

**The Effects of Social Media and its Quality and Content on NVCC Students Learning**

**Caroline Causey, Kimberly Rivera, Ingrid Saldana**

**Northern Virginia Community College**

**Psychology 211**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	Page 2
Chapter I.....	Page 3
Chapter II.....	Page 9
Chapter III.....	Page 14
Chapter IV.....	Page 18
Chapter V.....	Page 33
References.....	Page 35
Appendices.....	Page 38

## **ABSTRACT**

The main focus of this research was to understand the quality and content of social media accessed by students at the Northern Virginia Community College, specifically focusing on the Loudoun campus. It was the purpose of the study to explore the quality and content of social media as used by Northern Virginia Community College students to determine how social media is being used and how it affects student learning.

The researchers hypothesized that there is a correlation between high quality social media sites and high quality educational content on student learning. The method applied in this research was a mixed methods approach. A survey instrument was created and interview questions were written by the researchers. There was a total sample size of 38. The experiment took place on the Loudoun campus of Northern Virginia Community College. The data was able to support the hypothesis in this research study, but the researcher recommend that adjustments should be made before attempting this research in future.

## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction and Statement of the Problem**

#### **Introduction**

It is fair to say that social media has become one of the most popular communication methods among college students. From the early sites like MySpace and IM (instant messaging), social media continues to expand. The most popular sites used now include: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr. These sites while can be used in a beneficial way, are not, instead they are used to post obscene images and irrelevant commentaries. This study will evaluate the content and quality of social networking use of college students by assessing how NVCC students use social media and for what purpose. This study will measure if social media can be beneficial if used properly, by using high quality social media sites with high quality educational content.

#### **Background**

In one study published in 2005, it was estimated that “nearly 8–18 year old U.S. youth investing approximately 6.5 h per day with media”(Roberts, Foehr, & Rideout, 2005). As social media has expanded, there has been an increase in types of sites (moving beyond Facebook) that young adults are using frequently. But how are students using social media? And what kind of quality and content of social media are they exposing themselves to? We will address this query in our research study to be conducted at Northern Virginia Community College Loudoun Campus.

#### **Statement of the Problem**

Prior to deciding on our topic of research, we perused the literature available. Most of these articles focused on negative aspects of social media: such as the frequent complaint that social media has a damaging effect on self-image, while other studies only focused on the benefits that social media offers to classrooms, making a rapid exchange of information possible both within and outside of the classroom. In this study, we are assessing how NVCC students are using social media. What sites do they frequent? How often are they using social media in an educational manner? This study will assess at the quality and content of social media that NVCC student's use, and its effect on learning. In our research, we were able to narrow our focus.

### **Purpose**

It is the purpose of the study to explore the quality and content of social media as used by Northern Virginia Community College students to determine how social media is being used and how it affects student learning.

### **Major Research Question**

How does the quality and content of social media affect the learning of NVCC students?

### **Sub Questions**

1. What types of social media are used by college students; and for what purposes?
2. What is the nature of social media accessed?
3. What is learned from social media?
4. Does the student know about and use NVCC social media resources (affiliated with NVCC or a NVCC professor)?

### **Hypothesis Statement:**

There is a correlation between high quality social media sites and high quality educational content on student learning.

### **Null Hypothesis:**

There is no correlation between high quality social media sites and high quality educational content on student learning.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Of the schools studied in the paper, *“37 percent of those schools with blogs did not accept comments.... the lack of interaction through comments can be significant. With more and more schools moving into multiple channels of social media, schools that don’t allow for conversation risk losing engagement with students”*(8). This is an example of Social Media being used ineffectively, because discussion is one of the key benefits of Social Media.

Social Media can be a wonderful tool for colleges to engage students, because if used correctly, it allows college students to exchange knowledge with one another in an academic setting. (Young and Rossman) This is true only if the quality of content of social media used is academically sound. In *Reaching The Wired Generation: How Social Media Is Changing College Admission*, (Barnes 2009) NACAC discussion paper: *“...This generation of students is one of the most connected yet hardest to reach audiences. That paradox is only true if one ignores the research findings in this paper; prospective students haven’t stopped paying attention, they have simply focused on the world of social networking. The sooner colleges and universities understand how to use this medium, the sooner they can be a part of that world—the student world”* (Barnes 2009).

Social Media can help college students in their studies, if used in an appropriately academic manner. Some educators view social media as a distraction in the classroom, but according to our research there are many benefits of using social media as a college student. There has been research which shows that community college students, (unlike most college students who live on campus at a four year university) may struggle to feel connected to their campus community. By connecting students with college resources via social media, social media is contributing to the student's experience at community college. Colleges are under pressure to add social media to their resources for students. (Ganim Barnes)

According to research study published in 2014 (*Social Media, Higher Education, and Community Colleges: A Research Synthesis and Implications for the Study of Two-Year Institutions, Community College Journal of Research and Practice*) a study of college students and their use of social media stated that further research is needed on specifically community college students and social media. “*There is a paucity of research on two-year colleges and SMT. (Social Media Technology). Even our own work... is limited to institutional use rather than student use. Yet, prior studies of four-year students show promise regarding the potential of SMT to aid college engagement and academic success. Therefore, future research should study community college students' use of SMT to understand how to shape engagement and achievement outcomes in similar ways.*”(Davis III, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, and González Canché (2014).

### **Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is to contribute research to the academy, and to also further the research that has been made. While there has been research conducted regarding college students and their time on social media, there is no definite research on the quality and content.

This study will contribute to the academy, because of the lack of previous research on this topic. This study will provide a new perspective to the academy, and from the data collected the researchers as a whole will be able to learn from it and further contribute to the body of knowledge regarding social media and its use among community college students.

### **Definition of Terms**

**Social Media:** *“forms of electronic communication (such as Web sites for social networking and microblogging) through which users create online communities to share information, ideas, personal messages, and other content (as videos)”*. (Merriam Webster, 2015)

**NVCC Students:** Students attending Northern Virginia Community College Loudoun Campus; part-time and full-time.

**Quality:** The standard of something as measured against other things of a similar kind; the degree of excellence of something (Oxford Dictionary)

**Content:** Information made available by a website or other electronic medium. (Oxford Dictionary)

**Social Media Technology:** Anything that can be used to access social media sites (i.e. smartphones, computers, tablets, etc....)

### **Assumptions, Limitation and Delimitations**

#### **Assumptions**

- Social media will positively affect the learning of students at NVCC.
- The information that students provide will be accurate
- All Northern Virginia Community College students use social media



**Limitations**

- Students are self-reporting their use of social media, which might affect the complete accuracy of responses.
- The sample will be college students at NVCC who are between the ages of 18-24 years, so the survey will not address participants who are older who may also be affected by social media.
- This research study will be conducted within the time limits of this semester, thus potentially impacting the completeness of findings.

**Delimitations**

- Because students are providing self-reported information, information may not be accurate
- All students surveyed are 18 years or older, in order to obtain full informed consent without the need for additional parental consent
- All subjects are current students at Northern Virginia Community College, attending the Loudoun campus for the majority of their classes (2 classes or fewer at another campus is acceptable)

## **Chapter II**

### **A Review of the Related Literature**

#### **Introduction**

We live in the world of technology, the 21st century, the fast paced world of today. From this technology comes social media sites, which influences students in positive, but also negatives ways. It all depends on how it is used, and what quality and content of social media is being accessed by students.

In this study, the researchers will test the quality and content of social media use on students attending Northern Virginia Community College Loudoun Campus. It is important that the researchers do so to find a better way for students to use their time on these sites to better their minds and improve learning, rather than to waste time or negatively impact learning. While there has been research conducted on social media use among college students (Bowman and Akcaoglu 2014; Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & González Canché, 2014), research has not yet assessed the quality and content of the social media accessed. The literature review is necessary to evaluate previous research studies and findings on the topic in order to ensure that

this study will present new, valuable information which can add the body of knowledge regarding social media usage among college students.

### **Social Media's Origins and Rise in Popularity**

Social media is a relatively recent means of information exchange: “*The first recognizable social network site launched in 1997. SixDegrees.com allowed users to create profiles, list their Friends and, beginning in 1998, surf the Friends lists.*” (Boyd and Ellison 2007, 4). Since then, social media has evolved to include many easily accessible web sites which can serve as a platform for an exchange of information and ideas. Popular sites such as Facebook and Twitter are now considered sources of information, because information can be shared, discussed and analyzed all in one forum. Social media is still a relatively new technology, and colleges have had to make adjustments. Many colleges feel the need to offer social media as a way of attracting and retaining students (Barnes 2009; Noor & Hendricks 2012).

### **Social Media as a Learning Tool**

Social media has been regarded as an effective learning tool for students attending college classes. (Sung Youl, Seung-Bong, Keol, & Seung-Hwa 2014; Bowman & Akcaoglu 2014). “Connectivism” has been discussed in relation to social media, as a new learning theory concerning social media “*Connectivism is driven by the understanding that decisions are based on rapidly altering foundations. New information is continually being acquired.*” (Siemens 2004, "Connectivism", para. 25). Siemens discusses the idea that information is being used and treated

in a different manner than only a few decades ago. Knowledge now has a ‘half-life’: *“Technology is altering (rewiring) our brains. The tools we use define and shape our thinking... One of the most persuasive factors is the shrinking half-life of knowledge. The “half-life of knowledge” is the time span from when knowledge is gained to when it becomes obsolete. Half of what is known today was not known 10 years ago”* (Gonzalez 2004, cited by Siemens 2004 “Connectivism”, para. 3). College students between the ages of 18-22 (born 1993-1997) have grown up as digital natives. This is a unique experience, and they are the first generation to have social media present throughout their adolescence and into their young adult life which provides them with skills to use social media, but they need to learn to use social media in a beneficial way in order to expand their knowledge.

### **Social Media Use Among College Students**

Technology is on a rise in all school settings. From iPads in an elementary school setting and Laptop/Tablets in a high school one. With this technology comes a price though, the use of social media in school. In college students it seems to have become both a benefit and hindrance. *“The current generation of students is often called the Net Generation; they are digital natives, born in the digital age, who have been interacting with this technology almost from infancy”* (cited by Gettman and Cortijo 2015: Prensky, 2001, 2010; Tapscott & Williams, 2010, 17). If used effectively social media can be used as a tool in the classroom and can improve a student's academic performance (Sung Youl, Seung-Bong, Keol, & Seung-Hwa 2014).

There has been debate that social media is not a positive learning tool, but instead a potential danger because of the increasingly high amount of inappropriate content appearing on the web. (Jain, Petty, Jaber, Tackett, Purkiss, et al. 2014) Profanity, nudity, sexism, or racism can be seen on social media as well. . In this research paper it is argued that if one is posting or

viewing inappropriate content via social media, than that person is not using social media an educational manner. The fault lies on that person, not on social media as a whole. Social media has the potential to be used in an academic, educationally-based manner. Students must utilize these skills in order to use social media to its full potential.

### **Research Designs and Study Methods Found in the Literature**

A majority of the information gathered in the research articles reviewed was a result of a non-probability survey conducted through a university or college class (Sung Youl, Seung-Bong, Keol, & Seung-Hwa 2014; Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & González Canché 2014). Chris Evans created an anonymous online survey (random sampling) to measure the amount of twitter usage (Evans 2014).

Data have been gathered with social media as the format of testing, e.g. using a class blog and assessing that blog's effectiveness as a learning tool (Bowman, Akcaoglu, 2014). A way to modify this design into an experimental Before After Design model would be to have a pre test and post test, comparing the post test scores of those who participated in the class blog with those who did not participate. One study used the Delphi method using it to gather data and organize the ideas in the surveys (Magro, Sharp, Ryan, & Ryan 2013).

### **Summary**

By conducting a review of the literature, it was discovered that while there has been substantial research regarding social media use among college students, there was very little evidence of data being collected among community college students. It appears that some research has been conducted on the content of social media and the risks of exposure to that type

of content, the research is quite limited. The college students who are of age have grown up as “digital natives”, and the college students at NVCC are no exception. This research study will fill the gap of information, which will further contribute to the growing research regarding social media use, and focus on the effect of its quality and content on students attending the Northern Virginia Community College Loudoun Campus.

## **Chapter III**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **Introduction**

It is the purpose of the study to explore the quality and content of social media as used by Northern Virginia Community College students to determine how social media is being used and how it affects student learning. The major research question which will be addressed by this research study is: “How does the quality and content of social media affect the learning of NVCC students?” The researchers hypothesize that there is a correlation between high quality social media sites and high quality educational content on student learning.

#### **Overview of Research Design and Rationale**

This research study will use mixed-methods (a survey and an interview) to discover how NVCC students are using social media and the quality and content of the social media accessed. Quantitative data (the number of hours spent on social media) as well as qualitative data (the quality and content of the social media accessed by students) will be gathered from using both a survey and an interview. Using a survey alone would not provide this research project with enough data, so the interviews (conducted after survey collection) will help to increase the amount of data.

#### **Sampling Design**

This research project employed convenience sampling design for data collection. Convenience sampling design is a sampling technique where subjects are selected because of their convenient accessibility and proximity to the researcher. A message will be posted using Facebook to notify students that a research project regarding social media would be taking place, and by participating, subjects have the chance to win a \$25 gift card. Subjects will also be gathered from around the NVCC Loudoun campus. The research project will be explained to them and they will be asked if they would like to participate for the chance to win a \$25 gift card. All participants will be required to provide a survey, but an interview is optional.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

Subjects will be gathered from around the NVCC campus on a busy afternoon. Subjects will be asked if they would like to participate in a psychology research project studying social media, and they will be told that for their participation, they will get the chance to win a \$25 gift card. If the student agrees, one researcher will ask the student to complete the survey, explaining that the research is being conducted on social media use of NVCC students. Data will be collected by using a survey, and if the student agreed, a more in-depth interview. The entire process will only take 20 minutes maximum, so as to avoid strain or stress on the subjects. After completing the survey and the interview, subjects will be invited to provide their contact information (their school email would be least invasive) and the \$25 gift card will be awarded to a randomly selected student email address using an online randomizer tool.

### **Data Instrumentation**

A paper survey will collect the first set of data, and if the subject agrees, will be followed by a one-to-one verbal interview which will be tape recorded for accuracy of reporting the



subject's responses. The interviews will require a tape recorder, which is the only apparatus necessary.

### **Field Testing**

The field test assesses the clarity of the questions prior to the data collection to the research study. The survey instrument as well as the questions for the interview will be field tested for clarity. Based on field testing collected from 5 interviews and 5 surveys, the researchers will edit the survey instrument. In this research project, the researchers edited the survey by adding Snapchat as an option for social media, added a question regarding social media use in class, and added a question asking if the student had ever purposefully reduced the time spent on social media and the reason for the decision.

During the field testing of the interview questions, it was determined that one question was redundant, because it asked for the same information later on in the interview. This question was removed as a result of field testing.

### **Data Analysis Plan and Procedures**

The program Excel will be used to organize and tabulate the data collected from the survey. By reviewing the interviews, significant quotes will be highlighted, as well as the frequency of typical responses. Did the students use similar words to describe their use of social media? Did they give similar definitions of social media? How much time does the average student report using social media? Was there a wide range of responses, or were responses similar? By analyzing both the survey responses and the interview quotes both these queries will be addressed in our research study.

### **Limitations of the Research Design**

The openness of the subject and their responses will vary. The sample size is not large enough to be statistically significant because it would have to be a larger sample size to apply to a whole population. Subjects may not have typical responses of a NVCC students and we cannot generalize to describe NVCC students as a whole, solely based on our research. Even though the surveys and interviews were collected randomly, there were more female than male participants. This was a limitation of the research design, and in future if this research project will be recreated the researchers suggest using an equal amount of males and females involved in the study, not a convenience sample.

### **Internal and External Validity**

Part of the study will involve interviews of the subjects, in order to prevent experimental bias we will have a list of questions to ask subjects and will endeavor to ask the questions in the same manner and tone for all subjects. This will strengthen the internal validity of the research study. This research study can easily be re-created, increasing the external validity of the project.

### **Expected Findings**

Most students at NVCC are using social media for more than 4 hours each day, and are using social media for interacting with their family and friends, for non-academic purposes.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Students are aware that they can cease participation in the study at any time, students will also have the right to remain silent and leave a question unanswered. The researchers will not disclose names of participants in order to maintain subject's privacy. During the interviews, we will be tape recording to avoid error in our assessment of responses. Therefore, the study will require an informed consent form and subjects will be provided one prior to the survey. Parental

consent is necessary for subjects under 18, so we will exclude subjects who are <18 from the study.

## **Chapter IV**

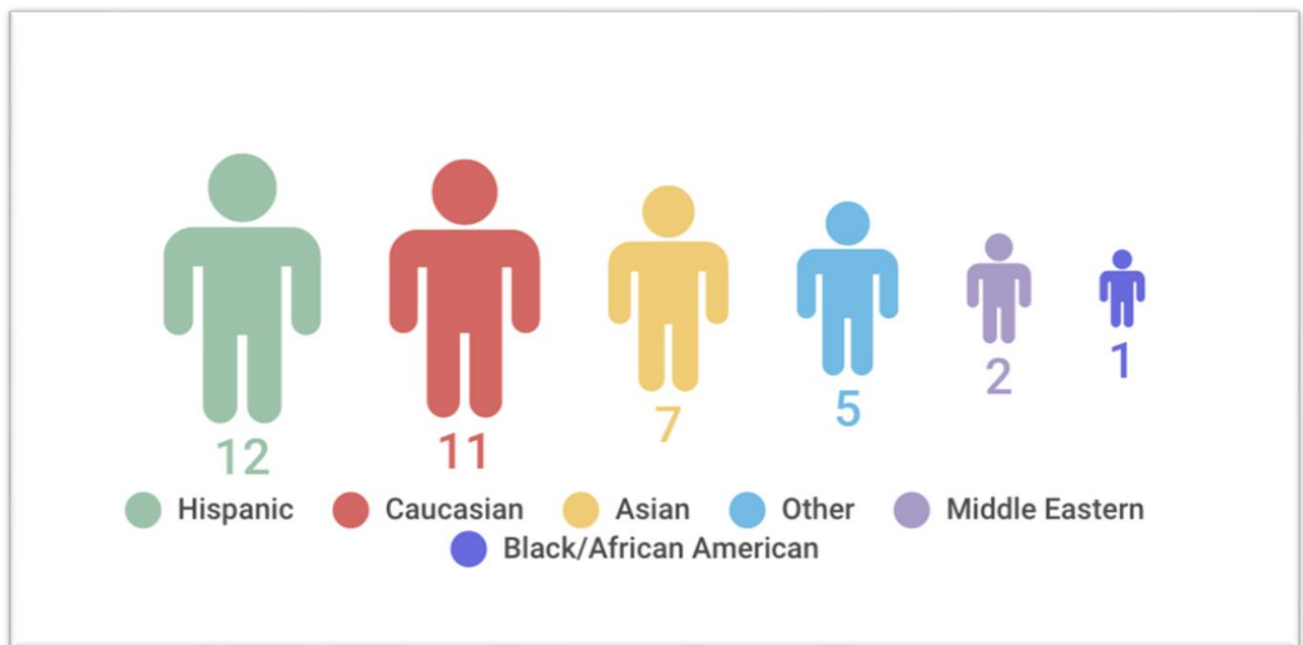
### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### **Overview of Data Analysis**

The purpose of the research study was to assess the quality and content of the social media used by NVCC students at the Loudoun Campus. The researchers hoped to measure the amount of time spent on social media, as well as the purpose for use, and the quality of social media content accessed by NVCC Loudoun students. Using the survey portion of their data collection, the researchers were able to make graphs to show how much time the average student in the study used social media, the percentage of time in which the student used social media for an academic purpose (examples such as participating in an online project collaboration were provided) and the percentage of time in which the students used social media to communicate with family or friends for a non-academic purpose. The researchers also used the survey results to discover which sites were most frequently accessed, the amount of students who were aware that NVCC uses social media, the amount of students who used NVCC social media, and whether or not NVCC students thought that social media was a distraction from school work. Students were asked if they had ever purposely reduced their time spent on social media. If the answer was affirmative, students were asked to provide a reason.

All of the data collected was placed into Excel and the researchers created the graphs and charts below, with written explanation to explain each graph or chart meaning.

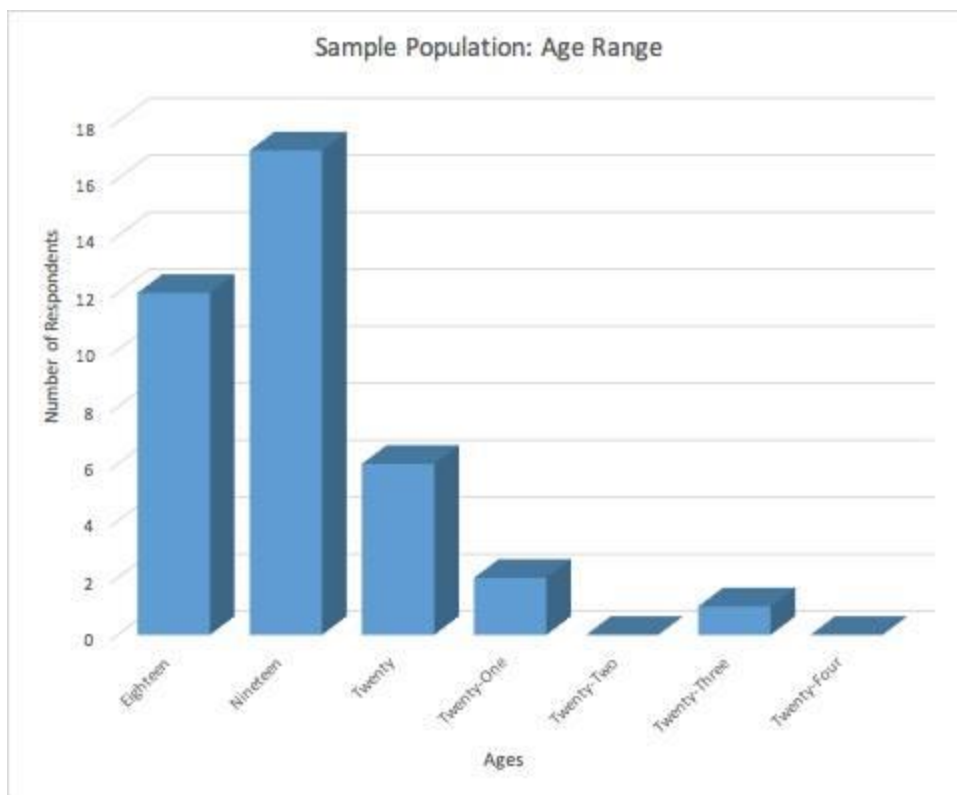
**Figure 1: Sample Population Race Demographic**



As shown by Figure 1, the sample population consisted of varying races. The most common races being either Hispanic (31.5%) or Caucasian (28.9%), followed by Asian (18.42%), Other (13.15%) Middle Eastern (5.2%). There were no Native American responses, which was not surprising due to the low percentage of Native Americans attending NVCC Loudoun (0.35%). There was a lack of Black/African American subjects (only 2.6%) and the researchers conclude that it is like this due to the fact that there is a low percentage of African American students

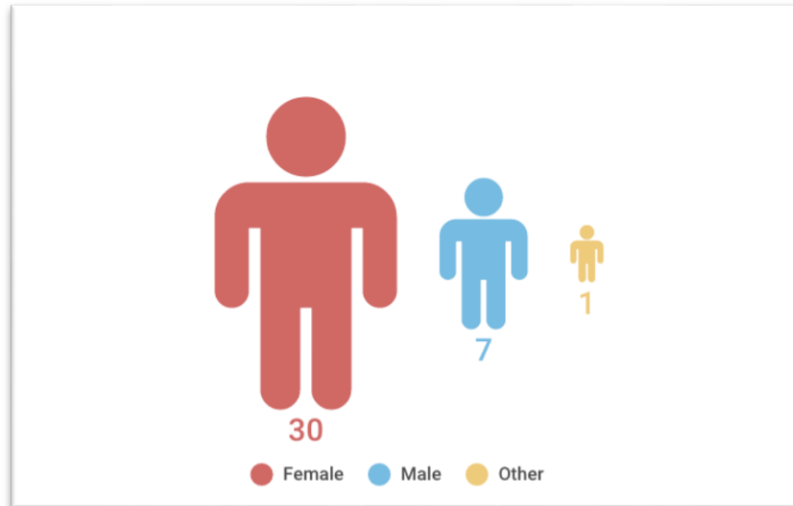
attending NVCC (17.5 % of students attending the Loudoun NVCC are African American according to the NVCC Student Demographics information published by the NOVA Office of Institutional Effectiveness and Student Success Initiatives). This was a limitation of the sampling design. If the researchers had used a stratified random sampling technique, the races could have been arranged into an equal number of subjects for each race.

**Figure 2: Sample Population Age Demographic**



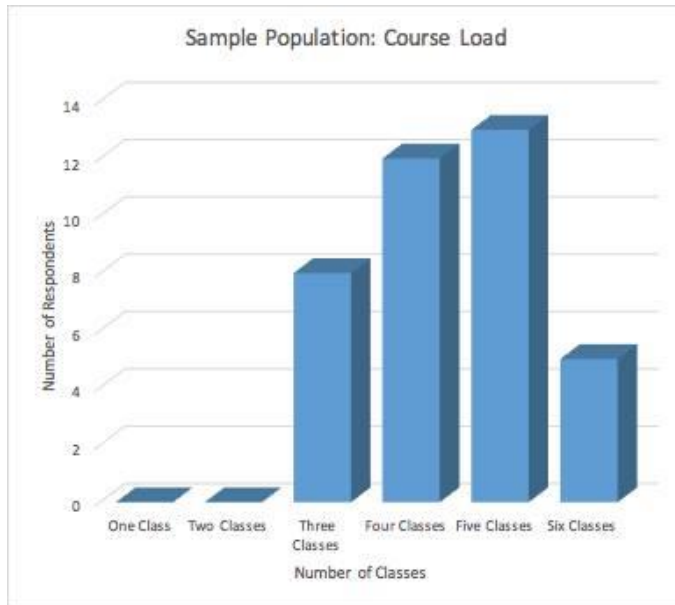
According to NVCC demographics, the most common age group attending Loudoun NVCC in Fall 2015 are students ages 18-21. This applies to the sample population used in this research study. For this research study, the sample population ages ranged from 18 to 24, 17 of the respondents being 19 (the most common age). There was one outlier being one 23 year old, the rest of the respondents fit in the common age groups of 18-21.

**Figure 3: Sample Population Gender Demographic**



The majority of the sample population in the research study was female. While it is true that females outnumber males at NVCC Loudoun (54% to 46%), the difference in the sample population was severe. This problem could have been solved had the researchers used a random stratified sampling design.

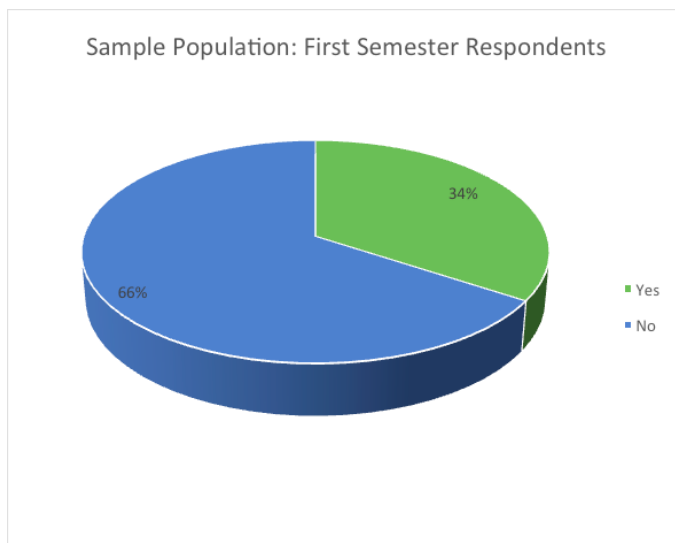
**Figure 4: Course Load**



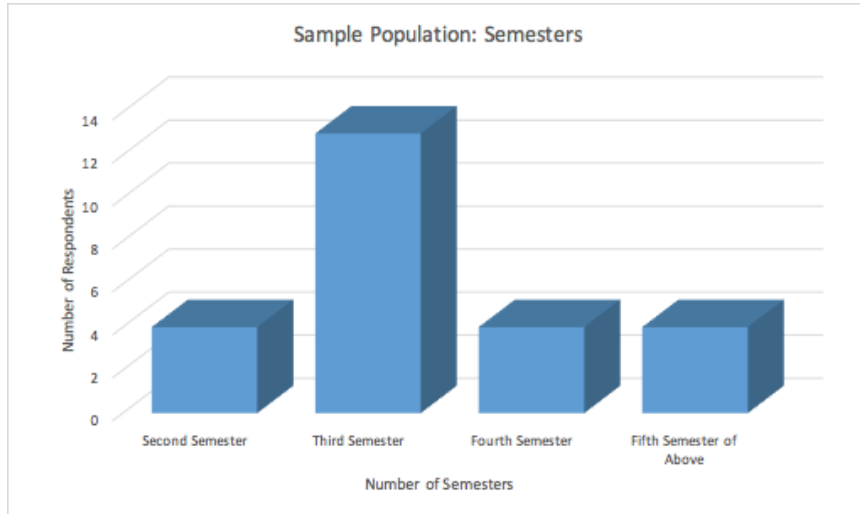
The majority of students in the sample population were taking 5 classes (34%)

13% taking 6 classes, 31% were taking 4 classes, 21% were taking 3 classes. No students in the sample population were taking fewer than three classes.

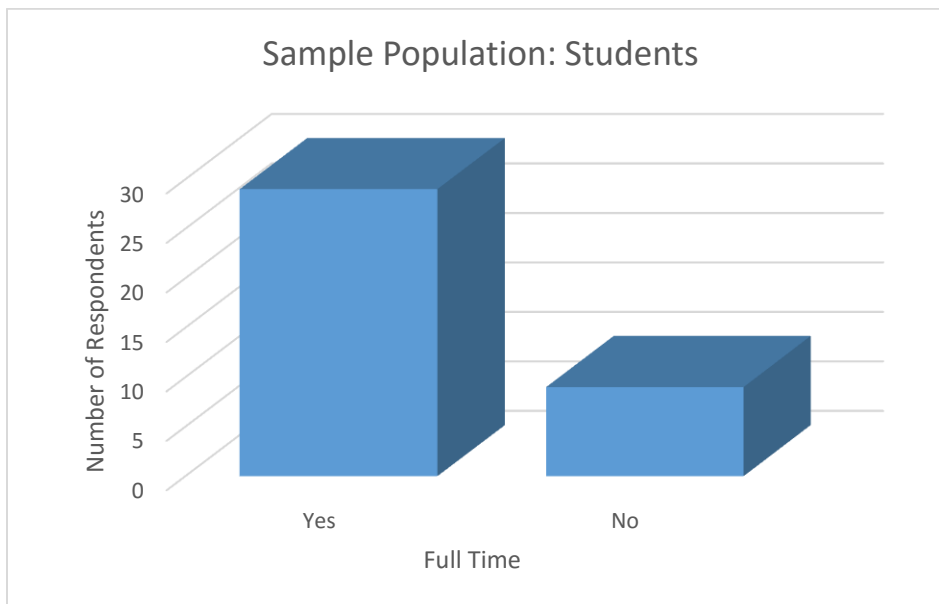
**Figure 5: First Semester Respondents**



According to Figure 5, the majority of students (66%) in the sample population were not in their first semester.

**Figure 6: Semester of Study (Excluding First Semester Students)**

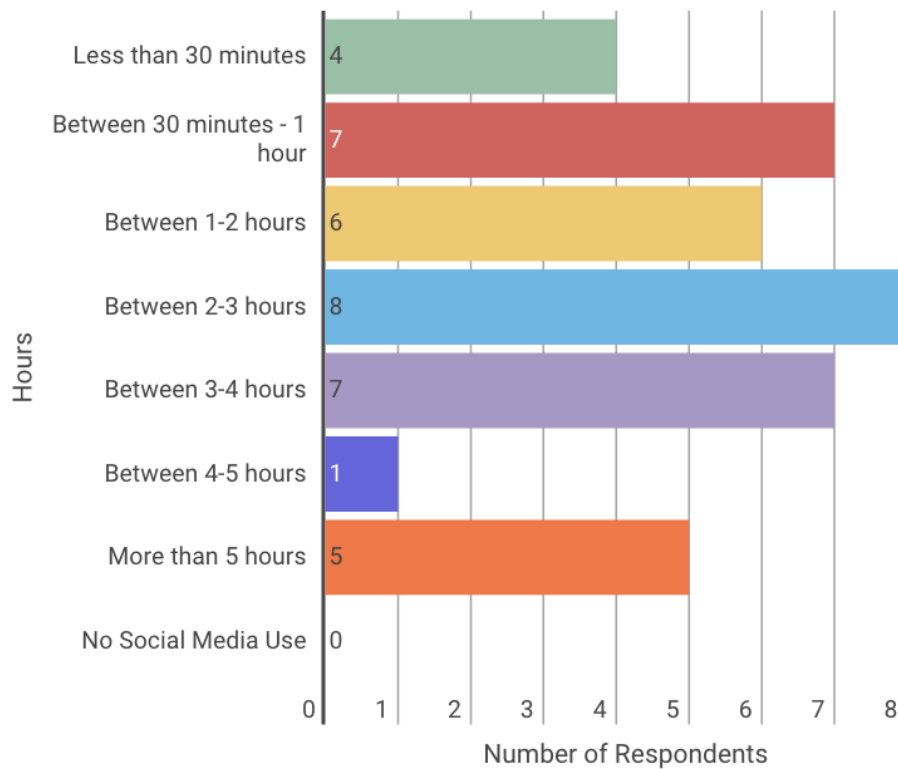
In figure 6, the bar graph illustrates that the majority of students in the sample population were in their third semester of study. 52% of students were in their third semester, with 16% in their second semester, 16% in their fourth semester, and 16% in their fifth semester or above.

**Figure 7: Part Time and Full Time Students**



The majority of the students in the sample population were full time students (76%) with only 24% part time students.

**Figure 8: Amount of Time Spent on Social Media (Average day)**



According to Figure 8, the average student at NVCC in the sample population uses social media between 2-3 hours each day.

**Figure 9: Communication Through Social Media**

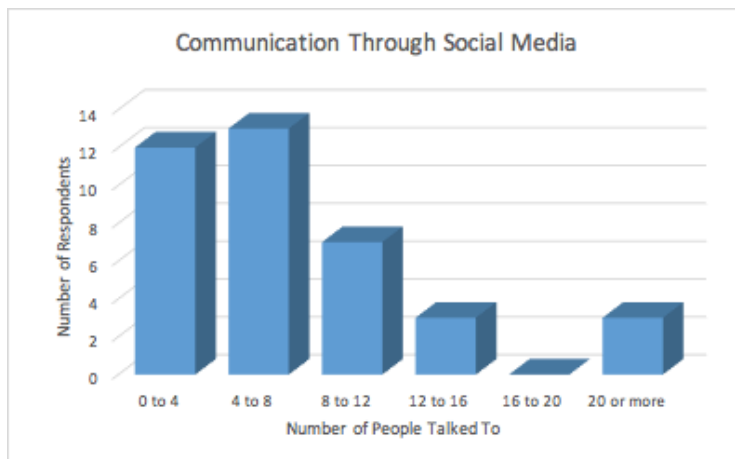
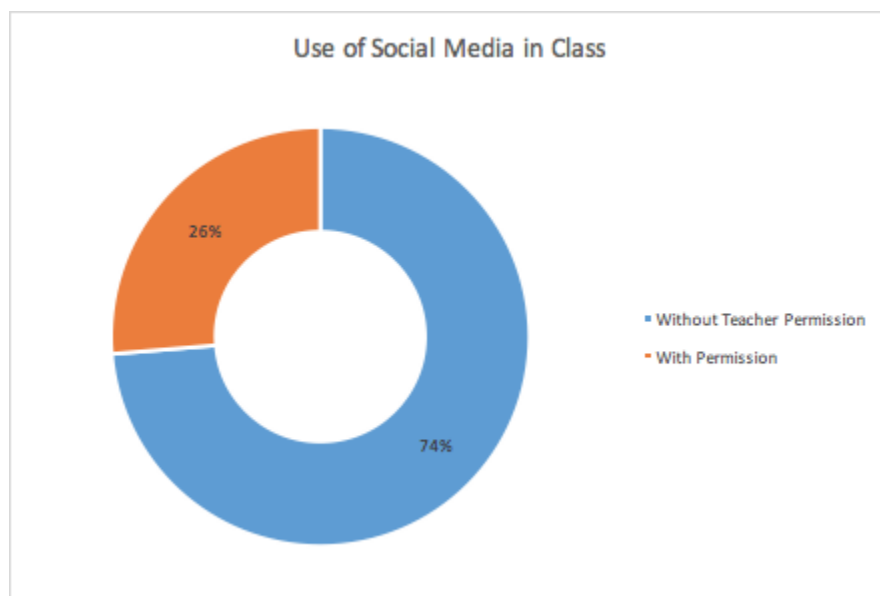


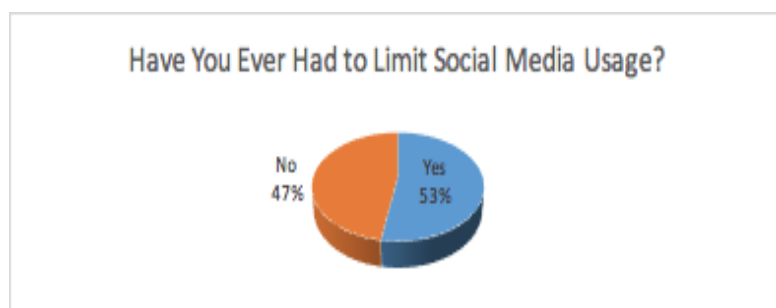
Figure 9 shows that social media is used frequently among NVCC students in communicating with their family/friends. The majority of the respondents communicating with at least 4 to 8 people via social media.

**Figure 10: Use of Social Media in Class**



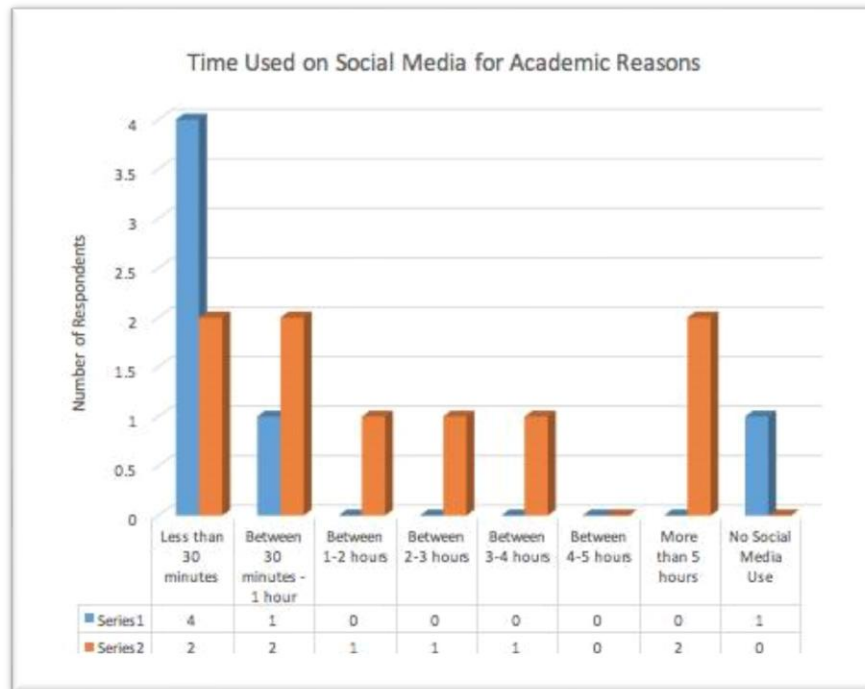
According to Figure 10, 74% of students in the sample said that they have used social media “during class for non-academic reasons, without direct permission” from their instructor. The other 26% did not use social media during class.

**Figure 11: Respondents Who Have Purposely Limited Their Social Media**



As shown above, the majority of the 38 participants have had to limit their social media usage. Some stating that “to give my eyes a break-- I was staring at the screen too much” and others saying that they had an assignment coming up and needed to focus. The majority of the respondents claimed that they limited their social media use because it was becoming a distraction.

**Figure 12: Time Used on Social Media for Academic Reasons**



**Series 1: students with a GPA of 2.5-2.9**

**Series 2: Students with a GPA of 3.7-4.0**

From Figure 12, the data shows that those who spent more time on social media for academic reasons were also the students that had a higher GPA.

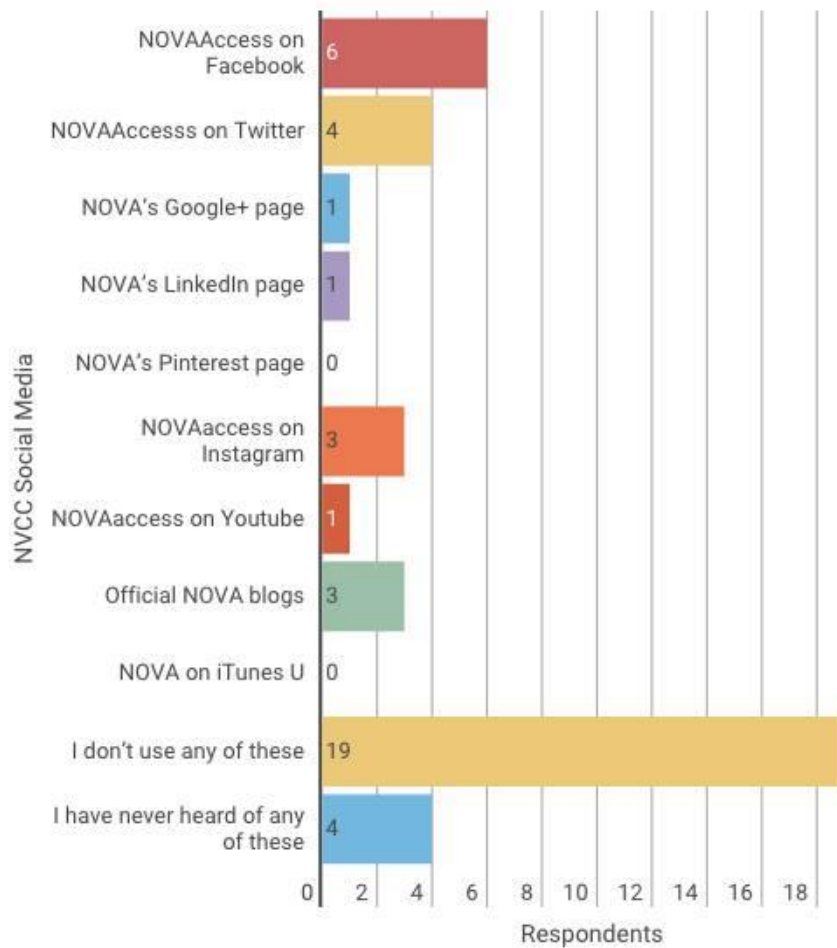
**Figure 13: Students And NVCC Social Media**

35

People are aware that NVCC uses social media

3

People are unaware that NVCC uses social media



Only 50% of students were aware that NVCC used social media, and 60% had either not used NVCC social media or were not aware of it.

**Figure 14: Frequently Used Social Media Sites**

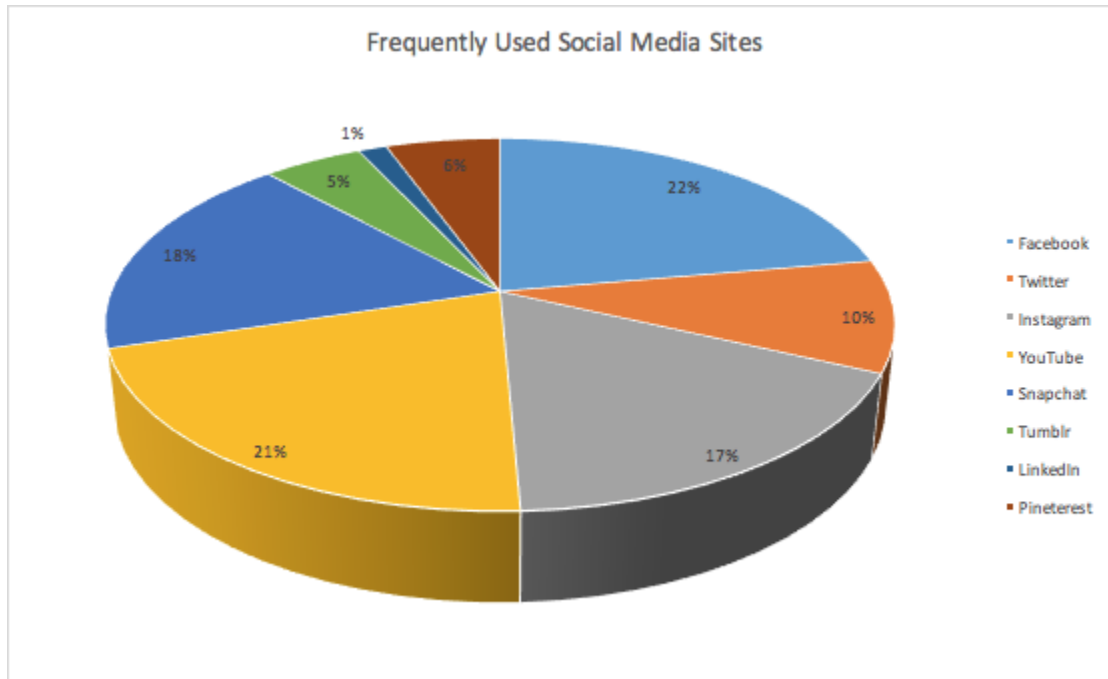


Figure 14 shows that the most used social media sites by NVCC students are as follow:

Facebook, YouTube and Snapchat. The least used social media sites are LinkedIn and Pinterest.

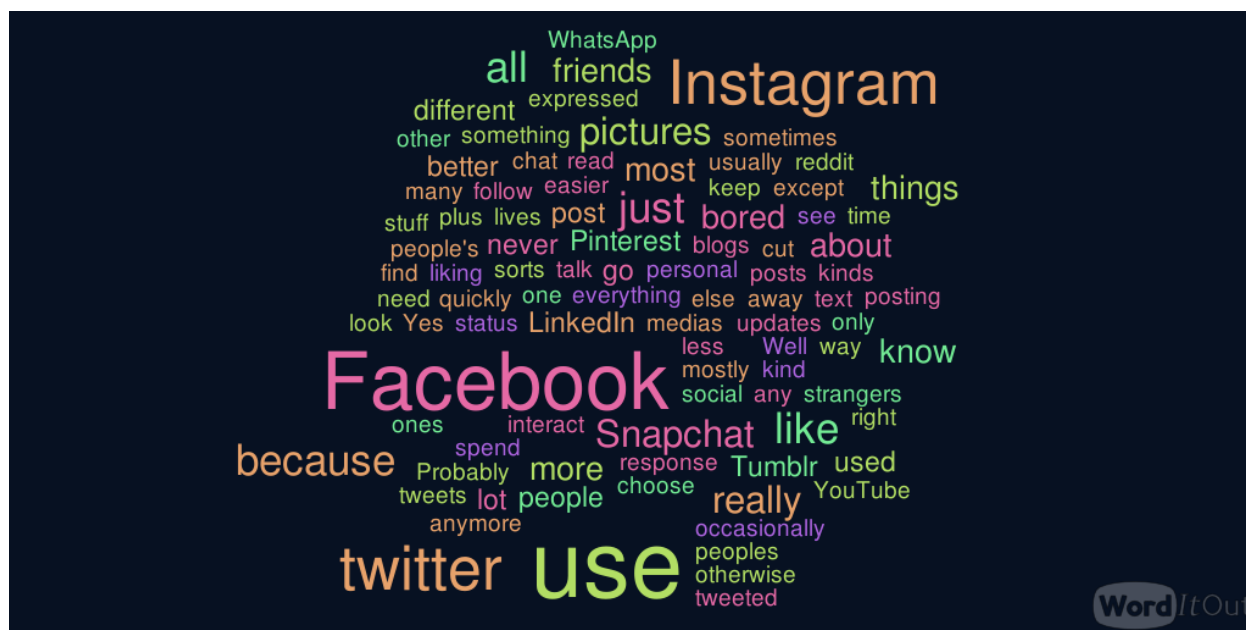
Facebook had the highest percentage of usage 22% which is to be expected as the data gathered from the Interviews showed that most of the population used Facebook to interact with others.

LinkedIn had a 1% usage which was expected because the population sample was unaware of this site. This could be due to the fact that Facebook is better known among college students.

## Interview Data







This word cloud is a visual representation of text data. The importance of each word is shown with font size. The data showed that “Facebook” and “Instagram” were the most popular social media sites used by NVCC students.

## Discussion

The hypothesis was that there is a correlation between high quality social media sites and high quality educational content on student learning. By analyzing the data, it was concluded that using NVCC affiliated social media was not directly related with having a higher GPA. However, there was a positive relationship with using social media and having a higher GPA.

There was also a positive relationship between using social media for academic reasons and GPA. The researchers compared the respondents with a self-reported GPA of 2.5-2.9 and the respondents with a self-reported GPA of 3.7-4.0 and it was discovered that the respondents with

the higher GPA reported spending more time on social media for academic purposes than the students with a lower GPA. This data helps to support the researcher's hypothesis, because it can be surmised that spending time on quality social media for academic purposes did have a positive effect on student learning, based on the GPA and the students anecdotal responses from the interviews.

This was a limitation, because learning was based on GPA alone. After data collection, the researchers concluded that in future research, learning should be based on more than GPA scores alone.

### **Limitations Discovered Post Experiment**

For the purposes of comparing gender differences and for a more equal representation of NVCC, the researchers concluded that it would have been better to have used a random stratified sampling approach. This would have ensured that there was an equal male to female ratio, and that all ethnicities were equally represented.

Learning would not have been based on GPA alone, as GPA is not an all-inclusive measure of a student learning.

### **Future Research**

The researchers recommend using a random stratified sample for future research. Also, the amount of students studied would be insufficient to make the data applicable to all NVCC students.

## **Chapter V**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Gaps in Research**

The researchers concluded post-study that it would have been beneficial to the quality of the data if random stratified sampling had been used. The issue of male to female participants, and the racial group disparities would have been improved by using random stratified sampling.

#### **Summary of Findings**

Students who use social media in an academic way had a higher GPA than those who did not. Social media is not detrimental to academics, but often social media is being used to fill up time in a non-constructive way. 74% of students in this research project answered that they use social media during class, for non-academic reasons and in a non-emergency situation. Many of the students interviewed cited boredom as the main reason for using social media during class. Most students who admitted to using social media in class said that their main activity online was scrolling through Facebook or Twitter. When asked if their social media in class was related to their class work, the majority of people said that their social media use in class is not academically constructive (unlike looking up a definition or a map to improve understanding). Social media is best when used in an academic way rather than in personal use, as supported by Figure 12. Figure 14 illustrates findings which concluded that Facebook, Instagram and Twitter were the most frequently used sites, which coincides with our data instrumentation tool that mentions these in the survey as the main sites.

#### **Implications and Recommendations for Further Study**

For further studies it is recommended that a random stratified sampling technique be used rather than a convenience sample. This would facilitate more accurate data collection, and the information would be able to be applied to a greater majority of the NVCC Loudoun campus.

## References

- Barnes, N. B. (2009). *Reaching The Wired Generation: How Social Media Is Changing College Admission*. Retrieved online.
- Boyd, D. M. and Ellison, N. B. (2007), Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13: 210–230. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393
- Bowman, Nicholas D., Akcaoglu, Mete. (2014) “I see smart people!”: Using Facebook to supplement cognitive and affective learning in the university mass lecture *The Internet and Higher Education*, Vol. 23 (October 2014), pp. 1-8.
- Davis III, C. H. F., Deil-Amen, R., Rios-Aguilar, C., & González Canché, M. S. (2014). Social Media, Higher Education, and Community Colleges: A Research Synthesis and Implications for the Study of Two-Year Institutions. *Community College Journal of Research and Practice*, 39(5), 409–422. [doi: 10.1080/10668926.2013.828665](https://doi.org/10.1080/10668926.2013.828665)
- Evans, C. (2014). Twitter for teaching: Can social media be used to enhance the process of learning?. *British Journal Of Educational Technology*, 45(5), 902-915. doi:10.1111/bjet.12099).

Gonzalez, C., (2004). *The Role of Blended Learning in the World of Technology*. Web.

Gettman, Hilary J., and Cortijo, Virginia (2015) "Leave Me and My Facebook Alone!" Understanding College Students' Relationships with Facebook and its Use for Academic Purposes", *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*: Vol. 9: No. 1, Article 8.

Jain, Anuja. Petty, Elizabeth M. Jaber, Reda M. Tackett, Sean. Purkiss, Joel. Fitzgerald, James. White, Casey. What is appropriate to post on social media? Ratings from students, faculty members and the public *Medical Education* 2014; 48: 157–169 doi:[10.1111/medu.12282](https://doi.org/10.1111/medu.12282)  
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/medu.12282>

Noor, A.-D. H. S., & Hendricks, J. A. (2012). *Social media: Usage and impact*. Lanham, Md: Lexington Books.

Siemens, George. "Connectivism: A Learning Theory for the Digital Age."  
Connectivism. December 12, 2004. Web.

Sung Youl, P., Seung-Bong, C., Keol, L., & Seung-Hwa, J. (2014). The relationship between university student learning outcomes and participation in social network services, social

acceptance and attitude towards school life. *British Journal Of Educational Technology*, 45(1), 97-111. doi:10.1111/bjet.12013

Tapscott, D., and Williams, A. (2010). Innovating the 21st century university: It's Time. *EDUCAUSE Review*, 45 (1), 17-29.

Young, S. H., & Rossmann, D. (2015). Building Library Community Through Social Media. *Information Technology & Libraries*, 34(1), 20-37.

## Appendices

### Informed Consent Statement:

It is the purpose of the study to explore the quality and content of social media as used by Northern Virginia Community College students to determine how social media is being used and how it affects student learning. The major research question which will be addressed by our research study is: "How does the quality and content of social media affect the learning of NVCC students?"

There are two parts, an interview and/or a survey. We request that all participants take part in the survey, but do not require all participants to take part in the recorded interview. The interview will be recorded by using a tape recorder. Your name will not be disclosed at any time, which is to ensure your anonymity. You have the right to halt the survey and/or interview at any time. If you provide us with your email address, you will have a chance to win a \$25 gift card. We will also send you our finished project so that you can see how the data was used.

By signing below, you are agreeing that you have read and understand the above statements.

---

Survey: Please circle or write your answer to the following information:

#### **Gender:**

Male   Female   Other

**Age:** \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Race:**

Black or African-American,   Caucasian,   Asian,   Hispanic,   Middle Eastern, Native American, Other

**How many classes are you taking this semester? (Fall 2015)** \_\_\_\_\_

**Is this your first semester?**   Y   N

**If "No", please circle what semester you are currently in:**

Second semester

Third semester

Fourth semester

Fifth semester or above

**Please circle the range that best matches your current GPA:**

4.0-3.7

3.6-3.4



3.3-3.0

2.9-2.5

2.5 or below

**Are you a full-time student (currently taking 12 or more credits) Y N**

**Are you taking NVCC classes at a campus other than Loudoun? (E.g. Reston, Manassas, Alexandria) Y N**

**If "Yes", please write the number of classes taken at a non-Loudoun campus \_\_\_\_\_**

**1. Circle the time you spend on social media on an average day**

Less than 30 minutes

Between 30 minutes- 1 hour

Between 1-2 hours

Between 2-3 hours

Between 3-4 hours

Between 4-5 hours

More than 5 hours

I don't use social media

**2. Circle any social media sites that you use frequently (at least once each week)**

Facebook

Twitter

Instagram

YouTube

Snapchat

Tumblr

LinkedIn

Pinterest

Write in any other social media site which you use: \_\_\_\_\_

I don't use social media

- 3. How often do you use social media in an academic way? (Examples include: using social media to organize and discuss a class project, exchanging academic information with classmates). Rate the frequency over 1 average week.**

Never

Less than 30 minutes

Between 30 minutes- 1 hour

Between 1-2 hours

Between 2-3 hours

Between 3-4 hours

Between 4-5 hours

More than 5 hours

- 4. How often do you use social media to interact with family and/or friends? (Examples include: Facebook messaging, tweeting, Snapchat) Rate the frequency over 1 average week**

Never

Less than 30 minutes

Between 30 minutes- 1 hour

Between 1-2 hours

Between 2-3 hours

Between 3-4 hours

Between 4-5 hours

More than 5 hours

- 5. How many people do you communicate with using social media? (Please base your answer on an average week) Please circle the number of people:**

0-4    4-8    8-12    12-16    16-20    20 or above

- 6. Have you ever used social media during class for non-academic reasons, in a non-emergency situation and without direct permission from your instructor? Y N**

- 7. Have you ever purposefully reduced the time you spend on social media? Y N**

If “Yes”, please write the reason for your decision to limit social media use:

---



---

8. Do you think that social media is a distraction from school work? Y N

9. Are you aware that NVCC uses social media? Y N

Please circle any that you have used:

NOVAaccess on Facebook

NOVAaccess on Twitter

NOVA’s Google+ page

NOVA’s LinkedIn page

NOVA’s Pinterest page

NOVAaccess on Instagram

NOVAaccess on Youtube

Official NOVA blogs

NOVA on iTunes U

I don’t use any of these

I have never heard of any of these

**\*\*OPTIONAL\*\* Please provide your email address if you would like a chance to win a \$25 gift card**

---

We will randomly select 1 participant and will contact the winner directly.

Would you like to receive our final project? Y N

(We will send you the project using the email address you provided above).

Thank you for your participation!

Comments:

Interview Questions:

**What do you consider to be social media?**

**Do you use Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat or Twitter? Do you use any other social media site? If so, please provide the name of the site.**

**Have you ever used social media during class? Was the reason for using it related to the class? How and for what purpose? Which sites do you use most while in class?**

**What is your intended social media usage at home? How and for what purpose?**

**Have you ever used social media to communicate with your classmates or professors? If so, please provide an example.**

**Do you think that social media is a distraction from school work? Why or why not?**

**Which social media platform do you have the most followers?**

**Has your use of social media changed from how you used it in high school?**