FACEBOOK, TWITTER, AND INTERACTIVITY: CHANGES IN THE WAY
SOCIETY DISCUSSES NEWS

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When the way we communicate changes, society changes (Shirky, 2008). This statement has always been true, no matter what the communication technology, be it the telephone, radio, television, or the Internet. However, new technologies are not integrated into society instantly. It takes time, whether the new technology is something minor, such as the development of cheap, long-distance telephone calls or faster fax machines, or something major, such as the printing press or the telephone (Shirky, 2010). But unlike minor new technologies, which are integrated into society fairly quickly when compared to major ones, major new technologies always create some sort of restructuring of society. Both the arrival of a new way to communicate (such as the telephone or the Internet) and the ending of old communication constraints alter our connective societal tissue, and thus change the way groups communicate and function (Shirky, 2010). Anything that changes the way groups function will affect society as a whole, as anything that changes the way groups function will have “profound ramifications” for everything from commerce and government to media and religion (Shirky, 2008).

Keeping this in mind, it is important to look at the fact that sociability — conversation — is one of our core capabilities. When people are in each other’s company, they like to talk, even if it is merely virtually (Shirky, 2008). The Internet has the potential to make it possible for anyone to talk to anyone, and it has indeed done this. In fact, the Internet has been called “the global equivalent of a tribal village,” bringing people together even though it is made up of many smaller communities rather than a single large one (Carr, 2010). Traditional mass media, such
as television, radio, and newspapers, are not as conducive to bringing people together as a community (Stromer-Galley, 2000). However, community is what society wants — sociability is one of our core capabilities, and community is created by conversation (Shirky, 2008).

Conversation could also be said to be interactive, and interactivity appears to be at the core of new media technologies, especially the Internet (Bucy, 2004). Studying interactivity in the context of networked communication, such as online communities, could potentially have broad social implications (Bucy, 2004), and looking at the Internet and its implications for interactivity is one place to start. This paper will explore how interactivity and social media have changed the way society discusses news, both through academic research as well as a survey conducted among undergraduate college students about their news consumption and social media habits, such as determining if they are indeed getting their news from social media, and if so, how often they are participating in interactive activities like commenting.
**Literature review**

The first newspaper to go online was *The Columbus Dispatch*, when on July 1, 1980, it launched a website on the CompuServe dial-up service, along with ten other newspapers (Shedden, 2011). Since then, online news has exploded into online forums for almost every newspaper, as well as discussions about the news on social media sites due to users posting links to stories and offering their own opinions. If people are able to share their work in an environment where they can also have conversations with one another, they will begin discussing the things they have shared (Shirky, 2008). This eventually leads to more in-depth discussions, and more users involved in these discussions because people garner information from the mass media when they anticipate some sort of future communication with others about the topic — and if they see this topic on social media sites, they are more likely to look up more information about it because they do not want to appear uninformed when conversing with others (Walther, et al., 2011). This also leads to more people becoming more knowledgeable about the topic at hand. The more people in a community (online or offline) who can understand a certain topic, the more likely it is that those people will be able to work together in order to make use of those particular bits of knowledge (Shirky, 2010).

Since the mid-1990s, the importance of the Internet has grown dramatically, and is now accessible to nearly everyone. It is possible to access it almost anywhere at any time (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010). The Internet is also quickly changing the way that people consume their news information. In previous generations, people were
only able to get news information by reading the newspaper, listening to a news bulletin on the radio, or watching a news program on television. Today, however, people can get news information from the Internet that is literally only minutes or hours old, and they can also receive updates through e-mail, messages sent to their mobile phones, or from their social network pages (Stassen, 2010).

New media, which includes the Internet, has changed the broadcast model of the audience in the context of news information, and has decentralized news production and distribution (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Within this context, social media has changed it even further due to its interactive nature. The technologies we use to communicate with each other can serve either to bring us together, or to isolate us (Stromer-Galley, 2000). However, since it has already been established that we as a society wish to remain connected to each other, the technologies we use will naturally pull us together. No other technological medium does this better than social media networks such as Facebook and Twitter, both of which rely on some form of interactivity in order to be effective as a social network (Shirky, 2008; Ellison, et al., 2011).

But what do these new social implications mean for journalism? The traditional media are not as interactive as these new media technologies, and in order for them to remain viable as news sources, they must change along with society. Some already have, and others have not been as quick to embrace the changes that society has. Throughout this paper, I will define interactivity, give an overview of social media and how interactivity plays a role in it, how the Internet and especially social
media have changed journalism, and speculate as to what the future of journalism will be to society based on the technological changes that have occurred in journalism through the Internet and social media. I will also examine how people are getting their news today, and how interactivity plays a role in that. To learn more, I conducted and analyzed a study of undergraduate college students about their news consumption and social media habits to get a clearer picture of how interactivity and social media are changing the way people discuss news. In order to begin this examination, it is necessary to develop a definition of interactivity that is in line with the purpose of this paper.

Interactivity

Defining interactivity is important when examining the effects that Facebook and Twitter have had on journalism. However, due to the massive amount of both implicit and explicit definitions that have been prepared by researchers from differing perspectives, it becomes necessary to narrow the focus of the topic of interactivity (Kiousis, 2002). In this case, the focus centers on interactivity in online news and news in social media.

Even though interactivity is a main characteristic of online news, among scholars and researchers, there is no agreed-upon definition of interactivity and how it should be measured (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010). Because interactivity does help to characterize online news (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010; Boczkowski & Mitchelstein,
2012), a definition of the term is necessary in order to fully examine its effects on both online news and news in social media.

If a system permits third-order dependency among participants in a particular communication medium, then the system is deemed interactive (Kiousis, 2002). He then defines “third-order dependency” in conjunction with interactivity, defining interactivity as “the degree to which a communication technology can create a mediated environment in which participants can communicate (one-to-one, one-to-many, and many-to-many), both synchronously and asynchronously, and participate in reciprocal message exchanges” (Kiousis, 2002). This definition is consistent with Steuer’s suggestion that interactivity is “the extent to which users can participate in modifying the form or content of the mediated environment” (Steuer, 1993), and both of these definitions build off of Rafaeli’s definition, which states that interactivity “is an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to even earlier transmissions” (Rafaeli, 1988).

Combining these three definitions of interactivity, I have defined interactivity within a communication technology as the degree to which a mediated environment is modified in real time by responsiveness among participants having reciprocal message exchanges that are related in the sense that they refer to earlier messages in the same exchange. In this definition, “mediated” means that the communication exchange is taking place within some form of media, typically on a computer, through instant messages, chat rooms, or comment threads.
However, there is still the question of why interactivity is important to journalism, and how Facebook and Twitter have changed interactivity when examining it within the context of journalism.

Interactivity is important to journalism, and specifically online journalism, for several reasons. First, interactivity allows users of online news sites (as well as social media sites) to add information to the news content or context by commenting on the stories, which gives the news a different appearance over time without it necessarily being controlled by news organizations (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010).

Second, a core component of interactivity is feedback (Kiousis, 2002). Through feedback, communication can be seen as a dynamic and interdependent process between senders and receivers, and in the case of journalism, the audience has a chance to really communicate with the news organization in the case of a news website, or the user who posted an item on a social media site (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Feedback is essential for interactivity because if there is no feedback in a particular exchange, then that exchange is not interactive (Kiousis, 2002). Responsiveness is also key when it comes to interactivity (Stromer-Galley, 2000), and responsiveness in the context of interactivity is when the receiver of a message takes on the role of the sender, and replies in some way to the source of the original message (Stromer-Galley, 2000).

Third, interactivity has the potential to fundamentally alter the nature of interpersonal and mass communication, because by interacting with the media, or whoever is disseminating news information, users are not simply receiving
information, they are becoming gatekeepers, because they are able to change both the content and context of the news through their input (Sundar, 2004; Karlsson & Stromback, 2010).

Finally, interactivity is important because it is essentially changing the face of journalism today. In previous generations, one of the only ways to interact with a news outlet was by writing letters to the editor or writing stories for inclusion if it was a print publication, or by calling in if it was a radio or television show (Steuer, 1993). Today, if the news is posted online, whether by a news organization or an individual user, a reader can have a dialogue with either the reporter, the person who posted the story, or both, due to the ability on most sites to comment back and forth directly. This is essentially breaking down the “wall” that once existed between the media and their audience (Regan, 2000).

Interactivity can provide a sense of community online, as anyone can communicate with anyone (Stassen, 2010). However, this online community is different than the way an online community is generally known. Rather than an online community made up of only people a user knows in his or her personal life, many online communities today are made up of people from all over the world, which changes the nature of posting or responding to a message entirely, because online technologies allow a user to talk back, whether that user is talking to a big company or news organizations, or individual citizens (Baym, 2010). Saying something to a few people one knows used to be very different from saying something to many people one doesn’t know (Shirky, 2008), but now, with the rise of online journalism and
social media, it appears to be the norm, as both allow interaction with many people at the same time. In fact, people may not even differentiate what they say among small groups and large groups. Social media sites especially have played a large role, as a comment a user makes to one friend online can be seen by many other users.

**Social media sites**

Social media sites, also known as social networking sites, have been defined as Web-based services that allow users to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, make a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and view the profiles of this list of connections, as well as those made by others within the same system (Baym, 2010). Two of the most popular social networks are Facebook and Twitter.

Facebook is a free online social network that is defined by its creators as “a social utility that helps people communicate more efficiently with their friends, family, and coworkers” (Wise, et al., 2010). Users of the site create a personal profile that they can link to their friends’ profiles, and can also send messages and update their own profiles to notify friends about themselves (Wise, et al., 2010). As of 2010, Facebook had more than 500 million active users, and more than 30 billion pieces of content, such as links to websites and news stories, are posted each month (Glynn, et al., 2011).

Twitter is a microblogging website that is designed to let users post short, 140-character message updates, or “tweets,” to a network of others (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Twitter is also considered a social networking site, and therefore a part of
social media. Users also create a profile to which other users can link as “followers.” Users’ tweets are displayed on the author’s profile page and delivered to the author’s followers (Stassen, 2010). Unlike Facebook, there is no technical requirement of reciprocity when it comes to followers (i.e., a user can follow another user without that user reciprocating), and there is often no social expectation of such an action, either (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Twitter asks users to answer the question, “What are you doing?” This question can be answered a number of ways, such as actually posting about whatever is happening, or links and breaking news. This results in a constantly updated timeline, or stream, of short messages (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). One does not have to be a member of Twitter to view the messages, either. It is possible for a person to read a user’s tweets either by a direct link to the user’s profile, an RSS feed, or third-party software (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). In addition, new content can be brought to the attention of new audiences though the practice of “retweeting,” which is when users re-post other users’ tweets through their own accounts, spreading them further throughout the Twitter network (Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

However, there also exist on both social networks people that are only marginally involved with using the sites. For example, the stream of messages on Twitter makes it possible to be aware of the postings that are made without actually participating and also posting messages (Boyd, et al., 2010).

Both social networks also lend themselves to a high degree of interactivity. For example, on Facebook, when users directly communicate with other users (by either writing on someone’s “wall,” or message board, or sending or receiving a message in
his or her inbox), it is considered to be communication, therefore making Facebook interactive (Wise, et al., 2010). Twitter is interactive because it allows the retweeting of messages, as well as the ability to respond to specific authors of tweets through an “@ reply.” The spreading of tweets is not simply to get messages out to new audiences, but also to validate and engage with others (Boyd, et al., 2010). The main difference between Facebook and Twitter in terms of interaction is that there is no ability to comment on individual posts on Twitter, while that function remains a central feature of Facebook (Boyd, et al., 2010).

Social media, and specifically Facebook and Twitter, have also had an impact on interactivity in journalism. For example, sharing links is considered to be a central practice in Twitter (Boyd, et al., 2010). Also, Facebook allows users to post hyperlinks to other sites, including news stories from more traditional websites such as The New York Times. These posts are then displayed on the users’ walls, and in other users’ news feeds (a stream of what their connections on Facebook are doing), which allows the users’ friends to read the headline of the story and link to it themselves (Glynn, et al., 2011), and also leave comments on the post if they so desire.

The ability to post news stories to both Facebook and Twitter make social media powerful tools as users become more and more involved with the news process, whether by simply posting a story, making their opinions known through commenting on the story, or by interacting with the author of the news story. In addition, many important news stories have broken through social media, especially on Twitter.
(Stassen, 2010), such as an 8.0 magnitude earthquake in China’s Sichuan province and a building exploding in Bozeman, Montana.

Twitter is appealing as a news source partially because the messages are so short. The brevity of the messages allows them to be produced, consumed, and shared without a large amount of effort, which allows a fast-paced conversational environment to emerge. This is crucial to developing a highly interactive environment (Boyd, et al., 2010). Regardless of whether users embrace either retweeting messages or producing their own, no matter what the content, they are becoming part of a broader online conversation — one that is spread to many people, possibly across the world. Twitter can be seen as an authentic space for personal interaction (Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

Many Twitter users embrace the fact that their tweets could become part of a global online community and conversation and, therefore, make definite goals for their Twitter use. For example, Twitter user Nansen, who is a conservative activist with 110,000 followers, tries to maintain consistent political messaging, create relationships, provide information, and spread news through Twitter (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Guy Kawasaki, who has 154,000 followers, primarily uses his feed as a news broadcast (Marwick & Boyd, 2010).

Using Twitter and other social networks for news use is a growing trend, and whether users are using social media to broadcast news to their followers, or have conversations about it with other social media users, there is no doubt that it is changing both how people are getting their news, and the overall interactivity of
journalism. The face of journalism is also changing as news organizations create their own Facebook and Twitter pages so that their audiences can link to their pages and receive regular updates from them on their own profiles, as well as interact with them if they so desire (Stassen, 2010).

One of the main reasons for social media’s impact is online news platforms have become both an important and attractive source of information, because they allow easy access to the most recent news, along with the integration of social media, which motivates online readers to interact with the news platforms through comments and online social links (Tatar, et al., 2011). Today’s news consumers live in an interconnected world (due to the Internet) where information is more readily accessible and more critical to their lives, and it is journalism’s job to convey that information to them. However, journalism also needs to reach beyond current conventional media (television, radio, and newspapers) in order to be where the new audience is — online (Stassen, 2010).

The biggest weakness of the traditional mass media is their lack of interactivity and two-way communication with their audience (Carlson, 2003). In the setting of traditional media, it is very difficult for readers or viewers to interact, either with each other or with news reporters and editors. This lack of interaction limits feedback that both lets media executives know how good of a job they are doing, and what news audience members think about the news that they are reading or seeing. Online journalism, as well as news on social media sites, remedies this problem because the medium itself is interactive (Carlson, 2003).
Mainstream and traditional news organizations are increasingly relying on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter in order to attract more readers to their websites (Johnson, et al., 2011). In fact, news sources now concentrate a large portion of their attention on online media such as social media where they can disseminate news information to a large number of people effectively. It is now common for almost all major news sources to have active accounts on social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter in order to take advantage of the large reach that these services provide (Bandari, et al., 2011).

Social media are also transforming the way in which people receive and share news information. One of the major attributes to social networking is its high level of interactivity, which adds value to the news because of the sites’ ability to facilitate meaningful conversation with and between users (Stassen, 2010). Journalists have begun to join these conversations that are taking place through social media (Stassen, 2010). Through using social media such as Facebook and Twitter, journalists are able to get information, ideas, and feedback from their audience. Social media serve as a source of news and information for the journalists themselves because of the interactive functions of the sites (Stassen, 2010).

Communication scholars have suggested that interactivity is one of the defining characteristics of new media, including social media (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2012). The social media environment has therefore become a place where person-to-person conversations take place around user-generated content within audiences that have the potential to be very large (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Within
this context, social media have become important channels for people to share information, as users have the ability to post news or links to news stories, and discuss and share their opinions in real time (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). Social media sites have evolved to include news content as an important aspect of the information that is shared and discussed on the site (Glynn, et al., 2011). In addition, as more and more news organizations are discovering the value of social media sites to make stories go “viral,” or spread rapidly through the network, more users are potentially exposed to news in an online news environment that is rapidly changing (Glynn, et al., 2011). For example, while many users of Facebook may have signed up for the site primarily to connect with other people, most will eventually end up being exposed to news content that is posted by their friends in their network, and some may then subscribe to various news feeds that are available via Facebook (Glynn, et al., 2011).

Facebook and other social media sites also sometimes offer users the opportunity to learn about breaking news events as they are happening, as Internet-based technologies are sometimes the only available means of sharing critical news information (Glynn, et al., 2011). The interactive nature of social media sites, especially in the case of breaking news stories or stories that are too large in scope or size for more traditional news outlets to thoroughly cover, allow users the opportunity to post their own accounts of what is happening, or provide information that other media outlets might be withholding (Glynn, et al., 2011) through social media. In addition, users are able to create, edit, relay, and comment on and discuss the news content in real time, on their own terms (Glynn, et al., 2011).
Because online social media networks are facilitating this kind of discussion and interaction, they are functioning as one of the major news distribution outlets (Yun & Park, 2011). As an example, Twitter is an important source of timely information for many people (Lerman & Ghosh, 2010). For instance, on May 12, 2008, an 8.0 magnitude earthquake hit China’s Sichuan province, which ultimately killed 70,000 people and displaced another 5 million. The first line of reporting was not from any sort of media outlet, but from Sichuan residents themselves, who began posting messages on QQ (China’s largest social network) and Twitter even while the earthquake was still happening (Shirky, 2008). Within minutes, photos and videos of the effects were available as people uploaded them from their mobile phones, and the links were passed around even further via e-mail, instant messages, and text messages, being thoroughly discussed before the story was available on any news sites (Shirky, 2008). In fact, Rory Cellan-Jones of the BBC reported learning about the earthquake from Twitter (Shirky, 2008). Within 40 minutes, there was a Wikipedia page about the earthquake, which helped in sharing links to information about both the quake and its effects, as people simply linked to the page, and within hours after that, sites were designed to aid in the search for missing victims. By the next day, there were donations from all over the world that were being raised on behalf of the survivors (Shirky, 2008).

The world became aware of the earthquake at a surprising speed, not purely as a function of global technological networks. Through social networks, word of the earthquake reached a few highly connected users, who then passed on the news to
groups that were much larger (Shirky, 2008). One of these highly connected users was Kaiser Kuo, a Web strategist living in Beijing who was one of the early recipients of news of the earthquake, and he acted as both a translator, translating the story from Mandarin to English, and as an amplifier, as he redistributed the news from China to contacts all over the world (Shirky, 2008). The instant availability of the news may also have encouraged the Chinese media to begin publishing immediate information about the earthquake. By contrast, in 1976, it took the Chinese government several months to admit that an earthquake of similar magnitude had even happened (Shirky, 2008).

Events such as these help journalists understand the value and nature of news information that is being gathered and conveyed through various social networks. Ultimately, they will enhance the prospects for journalism’s long-term survival, because as a result of social media, the news media can end up covering a story because something has broken into the public sphere of consciousness via other means (Overholser 2009; Shirky, 2008). For example, when a building exploded in Bozeman, Montana, in 2009, no news network had a reporter at scene. But, like the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, there were plenty of people who broadcasted via Twitter what was happening (Lowery, 2009). Within moments of the explosion, Twitter users in Bozeman had posted photos of it, described the scene in detail, and provided vital emergency information. A few hours later, these same Twitter users were sharing coverage of the city’s press conference and were acting as a larger reporting team than any single news organization in Bozeman could have done (Lowery, 2009).
The Bozeman explosion serves as a good example of how social media and mass media can rely on each other to create a new form of journalism — a more real time, interactive one (Lowery, 2009). On-site observers of the explosion and its aftermath used Twitter to cover the event in a way that a small Bozeman newsroom could not, suggesting that social media can bring a much greater depth and breadth to journalists’ work (Ludtke, 2009). The coverage of the Bozeman explosion also demonstrates that news organizations will benefit from interactive communication with social media users, because by using online tools such as Twitter, journalists are able to get information, ideas, and feedback, and by interacting with their audiences consistently, they can develop a different type of relationship — an interactive one — than the arms-length connection that traditional mass media had created (Picard, 2009).

The value of social media

The value of using any social media application such as Facebook or Twitter is found in its ability to facilitate meaningful, interactive conversation with users within those networks (Lowery, 2009). Mainstream media are primarily using social media as a tool to help them distribute and market their news content, while some individual journalists are using these networks as a way to establish a relationship with their audiences and listen to other users, allowing members of the public to take part in discussions about the news with larger groups of people, and draw attention to issues,
topics, and news stories that a larger, more traditional news outlet may have overlooked (Picard, 2009).

This change isn’t a shift from one kind of news institution to another, but it is more a shift in the ways that news has gone from an institutional prerogative, where the news organization decided what news was fit to be distributed to its audience, to more of a communications ecosystem, which, through social media, is occupied by a combination of formal news organizations, informal groups of people, and individuals (Shirky, 2008).

The immediacy provided by social media and other online news outlets also allows those posting news, whether they are part of a traditional news outlet or not, to continuously change, tweak, or update any content that they publish (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010). This feature of posting online lends itself to a great deal more information being published online because of its ease in updating. Traditionally, communication occurred through mass media, such as newspapers, radio, and television, or through interpersonal channels, such as two people speaking on the telephone. Today, however, much more information is produced and shared through mass collaboration and peer production (Kushin, 2009), such as the events of the Sichuan earthquake and Bozeman explosion. This information was spread to the public because of the massive number of people using Twitter to spread it.

Digital means of distributing information have proven the traditional newspaper to be merely a provisional solution to quickly disseminating the news. The Internet, through online news and social media, did not just introduce a new
competitor into the old news ecosystem, as had happened when radio and television were introduced into the news scene. The Internet created an entirely new ecosystem, and changed the online journalistic environment (Shirky, 2008).

The impact of social media

Social media have changed the online journalistic environment, but the question remains, how have they impacted the way people receive their news and the way they discuss it? The changes are significant, almost to the point of a revolution in the way society receives and discusses news, because society as a whole has adopted new behaviors, and according to Shirky, a revolution doesn’t happen merely when society adopts new technologies. It happens when a society adopts new behaviors (Shirky, 2008).

What are these new behaviors? Because they are able to, news consumers are commenting on stories, re-posting them on social media sites, and discussing news among themselves online (Shirky, 2008). Posting comments online, such as on a news group, website, or blog, has become more common among both adults and young people over time. In 2009, 33 percent of users ages 18 to 29 reported commenting online, and 24 percent of users over age 30. Eighty-six percent of teenagers reported commenting online within a social media context (Lenhart et al., 2010). However, since these results are more than three years old, these same teenagers are now college students, making them the ideal age to be studied for social media behaviors (Hargittai, 2008).
Society “institutionalizes” inventions by discovering new possibilities of communication through them (Stober, 2004), and the Internet is no exception, especially when one looks at the concepts of online, real-time interaction and commenting. Society formats news media functions, and also adapts them. It also develops new economic models if they are needed, and eventually accepts them by creating new political frameworks for them (Stober, 2004).

By political frameworks, Stober does not necessarily mean politics in the sense of government. Instead, he means the acceptable ways a society functions (Stober, 2004). For instance, online discussion forums can been seen as a place for individual users to express their opinions about a certain topic simply by posting a message that can be seen by many (Yun & Park, 2011). Before the rise of the Internet, people did not have this option; they were limited to writing letters to newspapers or calling into radio shows (Steuer, 1993). Now, it is thought that the use of online social media sites, including for newsgathering, is an intentional social action, rather than for individual enjoyment (Chiu, et al., 2008). This means people are using social media sites for the purpose of interacting with other users, rather than simply using them to find out information for themselves. In the long run, a type of media’s content matters less than the type of media itself (in this case, social media) in influencing how people think and act (Carr, 2010).

A deeper understanding of the use and influence of online journalism and social media sites might be derived through a renewed focus on the interpersonal goals that motivate users’ information-seeking and processing (Walther, et al., 2011). People
want to be connected to each other, and networks provided by social media sites and sites where users can interact with one another give people this ability (Shirky, 2010). The most important asset of a social network is the access that users gain to one another (Shirky, 2010). In addition, social tools don’t create collective action; they remove the obstacles to it. These obstacles, because they have been so significant to and pervasive in society in the past, are causing the world to become a different place as they are removed. As a result of improving technology, the world can be more interconnected than ever before (Shirky, 2008).

The growing interconnectedness of society has forced traditional media outlets such as newspapers, televisions stations, and radio stations to face the challenge of adapting their operating processes and procedures in order to best take advantage of this new venue (social media) for disseminating news and offering provider-consumer interaction through comments (Glynn, et al., 2011). In addition, when users are allowed to comment on news stories, no matter if it is through an online news site or through social media, it might further disrupt the traditional and predictably recurring news cycle, because the online discussion surrounding a story can continue to develop and attract attention even if the news story itself is not updated (Karlsson & Stromback, 2010).

Online, the user has more control in determining what the entertainment or information experience will be, and anyone can produce content for the network of networks, be it a social media network or an online news network (Stromer-Galley, 2000). A person can seamlessly shift from being a news consumer to a news
contributor and creator in a world where all a user needs is a camera phone to report on his or her surroundings (Tapscott & Williams, 2008).

This method of sharing opinions also greatly enlarges the number of people who can be involved in any given conversation at any given time. In the early years of the Internet, if one wanted to reach many people at once, e-mail was the best method. However, e-mailing news articles consisted of sharing content only within a smaller network of users that the user already knew, such as friends, family, and acquaintances. Now, commenting on news stories comprises communication within a much larger network of people unknown to the user (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2012).

The more people who know about a topic and wish to discuss it, the more likely it is that the topic will disseminate through users’ networks across social media sites. One way that messages can spread is through Twitter users retweeting links to news stories. The practice of retweeting helps to contribute to a “conversational ecology” online, where the story is discussed more in depth (Boyd, et al., 2010). Twitter has also been used to help aggregate useful information for readers when news organizations retweet what others are saying, send their followers to other interesting stories, and use it as a vehicle with which to converse and interact with their readers (Lowery, 2009).

The shift in society’s behavior has been gradual since the rise of social media. However, one major impact it has had is that many younger people no longer look for
news for themselves. The news comes to them through their social networks (Skoler, 2009).

These same young people simply assume that their network of friends — people they trust — will tell them when something interesting or important happens, and send them whatever is deemed to be a trustworthy source, including articles, blogs, videos, and posts from social media such as Facebook and Twitter (Skoler, 2009). News communication technologies, which include everything from traditional print newspapers to social media sites, are changing the ways in which people acquire information from institutional, interpersonal, and peer information sources (Walther, et al., 2011).

People like to get their information from other people in some capacity, because sociability is one of our core capabilities, and it shows up in almost every aspect of our lives (Shirky, 2008). People talk about things they are interested in, and if a news story happens to be something that a large amount of people are interested in, then they will talk about it, and thus, it will likely spread through social media channels. Many young adults prefer to exchange news information with others through social media sites (Kushin, 2009), so it can be expected that news that caters to them will spread online rapidly.

In order for a news article to be popular, it is essential that a large number of readers see it within a short timeframe (Bandari, et al., 2011). If a news article is of interest to many people, it can be expected to garner much attention, while specific content that is relevant to only a few niche groups may not be as successful (Bandari,
et al., 2011). The manner in which most people form and change their opinions of
news issues involves mass media messages and interpersonal discussions (Walther, et
al., 2011), and the only way to combine these two things is through social media sites,
where news can spread rapidly when users retweet and re-post links to news stories,
and discuss their opinions about the news at the same time.

People also seek news and other information from media or interpersonal
channels such as social media largely based on topic, timing, and immediate
accessibility (Walther, et al., 2011). Therefore, people could potentially seek out the
majority of their news from social media sites. News audiences are more likely to read
news stories that they will likely discuss in the future, and if their friends on social
media sites are posting news stories, users will read those particular stories so that they
can talk about them at a later time. Also, social media sites like Facebook and Twitter
show posts chronologically, and in real time, so if a user is online at the same time or
soon after a friend on one of these networks posts a news story, that user will see it
and be likely to read it, because it is also immediately accessible. On social media
sites, the links to stories are embedded into the posts.

Users can discuss these stories among themselves, as well. Not only should
members of a society have the willingness to express their opinion (this can be done
through posts on social media sites), but they should be *able* to, as well (Yun & Park,
2011). Social media sites allow for this because the nature of the site encourages
people to express their opinion online about anything, including news, while giving
them an outlet to do so.
Social media sites can indeed be useful for spreading news online, and people are using social networks. But who are these users? And why are they seeking their news online? Users of social media sites tend to selectively seek out news (Glynn, et al., 2011). But who are the people who are more likely to receive some or all of their news information from sites such as Facebook and Twitter? One study found that 22 percent of young people report using social media sites for news, and more research demonstrates that age (being younger) and gender (being female) also positively predict social media use (Glynn, et al., 2011). In fact, there was a significant relationship that indicated younger people were more likely to use Facebook for news purposes (Glynn, et al., 2011). To strengthen this claim, it has also been determined that college students in the United States constitute an ideal population in which to study differences in particular types of digital media uses (including using social media sites to get news information), because of their high connectivity levels (Hargittai, 2008).

The impact of peers’ online comments has an influence on users’ attitudes and perceptions about the news (Walther, et al., 2011). In a study conducted by Lee, Jang, and Kim, undergraduate college students, the ideal population in which to study digital media uses, viewed online news stories about a teacher compensation package. Along with the stories, peers’ comments appeared to either agree or disagree with the actions that were presented in the news story. Those who read comments that opposed the issues rated the story as more negative. Also, participants who read negative
comments perceived that public sentiment about the issue was the same as the
direction of the attitudes that appeared in the comments (Walther, et al., 2011).

People also more highly value information presented on computers (and therefore, online) when they believe that the information was selected by other users (Walther, et al., 2011). In an experiment that presented identical news stories to participants who were told that the story was either selected by a computer or selected by their peers, overwhelmingly the peer-selected stories were preferred, because they were “perceived to be more representative of news” (Walther, et al., 2011).

People prefer the same news as their peers likely because it means that they will be able to discuss the news later, and as social beings, they will want to. Also, because humans are inherently social, they are able to influence each other’s opinions about issues through discussing them. Online, this can mean through comments, or simply what others in a person’s online social network are posting. The interactivity of social media has allowed users to communicate with each other and have discussions about anything, including news. In fact, it has allowed more people to learn about the news because, based on the aforementioned research, it is suggested they will want to be able to discuss it with their friends. These changes, especially those that encourage greater interactivity among social media users, have the possibility of significantly impacting the future of journalism and changing the way society discusses news.

This paper has established a definition of interactivity, given an overview of social media and how interactivity plays a role, how the Internet and social media have changed journalism, and from these facts, it is possible to speculate on how social
media and interactivity will impact the future of journalism and how society discusses news, and especially breaking news. In order to do this, however, it is necessary to discover how young people today are getting their news (are they getting it from social media?) and how interactivity is playing a role in that.
**Research questions and hypotheses**

There are several questions that need to be asked in order to see how people today are getting their news, if they are getting it from social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter, and if users are interacting with each other about the news online via commenting. These questions (indicated by the letter “R”) and the following hypotheses (indicated by the letter “H”) about their answers are listed below:

*R1:* Are Facebook users getting their news information from Facebook, or are they getting it elsewhere?

*R2:* Are Twitter users getting their news information from Twitter, or are they getting it elsewhere?

*R3:* Are Facebook users getting their breaking news information from Facebook, or are they getting it elsewhere?

*R4:* Are Twitter users getting their breaking news information from Twitter, or are they getting it elsewhere?

*R5:* Are the people who get their news information from social media sites re-posting or retweeting the stories they read? Or are people more apt to post stories to social media that they find on their own on news websites?

*R6:* Are these people commenting and interacting with others online about these stories?

These research questions are based on previous research. I have also based my hypotheses off of this research.
**H1: The more frequently respondents use social media, the more they will get their news information from social media, as well as breaking news.**

Previous research suggests that those who use social media frequently will get more of their news information from social media, as well as breaking news. People seek information from media or interpersonal channels (i.e., social media) based on topic, timing, and immediate accessibility (Walther, et al., 2011), and frequent users of social media will find that the most accessible stories are presented to them in their Facebook news feed or Twitter stream, and they can click on the link right there, rather than having to go to the website of a specific news organization. Because these links are the most accessible forms of news available to social media users, it is reasonable to believe that frequent users of social media will get their news information, as well as breaking news, from social media.

A previous study suggested that nearly half (48 percent) of the sample got their news from social media sites at least once a week (Baumgartner, 2008), and another study said that 22 percent of young people use social media sites for news (Glynn, et al., 2011). This same study suggested there was a significant relationship indicating that younger respondents were more likely to use Facebook for news purposes (Glynn, et al., 2011).

**H2: Those who get their news information from social media sites will more often re-post or retweet the news stories that interest them than those who do not.**
If frequent social media users are getting more of their news from social media sites, then these same users will re-post or retweet news stories mainly because they are more frequent users of the sites. Especially on Twitter, re-posting or retweeting posts gives a sense of a “shared conversational context,” and because we are inherently social (Shirky, 2008), it is suggested that those who get their news information from social media sites will re-post or retweet the stories they find on these sites (Boyd, et al., 2010), especially in the case of breaking news. Many important news stories have broken on Twitter, and have spread like wildfire due to the amount of users retweeting the information (Stassen, 2010; Shirky, 2008).

**H3:** Those who frequently get their news information from social media sites will also post or tweet news stories that they find on other websites to social media more often than those who do not.

Research suggests this hypothesis because this will encourage interaction with their friends on these sites.

**H4:** Those who frequently get their news information from social media sites will comment more frequently on news stories, both on social media sites and news organization websites than those who do not.

This is not only because it has been suggested that users of social media sites tend to selectively seek out news (Glynn, et al., 2011), but because many users are online for the purpose of interaction (Wise, et al., 2010). If they are online to interact with others, then these motivations would spread beyond social media sites. Online news consumers who choose to post comments on news stories seem to scan their
environment and express their opinions broadly, especially during times of high interest in politics, but they also focus on other matters during uneventful periods (Boczkowski & Mitchelstein, 2012). This suggests that those who frequently get their news from social media are commenting regularly, whether the stories are found on social media sites or not.
Methods

To test these research questions and hypotheses, I conducted a survey of students at Ohio University. I chose to focus on college students because they comprise an ideal population in which to study differences in types of digital media uses, due to their high connectivity levels (Hargittai, 2008). I selected a sample (every fourth student) of 7,166 students from official university records of undergraduate students enrolled for the 2012 winter quarter at Ohio University. Potential respondents received an e-mail invitation that described the survey and linked them to Qualtrics, where the survey was hosted online. All respondents who completed the survey were entered into a drawing for one of four $25 gift cards to a popular Mexican restaurant. The study was available for approximately four weeks, during which time the potential respondents received three reminder e-mails, if they had not taken the survey already.

A total of 1,088 respondents completed the online survey. The respondent pool was 71 percent female and 29 percent male. Respondents ranged in age from 16 to 60, and the average age was 22.4 years. The respondent pool was made up of 24 percent freshmen, 20 percent sophomores, 24 percent juniors, and 31 percent seniors. The overall response rate was 15.2 percent. Respondents logged onto the survey website Qualtrics via a link in the invitation e-mail they received and were asked about their use of social media and newsgathering habits.

The main focus of the survey was the degree to which people get their news from social media, and how often they comment in order to have interactions with other users online. Respondents were asked how often they used the social media sites
Facebook and Twitter, as well as how often they used these sites in order to get news information. In addition, they were asked which news source they use the most. The full questionnaire is available in the Appendix. They were also asked about their online commenting habits — how often they leave comments on both stories from news organizations websites as well as social media sites, and how often they carry on conversations or discussion via a comment thread on these stories. The survey defined a conversation or discussion as three or more exchanges between the user and at least one other person, in which the user posts at least twice. This definition of conversation or discussion is in line with this paper’s definition of interactivity. Interactivity within a communication technology as the degree to which a mediated environment is modified in real time by responsiveness among participants having reciprocal message exchanges that are related in the sense that they refer to earlier messages in the same exchange.

Respondents were also asked what kinds of news they seek on Facebook, Twitter, and news websites, as well as for demographic information (which has been described above). They were also asked three open-response questions to examine why they leave comments on news stories that they read, why they post or tweet news stories on social media that they read on news websites, and why they re-post or retweet news stories on social media sites. Finally, in order to judge whether or not they began using social media for news over time, respondents were asked how they heard about four major news events from the past 11 years. These events were the
**Results**

The data was analyzed through SPSS. I ran tests mainly to get Pearson correlations and ANOVAs, though I also ran some tests to create frequency tables. I also ran a small number of t-tests.

Pearson correlations show relationships between two variables in either a positive or negative direction. For example, when comparing how often people use Twitter with how often they get breaking news information from Twitter, I got a Pearson correlation of .837, which means that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they get breaking news information from it. A negative correlation means that there is an inverse relationship between the two variables. For example, when comparing how often people use Facebook with how often they use it to get news information, I got a Pearson correlation of -.717. This means that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they use it to get news information.

In addition, the closer the Pearson correlation is to -1 or 1, the more statistically and practically significant (strong) the correlation is, and the closer it is to zero, the less significant (weak) it is. So, .837 and -.717 are both significant.

ANOVAs compare groups. For example, in many of the questions about Facebook and Twitter, the results were divided into five groups: “very often,” “often,” “sometimes,” “rarely,” and “never.” Each group had a mean score for how often respondents chose that particular group as an answer, and the ANOVA test compares all of them together with F-scores that measure frequency, and significance levels that tell how significant that particular result is. ANOVAs also produce Tukey’s HSD
range tests, which measure the differences between the means of the groups that were compared in the ANOVA, and where the significant differences between the groups are. The Tukey’s HSD range tests compare only two groups at a time, while the ANOVA itself compares all five. However, within an ANOVA, there are different levels of significance, and so these different levels will be described as they appear in the results.

In this section, I will organize my results around my research questions. The tests that do not answer a specific question will be discussed first, and further discussion about each topic will be discussed in the discussion section, including discussion about whether or not my hypotheses were supported.

When comparing different types of social media use (i.e., Facebook versus Twitter use), I got a Pearson correlation of \(-.213\), which suggests that people who use Facebook more often use Twitter less frequently.

My results suggest that there are some gender-related differences when it comes to social media use, as well. After running a t-test for equality of means, it is suggested that women use Facebook more than men (2-tailed significance level of \(p<.05\)) with women having a mean score of 4.25 and men having a mean score of 4.06. When running the same test for Twitter use, it was found that there is no statistically significant difference between men and women when comparing Twitter use. Women also comment more on stories that they find on news websites, based on mean scores of 4.52 for women and 4.39 for men, with a 2-tailed significance level of \(p<.05\).
R1: Are Facebook users getting their news information from Facebook, or are they getting it elsewhere?

R2: Are Twitter users getting their news information from Twitter, or are they getting it elsewhere?

When comparing how often people obtain news information from Facebook and how often people obtain news information from Twitter, I got a Pearson correlation of .207, which suggests that people who get news information from Twitter more frequently get it from Facebook less frequently. I also found suggestions that the more people use Facebook, the less they use it to get news information (Pearson correlation of -.717). However, the opposite was suggested when comparing the frequency of Twitter use to the frequency of how often people use Twitter to get news information. A Pearson correlation of .923 between these two results suggests that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they use it to get news information.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often users get news information from Facebook and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 284.995 and a significance level of p<.01. A Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences (significance levels of .000) between all of the groups tested, which were “never,” “rarely,” “sometimes,” “often,” and “very often.” These groups were the same for most ANOVAs that were tested. These results suggest that those who rarely or never use Facebook get news information from it more often than those who use Facebook often, as the “never” group had a mean score of 4.39 and the “very often” groups had a mean score of 1.12.
A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people got news information from news websites and how often people use Facebook found no significant relationship (F-score of 4.060 with a significance level of .000), although it is suggested that people who use Facebook often get their news information from news websites slightly more often than those who do not use Facebook as frequently.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people get more of their news from friends than mainstream news sources and how often people get news information from Facebook found an F-score of 42.950 with a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences (significance levels of .000) between all of the groups tested. The results for this test were grouped into “rare to never,” “sometimes,” and “often.” This suggests that the more often people get news information from Facebook, the less often they get their news from their friends and the more often they get their news from mainstream news sources.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people feel that the news media do a better job of covering breaking news than social media and how often people get their news information from Facebook found an F-score of 2.001 and a significance level of .136, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found no significant differences between the groups tested. The results for this test were grouped into “rare to never,” “sometimes,” and “often.”

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people are more likely to read news stories that their friends post than they are to seek them out themselves and how often people get their news information from Facebook found an
F-score of 69.013 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between the groups tested. The results for this test were grouped into “rare to never,” “sometimes,” and “often.” This suggests that the more often people get news information from Facebook, the less likely they are to read news stories that their friends post and the more likely it is that they will seek them out themselves.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people are more likely to seek out news stories themselves than read news stories that their friends post and how often people get their news information from Facebook found an F-score of 23.657 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between the groups tested. The results for this test were grouped into “rare to never,” “sometimes,” and “often.” This suggests that the more often people get news information from Facebook, the more likely they are to seek out news stories themselves than read news stories that their friends post.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often users get news information from Twitter and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 787.343 and a significance level of .000. A Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences between all groups, except for between the “often” and “very often” groups (significance level of .153). These results suggest that those who use Twitter more often get news information from it more often than those who use Twitter less. However, it must be noted that in these calculations, the range of values in the means was only from 1 to 2 due to unknown problems while running the data through SPSS,
rather than 1 to 5 as in all other comparisons in these tests. Also, there were six groups compared as opposed to five. However, the sixth group, which was made up of people who did not answer the question, can be ignored due to the sample size of the survey (over 1,000 results) and the fact that there were only 12 results in this particular group. Also, because of the sample size, though the actual numbers in the F-score and significance levels may change if the range of values in the means was from 1 to 5 instead of 1 to 2, the results can be considered to be valid.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people got news information from news websites and how often people use Twitter also found no significant relationship (F-score of 1.401 with a significance level of .221).

*R3: Are Facebook users getting their breaking news information from Facebook, or are they getting it elsewhere?*

*R4: Are Twitter users getting their breaking news information from Twitter, or are they getting it elsewhere?*

The results of R1 and R2 were similar when comparing how often people use Facebook to how often they use Facebook to get breaking news information. With a Pearson correlation of -.613, it is suggested that the more people use Facebook, the less they use it to get breaking news information. However, when comparing the frequency of Twitter use to the frequency of how often people use Twitter to get breaking news information, a Pearson correlation of .837 suggests that they more often people use Twitter, the more often they use it to get breaking news information.
A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people got breaking news information from Facebook and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 162.381 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences (significance levels of .000) between all groups except for between “often” and “very often” (.093), and “sometimes” and “often” (.016). These results suggest that the more people use Facebook, the less often they use it for breaking news.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people get breaking news information from news websites and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 5.351 and a significance level of .000. Although the F-score is not as high as other F-scores found, it is still significant and therefore worth noting. However, a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed very low significance levels between groups. There was a significance level of .030 between “never” and “rarely,” a significance level of .046 between “never” and “sometimes,” and a significance level of .037 between “never” and “often.” These results suggest that as Facebook use gets more frequent, the less frequently people get breaking news information from Facebook, though a means plot revealed that there is a slight jump in how frequently people get breaking news information from Facebook between the “often” and “very often” groups, though there was a significance level of only .099 between them.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people got breaking news information from Twitter and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 688.917 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed
significant differences between all groups tested. This suggests that the more people use Twitter, the more often they use it for breaking news.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people get breaking news information from news websites and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 1.636 and a significance level of .148, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed no significant differences between groups.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people get more of their news from friends than mainstream news sources and how often people get breaking news information from Twitter found an F-score of 14.089 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significance differences between all groups tested except between the “sometimes” and “often” groups (significance level of .637). As above, the results for this test were grouped into “rare to never,” “sometimes,” and “often.” This suggests that the more often people get breaking news information from Twitter, the less often they get their news information from friends and the more often they get it from mainstream news sources. The reason I used the variable of breaking news from Twitter rather than just regular news information from Twitter was because of the sixth group that was included in previous tests. Though the group did not affect results to a large degree, in grouping the results for this test, there was no place for it, and throwing it out would not have had a large effect on the overall results. There was not a large statistical difference between how often people got regular news information from Twitter and how often people got breaking news information from Twitter due to the large sample size (over 1,000), and so the groups
that are compared are not exactly parallel when compared to the groups comparing Facebook use. However, because of the large sample size, the results found from this test, and the following four tests, are still valid.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people feel that the news media do a better job of covering breaking news than social media and how often people get their breaking news information from Twitter found an F-score of 25.529 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences except between the “rare to never” and “sometimes” groups (significance level of .165). This suggests that the more often people get breaking news information from Twitter, the more likely they agree that the news media do a better job of covering breaking news than social media.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people are more likely to read news stories that their friends post than they are to seek them out themselves and how often people get their breaking news information from Twitter found an F-score of 10.818 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences only between the “rare to never” and “often” groups (significance level of .000). This suggests that the more often people get breaking news information from Twitter, the less likely they will read news stories that their friends post and the more likely it is that they will seek them out themselves.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people are more likely to seek out news stories themselves than read news stories that their friends post and how often people get their breaking news information from Twitter found an F-
score of 5.354 and a significance level of .005, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences only between the “rare to never” and “often” groups (significance level of .005). This suggests that the more often people get breaking news information from Twitter, the more likely it is that they will seek out news stories themselves than they are to read news stories that their friends post.

R5: Are the people who get their news information from social media sites re-posting or retweeting the stories they read? Or are people more apt to post stories to social media that they find on their own on news websites?

I also found results that suggest that people who re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media also post or tweet news stories on social media that they find on news websites, with a Pearson correlation of .738 between these two results.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people post or tweet news stories on social media that they find on news websites and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 31.755 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between all groups except between the “sometimes” and “often” groups (significance level of .574) and the “often” and “very often” groups (significance level of .706). This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will post or tweet news stories on social media that they find on news websites.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 34.103 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found
significant differences between all groups except between the “sometimes” and “often” groups (significance level of .261) and the “sometimes” and “very often” groups (significance level of .093). This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will re-post or retweet a news story that they read on social media.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people frequently post news stories that they read onto social media and how often people get their news information from Facebook found an F-score of 56.120 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between the groups tested. The results for this test were grouped into “rare to never,” “sometimes,” and “often.” This suggests that the more often people get news information from Facebook, the less likely they are to post news stories that they read onto social media sites.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people post or tweet news stories on social media that they read on news websites and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 49.402 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between all groups tested except between the “rarely” and “sometimes” groups (significance level of .818) and the “sometimes” and “often” groups (significance level of .479). This suggests that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they will post or tweet news stories on social media that they read on news websites.
A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 82.129 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between all groups except between the “rarely” and “sometimes” groups (significance level of .884) and the “sometimes” and “often” groups (significance level of .123). This suggests that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they will re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media.

A one-way ANOVA comparing the level of agreement that people frequently post news stories that they read onto social media and how often people get their breaking news information from Twitter found an F-score of 70.989 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between all groups tested. This suggests that the more often people get breaking news information from Twitter, the less likely they are to post news stories that they read onto social media sites.

*R6: Are these people commenting and interacting with others online about these news stories?*

It is also suggested that users who post or re-post stories on social media also leave comments on news stories that they find on social media. I found a Pearson correlation of -.511 between those who leave comments on news stories on social media and those who post or tweet stories on social media that they read on news websites, and a Pearson correlation of -.497 between those who comment and those
who re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media sites. This means that those who leave comments on news stories on social media are less likely to post or tweet stories on social media that they read on news websites, and are also less likely to re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media sites. I also found a Pearson correlation of .481 between users who leave comments on stories that are posted by their friends on social media and users who post or tweet news stories to social media that they read on news websites, and a Pearson correlation of .488 between users who leave comments on friends’ stories and users who re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media, which suggests that commenters in general are more likely to post news stories to social media.

I also found a suggestion (Pearson correlation of .397) that users who re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media are more apt to carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on social media sites.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people leave comments on stories that they find on news websites and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 5.930 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences between the “never” and “very often” groups (significance level of .000), the “rarely” and “very often” groups (significance level of .012), and the “sometimes” and “very often” groups (significance level of .049). This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will leave comments on news stories that they find on news websites.
A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people leave comments on news stories that they find on social media and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 43.329 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences across all groups except for between the “often” and “very often” groups. This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will leave comments on news stories that they find on social media.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people comment on stories that their friends on Facebook and Twitter post and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 115.725 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences between all groups tested except for between the “often” and “very often” groups. This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will leave comments on stories that their friends on Facebook and Twitter post.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on news websites and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 6.455 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences only between the “never” and “very often” groups (significance level of .000), the “rarely” and “very often” groups (significance level of .044), and the “sometimes” and “very often” groups (significance level of .013). This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on news websites.
A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on social media sites and how often people use Facebook found an F-score of 50.952 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between all groups except for between the “sometimes” and “often” groups (significance level of .089) and the “often” and “very often” groups (significance level of .356). This suggests that the more often people use Facebook, the less often they will carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on social media sites.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people leave comments on news stories that they find on news websites and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 2.272 and a significance level of .045, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found no significant differences between the groups that were tested. However, it must be noted that in all of the following tests involving Twitter, as in one of the tests described above, there were six groups instead of five, but the results of the sixth group were thrown out due to the size of that particular group compared to the overall sample size.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people leave comments on news stories that they find on social media and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 11.175 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences when comparing the “never” group with the “sometimes,” “often,” and “very often” groups. This suggests that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they will leave comments on news stories that they find on social media.
A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people leave comments on stories that their friends on Facebook and Twitter post and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 17.074 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed significant differences between the “never” and “sometimes” groups (significance level of .122), the “never” and “often” groups (significance level of .000), the “never” and “very often” groups (significance level of .000), the “rarely” and “often” groups (significance level of .009), and the “sometimes” and “very often” groups (significance level of .007). This suggests that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they will leave comments on stories that their friends on Facebook and Twitter post.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on news websites and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 2.513 and a significance level of .028, and a Tukey’s HSD range test revealed no significant differences between the groups being tested.

A one-way ANOVA comparing how often people carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on social media sites and how often people use Twitter found an F-score of 10.402 and a significance level of .000, and a Tukey’s HSD range test found significant differences between the “never” and “often” groups (significance level of .026), the “never” and “very often” groups (significance level of .000), and the “rarely” and “very often” groups (significance level of .040). This suggests that the more often people use Twitter, the more often they will carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on social media sites.
**Discussion**

Overall, this study found that the more often people use Twitter, the more they get news information from it, the more they participate in online discussions about the news, and the more they tweet or re-tweet stories that they find; it does not matter whether these stories are found on social media sites or on news organization websites. However, the more often people use Facebook, the less often they do all of these things — the less they get news information from it, the less they participate in online discussions about the news, and the less they post or re-post stories that they find. The results were similar for breaking news — the hypotheses lined up when discussing Twitter use, but not Facebook use.

The question to be asked from this is: Why do the hypotheses line up when the social media site in question is Twitter, but not Facebook? To begin to answer this question, it is necessary to look at the purposes of both Facebook and Twitter.

According to Facebook’s website, its mission is “to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected.” Twitter’s website says that Twitter is “a real-time information network that connects you to the latest stories, ideas, opinions, and news about what you find interesting. Simply find the accounts you find most compelling and follow the conversations.” Although both social media sites were created in order to help connect people to others, the functions of each site are different, which could be part of the reason why people are more apt to use Twitter over Facebook for news information. This reasoning is especially helpful when
examining the first hypothesis, which held true for people who use Twitter frequently, but not for those who use Facebook frequently.

*H1: The more frequently respondents use social media the more they will get their news information from social media, as well as breaking news.*

On Facebook, users are able to post pictures, status updates, notes, links to websites, and numerous other things, including playing games. Twitter users are limited to posting messages that are 140 characters or less. Because users can do more on Facebook than Twitter, they will be more apt to use Facebook for social purposes rather than newsgathering purposes.

In addition, people do not use social media primarily to get news information. The survey included a question that asked respondents how they used social media on a scale of 0 to 100, with zero meaning “I never do this” and 100 meaning “I always do this.” The highest average score was on the choice “to keep up with what friends are doing,” with a score of 76.57. The next highest was “to keep up with current trends” (47.05), and then “to find out the news,” which had a score of 34.14. Because “to find out the news” had only the third-highest score (out of five; the other two choices were “to help with my job or internship search” (32.71) and “to play games” (23.56)), it is clear that news is not people’s primary reason for using social media. This is in line with research that has been done suggesting that young people use social media primarily as a means to connect with current friends (Ellison, et al., 2011).

However, people cannot help but find news information when they are on social media sites. As stated previously, social media is now used as an outlet for news
organizations to disseminate news information. In fact, in one of the open response questions included in the survey, one respondent wrote, “With the page and ‘like’ option on Facebook, I am able to receive regular updates in my news feed from news websites that post their news on Facebook. Thus, I am not regularly seeking it out, (sic) however, it is broadcast for me to view if I happen to be online when it is posted.” News information sometimes even breaks on social media outlets, such as the explosion in Bozeman, Montana. This frequently happens on Twitter, where the central function of the site is to post short messages, which lends itself easily to becoming an outlet for breaking news. In fact, based on the survey results, over the past 11 years, people have gradually gotten more and more of their news from social media, especially Twitter.

The survey also included a question that asked about how people first got information from a news source about the following four events: the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11); the July 2005 London subway bombings; the June 2009 death of Michael Jackson; and the May 2011 death of Osama bin Laden. In all four categories, the most common way of learning about the events was through TV broadcast news, but over time, there was a jump in terms of people getting news online, and once social media became more prevalent in society, on Facebook and Twitter as well.

There were zero respondents who learned about 9/11 from social media, because Facebook did not exist until 2004, and Twitter did not exist until 2006. However, 1.5 percent of respondents learned about the London subway bombings
from social media (Facebook only), and 21.8 percent of respondents learned about the death of Michael Jackson from social media (19.3 percent from Facebook, 2.5 percent from Twitter). One-third of respondents learned about the death of Osama bin Laden from social media (25.3 percent from Facebook, 8 percent from Twitter). The increase in respondents getting important, breaking news information from social media suggests that although people may not necessarily seek out news information on social media, they are finding it there anyway.

However, this conclusion still does not answer the question of why getting news from social media holds true for Twitter, but not Facebook. It can be suggested that it is because of the way the two sites function. Facebook lends itself more to socialization; therefore, more posts on the site will be related to users’ friends’ everyday lives, and it would take longer to find news information from all of the posts that are on users’ home pages. Also, people may be accustomed to the longer posts on Facebook, whereas on Twitter, posts are limited to 140 characters. It is easier to scan through shorter posts; thus, it is possible that people find more news information from Twitter than Facebook simply because it is easier. Although a user can subscribe to news organizations’ feeds on both Facebook and Twitter, it is easier to find them on Twitter because they are not overshadowed by a variety of different kinds of posts. The reason that people who use Twitter more frequently get news information from it more is because it is easier to find the news information from the stream of posts on the website. In addition, there are the previous examples of Guy Kawasaki and Nansen on Twitter who primarily use the medium as a news broadcast, which is something
that rarely happens on Facebook (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). The reason people who use Facebook more frequently get news information from it less because is it is more difficult to find the news information out of all the other posts that are made on the site.

*H2: Those who get their news information from social media sites will more often re-post or retweet the news stories that interest them than those who do not.*

The pattern holds true for people who use Twitter frequently but not for those who use Facebook frequently continues looking at whether those who get news information from social media sites will re-post or retweet the news stories that interest them, and that people who frequently get their news information from social media sites will also post or tweet news stories to social media that they find on other websites.

The survey included open response questions to attempt to figure out why users re-post or retweet news stories that they read on social media, why they post or tweet news stories to social media that they find on other websites, and whether or not these concepts have anything to do with why people who use Twitter frequently do these things and those who use Facebook frequently do not. One of these questions asked, “Why do you retweet or re-post news stories on social media?” Some of the responses are as follows:

“I enjoy reading them, and want others to also read them.”
“I feel the information is interesting or should be shared to enlighten others. Also, if it’s breaking news.”

“To share what I’m seeing with my readers so that, hopefully, I can engage them in conversation about it.”

“If I find them interesting and think my friends would also find them interesting I pass them on so they can see them.”

“I want to share the story, but I rarely do it because once it’s on a social media site, it spreads pretty fast.”

These responses help to shed light as to why social media users re-post and retweet news stories they read. The users who are posting want others to read the stories they post because they feel they would also find the stories interesting and want to engage them in conversation about the stories. Interestingly, I did find that the people who are most likely to re-post or post stories are the ones most likely to also leave comments. This makes sense, as it can be inferred that someone posting a story would want to discuss it with others; otherwise, he or she would not post it.

The last open-response answer, however, can potentially shed the most light as to why people may be more inclined to post stories to Twitter rather than Facebook. In addition to the idea that news stories simply get lost in the shuffle of the home page on Facebook and it is easier to find news stories on Twitter (this may play a role in the motivation of someone posting a story; he or she would want to post it to a site where people would actually see it), there is a chance that users see the same stories over and over on Facebook (if it is a major news event), and they are less inclined to re-post the
stories for themselves. As for stories spreading faster via social media, Facebook has more users, which could potentially lead to a more cluttered news feed on the home page. In March 2012, there were 901 million monthly active Facebook users (Facebook, 2012). Twitter had 100 million monthly active users in January 2012 (Bennett, 2012). It is possible that it is easier to find news information on Twitter simply due to fewer users, and if it is easier to find news information there, people may be more inclined to re-tweet stories that they see, no matter how fast the story is actually spreading.

**H3: Those who frequently get their news information from social media sites will also post or tweet news stories that they find on other websites to social media more often than those who do not.**

People also post news stories to social media that they find themselves on other websites for reasons similar to the reasoning behind why people re-post and retweet news stories, even though the motivations behind doing it are slightly different. The question included in the survey was, “Why do you tweet or post news stories on social media that you read on news websites?” Some of the responses to this question are as follows:

“I find them interesting and I think people who can see what I tweet should know what’s going on in the world.”

“It seems like something all journalists do and I also always find interesting stories through the hashtags.”

“Because they’re important, and some people don’t actively follow the news.”
“I am very interested in the news and I want my friends/followers to be informed as well.”

“To show my interests, to explain my point of view, to engage in conversation with others.”

A common theme through these answers is that respondents want others to appear informed about the news and what is going on in the world. Like the question about why people re-post or retweet stories, answers to this question revealed that users want others to see the stories, but not just because they feel that others would find the stories interesting. Respondents to this question post and tweet news stories because they feel that their followers need to be informed about the news. Also, it is interesting that many of the responses to this question included specific references to Twitter rather than Facebook. Once again, it is difficult to determine why, but as before, it can be inferred that it is simpler to post short messages on Twitter, and the home page is not as cluttered with other information. Streamlining the way posts are displayed on Twitter could also play a role because posts are not mixed in with photos and other types of posts on Facebook.

One interesting response to this question read, “I do not partake in this because I feel too nervous that what I have to say is not up to par with other discussions.” This could be a potential reason why others do not post or retweet stories that they read — if they do not feel their comments will be appreciated or given serious consideration, they may be less inclined to post or tweet news stories, because on social media sites, there is always the possibility that there will be future interaction about the story.
**H4: Those who frequently get their news information from social media sites will comment more frequently on news stories, both on social media sites and news organization websites than those who do not.**

Like all of the other hypotheses, the hypothesis that those who frequently get their news information from social media sites will comment frequently on news stories, both on social media sites and news organization websites holds true for those who use Twitter frequently, but not those who use Facebook frequently.

This is interesting, because the layout of Twitter does not lend itself to commenting on individual posts, as on Facebook, which suggests that frequent Twitter users are commenting on stories that they find on news websites, and not necessarily social media sites. The last response I listed to the question, “Why do you tweet or post news stories on social media that you read on news websites?” read, “To show my interests, to explain my point of view, to engage in conversation with others,” and this answer related well to the responses to the question, “Why do you leave comments?” Some responses to this question are as follows:

“To communicate and receive the opinions of others on social matters.”

“To express my opinion, or comment on someone else’s opinion they may have posted.”

“To communicate and let other people know how I feel about a topic and to see what response I get from my comment.”

“I like to give my input on the matter and discuss which views may or may not be right and/or wrong.”
“Because I enjoy debating certain issues and finding out how others feel about them.”

The connection between the responses to the two questions suggests that people who post and re-post stories are likely to engage in conversations via comment on news stories — which could be because users would not post stories if there was not a chance that they would be discussed in the future.

It makes sense for Twitter users to be posting comments on stories they find on news websites, because the data suggests that people who use Facebook frequently are less likely to engage in conversations or discussion via a comment thread on social media. However, because those who use Twitter more frequently are more inclined to post, there is the possibility that they are using Facebook to have discussions about the news, but not necessarily post stories on that particular social network themselves.

Further discussion

The next logical step in trying to determine why users of one social network are more active in discussing news information than another is to examine the types of news that users are getting from Facebook, Twitter, and news websites.

Forty-seven percent of respondents reported that they do not seek out news information on Twitter, but 39 percent reported seeking entertainment news, and 28 percent reported seeking national news. Respondents could choose more than one answer. Sixty-three percent of respondents reported that they do not seek out news information on Facebook, but 27 percent reported seeking entertainment news, and 20
percent reported seeking national news. However, only 11 percent of respondents reported that they do not seek out news from news websites, and 76 percent reported that they seek national news. Respondents could choose more than one answer.

Because respondents are seeking out more entertainment-type news on social media, and looking for national news on news websites, it makes sense that users would carry on conversations via a comment thread on stories found on news websites.

Overall, why are those who use Twitter frequently significantly more active in online news-related activities than those who use Facebook frequently? It could be because most Facebook users receive more (in terms of information in general) from their Facebook friends than they give (Hampton, 2012). It is possible that they get used to this pattern of behavior, let the stream of information flow in, become overwhelmed by it, and only pick out the stories that pertain to their friends because there is simply too much to sort through. Twitter, on the other hand, is easier to participate in, and there are fewer users. Therefore, it is easy to pick out information, and clicking on links will take a user directly to the story on a news website. Here, Twitter users may comment and carry on discussions because they are interested enough in the topic to click on the link to the story in the first place. Facebook allows for longer posts, so a story could be summarized in the post itself, eliminating the need to click through the link to the story on a news website. However, this could also cause the story to be lost in the shuffle of Facebook news feed posts.
One interesting observation from the survey results is that women use Facebook more than men, as well as comment on stories they find on news websites more than men. Men and women were found to use Twitter an equal amount. This is in line with prior research (Glynn, et al., 2011; Hampton, et al., 2011). Research has shown that women are inherently more talkative than men, especially at the college-age level (Mehl, et al., 2007). Because this particular sample was comprised mostly of college-age students, this research can be applied. Thus, it is suggested that because women are more talkative than men, and Facebook allows for more social behavior than Twitter, women will be found on Facebook more often than men will. Because Twitter does not allow for the types of interactions that can be found on Facebook, men and women use it an equal amount. Also, because women are more talkative, it makes sense that women comment on news stories more than men.

More and more people get news from social media. Although it is not people’s primary news source, it is still a prominent place to get news information. This suggests the way society gets its news has changed — it has gone from getting news information from more traditional news sources such as television, newspapers, and radio, to online, whether it be from social media or news websites. The news has also become more interactive — people are able to talk about the news, and so they will seek out news from media that allow them to interact with others. In fact, it can be suggested that the rise of Facebook and Twitter (and therefore interactivity) have actually been the catalysts for people discussing the news online, because it is easier for people to hear about it through these media and to be directed toward stories that
pertain specifically to them, rather than simply hearing the stories selected by the mass media.

People also tend to prefer convenience, which is one possibility as to why those who use Twitter frequently are more involved in discussing the news online than those who use Facebook frequently.

Because of the immediacy and interactivity of social media, Facebook and Twitter have transformed the way society discusses online news, though more research can certainly be conducted in the future.
Limitations and suggestions for future research

I suggest that future research be conducted specifically in the realm of breaking news, and potentially across more demographic groups than students at a Midwestern university. Even though my sample had more than 1,000 respondents, if the same questions are studied at a global level (with a randomized, more representative sample), it is possible that the results could change.

In addition, my research did not include the possibilities that people could be using both Facebook and Twitter simultaneously, such as when Twitter users have their accounts synced with their Facebook accounts, so each tweet is also seen on Facebook. I also did not take into account Facebook applications like the Washington Post Social Reader, which allows Facebook users to read stories from The Washington Post directly on Facebook. Further research into these two areas would prove beneficial.

Finally, more research could be done about the influence of blogs and news websites on the news-seeking behaviors of social media users.
Conclusion

Clay Shirky stated that when we change the way we communicate, we are also changing society (Shirky, 2008). Never has this been more true than in today’s world. Major new technologies always create some sort of restructuring of society, and since the rise of the Internet, society’s restructuring can be attributed to the rise of social media and interactivity.

Interactivity is at the core of new media technologies, especially the Internet and social media. These two media have changed the way people get their news information, and interactivity has changed the way they discuss it. Because of the Internet and social media, people can get news instantly, and because these two media are interactive, people can also instantly comment on news stories, and discuss them with others. In fact, it could be said that the Internet and social media rely on interactivity in order to be effective to their full potential.

Before the Internet and social media, in terms of interactivity and journalism, people were limited to writing a letter to the editor of a newspaper or calling in to a radio or television show. But now, especially on Facebook, Twitter, and news organization websites themselves, anyone can talk to anybody about anything, including the journalist who wrote the particular news story that is being discussed. Online, society is one big community.

Social media have also become powerful news tools. Stories can be posted instantly for users to see, and they can talk about the stories among themselves as they become available. News stories even occasionally break on social media, especially
Twitter, making social media a tool for the news media, who have begun using it actively to in order to obtain these news tips, and also to share their stories and interact with readers.

Because of the Internet and social media, news organizations have gone from being untouchable institutions to bodies that are accessible to everyone, and the way society discusses the news reflects these changes.

This research concurs with previous studies, although it suggests more for one social media platform than another. People don’t use social media primarily to get news information, but sometimes they can’t help but find news on it. The news comes to them due to the fact that their friends or followers may post stories, or they may follow news organizations on social media. However, people who use Twitter frequently use it more for news-related purposes, including interaction about the news, which people who Facebook frequently use it less for the same purposes. This could potentially be because people can do more on Facebook (post pictures, etc.), and there are significantly more Facebook users than Twitter users, people may be more inclined to use Facebook more for social purposes than newsgathering purposes. Twitter, on the other hand, is more streamlined, and so it is simpler to sort through all of the posts to find news stories, while Facebook could appear to be cluttered with several different types of posts.

More and more people are getting their news from social media, though it is not their primary news source. It is a prominent place to get news information and discuss it, which suggests the way society gets its news has changed. It has gradually
gone from getting it from more traditional news sources such as television, newspapers, and radio, to online sources. The news has also become more interactive as a result.

These results can be applied to the news industry, as well. For example, news organizations should use Facebook in order to connect with their audiences, and Twitter to post news stories, rather than using both outlets to post the same stories. Twitter will help to draw people to the news stories, and Facebook will help people feel more connected to the news organizations.

It can be suggested that Facebook and Twitter (and therefore interactivity) have been the sparks for people to actively discuss news online. It is easier for them to hear about news stories, specifically ones that directly interest them, and they are more likely to want to discuss these stories. Also, it is a more convenient way to obtain and discuss the news, because people are online frequently anyway. Although more research can certainly be done about this topic, because of their immediacy and interactive features, Facebook and Twitter have revolutionized the way society discusses news.
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Appendix

The following questions are the questions that respondents were asked in the survey. However, due to formatting constraints, the format presented here is not the exact formatting seen by respondents.

Q1_1: How often do you get news information from Facebook?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q1_2: How often do you get news information from Twitter?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q1_3: How often do you get news information from blogs?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q1_4: How often do you get news information from news websites?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q2_1: How often do you get BREAKING news information from Facebook?
Breaking news is defined as news that is being released as the event is happening, or very shortly after it happens.
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
Q2_2: How often do you get BREAKING news information from Twitter? Breaking news is defined as news that is being released as the event is happening, or very shortly after it happens.
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q2_3: How often do you get BREAKING news information from blogs? Breaking news is defined as news that is being released as the event is happening, or very shortly after it happens.
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q2_4: How often do you get BREAKING news information from news websites? Breaking news is defined as news that is being released as the event is happening, or very shortly after it happens.
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q3_1: How did you first get information from a news source about the events of September 11, 2001 (9/11)?
- TV broadcast news
- TV cable news
- Newspaper
- News website
- Radio news
- Blog
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Other
Q3_2: How did you first get information from a news source about the events of the July 2005 London subway bombings?
- TV broadcast news
- TV cable news
- Newspaper
- News website
- Radio news
- Blog
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Other

Q3_3: How did you first get information from a news source about the events of the June 2009 death of Michael Jackson?
- TV broadcast news
- TV cable news
- Newspaper
- News website
- Radio news
- Blog
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Other

Q3_4: How did you first get information from a news source about the events of the May 2011 death of Osama bin Laden?
- TV broadcast news
- TV cable news
- Newspaper
- News website
- Radio news
- Blog
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Other

Q4: How often do you leave comments on news stories that you find on news websites? This means leaving comments on the news website itself.
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never
Q5: How often do you leave comments on news stories that you find on social media? This means leaving comments on the social media site, not a news website.
  - Very often
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never

Q6: How often do you leave comments on stories that your friends on Facebook or Twitter post?
  - Very often
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never

Q7: How often do you carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on news websites? A conversation or discussion is defined as three or more exchanges between you and at least one other person, in which you post at least twice.
  - Very often
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never

Q8: How often do you carry on conversations or discussions via a comment thread on social media websites? A conversation or discussion is defined as three or more exchanges between you and at least one other person, in which you post at least twice.
  - Very often
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never

Q9: Why do you leave comments?
Q10: How often do you tweet or post news stories on social media that you read on news websites?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q11: How often do you retweet or re-post a news story that you read on social media?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q12: Why do you tweet or post news stories on social media that you read on news websites?

Q13: Why do you retweet or re-post news stories on social media?

Q14: What kinds of news do you seek out on Facebook? Check all that apply
- International news
- National news
- Sports news
- Culture news
- Entertainment news
- I don’t seek out news on Facebook
- Other (please specify)

Q15: What kinds of news do you seek out on Twitter? Check all that apply
- International news
- National news
- Sports news
- Culture news
- Entertainment news
- I don’t seek out news on Facebook
- Other (please specify)
Q16: What kinds of news do you seek out on news websites? *Check all that apply*
- International news
- National news
- Sports news
- Culture news
- Entertainment news
- I don’t seek out news on Facebook
- Other *(please specify)*

Q17: How do you use social media? Please place the marker for each category on the percentage of time you use social media for that purpose. Totals do not have to equal 100.
- To find out the news
- To keep up with what friends are doing
- To keep up with current trends
- To play games
- To help with my job or internship search

Q18.1: Please rate your level of agreement with the following: I get more of my news from my friends than mainstream news sources.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18.2: Please rate your level of agreement with the following: News media do a better job of covering breaking news than social media.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18.3: Please rate your level of agreement with the following: I am more likely to read news stories that my friends post than I am to seek them out myself.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree
Q18_4: Please rate your level of agreement with the following: I am more likely to seek out news stories myself than I am to read news stories that my friends post.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q18_5: Please rate your level of agreement with the following: I frequently post news stories that I read on social media.
- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Q19: How often do you use Facebook?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q20: How often do you use Twitter?
- Very often
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

Q21: What is the news source you use the most?
- TV broadcast news (ABC, NBC, CBS, NPR)
- TV cable news (CNN, MSNBC, etc.)
- Newspaper
- News website
- Radio news
- Blogs
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Other (please specify)

Q22: How old were you on your last birthday?
Q23: What is your gender?
   - Male
   - Female
   - Other

Q24: What is your ethnicity?
   - White/Caucasian
   - African-American
   - Asian
   - Native American
   - Hispanic
   - Pacific Islander
   - Other (please specify)

Q25: What year are you in school?
   - Freshman
   - Sophomore
   - Junior
   - Senior
   - Graduate

Q26: What is your major?

Q27: What is your e-mail address? Provide this answer only if you wish to be entered in the drawing for one of four $25 Chipotle gift cards.