

UNDERSTANDING HOW ADMINISTRATORS AT FOUR-YEAR,  
COMPREHENSIVE, RESIDENTIAL, CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES IN OHIO  
RESPOND TO STUDENT MISUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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## ABSTRACT

### UNDERSTANDING HOW ADMINISTRATORS AT FOUR-YEAR, COMPREHENSIVE, RESIDENTIAL, CATHOLIC UNIVERSITIES IN OHIO RESPOND TO STUDENT MISUSE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how administrators at Catholic, four-year, comprehensive, residential colleges and universities in Ohio experience and respond to student use and misuse of social media. Using qualitative interview techniques, five administrators from five Catholic, four-year, comprehensive, residential colleges and universities in Ohio were interviewed. Three were interviewed a second time, six months after the initial interviews. The participants' interviews were transcribed and coded for meaning. The data yielded six key findings. First, colleges and universities have behavioral student conduct policies, not social media policies. Second, administrators do not proactively educate students about how to use social media. Next, anonymous social media platforms inhibit administrators' ability to hold students accountable for social media misuse but do provide a means for students to hold each other accountable. Fourth, most instances of social media misuse in which a college or university administrator responds were during Title IX investigations. Next,

administrators recognized the role the faith traditions of their universities play in addressing student behavior. Last, because social media technology is continuously evolving, administrators may not be ready to engage in a discussion about this topic.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

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## LIST OF SOCIAL MEDIA TERMS

Chatting: A Facebook feature enabling users to type instant messages to one another while logged onto Facebook ("Facebook Chatting," n.d.).

Comment: Items posted below status messages; friends or administrators can post these ("Facebook Comment," n.d.).

Discussion Thread: Can be formed by either friends or administrators. A thread is usually formed when a detailed discussion of a particular topic is warranted. ("Facebook Discussion Thread," n.d.).

Facebook: Refers to a social networking site in which any person with a valid email account can join ("Facebook," n.d.). It "began life catering first to Harvard students and then to all high school and college students. It has since evolved into a broadly popular online destination used by both teenagers and adults of all ages" ("Facebook founding," n.d.).

Facebook Friend: One who has connected, or added, another to one's list of contacts.

Facebook Stalking: Refers to a user's constantly and passively checking the Facebook activity of another user (Chapman & Higa 2011).

Gaming: Refers to when Facebook users play simple pre-made games on the technology. These games include Farmville, Candy Crush, Jackpot Party Casino among many others. Facebook gaming allows users to play these games through the Facebook site anywhere in which they can log onto Facebook (Junco, 2011).

Instagram: Is a social media photo-sharing and video-sharing site allowing users to post pictures and videos in order to share them with others (“Instagram,” n.d.).

Liking: Refers to a friend indicating approval of a post or having joined a webpage (“Facebook Liking,” n.d.).

Link: Something an administrator or friend can post on a page to direct friends to another webpage. For example, a friend could post a link to an article in the campus newspaper about a team (“Facebook Link,” n.d.).

Pinterest: An online application permitting users to collect, store, and share their visual interests on a board with other users (“Pinterest,” n.d.).

Posting Pictures: Refers to when Facebook users upload pictures to their individual Facebook page for their “friends” to see (“Facebook Posting Pictures,” n.d.).

Private Message: Is much like an email insofar as only those who send or receive such a message can view its content (“Facebook Private Message,” n.d.).

Snapchat: Is a video messaging system permitting users to take photos, record videos, add text and drawings, and send them to friends with whom they are connected.

Social Media Technology: Is a channel through which individuals engage to create, share, and/or exchange information and ideas (Ahlquist et al., 2008).

Status Message/Updates: Something site administrators put on their pages to disseminate information, to stimulate discussions, or for general engagements with other users (“Facebook Status Message,” n.d.).

Twitter: Is a social media site allowing users to post comments in 140 characters or less as a means of engaging with other users (“Twitter,” n.d.).

Yik Yak: Is a social media tool permitting people to post and view discussion threads anonymously within a 5-mile radius of where they are created.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how administrators at private, Roman Catholic, four-year colleges and universities in Ohio experienced and responded to student use and misuse of social media. According to Drescher (2011) of the Religious Dispatch, officials in the Catholic Church are creating a set of social media guidelines for Church institutions, including colleges and universities, suggesting that more work must be done in order to develop strong social media policies. As such, studying college administrators of private, Roman Catholic, four-year institutions in Ohio can provide insight into how Catholic higher education institutions address social media. Drescher noted that the current social media policies within the Catholic Church do not address the protection of minors and students; rather, they focus on how the Church can build community through the use of social media. Specific Catholic Church social media policies, such as the one of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, focus primarily on guiding the behavior of employees, but do not branch out to address student use of social media. Individual schools and universities within the

Archdiocese are left to guide the behavior of students on their own without uniformity (Archdiocese of Cincinnati, 2010).

As stated, research in Catholic higher education focused on social media is directed at community engagement. This study explored the wider phenomenon of student use and misuse of social media within Catholic higher education settings. Unlike public institutions, policies governing student behavior at these universities stem from deeply rooted religious values. These religious universities offer both unique and diverse look at the issue. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), the state of Ohio includes a mix of urban, rural, income, and racial backgrounds, which is represented within the four-year, religiously-affiliated, comprehensive universities in the state.

The significance of Catholic institutions is that they not only have similar legal parameters providing a boundary for how their administrators can respond to student use and misuse of social media, they also have institutional values to guide their responses to student issues (Mack & Stoner, 2014). As is outlined later in this chapter, an array of legal issues situate administrator responses to student use and misuse of social media. By exploring how Catholic administrators respond to this phenomenon, the audience for these findings might gain understanding of how their response is governed by policies and practices that not only proceed from a legal perspective but also an ethical and moral one.

Current discussions in higher education do not center on how to craft meaningful social media policy. Instead, they examine whether such policies should even exist (Burl, 2011). The National Association of College and University Attorneys (NACUA) engaged in a discussion about whether institutions should monitor and sanction student use of

social media (Land, 2012). NACUA is of the opinion that because application of student free speech law to social media in a higher education context is still up for debate, administrators should not create social media policies that govern student behavior, but should address instances on case-by-case bases (Burl, 2011).

Within this debate about the application of student free speech law to social media use and its impact on university policies, Junco (2011) believed in the need for colleges and universities to have social media policies. Junco (2011) stated that:

Given the double-edged potential of online communication technologies...such policies would give the campus community guidance in behaviors that are expected online in the same way that campuses have honor codes to delineate expectations about academic honesty....Yet, no best practices exist to help guide higher education institutions in creating policies for students (p. 60).

Junco (2011) maintained that student use of social media is similar to other student behaviors on campus, and, thus, policy formation is needed to direct the behavior. Additionally, Junco indicated that there are no current best practices that universities can look to in order to craft policies. In this study I aimed to understand how one group of administrators from Catholic universities responded to student use and misuse of social media. My findings might suggest to higher education administrators possible approaches to policy based on current practices.

As is explored in this chapter, officials at many colleges and universities have taken steps to limit student speech on social media either by reacting to a perceived or actual threat or by moving proactively to protect the image of the university from potential threats. By understanding how administrators respond to student use of social

media, meaningful social media policies that are rooted in current practices might be better understood.

### **Background of the Study**

A variety of media outlets have reported that as student use and misuse of social media have proliferated, college and university administrators have reacted in a variety of ways. In the Chronicle of Higher Education, Howard (2013) detailed the lengths to which Northern Illinois University has gone to govern faculty, staff, administrator, and student use of social media. She reported that any person associated with Northern Illinois University who creates a social media account for official university purposes - such as a student organization, an academic department, or a university program - must adhere to a set of strict guidelines and protocols. These rules were not just on what information and engagement can and cannot happen, but also on how to capture and report the content of the social media account.

Administrators at Northern Illinois University acknowledged that a certain element of risk is associated with social media use. Not only do administrators claim to be worried about potential harassment, bullying, and other conduct that would violate university student code of conduct policies and First Amendment case law, but they are worried about the image of the university that is being projected from these social media accounts (Howard, 2013).

Troop (2010) reported in the Chronicle of Higher Education that officials at colleges and universities have restricted student use of social media by blocking sites from being viewed through their internet servers. For example, the administration at Harrisburg University implemented a temporary five-day social media ban after noticing

how frequently students engage with social media versus traditional forms of communication such as face-to-face interaction and conversations over the phone (Chapman, 2010); however, they gave no data on frequency. According to Chapman (2010) in the *Chronical of Higher Education*, Administrators at Harrisburg University were concerned that electronic communications, something they considered harmful to students, were supplanting traditional person-to-person interactions, which administrators believed to be a healthier way to communicate.

Straumsheim (2013) reported that most higher education policies related to social media focus on situations in which the university community would be at some risk. Georgia Southern University, for instance, has a social media policy prohibiting students from threatening the physical safety of others, while other universities have social media policies banning references related to alcohol abuse and any activity that can be construed as harassment. Straumusheim (2013) also reported that many universities craft social media etiquette statements such as those of Oberlin College, which ask students to think about how their social media use could impact future employment or that what they post could be hurtful to others.

As college and university administrators struggle with crafting policies directed at student social media behavior, scholars and social media experts have begun to articulate some options for administrators to consider. Junco (2011) suggested that social media policies should begin with the creation of steering committees that include key stakeholders, such as students, faculty, student affairs professionals, and administrators.

To this point, Junco stated that the committees should include members with wide-ranging technological abilities. Junco (2011) also suggested that the committees



should be transparent by reporting meeting minutes through social media formats, in addition to having open meetings and presenting opportunities for input for those outside the committee. Junco recommended that these committees proceed with the mindset that students can use social media in positive ways to help them develop a sense of who they are, rather than in ways that detract from student development. Finally, Junco wrote that the official policy should be concise, align with institutional values, and be accessible. These suggestions are a starting point for university administrators to create meaningful social media policies that protect both the students' right to speech and the safety of the community.

Greenfield (2010) outlined guidelines for campus administrators to follow when crafting social media policies for students. He suggested that current federal and state laws are not up to date with the social media phenomenon, and that there are issues beyond the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 2016) and intellectual property that administrators need to take into consideration, such as the transformational ability social media sites have to assemble large groups of people instantaneously, or the access students have to personal content of others via social media. Greenfield suggested that all social media policies need to protect institutions and university employees from problems associated with social media misuse by students.

Petroff (2010) observed that social media policies need to protect confidential information, should be respectful of students, and should obey the terms of use on the specific social media channel, meaning that administrators should not circumvent the privacy rights and restrictions created by the social media sites' operators. He also argued that social media policies in higher education should not be complicated. Petroff modeled

his recommendations on Coca-Cola's social media guidelines for employees. Petroff thus outlined ten simple principles of social media use: partake in the company social media training program; follow all other company policies; be mindful of representing the company; fully disclose relationships or affiliations; keep records; if in doubt, do not post; give credit to others when due; be responsible; nothing is private; the internet is permanent.

These three examples offered by Junco, Greenfield, and Petroff provided insight into the complex nature of the problem. Experts have articulated that administrators should focus on process and on the unintended consequences and issues that arise with crafting such policies. However, the guidelines from the researchers noted above are not rooted in an understanding of how students actually use social media, nor how administrators respond. Though researchers provide processes that can be used to arrive at policy decisions, their work does not offer specific recommendations for what should be in the policies. Rather, they only prescribe processes or general guidelines for policy creation. These processes also do not address the unique circumstances of Catholic colleges and universities, given that religious institutions are guided by mission and purpose in ways that may differ at non-Catholic colleges and universities.

In this study I explored how college and university administrators in Catholic college cultures respond to student use and misuse of social media. Administrators might be better informed with the results of this study to implement a process through which policies can be created and implemented regarding use of social media.

### **The Problem**

It is important to have an initial description of what administrators legally can and cannot do within the context of how students commonly use and misuse social media on

college and university campuses. This section of chapter one is important because it outlines the current ways students are using and misusing social media and the legal framework in which administrators must navigate.

Most reported cases of social media misuse involve K-12 education (Dougherty & Terrigno, 2013; Reyes, 2013; Schreiber, 2014; Schwartz, 2012) as described by various news sources. For example, as reported in the LA Times, school officials in Nevada expelled a student for making comments on Facebook referencing the Virginia Tech shooting, indicating that the student created a clear danger to the school and to others (Gilonna, 2013). As a result of this incident and other similar occurrences, courts are hearing cases involving student use of social media. In reference to the incident in Nevada, the Ninth Circuit affirmed that a student's speech was not protected under the First Amendment (*Wynar v. Douglas County School District*, 2013).

Higher education is not immune to the widespread student use, and misuse, of social media, even though there are fewer instances of college and university administrators censoring student social media speech compared to administrators in K-12 education. Accordingly, I relied on references to K-12 education as an analogy that applies to higher education.

Ahlquist (2013) collected and catalogued case law that impacted or could influence the use of social media in higher education. Ahlquist's work primarily utilized cases from K-12 education as a means of understanding the legal framework of social media in higher education. Moreover, Cain and Fink (2010) identified four basic constitutional rights regarding social media and higher education: freedom of speech,

freedom from unwarranted search and seizure, the right to privacy, and the right to due process.

Jerry and Lidsky (2012) maintained that “no case law currently exists on how the Supreme Court’s public forum analysis applies to social media sites created or maintained by public universities and colleges” (p. 6). As such, Jerry and Lidsky (2012) utilized a series of examples from K-12 litigation in conjunction with limited higher education examples to provide their analysis. Gay (2012) also noted, using the same series of examples as Jerry and Lidsky, that *Tinker v. Des Moines School District* (1969), *Fraser v. Bethel School District* (1986), *Hazelwood School District v. Kuhlmeier* (1987), and *Morse v. Frederick* (2007) - all cases concerning free speech in K-12 education - provide a framework for understanding student free speech in higher education. Jerry and Lidsky, along with Gay, were of the view that cases involving K-12 student free speech not only inform the understanding of student free speech in higher education, but also have an implied legal parallel to similar examples in higher education that have yet to materialize.

There are numerous ways in which students are misusing social media on campuses. One such way is cyberbullying, which has elicited responses from lawmakers and school administrators. In Missouri, for example, lawmakers have mandated that K-12 school administrators include language around cyberbullying as part of their harassment policies according to a report on Ozark Public Radio (Tan, 2011).

As reported in Sentinel and Enterprise, a similar law was implemented in Massachusetts (Donelan, 2010) after an eleven-year-old student hung himself due to comments made about him on Facebook and through text message. Lawmakers argued

that social media enables bullying at any time, day or night, and beyond the means of traditional bullying. Lawmakers hoped to provide adequate consequences for those who engage in cyberbullying in order to show that real people are affected by these attacks, so often seen by the perpetrator as a victimless crime (Donelan, 2010).

According to then Massachusetts Attorney General Martha Coakley, the law includes restrictions on student use of social media to bully in order to create a school climate free of hostile behavior (<http://www.mass.gov/ago/>, 2014). However, even with more pointed language, school administrators in West Virginia suggested that addressing student cyberbullying is rarely clear cut, because the behavior often happens off of school grounds and may be protected under the First Amendment according to a report in the Charleston Daily Mail (Maunz, 2013).

Conversely, a student in Florida was bullied so much that her mother pulled her out of traditional school and enrolled her in a state online program only for the bullying to continue through social media. This incident gave way to Congressional work on the *Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2013*, which would make school cyberbullying illegal (Taurino, 2013).

Higher education has experienced a similar phenomenon. The Kansas Board of Regents has given higher education administrators the authority to discipline students who “adversely affect the university’s ability to efficiently provide services” (Rothschild, 2013, B2). Yet, according to a report in the Texas Tribune, other state legislatures, most notably California, Delaware, Michigan, New Jersey, Texas, and Wisconsin, have moved to restrict universities’ capacities to track students online (Permenter, 2013). The Seyfarth and Shaw Social Media Practice Group (2014) declared that lawmakers have created such

legislation because social media and the internet are critical channels in which individuals interact with family, friends, and peers.

Baum and Vicent (2013) contended that this state legislative movement to restrict universities' capacities to monitor students' online social media use stemmed from a 2010 incident in which the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill tracked, investigated, and punished a student athlete for posts he made on Twitter. These state laws, or pending legislation, stress that students should not have to submit their social media usernames and passwords to college administrators, and that colleges and universities should not seek out or monitor students' behavior on social media, meaning that administrators should not actively surveil student social media use. Yet, if questionable student social media behavior is reported to university officials, they can take action. Baum and Vicent (2013) cited administrators who support the legal changes, noting that their institutional policies were outdated and in need of structures that these new laws now provide.

While specific actions that lawmakers and school/college administrators can use to address student misuse of social media may not be clear, it is evident that social media technologies are being misused to cause harm in the lives of many students. Noyes (2014) noted that there were roughly 1.35 billion active Facebook users. High school and college-age individuals make up the largest block of users, and the average amount of time spent on Facebook each day is 20 minutes. This is compared to 2012 statistics in which there were just under 1 billion total Facebook users, ages 25-30 were the largest single user block, and 95 percent of American teens had at least one social media account (Browning, 2012).

Government officials found that 16.2% of American students reported being bullied through the use of technology (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Another study found that 95% of students between the ages of 12-17 use social media daily, and that nearly 90% of these users reported witnessing others being mean or cruel to other people on social media (Pew Research Institute, 2011).

Hopkins, Hopkins, and Whelton (2013), like Browning (2012), attributed the increased use of social media in adults and adolescents in the United States to the acceleration of cellular technologies that now bring social media to phones and the internet into public places. Social media use has expanded because the technology has become more accessible to more people.

As social media technology becomes more accessible to students, they are able to misuse it in a variety of ways. In USA Today, Paulson (2010) outlined numerous incidents in which high school and college students were suspended, expelled, or given other forms of punishment for mocking, parodying, or criticizing of school officials. The author suggested that those affected by the social media postings should sue, press criminal charges, and pursue all necessary punishments through the schools. A point of caution is that the offending students also have rights that may be constitutionally protected, and that the first course of action should not be to punish but to educate (Paulson, 2010).

By way of illustration, in *Layshock v. Hermitage School District* (2011), the Third Circuit ruled in favor of a high school student who created a parody profile of his principal. The student was suspended and banned from all extracurricular activities including graduation ceremonies. The court ruled that there was a weak relationship

between the student's conduct and its effect on the school. The court explained that the parody profile did not create a substantial disruption to the school, and, thus, that the student's speech is protected. In discussing the implications of social media, the court explained that school authority has limits, and that it (the court) "will not allow the School District to stretch its authority so far that it reaches [a student] while he is sitting in his grandmother's home after school" (p. 36).

According to the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) in 2006, administrators punished five Wilson College students for creating a parody profile of a college administrator. Other higher education institutions have attempted to be proactive. St. Thomas College, Elizabethtown College, St. John's University (MN), and the College of St. Benedict permitted students to create parody profiles so long as the students make it clear that the profiles, are, in fact, faux rather than real accounts (Metzger, 2013). FIRE maintained that most colleges assign punitive measures when students create parody profiles of administrators, faculty, and staff members. Because these controversies in higher education have not made their way to the courts, K-12 case law can serve as a way to understand similar incidents in higher education (Jerry & Lidsky, 2012).

The consequences for misusing social media include discipline from school administrators, but there are other ramifications as well. Misuse of social media is not always nefarious, but it can nevertheless be harmful in multiple ways. Karpinski and Kirschner (2010) conducted a seminal study on student use of Facebook in relation to academic achievement. They found that college students who use Facebook daily report spending much less time studying as compared to those who do not use Facebook at all.



Additionally, their study revealed that the grade point average (GPA) of college students who use Facebook daily is lower than those who do not.

At the same time, Chony (2010) stated that today's college students do not have the same ability to multitask as students of prior years or previous generations. According to Chony, college students were unable to perform two voluntary acts at the same time, transitioning instead from one activity to the next. For example, students were unable to read an article for class and view the latest postings on Facebook at the same time. In this instance, Chony reported that students are not consuming the article and Facebook at the same time, but rather switching their attention from one task to another.

Not only can the use of social media contribute to less time on school work, Richtel (2012) reports for the New York Times that it is especially true of K-12 students of less educated parents, because those students have less parental supervision than students whose parents' education goes past high school. Further, Richtel (2012) found that students whose parents are more educated promote the value of education, while those whose parents are less educated are not apt to push initiatives that lead to learning. These pre-college students spent ninety more minutes a day using social media than those K-12 students whose parents have education past high school.

Corwin (2012) delved deeper, expanding on this point by having revealed that the digital divide between students whose parents have education past high school and those who do not has less to do with parental supervision or the value of learning than with digital literacy. Corwin (2012) posited that students of educated parents are taught the proper ways to use social media and the internet from their parents while their peers' less

educated parents are unable to transfer that skill onto their children because they do not have it themselves.

Not only may there be a relationship between the amount of time spent using social media, time spent studying, and GPA, Richtel (2012) claimed that today's K-12 and college students are hardwired with short attention spans. He hypothesized that the days when students could sit and digest books for long periods of time are long gone. Richtel suggested that social media presents information to students in quick bites, which trains the brain and impacts how students are able to consume it. Study time, as Richtel wrote, not only competes with time spent using social media but the ways in which students take in information for educational purposes are being affected by their use of social media.

On the face of it, this is a problem. K-12 and college students are misusing social media in a variety of ways. On one hand, some students are posting threatening messages, bullying each other, and mimicking, parodying, or criticizing other students and school officials using social media. On the other, it appears that the mere use of social media may be distracting students from their studies, contributing to lower GPAs.

While the previous examples largely stem from K-12, there are accounts of similar specific occurrences in higher education. Insofar as today's K-12 student is tomorrow's college or university student, it is important to understand how administrators on campuses respond to student use and misuse of social media in order to craft policies to educate and provide consequences for particular types of social media use.

According to a report in the New York Times, administrators at Harvard, for instance, seized email and social media records of students using campus servers to

investigate suspected plagiarism (Perez-Pena, 2013). Some Harvard students were discovered to have been using their email and social media accounts to pass along test questions and answers to each other through the university internet service. Officials also ordered searches of faculty email accounts, which sparked an outcry that administrators ignored. University administrators retained the right to search email accounts (Perez-Pena, 2013).

In like fashion, a New York Times report indicated that administrators at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill paid an outside firm to monitor the online social media behavior of their athletes to ensure that the “wrong” image is not portrayed to the public about the school and the athletic program (Thamel, 2012). The monitoring program successfully maintained the image of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Paulson (2012) explained that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill instituted social media monitoring of its athletes after an investigation of a player’s tweets resulted in the loss of fifteen scholarships. In the time since the monitoring program has been put into place, Glunt (2012) noted that the university has been fully compliant with the NCAA’s social media rules and regulations.

Warner (2014) described the NCAA rules for coaches and other persons affiliated with student athletic programs during the recruitment of student athletes. These rules limited the time frame that recruitment via social media can take place. However, Warner (2014) indicated that the NCAA had no specific rules or regulations governing student-athletes, other than obligating college and university officials to monitor their social media usage.

According to Santus (2014):

How stringently social media guidelines are enforced or punished varies from athletic department to athletic department, and, at some schools, from team to team. Many schools employ what boils down to a best-practices guide, but others have policies that require athletes to remove any content deemed questionable by administrators. (p.2)

In other words, the NCAA created a general rule that university administrators are responsible for monitoring student athlete social media profiles without providing specific criteria or resources for doing so. As a result, Santus (2014) found that of the 59 athletic departments that actively monitored and limited student-athlete social media profiles, there were no consistent or uniform practices.

These are limited examples of recent decisions higher education administrators made regarding student use of social media. It is clear that there are more reported occurrences of K-12 school administrators taking action against their students than in higher education. By nature, students in higher education are granted greater free speech rights than K-12 students. In both the Harvard and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill cases outrage and questions ensued. It is unclear what the administrators' decision-making processes were. A fuller knowledge of how students use social media and its effects on students could positively contribute to more thought-out policies.

Against this backdrop, in this dissertation I sought to understand how a group of Catholic college and university administrators responded to student use and misuse of social media. By so understanding, other college and university administrators might be armed with relevant information enabling them to make well-informed decisions about

social media policies and social media education campaigns that promote productive use of an evolving technology among students.

### **Significance of the Study**

As of 2014, upwards of one billion people used Facebook (Noyes, 2015; Scott, 2014). In addition, Scott (2014) noted in *Social Media Today* that there were roughly five-hundred million Twitter users, over two-hundred million LinkedIn users, upwards of one-hundred million Instagram users, and nearly one-hundred million people on Pinterest. Scott indicated that these figures are growing, not shrinking.

As new social media channels emerge, such as Pinterest, which allows users to post their interests to a virtual cork board, more users are bound to sign up. Couple this with evolving cellular technology, and social media becomes a boundless phenomenon. Put another way, as cellular technology expands, so too does social media usage. According to Scott (2014), nearly a fifth of all Facebook users do not own personal computers and access the channel through their mobile phones.

Duggan and Brenner (2014) discussed the findings of a 2012 Pew study which found that 68% of college students or graduates log onto Facebook regularly; another twenty percent used Pinterest and fifteen percent were Twitter users. Facebook users may also have had Pinterest accounts or were active users of Twitter or Instagram. Duggan and Brenner (2014) reported that these numbers suggested that college students were enthusiastically engaging with social media, that engagement was not waning, and that the advent of new channels and ways to log on were only growing.

The increase of student use and misuse of social media prompted college and university officials to create policies to govern this student behavior. As the examples and

expert research cited above indicate, administrative policies are put into place to protect the image of their institutions (Santus, 2014). These policies rarely seek to educate students and are more of a restrictive list of “dos and don’ts,” coupled with punitive measures if students violate the policies.

Straumsheim (2013) investigated university policy approaches to student use and misuse of social media and determined that students are being disciplined for questionable behavior through social media. Straumsheim went on to claim that while students were subjected to adverse consequences for their actions, universities and colleges are not providing basic education that could aid students in their decision-making processes. In other words, some college and university administrators created reactionary policies that did not impact behavior before it happened.

While administrators continue to struggle to form up-to-date social media policies, NACUA and some researchers were uncertain about not only what should go into university social media policies but also if they should even exist. At the same time, Junco (2011) argued that student use of social media is a problem too big to ignore.

In this study I aimed to explore how university administrators currently respond to student use of social media. I conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews of student conduct administrators for Catholic, four-year comprehensive universities in the state of Ohio. I set out to understand how administrators at Catholic schools respond to student social media behavior in order to provide transferable policy recommendations based on their current practices and policies.

Because this study used a qualitative design, the findings are not generalizable. However, the design included plans to build strong transferability, the study might arm

college and university administrators at Catholic institutions with tentative new information to assist in creating social media policies.

### **Positionality**

Consistent with qualitative research, it is important for the researcher to describe his background, insofar as it is salient to this study. To do this, I describe my educational background, experience with social media, professional experience, and experience in private, Catholic, four-year colleges and universities.

I have earned both a bachelors and masters degree in Communication from large state universities while my doctoral work was at a private Catholic university. During my undergraduate and graduate work, I focused on speech communication but became more interested in student social media speech through the experience of being a teaching assistant for a course titled “Freedoms of the First Amendment.” In this class I was able to lead discussions and lectures on student speech rights in and out of the classroom. I was able to combine my knowledge and experience of social media (Facebook and Twitter were prominent at the time) with traditional aspects of student speech, such as verbal communication, and current issues in student speech, such as social media.

Not only did student use of social media pique my interest in relation to my studies and time teaching in the classroom, but my personal use of social media also began to develop. I used Facebook and Twitter along with emerging social media avenues such as Yik Yak, Pinterest, and Vine, but I began to see potential issues with student use as I transitioned from a full-time graduate student to a full-time professional. As a Housing and Residence Life in-hall staff member at a private Catholic university, I began to see how students use social media in ways that may harm themselves or others. I

first thought that a policy was needed to guide the behavior. I began to question how other institutions resolve similar situations. When faced with something new, exploring what other universities do provides an understanding of what the current practices are for a given context. At this Catholic school, often policy decisions were driven through religious moral lens that superseded a legal framework.

I was a first year student in college when Facebook first went live. I was therefore part of the first group of students to experience social media and have seen it grow from its infancy. I have used social media for fun as a student, as a means to connect with friends and family, and as a Student Affairs professional. In my current role as Assistant Director for Administration at a private non-religious university, I have purview over my department's social media accounts among other responsibilities related to housing assignments, department communication, and database management.

Based on my experiences, I am able to see the side of social media that can be harmful to students and to the institution. Also, I have questions about how universities could or should respond to student use of social media. In my experience, I have seen students bullied via social media, large gatherings assembled via social media creating a disruption to the school environment, and instances of parody and disparaging remarks made about others and the university.

Additionally, I have worked for both private religious and public institutions. Each has a different way to deal with student issues. What I have noticed from my experiences is that private religious universities do not simply have a list of “dos and don'ts” but a prescribed vision of how students should act and live, as compared to public universities that generally have lists of what students should not do.



Working at a private Catholic university presents many challenges and benefits. On one hand, religious schools clearly frame who they are and how students should behave. On the other hand, that framework errs on the side of religious moral rights and may be at odds with a legal framework.

I was interested in how university administrators respond to student use of social media. I had been studying educational leadership for nearly five years on beginning this study and firmly believed that understanding the implications policies in higher education have on student development must be weighed against the legal, ethical, moral, and financial concerns of a university. As a young professional in higher education and as an emerging higher education leader, I sought to understand how industry leaders are tackling this phenomenon.

### **Organization of the Study**

This dissertation contains five chapters. Chapter I presented the purpose, explored the background of the issue at hand, outlined the specific problem, discussed the significance of the study, and described my positionality. Chapter II reviews literature pertinent to the legal issues school and higher education administrators face when addressing student use of social media, research conducted that explores student use of social media and student success measures, and material that reviews student development theory. Chapter III describes the research design, the procedure for data collection, how the data were analyzed, and discusses the trustworthiness of the study. Chapter IV includes the findings of the study. Chapter V is a summary of the study and my conclusions along with recommendations for future practice.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### **Introduction**

Chapter two provides a framework of relevant literature and litigation, offering an understanding of how social media technology in higher education has been studied in three key areas: student development theory, student success and social media, and legal issues associated with social media technology use in educational settings.

In the first area, student development theory, I explore the foundational literature in this field - specifically, the exploration of the theory of human development and its parlay into student development, followed by an exploration into the role of social media technology. In the second area, student success and social media, I investigate the impact and relationships student use of social media technology have on student success, including Grade Point Average (GPA) and study habits. In the final area, legal issues, I focus on the evolution of student speech rights and the growing body of case law related to student use of social media technology. In this section, many analogies are made from K-12 rulings to higher education.

The purpose of this study was to understand how one group of college administrators experienced and responded to student use of social media technology in order to generate findings that might inform policymaking. The three key areas I examine in this chapter not only provide a lens through which college administrators can see the problem, but also create the structure on which this study was built.

### **Student Development Theory Framework**

This section is divided into three subsections: foundation, student choice, and learning paradigm. The foundation subsection focuses on the seminal work related to human and student development. This literature provides a framework to understand how students develop as they progress through college. The next subsection, student choice, details how individuals make their decisions to enter and persist in college. This subsection is important because it explains factors higher education administrators should take into account to attract and keep students when making policy decisions. The final subsection explores how college students learn. By understanding how students learn best, higher education administrators can craft policies that take into consideration the varied ways individuals receive and interpret information.

#### **Foundation**

To explain and begin the understanding of student development theory, Kegan (1994) details “orders of consciousness,” or the progression of self-evolution. Specifically, Kegan’s (1994) theory focuses on the “evolution of consciousness, the personal unfolding of ways of organizing experience that are not simply replaced as we grow but subsumed into more complex systems of mind” (p. 9). For Kegan, there are five orders of consciousness in all - the mind of young children, the sovereign mind, the

socialized mind, the modern mind, and the post-modern mind - and the progression takes place as a person transforms something that is subject into something that is object.

“Something that is object” refers to a concept that an individual has personal experience with, and thus can fully understand. “Something that is subject” is a concept that a person does not have tangible experience with, and cannot fully understand.

Berger, Hasegawa, Hammerman, and Kegan (2007) expanded on Kegan’s theory by highlighting that the progression in the orders of consciousness occurs with regards to one’s ability to make meaning. Progression in the orders of consciousness happens when one takes something that she could not see, the subject, and it becomes a lens through which she can make meaning, the object. Kegan’s theory posited that people progress through orders of consciousness when they are able to use something that they could not see as a new way to make meaning, or sense, out of the world.

Necessitating the progression in the orders of consciousness are the dimensions of cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal development. Progression through these orders occurs when individuals form a set of values they use to make sense of the world around them (cognitive), strengths and weaknesses become aware (intrapersonal), through which they are related to others (interpersonal). This intersection dictates the process by which subject becomes object (Kegan, 1994).

Kegan’s (1994) work is of particular importance because it provides an underpinning for understanding student development theory. Kegan’s work focused on perspective-taking, or how people psychologically develop over time by viewing and making sense of the world around them. A similar approach can be used to understand student development. By understanding human development theory, and subsequently

student development theory, higher education administrators can craft policies accessible to students in their various stages of development.

Kegan (1994) provided the broad framework for human development. At the same time, Baxter-Magolda (2001) described student development by creating what she called a student's journey toward self-authorship, or "the ability to collect, interpret, and analyze information and reflect on one's own beliefs in order to form judgments" (p. 14).

Baxter-Magolda (2001) created three phases of student development: following external formulas, crossroads, and becoming the author of one's own life. During phase one, students use external lenses for making sense of the world and themselves. These lenses come from outside sources such as parents, schools, and religious institutions. During phase two, students begin to look inward to develop their own lenses for making sense of the world around them. Finally, in phase three, students have created their own set of lenses to provide them with ways of understanding what to believe, their own identity, and about their relationships with others.

Similar to Kegan (1994), Baxter-Magolda (2001) noted that the connections between the dimensions form self-authorship, or the progression in making meaning. Baxter-Magolda (2001) stated that, "in order to know and make decisions contextually (cognitive) [students] also needed to construct an internal self-definition (intrapersonal) that enabled them to choose what to believe and mediate their relations with the external world (interpersonal)" (p. 23). The dimensions work together to transition a student from phase one to self-authorship.

Higher education administrators should take note of student development theory because it makes sense of the stages students commonly go through during their time in

higher education. First-year college students may interpret and make meaning of policies differently than would seniors. Additionally, by understanding student development theory, administrators can use policy creation as a catalyst for challenging students' conceptions of reality.

For example, the University of Dayton, in response to student riots on St. Patrick's Day in 2013, implemented policy changes that would impact students' 2014 St. Patrick's Day celebration. One of those changes was modifying the university's guest policy by restricting the ability of students to have non-UD students on campus during the festivities ("University of Dayton St. Patrick's Day," 2014). The policy change was met with great backlash by students on campus. Students could only make sense of the policy change in relation to their own behavior. Because most students' guests were not responsible for the St. Patrick's Day destruction, by interpreting events in light of Baxter-Magolda's theory, these college students were not able to separate their own personal behaviors from that of their community.

Understanding student development theory gives a glimpse into why students make sense out of the world based on what they know and experience. The University of Dayton students may have seen St. Patrick's Day celebrations as a rite of passage in which high risk behavior is the norm. University administrators convened town hall meetings and created a "rights, rites, and writes" campaign to help challenge student viewpoints on the matter at hand and to aid in their growth and development ("Rights, Rites, and Writes," 2014). This campaign was meant to help students delineate between their legal rights and responsibilities and rites of passage based on tradition, with the challenge to integrate those concepts of rites and rights together in an intellectual fashion.

Kegan (1994) and Baxter-Magolda (2001) provided revealing information about human and student development by describing how individuals grow as their cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal abilities mature. Taylor (2008) used that framework to explain how individuals develop in relation to dynamics such as gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Taylor posited that individuals use these dimensions to help foster an understanding of who they are.

Taylor (2008) maintained that the dimensions act on four different levels: microsystems, mesosystems, exosystems, and macrosystems. These different levels move from the most local, namely individuals and friends, to the most global, or cultural forces, to impact one's development. Taylor (2008) suggested that these levels impact how a student formulates her understanding of the dynamics. For example, messages from friends at the local or micro level and messages from the overall or macro level, impact how individuals interpret their dynamics. Further, the interplay of the dimensions informs how individuals understand the levels impacting the dynamics.

Taylor (2008) also indicated that students or persons come to understand their dynamics through the development of the dimensions. This means that individuals receive messages from many different sources, such as friends, family, popular culture, and the news media. These messages shape an individual's understanding of her gender, sexual orientation, race, and ethnicity. Taylor (2008) described this interplay by writing: "An individual's primary style of knowing combines with his or her socially constructed identities, family background, life experiences, attitudes, and ideologies to comprise a particular way of seeing and interacting with the surrounding network of social

environments” (p. 221). One’s cognitive, intrapersonal, and interpersonal growth thus combine to create a lens through which the dynamics are understood.

Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) took student development a step further by studying the impact of social media on one’s identity. Their research found that the better students are able to align their online identities to their “real-life” identities, the further along they are on their journeys to self-authorship. Torres, Jones, and Renn (2009) stated that when students’ social media pictures, quotes, groups, and friendships match those of their lived experiences, they make decisions based on their personal values, rather than what they think others would want them to do.

All of this is to note that college students make judgments based on values constructed in a variety of ways. The challenge for higher education administrators is to understand the process by which students develop their values or the lenses they use to make sense of the world around them. By understanding these processes, administrators can create educational policies that ignite the development process. As mentioned, the University of Dayton’s “Rights, Rites, and Writes” campaign mirrored the rollout of a controversial change to the student guest and alcohol policies. While, predictably, the students at the University of Dayton were outraged by these updated policies, the educational campaign focused on changing the schema students use to evaluate such policy changes.

### **Student Choice**

While I did not find literature about student choice pertaining to use of social media technology, literature about student choice pertaining to retention can lend insight to an understanding of why students engage with social media technology in potentially



destructive ways. Tinto (1993) divided student choice to stay or leave institutions into two categories: academic dismissal or voluntary withdrawal. The former occurs less than does the latter, and is mostly due to a student's inability to maintain a minimum GPA, either because of poor study skills heading into college or because of her capacity to meet the academic demands of college.

Voluntary withdrawal is comparatively much more common. Tinto (1993) identified two primary reasons for voluntary withdrawal: problems adjusting to college, and incongruence between what students thought the institution would be like and what it is actually like. What is clear from Tinto is that students who have had frequent interactions with faculty and staff outside of their classrooms are more likely to remain at the institutions than those who do not.

As mentioned, from Tinto's perspective, students primarily leave college due to problems adjusting to life on campus and/or incongruence between what they thought it would be and what it actually is in reality. Students' decisions to use social media technology in various ways could aid in an understanding of this theory.

While Tinto (1993) described why students leave, Kuh et al. (2008) provided two key findings as to why students stayed in college: engagement in purposeful activities, and activities linked specifically to academic initiatives. Student engagement is "a range of behaviors that institutions can influence with teaching practices and programmatic interventions such as first-year seminars, service-learning courses, and learning communities" (Kuh et al., 2008, p. 555).

Kuh et al. (2008) discovered that when college and university officials are able to connect educational engagement activities to students, those students are more likely to

perform better in the classroom and to persist in their studies. These findings helped address Tinto's (1993) theory of departure, which indicated that students left universities either for academic reasons or because their institutions did not meet their expectations. Kuh et al.'s findings can act as a tool to both help students meet academic requirements and to address meeting their expectations by connecting them to meaningful engagement opportunities.

Clark, Boyer, and Lee (2013) pointed out that students often used social media technology, Facebook in particular, as an avenue to create their college experiences. Alquist (2014) reported that college students using Facebook as a means of creating their experiences choose photos, status updates, or posts that craft an image of what they want others to see. She also explained that these crafted images on Facebook are not only what students want others to see but what, on a larger scale, is lived out through their college experiences. Alquist (2014) indicated that college students will create an image of themselves on a social media platform based on their beliefs of others' expectations of what it is like to be a college student. In addition, students receive messages from peers and society about what the college experience should consist of. In order to make these normative expectations, students use social media to create images of themselves designed to meet the social norms of their colleges or universities.

Hoyt and Winn (2004) explored student retention by describing various types of students who decide to leave their institutions: opt-outs, transfer-outs, stop-outs, and drop-outs. The researchers found that, regardless of type, the top reason students left their institutions was financial concerns. The authors broke down the financial concerns into a range of students who do not have the money to pay, those who lacked sufficient

financial aid, those with the ability to transfer to less expensive institutions, and/or those beset by outside expenses such as rent, house payments, and medical bills. Hoyt and Winn's (2004) findings countered what Tinto had (1993) posited. Namely, Tinto explained that financial concerns are most always a factor in deciding which institutions students enter and at which they remain.

Regardless of whether financial concerns come into play before students enter higher education or during the process of deciding to leave, money is clearly a factor in student choice. Additionally, Tinto (1993) and Hoyt and Winn (2004) provided clear evidence suggesting that, more often than not, students elected to leave institutions on their own as opposed to forced separations. These decisions to leave hinged on a variety of factors: finances, connections to faculty and staff, ability to meet academic requirements, adjusting to college life in general, and whether or not the institution meets the student's expectations.

In relation to social media technology, it appears that students are rarely forced to leave institutions because of policy violations. The reasons for leaving college run much deeper than breaking rules in student handbooks. One such reason is students' inability to meet academic expectations. As discussed later in this chapter, students who use social media technology in specified ways often have significantly lower GPAs and spend much less time studying than those who use it in other ways. For example, students who use Facebook to play games have lower GPAs than peers who use it to post status updates. Understanding these sorts of relationships in conjunction with student development theory can aid college administrators as they not only craft social media policies but also create educational initiatives.

## **Learning Paradigm**

Not only do college administrators need to create social media policies centering on understanding the harmful ways in which students currently use them, but they must also do so in a developmental manner. The sections on student choice and student development provide reasoning for the reasons students persist in college and how they make sense of the world around them. College administrators, faculty, and staff are responsible for aiding student growth and development. This section highlights techniques higher education professionals can employ to aid students in their journey of development.

Tagg (2003) outlined three barriers to transforming learning in higher education. Briefly, Tagg noted that the learning paradigm, which is central to transforming learning in higher education, is “rooted in a view of students as integral beings, not merely functional instructional processes. What counts in college is the value added for students, the growth in their knowledge, capacities, and abilities as a result of their college experience” (p. 32). Tagg believed learning in college should take a holistic approach, focused on outcomes and goals where students attend classes and are actively engaged in producing knowledge.

The barriers to achieving the learning paradigm are threefold: organization defense routines, institutional structures, and the Sacramento Syndrome (Tagg, 2003). When outcomes and goals for learning are not met, someone has to be blamed, whether the teacher, the student, or both. Organizations create policies or take actions in order to protect themselves from blame. Similarly, institutional structures, or rules and regulations, act as barriers to achieve a learning paradigm approach; that is, management

information systems, course structures, and the credit hour itself are barriers to reaching a new way of learning. Finally, Tagg (2003) described the Sacramento Syndrome as the notion that established organizational/institutional structures cannot be changed. In such a mindset, Tagg explained, individuals argue against the learning paradigm by defending the system, thereby making change all the more difficult to achieve.

Scott, Moxham, and Rutherford (2014) took the learning paradigm a step further by investigating the role social media has on student learning. The researchers argued for “shadow modules,” which “take place parallel to the formal, academically taught module and facilitate collaboration between students to support their learning for that module” (p. 286). Shadow modules utilize social media because their open access ability enables students to collaborate on a topic and share their knowledge and experiences to create an understanding together. The researchers found that this additional technique within the learning paradigm fostered “social interaction between the learner and either experts or other learners” (p. 292). Further, the learning paradigm outlined by Tagg (2003) posited that students learn best when they are active participants in the process. Scott, Moxham, and Rutherford (2014) supplied evidence that social media can be a valuable tool in the learning paradigm because it permits students to be active participants in knowledge creation in light of its innate abilities as a technology.

The previous two subsections explored how students develop and how they make the decisions to enter and stay in college. This subsection explored how students learn, as well as institutional barriers to that learning. The expectation is for college administrators to craft policies designed to aid in the development of students that should take into consideration both the choices they make and how they learn. This subsection, on

learning paradigms, focused on how students learn. The literature suggests that students should be active participants in the learning process where their instructors are not the gatekeeper but, rather, facilitators of knowledge. Applying this concept to college administrator policy creation, students must have agency that enables them not only to make a connection with institutions that results in greater persistence but also aids in how they learn and grow.

### **Social Media Effects on Students**

This subsection explores the use of social media as a tool for student engagement. As the previous subsections outlined, student engagement can lead to many positive outcomes for students, including higher grades, clearer identity development, and persistence to attain their degrees. This subsection first outlines how social media can be used as a resource to help students persist and achieve in the classroom. Second, this subsection explains how faculty can interact with students on Facebook to build positive environments in the classroom.

To begin, DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, and Fiore (2012) studied the use of social media as a tool to help students improve their adjustment to higher education. Even so, they did not uncover a relationship between student use of social media and academic self-efficacy. However, they did find that incoming first-year students used the social media platform to connect with other students for peer-to-peer support on topics such as the university's orientation program and other pre-college inquiries. The DeAndrea et al. (2012) study adds to the discussion of student choice by its having asserted that although social media is not necessarily a tool that can be used to connect

students to faculty and staff, it is a medium in which students can act as a resource to one another, which can aid in the student choice process.

While DeAndrea et al. (2012) did not find social media to be a great tool to connect students to faculty and staff, Ivala and Gachago (2012) presented techniques faculty members can use to engage with students via Facebook. They posited that faculty members should use social media as a supplemental channel for creativity in which the faculty member has the students help to set the parameters. Additionally, the social media channel should be used as a means for students and faculty members to share their lived experiences while collaborating on projects. When these guidelines were put into place, faculty indicated that the channel offered “an alternative way of organizing learning opportunities in order to encourage students to participate and benefit from such activities” (p. 157). In all, social media can be used not only as a tool for students to connect with each other but also as a means to better connect students to course material. As Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008) and Tinto (1993) suggested, the more connected students are, the more likely they are to persist and succeed academically.

The research first mentioned in this subsection connected use of social media to the sort of student engagement leading to persistence in school. The following literature discusses how faculty can use Facebook as a tool help build positive rapport with students. Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) discovered that faculty members who divulged more of themselves on Facebook were seen as more credible by students than those who do not. The research pointed out that students were able to see similarities between themselves and faculty members when the latter voluntarily disclosed personal details about themselves and their lives.

Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2009) looked beyond teacher credibility to find that faculty self-disclosure also leads to “higher levels of anticipated motivation and affective learning and lends to a more comfortable classroom climate” (p. 12). These authors explained that when faculty members share about themselves with students via Facebook they not only are seen as credible in the eyes of students, but it translates to better engagement in the classroom.

Social media is not only a tool for students to connect with each other, but also a resource for faculty members and students to engage with course material. Faculty members should use social media to attempt to open up with their students. Open use of social media, as the research points out, leads to greater engagement. In all, this section discusses that student engagement using social media leads to a host of positive outcomes in higher education.

### **Social Media Technology and Student Success Literature**

Student use of online social networking has been studied in various ways. First, Karpiniski and Kirchner (2009) as well as Jacobsen and Forste (2011) examined student use of Facebook by looking at the relationship between the frequency of time spent on it and student academic achievement as measured by GPA. Yan Yu, Wen Tian, Vogel, & Kwok (2010), Cheng and Tzeng (2010), Hanson et al. (2011) and Junco (2012) took this research a step further by both studying the relationship between frequency of time spent on Facebook and GPA and examining the relationship between the ways students use Facebook and GPA. Finally, Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2011) used an experimental study to understand the impact online social networking has on student achievement and engagement.



Hew (2011) provided a digest of the current research conducted on use of Facebook by students and teachers. Hew focused his exploration in three areas: a profile on the extent to which students use Facebook, the multiple effects of student Facebook use, and students' attitudes toward Facebook.

Among Hew's (2011) findings were that a majority of students (between 79-96%, depending on the study), spend between 10-60 minutes a day on Facebook. Additionally, he reported studies indicating that students mostly use Facebook while engaging in academic activities, such as studying for examinations or writing papers. Hew also investigated multiple studies suggesting that students who use Facebook have lower GPAs than nonusers, and that students who use Facebook spend less time studying than nonusers.

As college administrators begin the process of crafting social media policies and guidelines, it is important to consider how students are using the technology. Social media is a tool that is neither good nor bad. However, the ways in which students use the technology can be a hindrance or have a positive effect. By determining the positive and negative ways students use Facebook, administrators can make informed policy decisions.

Though Hew (2011) provided an exhaustive list of scholarly research, studies on Facebook have made their way into more accessible publications. In the Chronicle of Higher Education, Young (2009) referenced a study which reported a correlation between student use of Facebook and GPA. This same study was also reported by Marklein (2009) in USA Today who judged it as too small to conclude that student use of Facebook is a strong predictor of GPAs.

Karpinski and Kirchner (2009) explored the relationship between the amount of hours students spend studying per week and academic success. In general, Karpinski and Kirchner framed their work around the millennial generation by noting their propensity to multi-task. The authors stated that the perception that individuals can multi-task or conduct more than one thing at the same time is common. Yet, Karpinski and Kirchner discussed that humans can only effectively perform multiple acts at the same time when those acts are automatic. An example that the others give is the act of walking and chewing gum at the same time. The authors further discussed that while the current generation of college students may believe that they are multi-tasking, they are instead performing two tasks separately and going back and forth between them.

Karpinski and Kirchner (2009) asserted that individuals cannot perform more than one task at a time. For example, the authors stated that persons typing emails and talking on phones are unable to do both actions optimally at the same time. Rather, they explained that persons emailing and talking on the phone are switching their attention between emailing and speaking. They added that when persons are completing one task, they are not engaged in the other.

Among their results, Karpinski and Kirchner (2009) indicated that Facebook users reported lower GPAs than those who do not use the medium. Interestingly, non-Facebook users reported spending nearly equal amounts of time on the internet as do Facebook users. The authors could only conclude that there are undefined personality characteristics of Facebook users and nonusers that might explain their respective relationships to GPA. The authors further pointed out that students who used Facebook

are reported to be involved in extra-curricular activities, while nonusers more often reported working part-time.

Additionally, Jacobsen and Forste's (2010) analysis suggested a negative relationship between use of various types of electronic media and student grades among first-year, first-semester students. In order to examine the relationship between student use of online social networking and student achievement, they measured online social networking by having participants keep a two-day-long diary of how they spent their time. They then measured student achievement by GPA. The authors found that time spent on social media sites had an inverse relationship with GPA. In other words, the more time students spent on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Pinterest, the lower their GPAs would be.

Jacobsen and Forste's (2010) findings are of note because they supported the idea that Facebook and social media are innately detrimental to student GPAs. Other researchers, such as Junco, found there are ways that students use Facebook which have a clear, positive correlation with higher GPAs. To complicate the matter further, additional data indicate that those who logged onto Facebook have lower GPAs than those who did not, and that those who used Facebook were often involved in organizations on campus.

As noted, Tinto (1993) declared that students who are involved and make connections on campus are more likely to have positive experiences in higher education compared to those who are uninvolved, thereby resulting in better grades. Put another way, student choice theory maintains that a key element of student academic success is engagement with others. From this perspective, Facebook is a tool used by students to

engage with peers even though some research suggests that student usage of Facebook yields a correlation to lower grades. This counters Tinto's assertions.

Junco (2012) conducted extended research on the relationship between Facebook use, participation in Facebook activities, and academic achievement to contextualize the time and effort that students invest in their education. Junco reported that other research examining this relationship has been inconclusive. According to Junco, researchers have found, in some cases, that there is an inverse relationship between Facebook use/participation and student academic performance, while, others have found that there is not a significant relationship at all.

At the same time, Junco (2012) revealed that student use of and participation in Facebook is negatively related to student GPAs. In other words, the more time students spend on Facebook, the lower their GPAs, and the more they engage in Facebook activities, the lower their GPAs. Yet, there is a relationship between Facebook use and the amount of time students spend preparing for class. Junco's findings indicated that the absence of study time, and not necessarily the functions and elements of Facebook, are the source of lower grades for students. Facebook is, of course, a distraction from course work, similar to watching television or listening to music.

Junco (2012) identified a key limitation of this study insofar as it did not take into consideration alternative explanations or reasons (confounding variables) that may have contributed to the findings. While his study concluded that there was a negative relationship between Facebook participation and GPA, the strength of that relationship was unclear. Junco also suggested that even as this research indicated a problem for

students, instructors should still use Facebook to foster positive experiences and engagement with and for their students.

Junco's investigation countered the earlier research conducted on student use of Facebook and GPA. Still, Junco's work did reinforce the notion that social media is neither inherently good nor bad, and that the outcomes depend on how students use the medium. Moreover, Junco's work supported the learning paradigm literature that suggested that students learn best when engaged. Social media can thus be outlets for educational engagement on the one hand and for wasting time and partaking in activities that detract from student learning and involvement, on the other hand.

Hanson et al. (2011) extended the study of online social networking to include variables other than frequency of time spent using online social networking to focus on engagement with today's student. They posited that insofar as the millennial generation is different than previous generations, scholars must seek to understand its characteristics in order to understand the question of student involvement in learning. Hanson et al. (2011) explored the ways in which students manage their time on weekly bases, and then identified the effect of specific teaching strategies on millennial students. These teaching strategies focused on ways instructors can engage with students to facilitate learning through dialogue and questions rather than lecture style.

Hanson et al. (2011) determined that students spend a majority of their time engaged in personal communication such as Facebook, texting, email, and face-to-face, rather than on academic work such as homework, studying, and reading. While Hanson et al. (2011) do not address the relationship between time spent on personal communication and academic work, they did explore the relationship between the time students spend on

school work and GPA. They did not find a significant relationship between the hours students work and their GPAs. Qualitatively, they discovered that students have a difficult time balancing their personal time and time spent preparing for class.

Hanson et al. (2011) offer five instructional strategies based on their results: understanding the demands placed on today's students, relating reading to course outcomes, using collaborative activities, incorporating and using their communication channels, and helping educate students on how to manage time.

The first strategy, understanding the demands placed on today's students, requires instructors to explore students' frame of reference, aided by materials such as the Beliot College Mindset List, which each year describes major cultural, political, and social experiences students have and have not lived through (Nief, 2014). This tool gives instructors a glimpse into context of the students' lives. The second strategy, relating readings to course outcomes, merely suggests that instructors need to make the readings meaningful to the outcomes listed in the syllabus.

The third strategy, using collaborative activities, suggests that instructors utilize the knowledge, skills, and abilities of the students to engage with course readings in a way that is not, by nature, a lecture but interactive. The fourth strategy, using communication styles, requires instructors to think about communication with students beyond email, blackboard, and face-to-face, and to include Twitter, Facebook, and other media. Finally, a course goal should always be helping students to become better at time management.

Hanson et al. (2011) presented another way to examine student use of social media. While students spend more time on Facebook than on school work, the

researchers demonstrated that when the social media channel is used for learning purposes, students adapt to it. That is, Hanson et al. maintained that the channels of communication have changed over time as blackboards have been replaced by Smartboards, course materials once handed out on paper are now distributed via email. They added that students in the past may have read the physical editions of newspapers and magazines, where now they receive similar information through blogs. According to the authors, the basics of student communication and time allocation of work to play may or may not have changed, but the channels have. Hanson et al. explained that when instructors use social media as a learning tool, students will reap the benefits.

Chen and Tzeng (2010) maintained that it is not how much time students spend online but what they do once there that is more associated with academic performance. They categorized student respondents in groups based on how they use the internet and their frequency of use. These researchers posited that females who are heavy social media users generally sought information and avenues to chat with friends, while male heavy users often spent the majority of their time playing games online which has a negative relationship with GPA. They reported that other groups did not have such a relationship.

While the researchers all measured student academic performance by GPA, Yan Yu et al. (2010) explored student engagement in online social networking from a pedagogical standpoint. The authors measured academic performance much differently than previous scholars have. While other researchers measured academic performance by calculating GPA, Yan Yu et al. based it on cognitive and skills-based learning. When measured this way, students who, in the view of these authors, engaged in Facebook use

actually increased their academic performance. In other words, Facebook was a tool students used to increase their learning.

Finally, Junco, Heiberger, and Loken (2010) explored the impact of Twitter on student engagement and grades through an experimental design by studying seven first-year seminar classes for pre-health professional majors. Four of the sections were randomly assigned to be part of the experimental group and three were randomly assigned to the control group. The experimental group used Twitter as part of the class while the control group did not. The researchers used Twitter in a variety of ways: as a forum to ask questions, a means to post assignment due dates and campus events, a place where students can discuss class material, and venue to organize study groups. Students took both pre and post-tests to measure their engagement, including nineteen items chosen from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). Students disclosed their GPAs to the researchers.

The researchers reported that Twitter had a positive impact on student GPA when it is used for educational purposes. The further explained that Twitter has a positive impact on student engagement when it was used for educational purposes. This study highlighted that social media, on its face, was not necessarily a detriment to student academic success. Rather, the study reported that social media, whether Twitter or Facebook, are tools that both students, faculty members, and staff can use to promote learning, just as easily as they can be used to detract from academic pursuits.

In sum, the research conducted on student use of Facebook and student academic success has been somewhat limited in quantity. Even so, the studies that have been published generally pointed in the same direction, arguing that students who are



Facebook users tend to have lower GPAs. However, the depth of research indicated that the relationship is strongly determined by the manner in which students participate in Facebook and how scholars measure academic achievement. As said, there is room for further study.

### **History and Development**

In order to conduct a thorough review of literature pertaining to the legal use of social media in higher education, a definition of what social media is must first be explored by examining ways in which scholars have applied the term to their work. This section provides a detailed history of social media in order to understand its development in society. The aim of this section is to create a base of knowledge that combines an investigation of social media theory with how it developed over time.

#### **Social Media Defined**

Lang and Benbunan-Fich (2010) defined social media as “web applications that process, store, and retrieve user-generated content that resonates with other contemporary characteristics” (p.12). Yet, social media is much more than a line of computer code or complicated interfaces. Social media is an interactive online medium that allows users to share thoughts, make connections, engage in activities, and/or discuss ideas.

Junco and Chickering (2012) described social media as more than the original generation of online websites because social media calls for users to engage, connect, and interact with each other, while the first online websites were mere information distribution centers where individuals would consume information. Social media has become a collection of online websites where individuals can construct and accumulate knowledge/information through engagement with other people.

Social media is an online avenue for the creation and development of knowledge and ideas. Boyd and Ellison (2007) outlined three specific aspects that all social media websites have in common. First, social media sites such as Facebook require their users to create public profiles, which are, in essence, a virtual presence, or account of who they are. Next, in order to be considered a social media website, sites must enable users to make connections with one another. Third, social media websites must allow users to search through a list of other users in order to make connections and to interact.

What separates social media websites from other online resources is that they go beyond the distribution of information, allowing users to make connections with other people in order to produce information. Social media websites allow users to communicate with one another and to make knowledge because of their engagement with others.

### **The Development of Social Media over Time**

In providing a brief timeline of the development of social media, Bennett (2012) noted that the first emails were sent during the early 1970s by American researchers working for the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA). The next major development in online technology did not occur until the 1980s with the creation of USENET, which enabled users to post and read messages. Again, it was not until a decade later, in 1991, when Tim Berners-Lee of the European Laboratory for Particle Physics created a means for information dissemination that embedded links in text format. This would become the World Wide Web (www).

Bennett (2012) reported that the 1990s witnessed a rapid development in online technology pertinent to social media. In 1994, a student at Swarthmore College created

the first personal blog. Classmates.com was launched in 1995 as a service to connect former grade school and high school classmates. The search engine “Ask Jeeves,” a site which allows users ask questions in real language rather than html computer code, started in 1996.

An important advancement in social media took place in 1997 with the creation by America Online instant messaging which enabled users to talk to each other in real time, online, in text format. Instant messaging is analogous to texting. Texting refers to individuals sending worded messages to each other through cellular technology similar to AOL instant messaging in which individuals send worded messages to each other through an internet program. Another important development identified by Bennett (2012) took place in 1999 when specific tools were created that gave individuals access to blogging pages.

Bennett (2012) noted that the 2000s produced many sites that encapsulate user conceptions of social media as they are understood today. According to Bennett (2005), Wikipedia was created in 2000 to allow individuals to collaborate on creating the chronicle of world and human knowledge. Notable websites launched between 2000-2004 allowed users to engage with one another in various ways, such as critiquing restaurants or creating personal pages on MySpace.

In 2004, Mark Zuckerberg launched Facebook for college students (Bennett, 2012). Facebook allows users to create personal profiles, to connect with other people, and to engage one another. Bennett (2005) reported that the video sharing website YouTube was created in 2005. Twitter was created in 2006 as a means of quick and easy

communication to large groups of people. Most recently, Pinterest was created in 2012 as an interactive scrapbooking website.

It is evident that personal interaction online has developed rapidly since the first emails were sent in the 1970s. Bennett (2012) pointed out that 90 percent of internet users in 2011 used email, while its use a decade earlier was considerably less. According to Scott (2014), there were over a billion active users of Facebook worldwide, and those users spend 500 billion minutes interacting on the website each month. Junco and Chickering (2012) noted that the development of cell phone technology allows individuals to connect with one another via social media websites at anytime, anywhere in the world. As these technologies proliferate, the number of social media users taking advantage of them continues to increase (Freiert, 2007).

As social media has become commonplace in the lives of many, concerns have begun to amass about what is still a relatively new phenomenon (Junco, Elavsky, & Heiberger, 2012). While websites such as Facebook were created as public forua, users are just recently beginning to be concerned about their privacy. This means that while blog readers and users of sites like Facebook and Twitter want to make connections and engage with others on these formats, they also want a degree of privacy. These users wish to engage and share their digital lives with others, but they do not want to share or engage with everyone.

While the history of social media provides context for how it has been developed over time, it provides little insight into what it will look like in the future. Could USERNET\_ participants anticipate Facebook, or mobile devices that let people connect

anywhere at any time? The future of social media is not known, nor how its barriers will be overcome, but it does seem that it is here to stay.

## **Legal Issues**

### **Social Media in Schools**

Officials in many K-12 schools have banned social media on campuses for a variety of reasons. According to Dunn (2012), there are three primary reasons why social media has been banned: concerns of bullying, the inherent difficulty of monitoring student activity, and its potential to distract from learning. However, the limits on social media did not begin with the rise of Facebook or Twitter. Instead, they started with the use of cell phones. That is, while most K-12 schools have an abundance of computers for student use on campus, students also take to their mobile devices to connect via social media platforms.

Social media technology is now accessible to students on their cellular phones. Smartphones such as the Apple iPhone or Android Galaxy allow users to log onto Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or any other social media channel at the push of a button anywhere their phone receives service. In order to better understand the relation of cell phones to social media usage by students, Nielsen (2011) described the brief history of cell phone use in schools. She noted that the emergence of cell phone use began in the early 1990s alongside beepers and pagers. School officials sought immediately to ban cell phones, with mixed results. In the late 1990s, text messaging became a common feature on cell phones, though most of the bans continued.

As the first decade of the new millennium began, two crucial incidents occurred that changed the way parents thought about cell phone use in schools, and, as a consequence, changed the shape of the bans themselves (Nielsen, 2011). After the shootings at Columbine High School in 1999 and the terrorist attack on September 11, 2001, parents wanted to ensure that they could get into contact with their children in the event of emergencies. As a consequence, the National School Safety and Security Service reversed its past position of prohibiting cell phones in schools.

Nielsen (2011) revealed that, by the middle of the 2000s, cell phones were no longer considered luxury but rather commonplace items – in many instances a necessity – and the cost of cell phones for the consumer decreased as a result. K-12 schools began to allow students to have cell phones on campus so long as they were turned off during the day. Camera technology had by this time advanced, and many phones were equipped with the ability to take pictures. Some schools attempted to ban this feature during operational hours.

Russo (2012) mentioned that cell phones have multiple uses, suggesting that these devices can just as easily be used for safety, such as calling for help, as for nefarious reasons, such as photocopying tests or sexting pictures. Additionally, Russo (2012) detailed six steps that school administrators should take when considering their cell phone policy. Chief among them is to determine whether a policy described when students can use cell phones or whether they can be in possession of them to begin with. This seems to be a key question. If cell phone policies center on the concept of usage, phones could be incorporated as a learning tool, versus a possession policy that would prohibit them altogether.

In 2007, officials in K-12 schools began to think of cellular phones as learning and safety tools. For example, parents and students could sign up to be part of a listserv. In the event of a tenuous situation, those on the listserv would receive a text message with important information and instructions. Nielsen (2011) indicated that teachers also began using texting features as learning tools in the classroom. By 2010, smart phones came into vogue. Smart phones enable users to connect to the web and engage in social media. The capacity of cell phone technology to be used as a learning tool increased. Still, the concerns of school administrator did not fade.

Currently, bans on smart phone and social media use in schools center on the desire to protect students from bullying and/or child predators, and the concern that they are distractions from learning. Specifically, in the fall of 2010, cyberbullying spurred a student at Rutgers University to commit suicide as reported in the Wall Street Journal (Valentino-DeVries, 2010). In 2011, there were nearly 70 cases reported of teachers who used social media to lure students into sexual activity (Gunn, 2014).

Russo (2012) suggested an annual review of cell phone policies in schools because, like rivers, the technology is constantly changing. The takeaways from this discussion on the history of cell phones in schools lend credence to the idea that what is true about technology today may not be true tomorrow. Pagers, according to Russo (2012), were used in the 1990s often to alert students of pending drug deals. Today, students send naked photos of themselves, called sexting, to each other via text messaging. With cell phone technology now allowing the ability to access social media sites, its impact on student behavior is currently unknown, and its effect on policies is still pending.

## **Social Media in Higher Education**

Colleges and universities have many and varied policies in relation to student use of social media technology. A report on Whittier College in California provides an example of speech codes that went a bit too far. Specifically, the California state Constitution states that students, regardless of attending a public or private higher education institution, “have the same right to exercise his or her free speech on campus as he or she enjoys off campus” (Steinbaugh, 2012, p.1).

Whittier College and others encourage students and student organizations to utilize social media as a means of engaging with other students, faculty, staff, and the larger community. On the other hand, the same policies do indicate that such engagement should not offend another party. Additionally, many colleges have cyberbullying policies that limit social media use, in that posts that are considered to be hurtful, mean, or of a teasing nature are not permitted. These policies “explicitly extend to simply posting messages for others to read in which someone might not like the subject” (Steinbaugh, 2012, p.5). In other words, while the state constitution indicates that student speech is protected both on and off campus, many officials at colleges and universities adopted social media speech policies that limit students’ capacity to engage in social media.

While individual institutions such as Whittier College are regulating their students’ use of social media, the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) considered a blanket policy for its members (Blohm, 2012). Thus far, the NCAA has only enacted a social media policy between college and university officials and prospective athletes. Once students have decided to attend particular institutions, the rules and regulations of the university are utilized as reported in the Bangor Daily News (Warner,



2014). Put another way, each member school of the NCAA has the ability to craft policies tailored to its departments. For example, Loyola University in Chicago has a policy prohibiting student-athletes from having a social media profile on any format.

Other schools have similar policies pertaining to student-athletes, but only when they are in season. Some programs have left policy creation up to the individual team captains. Policing student-athletes' social media engagement is a large undertaking and many schools have outsourced the endeavor to private companies that focus on internet monitoring by surfing the web using key words and phrases.

The University of West Virginia has hired a compliance officer solely to monitor student-athlete use of social media. Still, some individuals are not only wary of an NCAA blanket policy but also of individual athletic department policies, since they only apply to student-athletes and not to all students. That is, if certain free speech applies to student-athletes, should it not also apply to all students? However, athletic department administrators suggest that insofar as playing sports, representing their schools, and receiving the benefits of scholarships are privileges rather than rights, student-athletes can therefore be disciplined for their social media behavior (Etherton, 2014). Thus, student-athletes' social media behavior can be treated differently than other students use of the technology would be. Hauer (2012) did not disagree, but added that such monitoring had a higher likelihood of being found constitutional if administrators make prospective student-athletes aware of such policies prior to coming to campuses.

Gunther (2014) argued that "the practice by colleges and universities of utilizing outside services in order to monitor public social media activity of student-athletes is warranted" (p.11) because there is a higher level of scrutiny associated with student-

athletes than with the rest of the student body. Conversely, LoMonte (2014) asserted that while officials at colleges and universities may have the legal authority to monitor and limit the speech of student-athletes, “the notion that educational institutions must necessarily ‘punish to teach’ reflects a failure of pedagogical creativity and, in the end analysis, a failure of trust” (p. 20).

Gunther’s analysis is correct that higher education administrators can legally monitor student-athlete speech on social media. Even so, LoMonte begs the question as to whether the best way to help student-athletes use social media responsibly is to punish rather than teach. Browning (2012) puts it more bluntly: “student-athletes are still students first and foremost, not merely living billboards for the school’s sports programs...universities concerned about social media fallout would be better advised to do what they do best: teach” (p. 3).

While university administrators begin the process of creating policy regulating student use of social media, LoMonte (2012) provided a legal understanding of such policies in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* and cautions the court on future rulings about college student use of social media. He reported that “lawyers nationwide are attempting, with some success, to persuade courts or legislatures that, because the internet makes off-campus speech theoretically viewable anywhere, speech about a school or college is equivalent to speech inside of the institution” (p. 2).

LoMonte (2012) also noted in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* that there is a significant difference in social media speech as opposed to speech through other channels, such as face-to-face. That is, the audience using social media is not exclusive to colleges and universities, and offended individuals can easily avert their eyes with mouse

clicks. Put another way, speech creating reasonable forecasts of material and substantial disruptions to school environments can be subject to infringements. While student speech on social media websites might be offensive and reach a potentially limitless audience, it does not mean that such a disruption automatically exists. LoMonte wrote that if administrators are given blank-check authority over the content of student speech on social media, then not only will students lack the ability to speak freely about controversial issues, but they also might be disciplined for any speech the university does not find in standing of a “good citizen.”

The American Council on Education (ACE) (2012) has offered recommendations for how colleges and universities should govern social media use by students. First, the ACE indicated that there is little legal guidance on the issue of social media and free speech. That is, it is unclear if and how the *Tinker* Standard applies to colleges and universities, and, if it does, what impact it has on off-campus speech. The *Tinker* Standard refers to *Tinker v Des Moines Independent Community School District* (1969), in which the Supreme Court found that in order for student speech in a K-12 schools to be restricted, there must be a reasonable forecast of material and substantial disruption to the school environment.

Fishwick (2012) explained that the *Tinker* Standard “requires a showing that either actual substantial disruption to school activities occurred on campus or that school officials reasonably foresaw substantial disruption and acted to prevent it or deter future disruption” (<http://jolt.law.harvard.edu/>). However, even with the legal parameters unclear, four recommendations can be made. First, ACE suggested that administrators create education avenues for students to learn about responsible use of social media.

Second, ACE proposed that existing codes of student conduct are re-read to ensure that they can be applied to social media cases. Third, ACE recommended that officials make decisions as to whether they will police student use of social media occurring on their networks. Finally, ACE cautioned against creating specific policies around social media use because the media is constantly evolving and doing so could violate student free speech rights.

On the other hand, Junco (2011) argued that college and university officials should create specific policies regulating student use of social media as a reaction to recent high profile incidents such as the death of Rutgers University student Tyler Clementi, who committed suicide as a result of being cyberbullied. Junco noted that such policies should give students guidance on how to use the media in general and university expectations surrounding that use.

Junco (2011) began by outlining a process for policy creation. He focused on the need to include many different stakeholders from various backgrounds and understandings of social media on policy-making teams. He indicated that committees creating policies should be transparent and should focus on how social media can be beneficial to student development while providing expectations for student use. Finally, Junco made specific policy content recommendations.

Junco (2011) suggested that policies should offer information to help students make their online experience better as opposed to a list of “do not’s.” Second, the policies should articulate that the law applies to social media use, and should acknowledge the positive ways students use social media such as collaboration, connection, expression, as part of civic debate and dialogue. Junco expanded his recommendations to include

explanations of the privacy limits these sorts of platforms have, along with a discussion of how users of social media infer tone in communication.

Other policy recommendations from Junco included clearly stating expected behaviors such as being respectful, careful, responsible, and accountable, and potential negative behavior, along with the consequences that would follow. Junco further asserted that policies should include information on how to handle miscommunication, calling for faculty and staff to model appropriate behavior.

Buri (2011) provided a series of recommendations of ways in which college and university policies should address questionable student speech through social media. She indicated that the courts have been clear that student speech is protected so long as it does not interfere with the function of a college or university. However, she noted it is unclear whether the *Tinker* Standard can be applied to social media in collegiate settings.

In order to provide additional background on the *Tinker* Standard, Fishwick (2012) explained that during the 1960s, Mary Beth Tinker and her high school friends wore black arm bands to protest the Vietnam Conflict. School administrators cautioned the students against wearing the bands and threatened discipline. The students disobeyed the warning, wore the armbands, and were subsequently placed on probation. When Tinker challenged the school's decision, the Supreme Court invalidated the punishment as unconstitutional. Essentially, the *Tinker* Standard dictates that before school administrators discipline student speech, they must determine whether it creates or could create a substantial disruption to the school environment. If the answer is no, then the administrators lack the authority to censor or punish the behavior.

Buri (2011) did not propose that college and university officials create new speech policies specific to social media. Rather, she maintained that officials at various colleges and universities created such policies specific to MySpace, which is no longer in popular use since Facebook has emerged. Instead, Buri (2011) suggested applying current, broader policies to social media use. She did recommend that administrators should respond to questionable social media use by students, but that their responses should be educational rather than punitive. Buri proposed that administrators should meet with students whose speech did not violate the law or institutional policies but still might be offensive or potentially problematic. In these educational interventions, students should discuss their use and be presented with tools on how to use social media in a more responsible way. Additionally, Buri (2011) suggested that campus officials should proactively create educational opportunities for all students regarding social media. Finally, Buri (2011) indicated that many schools instituted social media training sessions for students during their first-year orientation.

While college and university officials have different approaches to addressing student use of social media both on and off campuses, it is clear that it behooves institutional officials to take systematic approaches to crafting these policies. The work of ACE, Junco, and Buri (2011) all suggest that institutional officials should be cautious with their approaches and include broad measures as opposed to specific policing mechanisms. Not only that, but the three authors seem to also suggest that there should be educational components to policies so students might have professional senses of how to engage with the new technology once they leave college and university settings.

## **Student Speech Cases**

In this section I begin by reviewing the seminal cases involving student speech, namely *Tinker*, *Bethel School District v. Fraser* (1986), *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* (1988), *Healy v. James* (1972), and *Morse v. Fredrick* (2007), then I explore current speech cases in schools. Next, I conduct a review of recent speech cases in higher education and, finally, draw connections between K-12 and higher education, followed by further analysis and conclusions.

### **Seminal Cases**

To begin, the Supreme Court, in *Tinker v. Des Moines Independent School District* (1969), expressed that neither “students nor teachers shed their constitutional rights to freedom of speech or expression at the schoolhouse gate” (p. 507). As noted, Mary Beth Tinker and her friends wore black armbands to school to protest the conflict in Vietnam. School administrators cautioned the students against such an act and later disciplined them for wearing the armbands.

In *Tinker*, the Supreme Court overturned the decision of school officials in ruling that they must show that the speech or expression in question would cause a material and substantial disruption to the function of the school. In other words, “a mere desire to avoid the discomfort and unpleasantness that always accompany an unpopular viewpoint” (p. 510) is not enough to justify limiting the speech of students. Additionally, the Court specified that “school officials do not possess absolute authority over their students” (p. 512).

Analogous to *Tinker*, *Healy v. James* (1972) addressed political speech in a case from higher education. The Supreme Court decided that higher education administrators

cannot deny student groups the opportunity to form due to the fear of disruption. In this part of its analysis, the Court applied the *Tinker* Standard, stating that officials must prove that a material and substantial disruption to the school would take place in order to bar speech.

In *Healy*, students challenged their being denied the ability to form an offshoot of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS). Administrators repudiated SDS because of the disruptive nature of the national SDS association. *Healy* focused more on the First Amendment freedom of association rather than speech with the Supreme Court noting that, “the critical line for the First Amendment purposes must be drawn between advocacy, which is entitled to full protection, and action, which is not” (p. 408). In *Healy*, the court concluded that because the students were not acting out the disruptive positions of SDS, merely supporting them, speech could not be limited.

In *Bethel School District v. Fraser* (1986), the Supreme Court found that school officials have the authority to prohibit the use of vulgar and offensive language. Here a student gave a speech to an assembly using graphic sexual metaphors to nominate a friend for student government. The Supreme Court reasoned that while *Tinker* protected student political speech, the First Amendment does not protect vulgar or lewd speech, because the language at issue was the antithesis of the “fundamental values of public school education” (p. 478).

While *Tinker* answered the question of whether school officials must tolerate certain student speech, *Hazelwood* answers the question of whether they must endorse student speech in written form. In *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* (1988), the Supreme Court declared that school officials have the authority to limit content in school-sponsored



publications so long as they are curriculum related. Here officials removed two articles from a school-sponsored student newspaper. In its opinion, the Supreme Court found that “a school need not tolerate student speech that is inconsistent with its basic educational mission, even though the government could not censor similar speech outside of school” (p. 484). This comes with the caveat that editorial control over school publications by school officials has to be “reasonably related to pedagogical concerns” (p. 484).

In *Morse v. Fredrick* (2007), another case applying the *Tinker* standard, the Supreme Court ruled that school officials have the authority to limit speech that is counter to the mission of education. In this case a student refused to take down a banner reading “bong hits for Jesus” as he and peers gathered to watch the Olympic parade pass through Juneau, Alaska. As a result, the student who refused to take down the “bong hits for Jesus” banner, was suspended. The Court noted that students have a right to political speech, but that, here the student clearly promoted the use of illegal drugs which may undermine the mission of schools to discourage drug use. The court thus upheld the actions of the school officials who disciplined the student.

*Tinker*, *Hazelwood*, *Fraser*, *Healy*, and *Morse* are important in crafting standards for student speech made through an online platform. Yet, Daige (2012) argued that it is unclear whether these standards still apply to the changing landscape of student speech today. Daige further asserted that lower-level courts have used these standards arbitrarily, indicating that a firm precedent cannot be set on cases involving student speech via social media until the Supreme Court establishes whether the *Tinker* and other standards apply, and, if so, how they apply. It is clear that insofar as the courts are currently using these

standards, it is vital for campus administrators to have a good understanding of how they originated and are applied.

In short, lower courts applied *Tinker* in cases in which the speech took place through traditional forms of communication, while relying on different justification when speech took place through electronic means. In either event, the courts are thus far applying the foundational standards to more recent cases involving student speech, no matter the channel of communication. While the cases described in this section may be examples of occurrences in which student speech is not protected, further clarification of the application of the foundational standards is needed when deciding cases that are more ambiguous. Having a clearer precedent will aid the ability of the lower courts to rule consistently in future cases (Daige, 2012).

### **Application of the Standards**

In 2010, the Third Circuit applied *Tinker* in two cases involving the social media website MySpace. In *Layshock v. Hermitage School District in Pennsylvania* (2010), the court ruled in favor of the student who created a parody profile of his high school principal. The student was suspended and banned from all extracurricular activities, along with partaking in graduation ceremonies. The court found that there was a weak relationship between the student's conduct and the school; that the parody profile did not create a substantial disruption to the school, and, thus, the student's speech is protected. In its discussion about the implications of social media technology, the court stated that "school authority has limits, and that it (the court) will not allow the School District to stretch its authority so far that it reaches [a student] while he is sitting in his grandmother's home after school" (p. 790).

In this instance, the court determined that the parody profile did not meet the *Tinker* Standard and that school administrators' authority did not extend to communication taking place outside of school boundaries. In essence, the court declared that the authority of educational officials to restrict student speech is limited if it takes place off of school grounds. The question remains, though: if the student's communication from outside of school confines creates a substantial disruption in the school, would school administrators have the authority to punish the student?

In *Snyder v. Blue Mountain School District* (2012) the Third Circuit again ruled in favor of a student. The student created a parody profile of her principal on MySpace. The court was of the opinion that insofar as the student tried to keep the profile "private" so only her friends could have viewed it and it was so outrageous as to not be taken seriously, educators violated her rights because they could not reasonably have forecast the substantial disruption of, or material interference with, school activities due to her posting.

### **Current Speech Cases in Schools**

The Eighth Circuit, in *Doe v. Pulaski County Speech School District* (2001), upheld the expulsion of a student who wrote a profane and threatening letter to his ex-girlfriend. Although the letter was written off of school grounds and was never meant to be shared with the ex-girlfriend, a friend of the student who wrote the letter alerted school officials. School officials expelled the student over the threatening nature of the letters. The court upheld the expulsion, stating that once a threat is communicated it is the government's responsibility to ease the fears of the threatened person. Additionally, the court deemed the speech a true threat because a reasonable recipient would have viewed

the letter as a threat. The court thus determined that the authority of educational administrators to discipline student speech extends outside of schools so long as it impacts an individual or individuals at the school. This case is another good example of how emergence of social media technology makes school boundaries permeable rather than solid, fixed states.

In a similar case involving social media, *Kowalski v. Berkeley County School District* (2011), a middle school student created a personal website where she made threatening remarks and posted offensive pictures. The Fourth Circuit held that school officials could punish students if a student website produced a “material and substantial disruption.”

The court decided that the *Tinker* situation “has been replaced by J.S.’s complex, multi-media website, accessible to fellow students, teachers, and the world” (Baxter, 2014, p. 118). That is, while the court did not find that the student’s website amounted to a “true threat,” she did contribute to a “demoralizing impact on the school community”(Baxter, 2014, p.115). In other words, the student caused a “material and substantial disruption” even though the web site was created off campus. Finally, the court held that the *Fraser* Standard also applied because of the lewd and profane nature of the student speech.

LoMonte (2014) wrote about a high school student in Wisconsin who was arrested for posting a YouTube video filled with lewd language and behavior geared toward his Spanish teacher. However, he reported that a state appellate court found that as distasteful as the student’s online behavior was, because it was not threatening or

obscene enough to warrant discipline from the school, the court refused to allow him to be disciplined.

### **Current Speech Cases in Higher Education**

Most of our legal understanding of student speech in higher education comes from K-12 litigation. Yet, a limited number of cases in higher education can provide a firmer understanding of what student speech is protected and what speech college administrators can act upon.

In *Reno v. ACLU* (1997) the Supreme Court ruled that online speech is no different than other speech in that speech that takes place on the internet cannot be restricted across the board. In this case, specified sexually explicit content on the internet was restricted to minors which also limited the content to adults. While protecting minors from sexually explicit content seems like the moral thing to do, the Court found that limiting speech of minors cannot come at the expense of adults. It remains to be seen how lower courts may apply this holding in future cases.

Second, the Supreme Court of Minnesota applied the *Tinker* in *Tatro v. the University of Minnesota* (2012) wherein the plaintiff posted comments on Facebook about her work with cadavers as a mortuary science student. University officials then disciplined the student for her comments, citing the institution's code of conduct which granted them the authority to address student speech, whether on-campus or off, so long as the speech, "adversely affects a substantial University interest and . . . indicates that the student may present a danger or threat to the health or safety of the student or others" (p. 1445). The court found that insofar as the Facebook posts amounted to something

with the potential to materially and substantially disrupt the work and discipline of the school, officials had the authority to discipline her by lowering her grade in the class.

Beckstrom (2008) noted that the legal precedent for college and university administrators to create and enforce social media policies for students mainly stems from *Tinker*, *Fraser*, *Hazelwood*, *Morse*, and *Healy*. These cases have set precedent for K-12 and are instructive for student speech in higher education. While there has been a lack of litigation involving social media and students in higher education, it is likely that these cases have set the framework to determine the degree to which student social media speech is protected.

### **Application of Speech Cases in Schools to Higher Education**

As noted, only relatively few cases have materialized in higher education on student speech and social media. To this end, Jerry and Lidsky (2012) wrote that, “no case law currently exists on how the Supreme Court’s public forum analysis applies to social media sites created or maintained by public universities and colleges” (p. 6). As such, Jerry and Lidsky (2012) used a series of examples from K-12 litigation in conjunction with limited higher education examples to provide their analysis.

Moreover, Gay (2012) noted that *Tinker*, *Fraser*, *Hazelwood*, and *Morse* provide a framework for understanding student free speech in higher education. Jerry and Lidsky (2012) and Gray indicate that cases involving K-12 student free speech not only inform the understanding of student free speech in higher education, but also that K-12 examples have an implied legal parallel to similar future higher education examples that have yet to materialize.

As this literature has reviewed, cases involving student speech in school fall into one of three standards established by the Supreme Court. Each standard addresses a particular aspect of student speech. Specifically, *Fraser* applies generally in cases involving vulgarity, lewdness, obscenity, and other offensive speech. *Hazelwood* applies primarily to school-sponsored publications. The remainder of student speech, such as on the internet, likely falls under *Tinker*.

Under the preceding analysis, it appears that *Tinker* applies to student speech involving social media websites if postings create reasonable forecasts of material and substantial disruptions on campuses. At the same time, student speech that is merely controversial or that casts administrators in a negative light, whether on or off campus, does not likely satisfy *Tinker*. Not only that, but insofar as social media extends to large audiences, and because it is a public and permanent record, it should be treated differently than traditional forms of communication.

The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), a group committed to protecting students' speech rights on college campuses, also promotes and advocates for the protection of student speech online. Cohn (2014) highlighted legislation in Ohio designed to prohibit educational institutions from asking students for their access information into social media sites and from disciplining or penalizing individuals for refusing to do so.

FIRE's advocacy on the issue of getting password information, along with its support for other, related issues of student speech via social media, have forced lawmakers to get involved and to take the issue out of the hands of higher education administrators who often seem to err on the side of their institutions rather than the side

of students. For example, a faculty member at the University of Kansas was punished for what were deemed inappropriate tweets. The Kansas Board of Regents stepped in to create a broad and restrictive social media policy, according to FIRE (2014), and, as a result, lawmakers are being asked to step in to create standards for all.

After the evaluation the three standards and their application to student speech involving social media, it is important to understand whether *Tinker* applies in higher education and, whether campus officials can curb student speech on social media platforms. As mentioned, the *Tinker* Standard was applied to *Tatro* because it created a reasonable forecast of material and substantial disruption for the student's academic program. However, the cases only centered on the potential loss of the program's prestige rather than some more impactful disruption to the university or its other programs, making it unclear how it might apply to cases of student misconduct who misused social media in other ways.

While there is evidence to suggest that *Tinker* should be applied to instances of college or university student social media misuse, it remains to be seen how this plays out in practice. That is, it is unclear whether, regardless of whether speech occurs on or off campus, college and university administrators must determine student misuse of social media created a substantial and material disruption to the learning environment before students can be disciplined. Hopefully the courts will soon provide some guidance.

### **Analysis**

This section explained that legal principles applicable to the use of social media technology by college and university students relies heavily on litigation from K-12 settings. Specifically, cases involving social media fall under *Tinker*, which requires a



reasonable forecast of a substantial and material disruption. It is unclear whether social media creates disruptions in educational environments due to its natural design which enables individuals to communicate instantly with wide audiences. However, information from this section suggests that if such a threat to a college or university community is present, administrators then have the authority to act. While this point is simple, it is not simplistic. Understanding when administrators in higher education have the authority to discipline students who (mis)use social media, and to what degree they may do so is not always easy. As seen with cases in K-12, understanding when speech through social media creates a threat and when it is harmless can be hard to parse.

As seen in this section, the court has ruled in conflicting ways based on the unique facts of cases when determining whether instances of student use of social media technology violate *Tinker*. Wheeler (2011), although speaking on K-12 settings, wisely suggested that the courts must provide consistency in order to “give school administrators both the tools and guidance as to how to apply those tools” (p. 16), language that applies just as aptly in higher education contexts.

### **Conclusion**

Section one of this chapter provided an understanding of the foundational elements of student development theory. Specifically, this section investigated human and student development theory. Kegan’s (1994) explanation that humans develop a sense of themselves through an evolving consciousness was paralleled with Baxter-Magolda’s (2001) idea that students develop in similar ways, through experience and questioning, as they develop sets of lenses to make sense of their worlds. Additionally, this section focused on literature pertaining to student choice and learning paradigms.

This section is vital toward understanding how students develop, choose, and learn, so that a firm foundation can be set toward understanding how college and university administrators can and should create and enforce social media policies.

Section two of this chapter focused on research explaining the impact that use of social media technology has on student behavior. Multiple studies reinforced the same conclusions, namely that student use of social media technology negatively impacts student academic success, and that there is an inverse relationship between certain use of social media technology and student academic achievement. This section also pointed out that social media technology can be used as a learning tool that, when used in particular ways, can positively impact student academic achievement. Finally, this section described that social media technology is neither good nor bad, but can be used in ways that are debilitating towards student learning. However, conclusions from the research studies so far are inconclusive.

Section three outlined the legal issues in higher education related to student use of social media technology. This section first defined the term social media, then provided a timeline of its development. Next, this part discussed social media in K-12 schools, describing the emergence of cellular technology and the evolution through which students were permitted to use it at school. The next section of this chapter investigated social media in colleges, including recent examples of university social media policies and protocols in action, their ramifications, and the reactions to them. Another section in this chapter explained specific legal literature of social media use in higher education by describing and analyzing the seminal student speech cases and connecting them to higher education.

Chapter one of this study presented the nature of the problem to be investigated and chapter two set the foundation. Chapter three reports on how the study was conducted. Specifically, Chapter three identifies the population, participants, procedure used in data collection, methods of data analysis, and the use of a pilot study.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODS

This chapter includes the research design, a description of the process of choosing settings and participants for this study, a report on a pilot test of the data collection procedure, the procedures used in data collection, the method for how the data were analyzed, and notes on the trustworthiness of the study.

#### **Research Design**

The purpose of this study was to understand how selected college administrators in selected four-year Catholic colleges and universities in Ohio respond to student use and misuse of social media. I used a qualitative design because it is best aligned with the research purpose. Qualitative research is utilized to understand a phenomenon, and, especially, to understand the lived experiences of a group of people (Merriam, 2002). Qualitative research also aligned with my desire to explore a phenomenon that is fairly new to a field of study; and, in this case, the phenomenon of student use of social media is a new issue facing college administrators.

The research question was: what are the experiences of college administrators responsible for student conduct at private, Catholic, four-year Ohio colleges and universities in responding to student use of social media? The research question was consistent with the research purpose in that the question did not come from a need to

measure narrow variables, but, rather, a need to explore and to understand how a selected group of individuals made meaning of a particular phenomenon.

While quantitative research methods are used to measure, predict, or explain, phenomenology builds on data collected to provide an understanding of how participants experienced a phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). According to Creswell (2007), phenomenology provides a deep understanding of a phenomenon experienced by individuals to provide helpful information to policy makers.

Phenomenology is a method designed to enable researcher to build complex and holistic pictures detailing the views of participants and to understand phenomena from new perspectives (Creswell, 2009). According to Moustakas (1994), data collection in phenomenology utilizes qualitative interviews while data analysis is a process focusing on understanding phenomena by teasing out overarching themes that strike at the heart of each participants' experiences.

### **Settings for the Study**

Multiple potential settings met the criteria established by the study purpose. I established one set of criteria to apply to the institutions and the second set to the individuals I sought for interviews. The state of Ohio has 42 private universities. After reviewing these institutions, I discovered that administrative positions and titles of potential administrators of student conduct vary. Titles included Dean of Students, Assistant Vice President of Student Life, Director of Community Standards, and other similar positions that denote a management role in the student conduct process.

I ultimately decided to narrow my selection criteria to universities that were Roman Catholic, four-year comprehensive, with a residential student population. I did

this by placing each of the 42 universities in an Excel spreadsheet. Roman Catholic universities were selected because of the prevalence of them in the state of Ohio. Of the 42 private universities in Ohio, 15 were Roman Catholic. The next highest portion was Methodist at six.

Narrowing the focus to Roman Catholic universities provided a larger pool of schools to select. Additionally, selecting universities with the same faith-tradition would help with the transferability or generalizability of the research results. Then I created a column for the following criteria: faith-based, four-year comprehensive, residential, and Roman Catholic. From there, I put “yes” or “no” in the block across the rows for each university to indicate whether the university met the criteria points or not (see appendix A). Through this process I was able to identify eight universities that were Roman Catholic, that were residential, and were four-year comprehensive.

The purpose of this study was to understand how university administrators responded to student use and misuse of social media. In order to narrow the study, I focused on mid to upper level administrators at Roman Catholic, four-year comprehensive universities that are highly residential. I had planned to narrow the potential university sites to those with student conduct policies addressing student social media misuse, but none had such information available for review.

These universities selected for the study were: Xavier University (Cincinnati), Mt. St. Joseph University, the University of Dayton, Ohio Dominican University, Franciscan University of Steubenville, Lourdes University, Walsh University, and John Carroll University. These eight universities had many similar aspects possibly lending to ultimate transferability of the study findings. These institutions were all four-year comprehensive

Roman Catholic schools; all have a student live on-campus residency requirement; and all have comparable student codes of conduct policies in that they did not have any details about social media misuse.

I gained access to four universities that met my selection criteria by a process of an initial email to an administrator and a follow-up phone call. In an effort to gain access to the remaining four universities that met my selection criteria, I contacted colleagues with whom I had relationships at the remaining schools. This fostered one additional institutional setting, resulting in five settings: Xavier University, Mt. St. Joseph University, the University of Dayton, Walsh University, and John Carroll University.

Xavier University is a Catholic university administered by the Jesuit order in an urban setting in Cincinnati, Ohio. Xavier University has an undergraduate population of approximately 4,500 students. Students are required to live on-campus for the first two years of college unless they live within a commuting distance (typically within 45 miles of campus). Xavier University is a four-year comprehensive university offering 81 majors.

Mt. St. Joseph University is also a Catholic university established by the Sisters of Charity outside of the city of Cincinnati, Ohio. Mt. St. Joseph University has approximately 1,200 students who are required to live on-campus for their first two years unless they live within a commuting distance, typically within 45 miles of campus. Mt. St. Joseph University offers 39 undergraduate degree opportunities.

The University of Dayton is a Catholic university sponsored by the Marianist order on the edge of the city of Dayton, Ohio. The University of Dayton has a two year housing requirement for its nearly 8,000 undergraduate students unless they live within a

commuting distance, typically within 45 miles of campus; however, nearly 97% of students live on-campus all four years. The University of Dayton offers 80 undergraduate degree programs.

Walsh University in North Canton, Ohio, is a Catholic university operated by the Jesuits. Walsh University has approximately 3,000 total undergraduate students who are required to live on-campus during their freshmen year. Walsh University offers 60 undergraduate degree programs.

John Carroll University is a Catholic university administered by the Jesuits. John Carroll University has approximately 3,000 undergraduate students who are required to live on-campus during their first two years of school unless they live within a commuting distance. John Carroll University is primarily a four-year liberal arts institution located in University Heights, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, offering 31 different undergraduate majors.

### **Pilot Study**

In order to pilot test my data collection protocol, I selected an individual who was not a potential study participant to interview. The participant was a Dean of Students at a private, non-religious, four-year comprehensive university in the south-eastern region of the United States. The pilot study participant was male, a difference from the primary study of four females, who had 17 years of higher education experience in student conduct and Housing and Residence Life.

The pilot participant differed from the participants I sought for the study in that he was an administrator at a non-faith based institution. The university he represented was highly residential with 97% of students living on campus. Additionally, the institution



was a four-year comprehensive private university. The only key difference is that his university was private non-religious; whereas, the participants in the study were from Roman Catholic universities. Given the specific criteria set on selecting participants for the study, it was difficult to find a pilot study participant who met all of the criteria. The pilot study participant met all but one of the stated criteria.

In order to solicit participation, I first sent an email invitation that was immediately accepted. I conducted an interview over the phone and asked questions to understand how students on his campus commonly misused social media, to understand the policies and practices he used to respond to social media misuse, and to understand how he balanced student speech rights versus the rights of the school community. I then transcribed the interview. When analyzing the data I first bracketed out my own biases in order to explore the data with an open mind. I did this by writing out my attitudes, beliefs, and experiences on the topic to become aware of them. Next, I identified units of meaning by noting topics, phrases, words, or ideas that were common throughout the interview. Finally, I reviewed the units of meaning to form overarching themes.

During the interview, I began with detailing the purpose of the study, the steps I would take to ensure anonymity, and how he could get in touch with my chair. From there I asked the following questions: how do students on your campus commonly misuse social media, how do you address instances of student social media misuse, what policies or practices do you use to address student misuse of social media, what role do legal counsel play in managing student social media misuse?

From the pilot study, I found that students at this university were not often misusing social media. The administrator noted that while he had a procedure created to

deal with instances of student social media misuse, he never had to implement it. His procedure involved pulling together a small group of key university officials to create a specific response to an instance in which student social media misuse interfered with the learning environment. He noted that the most common ways students were misusing social media requiring him to intervene were instances of Title IX cases in which individuals put information on social media sites pertaining to sexual misconduct investigations. He explained that the misuse was not global to the university community, but specific to a small number of people. His social media protocol was created to address issues that could cause a large disruption to the university environment such as students using social media to promote a campus wide demonstration.

Ultimately, the pilot study helped me focus my questions to get the most out of time with each participant. The study was also valuable in helping me to practice the process of transcribing, coding, and analyzing my data. The pilot study gave me a resource to go back to when I was in the beginning stages of interviewing for my study. For example, the way that I began my pilot interview was clear, to-the-point, and offered a natural transition into the first question. To prepare for my first interview of the full study, I listened to the pilot interview.

### **Research Participants**

In qualitative design, the selection of participants is “purposeful” (Merriam, 2002). Rather than probabilistic samples representing identified populations for generalizability, a purposeful sample is one that best meets the purpose of the study. The identified participants were ones who were most likely to relate the narratives and the meaning the researcher needs. Additionally, a goal in qualitative research is to find rich

cases, or participants, who have experiences with the phenomenon. The purpose of the study, exploring how administrators deal with student use and misuse of social media, was relatively narrow; it is not a general or broad responsibility of administrators. It is a topic I found has not yet made it to the policy level at these institutions. Thus, it was not only narrow in scope, it is relatively new in higher education, a new challenge for higher education leaders. Finally, these participants were chosen because of the convenience they offered to me as the researcher. Because I had experience at an Ohio Catholic university, it was convenient to gain access to these institutions.

The profile of the participants interviewed was purposefully sampled from private, Roman Catholic, four-year, comprehensive universities in Ohio. Also, participants were individuals who managed the student conduct at their respective universities. I planned to ask one administrator from each selected university to participate in phone interviews. A total of eight administrators was my goal.

I chose administrators for their purported roles in creating and/or administering student codes of conduct social media policies at their institutions. I was also able to identify possible participants by reviewing the websites of the colleges and universities. I examined role descriptions, biographical information, and titles on the website to identify the chief student conduct administrator. These individuals were often Director of Student Conduct, Dean of Students, or Conduct Coordinator.

Of the eight administrators I identified as potential participants I ultimately gained access to five who became the sources of research data. I describe all five participants in the next several paragraphs, using their pseudonyms. All were female and ranged in age from their mid-20s to 50s. Their work experience in higher education ranged from 4

years to over 20 years of administrator experience. All five participants had experience as administrators in Catholic institutions of higher learning. Four of the five administrators identified as the individual who oversaw student conduct while one interviewee self-described as a mid-level administrator who implements policies created by the upper-level administrator.

Participant number 1, Diana, was an upper-level administrator in Student Life who said she was very eager to participate because her institution had just resolved a student social media misuse situation. While her institution had yet to develop a social media protocol, she believed that her school did a good job managing the situation. Diana had 30 years of higher education experience.

Participant number 2, Lisa, was also an upper-level administrator at her institution; the primary focus of her duties was on student conduct issues. Lisa had over 25 years of experience in Catholic higher education. In addition, Lisa had held many different positions in student affairs within Housing and Residence Life, Student Conduct, and Student Life.

Participant number 3, Danielle, an upper-level administrator in Student Life, had over 20 years of experience in Catholic higher education at two institutions. She had been at her current institution for only three years and she said she had yet to fully explore the social media issue as a professional. Moreover, Danielle was a leader of a national higher education organization who was well respected in the higher education community.

Participant number 4, Elizabeth, was the youngest professional of the five participants and she served in an upper-level role in Student Life. Elizabeth was relatively new to her current institution having just reached her four year milestone. Elizabeth was

familiar with student use of social media on her campus and was part of a division that created new and innovative ways to address these issues on her campus.

Participant number 5, Mary, was a mid-level student conduct administrator with only one full year in Catholic higher education. She was still learning about her current institution and the students on her campus. While she did not believe that she was able to contribute to this study, her responses shed light on a common trend among administrators as the results of her interview demonstrate.

### **Institutional Conduct Policies**

It was important to me not only to describe but also to detail the institutions and individuals selected to participate in my study, but was is also important to detail the student conduct policies of each university selected to present greater background into the policies of the institutions selected. While some of the selected universities had very little information listed, some had very specific information available. In order to collect this information, I viewed each university's website.

Xavier University had little information available about policies governing their students' behavior. Their code of conduct was subdivided into smaller sections: community neighbors, sexual discrimination, discrimination, and alcohol and drugs. Community neighbors referred to how the students treat and interact with non-university people. Xavier University is located next to non-university owned property where people live, work, and shop. The community neighbor section detailed how university students should conduct themselves with their non-university neighbors in fitting with their Catholic values. Sexual discrimination policies simply detailed that students should not discriminate against others due to their genders. General discrimination was essentially

harassing someone due to any other reason than due to a person's gender. Finally, alcohol and drugs referred to the misuse of alcohol and drugs as a student.

Mt. St. Joseph University had the least accessible information available on the internet. Their student rights and responsibilities focused solely on describing how a student can file a complaint with the university about another student. However, there was a very small two line section that stated students should not tamper with any university electronic systems or files such as course registration.

The University of Dayton had the most information available online. The University of Dayton's student code of conduct began with outlining a series of standards that students should live by. These standards embodied what the University of Dayton calls its "Commitment to Community" which was rooted in their Marianist and Catholic faith traditions. Specifically, there were three behaviors the University of Dayton students were called to do: learn through community, respect the dignity of every person, and to promote the common good. After highlighting these standards, the code of conduct then outlined several possible code violations: alcohol, compliance, disorderly behavior, drugs, environmental disrespect, fire, gambling, unregistered guest (visitor), harassment, hazing, laws and statutes, misrepresentation, physical abuse, safety and security, sexual harassment, commercial activity, and theft. None of the policy offenses listed specifically included misuse of social media.

Walsh University had a section of their student code of conduct that touches on technology; however, it was listed under a student's personal use of Walsh technology which referred to using email appropriately and fighting against viruses such as Malware. Walsh was different from the other universities explored because it had a technology

protocol for students, though from an email perspective and not a social media point of view. Additionally, Walsh's policy did touch on common issues such as alcohol, drugs, compliance, and discrimination situated within their Jesuit and Catholic values.

Finally, John Carroll University had a similar student code of conduct to Walsh University that briefly mentioned university technology. John Carroll detailed that university students should not interfere with university systems or files. A common example was the course registration process. Finally, John Carroll also had policies against drugs, alcohol, fire arms, hazing, and harassment/discrimination also situated within their Jesuit and Catholic values.

As one can see, none of the universities explored have specific policies governing student use of social media. However, four of the five universities had policies warning students not to harass people for any reason, specifically highlighting that they not do so based on gender. It is also important to note that the universities noting something related to technology only did so in reference to interfering with university data management systems. Finally, four of the five institutions oriented part of all or their student codes of conduct to their Roman Catholic faith traditions.

### **Power of the Research Design to meet the Purpose**

Because the total number of potential participants meeting the purpose of the study was limited to 8, I could not use saturation to define the sufficiency of gathered evidence, even though saturation is the typical standard for defending N-size in qualitative research. Saturation (Mason, 2010) is the point at which, during data coding, the researcher finds redundancy. In other words, it is the point at which the interviews have saturated the phenomenon being studied. No new codes are being revealed to the

researcher. In order to test this limit, researchers analyze their transcripts and continue to seek out additional informants until saturation is reached.

Because I exhausted the number of possible participants (only 3 remained in the population of 8; and they were unresponsive), I had no others to add to my participant group as I analyzed the data. As an alternative, I used the notion of “information power” (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016) to characterize and to justify the sufficiency of 5 interviews. I also sought guidance from Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006) as well as Mason (2010). All of these researchers began with the flaws in the notion of saturation to provide other perspectives on N size in qualitative research.

Before discussing “information power,” in conducting research in new areas of study such as student use of social media, researchers such as myself are limited insofar as not all identified officials at the universities may have been immediately ready to respond because of newness of the phenomenon. Having individuals at five of the eight universities responsive might be another indication that this is new and pioneering work.

Malterud et al. (2016) coined the term information power, after the term, statistical power, in quantitative research. Statistical power is calculated to help characterize the potential of the research design (including n-size) to detect variable relationships. Malerud et al. began with the traditional way n-sizes are defended in qualitative research, saturation; they suggest “the larger information power the sample holds, the lower n is needed, and vice versa” (p. 1754). Moreover, they explored qualitative sample sizes against the concept of saturation while determining that there are five dimensions that impact the quantity of information necessary to gather: study aim, sample specificity, established theory, quality of dialogue, and analysis strategy.



In my study, the first two dimensions, “study aim” and “sample specificity”, are the most salient in justifying the sufficiency of five participants. Malterud et al. (2016) explained that a broad study requires a larger sample than a narrow aim. In my case, I had a very narrowly targeted aim, namely the experiences of student use of social media, and a specific sample consisting of high level student conduct administrators at Roman Catholic, four-year, highly residential universities in Ohio.

Malterud et al. (2016) went on to observe that in rare or specifically tailored studies such as mine, interviewing one or a few participants would likely yield greater information than interviewing a whole host of individuals just to reach a high number. In other words, in a narrowly tailored study, interviewing numerous individuals who lack relevant knowledge or who are not in direct roles to be even exposed to the topic may diminish the quality of the findings. However, it should be clear that Malterud et al. indicated that all five aforementioned criteria should be considered when determining N size. In my case, I tailored my smaller N size to two of the five criteria.

Guest, Arwen, and Johnson (2006) sought to investigate when the point of saturation occurs in qualitative studies. They were concerned about the weaknesses in the few available guidelines for measuring saturation. In doing so, they worked backwards from the coding of a study using 60 interviews. They concluded, “saturation occurred within the first twelve interviews, although basic elements for metatheses were present as early as six interviews” (p. 59). The data they used was from a narrowly focused study: interviews of women in two West African countries who were “at high risk for acquisition of HIV and who would be appropriate candidates for HIV prevention programs” (p. 59). They applied narrow criteria, based on sexual behavior and frequency

of specific sexual behaviors, for the selection of participants – further narrowing the study. In their discussion they noted that that if a sample is homogeneous, the sooner one can expect to reach saturation. They indicated that in instances where the participants were similar, new codes of meaning pulled from the interview data were just variations on existing themes already developed.

In the case of my study, not only were the universities similar, but the roles of the participants were narrowly defined and the topic, experience in managing student use of social media, was narrowly constructed as well as fairly new on college campuses as a policy issue. Moreover, participants had similar backgrounds and position titles.

Mason (2010) stated that “the point of saturation is, as noted here, a rather difficult point to identify and of course a rather elastic notion” (p. 11). Mason investigated the number of participants PhD students included in their qualitative studies. Mason found that there is no magic number for researchers to hit and that too often PhD students get a much larger number of participants “just to be on the safe side” (p. 12). Mason added that saturation was generally achieved at a comparatively low number that can be drawn from the purpose and aim of the study. In other words, a student with a narrow or specific aim and purpose would require fewer participants than would a student with a wider and more complex purpose.

Ultimately, the aforementioned studies provide support for the five interviews conducted in this study. First, my study’s aims and purposes were narrow or specific. Additionally, the participants and participant instructions in my study were homogenous. Finally, the evidence suggests that conducting more than a few interviews with such a specific purpose might be counterproductive in my study. Having defended the level of

research participation with these research sources, I remain convinced that gaining the participation of all eight administrators would have been a benefit to the study. I would have particularly enhanced the dimensions of “established theory” and “quality of dialogue” that Malterud et al. suggest. They asserted that a study such as mine, with a limited theoretical base, would benefit from larger sample sizes. Likewise, a study with an experienced interviewer is likely to require fewer informants than a study with a novice interviewer, such as myself.

### **Data Collection**

Gaining the participation of the five research informants was the result of several steps in communication with the identified institutions. In an attempt to solicit participation, I emailed letters to the prospective participants (see appendix B). The letter contained a written explanation of the study. I also focused on reciprocity, or what the participants could gain professionally from participating. In this case, I offered to share my results with each participant individually, with the idea that they can use the findings to shape their approach to guiding student social media behavior.

I took active steps to ensure confidentiality. Participants were instructed to speak in generalities rather than about specific instances in order to protect themselves, the students they served, and the institution that they worked for. Additionally, Kaiser (2010) describes that in cases that are unique, sensitive, or might be easy for readers to determine, participant identities should be masked in the public presentation for protection. While anonymity cannot be guaranteed in qualitative research, participants were given pseudonyms, and the identities of their home institutions were disguised.

After conducting interviews with four administrators at four institutions I called the remaining four individuals and left personal messages on their voice mail. This did not yield any additional interviews. I then relied on personal contacts to solicit participation. This resulted in one additional interview for a total of five individuals I interviewed.

After I completed my fifth interview, I selected a previous participant to conduct a member check interview. During the member check interview I discussed my key findings and asked probing questions to understand how my findings fit with her experiences and to investigate if there was more to the story. The member check interviewee corroborated my findings.

My data collection was guided by theoretical sampling, in which I simultaneously collected, coded, and analyzed the data as they were collected. This process helped me decide, at each step, whether and how to alter the interview questions in order to develop the story as it emerged (Merriam, 2002).

The initial amount of time I allotted for each interview was 30 minutes; this gave the participants the flexibility to be as brief or extensive as they wished. In order to capture the interviews, I made audio recordings of the phone conversations with the consent of the participants. I transcribed the digital audio recordings for coding by listening to the recordings aloud and typing what I heard.

I began each conversation with a brief introduction of the purpose of the study and asked the participants about themselves and their institution in order to gain context and to build rapport. After the initial conversation, I started with a broad open-ended question asking about their experiences with students who use and misuse social media.

Next, I tailored my questions to the specific participants, asking each about how he/she responded to student misuse of social media and ultimately concluding with questions about the speech rights of the students on their campus.

The data for this study were collected via semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions so key concepts were explored. Yet, flexibility allowed the participants to move into their own issues to generate thick, rich descriptions (Merriam, 2002). A list of interview questions included how have you noticed students using and misusing social media on your campus; what are some common ways that students are using social media that cause you to respond; how have you responded to student use or misuse of social media; what policies or practices guide your response; what have been the outcomes of your responses? (see appendix C)

### **Data Analysis**

Moustakas (1994) explained that in order to conduct data analysis in phenomenology, researchers must first bracket out their own presumptions or biases so that meaning can come from the participants' experiences and not be based on those of the researchers. Second, researchers should delineate units of meaning by considering the literal frequency a topic, phrase, or idea comes up in the interviews. Finally, researchers should cluster units of meaning into themes. As Moustakas (1994) points out, creating themes is when researchers identify areas of significance from descriptions of a phenomenon. For example, if a participant talked about anonymous social media, I put those responses into a unit labeled "anonymous social media." As a unit built up with responses from other participants, I was able to pull out a core issue or theme.

This was a difficult process. After first reading through the entire log of transcripts from each participant, I formed a surface level view of the common similarities between them. Then I reread each participants' transcript and started to highlight common words, phrases, and examples with separate colors to denote one category from another. Once I had the surface level commonalities highlighted, I reviewed the highlights to gain a deeper understanding and took notes on paper to help process meaning. From there, I was able to develop key themes of meaning. I did this continuously as I interviewed and categorized the data.

### **Limitations and Delimitations**

In qualitative research, Guba (1981) outlined criteria to ensure trustworthiness, which stands to counter the quantitative terms internal and external validity. Guba pointed out that credibility, or internal validity, refers to how congruent the findings are to reality, while transferability, or external validity, is the extent to which the findings can be applied to other situations. Within in this context, there were two limitations and two delimitations to this study.

The first limitation of this study is that it did not use what Guba (1981) called triangulation nor did this study employ other data collection methods such as observation or focus groups to verify the findings. This study relied solely on qualitative interviews to collect data.

The other limitation was the “positionality” of the researcher, which I included in chapter one. In qualitative research, a researcher is the primary instrument of data collection and analysis (Merriam, 2002). In the case of this study, a researcher's background and preexisting assumptions on the topic serve as a limitation.

My background is primarily within Housing and Residence Life at a Catholic university and a non-religious private university. While I have theoretical knowledge of the ways students misuse social media and a legal understanding of how administrators can respond, my practical knowledge and experience in higher education centers on students' housing needs ranging from room assignments, roommate mediation, check-in/out procedures, community development, and student development. My preexisting assumptions were that students often misuse social media in a variety of ways such as cyber bullying, sexual misconduct, racial discrimination, and character defamation.

In addition to the list of three limitations is a set of two delimitations, or aligning assumptions that helped frame the study. The first delimitation was the time period over which the data were collected between March to July 2016. Insofar as social media is continuously evolving, administrators' approaches to addressing student use of social media may change. In other words, administrators may not be able to keep their policies up-to-date with the ever changing social media landscape. For example, administrators may have written a social media policy that addressed issues related to Facebook and Twitter which are not anonymous channels of communication; however, those policies may not address anonymous social media channels such as Yik Yak which was created after Facebook and Twitter came on the scene.

## **Trustworthiness**

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested strategies to ensure “validity.” First, internal validity asks the question of how congruent one’s findings are with reality. I also used the strategy of member checks as a qualitative strategy to ensure “validity.”

Member checks occur when researchers asks informants to comment on the researchers’ interpretation of the data to see whether it fits with their experiences (Merriam, 2002). I did this to a limited capacity. After the fourth interview I sent one participant the transcription of her interview and asked her if she wanted to change anything to ensure that she articulated what she intended to say.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest another qualitative strategy to ensure “validity.” namely reflexivity. This is the process of reflecting critically on one’s self as a researcher, and allows readers to better understand how researchers might have arrived at particular interpretations of data.

Another strategy used to ensure “validity” is the use of bracketing. According to Merriam (2002), bracketing is a strategy where researchers notes their own biases in a separate columns while coding data. This enables researchers to delineate the participants’ words from their own thoughts.

In my case, I maintained a reflexive journal where I wrote down my initial thoughts on the data. I did this after conducting each interview, after listening to each interview recording, and throughout the transcription process. My reflexive journal was a collection of my thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and initial interpretations. From my journaling, I was able to identify my own biases and separate them out from the coding process. For example, one theme in my findings centered on Title IX related issues in



higher education. I was recently trained to be a Title IX investigator. Part of this training not only informed me on how to collect necessary information from students when an instance of alleged harassment occurs against a protected class, but it also versed me in the rules, regulations, and processes universities commonly use address Title IX related issues. When the participants brought up Title IX examples, I bracketed them by underlining the text of the transcript. I did not want to presume that I knew everything about Title IX or how it impacts every university or every student. Underlining the text helped me to intentionally review the examples of my participants without bringing in my personal bias or experience.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss other ways that qualitative researchers can achieve “reliability,” or the extent to which their findings can be replicated. One key pair of strategies is dependability and consistency. Rather than insisting that others get the same results as the original researcher, “reliability” lies in others concurring that, given the data collected, the results make sense.

One qualitative tactic to “reliability” is the audit trail. I maintained an audit trail to document lists of participants, their institutions, times of meetings, correspondence, and how data were collected (Merriam, 2002). I kept my audit trail on an Excel document that listed each participant, their universities of origin, their roles, contact information, date(s) contacted, dates and times the interview took place, and how the data were collected.

Finally, Lincoln and Guba (1985) discuss external validity, or generalizability, within a qualitative framework. “External validity,” or, in this case, transferability, refers to the extent to which the consumer of the study can transfer the results to his or her setting. Lincoln and Guba suggest thick and rich description, where the researcher

provides enough description and information that readers will be able to determine how closely their situations match, and thus, if results can be transferred.

In order to provide the richness of my findings, I selected key quotes, phrases, and words to put directly in the report of my findings in chapter four. Some of these quotes are lengthy, but were used to give greater context and understanding to the reader about this phenomenon. I selected the quotes, phrases, and words based on what they triggered in me or a quote, phrase, or word that clearly articulated an overall theme. For example, if a quote, phrase, or word helped me construct or elaborate a theme, I prioritized it to use in chapter 4.

Among the strengths of this study are the measures the researcher is taking to ensure “validity” and “reliability.” I used multiple strategies to ensure that the findings were concurrent with reality, replicated, and consistent in the extent to which they could be applied to another study. Also, it is important to keep in mind that the basic nature of qualitative theory is that knowledge is socially constructed.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESEARCH FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand how administrators at private, religiously affiliated, four-year colleges and universities in Ohio experienced and responded to student use and misuse of social media. The following research questions informed this study:

- (a) How do students commonly misuse social media on college campuses?
- (b) What policies or practices guide administrator responses to student misuse of social media and what are the outcomes?
- (c) How do administrators balance student speech rights with the impact on the community?

During comprehensive interviews, the participants described their experiences and knowledge, addressing student misuse of social media and the tools, practices, and/or policies they utilized to respond to student social media misuse. The findings in this chapter are based on an analysis of semi-structured interviews conducted with five key informants.

As discussed in chapter three, to derive the themes I transcribed the recorded interviews and placed each participant's answers into separate Excel

columns. From there I first read through the entire length of the transcripts before beginning to highlight common words, phrases, and examples that were common throughout the interviews.

For example, as discussed in this chapter, issues surrounding Title IX have impacted administrators' responses to student misuse of social media on college campuses. I first began by highlighting all references to Title IX either by direct mention or through examples. From there, I reviewed all of the Title IX highlights and took notes on the side to form a theme. A theme is more than a redundancy of words or phrases, but is a connection of ideas that are alike or consistent from participant to participant. The themes spurred from the specific experiences voiced by the participants.

### **Study Findings**

Six themes emerged from the data:

1. Behavioral Policies: Colleges and universities have behavioral student conduct policies, not social media policies.
2. Reactionary: Administrators do not proactively educate students about how to use social media.
3. Student-to-Student: Anonymous social media platforms inhibit administrators' ability to hold students accountable for social media misuse but do provide a means for students to hold each other accountable.
4. Title IX: Most instances of social media misuse in which a college or university administrator responds are during Title IX investigations.
5. Catholic Identity: Administrators recognize the role the faith traditions of their universities play in addressing student behavior.

6. New and Emerging Area of Study: Because social media technology is continuously evolving, administrators may not be ready to engage in a discussion about this topic.

### **Theme 1: Behavioral Policies**

Behavioral policies refer to how administrators categorize student misuse of social media. This section provides evidence to support the notion that administrators see social media as a channel through which a bad or negative behavior occurs. In other words, administrators see student use of social media as a tool that students use for harmful purposes. For example, if a student uses Facebook to bully a peer, Facebook is the social media channel and the bullying is the negative or bad behavior. To administrators, the channel of social media did not matter. Rather, the responding administrators were more concerned with the behaviors students exhibited.

The first question I asked in each interview was “how have you noticed students on your campus using social media that causes you to respond.” In each interview I received responses that highlighted specific recent examples of student social media misuse and of larger problems. For example, Elizabeth stated:

Unfortunately there have been a few instances where a student is friends with a faculty member on Facebook and then proceeds to slam....[also] I think first the most prevalent is Yik Yak and that can't be a surprise to you. I'm very sure that's not the first you've heard that. I think it's the anonymity at least in our conversations that on campus that I don't know it seems to make folks braver and so obviously that's been one of the most prevalent.

Similarly, Danielle answered:

I would have to say, that in general, most are individual cases that typically involve Facebook where students are identifiable. There have been a few situations where students are upset at something posted on Yik Yak but if it gets five negative votes it will get deleted. So that can be hard. It is much easier when it is on Facebook where students' names come up versus Yik Yak which is more of an anonymous open forum.

This question led me to ask about the “policies or practices do you utilize when addressing these kinds of issues.” Some administrators spoke of peer to peer initiatives that they created to empower students to hold other students accountable. These peer-to-peer initiatives are most commonly used to address anonymous messages posted on Yik Yak. Specifically, peer to peer initiatives are programs created by administrators that train students to interact with other students on campus through social media.

Elizabeth discussed her university’s peer-to peer-program: “Peace Makers focus on safe outreach in the halls and so what we’ve done this year when we had some posts that were very concerning that we set up a team mostly of Peace Makers that would go on and address those posts in terms of reminding them of who we are.”

Mary also described her school’s peer to peer response: “I think we do a lot of education with peer educators across the board on things in general. I think our students hold other students accountable.”

While Elizabeth and Mary specifically talked about peer-to-peer programs, they and the other administrators explained that they do not have stand-alone social media policies. Rather, they viewed social media as a channel through which negative student

behavior occurs. In other words, social media is the tool students use to violate the code of conduct.

When asked about specific social media policies at her school, Lisa responded that “There is a fair and responsible use policy that the university has but it does not cover social media. It is the behavior that is demonstrated through social media that we pursue.”

Danielle confirmed Lisa’s example by indicating that while her university outlines how students should use social media, the consequences for behavior fall under a behavioral violation of the student code of conduct:

We have an electronics communication (student technology user guide) platform that was created before my arrival. This outlines what the university believes is the best way for our students to use social media. We encourage students to use social media in a responsible manner. Typically, when we see something that is a violation of what our conduct standards are, it is in some situation where Title IX is involved. Situations where there is some kind of harassment or bullying behavior.

When Mary was asked how officials at her university respond to social media bullying, she responded that they brought the student(s) into the office and discussed how bullying is a violation of the student code of conduct. While social media was discussed, the violation was the bullying behavior, not the fact that it was committed via social media. Mary indicated that the response would have been similar had the bullying occurred through text message or notes put on a bulletin board. Specifically, Mary described the situation this way:

I have had one student who on Yik Yak claimed that her roommate was threatening her. We ended up calling both of them in. We have a peer review board. So, I had the peer review board talk to the students about what they post on social media and being aware of what they post on social media. Because it was on Yik Yak I was not able to pinpoint if it was actually her. But I thought it was a moment when peers could talk to their peers about social media.

Diana stated that when someone brings a social media post to her attention: “We will evaluate it and if we believe it falls into a conduct policy violation, then we would pursue it through the code of conduct.” Finally, Elizabeth specifically reported that “We do not have a social media policy. And as a matter of fact when I was preparing knowing that we were talking today, I actually typed that word into the handbook to see if that actually came up. But you're exactly right it does follow under our other aspects of our student code of conduct.”

Lisa participated in my member check interview. During that conversation I put further my findings in a series of statements and asked for her response. I stated that “My first overall finding is that, college and universities do not have standalone social media policies, but social media is often a channel through which behavioral violations happen. So, universities have behavioral policies or codes that they use to address the behavior not the channel through which it happened,” Lisa then replied that replied, “Yes, that is accurate in my experience.”

Theme 1, behavioral policies, simply referred to the classifications administrators use to address student misuse of social media. As this section has demonstrated, the participating administrators made it clear that their institutions did not have separate



social media policies governing how students should interact on social media platforms. Rather, the administrators treat social media as a channel through which policies are broken. In other words, social media is the setting in which a behavior policy is violated, not the means.

## **Theme 2: Reactionary**

The term or theme of reactionary refers to the lack of preplanning or proactive measures the responding administrators used at their institutions to address ways students are commonly misusing social media. Theme 1 revealed that students commonly misused social media through anonymous channels such as Yik Yak, and yet administrators had not developed means to address the issues before they arise. Therefore, the administrators in this study relied on reactionary practices to address the behavior by forming peer to peer programs or having educational conversations with the students misusing social media after it is brought to the administrator's attention.

The participants each took different routes to discuss their institutions' reactionary tendencies to student use of social media. Often, the second question that I asked, was "what procedures or policies do you use to address instances of social media misuse on your campus?" While this question generated a host of responses, the most illuminating was from Elizabeth who replied:

We have 'Peace Makers'. Those are the folks [students] that we have brought to the staff that are pure at heart in terms of carrying and holding true the mission of our university. These are the students that are already challenging other students on Yik Yak, but really what we find that once the negative comments are

confronted [by the Peace Makers], we don't see that they [the negative commenters] really respond back after that. It kind of shuts them down.

Diana responded this way:

I would also say that we [do not], I do not have the kind of staff to say, spend all day every day to monitor what students put out on Instagram, Snapchat, Twitter, Facebook. There is no way. And so, our practices when another student brings something to our attention, we will evaluate it and if we believe it falls into a policy violation, then we would pursue it through the code of conduct. If it is not a policy violation but it might be inappropriate we would still have, what I refer to as an 'educational conversation' with a particular student.”

The participants indicated that neither they nor the policies at their institutions proactively educated students on the use of social media. However, when situations of misuse are brought to their attention, the administrators reacted and educated offenders. As mentioned above, Mary's and Elizabeth's universities have peer-to-peer educational initiatives but these are reactive rather than proactive insofar as they are only employed after a case of student social media misuse has occurred.

When discussing what policies or practices her institution used to address student misuse of social media, Mary gave this example: “Let's say a Hall Director sees it [social media misuse] but is not able to quickly intervene but sees it 24 or 48 hours later, we are going to pull the student aside and say "Hey you need to be more aware of what is on your social media. This was alarming to us. Let this be part of your warning. Next time you will be going through the formal process." Elizabeth indicated that, as noted, her institution has a group of students and staff called Peace Makers, similar to Residence

Assistants, who use social media during their daily routines, but react to negative posts that do not align with the university's values.

While Lisa's university did not have a peer to peer program, if something is brought to her office's attention, staff members will make determination about what the next steps should be:

There have been instances where I have found things or someone has brought it to my attention. As a university we do not scan social media. When something comes to my attention that could be considering something that is borderline we will consult and make a decision. Is there anything in this message that leads us to know who it is without having to go through the police and are the police necessary at this point? Because sometimes they put little hints out there that help you, you know this is coming from a [student residence] that we know there was a party last weekend. So we have ways to kind of narrow the scope....We don't scan it and we don't do a lot of education about it.

Diana responded that officials at her school do not proactively teach their students how to use social media to do so in positive and productive ways: "The campus response would be to do a, to have a conversation with, I think the initial response would be to try to have a conversation with the students who were initiating that kind of a [behavior]."

Elizabeth's institution was also not proactive in educating students about social media. Elizabeth received a daily report from the director of university communications outlining every social media post in which her school is mentioned. From there, if she saw something deemed to be inappropriate, her office engaged in some sort of outreach

to the student to investigate the situation, provided the student with an educational moment, and/or to implement the student code of conduct.

Finally, while Danielle's university did not have a set of social media platform guidelines, the reaction to misusing them "...could be anything from a monetary fine to social probation. We also have social counseling with peers. We want to empower students to hold each other accountable." In other words, while the guidelines are out there, intervention only happens after the guidelines are broken. There is nothing done before students break the guidelines help educate students.

As part of the member check interview, I state that "Colleges and universities do not monitor social media but when social media misuse is brought to their attention of an administration, the administrator will take action ranging from having an educational conversation or applying the student code of conduct to that student's behavior. " To this, Lisa replied "Yes, except I would say that generally is accurate, but there are some schools who do monitor."

In general, as noted, the theme of "reactionary" describes that administrators do not have proactive means to address student social media use before it happens. The reactive responses range from peer to peer initiatives, to educational conversations, or to applying the student code of conduct to the behavior.

### **Theme 3: Student-to-Student Accountability**

The third theme focuses on student-to-student accountability. As the administrators highlighted, anonymous social media platforms such as Yik Yak make it nearly impossible for administrators to know which students have violated the code of conduct through social media because individuals' names and identities are not attached

to posts. Yik Yak provides its users with a level of anonymity that makes it virtually impossible for administrators to pinpoint exactly who has made a post. In order to combat these situations, as previously mentioned, the administrators in this study have taken to peer educators to address the issues at hand.

First, all five respondents agreed that anonymous social media, specifically Yik Yak, is one of the most prevalent channels used by students. Lisa explained this best when was asked to detail broadly how her students commonly misused social media: Broadly, I think, the anonymous services such as Yik Yak and mostly Yik Yak is coming to mind. Anything in which they can post something that is harmful or hurtful or inappropriate in a way that nobody knows who they are. Specifically when it comes to being racist homophobic. Hateful in general. Sexist. So, I think that's one way that sticks in my mind.

Lisa continued on a lengthy conversation about the direction technology and anonymity is going. Lisa provided this discourse:

Anonymity that you think you are getting now may not be there depending on where technology is going. Post anonymously may imply something about you, that you were trying to hide something. And that says something in and of itself besides the message that you type. So, I think some of my educator role, I think we have not done a good job about, is helping students understanding that the technology has grown in your life time and will continue to grow as we watch Apple try to figure out how to not share with the Federal government. How to open their phones and at the same time figure out how do I help local law enforcement try to catch a pedophile. Right. So, those are issues that our

community is going to continue to grapple with. And technology and what you have put out there on the internet and what you think is anonymous may be less anonymous as you age. You know what I mean? I think right there. That is the point that worries me more than if someone is saying something that is racist or sexist or that kind of thing because there is no laws against being racist or sexist. And there should not be in my opinion. But, at this type of community we have a, a different stances about what does it mean to be at this institution, so we have that, we want to talk to you about it and hold you accountable to it. And then we have this other educational piece about do you understand where technology is going and where it could go?

What Lisa was saying was that what is anonymous today may not be anonymous tomorrow because technology along with the rules and laws surrounding it are constantly changing. Lisa maintained that she is not so much worried about what is being communicated via social media, but is concerned that her office may be unable to find out who these people are in order to educate them not only on how to use social media responsibly but to also help students recognize that their comments may be harmful or hurtful to others.

Diana, when discussing how students were engaging via social media about the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement, said that there were a few anti-BLM posts that caused her concern, but stated that “The issues were on Yik Yak so we don't know who was involved in putting that out there what I would describe as offensive.” Additionally, Lisa suggested that anonymous social media existence makes users feel safe knowing that

their information will be protected if anyone asks for a user's personal information to be shared.

From what I have gathered from the participants, Yik Yak puts administrators in blind-spots insofar it is not clear who they should hold accountable for misuse or how they should respond in general. However, while the administrators do not know the answers to these questions, three of them have figured out that peer to peer education can work.

Mary's institution recently had a potential Title IX infraction via Yik Yak where male students suggested that they sexually violated a female peer. This post was up on Yik Yak for all people within the school's location to read. The Title IX coordinator worked to formulate a response. While the Title IX Coordinator could not pinpoint who made the comments, the Coordinator worked with Mary and her peer educators to put messages out via Yik Yak about the situation. For example, the peer educators post information about campus resources if a student felt violated by the comments and also worked to directly challenge the harmful comments on Yik Yak.

Mary said that when the Student Life full-time staff member tried to intervene directly, it was met with great backlash: "A student got mad at one of our hall directors [for countering a post on Yik Yak] and so that was a fun experience [sarcasm] where the hall director was being talked about all over any format of social media whether Yik Yak, it was mostly on Yik Yak, and our IT office has to come in and kinda stop that."

Elizabeth had a similar group of students on her campus called "peace makers," a group I discussed earlier. Elizabeth described these students as the equivalent to Resident Assistants except that they focus on safe outreach via social media. Elizabeth provided

this additional information about Peace Makers with regard to how they specifically address Yik Yak.

Peace Makers would go on [Yik Yak] and address those posts in terms of reminding them of who we are, but doing it in the student's language so that you know it was better received. So, we have a group on there that addresses what's not true to the character of our university and who we are as a Catholic University of distinction as Christians as an inclusive community. Students, again, by using their own language are policing that, but that doesn't mean that there still aren't negative things out there. Sometimes it's just the mean and ugly, so we address it in terms of that direct contact and communication from students.

Finally, Diana, when describing a situation about a recent post made from a member of the incoming freshman class, reported that "A student who is going to come to the university this fall emailed me and said 'hey there is a really offensive conversation that is going on [via social media].'" Diana and other administrators explored the posts but found that the students were holding each other accountable. According to Diana, while university officials made it known that this kind of negative offensive content is unacceptable on campus, the students' self-monitoring had greatest impact on the behavior:

To confirm my findings, I conducted a member check interview with Lisa. I asked her whether "Anonymous social media platforms such as Yik Yak present additional challenges of accountability. In other words, I asked whether it is difficult to figure out who exactly is saying what and trying to have those educational moments or holding students accountable in another way." To which, Lisa replied, "Yes, right on."



In all, anonymous social media platforms such as Yik Yik make it virtually impossible to hold students to account for their behavior. In order to address student misuse of social media in these instances, administrators are asking students to directly respond in their own voices. While peer-to-peer accountability does not translate to an official university sanction or discipline, it does provide an avenue for the university to respond in a productive way. As Mary's example demonstrates, when a university official attempts to respond to anonymous posts, it is met with resistance and open hostility. However, as Elizabeth and Diana pointed out, when students are able to use their own voices, they are able to make an impact on the outcome.

#### **Theme 4: Title IX**

Another major theme is that most instances of social media misuse stem from issues implicating Title IX. In these instances, the accused student engages through some kind of harassing behavior on social media on the basis of someone's sex. A good example is a hypothetical situation Lisa described when discussing the role of legal counsel at her institution:

We use the federal standards with the university's anti-harassment discrimination coordinator and policy. So, if you put a yak out there that says women belong at home barefoot and pregnant, that would not tweak our anti-harassment non-discrimination process and that would not go anywhere for us. But if it was something elevated or targeted at one person or something that put folks in a hostile environment...for example, If I post on social media that tomorrow everyone who thinks that black lives don't matter should wear red....That is going

to tweak our anti-discrimination inquiry to at least investigate to figure out what does it mean to say you don't believe black lives matter.

As Lisa explained, because of the federal standards and with the university's anti-harassment and discrimination policies, administrators on campus are often required to investigate situations. Yet, under Title IX, the comments posted on social media must target specific persons because of their sex or put a group of people based on their sex in hostile environments before investigations can occur. Diana described the Title IX investigations this way:

Our legal counsel is very involved [with Title IX investigations] it is sort of hard to split apart [social media from the harassing behavior]. Because lawyers are permitted in Title IX cases, things are much more complicated and so our lawyers of course are involved as well to run the investigation by asking questions of the parties involved.

Diana followed up by saying:

We might have a Title IX case, let's say it is sexual misconduct, and an investigation going on and part of that investigation reveals one of the parties is also posting things online or social media. So, then we are dealing with not only with the alleged behavior but also with what is being put out there through social media. Certainly, we have done that. In general the issues do seem to be around Title IX cases, if I were to generalize. So, then have to get involved in trying to find out what people posted and what the context is and is a truly a violation and those kind of things.

Lisa indicated that most of what comes through her office involving social media are cases in which students used social media to target specific persons that raised a flag because of the anti-harassment and discrimination policies that she put under the umbrella of Title IX. Lisa was the source of my member check interview. I asked Lisa to respond to the statement “Most instances of some kind of social media misuse are often on display in instances that are either Title IX or other harassment situations.” Lisa answered “Yes, sounds like you are exactly on it.”

Likewise, Elizabeth, when discussing the balance of student free speech rights and the impact on the community found that when the speech ventures into “Harassment or intimidation or any aspect that would directly fall under our discrimination policies and Title IX policies or if it's perceived in any way shape or form as any threat or form of intimidation, stalking through physical threats of violence....we will address that.” Although Elizabeth did not define harassment or intimidation in her comment, she seemed to be using it as a catchall to confront behaviors that may not have been addressed in the student code of conduct but which are perceived to be or actually are harmful toward students.

Mary responded that most of what she has seen in terms of student social media misuse on her campus as an administrator stemmed from potential Title IX violations. Mary indicated that, while she believed that officials at her university did not perceive a major problem with student social media misuse, it is likely that if an incident were to occur it would lead to a formal university response involving some kind of Title IX related situation.

Similarly, Diana stated that her primary memory of instances involving social media misuse, tend to involve Title IX cases. She added that this is so because legal counsel is very involved and the issues are much more complicated insofar as they involve new and unclear mandates on higher education.

As this section has demonstrated, Title IX related issues are at the forefront of these administrators' thinking when it comes to social media. Title IX requirements are evolving and expanding from the 2011 "Dear Colleague" letter from the Department of Education. According to Grasgreen (2011), the "Dear Colleague" letter described the ways colleges should address and prevent sexual harassment. The letter elaborated on the mandates that Department of Education officials said colleges have previously misunderstood or not followed. While the letter did not include any new mandates, it did clarify requirements that have confused administrators. Moreover, the letter specifically identified the duties of administrators when dealing with sexual violence while establishing how institutional officials should report IX violations, conduct investigations, and respond to sexual violence issues (Grasgreen, 2011).

According to FIRE (2013), once university administrators become aware of a possible sexual harassment situations, they must determine what actually occurred and respond to those actions accordingly. FIRE (2013) explained that the Title IX mandate necessitated that administrators immediately respond to reported sexual harassment claims by conducting a, "prompt, thorough, and impartial inquiry designed to reliably determine what occurred" (FIRE, 2013). From there, administrators should take action to eliminate the harassment or hostile environments by sanctioning alleged perpetrators.

FIRE also noted that university officials who do not respond to such cases are subject to investigation, fines, and loss of federal funding.

In this subsection, the administrators indicated that most instances of student social media misuse are found and addressed when investigating Title IX related situations. As Danielle said in her interview, Title IX related issues have placed additional considerations on the plates of college administrators where more and more of their time is being consumed by adhering to Title IX.

Title IX seems to be impacting the ways these administrators think about student conduct in relation to social media. As the interview data suggest, the most pressing matters of social media behavior concerns have to deal with expansive Title IX related issues, including harassment and discrimination against individuals or groups of people that cause real or perceived harms.

All five administrators interviewed brought up Title IX issues without prompting. They all remarked that they found evidence of social media misuse through Title IX investigations. As Danielle explained, social media behavior is rarely what prompts a Title IX investigation, but social media often becomes involved in such cases because the alleged perpetrator more often than not reaches out or communicates to or about the alleged victim. Because of the new abundance of Title IX investigations, social media misuse is most often brought to administrator's attention in instances of Title IX investigations.

### **Theme 5: Catholic Identity**

As noted, the five individuals interviewed were all administrators at Roman Catholic universities. The participants described the impact the faith traditions of their

institutions played when addressing student behavioral issues. For example, Diana described a situation where an admitted student posted sexually explicit comments on the class of 2020's Facebook page. Another incoming student alerted university officials and Diana responded to the person who posted the negative comments. In her discussion with the student, she referenced that her university espouses values and beliefs rooted in their Catholic faith, "[I] basically sa[id] this university is not the kind of place where we allow this [sexual comments on Facebook]. You know, words to that affect that as a Catholic university this will not stand and he could find another university to attend if this represents what he believes."

Elizabeth took the Catholic faith tradition of her institution a step further by stating she educates her peer to peer leaders about the mission of her institution so that the peer to peer leaders can interact with others on social media to promote the university's core faith values.

Peace Makers [trained students and staff] that would go on [social media] and address those posts [negative posts] in terms of reminding them of who we are but doing it in the students' language so that it was better received and so we have a group on there that would address what's not true to the character of our Catholic university and who we are as a Catholic University of distinction as Christians.

Danielle and Lisa also highlighted the importance of their institutions' Catholic faith when describing how they have educational conversations with students about something they did or said on social media. They both indicated that when students did not violate a behavioral policy but still misuse social media, they call the student into their offices to have a conversation about their social media behavior and they also refer

back to their Catholic faith traditions as a means to promote how students should interact with one another via social media.

While the universities do not have specific social media policies, the administrators all indicated, to differing degrees, the role their institutions' Catholic faith can play in the conduct process. Some administrators use these Catholic values as means to promote positive behavior while other administrators cited using the Catholic values as a tool to have meaningful conversations with students in lieu of implementing the conduct policy.

### **Finding 6: New and Emerging Area of Study**

The beginning of chapter one outlined the measures taken to secure interviews. I described that eight interviews were planned. In this chapter I provided justification that the five interviews secured enough data to successfully construct findings based on theories and information power.

Often, in new areas of study, selected individuals are hesitant to participate if they do not have information readily available to share. In my solicitations, I detailed the purpose of the study and gave a broad overview of the interview. I can only speculate that those who did not participate did so because they were not ready to respond to inquiries about social media in students' lives. The five participants all responded to my inquiries within a short timeframe and were very straight forward in talking about experience in student use and misuse of social media.

When I spoke with Diana, for example, she took time to look up her institution's specific policies regarding social media. In other interview instances it was clear that the informants were looking through their policies as we spoke. Similarly, Mary took time in

advance to prepare herself on the topic by reviewing her university's policies and had conversations with colleagues before our interview only to find out that her university did not provide specific social media policies.

These data suggest that university administrator response to student misuse of social media is a new and evolving area of study. As evident with the interviews conducted, administrators may be still figuring out how to address these issues in a proactive way.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, I first described the overall purpose of this study as being designed to explore and understand how administrators at private, Roman Catholic, four-year colleges and universities in Ohio experience and respond to student use and misuse of social media. Next, I outlined the research questions. Third, I used a narrative approach to describe the four major themes ascertained from the data, elaborating each with quoted passages from voices of participants.

In the next chapter I provide an overview of the findings, discuss the implications of the findings, offer suggestions for professional practice in applied settings, describe the limitations of the study, and offer recommendations for further research.



## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

My interest in two primary problems in higher education led me to complete this study. First, I was concerned over the fact that the misuse of social media technologies by college and university students is causing harm to their peers (Howard, 2013). Second, despite the harms that are occurring on campuses, it is unclear what actions college and university administrators have taken to address student misuse of social media (Burl, 2011). These two concerns led me to conduct this qualitative study which was designed to understand how administrators at a sample of Catholic colleges and universities in Ohio respond to student use and misuse of social media.

The five participants in this study were either mid-level or upper-level administrators who worked in student conduct offices or served as Vice Presidents of Student Life and had leading roles in managing student conduct on their campuses. I conducted phone interviews with these administrators from March 2016 through July 2016 to gather data in order to address the research questions. I analyzed the data by first bracketing my own biases in order to explore the data with an open mind. I wrote down my attitudes, beliefs, and experiences on the topic to become aware of my own thoughts and values on this topic. Next, I coded the interview transcripts by identifying units of

meaning, noting topics, phrases, words, and/ or ideas. Finally, I reviewed the units of meaning to form overarching themes. Once the data were analyzed, I conducted post hoc data collection six months after the initial interviews “to obtain further depth and detail, to ask for clarifying examples, and to clarify concepts and themes” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 159).

### **Summary of Findings**

Six main findings or themes emerged from this study. The findings of this study were:

1. Behavioral Policies: The colleges and universities in this study had behavioral student conduct policies in place, not social media policies.
2. Reactionary: Administrators in this study did not proactively educate students about how to use social media.
3. Student-to-Student Accountability: As revealed in this study, anonymous social media platforms inhibited the ability of administrators to render students accountable for social media misuse. Even so, these platforms did provide means for students to render each other accountable.
4. Title IX: Most instances of social media misuse to which the informants responded occurred during Title IX investigations.
5. Catholic Identity: Administrators recognized the role the faith traditions of their institutions play in addressing student behavior.
6. New and Emerging Area of Study: Administrators may not be ready to engage in fruitful discussions about this student misuse of social media on their campuses

because the social media phenomenon is relatively new and administrators are just now grappling with the issues at hand.

The first finding, behavioral policies, refers to the fact that the behavioral conduct policies of Catholic, four-year colleges and universities in Ohio lacked social media policies. In other words, the participating administrators made it clear that their institutions did not have separate social media policies governing how students should interact on social media platforms. Rather, administrators and their institutions treated social media as a channel through which behavioral conduct policies were either complied with or broken.

Administrators viewed social media as the setting in which behavior policies were violated, not the means. For example, if students bullied or harassed their peers on Facebook, then they violated the bullying/harassment policies but did not engage in potential transgressions of media usage policies. This means that students were formally rendered accountable for social media misuse only if their actions violated the student behavioral codes of conduct at their institutions. Further, institutional officials lacked the means to render students account for simply misusing social media because the policies governing student conduct are behavior related.

Based on the responses I received, if students' actions on social media did not violate behavioral policies such as harassment and/ or lewd/indecent behavior, then their misbehavior on social media would not have been categorized as misuse by officials at their colleges and universities. For example, students who verbally bullied peers in face-to-face encounters would have been held accountable for their behavior. In this example, it does not matter whether the bullying took place face-to-face or through written word.

The negative behavior is what concerned administrators. This is similar to behavior exhibited through social media. It did not matter to administrators that students used, or more aptly, misused, social media to make racial comments. The administrators were concerned with holding the student accountable for their behavior not the channel through which the behavior occurred.

The second finding, reactionary, explains that administrators did not proactively educate students about the use of social media. In other words, administrators had educational moments with students about the use of social media only after behavioral violations occurred via social media platforms. It may behoove administrators to educate students about the challenges of social media before the point of misuse. One such reactive measure is administrator use of peer to peer programs where institutional officials educate students to respond directly to the negative behavior peers exhibited via social media when it occurs. Moreover, administrators from this study noted that they utilized the student code of conduct to sanction unacceptable behavior involving the use of social media.

The third finding is what I call Student-to-Student Accountability. This refers to how anonymous social media platforms inhibit the ability of administrators to render students accountable for social media misuse but do provide means for students to hold each other accountable. In fact, anonymous social media platforms such as Yik Yak had made it nearly impossible for administrators to know which students have violated the codes of conduct via social media because individuals' names and identities are not attached to posts. In this way, Yik Yak provided its users with levels of anonymity making it virtually impossible for administrators to pinpoint exactly who made posts. In

order to combat these situations, as mentioned, the administrators have taken to peer educators to address the misuse of social media on their campuses.

The fourth finding is that most social media misuse the administrators in this study responded to occurred during Title IX investigations. This is because the officials did not actively monitor social media use of their students. In today's society, when litigation seem to be common, officials at these colleges and universities made calculated decisions not to monitor the social media behavior of their students. Rather, the administrators relied on students to report behavioral violations by utilizing convenient and simple mechanisms developed for students to report alleged instances of sexual harassment or misconduct.

Given the Office of Civil Rights Dear Colleague Letter in 2011 (Ali, 2011), officials at colleges and universities are mandated to investigate reports of sexual misconduct on their campuses. Administrators have created and promoted mechanisms for students to file reports, an approach which has led to a greater volume of alleged Title IX violations reported by students and investigated by campus administrators. According to the informants, the greater volume of reported Title IX violations are due to the prominence of the reporting mechanisms on college campuses.

All five administrators who participated in this study brought up Title IX issues without prompting, noting that they found evidence of social media misuse through Title IX investigations. Yet, social media misbehavior is rarely what prompts Title IX investigations even though social media is often involved in such instances because alleged perpetrators more often than not reach out or communicate to or about alleged

victims. In light of the abundance of Title IX investigations, social media misuse is most often brought to administrator's attention in these instances.

Because the administrators reported in this study did not monitor student social media use, they were able to act only on information they received through standardized report features. At these universities, administrators encouraged students to report instances of possible sexual misconduct. The heightened awareness of Title IX related issues resulted in an abundance of Title IX investigations by administrators exploring instances of alleged sexual misconduct. Administrators in this study reported that these investigations typically resulted in uncovering social media misuse by their students that was not brought to the forefront under other circumstances not involving detailed investigations. There may be greater occurrences of social media misuse related to Title IX because of the standardized reporting features. Additionally, Title IX may be at the forefront of the participants' minds because of the obligations placed on the participants by the 'dear colleague letter.' With transition to a new U.S. President, it is hard to speculate about the impact his administration may have on Title IX and its connection to social media misuse. The interviews for this study took place before the presidential nomination process had concluded and the participants did not explore potential changes or challenges that they may experience as a result of a new president.

In the fifth finding the participants described the impact the Catholic faith traditions of their institutions played when addressing student behavioral issues. While the colleges and universities lacked specific social media policies, the administrators all indicated, to differing degrees, the role their institutions' Catholic faith played in the conduct process. More specifically, some of the administrators reported using these

values as means of promoting positive behavior while others relied on them as tools to engage in meaningful conversations with students in lieu of administering the conduct policy.

The final finding is that this is a new and emerging area of study because insofar as social media technology is continuously evolving, administrators may not be ready to engage in fruitful discussion about its use, and misuse, on campuses. As is evident with the results of the interviews I conducted, administrators are still trying to determine the best measures to address issues surrounding the use, and misuse, of social media on their campuses in proactive ways.

### **Recommendations for Future Practice**

The six unique findings in chapter four, along with the ideas explored in the literature review in chapter two, provide the basis for the creation of social media guidelines on Catholic college and university campuses. Given the evolving phenomenon of student use and misuse of social media on campuses, college and university administrators working in conjunction with their attorneys and policy teams must develop social media guidelines. In creating social media guidelines administrators need to keep the following concepts in mind.

#### **Guideline Concept 1**

In chapter two I highlighted ideas from Junco (2011) who explicated a process for how college and university administrators could form social media guidelines on their campuses. Junco's recommendations focused on including as many different stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and interests as possible. Focusing on a diverse group of

stakeholders, according to Junco, should lead to social media guidelines that are representative of the student experiences on their campuses.

Therefore, guideline concept number 1 states: Campus administrators should form committees including representatives of key constituencies such as in-house legal counsel, directors of technology, student life administrators, faculty members, staff members, campus faith leaders, parents, alumni, and student leaders who are charged with implementing the new guidelines. Committee members should have a range of experience with social media.

As revealed in chapter four, not only did the administrators in this study lack guidelines to help govern student social media use and misuse, they often did not consult with the breadth and depth of university constituencies when managing controversies involving student misuse of social media. By formalizing committees encompassing individuals throughout the many sectors of their campuses, administrators can take significant step forwards by helping to develop social media guidelines adequately addressing student usage of this evolving technology.

### **Guideline Concept 2**

Similar to guideline concept number one, as reported in chapter two Junco (2011) indicated that committees creating policies should be transparent as they focus on how social media can be beneficial to student development while providing expectations for how students use this evolving technology. Junco explains that students are often critical and ask questions about university guidelines and policies. Junco adds that in order to meet students where they are in their development, administrators should be transparent with the outcomes of meetings. As such, committees should keep public records.



Therefore, guideline concept number two promotes meeting students where they are and asking for feedback: As committees work on new guidelines or revise existing ones, they should utilize social media channels such as Facebook, Twitter, and Snap Chat to post information and outcomes of their work. Committees should also use these social media channels to gather feedback from their campus communities at large to help inform their decision making processes.

The idea of engaging students on social media platforms they frequent as a means of creating or enhancing policy or guidelines was missing from the responses of the administrators I interviewed. The informants did note that they often educated students or full-time staff members to engage with students on social media in times where posts or comments failed to align with institutional values; however, the respondents indicated that these engagements did not result in moves to the next step, namely starting conversations about how students could avoid the misuse of technology.

### **Guideline Concept 3**

In chapter two I provided a framework for promoting student learning through social media guidelines. As stated in chapter two, “not only do college administrators need to create social media policies centering on understanding the harmful ways in which students currently use the medium, but they must also do so in a developmental manner.” Further, in chapter two I quoted Straumsheim (2013) as having stated that while colleges and university administrators are punishing students for their actions on social media, these officials are not educating users about ways to avoid the negative behavior they wish to prevent. By applying student development theory to social media guideline

creation, students should be able to make better decisions while pursuing higher education because they will have the tools to navigate this prevalent issue.

Guideline concept number three thus states that committees should focus on proactive means to address student misuse of social media. As noted in chapter four, college and university officials are addressing student misuse of social media by applying their behavioral codes of conduct. Rather than create new behavioral violations, committees should proactively devise means of educating students about the proper ways to use social media before misuse occurs.

Officials can offer educational opportunities about the proper use of social media by providing students the tools to explore their online identities while also setting clear expectations of how of how to use social media. These educational opportunities should include selecting student leaders to not only model responsible use of social media but also to teach them to be able to educate their peers in real world interactions.

#### **Guideline Concept 4**

Paramount to the creation of guideline concept 4 are Junco's (2011) suggestions detailed in chapter two. One of his assertions is that the guidelines should offer information to help students make their online experiences better as opposed to being created as strict behavioral policies. In another way, Junco thought that guidelines should both serve as avenues where students can learn and be representative of the real ways they use social media.

By focusing on student learning and the actual ways student use social media, Baxter-Magolda's (2001) theories on student development can be incorporated as discussed in chapter two. In general, Baxter-Magolda identified three phases of student

development: following external formulas, crossroads, and becoming the author of one's own life. During phase one, students use external lenses for making sense of their worlds and themselves. In other words, in phase one, students understand the world around them through what their parents, friends, peers, and Facebook friends think. Administrators crafting social media guidelines would be wise to help students explore how their social media "friends" help frame the way they make decisions, interact with others, and see themselves.

During phase two, students begin to look inward to develop their own lenses for making sense of the world around them. This means that students are taking a step to understanding who they are and what they value. To create social media guidelines, administrators should ask students to reflect on their own values and how those values align or misalign with how they use social media.

Finally, in phase three, students should have created their own sets of lenses providing ways of understanding what to believe, their own identities, and about their relationships with others. In this instance, administrators could take social media guidelines a step further by asking students to think about the impact their social media use has on other students and the world around them. By relying on such information, campus officials can help students to have positive understandings of social media.

In addition to Baxter-Magolda's theory of student development, Kegan's (1994) theory of human development can also be applied to help administrators create developmentally appropriate policies. As noted in chapter two, Kegan posited that there are five orders of consciousness in human development and to transition from a lower level of development to a higher level of development, individuals must be able to

understand something that was once foreign to them by having a meaningful experience with that concept.

Administrators can help students progress in their development by exposing them to concepts that are foreign to them in a way that asks students to explore an idea rather than to dictate the terms. This concept can also be connected to the learning paradigm, where it is important for administrators to engage with students in the creation of understanding rather than to prescribe to students how a rule or guideline applies to them.

At the same time, by creating proactive guidelines rather than restrictive policies, committees are free to frame their directives in ways designed to promote student development. In this way, committees should create illustrative lists of examples and hypothetical situations about social media to help students understand what is and what is not acceptable behaviour when they are using social media. Students can learn how to use social media properly in a hands-on low-risk environment by placing themselves in these hypothetical situations. These lists should incorporate the real ways students are using, and misusing, social media and the legal parameters college and university officials have available to render them accountable. These lists should also include references to Title IX.

Some of the central issues discussed by the informants reported in chapter four dealt with legal issues such as student speech, Title IX, and student conduct policy. In order to help educate students about these issues, one of the promoted guidelines should be to challenge students to make meaning out of potential issues and problems associated with the use and misuse of social media.

## **Guideline Concept 5**

The American Council on Education offers recommendations to administrators I highlighted in chapter two. Key among the recommendations is that administrators should not create specific policies on social media use and misuse because as the media constantly evolves, doing so could violate the free speech rights of students. Additionally, Buri (2011) suggested that institutional officials should be cautious with their approaches and include broad measures as opposed to specific policing mechanisms.

Guideline concept number five states that: committees should devise accountability measures if students misuse social media based on the guidelines. Moreover, committees should develop sanctions with a range of progressive punishments ranging from verbal warnings to possible suspensions and expulsions. If students have not violated their codes of conduct, but have ignored the proposed guidelines, possible accountability measures could include additional education or conversations with peers or administrators. Additionally, administrators should review the student misuse of social media to determine whether their actions violated the student codes of conduct. If their actions did violate conduct codes, then students should go through the standard conduct processes.

Because social media is a channel through which actions occur, college and university officials should not create new social media behavioral policies. Instead, administrators need to educate students about the proper use of social media. Then, if students using social media violate behavioral policies, they can be held accountable for their actions. As a point of comparison, when persons are caught speeding on highways, it does not matter if they were driving Chevrolets or Fords; what mattered was that they

were speeding. In this case, if students violate the disorderly behavioral policies for lewd and indecent speech at their colleges or universities, it does not matter if it occurred through Facebook or face-to-face, merely that the behavior happened and the students are accountable.

The experiences of the informants in this study suggested that current student conduct behavioral policies do not address the misuse of social media. However, behaviors committed via social media may constitute violations of student conduct behavioral policies. In other words, students are made accountable for their actions, not the media by which they acted. Guideline concept number five, in conjunction with literature from chapter two, asserts that the informants are correct in separating a behavior from the medium in which it occurs.

### **Guideline Concepts 6 and 7**

The final two guideline concepts focus on legal issues:

6. Administrators should work with campus legal counsel to ensure that their institutional policies are consistent with state and federal law with special attention given to Title IX and the First Amendment.

7. Administrators should require students to sign forms acknowledging that they understand and will abide by the guidelines. Guidelines should specify that individuals who refuse to sign forms, or fail to comply with their provisions, can be denied access to the technological facilities at their institutions, especially the Internet.

In chapter two I went into great detail about judicially created free speech standards in educational settings. While the informants interviewed only cursorily touched on this topic, it is important for administrators to be well aware of this litigation

by working with campus legal counsel to review the final product of their committees. Additionally, the best planned set of guidelines to help educate students while promoting the positive use of social media will fail if students do not comply.

As the informants mentioned, it is often hard or impossible to find out who violated guidelines or policy on Yik Yak or other anonymous social media sites. Therefore, it is important for institutional policies to require all students to read and put in writing their willingness to agree with all of the guidelines at the start of academic years. If students do not comply, then taking steps to deny or limit internet access may be a significant enough penalty to at least have students review the guidelines.

In all, college and university administrators should not add to the long list of behavioral violations already included in their student codes of conduct. Instead, administrators should form committees to create straightforward guidelines of acceptable social media behavior to educate students how to use social media in productive, safe ways. This education should take place before misuse happens. If students do not violate their codes of conduct but misuse social media as outlined in the guidelines created by campus committees, they should receive additional education because sanctions are only applied to behavioral violations.

To further explain the difference between social media guidelines and behavioral conduct policies, one must think of behavioral policies as lists of do's and don'ts while thinking of guidelines as collections of responses to policy violations. For example, behavioral policies might include not harassing others, not consuming alcohol irresponsibly, and/ or not physically harming others. On the other hand, guidelines might include using positive images of one's self and others, engaging in open and honest

dialogue, and using technical features as intended such as message boxes for private conversations as well as open threads for public discussions.

The proposed recommendations for social media guidelines grew directly from the student development theory literature, student speech case law, and exploration of trends in social media affecting colleges detailed in chapter two coupled with my research findings in chapter four. By utilizing these guidelines, college and university administrators should be equipped to educate their students about how to use social media properly. These guidelines should also arm administrators with tools to address student misuse of social media when it occurs on their campuses.

### **Revisiting Participants Six Months Later**

The five participants in this study provided a wealth of information from which the six key findings emerged. Even so, Rubin and Rubin (2012) maintained that “follow up questions and interviews explore the interviewees’ answers to obtain further depth and detail, to ask for clarifying examples, and to clarify concepts and themes” (p. 159). As posited throughout this dissertation, social media has changed and evolved rapidly over a fairly short period of time. What is a “hot” developing trend today may not be so in six months. In order to get an updated view of the experiences of the participants with regard to student misuse of social media, Rubin and Rubin (2012) suggested that interviewers followed up by asking for additional information about the themes at more appropriate times. In this case, the six months that passed since I last spoke with the informants is such an appropriate passage of time.

At the same time, Ryan, Lopez-Rodriguez and Trevena (2016) wrote that repeat interviews provided advantages to researchers, contending that in order to capture the



changing dynamics of the lived experiences of the informants, second interviews may be necessary. These authors observed that while first interviews may provide the frameworks for the follow up inquiries, second interviews should vary. Put another way, these authors believed that the purpose of second interviews is not to validate or confirm the key findings from the primary inquiries. Rather, they view second interviews as means to draw out consistencies and inconsistencies in the lived experiences of the informants. Finally, Ryan, Lopez-Rodriguez and Trevena (2016) explained that analysis of second interviews should occur after, and separately from, the first interviews so that new insights can emerge over time.

Acting out of my desire for a follow up, I sent each of the participants an email re-describing my study, reminding them of my purpose I also sent the respondents some of the narratives of our discussions both to refresh their memories and as a means of gathering their further reflections. I chose the follow up questions based on the information each participant shared with me and so tailored my further investigation to each specific participant. If an area of discussion left more to be desired or an idea was not fully explored, I highlighted those items in order to ask for further information. Additionally, I asked one common question throughout. Central to this study is the Catholic values that each of these institutions share. To ensure that each participant had a chance to explore this concept fully, I asked each participant a specific question about Catholic values.

In keeping with the logistics of informed consent, I reminded participants that they did not have to participate, that their ideas would remain anonymous, and that the data would be deleted from my email at the conclusion of the study. Only three

participants agreed to answer the follow up questions. The other two did not wish to continue their participation in this study.

### **Follow up Interview Summaries Conducted Six Months Later**

I framed the follow up questions around the key findings. I worked to identify a unique concept to further explore with each participant. Specifically, because Mary had little exposure to social misuse at her institution, I was interested in gaining an understanding of the impact of how the new and evolving nature of social media technology affected her ability to respond to my line of inquiry.

Next, insofar as Elizabeth pointed out that many instances of social media misuse were uncovered during Title IX related situations on campus, I was interested in getting her thoughts on this matter due to her experiences as an administrator. Finally, Lisa was a key informant on the concept that social media misuse is not a stand-alone policy, but that actions taking place through this medium are often behavioral violations. To this end, I inquired about the delineation of social media policies versus behavioral policies.

**Elizabeth.** I asked Elizabeth to discuss why social media misuse often “pops up” during a Title IX related situations. She responded that social media is a widely used communication medium by students and has replaced phone conversations in many instances. She also observed that students often think that what they post on social media will disappear. However, Elizabeth noted that people can screenshot, or save, pictures of social media posts and share them with others. In short, Elizabeth concluded that students are supplanting face-to-face communication with social media use. In these instances, students’ social media misuse creates digital footprints, or records, that could be used as evidence; whereas, face-to-face communication has no such record trail. Thus, in

instances of Title IX investigations, students are using social media records as a means to submit or refute claims of sexual harassment, dating violence, or sexual assault.

**Lisa.** I further asked Lisa to distinguish between social media and behavioral policies. Lisa explained that her institution did not have a social media policy. She added that officials instead looked for student misbehaviors that might have violated the institution's alcohol or disorderly behavioral policies.

**Mary.** In order to understand the reactionary measures Mary's institution utilized to educate students about social media misuse, I asked her to describe the types of conversations she would have had with a student following instances of social media misuse. First, Mary noted that her policies were reactionary because she has not encountered many instances of social media misuse that caused her to respond; therefore, officials at her institution did not perceive a current need to engage in preventative education. Next, Mary indicated that conversations with students who misused social media focused on identifying and helping them to understand why specified behaviors were unacceptable, thereby educating students so that they did not find themselves in similar circumstances again.

**Catholic Values.** I asked all of the participants about the role that Catholic values played in policy making at their institutions. Elizabeth highlighted a key phrase at her institution "Respect and concern for others." Similarly, Lisa's institution developed a document containing guidelines for living and learning under the guise of their values. Finally, Diana told me that her institution's Catholic values are always at the forefront of decision making. Yet, with social media she would also have a deliberate discussion about possible incongruities between the university's Catholic values and the First

Amendment. In other words, Diana indicated that the First Amendment would trump institutional values if the two were at odds when adopting social media policies on campus.

As noted, six months passed since my first inquiries with the informants and our second conversations. While it is possible for additional insight and information to have been presented, the responses to my follow up questions yielded consistent data not resulting in new information. In all, the data presented in the follow up interviews did not garner a revision of the themes or construction of the social media guidelines. Still, the additional questions added a richness and further context to this study.

### **Recommendations for Future Study**

From the findings of this study, I can identify seven key areas for future study. First, it would be worth investigating the impact of the current reactionary practices of administrators on future student use of social media. In other words, because administrators are not educating students about how to use social media properly, it is unclear whether student misuse of social media is likely to escalate over time.

Second, this study focused solely on administrators as a source of data. As such, it might be worth exploring this phenomenon from the perspective of students and/or faculty members so as to get a better overview of what is happening on campuses with regard to the use of social media.

Next, as the interviews from chapter four data suggest, social media misuse is often uncovered in investigations related to Title IX situations where there are instances of sexual harassment, assault, and/or discrimination. Accordingly, it would be helpful for administrators to educate students not only on Title IX, but how social media

misbehaviors violate the rights of peers. This study took a broader look at understanding how administrators respond to student misuse of social media across any and all issues, finding that the primary occurrences of student social misuse took place in the context of Title IX-related violations. Further, exploring how students misuse social media in ways that violate Title IX may make additional contributions to the base of knowledge this study laid out.

Fourth, as outlined in chapter four, college and university administrators reacted to misuse of social media by bringing students who misbehaved in for educational conversations or by employing peers to counter misuse occurring on social media platforms. It would be helpful to know what impact these reactionary tactics had on students' subsequent use of social media. One of the practice recommendations was to use both proactive and reactive tactics. Understanding the impact of the reactionary measures could influence future social media guidelines by providing information on the frequency of social media misuse and the types of misuse students engage in.

Next, insofar as this study focused solely on administrators at Roman Catholic universities in Ohio, it would be useful to explore what administrators at other types of institutions experience and how they react to student social media misuse. More specifically, it would be worthwhile to look at institutions from faith traditions other than Catholic along with public institutions, especially those with larger student populations than the schools in this study.

Sixth, this study did not use what Guba (1981) calls triangulation, or employment of other data collection methods such as observation or focus groups, to verify the findings. Rather, I relied solely on qualitative interviews to collect data. A future

researcher might explore student social media misuse by sampling students and/or faculty or conducting a study using a mixed methods approach in which the quantitative results could help tailor the qualitative exploration.

Finally, it may be worth recalling that the Office of Civil Rights within the Department of Education released a “Dear Colleague” (Ali, 2011) letter which put Title IX related issues back in the forefront by addressing evidentiary standards to be employed in disciplinary proceedings. In light of this “Dear Colleague” letter, it would be worth exploring how administrators address student misuse of social media. This is noteworthy because, as the administrators who were interviewed for this study pointed out, most instance of social media misuse occurred during Title IX-related investigations.

### **Limitations**

The first of this study, is that, as noted, it did not use what Guba (1981) calls triangulation, or employment of other data collection methods such as observation or focus groups, to verify the findings. Instead, this study relied solely on qualitative interviews to collect data. The interviews were tailored to inquire specifically about administrators’ experiences with addressing student misuse of social media on college campuses.

Another limitation is that the findings may only be transferable or generalizable to other similar types of colleges and universities. Administrators at large public research universities may find it difficult to make parallel conclusions. Even so, administrators at other Roman Catholic, four-year comprehensive, highly residential universities may be able to extract conclusive meaning from this study because of the similarities in their institutional makeup.

A third limitation of this study relied on the experiences of only five participants from a narrow swath of schools, the findings are not generalizable and are only transferable to like institutions. While the findings stem from data collected from private, Roman Catholic, residential, four-year comprehensive universities in Ohio, Roman Catholic universities outside of the mid-west might find it difficult to find commonalities.

A final limitation is that this study provided evidence of snapshots in time. What was true when this dissertation was written may not be true tomorrow due to the rapidly evolving nature of social media. When I began this study, anonymous social media channels such as Yik Yak had yet to be invented. However, midway through this study I included this new social media application in my analysis. There is no telling what will be new in social media tomorrow. Thus, the findings that have led to my recommendations need to be reviewed continuously to ensure that they are up-to-date with the latest developments in social media.

### **Conclusion**

In undertaking this study, I sought to understand how student conduct administrators at five Catholic, four-year institutions of higher learning in Ohio responded to student misuse of social media. Using qualitative interviews to collect data, six key findings emerged: participating officials had behavioral rather than student conduct, or social media policies in place at their institutions; responding administrators did not proactively educate students about how to use social media; anonymous social media platforms inhibited responding administrators' ability to render students accountable for social media misuse but did provide a means for students to render each other accountable; most instances of social media misuse to which participating

administrators responded occurred during Title IX investigations; because social media technology was continuously evolving administrators may not have been ready to engage in discussions about student misuse of social media (New and Emerging Area of Study); and the participating administrators recognized the role the faith traditions of their universities played in addressing student behavior.

My findings led me to develop recommendations for future practice which centered on the creation of institutional committees designed to create guidelines to educate students how to use social media before misuse occurs. These guidelines are meant to be different than student codes of conduct insofar as they should provide students with information on how to use social media while codes of conduct are typically lists of things not to do. These recommendations are based on findings limited to the five Roman Catholic, four-year, comprehensive colleges and universities in Ohio with a residential student population as well as a literature review of related topic areas. Additionally, it should be kept in mind that the constantly changing nature of social media could impact the application of the recommended guidelines for practice.



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APPENDIX A  
PARTICIPANT SELECTION CRITERIA

<b>Private Universities/Colleges in Ohio</b>	<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>Four-year Comprehensive</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Catholic</b>
Allegheny Wesleyan College	Yes- Protestant	No	No	No
Ashland University	Yes- Brethren Church	Yes	Yes	No
Baldwin Wallace College	Yes- United Methodist	Yes	Yes	No
Bluffton University	Yes- Mennonite Church	Yes	Yes	No
Capital University	Yes- Evangelical Lutheran Church	Yes	Yes	No
Cedarville University	Yes- Baptist	Yes	Yes	No
Chatfield College	Yes- Roman Catholic	No	No	Yes
Cincinnati Christian University	Yes- Christian Churches and Churches of Christ	No	No	No
Mount St. Joseph University	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes

Defiance College	Yes- United Church of Christ	Yes	Yes	No
Franciscan University of Steubenville	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Gods Bible School and College	Yes- Protestant	No	No	No
Good Samaritan College of Nursing	Yes- Roman Catholic	No	No	Yes
Heidelberg University	Yes- United Church of Christ	Yes	Yes	No
John Carroll University	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Kettering College of Medical Arts	Yes- Seventh Day Adventists	No	No	No
Lourdes University	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Malone University	Yes- Friends	No	No	No
Mercy College of Ohio	Yes- Roman Catholic	No	No	Yes
Mount Carmel College of Nursing	Yes- Roman Catholic	No	No	Yes
Mount Vernon Nazarene University	Yes- Church of the Nazarene	No	No	No
Muskingum University	Yes- Presbyterian Church	Yes	Yes	No
Notre Dame College	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	No	Yes
Ohio Christian University	Yes- Protestant	Yes	No	No
Ohio Dominican University	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Ohio Mid Western College	Yes- Baptist	No	No	No
Ohio Northern University	Yes- United Methodist	Yes	Yes	No
Ohio Wesleyan University	Yes- United Methodist	Yes	No	No

Otterbein University	Yes- United Methodist	Yes	Yes	No
Pontifical College Josephinum	Yes- Roman Catholic	No	No	Yes
Rabbinical College Telshe	Yes- Jewish	No	No	No
Rosedale Bible College	Yes- Mennonite Church	No	No	No
The University of Findlay	Yes- Church of God	Yes	Yes	No
Tri State Bible College	Yes- Undenominational	No	No	No
University of Dayton	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of Mount Union	Yes- United Methodist	Yes	Yes	No
Ursuline College	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	No	Yes
Walsh University	Yes- Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes
Wilberforce University	Yes- African Methodist Episcopal	Yes	Yes	No
Wilmington College	Yes- Friends	Yes	Yes	No
Wittenberg University	Yes- Lutheran Church in America	Yes	Yes	No
Xavier University	Roman Catholic	Yes	Yes	Yes

APPENDIX B  
SOLICITATION EMAIL LETTER

Hello!

My name is Curtis Nash and I am a Student Affairs Professional. I am in the process of doing research to complete my Ph.D. in Educational Leadership at the University of Dayton. I am currently writing my doctoral dissertation entitled “College Administrator Responses to Student Use and Misuse of Social Media on Campus.”

**I am writing to ask that you participate in this study by arranging a brief time that I ask you questions over the phone about your experiences addressing student use of social media on your campus.**

This study guarantees complete anonymity and confidentiality. Under no circumstances will data be published which identifies the participants or their home institutions. All inquiries will be coded and kept in a secure location with no names attached to any research. Results will be discussed with my dissertation chair, but will not be seen by any unauthorized individual. There are no risks for not participating. If you would like to assist but have questions, you can contact me directly at (513)470-8257 or my dissertation chair, Dr. Charles Russo, at the University of Dayton, at (937)229-3722.

In addition, questions may be directed to the University of Dayton's Institutional Review Board (IRB) Chair, Candise Powell, at (937) 229-3515.

I would greatly appreciate it if you could assist me by taking 15-30 minutes to discuss this topic with me. The data provided by you is greatly needed to assist in the research on student use of social media technology and how university administrators respond. I certainly understand that your time is valuable. My hope is that the data gathered, with your help, will contribute to the current knowledge base and will directly aid in the formation of general policy guidelines. Thank you very much in advance for your help and consideration.

Sincerely,

--

Curtis Nash

Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

College of Education and Allied Professions

University of Dayton

nashc1@udayton.edu

## APPENDIX C

### INTERVIEW QUESTION LIST

A list of interview questions includes:

- How have you noticed students using and misusing social media on your campus?
- What are some common ways that students are using social media that cause you to respond?
- How have you responded to student use or misuse of social media; what policies or practices guide your response?
- What have been the outcomes of your responses?
- What are some general concerns that you have regarding student use or misuse of social media; how have you prepared for potential student use or misuse of social media on your campus?
- Why do you believe your campus has not had issues of student use or misuse of social media on your campus that necessitated a response?
- What policies, procedures or practices do you have in place to address student use or misuse of social media on your campus?