

Is There a Relationship Between Facebook, Grades?

May 7 2009



Facebook logo

(PhysOrg.com) -- News in mid-April of an unpublished study suggesting that college students' use of Facebook was related to lower college academic achievement probably sent more than a few parents reeling. Now a new study may allay parental concern.

Attempts by researchers to replicate the results of the widely publicized preliminary [Ohio State University study](#) failed to find any robust relationship between use of the popular [social networking](#) site and diminished grades.

“We found no evidence of [Facebook](#) use correlating with lower [academic achievement](#),” said Eszter Hargittai, associate professor of communication studies at Northwestern University and a fellow at the Berkman Center for Internet & Society at Harvard University.

Hargittai is co-author of “Facebook and Academic Performance:

Reconciling a Media Sensation with Data” with Josh Pasek, a doctoral student at Stanford University, and eian more of the University of Pennsylvania’s Adolescent Risk Communication Institute. The study appears in the online journal First Monday.

The researchers used relevant information from three existing data sets -- a sample of more than 1,000 undergraduates from the University of Illinois, Chicago; a nationally representative cross sectional sample of 14- to 22-year-olds; and a nationally representative longitudinal panel of American youth aged 14- to 23. No significant negative [relationship](#) between grade point averages and Facebook use was found.

“I suspect that basic Facebook use -- what these studies measure -- simply doesn’t have generalizable consequences for grades,” said Hargittai, whose research explores the social and policy implications of the Web. The doubt cast on the use of [social networking sites](#) vis-à-vis students, the study suggests, is reminiscent of suspicions cast on earlier new media, including TV and motion pictures, and their effect on children.

“The Internet and social networking sites in particular can be used in any number of ways, some of which may be beneficial to the user and others less so. More important than whether people use these sites is what they do on them,” said Hargittai. “Cultivating relationships, for example, can lead to positive outcomes.”

That is not to say that extraordinary Facebook use can never have deleterious effects on academic performance.

“If somebody’s spending an inordinate amount of time on Facebook at the expense of studying, his or her academic performance may suffer, just as it might from spending an excessive time on any activity,” Hargittai said. “ We need more research with more nuanced data to

better understand how social networking site usage may relate to academic performance.”

The study can be found in the online journal First Monday at [www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ . . . ticle/view/2498/2181](http://www.uic.edu/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/. . . ticle/view/2498/2181) . The journal is one of the first openly accessible, peer-reviewed journals on the Internet, solely devoted to the Internet.

Provided by Northwestern University ([news](#) : [web](#))

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