiles, the laughter, the aches and pains, the passion and pride, along with the reminder of what it means to live as a teenager.

Years ago, I started my educational journey with a scholarship and a plan to take the route of a medical doctor in sports medicine. I rerouted to Communication Studies and funny, how we do often come full circle or close to it as I have through this doctorate degree in Educational Leadership with a health communication emphasis. God does work in mysterious ways, and with Him as our running partner we usually get where we need to go. In the words of television producer and writer, Barbara Hall, “The path to our destination is not always a straight one. We go down the wrong road, we get lost, we turn back. Maybe it doesn't matter which road we embark on. Maybe what matters is that we embark,” and so I did.
## Contents

ABSTRACT ............................................................................................................................ 3

Copyright ............................................................................................................................... 4

Dedication ............................................................................................................................. 5

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................. 6

List of Tables ....................................................................................................................... 17

List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... 18

List of Abbreviations .......................................................................................................... 19

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................... 20

Background ......................................................................................................................... 20

Situation to Self .................................................................................................................... 22

Problem Statement ............................................................................................................. 24

Purpose Statement ............................................................................................................. 26

Significance of the Study .................................................................................................... 26

Research Questions .......................................................................................................... 28

Research Plan ..................................................................................................................... 28

Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations ................................................................. 29

Definitions ......................................................................................................................... 30

Summary ............................................................................................................................ 32

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW ............................................................................ 33

Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 33

Overview ............................................................................................................................. 33

Theoretical Framework ....................................................................................................... 34
Gilligan: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development ........................................ 34
Teen Esteem .................................................................................................................. 40
Teen Esteem and the Multi-Dimensional Effect .......................................................... 45
The Teen Media Scene ................................................................................................ 54
Teens and Their Technological Culture ...................................................................... 62
Teens and the Facebook Trend .................................................................................... 67
Teen Esteem, Technology, the Educational Implications, and Interventions ............ 79
Summary ....................................................................................................................... 89

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY ........................................................................ 90
Overview ....................................................................................................................... 90
Design ......................................................................................................................... 91
Hermeneutical Phenomenology .................................................................................. 91
Assumptions of Common Ground ............................................................................. 95
Research Questions ..................................................................................................... 96
Setting .......................................................................................................................... 97
Participants .................................................................................................................. 97
Procedures .................................................................................................................... 98
IRB Approval ................................................................................................................. 98
Recruitment of Participants ....................................................................................... 99
Pre-Interview Connections ........................................................................................ 99
Assent and Consent Forms ......................................................................................... 100
Initial Interviews and Journals ................................................................................. 100
Transcription of Interviews ....................................................................................... 102
Second Meetings with Member Checks and Journal Reviews ........................................ 102
Descriptive Surveys and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales Coded ................................ 103
Transcriptions Coded ................................................................................................. 104
Six-Stage Data Analysis ............................................................................................. 104
The Researcher’s Role ................................................................................................. 104
Data Collection ............................................................................................................ 106
Descriptive Surveys ..................................................................................................... 106
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales ..................................................................................... 106
Initial Interviews .......................................................................................................... 107
Journals ......................................................................................................................... 108
Second Meetings .......................................................................................................... 108
Site Artifacts ................................................................................................................ 109
Data Analysis .............................................................................................................. 110
Stage One: Organization .............................................................................................. 111
Stage Two: Transcription of Interviews ....................................................................... 111
Stage Three: Second Meetings with Member Checks and Journal Reviews ............... 112
Stage Four: Coding ....................................................................................................... 112
Stage Five: Textural and Structural Descriptions ....................................................... 117
Stage Six: Composite Description ............................................................................... 118
Trustworthiness ............................................................................................................ 119
Descriptive Validity and the RSES ............................................................................. 119
Descriptive Validity and Member Checks .................................................................. 119
Descriptive Validity and Journals .............................................................................. 120
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Descriptive Survey Results

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Results

Theme One: Participants Described Messages Used to Catch Up with the News as Positive

Subtheme One: Updates on What Friends and Family Might Be Doing

Subtheme Two: Management and Organization of Extracurricular Activities

Subtheme Three: To Share and View Pictures

Subtheme Four: Just to See What Might Be Happening on Facebook

Theme Two: Participants Described Happy Messages As Positive
Subtheme Two: Bad Days ........................................................................................................138

Theme Three: Participants Described Funny Messages as Positive..................................139

Subtheme One: "Funny But..."..........................................................................................140

Subtheme Two: "A Friend Thing".......................................................................................143

Theme One: Participants Described Inappropriate Messages as Negative......................144

Subtheme One: Bullying and Cyberbullying.......................................................................145

Subtheme Two: Boys........................................................................................................149

Subtheme Three: Bad Choices............................................................................................150

Theme Two: Participants Described Mean Messages as Negative.................................151

Mean Messages................................................................................................................152

Theme Three: Participants Described Dramafied Messages as Negative......................155

Dramafied Messages..........................................................................................................156

Research Question One Summary ....................................................................................159

Multi-Dimensional Effect................................................................................................160

Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive

Physical Reactions .............................................................................................................160

Positive Physical Reactions..............................................................................................161

Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative

Physical Reactions.............................................................................................................164

Negative Physical Reactions.............................................................................................164

Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Affect.............170

Positive Affect ..................................................................................................................170

Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative Affect........178
Negative Affect ........................................................................................................................................ 179

Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Adult Effects ...... 190
  Adult Effects ........................................................................................................................................ 190

Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Adult Effects .... 194
  Adult Effects ........................................................................................................................................ 194

Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Academic Effects .......................................................... 199
  Academic Effects .................................................................................................................................. 200

Theme One: Positive and Negative Messages Can Have A Negative Effect Per Negative Academic-Related Effects ................................. 201
  Academic-Related Effects ...................................................................................................................... 201

Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Affect .................. 202
  Positive Affect ...................................................................................................................................... 202

Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative Affect .............. 203
  Negative Affect .................................................................................................................................... 203

Research Question Two Summary ........................................................................................................ 204

Theme One: Participants Described Positive Messages as Affirmation of Their Friendships ........................................................................ 205
  Subtheme One: Best Friends .................................................................................................................... 205
  Subtheme Two: Great Friends .................................................................................................................. 206
  Subtheme Three: Good Friends ................................................................................................................ 207
  Subtheme Four: Sister-Like Friends ....................................................................................................... 207

Theme Two: Participants Described Positive Messages as Supportive ...................................... 208
Subtheme One: School-Related Activities ................................................................. 208
Subtheme Two: Personal Matters ............................................................................. 209
Theme Three: Participants Described Positive Messages Foster Their Friendships .... 211
Subtheme One: Love ................................................................................................. 211
Subtheme Two: Other Encouragement ..................................................................... 212
Theme One: Participants Described Negative Messages Can Lead to
Adult Involvement .................................................................................................... 213
Subtheme One: Parental Involvement in Friendships .............................................. 213
Subtheme Two: School Personnel ........................................................................... 215
Theme Two: Participants Described Negative Messages Can Lead to Fights .......... 218
Subtheme One: Something Said ............................................................................... 218
Subtheme Two: Potential Fights and Other Fights Among Friends ....................... 219
Theme Three: Participants Described Negative Messages Can End Friendships .... 221
Subtheme One: Participants “Unfriend” ................................................................. 221
Subtheme Two: Blocked Friends ............................................................................. 223
Subtheme Three: Other Endings ............................................................................. 224
Research Question Three Summary ....................................................................... 225
Summary .................................................................................................................. 225

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .......... 226
Overview .................................................................................................................. 226
Summary of the Findings ......................................................................................... 226
Research Question One ............................................................................................ 227
Research Question Two ............................................................................................ 228
Research Question Three

Discussion

Gilligan’s Theory of Moral Development Revisited

Triangulation

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Scores

Research Question One Major Themes

Research Question Two Major Themes

Research Question Three Major Themes

How This Study Adds to the Literature

Additional Conclusions

Implications

Theoretical Implications

Methodological Implications

Empirical Implications

Practical Implications

Delimitations and Limitations

Recommendations for Future Research

Summary

REFERENCES

APPENDIX A

APPENDIX B

APPENDIX C

APPENDIX D
List of Tables

Table 1: Descriptive Survey Results………………………………………………………… 129

Table 2: Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Scores……………………………………………… 131
List of Figures

Figure 1: The dimensions of health/wellness……………………………………………………………. 46
Figure 2: Almond Joy candy bar commercial meme…………………………………………………… 141
Figure 3: “Funny but…” meme…………………………………………………………………………….. 142
Figure 4: Drawing of suicide message per Jasper’s interview……………………………………… 157
Figure 5: Facebook wheel/circle of attachment………………………………………………………… 231
Figure 6: Sociometer model as related to Facebook………………………………………………… 235
Figure 7: Traditional Media and Facebook Links……………………………………………………… 238
List of Abbreviations

Collective self-esteem (CSES)
Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V)
Mass Interpersonal Persuasion (MIT)
Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (PANAS-X)
Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES)
Social networking sites (SNS)
Standards of Learning (SOL)
To Be Honest (TBH)
Women Crush Wednesday (WCW)
World Health Organization (WHO)
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Background

Historically, traditional media has played a huge role in the lives of adolescent girls and given them messages on how to speak, look and act in their journey from adolescence to adulthood (Botta, 1999; Durham, 1999, 2008; Etcoff, Orbach, & Scott, 2004; Field et al., 1999; Gotz et al., 2008; Hammel, 2008; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005; Signorielli, 2004). For example, girls have been portrayed as being extremely thin (Kearney-Cooke, 2008), objectified (Durham, 1999, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997), hypersexualized (Sarracino & Scott, 2008), and stereotyped (Gotz et al., 2008). In many instances, older girls have been cast as younger. For example, in the 1990s television hit Beverly Hills 90210, 29-year-old, Gabrielle Carteris admittedly lied about her age to play the part of a 16-year old high schooler (Carteris, 2011).

By nature, middle school girls go through significant changes and growth (Jacob & Yoo, 2010; Mitchell, Petrie, Greenleaf, & Martin, 2012; Racine, DeBate, Gabriel, & High, 2011) In Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem, Kearney-Cooke (2008) gave online surveys to 1,029 girls, eight to 17 years old, and found seven out of 10 girls felt they did not measure up whether it be in appearance, school performance or in relationships with friends and family. Herein, Kearney-Cooke emphasized the emergency nature of these findings and that they should not be overlooked for the present and future of society.

During the adolescent years, the media plays a major role as girls seek to negotiate and construct their identities (Badaoui, Lebrun, & Bouchet, 2012; Diedrichs, Lee, & Kelly, 2008; Durham, 1999, 2008; Halliwell, Easun, & Harcourt, 2011; Pipher, 1994). Throughout history,
girls and traditional media have had a negative relationship, particularly in the area of self-esteem (Becker, Burwell, Herzog, Hamburg, & Gilman, 2002; Botta, 1999; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; Durham, 1999, 2008; Etcoff et al., 2004; Field et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hinshaw & Kranz, 2009; Hua, 2012; Jacob & Yoo, 2010; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; McClure, Tanski, Kingsbury, Gerrard, & Sargent, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pipher, 1994; Racine et al., 2011; Sanders, 2009; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Signorielli, 2004; Slater, Tiggemann, Hawkins, & Werchon, 2012; Snigda & Venkatesh, 2011; Spettigue & Henderson, 2004; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Along with the impact of traditional media traditional on girls and self-esteem, technology, also known as new media, should now be examined (Ahn, 2011; Agosto & Abbas, 2009; Akanegbu, 2012; Anderson, 2012; Anderson, Fagan, Woodnutt, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2012; Andreasson, Torsheim, Brunborg, & Palleson, 2012; Blair & Fletcher, 2011; Block, 2008; Considine, Horton, & Moorman, 2009; Courtois, Mechant, Paulussen, & De Marez, 2011; Craft, 2010; Davis, 2012; Denti et al., 2012; Dowell, Burgess, & Cavanaugh, 2009; Gangadharbatla, 2008; Gentile, Twenge, & Campbell, 2010; Gottfried, 2012; Griffiths, 2012; Hoal, 2011; Jelenchick, Eickhoff, & Moreno, 2012; Kite, Gable, & Filippelli, 2010; Kumar et al., 2012; Lenhart et al., 2011; Leung & Lee, 2012; Lewis & Wahesh, 2012; Livingstone, 2008; Madden, Cortesi, Gasser, Lenhart, & Duggan, 2012; McBride, 2011; McCarthy, 2010; Moreno, 2010; O’Keefe, Clarke-Pearson, & Council on Communications and Media, 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pies, 2009; Reich, Subrahmanyan, & Espinoza, 2012; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Selfhout, Branje, Delsing, Ter Bogt, & Meeus, 2009; Selwyn, 2009; Slater et al., 2012; Subrahmanyam & Lin, 2007; Teng, 2012; Tong, Van Der Heide, & Langwell, 2008; Trim, 2010; Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006; Young, 2012; Zernicke, 2013; Zurbriggen et al., 2010).
To gain an understanding of today’s teen, Prensky (2001) noted that most teens have grown up as “digital natives” (p. 1), also known as “digital immigrants” (p. 1). As Prensky discussed, since birth they have been “surrounded by and using computers, videogames, digital music players, video cams, cell phones, and all the other toys and tools of the digital age” (p. 1). Hence, these teens can be considered digital citizens of the World Wide Web (Davis, 2012; Denti et al., 2012; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Subrahmanyan & Greenfield, 2008). On the positive side, technology allows adolescents to have a cell phone at all times for safety (Blair & Fletcher, 2011) or a computer for educational purposes (O’Keefe et al., 2011). On the negative end, some of the dangers of cyberspace include sexual predators (McCarthy, 2010), cyberbullying (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), and other social media drama on websites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and other venues (Boyd, 2014; Lenhart et al., 2011).

Without a doubt, new media research has just begun (Moreno, 2010). In his 1923 speech to the Royal College of Surgeons in London, the famous writer, Rudyard Kipling, said, “…and words, are of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind” (Del Turco, n.d., para. 1). Therefore, the study of words through verbal analysis and site artifacts, also known as qualitative research, must continue to evolve for a better understanding of how new media plays a role in daily living. Thus, this research examined how positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends can multi-dimensionally effect middle school girls’ self-esteem and play a role in their friendships.

**Situation to Self**

As a young girl, I can remember feeling like a square peg in a round hole. While other girls played with Barbies, I played with baseball bats. Stereotypical male activities suited me well. I felt comfortable in my skin. However, others did not seem to feel quite the same about
my tomboy ways. Thus, rather than be myself, I felt pressure to conform to how girls act and what females do. This did not suit me well.

In one instance, the local Little League coach wanted to add fun to the boys’ game. With the agreement of my family, I got dressed in a burgundy and white uniform, and tucked my long, chestnut hair under a baseball cap to play first base. The coach called the local media to introduce this new first base phenomenon. However, after only a few innings, a parent complained that his son got put in right field, while a girl had a better position. To my disappointment, I was taken out of the game. The media had not even showed up yet. Thus, my day of fame quickly faded under the word “female.”

Going through my teenage years, I can recall not only the personal stress, but the public strain placed upon girls and women per media messages. In the 1970s females were encouraged to fly like Superwoman with superb skills as a wife, mother, and career wonder. At the end of the day, we were to look ready for the red carpet rather than the rugged kitchen.

As I approached my early twenties, I began to see the fatal flaws of these patterns of pressure upon females. Be skinny, sexy, and a superhero were the messages that I received. As a young woman with a muscular body type, a mildly conservative style of dress, and a set of mini young adult wings, I felt more like an awkward, baby bird rather than an exquisite eagle.

Meanwhile, some of my friends had started down the path to eating disorders, others had abandoned the so-called career track, and I went on a journey of self-discovery. Although a completely competent and confident student, rather than take the college path, I took the road less traveled. I went to explore the world.

In doing so, not only did I find out about others but also about myself. After being laid off from a job at a television station, I found myself sick in bed. Life’s pressures seemed to
consume me at a young age.

However, while on my sick bed, I had a dream that my heart had been taken out and a new heart put in. At the same time, to ease my boredom, I had been reading a book or two along with the Bible. While reading my Bible, a scripture jumped off the page that went along with my dream. “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26 New International Version).

Indeed, life’s greatest lessons often come in mysterious ways. I felt this heart lesson had implications for my big picture. As I thought further about this concept, I recognized that I had built a shell around myself trying to fit into the world’s mold. Therefore, I had a gigantic problem as I could not fit. Thus began the uncovering of my heart and soul.

**Problem Statement**

Historically, a problem exists in that girls have a poor relationship with traditional media which impacts their self-esteem (Becker, 1995; Becker et al., 2002; Botta, 1999; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; Durham, 2008; Etcoff et al., 2004; Field et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hinshaw & Kranz, 2009; Hua, 2012; Jacob & Yoo, 2010; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pipher, 1994; Racine et al., 2011; Sanders, 2009; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Signorielli, 2004; Slater et al., 2012; Spettigue & Henderson, 2004; Snigda & Venkatesh, 2011; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Because of this relationship, and the increase of new media use among teens, this connection should be continuously examined and understood (Madden et al., 2012; O’Keefe et al., 2011).

Indeed, today’s adolescents use technology constantly, whereby, a technological gadget can be likened to an appendage. According to the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American
Life Project, “95% of all teens ages 12-17 are now online and 80% of online teens are users of social media sites” (Lenhart et al., 2011, p. 2). In her interview with the Digital Media Learning and Research Hub, Lenhart, Senior Research Specialist, of the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project, noted middle school girls usually are among the first to experiment with social media as they have just started to spread their social wings (Burke, 2012).

On one hand, social media provides a wonderful way for young people to share family (Craft, 2010), friends (Davis, 2012), and fun adventures (Tapscott, 2009). On the other hand, social media opens doors to cyberbullying (Lenhart et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), sexual predators (McCarthy, 2010), and deceptiveness (Guadagno, Okdie, & Kruse, 2012). Thus, the positive and negative outcomes of social media should be further studied, as the repercussions of such activities can have short-term and long-term effects at home, school, and in the community. Therefore, this research acts as an important step of awareness for girls, their parents, and the public regarding the power of social media (Considine et al., 2009) during this changing and critical time of adolescence.

Over the last 25 years, the research on the media and adolescent girls confirms the scope of this problem and importance of this issue (Ahn, 2011; Agosto & Abbas, 2009; Akanegbu, 2012; Anderson, 2012; Anderson et al., 2012; Andreasson et al., 2012; Blair & Fletcher, 2011; Block, 2008; Botta, 1999; Courtois et al., 2011; Craft, 2010; Davis, 2012; Denti et al., 2012; Dowell et al., 2009; Durham, 2008; Etcoff et al., 2004; Field et al., 1999; Gangadharbatla, 2008; Gentile et al., 2010; Gottfried, 2012; Gotz et al., 2008; Griffiths, 2012; Hinshaw & Kranz, 2009; Hoal, 2011; Jelenchick et al., 2012; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; Kite et al., 2010; Kumar et al., 2012; Leung & Lee, 2012; Lewis & Wahesh, 2012; Livingstone, 2008; Madden et al., 2012; McBride, 2011; McCarthy, 2010; Moreno, 2011; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pies,
Moreover, the rationale for this design lies in the ever-increasing use of social media among teens and the need for exploration of this phenomenon, particularly in relationship to self-esteem (Jones, 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Boyd (2014) noted the lack of qualitative studies on teens and technology, thus, the importance of what adolescents have to say on issues that relate to them. Therefore, the choice of a hermeneutical phenomenological approach (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) seemed appropriate, as the lived experiences of middle school girls’ and the multi-dimensional effect of social media messages on their self-esteem and friendships should not be overlooked.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to describe middle school girls’ perceptions of positive and/or negative Facebook messages from female friends and how, if at all, they multi-dimensionally effect their self-esteem and friendships. Understanding this phenomena may benefit the past, present, and future of middle school girls and those who work with them in their educational processes.

**Significance of the Study**

The results of this study have meaning in three key areas: (a) personal responsibility; (b) for parents and other adult leaders that influence children; and (c) community awareness such as for teachers, administrators, and other leadership training.

Regarding middle school girls and personal responsibility, this research can give them insight into the power of social media messages; specifically, Facebook and how it can multi-
dimensionally effect one’s self-esteem and friendships. For instance, this research can provide insight as to how social media messages may influence how an individual feels about oneself and each day (Lenhart et al., 2011). Herein, middle school girls may have the opportunity to consider whom they do and don’t let into their life not only via social media but in general.

For parents, the findings of this study can give more information into their child’s “digital footprints” (Madden et al., 2012, p. 2). Thus, these findings can provide awareness for adults of the social media actions of teenagers that can contribute to their positive and negative behavior. Most importantly, these findings can remind parents and other adults about the importance of their involvement with social media and the children in their sphere of influence.

Moreover, this research can potentially benefit teachers and others that work with young people as social media has become a “routine activity” (O’Keefe et al., 2011, p. 800). In fact, low-income minority students have started in kindergarten to use the computer keyboard in programs such as the Knowledge is Power Program in South Los Angeles (Barshay, 2011). Therefore, the interest and awareness of technology, as well as the multiple ways it can be used, begins early. Additionally, the findings of this study can help students to understand the importance of media literacy.

Since technology changes frequently, Burke (2012) suggests that the topic should be addressed regularly especially as related to children. When Burke interviewed Amanda Lenhart, Senior Research Specialist, of the Pew Research Center’s Internet and American Life Project for the Digital Media Learning and Research Hub, Lenhart also discussed the importance of children being accompanied throughout life on their technological adventure. Lenhart stated, “I think it is so very important, and I really love this idea of looking at the whole child across his/her whole life and making sure he/she is nurtured and taught and escorted through the technological
difficulties of adolescence by a large variety of people” (Burke, 2012, para. 10). This research serves as a part of this journey.

**Research Questions**

The questions framing the research are:

**RQ 1.** How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?

**RQ 2.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?

**RQ 3.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?

**Research Plan**

This study employed a hermeneutical phenomenologic approach. Van Manen (1990) noted, “hermeneutical phenomenology is a human science which studies persons” (p. 6). Therefore, this study used nine middle school girls in the seventh or eighth grade who were each 13, the minimum age to have a Facebook account (“Facebook,” 2013) or 14 years old. The participants resided in the South Atlantic region of the United States.

Along with van Manen’s (1990) ideas, Merleau-Ponty (1962) described phenomenology as “the study of essences” (p. vii). To understand the meaning of essences, one must experience the “texts of life” (van Manen, 1990, p. 4). Creswell (2007) said phenomenology returns “to the traditional tasks of philosophy” (p. 58) and one would be “remiss” (p. 59) to exclude the philosophical underpinnings. Therefore, an in-depth review of the rationale for this study will be presented in Chapter Three.
Most importantly, the choice of phenomenology aligns with van Manen’s (1990) ideas, and the researcher’s purpose to understand “human science” (p. 11). Van Manen reiterated, “what it means to be in the world as a man, a woman, a child, taking into account sociocultural and historical traditions that have given meaning to our ways of being in the world” (p. 12). Van Manen remarked phenomenology serves as a ministry “of thoughtfulness” (p. 12). In this case, thoughtfulness related to adolescent girls and their relationship with the media. Thus, the voices of middle school girls were heard as related to positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends and how they can multi-dimensionally effect their self-esteem and friendships to provide, in van Manen’s words, “tactful thoughtfulness, situational perceptiveness, discernment and depthful understanding” (p. 156).

**Assumptions, Delimitations, and Limitations**

As one considers research, assumptions, delimitations, and limitations must be considered. The assumptions in this study included: (a) the choice of phenomenology as the research approach, (b) sample size, and (c) the authenticity of girls’ voices, as opposed to what they think the researcher wanted to hear. The delimitations included: (a) participants were selected from only one county in the South Atlantic region of the United States, and the study has been limited to nine, seventh and eighth grade, 13 and 14 year old girls; (b) in this region, the leaders of approximately ten to fifteen groups were contacted as well as individual parents, and (c) RSES (Rosenberg, 1965, see Appendix H) scores (see Table 2) were self-reported. Limitations included: (a) semi-structured interviews and not enough time, (b) authenticity related to trust, and (c) the possibility of girls with low self-disclosure; (d) the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965, see Appendix H) can also be considered a limitation per lack of contextual factors.
Definitions

Bullying: Dess, White, Jaffe, and Jaffe’s (2011) acronym RAP help one to remember “three components that distinguish bullying behavior from hurtful teasing” (p. 3) means (a) “Repeated often to the same person or different people” (p.3), (b) “An imbalance of power” (p. 3), and (c) “Purposeful with the intent to make fun of, embarrass or exclude others” (p. 3).

Bully/Cyberbullying: Per this study’s definitions the terms have been used interchangeably, however, at times, the context differentiates the meanings as bullying can occur offline while cyberbullying happens online.

Cyberbullying: Cyberbullying refers to, “mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles” (“What is Cyberbullying?,” n.d., para. 2).

Female friend: A female friend refers to a Facebook “friend” unless denoted.

Media: For this research, media will be used as an all inclusive term for traditional media, new media, and social media. These individual definitions have been included.

Messages: Messages will be defined as electronic communication either written, auditory (songs), or visual data (artwork, photos, video recordings) from a female friend. This may be a private message sent to a participant’s Facebook account or a public message to include a status or a comment posted on a Facebook wall. The message may or may not elicit a direct response.

Middle school(s): Although the middle school years can be defined as sixth to eighth grade, for purposes of this study, the participants were required to be in the seventh or eighth grade, and 13 years old, the minimum age to have a Facebook account (“Facebook,” 2013) or 14 years old.
Multi-dimensional effect: Multi-dimensional effect refers to the physical, emotional, social, intellectual or mental, and spiritual factors that play a role in middle school girls’ self-esteem and overall health and well-being (Butler, 2001). Similar to Butler’s (2001) dimensions, the National Wellness Institute supports an “interdependent model” (Hettler, 1976, p. 1) but with an added occupational category. In this study, Hettler’s (1976) occupational category does not play a role at this time with most middle school girls. Considerations have also been given for Miller (1997) whom supports a holistic model for education.

New media: As technologies continue to evolve, definitions of new media continue to expand. For this research, Logan’s (2010) definition of new media will be used and “in general refer to those digital media that are interactive, incorporate two-way communication, and involve some sort of computing” (p. 5).

Social media: Forms of social media continue to evolve with the addition of new technologies. Cohen (2011) noted thirty definitions of social media. The following definition of social media by Jones (2009) will be used for this research:

A category of online media where people are talking, participating, sharing, networking, and bookmarking online. Most social media services encourage discussion, feedback, voting, comments, and sharing of information from all interested parties. It's more of a two-way conversation, rather than a one-way broadcast like traditional media. Another unique aspect of social media is the idea of staying connected or linked to other sites, resources, and people. (para. 3-4)

Social networking sites (SNS) include “Facebook, blogs, YouTube, Twitter, MySpace, and virtual worlds such as Second Life” (Wankel, 2009, p. 251). For this study, Facebook will be the primary source of social media.
Traditional media: For this research, traditional media will be defined as, “newspapers, radio, television, cable TV, magazines and other print publications” (Sturgis, 2013, para. 1).

Summary

Chapter One gives a background on middle school girls and Facebook as related to self-esteem and friendships. The chapter also described the (a) situation to self; (b) problem statement; (c) purpose statement; (d) significance of the study; (f) research questions; (g) research plan; (h) the assumptions, delimitations, and limitations; and (i) the definitions. To further understand the importance of this study, one must better understand the past and present as found in a review of the literature.
CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This literature review includes: (a) Gilligan’s (1982) theory of moral development as a framework for understanding adolescent girls’ voice and self-esteem; (b) the value of teen self-esteem; (c) teen esteem and the multi-dimensional effect (d) the importance of social acceptance in adolescents; (e) the teen media scene; (f) teens and their technological culture, specifically, Facebook; and (g) teen esteem, technology, and the educational implications and interventions. The literature gives a foundation for this study on Facebook and the lived experiences of middle school girls with positive and negative messages from female friends as they impact self-esteem and friendships.

Overview

The technological world changes at a fast pace. As Considine et al. (2009) stated, “from Gutenberg to Gates, from the invention of the printing press to the emergence of digital communication, technology has transformed the way we produce, distribute, and receive information” (p. 471). Thus, the multitude of ways the digital landscape directly impacts its citizens should be examined.

Computer mediated communication has exploded. A powerful blast needs an investigation for its risks and benefits, particularly when the future generation has “been involved with computers from the time they were toddlers” (Wankel, 2009, p. 251). Moreover, educators need to keep in step with the skills that students bring to the classroom (Courtois et al., 2011). Considine et al. (2009) described these abilities as “a rich and different set of literacy practices and background that is often unacknowledged or underused by educators” (p. 471). This literature review starts a conversation of how social media, specifically Facebook, plays
a role in today’s society, particularly with adolescent girls.

Theoretical Framework

Gilligan: Psychological Theory and Women’s Development

Ethic of care. Through her 1980 book, *In A Different Voice*, Gilligan (1982) proclaimed what some consider a revelation and began what others call a revolution (Graham, 2012). Contrary to the work of well-known researchers, Freud (1938), Erikson (1950), Piaget (1932), and Kohlberg (1958) and their stages of moral development, Gilligan unexpectedly discovered that females do indeed view the world differently than males. In her interview with Kiegelmann (2009) Gilligan stated, “like the Gestalt experiments where you could see a vase or two faces in profile; psychologists were talking about vases while women were often seeing the faces” (p. 4).

Indeed, as Bodey and Wood (2009) remarked the concept of voice “has a long and rich history in relation to women” (p. 325), going back to “Virginia Woolf’s 1929 essay, ‘A Room of One’s Own,’ in which Woolf argued that women need their own space-private, uninterruptable-to cultivate their voices” (p. 325). However, Gilligan (1982) found a distinction in women’s voices. This distinct difference challenged what researchers previously considered “a problem in women’s development” (p. 7), Gilligan now called “a problem in theory” (p. 7).

In the 1970s at Harvard University, Gilligan (1982) had the opportunity to work with Erikson and Kohlberg. Gilligan described her research in relationship to the findings of those within “the so-called objective position” (p. xviii) of “the canon of traditional social science research” (p. xviii) who were “blind to the particularities of voice and the inevitable constructions that constitute point of view” (p. xviii). In her interview with Gilligan, and their discussion about the male-dominated theoretical approaches, Kiegelmann (2009) described the lack as “the researchers forgot to study women” (p. 7).
To better understand Gilligan’s (1982) perspective, one must consider her concept of voice. When asked what she meant by voice, Gilligan responded, “voice” (p. xvi). Thus, Gilligan expounded:

I say that by voice I mean something like what people mean when they speak of the core of the self. Voice is natural and cultural. It is composed of breath and sound, words, rhythm, and language. And voice is a powerful psychological instrument and channel, connecting inner and outer worlds. (p. xvi)

Gilligan further discussed voice as being “a new key for understanding the psychological, social, and cultural order—a litmus of relationships and a measure of psychological health” (p. xvi).

Contextually, Gilligan’s (1982) research came after the second-wave of feminism meaning, “the women’s liberation movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s” (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 7). In the 1960s, Friedan (1963) had set the stage for this second wave in her book, *The Feminine Mystique*. Friedan called this feminine mystique the “yearning in the millions of words written about women, for women, in all the columns, books, and articles by experts telling women their role was to seek fulfillment as wives and mothers” (p. 57).

Like Friedan (1963) in the 1960s and 1970s, a number of woman scholars such as Gilligan (1982) “challenged the traditional gender dynamics” (Kearney, 2009, p. 4) that had long been a part of the academy. Krolokke and Sorensen (2006) recalled this rise of feminism was “inspired by the tactics of the more activist parts of liberal feminism, radical second-wave feminists also used performance (e.g., underground or guerilla theater) to shed light on what was now termed ‘women’s oppression’” (p. 8). Similar to Friedan’s work, Gilligan’s message “became an immediate sensation, embraced by newly formed women’s studies departments and by women themselves” (Graham, 2012, para. 2).
During this movement, feminists addressed “the woman question” (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 10). Kearney (2009) stated that many scholars did this in a way “to explore women’s uniqueness” (p. 12). Rather than take the approach of what some might call the radical feminists, Gilligan (1982) approached the subject in a “woman-friendly” (Krolokke & Sorensen, 2006, p. 12) way that gave her voice and message credence.

In other words, Gilligan (1982) encouraged the voices of the radical feminists to receive reevaluation and understanding in respect to “knowledge, know-how, and empowerment” (Krolokke, 2006, p. 12). As Gilligan recalled, “it shifted the paradigm” (Kiegelmann, 2009, p. 5). Gilligan also stated:

The idea that women’s entrance would initiate a change in the structure, whether of theory or practice, work or love, by introducing new experiences, new perceptions, new ways of seeing and thinking, that’s more contentious and also more pressing, because we can now see more clearly the limitations of the old ways. (Kiegelmann, 2009, p. 6)

Thus, as Shaughnessy (1988) noted in Gilligan’s Travels, answered the question, “What difference will women make?” (p. 8).

Per the literature, Gilligan’s (1982) work has been controversial (Kurtz, 2002). Not only have scholars questioned her research methods (Graham, 2012), but like Farady noted (2010), the premise of her philosophy, meaning the death-by-culture or at-risk model called the “girl-crisis movement” (p. 44), has also been questioned.

Admittedly, Gilligan (1982) commented that some of her work had research restraints. For example, in her abortion study Gilligan said, “these findings were gathered at a particular moment in history, the sample was small, and the women were not selected to represent a larger
population” (p. 126). Nevertheless, Gilligan’s work has been powerfully embraced (Graham, 2012; Kearney, 2009; Shaughnessy, 1988).

What made Gilligan’s (1982) work a message to hear? To begin with, one must understand how she reached her findings. Throughout her years of research listening to people talk about their lives, Gilligan stated that she “‘began to hear a distinction in these voices, two ways of speaking about moral problems, two modes of describing the relationship between other and self’” (Kiegeleman, 2009, p. 1).

Specifically, Gilligan (1982) became aware of differences between male and female, as “characterized not by gender but theme” (p. 2). Gilligan said, “given the differences in women’s conception of self and morality, women bring to the life cycle a different point of view and order human experience in terms of different priorities” (p. 22). Because she had learned from Erikson how life “entwined” (p. xi), Gilligan reinforced what she recognized as, “listening to women, I heard a difference and discovered that bringing in women’s lives changes both psychology and history. It literally changes the voice: how the human story is told, and also who tells it” (p. xi).

In reflection, Gilligan (2011) quoted the words of one of her former colleagues in anthropology who said:

Culture appears in the unspoken. Culture is the way of seeing and speaking that is so much a part of everyday living that it never has to be articulated.

Fish don’t know they are swimming in water, until they are fish out of water.

It is when culture shifts that we recognize the ocean in which we have been drenched. (para. 4)

Gilligan commented further about the opportunity, In a Different Voice, presented for “people whose voices were dismissed to be heard” (para. 1). When she recalled the start of her teaching
career, Gilligan mentioned she even found herself omitting the thoughts of girls and women.

Hence, a further understanding of Gilligan’s psychological theory of women’s development (Gilligan, 1982) includes “the use of two different value systems” (Graham, 2012, para. 8). Gilligan found that men use an “ethic of justice” (p. 174) and women an “ethic of care” (p. 174). As Gilligan emphasized, the difference being, “an ethic of justice proceeds from the premise of equality—that everyone should be treated the same—an ethic of care rests on the premise of nonviolence—that no one should be hurt” (p. 174).

To elaborate, Gilligan (1982) referred to an “ethic of justice” (p. 174) as men being concerned with the rights of the individual. On the other hand, Gilligan reinforced that women view the world through an “ethic of care” (p. 174) and the perspective of their responsibilities to others. With men, Gilligan discovered they find value in the establishment of “separateness” (p. 12), while women find importance in “attachments” (p. 12).

As noted, while previous researchers consider the perspective of women as a lack in moral development, Gilligan (1982) deemed this view a male bias and “life being seen through men’s eyes” (p. 6). With her new view, Gilligan stated it “changes the basic constructs of interpretation” (p. 173).

What significance does this have? Besides Gilligan’s (1982) revelation and the start of a revolution (Graham, 2012), the importance of understanding the tension of rights and responsibilities emerged. Herein, as Gilligan stated how the tension “sustains the dialectic of human development” (p. 174) and “to see the integrity of two disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected” (p. 174).

In a look back, Gilligan (2011) reflected that her book’s title, *In A Different Voice*, called “for a new way of speaking a change in the very terms of the conversation about ourselves and
morality, women and men-about the human condition” (para. 2). Indeed, Gilligan’s “argument rang true for thousands of readers” (Graham, 2012, para. 12). Thirty years later, Graham (2012) concluded that Gilligan’s voice still speaks.

The loss of voice. Over the years, Gilligan’s (1982) voice research expanded. In 1992, Brown and Gilligan worked with girls as part of a series through the Harvard Project on Women’s Psychology and Girls’ Development. As a part of the project, Brown and Gilligan were invited to work with girls at The Laurel School, and they recorded this research in their book, Meeting at the Crossroads. With this research, Brown and Gilligan expanded their understanding of female moral development.

In their work, Brown and Gilligan (1992) discovered “early adolescence as a crossroads in women’s lives” (p. 1). In respect to voice, Brown and Gilligan realized a paradox that added to girls’ need for “survival strategies” (p. 217). Gilligan (1982) commented on this need for survival as “girls struggle against losing voice and against creating an inner division or split, so that large parts of themselves are kept out of relationship” (p. xxiii).

In other words, Brown and Gilligan (1992) found that as girls begin their adolescent journey, they begin to lose their authentic voice for a more acceptable one. Brown and Gilligan referred to a more acceptable voice as “what others want and desire, or look more like some ideal image of what a woman or person should be” (p. 218). Theoretically, Brown and Gilligan considered that perhaps girls “compromise between voice and relationships” (p. 218), in what psychologists call “a compromise formation” (p. 218). Cihonski (2003) emphasized, “this pressure comes from places such as television, magazines, schools, movies, and peers” (p. 12).

This crossroads compromise, as Brown and Gilligan (1992) stated showed “some of the darker places in women’s development, including the processes of disassociation and
disconnection which play a central role in women’s psychological lives” (p. 17). Furthermore, their research brought “difficult questions about truthfulness and authenticity in relationships” (Brown & Gilligan, 1989, p. 17). Most importantly, Brown and Gilligan said:

Meeting at this crossroads creates an opportunity for women to join girls and by doing so to reclaim lost voices and lost strengths, to strengthen girls’ voices and girls’ courage as they enter adolescence by offering girls resonant relationships, and in this way to move with girls toward creating a psychologically healthier world and a more caring and just society. (p. 6)

**Teen Esteem**

**The importance of self-esteem.** For most middle schools girls, entrance into adolescence can be full of tumultuous times (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994). Researchers have noted that adolescent girls have increased self-awareness, along with a sense of super self-consciousness and need for social acceptance (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Burke, 2012; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002). Everything in the life of adolescent girls seems bigger and not necessarily better as girls transition from childhood to adulthood (Badaoui et al., 2012). The importance of positive input can be crucial for young women to successfully navigate the roller coaster ride called teenage turbulence and feel better not only about their body but their entire being (Harris, 1991). Therefore, Ferguson, Munoz, Garza, and Galindo (2013) suggested adolescent girls actively shape, not passively be formed, by their media consumption.

Moreover, adolescence serves as an important development period for self-esteem (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Impett, Sorsoli, Schooler, Henson, & Tolman, 2008). Self-esteem refers to the “positive or negative attitude toward… the self” (Rosenberg, 1965, p. 30). Although self-esteem can be considered a complex, multi-dimensional and global construct (Richardson,
Ratner, & Zumbo, 2009), as the developer of the widely-used self-esteem scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), Rosenberg (1965, see Appendix H) stated the structure of self-esteem gets revealed largely through individuals classified via “universal dimensions” (p. 7). Most importantly, “self-esteem is an important marker of general well-being” (Adams, Kuhn, & Rhodes, 2006, p. 1).

In their four-year study of elementary and middle school girls, Kutob, Senf, Crago, and Shisslak (2010) found “the most important predictor of self-esteem as appearance appraisal, and, in all grades, but the eighth, weight-related teasing by either boys or girls was also a predictor of self-esteem” (p. 240). Durham (2008) stated, “80 percent of all girls are dissatisfied with their bodies” (p. 182). Additionally, Durham remarked:

The problems that the research reveals are real, and it would be an ostrich-like move to focus only on the kind of adolescence that is untouched by adversity or trauma and thus to blithely ignore the cultural, political, economic, and structural realities that constrain and jeopardize many girls’ lives, especially girls who live on the precarious margins of society, girls who are not of the First World, who are not privileged by class, who express non-mainstream sexual preferences, or whose bodies transgress social norms in ways that can result in abuse. (p. 59)

In Real Girls, Real Pressure: A National Report on the State of Self-Esteem, commissioned by the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty, Kearney-Cooke (2008) found that for every 10 girls, seven of them feel that they do not measure up in some way whether it be in appearance, school performance, or relationships with friends and family. This self-esteem crisis among adolescent girls should not go unnoticed.
In their research on body image in girls, Mitchell et al. (2012) discussed the adolescent years which coincide with the entrance to middle school, and the time when “girls undergo extensive physical changes, including increases in adipose tissue and changes in body structure” (p. 432) to include “widening of the hips” (p. 432). Additionally, normal, developmental weight gain also occurs (Jacob & Yoo, 2010). These physical changes can also bring emotional challenges (Racine et al., 2011) as girls seek to negotiate and construct their identities (Badaoui et al., 2012; Kearney, 2011). Therefore, researchers have noted adolescence can be a more trying time for girls than boys (Block & Robins, 1993).

As females enter adolescence, and their bodies begin to change, little girls start the process to become young women (Badaoui et al., 2012; Pipher, 1994). Thus, for girls, the concepts of make-up, clothes, physical appearance, sexuality, along with their connections with friends and family, all take on new meaning (Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1965). During this journey, the research clearly indicated that girls have one of their most challenging relationships with their self-esteem (Botta 1999; Etcoff et al., 2004; Field et al., 1999; Impett et al., 2008; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; Signorielli, 2004; Slater & Tiggemann, 2002).

In further findings of Real Girls, Real Pressure, the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty’s report on girls and self-esteem, Kearney-Cooke (2008) found: (a) seven of 10 girls, eight to 17 years old, do not feel good enough; (b) when they feel low in self-esteem, 75% of girls reported engaging in negative behaviors such as disordered eating, cutting, bullying, smoking, or drinking compared to 25% of girls with high self-esteem; and (c) when girls feel badly about themselves they avoid daily activities such as going to school, voicing their opinion and going to the doctor. These feelings of self-awareness and self-esteem in middle school girls enhances their sense of interplay between self and society (Erikson, 1950; Impett et al., 2008; Mitchell et al. 2012;
Mueller, Pearson, Muller, Frank, & Turner, 2010; Rosenberg, 1965). Therefore, with a crisis at hand, the past and “current cultural context” (Curry & Choate, 2010, p. 6) in which middle school girls live should be understood to grasp not only the educational implications but the global effects of poor self-esteem.

**Social acceptance.** Along with their relationships to themselves, peers play an important role in middle school (Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1965). For both adolescent males and females, the research noted social acceptance as a “wellness factor” (Myers, Willse, & Villalba, 2011, p. 28) for adolescent self-esteem. Moreover, scholars have found inclusion or exclusion by one’s peers as a “predictor of early adolescents’ adjustment across the middle school transition” (Kingery, Erdley, & Marshall, 2011, p. 215). Furthermore, Cobb (1976) called social support a “moderator of life stress” (p. 300) and that it serves as a “protective” (p. 310) factor across the cycles of life.

Regarding peer groups, Warrington and Younger (2011) referred to acceptance as being “a vital aspect of school life for many students” (p. 153). Warrington and Younger stressed, “for many boys and girls, deciding which group to ally themselves with, or to attempt to win membership of, is an agonizing and anguished process, accompanied by much self-examination, self-doubt and pain” (p. 154). This desire to fit in would be what Maslow (1943) described as a sense of belongingness and what he deemed to be a fundamental human need. Faith leaders have also suggested the importance of this element in the life of teenagers (Lytch, 2004).

If one observes a classroom with middle school girls, one will see a variety of shapes, sizes, and self-expressions. Hence, one can clearly see Festinger’s (1954) social comparison theory easily becomes evident in the classroom. Social comparison theory refers to an individual’s “drive for self evaluation and the necessity for such evaluation being based on
comparison with other persons” (Festinger, 1954, p. 138). At one time or another, everyone considers these thoughts of assessment in relationship to others. However, with the variety of shapes, sizes and self-expressions of middle school girls, the considerations and comparisons to one another become a huge part of daily life.

As Pipher (1994) stated, “as girls pull away from parents, peers are everything” (p. 67). This concept of being in or out (Schutz, 1958), otherwise known as cool and uncool, can be considered a complex and elaborate process that includes a multitude of components such as “perceptions of appearance, personality, behavior and ability, and it has been noted the widespread imperative to ‘do boy’ and ‘do girl’ in conformity with accepted gender norms” (Warrington & Younger, 2011, p. 164). Therefore, middle school girls search to find some sort of commonality so that they have a sense of belonging. One 13-year-old girl described:

The way you dress is like part of your personality, ‘cause if people dress up all posh, people think they might be a bit snobby, if they dress all punk, they might be scared of them. Whatever you wear comes into it, ‘cause you want to know what people think if you hang around with someone…Like we [close friends] are all wearing pink people know we belong together. (Krayer, Ingledew, & Iphofen, 2008, p. 896)

Additionally, Warrington and Younger (2011) found students “writing confirmed that those who were seen as unpopular, ‘uncool,’ odd or misfits were students who stood out from the crowd or were perceived as being different in some way from everyone else” (p. 155). Generally, the researchers said students stated appearance related issues as the reason. For example, in Warrington and Younger’s study, one student stated, “It’s all about how you look. I mean, if you haven’t got the right image, instantly, you’re like out of the way” (p. 155). As Erikson (1950) said:
Young people can be remarkably clannish, and cruel in their exclusion of all those who are ‘different,’ in skin color or cultural background, in tastes and gifts, and often in such petty aspects of dress and gesture as have been temporarily selected as the signs of an in-grouper or out-grouper. (p. 262)

Because the patterns of wellness throughout life get established in childhood (“Social Determinants of Health,” 2014), and due to the many inward and outward changes taking place for middle school girls at this critical period particularly as related to self-esteem, an extra dose of attention to overall health and well-being by parents and educators should be considered at this time. To do this, one can be mindful of the multi-dimensional effect of health and wellness (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1997).

**Teen Esteem and the Multi-Dimensional Effect**

As noted in the definitions, multi-dimensional effect refers to the physical, emotional, social, intellectual, and spiritual factors that play a role in middle school girls’ self-esteem, and overall health and well-being (Butler, 2001). Similar to Butler’s (2001) dimensions, the National Wellness Institute supports an interdependent model (Hettler, 1976) but with an added occupational category. For most middle school girls, Hettler’s (1976) occupational category does not play a role at this time. Otherwise, a combination of Butler’s (2001) and Hettler’s (1976) National Wellness Institute’s categories for the tenets of each dimension should be considered as well as considerations for Miller’s (1997) perspective on holistic education.

These dimensions intertwine to form one’s “state of being called health” (Butler, 2001, p. 3) derived from the concept of being whole (Dolfman, 1973). Miller (1997) said, “Holism, is
literally, a search for wholeness in a culture that limits, suppresses, and denies wholeness” (p. 7).

Most importantly, “…wholeness is a vitally important value for human happiness and fulfillment, and definitely needs to be reclaimed” (Miller, 1997, p. 8).

Figure 1. The dimensions of health/wellness based on Butler (2001) and Hettler (1976), with considerations for Miller (1997). Graphic Eileen E. Hegel ©2015.

Along with Butler (2001) and Hettler’s (1976) views, the World Health Organization (WHO) considers multi-dimensional health essential and of basic importance in childhood (“Social Determinants of Health,” 2014). Moreover, the patterns of wellness that begin in early childhood serve as critical factors in a “child’s developmental trajectory” (“Social Determinants of Health,” 2014, para. 1) and the course of their life. In their constitution, the WHO refers to “a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity” (“Mental Health,” 2014, para. 1).
Physical dimension. As for physical health, Butler (2001) referred to “body size and shape, sensory acuity, susceptibility to disease and disorders, and recuperative ability” (p. 3). Specifically, the body’s physical condition can be reflected in a number of ways to include “blood pressure, heart rate, body composition, flexibility, agility, muscular strength and endurance, and vital capacity” (Butler, 2001, p. 3). Moreover, one can behave in certain ways to enhance physical health such as exercise, eating properly, and watching one’s weight (Hettler, 1976; Butler, 2001). One can also stay away from behaviors that may “erode physical health” (Butler, 2001, p. 3) such as smoking, heavy drinking, or overeating.

In consideration of physical health, the human body gives messages as a guide (Butler, 2001). For example, Butler (2001) stated a person’s body might say, “Please let me get a good night’s sleep” (p. 3) or “My muscles are tense” (p. 3). All of these indicators give warning signs to the body as an alert to one’s physical wellness or “biologic integrity” (“Clean Water Act,” 1972, p. 22205).

Most importantly, those who care about the self-esteem and well-being of adolescent girls must be aware of this physical dimension, as positive and negative physical reactions can be indicators of overall health. Specific to educators, positive and negative physical reactions in the classroom play a role in learning. Reschly, Huebner, Appleton, and Antaramian (2008) found “positive emotions appear to be related to greater personal and environmental resources, such as greater student engagement in school activities and more supportive relationships with adults (e.g., teachers)” (p. 428). Meanwhile, the negative practices and physical reactions of eating disorders, such as taking laxatives and vomiting, would impede a student’s attention in the classroom. Moreover, girls with eating disorders are more likely to have low self-esteem (Flament et al., 2012).
Throughout life, physical health can play an important role in self-esteem and overall well-being as part of a multi-dimensional or holistic view (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1997). Without a doubt, the self-awareness middle school girls have of their bodies to include their shape, size, and particularly in the case of girls, their weight (Kutob et al., 2010) become a huge part of their adolescent journey. Along with increased awareness of their physical appearance, the emotions of adolescence often cause them to feel and react physically (Kostiuk & Fouts, 2002; Jellesma & Vingerhoets, 2012). Therefore, the close relationship of the physical dimension and the emotional dimension.

**Emotional dimension.** From Butler’s (2001) perspective, emotional health means “the ability to feel and express the full range of human emotions, give and receive love, achieve a sense of fulfillment and purpose in life, and develop psychological hardiness” (p. 5). As for some of the qualities of emotional health, one should be able to “work and study, love and be loved, pursue the activities that define our being, and enjoy these activities” (Butler, 2001, p. 4). This includes “self-esteem, self-acceptance, self-control, and the ability to share one’s feelings” (Butler, 2001, p. 4).

Along with the ability to express one’s emotions (Butler, 2001) and feelings (Hettler, 1976), emotional health consists of being able to effectively manage feelings not only in oneself, but being able to accept feelings in others (Hettler, 1976, p. 2). Thus, Hettler (1976) said emotional health consists of independence and interdependence. In his “Six Dimensions of Wellness Model,” Hettler (1976) said emotional health “includes the degree to which one feels positive and enthusiastic about one’s self and life” (p. 2). Accordingly, *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (“Happy,” 2014) defines this as being happy. Diener and Chan (2011) stated, “When
people list the key characteristics of a good life, they are likely to include happiness, health, and longevity” (p. 1).

Specific to happiness, Baumeister et al. (2003) stated, “self-esteem has a strong relation to happiness. Although the research has not clearly established causation, we are persuaded that high self-esteem does lead to greater happiness” (p. 1). As mentioned earlier, like many of the other aspects of self-esteem and well-being, happiness has many components.

Along with Butler’s (2001) and Hettler’s (1976) views of emotional health, Miller’s (1997) holistic perspective of education emphasizes this dimension. Herein, the emotional dimension is included among “all facets of human experience” (Miller, 1997, p. 92).

Additionally, while Miller deems others may consider the purpose of education as being “rational intellect and the responsibilities of vocation and citizenship” (p. 92), he adds that education includes the “innate physical, emotional, social, aesthetic, creative, intuitive, and spiritual aspects of our nature” (p. 92).

**Social dimension.** Levy, Dignan, and Shirreffs (1992) referred to social health as an individual being able to effectively perform one’s roles without injury to others. Likewise, Butler (2001) characterized social health as “a concern and fondness for others, the ability to show respect, a sense of belonging within a larger social unit, the ability to communicate effectively, and efforts to make a positive contribution to family and community” (p. 5). Hettler (1976) called this awareness of one’s “importance in society as well as the impact you have on multiple environments” (p. 2). Butler (2001) noted the components of social health include “the needs for love, intimacy, safety, companionship, and cooperation” (p. 5). Miller (1997) included social health in his list of precious gifts, “which must be honored and cultivated,” (p. 92) particularly in education.
In adolescence, one aspect of social health also considers how children interact with their parents as well as other adults. Although when middle school girls approach adolescence, they begin to pull away from their parents, the importance of adult guidance plays an important role in adolescent self-esteem and overall well-being (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2009; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; DeSisto et al., 2010; Shulkind & Foote, 2009). Therefore, attention to adult involvement with Facebook plays an important role in the social dimension (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976) per the distinct roles of parents, children, and others such as educators who may be involved with the technology use of adolescents.

**Intellectual or mental dimension.** Butler (2001) described intellectual health as the “processes of reasoning, analysis, evaluation, curiosity, humor, alertness, creativity, logic, learning, and memory” (p. 6). According to Anspaugh, Dignan, and Anspaugh (2000), intellectual health includes the desire for personal growth. Butler (2001) related this idea of personal growth to Maslow’s (1943) process of “self-actualization” (p. 382), or the ability to become all one can be.

Regarding children and adolescents, intellectual growth to include the brain occurs in four stages (Piaget, 1983). In the middle grades, “students display a wide range of individual intellectual development as their minds experience transition from the concrete-manipulatory stage to the capacity for abstract thought” (“Characteristics of Middle Grade Students,” 1989, para. 1). Specific to education, Hettler (1976) stated regarding intellectual or mental health:

> Using intellectual and cultural activities in the classroom and beyond the classroom combined with the human resources and learning resources available with the university community and the larger community, a well person cherishes intellectual growth and stimulation. (pp. 1-2)
Moreover, Butler (2001) stated that “conforming to social demands is not necessarily a mark of mental health. Questioning what goes on around you indeed may be a sign of mental health” (p. 6). As discussed in the emotional dimension, Miller’s (1997) holistic view, especially of education, includes the intellectual or mental dimension in terms wholeness of being as opposed to just “rational intellect and the responsibilities of vocation and citizenship” (p. 92).

As indicated by some of the other dimensions, in middle school, the adolescent development period has many changes to include one’s physical appearance, friendships, relationship to parents, school environment, and intellectual/mental ability, also known as cognitive development. Specific to cognitive development, Giedd (2014) referred to the child’s brain as being like a thickening tree, where beginning in childhood, “the brain cells get extra connections, much like a tree growing extra branches, twigs and roots” (para. 1). For girls, their brain thickening peaks at about 11 years old and boys at 12 years old, whereas, after the peak, the brain goes through a kind of leveling process where “excess connections are eliminated or pruned” (para. 2).

During this time of immense adolescent change, in most instances, their school environment also becomes different. For instance, (a) they go from self-contained elementary school classrooms to changing classrooms for each subject, so they also have more teachers; (b) students in one middle school usually come from several elementary schools, so friendships change; (c) students encounter new rules and regulations such as hall passes and lockers, as well as several levels of principals; (d) rather than recess, students change clothes and shower for gym class; and (e) often middle school students have more rigorous homework.

Throughout this time, girls place great importance on friendships (Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1965), and therefore, these relationships can be a factor in learning. For example,
Furrer and Skinner (2003) found a “sense of relatedness plays an important role in their academic motivation and performance” (p. 158). Similarly, Nelson and DeBacker (2008) discovered, after controlling for grade level, “Peer climate variables and best friend variables each resulted in significant increases in variance accounted for in intimacy, approval, responsibility goals, and mastery goals” (p. 183). Specific to self-esteem, Mann (2013) found in an experimental study on middle school girls at risk for school failure, that the gender-specific program, Project Challenge, based on psychosocial development theory, (Steinberg, 2005) appeared to have benefits per the “context high in described social support and mattering” (Mann, 2013, p. 12), because this “contributed to increased self-confidence, self-esteem, and identity” (p. 12).

Without a doubt, educators have been concerned about the distractions of social media as related to self-esteem, study habits, sleep, and social experiences, among other factors, that shape adolescents’ well-being. In the past per their transition to middle school, students have reported they experienced difficulties with classes, good grades, homework, and teachers (Akos & Galassi, 2004). Van den Bulck (2004) found “television viewing, computer game playing, and Internet use all lead to getting to bed later and to spending less time in bed” (p. 104). Lack of sleep among adolescents, have been associated with a number of negative outcomes such as poor academic performance (Wong, Rowland, & Dyson, 2014), depression (Lovato & Gradisar, 2014), mood (Chou & Edge, 2012; Roybal et al., 2007), delinquency (Clinkinbeard, Simi, Evans, & Anderson, 2011), school-related violence (Hildenbrand, Daly, Nicholls, Brooks-Holliday, & Kloss, 2013), suicide (Abe & de Kernier, 2013), and quality of life (Gruber, 2013). Undoubtedly, both the positive and negative effects of social media must be considered with middle school girls as related to short-term and long-term consequences.
**Spiritual dimension.** As for the spiritual dimension, spirituality has different meanings to people. While some think of spirituality as nature, others consider God or a divine being. Groups of people often organize their “beliefs and experiences into collective dogma and practices associated with organizational memberships” (Haug, 1998, p. 182). As mentioned in the overview, Butler (2001) defined the spiritual dimension per Hawks’ (1994) perspective:

A high level of faith, hope, and commitment in relation to a worldview or belief system that provides a sense of meaning and purpose to existence in general, and that offers an ethical path to personal fulfillment that includes connectedness with self, others, and a higher power or larger reality. (Butler, 2001, para. 10)

Hettler (1976) referred to the spiritual dimension in a similar fashion. As in the other dimensions, spiritual practices often overlap in terms of self-esteem and well-being. The research showed that spirituality and religious practices among adolescents may be a protective factor (Wong, Rew, & Slaikeu, 2006).

In their National Longitudinal Study on Adolescent Health, Resnick et al. (1997) found adolescents who placed “high levels of personal importance on religion and prayer” (p. 829) had higher self-esteem and a “decreased frequency of cigarette use” (p. 829) and “less frequent” (p. 829) alcohol use. In their study on the religion and self-esteem of young adolescents, Dai, Nolan, and Zeng (2001) found youth who participated in religious activities evaluated themselves more positively than those who did not. King (2003) added to Erikson’s (1968) ideas on the effectiveness of religious ideology as a “social context” (King, 2003, p. 199) helpful for identity development, whereby, “During adolescence, personal integration is facilitated not only by abstract ideology but by having it lived out in the flesh” (p. 199). For example, King (2003)
stated “Religions often provide opportunities to interact with peers and build intergenerational relationships as well” (p. 199).

Additionally, spiritual health has been related to physical health (Powell, Shahabi, & Thoreson, 2003), emotional health (Kim & Seidlitz, 2002), mental health (King, 2003; Aten, O’Grady, & Worthington, 2011), as well as social well-being (Resnick, Harris, & Blum, 1993; King, 2003). Miller (1997), felt education should be treated as a “spiritual endeavor” (p. 80). Hence, the overlapping of the dimensions, particularly as related to the multi-dimensional effect (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1997). However, in the research, Dein, Cook, and Koenig (2012) called for the methodology on spirituality and religion to become more robust and discriminative, such as with consideration for the specifics of culture and practice.

As one can see, in consideration of the overall health and well-being of adolescence, there exists a multitude of factors that come into play. A multi-dimensional perspective (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1994) gives one an excellent place to start for a well-rounded view. These factors also become evident in how teens do or don’t relate to technology.

**The Teen Media Scene**

**Media mania.** To find a sense of self and community, girls often turn to the media as a way to construct their identity (Blair & Fletcher, 2011; Clementes-Cortes, 2010; Durham, 1999, 2008; Moreno, 2010; Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010; Theran, Newberg, & Gleason, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The average girl in the United States has an opportunity to see 77,546 commercials by the time she reaches 12 years old (Kearney-Cooke, 2008). Around this age, young women enter their middle school years. By this time, many ideas about the culture have been impressed upon girls not only through television but through computer advertisements, album covers, films, teen magazines, music, social websites such as Facebook, MySpace, and
Twitter along with other forms of traditional and new media (Collins, Lidinsky, Rusnock, & Torstick, 2012; Durham, 2008; Rideout et al., 2010; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Signorielli, 1997; Slater et al., 2012; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010).

In their study for The Kaiser Family Foundation, Rideout et al. (2010) found “teens spend more time with media than in any other activity besides (maybe) sleeping” (p. 1). Rideout et al. noted teens spend an average of about “7 ½ hours a day, seven days a week” (p. 1) with media activities and receive “a constant stream of messages about families, peers, relationships, gender roles, sex, violence, food, values, clothes, and an abundance of other topics” (p. 1). Moreover, the research showed overwhelming evidence that young women do shape their identity and world as influenced by the media (Becker et al., 2002; Blair & Fletcher, 2011; Botta, 1999; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; Clementes-Cortes, 2010; Durham, 1999, 2008; Etcoff et al., 2004; Field et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hinshaw & Kranz, 2009; Hua, 2012; Jacob & Yoo, 2010; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; Moreno, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pipher, 1994; Racine et al., 2011; Rideout et al., 2010; Sanders, 2009; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Signorielli, 2004; Slater et al., 2012; Spettigue & Henderson, 2002; Snigda & Venkatesh, 2011; Sukumar & Venkatesh, 2011; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). The media’s messages to girls include portraits of objectification and unrealistic beauty impressions (Botta, 1999; Durham, 2008, Field et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Impett et al., 2011; Pipher, 1994; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Slater et al., 2012; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010), stereotypical views of women (Gotz et al., 2008; Noble, 2012) as well as mixed and aggressive messages on how girls should speak, think, and act (Hammel, 2008; Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005).

In her study on the representations of black girls and women on the search engine,
Google, Noble (2012) found what she called old, traditional messages that featured racist and sexist views. After Noble began her pilot study in 2010 and collected data in 2011, she wrote an article for *Bitch Magazine*, on this topic. Noble then continued to search for “black girls on a regular basis, at least once a month” (p. 184). Although Noble did not maintain that her article definitely had any influence on Google, she discovered “after more than two years of featuring pornography as the primary representation of Black [sic] girls” (p. 185), Google finally made some “modifications to its algorithm” (p. 185) and eliminated some pornographic references. Furthermore, Noble also made the point about the historical representations of women being “interwoven into the fabric of American culture” (p. 181).

In consideration of Noble’s (2012) thoughts, this coincides with one of the primary discussions by researchers regarding adolescent girls identities in the media, the concept of objectification (Durham, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). This discussion made strides with Fredrickson and Roberts’ (1997) objectification theory “as a framework for understanding the experiential consequences of being female in a culture that sexuality objectifies the female body” (p. 173). Moreover, Durham (2008) recalled that for years “girls’ sexuality has been repressed, controlled and punished in ways that have curbed and subjugated them in this crucial domain” (p. 11).

Per the theory of objectification, Fredrickson and Roberts (1997) concluded, “the common thread running through all forms of sexual objectification is the experience of being treated as a body (collection of body parts) valued predominantly for its use to (or consumption by) others” (p. 174). Moreover, Fredrickson and Roberts said this sexual objectification sets women on a course of “poor mental health outcomes” (p. 185) through two potential routes. Fredrickson and Roberts continued:
Habitual body monitoring, leaving women with surpluses of shame and anxiety, a shortage of peak motivational states, and scant awareness of internal body states. We argue that the accumulation of such experiences could, for some women, contribute to psychological disorders. The second route is more direct and extreme, although it is just beginning to capture substantial research interest; actual sexual victimization, whether through rape, incest, battering, or even sexual harassment. (pp. 185-186)

Herein, most of the mental health concerns described by Fredrickson and Roberts “first emerge in adolescence” (p. 193).

Other experts have confirmed this trend in the eroticization of young girls (Durham, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Durham (2008) called it “The Lolita Effect” (p. 12) or “distorted and delusional set of myths about girls’ sexuality that circulates widely in our culture and throughout the world” (p. 12). Sarracino and Scott (2008) noted in their book, *The Porning of America: The Rise of Porn Culture, What it Means, and Where We Go from Here*, that “we have created a culture that puts our daughters in grave danger and leaves them there to fend for themselves” (p. 194).

Not only do girls and women get bombarded with hypersexual images (Durham, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010), but the unrealistic images of beauty do not help the ever-changing physical and emotional rides of early adolescence (Slater et al., 2012). In addition to age issues with media models (Carteris, 2011), the older age models have more mature body characteristics. These mature body characteristics, again, do not represent the reality of average middle school girls with different body types.

Along with more mature body characteristics, the media often uses ultra-thin models, who many times use drugs to stay thin (James, 2008), and this causes more self-esteem related
issues (Bell & Dittmar, 2011). While the relationship to traditional media, self-esteem, and body image has been well documented, Tiggemann and Miller (2010) found “Internet appearance exposure was associated with weight dissatisfaction and drive for thinness” (p. 85) which can lead to eating disorders as well as other associated problems.

Furthermore, other self-esteem related concerns can be seen in the media’s portrayal of femininity. For instance, in their worldwide study on gender in fictional, children’s television programs, Gotz et al. (2008) found that

- male characters get portrayed as being overweight twice as frequently as girl characters,
- obese girls and elderly women rarely appear,
- children’s TV lacks characters with disabilities and chronic diseases,
- blondes get portrayed as bitches,
- Latinas can be seen with their one and only best girl friend, and
- Asian girls get shown in groups.

The research confirmed these images reinforce stereotypes and stifles girls (Durham, 2008; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Slater et al. (2012) found similar concerns in their content analysis of Internet advertisements, whereby; the stereotypical thin, feminine ideal was emphasized.

Another concern among scholars has been the increase of physical aggression and violence displayed by girls (Behm-Morawitz & Mastro, 2008; Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005). Prothrow-Stith and Spivak (2005) attributed this to the “feminization of the superhero” (p. 80). In the past, Prothrow-Stith and Spivak talked about how girls have shown more indirect forms of aggression such as “backbiting, ostracizing, and hurtful self-directed behaviors” (p. 3). Now,
photographers even have a gun theme as a sort of glamour photo shoot for women as seen in McCrum’s (2011) book, *Chicks with Guns*, which may also be an allure to men (J. Hague, personal communication, September 27, 2013) who find this image sexy.

Although some research has been done on the impact of the media with adolescent girls who feel satisfied with their body image, the study of positive psychology has not been fully developed (Holmqvist & Frisen, 2012). In respect to body dissatisfaction among girls, researchers have reported it can be considered a “normative discontent” (Cash & Henry, 1995, p. 25). Regardless of a positive or negative body image, adolescent girls acknowledged the media’s emphasis on “appearance ideals” (Holmqvist & Frisen, 2012, p. 388).

Hence, the literature emphasized the importance of positive role models for girls, particularly women role models (Buck, Clark, & Beeman-Cadwallader, 2008; Chan, Tufte, Cappello, & Williams, 2011), and especially those whom embrace differences (Warrington & Younger, 2011). As Durham (2008) remarked, girls need “a place to talk and think about these issues in collaboration and dialogue with adults” (p. 230). The research showed girls need to feel that they have an ample range of adult women to ask for advice or mentorship, whether for personal or career communication (Buck et al., 2008; Durham, 2008).

In a Girl Scout study on the achievement and distinction of women in America, 64% said they were in The Girls Scouts of America (Harris, 1991). From 1999 to approximately 2010, women have earned about 60% to 62% of associate’s degrees and 57% to 58% of bachelor’s degrees (“National Center for Education Statistics,” 2012). Furthermore, females account for 49% of the population, while only 32% of the characters on television are female (Gotz et al., 2008). If girls do not see women outside of the media stereotypes, they may not feel that opportunities exist on a broader scale for communication and career advice (Durham, 2008).
In her book, *The Lolita Effect*, Durham (2008) talked about the media “spectacle” (p. 180) or “representations of the world through the wild mix of images and messages that are transmitted simultaneously and circulate globally” (p. 180). This, of course, as Durham stated, “influences girls’ relationships with each other, and their relationships with themselves” (p. 181), while at the same time “casts girls in roles that are geared to fulfilling male fantasies and paying obsessive attention to male needs” (p. 171). Durham emphasized the myth does not “acknowledge that boys have responsibilities toward girls” (p. 171). On this note, Collins et al. (2012) stated, “simply rejecting mainstream beauty ideals does not yet open up strategies for imagining positive, feminist alternatives, and it risks replicating the cultural double-bind whereby girls are criticized for their vanity if they struggle to conform to beauty norms, but are also criticized should they fail to do so” (p. 106).

When asked why female TV characters look like models, Warner Brothers Television President Tony Jonas replied, “It's a very odd line to walk. We try to show empowered women but we also take advantage of the fact that they’re beautiful, because that attracts men to watch as well. There are economics that drive some of these decisions” (Lapp, 1997, p. 8). Former Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services, Donna Shalala, remarked:

I know that you need to be ever-mindful of the bottom line of ratings and profits, but there's another bottom line that we all need to pay attention to. It’s our role as citizens and guardians of the public trust. It’s our role as parents, and it’s the bottom line of young girls. You alone will probably never save or ruin a young girl’s life, but what you show girls can have a tremendous impact on how they view themselves and how others —boys and adults alike—view them. Put simply, I’m asking everyone to hold up a more accurate mirror.’ (Lapp, 1997, p. 8)
**Girls and groups.** Not only does the media give girls an array of appearance related messages, but the literature noted the media also gives girls messages about social acceptance through group connection (Badaoui et al., 2012). The media does this through boys (Shapiro, 2010), bands (Badaoui et al., 2012; Brown, 2011; Warrington & Younger, 2011), best girls (Clementes-Cortes, 2010), bad girls (Brown, 2011), and brands (Badaoui et al., 2012; Warrington & Younger, 2011).

In fact, girls create a sense of community and identification with the film characters and have what researchers call “parasocial interactions with media figures” (Theran et al., 2010, p. 270). As mentioned, group identification can be seen in the wearing of pink (Krayer et al., 2008) or the pink gear marketed for girls (Kearney, 2011). Another instance would be via an adolescent’s online presence (Code & Zaparyniuk, 2010; Usita, 2010) such as acknowledging membership to a virtual community (Moreno, 2010).

This concept of group identification falls under Tajfel and Turner’s (1979) social identity theory. Tajfel and Turner’s social identity theory refers to a person’s need to develop one’s sense of self via identification with a group or groups. As adolescents journey on their process to become, the research noted that their “identity experimentation becomes a means of self-exploration” (Code & Zap, 2009, p. 93).

In another relationship to self-esteem, group identification ties into what the research called collective self-esteem (CSES) (Gangadharbatla, 2008). Gangadharbatla (2008) mentioned the similarities of both forms of self-esteem. Hence, Gangadharbatla stated, “the way CSES operates in a group context is also similar to how personal self-esteem works in an individual context” (p. 8).
As seen in the literature, girls’ self-esteem, and social acceptance connect with the media on many levels (Blair & Fletcher, 2011; Clementes-Cortes, 2010; Collins et al., 2012; Durham, 2008; Gangadharbatla, 2010; Moreno, 2010; Rideout et al., 2010; Theran et al., 2010; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Sanders (2009) said, “the ability of media marketing to affect adolescents today has evolved through many different means” (p. 1). Technology or new media has now become the common and popular tool for communication, whereby; these relationships of adolescent girls, self-esteem, and social acceptance should be further examined (Ahn, 2011; Desjarlais & Willoughby, 2010).

**Teens and Their Technological Culture**

**The global world.** Although the research can be still considered in its “infancy” (Moreno, 2010, p. 567), scholars have begun to see similarities with traditional media, particularly with girls and self-esteem (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Slater et al., 2012). Unquestionably, teens have become active citizens in the global world (Davis, 2012; Denti et al., 2012; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Lenhart et al. (2011) states, “fully 95% of all teens ages 12-17 are now online and 80% of those are users of social media sites” (para. 1). A study by Common Sense Media, found girls use social media more than boys and (a) 77% of girls text daily as opposed to 60% of boys, (b) 33% of girls have used Twitter as opposed to 22% of boys, and (c) 75% like to post pictures as opposed to 42% of boys (“Social Media, Social Life: How Teens View Their Digital Lives,” 2012).

As girls approach middle school, Livingstone (2002) stated they “start to want personal ownership of media” (p. 152). Livingstone discussed one of the main reasons being girls want to watch their own programs. This aligns with a teenager’s need for one’s own space as a part of
“identify formation and autonomy attainment” (Courtois et al., 2011, p. 402). Accordingly, Downs (2011) stated technology provides an excellent venue:

In many senses the Internet offers the archetypal private space for young people. The activities that they enjoy, chatting to friends, engaging in games trying out new identities, listening to music, social voyeurism are all available online and without the problem of persuading parents and carers [sic] that you should be allowed to engage in these activities. (p. 17-18)

In fact, in their technological worlds, Courtois et al. (2011) discovered a multitude of ways that teenagers connect old and new media as they seek to form their identity and attain autonomy. Courtois et al. found what they called a “triple articulation” (p. 416). For example, a teenager might combine the use of a television to discover new music, the use of a computer to download it, and the use of a mobile device to listen to the music (Courtois et al., 2011).

Indeed, the relationship to the media and teens has been a staple of youth. Like with most innovations, the outcomes can be positive and negative. Regarding positive outcomes, social media networking such as through cell phones connect parents and children for safety (Blair & Fletcher, 2011) and can build relational bonds within the family (Craft, 2010). Social media can also be used for educational purposes (O’Keefe et al., 2011), whereas, some schools even require students to get a computer for their work and is included in the cost of tuition (S. Brandon, personal communication, July 22, 2012). Furthermore, many schools and colleges now use social media as a promotional tool and means to link students (Akanegbu, 2012).

On the negative end, social media opens young people to sexual predators (McCarthy, 2010), cyberbullying (O’Keefe et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), female degradation (Durham, 2008; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010), victimization that has led to
suicide (Zernicke, 2013), and even murder (Powell & Stickney, 2012). With respect to adolescent girls, researchers have also been particularly concerned about their verbal postings, as well as their photos and videos, that demean not only others but also themselves (Durham, 2008; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). Sarracino and Scott (2008) stated that by the 1990s children had “become thoroughly sexualized in movies, advertisements, and marketing” (p. 29) and has led to what they call the “porning of America” (p. ix).

Additionally, technology becomes problematic for young girls, when many of the professional media organizations digitally edit their models (Sanders, 2009) with programs such as Photoshop. In one instance, Vogue altered the photo of music superstar, Adele, and took away her curves (Anderson, 2012). Harvard University media and body image expert, Dr. Anne Becker, stated:

What is concerning about images that are altered is that it sets unrealistic expectations for girls and young women. If they are not yet sophisticated media consumers, there may be some dissonance between what they feel they can live up to, and what they can actually attain or what’s actually healthy to attain. (Strachan, 2012, para. 13)

Well-known scholars of adolescent girls and body image in traditional media, Slater and Tiggemann of Finders University in Australia have now transitioned to include social media in their work (Slater & Tiggemann, 2010; Slater et al., 2012). Slater et al. (2012) found that similar to traditional media, online content reinforces “appearance and the thin beauty ideal” (p. 339) and therefore, “perpetuates the ideal of feminine beauty” (p. 339). Hence, Slater et al. connected these advertisements to body image and self-esteem issues for girls with the statement, “The portrayal of women in the media is an important public health issue” (p. 339).

Moreover, Slater et al. (2012) found much of the content on sites was “not suitable for the
intended audience” (p. 344). For instance, some weight-related advertisements were “potentially harmful” (Slater et al., 2012, p. 344) to adolescents. Thus, these researchers called for more studies particularly regarding online media and body image (Slater et al., 2012).

Furthermore, the online presence of past and present female, teenage music icons like Madonna and Rihanna underscore some of the social media and self-esteem challenges for girls. Pop stars songs and videos can be easily accessed via sites such as iTunes and YouTube. This music presents conflicting media messages about whom and what a female should be (Joseph & Mandler, 2011; Rodgers & Keshishi, 1984; Streittmatter, 2004). On this note, Durham (2008) stated what the media promotes “is not conducive to girls’ healthy sexual growth and development. Instead, it works against girls’ best interests to create a pervasive idea of sexuality that objectifies, undermines, and exploits girls, and narrows their options” (p. 221).

Yet, the research confirmed that music could have both a positive (Sharma & Tanmeet, 2012) and negative effect on teen self-esteem (Primack et al., 2011). For example, Sharma and Tanmeet (2012) showed how music therapy can benefit academically stressed students and improve self-esteem, while Primack et al. (2011) found the positive association of music and major depressive order.

**Online safety and cyberbullying.** Among the many concerns of online safety and cyberbullying, in their research for the Pew Internet and American Life Project, Madden et al. (2012) discovered that (a) “63% of parents with teens 12-13 years old say they are ‘very concerned’ about their child’s interactions with strangers online” (p. 3); (b) “50% of parents of teens online (not just those who use SNS) have used some sort of parental controls or ways to block, filter, or monitor their child’s activities” (p. 3); and (c) “42% of parents with teens online have searched for their child’s name online to see what information they could find” (p. 3).
Although attention from sexual predators presents online concerns, Kite et al. (2010) found that young people were more apt to get bullied online. In one instance, even a mother was involved in a landmark case and received misdemeanor charges over an Internet hoax where a 13-year-old girl committed suicide (Meyer, 2008). Klomek, Sourander, and Gould (2011) noted bullying as a “major health problem” (p. 1) particularly “in light of recent cases associated with youth suicides” (p. 1) and cyberbullying.

In their global study on cyberbullying, Ipsos, a market research company, conducted online surveys with 18,687 citizens in 24 countries and found:

- A high awareness of cyberbullying (66%)
- One in 10 parents (12%) said their child has been cyberbullied
- One in four (26%) parents know a cyberbullied child
- 60% of parents stated their children experienced cyberbullying on SNS
- Cyberbullying needs attention from parents and schools (77%) (Gottfried, 2012)

In their research on cyberbullying and self-esteem, Patchin and Hinduja’s (2010) surveyed almost 2000 students “from 30 middle schools (sixth to eighth grades) in one of the largest school districts in the United States” (p. 616) who were enrolled in a peer conflict class required for their district. After controlling for demographic differences, Patchin & Hinduja found in the bully-victim cycle both had “significantly lower levels of self-esteem” (p. 619).

An Associated Press-Music Television Survey in 2009 among 14-24 year olds reported (a) “13%” (p. 5) of bullied young people have seen a mental health professional, (b) “11%” (p. 5) have considered dropping out of school, and (c) “8% of targets” (p. 5) have thought about committing suicide (Gatti, 2009). PureSight Online Safety also reported middle school children more likely to commit suicide over cyberbullying (Gottfried, 2012).
Although cyberbullying has been a major and popular concern of Internet use, on a positive note, Reich et al. (2012) found teens used social media sites to increase intimacy and connections. While much of the media has been focused on children’s Internet safety and cyberbullying, Reich et al. found that teens were not “putting themselves at risk when interacting with others online via these sites” (p. 364). Therefore, the research indicated that positive, personal connections could actually make the teenage social media adventure an enriching experience (Reich et al., 2012).

Yet, Dowell et al. (2009) did find a cluster of “Internet risk behaviors” (p. 551) reported by “20% of middle school students who posted their picture on the Internet” (p. 551). Among these risky behaviors, Dowell et al. found the students posted “personal information (name of school, e-mail address, sending a picture of self), corresponding online with an unknown person (met person offline, developed relationship), online-initiated harassment (playing jokes), online-initiated sex sites, and overriding Internet filters or blocks” (p. 551). Therefore, Dowell et al. concluded that these risky behaviors could be potent.

Indeed, social media has become a fixed part of daily life (Davis, 2012; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Considine et al. (2009) stated, “digital natives seem to have boundless interest and curiosity about emerging technologies” (p. 473). Since the virtual world continues to play “an increasing role in the lives of today’s adolescents” (Moreno, 2011, p. 565), the research needs to keep pace.

**Teens and the Facebook Trend**

The presentation of self. Pre-technology, Goffman (1959) noted people acquire information about others to define situations. This information gets conveyed in a number of ways, which Goffman called “carriers (or ‘sign vehicles’)” (p. 1) and enables others “to know in
advance what he will expect of them and what they may expect of him” (p. 1). Goffman used the theater as a metaphor, whereby, a person in social intercourse “guides and controls” (p. xi) the impressions others have of oneself.

Similar to Goffman’s (1959) pre-technology theory, the presentation of self in the physical world or face-to-face communication, the cyberworld has hangouts, otherwise known as social networking sites (SNS) (McBride, 2011). SNS have become a global “trend” (Agosto & Abbas, 2009, p. 33) or phenomenon (Valkenburg et al., 2006). On SNS, individuals have an opportunity to create personal profiles, chat with friends, comment on others, join groups, and play games (Denti et al., 2012; Gangadharbatla, 2008; Lenhart et al., 2011). The most popular SNS is the website Facebook (Denti et al., 2012; Lenhart et al., 2011).

Similar to in-person connections, SNS profiles provide an opportunity to self-present or create an identity (Agosto & Abbas, 2009; Denti et al., 2012; Ong et al., 2011) based on a variety of components. A Facebook personal profile might include special interests and individual or group identification through either friendships or community membership (Gangadharbatla, 2008). Thus, an SNS like Facebook offers one the ability to form and manage impressions, maintain relationships, and serves as a forum to seek relationships (Lewis & Wahesh, 2012; Tong et al., 2008) with features of adolescence such as “opportunity and risk” (Livingstone, 2008, p. 397).

As Livingstone (2008) noted, “young people have always devoted attention to the presentation of self” (p. 394). Hence, Livingstone talked about how Facebook and other SNS give teens an “integral means of managing one’s identity, lifestyle and social relations” (p. 394). Dean and Laidler (2013) called Facebook a “virtual two-way mirror, allowing girls and young women new ways to see themselves and to be seen by others” (para.15).
To better view the Facebook effect, one must look at its beginnings. In 2004, teenager Mark Zuckerberg, a student at Harvard University, created Facebook (“Facebook Newsroom Key Facts,” 2013) as a platform for college students to connect (Denti et al., 2012; Tong et al., 2008). Facebook now has more than a billion users worldwide (“Facebook Newsroom Key Facts, 2013”) and one must be 13 years old to become a member (“Facebook,” 2013).

Normally, SNS such as Facebook do have a required minimum age of 13 years old (O’Keefe et al., 2011). Most SNS follow the guidelines of the age set via Congress in the Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act of 1998 that forbids websites from gathering information about children without the permission of their parents (“Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act,” 1998). Regardless of the age prohibition, Facebook kicks off 20,000 kids a day under the age of thirteen years old (Sammons, 2011).

In their two-part study on SNS usage, Lenhart et al. (2011) found “Facebook dominates teen social media usage” (p. 18). However, Madden (2013) noted more recent accounts of teen Facebook usage indicated “teens have started to diversify their social media portfolio” (para. 1). Madden referred to the appeal of newer platforms like Instagram and Twitter starting to captivate the teen market.

As McBride (2011) emphasized, Facebook users can make their personal profiles public or private. Hence, there is potential to disseminate an extensive amount of information either through one’s personal profile or via posts to friends (McBride, 2011). Regarding adolescents, McBride said this can present danger due to minimal privacy, and the possibility of sharing too much information, along with the chance teens might “position false information about themselves or others” (p. 499).
Some of the positive Internet and SNS outcomes have been mentioned earlier such as parental connections and family bonds, (Blair & Fletcher, 2011; Craft, 2010), safety purposes (Blair & Fletcher, 2011), and educational opportunities (O’Keefe et al., 2011). Livingstone (2008) stated, specifically, regarding SNS like Facebook:

Optimistic accounts stress new opportunities for self-expression, sociability, community engagement, creativity and new literacies. Critical scholars argue that youthful content creation will counter the traditional dominance of consumers by producers and facilitate an innovative peer culture among young people, both locally and globally. Public policymakers hope that media literacy skills developed through social networking will transfer to support online learning and participation and protect youth from the online risks associated with transgressive representations of the self and abusive contact with others. (pp. 394-395)

Contrarily, some of the negative online outcomes specific to teens have also been stated previously such as sexual predators (McCarthy, 2010), cyberbullying (McBride, 2011; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010), female degradation (Durham, 2008; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen et al., 2010), victimization that has led to suicide (Zernike, 2013), and murder (Powell & Stickney, 2012). However, Livingstone (2008) also mentioned the media amplifies the anxieties of the public.

Amidst these considerations and concerns connected to the self preservation of today’s youth, the literature on the direct relationship to SNS like Facebook and self-esteem has really just begun. Patchin and Hinduja (2010) mentioned the importance of self-esteem research with adolescents as a “key construct” (p. 615) in adolescent development. Here, some of the current SNS with research regarding self-esteem and Facebook will be reviewed.
In their meta-analysis of self-esteem, Gentile et al. (2010) found American middle school students’ self-esteem scores from 1988 to 2006 increased, and the effect was similar when controlling for females. Gentile et al. attributed this to the emphasis on self-esteem in those years, “both in and out of school” (p. 262). Based on the culture of self-worth model (Deutsch & Gerard, 1955), Gentile et al. stated:

The Internet has become a rapidly growing medium for self-expression with websites like Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter enabling the creation of personal websites listing interests, friends, and status updates. YouTube, which bears the slogan ‘Broadcast Yourself,’ allows ordinary people to reach millions. Thus the culture of self-worth model predicts that self-esteem will continue to increase after the mid 1990s among children, adolescents, and college students. (p. 263)

Although middle school self-esteem may be increasing, there still exists a self-esteem problem with girls (Kearney-Cooke, 2008). Moreover, scholars such as Sarracino and Scott (2008) expressed concern about the “crossover in 1996 from television to the Internet” (p. 205) which “removed the need to censor the very few still off-limits private events that happen in the bedroom and bathroom” (p. 205). Sarracino and Scott described this as a “cultural breakdown of the wall between public and private” (p. 203).

To further understand this issue, well-known scholars of traditional media and girls, Slater and Tiggemann (2010), found in their research of over 1000 girls 12-16 years old for The NET Girls Project that (a) girls spend about three and one-half hours each day on SNS with their main sites being Facebook, Twitter and MySpace; (b) of the “96% of girls” (p. 2) with home Internet access, “72.1%” (p. 2) of these girls upload pictures of themselves and “12.1%” (p. 2) upload videos of themselves; and (c) “34.9%” (p. 2) of the girls mentioned their parents set
Internet rules regarding what they can see on the Internet and when they can view it. Slater and Tiggemann found with an increase in Internet use among girls, they had lower self-esteem and more body image issues.

In another study with middle school students, Ong et al. (2011) found even after giving account for extraversion, “partial support for the manifestation of narcissism in adolescents’ Facebook profile features” (p. 183). Narcissism falls under personality disorders with grandiose features of self-importance, preoccupation with oneself, and little empathy for others (Blais et al., 2008). Although normal teenage behavior does indeed look similar to narcissism, the difference would be a narcissist feels a sense of entitlement or privilege, believing that one deserves more than others (Twenge, 2006) as opposed to feeling the need to work hard and gain a sense of responsibility. Moreover, narcissists often have depressive thoughts, suicidal ideation, failed relationships, school or work problems and ironically, lack self-love (Carrasquillo, 2012).

Other studies done on middle school students and Facebook have shown self-esteem related concerns. For example, depression, whereby, researchers have coined the term “Facebook depression” (O’Keefe et al., 2011, p. 800) or “Social Media Syndrome” (Sloviter, 2011, p. 30). O’Keefe et al. (2011) said, “as with offline depression, preadolescents and adolescents who suffer from Facebook depression sometimes turn to risky internet sites and blogs for ‘help’ that may promote substance abuse, unsafe sexual practices, or aggressive or self-destructive behaviors” (p. 12).

However, in their study of older adolescents, with a mean age of about 18 years old, and Facebook, Jelenchick et al. (2012) did not discover any evidence to support depression. Jelenchick et al. concluded because of the embryonic stage of SNS research, the risk of associated terms such as depression might be “premature” (p. 128). Yet, even though in its
infancy, counselors have found the use of Facebook valuable in interventions for adolescents with problems as a tool to promote self-awareness (Lewis & Wahesh, 2012).

Another term that has been coined in relationship to SNS and Facebook is “Internet addiction” (Young, 1998, p. 237) or “Facebook addiction” (Andreasson et al., 2012, p. 501). The first to identify an addiction to the Internet, Young (1998) found the similarities of Internet addicts with alcoholics and drug addicts, whereas, they have problems with their personal and professional lives. Along with this, Pies (2009) stated, “Internet addiction shows the features of excessive use, withdrawal phenomena, tolerance, and negative repercussions that characterize many substance abuse use disorders” (p. 31). Griffiths (2012) questioned whether or not individuals become addicted to the platform or the Internet content.

In 2012, Norweigen scholars, Andreasson et al., developed an instrument known as the Facebook Addiction Scale. This scale consists of 18 items, with “three items for each of the six core elements of addiction: salience, mood modification, tolerance, withdrawal, conflict, and relapse” (p. 505). Griffiths (2012) also made reference to this scale as obsolete and said it might be more useful to measure addiction to the activity of social networking rather than a specific product like Facebook.

Mental health expert, Kimberly Young, has developed a research based treatment plan for Internet addiction (Young, 2012). Meanwhile, a controversy existed in the medical world as to whether or not this term should be included in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-V) for 2013 (Pies, 2009) and it was not (“American Psychiatric Association DSM-5 Development,” 2013). Block (2008) argued merit for the inclusion based on global research, particularly in South Korea, where deaths have occurred among youth based on online gaming habits (Sun, 2011). Herein, the DSM-V (2013) did include in Section III Internet
Gaming Disorder, as “a condition warranting more clinical research and experience before it might be considered for inclusion in the main book as a formal disorder” (p. 1).

In a Dutch study of adolescent boys and girls 10-19 years old, Valkenburg et al. (2006) found the self-esteem of adolescents “was affected solely by the tone of the feedback that adolescents received on their profiles” (p. 589), while positive feedback increased self-esteem and negative feedback decreased self-esteem. Herein, 78% of adolescents “always or predominately received positive feedback on their profiles” (p. 589). Thus, Valkenburg et al. noted the value of friend networking sites as perhaps a way to increase adolescents’ self-esteem.

Yet, in this study, Valkenburg et al. (2006) also found 7% of adolescents “predominantly or always receive negative feedback on their profiles” (p. 589). Whereas positive feedback had an increase in adolescents’ self-esteem, Valkenburg et al. discovered negative feedback had a decrease in their self-esteem. Therefore, Valkenburg et al. stated these adolescents may “be in need of mediation on how to optimize their online self-presentation” (p. 589).

Along with Valkenburg et al.’s (2006) research on friend networking sites, Gonzales and Hancock (2011) did research that tested Facebook’s effect on self-esteem. Similar to Valkenburg et al.’s findings Gonzales and Hancock found “adolescents’ self-esteem was affected solely by the tone of the feedback that they received on their profiles: Positive feedback enhanced adolescents’ self-esteem, and negative feedback, decreased their self-esteem” (p. 589). Furthermore, “(78%) always or predominantly received positive feedback” (p. 589).

Of course, some teens have stated that “people’s profiles can be ‘just a front’” (Livingstone, 2008, p. 399). With a theatrical performance in mind, Goffman (1959) has suggested two extremes. Herein, “an individual may be taken in by his own act or be cynical about it” (p. 19). Thus, some teens create outlandish profiles (Livingstone, 2008). As
Livingstone (2008) found, one teen girl jokingly told her friend she was “pregnant” (p. 399), while one teen boy created his profile as being “36, married, living in Africa” (p. 399).

Similar to the stir with Gilligan’s work (1982), Facebook has created a phenomenon. Livingstone (2008) discussed how Facebook gives teens a sense of individuality and a chance to self-express. Livingstone continued, since Facebook users “are motivated by a desire to manage new and existing relationships, it is important to consider the impact of making (or being) a Facebook friend” (p. 29), particularly in adolescence.

**Facebook and friends.** In their study on Facebook, Denti et al. (2012) said, “human beings are born social and are constantly socialized through interacting and communication with others” (p. 8). Denti et al. also stated, “being social beings, we interact with friends, family, colleagues and even strangers” (p. 8). Thus, because of the need for social acceptance in the middle school years (Brown & Gilligan, 1992; Erikson, 1950; Kingery et al., 2011; Pipher, 1994; Rosenberg, 1965; Warrington & Younger, 2011), it makes sense that Facebook presents a platform that interests teenagers (Agosto & Abbas, 2009).

A main feature of Facebook “is the connection to and links among friends” (Tong et al., 2008, p. 531). Tong et al. (2008) commented, “much of the value of these sites derives from their making manifestly visible users’ social network of friends, or at least acquaintances, who also have accounts in the system” (p. 532). As Gangadharbatla (2008) discussed, Facebook serves as a way for adolescents to “remain ‘in the loop’ and maintain relationships with friends and others, irrespective of time and space” (p. 8).

Valkenburg et al. (2006) remarked that friend networking sites give a tremendous opportunity for “the investigation of the social consequences of Internet communication”
At the time of their research, Valkenburg et al. found almost nothing had been written about social networking, however, much attention has now been garnered to cyberbullying (Gottfried, 2012; Kite et al., 2010; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Agosto and Abbas (2009) emphasized that the window of opportunity for the impact of SNS, like Facebook, on not only individual but group behavior has really just begun.

Regarding social outcomes, in their SNS survey that included Facebook, Lenhart et al. (2011) surveyed over 750 teens and found “more teens report positive personal outcomes than negative ones from interactions on social network sites while 78% report at least one good outcome and 41% report at least one negative outcome” (p. 4). Among the positive outcomes of social media, “65% of social media-using teens have had an experience on a social network site that made them feel good about themselves” (p. 4), while “58% of social media-using teens have felt closer to another person because of an experience on a social network site” (p. 4). The negative outcomes included: (a) “25% of social media teens have had an experience on a social network site that resulted in a face-to-face argument or confrontation with someone” (p. 4); (b) 13% have had “an experience that caused a problem with their parents” (p. 4); and (c) “13% have felt nervous about going to school the next day” (p. 4).

In Moore’s (2011) study on cyberbullying with adolescent girls, she found 15% of the girls used Facebook. Additionally, Moore asked the participants whether or not girls talk about each other on Facebook. Indeed, as Moore found, girls do:

Eighteen (94%) of the respondents stated that girls do talk about other peers via technology while one respondent reported that this happens some of the time. When asked to elaborate on their responses, the girls reported a variety of ways that girls talk about other peers through the use of technology including it as a method to vent or ‘air
out’ a problem (seven responses, 37%), to gossip about others (eight responses, 42%), and to put people down for physical appearance (one response, 5%). Two (10%) respondents stated that they believed girls talked about other girls, but were unsure of how this activity occurs. Many of the girls were willing to share specific aspects of how girls talk about others. (p. 45)

For example, one girl stated in respect to Facebook:

If you had a bad day or something, and someone said something you didn’t like, you’ll probably text it to your friend. If you’re really bold, you might send a message on Facebook, so that the person can see it, but I don’t see that so much. Usually, it’s just texting to tell your friend or calling them about it. (pp. 45-46)

In a study of thirty two 13 to 18 year old adolescents, a part of a larger study of 11-19 year old adolescents, Davis (2012) looked at online exchange between Bermudian youth, who get “exposed on a daily basis to the same sources of information and popular culture as most Americans” (p. 1529). The study on SNS included the use of Facebook, and Davis found 90% of the Bermudian youth had a Facebook profile. The participants’ primary motivation for using digital media was to be able to communicate with their friends (Davis, 2012).

Per her investigation, Davis (2012) reported that Bermudian teens also reported: (a) their “online communications support a sense of belonging and self-disclosure” (p. 1534); (b) when they can publically post such as on a Facebook page, “adolescents are able to articulate their peer group membership to a wider audience” (p. 1534); and (c) when communication takes place through more “intimate exchanges” (p. 1534) such as through private Facebook channels, this “provides unique opportunities for adolescents to engage in self-disclosure online” (p. 1534).
Furthermore, some of Davis’ (2012) findings regarding Facebook included the girls’ ability to reflect together. For example, one 13-year-old girl said, “Sometimes [my friends] take a picture of themselves, and picnick [sic] it, and change it around, and put stuff like ‘I love you’ and stuff on it, and tag me in pictures” (Davis, 2012, p. 1533). Girls, as opposed to boys in the study, talked about posting “affectionate comments such as ‘I love you’” (Davis, 2012, p. 1533).

In Davis’ (2012) study, one older adolescent, 17-year-old, Jenni, stated why she liked Facebook as a platform. She stated:

Facebook is the one that is the most interactive with like everybody. Cell phones, like texting is like with your close friends, like I wouldn’t text a random girl in my class, you know, but if she has like a funny video on Facebook, then I would watch it, and be like, ‘Hey, this is really great.’ (p. 1533)

In another Internet study on adolescent girls and communities, Reich (2010) reported participants with large friend networks (on average of 150 friends and up to 793 friends), “almost all noted many of their ‘friends’ did not know or were friends with the same people in their own networks” (p. 694). Therefore, Reich could not identify groups. Reich’s data suggested although SNS get referred to “as online communities” (p. 703), her data showed “that individual uses support networked individualism rather than reflect a sense of community” (p. 703).

Moreover, Reich (2010) found when girls were asked why some participated in SNS, they liked the concept of connection, as one girl stated regarding Facebook:

Girl: There was this honesty box where your friends could leave honest info about you anonymously. I was so excited at first, to hear what people think. It just made me cry and I removed the app [application] the very next day.

Facilitator: Did they write mean things?
Girl: My ‘friends’ (fingers in the air in a quotation mark) said horrible things about me!

I guess it was what they really think of me. It was just awful. (p. 695)

Being all about connection and friendships, the power of Facebook with adolescents lends “exceptionally well to the investigation of the social consequences of Internet communication” (Valkenburg et al., 2006, p. 584). Fogg (2008) wrote that SNS like Facebook may even be more powerful than traditional media because of the power of what he called, “mass interpersonal persuasion (MIT)” (p. 1). Thus, along with identity formation, Facebook has the potential to tap into the dynamics of social influence (Fogg, 2008).

In online communities, group identification can be seen through fansites, self-help groups, and individual identity groups (Reich, 2010). On Facebook people click a link called “Like” (“Facebook Like Button,” 2013) to group connect. Yet, Reich (2010) also found virtual communities and “aspects of social networking sites found some, but not strong, evidence” (p. 701) to really represent communities.

Both the positive and negative outcomes of SNS like Facebook have been brought to the forefront of attention to parents, educators, and others in the community through a variety of sources. Even the American Academy of Pediatrics has issued a clinical report on the risks and benefits of social networking use, encouraging all pediatricians to expand their knowledge of the digital world (O’Keefe et al., 2011). With the range of positive and negative implications of SNS like Facebook, the educational implications should be examined.

**Teen Esteem, Technology, the Educational Implications, and Interventions**

**The implications.** In the past 30 plus years, self-esteem has been one of the “most widely studied topics in modern psychology with more than 25,000 publications concerning this construct” (Zeigler-Hill, 2011, p. 157). As seen, the nature of self-esteem, particularly with
middle school girls, can be considered a complex and multi-dimensional construct with positive and negative outcomes (Gentile et al., 2010; Rosenberg, 1965). Although there has been extensive research on self-esteem in adolescents, Gentile et al. (2010) said, “the mix of positive and negative aspects of self-esteem has resulted in a dichotomy between those who advocate its benefits and those who criticize its usefulness” (p. 261).

Educationally during the 1970s, the research showed self-esteem as a predictor of academic achievement (Purkey, 1970). Thus, in the 1980s and 1990s, self-esteem became accentuated in American education particularly with the California Task Force on Self-Esteem, a group that hoped to create a “social vaccine” (“Toward a State of Esteem: The Final Report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility,” 1990, p. 21). Specifically, this vaccine aimed to remedy: (a) family, which included parenting, child abuse, and teenage pregnancy; (b) education, meaning schools; (c) academic failure; (d) substance use, as well as abuse; (e) violence and crime; (f) poverty, along with chronic welfare dependency; and (g) the workplace (“Toward a State of Esteem: The Final Report of the California Task Force to Promote Self-esteem and Personal and Social Responsibility,” 1990). Although conducted by researchers from some of California’s best universities, the findings in the report (1990) showed “no causal relationships” (p. 60).

Since the 1970s, the self-esteem research and opinions as related to education have varied (Robins, Trzesniewski, & Donnellan, 2012). For example, Smith (2002) questioned if a self-esteem focus conflicted with other educational goals. Baumeister, Campbell, Krueger, and Vohs (2003) indicated that high self-esteem resulted partially from “good academic performance” (p. 1), and attempts to boost self-esteem for better academic performance can actually be counterproductive.
Most recently, Ferkany (2008) noted when educators take the position to ignore children’s global self-esteem without perhaps what they consider educational repercussions, this “view is mistaken” (p. 119). Ferkany said a more appropriate and “sophisticated account” (p. 120) looks at self-esteem in this way:

Self-esteem is importantly connected to the confidence and motivation children need in order to engage in and achieve educational goals, and can and should be facilitated socially, i.e., not just, or even primarily, through the interactions between teacher and student, but between student and the social environment and the school itself. (p. 120)

Although many still see the self-esteem movement as a fad, the need for continuing research appears evident. Orth, Robins, and Wideman (2012) found high self-esteem resulted in positive life outcomes in the “life-span trajectories of relationship satisfaction, job satisfaction, positive affect, negative affect, and depression” (p. 85).

To reiterate the findings of Kearney-Cooke (2008) in Real Girls, Real Pressure the Dove Campaign for Real Beauty’s report on girls and the state of their self-esteem, Kearney-Cooke found: (a) seven out of 10 girls, eight to 17 years old, do not feel good enough; (b) when they feel low in self-esteem, three-fourths (75%) of girls reported engaging in negative behaviors such as disordered eating, cutting, bullying, smoking or drinking compared to one-fourth (25%) of girls with high self-esteem; and (c) when girls feel badly about themselves they avoid daily activities such as going to school, voicing their opinion, and going to the doctor. Kearney-Cooke’s findings align with Ferkany’s (2008) argument that “low self-esteem is indeed an impediment to achievement” (p. 125) and educators should, therefore, do what they can to better the process for adolescents (p. 131).

In the 21st century, several important research findings have emerged with respect to
girls, voice, self-esteem, and education to include the technological implications. To begin with, Impett et al. (2008) found the role of authenticity as a predictor of girls’ self-esteem across adolescence. Moreover, Kastelic (2008) discovered to encourage voice, achieve authenticity in education, and to develop strong, vibrant girls, several aspects of the school environment should be met. This includes health among the school’s structure in the areas of leadership, curriculum culture, and climate.

In accordance with this study and the 21st century, the educational implications of technology as it relates to girls, voice, self-esteem, and social acceptance should be considered. In their study of older adolescent girls and Facebook, Dean and Laidler (2013) examined the Ophelia or culturally at-risk view (Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994) of girlhood that views girls as “passive, fragile and vulnerable” (Gonick, 2006, p. 2). They compared this perspective with the Girl Power movement of the early 1990s which sees girls as “assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity” (Dean & Laidler, 2013, p. 2). In both instances, Dean and Laidler commented that girls more or less get ostracized which can easily be seen in the at-risk model (Gilligan, 1992; Pipher, 1994), but can also be viewed in the Girl Power model (Hesford, 1999), as girls go against traditional views of femininity.

Dean and Laidler (2013) discovered Facebook serves as a bridge rather than an “either-or proposition presented by these two discourses” (p. 34). Furthermore, Dean and Laidler found Facebook girls did not perceive themselves in Ophelia terms such as “weak and in need of specialized attention” (p. 21). Instead, girls stated Facebook provided a “platform for conveying alternative, flexible, and more direct expressions of self” (Dean & Laidler, 2013, p. 11).

In respect to the Girl Power model, or the reframing and reclaiming of girlhood (Hesford, 1999), Dean and Laidler (2013) learned their participants “found Facebook communication
circumvents some of the disadvantages of binding feminine identity with consumerism, often citing how online exchanges allow them to dress, look and feel more naturally” (p. 32). Thus, Dean and Laidler concluded that SNS like Facebook provide a way for girls to carve out their own expressions, views, and representations of femininity and how in the process “girls and young women shape and take command of their own unique identities” (p. 34). Thus, Dean and Laidler mentioned the reframing, expanding and opening of a window to possibilities for “leveraging change in the new millennium” (p. 34) for girls’ voices and self-esteem.

In another look at voice, Facebook, and education, Teng (2012) went on special assignment to teach language arts to middle school students in San Diego, California. Teng found that “voice mattered. Response mattered” (p. 34). Teng translated this as students described, “your ideas mattered” (p. 35).

With this in mind, the San Diego School District took a “leap of faith” (Teng, 2012, p. 35) to implement an SNS similar to Facebook, and the students successfully responded. Teng (2012) stated, “the comments, feedback, shout outs, and general response from others, typically their friends, are what have students rushing home to check their e-mail notifications” (p. 36). Thus, this is one example of an educational strategy.

Another instance of an educational strategy for social media and the use of voice can be seen in this self-awareness activity for teens mentioned earlier (Lewis & Wahesh, 2012). Counselors Lewis and Wahesh (2012), showed one example of the tool used with Rachel, a teenage girl, experiencing difficulties at school and in her relationships. Rachel and her counselor reviewed some of her Facebook posts and explored “cognitions, emotions and actions related to each event that Facebook represented” (Lewis & Wahesh, 2012, p. 371).
Through this activity, one of the counselors was able to show Rachel how her Facebook posts had reinforced her “negative beliefs about herself” (Lewis & Wahesh, 2012, p. 371). Lewis and Wahesh (2012) stated how the counselor and Rachel agreed that she could “monitor her thinking and attempt to dispute problematic thoughts” (p. 371) with this activity. The researchers stated how Facebook can be used in the counseling environment and as a therapeutic tool, because it can be considered “an extension and replication of adolescents’ offline lives” (Lewis & Wahesh, 2012, p. 372).

Indeed, SNS like Facebook have opened a multitude of concerns and considerations specific to education. In a conversation with one educator, he commented that SNS such as Facebook have become problematic on his campus (G. Mowen, personal communication, February 28, 2012). SNS problems have been seen across every grade level from K-12, therefore, some educators favor less technology use (Considine et al., 2009), while others encourage more (Considine et al., 2009; Teng, 2012; Wankel, 2009).

For today’s teens that have grown up with technology, Considine et al. (2009) noted the “paradox that this generation presents to educators” (p. 472). Considine et al. discussed how teens’ regular use of technology “creates a false sense of competency, as well as the misperception among many adults that contemporary youth are ‘media savvy’” (p. 472). Herein, Considine et al. said, “hands on is not the same as heads on” (p. 472).

**Media literacy interventions.** One-way educators have addressed their concerns has been through media literacy interventions or programs in schools. Considine et al. (2009) said:

We live in an era surrounded by media that bombards us with messages through text, images, and sound. But simply being surrounded by media does not necessarily mean
we recognize or understand its content or intent. To prepare today’s students to succeed in the 21st century, educators must begin to address the complex, high-tech media environments that are part of everyday life. This involves what media and technology do to today’s young people along with the equally intriguing issue of what they do with it. (p. 472)

Hobbs (2011) defined media literacy as: (a) the ability to “use texts, tools, and technologies to access both information and entertainment” (p. 12); (b) the development of “critical thinking, analysis, and evaluation” (p. 12); (c) “the practice of message composition and creativity” (p. 12); (d) the engagement in “reflection and ethical thinking” (p. 12); and (e) the active participation in “social action through individual and collaborative efforts” (p. 12). However, the literature showed that much of media literacy research has been inconsistent (Choma, Foster, & Radford, 2007; Donnelly, 2011; Hobbs, 2011; Potter, 2010; Spettigue & Henderson, 2004; Wilksch, Tiggemann, & Wade, 2006). Potter (2010) commented that there is “no consensus as scholars continue to add and subtract ideas” (p. 679).

Meanwhile, Hobbs (2011) refuted Potter (2010) and said he neglected the innovations in education, communication, and public health, including his own. Hobbs also commented on “the rise of support for media literacy in the digital media landscape” (p. 421). Moreover, the importance of media literacy can be seen in the National Governors Association Common Core Standards, and thereby placed by educational reformers (“Common Core Standards,” 2011).

In another way to look at media literacy, Young (2012) connected media literacy with traditional literacies and suggested how educators understand the assumptions and find value in both. Specifically, Young stated: (a) both literacies aim at communication; (b) schools, for the most part, emphasize traditional literacy, therefore, teachers must be taught the connections with
digital literacy; (c) writing of any kind can be considered a process; (d) the notion of community plays an important role in learning. Hence, the teacher/student relationship and the student-to-student relationship should include the entire group; and (e) learners can and do produce knowledge as well as content. In working with students to produce audio and video productions, Young found the experience helps student with their writing, audience analysis, knowledge of perspectives, and their ability to critique arguments through the understanding of sub-texts.

Similar to Young (2012), Considine et al. (2009) emphasized the importance of media literacy both from a consumer and creator perspective. Moreover, today’s students have been raised on technology; therefore, educators must seek to connect those of the Millennial generation to instruction. Considine et al. stated the value of developing media literacy as:

A necessary and critical component of schooling in an increasing multicultural society.
Different voices, visions, and experiences must be recognized and respected. Teachers should assist Millennials’ understanding of how media representations of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation affect our society.  (p. 480)

Additionally, the research showed the importance of major organizations getting in the educational game to promote girls’ self-esteem. For example, The Dove Self-Esteem Fund (“The Dove Self-Esteem Fund: Social Mission,” 2012) has been involved for over ten years. In 2004, Dove created its Campaign for Real Beauty (Brodbeck & Evans, 2007) in England due to a decline in sales. However, rather than focus on their product, Dove decided they wanted to focus on a way to make women feel better about their appearance. Brodbeck and Evans (2007) discussed how Dove also aimed to become a catalyst for how society defines beauty for women.

After their 2004 beginning, Dove commissioned a study with girls eight to 17 years old called Real Truth Real Beauty: A Global Report so that they could find out what beauty means
to them (Kearney-Cooke, 2008). Brodbeck and Evans (2007) noted that Dove later commissioned several other studies to find out more about this issue of women, perceptions about beauty, self-esteem, the media, and social-cultural influences. All of the studies confirmed the history that women’s self-esteem issues impact their daily living (Brodbeck & Evans, 2007).

Along with this study, in their *Campaign for Real Beauty* in 2004, Dove utilized more realistic looking models rather than the perfect, ultra-thin, stereotypical media visions of femininity (Brodbeck & Evans, 2007). Brodbeck and Evans (2007) discussed the positive end, whereas, the media and experts for the most part praised the ads as they were innovative and broke the feminine stereotype. However, Brodbeck and Evans recalled how some critics thought the campaign should have also been done for men, others felt the models were still head-turners, and others demeaned the women’s plumpness. One woman commented, “I do not consider those plump women” (G. Pennington, personal communication, October 15, 2009).

As an extension of their work, Dove presents self-esteem workshops globally for adolescents (“The Dove Self-Esteem Fund: Social Mission,” 2012). This seems to have been successful as noted by some of the comments by adolescents such as Madeleine who remarks about her beautiful freckles and Candace (with braces) who talks about her beautiful smile (“Redefining Beauty in Their Own Words,” 2009).

Furthermore, Dove has partnered with The Girl Scouts of America and the Boys and Girls Clubs of America to empower girls globally in the area of self-esteem and offers a wide variety of advice for and from moms and mentors (“Dove Movement for Self-Esteem,” 2012). Dr. Joyce Brothers weighed in on the Dove Campaign and says, “Dove helps show that we have come a long way when we no longer have to try to look exactly like every other woman who has
been declared by some fashion magazine or film czar to be the epitome of beauty” (Brodbeck, & Evans, 2007, p. 6).

Since the Boys and Girls Clubs of America have stepped to the plate (“Dove Movement for Self-Esteem,” 2012), it cannot be overlooked that perhaps education for boys and men must be considered. In a study of 20 children, ages eight to 12 years old (nine girls and 11 boys), regarding their media use and popular culture perceptions, Uhls and Greenfield (2012) showed “fame as the number one cultural value” (p. 323) while participants also emphasized the importance of their use of “interactive media tools to search for an audience for themselves” (p. 324). Herein, at their fingertips, the use of easily accessible and public relations tools such as social media sites like Facebook and YouTube.

Included in the digital literacy organizational effort, many companies have joined forces with parents and schools. For example, Facebook and Time Warner have teamed up and created Stop Bullying: Speak Up (“Facebook,” 2013). While other companies, such as the Pew Research Center, provide free information about digital literacy through their Internet and American Life Project (“Pew Internet and American Life Project: About Us,” 2013).

Educationally, Durham (2008) remarked, “it seems hopeless to try to challenge the pervasive and persuasive images of the media juggernaut. But it isn’t. Girls are smart, critical, and thoughtful consumers, and they are well aware of the contradictions they encounter in their daily negotiations with identity and gender” (p. 85). Moreover, O’Dea (2005) emphasized the role of parents as the gatekeepers of their children’s health habits, while the public should also take a stand. This research will be a contribution to the journey of adolescent girls as summarized in the next section.
Summary

As noted, historically, girls and the media have had a poor relationship (Becker, Burwell et al., 2002; Botta, 1999; Clark & Tiggemann, 2006; Durham, 2008; Etcoff et al., 2004; Field et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Hinshaw & Kranz, 2009; Hua, 2012; Jacob & Yoo, 2010; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; McClure et al., 2010; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Pipher, 1994; Racine et al., 2011; Sanders, 2009; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Signorielli, 1997, 2004; Slater et al., 2012; Spettigue & Henderson, 2004; Snigda & Venkatesh, 2011; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010). With the popularity of technology among teenagers, particularly girls, both the positive and negative aspects of new media must be further uncovered and understood (Moreno, 2010). This phenomenological study aims to do this by looking at girl gab and how positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends multi-dimensionally effect, if at all, middle school girls’ self-esteem and friendships.

This literature review included: (a) Gilligan’s theory of moral development (1982); (b) the value of teen self-esteem; (c) the importance of social acceptance in adolescents; (d) the teen media scene; (e) teens and their technological culture, specifically, Facebook; and (f) teen esteem, technology, the educational implications, and interventions. This understanding of the literature gives a foundation for the importance of this study on Facebook and the lived experiences of middle school girls with positive and negative messages from female friends in relationship to self-esteem and friendships.
CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

Phenomenological studies report the lived experiences of several individuals in respect to a phenomenon (Creswell, 2007; Heidegger, 1927/1962; Husserl, 1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994; Sartre, 1956; van Manen, 1990). This research utilized this approach, as phenomenology aims to “illuminate the specific, to identify phenomena through how they are described by the actors in a situation” (Lester, 1999, p. 1). Herein, how positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends multi-dimensionally affect, if at all, middle school girls’ self-esteem and what role they play in friendships. Most importantly, Lester (1999) discussed how “Phenomenological approaches are good at surfacing deep issues and making voices heard” (p. 1).

To better understand phenomenological inquiry, one can look at Evans’ (2010) study of loneliness in recovering alcoholics. Since loneliness and alcoholism do not discriminate, the importance of understanding loneliness in the voices of recovering alcoholics benefits friends, family and of course, the one who forges through the recovery process. As Evans showed, recovering alcoholics noted they “often grew up in homes where they felt abandoned, disconnected, unloved, or underappreciated by their parents or caregivers” (p. 92). Armed with this knowledge, friends, family, and the recovering alcoholic’s future can be enhanced and equipped through the power of words.

In another phenomenological study, Morrissey and Higgs (2006) examined adolescent sexual behavior and a girl’s first sexual encounter. As a key application their findings were “to inform school sex education programs” (Morrissey & Higgs, 2006, p. 162). As van Manen (1990) discussed, personal experience serves as a starting point and “the phenomenologist knows that one’s own experiences are also the possible experiences of others” (p. 54).
In phenomenology, Morrissey and Higgs (2006) also stated this approach can be “of great importance to understanding human existence” (p. 162). Herein, they emphasized a phenomenological approach can serve as a “cornerstone of knowledge” (Morrissey & Higgs, 2006, p. 162). Additionally, Creswell (2007) discussed phenomenology as being “valuable for groups such as therapists, teachers, health personnel and policymakers” (p. 62).

With this understanding, this chapter will discuss the methodology for this phenomenological inquiry. Specifically, the (a) design, (b) research questions, (c) setting, (d) procedures, (e) researcher’s role and biography, (f) data collection, (g) data analysis, (h) trustworthiness, and (i) ethical considerations will be discussed.

**Design**

This qualitative study employed hermeneutical phenomenological (van Manen, 1990) design principles. The researcher examined the multi-dimensional effect of positive and/or negative Facebook messages from female friends on middle grade girls’ self-esteem, and what role these messages play in their friendships. The rationale for this design lies in the ever-increasing use of social media among teens and the need for exploration of this phenomenon, particularly in relationship to self-esteem (Jones, 2012; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). Moreover, Boyd (2014) noted the lack of qualitative studies on teens and technology. Therefore, the choice of a hermeneutical phenomenological approach (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) seemed appropriate, as the lived experiences of middle school girls’ and the multi-dimensional effect of social media messages on their self-esteem and friendships should not be overlooked.

**Hermeneutical Phenomenology**

According to Friesen, Henriksson, and Saevi (2012), in the latter decades of the 20th
century, researchers gained a renewed interest in phenomenology and it “can be said to have evolved into a relative mature empirical science, capable of being attuned to the methodological needs associated with each specific discipline” (p. 3). Because phenomenology focuses on lived experiences, Friesen et al. discussed the benefits to “fields such as education, nursing, psychology, and social work (p. 3).” In education, “hermeneutical phenomenology bridges the gap between what theory and educational documents say should take place in the classroom and what actually takes place in every-day pedagogical practice” (Friesen et al., 2012, p. 9).

To further understand hermeneutical phenomenology (Heidegger 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) as the best choice for this research, a comparison to another major approach known as transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994) would be appropriate. Hermeneutical (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) and transcendental phenomenologic (Husserl,1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994) designs have been based on “philosophical assumptions about experience and ways to organize” (Moerer-Urdahl & Creswell, 2004, p. 2) the data. The similarities begin as hermeneutical and transcendental phenomenology stem from German philosophy (Husserl, 1913/1983; Heidegger, 1927/1962) with Heidegger (1927/1962 ) as the main proponent of hermeneutical phenomenology, and Husserl (1913/1983) as the foremost advocate of transcendental phenomenology. More recently, van Manen (1990) has developed a semi-structured approach to hermeneutical phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1962) focused on pedagogy, and Moustakas (1994) has developed a qualitative method for transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1983).

Along with their German beginnings, hermeneutical (Heidegger, 1927/1962) and transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1983) can be considered similar in that both
aim to uncover lived experiences through human science and to discover what has been lost through empirical research. In other words, to find the meaning of humanness.

Although these similarities exist, the differences between hermeneutical phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) and transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994) lie in core concepts. Specifically, the heart of the approaches differ. Additionally, the position and processes of the researcher contrast.

Like Heidegger (1927/1962), who considered context a “central concern (Wojnar & Swan, 2007, p. 172). Moustakas (1994) stated, “interrelationship of science, art, and history is at the heart of hermeneutical design and methodology” (p. 9). Similarly, when talking about holistic health research, Wojnar and Swan (2007) stated health must be considered in light of “family traditions, community values, and the broader sociopolitical context” (p. 174). In the same fashion, this research on self-esteem takes into consideration contextual features to include the historic role of girls and women in society particularly in relationship to the media.

In consideration of context, in hermeneutical phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990), the researcher’s position becomes “embedded and essential to interpretive process” (Laverty, 2003, p. 17). Thus, the researcher aims to read the text and “the intention and meaning behind appearances” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 9) or the subtext. Most importantly, the researcher seeks “to identify the participant’s meanings from the blend of the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon, participant-generated information, and data obtained from other relevant sources” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 175).

In transcendental phenomenology (Husserl,1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994), “meaning is at the heart” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 56). With this in mind, the transcendental researcher seeks to
set aside or “abandon his or her own lived reality and describe the phenomenon in its pure, universal sense” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 173). Husserl (1931/1983) called this process “epoche” (p. 34), a “Greek word meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33).

In hermeneutical (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) and transcendental phenomenology (Husserl,1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994), the positions of the researcher(s) align with their processes, although both van Manen (1990) and Moustakas (1994) processes have six stages of data analysis their stages contrast. As noted, “For Husserl, context was of peripheral importance: for Heidegger, context was a central concern” (Laverty, 2003, p. 174).

Because the researcher self reflects in the hermeneutical process, “one, therefore, needs to become as aware as possible and account for these interpretive influences” (Laverty, 2003, p. 10). Laverty (2003) emphasized, “Meaning is found as we are constructed by the world while at the same time we are constructing this world from our own background and experiences” (p. 8). The researcher achieves this through the hermeneutical circle (Heidegger, 1927/1962), or a blending of meanings as articulated by the researcher and the participants (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 174).

On the other hand, in transcendental analysis and “epoche” (Husserl, 1931/1983, p. 34), the researcher engages in Moustakas (1994) “bracketing” (p. 85) which means to set aside one’s “prejudgments, biases, and preconceived ideas about things” (p. 85). The value lies in the scientific validity and “opportunity for a fresh start, a new beginning, not being hampered by voice of the past that tell us the way things are or voices of the present that direct our thinking” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 85).
Specifically, hermeneutical or interpretative phenomenology (Heidegger 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) can be most useful when a researcher wants to find the “holistic account” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 233) of an experience which can benefit practice (Svedlund, Danielson, & Norberg, 2001), such as Rivituso’s (2013) research on cyberbullying and the psychological impact of victimization among college students. When one wants to discover an “essential form” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 731), structure, or framework to a phenomenon, one would use transcendental phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994). An educational example would be Clark’s (2013) research on “how in-service teachers with three to five years of experience perceive their pre-service and in-service training regarding the integration of twenty-first century technology into their instruction” (pp. 25-26).

Depending on one’s research questions and goals, a researcher can decide the right approach. As mentioned, a guideline would be that a researcher consider hermeneutical phenomenology (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) when, as in this study, context and a blend of his or her notion of a phenomenon with that of the participants and other sources (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007) serve as key components of the research. When one’s goal may be to discover “universal essences of phenomena with an ultimate goal to develop caring interventions” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 178), than a transcendental approach (Husserl, 1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994) will probably best suit the research.

Assumptions of Common Ground

To understand phenomenology, Moustakas (1994) noted one must be able to view “the experience and behavior as an integrated and inseparable relationship of subject and object and of parts and whole” (p. 21). Creswell (2007) stated that phenomenology hopes to understand the
common ground among those who have experienced a phenomena. Two other examples of phenomenologic designs would be Wyman’s (2012) hermeneutical research on non-completers in online education doctoral programs, and Cooper-Barnett’s (2011) transcendental study on observing what middle school boys read.

Moreover, phenomenological research investigates lived experiences with, as van Manen (1990) remarked, tasks in mind. Most importantly, Merleau-Ponty (1962) pointed out that phenomenology aims to achieve “a direct and primitive contact” (p. vii) with the readily experienced (van Manen, 1990). In this case, the researcher’s intention to obtain detailed descriptions of middle school girls’ experiences with positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends to discover how, if at all, they multi-dimensionally affect their self-esteem, and what role they play in their friendships. Thus, the hermeneutical lens (Creswell, 2007; van Manen, 1990) informed the following research questions.

**Research Questions**

The questions framing the research are:

**RQ 1.** How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?

**RQ 2.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?

**RQ 3.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?
Setting

The participants came from the local public and private middle schools, while one participant attended home school. The public middle schools were in the same city but one was in a different school district. All of the schools are situated in a thriving college town that has grown from a small, manufacturing city. According to the Chamber of Commerce’s website, the school system can be considered among one of the top in the state.

Per the city’s official website, the median household income for two persons falls in the $35,000 to $40,000 range with approximately one-fifth of the population living below poverty. One of the public school district’s websites noted technology has been infused in their curricula at every level. On the other public and private school district’s websites they had five year growth plans that included technology. The public school district noted a specific, educational technology plan and the private school included technology in their strategic plan.

All of the meetings took place in a comfortable and casual place convenient for the girls and their parents. Thus, the interview took place inside a local grocery store with a popular coffee shop often frequented by teenagers. The girls could then get a beverage while their parents could sit out of interview range or walk around and shop. Two follow up meetings were conducted at the participants home under parental guidance and with safety precautions in place for the researcher.

Participants

The sampling for the study was purposeful. Purposeful sampling means “that the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 125). Nine females, 13, the minimum age to have a Facebook account (“Facebook,” 2013) or 14 years old,
in the seventh and eighth grade were recruited as participants. The sample size of nine participants aligns with Polkinghorne’s (1989) recommendation of five to 25 participants for phenomenologic inquiry. As noted in the previous section, the participants resided in the South Atlantic region of the United States and had Facebook accounts that they used at least five days per week. The girls were from local groups and other contacts. Next, the recruitment process as well as the study procedures will be discussed.

**Procedures**

A brief review of the procedures includes (a) Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval (see Appendix A), (b) recruitment of participants, (c) pre-interview connections, (d) assent and consent forms (see Appendices E and F), (e) initial interviews and journals, (f) transcription of interviews, (g) second meetings with member checks and journal reviews, (h) descriptive surveys (see Appendix G) and RSES (See Appendix H) coded, (i) coded transcripts, and (j) a six-stage data analysis. A short synopsis of the procedures will be addressed next, and the procedure details have been outlined in their respective sections.

**IRB Approval**

This research proposal was submitted to the Liberty University IRB for approval (see Appendix A). The IRB “exists to protect the rights and welfare of human participants volunteering in any academic research study” (“Institutional Review Board,” 2012, para. 1). According to the Liberty University Institutional Review Board Handbook (2014), children (those under 18 years old) are considered a “vulnerable population” (p. 10); therefore, under IRB guidelines, they receive “additional protections” (p. 10). The IRB has four categories (“Special Protections for Children as Research Subjects,” 2012) for research: (a) research with “minimal risk” (para. 5) to children; (b) research with minimal risk but the potential of “direct benefits”
(para. 6) to the participants; (c) research with a “greater than minimal risk” (para. 7), yet, no direct benefits to the individual subjects but rather the possibility to “yield generalizable knowledge” (para. 7) about a disorder or condition; and (d) research with “greater than minimal risk” (para. 8) that does not fit the first three areas but presents a chance to “further understanding, prevention, or alleviation of a serious problem affecting the health or welfare of children” (para. 8). This research will be category one, or research with minimal risk to children.

**Recruitment of Participants**

To recruit participants, several local organizations were e-mailed the recruitment flyer (see Appendix D) as opposed to schools. The researcher secured IRB approved forms from the organizations to acknowledge that she had permission to ask their members to participate (see Appendices B and C). The researcher was asked to attend some of the groups’ meetings to present the study and answer questions, which she did and handed out flyers (see Appendix D). At one group, the parents were present so interviews were scheduled for the following week.

Two other methods were used. Recruitment flyers (see Appendix D) were distributed among the researcher’s circle of influence. Additionally, snowball sampling (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002) was used. Lindlof and Taylor (2002) noted that snowball sampling “is a method well-suited to studying social networks, subcultures, or dispersed groups of people who share certain practices or attributes” (p. 124). The combination of methods secured the participants while snowball sampling proved the most effective.

**Pre-Interview Connections**

Because the study e-mail was provided on the flyer (see Appendix D), several of the parents made contact through this means. They were then able to receive and review the assent/consent forms (see Appendices E and F) with their child prior to their initial interview as
well as have any questions answered. These forms will be discussed further in the next section. Before the initial interview with each participant, the researcher either called or e-mailed the parent to confirm the time, place, and length of the interview.

**Assent and Consent Forms**

The assent (see Appendix E) and consent (see Appendix F) forms confirmed the criteria for participation and the rest of the study protocol. Each participant signed an assent form (see Appendix E) to acknowledge she met the criteria and that she desired to take part in the study. A parent signed the consent form (see Appendix F) to give his or her child permission for participation. Both child and parent received a copy of their signed form. These forms served as a binding agreement to study protocol.

**Initial Interviews and Journals**

The initial interview was conducted in the coffee shop inside the local grocery store. Prior to the interview, the study protocol was reviewed with the parent(s) and child, particularly as related to the use of pseudonyms and other privacy (“Data Collection and Maintaining Confidentiality,” 2012). The parent(s) either waited at a nearby table, walked around the grocery store, or with referrals per snowball sampling, several of the parents felt comfortable and dropped their child off.

Before the interview began, the participant and her parent were told the interview would be about one-hour to one-hour and a half. The researcher bought the participant a beverage, and engaged in small talk about her day to establish rapport and to encourage her to talk freely. Spratling, Coke and Minick (2012) stated the importance of rapport as a critical interview technique for successful outcomes and “rapport can be further developed through talking with the children and allowing them to talk freely in the interview” (p. 48).
When she sat down, each participant was asked to fill out the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) and take the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H). The information was then reviewed and confirmed by the interviewer. The main purpose of the interview was to begin a conversation with each girl regarding her positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends. All first interviews were audiotaped on two recorders. Each interview began with the question, “Share with me some of your positive experiences with posts from your female friends on Facebook. This can include anything your female friends may have sent you including songs, videos, cartoons, photos, or any other type of posts that might have impacted you.”

As the interview progressed, the participant was prompted with the following: (a) tell me more about how your positive Facebook messages from your female friends play a role in your day, (b) can you explain how your positive messages from your female friends make you feel, and (c) what happens at school the next day when you have received positive messages from your female friends? The second question was the same as the first with similar prompts, but each participant was asked about her negative messages. Throughout the interview the researcher noted observations.

At the end of the first interview, the participant selected a journal to record her Facebook messages and related thoughts. The journals had either peace signs or flowers. Each participant was also told she could make notes for herself in case she said something during her initial interview that she wanted to discuss further in her second meeting. The participant was reminded before she left what would happen next, and how the information would most likely be used in the study write-up known as the compositive description (Creswell, 2007). The participant was taken to her parent(s) and told they would be contacted by e-mail or phone in three to five weeks for a second meeting in four to six weeks.
Transcription of Interviews

After each initial interview, the audiotapes were transferred to the researcher’s home computer in iTunes with a separate file for each participant. All study material was stored and locked in the researcher’s home office. The computer information was password protected, and only the research had access to the computer.

Since each interview took approximately one-hour, the transcription time came to approximately four to six hours for each tape in alignment with professional transcription. The researcher transcribed all interviews between the first and second meeting then put them in a Microsoft Word file. Matheson (2007) stated, “the ‘researcher-transcriptioner role’ allows the interviewer multiple opportunities to hear the interviewee’s words, pauses, silences, and non-verbal expressions such as sighs or crying” (p. 549) Bailey (2008) called transcribing “an interpretive act rather than simply a technical procedure, and the close observation that transcribing entails can lead to noticing unanticipated phenomena” (p. 130). This reiterates the importance of the “researcher-transcriptioner role” (Matheson, 2007, p. 549). After each transcription, they were reviewed by the interviewer in accordance with each audiotape to confirm accuracy.

Second Meetings with Member Checks and Journal Reviews

Each second meeting or member check occurred four to six weeks later for transcription purposes, so the participant had time to write in her journal and collect site artifacts. The participant and her parent(s) were contacted a week in advance to schedule the second meeting and then contacted again a day before the second meeting for confirmation. This contact occurred in some cases on e-mail, and in other instances, by phone, whereby each participant was reminded to bring her journal to include site artifacts.
For the second meeting, each participant brought her journal along with her site artifacts. Some site artifacts, such as a picture, were also sent on e-mail per parental permission. The second meetings took place at the same coffee shop except, in two instances, where the parent(s) asked for home visits. For home visits, safety precautions were taken by the interviewer.

In qualitative research, Gall, Gall, and Borg (2007) referred to member checks as “the process of having research participants judge the accuracy and completeness of statements made in the researcher’s report” (pp. 644-645). The directions for the member checks were that the participant could change the transcripts by drawing a line through her words so they could still be seen, write what she meant, and initial her changes. The participant could also draw a line through anything she preferred not be used in the final description. While the participant did this, her journal was reviewed by the interviewer. After both processes were completed, questions were asked by the interviewer regarding markings and clarification of any issues. Observations were noted. At the end of each interview, the participant was thanked and given her gift basket filled with school supplies and a $5 gift certificate to Starbucks.

**Descriptive Surveys and Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales Coded**

After the second meeting, the researcher hand coded the results of the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) and the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) and put them in tables on her computer. Although hand coding can be a “laborious and time consuming process, even for data from a few individuals” (Creswell, 2014, p. 195), this was an easy process for the nine participants per the simplicity of the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) and RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H).
Transcriptions Coded

As noted, the interviews were transcribed between the initial meeting and second meeting. After the second meeting where the member check occurred, the transcriptions were then coded using Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) eight techniques and the PANAS-X, also known as the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (Watson & Clark, 1994) along with Fredrickson’s (2009) list of the top ten positive emotions of joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love as guidelines. The details of the coding will be discussed in the section on data analysis.

Six-Stage Data Analysis

The research was then analyzed via an invented approach per van Manen’s (1990) suggestion and based on his six techniques, as well as Moustakas’ six stages (1990) of “the initial engagement, immersion into the topic and question, incubation, explication, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis” (p. 27). The six-stage data analysis included:

(a) Stage One: Organization, (b) Stage Two: Transcription of Interviews, (c) Stage Three: Second Meetings with Member Checks and Journal Reviews, (d) Stage Four: Coding, (d) Stage Five: Textural and Structural Descriptions, with (f) Stage Six: Composite Description. Next, a discussion of the researcher’s role in this process.

The Researcher’s Role

In a hermeneutical phenomenological study, the researcher’s role and purpose, as well as the participants’ experiences, combine to understand “human science” (van Manen, 1990, p. 11). Specifically, van Manen reiterated what it “means to be in the world as a man, a woman, a child, taking into account sociocultural and historical traditions that have given meaning to our ways of being in the world” (p. 12). Van Manen remarked that phenomenology serves as a ministry of
thoughtfulness. In this case, thoughtfulness as related to adolescent girls and their relationship with the media. Specifically, the voices of middle school girls, and the multi-dimensional effect of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends in relationship to their self-esteem and friendships should be heard to provide, in van Manen’s words, “tactful thoughtfulness, situational perceptiveness, discernment and depthful understanding” (p. 156).

While the participants come with a forestructure (Heidegger, 1927/1962), since hermeneutical phenomenology can be considered interpretive, the researcher comes to the study likewise. In contrast to quantitative research, where surveys, questionnaires, or computer programs calculate findings, in a qualitative study, the researcher serves as a mediator of the data. Thus, the researcher can be considered an instrument and this has been viewed “an accepted and acceptable stance” (Xu & Storr, 2012, p. 3). With this in mind, Wojnar and Swanson (2007) stated, “the goal of hermeneutical inquiry is to identify the participants’ meanings from the blend of the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon, participant-generated information, and data obtained from other relevant sources” (p. 175).

For over 25 years, I have worked with teenagers in retreats, workshops, colleges, and universities with an interest in self-esteem. I co-founded the Women’s Aglow International Retreats for Teenage Girls in Northern California and led these retreats from 1985-1991. In the first half of my career, I worked in radio and television and developed over 250 programs for women on personal growth with topics such as Mentoring, Attitude, and Leadership. I have been a speaker for The Girl Scouts of America, The Physically Challenged Women’s Support Group, Daughters of Destiny, and other female organizations. For this study, I did not previously know any of the local group leaders, the parents, or the participants.
Data Collection

In this section, more on the data collection techniques mentioned in the procedures section. Multiple data collection techniques were utilized: (a) descriptive surveys (see Appendix G) and the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H), (b) two meetings (interview and a follow-up member check), (c) journaling, and (d) site artifacts (written messages, photos, and visual data to include artwork) that were sent from female friends to the participants on Facebook. Each participant had an online folder in iTunes and Microsoft Word under her participant number/pseudonym. The purpose of the online folders was to have the data systematically organized (van Manen, 1990). The journals were analyzed and used in the descriptions but were not transcribed or coded. This study followed IRB protocol for work with minors under section 45 CFR 46.404, and, as noted, this was a category one study with minimal risk (“Special Protections for Children as Research Subjects,” 2012).

Descriptive Surveys

The descriptive survey (see Appendix G) was used in each initial interview and was self-reported. The participants were asked their age, race/ethnicity, grade, religion, the approximate number of Facebook messages they send and receive each day, how much time they spend on Facebook daily, how many Facebook friends they have, if they live with one parent or two, and with whom do they live. Additionally, the participants were asked whether they attended public, private, or home school.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scales

In addition to completing the descriptive survey (see Appendix G), the researcher also had each participant complete the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) to measure self-esteem at the interview. Known as perhaps the most widely used self-esteem measure in social
science research (Richardson et al., 2009), Rosenberg (1965) initially designed a Guttman scale, and now the scale is a ten-item Likert scale with items answered on four-point range from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The numbers for the four points were inserted in the scale for easy coding. The scale was used at no cost with permission from Rosenberg’s (1965) wife, Dr. Florence Rosenberg, and The Morris Rosenberg Foundation at the University of Maryland, who were contacted per their request on the nature of the scale’s use (“Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale,” n.d.).

**Initial Interviews**

After the study participants were identified, an initial interview was conducted with each participant that had a signed assent (see Appendix E) and consent form (see Appendix F). As noted, at the start of each interview, the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) was used for biographical information and the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) was used to measure self-esteem. Each girl’s initial interview consisted of two main, open-ended questions:

1. Share with me some of your positive experiences with posts from your female friends on Facebook. This can include anything your female friends may have sent you including songs, videos, cartoons, photos, or any other type of posts that might have impacted you.

2. Share with me some of your negative experiences with posts from your female friends on Facebook. This can include anything your female friends may have sent you including songs, videos, cartoons, photos, or any other type of posts that might have impacted you.

For both positive and negative experiences, these prompts were used accordingly: (a) tell me more about how your positive/negative Facebook messages from your female friends play a
role in your day, (b) can you explain how your positive/negative messages from your female friends make you feel, and (c) what happens at school the next day when you have received positive messages from your female friends? Throughout the interview, further questions or elaboration was asked for as needed and the researcher noted observations. Each interview lasted approximately one hour and was audiotaped with a backup. As discussed in the next section, the participant selected her journal and received directions.

**Journals**

At the end of her initial interview, each girl selected a journal with either peace signs or flowers that she could take home to think about what she told the interviewer and write about her interview. In addition, each girl was to consider and record her positive/negative messages from her female friends along with her thoughts about these messages. If she wanted, the participant could also bring other site artifact(s) the next time or send them to the study Facebook account with parental permission.

As Creswell (2007) discussed journaling serves as a tool of self-reflection. Adolescent girls have been known to keep diaries, and written disclosure benefits mental health (Ullrich & Lutgendorf, 2002). Hence, each participant had a chance to reflect and record her thoughts, feelings, and other expressions as they related to positive and negative Facebook messages from her female friends. The journaling process can also be a way to relieve some of the stress associated with adolescence (Landis, 2004) or even the study. Each participant was then asked to bring her journal the next time, was thanked for participating, and was taken to her parent(s).

**Second Meetings**

The second meetings were for a member check and journal review. These meetings took place inside the grocery store coffee shop as did the first meeting except in two instances, where
they were done for convenience purposes at each participant’s home. Safety precautions were taken by the interviewer for these visits. The member check also refreshed the participant’s memory as to what she initially said and her transcript was checked for accuracy. The directions for the member checks were that the participant could change the transcripts by drawing a line through her words so that they could still be seen, write what she meant, and initial her changes. She could also draw a line through anything she preferred not be used in the final description. While the participant did this, her journal was reviewed by the interviewer. After both processes were completed, questions were asked by the interviewer regarding markings and clarification of any issues. Observations were noted.

Site Artifacts

Typically used in ethnographic research, site artifacts, also known as cultural artifacts (Spradley, 1990), provide another way to understand a group’s culture. Spradley (1990) defined cultural artifacts as “the things people make or use” (p. 25). Goffman (1959) would consider these as the items the performers use “intentionally or unwittingly” (p. 22) during one’s performance which would include “setting, involving furniture, décor, physical layout, and other background items which supply the scenery and stage props for the spate of human action played out before, within, or upon it” (p. 22).

In this study, site artifacts included each participant’s recording or referencing in her journal positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends to include written or other data such as art, photos, songs, videos, or any other kind of message. Some of these were also sent via the study e-mail or Facebook account. Site artifacts have been used in the descriptions. For instance, one participant submitted a drawing of a message having to do with suicide.
Van Manen (1990) referred to site artifacts as a way to better understand messages from friends and family members as well as the possibility of including them in the “composite description” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62) or “phenomenological text” (van Manen, 1990, p. 112). All IRB guidelines for confidentiality (“Data Collection and Maintaining Confidentiality,” 2012) and work with minors (“Special Protections for Children as Research Subjects,” 2012) were followed. Next, a discussion of the process for the six-stage data analysis.

**Data Analysis**

In phenomenological research, Creswell (2007) said data analysis provides “an understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon” (p. 61). To do this, one needs to make use of van Manen’s (1990) concept of systems, or what Creswell called “structured methods” (p. 159). Herein, one needs “approaches and procedures uniquely suited to this particular project and this individual researcher” (van Manen, 1990, p. 163). Although van Manen (1990) does not have a fixed set of procedures, he sees hermeneutic phenomenological research as the interplay of six research techniques, whereby one (a) turns to a phenomena of serious interest that commits a person to the world, (b) investigates an experience as lived rather than conceptualized, (c) reflects on the essential themes which characterize the phenomenon, (d) describes the phenomenon through the artistic process of writing and rewriting, (e) strongly relates pedagogy and maintains this with the phenomenon, and (f) balances the research context by considering the parts and whole.

For this study, the researcher used van Manen’s thematic approach (1990) for data analysis as a premise for the study. Van Manen also noted that a researcher can invent an approach. Therefore, the researcher invented an approach based on these six techniques of van Manen’s and the six stages of Moustakas’ (1990) of “the initial engagement, immersion into the
topic and question, incubation, explication, and culmination of the research in a creative synthesis” (p. 27). The six stage data analysis process included (a) Stage One: Organization, (b) Stage Two: Transcription of Interviews, (c) Stage Three: Second Meetings with Member Checks and Journal Reviews, (d) Stage Four: Coding, (e) Stage Five: Textural and Structural Descriptions, and (f) Stage Six: Composite Description.

**Stage One: Organization**

**Online folders.** To store data, online folders were created under each participant’s number/pseudonym in iTunes and Microsoft Word. The researcher’s computer was password protected per IRB guidelines (“Data Collection and Maintaining Confidentiality,” 2012). The researcher was the only one with the password.

**Audiotapes.** Original audiotapes were stored on a computer in iTunes, and backup tapes were left on the recorder. They were locked per IRB guidelines (“Data Collection and Maintaining Confidentiality,” 2012) in the researcher’s home office.

**All interviews.** After being put on the computer, all interviews on the first recorder were deleted and backup tapes were left on one recorder. As noted, the computer was password protected with only the researcher having access to the study information (“Data Collection and Maintaining Confidentiality,” 2012).

**Stage Two: Transcription of Interviews**

**Transcription process.** Bailey (2008) commented on the importance of transcription as it “involves close observation of data through repeated careful listening (and/or watching)” (p. 129). The interviewer transcribed each audiotape within two weeks of completion and prior to each participant’s second meeting. Each interview was checked by the interviewer against the audiotapes, and the transcriptions were placed within the participant’s online folder in Microsoft
Word. Each interview was printed for the participant’s second meeting and member check.

**Stage Three: Second Meetings with Member Checks and Journal Reviews**

The second meeting included a member check and journal review to include site artifacts. The directions for the member checks were that the participant could change the transcripts by drawing a line through her words, write what she meant, and place her initials to confirm. The participant could also draw and line through anything she preferred not be used in the final description. If needed, these comments were reviewed and discussed. Observations were noted.

**Stage Four: Coding**

**Descriptive survey.** The results of the descriptive surveys (see Appendix G) and the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) were hand coded after completion of both meetings. The demographics and scores were placed in separate tables (see Tables 1 and 2) for use in the descriptions.

**Interview coding.** After the second meeting, the researcher began coding the data. Van Manen (1990) emphasized qualitative research as a “systematic investigation” (p. 168). This process keeps in mind “a sense of organizational form and organic wholeness of the text consistent with the methodological emphasis of the research approach” (p. 168). Van Manen suggested the researcher asks oneself, “what statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described” (p. 93).

As mentioned, the researcher used Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) suggestions to identify themes in qualitative research. Specifically, Ryan and Bernard’s techniques include the identifying of (a) “repetitions” (p. 89); (b) “indigenous typologies or categories” (p. 89) meaning specialized terms among a group or groups of people. For example, teenagers often refer to something good or cool as being “sick” (R. Brandon, personal communication, September 19,
2013); (c) “metaphors and analogies” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 90); (d) “transitions” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 90) or “shifts in content” (p. 90); (e) “similarities and differences” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 91) also known as comparing and contrasting differences in the text; (f) “linguistic connectors” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 91), which refers to how the participant joins parts of his or her life; (g) “missing data” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 92). For instance, what may not have been said; and (h) “theory-related material” (Ryan & Bernard, 2003, p. 93).

In addition to Ryan and Bernard’s (2003) eight techniques, the PANAS-X, Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (Watson & Clark, 1994), was used as a guideline. Additionally, Fredrickson’s (2009) list of the top ten positive emotions of joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love was used in the coding as another guideline. Finally, for each dimension the following considerations were taken into account.

**Physical dimension.** In taking a look at the positive and negative physical reactions of the participants to their positive and negative Facebook messages from their female friends, it should be noted this was in basic and broad terms. Herein, positive and negative physical reactions was defined as those words and actions that usually get associated with positive and negative emotions (Watson & Clark, 1994; Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2009), and the concepts of positivity and negativity (Fredrickson, 1998, 2001, 2009). For example, positive physical reactions that coincide with positive emotions can include a smile (Duchenne, 1862/1990; Frank & Ekman, 1996), a laugh (Mora-Ripoli, 2010), or enjoying time well spent with a person for whom one cares (Chapman, 1992). Negative physical reactions that relate to negative emotions might be a frown (Ekman, 1972), avoidance (Hall, 1966), or physical aggression (Geiger & Fisher, 2006).
Of course, within the realm of what most people consider positive or negative reactions, such as a smile means someone may be happy and tears mean sadness, there can be differences in interpretation. For example, the absence of the Duchenne marker (Duchenne, 1862/1990) which distinguishes a “true smile” (p. 276), or one associated with positive emotions, from a “false smile” (p. 276) had a combination of the “orbicularis oculi which produces the movement of the lower eyelid” (p. 276) and the “zygomatic major muscle” (p. 276).

Meanwhile, tears can be those of joy, such as tears at the sight of “art or entertainment” (Lutz, 2001, p. 2). Therefore, true to a hermeneutical phenomenological study, context comes into play (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990). It should also be noted that positive physical reactions can and do often release physiologic effects. For example, mirthful laughter has been shown to have a positive effect on the cardiovascular system (Miller & Fry, 2009).

Importantly, it should be stated that “with positivity you are literally steeped in a different biochemical stew” (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 94), and perhaps this should be stated conversely. For instance, although the research on the brain and depression has entered new territory regarding the theory of chemical imbalances (Malenka, 2012), the research showed that biological factors added with life events or environmental stressors can create a predisposition to depression (Chaudhary, Rana, Bala, & Seth, 2012).

**Emotional dimension.** With this in mind, positive messages that could have a positive effect on self-esteem per positive affect was considered in light of “positive youth development” (Damon, 2004, p. 13), which focuses on “each and every child's unique talents, strengths, interests, and future potential” (p. 13). Herein, the basic premise of happiness was considered in broader terms as an emotional experience (Gilbert, 2006) or what might be considered an indicator of one’s emotional wellness and included in the term positive affect. Lyubomirksy,
King, and Diener (2005) stated, “happy people are successful and flourishing people” (p. 845).

In addition to happiness, positive emotions was considered under the broader term positive affect (Fredrickson, 2001) as was positive feelings (Carver, 2003). Most importantly, all terms relate to what one can look for to help young people thrive. Importantly, from birth babies “show signs of pleasure when they hear others making happy sounds such as cooing and laughter” (Damon, 2004, p. 18).

Regarding positive affect and specific to positive emotions, Fredrickson’s (2009) list of the top ten positive emotions of joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love has been used as a guideline along with the PANAS-X, known as the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (Watson & Clark, 1994). Hence, positive feeling(s) can be considered a statement that may act as a gauge of an “emotional state or reaction” (“Feeling,” 2014). Thus, one might say she feels excited to talk to her friend because she has an emotional interest.

Conversely, for the purposes of this study, negative emotions and negative feelings has been discussed under the umbrella of negative affect. Negative affect describes “unpleasant feelings or emotions, which exist on a continuum ranging from common and normal feelings of sadness, fear, and anger to more extreme feelings along the same continuum” (“Negative Affect,” 2012, para. 1). According to the PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1994), other terms to describe negative affect would be “upset” (p. 1) or “scared” (p. 1). Again, these sources have been used as a guideline with considerations for context.

Like positive affect, negative affect was discussed in broad and basic terms. The negative outcomes of negative affect have been topics in the health literature for a long time (Cohen & Pressman, 2006). Specific to girls, in the last few decades negative affect has been of
particular concern as related to self-esteem effect and traditional media (Botta, 1999; Durham, 2008; Field et al., 1999; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Gotz et al., 2008; Hammel, 2008; Impett et al., 2011; Nobel, 2012; Pipher, 1994; Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Slater et al., 2012; Tiggemann & Miller, 2010; Zurbriggen et al., 2010), and the research has only recently started reflect how new media plays a role with adolescents with cyberbullying a growing issue (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010; Sokal, 2012).

**Social dimension.** In adolescence, one aspect of social health also considers how children interact with their parents as well as other adults. Although when middle school girls approach adolescence, they begin to pull away from their parents, the importance of adult guidance plays an important role in adolescent self-esteem and overall well-being (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2009; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; DeSisto et al., 2010; Shulkind & Foote, 2009). Therefore, adult involvement with Facebook has been included under the social dimension (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976) per the distinct roles of parents, children, and others such as educators who may be involved with adolescents and their use of technology.

**Intellectual or mental dimension.** For several reasons, intellectual or mental health takes a school-related approach. Foremost, a priority of this study lies in the educational leadership aspects. Moreover, school plays an important daily role in adolescence and school-related concerns can bring on a myriad of other challenges.

**Spiritual dimension.** Hawks’ (1994) definition of spirituality was used and included religious affiliation. As mentioned earlier, positive emotions was considered under the broader term positive affect (Fredrickson, 2001), as was positive feelings (Carver, 2003). Regarding positive affect and specific to positive emotions, Fredrickson’s (2009) list of the top ten positive emotions of joy, gratitude, serenity, interest, hope, pride, amusement, inspiration, awe, and love
were used as a guideline along with the PANAS-X, known as the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule – Expanded Form (Watson & Clark, 1994). Herein, positive feeling(s) per the definition of feeling can be considered a statement that perhaps acts as a gauge of an “emotional state or reaction” (“Feeling,” 2014, para. 2).

Like positive affect, negative affect was discussed similarly. This means negative affect was discussed with the PANAS-X (Watson & Clark, 1994) as a guideline, as well as words that usually get associated negative emotions such as being mad or aggravated. The descriptions also include context, therefore, the meaning of the words and accompanying feelings can be associated situationally. Here again, Fredrickson’s (2009) concept of positivity relates to both positive and negative emotions related to positive and negative outcomes.

With these techniques and guidelines, the data was color coded on the computer. After the key themes or concepts were highlighted, they were then placed in the margins of each transcript. These themes or concepts were then placed as headings in two charts labeled Positive Messages and Negative Messages. The number of times each theme was mentioned was marked in the column of the chart and totals were calculated for thematic review.

**Journals and site artifacts.** While each participant’s journal and site artifacts were reviewed at their second meeting, they were now examined in light of thematic analysis. Although they were not coded, they were used as applicable in the descriptions.

**Stage Five: Textural and Structural Descriptions**

Stage Five involved writing a textural and structural description (Creswell, 2007). Creswell (2007) called a textural description, “what participants in the study experienced with the phenomenon” (p. 159), while he described the structural description as the “how” (p. 159) it happened. An example of structural and textural themes would be LaRocco’s (2011) findings on
international teaching assistants and the essence of the development of intercultural competence.

LaRocco’s structural theme of “perceptions of cultural differences” (p. 89) included textural themes as, (a) “perceptions of Chinese culture and communication” (p. 89); (b) “perceptions of American culture and communication” (p. 92); and (c) “perceptions of differences between educational cultures” (p. 93).

For Research Question One and Research Question Three, the top three major themes as well as their subthemes for positive and negative messages were included in the write-up. One major theme, whereby the participants’ described mean messages as negative, had this theme only in the write-up. The participants had many different words to describe mean messages, and these were included instead as they were likened to subthemes. For Research Question Two, the multi-dimensional effect included five dimensions of positive and negative messages, therefore, just the major theme was used for the write-ups.

This section also made use of journals and site artifacts. Beck (2012) stated, “journaling is an empowering and confidence building tool for teens” (para. 4). Furthermore, anthropologist, Clifford Geertz (1973) who made significant contributions to ethnography, commented, “not only ideas, but emotions too, are cultural artifacts in man” (p. 81).

**Stage Six: Composite Description**

The textural and structural descriptions were incorporated to form the “composite description” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62) or the “essence” (van Manen, 1990, p. 177) of the lived experiences. In this study, the composite description included how positive and negative messages from female friends multi-dimensionally affect middle grade girls’ self-esteem and the role these messages play in their friendships, as well as their health and overall well-being. These findings were examined per Gilligan’s theory of moral development (Gilligan, 1982) and
compared and contrasted to the literature along with conclusions. The implications were discussed and recommendations made. Van Manen (1990) stated, “phenomenological texts succeed when it lets us see that which shines through, that which tends to hide itself” (p. 130).

**Trustworthiness**

As Creswell (2007) emphasized, trustworthiness of a phenomenologic study incorporates rigor. Rigor includes collecting “multiple forms of data” (Creswell, 2007, p. 45) which this study completed through interviews, journals, and site artifacts. More information on these data collection procedures have been discussed in the next sections. Creswell also commented on the trustworthiness of research being viewed in light of the frame or design of the study, meaning it employs the fundamental characteristics of phenomenology. These areas have also been documented in the next section.

**Descriptive Validity and the RSES**

At her first interview, each girl completed the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H). Initially developed for Rosenberg’s work with adolescents (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H), the scale has been one of the most widely-used self-esteem measures (Richardson et al., 2009). The scale has also been comprehensively studied (Wongpakaran & Nahatai, 2012) and consistently validated (Owens, Stryker & Goodman, 2001).

**Descriptive Validity and Member Checks**

At the second meeting, the interviewer did a member check with each participant of her transcription to make sure it conveyed what she wanted to say. Buchbinder (2011) called member checks a “validation interview” (p. 107) and described it as “a dialogue between interviewee and interviewer intended to confirm, substantiate, verify or correct researchers’ findings” (p. 107). The directions for the member checks were that the participant could change
the transcripts by drawing a line through her words so that they could still be seen, write what
she meant, and to initial her changes. The participant could also draw a line through anything
she preferred not be used in the final description. The participant’s markings were then reviewed
by the interviewer and clarified if needed. Observations were noted.

Descriptive Validity and Journals

After the initial interview, each participant received a journal to take home and record her
thoughts, feelings, and expressions related to her positive and negative Facebook messages from
female friends. The journals were collected at the second meeting along with other site artifacts.
While the participant did her member check, her journal was reviewed by the interviewer. After
both processes were completed, the participant was asked for clarification of any issues.
Observations were noted. Murray (1997) discussed, “journaling, as a specific form of narrative
activity, is a distinct immediate expression of subjective personal experience unbound by any
writing convention. It may be words, symbols, scribbles, stamping or doodling” (p. 69). Some
of these journal writings and other site artifacts have been included for descriptive validity as
each girl will have documented her lived experience (Geertz, 1973).

Triangulation

The use of triangulation can serve many purposes particularly as related to a
comprehensive view of the study problem. For example, triangulation can add richness to the
participants’ descriptions through other ways of telling their story such as through site artifacts
like drawings. Mathison (1988) emphasized the importance of triangulation as a research
strategy by stating, “multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of
research findings” (p. 13). Creswell (2007) called triangulation the process of “corroborating
evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or experience” (p. 208). Triangulation
was achieved through the following methods and sources of data collection: (a) RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H), (b) initial interview and second meeting with member checks, and (c) journal reviews to include site artifacts.

Credibility Per Experience

Since hermeneutical phenomenology can be considered interpretive, the researcher plays a role as an “instrument,” and this has been viewed as “an accepted and acceptable stance” (Xu & Storr, 2012, p. 3). Therefore, the background, qualifications, and experience of the researcher with 25 plus years of working with teenagers served as an important part of this study. The researcher’s previous success as an interviewer instilled confidence in her approach to the participants and also helped gain a level of trust as well as authenticity.

Peer Review

In all excellent research, the importance of peer review cannot be overlooked. “The value of peer review is based on the assumption that it provides a valid measure of the quality of a manuscript and its adherence to the norms of the field” (Soloman, 2007, para. 17). The researcher received guidance from the dissertation committee and research consultant to assure adherence to scientific and systematic phenomenological research methods. The editor provided formatting guidance.

Dependability

The processes of the study were systematically documented in writing and via online systems. Backup data was in place for any technological glitches. The systematic documentation enables future researchers to repeat the study procedures.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations lie at the core of excellent research. Creswell (2007) indicated a
key consideration regarding ethics as “we do not want to put the participants at further risk as a result of our research” (p. 44). Proper ethical procedures, as well as professional responsibilities to the field of education were followed.

**Institutional Review Board**

The research methods for this study were submitted and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University (see Appendix A). The research methods abided by IRB policies for human subjects/children (“Special Protections for Children as Research Subjects,” 2012).

**Assent and Consent**

The adolescent girls who participated in this study signed assent forms (see Appendix E). Additionally, a parent(s) signed the consent form (see Appendix F). All participants were able to withdraw from the study at any time. There was no financial compensation for the participants, but each girl received a small token of appreciation of a $5 gift card to Starbucks and a gift basket with school supplies.

**Pseudonyms**

To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms were used. No identifiers have been included per IRB guidelines for protection of participants (“Special Protections for Children as Research Subjects,” 2012).

**Security of Data**

Technological data has been locked under computer password protection in the researcher’s home office. Only the researcher has access. Original audiotapes and backup tapes have been stored in a locked area. Descriptive surveys (see Appendix G), RSES (Rosenberg,
1965; see Appendix H) scores, and transcriptions have been secured. The research will be stored for three years under IRB guidelines and protocol (“Office of Research and Engagement,” 2011).

**Sensitivity**

All study information is considered confidential per the researcher, committee, the research consultant, and the editor.

**Mental Health Professionals**

As in any study with human subjects, the potential issues discussed could have stirred strong or uncomfortable feelings in some of the girls. For instance, a message on body image might have brought up issues of an eating disorder. Another example would be that displays of sexuality could have stirred concerns regarding sex. The interviewer stressed that the study was confidential, however, she also made clear in the assent (see Appendix E) and consent forms (see Appendix F), as well as verbally before the interview, that she will abide by the ethics and standards of a professional educator. This meant had any topic come up whereby the interviewer considered the child or another in a potentially dangerous situation, the child’s parents, and/or appropriate agency, would have been notified immediately, both verbally and in writing. The child would have then been disqualified from the study. As a professional courtesy, a list of Mental Health professionals was provided (see Appendix I). No reports were made in this area.

**Summary**

Overall, this study makes a contribution to hermeneutical phenomenological (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) research on adolescent girls and the impact of social media in general, and Facebook in particular. Specifically, this research addresses how positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends can multi-dimensionally affect the self-esteem of middle school girls and play a role in their friendships. As Gilligan (1982) noted, females
view the world in a “different voice” (p. 2) than men. Herein, this investigation gives adolescent girls an opportunity to let their voices be heard through their lived experiences.
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to further the understanding of self-esteem as related to middle school girls and social media, specifically, Facebook. The following research questions have guided this study:

**RQ 1.** How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?

**RQ 2.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?

**RQ 3.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?

Since this study looks through a hermeneutical or interpretive (Heidegger 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990) lens, the view goes “beyond the core concepts and essences” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 174) of transcendental or descriptive phenomenology (Husserl, 1913/1983; Moustakas, 1994). Hermeneutical phenomenology considers Heidegger’s (1962) notion of dasein, meaning “that individuals cannot abstract themselves from various contexts that influence their choices and give meanings to lived experience” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 174). For Heidegger, (1927/1962) context served as a central premise of phenomenology. Like Heidegger, Wojnar and Swanson (2007) stated, one must view “the context of family traditions, community values, and the broader sociopolitical context” (p. 174).

Here, context considers the historical and negative relationship of middle school girls, the media, and self-esteem. Furthermore, the participants have been raised as technologically savvy teenagers in the 21st century. Therefore, they come with a preunderstanding or an underlying way of being in the world (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007; Heidegger, 1927/1962).
Along with the participants’ forestructure (Heidegger, 1927/1962), the researcher comes to the study similarly. Since hermeneutical phenomenology can be considered interpretive (Heidegger, 1927/1962; van Manen, 1990; Wojnar & Swanson, 2007), this plays a role in the research. In quantitative research, surveys, questionnaires, or computer programs calculate findings, in qualitative, the researcher serves as a mediator of the data. Thus, the researcher serves as an instrument which has been viewed as “an accepted and acceptable stance” (Xu & Storr, 2012, p. 3). Wojnar and Swanson (2007) stated, “the goal of hermeneutical inquiry is to identify the participants’ meanings from the blend of the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon, participant-generated information, and data obtained from other relevant sources” (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 175).

This section presents the participants’ Facebook experiences. All nine participants were in the seventh or eighth grade, 13 or 14 years old, and lived in the South Atlantic region of the United States. Upon their first meeting, Ellie, Quinn, Jasper, Giovanna, Tess, Carlisle, Addison, Shea, and Garette, all pseudonyms, completed the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) and RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H). They were then asked in a semi-structured interview, “Share with me some of your positive and negative experiences with posts from your female friends on Facebook. This can include anything your female friends may have sent you including songs, videos, cartoons, photos, or any other type of posts that might have impacted you.” As their interview progressed, the participants were prompted with the following: (a) tell me more about how your positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends play a role in your day, (b) can you explain how your positive and negative messages from female friends make you feel, and (c) what happens at school the next day when you have received positive and negative messages from female friends?
Descriptive Survey Results

The demographics of this study were important as related to the participants’ perspectives and to bring a more comprehensive view to the data analysis. Perspective can, of course, influence perception. Therefore, demographics can serve as a tool to analyze the themes, and to some extent, make forecasts of what people may or may not do (Berson, 1997).

At the beginning of their initial meeting, the participants were asked to fill out a descriptive survey (see Appendix G). As noted by the descriptive survey, the questions were related to grade, age, race/ethnicity, religious affiliation, daily Facebook messages (public and private), daily time spent on Facebook, number of Facebook friends, type of household (one parent, two-parent, or dual, which means the participant goes back and forth between variations of parent(s)/adult supervision). The participants were also asked in a separate question, “what kind of school do you attend public, private, or home?” The results of the descriptive survey can be found in Table 1.

To better see how demographics might be applicable to this study, one can consider some of the following examples. Per question eight, the participants were asked, “do you live in a one-parent/guardian or two-parent/guardian household? Which parent do you live with?” The participants could also write if they lived in a dual household which, as noted, meant they go back and forth between variations of parental/adult supervision.

Herein, a participant’s home supervision can influence one’s time spent on the Facebook. For instance, if a participant lived in a one-parent household and the parent goes to work, the participant may be at home unsupervised and may use the computer more often. If a participant lived in a two-parent household with a lot of upheaval, a participant could perhaps use the
computer as an escape. Therefore, as noted, the importance of an understanding and examination of demographics gives a more well-rounded view of the participants (see Table 1).
Table 1

Descriptive Survey Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Religious Affiliation</th>
<th>Daily Facebook Messages Public/Private</th>
<th>Daily Time Spent on Facebook</th>
<th>Number of Facebook Friends</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>School</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>250 or less</td>
<td>6 hours or more</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>30 minutes</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>Two-parent Mom and Dad</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>95 plus</td>
<td>2 hours</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanna</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Multiracial</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>55-60</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>Two-parent Mom and Stepdad</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>5 or less</td>
<td>15 minutes or less</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Two-parent Mom and Stepdad</td>
<td>Home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlisle</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 hour</td>
<td>800</td>
<td>Two-parent Mom and Stepdad</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addison</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>1 hour/2 on weekend</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>Two-parent Mom and Dad</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shea</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Christian</td>
<td>1-2 a week</td>
<td>10-15 minutes</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>Two-parent Mom and Dad</td>
<td>Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garette</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Non-Hispanic White</td>
<td>Unitarian</td>
<td>3-4</td>
<td>10-15 minutes</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>Dual</td>
<td>Public</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Dual household indicates the participant goes back and forth between variations of parent(s)/adult supervision. The “school” column refers to what type of school the participant attends: public, private, or home.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Results

The Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale scores range from 0-30. While Rosenberg (1965) did not have a discrete (“Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale,” n.d.) cut off, other professionals suggest scores between 15 and 25 are within normal range, scores below 15 suggest low self-esteem (“Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale,” n.d.), and over 25 high self-esteem (“Fetzer Institute,” 2014).
Six of the participants scored within the normal range, while three of the participants scored above normal. For this study, normal to high will be called high self-esteem as opposed to low self-esteem.
Table 2

*Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) Scores*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (n = 9)</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ellie</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jasper</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giovanna</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tess</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carlisle</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addison</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shea</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garette</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this section reported the descriptive survey (see Table 1) and RSES results (Rosenberg, 1965; see Table 2), the next section looks at the major themes and subthemes.

**Theme One: Participants Described Messages Used to Catch Up with the News as Positive**

This section presents the way select middle school girls discussed their use of Facebook. As noted, Ellie, Quinn, Jasper, Giovanna, Tess, Carlisle, Addison, Shea, and Garette were asked in a semi-structured interview, “Share with me some of your positive experiences with posts from your female friends on Facebook. This can include anything female friends may have sent you including songs, videos, cartoons, photos, or any other type of posts that might have impacted you.” As her interview progressed, each participant was prompted with the following: (a) tell me more about how your positive Facebook messages from female friends play a role in your day, (b) can you explain how your positive messages from female friends make you feel,
and (c) what happens at school the next day when you have received positive messages from female friends?

The nine participants described positive meaning from Facebook messages that gave them a chance to catch up with the news of their female friends. This major theme of catching up with the news had four subthemes, and this description focuses on these more specific messages. Within the subthemes, the participants said they catch up with the news for purposes of (a) updates on what friends and family might be doing, (b) organization and management of extracurricular activities, (c) to share and view pictures, and (d) just to see what might be happening on Facebook. The next section includes the participants’ descriptions of their experiences with getting Facebook updates on what friends and family might be doing.

**Subtheme One: Updates on What Friends and Family Might Be Doing**

Six of the nine participants who described positive meaning from Facebook messages from female friends that gave them an opportunity to catch up with the news discussed the subtheme of Facebook updates on what friends and family might be doing. The participants talked about topics such as teen challenges, family connections, and hearing from old friends.

**Ellie.** As Ellie said, “One of my friends was talking about when she was gonna to [sic] get her braces off and that was kind of really exciting because I’ve had mine off for a while.” Ellie remarked she sees Facebook as an “opportunity to talk with my friends” to see “how their day’s going.”

**Tess.** Like Ellie, Tess described positive meaning from Facebook messages that allow her to keep updated with friends and family, particularly her teenage cousin, Samantha. Tess described the value of her family connection on Facebook, “that’s important to me because I
haven’t been able to keep in contact with them these couple of years, and then I only get to see them for a week.”

**Carlisle.** Similarly, Carlisle described positive meaning through Facebook updates from her female friends. Carlisle explained, “Facebook though like it’s a social media network it’s to post about like how your day is going,” and “um, mainly to see like [sic] to catch up on everyone, you know.” Carlisle mentioned she liked, “to see what they post about what their li-, like what’s happening in their life, stuff like that.”

**Addison.** In the same fashion, Addison described positive meaning through Facebook updates from her female friends. Addison described, “Um, really that um, it’s really good to you know chat with your friends on Facebook ‘cause then you can know how what [sic] they’re doing and how they’re doing,” she said.

**Shea.** Moreover, Shea described positive meaning to Facebook messages from female friends that give her updates. Shea stated, “Um, I guess Facebook is more to like communicate like a, you know, how is your year been since I haven’t seen you in like five years or whatever?”

**Garette.** Additionally, Garette described updates from her female friends on Facebook as positive, particularly if they have not conversed recently. Garette explained, “just like even just saying, ‘hi,’ if we haven’t talked in awhile kind of makes me happy.” In this section, the participants talked about how they catch up with the news. In the next section, the participants describe how they manage and organize their extracurricular activities on Facebook.

**Subtheme Two: Management and Organization of Extracurricular Activities**

Four of the nine participants who described positive meaning through Facebook messages from female friends that give them an opportunity to catch up with the news, talked about they how they use Facebook for management and organization of extracurricular activities.
Quinn. Quinn described positive meaning to Facebook messages from her female cross country coach, Coach Fogie, that help her manage and organize her team schedule. She said, “Um, but then when I started cross country, like a lot of the information was on a Facebook page. So, I knew that I needed to get one.”

Jasper. Jasper also described positive meaning from Facebook messages, and said her female friends help with the management and organization of extracurricular activities. Because Jasper participates in cheerleading, messages from her female coach, Coach James, also a Facebook friend, assist her with timeliness. Jasper explained:

Yeah, ‘cause like if my mom if gets e-mails from my coach then she can check everything but say she’s not home that day, and but we’re supposed to have practice and my stepdad’s only there ‘cause she’s at work, then I can check on Facebook say, ‘Oh, practice postponed, blah, blah, blah.’

Giovanna. Like the other participants, Giovanna described Facebook messages from female friends as a positive source for the management and organization of her extracurricular activities. Specifically, Giovanna interpreted positive meaning to Facebook updates from her friends about her secret school identity, the Wisdom Guide. With this identity, Giovanna has anonymously helped solve her classmates’ challenges on and off Facebook. Giovanna’s classmates have created a Facebook page called The Wisdom Guide True Identity, with hopes to discover this person. Giovanna said these messages were positive because “Now I feel more confident to help more people,” she remarked.

Shea. Another participant, Shea, described positive meaning to Facebook messages from female friends that help her manage and update her friends’ extracurricular activities. As Shea described, “Um, well my friend, Meryl, she like, she’s in the drama stuff so when she posts stuff
about like her, her [sic] plays and what not that makes me like makes me excited for her you know.” Along with the importance of their management and organization of activities, in the next section are the participants’ descriptions of how they share and view pictures.

**Subtheme Three: To Share and View Pictures**

Three of the nine participants described positive meaning to Facebook messages from female friends that help them catch up with the news in another way. They use Facebook as a means to share and view pictures.

**Quinn and Jasper.** Quinn interpreted the funny pictures she and her friends share as positive because they “brighten” her day. Like Quinn, Jasper and her best friend, Macy, have been using Facebook to view and share pictures of their spring break plans. Jasper interpreted this as a positive also “‘cause we’re going to the beach this year together on break,” she said.

**Addison.** Similar to Jasper, Addison shares and views pictures with her female friends on Facebook and she described this as a positive experience too. Addison and her friends send each other pictures of their pets and funny selfies. She remarked, “My friend, Rachel, sent me a picture of her Tapion and Jules sent a funny one with popcorn in her mouth.” Addison said she liked “having something in common to share” and feels she has the “bestest friends in the world that I could ever have.”

**Shea.** As the other participants did, Shea described positive meaning when she and her female friends share and view pictures. Shea described how her pictures from her friends, particularly of their pets, enliven her. She remarked, “Ok, so, my friend she got a dog and like that was really exciting.” In addition to sharing and viewing pictures, as seen in the next section, the participants described how they get on Facebook just to see what might be happening.
Subtheme Four: Just to See What Might Be Happening on Facebook

Two of the nine participants described positive meaning through Facebook messages from female friends that help them catch up with the news. These two participants discussed how they like to get on Facebook to see what might be happening.

Tess and Garette. Tess reported, “When I’m in the mood, I scroll through my feed, ‘Oh, that’s cool!’” Garette said she also goes on Facebook just to see “what’s on.” Garette described the messages that she receives from her female friends as thoughts that “usually cheer me up and that make me happy” because “most the time it’s just positive things.”

This section described how the nine participants described positive meaning through Facebook messages from female friends as a way to catch up with the news. Under the major theme of catching up with the news, four subthemes emerged. Participants described they used Facebook to provide (a) updates on friends and family, (b) organization and management of extracurricular activities, (c) to share and view pictures, and (d) just to go on to see what might be happening. In the next section, the participants’ interpretations of their happy messages from their female friends are discussed.

Theme Two: Participants Described Happy Messages As Positive

In this section, eight of the nine participants described positive meaning from Facebook messages from female friends that made them happy. Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary (2014) defined the word, happy, as “feeling pleasure and enjoyment because of your life, situation; showing or causing feelings of pleasure and enjoyment; pleased or glad about a particular situation, event” (“Happy,” 2014, para. 1). Oishi, Graham, Kesibir, and Galinha (2013) stated, “Across cultures and time, happiness was most frequently defined as good luck and favorable external conditions. However, in American English, this was replaced by
definitions focused on favorable internal feeling states” (p. 2). To describe happy messages, the participants also used synonyms such as brighten, cheer, glad, feel good, and excited. Within the major theme of happiness, two subthemes emerged: bright days and bad days. Regarding bright days, the participants did not attribute these happy messages to being received on a certain kind of day meaning a good day, a bad day, or an indifferent day, but rather their messages brightened their overall day regardless of how they might be doing. The participants described bad days in general and as family problems. This description focuses on these two subthemes.

**Subtheme One: Bright Days**

Five of the eight participants that described happy messages from their female friends ascribed positive meaning because this communication brightened their day in general. The participants said these happy messages were sent on generic days as opposed to specifically a good day, a bad day, or an indifferent day. Bright days were discussed in terms being uplifted, feeling good, excited, and loved after receiving a happy message.

**Quinn.** When Quinn talked about happy messages, she said they “just kind of like brighten your day.” On Women Crush Wednesday (WCW), Quinn and her female friends share funny pictures. WCW refers to the Facebook day when females post pictures of their girl crushes (Vultaggio, 2013). When Renie posted a picture of her, Quinn stated, “Um, it made me really happy because she’s my really good friend.”

**Jasper.** Jasper also described happy messages from her female friends as being positive and inspirational. Her friends usually post “Bible verses.” Jasper interpreted the bible verses as “really like uplifting,” she said.

**Carlisle.** One time Carlisle said her friend, Presley, did a To Be Honest (TBH). A TBH refers to “a term that encourages online users to express honestly how they feel about a person or
an idea they post” (Birdsong, 2013, para. 3). Carlisle said Presley commented, “you’re my best friend and you’re gorgeous and you’re really nice, or you know, something like that.” Carlisle ascribed positive meaning to this message because as she said, “And so, that made me feel good I guess.” *Merriam-Webster’s Online Dictionary* (2014) referred to “feel good” (para. 1) as a means of “producing good or happy feelings” (“Feel good,” 2014, para. 1). Thus, Carlisle’s “feel good” message from Presley per the definition of “feel good” can be considered one that brought happiness.

**Addison.** Likewise, Addison shared how she described Facebook messages from her female friends as positive. Addison recalled a message from her best friend, Brice, that said, she loved her “like a sister.” Addison remarked, “It made me feel very happy because I know she loves me.”

**Shea.** When one of Shea’s female friends, Meryl, posted on Facebook that she got a part in their school play, Shea discussed her positive interpretation of this message. Shea stated, “…that makes me like makes me excited for her you know.” *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary* (“Excited”, 2014) noted excited can be considered a word related to happiness. Shea also described a happy message that she received about her friend, Emerson’s, new puppy. Shea said she and her group of friends were “And, uh, we were all really excited for her….” In her journal, Shea wrote about Emerson posting photos of her new puppy and said, “so it turned out good.”

**Subtheme Two: Bad Days**

Three of the nine participants described positive meaning to happy messages on bad days. Two of the participants, Ellie and Garette, described bad days in general, and one participant, Giovanna, discussed a bad day in terms of family problems.

**Ellie.** Ellie talked about how her best friend, Jenna, sends happy messages just when she
needs them. Ellie said:

I wrote to her, I love how this girl is like my best friend; we have been so close over the past two years and she really can cheer me up on days when it feels like there’s one of those big grey clouds over top of me.

**Giovanna.** In her interview, Giovanna told about a bad day with her family. She went on Facebook to talk with her female friend, Carly. When Giovanna did not hear from Carly for a few minutes, she asked, “Hey, you still there?” Giovanna said Carly replied, “And she sent me like this happy face that was like so happy I was crying.”

**Garette.** As the other two participants did, Garette described happy messages from her female friends as positive because they can help with a bad day. She said:

Yeah, from having a bad day or and like I tell my friends that then they can usually cheer me up and that makes me happy or they might not even know I’m upset and they just send something that makes me happy, and I feel all better.

This section discussed how eight of the nine participants described positive meaning through Facebook messages from female friends that made them happy. Within the major theme of happy messages, two subthemes emerged: bright days and bad days. While the participants described happy messages as being positive, as seen in the next section, they talked about funny messages in a similar way.

**Theme Three: Participants Described Funny Messages as Positive**

Seven of the nine participants described positive meaning when female friends send them funny Facebook messages. Funny messages included cartoons, funny pictures, cartoon-oriented music videos, memes, gifs, birthday cards, and comics. Within the major theme of funny messages, two subthemes emerged. This description focuses on these two subthemes: funny
messages as being “funny but…” which means they have a secondary meaning or effect or funny messages as “a friend thing.”

**Subtheme One: “Funny But…” Messages**

Five of the seven participants described positive meaning to Facebook messages from female friends that can be “funny but…” also have a secondary effect or meaning. The participants described this secondary effect or meaning in a number of ways. For example, the participants emphasized that the funny messages can also brighten one’s day, might be based on amusing commercials, can be insulting but true, kind of scary, positive and friendly, or appear strange to them.

**Quinn.** When Quinn discussed funny messages, she said, her friends send “funny pictures.” The pictures include “Pretty much like anything, but it just kind of like brightens your day.” Though Quinn and her friends send digital pictures, Jasper and her friends usually send funny memes and gifs. Memes refer to:

> An element of a culture or system of behavior that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another by nongenetic means, especially imitation. For example, a humorous image, video, piece of text, or something similar that is copied (often with slight variations) and spread rapidly by Internet users. (*Oxford Dictionaries*, 2015, para. 1)

Like memes, gifs can be a static image, but they also can be “multiple images for animated effects” (*Jones, 2006*, para. 2).

**Jasper.** In her journal, Jasper drew a picture of a funny meme that she received from a female friend that was based on an amusing *Almond Joy* candy bar commercial (‘Almond Joy,”
The commercial talked about when a person unwraps an Almond Joy (“Almond Joy,” 2011), one unwraps paradise (see Figure 2).

![Meme - Someone opened an Almond Joy](image)

**Figure 2.** Almond Joy (“Almond Joy,” 2011) candy bar commercial meme/unwrap paradise.

Additionally, Jasper talked about memes and gifs that can be funny but also insulting. Even though funny and insulting, Jasper called the messages “but actually is true like.” She then gave an example of “the basic white girl thing,” a meme that her friend, Tate, sent. Jasper stated:

> The basic white girl things is they, we drink Starbucks. We drive Prius apparently and, and stuff like that and we’re all about pink, pink, pink or whatever (her voice went along as if in a scale and she raised her pitch each time she said the word “pink”). So, they’ll have stuff like posted like [sic] ‘City girls drinking their Starbucks and we’re out here within the ghetto.’

Jasper gave another example of a meme that she described as funny but “insulting.” The meme has a picture of a black guy as he brings out the garbage. Jasper reiterated the caption, “Um, us ghetto people, be roughin’ it.” Jasper mentioned that a diverse people have responded to these memes with comments such as, “Ha, ha, that’s so true or so funny or whatever.” As part of her journal, Jasper provided another example of a “funny but…” meme (see Figure 3).
Giovanna. When she talked about a birthday card from her female friend, Jessica, Giovanna interpreted the message as funny, but scary. Giovanni noted the dragon in the middle that popped out of the birthday cake. She remarked, “It was even funnier ‘cause she sent it to me, I thought it was like a regular cake, ‘cause it’s like a moving one and it like just popped out and I was like, ‘Oh, God!’” Speaking of the scary dragon, Giovanna emphasized, “That’s like the funny part it’s like, ‘Oh, God!’”

Addison. As Addison described her funny Facebook messages from her female friends, she discussed how they try to keep them funny, but positive and friendly. Addison mentioned how she and her friends send and receive funny Facebook messages in a comic called Bitstrips (“Bitstrips,” 2014). Addison said:

So we put like two people in the comic and you can retype and like, like, ‘Addison, Addison [sic] wishes Sloane would move out of her basement quickly. But you can change that and put like, ‘Addison is happy that Sloane’s in her basement and being safe,’ like that, so they could sound friendly.

Garette. Garette too ascribed positive meaning to funny Facebook messages from
female friends on WCW. Even with her positive interpretation of funny WCW pictures, Garette found them another “weird kind of weird, another weird aspect of Facebook.” Along with funny messages being “funny but…,” in the next section, the participants described how they ascribed positive meaning to messages they called “a friend thing.”

**Subtheme Two: A Friend Thing**

Three of the seven participants that described positive meaning from funny Facebook messages from female friends called these messages “a friend thing.” “A friend thing” might be otherwise, called a sign of friendship. The study of signs or symbols as they relate to communication goes by the name semiotics and goes back to the work of Augustine (Deely, 1990) and Poinsot (1632/1985). In this case, signs and symbols refer to cartoons, funny pictures, cartoon-oriented music videos, memes, gifs, birthday cards, and comics that give “information about something: something (such as an action or event) which shows that something else exists, is true, or will happen” (“Sign,” 2014).

**Giovanna.** Giovanna described positive meaning in the cartoons from her female friends. Giovanna said, “It’s kind of a friend thing with us.” Giovanna and her friends prefer to send cartoons rather than a song or video because they all seem to find a common understanding in the cartoons. Giovanna said if they were to send videos or songs to each other it would be little more difficult because the sender would not always be sure that the receiver likes the video or song, “so we just send cartoons.”

**Shea.** On Woman Crush Wednesday (WCW), a day where girls and women post pictures of females they “find attractive or admire” (Vultaggio, 2013, para. 1), Shea and her friends, post funny pictures of each other. When asked if she has ever posted on WCW in more
of a serious or admirable way, for example, with a picture of her mom or a teacher, Shea said, “It’s more of like a friend thing.”

**Ellie.** In addition to the other two participants, Ellie described funny Facebook messages as a sign of friendship. Ellie gave an example of a cartoon-oriented music video that she received from her best friend, Jenna. The music video talked about “best friends and everything (Ellie squealed).”

This section discussed how seven of the nine participants described positive meaning to funny Facebook messages from female friends. Funny messages included cartoons, funny pictures, cartoon-oriented music videos, memes, gifs, birthday cards and comics. Within the major theme of funny messages, two subthemes emerged. This description focused on these two subthemes, funny messages as being “funny but…” which means they have a secondary meaning or effect and funny messages as “a friend thing.” While this section discussed the participants’ descriptions of positive Facebook messages from their female friends, the next sections will include their experiences with negative messages.

**Theme One: Participants Described Inappropriate Messages as Negative**

This section presents the participants’ negative perceptions of Facebook messages from female friends. Ellie, Quinn, Jasper, Giovanna, Tess, Carlisle, Addison, Shea, and Garette, were asked in a semi-structured interview, “Share with me some of your negative experiences with posts from your female friends on Facebook.” This can include anything your female friends may have sent you including songs, videos, cartoons, photos, or any other type of posts that might have impacted you.” As their interview progressed, the participants were prompted with the following: (a) tell me more about how your negative Facebook messages from female friends play a role in your day, (b) can you explain how your negative messages from female friends
make you feel, and (c) what happens at school the next day when you have received negative messages from female friends?

Eight of the nine participants described negative meaning from inappropriate Facebook messages from female friends. In their interviews, the participants discussed an array of topics to include bullying also known as cyberbullying, appearance comparisons, intonation, bad influences, boys, suicide, hate, bands, sexuality, cussing, disrespect, girls crying, smoking, drinking, twerking, scantily-clad selfies, and bad choices. Within the major theme of inappropriate messages, three subthemes emerged (a) bullying/cyberbullying, (b) boys, and (c) bad choices. This description focuses on these three subthemes.

In their study of social media and Facebook among college students, Stern and Taylor (2007) discussed they believed students have some degree of “moral compass” (p. 12) to judge appropriateness meaning right and wrong. This study has been based on this same premise. When a participant questioned her judgment about a Facebook message from a female friend, she remembered her parents’ advice particularly that of her mom. One participant, Ellie’s dad, is the main figure in her life so she has been following his guidance. The next section contains the participants’ descriptions of negative online and offline behavior.

**Subtheme One: Bullying and Cyberbullying**

Five of the eight participants discussed the subtheme of bullying, also known as cyberbullying. Per this study’s definitions, the terms have been used interchangeably, however, at times, the context differentiates the meanings, as bullying can occur offline while cyberbullying happens online. To reiterate the definitions, bullying according to Dess, White, Jaffe, and Jaffe’s (2011) acronym RAP help one to remember the “three components that distinguish bullying behavior from hurtful teasing” (p. 3), (a) “Repeated often to the same person
or different people” (p.3), (b) “An imbalance of power” (p. 3), and (c) “Purposeful with the intent to make fun of, embarrass or exclude others” (p. 3). Cyberbullying refers to, “mean text messages or emails, rumors sent by email or posted on social networking sites, and embarrassing pictures, videos, websites, or fake profiles” (“What is Cyberbullying?,” n.d., para. 2). Female friends had directly bullied three of the participants. The other two were included per the noteworthiness. One participant talked about being bullied at school and on Facebook, but the bullying on Facebook was from those she did not consider true friends. One participant talked about a message that can be classified as bullying (Dess et al., 2011), though she called the message “mean.”

Ellie. In her discussion of negative messages from female friends, Ellie talked about a female school bully, Sage. Ellie described the time she and her female friends were in a Facebook chat with Sage. Ellie said, “And, um, in this message, one of the girls, um, kept telling me that nobody likes me and that I’m fat and everybody hates me and they don’t want to be near me.” Ellie remembered that Sage had also been bullied in fourth grade and recalled, “She said, ‘If everybody else wants to make me feel bad, then I can make them feel bad twice as hard.’”

Regarding Sage, Ellie said, “She’s one of those people that people don’t really like to get to know ‘cause she’s, yeah, she’s been a bully, she’s been a bully to me, she’s been a bully to a bunch of my friends.” Ellie continued, “She’s said some threatening things that have kind of scared me and my other friends.”

Giovanna. Along with Ellie, Giovanna talked about how she reported to her school principal a described Facebook “threat” from a female friend. The incident falls under Stopbullying.gov’s (n.d.) definition of cyberbullying per Giovanna’s perception of the message.
When her Facebook friend, Scarlett, accidentally sent her a message that she had a better name, Giovanna described what happened:

She shouldn’t even be telling, talking about this, you know. And the next day I went to school I said, ‘So do you still hate me?’ She’s like ‘Yes, I still hate you and your name.’ I was like ‘Ok.’ So I went to the principal and I told him like because basically she had threatened me like to make sure I couldn’t have a better name than her. And I went to the principal and I was like ‘So I got this threat on Facebook from this girl saying that she wanted to make sure I couldn’t have a better name than her.’

Regarding this incident, Giovanna also talked a lot about right and wrong Facebook posts from female friends, which fit Stern and Taylor’s (2007) definition of inappropriateness, whereby an individual makes a “judgment call” (p. 12) on the rightness or wrongness of a message. For instance, Giovanna considered messages where girls compared other girls based on appearances wrong. Giovanna also referred to a picture where Scarlett included her. She said, “And she takes like five or six people, puts them in one picture, puts like numbers on them, and says, ‘Who do you think will win in a beauty contest?’” Giovanna stated the reason she considered this inappropriate, “This is basically taking someone and throwing them in gutter [sic] or in this case throwing a group in the gutter,” she said.

**Carlisle.** At one point in the interview, Carlisle asked if she could talk about bullying. Carlisle said, “Well, a lot of girls bully over Facebook” and she mentioned how a lot of her female friends have bullied her. Carlisle gave an example of what some girls will say, “Oh, yeah, I’m gonna beat your butt tomorrow at school.” Carlisle continued:

When I was like, a lot of people, a lot of girls mostly are immature in my grade
and they just like to say a lot of immature things. Kind of like, sometimes gross

I guess you could say or not appropriate for school.

**Addison.** Like the other participants, Addison also talked about being bullied at school and on Facebook. Addison said, although she knows the bullies, she found out they were not her real or true friends. When asked about what the bullies said, Addison didn’t want to talk about their comments. The times she has been bullied on Facebook, Addison said she told her mom and “then my mom helps me work this out so that way, um, and they don’t bother me again.”

**Garette.** In one instance, Garette talked about mean Facebook messages from her female friends. One message where her friends were talking about her in a chat room with Garette present left her to consider whether or not she would keep these friendships. This message will be further discussed in the section on mean messages. As she talked further, Garette proceeded to discuss cyberbullying, hence, the relevant information. Garette mentioned why she associated negative meaning to some Facebook communication and the reason she considered it quite inappropriate.

Yeah. I mean, yeah. It’s definitely easier cause you don’t have, ‘cause you’re hiding behind a computer screen or a phone screen but um, I think that’s probably why they do it ‘cause a lot easier but it’s not really the right thing to do ‘cause also just like the intonation of words and you could just get across the wrong message and there have been so many cyberbullying incidents on social media sites and it’s all just it would all be a lot more simpler if everything, everyone did everything to their face to face [sic].

Garette reiterated the importance of people talking face to face because of concerns with intonation and cyberbullying. Regarding intonation Garette stated:
But I don’t, I ca-, I don’t know if maybe it was just the way, ‘cause on Facebook when you’re typing you never know what the like the intonation of words or you don’t know how they’re thinking it sounds like they might be saying it playfully like and then you might take it they’re saying it for real.

Garette elaborated:

I think cyberbullying also is just instances of like, like yeah, another instance of people not talking it out ‘cause like you wouldn’t say something to someone’s face then and you shouldn’t definitely not say it over like Facebook ‘cause then other people can see it too.

Not only did the participants discuss their experiences with bullying, also known as cyberbullying, but as discussed in the next section, they discussed negative Facebook messages in relationship to boys.

**Subtheme Two: Boys**

In their interviews, two participants, Quinn and Jasper brought up inappropriateness as related to boys. Because of the importance of their comments, they were included in this section. As mentioned previously per Stern and Taylor (2007), inappropriateness can be defined as a “judgment call” (p. 12) by the individual per “some degree” (p. 12) of “moral compass” (p. 12).

**Quinn.** Quinn referred to one girl, Hannah, whom she called a “not a very good influence.” She called Hannah “boy crazy” and stated, “she just does things that she shouldn’t do at her age.” This means “pretty much everything,” Quinn said. Quinn also referred to her mom’s criteria on Facebook appropriateness and that means not a lot of pictures of her friends “hugging” boys.

**Jasper.** Like Quinn, Jasper also brought up inappropriate messages about boys as being negative. In one instance, her friends were “liking” boys’ private parts on Facebook. Jasper
said, “Well, I didn’t know what it was at first and then my mom told me like in family health we had to learn about the guy’s parts or whatever.” Along with negative Facebook messages about boys, the participants discussed their experiences with bad choices as seen in the next section.

**Subtheme Three: Bad Choices**

Along with bullying and boys, two participants referred to bad choices as related to their negative Facebook messages from female friends. Bad choices revolved around bands and the use of language.

**Ellie.** As she talked about negative Facebook from female friends on topics like suicide, hate, bullying, and an array of subjects that one might consider inappropriate, Ellie did not mention inappropriateness until she talked about her bad choices as related to her involvement with a band called *Blood on the Dance Floor*. Ellie called their music, “pure torture.”

Ellie’s female friend, Jade, introduced her to *Blood on the Dance Floor* via Facebook. As she got more involved with listening, Ellie stated she even started to disobey her father. Ellie described:

For what age I was listening to them at um, it definitely wasn’t appropriate. I still am uncomfortable listening to them. Um, their music is pure torture. Gotta be honest, it is, it’s horrifying, um, but at the time I started listening to that band more and more and more to the point where I was disobeying my father to get to that point.

Ellie described the reason she considered the band inappropriate. Talking about her dad, she said:

Making him upset, because you know I was over there listening to that band and it wasn’t the most age appropriate. Most of the songs, some of, some of the songs were about, um, like very sexual things.
As time progressed, Ellie’s conscience began to bother her more over the lyrics of *Blood on the Dance Floor*. She stated that she knew “I shouldn’t be listening to them.” The music concerned Ellie particularly because of the damage to her relationship with her dad. Eventually, Ellie said, “I ended up deleting all, all of the music, and ended up listening to other bands.” Ellie also restored her relationship with her dad.

**Tess.** Along with Ellie, Tess talked about inappropriate messages and rather than her dad, she talked about how Facebook messages from her cousin, Samantha, have led to fights with her mom. One fight Tess stated resulted when Samantha posted an “f-bomb” message “like in a disrespectful way to God” and Tess’ mom told her not to look at it but Tess did. Tess said she considered “f-bomb cussing,” “sensual,” “blatant pornography” like “some not good like photos in Las Vegas,” all inappropriate messages. Although Tess did not get into all of her “mom’s Facebook etiquette,” she tries to keep it as a guideline for appropriateness.

In this section, eight of the nine participants described negative meaning from inappropriate Facebook messages from female friends. While the participants discussed topics such as bullying, appearance comparisons, intonation, bad influences, boys, suicide, hate, bands, sexuality, cussing, disrespect, girls crying, smoking, drinking, twerking, scantily-clad selfies, and bad choices, within the major theme of inappropriate messages, three subthemes emerged: (a) bullying, (b) boys, and (c) bad choices. This description focused on these three subthemes. The next section looks at how the participants interpreted mean messages as negative.

**Theme Two: Participants Described Mean Messages as Negative**

Eight of the nine participants described girls posting mean messages on Facebook as negative. The participants seemed to differentiate between what they called bullying and mean messages. Therefore, this section has done the same. In other words, mean messages were not
necessarily bullying, as some of the participants who had been bullied did not talk about those messages with the use of the term “mean.” Three of the participants reported they have received mean messages from their female friends. The other five participants were included in this section per the importance of their voice.

Along with their use of the word “mean,” the participants used the words “harsh” and “rude” to describe some of their Facebook messages from their female friends. Harsh can be considered a word related to mean (“Harsh,” 2014), and rude is a word related to harsh (“Rude,” 2014). “Not nice” messages have also been added to this section.

Mean Messages

Ellie. Although she previously discussed being bullied on Facebook, as she talked about mean messages, Ellie discussed ratings and why she finds them negative. To rate someone on Facebook, one girl says, “rates” to another girl, and then the other person hits the “like” icon to acknowledge she wants a rating. The rater then responds with the girl’s name and a rating on a scale of one to ten. Ellie said she doesn’t really do ratings as they “add fuel to the fire,” and can be “rude,” “obnoxious,” “mean,” and “not nice.”

Quinn. Likewise, Quinn was the second participant who talked about girls not being “nice” on Facebook. Although a “friend” request is not considered a message per this study’s definition, this information was included because of the importance. Quinn talked about one girl, Eden, who regularly sends her Facebook “friend” requests but “she’s not very nice to me.” So, Quinn will delete Eden’s requests.

Jasper. Jasper was the third of the five participants that discussed mean messages and ascribed negative meaning to them. Hence, her comments as related to her friends receiving mean messages have been included because of the offensive nature. Jasper noted she takes
offense to mean messages. She gave an example of a mean post where a girl said Jasper’s best friend, Macy, “hit her or whatever.” Jasper said Macy “would never do that.” Whenever Jasper sees mean messages on Facebook, she said, “I just won’t trust you as much.”

Furthermore, Jasper ascribed negative meaning to girls who post mean messages about their parents. As she explained, “This one girl was like ‘My dad, I don’t want to call him my dad, he’s so rude and mean and blah, blah, blah… and he won’t let me get on here anymore tonight so just text me or whatever.” Jasper stated, “Yeah, like I don’t understand why they would like bash your parents or whatever.”

**Giovanna.** As she talked about her female friends on Facebook, Giovanna referred to many people as “very mean and they say harsh things.” Giovanna and her friends from school communicate on Facebook and she mentioned Scarlett again, the girl mentioned several times in previous sections. Scarlett regularly posts mean messages that include Giovanna. In reference to Scarlett, Giovanna stated, “There’s this one girl that’s like really mean” and “she’s basically like the devil of Facebook.”

**Carlisle.** When she talked about negative Facebook messages from female friends, Carlisle was another participant who discussed mean girls, hence, the value of her thoughts. In fact, Carlisle stated, “Girls are mean.” In the section on inappropriate messages, Carlisle also described being cyberbullied. In talking about mean messages, Carlisle said a girl, Grayson, “messaged me all this mess.” As the interview progressed, Carlisle stated again, “Girls are just mean like, you know.”

**Addison.** A lot of times, Addison and her friends get on Facebook for group chats. In one instance, Addison, along with a female and male friend, were having a talk that became a mean conversation. She said her female friend, Maxie, “was talking like some kind of harsh way
because she thought…” Addison was “gonna do something that she really wasn’t.”

**Shea.** Like the other participants, Shea talked about mean Facebook messages from female friends that she described as negative. Therefore, Shea’s comments have been included because of their noteworthiness. Shea talked about rates, and stated, “Um, likes sometimes they can be mean like….”

**Garette.** Finally, Garette talked about a time she and several of her female friends were in a group chat on Facebook and she described a mean message. This experience was mentioned in the section on inappropriate messages with the details included here. Garette talked further about Facebook messages and how they can easily be construed as negative. Two of the girls, Sinclair and Sarah, were talking and Garette mentioned one of them said something, “I felt wasn’t very nice.” Garette said at times she finds it difficult to interpret Facebook messages as “they might be saying it playfully like and then you might take it…,” she said, “they’re saying it for real.”

Eight of the nine participants talked about girls posting mean messages on Facebook, and why they described these messages as negative. The participants seem to separate cyberbullying from mean messages. Three of the participants reported they have received mean messages from female friends. The other five participants were included in this section per the importance of their voices. The mean messages included “rates,” “not nice” messages, “mean” messages to friends, bashing parents, rudeness, harshness, and questionable intonation. Along with negative messages being mean, the next section looks at how the participants described their Facebook messages from their female friends as dramafied.
Theme Three: Participants Described Dramafied Messages as Negative

While seven participants described negative meaning from dramafied Facebook messages, five of the participants reported that they have received them. The other two participants have been included in this description because of the relevant information. Within the major theme of dramafied messages, one subtheme emerged among all seven participants, which was avoidance. Either the participants intentionally avoided the individual causing the drama, or the person causing the drama got removed from the situation in school. Thus, the dramafied individual was avoided per one’s absence. This section focuses on this subtheme.

Over the years, the term “drama” has become part of the pop culture vernacular (Allen, 2014; Boyd, 2014; Marwick & Boyd, 2011). The word drama can often be associated with a theatrical performance. Goffman (1959) used the theater metaphor to discuss how in human behavior an individual presents oneself and their activities to guide and control impressions that sustain one’s performance. Although Allen (2014) noted the research on drama could still be considered in its infancy, Boyd (2014) said many teens see “social media as a key factor in the escalation of drama” (p. 138).

In their research, Marwick and Boyd (2011) found while adults may use the term drama in relationship to the behavior of bullies, teens often use the word as it relates to their subsequent scuffles as well as their digital footprints. Allen (2014) referred to drama as “conceptualized as social interactions characterized by overreaction, exaggeration, excessive emotionality, prolongation, inclusion of extraneous individuals, inflated importance, and temporary relevance” (p. 1). Marwick and Boyd (2011) said, “Drama is a performative set of actions distinct from bullying, gossip, and relational aggression, incorporating them but also operating quite distinctly” (p. 2).
Typically found among girls and women, Marwick and Boyd (2011) emphasized drama goes one step further. Marwick and Boyd likened drama to Goffman’s (1959) notion of an onstage or behind the curtain performance with drama being “undertaken to involve an audience” (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p. 11) and for “publicity” (p. 4). Just like in a stage performance by different companies, Marwick and Boyd also stated drama may have a little different meaning among social circles and schools. However, they found five components that make up drama, “(1) Drama is social and interpersonal, (2) Drama involves relational conflict, (3) Drama is reciprocal, (4) Drama is gendered, and (5) Drama is often performed for, in, and magnified by networked publics” (p. 5). Boyd (2008) defined networked publics as “(1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology and practice” (pp. 1-2).

**Dramafied Messages**

**Ellie.** When asked what messages she described from female friends that were negative, Ellie discussed suicide messages. Ellie called these messages “drama.” She described what happened one time regarding her female friend, Sage:

> There was one and that same girl that was suicidal posted a photo of her with a knife in her hand and her arm like all cut up and everything. And then she sent a video to like everybody friends [sic] with her on Facebook of her trying to kill herself.

Even though Ellie said she tries to act nice to Sage at school, she remarked, “She’s kind of one of those people that you need to avoid.”

**Quinn.** When she described negative Facebook messages from female friends, Quinn talked about “drama people.” Like Ellie, Quinn also reported how she avoids these individuals, hence, the inclusion of her comments. She stated, “I try not to really be friends with
drama people at all.”

**Jasper.** As Jasper explained negative Facebook messages from her female friends, she called Facebook messages in general “very dramafied.” Jasper referred to “dramafied” messages as those that cause “fights and commotion” between girls. She described when some middle school girls from her school posted scantily clad selfies, and the high school boys were fighting over them. Jasper said Facebook “fights and commotion” have led to her not being “best friends” anymore with some girls.

Jasper also discussed how girls post dramafied messages for attention. She talked about suicide messages and provided an example that she drew in her interview (see Figure 4). The picture refers to a rock band called Black Veil Brides. When talking about the attention behind suicidal messages, Jasper stated, “But some people might be serious, but I think it’s mostly for attention ‘cause no one’s killed themselves.”

![Figure 4. Replication of a suicide message from a female friend per Jasper’s interview.](image)

**Giovanna.** The one example in this section whereby the person who caused the drama was removed from the situation occurred with Giovanna. With Allen’s (2014) criteria for drama in mind, which is “conceptualized as social interactions characterized by overreaction, exaggeration, excessive emotionality, prolongation, inclusion of extraneous individuals, inflated importance, and temporary relevance” (p. 1), when asked about negative messages from female
Facebook friends, Giovanna told of a battle that met this criteria. This Facebook message has been described also in the section on bullying and cyberbullying per the definition of Stopbullying.gov (n.d.). Giovanna described that the situation began when a girl from her school, Scarlett, sent a mean Facebook message to her arguing about who had a better name. This led to a fight, the situation escalated, and the event unfolded negatively when Giovanna reported to the principal that she had received a “threat.” Giovanna said Scarlett temporarily was sent to an alternative school. Hence, Giovanna could avoid her for a while.

**Tess.** Tess also described negative meaning to dramafied Facebook messages from female friends. Hence, the value of her comments per Tess’ perceptions of messages others have received. When asked about all of the “stuff” on Facebook meaning “drama,” Tess said that she doesn’t use Facebook like other girls. Next, Tess elaborated, and said that girls gossip. She then changed her voice and stated more about how she does not use Facebook like other girls do. Tess said, “Um, yeah, it’s not really to ‘Oh, my gosh did you see her hair?’”

**Carlisle.** Carlisle also talked about Facebook drama as being negative. She mentioned the “school drama queen” that said to her, “(Carlisle changes her voice) I’m gonna beat you up right now if you don’t stop talkin’ about me. You know, she’s kind of (whispers) ghetto.” Carlisle continued, “And nobody likes [sic] everybody likes to hear about drama but nobody likes to be in the drama except for this girl.”

**Garette.** In her interview, Garette used “drama” in association with “gossip.” She referred to some of her female friends as “you’ll just be like drama…” Carlisle said she finds this negative and she doesn’t feel the need to “gossip.” When Carlisle sees this going on “I just kind of keep my distance from them usually.”
This section discussed how seven participants described negative meaning from dramafied Facebook messages from female friends, while five of the participants reported they have received them. The other two participants have been included because of what they had to say as related to the theme of dramafied messages. Of the two participants, one discussed Facebook drama as it related to a school situation, and another used the term to describe her perceptions about Facebook in general.

**Research Question One Summary**

The preceding sections have described the major themes as related to Research Question One, “How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?” The major themes were the participants ascribed positive meaning to messages that helped them to (a) catch up with the news, (b) brought happiness, and (c) were funny. Among these three major themes, the participants described a range of subthemes as related to their messages. For instance, participants caught up with the news as related to their school and the world. Happy messages were uplifting on bright days and bad days. Meanwhile, funny messages were often “funny but…” had a secondary meaning/effect or could be “a friend thing.”

Like positive messages, the participants described negative messages under three major themes. These messages were (a) inappropriate, (b) mean, and (c) dramafied. This section examined the subthemes of inappropriate messages and dramafied messages, while mean messages were examined in light of other words that related to mean. An important subtheme among inappropriate messages was cyberbullying. Several of the participants had been cyberbullied. Mean messages included rates, mean messages to friends, bashing parents,
rudeness, harshness, and questionable intonation. Finally, dramatified messages were discussed in terms of Goffman (1959), Allen (2014), as well as Marwick and Boyd (2011). The next section examines Research Question Two, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?”

**Multi-Dimensional Effect**

In consideration of Research Question Two, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends multi-dimensionally affect their self-esteem?,” as defined, multi-dimensional effect will be examined in light of five dimensions (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1997). As shown in Figure 2, the five dimensions were the physical, emotional, social, intellectual or mental, and spiritual. Hettler’s (1976) model does not include an occupational category, however, this does not play a role at this time with most middle school girls. One major theme has been selected for each dimension and the considerations for coding can be found in Chapter Four under Data Analysis.

**Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Physical Reactions**

In this section, seven participants either described or were observed to have had a positive physical reaction to a positive Facebook message from a female friend that can, in turn, have a positive effect on self-esteem (Baumeister et al., 2003; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). One of the seven participants mentioned Facebook in general as helping her to wake up, thus, she was included in this section. Positive physical reactions included smiles, happy tears, squeals, laughter, and motivation to spend time. As noted in the introduction, positive physical reactions can also interwine with the emotional dimension (Kostiuk & Fouts, 2002; Jellesma & Vingerhoets, 2012) and are seen in the descriptions.
Positive Physical Reactions

**Ellie.** Several messages that Ellie described indicated a positive physical reaction as related to positive Facebook messages from her female friends. Ellie likes to get early morning messages when she gets ready for school because they can be like “an instant pick me up.” Ellie described these messages as causing her to “feel all eeeee” (Ellie drags the letter “e”).

As she described the music video from her best friend, Jenna, Ellie did so with another positive physical reaction; she squealed. At first, Ellie called the song, “Peanut Butter and Jelly,” and then she remembered the name as “Perfect Two.” The music video was a cartoon. Ellie furthered described the music video with a smile in her voice, “It was funny, it had comedy like tied into it but it was like in the song of a, in the formation of a song (laughing).” She said, “it was really cute and it was funny.”

Another instance of a positive physical reaction to a Facebook message from a female friend was noted in Ellie’s voice. She said, “One of my friends was talking about when she was gonna to get [sic] her braces off and that was kind of really exciting because I’ve had mine off for awhile. And, and [sic] I’m just like, you need to get them off so soon (Ellie makes a funny voice and laughs).”

**Quinn.** As Ellie did, Quinn described Facebook in general as giving her a positive physical reaction. Hence, Quinn got included in this section per the importance of her comments. Quinn referred to Facebook as a wake up call. Quinn said, “Um, I check when I first wake up.” She then indicated a positive physical reaction, “Uh, like when I get up in the morning it just kind of helps me to slowly get up and get awake and all.”

**Jasper.** In her descriptions of Facebook positive messages from female friends, Jasper described positive physical reactions in terms of funny messages. Jasper said her friends send
funny memes and gifs. As she described the memes, Jasper did so with several positive physical reactions as seen in the pitch of her voice along with laughter. Earlier, Jasper referred to the “basic white girl thing,” drinking their coffee at Starbucks and that “we’re all about pink, pink, pink (her voice went along as if in a scale and she raised her pitch each time she said the word, pink). Jasper talked about another meme added to the white girls drinking their Starbucks scenario. She described that the black people were in the “ghetto” and “roughin’ it.” When she saw this meme, Jasper said, “Oh, ok, (laughter).” She added, “And it’s like lots of times it’s us but it’s sort of true (laughter).”

**Giovanna.** When she received a birthday card from her female friend, Jessica, Giovanna also talked about a positive physical reaction. She called the message “funny.” As Giovanna talked about the message from her female friend, she also had a positive physical reaction. Giovanna said, “She sent this like birthday cake cartoon (laughter) and like in the middle was like a dragon popping out.” The scary dragon that popped out was “like the funny part (laughter),” she said.

Another time Giovanna received a positive message from her friend that caused her to have a positive physical reaction. When Giovanna felt upset about something in her family, Carly sent her a Facebook message. Giovanna described, “And she sent me like this happy face that was like so happy I was crying.” As she further discussed the message, Giovanna smiled, “Yeah. I was like, ‘What is this?’ She was like, ‘You should be smiling.’ I was like, ‘Yeah, I’m smiling but it’s just so funny.’”

**Addison.** When she talked about positive messages, Addison talked about school-related messages in terms of positive physical reactions. Like Giovanna, Addison talked about “funny” messages. Addison also displayed positive physical reactions as she described:
Yeah, like um, like I like sometimes they send me funny stuff like that moment when you realize, (smile began in her voice and an emphasis on the word ‘that’) that moment when you realize you haven’t done your homework and stuff like that. It’s just like someone was like (pause and raises her pitch from the word ‘uh’ to ‘oh’) uh, oh, uh and it’s like, and then um, you fa-, and then like. ‘Your face (smile began in her voice) when someone reminds the teacher about homework.’ Say, (pause and says ‘what’ much louder than ‘say’) ‘What?’

**Shea.** With her female friends, Shea posts funny pictures. Shea talked a lot about the positive physical reaction of being funny on Facebook both as a receiver and sender of messages. When she described one of her messages, Shea did so with a positive physical reaction. She stated, “Like if I post a funny picture they’re like, “Ohhhh (Shea drags out the word as if it were laughter), so funny!”” Shea also described her Facebook friendship with her best friend’s mom who posts pictures of funny animals. She said, “And, um, Elizabeth’s mom actually she’ll post like funny pictures like I’ll “like” ‘em and laugh at ‘em, you know.”

**Garette.** One time, in a Facebook chat, Garette and her friends were discussing going to different high schools. One friend, Gabriella, told the group she would “miss” them. Although Garette said this message brought her mixed feelings of ending the old and starting the new, she considered the positive physical reaction of time spent with Gabriella. Garette said that the message “motivated me to want to spend a lot of time with her over the summer.”

In this section, seven of the nine participants either described or were observed to have had a positive physical reaction to a positive Facebook message from a female friend that can, in turn, have a positive effect (Baumeister et al., 2003; Chapman, 1992; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). One of the seven participants has been included per her positive physical reaction to Facebook in
general. Among their positive physical reactions were smiles, happy tears, squeals, laughter, and motivation to spend time. Next, the participants’ negative physical reactions as related to negative messages from their female friends will be discussed.

**Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative Physical Reactions**

In this section, all nine participants either described or were observed to have had a negative physical reaction to a negative Facebook message from a female friend, which can have a negative effect on self-esteem (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). As noted in the introduction, the dimensions can be closely entwined, particularly with the emotional and physical (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1997). The negative physical reactions included avoidance, being “trapped in a bathroom stall,” disobedience, feeling sick, “crying,” and taking back clothes.

**Negative Physical Reactions**

**Ellie.** When asked if she thinks Facebook ever interfered with her school day or her homework, Ellie said it did per the negative physical reaction of avoidance. She described, “Um, previously, it has prevented me to like kind of avoid homework until a little later in the day or (laughs) in, in [sic] the morning when I go to school.”

Although they were talking about a lot of “good stuff” at school regarding Facebook, Ellie said she and her friend Gia’s conversation also included talking about Sage, who regularly posts about suicide. As Ellie described, this led to the negative physical reaction of tardiness. Ellie said, “We started talking, um, and we wouldn’t, we actually got to class late because we were so caught up on talking (laughs).”

Another of Ellie’s friends, Jade, convinced her to download the band, *Blood on the Dance Floor*, from Facebook. Ellie called the band not “appropriate,” “torture,” “horrifying,”
and “sexual.” At one point, Ellie said a group of her friends and their interest in *Blood on the Dance Floor* became a part of their relationship on and off Facebook, which led to her experiencing several negative physical reactions. Ellie described being “forced” to listen to the band that also led to being “trapped in a bathroom stall.” When asked what she meant by being “forced” to listen, Ellie described:

> With my friends. They like made me listen to it. At, um, when I went to their houses and when to like, um, I’m trying to remember the name of it, it’s like party place [sic] for kids and it’s like, I think it’s called Fun Times. And it’s, and it’s [sic] with, um, it’s a family area and I remember listening to some of their songs there. And that kind of it made me feel uncomfortable. Because I mean here I am listening to songs that are very sexual, and I know that I shouldn’t be listening to them, but they made me do it anyways, and when I tried to walk away they would follow me with the theme playing out loud and yeah, and it got, I remember, I got trapped in a bathroom stall trying to get away from it and they were standing like right in front of me.

Along with that experience, Ellie described her interest in *Blood on the Dance Floor* caused problems per the negative physical reaction of disobedience in her relationship with her dad. Ellie said, she “started listening to that band more and more and more to the point where I was disobeying my father to get to that point.”

**Quinn.** When Quinn talked about negative messages from female friends, she talked about rates and TBHs, and why she does not do them anymore. This seemed important to note regarding negative physical reactions, as although Quinn said she doesn’t always take the negative messages from her female friends so seriously, some other girls “They just, they really rely on what other people think about them instead of using their own judgment.” Quinn talked
about how this time on Facebook can lead to a negative physical reaction of not getting outside. She continued:

Um, to get out of the house and I mean, like, if you just like rely like on what newsfeed tells you, if that’s like your life then, not a very fun life and, uh, you don’t really get to get out much and you kind of like depend on what other people say instead of making your own life, you kind of like let other people create your life for you.

Along with the negative physical reaction of not getting outside, Quinn also referred to the negative physical reaction or behavior caused by too much time on Facebook as related to her female friendships. Quinn said she thinks girls should “make time to hang out” to make a good friendship as opposed to “like, you shouldn’t spend like your whole day on Facebook trying to get to know someone.”

**Jasper.** Pertaining to negative messages and negative physical reactions, Jasper described the school day after negative messages have been posted on Facebook as related to avoidance. She said:

Well, you can be best friends with someone like not like best friends but you can be like really good friends with someone and if you see what they post on Facebook if it’s about you, you don’t really want to talk to ‘em. That happens a lot at my school. Like, I see what they post or whatever and I try to sort of stay away from them but then they’re like you don’t do this to me anymore, we don’t do this no more [sic]. I’m like, you do-[changes word] you just want to tell ‘em, well, hey we can’t hang out no more [sic] ‘cause you do this.

Furthermore, Jasper mentioned TBHs and then rolled her eyes. When asked about her reason for rolling her eyes, Jasper talked about how some girls from her school will be “really sweet and
“everything” then “turn into that type of person” in reference to a negative person. Jasper said, “Facebook just makes it where you say anything you want too.”

**Giovanna.** In Giovanna’s description, she told of a negative physical reaction to a negative message from her female friend, Jane. Giovanna told Jane to get out of her space meaning off her Facebook page. In her interview, Giovanna referred to Jane as one of her “old” female Facebook friends. Giovanna told what Jane posted, “I feel like people who are white are better than others.” Giovanna responded, “Well, you know what, I’m not fully white but you’re still my friend.” Jane was like, “Well, not anymore.” And I said, “Ok. You want to say that, then get off my Facebook page.”

**Tess.** When Tess described negative messages from her female friends on Facebook, she described her cousin, Samantha, and her anti-social posts. Tess described how Samantha will write, “I’m sitting under the covers playing video games and I’m not going to talk to anyone.” Tess said these posts cause her to have a negative physical reaction too and she feels “anti-social” and just wants people to leave her alone for awhile.

**Carlisle.** In the past, Carlisle has been bullied on Facebook. She described one of the incidents and a strong, negative physical reaction of “crying” which also caused her to miss school. Carlisle stated:

Um, well, I’ve been like, I missed days of school before because this girl that I thought was my friend decided to talk bad about me and spread lots of rumors about me and told the principal a lot of false things about me. And then one, the day that I came back I just went home again because like I was crying and stuff. I just, you know, it was just a bad day and this girl has cussed me out on Facebook, you know.
When Carlisle saw a negative Facebook post from her female friend that she thought was about her she wrote the sender, her friend, Ally. Carlisle discussed the experience in her journal and noted a negative physical reaction of taking her possessions back. The message by Ally stated, “You’ve changed. Not for the better. Oh, well, that’s why I keep my real friends close 😊.” Carlisle continued:

I messaged her about it and asked if it was about me she said, ‘if the shoe fits wear it.’ Then she began being rude and I asked for one of my shirts back and she told me she’d give it to my brother. (they go to school together.) [sic] So I was mad about that obviously.

Addison. Addison also had a strong, negative physical reaction like Carlisle did of “crying” over a negative Facebook message as she described:

Jamie was just worried about losing a friend and Jamie wanted to talk and Ja- (changes thought) and then Jackson’s like, ‘Please talk,’ and Carrie’s like, ‘Yeah, talk, please.’

And I said, ‘Jamie, I love you and I’m here for you just please talk,’ and then I started crying and Carrie started crying but Shane and Jamie got so caught up in the fighting.

Shea. Like most of the other participants, when Shea has a negative emotional reaction to a negative Facebook message from a female friend she described an associated negative physical reaction. For example, Shea talked about how negative messages from her female friends on Facebook such as pictures of people in the community with cancer or when she saw the sad message about friend’s new dog dying, caused her to feel “depressed.” Shea described her negative physical reaction when she feels this way, “‘Cause it’s like oh, that’s so bad it’s like five bad things, and like oh, one good thing. Um, if I’m hungry, I’ll go eat. Even if I’m not hungry, I’ll go eat.”
**Garette.** When she talked about negative messages from her female friends, Garette did so with a negative physical reaction, and said she does not feel well. Garette continued and stated, “drama (she dragged the word out).” In reference to the “drama,” she said, “reading peoples’ posts over and over just kind of makes me sick a little and it makes me feel like (makes a sound with the next word) uck after awhile.” Garette continued and described a negative physical reaction in reference to listening, as “I don’t like hearing peoples’ problems all the time. So, it’s kind of sickening.”

Additionally, Garette mentioned negative physical reactions related to sitting in front of the computer, which takes her time and adds to her level of stress. The negative physical reactions as noted by her description seem to spiral to include temporarily setting aside homework for Facebook, and getting to bed later which causes a lack of sleep. These will be discussed further in negative academic-related effects, but included here per the importance. Garette said:

Yeah, ‘cause sometimes also I find also when I’m on Facebook, and I start like just reading more and more and then I end up wasting more time and then I like my homework I have to do [sic], and then I end up not getting as much sleep. So that also I [sic] kind of moved away since I’ve been so stressed out.

In this section, nine participants either described or were observed to have had a negative physical reaction to a negative Facebook message from a female friend, which can in turn have a negative effect (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). As noted, their negative emotional and physical reactions closely intertwine (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012; Butler, 2001; Fredrickson, 2009; Hettler, 1976; Miller, 1997; Steptoe et al., 2005). The negative physical reactions included
avoidance, feeling trapped, disobedience, feeling sick, crying, taking back clothes, eating when not hungry, and wasting time. The next section will discuss emotional health.

**Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Affect**

In this section, all nine participants described the major theme of positive messages from female friends as having a positive effect which can have a positive effect on self-esteem and what helps young people thrive (Baumeister et al.; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). Here, and as mentioned in the section on positive and negative physical reactions to Facebook messages from female friends, the emotional dimension closely interlaces with the physical dimension (Boehm & Kubzansky, 2012; Miller, 1997; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009; Steptoe et al., 2005). The participants recalled their receipt of Facebook messages from the time they get up in the morning and throughout the day into the evening when they get home with their families. The subjects included appearance-related topics, cancer, inspiration, motivation, vacation, school events, and death.

**Positive Affect**

**Ellie.** As she talked about positive Facebook messages from female friends, Ellie stated her emotions. She said the messages made her “feel happier,” “feel good,” they “cheer me up,” “made me feel special like loved outside my family circle,” “brighten my day,” “inspiring,” “feel all eeeeee (Ellie drags the letter “e”), were “really exciting,” and “made my day.”

About 6 a.m. to 7 a.m. in the morning, when she gets ready for school, Ellie and her best friend, Jenna, often get on Facebook. Ellie described a message Jenna sent her one morning, “And this morning, um, when I woke up she said, ‘Good morning. How’s your day going so far?’ And I’m like, ‘Ok, it’s going, it’s going (laughs).’”
When asked what she meant by “it’s going,” Ellie responded, “Like it’s going by, but it’s not going by quick enough.” When Jenna wrote her, Ellie stated, “I felt, I felt [sic] it made me feel happier because you know, it’s kind of like she never gets on Facebook except when I’m on.” Ellie described the positive effect of this early morning message as it “made me feel good because she starts like [sic], started talking on Facebook more because of me.” As mentioned earlier, “feel good” can be two words that describe happiness (“Feel good,” 2014). Ellie also said, Jenna, can “cheer me up” when I have “those big grey clouds over me.”

When Jenna’s Dad had cancer, Ellie supported her. Jenna wrote Ellie a message that positively affected her. The message said, “I love how, um, she can always make me feel happy and cheer me up and ever since my Dad got diagnosed with cancer, she’s, she’s [sic] really been helping, she’s been volunteering”.

Ellie said this message “made me feel kind of special like loved outside of my family circle.” Ellie wrote Jenna a message back and she made it her home screen. Ellie said, “That made me feel really, really happy.”

Another time one of Ellie’s friends brightened her day with a message. Ellie wrote in her journal, “My friend sent me a very inspiring, positive message. She said, ‘Friends may come and go, but the real ones will stay with you for your best and worst. It brightened my day.’”

Ellie also mentioned that she and her friends talk about their feelings on Facebook regarding a lot of different subjects. She gave an example, “One of my friends was talking about when she was gonna to [sic] get her braces off and that was kind of really exciting because I’ve had mine off for awhile.”

In another instance, Ellie wrote in her journal about the positive effect of a message from one of her friends regarding her new haircut. Ellie described:
I got a haircut today and messaged my friend after I got home. I sent her a picture of my new haircut. She replied with possibly the one message that made my day. She said, ‘gorgeous.’ It only takes one message to make or break someone’s day. That message was positive for sure.

As she talked about her Facebook experience, Ellie said it has been “positive.”

She stated:

So, overall, I think it’s kind of been a positive experience for me because its kind of like outstretched that area of friends that I have and it’s kind of made me, um, more social I guess you could say that and I like it.

**Quinn.** When Quinn talked about her positive messages from her female friends on Facebook, she described the positive effect with the terms “happy” and “motivated.” Her best friend, Liza, posted a picture of her on WCW. Quinn said, “Um, it made me really happy because she’s my really good friend.”

Quinn also reported she looks for positive effects on Facebook through inspirational and motivational messages from her female friends, and on other profiles. She mentioned “Monday Morning Motivation,” and “Wednesday Wisdom.” In her journal, Quinn wrote:

*Runner’s World* posted a ‘Monday Morning Motivation’ that I really liked. It stated ‘If you train your mind for running, everything else will be easy,’ by Amby Burfoot. It motivated me for the day, and I saved it to look at later when I need more motivation.

Since she’s on her middle school cross-country team, Quinn reads *Runner’s World* on Facebook. Quinn likes their inspirational and motivational quotations, and she saves them in her Facebook “gallery.” She said, “if it’s like a picture then I’ll save it and then if I, um, need some motivation I’ll like go back in my gallery, and I’ll like look at those pictures.” Quinn gave an
example of one meaningful motivational quote:

Um, ok, so, um it’s by I can’t remember who it’s by but um, I think it’s like Aristotle or, I don’t know, I can’t think of it. Um, but it’s like, ‘You are what you repeatedly do, excellence then is not an act but a habit.’

Overall, Quinn said she has made Facebook “positive for myself.” Quinn talked in generalities about keeping her profile positive, and this was noteworthy. Quinn deletes or blocks any female friend the might have too much “drama” in her life. She said,

I’m pretty like I guess you would say picky about who I’m friends with, like, it’s really only people that I hang out with at school and all. And so I try not to really be friends with like drama people and all. So, I really don’t get that in my newsfeed.

Jasper. During her interview, Jasper described the positive effects of her Facebook messages from female friends and used the words “uplifting,” “happy,” and “helpful.” Jasper also talked about sharing music messages with her best friend, Macy, when they’re “feeling young.” Specifically, Jasper likes to get Bible verses on Facebook. She described:

Well, my friends now are just very like I just see like me and Macy and a lot of my, my dad’s, not it’s not his girlfriend, but it’s like his friend but they’re not dating or whatever but they just hang out and I see her and like Macy, and a lot of my other friends like that I’m friends with now, they put stuff like Bible verses or whatever so it’s really like uplifting, I guess when you can see stuff like that.

Jasper said these Bible messages also made her “happy.”

Along with the positive effects of Bible messages, Jasper finds the Facebook posts from her female cheerleading coach, Coach James, “helpful.” When Coach James lets the team know
via Facebook that practiced has been postponed or if Jasper’s mom either forgets or doesn’t send an e-mail to her in time, she sees Facebook as a useful resource.

As she talked more about positive Facebook messages from female friends and the positive effects, Jasper said, a lot of “people post pictures on Facebook they’re like good pictures they’ll post like a lot of song lyrics with them or whatever” that tell how “they’re feeling.” When Jasper and her best friend, Macy, are “feeling young” they also share music such as Miranda Lambert.

**Giovanna.** When she described her positive Facebook messages from her female friends as related to the positive effects, Giovanna used the words “happy,” “care,” and “confident.” As mentioned in the descriptions for Research Question One, “How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?” a birthday card from one of her friends, Jessica, made Giovanna “happy.” She said the card also made her feel like “I have really great friends who care about me.” Another time Giovanna received a message from her female friend, Carly, which made her happy, and this was also mentioned earlier. The message had a strong, positive effect of happy tears. Giovanna said:

> And then another good one I got was like when, um, when I was like upset about something that happened in my family. My friend like she knew and she was just like, ‘I, I [sic] don’t want you to be sad anymore,’ and she didn’t message me for a long time and I was like, ‘Hey, you still there?’ And she sent me like this happy face that like so happy I was crying. I was like ‘What is this?’ Yeah, I was like, ‘What is this?’ She was like, ‘You should be smiling.’” I was ‘Yeah, I’m smiling but it’s just so funny.’

As a note of importance, Giovanna described when her family gets into arguments, she will go on Facebook to look for positive messages that make her “happy.” Giovanna mentioned
a lot of family arguments occurred when her older, teenage sister, Stella, was at home and caused problems with behaviors that Giovanna’s parents found unacceptable such as drinking. Giovanna explained:

Sometimes I’ll go on Facebook to you know stay away from the arguing, and other times I’ll just go upstairs with my ipod and plug it in and like go on Facebook for a few minutes like and let that run while I’m reading, so, like while I’m reading I’ll let Facebook run in case anyone wants to message me or something. Yeah, like to get like good news or like to have my friends send me something that makes me happy like to get it drown out.

Along with sometimes being upset at home, Giovanna said she likes her positive Facebook messages because she will also “think about like really cool, happy ones,” if she gets upset for any reason during the day.

As mentioned in Research Question One as well, Giovanna helps her classmates with their problems through her secret identity, the Wisdom Guide. Her classmates give Giovanna notes at school with their problems that she stores in her locker. Although she normally responds anonymously and in-person, once in awhile Giovanna will comment on her school’s Facebook page without letting the viewers know she’s the Wisdom Guide. Giovanna said she helps about ten students a day “so in a week probably about fifty students” and they are mostly sixth graders. The entire school knows about this person, and Giovanna’s History teacher, Mr. Jax, discovered her identity and wants her to start a club to further help others. Giovanna described, “Um, mostly it’s basically helped me ‘cause I feel like now that someone knows who I really am at school. Now, I feel more confident to help more people.”

Tess. Tess described only one positive Facebook message from a female friend with a
positive effect. She said the message made her “feel really good.” Although she couldn’t remember the details of the message, at her member check when the participants could clarify or cross out anything they may have said in their initial interview, Tess recalled her female Facebook friend, Aunt Christine, sent her this feel good message. Of note, Tess also wished she had more female friends on Facebook to send her messages because “It would make me feel good like you want to talk to me.”

Carlisle. Like some of the other participants, Carlisle described the positive effects of positive Facebook messages from her female friends and used the words “feel good,” “feel really good,” and “happy.” Carlisle said her friend, Presley, commented, “you’re my best friend and you’re gorgeous and you’re really nice, or you know, something like that.” Carlisle said this message made her “feel good.”

Carlisle also wrote in her journal about a positive message with a positive effect as it made her “feel really good.” She said, “This other girl, Danielle, messaged me a TBH and said, ‘TBH, you’re really pretty and super chill.’ That made me feel really good about myself that day.”

When she received some positive messages from female friends that she had not heard from in a while that wanted to hang out with her, Carlisle wrote about these experiences in her journal too as related to the positive effect. Carlisle said these messages made her “happy.”

Addison. When she was interviewed, Addison stated she felt it important that people “show what you’re feelin’” on Facebook. Addison said she recommends people keep Facebook “friendly.” She described positive messages from her female friends and used the words “happy,” “loved,” “cares,” “better,” and “lucky,” to describe the positive effects.

When Addison’s friend, Brice, sent her a message that said, “loves you like a sister,”
she felt “happy” and “loved for who I am.” When Addison’s Facebook boyfriend, Jake, died, she received another positive message from her female friend that had a positive effect. She said, it “makes me feel like she cares about me and she just wants me to get through this. I can get through this.” After getting that message, Addison started “feeling a bit better” and “lucky” regarding her friendships.

**Shea.** In her descriptions of positive Facebook messages from her female friends, Shea talked about the positive effects and used the terms “excited,” “laughing,” and “liking” pictures of her friends. Specifically, Shea said she gets excited about her friends Facebook messages about school events such as when they get in the play or their soccer team wins. Shea also got excited when her friend, Emerson, posted a picture of her new dog. Other pictures make Shea laugh, such as when her best friend’s mom, also a Facebook friend, posted funny pictures of her.

Most often, when Shea likes a picture she will hit the Facebook “like” button. In addition to funny pictures posted by her best friend’s mom, Shea likes her female friends to post pictures with the guys they date as they’re “cute,” “adorable,” and have a positive effect.

**Garette.** Garette described her Facebook experience as mostly positive. She said liked to hear her friends tell her on Facebook that she’s a “good friend,” she’s loved, or if she hasn’t talked to a person in awhile, Garette just likes to hear from them. Garette said all of these messages positively affect her and she feels “happy.”

In her journal, Garette had four journal entries regarding her physical appearance and she described the positive effects of these messages. Many of Garette’s female friends commented on her beauty with words of affirmation and “likes.” Among her feelings, Garette described how these messages also caused her to feel “happy,” “better about my physical appearance and boosted my self-confidence,” and to “feel good.” In one of her entries, Garette wrote:
Today I got my braces off and I posted a before and after picture of me with and without my braces. Many people liked my photo and some commented on the photo saying, ‘Beautiful smile!’ This comment made me feel very happy about my new smile and it boosted my self-esteem about my appearance.

Regarding another message, Garette wrote:

Today, I posted a picture a picture of myself on Facebook. My female friend said I looked beautiful in a comment. The comment made me feel better about my physical appearance and boosted my self-confidence. Also, my picture got many likes, which made me also feel good about my looks.

All nine described positive messages from female friends as having a positive effect. As noted in the introduction, positive messages can have a positive effect on self-esteem per positive affect. Among the topics were appearance-related discussions, cancer, inspiration and motivation, vacation, school events, and death. The next section will discuss the participants’ experiences with negative messages.

**Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative Affect**

Nine participants described Facebook negative messages from female friends had a negative effect. As mentioned previously, negative messages can have negative effects (Valkenburg et al., 2006) and thereby, create negative effects on self-esteem (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Leary, Tambor, Terdal, & Downs, 1995; Valkenburg et al., 2006). Among the messages the participants discussed were appearance-related, bullying, confusing, insulting, offensive, upsetting, and creepy messages.
Negative Affect

Ellie. When she talked about the negative effects as related to negative messages from her female friends, Ellie used the terms “upset,” “mad,” ‘aggravating,” “annoying,” “pure torture,” “horrifying,” and “uncomfortable.” Ellie began with bullying. She said, “Well, um, there’s one that kind of made me feel really like upset because it was, um, bully. And, normally, I feel like, hey, maybe I should just go away and like not pay attention to this for awhile.”

When asked what she meant by “go away,” Ellie said she meant go away from Facebook. Ellie continued, “And not really like listen to what they’re trying to say. And just get off of it and log out, maybe change, like have my parents change my password or something like that.”

On several occasions, Ellie has been bullied on Facebook. She said, “a lot of bullying goes on over Facebook and it’s kind of upsetting having to sit there and deal with that.” In one instance, Ellie described what a girl, Mo, said, “And, um, in this message, one of the girls, um, kept telling me that nobody likes me and that I’m fat and everybody hates me and they don’t want to be near me.”

In another instance, Ellie got really “mad” about a girl posting biblical information on Facebook. Ellie said, “obviously, she didn’t know enough to assess the Bible how she did.” Ellie felt this message was “so aggravating.” Additionally, Ellie found another spiritual message “annoying.” Both of these messages will be discussed further in the spiritual dimension.

As mentioned earlier, Ellie discussed the band, Blood on the Dance Floor, that her friend, Jade, got her to listen too. Ellie said the band talked a lot about “depression” and “very sexual things.” She described the band as “pure torture,” and “horrifying.” Even though she still has the band on her old ipod, Ellie said, she still feels “uncomfortable listening to them” and “I really regret getting them.”
Quinn. In her description as related to negative messages and the negative effects, Quinn used the words “annoying,” “not very motivational,” and “confusing.” Like she did regarding positive messages from female friends and the positive effects, Quinn also talked in generalities about the negative effects brought about by negative Facebook messages from female friends and this seemed important to note.

When girls post too many pictures where Quinn has described them as “boy crazy” meaning a lot of “hugging” of males, she stated, “that’s like really annoying and all.” In another instance that Quinn described as “not very motivational at all” and “confusing,” her female friend, Katherine, a softball player, posted a message, “Just do it later!” Quinn said Katherine may have meant this message as “funny” but Quinn didn’t take it that way. She described:

And, and [sic] so she’ll post things about softball and then she’ll post things that are instead of like, ‘Just do it!’ it will say like, ‘Just do it later!’ and I’m like that doesn’t even make any sense you’re a softball player you should like be motivated and stop motivational kind of stuff not like lazy kind of stuff. And, so, that’s kind of like confusing and all.

Regarding other negative messages from female friends and the negative effects, Quinn again talked in generalities. She said:

Um, I mean it really all comes down to who your friends with because if you’re friends with a bunch of random people then you’re not gonna you’re not going to start your morning well. You’re not going to end your day well of just [sic] the things you’re gonna see.

Quinn also remarked, “Um, I mean certainly if you saw something bad about you that would definitely impact your day.”
Of noteworthiness, Quinn did say and alluded to the idea that negative messages from female friends have a negative effect on her, however, most of the time, she doesn’t put a lot of weight on them. For example, some people will say, “you don’t talk very much.” Quinn described:

They think I am really shy but once you get to know me I talk a lot. And so someone else might take that really, really seriously but I don’t really because they obviously do not know me very well. Um, because my good friends would not tell you that about me.

Speaking of others, Quinn continued, “They just, they really rely on what other people think about them instead of using their own judgment.” Quinn also mentioned, “it doesn’t really matter what other people think about your pictures or whatever like that [sic] it depends on how you feel about it.” If one does not “get out much and you kind of like depend on what other people say instead of making your own life, you kind of let other people create your life for you,” Quinn said.

**Jasper.** In the past, when Jasper has described negative messages from female friends, she often does not stay in the relationship because of the negative effects. Like Quinn, Jasper did not talk much about her specific emotions or feelings regarding the messages, but rather spoke in generalities such as negative messages can insult and offend people or give a negative impression. Specifically, Jasper talked about memes and gifs. In regards to Research Question One, Jasper talked about the “basic white girl thing” going to Starbucks while the black people were “in the ghetto roughin’ it.” In reference to messages like this, even though Jasper described them as “funny” and “true,” she said they can also have negative repercussions. For instance, the messages may insult people and be offensive. Jasper referred to her family, “I mean I do, do
[sic] that or whatever but people still, like we’re not rich or whatever we still have to go to our jobs or our school.”

Because she plays a role on the cheerleading squad at her school, Jasper has become Facebook friends with all of the girls because of the “cheer thing.” However, again, speaking in generalities, Jasper thinks these girls post a lot of negative messages with negative effects. Jasper said they can “be all nice” and “really sweet and everything” in person then turn into “that type of person” meaning one she wants to avoid. Jasper elaborated, “They’re like more of a party person so instead of a nice uplifting person.” Sometimes Jasper said she has to tell herself, “Ok, Jasper, doesn’t need to see this part.”

Giovanna. In her interview, Giovanna went back and forth between descriptions of generally negative Facebook concepts and specific messages. Giovanna discussed ratings and the negative effects on both the sender and the receiver. Regarding ratings, Giovanna noted how she doesn’t like to “put people down” and “it just feels mean.” Giovanna also mentioned “mean” Facebook messages in terms of her dislike for “double-sided people,” how some of these messages have “hurt” her, have been “patronizing,” “harsh,” and “take people and throw them in the gutter.” She even referred to one girl, Scarlett, as “like the devil of Facebook.”

Regarding ratings, whereby people rate another person on looks or personality, Giovanna gave an example a picture that Scarlett posted on Facebook asking other girls who would win a beauty contest. Unbeknownst to Giovanna, Scarlett got her picture from somewhere and posted it in one of her Facebook comparisons. Giovanna felt the entire concept of ratings sends a negative message with negative effects for both the sender and the receiver. She mentioned what she told Scarlett and the message went out to all of Giovanna’s Facebook friends:
I tell ‘em, I say, ‘it doesn’t matter, a beauty contest is just something that makes people feel have [sic] lower self-esteem or higher self-esteem. And personally to me, I feel like every last one of these people should win because I don’t feel like putting people down.

Giovanna continued, “I’m just like I can’t do that I feel like I’m putting everyone else down and it just feels really mean.”

As she talked more, Giovanna discussed how some girls can be “really sweet and nice” at school, then they get on Facebook and turn “mean.” She gave an example of what one girl said: ‘Yeah, and I beat this girl to the ground,’ and I’m just like, ‘Who are you anymore? Like seriously? If you’re gonna be like this then you shouldn’t even be on Facebook because this is basically a double-sided person and I don’t like double-sided people ‘cause then it’s really hard to tell who you truly are.

In another instance, Giovanna described being “hurt” by a message from her friend, Jane. This message has been discussed previously, but will be included here per the negative emotional effect. Giovanna described:

Well, some like, one of my friends that, like one of my old friends that I don’t like her because of this post. She put on there she said, ‘I feel like people who are white are better than others. And I told her I said, ‘Well, you know what, I’m not fully white but you’re still my friend.’ She was like, ‘Well, not anymore.’ And I said, ‘Ok. You want to say that, then get off my Facebook page. Like, it hurt my feelings a little bit because then she because my mom’s not all white, my dad’s not all white, nobody in my family’s all white. And that’s basically patronizing every person who isn’t like fully American. And she’s just like, ‘Well it’s better this way.’
Regarding Facebook messages in general, Giovanna does not like the idea of negative messages because of the negative effects. She said the middle school kids are “harsh.” Giovanna repeated her thoughts about negative messages as “basically taking someone and throwing them in the gutter.”

**Tess.** When she described negative messages, Tess emphasized her one main connection, Samantha, her cousin. Samantha’s messages cause Tess to feel negative emotional reactions such as depression, being upset, and creeping her out. The next message was discussed in the last section of negative physical reactions, as Samantha’s words also made Tess feel “anti-social.” Here, Tess described how this message had a negative emotional effect of feeling “depressed.” Tess described:

> But it was like this picture that she posted. It was, it was [sic] like this stick figure under a blanket with like a video game controller like um, I’m not anti-social or whatever, I’m just depr- (doesn’t finish word), I’m just, I don’t, I need not to talk to anyone for awhile and that’s ok.

In her journal, Tess’ wrote about her friend, Lacy, posting a negative message about being sick. Tess said, Lacy had “bronchitis.” Tess wrote, “Yuk, made me feel sad for her.”

**Carlisle.** When she talked about negative messages from her female friends, Carlisle mentioned she didn’t like ratings because of the “hurt” they cause the sender and the receiver. Carlisle talked pictures that her female friends post that caused her to feel “weirded out.” She also discussed “mean” messages and how they made her “mad,” “upset,” and “sad.”

In the physical dimension section was a message that Carlisle had written regarding a message from her friend, Ally, that made her “mad.” Ally felt Carlisle had changed. In addition to that message, Carlisle talked about ratings, her feelings, and the negative effects. She
said, “I don’t like it because I don’t wanna, you know, I don’t want it to like hurt my feelings or something if I get a bad one.” In reference to other friends, Carlisle stated the reciprocal and this seemed important to note. She stated, “cause I don’t want to like hurt somebody’s feelings.”

When a girl wants to become Facebook friends with Carlisle, she will review her profile. If Carlisle sees pictures she doesn’t like, Carlisle will not become friends. To begin with, Carlisle looks to see if a potential friend might be around her “age,” Carlisle described:

Age, um, probably like if they have a picture of them like smoking or something, I don’t really like that, that much. Um, if you look at their statuses if I’m able too, and it’s like, you know, um, ‘I’m gonna go smoke some weed, you know it can turn into something bad.

Along with the photos of girls smoking weed, Carlisle’s negative perceptions of girls’ posting pictures of themselves crying caused a negative effect. Carlisle described:

Like, you know, like they’ll be like they’ll take a picture of them cryin’and they’ll be like, um, ‘I hurt too sometimes,’ you know. And I just don’t like that at all. It’s, I mean, I feel bad for them but like then again everyone cries like there’s no need to post it all over Facebook.

Regarding pictures, Carlisle wrote in her journal about a “before and after” picture of her friend, Valentina, posted when she was younger. Carlisle referred to being younger and “13 yrs.,” and she’s now “16.” In the picture, Valentina was in a thong and Carlisle stated, “I felt very weirded out, honestly.”

In her interview, Carlisle described the negative effect of a negative message before she went to bed. Carlisle said:
Well, if I get like a bad message the night before or I go to school or something or the morning before like somebody just you know being mean for no reason, then it kind of, I mean it does affect my day, you know, normally, people are good at hiding their emotions, unless, it’s something really bad then they just kind of get really upset and they’re just kind of like you know sad all day.

When asked what specific kinds of messages she had meant, Carlisle continued:

I mean it’s just kind of like if somebody’s calling me names over the message then I see that person it’s [sic] just kind of like reminds me of it all over again. It just makes me upset, I guess, yeah.

Addison. When she described negative messages, Addison described the negative effect with the term “upset.” Sometimes Addison’ friends will get in Facebook fights. She talked about one of the instances where her friend, Melanie, wanted to come over but couldn’t. Melanie got mad at her on Facebook and Addison felt “upset.”

Shea. As for Shea, she described negative messages and the negative effects as feeling “bad,” “emotional,” and “depressed.” She also discussed concepts like ratings and TBHs as not being “mean” and not “appealing” to her.

When one of her female Facebook friends posts “something bad,” Shea feels “bad” for her. Shea described how she went from “really excited” about her friend, Emerson’s, new dog to being really “emotional” when within a few days she posted the dog “got sick and they had to put it down.”

As she talked further, Shea said in addition to feeling “bad,” she sometimes feels “depressed.” Shea described, “Cause it’s like oh, that’s so bad it’s like five bad things, and like, oh, one good thing.” Along with the message of Emerson’s dog, Shea referred to other negative
messages that makes her feel blue. Some of her female friends will post pictures of people in the
community with cancer. She said, “and they’re like, ‘oh, pray for them,’ you know.”

Additionally, Shea discussed the concepts of ratings, which can be “mean” and TBHs
that “just don’t appeal to me.” This is important to note, as Shea, like some of the other
participants, does not like the idea of rating people and doing TBHs because they can negatively
effect the sender and receiver. When she does do a rate or TBH, Shea said she only does it with
girls “I have really good relationship with ‘em so I don’t hurt ‘em or anything. So they
understand I’m just joking and like I wouldn’t really post that if I didn’t, if they didn’t trust me
with it.” Shea discussed further how the ratings and TBHs can work to include a positive or
negative effect. She said:

Like sometimes it is if they give you a ten and your like, ‘Oh, I’m gonna be a five,’
and they’re like, ‘Oh, they think I’m pretty and beautiful and stuff.’ So that can be
positive. But then if you’re like ‘Oh, I’m gonna get a perfect ten,’ then they give you
a four you’re like ‘Oh, oh, I’m not pretty. I’m not beautiful.’ So that’s part of the
reason I don’t like it. Cause it hurts not only my friends if they do it but like other
people. And that’s just like not cool for me.

Garette. Garette said she could not think of too many negative messages from her
female friends. However, she did come up with a few words to describe the negative effects of
Facebook messages such as not “too nice,” “lost a little bit of interest,” “dumb,” “bad,” “sad.”
She also discussed feeling “sick” and “losing interest” which has been described in the physical
dimension section but also intertwines with the emotional dimension.

One time Garette felt a message from a few of her female friends in a chat room wasn’t
“too nice.” Garette said it’s hard sometimes too tell what people mean on Facebook because of
their “intonation.” In other words, “they might be saying it playfully like and then you might take it they’re saying it for real.” Next, Garette talked about TBHs and how she feels they’re “dumb.” She described:

> Because first of all, if you’re being honest to someone like that probably means you weren’t being honest before and it’s like you’re doing it now. Like on a social media not even to the person’s face or anything, you’re just typing it up and clicking send.

Garette continued:

> But yeah, it’s like if you have something to say about them anyway you should probably say it to like their face. Just like, ‘hey,’ like you don’t like something that they’re doing don’t write it on the To Be Honest like say, ‘Hey.’

Garette said it’s much “easier” to say something “hiding behind a computer screen,” but it “would all be a lot more simpler if everything, everyone did everything to their face to face [sic].”

Along with TBHs, Garette discussed rates and the potential for negative effects, therefore, this information is noteworthy. In reference to rates, Garette said, “I mean I think that can make someone feel even possibly worse than the To Be Honest ‘cause like even if you’re anything below a ten it can just make you feel kind of worthless.” Garette has been rated before and she talked further:

> Uh, I think way back when, when [sic] I would like when they would that would come up and I would ‘like’ it just, you know, let’s see what other people think of me. I never like any of those anymore because that’s like I, I [sic] have no interest of knowing since I have my own like what I think of myself. So, I don’t, I don’t [sic] feel like I need to know other people’s but before, um, what other people think of me but before um, when I
would I mean it would always be high ratings. I don’t think I ever got anything super low that made me feel bad but it does kind of make you think, like, I wonder why they rated me below a ten, or I wonder why they rated me an eight or something, you know.

When Garette sees her female friends post “bad things happening,” she said:

It would kind of make me feel like bad and stuff. It, it [sic] just kind of like usually it made me feel kind of just I didn’t really sometimes I wouldn’t care, and sometimes it would like make me feel sad or if there was like people were being angry on Facebook, I’d be like, ‘Whoa!’

Garette talked further about when she might get a message from a female friend and “feel bad” and “sad” for her. She described:

If my friend is stressed out about SOLs and you know, dropped her phone and it cracked, and then she hasn’t been getting any sleep, I feel bad for her and then I also, and then I also, [sic] kind of like, yeah, I kind I just basically feel bad for her. And then I just feel kind of sad moving on.

When Garette talked about these feelings she said, “It’s like them bothering me” as one of the reasons why she has gone away from Facebook.

Nine participants reported negative messages from female friends had negative effects, which can have a negative effect on health and well-being (Cohen & Pressman, 2006; Durham, 2008; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Sarracino & Scott, 2008). The participants discussed negative effects in terms of appearance-related messages, bullying, messages that confused them, insulting, offensive, upsetting, and creepy messages. The next section will look at social health.
Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Adult Effects

This section discusses how the nine participants described adult effects with Facebook as related to their positive messages from female friends. Among the descriptions, the participants talked about their process to keep their Facebook positive, how their parents check their Facebook, and how parents as well as school personnel guide and encourage their Facebook posts.

Adult Effects

Ellie. As she talked about her positive messages on Facebook from her female friends, Ellie talked about her dad. She stated how he “wears the pants in my relationship with Facebook.” Ellie mentioned her dad checks her Facebook to make sure it stays positive, particularly as it relates to safety. A few days before her interview she said, “Um, so he checked that Monday and said, ‘Ok, you’re all clear, go, go [sic] have fun.’”

Quinn. When Quinn discussed positive messages, she talked about potential female friends, and her process to keep Facebook positive. A girl will “friend” Quinn, and she reviews her profile. If she’s not sure about some of what she sees, Quinn stated, she will “see what my mom thought if I wasn’t quite sure.” Quinn said she will ask her mom questions and vice-versa about the person and her profile, so that they come to a common understanding regarding the Facebook friendship.

Like many of the other participants, Quinn often gets Facebook off her phone. Quinn reported her mom, also “checks my phone every now and then like, um, like messages from my phone and then Facebook messages, and then like, you know, what exactly’s in your newsfeed (laughs)?” Also noteworthy, Quinn stated her mom also guides her with Facebook posts. At
times, Quinn said, she will ask her mom, “Do you think this is a good post or is it obnoxious or something like that?” Quinn described:

Like you feel good about yourself and so you’ll find like a motivational kind of thing about you but sometimes that can come out to be a little too cocky. So, my mom will be like, well, you know, to me, you know, it will make sense and all because it’s motivational for me but to someone else they may be like oh, well, she sure does think a lot of herself.

**Jasper.** Regarding her Facebook, Jasper said, “My Mom she, she [sic] doesn’t like me to act like other girls at my school. So, we’re very safe and she checks me like my messages and make sure [sic] we’re all good.” Jasper also referred to her friends and their moms and said:

I don’t think their moms really check ‘cause like my mom says she trusts me and everything she just wants to make sure I’m on the right path. And she trusts me enough to where she doesn’t check my message, well, I, I [sic] wouldn’t care if she did because I know. And like she’ll check my statuses and say, ‘Oh, ok, you’re doing this,’ and she has a certain time for me to be on there so I don’t like overwork myself with it or stay on too long.

**Giovanna.** As for Giovanna, she discussed when she first got her Facebook. She said her mom told her, “You can only talk to your friends, your family, and post things like pictures and play games. So, she basically made sure I couldn’t do anything bad on it.” The first few months, Giovanna’s mom would monitor her Facebook. When asked how she felt about that Giovanna stated, “It just makes me feel like she cares.” She continued, “Like I, I [sic] figured she knew I wouldn’t do anything but like, like [sic] she just wanted to make sure.”
Tess. As she described what her mom has been trying to teach her about social media, Tess sped up her words with little inflection, “She’s been trying to educate me on Facebook etiquette ever since my birthday.” Tess didn’t get into the details of her mom’s etiquette. However, her mom only allows Tess to have Facebook friendships with her family and a few other people such as her female group leaders from church.

Carlisle. Likewise, Carlisle also mentioned her mom’s involvement with her positive messages to and from her female friends on Facebook. She stated, her mom’s “very honest with me” about what to post or not to post. Regularly, Carlisle said her mom tells her not to post anything “bad” in general on Facebook like “pictures.” Carlisle said her mom referred to when she gets older “because the jobs you apply for they will look at all of that.”

Addison. Moreover, Addison remarked her mom guides her on messages with her female friends so that they stay “friendly” and “positive.” At times, Addison said she has “liked” and “shared” too many messages to and from her Facebook friends to include some that were not age appropriate because she did understand them. Her mom encouraged Addison not to do this. Addison stated, “my mom says I’m doing something wrong, it’s like, oh, (pause) oh [sic] (higher pitch) sorry, um, ok, I will definitely change that.”

Shea. When Shea talked about positive messages and adult involvement on Facebook, she said she has connections with the moms of three of her female friends. Shea usually sends positive messages and gets them from her best friend, Elizabeth’s mom, to set up weekend trips that she goes on with their family. Shea gave another example of how some of the moms will send her positive messages. She said, “Um, if I post like a picture of me with my friends, and I follow their mom, then they’ll like the picture.”

Additionally, Shea mentioned positive Facebook messages as they relate to the adults at
her school. Shea said she follows the “cool teachers.” Sometimes the teachers post “cute” stuff of their families. One specific teacher, Mrs. Aims, whom Shea considers “cool” will post pictures or Bible verses, and she said, “then all the kids who had her will like comment on it and ‘like’ and she’ll answer back and all that stuff.”

**Garette.** When Garette described adult involvement, she mentioned how her mom keeps an eye on her Facebook and makes it “known” for Garette not to have friendships with just anyone. It seemed important to note, that Garette also mentioned how her mom will sometimes help her with her posts so she can keep them positive. Garette described:

> But I think sometimes she might like see what I post or I don’t think she goes on my wall, but like maybe she sees something that I’ve posted that she doesn’t like she might find a different angle at it why it’s not a good thing to post that I didn’t. So, then should we let me know and then I would change it or edit it or take it off or like if I hmm, yeah, I don’t know if I can think of an example, but like maybe if I post something that seems perfectly fine to me and she says, ‘Well, there might be a group of people out there that think maybe that’s not so good,’ like with their beliefs or their I don’t know feelings or it mi-, might make someone else think that like I’m talking about them or something just like people have different feelings, and you might not ever know that what you might be posting could make someone else feel bad.

This section included how the nine participants described adult involvement with Facebook as related to their positive messages from female friends. Included in some of the descriptions, the participants talked about their process to keep their Facebook positive, how their parents check their Facebook, and how parents as well as school personnel guide along with encourage their Facebook messages.
Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Adult Effects

All nine participants discussed positive adult effects with negative Facebook messages from their female friends, and as noted in the introduction this can have a positive effect on self-esteem (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2009; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; DeSisto, Farreras, & Woody, 2010; Shulkind & Foote, 2009). Among the topics discussed were suicide, bullying, stranger danger, and an array of other subjects. Included among the adults involved were parents and school personnel.

Adult Effects

Ellie. When Ellie talked about one of the negative messages that she received from a female friend, Sage, on Facebook she stated her words in a slow staccato, “If you don’t stop talking to me, my friends, or anybody else in the school, then I will kill myself and I will blame it on you.” Ellie proceeded to tell her parents. This led to Ellie’s mom writing Sage and she still would not stop with her negative Facebook messages. Ellie reported her mom finally called Sage and “she started apologizing to my mom to the point that she was crying.”

As mentioned in the previous section, Ellie’s dad has concern about her receiving negative Facebook messages. Ellie described:

I think it’s more of a concern of me to him because it’s like he’s because of recently because of all those kidnappings and everything like that he’s probably I’m assuming he’s concerned that I’m going to talk to someone who I shouldn’t and they’re gonna and they’re gonna [sic] end up somehow finding me and that they’ll take me away from him.

Of noteworthiness, Ellie did report a bad experience with a stranger on Facebook. She said, “And, previously, I have had uh, a very scary experience on Facebook with strangers. When asked if she felt comfortable to share the experience, Ellie described:
Yeah, I’m good. I’m fine. Um, there was this guy, and I still remember his name, uh, Sahil Masoud. And I don’t know him. I didn’t know, I di- [sic] I haven’t met him and um, he had sent me a friend request and messaged me, ‘Hey, you’re pretty, wanna meet me’ and I was like oh, no, no, no. So, I ended up deleting the message. I didn’t respond.

When questioned about why she answered the message in the first place, Ellie mentioned it being on her phone. She continued:

That was like kind of like the first thing that popped up ‘cause you know how it shows the first one or two lines. Well, that was the first line and that’s all it said. So, I deleted that…I didn’t open it. Yeah. I marked it as unread, so he wouldn’t know that I read it. And I deleted it and then I ended up blocking it. And then I found out that one of my friends was friends with him and they had actually met each other when they went to New York.

Ellie discussed more about the experience:

I never responded and I was freaked out ‘cause that’s kind of honestly, it’s the first real experience I’ve actually had talking to a stranger without my family really being beside me. And, I didn’t, I ended up not telling them because I knew that my dad would freak out and start panicking and stuff and think, ‘Hey, this guy’s gonna come steal my daughter.’

**Quinn.** When Quinn talked about negative messages, she said her mom can see what’s going on. Since Quinn has made her Facebook positive by staying away from certain people such as the school bullies, she mentioned she doesn’t get a lot of negativity on her Facebook. However, it appeared noteworthy to mention what Quinn said about her female friends and negative Facebook posts as they related to adults. Quinn described:
Yeah. I mean like some people they aren’t even friends with their own family and so what I always say, ‘Is, you know, don’t say anything or post anything that you wouldn’t want your grandma to see you say.’ And, I mean, my grandparents are my friends, and, so I mean that obviously shows you that, I mean I’m picky about what I post and all too.

Quinn added:

Um, I mean, ‘cause they don’t really want their parents to know exactly everything that’s going on in their life, you know. But I mean those are the same kind of people that don’t really, you know, talk with their parents at the dinner table or talk to them in the car. So, I mean it all kind of goes hand in hand together.

**Jasper.** In the past Jasper has received negative messages from female friends on Facebook. She said, “that’s why I’m not friends with a lot of people now.” At times, Jasper will call her mom over to see some of her negative messages. Jasper described a post that she showed her mom:

She like posted, um [sic], she said, ‘I’m eating pizza or whatever and now my butt’s spreading.’ I’m like, ‘why would you post that?’ (Researcher laughs). I was like, ‘Mom, come here do you see this?’ She goes, ‘Oh, well, she has issues.’ I said, ‘Yeah, she does have issues.’

Another time, Jasper received a message from her friend, Kylie, that she and her mom described as negative. Jasper continued and laughed as she began:

‘Cause I was like ‘Oh,’ but my mom goes, ‘What’s, what’s twerking?’ ‘cause someone posted it or whatever on my wall. She’s like, ‘Why’s my daughter hanging out with these people who are twerking,’ or whatever? She’s goes, ‘Jasper, what’s twerking,’ she said,
‘Can you do it?’ I’m like, ‘No, I can’t do it’ (Jasper laughs). So I was like, here you go I showed her Miley Cyrus, she was like ‘Oh, no’ (Researcher laughs). I said, ‘Ok. I won’t do it, I promise.’

**Giovanna.** As Giovanna discussed negative messages, she mentioned anytime she gets a Facebook message that bothers her, she shows her mom. Giovanna stated, “And if I get anything like bad, I literally the second I get it, I call my Mom.” As noted previously, in one instance, a Facebook friend, Scarlett, was arguing with Giovanna over the meaning of their names. Giovanna stated what happened when she showed her mom one of the messages, “Well, I showed my Mom and my Mom was just like, you know, she shouldn’t have sent this, she shouldn’t even be telling, talking about this, you know.”

Regarding Scarlett’s message over the meaning of their names, the discussion continued the next day at school. Additionally, and also mentioned earlier, Giovanna ended up reporting to the principal a “threat” from Scarlett, whereby, the principal sent her to the local school for “troubled teens.” Giovanna stated how the principal’s response made her feel, “She’s just like ‘I’m not gonna have this and you need to, you need to [sic] get out of my school. It made me feel better ‘cause I know like that I have power now.” Giovanna said the principal has been well aware of the both the positive and negative Facebook activity at her school.

**Tess.** When Tess talked about negative messages, she spoke about her cousin, Samantha. Samantha often posts about being “depressed” and “anti-social.” One time, Tess actually had a “fight” with her mom over her friendship with Samantha. Overall, Tess said her mom doesn’t let her have Facebook friendships with anybody whom she thinks will post something “bad.” Tess gave an example of another girl, Taylor, and speaking of her negative influence, said, her “mom just knows.”
Carlisle. Regarding her negative Facebook messages from female friends, when asked if her mom ever checks her Facebook account, Carlisle said, “Um, she will if she thinks that something bad is going on but not normally.” Previously, Carlisle has received negative messages from female friends at her school. In fact, Carlisle called said “I’ve been like, I missed days of school before because this girl that I thought was my friend decided to talk bad about me.” Carlisle said the girl, Grayson, “cussed her out on Facebook,” and eventually the principal also got involved.

Of note regarding adult involvement, school, and phone use (where most of the participants access their Facebook), Carlisle also said her principals “they have permission to look at anything on your Facebook.” If students use their phone when they are not supposed to, “you will get it taken away and your mom has to come and pick it up.”

Addison. As for Addison, when Facebook gets too “negative,” she said her mom tells her to “take a break.” In the past, Addison said she has been “hurt” on Facebook by females she at first thought where her friends. She described, “But I do tell my if [sic] someone like hurts me on Facebook, I tell my mom and then my mom helps me work this out so that way, um, and they don’t bother me again.”

Shea. When Shea talked about negative messages and adult effects, she talked about her school rather than specific messages from female friends. Shea mentioned some of the teachers and the school principals have Facebook. When asked whether or not the school administration monitors the students Facebook, Shea said only if you “follow” them. Shea said if one of the administrators finds out that someone has posted something like a curse word, “they might like suspend you for a day it just depends on what the situation is.”

Garette. In her interview, Garette discussed that in addition to her mom making it
“known” that she doesn’t want her just to be friends with just anyone, she also talked about the adults at her school and how they get involved with Facebook. Although it hasn’t happened to her, it seemed important to discuss Garette’s thoughts. She said, “that’s like I think that’s only if it has gotten to the point where the school is involved like school work.” Garette gave an example if someone “starts to get to where like they don’t want to come to school then that is a school issue and usually you go through guidance.” Guidance refers to the school counselor. Garette also mentioned if a student uses one’s phone at school, such as to get on Facebook when she or he has not been given the ok, the phone will be confiscated and “then your mom has to come pick it up.”

This section included the nine participants’ descriptions of adult involvement with negative Facebook messages from their female friends. Among the topics discussed were suicide, bullying, stranger danger, and many other subjects. The adults mentioned were parents and school personnel. As noted in the introduction, adults effects can have self-esteem related effects of adolescents (Bulanda & Majumdar, 2009; Cripps & Zyromski, 2009; DeSisto, Farreras, & Woody, 2010; Shulkind & Foote, 2009). In the next section, intellectual/mental health is discussed.

Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Academic Effects

Five participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends as having positive academic effects; hence, this can have a positive effect on self-esteem (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009; Mann, 2013). One of the five participants discussed her female friends as being some of her teachers. The participants discussed sharing messages about missed work, homework, quizzes, studying, and sometimes even updates from the teachers.
**Academic Effects**

**Quinn and Giovanna.** If Quinn or one of her friends misses school, they will use Facebook to “catch up on like what they missed” and to discuss their test scores. Speaking of her friend, Aubree, Quinn wrote in her journal, “My friend and I message each other about school a lot (teachers, homework, and quizzes/tests).” Like Quinn, Giovanna said she and her female friends used Facebook for “studies and everything.” Giovanna also talked about if someone misses school, that person and her female friends will trade notes over Facebook.

**Carlisle and Shea.** Like Quinn and Giovanna, Carlisle finds her female friends supportive of her academics. Carlisle stated, “I mean, I’ll ask my friend a question if I don’t know it….” As Carlisle did, Shea also talks to her friends about homework on Facebook. Shea said some of her female friends are the “cool teachers.” Shea finds it helpful for her academics to follow the teachers as “sometimes they might post homework” or “updates.” She stated:

> Miss Patterson, my history teacher. Like if we have a snow day or like we can’t go in for school for some reason. She’ll be like, ‘Update like this will be due on this day instead of this day,’ and she’ll usually send it in an e-mail too, but like she’ll put it on Facebook just in case like, yeah, a reminder. I like it. ‘Cause like I almost never check my e-mail. So to see it on Facebook it’s like, oh, oh (raises voice with more expression).

Another note of importance as related to homework messages with her female friends, Shea said, “Um, sometimes like if I can’t text them a picture like sometimes my phone doesn’t like it won’t send a picture, then I’ll send it to them over Facebook.”

**Garette.** Garette also said she and her friends, use Facebook to help each other with academics. She stated:
Yeah. Sometimes like I might message my friend and be like, ‘What’s the homework tonight?’ or like if they need the, the [sic] homework I will send them a picture of it or the, the [sic] assignment for the night. So I use it for that too.

In this section, five participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends have positive academic effects which can have positive self-esteem effects (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009; Mann, 2013). One of the five participants discussed her female friends as being some of her teachers. The next section looks at positive and negative messages from female friends, and how they can have a negative effect on self-esteem per negative academic-related effects (Abe & de Kernier, 2013; Chou & Edge, 2012; Clinkinbeard et al., 2011; Gruber, 2013; Hildenbrand et al., 2013; Lovato & Gradisar, 2014; Roybal et al., 2011; Wong et al., 2014).

**Theme One: Positive and Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative Academic-Related Effects**

**Academic-Related Effects**

Two participants described how Facebook activity can have negative academic-related effects. This includes both positive and negative messages from female friends. The participants discussed negative academic-related effects such as avoidance of homework, wasting time, and lack of sleep.

**Ellie and Garette.** In the past, Ellie stated Facebook kept her away from homework. She stated, “Um, previously, it has prevented me to like kind of avoid homework until a little later in the day or (Researcher and Ellie laugh) in, in [sic] the morning when I go to school.” As Ellie did, Garette also said something similar. Garette remarked:
Yeah, ‘cause sometimes also I find also when I’m on Facebook and I start like just reading more and more and then I end up wasting more time and then I like my homework [sic] I have to do and then I end up not getting as much sleep.

It should be noted that Garette did recognize Facebook’s negative effects, and she “moved away” since she has been “so stressed out” with school.

In this section, two participants described the negative academic-related effects of Facebook activity. The participants discussed avoidance of homework, wasting time, and lack of sleep. Negative academic effects can have negative self-esteem related effects (Abe & de Kernier, 2013; Chou & Edge, 2012; Clinkenbeard et al., 2011; Gruber, 2013; Hildenbrand et al., 2013; Lovato & Gradisar, 2014; Roybal et al., 2011; Wong et al., 2014). In the next section, spiritual health is discussed.

**Theme One: Positive Messages Can Have a Positive Effect Per Positive Affect**

Three of the nine participants described spiritual Facebook messages from their female friends as having a positive effect. As noted, positive messages can have a positive effect on self-esteem per positive affect (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). The three participants self-reported their spiritual or religious affiliation as Christianity. The participants discussed biblical verses and messages hypothetically from Jesus.

**Positive Affect**

**Jasper.** When she discussed spiritual messages from her female friends, Jasper discussed her best friend Macy’s posts and her Dad’s girlfriend, Cary. Jasper said, “They put stuff like Bible verses or whatever so it’s really like uplifting, I guess when you can see stuff like that.”

**Addison.** As Jasper did, Addison described spiritual messages from her female friends. She gave an example. Addison stated, “‘You have a message from Jesus, would you answer?’
She said, ‘Yeah, I’ll answer. I mean it’s Jesus. I mean He loves me, I love Him.”

Shea. Shea attends a private, Christian school and is connected with some of her female teachers as Facebook friends. She said one of the “cool” teachers, Mrs. James, “a Bible teacher,” will sometimes post biblical verses. Shea described many of her classmates will “like” the posts.

In this section, three of the nine participants described spiritual messages from their female friends as having positive effects (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). The three participants self-reported their spiritual or religious affiliation as Christianity. The participants discussed Bible verses, Jesus, and the postings of a “cool teacher.” In the next section, the participants’ descriptions of negative spiritual messages will be discussed.

Theme One: Negative Messages Can Have a Negative Effect Per Negative Affect

Two of the nine participants discussed negative spiritual messages from female friends, which can, therefore, have a negative effect on self-esteem (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). The two participants self-reported their spiritual or religious affiliation as Christianity.

Negative Affect

Ellie. When Ellie discussed negative spiritual messages from her female friends, she talked how one girl posted she doesn’t like being a Christian. Ellie stated:

I remember one girl and she said that she doesn’t like being a Christian because she’s forced to follow all these rules and she doesn’t like it and it’s mean t- (Ellie couldn’t get the word out) towards her and her family. That was kind of like (again, Ellie couldn’t get the word out) annoying.

Ellie discussed another spiritual message from a female friend. She described:

Uh, there’s one and this girl was talking about how she’s an atheist and that means like they’re not for God and they don’t like um, the practices of Christianity. And, um, I
remember her saying that God like trusts something about abortion, and death, and like killing people and everything and that is 100% not true ‘cause it’s in the Ten Commandments, hey, thou shall not kill. And that was kind of, that made me really mad because, obviously, she doesn’t know enough to assess the Bible how she did. And that was kind of like one of those things like I am going to rip my hair out if you say something like that over and over and over again and that was so aggravating.

**Tess.** When Tess described spirituality and messages from her female friends, she discussed her cousin, Samantha. Tess remarked:

Um, actually I feel kind of like a hypocrite saying that because my cousin, my mom actually told me don’t look at this post because Samantha used f-bomb and like in a disrespectful way to God. So, I was like…but my mom, we actually had a little fight over me being friends with Samantha.

In this section, two of the nine participants discussed negative spiritual messages from female friends and the effects. In turn, this can have a negative effect on self-esteem (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). The participants self-reported Christianity as their religion.

**Research Question Two Summary**

Similar to a machine, “no dimension of health functions in isolation” (Butler, 2001, p. 3). Furthermore, Butler (2001) also said high levels of health form from a proper combination of coordination and integration of the dimensions. Conversely, poor integration and coordination may result in the opposite effect. Additionally, “the interactions of the dimensions contribute to the richness of a person’s life and help determine that person’s uniqueness” (Butler, 2001, p. 3). Miller (1997) stated “nothing is whole in isolation” (p. 81). This section addressed Research Question Two, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages
from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?” The next section looks at the participants’ experiences with friendships and addresses Research Question Three, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?”

**Theme One: Participants Described Positive Messages as Affirmation of Their Friendships**

Eight of the nine participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends as affirmation of their friendships. Within this major theme, the participants described how their messages from female friends were positive not only because they encouraged their friendships, but also because they emphasized the friendship type. Thus, the four subthemes of (a) best friends, (b) great friends, (c) good friends, and (d) sister-like friends emerged. This description focuses on these subthemes. Per the relevance, one participant stated she wished her best friend had a Facebook account, hence, the inclusion of this information.

**Subtheme One: Best Friends**

Five of the eight participants described positive Facebook messages that came from their best friend as affirmation of their friendship. One participant felt she hoped her best friend would get a Facebook account, thus, this information has been added per the importance.

**Ellie.** At the start of her interview, Ellie began, “Well, um earlier today, one of my friends messaged me and we are best friends, and we have been attached to the hip that’s why,” Ellie said, “I send so many messages on Facebook and everything.” Ellie mentioned one message that her best friend, Jenna, sent, “Um, um, the other day my friend sent me a music video and it was talking about best friends and everything (Ellie squealed).”

**Quinn.** Like Ellie, Quinn talked about how she described positive messages from her best friend, Liza, as affirmation of their friendship. Quinn spoke about WCW meaning the day
girls and women share pictures of females they “find attractive or admire” (Vultaggio, 2013, para. 1). Quinn stated, “Woman Crush Wednesday which can be like you make it for your mom or you make it for your best friend.” Quinn said, “Um, and so me and my friends do that for each other a lot which is fun.” When asked Quinn what she and her friends post with the picture she mentioned, “Um, normally you post a picture of the person and then you can say, you know ‘This is my best friend, I love her so much,’ stuff like that.”

**Jasper.** As Quinn did, Jasper described how positive Facebook messages from her best friend, Macy, showed affirmation of their relationship. Jasper noted that she and Macy also do WCW. She stated, “And like, Macy, will do that to me and I’ll do it for her ‘cause we’re like best friends or whatever.”

**Carlisle.** Like the other participants, Carlisle reported positive messages from her best friends on Facebook also show affirmation of their relationships. Carlisle stated she and her best friends will do TBHs. As mentioned earlier, TBH, or To Be Honest, refers to “a term that encourages online users to express honestly how they feel about a person or an idea they post” (Birdsong, 2013, para. 3). Carlisle stated, her best friend, Presley, sent her a Facebook message that said, “And um, she liked it, To Be Honest, you’re my best friend and you’re gorgeous and, you’re really nice, or you know, something like that.”

**Shea.** Similarly, Shea emphasized positive Facebook messages from her best friend, Elizabeth, showed affirmation of their friendship. Shea talked about how she didn’t find it a big deal to do TBHs with female friends. However, if her best friend, Elizabeth, wanted to do a TBH, Shea stated, “but like if my best friend is doing it then, ‘Oh, yeah, like it up!’” (Shea laughs). When Shea said, “like it up,” this meant she desired to receive a positive message from her best friend so she will hit the “like” icon, and her other friends may too.
**Tess.** Tess was the one participant who had hoped her best friend, Jill, would get a Facebook account. This information appeared noteworthy per this subtheme. Tess said, Jill’s family is not all that “modern.” A lot of the participants talked about how they get their Facebook messages on their phones and Tess stated regarding Jill, “You know, I’m gonna persuade her to try and get her mom to let her have a phone for her thirteenth birthday.”

**Subtheme Two: Great Friends**

**Giovanna.** Giovanna talked about her “great,” female, Facebook friends. She described a positive message from one of her female friends, Jessica, as a “cute” birthday card. Herein, this friendship was affirmed, but the type of friendship was identified in a little different way than for the other participants. Rather than the sender acknowledging the type of friendship, the receiver did. She said, the message reinforced how she has “great friends who care about me.” While this section talked about great friends, the next section discusses good friends.

**Subtheme Three: Good Friends**

**Garette.** Additionally, Garette, described a positive message from one of her “good friends” that affirmed her friendship and the nature of their relationship. She stated:

Well, um, most of the female friends that I have are like my on my Facebook are like my really good friends that I message and so the um, some positive ones that had [sic] usually is them telling me like how much of a good friend I am or that they love me or something.

Along with good friends, the next participant talked about a sister-like friend.

**Subtheme Four: Sister-Like Friends**

**Addison.** Similarly, Addison, talked about a positive message that she received from her friend, Brice, which affirmed their friendship particularly the close nature. Addison said Brice
wrote, “um, ‘loves you like a sister.’” This made Addison feel “lucky,” she said, and that she has the “bestest [sic] friends in the world that I could ever have.”

Eight of the nine participants’ perceptions of positive Facebook messages from female friends as affirmation of their friendships. Within this major theme, the participants described how their messages from female friends were positive not only because they encouraged the friendship, but also that the messages reinforced the type of friendship. Included because of the relevant information, one participant stated she wished her best friend had a Facebook account. The next section talks about Facebook as a support system.

**Theme Two: Participants Described Positive Messages as Supportive**

Eight of the nine participants described positive Facebook messages from their female friends as supportive. This major theme of supportive messages had two subthemes: (a) school-related activities and (b) personal matters. This description focuses on these two subthemes.

**Subtheme One: School-Related Activities**

Six of the eight participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends as supportive for school-related activities. These activities took place in and out of school. Some of these activities have been mentioned in the section on intellectual or mental growth.

**Quinn.** Quinn stated, “Um, well, I’d have to talk about school, like especially if someone was gone today.” Quinn continued, “Then, we’ll kind of catch up on like what they missed” and “Um, and sometimes it will be like talking about you know, ‘How did you do on that test or whatever?’” Quinn wrote in her journal that she and one of her female friends, Aubree, “message each other about school a lot (teachers, homework, and quizzes/tests).”

**Jasper.** In her interview, Jasper described positive messages from her best friend, Macy, as supportive of their vacation plans when they have a school break. Jasper and Macy’s family
plan to take a vacation together. So, pre-trip Jasper said, they send each other pictures of their vacation and “things they should do during spring break.”

**Giovanna.** Like Jasper, Giovanna interpreted positive messages from her female friends on Facebook as supportive as they help each other with their advanced classes. At the time of her interview, Giovanna had been involved with her Standards of Learning (SOL) exams. Giovanna reported she and her friends discuss “studies and everything” on Facebook. She also said they trade notes if one of them misses something at school.

**Carlisle.** As the other participants did, Carlisle described positive messages from her female friends as a support system for homework. Carlisle stated, “I mean, I’ll ask my friend a question if I don’t know it….”

**Shea.** Shea reported some of her female Facebook friends are her teachers. She stated, “I mean you can follow the teachers and they’ll usually follow you back ‘cause sometimes they might post like homework [not sure of her word] like updates or whatever.” As a note, Shea also sometimes sends homework over Facebook to her female friends.

**Garette.** Garette also interpreted positive messages from her female friends on Facebook as supportive of homework. Garette said:

> Yeah. Sometimes like I might message my friend and be like, ‘What’s the homework tonight?’ or like if they need the, the [sic] homework I will send them a picture of it or the, the [sic] assignment for the night. So I use it for that too.

While this section included the participants’ descriptions of messages from female friends as supportive of school-related activities, in the next section, the participants’ discussed their experiences with Facebook and personal matters.
**Subtheme Two: Personal Matters**

Four of the eight participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends as supportive of their personal matters. Personal matters included getting braces, people getting bullied, gossip, the death of a boyfriend, rates, and being upset.

**Ellie.** When Ellie talked about positive Facebook messages from her female friends, she discussed how they help her through the challenges of being a teenager. She said, “We talk about like how we feel about, um, having braces, and having like, we talk about how people are getting bullied and like what people are saying about other people and stuff like that…”

**Addison.** When her Facebook boyfriend, Jake, died from cancer, Addison said she received positive messages from her female friends that supported her. One friend, Ashley, sent Addison a message that said, “I’m here for you and you can get through this.”

**Shea.** Shea also talked about positive Facebook messages from female friends that serve as a support system for personal matters. For example, if somebody might “rate” her as a four on a scale of one to ten, that person will, most likely, receive a message from one of Shea’s female friend’s that says something like, “my friend is better than that.”

**Garette.** Like the other participants, Garette talked how her positive Facebook messages from friends give her sense of support with personal challenges. For example, if one of her friends sees that Garette might be upset at school, later in the day that friend might send Garette a Facebook message. Garette said, a friend might write to her first and say like, “Hey, what’s up? Are you ok?”

Eight of the nine participants described positive messages from female friends on Facebook as being supportive. Within this major theme, the participants described the two subthemes of support for (a) school-related activities and (b) personal matters. Along with their
use of Facebook as a system of social support, in the next section, the participants’ experiences with how this venue promotes their friendships.

**Theme Three: Participants Described Positive Messages Foster Their Friendships**

Seven of the nine participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends foster their friendships. The participants described this happens through messages on home screens, WCWs, birthday cards, pictures of pets, selfies, and TBHs. This major theme had two subthemes: (a) love and (b) other encouragement. This description focuses on these subthemes.

**Subtheme One: Love**

Four of the seven participants described positive Facebook messages from their female friends foster their friendships through messages of love. These messages of love were often sent for no special reason, sometimes on WCW, and made the participants feel special and “loved outside their family circle.”

**Ellie.** Ellie discussed the time she responded to her best friend, Jenna, with a message of encouragement. Jenna made Ellie’s message her home screen. Then Ellie talked about what Jenna posted. She said, “So, she, uh, posted on Facebook, ‘I love how, um, she can always make me feel happy and cheer me up!’” She continued, “It made me feel kind of special ….” and “Like loved outside of my family circle.”

**Quinn.** Furthermore, Quinn described positive Facebook messages from female friends that foster their friendships through messages of love. As mentioned, Quinn talked about what she and her friends normally do on WCW. They will post a picture of their best friend with a message that will usually say, “This is my best friend; I love her so much,” Quinn said.

**Addison.** As Quinn did, Addison interpreted positive messages from her female friends
that foster their friendships through messages of love. Addison commented on her friend, Brice’s, message that said she loved her “like a sister.” Addison added she “loves me for who I am.” Speaking of her friends, Addison also said, she wants to “stick with them” because she knows they “love me.”

**Garette.** Like the other participants, Garette identified positive messages from her female friends that foster their relationship and often mention love. Garette said her friends usually tell her “how much of a good friend I am, or that they love me or something.” As well as fostering their friendships through messages of love, as seen in the next section, the participants discussed Facebook messages related to other forms of encouragement.

**Subtheme Two: Other Encouragement**

Three of the seven participants described positive messages from their female friends on Facebook that foster their friendships through other encouragement. This encouragement often came on WCW, sometimes a message came when the participant felt upset, and TBHs from best friends were another type of encouragement.

**Jasper.** Jasper talked about how she and her female friends do WCW. Jasper said on WCW, “Um. Well, like, and then there’s this thing and all the girls will tell, oh, you’re my c - - (participant changes start of her thought) like if you have a crush you’ll say, ‘Oh, I like you too or whatever.’” Jasper said her best friend, Macy, has been posting this kind of WCW about her, and then she will reciprocate.

**Giovanna.** When she was upset, Giovanna’s friend Carly fostered their friendship through encouragement. Giovanna described, “And then another good one I got was like when, um, when I was like upset about something that happened in my family, my friend like she knew and she was just like, ‘I, I [sic] don’t want you to be sad anymore.’” When she talked about her
Facebook friends’ affirmations, Giovanna stated, “like it makes me feel that I know I have really great friends who care about me.”

**Shea.** When Shea talked about how her female friends foster their friendships on Facebook, she talked about TBHs, and encouragement. Although Shea couldn’t think of a specific TBH that she has received, Shea said if her best friend, Elizabeth, wants to do a TBH, she will “like it up.” “Liking it up” means she wants to receive a TBH from her best friend so she will hit the “like” button and her other friends may too. Shea said she “likes it up,” because she will “have to say something good.”

Seven of the nine participants’ reported their perceptions of positive Facebook messages from female friends foster their friendships. This happens through messages posted on home screens, WCWs, birthday cards, pictures of pets, selfies, and TBHs. These messages had two subthemes: (a) love and (b) other encouragement. This description focused on these subthemes. In the next section, adult involvement with negative Facebook messages will be discussed.

**Theme One: Participants Described Negative Messages Can Lead to Adult Involvement**

All nine participants described that negative Facebook messages from their female friends could result in adult involvement in their friendships. The adult involvement can occur in various ways. For instance, a parent may see his or her daughter’s negative message from a female friend and then, in some instances, he or she may have some level of contact with the friend. In some situations, the principal, a teacher, the guidance counselor, or the school deputy, usually a sheriff or police officer, may get involved with Facebook friendships. These two subthemes of (a) parents and (b) school personnel will be discussed in the next section.
Subtheme One: Parental Involvement in Friendships

Seven of the nine participants reported a parent getting involved with their Facebook friendship when they described negative messages from female friends. The participant may have received a negative message recently or in the past, therefore, the adult was now involved with the prevention of negative messages.

Ellie. As reported elsewhere, Ellie discussed a negative Facebook message from a chat with four other girls. One girl, Sage, said she would kill herself if Ellie did not stop talking to her and her friends at school. Ellie stated Sage then said she would blame this on her.

After she received this message, Ellie ended up telling her parents. Ellie and her mom tried e-mailing Sage to get her to stop. Sage did not believe that Ellie’s mom had been involved and she continued with the negativity. This resulted in Ellie’s mom calling Sage. Ellie said Sage started “crying” and “apologizing.” Although her mom had been involved in this incident, Ellie’s dad serves as the main figure in her life. Ellie stated, “he’s the one who wears the pants in my relationship with Facebook.”

Quinn. As for Quinn, her description is included as one of the participants who talked about adult involvement with her Facebook per the prevention of negative messages from female friends. Quinn gets Facebook friend requests from girls at school that she has known from their elementary school days. If Quinn looks at the friend’s profile, and she does not feel completely comfortable with the friend’s posts, she will call her mom for a review too.

With some people, Quinn’s mom can “can just kind of think back,” and “remember them.” Depending upon her mom’s memory and her evaluation of the girl’s profile, Quinn may or may not become Facebook friends with the person. Quinn said, “Yeah, and like if I tell her
that they’ve changed then she’ll trust my judgment.” Yet, Quinn noted, “But if I’m like they
really have not changed then she’ll tell me just to not really be their friend.”

**Jasper.** In the past Jasper said that she too has received negative messages from female
friends, but she is not friends with these people anymore. Jasper said, her mom “doesn’t like me
to act like other girls at my school so we’re very safe and she checks me like my messages, and
make sure [sic] we’re all good.” She also said, “cause like my mom says she trusts me and
everything she just wants to make sure I’m on the right path.”

**Giovanna.** When she referred to negative Facebook messages from female friends,
Giovanna said, “And if I get anything like bad, I literally the second I get it, I call my mom.”
Giovanna gave one example of when a female Facebook friend, Scarlett, sent her a mean
message. Scarlett insisted she had a better name than Giovanna. This incident has been
mentioned in several sections. When Giovanna received this message, she told her mom right
away and her mom stated, “she shouldn’t have sent this.”

**Tess.** When talking about her Facebook connections, Tess became another participant
who referred to her mom being concerned about negative messages and hence, her mom’s
preventive measures. Tess said in reference to her mom, “she’s super psyched about my friends
on Facebook.” When the researcher asked Tess what she meant by super psyched, she portrayed
a scenario. Tess said, “‘Uh, mom can I be friends with this person on Facebook?’(Changes voice
as if her mom is speaking) ‘No, I have to scroll through their entire feed’” (Participant laughs).

**Addison.** If Addison gets any negative messages from her female friends, she tells her
mom, too. She said, “and then my mom helps me work this out so that way, um, and they don’t
bother me again.” Addison’s mom normally tells her to “take a break” from Facebook.
Garette. Finally, when talking about negative messages from female friends, Garette said her mom has an awareness of her Facebook activities. Garette said, “she doesn’t want me to you know like friend whoever [sic] …” and she lets that be known. Along with parental involvement on Facebook, the next section shows how the participants described the actions of school personnel.

Subtheme Two: School Personnel

Four of the nine participants talked about negative Facebook messages and the involvement of school personnel. Two of the participants discussed they had received negative messages from female friends, whereby school personnel were contacted. The other two participants were included per their discussion of school Facebook policies.

Giovanna. In the last section, Giovanna described how, if needed, she gets her mom involved with Facebook. When Giovanna described the previously mentioned “threat” from Scarlett, she contacted her school principal. Giovanna reported that Scarlett was regularly involved with negative Facebook messages. After Giovanna’s report, the principal temporarily transferred Scarlett to the local alternative school.

Carlisle. When Carlisle talked about her perception of negative messages from female friends, she mentioned being bullied. When a girl, Grayson, bullied her at school, Carlisle said the principal got involved. She said:

Um, well, I’ve been like, I missed days of school before because this girl that I thought was my friend decided to talk bad about me and spread lots of rumors about me and told the principal a lot of false things about me.

When she finally went back to school, Carlisle said she had more problems:
And then one, the day that I came back I just went home again because like I was crying and stuff. I just, you know, it was just a bad day and this girl has cussed me out on Facebook, you know.

Moreover, Carlisle also discussed her school policy, and this information appeared relevant per adult involvement with Facebook and friends. Carlisle said, “if you’re cussing and saying a lot of inappropriate things,” students get turned into the school deputy or police. She said this has happened, “very rarely but they do.” Carlisle also mentioned, as stated earlier, at school if students look at their phones when they’re not supposed to they can have their phone taken away and their mom must pick it up. Also, the principals “have permission to look at anything on your Facebook.”

**Shea.** When Shea talked about negative Facebook messages from female friends, she stated “sometimes if one of your friends like shares a picture that’s like not theirs then sometimes that could be bad like it may have one curse word in it or somethin’,” but “I just scroll by it.” However, Shea also said this can be potentially problematic at her school, and she does know people who have been penalized for Facebook posts not in line with school policies. Shea discussed how this can easily happen through a Facebook connection with teachers. If anybody posts negative messages to their classmates, Shea mentioned the teachers can see it and the student gets in trouble.

**Garette.** Although Garette had not received any negative messages from her female friends on Facebook that required the involvement of school personnel, she described, as Shea did, that this happens. Garette said if a message revolves around school, it will get sent through the appropriate channels. Most of the time, she thinks school-related incidents will go to “guidance,” meaning the school counselor.
All nine participants discussed how their perception of negative Facebook messages from female friends can result in adult involvement. These adults may be their parents, the school principal, a teacher, a guidance counselor, and the school deputy, who may be a sheriff or a police officer. In the next section, the participants’ descriptions of how messages can lead to fights will be discussed.

**Theme Two: Participants Described Negative Messages Can Lead to Fights**

Seven of the nine participants discussed negative Facebook messages can lead to fights between female friends. A fight can be defined as either a verbal or physical altercation with another person (Letendre & Smith, 2011). Three of the seven participants had directly been in a Facebook fight. Among the three participants who were in fights with their female friends, the subtheme of “something said” emerged as the reason for the fight. Thus, this description focuses on this subtheme. The other four participants have been included per the importance of their information about fights on Facebook.

**Subtheme One: Something Said**

Three participants described negative messages from female friends. All three of the participants got into verbal fights over the messages. In one message, the girl talked about killing herself and blaming the participant. The other participant discussed that these negative girls have now become old friends. The other message got reported as a “threat.”

**Ellie.** Ellie called an incident she had on Facebook “a three-day ordeal.” During a Facebook chat with her female friends, a girl from Ellie’s school, Sage, messaged her and stated, “If you don’t stop talking to me, my friends, or anybody else in the school, then I will kill myself and I will blame it on you.” Ellie said she had to get her mom involved in this fight and Sage “started apologizing to my mom to the point that she was crying.”
**Jasper.** In her interview, Jasper talked about Facebook fights per negative messages. She spoke about people that she used to have as friends. Jasper stated a lot of them would post comments without names that would just cause “a big fight and commotion.”

**Giovanna.** Similar to the other participants, Giovanna discussed a Facebook fight with one of her female friends, Jane. The entire conversation can be found in the section on negative physical reactions to negative messages. The incident started when Jane posted a message, “I feel like people who are white are better than others.” Giovanna responded, “And I told her I said, ‘Well, you know what, I’m not fully white but you’re still my friend.’” And the friend said, “Well, not anymore,” wherein, Giovanna told Jane to get off her Facebook account. Along with Facebook fights with their friends, in the next section, the participants discussed potential fights and fights among others besides their friends.

**Subtheme Two: Potential Fights and Other Fights Among Friends**

These four participants have been included per the importance of their information about negative messages from female friends and potential fights, as well as other fights that occurred among the participants’ friends.

**Carlisle.** When the researcher and Carlisle were talking about Facebook and girls fighting, Carlisle said, “Oh yeah, girls fight.” When asked if girls get in a lot of Facebook fights, Carlisle spoke of one girl, Grayson, that has bothered her previously. She said:

> She has been in fights before; imagine that (Researcher laughs). And, she’s just very, she’s a violent person she’s always talking about like, ‘Yeah, I’m gonna beat her (spells it) a-s-s if she says this about me one more time,’ and like she’ll get like all up in somebody’s and like you know clap in their face (Carlisle laughs). (Changes voice) ‘I’m
gonna beat you up right now if you don’t stop talkin’ about me.’ You know, she’s kind of (whispers) ghetto.

Addison. Addison talked about negative messages and how they lead to fights mostly among her friends. In fact, Addison’s mom also told her, “If things get too negative, take a break.” Addison’s mom also mentioned, “Let them just be angry. Just take a break, but sometimes I like to see if they’re still fighting and somethin’ like they’re still fighting [sic].” Addison said that she usually finds herself in the middle of her friends’ Facebook fights. Some of Addison’s friends were even fighting on Facebook the night before her interview. Although she did not give the details, in her journal, Addison mentioned “another fight” with one of her female friends over a boy.

Tess. Tess mentioned her teenage cousin, Samantha. This incident has been mentioned in the section on inappropriate messages. When Samantha posted one of her “f-bomb” messages that also disrespected God, this led to a fight with her mom. Tess said, “But my mom, we actually had a little fight over me being friends with Samantha.”

Shea. When Shea talked about fights she said, “her friends get into arguing,” which she described as verbal fights. Shea said she sees these mostly on Instagram as opposed to Facebook, and now these two social media sites have been connected (“How Do I Link My Instagram Account to my Facebook Timeline?,” 2015). If a person connects his or her Facebook account to Instagram, when one posts on Instagram, the post can be seen via Facebook.

Seven of the nine participants talked about their friends fighting on Facebook. Four participants had received messages from a female friend that led to a fight. One participant got in a fight with her mom over a message from her female friend, and one participant was in the middle of a fight between her female and male friends. It seemed noteworthy that one
participant also sees her friends fighting on social media. In the next section, the participants
described how negative Facebook messages can end relationships.

**Theme Three: Participants Described Negative Messages Can End Friendships**

Seven of the nine participants discussed how negative Facebook messages from
female friends can end their relationships. Five of the participants actually ended their
friendships. Within the major theme of ending a Facebook friendship, one subtheme emerged.
Participants would “unfriend” their Facebook friend. Three of the five participants ended their
friendship by “unfriending,” one participant ended her friendship through a block, and three
participants will be discussed in the section, “Other Endings.” Streight (2012) stated,
“Unfriending someone is like divorcing a spouse, but still hanging around with them as pals”
(para. 7), hence, the two people can still see each other on Facebook, message each other, and
depending upon one’s privacy settings can still see each other’s activities. Blocking refers to
vanishing from each other’s Facebook experience (Streight, 2012). The next section discusses
the participants’ descriptions of “unfriending.”

**Subtheme One: Participants “Unfriend”**

Three of the five participants who described negative messages from female Facebook
friends put an end to their relationships through “unfriending.” Some of the reasons were
anonymous messages, drama, inappropriate messages, and immaturity.

**Jasper.** Jasper discussed how she has ended her friendships with the “drama” people.
She said, “I’m not best friends” with them anymore. Jasper gave an example of a drama-related
message. She said, these people would post “a lot of personal stuff” and then they would not put
names on the message.
To reiterate the definition of drama, Boyd (2014) said many teens see “social media as a key factor in the escalation of drama” (p. 138). Marwick and Boyd (2011) found that while adults may use the term drama in relationship to the behavior of bullies, teens often use the word as it relates to their subsequent scuffles, as well as their digital footprints. While Allen (2014) referred to drama as “conceptualized as social interactions characterized by overreaction, exaggeration, excessive emotionality, prolongation, inclusion of extraneous individuals, inflated importance, and temporary relevance” (p. 1), Marwick and Boyd (2011) said, “Drama is a performative set of actions distinct from bullying, gossip, and relational aggression, incorporating them but also operating quite distinctly” (p. 2).

As mentioned in the section on dramafied messages, typically drama can be found among girls and women and goes one step further. Marwick and Boyd likened drama to Goffman’s (1959) notion of an onstage or behind the curtain performance, with drama being “undertaken to involve an audience” (Marwick & Boyd, 2011, p. 11) and for “publicity” (p. 4). Just like in a stage performance by different companies, Marwick and Boyd also stated drama may have a little different meaning among social circles and schools. However, they found five components that make up drama, “(1) Drama is social and interpersonal, (2) Drama involves relational conflict, (3) Drama is reciprocal, (4) Drama is gendered, and (5) Drama is often performed for, in, and magnified by networked publics” (p. 5). Boyd (2014) defined networked publics as “the space constructed through networked technologies, and the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology and practice” (p. 8).

Along with the “drama” people, Jasper said she has ended her friendships with the people that post “inappropriate” messages. For instance, one girl at her school, Abigail, will post,
“Come at me bitch.” Jasper said, “And then when you see her in person, she’s all nice and sweet but I guess um, Facebook just makes it where you say anything you want too.”

Additionally, Jasper said she has also ended her friendships with some girls who “like” guys’ private parts on Facebook. She sees them “like” the “guy’s parts or whatever” on Instagram now that it has been connected to Facebook (“How Do I Link My Instagram Account to my Facebook Timeline?,” 2015). Jasper also ended her Facebook friendship with a girl on her cheerleading team because she posted a lot of pictures with high school guys.

**Tess.** Tess has also ended a female friendship on Facebook when her friend, Jules, posted a picture of herself in a “bikini.” Tess said, “Do I really need to, do I really need to [sic] see you posing in, in [sic] front of the mirror with a bikini on?” Tess said her mom saw the picture and told her to “unfriend” Jules, and Tess agreed.

**Carlisle.** When asked if she has ever ended any of her Facebook friendships, Carlisle said, “Oh, yes.” Carlisle did not talk about the specifics of why she has deleted her Facebook friendships, but she did say, “a lot of people, a lot of girls mostly are immature in my grade and they just like to say a lot of immature things.” She also mentioned, “Girls are mean.” As well as “unfriending,” the participants discussed per the next section how they block friends.

**Subtheme Two: Blocked Friends**

Along with and “unfriending,” one participant, Quinn, talked about blocking Facebook friends. Quinn discussed her process.

**Quinn.** Initially, Quinn stated she accepted some female friendships on Facebook because she wanted to get to know the girl. As time passed, Quinn said, “I don’t like what they’re posting” or “really like how they are in person, once I do get to know them better so then I’ll block them, so that they can’t know that I blocked them, but I don’t have to see their
newsfeed and all.” In addition to blocking friends because of negative messages, as seen in the next section, the participants described other negative endings to relationships.

**Subtheme Three: Other Endings**

Along with “unfriending,” or blocking a friend, three of the participants described other endings or what might be called, almost endings, to their Facebook friendships. One participant, Giovanna, actually ended her friendship. Meanwhile, Shea, discussed the reasons why she would end a Facebook friendship, and Garette, talked about how she almost ended one.

**Giovanna.** When Giovanna discussed her negative Facebook messages from female friends, she mentioned one of her “old friends.” Giovanna and her friend got into a fight on Facebook when her friend, Jane, posted a message that she felt “white people are better than others.” This situation has been mentioned in the section on physical reactions. When Giovanna told Jane, “Well, you know what, I’m not fully white, but you’re still my friend.” This message ended their Facebook friendship. Giovanna said she told Jane, “Ok. You want to say that, then get off my Facebook page.” Giovanna did not make the method of ending the friendship known whether through “unfriending,” or “blocking.”

**Shea.** When asked if she would ever end a Facebook friendship and if she has ever done so, Shea said she has never ended one but would. When asked further about messages that would cause her to end a Facebook friendship, Shea stated, “Um, just like every day like cursing or saying something bad about someone.” Although Shea has seen one or two curse words on her female friends messages, she said, “I hear it all the time,” and just “kind of let it go.” However, if the friend started to do this regularly Shea said, she would “unfriend” that person.

**Garette.** When Garrett talked about her negative messages, she told of a time when she considered ending her friendships with some girls from school. This situation has been
mentioned with Garette’s full response noted here. When two of Garette’s friends, Sinclair and Sarah, were in a chat room, and they said something she felt, “wasn’t very nice” Garette described what she did. She said:

I don’t think I said anything or did anything, and I think I just maybe stayed away from them for like a day or two so I could like get my bearings that way I could figure out what to do like to go back to being friends or yeah.

After thinking, Garette decided to let the incident go and remain friends.

**Research Question Three Summary**

This section discussed the findings for Research Question Three, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?” Regarding positive messages, the participants found they affirmed, supported, and fostered their friendships. The participants described negative messages can often lead to adult involvement, fights, and in some cases, may even end their relationships.

**Summary**

This chapter showed the themes and subthemes as related to the three research questions:

**RQ 1.** How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?

**RQ 2.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?

**RQ 3.** How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?

The next chapter discusses these findings, summarizes the study, and offers some conclusions as well as recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

This chapter will consist of eight sections: (a) summary of the findings; (b) discussion, with the findings talked about in terms of Gilligan’s theory of moral development (Gilligan, 1982) and other relevant literature to include conclusions; (c) how this study adds to the literature; (d) additional conclusions; (e) implications; (f) delimitations and limitations; (h) recommendations for future research; and (i) summary.

Summary of the Findings

The purpose of this hermeneutical phenomenological study was to further the understanding of self-esteem as related to middle school girls and social media, specifically, Facebook. The following research questions have guided this research:

RQ 1. How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?

RQ 2. How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?

RQ 3. How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?

To begin the study, nine participants were given the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) and the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H). After they completed the descriptive survey (see Appendix G) and RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) each participant then completed an approximately one-hour semi-structured in-person interview grounded in the theoretical framework of Gilligan (1982). Gilligan’s (1982) theory of moral development posits that girls see the world differently than the male-centric view offered by traditional ethics
(Kohlberg, 1958; Piaget, 1932), whereas women typically have what might be called a lesser than view. Herein, this study’s research questions gave opportunity for female voices to include the “how and why” they relate to their world as they do. Most importantly, the participants had an opportunity to play a role in issues that impact them.

After her interview, each participant received a spiral journal to take home and record some of her positive and negative Facebook messages from her female friends. Four to six weeks later, each participant returned for a second meeting and member check, whereby she read her interview transcripts, noted any changes, and returned her journal. Each participant then received her complimentary gift basket of school supplies.

Guided by the aforementioned research questions, Chapter Four revealed the findings from the descriptive survey (see Appendix G), RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H), the semi-structured interviews, the member checks, and the journals to include site artifacts. This process discovered the following themes.

Research Question One

Pertaining to Research Question One, “How do middle school girls describe their experiences with Facebook messages they receive from female friends?” the following major themes and subthemes were found.

Positive messages. The participants described positive meaning regarding Facebook messages from their female friends according to three major themes, (a) catching up with the news, (b) happy messages, and (c) funny messages. Under the major theme of catching up with the news, four subthemes emerged, (a) updates on what friends and family might be doing, (b) organization and management of extracurricular activities, (c) to share and view pictures, and (d) just to see what might be happening on Facebook. The second major theme of happy
messages had two subthemes, (a) bright days and (b) bad days. The participants described bad days in general and as family problems. Like the second major theme, the third major theme of funny messages had two subthemes (a) funny messages as being “funny but…” meaning they have a secondary meaning or effect and funny messages as a (b) “a friend thing.”

**Negative messages.** The participants described negative meaning from negative messages from their female friends within three major themes (a) inappropriate messages, (b) mean messages, and (c) dramafied messages. Within the major theme of inappropriate messages, three subthemes emerged (a) bullying/cyberbullying, (b) boys, and (c) bad choices.

In the second major theme of mean messages, the participants used the words “harsh,” “rude,” and “not nice” in their descriptions, and these words were included. Within the third major theme of dramafied messages, the one subtheme of avoidance emerged. Either the participants intentionally avoided the individual causing the drama, or the person causing the drama got removed from the situation meaning school. Thus, the dramatic individual was avoided per one’s absence.

**Research Question Two**

For purposes of this study, in respect to Research Question Two, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends impact, if at all, their self-esteem?” one positive and one negative major theme has been presented for each dimension.

**Physical dimension.** Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive physical reactions, while negative messages can have a negative effect per negative physical reactions.

**Emotional dimension.** Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive affect, while negative messages can have a negative effect per negative affect.
Social dimension. Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive adult effects, while negative messages can have a positive effect per positive adult effects.

Intellectual or mental dimension. Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive academic effects, while positive and negative messages can have a negative effect per negative academic-related effects.

Spiritual dimension. Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive affect, while negative messages can have a negative effect per negative affect.

Research Question Three

Pertaining to Research Question Three, “How do participants' perceptions of positive and negative messages from female friends impact, if at all, their friendships?” the following major themes and subthemes were described by the participants.

Positive messages. The participants described positive messages from female friends play a role in their friendships under three major themes: (a) affirmation of their friendships, (b) support of their friendships, and the (c) fostering of their friendships. Within the major theme of affirmation of their friendships, three subthemes emerged: (a) best friends, (b) great friends, (c) good friends, and one participant noted (d) sister-like friends. The second theme of support had two subthemes, (a) school-related activities and (b) personal matters. Regarding the third theme of positive messages from female friends fostering their friendships, the participants discussed two subthemes, (a) love and (b) other encouragement.

Negative messages. The participants described negative messages from female friends play a role in their friendship under three major themes and can (a) lead to adult involvement, (b) lead to fights, and (c) end friendships. Among the major theme of adult involvement, two subthemes emerged: (a) parents and (b) school personnel. As for the major theme of fights, one
subtheme emerged, which was that friend said something. Within the major theme of ending a friendship, one subtheme emerged, whereby, participants “unfriend,” while one participant ended her friendship through a “block,” and other participants were included in “Other Endings.”

**Discussion**

This section (a) revisits the theoretical perspective, (b) discusses how this study aligns with previous research, and (c) examines how this study adds to the current literature.

**Gilligan’s Theory of Moral Development Revisited**

Gilligan’s theory of moral development (Gilligan 1982) underpinned this study because of its relationship to girls, voice, and social connections. To reiterate Gilligan’s view, she found females speak in a different voice than men. Gilligan discovered women perceive the world through an “ethic of care” (p. 174), and the perspective of their responsibilities to others, while men see with an “ethic of justice” (p. 174), thus, being concerned with the rights of the individual. With most females, Gilligan found they find value in their attachments, whereas men typically prefer the establishment of “separateness” (p. 12). Among the differences, between females and males, Gilligan stated “to see the integrity of two disparate modes of experience that are in the end connected” (p. 174).

Since Gilligan’s (1982) original revelation and the start of a revolution (Graham, 2012), women’s studies departments began to form to better understand gender similarities and differences. As mentioned in the literature review, within these discussions, two prominent frameworks to view women’s studies came to light. Herein, the Ophelia discourse or “girls at risk” (Gilligan 1982; Pipher, 1994) views girls as “passive, fragile and vulnerable” (Gonick, 2006, p. 2). The second, or Girl Power, model (Hesford, 1999; Riordan, 2001) sees girls as “assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity” (Dean & Laidler,
In alignment with Gilligan’s (1982) theory, the research showed that girls indeed “tend to be the heaviest users of social media sites” (Madden et al., 2013, para. 8). As seen in this study, girls use Facebook for a web of connections, and they have what might be called a circle of attachment. Herein, Facebook can be likened to the hub of a wheel with spokes called parents, friends, other family, school, activities, and interests (see Figure 5).

![Facebook wheel/circle of attachment](image)

**Figure 5.** Facebook wheel/circle of attachment.

However, and perhaps in some sense contrary to Gilligan’s (1982) view where she found girls’ voices were not studied or recognizable, and more in line with the Girl Power perspective (Hesford, 1999; Riordan, 2001), Facebook gives females an opportunity for voice with a relatively free space to speak, as well as a chance to show face or self-present (Goffman, 1959; Seidman, 2013). Again, support for Gilligan (1982) that girls want to connect on a multitude of levels. Additionally, this suggests reinforcement for the Girl Power concept of girls actively taking the stage not just with their voice but their instruments too (Hesford, 1999; Riordan, 2001). This aligns with Dean and Laidler’s (2013) findings of Facebook being a combination of these two frameworks and perhaps a bridge.

Specifically, Gilligan’s (1982) care ethics can be seen in the descriptions, especially those
related to the third research question with regard to the role Facebook plays in the participants’ friendships. The participants described their positive messages from female friends under three major themes: (a) affirmation of their friendships, (b) support of their friendships, and the (c) fostering of their friendships. Thus, care ethics serves as the focal point of the participants’ female friendships. Along these lines, care was exhibited through several descriptions where the participants stated they did not want to “hurt” anybody or be “hurt.” Therefore, along with wanting to receive care, the participants described their desire to give or care back, and thereby creating a reciprocal relationship. Even when they were mistreated, in most instances, the participants took a positive or caring action to positively manage or resolve a disagreement or fight when they had received a negative message from a female friend.

With care as the focal point of their female friendships, this reinforces Gilligan’s (1982) research regarding the value women place on their attachments. In her first work, Gilligan also studied adolescent girls. Thus, this study continues Gilligan’s view that even with changes in how girls transmit information, in this case through technology, they value “interdependence” (p. 17) exhibited by “love and care” (p. 17).

Additionally, as reflected in their descriptions of not wanting to be “hurt” by somebody, the participants reflected self-compassion. Self-compassion has also been suggested to benefit adolescents and serve as a mediator of emotional well-being, since adolescents can often be hard on themselves (Bluth & Blanton, 2014). Based on an “ethic of care” (Gilligan, 1982, p. 174), Wiklund-Gustin and Wagner (2013) found in their study of clinical nursing teachers “that the development of a compassionate self and the ability to be sensitive, nonjudgmental and respectful towards oneself contributes to a compassionate approach towards others” (p. 175). Therefore, self-compassion can be likened to a tool of empowerment, and thus, related to the Girl
In another display of positive attachment and self-compassion, the participants had a connection with a parent or other adult that they could ask for assistance with their Facebook if needed. Thus, in Girl Power (Hesford, 1999; Riordan, 2001) fashion, they took control of their Facebook and in a sense their life, by asking for help when needed and/or getting rid of bad influences. For example, the situation where Giovanna confronted Scarlett at school about their online relationship, when she could not resolve the situation properly on her own, she took another step and reported her to the principal. The principal remedied the situation. Giovanna reported this “made me feel better ‘cause I know like that I have power now.”

A combination of the Ophelia view (Gilligan, 1982; Pipher, 1994) and the Girl Power model (Hesford, 1999; Riordan, 2001) found that Facebook reinforces adolescent girls’ stage of development (Pipher, 1994) offline, whereby they usually want and need their friends but also aspire the freedom to explore their identity. Moreover, the participants’ parents, along with other adults, were actively involved, again, in a mirror of their offline stage of development (Pipher, 1994), while at the same time, the participants were learning on their own to positively self-construct and shape their profiles, thereby, achieving a sense of empowerment.

This relationship between parent and child also exhibited a level of trust in that the child trusted her parent to ask for help and the parent trusted one’s child to take or learn to take positive actions on Facebook as she developed her self-presentation skills. Furthermore, this trust could be seen in some of the participants’ descriptions. For example, one participant stated, she and her mom are “very safe,” and her mom wants to “just make sure I’m on the right path.”

While this section revisited some of the findings and the theoretical perspective, the next part includes triangulation as related to the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores and
the major themes to include journals and site artifacts as related to each research question and how they connect with the literature to include insights and understanding.

**Triangulation**

In this study, triangulation included: (a) RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores, (b) interviews/member checks, and (c) journals to include site artifacts. Mathison (1988) emphasized the importance of triangulation as meaning “multiple methods, data sources, and researchers to enhance the validity of research findings” (p. 13). Hence, triangulation was used to gain a conceptual and comprehensive perspective (Meijer, Verloop, & Beijaard, 2001).

**Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale Scores**

At the beginning of their initial interview, each participant took the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) for a self-reported baseline score (see Table 2). As noted, self-reported scores were normal or above (see Table 2) and for purposes of this research, this was considered high self-esteem as opposed to low self-esteem. Although self-reports can be considered, at times, a limitation due to bias (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002), in this study, the researcher wanted to hear the participants’ voices. To elaborate upon the importance of a baseline score, one’s self-esteem can play a role in a person’s interpretations. Herein, self-esteem can be referred to as a “sociometer” (Leary et al., 1995, p. 519) or “interpersonal monitor” (p. 518).

The sociometer model (Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary et al., 1995) can be likened to a gas tank with an indicator (self-esteem) and the E (empty), or exclusion, and the F (full), or inclusion. As people do not want their gas tank to hit E (empty), they do not want to get socially excluded. Thus, as Leary et al. (1995) found they behave in a way to “move the indicator back toward F (full)” (p. 520). Hence, protection, like a buffer or a “system of monitoring” (p. 519), whereby self-esteem alerts “the individual to changes in his or her inclusionary status.
(particularly decrements in social acceptance), and it must motivate behavior to restore his or her status when threatened” (pp. 519-520).

Thus, within the sociometer model (Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary et al., 1995; see Figure 6), people with high self-esteem, as in this study (normal to high measure as opposed to low, see Table 2), the measure provides what might be called a stronger gauge of “personal adjustment” (p. 518 ) and “promotes positive affect” (p. 518). Therefore, a strong self-esteem gauge acts as buffer “against stress and other negative emotions” (p. 518) that those with a weakened indicator or low self-esteem do not possess. Herein, those with low self-esteem can and do perceive positive (Marigold, Cavallo, Homes, & Wood, 2014) and negative messages as negative. Because this study had participants with high self-esteem, it appears positive messages were interpreted positively and negative messages were described negatively.

Figure 6. Sociometer model (Leary & Downs, 1995; Leary et al., 1995) and Facebook. Graphic Eileen E Hegel ©2015.
From the findings, the triangulation process of the (a) RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores (see Table 2), (b) interviews/member checks, and (c) journals to include site artifacts provided a conceptual and comprehensive perspective (Meijer et al., 2001) of positive and negative messages from female friends and the multi-dimensional effect on self-esteem. The baseline RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores (see Table 2) gave an understanding of each participant’s self-esteem perspective at the beginning of the study. To recall, normal to high scores were considered high self-esteem as opposed to low.

Regarding the self-esteem scores as related to the perspective of each participant, this played a role in coding. If any participant had self-reported low self-esteem, this would need consideration, particularly if a number of positive messages were interpreted as negative.

Finally, journal messages and site artifacts supported the findings of positive messages being interpreted as positive and negative messages as negative. Therefore, the triangulation process gave a conceptually-based and comprehensive view (Meijer et al., 2001).

Research Question One Major Themes

Positive messages. The participants described positive meaning regarding Facebook messages from their female friends according to three major themes: (a) catching up with the news, (b) happy messages, and (c) funny messages.

Catching up with the news. In another bridge, the theme catching up with the news, links traditional communication and Facebook. Similar to letter writing, the participants reported catching up with the news from their female friends through private messages, Facebook connections for activity management and organization which can be likened to a date book/calendar, listening to music such as links to YouTube.com as one would on the radio or music television, reading inspirational and motivational stories or quotations similarly to what
one might see in a newspaper or a magazine, and “just to get on Facebook” as if to flip on the TV (see Figure 7).

Once again, care ethics (Gilligan, 1982) are at play per middle school girls and their desire for connection. As Jasper in this study expressed, “I want to be in touch with everything so I know what everything is.” This also coincides with O'Keefe et al.’s (2011) view that “social media sites allow teens to accomplish online many of the tasks that are important to them offline” (p. 801) and can open windows of opportunity. Thus, while the media often portrays that teens go online to behave irresponsibly (Boyd, 2014; Broderick, 2013), the participants were using and learning to use Facebook in responsible ways to accentuate their life.

![Figure 7. Traditional Media and Facebook Links.](image)
**Happy messages.** Along with messages, whereby middle school girls can catch up with the news, the participants also described positive meaning to messages from their female friends that made them happy. Civitici and Civitici (2009) noted the importance of a “happy childhood” (p. 954) for “emotional and social development and possession of a positive power that they can utilize in their adult years” (p. 954). As mentioned in Chapter 4, the previous research of Baumeister et al. (2003) stated, “self-esteem has a strong relation to happiness. Although the research has not clearly established causation, we are persuaded that high self-esteem does lead to greater happiness” (p. 1).

Furthermore, much of the media reports have surrounded unhappy situations taking place at schools such as shootings (Leary, Kowalski, Smith, & Phillips, 2003; Muschert, 2012) or teacher misbehaviors (Page, 2013), and this, of course, filters into families and can instill fear (Burns & Crawford, 1999). Although to some extent these school-shooting experiences may have been sensationalized (Burns & Crawford, 1999; Muschert, 2012), adolescents often do not have a developed sense of media literacy, therefore, the potential for unhealthy anxiety. Thus, the importance of girls being able to find happiness as related to school relationships not only for their education, but also for their short-term as well as long-term health and well-being should not be underestimated (Baumeister et al., 2003; “Social Determinants of Health,” 2014).

**Funny messages.** The participants also described positive meaning to funny Facebook messages from female friends, which supported the existing literature that humor plays “an important role in peer interaction” (Sanford & Eder, 1984, p. 242). Moreover, friendships serve as a valuable part of the adolescent development process and their “quality and stability” (Keefe & Berndt, 1996, p. 123) can have an affect on self-esteem. Furthermore, the positive effect of funny messages, which may include a smile (Duchenne, trans. 1990; Frank & Ekman, 1996),
laughter (Mora-Ripoli, 2010), or happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003), among other physical reactions or positive emotions can benefit self-esteem and the overall psychological well-being of adolescents (Fredrickson, 1997).

Specific to educators, the use of humor should indeed be considered as a teaching tool whether in the classroom or in girl-centered organizations. Typically, in middle school as girls begin to experiment with make-up and go through the maturing process (Erikson, 1950, 1968; Warrington & Younger, 2011), many may seem more serious and mature in their approach than males. In fact, several of the participants in this study looked older than their age and mentioned they were stressed by their exams. Therefore, per outward appearances, educators can easily be misled that girls may not react or engage in the appreciation of humor. Moreover, having too much fun in the classroom for some educators can seem like forbidden fruit. However, as noted by this theme of funny messages, adolescent girls respond to and actively engage in almost a daily dose of humor that can make a classroom creative and captivating. Herein, the participants often used traditional forms of media such as photographs and comics to coincide with technology. Similarly, one educational strategy would be for educators to find ways to bridge the old and the new per the subjects that they teach.

**Negative messages.** The participants described negative meaning from negative messages from their female friends within three major themes: (a) inappropriate messages, (b) mean messages, and (c) dramafied messages.

**Inappropriate messages.** Among their negative messages from female friends, the participants described negative meaning to inappropriate messages. Within the major theme of inappropriate messages, the major subtheme was cyberbullying. Girls more than boys have reported they have been cyberbullied (Lenhart, 2007). The negative effects of cyberbullying has
been a global topic the past few years particularly due to adolescent suicides (Giammona, 2013; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Stanglin & Welch, 2013). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention called youth suicide a “public health problem” (“Youth Suicide,” n.d., para. 1).

In 2013, Facebook added a “Put a Stop to Bullying” (“Put a Stop to Bullying,” 2015) section on their site for parents, teens, and educators (Risen, 2013). In this study, five of the participants talked about cyberbullying, and three of them had been cyberbullied. Related to self-esteem, the studies on cyberbullying have shown that both the victim and offenders have significantly lower self-esteem than those who have not been cyberbullied (Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). While none of the participants in this study self-reported low self-esteem, they still reported being bullied and cyberbullied. Moreover, the participants appeared to have a heightened awareness about bullying and cyberbullying as they seemed knowledgeable about the subject and were not afraid to make reports about possible incidents, such as in the case of Giovanna who reported a Facebook “threat.” This may be due to the attention given over the past few years to the topic (Gottfried, 2012; Kite et al., 2010; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010).

**Mean messages.** Another major theme was mean messages. Depending upon the description of the mean message, it may have been classified as cyberbullying and, as noted, included under inappropriate messages. Madden (2013) reported as the participants did, that although they have had an overall positive Facebook experience, adolescents use an array of negative words to describe how participants behave online. As related to mean messages, the participants also used “harsh,” “rude,” and “not nice.”

Interestingly, in their descriptions of mean messages, the participants seemed to separate them from bullying or cyberbullying, while they may have fit the definitions either of this study
(“Cyberbullying,” 2014) or elsewhere (Gottfried, 2012; Kite et al., 2010; O’Keefe et al., 2011; Patchin & Hinduja, 2010). In other words, when asked to further discuss mean messages, the participants talked about “rates” or “not nice” messages that were coming from their female friends rather than bullying or cyberbullying. One participant even stated, “Girls are mean.” Thus, the participants gave the impression that they would accept a certain level of meanness from their friends because girls act that way.

To revisit Bandura and Social Learning Theory (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961), in one of his experiments, whereby the participants were subjected to aggressive and non-aggressive models, subjects “reproduced a good deal of physical and verbal aggressive behavior resembling that of the models,” (p. 577), while those in the nonaggressive and control groups did not. Most importantly, there exits a plethora of negative outcomes, both short-term and long-term, for the individuals associated with sending and receiving mean messages whether in person or online. For instance, high levels of aggression in the classroom can result in poor relationships with students and teachers; therefore, friendships as well as academic achievement can be stifled (Ladd & Burgess, 2001). Moreover, a child who may not be doing well at school may bring these problems home. Specifically, the present conflicts in school, friendships, self-esteem, and psychological health, can also impact the same areas in the future as well career per lack of education, and therefore, one’s trajectory for life (“Social Determinants of Health,” 2014).

**Dramafied messages.** Similar to Boyd’s (2014) discussions with older adults, many teenagers see “social media as a key factor in the escalation of drama” (p. 138). The participants in this study also discussed drama as a major theme and associated the word negatively. Allen (2014) referred to drama as “stirring the pot” (p. 16) or “baiting” (p. 16). Stirring the pot “seems to mean that individuals can engage in behaviors, which prolong, resurrect, or reignite an
incident of drama” (Allen, 2014, p. 16) while “baiting” (p. 16) means “get them to engage” (p. 16). Boyd said the teenagers she met with had various reasons for starting “drama” such as “when bored” (p. 138), to relieve “homework tedium” (p. 138), to test friendships, to understand “the dynamics of popularity and status” (p. 138), and to achieve “attention” (p. 138).

In this study, the participants’ examples of drama included (a) a girl who “posted a photo of her with a knife in her hand and her arm like all cut up and everything. And then she sent a video to like everybody friends [sic] with her on Facebook of her trying to kill herself,” (b) “scantily clad selfies and the high school boys were fighting over them, and (c) the “school drama queen,” that said, “I’m gonna beat you up right now if you don’t stop talkin’ about me.” Although participants recognized the drama, they did not engage and chose to “avoid” the scenario. In one instance, the girl causing drama got temporarily sent to an alternative school; hence, others were able to avoid her for a while.

Further data of this study aligned with Lenhart et al.’s (2011) findings of Facebook; whereby the participants reported an intersection of Facebook drama, school drama, and drama such as physical fights in the streets. Madden et al. (2013) found that teens have been leaving Facebook because of the stress of drama. Related to stress, Youngs, Rathge, Mullis, and Mullis (1990) found in their study of North Dakota adolescents that stressful events negatively impacted their self-esteem.

Although teens may be leaving Facebook because of the stress of drama (Madden et al.), the participants in this study did not leave for several reasons. To begin with, as Boyd (2014) found, a few of the participants seemed to think that much of the Facebook drama revolved around getting attention. As one participant stated in regard to a suicide message, “But some people might be serious, but I think it’s mostly for attention ‘cause no one’s killed
themselves.” While some participants may consider a difference between attention-getting behavior and a real cry for help, most health professionals would consider falsely posting about suicide an indicator of an unhealthy want for attention (P. Brandon, personal communication, February 3, 2015; Freedenthal, 2013), therefore, it is usually a person in need of assistance.

Furthermore, this attention-getting behavior conjures the image of the childhood fable of Aesop, *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* (Aesop, 2014), whom after two false alarms to his villagers regarding a wolf attacking his sheep, when he had a real call, no one came to the rescue. Herein, children have written negative messages in their journals as well as online and then taken the actions such as school shootings (Bernstein, 2014) and suicides (Malm 2014). Therefore, the conversation must be continued that reports for this kind of behavior should err on the side of safety.

On a promising note, the participants were able to self-reflect on the positive and negative influences of Facebook, and how it either added or took away from their priorities and goals. For instance, Garette, recognized Facebook caused her to lose study and sleep time so she made adjustments for less online activity. Meanwhile, Quinn wanted to keep her Facebook inspirational and motivational. She stated, “I made it positive for myself.”

**Research Question Two Major Themes**

**Physical dimension.** Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive physical reactions and negative messages can have a negative effect per negative physical reactions. In this study, positive and negative physical reactions were defined as those words and actions that usually get associated with positive and negative emotions (Watson & Clark, 1994; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009) and the concepts of positivity and negativity (Fredrickson, 2001, 2009). Herein, the results aligned with Fredrickson’s (2001) notion of positivity, per her “broaden and build theory”
(p. 219) wherein, “positivity and negativity flow through us, the scope of our awareness blooms and retracts accordingly” (Fredrickson, 2009, p. 55). Additionally, positive and negative physical reactions should be of particular interest to educators, as they can be indicators of an adolescent’s self-esteem or overall well-being which can interrupt the educational process.

Not only do positive and negative physical reactions potentially serve as indicators of an adolescent’s self-esteem or overall well-being (Baumeister et al., 2003; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009), but individual behaviors of a student or students, can also have short-term and long-term effects in the classroom and campus climate. For instance, happy students usually make for a more pleasant classroom and campus experience. Meanwhile, low self-esteem can foster “delinquent behaviors” (Rosenberg, Schooler, & Schoenbach, 1986).

In an examination of the positive physical reactions of Facebook messages from female friends, one of the most prominent physical reactions described was laughter. This ties into Research Question One where participants described positive meaning to funny messages from their female friends. Laughter among the participants was not only experienced when they received intentionally funny messages, but they were also able to laugh at some of what they seemed to consider the inane or insane messages that adolescent girls post. For example, Jasper expressed her laughter at a message that stated, “I’m eating pizza now my butt’s spreading.” Laughter serves as an important tool for adolescent girls to enhance their daily living as related to some of the stress of adolescence, to benefit their classrooms and campuses, and laughter promotes health, self-esteem, and happiness (Baumeister et al., 2003, p. 1).

In contrast, in studies on middle school children “peer rejection was a powerful predictor of aggression” (Leary et al., p. 203). Aggression in the classroom and on campus can lead to not only to problems such as fear, but also as mentioned, unhealthy anxieties among students,
teachers, and other staff, therefore, leading to an unsafe environment. Herein, the importance of awareness regarding the positive and negative physical reactions of adolescents, particularly as related to any changes in behavior.

**Emotional dimension.** Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive affect and negative messages can have a negative effect per negative affect. Similar to the physical dimension, the emotional dimension also aligned with Fredrickson’s (2001) “broaden and build theory” (p. 219) which “posits that experiences of positive emotions broaden people's momentary thought action repertoires, which in turn serves to build their enduring personal resources, ranging from physical and intellectual resources to social and psychological resources” (p. 218). This study found that positive messages from female friends had a positive effect and like in the physical dimension, negative messages had a negative effect. Accordingly, these emotions can have self-esteem effects and/or be indicators of an adolescent’s overall well-being (Baumeister et al., 2003; Fredrickson, 2001, 2009).

As noted in Chapter Four, these positive and negative emotions can also play a role in the classroom and on the campus. For instance, Reschly et al. (2008) found students with more positive emotions had a more positive classroom experience per classmates, teachers, and engagement. Conversely, negative emotions can impede one’s classroom experience. For instance, and also mentioned in Chapter Four, eating disorders can distract a student for a number of reasons such as a preoccupation with food, a need to go to the bathroom, and a low-self-esteem (Flament et al., 2012).

For parents and other educators, emotional engagement with middle school students in the classroom and on campus serves as an important part of positive multi-dimensional effect (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976) and holistic learning (Miller, 1997), particularly at this middle
school juncture where girls seem to have a more difficult time than boys (Block & Robins, 1993). With the many responsibilities of parents and educators, as well as the lack of face-to-face communication per technology, emotional engagement must not be lost. Thus, emotional engagement should be considered from a balance of in-person and technological communication.

As an added note, in the emotional dimension, the participants talked particularly about their dislike of ratings and TBHs. Ratings and TBHs, give the receiver a numerical score on a scale of one to ten of certain qualities, many of which can be outward appearance-related. The TBHs, or to be honests, let the participants know that a truthful message will be on the way.

In their descriptions, the participants described an apparent roller coaster ride regarding rates and TBHs; one that they prefer not to go on. The reasons were that they felt like comparing and contrasting girls to one another, as one participant described, “throws” some girls in the “gutter.” Additionally, when one’s expectations are not met, as another participant described, “‘Oh, I’m gonna get a perfect ten,’ then they give you a four you’re like ‘Oh, oh, I’m not pretty. I’m not beautiful.’” While social comparison (Festinger, 1954) plays a huge part of their adolescent journey, it was interesting to note that the girls did not want to participate in this sort of group or self-evaluation on Facebook.

Moreover, one participant talked about TBHs as her friends deciding to be honest, which makes one wonder whether or not they were before. As described by the participants, rates and TBHs have too many negative repercussions, specifically, hurting others and being hurt. Therefore, more research can be done regarding rates and TBHs as related to self-esteem.

**Social dimension.** Positive messages can have a positive effect on self-esteem per positive adult effects, and negative messages can have a positive effect on self-esteem per positive adult effects. In this study, the girls and their parent who oversaw their Facebook
activity had a reciprocal relationship for understanding appropriate and inappropriate online behavior. Moreover, the girls seemed to go through a learning process of discovering what they and their parent(s) considered appropriate and inappropriate online behavior. For appropriate behavior, at times, the parent overseeing Facebook would guide the girl, while other times the girl would ask her parent for direction(s). This aligned with the findings of Lenhart et al. (2011) who said “parents are the most often cited source of advice and the biggest influence on teens’ understanding of appropriate and inappropriate digital behavior” (p. 65). Parents also serve as a key in adolescent self-esteem (Gecas & Schwalbe, 1986; DeSisto et al., 2010).

Furthermore, while the participants were also building their Facebook, they were building relationships with their parent(s), therefore, they were also engaging in the social dimension and developing the skill of teamwork. Working as a team serves as an important ability for classroom activity as well as in establishing a family or having a career. In fact, “teamwork is spilling out across organizational and national boundaries” (West, 2012, p. 16), as teamwork “boosts quality, reduce costs, and ensure continuous improvement” (p. 16). Therefore, while technology often gives the appearance of more individualistic behavior and consumption with self, one must not overlook some of the other positive skills that may be developed through positive use.

**Intellectual or mental dimension.** Positive messages have a positive effect per positive academic effects while positive and negative messages can have a negative effect per negative academic-related effects. Five participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends as providing academic support. One of the five participants discussed her female friends as being some of her teachers. The term “educational networking” (Purcell, 2012, p. 13) has been used to describe social networking for educational purposes. The participants shared
information through Facebook regarding homework with their female friends or missed work if someone did not attend school. This combination of positive social connection and academic collaboration can have an overall positive effect, as both of these factors “tend to increase in salience during the middle school period” (Anderman, 2003, p. 6).

Socially, teacher engagement on Facebook through simple messages, calendar updates, or homework reminders ties the emotional engagement mentioned in the emotional dimension in with the intellectual or mental dimension. Meanwhile, the participants expressed appreciation about these added educational benefits of Facebook. Again, this should encourage educators to learn the language of digital citizens, as simple but meaningful communication can make a difference in their educational and overall experience.

Regarding peer groups and social connectiveness, Warrington and Younger (2011) referred to acceptance as being “a vital aspect of school life for many students” (p. 153). Specific to learning and Facebook, Fewkes and McCabe (2012) found secondary students in Canada were using Facebook to collaborate, get help, to discuss homework, and to organize oneself. Ahmed, Minnaert, van der Werf, and Kuyper (2010) found adolescents who perceived support from their “parents, peers, and/or teachers” (p. 36) do better academically. Moreover, Mann (2013) found that that middle school girls at-risk for failure benefitted from the gender-specific program, Project Challenge, which “suggests girls are most likely to benefit from activities related to self-confidence, self-esteem, and identity in a context high in perceived social support and mattering” (para. 73).

Typically, in American education and culture, per what Gilligan (1982) would call the traditional male thought and “women’s moral weakness” (p. 16), individualism and separation have a higher value than community. However, as seen in this study and in alignment with
Gilligan’s (1982) theory, the participants found intellectual or mental value via their technological connections.

Just two participants discussed Facebook activity as interfering with their life, which can also have academic effects. One participant discussed avoidance of homework, while the other talked about wasting time and lack of sleep, which also impacted her academics. All of these factors can cause extra stress and adolescent stress, and, as mentioned, can negatively impact adolescent self-esteem and well being (Youngs et al., 1990).

For instance, in addition to academic effect, a lack of sleep in adolescents can cause an array of public health issues such as depression (Roberts & Duong, 2014) and automobile accidents (Danner & Phillips, 2008). The American Academy of Pediatrics has even suggested that schools start later so that children have more sleep time because of the negative outcomes to include academic performance (“Let Them Sleep: AAP Recommends Delaying Start Times of Middle and High Schools to Combat Teen Sleep Deprivation,” 2014).

While technological use can vary from homes and schools for a variety of reasons, such as finances, faculty/administrative proficiency, and fast changes in educational technology, as with most of life’s dimensions, a balance must be struck on a level of proficiency and use. In most instances, a parent(s) would not let a child eat in one’s room regularly nor would an educator(s) allow a child to be on the phone talking or online continuously in the middle of class. Hence, with balance comes boundaries as opposed to an all or nothing technology divide (Purcell, Heaps, Buchanan, & Friedrich, 2013).

**Spiritual dimension.** Positive messages can have a positive effect per positive affect, while negative messages have a negative effect per negative affect. While only three of the
participants discussed positive spiritual messages from their female friend and the positive effects, the benefits of spirituality/religion have been well-documented as to the positive effect on self-esteem and overall well-being (Aten et al., 2011; Erikson, 1968; Kim & Seidlitz, 2002; King, 2003; Powell et al., 2003). Regarding adolescents, Wong et al. (2006) found spirituality may be a protective factor.

While only three participants discussed positive spiritual messages from their female friends, just two described negative messages from their female friends. These messages had a negative affect which can have a negative effect per Fredrickson’s concept of positivity (2001, 2009). One participant, Ellie, described how one girl slammed the religious rules of Christianity, while another girl, an atheist, did not know what she was talking about on certain subjects such as abortion. The other participant, Tess, talked about how her cousin was disrespectful to God in her posts.

As in most areas of their life, adolescents serve as a time when children further develop their spiritual identity (Erikson, 1968). Like most of the research on adolescents and technology, the spiritual dimension findings have just begun. However, many churches have kept up with technological advances to attract young people. While Monahan (2009) found that technology “does increase the spiritual development among adolescents, which shows its importance” (p. 105) as noted in this study, the research aligned with Fredrickson’s (2001, 2009) notion of positive emotions and negative emotions. This means the positive effects of positive messages and negative effects of negative messages, can accordingly have positive and negative self-esteem effects.

While spirituality may be a protective factor (Wong et al., 2006), spirituality does not completely immune children from the ups and downs of their adolescent journey, as noted by the
positive and negative effects of positive and negative messages on the participants, who were primarily Christian. In fact, parents and educators may need to take a second look at those with a spiritual dimension to their life, as spiritual expectations may also cause children to hide or be conflicted about some of the other dimensions (Butler, 1997; Hettler, 1976). For example, as related to technology, a child may be getting cyberbullied and feel depressed but feels he or she needs “the joy of the Lord” (Nehemiah 8:10, New International Version) as one’s strength as opposed to getting parental or other adult assistance.

Research Question Three Major Themes

**Positive messages.** The participants described positive messages from female friends play a role in their friendship under three major themes: (a) affirmation of their friendships, (b) support of their friendships, and the (c) fostering of their friendships.

**Affirmation of their friendships.** Eight of the nine participants described positive Facebook messages from female friends as affirmation of their friendships. The participants described the female friends with whom they had regular Facebook connections under four subthemes of (a) best friends, (b) great friends, (c) good friends, and (d) sister-like friends. Similar to other findings, the participants used Facebook to mostly connect with friends from “offline contexts” (Reich et al., 2012, p. 366) such as school. Quality attachments at critical developmental stages benefit not only the short-term, but also the long-term relationship trajectory (Erikson, 1950; Rosenberg, 1965; Simpson, Collins, Tran, & Haydon, 2007). For adolescent self-esteem social acceptance can also be considered a “wellness factor” (Myers et al., 2011, p. 28).

Whether as a child or as an adult, positive affirmation particularly from those closest to a person, as seen by the emphasis of the types of the participants’ friendships (best friends, great
friends, good friends, and sister-like friends), can be likened to the wind beneath one’s wings. Similar to a baby bird that leaves the nest, for adolescents, who have now begun to separate to some extent from their parents and find their place in the world, positive affirmations from their friends, not just about their outward appearance but also about their inner beauty, helps them fly. This can be extremely important, particularly in a critical and appearance-oriented media culture that emphasizes the importance of cat calls as opposed to character (Durham, 1999, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Kearney-Cooke, 2008; Sarracino & Scott, 2008).

**Supportive of their friendships.** Eight of the nine participants found their positive messages from their female friends were supportive of their relationships for school-related activities and personal matters. During adolescence, social support can be extremely important particularly with all of the changes taking place in every dimension (Butler, 2001; Hettler, 1976), and teens do rely heavily on their peers during this time. Therefore, this study reinforced the findings of others as to the valuable role peer support plays in friendships. As mentioned and related to school, early adolescents with “perceived social support” (Ahmed et al., 2010, p. 36) from their “parents, peers, and/or teachers” (p. 36) do better academically.

Regarding personal matters, adolescents can be a mixed bag of emotions on a variety of subjects, particularly related to appearance. In their study to reduce disorder eating among adolescent girls, McVey, Lieberman, Voorberg, Wardrope, and Blackmore (2003) used a “life skills approach” (p. 179) with a peer support group to promote a positive body image and self-esteem, which included media literacy to increase resiliency. Their intervention had a “positive influence” (p. 180), which again showed the power of peers. Likewise, in their study of Dutch friend networking sites with adolescents Valkenburg et al. (2006) found positive messages from friends “enhanced social self-esteem and well-being” (p. 589).
**Foster their friendships.** As another major theme, the participants stated their positive messages from their female friends foster their friendships. This aligns with the study of Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008), who found adolescents use social media to “reinforce existing relationships” (p. 119). Lenhart and Madden (2007) had similar findings in which they said, “91% of all social networking teens say they use the sites to stay in touch with friends they see frequently” (para. 7). Several of the participants ended up pruning their Facebook, so as Garette stated, she could “know them by like name or if I saw them on the street I wouldn’t be able to say, ‘Hey, that’s so and so.’” Subrahmanyam and Greenfield (2008) also found adolescents use social media not only to maintain existing relationships but also “romantic partners” (p. 119). In this study, only one participant discussed a romantic partner.

As seen in this theme of fostering their friendships, as well as the other two themes of affirmation and support, the participants were more interested in quality as opposed to quantity of relationships. They did not feel the need to know a great amount of people but rather be known by a few. Hence, an emphasis on depth as opposed to breadth of friendships.

**Negative messages.** The participants described negative messages from female friends play a role in their friendship under three major themes and can (a) lead to adult involvement, (b) lead to fights, and (c) end friendships.

**Can lead to adult involvement.** All nine participants found adult involvement an important resource as related to negative messages from their female friends. As mentioned in other sections, the participants relied on their parents as well as school personnel for assistance with Facebook concerns. This has also been noted per the alignment with the findings of Lenhart et al. (2011) that teens rely on parents as their “top source” (p. 6) for Internet advice, and that they rely on a number of sources to guide Internet behavior.
The role of positive adult presence in the lives of adolescence cannot be neglected, particularly when technological devices often seem to take the place of time spent together. While the parents in this study were actively involved with their child’s Facebook, as seen, the participants felt they could also depend on school personnel for support. Modeling (Bandura, Ross, & Ross, 1961; Bandura, 1963) effective online and offline behavior by adults to include availability serves as an important ingredient for adolescent health.

**Can lead to fights.** Similar to Lenhart et al.’s (2011) findings, Facebook can lead to fights with female friends. Although in this study the participants described the fights were verbal, one participant, Carlisle, reported a girl who has been in physical fights. Carlisle talked about fighting on Facebook and in-person. This has also been discussed in the section on dramafied messages. Relational aggression often leads to physical aggression (Letendre & Smith, 2011) and can lead to an array of negative outcomes such as “social-psychological problems” (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995, p. 721). One middle school principal noted, “The first time I ever had to call an ambulance to the school was when two girls got into a big fight” (Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005, p. 4).

Much of the relatively new technology revisits and amplifies the stories and clichés of old. This is evidenced, as mentioned earlier, in the story of *The Boy Who Cried Wolf* (Aesop, 2014). Here, the concept of the cliché, sticks and stones and names not hurting is false, because they do. In fact, several of the participants noted their Facebook fights started by “something said,” and mean messages were a theme. Moreover, since Facebook communication is not about in-person presence, words do have power and therefore, the careful crafting of messages must be emphasized not only for etiquette, but also for the short-term and long-term self-esteem and well being of individuals and society. Girls being sidetracked online and offline from their priorities
such as education by being threatened or worrying about being beat up should not be a part of their daily living.

Can end friendships. While “58% of social media-using teens have felt closer to another person because of an experience on a social network site,” (Lenhart et al., 2011) online friendships can also end. In this study, the participants on their own or under parental request ended some of their online friendship(s). They chose to “unfriend” or “block” their female friends, while one participant told her female friend to “get off my Facebook page.” Inappropriate messages and a dislike for how a person acted offline were a couple of the reasons the friendships ended. These results were similar to Sibona and Walczak’s (2011) findings of the ending of Facebook friendships and online/offline behavior, though their participants were over 18 years old.

The ending of friendships may have both positive and negative benefits. For instance, as seen in this study, a positive benefit would be if a person perceives a bad influence on their Facebook page and decides she does not want to stay friends with that person. However, this can also be negative if the person just “unfriends,” “blocks,” or “deletes” the person, which the participants did without any kind of discussion. In some instances that might be appropriate, such as with extremely sexual content, yet, in other situations it would be proper to tell the person why this may be happening.

Without a conversation, not only can the friend not completely know why this might be occurring, but the person may not be given a chance to improve or change their offensive behavior. On this note, the importance of some sort of personal and professional communication should be considered. This may also be a skill that parents and educators can teach for a proper
management or resolution to poor communication. In this next section, how this study adds to the literature will be discussed.

**How This Study Adds to the Literature**

This study adds to the literature in many ways. To begin with, the research on social media can still be considered in its infancy (Agosto & Abbas, 2009; Boyd, 2014; Moreno, 2010). Five major areas, whereby this research sheds light would be (a) social media and adolescents as related to self-esteem, (b) social media and the friendships of female adolescents, (c) social media and adult involvement, (d) social media and the links to traditional media, and (e) social media, adolescents, and drama. In the past 30 plus years, self-esteem has been one of the “most widely studied topics in modern psychology with more than 25,000 publications concerning this construct” (Zeigler-Hill, 2011, p. 157).

Even though there has been a fair amount of work on adolescents, cyberbullying, and self-esteem (Valkenburg et al., 2006; Hinduja & Patchin, 2010; Patchin & Hinduja 2010; Šleglova, & Cerna, 2011; Valkenburg & Peter, 2011), the research on social media and self-esteem has really just started. While the participants in this study scored within the normal range or above for self-esteem per the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Table 2), as seen, Facebook messages from their female friends can multi-dimensionally affect their self-esteem. Thus, this study broadens the literature on social media and self-esteem with adolescents, and the multitude of ways it can positively and negatively impact their life.

In addition to adding to the literature on social media and self-esteem, this study enhances the research on female adolescent friendships. By understanding how adolescent girls interact positively and negatively on Facebook, this can assist girls, parents, and educators on how to make social media along with school more safe and secure. With the prevalence of
violence among adolescent girls both online and offline (Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2005; Stomfay-Stitz & Wheeler, 2007; Letendre & Smith, 2011), this study can bring awareness to help girls learn to get along in a positive fashion.

Along with adding to the research on social media and self-esteem, as well as female adolescent friendships, this study reinforces the importance of parental involvement. Along with a parent taking part in his or her adolescent’s social media, this connection extends to include their participation in their child’s Facebook circle of attachment (see Figure 5). Positive parenting per engagement in the life of one’s child serves as a protective factor, which helps teen esteem along with overall health and well being (“Positive Parenting Practices,” 2014).

This study also shows some of the more specific ways Facebook connects with traditional media (see Figure 7), thereby, a link between the past and the present. This can be seen not only in the interviews but also through the site artifacts. For example, two of the site artifacts were memes displayed via the participant’s drawings. These memes related to (a) an Almond Joy television commercial (“Almond Joy,” 2011, see Figure 2), and (b) a reality television program (“Here Comes Honey Boo Boo,” Lex, Reddy, & Rogan, 2011, 2012, 2013, see Figure 3).

Next, this study adds to the finding on the “emergent construct” (Allen, 2014, p. 3) of drama. While drama has long been known to take place upon a television screen, on the stage, or in a film, adolescents now use the term as part of their vernacular (Allen, 2014; Boyd, 2014) for what happens among them everyday such as at school or on social media. As seen in this study, and as Allen (2014) stated about drama, the story lines remain the same to include: “sex, romance, intrigue, deception, betrayal, and reconciliation” (p. 14). Therefore, while the method has changed from traditional media to technology, as mentioned previously, in respect to old fables and clichés, the ways of the past have now become the waves of the future.
Most importantly, much of the research on social media has been quantitative. As Boyd (2014) remarked, “so many people talk about youth engagement with social media, but very few of them are willing to take the time to listen to teens, to hear them, or to pay attention to what they have to say about their lives, online and off” (p. xi). Thus, this qualitative study gives voice to middle school girls.

Additional Conclusions

While Facebook and other technology have provided fresh and exciting ways that can positively multi-dimensionally affect adolescents, at the same time, like any new tool, there can be negative repercussions without proper use and maintenance. The findings of this study suggest the multitude of positive and negative ways that Facebook can play a role in the lives of adolescents, yet children must still be guided by parents and educators for positive outcomes.

Implications

Theoretical Implications

The view that aligns with Gilligan’s theory of moral development (Gilligan, 1982), meaning the Ophelia discourse or at risk model (Gilligan, 1982; Pipher, 1994) that sees girls as “passive, fragile and vulnerable” (Gonick, 2006, p. 2) will most likely always be present as long as women get placed in the media within this framework (Durham, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Sarracino & Scott, 2008), and society continues to literally and figuratively buy into this perspective. Women must also be able to have some self-respect and self-esteem while considering in-depth how they place themselves within the media’s watchful eye. For example, many nude photographs have come back to haunt women (Marcott, 2014). Unfortunately, this outlook seems to have become worse (Sarracino & Scott, 2008) rather than better and has been a negative influence on girls’ self-esteem (Durham, 2008; Fredrickson & Roberts, 1997; Kearney-
Cooke, 2008; Sarracino & Scott, 2008; Zurbriggen, 2010). On the other hand, at times, the second or Girl Power model (Hesford, 1999), which sees girls as “assertive, dynamic, and unbound from the constraints of passive femininity,” (Dean & Laidler, 2013, p. 2), leads one to envision a girl as a wild banshee.

As seen in this study, Facebook can be considered more of a meet in the middle movement that has given girls an opportunity to begin to shape their life by deciding what they want to let in and get out of their life. The participants described opportunities for connection and self-expression, which offers a nice combination of both the Ophelia (Gilligan, 1982; Pipher, 1994) and Girl Power model (Hesford, 1999) instead of the one or the other perspective. This aligned with Dean and Ladler’s findings (2013), meaning Facebook can be likened to a bridge between the two.

Moreover, a meet in the middle view offers girls an opportunity to break the mold or get out of the box of the one way or the other perspective (Dean & Ladler, 2013). Rather than be in need of rescue or have a sense of righteous indignation, with SNS such as Facebook, girls can begin to learn and take responsibility for their sense of identity which can affect their self-esteem and overall well-being.

**Methodological Implications**

Indeed, quantitative and qualitative methodologies “represent two different paradigms” (Sale, Lohfield, & Brazil, 2002), yet both have their place. While the data of quantitative research tells the story with statistics, Brown (2015) wrote, “Maybe stories are just data with a soul” (“Brene Brown: Researcher and Storyteller,” 2015). Hermeneutical phenomenology, as in this study, “is not considered to be a special process divorced from our everyday lives” (Walters, 1995, p. 793). Furthermore, Walters (1995) noted, “it is one of the processes people
use in making sense or understanding their everyday world” (p. 793). To reemphasize Boyd’s view (2014), “teens’ voices rarely shaped the public discourse surrounding their networked lives” (p. x). Thus, while quantitative research may give one perspective on the networked lives of teens, this qualitative study on the lived experiences of the nine participants has helped to shape the understanding of social media, self-esteem, and friendships in a way that statistics cannot. Herein, voices require ears to hear, and this study can further the conversation.

**Empirical Implications**

Specifically, as seen, the positive and negative multi-dimensional effects of Facebook messages from female friends to middle school girls can have direct effects on self-esteem and play a role in their female friendships. This was corroborated through the use of triangulation of the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores (see Table 2), the interviews/member checks, and the journals to include site artifacts. The research of this study supports, as noted, much of the research on adolescents and social media. However, more research can be done in every dimension to expand these conclusions, hence, recommendations have been included in one of the following sections.

**Practical Implications**

**Personal responsibility.** As middle school girls still have a large learning curve, this study gives them awareness regarding the positive and negative outcomes of social media use, specifically, Facebook. Moreover, this insight comes from the voices of their peers as opposed to parents and other educators. Because friendships (Clementes-Cortes, 2010; Theran et al., 2010) and groups (Badaoui et al., 2012; Brown, 2011; Warrington & Younger, 2011) have such an important role in middle school, hearing the voices of their peers plays a valuable part in education as related to personal responsibility and what an adolescent may want to let in or get
out of one’s life.

**Parental guidance.** As with most of life, there can be positive and negative consequences to underexposure or overexposure of almost anything. The same holds true for the use of Facebook. While much of the talk about social media and teenagers has been gloom and doom, the participants received positive guidance from their parents.

Because teenagers have just begun to spread their wings, their relationships with their parents plays an important role in their ability to navigate social media. Therefore, parents must step to the plate of responsibility to speak the language of their *digital citizens*. Additionally, parents and educators must not just speak the language, but they must serve as protectors of their child’s behavior online and offline. Parental monitoring includes “(a) the expectations parents have for their teen’s behavior; (b) the actions parents take to keep track of their teen; and (c) the ways parents respond when their teen breaks the rules” (“Monitoring Your Teen’s Activities: What Parents and Families Should Know,” 2012).

**Educator involvement.** Similar to parents, educators must keep pace with social media. Social media can be considered here to stay and the ways this tool will have overall effects on adolescents must be regularly reviewed and considered for their health and well-being. A few of the positive side notes were students liked their homework posted and updates about sport schedules helped them to manage and organize their day.

Related to education, a national survey by the University of Phoenix College of Education found “eighty percent of K-12 teachers report that they use social media for either personal or professional use, but fewer than one-in-five (18 percent) have integrated social media into their own classrooms” (Burden, 2014). Because this generation and those to come have been raised on social media, to reiterate, educators must learn to speak the language of *digital*
citizens, they must keep abreast of the technology, understand the positive and negative implications as they apply to classroom/campus activities, incorporate technology into their educational endeavors, as well as connect with students for purposes of care and commitment to the educational process along with advancement.

**Delimitations and Limitations**

The delimitations included: (a) participants were selected from only one county in the South Atlantic region of the United States; the study has been limited to nine, seventh and eighth grade, 13 and 14 year old girls; (b) in this region, the leaders of approximately ten to fifteen groups were contacted as well as individual parents, and (c) RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores (see Table 2) were self-reported. Limitations include: (a) semi-structured interviews and not enough time, (b) authenticity related to trust, (b) the possibility of girls with low self-disclosure, (d) the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) can also be considered a limitation, as it does not take into account contextual factors.

Initially, the study started out with the protocol approved for 13-year-old girls in the seventh grade; however, they became difficult to find. The delimitation of contacting local groups and individuals became a limitation of the study, as they were not as cooperative as expected. Therefore, the IRB was contacted a second time to include 14 year old, eighth grade girls. Furthermore, although contacts were made with multi-ethnic groups and individuals, this also became a limitation per their lack of response. Therefore, the participants were somewhat homogeneous. Herein, a different group of participants may have brought about other results.

Another delimitation was that the RSES (Rosenberg, 1965; see Appendix H) scores were self-reported (see Table 2). Self-reported scores can have a bias per respondents answering with socially desirable outcomes, whereas, participants often want to “look as good as possible”
(Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002, p. 247). However, even with this bias, it was the intention of the researcher to hear the voices of middle school girls.

Regarding other limitations, a study of this magnitude could have used a structured rather than a semi-structured interview. This may have provided richer descriptions for each of the dimensions in Research Question Two, as well as for the two sub questions in Research Question One and Research Question Three via more specific, planned questions. Along with more specific questions, more time for each interview may have given two of the other limitations of authenticity as related to trust and low self-disclosure participants a chance to further warm up to the process and the interviewer. This did not seem overly problematic (except in one instance where the participant in her follow up interview crossed out some of the words she said per what she described as “feeling guilty,”) but as in any phenomenological study, the more depth the better the findings. Along these same lines, because of all the components of the study to include positive and negative messages as well as the intricacies of Facebook, more than one interview could have been used. The use of a one-hour interview seemed rushed, and therefore limiting because of the schedules of the participants and their parents. This concept of time seemed to carry over into the journals as well, whereby they were not as rich as expected.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

While the Internet has opened a world of possibility for people to connect, similarly, a new frontier has been opened for academic research that can really still be considered in infancy (Agosto & Abbas, 2009), particularly in the area of qualitative research (Boyd, 2014). In consideration of this study’s findings and delimitations and limitations, this specific research suggests that positive and negative messages from female friends can multi-dimensionally affect middle school girls’ self-esteem, therefore, more research can be done on each specific
dimension. The recommended research would include both quantitative studies to measure the self-esteem effect of each dimension as well as more qualitative research to gain a depth of understanding of middle school girls’ experiences with social media and self-esteem.

Moreover, the additional research must use different demographics. For instance, a less homogenous group of participants should be utilized. Another example of different demographics would be to research girls with low self-esteem or older adolescent girls.

Along with research on adolescent girls, more research can be done with adolescent boys. As Boyd (2014) mentioned, most of the technological research on adolescents has been quantitative, therefore, more qualitative studies can be done to include adolescent males and females so that they can have a voice in situations that involve them. Many times adults have a tendency to decide what may or may not be right for children but lack evidence to support their view or their support has not been from the voices of their intended audience (Boyd, 2014).

Summary

While the media has reported teens may be abandoning Facebook, they have not (Madden, 2013). Social media can be likened to a semi-supervised teen party with an array of cliques and conflicts. Even if a majority of teens were to leave Facebook, they would find another space or place to hangout. For decades, teens have gone to dances, drive-ins, diners, dives, and now to digital technology.

Furthermore, while positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends can multi-dimensionally affect middle school girls’ self-esteem and friendships, these effects can also carry over into many other aspects of their life. Therefore, these findings must be considered individually and holistically (Miller, 1997) as related to the health and well being of adolescent girls. Most importantly, and in alignment with past research for online and offline
behavior, parents must stand as the gatekeepers of their adolescents’ adventures.

Along with parents, educators need to grasp the positive and negative repercussions of Facebook and other social media as it plays a role in adolescent development. Most importantly, parents and educators must learn the basic technological language spoken by today’s teens to arrive at common ground. Moreover, by gaining this fresh knowledge of what might be considered new territory, parents and educators leverage the playing field, advance their learning, and model educational leadership.
REFERENCES


Broderick, R. (2013, September 11). 9 teenage suicides in the last year were linked to cyber-bullying on social network Ask.fm. *BuzzFeed News.* Retrieved from
http://www.buzzfeed.com/ryanhatesthis/a-ninth-teenager-since-last-september-has-committed-suicide#.ehkE3D2wR


Chou, H. T., & Edge, N. (2012). “They are happier and having better lives than I am”: The impact of using Facebook on perceptions of others’ lives. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Network, 15*(2)117-121.


Del Turco, B. (n.d.). Rudyard Kipling-words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind. Retrieved from http://www.truenorthquest.com/rudyard-kipling/


Gottfried, K. (2012, January 9). One in ten (12%) parents online, around the world say their child has been cyberbullied, 24% say they know of a child who has experienced same in their community. Retrieved from http://www.ipsos-na.com/news/polls/pressrelease.aspx?id=5462#.Tw6exyC2__s.twitter


http://abcnews.go.com/Technology/We_Find_Them/facebook-place-kids/story?id=13846706#.UVJG8Y5yGfc


http://books.google.com/books?id=yODfAFoR9NAC&pg=PP1&lpg=PP1&dq=ADOLESCENT+GIRLS’+SUPPORT+FOR+VOICE+IN+EDUCATION,+Kastelic&source=bl&ots=XLk6j3_MQe&sig=Vu9E5Wkj0DAmf5D-qY6GSbcoDpY&hl=en&sa=X&ei=ojRWUcqgBI6f0QHrkYHoDQ&ved=0CEYQ6AEw


http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3862597/


Lopez, K. A., & Willis, D. G. (2004). Descriptive versus interpretive phenomenology:
Their contributions to nursing knowledge. *Qualitative Health Research, 14*(5), 726-735.


media use and psychological and physical assets among 3rd to 5th grade girls. *Journal of School Health, 81*(12), 749-755.


http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pub/youth_suicide.html


APPENDIX A

IRB Approval

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

February 26, 2014

Eileen Elizabeth Hegel
IRB Approval 1792.022614: A Phenomenological Study of Facebook Messages from Female Friends to Middle School Girls and Their Multi-Dimensional Effect on Self-Esteem

Dear Eileen,

We are pleased to inform you that your above study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

Fernando Garzon, Psy.D.
Professor, IRB Chair
Counseling

(434) 592-4054

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

Liberty University | Training Champions for Christ since 1971
APPENDIX B
The Girls Scouts Permission Form

Dear 

My name is Eileen Hegel and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University. I am conducting a study on positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends and their multidimensional effect on middle school girls’ self-esteem. The data collected will be for a doctoral project and for possible presentations as well as publications. Per our discussion, I appreciate that you have agreed to allow me to ask your Girl Scout troops to participate in my study. Herein, I will need your signed permission, and a consent form from the parent(s) of participants, as well as an assent form from girls.

The process will be that I plan to interview each girl, two times for 1-2 hours regarding their positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends. The girls will also be asked to keep journals. This study will be voluntary meaning there will be no financial compensation, but at the end each participant will receive a $5 gift certificate to Starbucks and a basket of school supplies.

To ensure the privacy, all information will be confidential. All identifiers will be concealed through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, the study information will be password protected and stored securely in the researcher’s home office.

As in any study, limited but potential risks will be present. For example, in talking about this subject, students may have strong or uncomfortable feelings. In this case, I have provided a list of mental health professionals should any girl feel she needs this service.

By signing this letter, you agree that you are familiar with the purpose, methods, scope, and intent of this research project. As mentioned, this study is voluntary and the girls may withdraw at any time. Please feel free to contact me at: Phone: (619) 368-2936 or E-mail: ehegel@liberty.edu

YOUR SIGNATURE CONFIRMS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE WITH THIS FORM. PLEASE KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS. THANK YOU.
APPENDIX C

Baptist Church Permission Form

February 4, 2014

BAPTIST CHURCH

Dear Jeremy,

My name is Eileen Hegel and I am a doctoral student at Liberty University. I am conducting a study on positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends and their multidimensional effect on middle school girls’ self-esteem. The data collected will be for a doctoral project and for possible presentations as well as publications. Per our meeting, I appreciate that you have agreed to allow your youth group to serve as a study site. Herein, I will need your signed permission, a consent form from the parent(s) of participants, and an assent form from the girls.

The process will be that I plan to interview each girl, two times for 1-2 hours regarding their positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends. The girls will also be asked to keep journals. This study will be voluntary meaning there will be no financial compensation, but at the end each participant will receive a $5 gift certificate to Starbucks and a basket of school supplies.

To ensure the privacy, all information will be confidential. All identifiers will be concealed through the use of pseudonyms. Additionally, the study information will be password protected and stored securely in the researcher’s home office.

As in any study, limited but potential risks will be present. For example, in talking about this subject, students may have strong or uncomfortable feelings. In this case, I have provided a list of mental health professionals should any girl feel she needs this service.

By signing this letter, you agree that you are familiar with the purpose, methods, scope, and intent of this research project. As mentioned, this study is voluntary and your youth group may withdraw at any time. Please feel free to contact me at: Phone: (619) 368-2936 or E-mail: eehegel@liberty.edu.

YOUR SIGNATURE CONFIRMS THAT YOU HAVE READ AND AGREE WITH THIS FORM. PLEASE KEEP A COPY FOR YOUR RECORDS. THANK YOU.

Sincerely,
13-year-old or 14-year old, 7th and 8th grade girls are wanted for a research study interview about their Facebook experiences with female friends.

Research conducted by:

Eileen E. Hegel, Ed.S.

Liberty University doctoral student in Educational Leadership.

This study will involve one interview, a follow up meeting, and journal writing. Parental permission required.

Individuals who participate will receive a $5 gift certificate to Starbucks and a basket of school supplies upon completion of the study.

For more information please contact:

eehegel@liberty.edu or 619-368-2936 Thank you.
APPENDIX E

Assent Form

What is the name of the study and who is doing the study?

Study Name: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACEBOOK MESSAGES FROM FEMALE FRIENDS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS AND THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EFFECT ON SELF-ESTEEM

Principal Investigator: Eileen E. Hegel, Ed.S.

Why am I doing this study?

I want to learn about Facebook messages from female friends to middle school girls and the multi-dimensional (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social factors) effect on self-esteem.

Why I am asking you to be in this study?

You are a 13-year-old or 14-year-old girl, in the seventh to eighth grade and use Facebook at least five days per week.

If you agree, what will happen?

You will have two meetings with Eileen. In the first meeting, you will fill out a survey, a self-esteem scale, do an interview, and asked to journal for a few weeks regarding your Facebook messages from female friends. The second meeting will be a follow-up. Eileen will abide by professional educator standards. At the end of the second meeting, you will receive a $5 coupon to Starbuck’s and a basket of school supplies.
**Do you have to be in this study?**

No, you do not have to be in this study. If you want to be in this study, then tell the researcher, Eileen. If you don’t want to, it’s OK to say no. Eileen will not be angry. You can say yes now and change your mind later. It’s up to you.

**Do you have any questions?**

You can ask questions any time. You can ask now. You can ask later. You can talk to the researcher, Eileen. If you do not understand something, please ask Eileen to explain it to you again. Signing your name below means that you want to be in the study.

________________________________________              _________________________
Signature of Child                     Date
Title of Study – A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY OF FACEBOOK MESSAGES FROM FEMALE FRIENDS TO MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS AND THE MULTI-DIMENSIONAL EFFECT ON SELF-ESTEEM

Principal Investigator - Eileen E. Hegel, Ed.S.

Liberty University
School of Education

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Your daughter has been invited to be in a research study of Facebook messages from female friends to middle school girls and their multi-dimensional (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social factors) effect on self-esteem. Your daughter was selected as a possible participant because she is in the 7th or 8th grade, is 13-years-old (the minimum age for Facebook) or 14-years-old, and uses Facebook at least five days per week. Please read this form and ask any questions before agreeing that your daughter participates in the study. This study is being conducted by Eileen E. Hegel, Ed.S., a doctoral student in the Liberty University School of Education.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study will be to describe how, if at all, positive and negative Facebook messages from female friends multi-dimensionally (physical, mental, spiritual, emotional and social factors) effect middle school girls’ self-esteem.
**Procedures:**

If you and your daughter agree that she should participate in this study, she will be asked to:

Fill out a descriptive survey for demographics and complete the RSES, which will take 10 to 15 minutes. Additionally, she will engage in two, 1-2 hour meetings (one semi-structured interview and one follow-up meeting) with the researcher about her positive and negative Facebook experiences with female friends. She will also be asked to keep a journal about her Facebook experiences. Each interview and follow up meeting will be audiotaped, and all of the study information will be confidential, meaning pseudonyms will be used. All data will be stored either on the researcher’s home computer with password protection or stored and locked in the researcher’s home file system. The researcher will be the only one with access to the information.

**Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:**

The study has several risks:

The Institutional Review Board (IRB) has four categories of risk and this study falls under Category 1 or “minimal risk” (“Special Protections for Children,” 2013, para. 5). This means “the probability and magnitude of harm or discomfort anticipated in the proposed research are not greater, in and of themselves, than those ordinarily encountered in daily life or during the performance of routine physical or psychological examinations or tests [Federal Policy §45 CFR 46 102(i)]” (“IRB Guidebook Chapter 3: Basic IRB Review,” 2013, para. 3). Should any topic come up whereby the researcher considers the child or another to be in a potentially dangerous situation, the child’s parents and/or appropriate agency will be notified immediately verbally and in writing. The child will then be disqualified from the study. As a professional courtesy, a list of mental health professionals will be provided.
With the increase of technology, this study will benefit society as the positive and negative implications of technological use among young people should be regularly examined for their well-being.

**Compensation:**

Participants will receive a $5 coupon to Starbucks and a basket of school supplies upon completion of the study (i.e. the interview with the descriptive survey, RSES, follow up meeting, and journaling).

**Confidentiality:**

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. All participants’ interviews, follow-up meetings, and journals will be coded with pseudonyms. The audiotapes for the interviews and follow up sessions will be stored on the researcher’s home computer in the participants’ online folder. The computer will be password protected and the researcher will be the only one with access. Each journal will be stored in a locked box along with the descriptive surveys and RSESs. All of the study data will be saved for three years according to the IRB guidelines. After three years, the computer information will be deleted and the paper documents shredded. No study information will be discussed in-person, on e-mail, or in any other fashion as to compromise the data except for with the researcher’s doctoral committee.

**Voluntary Nature of the Study:**

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to allow your daughter to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide
to allow her to participate, she is free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

**How to Withdraw from the Study:**

To withdraw from the study, the child or parent should notify the researcher, Eileen Hegel, immediately. As noted, you may withdraw your child at any time. Upon withdrawal, all of the participant’s audiotapes and paper documents will be destroyed. Herein, the participant will not receive the complimentary $5 gift certificate to Starbucks and basket of school supplies.

**Contacts and Questions:**

The researcher conducting this study is Eileen E. Hegel, Ed.S.. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you are encouraged to contact her at eehegel@liberty.edu or (619) 368-2936. You may also reach her advisor: Rebecca S. Harrison, Ed.D. at rsharrison@liberty.edu or (276) 619-4312.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, you are encouraged to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Suite 1837, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu. You will be given a copy of this information to keep for your records.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

☐ I agree that my daughter may be audiotaped for study purposes.
Signature of parent or guardian: _________________________ Date: ________________

(If minors are involved)

Signature of Investigator: ______________________________ Date: ________________

**IRB Code Numbers:** [Risk] IRB Approval 1792.022614: A Phenomenological Study of Facebook Messages from Female Friends to Middle School Girls and Their Multi-Dimensional Effect on Self-Esteem

**IRB Expiration Date:** [Risk] February 26, 2015
APPENDIX G

Descriptive Survey

1. What grade are you in/how old are you? ________________________________

2. How do you describe yourself (American Indian or Alaska Native, Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Non-Hispanic White)?
   ___________________________________________________________________

3. What is your religious affiliation (Christian to include Protestant, Evangelical, Nondenominational and Other, Roman Catholic, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Mormon, Other).
   ___________________________________________________________________

4. How many Facebook messages do you think you send and receive each day?
   ___________________________________________________________________

5. How much time do you spend on Facebook each day?
   ___________________________________________________________________

6. How many Facebook friends do you have?
   ___________________________________________________________________


*Per the researcher’s definitions messages include private or public messages such as a status or a comment posted to a Facebook wall that may or may not have elicited a response.
APPENDIX H

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1965)

The next questions ask about your current feelings about yourself. For each of the following, please circle the number that corresponds with the answer that best describes how strongly you agree or disagree with the statement about yourself now.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>I feel that I am a person of worth, or at least on an equal plane with others</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>I feel that I have a number of good qualities.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>All in all, I'm inclined to feel that I am a failure.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>I am able to do things as well as most other people.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I feel I do not have much to be proud of.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>I take a positive attitude toward myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>On the whole, I am satisfied with myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I certainly feel useless at times.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I wish I could have more respect for myself.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>At times, I think I am no good at all.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I

Mental Health Counselor Referral

The Center for Counseling and Family Studies at Liberty University refers clients to:

Thomas Road Baptist Church

1 Mountain View Rd.

Lynchburg, VA 24502

(434) 239-9281

trbc.org

Thomas Road Baptist Church provides free counseling for the Central Virginia community.