

## ABSTRACT

MCKENZIE, HEATHER M. Why Bother Blogging? Motivations for Adults in the United States to Maintain a Personal Journal Blog. (Under the direction of Dr. Marc Grimmett.)

A blog is an online journal that is updated regularly and usually maintained by a single author. Roughly 8 to 9 percent of adult Internet users in the U.S. maintain a blog, which is about 12 million people. This study examines the most prevalent motivations for adults in the U.S. to maintain a specific type of blog – the personal journal blog. The personal journal blog is defined as a blog maintained by one person and containing mostly personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings. An online survey of 127 personal journal bloggers who updated their blog at least every 4-5 days was conducted in December 2007 and January 2008. Participants in the survey represented a wide range of ages, geographical locations, and educational achievement levels, with most being 25 – 44 years old, female, White, and having at least some college education. Results indicate that the two most prevalent motivations for adults in the U.S. to maintain a personal journal blog are: (a) to entertain oneself and (b) to clarify thoughts and/or emotions. Survey participants also responded to questions regarding their feelings about blogging. Implications for the field of counseling and future research on the topic are addressed.

Why Bother Blogging? Motivations for Adults in the United States  
to Maintain a Personal Journal Blog

by  
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Heather McKenzie spent most of her life in Texas before relocating to Raleigh, North Carolina in July 2004. While in Texas, she earned Bachelors of Arts degrees in English Literature and Spanish Language, followed by a Masters of Education degree in Curriculum and Instruction, all at The University of Texas at Austin. She began her work on a Masters of Science degree in Agency Counseling at North Carolina State University in 2004 while also working there as an Assistant Director for University Housing. Heather worked in university residential life for over nine years. This experience enhanced her interest in human development, education, and advocacy, leading her to pursue a career in counseling.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no denying that the Internet and the resources, uses, and activities it offers have changed the landscape and functioning of modern society. Internet usage is commonplace for most adults in the United States, with at least 73% using the Internet at least occasionally (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2007). This number will continue to rise, as teens in the U.S. are becoming the most wired (i.e., regularly connected to the Internet) segment of the population, with 93% of those between the ages of 12 and 17 currently using the Internet, up from 87% in 2004 and 73% in 2000 (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Blogging is one of the many online activities that Internet users participate in. Blogging provides a venue for individuals to easily share thoughts, ideas, information, pictures, and a range of other data with people they know and those they do not. It is a unique format that essentially creates an equal opportunity for self-expression to anyone with access to the Internet.

The *blog*, derived from the term *weblog*, is widely defined as a frequently updated web page that contains a series of archived posts (i.e., entries), which are primarily textual and presented in reverse-chronological order (Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004; Herring, Scheidt, Bonus, & Wright, 2004; Miller & Shepherd, 2004). In its most basic form, a blog is an online journal that is updated regularly and usually maintained by a single author. Blogs can contain posts about any topic and blogging is accessible to even the novice Internet user, as entries require only a title and lines of text, and there are a multitude of free blogging sites available.

Blog readers represent between 1 in 5 (about 40 million people) and 1 in 3 (about 57 million people) of all Internet users (Saad, 2006; Lenhart & Fox, 2006). The reported number of actual bloggers in the U.S. varies since it is fairly common for someone to start a blog and then discontinue updating it. Roughly 8 to 9 percent of adult Internet users in the U.S. maintain a blog, which is about 12 million people (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Blog World Expo, 2007). Those who maintain blogs are referred to as bloggers, and are the subject of the current study.

Technorati is a website through which people can register their blogs for other people to search and peruse (<http://technorati.com/>). In April 2007, Technorati founder and CEO, Dave Sifry, reported having over 70 million weblogs worldwide in their searchable database, a number that jumped to 105.1 million by mid-September 2007 (Sifry, 2007 ¶7; Technorati, n.d. ¶1). It is notable that these numbers reflect only the blogs of people who have made the effort to register with the site and that the data includes blogs from around the world. Technorati also reports that 175,000 new blogs are created every day and are updated at a rate of 1.6 million posts per day (¶6). The likelihood that the number of adults participating in blogging will continue to increase makes it a worthwhile topic to investigate and better understand. Further, keeping in mind that there is limited time in each day and in life to engage in various pursuits, this study investigates the reasons that bloggers are motivated to maintain personal journal blogs.

### *Previous Research*

Because blogging is a relatively new development, around since 1997, there has not been an extensive amount of published research on the topic (Nardi et al., 2004). The studies that are available present some overlapping rationales for the reasons people blog, however there are divergent motivations documented as well. The available studies completed on blogging have either utilized a fairly localized sample or taken a broad approach to tracking and understanding bloggers as a whole. This study examines the most prevalent motivations for adults in the U.S. to maintain a specific type of blog – the personal journal blog.

To provide a framework for discussion and further research, Herring et al. (2004) collected and categorized a random sample of 203 blogs based on the nature of the content posted on each site. The blogs were collected over three months in 2003, utilizing the randomizing feature of the blog-tracking website <http://blo.gs/> (Herring et al., 2004). The colleagues identified three main types of individually authored blogs: (a) the Filter type - blog content is external to the blogger, such as sports, world events, etc., and the blogger links to and comments upon the information posted on other websites; (b) the K-log or Knowledge blog type - blog content is topic driven and based upon knowledge sharing, and the blogger makes observations, notes relevant references, and introduces new ideas about a particular topic of interest or expertise; and (c) the Personal Journal type - blog content is internal to the blogger, representing inner thoughts and feelings, and serves as a vehicle for self-expression and self-empowerment. In the random sample, Herring et al. found that the majority (70.4%) of the blogs online were of

the personal journal or “online diary” type. In their 2006 survey of 233 bloggers, the Pew Internet & American Life Project found that 76% blog to document their personal experiences and share them with others, while only 12% responded that they had never posted about a personal experience (Lenhart & Fox, 2006).

Viégas (2005) conducted a weeklong survey of 486 bloggers in January 2004. Survey participants were found through what Viégas describes as “a variant of the snowball-sampling strategy” (Methodology section, ¶ 2). Information about the online survey was distributed at a major university in the New England area and on a few high-traffic blogs published by people Viégas knew personally. Participants responded to an online questionnaire, consisting of mostly multiple-choice questions and some open-ended essay questions. Viégas focused on four areas: (a) content- the focus of the blog and any trouble resulting from blog content; (b) identity management- if bloggers identify themselves or others in their blog and the importance of identity disclosure; (c) audience- any limits set on who can access their blog and if bloggers can identify their readers; and (d) persistence- ramifications of internet material archiving and any self-editing of material after posting. Findings relevant to this current research study include: most respondents (83%) characterized their blogs as the personal journal type; 25% of respondents said they had posted highly personal materials on their blogs fairly often; 62% of respondents had considered whether certain topics were too personal to blog about fairly often; and 46% of the respondents felt they knew their audience very well (Viégas, 2005).

These findings lend validity to the impetus for further exploration into the motivations for personal journal blogging and its effects on the participants. Personal journal blogs often contain raw or uninhibited thoughts, information, and feelings that may not as easily be shared in face-to-face communication. Yet the blogger chooses to reveal this information in an open format for global viewing, perhaps rather than to write it in a traditional diary, locked with a tiny key or hidden under a bed. This type of public disclosure and implicit invitation for perusal from anyone with access to the Internet intrigues the author to understand the motivations behind it; therefore personal journal blogs are the sole focus of the current study.

In studying the personal journal type blogs, Herring et al. (2004) noted an important feature of blogging, in that it allows for only limited conversational exchanges (i.e., in the form of reader comments beneath the author's blog entry) and the author retains ultimate control over blog content. This allows the blogger to experience a certain level of social interaction while still giving him or her control over the communication space. Herring et al. also point out that blogs provide an unprecedented opportunity for ordinary people to self-express publicly, a motivation for blogging that is widely substantiated (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002; Clark, 2003; Miller & Shepherd, 2004; Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004; Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz, 2004).

Miller and Shepherd (2004) identified the blog as an emerging and significant genre, and qualitatively examined blogs written in English. They looked at blogs available on major hosting sites and blogs that have been the subject of public attention, as well as the evaluative criteria used within blogging communities (i.e., what bloggers

had to say about blogs). The sample size and participant makeup of this study were not further disclosed. Relating their 2003 findings to theory, Miller and Shepherd identified blog writers who were motivated by “mediated exhibitionism,” which in the case of blogging centers on the “social psychology of self-disclosure” (Miller & Shepherd, 2004, section The Kairos of the Blog, ¶ 12). They noted that self-disclosure serves four purposes, the first two of which are internal functions: self-clarification and social validation. Miller and Shepherd hold that self-disclosure through blogging addresses these two internal functions by providing the blogger a heightened understanding of oneself by communicating with others and confirmation that one’s personal beliefs fit within social norms. The other two purposes of self-disclosure serve external functions for the blogger: relationship development and social control. These functions are achieved by the use of self-disclosure to build connections with others, and/or to impact the opinions of others (Miller & Shepherd, 2004).

In a smaller qualitative study, Nardi, Schiano, and Gumbrecht (2004) interviewed 23 people (16 men and 7 women), aged 19 to 60. All lived in California or New York and were well educated, middle-class adults in school or employed in the humanities realm (e.g., arts, education, etc.). Through these 23 phone interviews, five motivations for blogging were found: (a) to update others on activities and whereabouts; (b) to express opinions to influence others; (c) to seek others’ opinions and feedback; (d) to “think by writing;” and (e) to release emotional tension. It is interesting to note that Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz (2004) wrote an article entitled “Why We Blog,” which was published one month after sharing the previously mentioned study results at

the 2004 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work. The article was based on the same interview data, however the five motivations listed for blogging were a bit varied from the initial documentation. The five reasons given in the latter article were: (a) documenting one's life; (b) providing commentary and opinions; (c) expressing deeply felt emotions; (d) articulating ideas through writing; and (e) forming and maintaining community forums (p.43). The significant changes to the motivating factors that Nardi, et al. made in the second report include: the removal of the desire to influence others, the removal of the desire for feedback, and the addition of a desire to create a community online.

Gumbrecht (2004) published her own conclusions as a result of the aforementioned collaborative research with Nardi and Schiano. She points to additional relevant motivations that press bloggers to continue blogging, citing that the "limited interactivity" of blogging is paramount to its preference over other forms of communication (Section 3.2, Media Selection, ¶1). First, immediate (or any) response to a blog entry is not necessarily expected, thus the blogger and reader can avoid feeling discomfort when emotionally heightened issues are posted on a blog, unlike when having a face-to-face conversation. And second, blogs enable the writer to avoid an immediate reaction or interjection, allowing the writer to get their entire story or thought out, uninterrupted.

Gumbrecht elaborates on a third motivation: that some of the survey participants chose to blog because it gave them a means to share their feelings when they would not otherwise do so. One participant in Gumbrecht's survey summarized this well by saying

she is “too closed to tell people in person that she’s having a bad day, but at some level she wants them to know” (Section 3.2, Media Selection, ¶5). The concept of forming community was also expanded upon, in that knowing what others are going through and being able to identify with that creates a bond of kinship, regardless of physical proximity. Concerning the public nature of blogging, another survey participant noted that with a blog, there is the “possibility of life-altering exchanges with others,” as opposed to a diary, which has “no interaction,” and “won’t change my life” (Gumbrecht, 2004, Section 3.3.2, Blogs on an “island,” ¶ 4).

Miura and Yamashita (2007) conducted an online survey of 1434 Japanese bloggers in 2004, seeking to understand why bloggers continued to write rather than abandon their blog. The study looked at two overall themes through the questionnaire: (a) the benefit to self, through reflection on personal traits and (b) the benefit to relationships with others, based around communicating with and gaining acceptance from readers. They found that the strongest influence on a blogger’s desire to continue blogging was the satisfaction of being accepted by others, as demonstrated by positive feedback (e.g., encouragement, sympathy, and support) the blogger received on their blog site by readers.

In a different approach, Polish researchers analyzed the motivations of bloggers through the blog content itself, rather than through a survey questionnaire (Trammell, Tarkowski, Hofmokl, & Sapp, 2006). After reviewing 358 blog pages and coding the content, the underlying motivations for blogging were categorized into six main reasons: entertainment (for pure enjoyment), information (sharing news), social interaction (blog

writer speaks directly to the reader or prompts reader response), self-expression (informing others of personal information, and feelings or thoughts), passing time (stating it was a way to spend time), and professional advancement (work-related information or topics). Upon examination of the webpages, Trammel, et al. found that 80.3% of the bloggers were motivated primarily by self-expression. Entertainment and social interaction ranked second and third, with 52.6% and 51.3%, respectively.

### *Research Question*

As is evident, there have been varied approaches and findings in the available research on blogging. There has also been significant utilization of and reference to a single study (viz., Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004) that prompts further investigation to expand upon and/or confirm the research findings. The common theme throughout the literature is that blogging provides a space for writers to express themselves and there are quite varied motivations for doing so. This study takes a deeper exploration into the most prevalent motivations for adults in the United States to maintain a personal journal blog.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

#### *Participants*

Participants in this study were individuals who had regularly maintained a personal journal blog on the Internet. Adults in the United States (18 years of age and older) who were proficient in English were targeted. *Maintaining* was defined as updating (i.e., posting a new comment to) a single-author blog at least three times a week. *Personal Journal blogs* were defined as those whose content was primarily about the author's experiences in daily life. The designated age group was intended to omit the need for guardian approval. The goal was for participants in the study to be representative of the varying genders, ethnicities, and overall diverse nature of the online community within the targeted age group.

#### *Research Design*

A survey research design was utilized in order to gain descriptive results regarding the most prevalent motivation for adults to maintain a personal journal blog. Because there was no existing validated measure for obtaining the desired information for this study, participants completed a specially developed online survey, which incorporated previously documented motivations for maintaining personal journal blogs. The online survey method was deemed quite suitable, given that the behavior being studied was also conducted online. Researchers have noted that some of the benefits of online surveys over paper surveys include the faster response rate, the ability to send e-mail reminders to participants, the ease of processing/downloading the data, the access to

varied populations, and the reduction in cost (Gunn, 2002; Baron, & Siepmann, 2000). Likewise, online surveys present some limitations, such as the high rate of non-response (i.e., failure to complete the survey), minimal thought given to the question prompts, the variance in the way a survey visually appears on different computers, and concerns of the respondents over security/privacy. This survey was carefully designed to help mediate some of the concerns that have been described, by making it short in length, plain in presentation and design, and divided into brief sections. Additionally, to alleviate privacy concerns, no identifying information was tracked or requested of the respondents.

#### *Survey Description*

The Blogger Motivation Survey (see Appendix A) consisted of 38 total questions divided into 4 sections, ordered in increasing levels of self-disclosure, beginning with basic demographic data and progressing to feeling-related data. The *Blogger Background Data* section contained 9 questions, each with unique drop-down menu responses, soliciting basic information such as age, gender, and geographical location. The *Blogger Usage Data* section had 6 questions, each with a separate four-point scale, and focused on the blogger's perception of their blog, such as how personal the blog content was.

The *Motivations for Blogging* section had 19 questions, 15 of which were statements (e.g., *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging; I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions*) with a uniform four-point scale assessing the intensity of motivation the respondent felt from each statement (e.g., *Motivates me an extreme amount; Does not motivate me at all*). The last 4 prompts in that section asked respondents to rank the motivations and featured drop-down menus and the option to

write in a response. The author created each of the 15 statements in the *Motivations for Blogging* section by associating it to one of the aforementioned research-based motivations for blogging. For example, Herring et al. (2004) documented that bloggers were motivated by the “opportunity to self-express publicly.” The associated Blogger Motivation Survey statement for that item was: *I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.* Appendix B illustrates the relationship between each of the motivations found in the research and their associated Blogger Motivation Survey statements. Finally, there were 4 questions in the *Feelings About Blogging* section (e.g., *How do you usually feel after updating your blog (adding a new post)?*), which provided options in drop-down boxes and the opportunity to write in a response.

Because blogging is an online activity, collecting and surveying participants online in their natural setting was the most sensible approach. The instrument was created utilizing an online survey provider, SurveyMonkey ([www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)). This professional service required a minimal non-contract monthly fee, which included the capacity for 1000 survey respondents, an unlimited number of pages and questions, and secured anonymity for the respondents. The site also had no extraneous advertisements or brands on the webpages that could contribute to the non-response rates by distracting or bothering survey respondents. The survey was made up of ten web pages and took respondents five to ten minutes to complete.

#### *Data Collection*

Three different volunteer sampling methods were used for obtaining study participants. First, the author created a profile page on the online networking site

MySpace.com, an interactive online community that links people to each other and to each other's friends. MySpace.com was selected based upon documented user data. In May 2007, MySpace.com was rated the top social networking site, with 56.6 million unique visitors (Nielsen//NetRatings, 2007). MySpace.com additionally enjoys the largest retention rate of any social networking site, reported at a rate of 67% in May 2006 (Nielsen//NetRatings, 2006). Each profile page on MySpace.com automatically comes with a section for the author to create a blog, so user ease was also a consideration in selecting this venue. The age of MySpace.com users ranges from 12 to 68, with the average user between 35 and 54 years of age and 68% of users being over the age of 25 (ComScore, Inc., 2006). Given the high number of users, the simplicity of blog maintenance, and the appropriateness of the user age range, MySpace.com presented an ideal venue for recruiting study participants. The author's "friends" on MySpace.com (i.e. people with profile pages on the site, who were linked to the author's page) were contacted and asked to recruit their friends, and their friends to complete the survey if they were bloggers. This method took advantage of the viral nature of the online blogging community, as many MySpace.com users maintain, read, and share blogs with each other. On October 28, 2007, the site recorded nearly 160 million "total blogs," a term that was not defined, but the author assumed that it represented individual blog posts, not actual blogs (<http://blog.myspace.com/>).

The second recruitment method also utilized MySpace.com, and the author directly contacted bloggers on the site. The blogs on <http://blog.myspace.com/> are grouped and listed under 23 "Blog Categories." Each category contains a list of 200

blogs, which appear to be listed in order of popularity (viewed the most times by visitors to the MySpace.com site). Of the 23 categories of blogs, 5 were selected for use in identifying bloggers for participation in the survey: (a) Blogging; (b) Friends; (c) Goals, Plans, Hopes; (d) Jobs, Work, Careers; and (e) Life. These categories were determined to most effectively encompass the blog topics and styles meeting the author's definition of personal journal blog. The author skimmed each blog for the presence of personal content, posting frequency, age, and geographical location (the last two of which are part of the standard user profile information on MySpace.com). Over the course of several weeks, 273 bloggers who met the criteria were contacted by clicking the "Send a Message" link on each user's MySpace.com page. Users who had their page "set to public" (i.e., meaning that anyone with access to a computer can read it) received a message from the author with details about the survey and a request for participation. Pages not "set to public" displayed a message stating, "This blog is set to private. This user must add you as a friend to see his/her blog," and were not sent a message about the survey. Additionally, MySpace.com blog sites that were clearly not maintained by a single person (e.g., a site for a band, TV show, or business) were not sent a message about the survey. Other bloggers that were excluded consist of: those whose most recent blog post was about a family/friend death, those who stated they were not going to be back for a while (i.e., military deployment), and those who maintained a video blog rather than a written blog.

The third method for recruiting participants was through the author's personal and professional contacts. These 69 people were solicited by e-mail and invited to participate in the online survey if they were bloggers or to forward the email to others who might be.

The sample was one of relative convenience (i.e., members of one of the most popular online communities and those connected to the author), but random within the selected venues, with the goal of adequately representing the adult U.S. blogging population. Additionally, the survey was anonymous, so the integrity of the responses remained intact. Respondents who selected *Blogger Background Data* options on the Blogger Motivation Survey that were outside the preset age, geographical location, blog maintenance, and blog type parameters were omitted (e.g., under age 18, non-U.S. residents, posting fewer than three times per week, and non-personal journal blog, respectively).

The survey remained live for a period of seven weeks to allow time to gather the desired sample size of 1000 bloggers. Information regarding the survey and eliciting participants was posted on <http://www.myspace.com/heatherbean01> and in the e-mails sent directly to potential participants. The Communication to Potential Participants (see Appendix C) contained a description of the research project and a link to the online survey.

### *Data Analysis*

Responses from the survey were compiled into a Microsoft Excel document and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The survey yielded quantifiable background data on bloggers in terms of frequency percentages (i.e., how often responses were selected, such

as *Male, Female, No response*). Statistical data on the motivations, feelings, and other blogger usage information was described using measures of central tendency, including the mean (the average response) and the mode (the most frequent response).

Write-in responses to the question about the most motivating factor for blogging and the questions regarding feelings about blogging were compiled and analyzed for common themes. When multiple comments represented similar sentiments, they were clustered together and reported in the results as an emerging theme (i.e., a theme of disappointment). Singular sentiments that were not reflected by at least two respondents were not included in the summaries of emerging themes.

### *Limitations*

Although the results of this study are useful in understanding the most prevalent motivation for adults to maintain a personal journal blog, it does have known limitations. Because the participants self-reported the data, information is potentially biased since the survey measure was not standardized. Some respondents may not have thought about blogging on a meta-level until taking the survey, and therefore the data may not represent their true, deeply felt motivations for blogging. The results also represent those bloggers that chose to actually complete the survey and may overly contain a certain type of person (e.g., one who selects to take the time to complete a survey). As mentioned previously, the online survey style itself lends to a high rate of non-response and the potential for the respondent to give minimal thought to the question prompts.

Additionally, the respondents may not adequately represent the diversity of bloggers in

the overall population because the recruitment of participants began with people associated with the author or who utilized MySpace.com.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESULTS

#### *Description of Participants*

A total of 196 respondents participated in the online survey. Of these, 69 were eliminated from the final results because the respondent: (a) did not complete the survey (n=17); (b) identified as being under 18 years of age (n=1); (c) indicated they did not update their blog within the desired frequency range (n=45); or (d) indicated they were located outside of the United States (n=2). After reviewing the survey responses, the researcher widened the original parameters of bloggers from those who updated their blog at least every 2-3 days to include some who updated at least every 4-5 days. The responses of 23 participants who indicated that they updated their blog every 4-5 days but specified that their content was Quite, Somewhat, or Extremely personal were included. The researcher chose to include these individuals based on a more thorough understanding of blogging after reviewing several hundred blogs on MySpace.com. As a result, it was evident that blogs updated every 4-5 days could contain as much personal content as those updated with more frequency. Therefore, the motivations of these additional 23 bloggers were determined to be relevant to the study.

The 127 participants that met the defined parameters represented a wide range of adults in the U.S. Nearly 82% of respondents were between the ages of 25-44, with 42% identifying themselves as 25-34 years of age and 40% identifying themselves as 35-44 years of age (see Table 1). Survey participants were mostly women, with 65% identifying themselves as female and 35% identifying as male. Most participants

categorized their race/ethnicity as White (n=100), with the next highest group being 11 participants who identified as Black or African American. Geographically, respondents were most represented in the South (24%), West (23%) and Midwest (19%) regions of the U.S. Regarding educational achievement, 84% of respondents had at least some college or higher.

Table 1

*Description of Blogger Motivation Survey Participants*

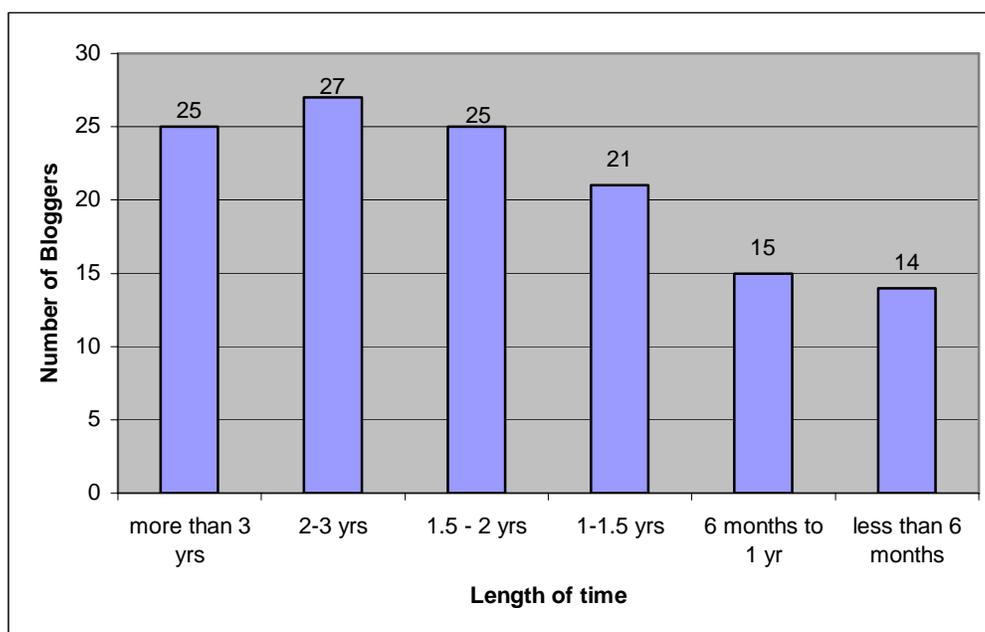
Blogger Background Item	No. Participants	% of Total
<u>Age Range</u>		
18-24 years	9	7.09%
25-34 years	53	41.73%
35-44 years	51	40.16%
45-54 years	11	8.66%
55-65 years	3	2.36%
<u>Gender</u>		
Female	82	64.57%
Male	44	34.65%
No response	1	0.79%
<u>Race/Ethnicity</u>		
American Indian or Alaska Native	3	2.36%
Asian	1	0.79%
Black or African American	11	8.66%
Hispanic or Latino	5	3.94%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	2	1.57%
Other	5	3.94%
White	100	78.74%
<u>Geographical Region</u>		
South	30	23.62%
West	29	22.83%
Midwest	24	18.90%

Table 1 (continued).

Blogger Background Item	No. Participants	% of Total
Mid-Atlantic	15	11.81%
New England	7	5.51%
Southwest	22	17.32%
<u>Level of Educational Achievement</u>		
Some high school	1	0.79%
High school graduate	19	14.96%
Some college	43	33.86%
Associate's degree	10	7.87%
Bachelor's degree	27	21.26%
Graduate or professional degree	27	21.26%

### *Blogger Usage Data and Blog Characteristics*

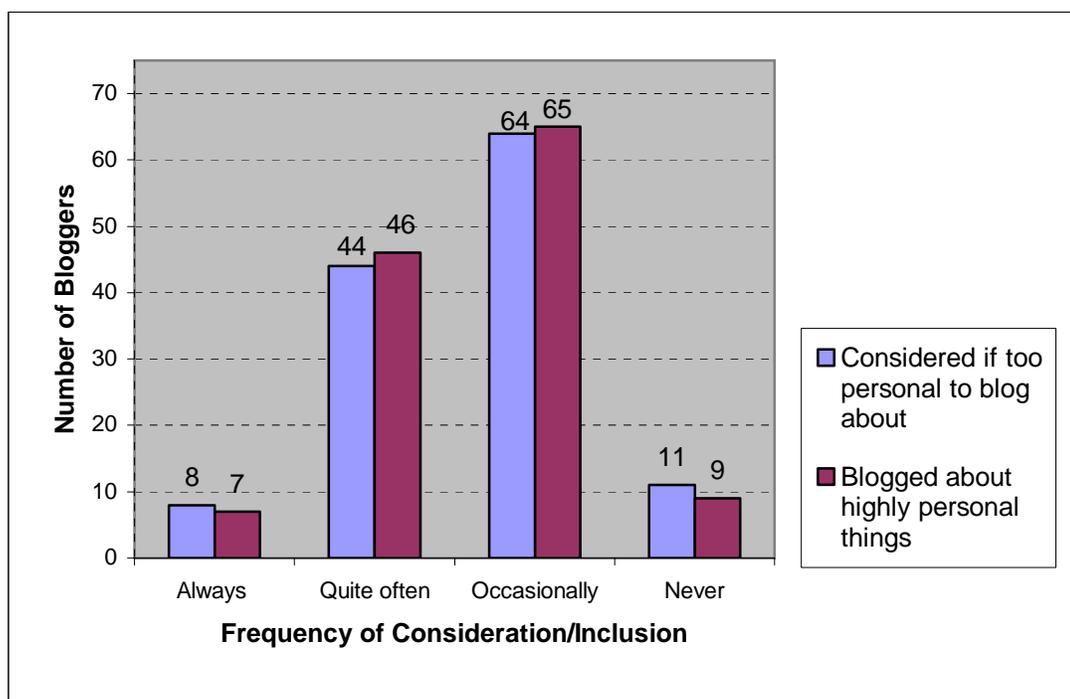
Participants in the survey have maintained their blogs for varying lengths of time, with 77% (n=98) indicating they had maintained their blog for more than a year, and 20% for more than 3 years (see Figure 1). About 21% of the bloggers do not identify themselves on their blog, while half of the respondents have their “real name” on their blog, and 29% have “part of their real name.”



*Figure 1.* Reported length of time blog has been maintained, from initial date of blog creation.

Bloggers indicated the levels of personal content in their blog to be the following: Extremely personal - 20%, Quite personal - 48%, and Somewhat personal - 32%. Only 11 bloggers said they never considered whether something was too personal to blog about and only 9 bloggers said they never blogged about highly personal things. Most bloggers said they occasionally considered if something was too personal and occasionally included highly personal content in their blog. Figure 2 illustrates the relationship between two survey items: (a) how often the blogger considered if content was too personal to blog about and (b) how often they included highly personal content in their blog. Regarding how well the bloggers know their audience that reads this personal content, half of the bloggers stated that they knew their blog reading audience Quite or

Extremely Well. The remaining 40% indicated they knew their audience Somewhat Well and about 10% said they knew their audience Not Well at All.



*Figure 2.* Comparison between consideration of personal content and inclusion of personal content in blogs.

#### *Motivations for Blogging – Rating of 15 Motivating Items*

In the first section of *Motivations for Blogging*, the survey participants rated each of the 15 identified reasons for blogging by degree of motivation (i.e., Motivates me an Extreme Amount, Quite a bit, Somewhat, or Not at all (See Table 2)). Respondents endorsed all 15 items as providing at least some level of motivation to maintain their blog. In order to get a strong grasp of which items provided bloggers the most motivation to blog, the “Extreme amount” and “Quite a bit” response percentages were combined for

analysis. Means were also calculated, with 1 being equal to an item motivating a blogger an “Extreme Amount, and 4 being equal to an item motivating a blogger “Not at all.” *I entertain myself by blogging* was the item with the highest percentage of respondents indicating it motivated them an “Extreme Amount” (55%), and having the highest combined percentage of 79%. Three additional items had combined percentage totals over 70%, signifying their heightened motivational value. In descending order of combined percentage, they are: *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* (73%); *I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with* (71%); and *I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do* (70%). Table 2 provides the percentages and means for the level of motivation respondents indicated for each motivating item.

Three items in this section of the survey had the highest percentage of bloggers select that it did not motivate them at all: *I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person* (40% selected “Not at all”); *I put thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud* (29% selected “Not at all”); *I create a community by bringing others to my blog* (28% selected “Not at all”).

Table 2

*Summary of How Much Each Item Motivates Bloggers to Blog*

Motivating Item	Level of Motivation					Mean	Extreme + Quite
	Extreme Amount	Quite a bit	Some what	Not at all			
I entertain myself by blogging.	55%	24%	17%	3%	1.69	79%	
I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.	43%	28%	18%	11%	1.98	71%	
I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.	34%	39%	20%	7%	2.01	73%	
I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.	27%	43%	24%	6%	2.09	70%	
I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.	36%	26%	24%	14%	2.16	62%	
I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.	21%	39%	33%	6%	2.24	60%	
I chronicle my life in my blog.	32%	27%	26%	15%	2.24	59%	
I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.	32%	27%	28%	13%	2.24	59%	
I keep people I care about updated.	29%	24%	28%	19%	2.36	53%	
I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.	23%	32%	31%	15%	2.38	55%	
I express myself without being interrupted.	32%	21%	20%	27%	2.41	53%	
I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.	17%	38%	32%	14%	2.43	55%	
I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.	24%	23%	24%	29%	2.59	47%	
I create a community by bringing others to my blog.	14%	31%	27%	28%	2.69	45%	
I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.	11%	14%	35%	40%	3.04	25%	

*Note.* Items are listed in order of increasing mean value. Mean was calculated based on values assigned to each level of motivation (i.e., 1 = Extreme Amount, 2 = Quite a Bit, 3 = Somewhat, and 4 = Not at all).

### *Motivations for Blogging – Ranking of Top Three Motivating Items*

In the second section of *Motivations for Blogging*, survey participants were asked to select, in order of importance, their top three of the 15 motivations for maintaining their blog. When asked to select their main reason for blogging, the highest percentage of respondents (22 participants) indicated that their main reason was not listed among the provided options and they chose to write in a reason instead. Of these 22 written comments, 11 represented a theme of writing, stating that they loved to write, were aspiring writers, or wanted to promote their writing. Six of the remaining 22 were deemed by the researcher as elaborations on the motivations actually listed as choices. For example, the bloggers who wrote that they blogged “To make people aware and to have an impact on thoughts and lives,” and “I make people smile -- a great way to start the day,” could have selected the option *I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion*. The remaining 5 who chose to write in their main motivation either stated a combination of reasons or focused on explaining the main topic of their blog. For instance, one respondent wrote, “Blogging is a great form of expression as well as a wonderful way for me to think about what is going on, or to recall my past. There isn't one reason.” Those who elaborated on the topic of their blog included items such as accountability to their weight loss goals and tracking an experience with chemotherapy.

After the write-in comments, the motivation for blogging endorsed by the most respondents was *I entertain myself by blogging*, with 20 respondents selecting it as the most important reason they continue to blog. Two other items also received high endorsement: *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* and *I release*

*intense feelings/emotions through blogging*, with 19 and 11 participants respectively selecting those items as their top reason. However, few participants selected as their main motivation two items that had ranked higher as a motivating factor in the previous section of the survey. *I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with* was chosen by only 6 participants and *I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do* was chosen by only 3 participants as their main motivation for blogging. Only one factor was unselected by any single respondent as their main motivation: *I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space*.

The next survey question that asked participants to select their second most motivating factor for blogging did not allow them the option to write in a response. The top two reasons selected in this question were: *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* (26 participants, 20.5% of total) and *I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/ emotions* (18 participants, 14.2% of total). Respondents then selected their third most motivating factor and the top reason selected was *I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/ emotions* (17 participants, 13.4% of total). Table 3 illustrates all responses for the questions regarding the top three motivating factors for blogging.

Table 3

*Survey Respondents' Three Most Important Reasons for Blogging*

Reason for Blogging	#1	%	#2	%	#3	%
The most important reason I blog is not listed above. My most important reason is: (write-in response)	22	17.3%	-	-	-	-
I entertain myself by blogging.	20	15.7%	10	7.9%	12	9.4%
I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.	19	15.0%	26	20.5%	10	7.9%
I chronicle my life in my blog.	13	10.2%	13	10.2%	12	9.4%
I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.	11	8.7%	7	5.5%	5	3.9%
I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.	9	7.1%	10	7.9%	5	3.9%
I keep people I care about updated.	8	6.3%	6	4.7%	13	10.2%
I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.	6	4.7%	9	7.1%	12	9.4%
I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.	5	3.9%	18	14.2%	17	13.4%
I express myself without being interrupted.	5	3.9%	2	1.6%	4	3.1%
I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.	3	2.4%	12	9.4%	10	7.9%
I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.	2	1.6%	4	3.1%	7	5.5%
I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.	2	1.6%	5	3.9%	6	4.7%
I create a community by bringing others to my blog.	1	0.8%	3	2.4%	10	7.9%
I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.	1	0.8%	0	0.0%	2	1.6%
I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.	0	0.0%	2	1.6%	2	1.6%

*Note.* Reasons are listed in order of highest response for the item selected as #1 (most important).

Participants were not given the option to write-in a response for their #2 and #3 most important reasons.

In order to more clearly identify the most prevalent motivations for maintaining a personal journal blog, the responses to each of the three ranking questions were combined. For example, the total number of participants who selected *I entertain myself by blogging* as their top motivation, as a second motivation, or as a third motivation were all added together. Those who opted to write in comments were excluded from this calculation. The resulting four most prevalent motivations for blogging were: *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* (15.3%); *I entertain myself by blogging* (11.7%); *I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions* (11.1%); and *I chronicle my life in my blog* (10.6%). Table 4 includes numerical data for all 15 motivations.

Table 4

*Combined Responses to Questions of Top Three Motivations for Blogging*

Reason for Blogging	Total Times Selected As Top Three	Total Percent
I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.	55	15.3%
I entertain myself by blogging.	42	11.7%
I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.	40	11.1%
I chronicle my life in my blog.	38	10.6%
I keep people I care about updated.	27	7.5%
I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.	27	7.5%
I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.	25	7.0%
I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.	24	6.7%
I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.	23	6.4%
I create a community by bringing others to my blog.	14	3.9%
I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.	13	3.6%
I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.	13	3.6%
I express myself without being interrupted.	11	3.1%
I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.	4	1.1%
I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.	3	0.8%

*Note.* Reflects combination of responses to all three questions of top reasons for blogging. Reasons are listed in order of most frequent selection. Write in responses to Most Important reason were excluded.

To summarize, survey participants were provided 15 different blogging motivations and asked to rate the level of motivation each item provided for them. Next, they selected their most motivating item, followed by the second and third items that most motivated them to continue blogging. Table 5 summarizes the top four reasons for blogging items in three different categories: (a) highest levels of motivation (i.e., an “extreme amount” or “quite a bit”); (b) ranked most frequently as the most motivating; and (c) appeared most frequently in the top three. The top four reasons in each category are not identical, but two of the fifteen motivating items did appear in each category. *I entertain myself by blogging* and *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* were both at the top of the list for being extremely or quite motivating, were most frequently selected as the number one motivating factor, and also ranked highest in the combined top three motivating factors.

Table 5

*Four Most Prevalent Motivations for Blogging in Three Categories*

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Four Highest Levels of Motivation (Items Motivate an Extreme Amount or Quite a Bit)

**I entertain myself by blogging.**

I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.

**I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.**

I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.

Four Most Frequently Selected as Most Motivating Factor

**I entertain myself by blogging.**

**I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.**

I chronicle my life in my blog.

I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.

Four Most Selected Among Top Three Motivating Factors

**I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.**

**I entertain myself by blogging.**

I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.

I chronicle my life in my blog.

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*Note.* Items are in order of descending frequency/percent, as reported in previous tables. Bolded items are those that appear in all three categories.

*Motivations for Blogging – Items Motivating Other People to Blog*

The final question regarding motivations for blogging asked the survey participants to select the reason they thought most other people maintain personal journal blogs. The top three reasons that bloggers thought motivated others to blog were: *To connect with others who think/feel similarly to them* (22%); *To receive feedback from others on their thoughts/emotions* (17.3%); and *To clarify their thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* (10.2%). These top three selections account for half of the responses. All other motivations were selected by at least some respondents as the top reason, except for the item *To decide on the content and the people that are part of their blog space*, which was not selected by anyone. Table 6 displays all responses for this survey question.

Table 6

*Survey Respondents' Beliefs About Why Other People Blog*

Reason for Blogging	No.	%
To connect with others who think/feel similarly to them.	28	22.0%
To receive feedback from others on their thoughts/emotions.	22	17.3%
To clarify their thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.	13	10.2%
To chronicle their life in their blog.	10	7.9%
To express themselves in a public (rather than private) way.	10	7.9%
To create a community by bringing others to their blog.	7	5.5%
To entertain themselves by blogging.	7	5.5%
To keep people they care about updated.	7	5.5%
To release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.	7	5.5%
To express themselves without being interrupted.	4	3.1%
To express thoughts/emotions in their blog that could be hard for them to say out loud.	4	3.1%
To impact the thoughts/feelings of others when sharing their opinion.	4	3.1%
To interact with people they might not otherwise interact with.	2	1.6%
To share about their emotions without seeing others react in person.	2	1.6%
To decide on the content and the people that are part of their blog space.	0	0.0%

*Feelings About Blogging*

Four questions were asked of survey participants to elicit their feelings about blogging. The first question asked the bloggers how they felt after adding a new post to their blog, and most respondents selected Satisfied (45.7%). Other responses were: Excited (17.3%), Positive (16.5%), Relieved (7.1%), Hopeful (3.1%), Drained (1.6%)

and Nervous (1.6%). Nine people (7.1%) chose to write in the way they felt. Responses centered on themes of catharsis, creativity, that feelings depend on the content of the post, and of seeking reactions from others (e.g., “Like I got to release some creative energy;” “Interested to see what people have to say.”).

The second feeling question asked participants how they felt after someone posted a positive or supportive comment to their blog. Many respondents selected Pleased (29.9%). In descending order, the remaining participants selected Valued (22%), Honored (18.9%), Connected (15%), Excited (7.9%) and Important (1.6%). Six people chose to write in how they felt after a positive comment, and these reflected feelings of appreciation, validation, satisfaction, and doubt/bemusement (e.g., “Validated;” “Thankful. I have some awesome friends and am often reminded of that with positive blog comments.”).

The third question in this section focused on how bloggers felt when they received a negative or criticizing comment on their blog. Most participants (30.7%) did not find their feelings in the list provided and chose to write in how they felt. These 39 write-in responses reflected common themes of indifference, curiosity, amusement, feeling challenged, introspection, and rejection (e.g., “I don't care one way or the other;” “Curious or interested in the opposing point of view;” “Challenged. Iron sharpens iron.”). Six of the bloggers wrote that they had never received a negative comment. The participants who selected from the list of feelings provided in the survey were as follows: Anxious to Respond (29.1%), Annoyed (18.9%), Connected (9.4%), Upset (5.5%), Excited (3.1%) and Important (3.1%).

The final feeling question asked bloggers how they felt when there was no response to their blog posting. Most participants selected Fine (40.2%). The next most frequent response was the write-in category, with 25 survey participants (19.7%) providing comments about how they felt. Themes emerging from the comments included: disappointment, curiosity/surprise, and indifference (e.g., “disappointed, unsuccessful;” “Curious, where is everyone?” “Not all of my blog are there for responses, so I do not care.”). Seven respondents said they had never had a blog post remain without a comment, but some respondents included caveats about how they would feel (e.g., “That never happens. My readership is large. I would be crushed if it were to happen though;” “I don't know. That's never happened. I would think I would feel contemplative about the post.”). The remaining participants selected Disconnected (14.2%), Unimportant (10.2%), Upset (6.3%), Annoyed (4.7%), Hopeful (2.4%), Anxious (1.6%) and Relieved (0.8%). Appendix D includes all the numerical response data regarding survey participants’ feelings about blogging.

## CHAPTER 4

### Discussion

The results of this survey indicate that the two most prevalent motivations for blogging are: (a) to entertain the blogger; and (b) to allow the blogger to clarify thoughts and/or emotions. As summarized in Table 5, there are several other factors that are quite motivating to bloggers as well. In this section, the findings will be compared to the previous research as well as applied to the field of counseling, and recommendations for future research will be included.

#### *Results Compared to Previous Research*

The results of the Blogger Motivation Survey both confirm and contradict the various findings of the previous research on blogging motivations. Regarding the level of personal content in blogs, 36.2% of bloggers in this survey indicated they wrote highly personal things on their blogs “quite often,” which is higher than the 25% that Viégas (2005) found. Additionally, 62% of the bloggers Viégas surveyed reported that they considered whether certain topics were too personal to blog about “fairly often.” This phrasing is slightly different than the Blogger Motivation Survey, therefore two responses are combined for comparison. A total 40.9% of survey participants reported that they considered whether it was too personal “always” (6.3%) or “quite often” (34.7%). These differences may be attributed to the fact that 18% of the 426 bloggers Viégas included in the survey did not classify their blog as the personal journal type, whereas 100% of the blogs in this survey were of the personal journal category. It is also possible that once a

blogger begins sharing personal content online regularly, as with a personal journal blog, they think less often about the level of disclosure they are engaging in.

Regardless of the frequency with which the bloggers considered how personal certain topics were, usually they still chose to post it, as indicated in Figure 2. A combined total of 67.7% of survey participants indicated that they blogged about “quite personal” (48%) or “extremely personal” (19.7%) topics. It is worth highlighting here that all of the bloggers recruited directly via message requests on Myspace.com had their blogs available for anyone to view, which reflects a significant casualness about the highly personal content being openly accessible to all Internet users. Viégas reported that 46% of respondents felt they knew their audience “very well,” which is similar to the total 50.4% of Blogger Motivation Survey participants who said they knew their reading audience “quite well” (38.6%) or “extremely well” (11.8%). Blogs often have habitual readers and even “subscribers.” A “subscriber” can have a link to someone else’s blog listed on their personal MySpace.com page and have access to all blog postings even if some posts are not set to public. This may account for the bloggers’ confidence in knowing who is reading their blog. Additionally, after studying several hundred blogs, it became apparent to the author that a distinct blogging community exists on MySpace.com, and many bloggers also read other people’s blogs or refer to them in their posts. This community feeling may also affect the bloggers’ sense of who their audience is and contribute to the blogger’s comfort in disclosing highly personal content.

Several of the previous studies documented self-clarification as a primary motivation for blogging (Miller & Shepard, 2004; Nardi, Schiano, & Gumbrecht, 2004;

and Miura & Yamashita, 2007). This mirrors the Blogger Motivation Survey statement *I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging* that was rated highly by respondents throughout the survey. Trammel, et al. (2006) were the only researchers to document entertainment as a main blogging motivation, representing the other motivating statement that was rated highly at all points on the survey: *I entertain myself by blogging*. The survey statement *I chronicle my life in my blog* was also selected frequently by participants, having a place in two of the three categories summarized in Table 5 (i.e., *most motivating* and *most selected among top three motivating factors*). Only the article by Nardi, Schiano, Gumbrecht, & Swartz (2004) included this item as a significant motivation for blogging.

Much of the previous research has concluded that bloggers were motivated by the desire to express themselves to others. The survey statement intended to represent this concept was *I express myself in a public (rather than private) way*, yet survey participants did not indicate this as a highly motivating factor. It is possible that the phrasing of this survey did not elicit the desired meaning, for in a more macro sense, the entire practice of blogging (i.e., writing something and putting it on the Internet for others to view), is public self-expression. Still, the survey participants selected other items as more motivating than that particular survey statement. Additionally, all of the motivations were selected by at least some respondents as their main reason for blogging, except for the item: *I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space*. This item was meant to represent a sense of control over the communication space, a

motivation documented by Herring et al. (2004). Perhaps the participants also misinterpreted the sentiment or wording of this statement.

An interesting facet of this particular survey methodology was that many participants seemed very invested in the process of providing feedback. Of the bloggers contacted through MySpace.com, 78 of them wrote back to the email indicating they had participated in the survey and/or added additional thoughts about blogging and why they are motivated to do it. Eight of these survey respondents requested the survey results once the study was complete. It was also notable that a significant number of respondents chose to provide write-in comments on the survey when the option was available. In a way, it seemed that the process of blogging was such a personal investment for the survey participants that it was almost diminutive to simply click a box on a survey to describe the motivations behind it and how it felt to blog.

Somewhat contrary to Miura and Yamashita (2007), who noted that the strongest influence on a blogger's desire to continue blogging was the satisfaction of receiving positive feedback from readers, 23% of Blogger Motivation Survey participants said their blogging entries were not at all affected by reader comments. Most participants (55%) said they were affected only "some." Yet it is interesting that when asked how they felt after receiving a negative comment on their blog, nearly a third of the participants chose to write in a response to explain how they were affected. Additionally, not a single respondent stated that they felt indifferent or unaffected after receiving a positive comment on their blog. It seems that if the feedback from readers did not have an impact overall, the bloggers would have expressed it on that particular question as well.

The concepts that Gumbrecht (2004) highlighted regarding the “limited interactivity” of blogging did not rate highly with survey participants compared to the other items. The survey questions related to that concept (e.g., *I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud; I express myself without being interrupted; and I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person*) did receive some response, but many participants indicated they were not motivated at all by them. However, one of those items, *I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud*, had fairly consistent representation across all levels of motivation, with the percent of respondents who selected “Not at all” only exceeding those who selected “Extreme Amount” by 5%. The researcher wondered if the responses to this particular item might be related to the gender of the bloggers, but upon comparison, there was not a considerable difference between how males and females responded. It appears that these items based on limited interaction may provide some side benefit to blogging as opposed to other forms of communication, but are not primary motivators for most bloggers in this survey.

Another significant result of the survey was the difference between what bloggers selected as their own motivation versus what they considered to be the motivations of other bloggers. Blogging for the purpose of entertainment was rated relatively low when bloggers selected why they thought others maintained a blog. Clarification of feelings and thoughts was still among the top three motivations (10.2%), but was considerably less than connecting with others (28%) and receiving feedback from others (17.3%). These two items were indeed rated highly by bloggers regarding their own motivations,

but not consistently noted as top motivations. It is interesting to consider why so many bloggers in the survey thought that others had different reasons than themselves for maintaining their personal journal blog.

### *Implications for Counseling*

There are numerous implications and applications that the results of this study can offer the field of counseling. It is notable that 77% of the bloggers surveyed have maintained their blog for over a year, with 20% maintaining it more than three years. These are significant amounts of time to continue an activity, and it highlights the important role that blogging plays in each individual's life. Counseling practitioners are aware of the importance self-exploration plays in helping individuals better understand themselves and their future goals. Blogging acts as a type of self-help in this regard, as personal journal bloggers are able to process their thoughts and emotions while also receiving feedback through their readers. Some blogs read as a type of catharsis, where raw and unprocessed thoughts are poured out onto the computer screen, just as clients might do in therapy. Other blogs seem more carefully constructed, as if the blogger desires to project or embody a certain type of person or personality. Both types of blogs open themselves up to feedback, and it is interesting to consider how these bloggers might be affected by the responses they receive from readers. It is conceivable that a counselor could be working with a client who maintains a blog and receives some troubling feedback (or no feedback) to their posts. In this case, it will be important for the counselor to recognize the important role the blog plays in the client's life and to

understand the type of audience who can read it (i.e., open to strangers or only people they know in “real” life) to effectively understand how it may impact the client.

Aside from validating the practice and importance of blogging for a client, there are other considerations for counselors to make. One of the highly rated motivations for blogging in the survey was that it allowed bloggers to interact with people that they might not otherwise engage. It is possible that some people blog because they experience some social isolation in their daily life. Likewise, another highly rated motivation was that blogging allows bloggers to connect with others who think/feel similar to them. A counselor who is able to explore these notions with a blogging client may help that person recognize and learn strategies for more effective interaction and connection with people in their physical proximity as well. Blogging might also be a useful recommendation for a counselor to make for a client with social anxiety. Because blogs can be anonymous, bloggers have the option of creating an identity they aspire to have and try it on to see what it is like in a less-risky setting, while also getting practice at making connections with other people. On the other hand, blogging has the potential to become an activity to hide behind, and those with social anxiety may struggle to leave that comfort zone for the uneasiness of face-to-face interaction.

A common technique that counselors use with clients is to encourage them to write out their thoughts, feelings, stressors, and anxieties as a way to begin identifying and working through them. Personal journal bloggers do exactly that, all on their own. A counselor could explore with their blogging clients the option of sharing those blogs in a session, or explore why the client might not desire to discuss them. Counselors can also

consider the impact that a client's blog has on the other areas of their life, such as work, friends and family. Almost 80% of the bloggers in the survey indicated that they had their real name (50%) or part of their real name (29%) on their blog, which means that a lot of people are able to read about, and associate with an actual person, the blogger's frustrations with co-workers and family members, drinking and partying habits, or sexual exploits, for example. The implications of exposing these sorts of intimate details can be far-reaching and potentially devastating. In these scenarios, a counselor might also serve as a voice of moderation in helping the client make smart choices about what topics to include in a blog, based upon the possible impacts on relationships with loved ones, careers, and future ambitions.

#### *Recommendations for Future Research*

As noted previously, bloggers participating in this survey had many additional thoughts and feedback to offer. Future studies might benefit from a more qualitative approach or the inclusion of more opportunities for write-in comments to gain a deeper understanding of how blogging impacts each person's life. At the least, the drop down menu options could be expanded based upon the written comments that participants provided in this survey, especially in the Feelings About Blogging section. It might also be helpful to ask bloggers what might make them discontinue their blog and if there are other things that would fill the need that blogging currently provides them. Additionally, MySpace.com is unique in that the blog is connected to each user's personal profile page, which makes it more difficult to remain anonymous. There are many blogging sites available that do not present such an obligation for users to create an identifying profile

(e.g., [www.blogger.com](http://www.blogger.com); [www.livejournal.com](http://www.livejournal.com)). It would be worth surveying bloggers on sites such as these to determine how their motivations for blogging might differ.

Regarding the design of the actual survey instrument, the participants who chose not to finish the survey once they had started it most often stopped when they arrived at the screen listing all the motivations and prompting them to select their main, second, and third motivations. It is possible that this screen appeared too lengthy, overwhelming, or time-consuming, and a different presentation (i.e., dividing it into several screen pages) might have encouraged more completion. Another recommendation would be to alter the phrasing of the two motivating items mentioned previously in the discussion: *I express myself in a public (rather than private) way*, and *To decide on the content and the people that are part of their blog space*.

### *Summary*

Those who regularly maintain personal journal blogs represent a wide range of ages, geographical locations, and educational achievement levels. The 127 respondents to this survey were overwhelmingly 25 – 44 years old, female, and White. Most participants indicated they blog often about quite personal content, and are fairly identifiable by their real name. Although each of the 15 provided motivations for blogging were relevant at varying levels to the bloggers as a whole, the two most prevalent motivations overall for maintaining a personal journal blog were: (a) to entertain oneself, and (b) to clarify thoughts and/or emotions. Additionally, bloggers tend to feel satisfied after posting a blog, pleased after receiving positive comments, anxious to respond after a negative comment, and fine when there is no comment to their

blog. Counselors with blogging clients can increase their efficacy by understanding more about the motivations behind personal journal blogging and the potential impact it can have on a bloggers' life (i.e., the way they interact with people on and offline and how the blog content affects relationships and careers). Blogging also has the potential to be a therapeutic tool in its own way, offering participants a space to express themselves in ways they may not otherwise be apt to explore.

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## APPENDIX

## Appendix A

### **Blogger Motivation Survey**

#### **Overview**

Thanks for your interest in my survey!

This Blogger Motivation Survey is intended for those who maintain a Personal Journal blog, defined as:

*a blog maintained by one person and containing mostly personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings.*

I am studying the reasons why people are motivated to maintain a personal journal blog, as part of my Master's of Science in Agency Counseling program at North Carolina State University.

If you are under the age of 18, you may not participate in this study. If you are at least 18 years of age, maintain a personal journal blog, live in the United States, and would be willing to complete a brief survey to help with my research, please read on.

Survey Details – No identifying personal information or login is required of you, and your responses will not be linked directly to you. The survey contains 38 multiple choice/ranking questions, and should take you 5 - 10 minutes to complete.

Consent form – the first webpage before the survey contains an Informed Consent, which provides additional details about the research and your rights. It will also give you contact information in the event you have concerns or questions about this study.

Thank you so much for your willingness to assist me in this research!

## **Blogger Motivation Survey**

### **Informed Consent**

Before you proceed with this survey, please read and become aware of the following:

- You are being asked to participate in a research study designed to help determine what motivates people to maintain personal journal blogs.
- Your participation in this survey is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without consequence.
- Your participation in this study presents no risks or benefits to you, however the information gathered may benefit those seeking to better understand blogging.
- If you are under the age of 18, you may not participate in this study.
- You will be presented with a series of questions, and it will take you 5 to 10 minutes to complete the survey.
- This survey does not ask you to identify yourself. Your participation in this study and the information you provide will be kept confidential.
- The responses from all surveys will be combined and analyzed together so that no respondent can be individually identified.
- There is a limit to the confidentiality that can be guaranteed due to technology itself; specifically, no guarantees can be made regarding the security of data sent via the Internet.
- By taking the survey, you will be giving your consent to include your data in the final results.
- There is no financial compensation for your participation in this research.
- You may contact the principal investigator at any time with questions: Heather McKenzie at [blogging.survey@yahoo.com](mailto:blogging.survey@yahoo.com)
- This research has been reviewed and approved by the North Carolina State University Institutional Review Board (IRB). If you feel your rights have been violated, you may contact the NCSU IRB at 919.515.4514.

*I am at least 18 years of age and have read and understand this consent form. I voluntarily choose to participate in this research study, but I understand that my consent does not take away any legal rights in the case of negligence or other legal fault of anyone who is involved in this study. I further understand that nothing in this consent form is intended to replace any applicable Federal, state, or local laws.*

I agree.

I do not wish to participate.

## Blogger Motivation Survey

*Blogger Background Data – There are 9 questions in this section. Please select the most appropriate response from the options available.*

### What is your current age range?

under 18

18-24

25-34

35-44

45-54

55-65

over 65

### What gender do you identify with?

Male

Female

no response

### What race or ethnicity most closely describes you?

American Indian or Alaska Native

Asian

Black or African American

Hispanic or Latino

Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

White

Other

### What is your current geographical location?

New England [CT, MA, ME, NH, RI, VT]

Mid-Atlantic [DC, DE, MD, NJ, NY, PA]

South [AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV]

Midwest [IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, OH, SD, WI]

Southwest [AZ, NM, OK, TX]

West [AK, CA, CO, HI, ID, MT, NV, OR, UT, WA, WY]

Outside the United States

### What is your current level of educational achievement?

Some high school

High school graduate

Some college

Associate's degree

Bachelor's degree

Graduate or professional degree

**What is the approximate length of time you have been maintaining a blog (from day of initial blog creation to current date)?**

- less than 6 months
- more than 6 months but less than 1 year
- more than 1 year but less than 18 months
- more than 18 months but less than 2 years
- more than 2 years but less than 3 years
- more than 3 years

**How frequently do you usually update your blog?**

- more than once a day
- once a day
- every 2-3 days
- every 4-5 days
- once a week
- every 2-3 weeks
- once a month or longer

**What is the main topic of your blog? (you may only select one)**

- your life and experiences
- a specific hobby
- a specific organization
- business
- current events
- entertainment/entertainers
- health topics
- politics/government
- religion/faith
- sports
- technology

**Do you identify yourself on this blog (i.e. is your real name on the site?)**

- Yes
- No
- Only part of my real name

***Blogger Usage Data - There are 6 questions in this section. Please consider the personal journal blog that you maintain and respond to the following questions.***

**Generally, how personal are the things you write about on your blog?**

1=Extremely personal 2=Quite personal 3=Somewhat personal 4=Not at all personal

**How often have you considered whether something was too personal to blog about?**

1=Always 2=Quite often 3=Occasionally 4=never

**How often have you written highly personal things on your blog?**

1=Always 2=Quite often 3=Occasionally 4=never

**How well do you feel you know who your blog reading audience is?**

1=Extremely well 2=Quite well 3=Somewhat well 4=Not at all well.

**How much do the comments that people write on your blog affect the entries you write?**

1=An extreme amount 2=Quite a bit 3=Some 4=None

**How often do you communicate with others about your blog posts through additional means (phone, email, IM, text message, in person, etc.)?**

1=Always 2=Quite often 3=Occasionally 4=never

***Motivations for Blogging - Below are 15 reasons why people blog. Please consider each item and rate how much it motivates you to maintain your personal journal blog. A response is required for each item.***

1=Motivates me an extreme amount

2=Motivates me quite a bit

3=Motivates me somewhat

4=Does not motivate me at all

I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.	1 2 3 4
I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.	1 2 3 4
I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.	1 2 3 4
I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.	1 2 3 4
I keep people I care about updated.	1 2 3 4
I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.	1 2 3 4
I chronicle my life in my blog.	1 2 3 4
I create a community by bringing others to my blog.	1 2 3 4
I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.	1 2 3 4
I express myself without being interrupted.	1 2 3 4
I put thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.	1 2 3 4
I entertain myself by blogging.	1 2 3 4
I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.	1 2 3 4
I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.	1 2 3 4
I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.	1 2 3 4

**The next four questions will ask you to rank the importance of the same 15 blogging motivations listed in the previous question.**

**Select the MOST important reason you continue to blog (you may only choose one).**

I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.

I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.

I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.

I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.

I keep people I care about updated.

I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.

I chronicle my life in my blog.

I create a community by bringing others to my blog.

I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.

I express myself without being interrupted.

I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.

I entertain myself by blogging.

I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.  
 I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.  
 I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.  
 The most important reason I blog is not listed above. My most important reason is: \_\_\_\_

**Select the SECOND MOST important reason you continue to blog (you may only choose one).**

I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.  
 I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.  
 I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.  
 I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.  
 I keep people I care about updated.  
 I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.  
 I chronicle my life in my blog.  
 I create a community by bringing others to my blog.  
 I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.  
 I express myself without being interrupted.  
 I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.  
 I entertain myself by blogging.  
 I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.  
 I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.  
 I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.

**Select the THIRD MOST important reason you continue to blog (you may only choose one).**

I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.  
 I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.  
 I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.  
 I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.  
 I keep people I care about updated.  
 I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.  
 I chronicle my life in my blog.  
 I create a community by bringing others to my blog.  
 I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.  
 I express myself without being interrupted.  
 I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.  
 I entertain myself by blogging.  
 I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.  
 I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.  
 I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.

**Now, please consider why OTHER people have a personal journal blog.**

**Why do you think most other people maintain personal journal blogs? You may only choose one - select what you think is the MAIN reason.**

- To clarify their thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.
- To receive feedback from others on their thoughts/emotions.
- To connect with others who think/feel similarly to them.
- To impact the thoughts/feelings of others when sharing their opinion.
- To keep people they care about updated.
- To release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.
- To chronicle their life in their blog.
- To create a community by bringing others to their blog.
- To share about their emotions without seeing others react in person.
- To express themselves without being interrupted.
- To express thoughts/emotions in their blog that could be hard for them to say out loud.
- To entertain themselves by blogging.
- To interact with people they might not otherwise interact with.
- To decide on the content and the people that are part of their blog space.
- To express themselves in a public (rather than private) way.

*Feelings About Blogging - There are four questions in this section. Please consider the way you usually feel and select the most appropriate response.*

**How do you usually feel after updating your blog (adding a new post)?**

Satisfied  
Nervous  
Relieved  
Smart  
Excited  
Positive  
Hopeful  
Drained

The way I usually feel is not listed above. After posting, I usually feel: \_\_\_\_

**How do you usually feel when someone posts a positive or supportive comment to your blog?**

Pleased  
Honored  
Excited  
Valued  
Important  
Connected

The way I usually feel is not listed above. After a positive comment, I usually feel: \_

**How do you usually feel when someone posts a negative or criticizing comment to your blog?**

Upset  
Excited  
Important  
Annoyed  
Connected  
Anxious to respond

The way I usually feel is not listed above. After a negative comment, I usually feel: \_

**How do you usually feel when there is no response to your blog posting (no one posts a comment to it)?**

Fine  
Upset  
Relieved  
Unimportant  
Anxious  
Annoyed  
Hopeful  
Disconnected

The way I usually feel is not listed above. After getting no response, I usually feel:

***THANK YOU - End of Survey***

This concludes the survey.

Thank you for participating - your responses are valuable and appreciated!

If you have concerns or questions about the survey, you may email the principal investigator at [blogging.survey@yahoo.com](mailto:blogging.survey@yahoo.com)

If you know others at least 18 years of age who also maintain personal journal blogs, I would very much appreciate you letting them know about this survey. You can refer them to: [www.myspace.com/heatherbean01](http://www.myspace.com/heatherbean01) for the info and survey link.

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

## Appendix B

**Statements in *Blogger Motivation Survey* Related to Documented Blogging Motivations**

**Study:** Quantitative content analysis of 203 blogs, world-wide but written in English

**Author(s):** Herring, S., Scheidt, L., Bonus, S. & Wright, E. (2004)

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
Control over the communication space	<i>I decide on the content and the people that are part of my blog space.</i>
Opportunity to self-express publicly	<i>I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.</i>

**Study:** Genre analysis of blogs (amount not specified)

**Author(s):** Miller, C. R., & Shepherd, D. (2004)

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
Self-clarification - Heightened understanding of self through communicating with others	<i>I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.</i>
Social validation - Providing confirmation that personal beliefs fit with social norms	<i>I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.</i>
Relationship development - Use of self-disclosure to build connections with others	<i>I connect with others who think/feel similarly as I do.</i>
Social control - Use of self-disclosure to manipulate the opinions of others	<i>I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.</i>

**Study:** Phone interviews of 23 bloggers in the United States

**Author(s):** Nardi, B., Schiano, D., & Gumbrecht, M. (2004)

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
To update others on activities and whereabouts	<i>I keep people I care about updated.</i>
To release emotional tension	<i>I release intense feelings/emotions through blogging.</i>
To express opinions to influence others	<b>(duplicate)</b> <i>I impact the thoughts/feelings of others when I share my opinion.</i>
To seek others' opinions and feedback	<b>(duplicate)</b> <i>I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.</i>
To "think by writing"	<b>(duplicate)</b> <i>I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.</i>

**Study:** Phone interviews of 23 bloggers (same study as previous)

**Author(s):** Nardi, B., Schiano, D., Gumbrecht, M., & Swartz, L. (2004)

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
To document one's life – to record activities and events	<i>I chronicle my life in my blog.</i>
As Community Forum – to form and maintain community around common themes	<i>I create a community by bringing others to my blog.</i>

**Study:** Phone interviews of 23 bloggers (same study as above)

**Author(s):** Gumbrecht, M. (2004)

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
Share emotional info without expectation/obligation of immediate response from others.	<i>I share about my emotions without seeing others react in person.</i>
Enable the writer to get their entire story or thought out, uninterrupted.	<i>I express what I want without being interrupted.</i>
A means to share feelings when they would not otherwise do so.	<i>I express thoughts/emotions in my blog that could be hard for me to say out loud.</i>

**Study:** Online survey of 1142 Japanese bloggers

**Author(s):** Miura, A., & Yamashita, K. (2007)

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
Benefit to self – can deepen their understanding of themselves through reflection on personal traits	<b>(duplicate)</b> <i>I clarify my thoughts and/or emotions through blogging.</i>
Benefit to relationships with others – gaining feedback and acceptance from others	<b>(duplicate)</b> <i>I receive feedback from others on my thoughts/emotions.</i>

**Study:** Quantitative content analysis of 358 blogs written in Polish

**Author(s):** Trammell, K., Tarkowski, A., Hofmohl, J., & Sapp, A. (2006).

<b>Documented Blogging Motivation</b>	<b>Related <i>Blogger Motivation Survey</i> Statement</b>
For pure enjoyment/ entertainment	<i>I entertain myself by blogging.</i>
Social interaction – speaks directly to the reader or prompts reader response	<i>I interact with people I might not otherwise interact with.</i>
Self-expression – informs others about personal information and feelings or thoughts	<b>(duplicate)</b> <i>I express myself in a public (rather than private) way.</i>

## Appendix C

**Communication to Potential Participants****Message Sent to Bloggers on MySpace.com:**

*Hello there -*

*I just saw your blog...and I am studying what motivates people to maintain a personal journal blog, as part of my masters degree program at NC State University.*

*If you are indeed over 18 and would be willing to give a few moments of your time to complete a survey to help with my research, please follow the link below to my brief online questionnaire.*

*Link to survey (located on Survey Monkey website):*

[www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hEyC7g7Ws\\_2foSeWSJydgqOw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hEyC7g7Ws_2foSeWSJydgqOw_3d_3d)

*I sincerely appreciate your time and consideration!*

*:)*

*Heather*

[blogging.survey@yahoo.com](mailto:blogging.survey@yahoo.com)

**Message sent to Personal and Professional Contacts:**

*Hello friends,*

*As part of my Master's of Science in Agency Counseling program at NC State University, I am studying the reasons why people are motivated to maintain a blog. Specifically, I am looking for those who maintain a Personal Journal blog, defined as a blog maintained by one person and containing mostly personal experiences, thoughts, and feelings.*

*If you maintain a personal journal blog and would be willing to complete a brief survey to help with my research, please follow the link below to my brief online survey.*

*If you do not maintain a personal journal blog, I would very much appreciate you forwarding this along to others in your circle (must be at least 18 years of age) who might.*

*Link to Survey:*

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hEyC7g7Ws\\_2foSeWSJydgqOw\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=hEyC7g7Ws_2foSeWSJydgqOw_3d_3d)

*Thank you SO MUCH for your help!*

## Appendix D

**Summary of Numerical Responses to *Feelings About Blogging***

<b>Feeling After Updating Blog</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Satisfied	58	45.7%
Excited	22	17.3%
Positive	21	16.5%
Relieved	9	7.1%
The way I usually feel is not listed above. (Write-in response option)	9	7.1%
Hopeful	4	3.1%
Drained	2	1.6%
Nervous	2	1.6%
<hr/>		
<b>Feeling After Receiving a Positive/Supportive Comment</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Pleased	38	29.9%
Valued	28	22.0%
Honored	24	18.9%
Connected	19	15.0%
Excited	10	7.9%
The way I usually feel is not listed above. (Write-in response option)	6	4.7%
Important	2	1.6%
<hr/>		
<b>Feeling After Receiving a Negative/Critical Comment</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
The way I usually feel is not listed above. (Write-in response option)	39	30.7%
Anxious to respond	37	29.1%
Annoyed	24	18.9%
Connected	12	9.4%
Upset	7	5.5%
Excited	4	3.1%
Important	4	3.1%
<hr/>		
<b>Feeling After Receiving No Response to Blog</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Fine	51	40.2%
The way I usually feel is not listed above. (Write-in response option)	25	19.7%
Disconnected	18	14.2%
Unimportant	13	10.2%
Upset	8	6.3%
Annoyed	6	4.7%
Hopeful	3	2.4%
Anxious	2	1.6%
Relieved	1	0.8%