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Hispanic Students and Social Networking

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[By Ben Wasike and John A. Cook](#)

[WJMCR 25 \(October 2010\)](#)

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[Abstract](#)

Social networking sites have surged in popularity lately, the most popular being MySpace and Facebook. Between them these two have more than 360 million registered users worldwide. Never before have so many people gathered to communicate through a single medium, and at such a personal level. In the U.S., 65% of American teenagers and 75% of young American adults ages 18-24 now have a profile on a social networking site, while 57% of American adults ages 25-34 also have an online profile according to the Pew Internet and American Life Project.^{[1](#)}

[Introduction](#)

The Pew study also reports that Hispanics are more likely to use social networking sites than other ethnicities. Forty-eight percent of all Hispanic online users have a profile on a social networking site. This is statistically significant from say, the 31% of Anglo internet users who have a profile on a social

networking site. It would be safe to conclude that social networking is more popular among Hispanics.

Social networking is on the verge of overtaking traditional media use such as linear non-interactive TV watching. An IBM survey shows that time spent online now competes well with TV viewership.² Seventy-one percent of the 2400 respondents spent two hours or more on personal internet use, compared to the 48 who spent the same time viewing TV. Consumers are increasingly turning to Web sites like YouTube, MySpace and Facebook for entertainment while shunning more traditional modes of communication. This means that soon, TV watching might no longer be the dominant mode for passing time. Social networking might just as well fill this void.

Also as a result of plummeting news readership rates and dwindling advertising revenues, mainstream media outlets like MSNBC, CNN and CBSnews.com have joined a network of social networking sites known as the sociograph in order to tap into the rich potential these sites offer.³

It comes as a surprise therefore, that despite the major presence Hispanics have in the social networking sphere, most peer reviewed research on this type of communication has failed to represent them in a substantive manner. It follows logically that there is need to look closer into the interaction and use of this new type of communication within a Hispanic audience. Using Papacharissi and Rubin's internet motive scale⁴ as a guide and the uses and gratifications theory as its basis, this study develops a profile of a Hispanic student social network site user. The aforementioned scale looks at the primary motives that drive people to use the internet, which are for information seeking, passing time, interpersonal utility, convenience and entertainment. Specifically, this study endeavors to determine: The uses and gratifications that Hispanic students derive from using social networking sites; the social effects that occur as a result of a Hispanic student's choice of a particular social network site, and why Hispanic students choose one social networking site over the other?

Literature Review: Social Networking Sites MySpace and Facebook

Although virtual and online communities did not start with MySpace and Facebook, their popularity is something to reckon with. These two sites have set a new precedent of how young media users employ computer mediated

communication as a means to connect to each other and to the rest of the world. Facebook alone has seen its membership double since 2007.⁵

Facebook.com reports more than 175 million active users. MySpace has about 192 million users. It is no wonder that 10% of Americans logged on to a social networking site during the 2008 presidential elections.⁶ This dramatic increase in site membership has seen these social networking sites morph into full-fledged Web portals.

MySpace and Facebook offer a platform for computer mediated communication, which is communication that occurs through some form of computer technology.⁷ Because of convenience, speed and suitability to a variety of situations, users prefer computer mediated communication over face-to-face communication.⁸ Computer mediated communication also offers other benefits including but not limited to information exchange, social support and friendship.⁹ Research also shows that when online, people tend to be less inhibited and less anxious. They also tend to be more truthful and more willing to disclose personal information.¹⁰ Computer mediated communication users also look for high quality media that they think is easy to use.¹¹ Certain computer mediated communication media such as instant messaging may lead to better social relationships and freer expression of thought.¹² Similarly, MySpace invites people to sign up in order to make friends and to express who they are.

Both MySpace and Facebook function like an amalgamation of diaries, e-mail applications and photo albums where users share content with friends whose pictures appear on each member's profile. Since its creation in 2001 and later purchase by NewsCorp in 2005, MySpace has ballooned into an online community of over 192 million users who gather in this part of the cyber world to exchange information, to network and to discuss various issues. ¹³ MySpace also offers its users an interactive music service, MySpace Music, which offers customized playlists.¹⁴ Unlike Facebook, MySpace attracts a more mature audience, having 50% of all adult social network users. Facebook attracts only about half as many adult users.¹⁵ While MySpace dubs itself "a place for friends," Facebook calls itself a "social utility" to connect to other people.

Facebook started out as a social networking site only available to college students who carried a .edu e-mail address but opened up to the public in 2006.¹⁶ Even then, Facebook was the ninth most visited site overall.¹⁷ Facebook's membership

now stands at about 175 million users. The average Facebook user has approximately 120 friends and may belong to the 20 million active user groups on the site. Facebook users spent almost 3 billion minutes on the site daily, updating their profiles at least 15 million times a day. They upload more than 850 million photos every month alongside 5 million videos in the same time period.¹⁸

Facebook now allows third party developers to create applications for its users. More than 50,000 such applications, some created by about 650,000 independent developers worldwide, are now available for users. Graffiti is one such application that allows users to draw digital graffiti on their friends' profiles. The Optical Illusions Challenge lets users discern faces and figures from an assortment of images. Growing Gifts lets users send their friends digital gifts that grow. Other applications include racing games, speed dating games, news quizzes, etc. Facebook also offers a shopping outlet in partnership with Amazon.com. Here, users can even send their shopping wish lists to their friends.¹⁹

Theory: Uses and Gratifications

The uses and gratifications theory focuses on what uses people put media to and the gratifications they derive from such use. Its arguments rest on audience activity and the forms these activities take.²⁰ Audience activity, which is the “voluntaristic and selective orientation by audiences,”²¹ and audience activeness²² are the foci of uses and gratifications research. Audience activity carries a variety of meanings, but these boil down to the following: Utility, intentionality, selectivity and imperviousness.²³ Utility has to do with the uses consumers can put media to. Intentionality refers to the effect prior influences and motivations have on patterns of current or future media use. Selectivity occurs when consumers base their media use on certain interests. Obstinance on the part of the users as far as purposefully avoiding external influences that come with certain media use makes up imperviousness. Activeness on the other hand refers to the relative uses people put media to. Activeness also changes across time, user personality and even media type.²⁴

As mentioned earlier, intentionality and motivation drive media use. Alan Rubin outlined the motivators of traditional media use as: Passing time, information seeking, entertainment, companionship and escape. ²⁵ He later described media use as either instrumental or ritualistic. Instrumental media use occurs when user actions are purpose-driven, while ritualistic media use refers to more

passive activities such as using media to pass time.²⁶ Later research on newer media forms showed similar motivational trends. Papacharissi and Rubin looked at the uses and gratifications for internet use and they found five primary motivators: Information seeking, passing time, interpersonal utility, convenience and entertainment. ²⁷ They also differentiated between instrumental and ritualistic use of the internet. They found that information seeking for example, is an instrumental motive whereby users are active and purposeful in their internet use. An example would be people using the internet for research purposes to look for information and to see what was out there.

The above mentioned aspects of the uses and gratifications theory are better illustrated by discussing how researchers have applied them to the real life use of social networking sites. B?ltare?u and Balaban found that psychological reasons like human communication, socialization, being part of a group and the maintenance of long distance relationships were motivators for young people to use social networking sites.²⁸ Likewise, Barker found that intra group communication was the chief motivator for using social networking sites by older adolescents.²⁹ These trends were more manifest for female students who more than males also used these sites for ritualistic purposes like entertainment and passing time. Males however reported more instrumental forms of use such as social identity, learning and as a means of gaining social capital in order to compensate for lower self esteem levels. Similar gender differences occurred within the motivations to use Facebook. Sheldon reports that female students used Facebook for relationship maintenance more than males.³⁰ They also used Facebook for ritualistic purposes like entertainment and passing time more than males, who were more likely than females to use Facebook to build new relationships.

Motivation to belong to a group and connect with others through social networking was also reported by Urista, Ding and Day.³¹ Their study found that young adults preferred social networking over telephone conversations and texting in order to keep tabs on what was going on with their friends' lives. Users found it easier to update online profiles that could be viewed by larger audiences than to engage in one-on-one telephone conversations.

Clark, Lee and Boyer examined, in an exploratory manner, the gratifications students derive from using Facebook and how dependent they are to the site. ³² Their findings matched extant research in that students used Facebook for reasons much similar to reasons people use the internet as discussed by

Papacharissi and Rubin.³³ These uses were: Information gathering, passing time, facilitating interpersonal relationships and entertainment. Raacke and Bonds-Raacke found that college students used MySpace and Facebook mainly to make new friends, to keep in touch with old and new friends, to view and post pictures online, etc.³⁴

Social interaction as a motivator for using social networking sites is not exclusive to adolescents and college students. Ancu and Cozma found that people visited MySpace profiles of political candidates in order to interact with like-minded people as well as to interact with the candidates themselves.³⁵ This study's sample had a mean age of 29.9 years with a range of 18 – 61 years. Other use factors in the study were information seeking and entrainment, which respectively are instrumental and ritualistic motivation.

Social Effects

Whatever media people choose to use or consume definitely has some effect on their personalities in terms of attitudes, behavior and beliefs.³⁶ This effect might stem from whatever meanings different types of media carry in different social contexts.³⁷ For example, jazz listeners and viewers of comedy films and comedy TV shows are evaluated more positively than those who listen to heavy metal music and those who watch anime films and soap operas.³⁸ It means that people are branded or classified in a particular manner simply by their choice of certain media.³⁹ This evaluation process may be conscious or subconscious and it may also force people to opt for certain media types and shun others in order to project a certain image to the world with a wish to reinforce membership to certain social groups. For example, Steele and Brown found that teens displayed book and movie posters in their rooms in order to convey a certain image of themselves to their friends and family.⁴⁰ Could this dynamic apply to one's choice of a social networking site? This study seeks to answer this question by examining whether MySpace and Facebook users are viewed differently based on their choice of the one site they use. We also try to find out the reasons users chose one particular site.

The uses and gratifications theory as applied to social networking sites hardly addresses Hispanics, who happen to be heavy users of these sites. The Pew Research Center reports that 48% of all Hispanic internet users have a profile on a social networking site.⁴¹ This figure is statistically different from the 31% of

Anglo online users who have a profile on a social networking site. Clark, Lee and Boyer specifically noted the lack of racial diversity in their pool of respondents.⁴² The Raacke and Bond-Raacke's study also came up short in representing Hispanics. Only eight of their 116 respondents were Hispanic.

Raacke and Raacke-Bond also noted the lack of effects research on social networking sites. This study addresses this concern by examining the social effects of using MySpace and Facebook.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

RQ1: *What uses and gratifications do Hispanic students derive from using social networking sites?*

In keeping with prior research on uses and gratifications and computer mediated communication, this study used an adaptation of Papacharissi and Rubin's internet motive scale⁴⁴ to determine the uses and gratifications Hispanic students derive from social networking. The internet motive scale comprises of the following dimensions: Information seeking, passing time, interpersonal utility, convenience, and entertainment on the use of MySpace and Facebook.

H1: *Hispanic students who choose MySpace are evaluated differently from those who choose Facebook.*

Different media carry different meanings in different social contexts and users are evaluated differently depending on their media choice.⁴⁵ For example, jazz listeners and viewers of high culture TV shows that feature celebrities are evaluated more positively than those who listen to heavy metal music and those who view low culture TV shows like Jerry Springer.⁴⁶ Media choice also affects personalities in terms of attitudes, behavior, and beliefs.⁴⁷ For example, teens display certain media such as wall posters in order to portray a certain image of themselves.⁴⁸ This research question seeks to find whether Hispanic students choose a particular social networking site in order to portray a certain image.

RQ2: Why do Hispanic students choose one social networking site over the other?

This research question picks from the former by asking open ended questions whether respondents purposefully chose one social networking site over the other. Basically, what motivates a user to shun MySpace and opt for Facebook and vice versa? Are there any underlying image, belief, or attitudinal issues that may lead to such a choice?

Method

Data Collection

A general e-mail invitation to an online survey was sent out to the entire 10,000-plus student population of a South Texas school classified as a Hispanic Serving Institution. The survey, hosted by Surveyconsole.com, allowed for both open and closed ended questions. After accessing the consent page, respondents were then directed to specific questions about their use of MySpace, Facebook or other social networking sites. The initial block of questions covered demographics, after which respondents were asked specifically about their use of MySpace and Facebook. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree) respondents answered a series of questions adapted from Papacharissi's and Rubin's internet motive scale. Respondents were also allowed to give open ended answers to the uses of social networking sites that fell outside the range of the internet motive scale.

Measurement

Motives to use social networking sites

Drawing from Papacharissi and Rubin's internet motive scale,⁴⁹ we used interpersonal utility, passing time, information seeking and entertainment as our computer mediated communication dimensions for measuring the uses and gratifications of online social networking. Respondents were asked to respond to the following questions based on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly

disagree; 5 = strongly agree). A composite score was then computed for each dimension, and then divided by the number of items in each dimension to yield an average computer mediated communication score for each motive with a maximum score of five points.

Interpersonal utility:

- I use MySpace/Facebook to participate in discussions
- I use MySpace/Facebook to belong to a group
- I use MySpace/Facebook to express myself freely
- I use MySpace/Facebook to know what other people say
- I use MySpace/Facebook to meet new people

Passing time:

- I use MySpace/Facebook to pass time when I am bored
- I use MySpace/Facebook when I have nothing else to do
- I use MySpace/Facebook to occupy time

Information seeking:

- I use MySpace/Facebook to see what is there

I use MySpace/Facebook to get information quickly

Entertainment:

- I use MySpace/Facebook because it is entertaining
- I use MySpace/Facebook because I just like to use it
- I use MySpace/Facebook because it is enjoyable

Social Effects

As stated earlier, a key tenet of the uses and gratifications theory is that media users are active and that their media use is goal oriented.⁵⁰ At the same time, the media we use are bound to have an effect on us in terms of attitudes, behavior and beliefs.⁵¹ Additionally, whatever media we choose to use may also determine how others perceive us.⁵² This probably explains why some people use certain media in order to portray a pre-determined image.⁵³ Hypothesis I examines the social effects that arise when a user chooses one social networking site over another. It asks whether users of either social networking site are perceived better or worse. Using a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), subjects were asked to rate MySpace and Facebook users on whether they were cool, smart, or interesting:

- Do you expect someone who uses MySpace to be
 - Cool
 - Smart
 - Interesting
- Do you expect someone who uses Facebook to be
 - Cool
 - Smart
 - Interesting

We then computed an average effects score by adding all three dimensions then dividing the composite score by three.

Why students choose one social networking site over the other.

In order to elicit clear responses, students were asked a series of open-ended questions to determine the specific reasons they chose the one social networking site they used:

- If you primarily use only one social networking site, are there any reasons you chose

this particular site?

- List any other reasons you use MySpace/Facebook

Results

Table 1 shows a summary of the sample characteristics. The mean age of the sample was 26.19 years (S.D. = 7.63), reflecting the average age of a student at this institution. Gender, race and classification also fell within the typical profiles of the student population. **54**. Of those who received the survey invitation, 1660 responded for a response rate of 16%.

Table 1: Descriptives, in Percent

Gender	Male	36
	Female	64
Race	Hispanic	87.1
	Anglo	8.1
	Black	0.4
	Other	3.5
Classification	Freshman	23
	Sophomore	18.4
	Junior	23.4
	Senior	22
	Graduate	13.2
Social Network Use	MySpace	63
	Facebook	20
	Both	14
	Other	3

RQ1: *What uses and gratifications do Hispanic students derive from using social networking sites?*

The variable in the first research question was based on a 13-point measure adapted from Papacharissi and Rubin's internet motive scale. Varimax rotation was used to analyze the 13 variables. The resulting four-factor structure as shown in Table 2 accounted for 62% of the variance. Factor 1, entertainment, accounted for 18.93% of the variance (Cronbach α = 0.911) while Factor 2, passing time, accounted for 18.04% of the variance (Cronbach α = 0.884). The third and fourth factors, interpersonal utility and information seeking each explained 14.74% (Cronbach α = 0.765) and 10.3% (Cronbach α = 0.624) of the variance respectively.

Table 3 shows the overall computer mediated communication mean score and the score for each of the four use factors across the type of social networking site. Overall, passing time and entertainment scored the highest; (mean = 3.68, s.d. = 1.08) and (mean = 3.67, s.d. = 1.12) respectively. Interpersonal utility scored the lowest (mean = 2.63, s.d. = 0.95), and information seeking scored slightly higher (mean 2.83, s.d. = 1.2).

Table 2: Factor Analysis for SNS Motives and Uses

	1	2	3	4
<i>Factor 1: Entertainment</i>				
Because it is entertaining	.651	.227	.220	-.042
Because I like using	.883	.247	.220	-.042
Because it is enjoyable	.901	.217	.260	.026
<i>Factor 2: Passing Time</i>				
To pass the time when I am bored	.286	.834	.116	.156
When I have nothing else to do	.210	.859	.077	.097
To occupy my time	.150	.709	.156	.265
<i>Factor 3: Interpersonal Utility</i>				
To participate in discussions	.203	.048	.595	.041
To belong to a group	.046	.020	.657	.163
To express myself freely	.230	.158	.583	.247
To know what others say	.171	.219	.532	.224
To meet new people	.255	.196	.393	.351
<i>Factor 4: Information Seeking</i>				
To see what is out there	.273	.236	.220	.665
To get info quickly	-.177	.156	.200	.631

Table 3: Means Of SNS Use Factors Across Type of Social Networking Site*[†]

	MySpace	Facebook	Overall Score	Cronbach α
Passing time	3.67 (1.22)	3.59 (1.14)	3.68 (1.08)	0.884
Entertainment	3.60 (1.11)	3.62 (1.11)	3.67(1.12)	0.911
Information seeking	2.78 (1.22)	2.97 (1.13)	2.83 (1.20)	0.624
Interpersonal utility	2.54 (0.95)	2.64 (0.97)	2.63 (0.95)	0.765

*Standard deviations in parenthesis

† Means are measured on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree)

H1: *Hispanic students who choose MySpace are evaluated differently from those who choose Facebook.*

Data supported this hypothesis. Indeed, Facebook users were significantly rated more positively than MySpace users. One-sample T-tests showed that Facebook users scored higher than MySpace users both on the overall effects score and on each effects dimension as illustrated in Table 4

Table 4: One Sample T-Test of the Means of Effects Scores

	MySpace	Facebook
Cool*	1.35(0.81)	1.36 (0.84)
Smart*	1.33 (0.77)	1.39 (0.86)
Interesting*	1.43 (0.90)	1.44 (0.93)
Overall*	1.37 (0.76)	1.40 (0.83)

*P<.001

RQ2: *Why do Hispanic Students Choose One Social Networking Site over the other?*

Tables 5 shows the most common open ended responses to why users favor MySpace over Facebook and vice versa.

Table 5: Reasons Students Chose One Social Networking Site Over Another

MySpace	f	Facebook	f
<i>The majority of the people I know have a MySpace.</i>	99	<i>Staying in touch with friends and family</i>	24
<i>MySpace is easier to navigate and offers a customizable format.</i>	35	<i>I primarily use Facebook because it is cleaner, looks nicer, and is easier to use</i>	18
<i>To Stay In touch with family and friends</i>	32	<i>I feel that it (Facebook) is for mature people</i>	6
<i>MySpace was the first one I heard of.</i>	25	<i>Facebook has more applications</i>	5
<i>I already have a MySpace</i>	14	<i>There are also more security options on Facebook</i>	
<i>Easy to use and promote my music</i>	10		
<i>MySpace (layout) seems to be more personal</i>	8		
<i>Had not even heard of it (Facebook).</i>	4		

Discussion

This study set out to develop a profile of Hispanic student social network site users. Most Hispanic students surveyed use social networking sites (73%) and a majority of them use MySpace (63%). The latter finding reflects national trends

since 50% of all social network users nationwide use MySpace.⁵⁵ One explanation for this occurrence would be that users chose MySpace because most of their friends were already registered there. This means that a switch to Facebook would have led to the loss of one's social network, a move some users might have been averse to. Others stated that MySpace was the first social networking site they'd heard of. This stands to reason since Facebook started out later than MySpace, and with an exclusionary policy that only allowed college students with a .edu e-mail address to register. It is a feat that Facebook has scored so many users since adopting an open door policy for new users. Also, MySpace users may simply prefer the simpler interface this site provides, as indicated by the open ended statements in table 5. Additionally, since entertainment, passing time and personal utility were the most salient factors as far as uses and gratifications of social networking sites in Hispanic students are concerned, probably the technical aspects of Facebook did not rub off on most users. In fact it seems that a simpler, more straightforward site would do best for such ritualistic media uses as entertainment and passing time.

The findings also indicate that Hispanic students use social networking sites mainly for entertainment and to pass time. Using an adaptation of Papacharissi's and Rubin's internet motive scale, this study found entertainment and passing time were the most salient motives for using social networking sites among Hispanic students. This comes as no surprise given that MySpace and Facebook are just that — social networking sites. Users set up accounts mainly to seek out buddies and keep in touch with friends and family. Self expression is also a central theme on MySpace. Users do this by uploading pictures and videos of themselves taken at social gatherings like parties and clubs. They also upload their favorite music, which they can use to customize their profiles to portray a certain image to the world of social networking.

The nature of use and the motivation for such action can possibly explain why entertainment and passing time were more salient factors. Alan Rubin described media use as being either instrumental or ritualistic.⁵⁶ Instrumental media use refers to the purposeful and goal-oriented activities that involve some form of selectivity, intention and involvement. Ritualistic media use however is more passive, for example when an individual logs on to the internet to chat with friends or surf the Web in a random manner in order to kill time, to deal with boredom or for entertainment purposes.

However, even though interpersonal utility was the least salient factor, we cannot dismiss its importance in predicting social networking use. Unlike information seeking which clearly denotes an instrumental use, the a priori categories that comprise interpersonal utility can fall under instrumental or ritualistic use. The five interpersonal utility factors this study examined were:

- To participate in discussions
- To belong to a group
- To express myself freely
- To know what others say
- To meet new people

Belonging to a group, expressing oneself freely, knowing what others say, and meeting new people online are all ritualistic endeavors. These also happen to be the main reasons why people sign up for MySpace and Facebook. Participating in discussions is the only category that can fall either way. But this depends on the nature of the conversation in question. In order to clear this uncertainty, Papacharissi and Rubin recommended that researchers allow subjects to describe their online conversations in order to discern behavior. We therefore asked our respondents a series of open-ended questions as to why they use MySpace or Facebook. By far the most typical response was to keep in touch with friends and family. Sharing pictures and videos was another common reason. Keeping up with the latest trends in the music world was also an oft mentioned reason. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that most discussion that occurs on MySpace and Facebook relates to these reasons, making interpersonal utility a ritualistic factor just like entertainment and passing time, albeit less salient.

The third finding had to do with media effects. Media consumption definitely has some effect on users and social networking sites are no exception. For example, people have been known to choose certain types of media in order to portray a certain predetermined image.⁵⁷ Also, people are evaluated differently depending on the media they consume.⁵⁸ Our study found that Hispanic students who use Facebook are rated more positively than those who use MySpace. On the three effects measures; coolness, smartness, and being interesting, Facebook users registered significantly higher scores than MySpace users. On the overall measure of these three scores, Facebook users still rated higher. It is possible

that Facebook users might have opted for this one site and kept their membership in order to portray that positive image to others.

Findings from RQ2 strength this contention further. From the open ended responses to the question why user opted for one social networking site over another, some MySpace users saw Facebook as a more complicated and technical site. In fact, some MySpace users avoided Facebook specifically for this reasons. When asked why they chose MySpace over Facebook, they gave such open ended responses as:

- MySpace is easier to navigate.
- Facebook is too confusing for me.
- Sometimes Facebook feels (sic) too complicated.

On the other hand, some Facebook users gave the following reasons for their choice:

- (Facebook) is for mature people.
- Facebook is geared towards more educate people.
- Facebook has more applications.

MySpace seems much more juvenile and geared toward a younger audience.

Although the above mentioned responses are not conclusive, they however paint Facebook as a more technically oriented site, one that attracts more internet savvy users. This makes Facebook users to seem more elitist, more tech-savvy, and thus a cut above the rest. It is no wonder that they are viewed as cooler, smarter and more interesting.

Limitations

Since our results were based on a student population from one school, our findings cannot be readily generalized to the entire Hispanic online population. However it is within reason to draw certain inferences within the framework of

the findings about Hispanic students and social networking. But to ensure that being a student is not a confounding variable, more comparative research is needed with Hispanic users from the general population.

Regardless of these shortcomings, this study breaks new ground on Hispanics and social networking. It provides important insights into the use of these new and dynamic media forms within an emerging demographic group. Although uses and gratifications research as applied to social networking sites is still in its infancy, our findings highlight some important issues pertinent to these new media.

Ben Wasike is an assistant professor of communication and John Cook is an associate professor of communication at the University of Texas at Brownsville.

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