

To like or not to like – how Facebook affects our sense of belonging

29 April 2014

Loneliness and a lack of self-worth could result from a lack of ‘likes’ on Facebook, according to researchers from The University of Queensland.

Two projects led by Dr Stephanie Tobin from UQ’s School of Psychology have identified the effects social networking sites have on users’ feelings of social belonging.

Dr Stephanie Tobin said the studies found that active participation on social media sites gave users a greater sense of connectedness.

“Social networking sites such as Facebook, which has more than a billion users a month, give people immediate reminders of their social relationships and allow them to communicate with others whenever they want,” she said.

“Our research shows that feelings of belonging are threatened when users stop generating content or participating online, and when information they have posted does not receive a response from others.

To examine how participants felt when deliberately ignored, the researchers conducted two studies on ‘lurking’ or passive Facebook participation and on ostracism.

The first study recruited users who frequently posted online. Half the participants were asked to actively post, while the other half, dubbed lurkers, were to simply observe friends’ status updates.

In the second study, participants used accounts set up by researchers and were encouraged to post and comment on the posts of others on Facebook.

Half the participants received the feedback while the other half didn’t and were effectively ostracised.

Dr Tobin said the findings showed that both lurkers and ostracised participants from each study experienced lower levels of belonging and meaningful existence than those who participated and received a response. Those who were ostracised also experienced lower levels of self-esteem and control.

“The studies allowed us to examine how belonging depends on how much people are sharing on Facebook, the kinds of experiences they are having on the site and whether they are being ignored or validated by others,” she said.

“The results clearly identified that active participation is necessary to decrease feelings of social rejection.”

The researchers are doing follow-up studies to examine the effects of being ‘seen’ but not validated by audiences of different sizes and how sharing different kinds of photographs affects belonging and well-being more broadly.

The new research was [published in the journal *Social Influence*](#) this month.

Media: Helen Burdon, +61 7 3365 7436, h.burdon@uq.edu.au.

Share link:

<http://tinyurl.com/pa43uj7>

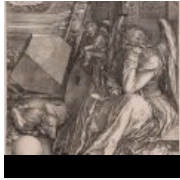


Subscribe to the UQ News weekly newsletter



ARTS + SOCIETY

[UQ addresses UN in New York](#) 8
September 2014

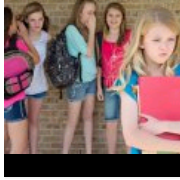


Five centuries of melancholia 25
August 2014

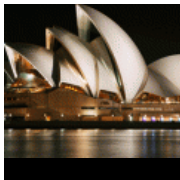


UQP author built Pig City on rock and roll 17 July 2014

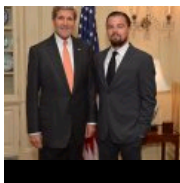
Young Australian women out-drink their mothers 1 July 2014



Families can play key role against bullying 1 July 2014



Student composition is new Opera House fanfare 30 June 2014



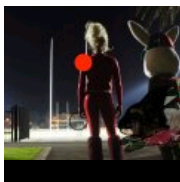
UQ researcher joins superstar line-up at US oceans conference 19 June 2014

ARTS + SOCIETY, HEALTH + MEDICINE, INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA



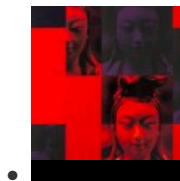
Smartphone app tackles Indigenous youth suicide 1 September 2014

ARTS + SOCIETY, INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA, ST LUCIA



Art to challenge what it means to be Australian 28 August 2014

RECENT HEADLINES



UQ Art Museum showcases 30 years of Lindy Lee 16 September 2014

• Just following orders? Obedient zombies in the spotlight 15 September 2014



New UQ CityCat terminal takes shape 15 September 2014



Customs House wins culinary kudos 15

September 2014

[More headlines](#)

[We need to talk about the sexual abuse of scientists](#)

8 September 2014

[Ghosts of 2003: US, Australia and allies face tough choices in Iraq](#)

9 September 2014

[Intelligence inheritance – three genes that add to your IQ score](#)

9 September 2014

[Does Singld Out, a gene-based dating service, pass the sniff test?](#)

9 September 2014

[Three misguided beliefs of the Group of Eight universities](#)

12 September 2014

[Read more](#) UQ articles on The Conversation

Home › To like or not to like — how Facebook affects our sense of belonging



Brisbane St Lucia, QLD 4072
+61 7 3365 1111

Other Campuses: [UQ Ipswich](#),
[UQ Gatton](#), [UQ Herston](#)

[Maps and Directions](#)

© 2014 The University of Queensland

A MEMBER OF



GROUP OF EIGHT

[Privacy & Terms of use](#) | [Feedback](#)

Authorised by: Director, Office of Marketing
and Communications
ABN: 63 942 912 684
CRICOS Provider No: 00025B

QUICK LINKS

- [For Media](#)
- [Emergency Contact](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA

NEED HELP?

EMERGENCY

[3365 3333](#)

EXPLORE

- [Giving to UQ](#)
- [Faculties & Divisions](#)
- [UQ Jobs](#)
- [UQ Contacts](#)
- [Services & Facilities](#)
- [Login](#)