HOW TO BEST INCORPORATE SOCIAL MEDIA INTO COMMUNICATION
CLASSROOMS

By

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A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Masters
of Arts in Communication to the Office of Graduate and Extended Studies of East
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ABSTRACT

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Abstract

Despite the number of active social media users, there is a disconnect for how these virtual platforms can be incorporated into communication classrooms. Moving into the new generation of digital natives, it will become a necessity to teach basic professional skills involving social media. This study divulges into current means of incorporating Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and YouTube in higher education, uncovering what practical methods are being used. A review of current literature summarizes, social media is becoming a primary means of communication. It has been challenging for higher education professionals to find ways to incorporate these platforms in ways that progress the quality of education. Communication majors are in need of updated curriculum and pedagogy that reflects our virtual means of communication. Using social media platforms fosters an interactive and hands on learning environment that teaches students practical information.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Social media has rapidly become a part of our everyday lives. We have essentially created a virtual world that enables the instant ability to connect with anyone. Pew Research recognizes that "YouTube and Facebook are the most-widely used online platforms, and its user base is most broadly representative of the population as a whole" (Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States). Also, according to Pew Research Center, in 2005, only about 5% of adults used at least one form of social media. By 2019, 72% of American adults had some type of social media. 90% of adults ages 19-29 are users of social media. This expansion means we are seeing changes in the way we communicate with one another. "The evolution of a plethora of Internet-based applications has changed the way people communicate, engage in business and interact socially." They continue, "One of the contributing factors has been the advent of social media websites; for instance, Facebook, YouTube and Twitter" (Alon and Herath 47). Despite the number of people who are regularly using social media to communicate, "only 38.6% of the students have any prior experience using social media in their course work" (Alon and Herath 48). This study looks into the potential of social media as a tool for learning in higher education, specifically, how can social media best

be incorporated into the subject of communication classrooms. Although the study of communication is a focus of this study, the importance of incorporating social media into the general classroom setting is discussed.

Defining Social Media

To understand the study, it is necessary to define what social media is and the sites that have the most engagement. Mark Taylor addresses the definition of social media beginning with the warning that readers should not become set on a singular definition and function of the various sites. These sites rise and fall with popularity and are constantly changing to stay relevant. The result of this is a rapid turnover rate in sites popularity and traffic. The constant evolution of social media makes it challenging to define. It is just as challenging to study these specific sites extensively because of their short lifespans. Social media can be defined as "any interactive communication channel that allows for two-way interaction and feedback," further specifying modern social media are characterized by their "potential for real-time interaction, reduced anonymity, a sense of propinquity, short response times, and the ability to 'time shift,' or engage the social network whenever suits each particular member" (Kent 645).

Twitter, Instagram, Facebook and YouTube have become the predominant social networking sites (SNS). Each provides a different experience, medium and application for users. According to Pew Research, "YouTube and Facebook are the most widely used online platforms" (Demographics of Social Media Users and Adoption in the United States). Simply put, "Facebook is a popular free social networking website that allows registered users to create profiles, upload photos and video, send messages and keep in touch with friends, family and colleagues" (Rouse). YouTube can be defined as "a web-

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based platform that allows people to discover, watch and share originally created videos"
(Alon and Herath 48). YouTube is easily incorporated into the classroom but, a study
conducted by Snyder and Burke (2008) found only 47% students have been exposed to
YouTube in the classroom as a teaching tool despite 89% of them believing YouTube
videos enhance their learning experience (Alon and Herath 48). Professors also desire a
method of incorporating SNS, like YouTube, into the classroom. 92.8% of faculty
members who were not currently using YouTube in their courses expressed interest in
incorporating it in their courses in the future" (Alon and Herath 48). Conversely, "Faculty
who used YouTube in their courses regarded it as an effective teaching and learning tool,
but stressed videos need to be carefully screened for appropriateness and validity" (Alon
and Herath 48). Twitter and Instagram are still among the most used social media
networks. According to Twitter, "A Tweet may contain photos, GIFs, videos, links, and
text up to 280 characters" (How to Tweet). Users can see other tweets on their "Feed"
and use hashtags to share searchable content. Instagram is a visual social media network
based around the sharing of images. "Instagram allows users to create, apply digital
filters to and share pictures and videos" (Taylor 38). Instagram has become a major form
of marketing and brand exposure over recent years.

Digital Natives

Looking at the upcoming and current student body, the majority of students are
digital natives. Digital natives can be defined as, "The term digital natives tags a
generation born during or after the introduction of Internet Communication Technology
into daily routines, thus distinguishing them from digital immigrants" (Šorgo et al 750).
This generation of students will not know what the world was like before the birth of

social media. This is important because "Digital natives are supposed to possess knowledge and skills that allow them to handle ICT tools in a "natural" way. This supposedly calls for the application of different teaching-learning strategies (Šorgo et al 750). This term is discussed in various articles and is vital to consider this generation when looking to apply social media into higher education.

Social Media in Higher Education

As the prevalence of online communication increases in our daily lives, there is a constant influx of content consumed from social media. The exploration of social media leads to users discovering brands, businesses and products that have been marketed to reach their demographic. Social media has become one of the main tools used to market products and build brand exposure. This boom in marketing style has resulted in more jobs in the field of social media. These jobs range in skill level, but it is not uncommon for entry level positions and even internships to revolve around a company's social media.

Social media can be used to increase class participation, allowing for lively discussions and creating content relative to students. Specifically, the pedagogy for communication faces a strong need to adapt to the exponential growth of social media and integrate it as a communication-based activity. "Social media also provides an opportunity for those students who find it difficult to engage in classroom discussions to increase interactions and exchange of ideas" (Alon and Herath 48). The goal of class participation is to challenge students to connect course concepts to relative knowledge. The main challenge is not providing access to students but incorporating it into pedagogy

in meaningful ways (Alon and Herath 48). Social media can be used as a tool to help build the bridge between course concepts and practical application.

Nothing should be adopted just because it is new. "The internet and web-based tools have clearly had great benefits in instruction in higher education, from the development of online learning to improving access to learning materials in live classes" (Taylor 44). Research conducted on University of Washington students "suggests that social media assists students with acquiring new information, facilitates connections with course material and peers and improves productivity" (Social Media in the Classroom: Opportunities, Challenges & Recommendations.). According to the same study done on students at the University of Washington, 21% of students want their professors to use social media as a teaching tool. Integrating social media into the classroom fosters innovative learning by allowing students the opportunity to overcome geographical barriers and gain round-the-clock connection with peers. These advantages are not limited to the students but branch to benefit the teacher as well, allowing a two-way medium for exchanging feedback. The vast majority of college age students use social media regularly. "98% of 18-24 year olds are using some form of social media" (Alon and Herath 47). With such high numbers of the student population, the authors capitalize on the unique opportunity we have to incorporate social media into education to enhance the learning experience (Alon and Herath 47).

The Study of Communication and Social Media

Based on research, there is an essential need to incorporate social media into communication classrooms. The benefits range from increased participation to better preparation for needed skills in careers within the field. Social media should be used in a

strategic way that allows for class concepts to be connected. Without research into the best means of incorporating social media into communication classroom pedagogy, we will not know if current methods are successful. How is social media currently being used in communication classrooms? We need to understand if students are gaining practical information to take with them into the workforce.

Public Relations, one of the sub-disciplines of communication, may be one of the most impacted by the growth of social media. Public Relations programs are consistently challenged by the changing landscape of the profession but academic courses give prominence to interactivity, dialogical dimensions of the profession, and the capacity to write persuasive content. Employers are looking to see that students have skills and are competent in transitioning these skills into social media content. It has been a challenge for educators to transition their courses to reflect this change in media. Failure to adapt will leave students with outdated knowledge and unprepared to enter the workforce.

Research Questions

Based on the increasing popularity of social media, the population of higher education students overwhelmingly being digital natives, and the need for sub-disciplines in the field of Communication to adapt to changing technologies, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

RQ1: How is social media currently being used in communication classrooms?

RQ2: How can we better incorporate social media into communication classrooms?

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Virtual based communication has been proven by studies to be an essential element of our current interpersonal communication structure. This section examines the current literature surrounding these social media platforms and how they are being used in higher education. Current studies focus on a wide variety of disciplines and subjects. But, each of the studies fall under the categories of Incorporating Social Media into the Curriculum, Tool for Teaching Professionalism, Specific Tools for Social Media in the Classroom, Student Perception and Communication, and Social Media as a Tool for Learning. Each section reveals current methods or struggles for higher education and the incorporation of social media.

Incorporating Social Media into the Curriculum

There is a lot of potential for integrating new media into higher education. Mass media has been digitalized and is constantly changing, leaving room for new opportunities for education. "Educational Potential of New Media", a study conducted by Maria Yu. Kazak and colleagues aims to define the role of media education, media enlightenment and media criticism. "The media environment fundamentally changes the basis of interpersonal interaction" (Kazak at el 56). The value of media is now measured

in new terms. These quantitative characteristics are likes, ratings, profits, number of subscribers and comments. These are measured through analytics, a useful skill to have in the world of new media. "Media education in pedagogy is meant by a special component of school and university "formal education" (Kazak at el 57). There is a more current, broader understanding that media education is a long-term social and educational activity (Kazak at el 57). "In this interpretation of media education, the emphasis is made on forming of active approaches to media content in an audience, with an emphasis on developing a critical view of the media, on the experience of identifying false information and distortions in the information received and developing immunity against the manipulative influence of media" (Kazak at el 57).

Ferberg and Kim discuss social media prevalence in our daily activities and communication practices and how they are beginning to be embraced by higher education as well. The purpose of their study, "Social Media Education: Industry Leader Recommendations for curriculum and Faculty Competencies", provides insight into social media education and what the future of this education should entail. Ferberg and Kim acknowledge social media as "having affected daily activities, communication practices, and business practices throughout society over the past few years" (Ferberg and Kim 380). They also noted that social media marketing was listed as the number 1 skill on "The 25 Hottest skills that Got People Hired" (Ferburg and Kim, 380). "To keep pace with this demand, higher education is trying to respond to the growing expectations and changing needs for social media competency expressed by future employers in industries such as brand managers, for corporations and practitioners working in public relation agencies" (Ferberg and Kim, 380). The article addresses the gaps in education stating,

"The system contains to focus on lectures and exams, leaving students underprepared to enter today's workforce" (Ferburg and Kim 380). Digital natives are discussed throughout this article (Ferburg and Kim 380). Being a digital native changes their expectations of education to have social media integrated into the courses. "There is a growing need to provide dedicated academic instruction designed to prepare graduates for careers in which they will use social media strategically" (Ferburg and Kim 380).

There is a divide in academic preparation and professional expectations when it comes to social media. This study looked at industry professionals and interviewed them about what classes should be taught with social media curriculum and what it means to be a professor teaching courses in social media. The professionals said that courses should be taught on content creation, marketing and public relations principles, writing, analytics and crisis. These core competencies are expected to be taught at the base level, giving students a base to grow from once they enter the workforce. There are three core factors that describe what it means to be a professor teaching courses in social media: connector between the industry and academy, community builder and role model and mentor. The professor needs to be someone who "bridges the industry and the academy" (Ferburg and Kim 387). They should get students to think outside the box, giving them opportunities to build real world experience. Social media professors should be active on social media themselves. This helps build credibility and build relationships on an online platform.

Gleason and Gillern discuss social media incorporation in secondary education and how it supports digital citizenship. Secondary education is an important area to consider for instruction in social media because it is a major stepping stone for preparing students to succeed in higher education. They note that students have an average of 6 hours of

screen time per day, making it a vital skill to be able to "responsibility engage in constructive conversation with others from diverse backgrounds and to ensure their online participation is safe, ethical and legal" (Gleason and Gillern 200). Content on the internet can often sound true, despite its lack of foundational proof. This article uses narratives to prove the necessity of teaching a critical viewpoint content found on the the internet. Digital citizenship is described as "the norms of appropriate, responsible technology use" (Gleason and Gillern 201). There is a need to teach students the rights and responsibilities of being a digital citizen. Similarly to how we have common etiquette for face-to-face communication, there are means of doing so online as well. Gleason and Gillern offer two critical elements to the development of social media- enabled digital citizenship. The first is "the use of a curricula that provides opportunities for secondary education students to develop understanding of citizenship and civic education through the use of digital media applications" (Gleason and Gillern 208). Social media platforms provide an endless supply of information and is becoming the forefront for social change. Classrooms can begin to teach students their responsibilities and the impact of their actions virtually. Secondly, "the use of social media is a way for young people to develop their competencies of digital citizenship through producing, sharing, and discussing information related to politics" (Gleason and Gillern, 209). Digital natives are taking on the unique responsibility of using social media to spark social and political movements. Giving them the skills to effectively and respectfully get their viewpoints across is something we have not seen before. We no longer need to rely on writing letters to Congress or State Senators because we are able to reach them virtually. Gleason and Gillern approached integrating social media use into a civic studies class in three ways.

First, students created and distributed PSAs. Secondly, they were required to contact representatives. Lastly, they communicated values through Twitter. Findings showed that students were interested in participating in actions that benefited their communities through the use of social media. Gleason and Gillern also note that although this generation is currently using social media as a tool to influence and communicate attitudes, secondary education can serve as means to teach students the tools to identify problems, create persuasive content, and use social media strategically (Gleason and Gillern,. 210). These skills are essential in the success of students in higher education.

In "A Management Framework for Implementing Social Media in Higher Education," Nurhad et al. explains how social media is not only used by students, but faculty as well. Both groups are using social media to communicate daily. "Social media has also been proven to have a positive impact in supporting the improvement of the quality of activities in higher education" (Nurhad et al 15). To make the integration of social media successful "higher education needs to build a management framework systematically through the stages of understanding, preparation, implementation and evaluation" (Nurhad et al 15). These stages work in a hierarchical style, starting with understanding as stage one. Understanding social media involves knowledge on "types of social media, approaches to using social media and models of social media design. As the social media landscape changes the teaching pedagogies must as well. This means being reactive to new trends and staying up to date while finding ways to incorporate that into the pedagogies. Preparation of social media in higher education is broken down into stages of identifying social media, analyzing planned processes using social media, creating planned activities and planned guides using social media. "The steps to planning

systematic guides using media social are determining objectives, institutional strategy, social media selection and evaluation" (Nurhad et al 23). The third stage in implementing social media in higher education is a six-step process including exploration, experimentation and learning, direction and coordination, formalization, consolidation and integration and institutional absorption. These six stages add guidelines for the implementation process and a resource for faculty to follow. Evaluation of social media is critical because the adaptation of social media must make sense and make an impact on the quality of education the students are receiving. The four components proposed to use for evaluation social media in higher education are reaction, learning, behavior, results and ROI. ROI or return on investment "is the benefit to an investor resulting from an investment of some resource in social media implementation" (Nurhad et al 26). According to the authors, "This framework can be implemented through the support of the whole community, of higher education supported with consistent policies, funding and commitment from leaders, faculty members and students" (Nurhad et al 26).

"Digitally Inspired Thinking: Can Social Media Lead to Deep Learning in Higher Education?*"* written by Samuels-Peretz et al. asks the question of whether social media can support meaningful learning. This question is hard to answer because there is no generalized consensus of what desirable learning is for all students. A variety of six courses that integrated social media into their pedagogy were surveyed to determine how "integration of social media tools supports deep approaches to learning" (Samuels-Peretz et al 32). Students reported from this survey that "social media supports deep learning both directly and indirectly, makes learning easier, promotes long-term retention of content, and fosters a more engaging and enjoyable learning environment" (Samuels-

Peretz et al 32). Not only are students more engaged and retaining more information, the "Students agreed that social media tools helped them analyze information in depth and consider it from different perspectives" (Samuels-Peretz et al 35). Students were highly comfortable using social media as well and made the experience more comfortable, and enjoyable.

Keval Vadodaria discusses some advantages to "enhanced collaboration, greater transparency, self-expression and technology-friendliness in using social media for educational purposes" (Vadodaria 1) He also believes that "Social media helps students overcome geographical barriers by staying connected with their peers round-the-clock (Vadodaria 1). Students rely on technology and social media gaining information. Therefore, Vadordaria sees social media as a tool for teachers to share updates and stay connected. Vadordaria also gives the uses of various social media platforms, starting with Facebook. Facebook is used in the modern classroom to share information and news in the form of status update posts. This has made it trouble free for teachers to communicate with their students and encourage a subject-focused dialogue. Vadordaria also informs us that Facebook has its own resource called "Facebook in Education" that provides information on how academicians can best incorporate Facebook into their classrooms. Twitter was also noted as a resource, its 280-character micro blogging format allows for real time communication between professors and students. Using these forms of social media helps students build stronger writing habits. What was once seen as a trend, is now being incorporated into more classroom learning spaces than ever before.

Jennifer and Christophe Veltsos address what responsibilities fall on the faculty when incorporating technology-mediated communication. There can be a variety of

problems surrounding privacy, intellectual property violations, data security, and violations of the Family Educational Rights (Veltsos 464). The Generally Accepted Privacy Principles suggests "students should be able to control what they disclose about themselves as well as when, where and how they disclose it" (Veltsos 464). Students want to disclose information on their own terms. To mitigate these issues, students should be allowed to create their own sock puppet accounts, according to Jennifer and Christophe Veltsos. Sock puppet account are discreet or anonymous accounts students can create if they are not comfortable using their personal social media accounts. Students need to cite sources that are especially important in protecting the intellectual property of others. Although the "fair use" doctrine allows for use of materials for classroom projects, scholarships and research, it is essentially important for students to know that this does not transfer over to their professional positions.

Tool for Teaching Professionalism

Luke Cartwright looked into the field of social work and how student social workers use social media as a tool for building professional development and building a professional persona (Cartwright 880). Notably Cartwright states we are "an era that has embraced the free sharing of information" (Cartwright 881). In the field of social work, social media can be used as a tool for research and engagement with social change campaigns (Cartwright 882). There is the risk of inappropriate social media use, especially in instances of social action. This is when Cartwright stresses the importance of teaching these issues with student social workers. Participants in this study most frequently used Facebook, Twitter and Instagram (Cartwright 885). Students used these platforms for a variety of purposes such as keeping in touch with friends and family, to

share pictures of social events and stay up to date on news and current affairs (Cartwright 885). Addressing the professional use of social media should begin with a focus on positive aspects and potential challenges. Social media is perceived as unprofessional, instead of a means of building a professional standing in your field (Cartwright, 888). Positive aspects like creating a personal brand and networking are effective ways of using social media in a professional context. A challenge facing getting students to use social media professionally is the fear that the use of social media will impact their ability to be hired in the future. This stems from the view of social media as a personal resource where you can share your life. Students are often warned to beware of the content they post of themselves online. This warning is often times not followed up by what content is professional, leaving a need to teach students those professional skills.

Tara Fenwick conducted a study titled *"Social Media, Professionalism and Higher Education: A Sociomaterial Consideration"* to analyze the debate of teaching professionalism in higher education now that the focus has shifted to social media. "Social networking media such as Twitter and Facebook are considered potential enhancements to practice by enabling information sharing and greater connectivity with those being served" (Fenwick 664). This study specifically investigated the fields of health care and social care. "Overall, there is a general concern that online environments loosen inhibitions and create a false sense of intimacy, producing inappropriate posting that can be amplified immediately and internationally" (Fenwick 666). Social media is rapidly becoming a part of professional ethics. Fenwick stated that "professionalism in social media is more about developing a critical sensibility of what it means to engage in various platforms, what is being produced and for whose benefit, what is visible and what

is present but not visible in the various sociometrical assembling that are occurring"
(Fenwick 672). Professionalism of social media means having a sense of awareness of
what you are posting. Specifically in the field of healthcare, there is sensitive information
that could potentially be unveiled if employees do not have these basic professional skills
while using social media.

In *The Rhetoric of Reach: Preparing Students for Technical Communication in
the Age of Social Media,* Verzosa et al. argues that "technical communication instructors
are in a particularly apt position to teach social media as key to student's lives as
technical communicators and future professionals" (55). The study assigned a task to
ENGL 313 at the University of Arizona that "requires students to identify and document
a specific process with potential professional value for them and for an identified social
media community where it can be disseminated" (Verzosa et al 59). The authors note
there is a fear of legitimacy in social media. There is particularly a negative dialogue
about the cornerstone of social media use and professionalism. Some students already
have a basic critical view of social media because of how they assume it might negatively
impact their careers (Verzosa et al 58). "Instructors, thus, must unpack critical
approaches to technology, pushing beyond notions of either/or and good/bad and toward
nuanced perspectives that frame social media as a resource that holds constrained
potential" (Verzosa et al 58). Teach students that social media is a tool they can use to
further than careers. Once the have the critical and professional skills, they can make
smarter decision on virtual platforms.

Specific Tools for Social Media in the Classroom

A study conducted by Ahmed Al-Azawei focused on how the four variables of system quality, information quality, technology experience and internet experience affect the successful incorporation of social media in education and E-learning. Universally, "E-learning has a significant impact on teaching and learning, including information accessibility, additivity and adaptability of learning content" (Al-Azawie). E-learning lessens the restrictions of relying only on the traditional classroom setting. Students can now access course information whenever they please. "SNS in education provides access to learning content and resources, regardless of the boundaries of time and/or place. Therefore, they meet learners' demands better services, given the global impact of these technologies" (Al-Azawei 255). Facebook was a sole focus of this study and was defined as "a social networking website intended to connect friends, family and business associates" (Al-Azawei 256). Al-Azawei discusses what makes Facebook such a widely used social networking site. First, users are able to create either a public or semi-public profile, as well as having the capacity to search for other users in the network, and users being able to track their own and other users' personal connections according to Al-Azawei (257). The study found that social networking sites that "were originally designed for social communications (such as Facebook, Twitter) are considered as significant technologies for enhancing teaching and learning methods, as well as the way in which relationships are formed between teacher and students" (Al-Azawei 257). The functionality allowed students the ability to use Facebook for many different reasons, including communication, collaboration, and resource-sharing" (Al-Azawei 257). Al-Azawei found that "the students gained higher satisfaction when using Facebook in

educational contexts, if they had sufficient experience of using it" (Al-Azawei 266). Students who are already aware and use Facebook find it easy to use. Faculty should not use this statement to make generalizations about their classes' exposure to Facebook. Each collection of students should be giving the opportunity to learn the site as an educational resource if they are unaware of the functions.

Joseph T. Chao et al. aim to create a new interactive learning experience that is designed to encourage student interaction, engagement, and participation in a lecture classroom. (Chao, et al. 323). The study is based around a software system that allows students to chat, view lecture slides, tweet, and make Facebook posts. Digital natives see technology and social media as a necessity and have a different expectation when receiving information. They have a low tolerance for lectures and prefer active learning over passive (Chao,., et al. 324). Students no longer what to see PowerPoint presentations and take notes all class. Hands on learning techniques have been shown to be more receptive to students. "Although the current generation of students spends a great deal of time immersed in social media, some students are unwilling to sacrifice the perceived benefits of face-to-face interactions with the instructor in a traditional classroom setting if offered a technology-based alternative (Chao, Joseph T., et al 331). Chao, et al. stresses that new technology should be integrated into learning only when driven by pedagogy. Higher Education should beware of incorporating social media in ways that to not benefit or increase the quality of the education.

Manuel and Schunke describe a social media specific course that was taught and developed by two professors who have no direct educational experience using social media. The goal was to "teach an interdisciplinary course on the historical and

philosophical dimensions of Facebook and other social media sites" (Manuel and Schunke 112). The authors argue that social media should be taken as a serious topic worthy of humanistic investigation in the classroom (Manuel and Schunke 112). Initially, it was discovered that students were naïve about how social media worked because it has always been a part of their daily lives. These students were not as enthusiastic as expected about social media use in the classroom. This article notes on the emerging field of critical social media studies. The goal of creating this course was to "engage topics that have societal currency—both among scholars in this emerging field and among students—in an intellectually rigorous fashion (Manuel and Schunke 112-113). Their initial course was structured around three questions. First, how can students engage meaningfully and ethically with social networking sites? Secondly, what does it mean to be an individual in the network age and lastly, is online networking a break from past traditions or a continuation of older patterns in the history of communication (Manuel and Schunke 113)? They felt strongly that students needed to express their views and opinions on social media. Students were broken up into smaller groups for discussions and those groups reported back to the class. This was a tool to get a quick generalized sense of how the students felt about social media and the course. The first round of teaching the course was generally seen as a success. Conclusions made for the first run at the course were the students generally did not like Facebook and viewed it to be old, boring and over run by older family members. The approach for the second round of the class had to be redone because it was two years later, and the landscape of social media had changed. Headlines began to become clickbait as sites like Buzzfeed began to gain popularity. The second time, the class was organized around three different topics:

authenticity, privacy, a mid-semester book club, politics, and the self (Manuel and Schunke 116). Each topic had three weeks devoted to it and in those three weeks were discussions and an ending summary. The course ended with an alternative presentation assignment that allowed students to pitch to a campaign manager why social media should be used (Manuel and Schunke 117). The second semester of the course ended up being more cohesive and structured. Students were able to think critically about the five topics discussed over the course of the semester. Another discovery from this course was that it is okay not to use social media in the classroom. Although social media can increase the quality of the education, if it is not incorporated in a way that fits into the pedagogy, it should be eliminated. The authors offer the advice that we need to not just teach with social media but teach about social media in higher education (Manuel and Schunke 118).

O'Bannon et al. conducted a study at the University of Tennessee that explored using Facebook as an educational tool and its effects on student achievement. Specifically, the function of the Facebook group was used to aid in increasing knowledge in core technology topics in pre-service teachers. The purpose of the study was to "examine (a) the effectiveness of using a Facebook group to increase pre-service teacher knowledge of core technology topics, (b) how they use Facebook, (c) how they use a course specific group on Facebook, (d) their frequency of using while participating in a Facebook group, and (e) their perspectives of using Facebook to improve learning" (O'Bannon et al. 232). Students were trained on how to use the Facebook group during the first weeks of the course. Questions related to course content were posted to the Facebook group by the instructional team. These students reported that "the Facebook

group was beneficial; in improving readiness for course assessments, was convenient, provided a good means of communication and enhanced learning" (O'Bannon et al 229). The students liked the communication and collaboration that the Facebook group provided. They least liked the notifications that commonly appeared because of the frequency of posts.

Mia Moody offers advice on how to incorporate social media into traditional courses. "The goal is to pique and hold students' interests while arming them with skills that will help them get a job in the future" (Moody 3) Creating a Facebook group and inviting students to connect is seen as an option for integration. This method is believed to encourage an open dialogue and allow shy students to open up. Students might feel more prepared for in class discussions if they explore the concepts and write down their perspective beforehand. Twitter can be used to follow current events. "Students could follow two different news outlets, such as FOX and MSNBC, and then analyze the type of tweets they post" (Moody 3). An interesting addition to the recommendations, which falls in line with the trend of e-professionalism is helping students to market themselves professionally by creating online portfolios that display their work from courses, jobs, and internships.

Student Perception and Communication

In "Double-Edged Sword: Social Media Use in the Classroom," the focus of the study was to determine student's perception of social media as a tool for classroom learning. The goal of understanding students' perceptions is to find a way to incorporate social media based activities into courses in a way that is beneficial for the professor and student. The method of this study focused on undergraduate students that were enrolled

in a communication course. Participants were studied though face to face focus groups and computer mediated focus groups. Students found it easy to use social media because they were already accustomed to using it in their day to day lives (Chromey et al 5). The results of the study created a model assessing social media use in a set of questions (Chromey et al 1). First, can students participate without giving access to personal information? "The most common remark made regarding social media in the classroom revolved around a desired separation between students' personal/private life and their professional/academic life" (Chromey et al 5). Students expressed that sharing content on social media could blur these lines. Students also worried that these blurred lines could result in inappropriate teacher-student interactions on social media. Students also feared that the instructor's perception of them might change after seeing their social media. The next question is are more effective alternatives available? There were other more professional forms of communication discussed like email and education-based communication sites like Blackboard. "Despite the awareness of effective alternatives, participants acknowledged the ease of accessing social media" (Chromey et al 7). Students also stated that with multiple streams of communication, they might miss important information if they do not log in (Chromey et al 3). Another important question to ask is if student participation in social media is a requirement or voluntary act? Making the use of social media mandatory for students to participate in was not preferred. "Students suggested the best use of social media for educational purposes comes from their own personal decision- a voluntary act" (Chromey et al 7). Common concerns include that the requirement of social media would not allow them a break from school, and they did not want to be coerced into creating alternate profiles Lastly, is the purpose

of social media use for a grade or an announcement? Students were less comfortable with the use of social media for a grade. They believe that graded content does not belong on social media. However, participants reacted positively to the use of social media for announcements, reminders or clarification purposes because of its convenience. It was only seen as a hassle if students were required to sign into multiple portals.

In the article, "Potential of Social Networking Sites for Distance Education Student Engagement," the author analyzes student groups enrolled in a community college distance education program. Social media is discussed as a tool for increasing student engagement in distance education courses. Social networking sites are defined as "virtual spaces that build virtual communities through sharing experiences, communicating personal information, and connecting to friends" (Lester and Perini 68). Twitter and Facebook were noted to be the most popular social media sites in the United States. These sites provide students who are enrolled in distance education an outlet and aid to break down the barriers of distance. Student engagement "focuses not on what students do in college (such as motivation and academic preparation), but what students do in college and how students' behaviors, opportunities and environments mediate college retention and graduation" (Lester and Perini 69). Social media is addressed as a resource to connect these students to administrators. The ability to use Facebook as a tool for live updates can help create a sense of a supportive campus environment (Lester and Perini 71). This method is more effective than more traditional methods like e-mail because SNS "offer places to post pictures, videos and profiles with information on one's job, preferences, interests and the like" (Lester and Perini 71). The authors stress that "Active and collaborative learning is a hallmark of student engagement" (Lester and Perini 72).

Incorporating the SNS would make it a one stop for students to engage with students and administration.

Social Media as a Tool for Learning

Alon and Herath evaluated "the outcomes of an experimental learning technique coupled with social media in an international marketing course" (Alon and Herath, 44). Students used the platform YouTube to post a video as a marketing tool. The assignment consisted of a media plan to promote investment tourism and trade in a specific country (Alon and Herath, 50). At the end of the assignment, students were asked to complete a questionnaire about the learning outcomes using social media. The study found that despite 61% of the students never having used social media in their course work, the exercise significantly helped students identify the uses of technology and helped them understand real world challenges of country branding (Alon and Herath, 52). The exercise also has a positive correlation with students having increased interest in using social media as a tool for international business. The study concluded that "Measured evaluations of the students' perceptions of the experience revealed that it was both beneficial and positive, and it helped to promote an understanding of the importance of teamwork and the uses of technology" (Alon and Herath 44). The study specifically highlighted "the importance of incorporating experiential learning pedagogies with social media to teach" (Alon and Herath, 44).

In the article, "Students' Views on the Teaching Process Based on Social Media Supported Flipped Classroom Approach," the authors used the flipped classroom approach aided by social media to reveal students' views on social media use in the classroom. Student perceptions were analyzed through semi-structured one-on-one

interviews at the end of the course. These interviews found that initially, the perception of the use of social media supported by the flipped classroom approach was negative (Bicen, Huseyin and Taspolat 115). This is because the students did not have experience using social media in the classroom setting and did not know how it would work. The option of students at the end of the study when students were asked the same question was found to be positive at the end of the study. It was also found that "one of the positive aspects of using the social media supported flipped classroom approach is to enhance the communication and interaction in and out of the classroom" (Bicen, Huseyin and Taspolat 128). Another positive aspect was it provided more interaction and communication opportunities between the teacher and student (Bicen, Huseyin and Taspolat 129). Students also appreciated the convenience of being able to access course content anytime, anywhere. They found that social media supported a flipped classroom which aids in learning because students have the ability to watch a course video multiple times (Bicen, Huseyin and Taspolat 130) and come to class more prepared, with a stronger understanding of course content. Student recommendations included adding the teacher's footage in the videos in a quality, studio environment, and making videos interactive through quizzes or games after videos (Bicen, Huseyin and Taspolat 133).

In "Educational use of social networking technology in higher education," the authors discuss the use of social networking as a means of enhancing students' sense of community. This study used social networking as a supplement for face-to face courses. They used social media as a resource for class activities and material. This factor alone made this study stand out from others because most studies look at online based courses. The web is described as a place of social interaction, an environment to share and spread

ideas and maintain communication (Hung and Yuen 705). It is seen as a potentially powerful tool for educational purposes if it is integrated naturally into the learning environment. "Social networking can be seen as the practice of expanding knowledge by making connections with individuals of similar interests" (Hung and Yuen 705). Success in education is strongly dependent on the classroom communities and how well the members are connected. This study functions as an example on how social media integration can increase class participation and discussions. The students who participated in this study noted there was a high pedagogical benefit to information sharing. The information-sharing feature of social media enhanced the learning experience. Students built the sense of community through sharing their personal interests and educational resources.

Stefania Manca and Maria Ranieri discuss the potential obstacles of social media use in higher education. The study surveyed academic faculty members and "The aim of these surveys is to provide a framework of various Social Media uses related to the personal, professional areas of interest in higher education" (Manca and Ranieri 219). This framework will make it easier for faculty to use social media in an effective way. "Social Media use is still rather limited and restricted and that academics are not much inclined to integrate these devices into their practices for several reasons, such as cultural resistance, pedagogical issues or institutional restraints" (Manca and Ranieri 216). These factors and perception do vary depending on the discipline in question. When asked if social media was a valuable teaching tool, only 38.6% declared it useful. Comparably, 24% were undecided (Manca and Ranieri 221). The motivation for faculty to use social media was measured through a series of categories respondents could

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choose from. These included "To increase students' motivation and involvement", "To fulfil ways of collaborative and participative learning", "To capitalize on students' familiarity with these tools", "To improve the quality of teaching", "To experiment with new tools", "To share content material with students easily, and "Other motivations" (Manca and Ranieri 222). Facebook and Twitter were found to be tools for increasing students' motivation and involvement. YouTube was a tool seen mainly to improve the quality of teaching (Manca and Ranieri 223). On Twitter, students were assigned to comment on content. "Our results globally show a general low level of faculty adaptation that seems to confirm resistance emphasized also by previous studies in relation to teaching practices" (Manca and Ranieri 226). It was found that 40% of faculty used social media as a teaching tool monthly. Age was found to be a factor in social media incorporation. The younger the faculty member, the more likely they were to adapt to social media. A main trend was "higher education instructors with higher numbers of years teaching were more prone to use Social Media, particularly referring to Twitter" (Manca and Ranieri 227). Social Media was also used primarily as a visual resource. "This tendency to use social media as means to support trans missive approaches to teaching and learning is consistent with other studies on teachers" (Manca and Ranieri 228). A part of the resistance to implement social media is due to lack of evidence that shows effectiveness. There is limited data surrounding specific method of social media use in comparison to traditional means of education.

"#HashtagPedagogies: Improving Literacy and Course Relevance through Social Media Metaphors", Mica Oelze discusses the use of social media metaphors as an aid in formatting discussion posts. Mica Oelze used the format of Instagram posts to help

students recognize and remember important information. He notes that "#Hashtag can be incorporated into classroom lectures and discussions to strengthen student's metacognition" (Oelze 9). By using a # students recognize that more clearly as a searchable concept that can be applied to a wide variety of cases. On social media the hashtag is a way to easily label your post to be related to a specific topic. At the beginning of class, the centralized main concept goes on the board as a hashtag. Students believe that this makes the class more memorable. Oelze has students approach reading in the routine which they use Instagram. The process is as follows starting with the explore page. Explore "provides an array of snapshots and headers to introduce users to the platform's diverse content" (Oelze 12). Books offer similar headings, key words and photos. "Likes" are next and students are supposed to "like" by drawing the heart icon in the margins if they believe it is important information. The "feed" is the place where you consume the content. But Instagrammers do not just consume, but also add their created content. This "post" is used when students find information that connects to the class or is helpful for an upcoming assignment. Students are asked to construct the post by creating brackets around this information to simulate a post. In the margins, students must add a one sentence caption that summarizes the paragraph. It is innovative though this style of reading course content is not revolutionary but is like reverse outlining. Students can make posts in place of tradition discussion boards. This is a way to use the functions of Instagram without asking students to sacrifice their privacy. It also allows students to have a stronger understanding of how social media functions and relates more to how they think about gaining information.

Tracy Sohoni created "a class assignment in which students produce a social media project that imparts academic knowledge to a general audience" (389). This social media assignment was an alternative option in place of completing a traditional paper. Students who participated in the social media project were asked to create a product that displayed the knowledge they learned throughout the semester. Students used software technology that helped them edit videos and build websites that they had little experience in prior. Their grades were based on their content, not their skills surrounding these software programs. The student's response to the project was positive. They reported that it "helped them make real world connections with class material, made them more critical of the messages they consumed, helped them feel more empowered to engage in public discourse on topics of importance to them and helped them learn how to convey messages" (Sohoni 399). Those who completed the traditional paper did not agree as strongly compared to those who completed the social media project. "94% among those completing the social media assignment saying they would choose the social media project in the future" (Sohoni 400).

Overall, the studies discussed above show that there is a need to use social media in higher education, specifically in Communication classrooms. Whether it is for means of creating professionalism or adapting social media it increase participation, these platforms need to be incorporated in ways that fit into the pedagogy.

CHAPTER 3: LIMITATIONS

Clearly there is a strong need to find an effective way to incorporate social media into communication classrooms. The depth of students' understanding of the capabilities of social media platforms rarely goes beyond personal usage. What studies fail to uncover is how the incorporation of social media will relate to and enhance the students' professional careers. There is a gap between how students see social media and the reality of professional capabilities it holds. Social media in higher education is still widely experimental and has little solid foundation of proven success and enhancement of students' professional capabilities. There is a disconnect between how professional businesses are using social media and how those skills can be used in the classroom. Studies that discussed building students' knowledge of social media as a professional resource were mainly found in the fields of healthcare and social work. Those professional skills surrounded the topic of patient confidentiality. Professional usage of social media for communication students stems into personal branding and portfolios. There are a wide variety of studies surrounding social media and how it can be incorporated into pedagogies in the higher education setting. It is indisputable that all disciplines are trying to adapt to this new and prevalent form of media. You cannot

however, develop a way to incorporate these platforms in a uniform way across all disciplines.

When searching for current research, there were few studies that were based on a public relations course or lower level communication classes. The studies conducted in communication classrooms focus on using SNS as a means of creating a new outlet of communication between the student and professor. Specifically, Facebook and Twitter were used for communication with the student about course updates and assignments. This method is controversial and may overcomplicate a course by requiring students to log onto multiple sites to gain information. Students can become easily distracted by notifications and their personal accounts, while student privacy is a paramount issue. Likewise, a main concern for students is faculty having access to their personal accounts. Students view social media platforms as a virtual escape and using it in an educational setting negates that function. Most students are not comfortable crossing these lines. This issue is addressed in multiple studies, but few studies offer a solution to increase students' comfortability with the use of social media in the classroom. One of the main solutions to the issue of student privacy is creating a new account that is specifically for educational purposes. For example, if an assignment required students to tweet about content related to class, they should be given the option to use a sock puppet account. Students' lack of understanding of social media as a professional resource could be one of the reasons why they do not feel comfortable bridging that gap. Students may also have limited experience or need to use social media as a professional resource. Sara West found that although social media competence is an important skill for communication professionals, students are often hesitant because the current narrative of social media is

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unprofessional and is a means of reputation management. Simply, students use social media, socially, not for professional uses. The university setting should shift communication students from content readers to content publishers. This means that they need to graduate from the university with the skills to no longer be only readers of social media content but contain the critical writing and thinking skills to be able to create this content themselves.

Research is lacking for the higher-level courses that begin to prepare students more for their specific goals within the field. Communication students often go on to use social media in professional contexts in their day to day work. There are few studies done on how you can teach strategic social media use and prepare students for the professional workforce. This is true despite the level of the course in question. It is vital for students to understand how to write clear, and persuasive content for social media platforms. Gaining critical knowledge of the power of the media and the role of SNS in that power is critical in the discipline academically and professionally.

The research shows a gap between higher education and professional standards in the field of social media. Entry level jobs that require the minimum amount of skill still seem out of reach to graduates who feel underprepared. Faculty members need a better understanding of baseline expectations for students in the professional context before changing their pedagogy around social media. There are no studies in the field of communication that investigate this space. Instead of using social media to increase in-class participation, it should be used to help students learn how to market themselves professionally, allowing them to build an online portfolio that they can display to jobs and internships. A study conducted by Navarro, González-Díez, and Puebla-Martínez

(2018) analyzed whether "the subjects that included theoretical or practical content regarding social media communication allowed for the acquisition of the specific skills required for optimum employability of graduates in professions related to the management of marketing communications on these platforms." (p.133). The study found that these degrees do not prepare students. Companies are moving away from interns and want true experts of management of social media instead.

An issue that could be impacting the incorporation of social media in the classroom is how immersed and connected faculty are to social media. The majority of professors are not digital natives while the majority of students are. Students could perceive that the faculty are trying too hard to relate to students. The quick lifecycle of platforms requires a consistent need to stay up to date. In the field of public relations, it is especially vital to watch content posted by companies because crises happen constantly. Those public relations crises provide a strong learning experience for students. Also, without professors immersing themselves in the online world, the means in which they incorporate SNS will not make sense to students. The incorporation of SNS is a constant evolution and students' perspectives are an essential asset to staying up to date on relevant information. In some studies, social media was incorporated in a way that did not align with the course content. The majority of studies done on social media use in the classroom focused on classroom communication. More studies need to be done on activities that professors can incorporate into their teaching strategies.

CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION

Social Media Application

There is endless potential for increasing the quality of communication education by developing effective strategies for using social media in the classroom. As discussed in the limitations, there are gaps in current research and methods of using social media in the classroom. While scholars agree, social media needs to be incorporated in a way that benefits course curriculum. It is vital that before professors incorporate social media into their classes, they develop and immerse themselves in the world of social media. This involves continuing experimentation and exploration of new social networking sites. Students rely on social media on a day to day basis. To develop a method of incorporating these necessary virtual communication skills in higher education, professors need to have the same level of exposure and understanding as students. Social media sites fluctuate in popularity and use at a rapid rate. Given the virality of social networking, it is hard to predict what is going to be the next social media trend. An example of this is Facebook. It was once top-tier choice for social networking among young people but is now known for its attraction to older individuals who want a means to connect. Currently, the app Tik-Tok, which allows users to post videos ranging from 15 seconds to a minute is one of the most popular apps today. "TikTok boasts

around 524 million active users worldwide" (The Rapid Rise of TikTok). A year ago, the app was used by kids in middle school and other generations did not use the app. It is now used by a widespread demographic. This displays the evolution and unpredictability that the viral world holds. Knowing what platform is creating the most viral content can help guide faculty to teach students the skills that they will need in the workforce, especially in the field of marketing. Professors do not necessarily need to find a means to base the course structure around the app itself, but it is crucial for these applications to be acknowledged as a marketing and communication tool, not just a source of entertainment.

Students come to higher education for employable skills in the field which they want to enter. It is part of the university's responsibility to stay up to date on what those skills are. For the subject of Communication and the evolution of social media, they have a unique responsibility to prepare and teach students the professional development capabilities social media has. There are a variety of ways professors can incorporate professional social media use in Communication classrooms. One specific way social media could be used is aiding students through the process of developing a professional portfolio. This portfolio will display hands-on activities the student has done throughout their college career. Professors can motivate and suggest that students share their learning process on professional social networking sites like LinkedIn. Having students create a professional portfolio will give them more motivation to put effort into their assignments. It will build the importance and show practical application for assignments that otherwise might be unnecessary filler work. This will give students something to work on that goes beyond their grade in the class. Writing skills are especially important for potential employers. Portfolios are a way to help students display their writing and creativity skills.

For students with full or part time job obligations, providing them with the opportunity to gain practical experience is key. Not all students can financially afford to intern with a company who most likely will not provide compensation for work. Professors can benefit from using portfolios as a tool for students' professional development. This will require them to base their courses on activity-based learning and lean away from PowerPoints and lectures. Instead of using PowerPoints and lectures for testing students on content, it would be preparing them to complete their portfolio. Students rarely are fully engaged in these teaching methods. Professors will need to understand what employers are looking for in recent graduates. They can base their class activities around sharpening those skills in students.

The media is saturated with content that is false or misleading. A major aspect of the study of communication is understanding the media system. There are a variety of perspectives and viewpoints on common topics. These views can vary from person to person or network to network. Teaching students how to critically look at the social media will help them professionally as well as in their daily lives. When you work for a corporation, you take on the responsibility of following their values and mission. These are expressed to stakeholders through content and actions done through the company. Today, this communication is mainly done through social media. You can view different perspectives and viewpoints of news or current events by analyzing the social media response by individual companies. For example, you can compare the news on a specific political candidate by looking at two contrasting news networks social media posts, such as FOX and CNN. Students could choose a topic and asked to compare articles or posts surrounding that topic. Allowing students to choose a topic allows them to report on

something they find interesting while also allowing the professor to stay up to date on news that students are finding interesting. Students need to understand how social media affects the image or a brand, especially when they take a side on a social issue. There are strategic ways to manage backlash or public perception. Showing students current examples on how people or companies are handling backlash or a crisis will help students refine their own skills and reflect on how they would have handled the situation. Twitter has been a strong tool for companies to show more personality and lighthearted content. We see large companies using Twitter to joke around and even poke fun at competitors. This content oftentimes goes viral because it is unexpected content from a business. Giving the students the opportunity to explore social media in a professional context will allow students to become more comfortable so once they enter the workforce, they are able to explore more creative methods of using social media.

One of the main disadvantages in the research is the lack of communication content focused on social media use in the classroom. A recommendation moving forward is providing students with ways to practically use social media. Social media is only going to continue to evolve, leaving higher education in a vulnerable position to be left behind and uninformed. From the perspective of the research, it is hard for higher education to break down social media into its basic functions. The research was oversaturated in using social media to communicate course material to students and how it affects their perception of the faculty they connect with. Digital natives already are highly familiar with using social media to communicate with others. What they are unaware of is how social media relates to communication content. Bridging the gap

between communication content and theories will make it easier for students to see the deeper meaning and uses of social media.

Social media is also a tool to help students understand and engage more with the course content. One study explored a method of using the formatting style of social media for discussion posts. *#HashtagPedagogies: Improving Literacy and Course Relevance through Social Media Metaphors* author discusses this method and how it helps students connect more with key topics and important terms. This method does not have students use a social media site but instead they go through the discussion posts with the same steps of using Instagram. Students found this method more engaging and helped them retain course content more than traditional discussion posts.

One of the major downsides to using traditional lecture methods of teaching that revolve around PowerPoints or the basic lecture is students get distracted and do not fully pay attention to the course. Social media is a great tool to get students more interactive and create group discussions. Hands on content will allow students to gain experience and collaborate with classmates. Creating a teamwork environment around social media based projects will simulate what it will be like for students in the workplace. Giving students a "position" within their project could be useful to help them gage what working in a professional setting is like. Press releases are a concise one to two pages and only lay out important information. Social media is being used more to make public statements. This limits the length even further meaning. Students leave the university setting after writing length papers with information that is sometimes unnecessary and strays from the main point. For communication majors, having the skills of social media writing is pertinent. Students need to understand how to pull main points and present that in a way

that is engaging to the reader. Projects based around social media campaigns are an interactive way to instill this writing style. Social media writing is vastly different from scholarly writing. This statement is not to negate the importance of research and scholarly work, it is to strive for a blend of the two styles of writing that are equally important for the age we live in today.

Analytics and consumer research are also two important aspects of analyzing the effectiveness of social media for businesses. Based on the research, this topic is neglected in communication education, especially in the concentration of public relations. Students need to have an understanding on how they determine whether their social media content is effectively reaching their desired demographic. It is likely this is a baseline skill for entry level positions that use social media. This goes into studying why certain content goes viral and what about that content appealed to many people. Understanding the fundamental communication methods that go into viral content will make students more marketable. This is an easy gateway into in-class activities. Students can be asked to send in a post that went viral and the class can discuss each submission and break down why it may have gone viral. This will give students an idea of how they can incorporate those viral components into their writing style. Professors also need to stay engaged in what viral content is out there. Again, it is vital that professors in the field of communication are just as engaged in social media as students. The upcoming generations of students are only going to be more familiar with social media. They will not have lived in a world where social media did not exist. Unlike professors who have experienced a world where our communication was not as largely focused on technology and social media.

There are current methods of using social media in higher education that need to be avoided because there are higher consequences and little reward. Research focused on using sites like Facebook as a means of communicating course content and updates. This allowed students to reach out to faculty on Facebook. This creates a lot of risk for the students and faculty members. Students are not comfortable sharing their personal social media accounts with professors and professors may likewise feel the same way. It is also challenging for administration to track what is going on in these groups. Another issue is students found it necessary to log into multiple portals for their courses. Most universities have an online system in place, like D2L or Blackboard. Students did not find the use of Facebook necessary because of these applications.

This leads into the professor's responsibility to reinvent the communication classroom to match our current society. Social media should not be used in the classroom if it does not make sense or provides a service that is not provided elsewhere. This can be said when regarding to social media as a teaching tool. However, it is a necessity to cover social media as content because we rely on it for our daily lives. When incorporating social media into classes, professors must look at it through a critical eye. To discover the best way of incorporating social media in communication classes is going to take trial and error. Students are the best asset in determining what is working. Recent graduates are a vital teaching resource because they see the world of communication in conjunction with social media. They can aid in the rethinking of how we are currently using social media and where we can improve.

At East Stroudsburg University of Pennsylvania, their communication department is setting a foundation for social media use in the classroom. While some professors change their teaching methods, they set a precedent to simple ways to go about teaching and incorporating social media. Higher level Public Relations courses like CMST 356: Public Relations Cases and Strategies is a gateway to experimenting with social media use. Currently, "This course exposes students to the best practices for public relations campaigns as recognized by the professionals in the field of public relations and the Public Relations Society of America (PRSA). Using a strategic communications model, students will examine different public relations cases by applying criteria based on objectives, research and audience analysis, organizational values, and creative tactics." (Zeytinoglu 1). The course involves an activity that requires students to present a current public relations case. The course also incorporates respectable Public Relations resources like *PR Weekly* and PRSA to determine these cases. The final project for the course involves students creating a public relations campaign for a local organization of their choice. This provides the students to utilize the experiences from their presentations and use their own creativity. These in-class experiences will provide students with skills they can carry on into the professional careers.

Introduction to Communication is key to building foundational knowledge about communication. Looking at the current syllabus for CMST 111 GN: Introduction to Communication this course is described as "an introduction to the study and application of some principles of dyadic communication, small group interaction, and public speaking, in addition to listening skills." (Mullan 1).

Current Learning Objectives for CMST 111:

"1. Gain a better grasp of the dynamics of human communication.

2. Attend to diverse contexts for communication.

3. Develop and practice small group communication skills

4. Organize and adapt their spoken messages for an audience.

5. Orally deliver their message in formal and informal settings.

6. Understand and be able to practice ethical communication in civic and professional settings

7. Gain the tools to assist them in making communication choices as they encounter real-life situations" (Mullan 1).

Objectively looking at this course, it is setting a strong foundation for public speaking skills. The course is structured around three speeches and a final small group project. The small group project consists of identifying an aspect of East Stroudsburg University that could be improved and creating a hypothetical proposal. There are no aspects of this course listed in the syllabus that involves the direct use of social media in a professional or educational way. It has been established that social media and virtual communication is just as common as face-to-face communication. The small group project does provide the students with experience collaborating and working as a team to achieve a common goal, but it would be more beneficial for the students to understand virtual communication instead of the small group project. This assignment could also be reformatted to involve social media. An idea around reconstructing this assignment is

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allowing students to explore how to create persuasive messages in an online context. Students could pick a topic and try to persuade or educate their "followers" on that topic. This would allow for an updated to suit the means in which we currently communicate today. Building virtual communication skills should be added to the learning objectives and better incorporated into the course.

CMST 255 Introduction to Public Relations, is another introductory course that sets a foundation for further study. The description of the course is "This course will acquaint students with the basic introductory ideas pertaining to public relations and communication in the public sphere. The course will have an emphasis on the significance of public communication in a democracy and encourage students to have a critical mind towards the issues around the functions, contributions, and theories of public relations. The course will provide a forum for student discussion of and engagement with both theoretical and practical aspects of public relations via its civic, corporate, and legal components within a historical context." (Mullan 1). Notably, the Social Media Report is a practice for students "To practice public relations in an online context, you will prepare a report of how an organization you select is using social media."(Mullan 1). This is useful based on its online context and use of social media. This gives students an opportunity to use creativity and apply course concepts in a practical way. This course is structured to incorporate social media in a way that is beneficial and practical for the student's future.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

Social media is becoming a primary means of communication. It has been challenging for higher education professionals to find ways to incorporate these platforms in ways that progress the quality of education. Communication majors need updated curriculum and pedagogy that reflects our virtual means of communication. Further research can be done on specific skills and professional standards that need to be incorporated into classrooms. The research has distinguished the blatant need for incorporation but lacks a guide for foundational support and proven success. Allies to this cause are industry professionals and students. Developing a consistent stream of information flow between higher education and these allies will help forge the way to successful social media incorporation in communication classrooms. Using social media platforms fosters an interactive and hands on learning environment that teaches students practical information. It is the responsibility of higher education communication professors to update their course content and incorporate social media in creative ways. We are moving into the next generation of students who have never lived in a world where social media has not existed. We need to make these adaptations it insure the quality higher education and without these changes it cannot be guaranteed we are meeting the needs of students.

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