

College Students: Understanding the Use of Facebook in an Educational Context

by Rebecca Grieb

Submitted to the Faculty of Extension

University of Alberta

In partial fulfillment for the degree of

Master of Arts in Communications and Technology

August 27, 2018

COLLEGE STUDENTS:

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my Supervisor Dr. Stanley Varnhagen for his mentorship and guidance during this process. I admire your attention to detail and appreciate your support.

To the MACT cohort of 2016, it has been a wild ride of anxiety, laughter and phenomenology. I am grateful for the lifelong friendships I have made.

I would like to thank my partner Mike for his unwavering support of my career, formal education and goals. The faith and confidence that you have in me is so appreciated.

To my family—especially Mom, Dad, Katie, Steve, Glor, Don and Steve Becker—thank you for cheering me on, helping me in the final stages of my capstone and pushing me through the obstacles presented by life as I completed my degree.

To Steve Young—thank you for igniting my passion in communications, taking a chance on me very early on in my career and allowing me the opportunity to grow under *The Force*.

To Kim Denstedt—thank you for introducing me to the MACT program and inviting me to teach your IMC students. Teaching at Conestoga College has been a wonderful, rewarding experience and I appreciate your support.

Last but not least, I'd like to extend my sincere gratitude to the focus group participants and to Conestoga College. I truly love being an instructor and am grateful for the experience I have had in designing and implementing new courses. Teaching allows me to combine my passion for digital marketing with helping others to learn and grow. I am excited to apply some of the learnings from this case study in my own classrooms and instructional plans.

COLLEGE STUDENTS:

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Disclaimer

The following case study was prepared by Rebecca Grieb for the partial fulfillment of a Master of Arts in Communication and Technology degree. The findings and conclusions from this study are the author's alone and do not represent the views of Conestoga College.

COLLEGE STUDENTS:

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
A CAREER IN A DIGITAL WORLD	1
THE DECISION TO PURSUE THE MACT DEGREE	2
PREPARING FOR CLASSROOMS OF THE FUTURE	3
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW	5
SCOPE	5
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS	7
USES AND GRATIFICATIONS THEORY	8
VARIATION THEORY	9
SOCIAL MEDIA INTEGRATION THEORY	10
PROCESS	10
THEMES	11
THEME 1: COLLABORATION	11
THEME 2: DISTANCE EDUCATION	14
THEME 3: SELF-REGULATED LEARNING	15
THEME 4: KNOWLEDGE BUILDING	17

COLLEGE STUDENTS: UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	
SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS	19
THE NEED FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION	22
RESEARCH STUDY	23
<u>CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODOLOGY</u>	<u>26</u>
INTRODUCTION	26
DESIGN	27
FOCUS GROUP STRUCTURE	31
INCLUSION CRITERIA	33
SETTING	33
PROCEDURE AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	33
DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION	34
<u>CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS</u>	<u>36</u>
DEFINING COLLABORATION.	36
FACEBOOK TOOLS	37
FACEBOOK GROUPS.	37
FACEBOOK MESSENGER.	40
FACEBOOK USE CASES	42

COLLEGE STUDENTS:	
UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT	
SHARING INFORMATION.	42
IMPROVED COMMUNICATION.	44
WORKING TOGETHER.	46
FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL SETTING.	47
<u>CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION</u>	<u>50</u>
COLLABORATION.	50
WORKING TOGETHER VERSUS PREPARING TO WORK TOGETHER.	53
TEST PREPARATION AND ASSIGNMENTS.	55
INSTRUCTOR OFFICE HOURS.	56
FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT.	58
FACEBOOK FOR FLIPPED CLASSROOM COLLABORATION.	60
FLIPPED CLASSROOM USE CASES	61
RESEARCH EFFECTIVENESS	63
THEORY	63
THE METHOD	64
FUTURE RESEARCH AND CONCLUSION	65
<u>REFERENCES</u>	<u>68</u>

COLLEGE STUDENTS:

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

APPENDIX A: FOCUS GROUP QUESTION GUIDE **77**

APPENDIX B: INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM **78**

APPENDIX C: TRANSCRIPTS **81**

GROUP A **81**

GROUP B **131**

COLLEGE STUDENTS:

UNDERSTANDING THE USE OF FACEBOOK IN AN EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT

Abstract

Social media has the potential to disrupt the educational landscape and also has the potential to change the way students learn and behave. As such, increased use and changes in social media will enable instructors to change how they structure their classrooms and teachings. Some current research examines how some instructors are using social media to facilitate collaboration in some of their courses, but we know little of how students use social media to collaborate in an educational setting. This paper presents a case study focusing on Facebook as the social media platform of choice. This research study aimed to answer the question, *How are postgraduate college students using Facebook for collaboration in an educational context?* This exploratory research study conducted two focus groups with postgraduate students from Conestoga College in Ontario, Canada. Key findings from the study suggest that participant postgraduate students use Facebook Groups and Facebook Messenger for information sharing, ease of communication and working together. Furthermore, findings from this case study appeared consistent with the literature examined, including the definition of collaboration and the role social media plays in collaboration. Also, participants provided details around how they, as students, specifically use Facebook to share information, work together and communicate. This study suggests that postgraduate students are using Facebook in an educational context to collaborate for groupwork and in the courses in general. One area this research notes where additional research could be warranted is to examine more closely how instructors use Facebook in an educational context.

Chapter 1: Introduction

A Career in a Digital World

In 2008 I started working in the field of communications. I quickly took on managing the social media accounts for various brands—technology companies, restaurants and small businesses—and grew fascinated with how social media platforms including Facebook connected people and became a tool that they used to communicate. Specifically, I was interested in how these organizations and brands used social media to communicate with consumers. I grew curious to understand how social media was used by individuals to share information and how what was once an in-person conversation was being transferred to platforms in the online world. In 2012 I won a “Top 30 Under 30” award and was recognized for my work in digital marketing and public relations. My curious nature was on fire and my desire to understand how social media platforms were being used hit a peak. From about 2012 onward I started watching social media emerge as a tool for businesses to use in communication with customers and as a platform for these various brands to use in sharing information with online audiences. A decade later I now specialize in digital marketing and public relations. I have watched social media platforms experience explosive growth becoming a part of the everyday personal lives of individuals, especially young people. Fast forward to 2015 when I started working as a part-time instructor at Conestoga College, a community-college in Ontario offering 1-year to 4-year, certificate and diploma, full-time and part-time programs to both young adults and mature students. Established in 1967 Conestoga College is a leader in polytechnic education serving approximately 13,000 full-time students and attracting more than 38,000 enrollments in continuing education programs (Conestoga College, 2018).

I originally was introduced to the college as a guest speaker, invited to give a talk on digital marketing to a class of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) postgraduate students. The talk was a success and I was asked to design a 'Digital Tools and Analytics' course to be implemented the following fall. I started teaching part-time as a digital marketing instructor in the School of Media and Design, teaching postgraduate students all about digital marketing platforms and strategy. The students I teach in this program already have a university undergraduate degree and typically are coming back to school to complete the eight-month program to grow their skill sets, hoping to better prepare themselves for the workplace. I immediately grew fascinated with how students were using social media beyond their personal lives, in their courses. A big part of the IMC program is groupwork. As an instructor I witnessed students initiating the use of various social media platforms to communicate with one another in and out of the classroom, and I knew that I wanted to explore this subject more.

The Decision to Pursue the MACT Degree

In 2016 I started the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology (MACT) program at the University of Alberta. What first connected me to the Program Coordinator at Conestoga College was my interest in pursuing the MACT degree. I noticed on LinkedIn that the Program Coordinator took the MACT program and I reached out to learn more about her experience as a graduate of the program and her background in teaching. The MACT program is part-time and is designed for professionals working in the field of communications and technology. It is a mostly distance education/online program that has an intense three-week institute during each of the first two years where two in-class courses are taken each institute. The remaining courses are taken online. To complete the degree each student must complete a capstone research project, which often includes applying their learnings to a topic related to their

career. I knew I wanted to research how social media was being used by students in an educational setting.

Thus, I decided to pursue a research study that would have the potential to help better understand social media in instruction and course delivery. I wanted to explore Facebook specifically as I use Facebook both for professional and personal use and see it as a robust platform. I also knew Facebook was a social media platform that had been around for a decade and I was confident that it was robust enough with many internal tools to support further exploration of how students use it in their courses for groupwork.

Preparing for Classrooms of the Future

In March 2016 I watched a TEDx Talk by Harry Dyer titled *Incorporating & accounting for Social Media in Education* (2016) in which he discusses how we live in a world where young people are often encouraged to disconnect from technology. In the talk he suggests that the study of social media can help us to better understand how young people interact both online and offline. Dyer also discusses how this younger generation is able to navigate social media with ease and suggests that there is a space for social media to live in classrooms of the future. In this TEDx Talk, Dyer encourages listeners to accept social media as a part of the world we now live in and predicts that if we can better understand social media and the relationship that young people have with it, we can incorporate social media into educational contexts (2016).

Years after watching Dyer's TEDx Talk I continued to teach at Conestoga College and my curiosity about how students were using social media in the classroom grew. I hoped that as a digital marketing instructor I would be able to incorporate the platforms and tools I teach about into my classroom lessons and communication processes.

I hope that by conducting this research study I will become more confident in the potential for social media, such as Facebook, to be involved in the student-to-student and student-to-instructor process of groupwork and collaboration.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

It can be argued that technology is disrupting the educational landscape and has the potential to change and improve the way students learn and behave. One of these technologies is the emergence of social media. As such, these disruptions could continue to challenge educational institutions and instructors to learn more about social media platforms which could potentially contribute to moving the field of education forward. The current literature demonstrates an understanding of how instructors are using social media and *why* students are using social media for educational purposes. Individuals generally use social media platforms to communicate with friends, but we do not know *how* students specifically use these platforms for educational purposes. Much of the current literature involves research focusing primarily on Twitter and Facebook, as these social platforms are the most widely used social media platforms by students (Smith & Anderson 2018). Current literature also focuses primarily on undergraduate university students as the population of interest.

This literature review looks at research describing the use of social media by students in an educational context. It then examines themes found within this scope and the theoretical frameworks that have guided the research. Lastly, this literature review has led to the identification of research questions which will guide this study.

Scope

Social media platforms such as Facebook are often perceived only as spaces purely used for social interaction; however, these platforms have evolved and so have the ways in which students are using them (Lampe 2011). The introduction of social media platforms and the Web 2.0 can lead to a potential change in the educational landscape. The Web 2.0 refers to a collective

term for applications of the internet which focus on interactive sharing and participatory collaboration rather than simple content delivery (BusinessDictionary 2018). However, there is a need to understand how students use social media in an educational environment as this is important for moving the field of education forward. Students have access to more online materials than ever before and those working in the field of education are being forced—at the very least—to consider these new potential resources. Two million students are enrolled in Canadian colleges and universities every year (Canada, G. O. 2016). Social media platforms are changing how students communicate and have the potential to change how they learn (Akcaoglu & Bowman 2016). With this emerging among many students at the postsecondary and postgraduate level, the need to understand how students are using social media platforms is becoming more apparent. The review of literature below looks at how social media is being used by students in an educational environment. Furthermore, this literature review will seek to understand how students use social media for groupwork. Groupwork is often a component of many college diploma and certificate programs and understanding how students use social media in this context is important. There are also potential positive outcomes that can emerge out of groupwork. One example of this was found in the work conducted by Bosman (2011) who discussed how individuals learn faster and in much greater depth in groups. Bosman's study suggests there is a potential to use groupwork as a means to help students learn and also poses an additional question with exploring: *how can social media tools be used to enhance groupwork?* Beyond learning outcomes, a review of the literature has led to the identification of four areas in which much of the literature on how social media is being used by students in an educational setting. The first of these is collaboration (Bosman L. & Zagenczyk T. 2011; Barnes 2014), when two or more people achieve a goal by working together (Martinez-Moyano 2006). The second is

distance education (Brady, K. P., Holcomb, L. B., & Smith, B. V. 2010) which describes “a way of learning remotely without being in regular face-to-face contact with a teacher in the classroom” (Midgley 2018). Self-regulated learning (Matzat & Vrieling 2016) is the third category and is defined as “the means by which students are able to independently monitor, adapt, and evaluate their learning” (Dinsmore & Parkinson 2018). The fourth area that student’s use of social media in an educational context can be segmented into is knowledge building (Barnes et al. 2007). This is defined as “a communal activity in which learners come together to pose questions, posit theories, and to revisit, negotiate, and refine their ideas” (Program Department 2018).

The researcher is interested in examining the role of groupwork as it is also well suited to the use of social media platforms (Barnes 2014). Bacon (2009) describes a concept of *collaboration-driven ethos* in which a group of people use online communities as a way to work together and commit to a common goal. The author describes this concept specifically in the context of online communities, explaining that online networks allow groups of individuals the opportunity to collaborate. Groupwork is a topic well-suited to the use of social media platforms as the intended purpose of using social media is to communicate with other individuals in either small or large groups.

Theoretical Frameworks

It is important to first understand the theories behind how individuals use media, learn and share information—elements of groupwork. A scan of the literature proved challenging in finding relevant research on student-led behaviours with social media. However, the academic discourse around the topic of student’s use of social media includes a diverse range of theories. One example is by Elliston, Steinfield & Lampe (2007) who examined the relationship between

Facebook use and the development and maintenance of social capital. The researchers viewed their topic through the lens understanding how social tools enhance social status. The study by Elliston et al. further emphasizes the importance of viewing a research study through a theoretical lens to help make better sense of the topic at hand. In regard to student's use of social media in an educational context, three relevant theories were noted and therefore will be examined in the following sections.

Uses and Gratifications Theory

Before analyzing how social media is used in an educational context, it is helpful to review a theory that discusses the use of media in general. Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT) is an approach to understanding why and how people actively seek out specific media to satisfy particular needs (Levy & Windahl 1985). One study that aimed to uncover why individuals use social media platforms and what uses of these tools satisfy specific needs was conducted by Raacke and Bonds-Raacke (2008). The researchers discovered that students were using social media primarily to keep in touch with one another and to make friends, which is consistent with Uses and Gratifications Theory because this theory concludes that there are many uses of social media that satisfy particular needs in individuals. Although this theory was developed when most media were not two-way, it is relevant to the study of how students use social media because the theory also strives to answer the questions "what does media do to people?" and "what do people do with media?"—focusing on the latter. This leads to the questions *what do students do with social media?* and *what does social media do for students?* This theory fits with the exploration of how social media platforms are used because it seeks to uncover how individuals use media and for what purpose. This theory will serve in the exploration of how students use social media in an educational context for groupwork and two-way communication. It assumes that audience

members are not passive consumers of media but instead, the audience has power over their media consumption and assumes an active role in interpreting and integrating media into their own lives (David 2016). Emphasis on the audience not as passive—not participating directly through the use of these tools—consumers of media but instead, as actively playing a role in the consumption of media further demonstrates a need to explore how students are using social media in an educational context.

Variation Theory

Oliver & Trigwell (2005) discuss Variation Theory—a theory of learning—which suggests, "for learning to occur, variation must be experienced by the learner. Without variation, there is no discernment and without discernment, there is no learning" (p. 22). Simply put we, as individuals, do not know what we do not know—we learn through being exposed to media tools. The authors suggest that exposing students to a variety of media in class can add variation to their learning styles and the process of absorbing and sharing information. An interesting question to consider based on Variation Theory is: *how does social media help students to absorb and share information?* Furthermore, Oliver & Trigwell's research also suggests that new technologies may bring about new patterns of variation not possible previously which "may make it easier to help students experience the variation in the critical aspects of the topic being learnt" (p.23). This is something to consider when discussing student's use of social media as it brings up the question of whether social media can help students to learn. Additionally, this theory is particularly useful when trying to understand if students are using social media as part of their learning processes.

Social Media Integration Theory

Another paradigm is proposed by Garcia (2015) and focuses on information sharing and social media; it is called Social Media Integration Theory. This theory accounts for the “exposure, feedback, engagement (connecting) and exchange (sharing)” of information that social media platforms provide, creating significant changes for the traditional landscape of communication. This theory views the flow of information not as one-way but rather as an interactive process that enables same-level information exchange among the audience. Furthermore, this theory suggests that social media platforms allow interaction from person to person to flow and become organic. This theoretical lens is an important one to the topic of student’s use of social media as it helps to understand how individuals exchange information. Through this lens the communication process is viewed as two-way in which users share information and engage in dialogue. Looking at the topic of students use of social media platforms through this lens is important because this theory emphasizes that communication is no longer one-way. Through the lens of Social Media Integration Theory, other questions are presented regarding student use of social media: *how do students use social media in a self-directed manner? What needs, processes or practices are occurring through the use of these social networks in an educational setting?*

Process

The theories above will help to provide a lens for looking at perceived student behaviours with social media in this study. Specifically, these theories will help in understanding how using Facebook in an educational context could potentially satisfy a particular need that students have. They also could potentially be useful in examining the process of two-way information

exchange, and lastly could provide insight to the potential ways in which Facebook can be used to contribute to the process of absorbing and sharing information.

An overall goal of this literature review was to gain an understanding of how social media is used in an educational context. The process of evaluating literature included developing a source assessment tool to evaluate the literature in the following areas: peer reviewed, research population, effectiveness of methodology, possible biases, data gathering methods, and year of publication. These criteria were developed based on the researcher wanting to pull literature that was mostly from the last decade, applicable to the area of interest and to also ensure a broad scope of research was pulled on students at the postsecondary level.

Four themes emerged from reviewing the literature on how students use social media: collaboration, distance education, self-regulated learning and knowledge building. The following sections will dive deeper into these themes.

Themes

Theme 1: Collaboration

The first theme that emerged out the literature review looking at student's use of social media was collaboration. The Web 2.0 movement has the potential for changing communication, collaboration and engagement in traditional classroom structures (Blankenship 2011). Social media also has the potential to act as a connector for students, teachers and learning materials, providing opportunities for collaboration. Authors including Barnes (2014) describe how to encourage cooperation and collaboration beyond the classroom walls, suggesting that technologies like social media can assist with content curation and critical thought.

Blankenship (2011) conducted a survey with college and university faculty to understand how faculty use social media in their teaching. Results revealed that more than 80% use social media in some capacity and more than 50% use these social platforms in some way as part of their teaching. He also describes five interconnected "literacies" of social media: (1) attention; (2) participation; (3) collaboration; (4) network awareness; and (5) critical consumption. Referencing the work of Howard Rheingold (2008), Blankenship notes the concept of a "social media classroom" and the benefits to students: "...greater engagement, greater interest, students taking more control and responsibility for their education" (p. 40, 2011). Blankenship supports his claims on collaboration, further citing the works of Rheingold:

...online communities are designed to thrive via collaboration . . . Wikipedia, for instance, is a website that doesn't work unless its collective members know how to embrace each other's contributions, and users need to become literate in the skills of collaboration, both online and in the actual world (p. 42).

Although Rheingold and Blankenship provide insight into how collaboration can be achieved with the use of social media tools and what potential barriers are involved, this research does not specifically examine social media tools in an educational setting. However, this study does pose the question: *how are students using social media in the context of a properly implemented 'social media classroom' setting?*

Bosman (2011) examined collective learning—also called collaborative learning ("What is Collaborative Learning?" 1997)—in her research. The author discusses how individuals learn faster and in much greater depth in groups, stating that social media is an enabler for collective/collaborative learning in a teaching/learning environment. The author illustrates a model that leverages the integrated use of social media technologies to support this. She

concludes that various challenges encountered in collective learning—planning, structuring, managing and evaluating—can be addressed with the help of social media technologies. This is a theoretical model of how students use the tools and could be leveraged as a starting point for further research. Bosman's work also supports further research in the context of how students use social media in an educational context.

A similar approach was taken by Gikas & Grant (2013) while exploring teaching and learning in higher education through the implementation of social media technologies. The researchers found that the use of mobile devices and social media platforms created opportunities for interaction and collaboration while allowing students to engage in content creation and communication (p. 33). Although a relevant study to understanding student's use of social media, further exploration on *how* students are using social media tools could contribute to the literature on the topic at hand.

Other variables identified under the theme of collaboration include the exploration of content and ideas, and increased levels of student engagement. Hentges (2016) argued that platforms like Facebook, Twitter and Instagram give students new spaces to explore and connect with other students and ideas. Furthermore, Welch & Bonnan-White (2012) explored whether the use of Twitter in a large-lecture format university course produced a difference in levels of self-reported student engagement. Although these research studies were conducted years apart and focused on different social platforms the conclusions drawn were consistent. As noted by the authors, while research from previous literature suggested a positive correlation between student engagement and Twitter use, there were no other differences worth noting. This study by Welch and Bonnan-White also noted that the level of familiarity students had with a social media platform has a direct correlation with how well they used it for engagement. The findings also

pose the question: *how do students engage using social media?* Much of the recent research has centered mostly around the platform Twitter and the use of social media as directed by an instructor. More research on student-led social media behaviours could contribute to the literature on the topic at hand.

Theme 2: Distance Education

With its online functionality and capabilities social media can be used in almost any physical space, thus making it a potential fit with theme two, distance education. Faculty at the college and university level are beginning to combine distance education delivery with social networking sites (SNSs) more in their teaching now than ever before (Brady et al., 2010). A research study conducted by Brady, Holcomb, & Smith (2010) involved surveying graduate students enrolled in distance education courses to understand their attitudes toward SNSs as productive online tools for teaching and learning. The results of the study suggest that education-based SNSs can be used effectively in distance education courses as a method for improving communication in the online space. This study also concluded that social networking platforms can be used to improve communication. The growing use of social media platforms by university and college students was also studied by Brook & Oliver (2003) when social media platforms were first starting to emerge. The authors noted the various challenges instructors are now facing when it comes to delivering distance education courses as student-to-instructor interaction is not face-to-face. In this study graduate students enrolled in distance education courses were surveyed on their attitudes toward Ning in Education, an education-based SNS used for online teaching and learning. The results of the study suggested that education-based social networking sites can be used most effectively in distance education as a means for improving communication between students.

A pioneer in the field, Howard Rheingold (2008) raises the subject of participatory media literacy—media tools that support social interaction, participation and communication (p. 99)—as a requirement for students using digital media. Furthermore, Rheingold discusses the concept of a ‘Social Media Virtual Classroom’ in which “students use multiple online media in their exploration of the syllabus texts” (Rheingold 2008) and video blogs for instruction and real-world examples. The author states,

...although a willingness to learn new media through point-and-click exploration might come naturally to today's student cohort, there is nothing innate about knowing how to apply those acquired skills to the processes of civil society, scientific or scholarly innovation, or economic production (p. 26).

Rheingold also shares that a successfully implemented Social Media Virtual Classroom can prepare students to participate in society as engaged and empowered citizens. Research on the theme of distance education poses the question: *do students work better or communicate better in groups through the use of social media?* The theme of distance education also brings up the question of learning new tools – *how do students learn to use social media for groupwork?*

Theme 3: Self-Regulated Learning

The third theme found in the literature of student’s use of social media is self-regulated learning. Akcaoglu & Bowman (2016) and Matzat & Vrieling (2016) conducted research studies related to self-regulated learning defining this concept as a cyclical process, wherein the student plans for a task, monitors their performance and then reflects on the outcome (National Science Foundation 2017). The researchers had both different research questions and outcomes in their studies. Akcaoglu and Bowman conducted open and closed-ended surveys with university

students to understand the impact of in-class Facebook use on learning. Results of instructor-guided Facebook usage in the classroom suggested that there is a relationship between technology and student's cognitive and affective learning. Further analysis of the data revealed that students participating in a class Facebook group reported more interest in and perceived more value in course content, felt closer to the course and viewed their instructors as having more involvement overall. Furthermore, Akcaoglu and Bowman's research revealed that participating in a Facebook Group could potentially enhance self-regulated learning among students. Matzat and Vrieling (2016) studied classroom social media use of secondary school teachers with a goal of uncovering how social media contributes to self-regulated learning. Results showed that teachers apply the use social media for information sharing with students outside of the class and often for teaching within the class. This study provides a good foundation for how students can use social media for self-regulated learning and further poses the question: *how do students use social media to plan for a task and monitor performance?*

Dabbagh (2011) discussed Personal Learning Environments (PLEs) as “an outcome of the tools that social media has provided learners enabling them to create, organize and share content” (p. 3). The author discusses the use of PLEs in higher education in which social media tools allow students to gain competence or knowledge. The connection from personal learning environments to self-regulated learning is also established in this study as the authors suggests that social media allows learners to create and manage their own content. Self-regulated learning is defined by the author as “a student's ability to independently and proactively engage in self-motivating and behavioral processes that increase goal attainment” (p. 5). To assist instructors in developing student self-regulation skills in the creation of PLEs, a framework for social media use was developed based on the levels of interactivity that social media tools enable. These

levels of interactivity are: personal information management; social interaction and collaboration; and information aggregation and management. The study concluded that a personal learning environment can be taken on by a student but the challenge of training students on how to effectively use these social tools still remains. Furthermore, the theme of self-regulated learning poses the question: *does using social media allow students more autonomy in groupwork?*

Theme 4: Knowledge Building

The fourth theme identified in a review of the literature on student's use of social media is knowledge building. In their research Barnes et al. (2007) stress the importance of addressing a new generation of learners. The authors discuss how educators have a lot to learn about new technologies, and how technology can be directed at the new habits and learning experience of their students. They conclude with a recommendation for educators to change the ways in which how students learn:

Educators should continue to find ways to exploit the skills students develop outside of class without accommodating the habits of instant gratification and shallow thinking. To be human is to learn, and we learn from good teachers (p.6, 2007).

This point made by Barnes et al. reminds educators that social media platforms—tools which often come naturally to most students today—could potentially be a tool to enhance student learning.

Elavsky (2011) also explored how social media and technology can be used to enhance the process of learning in higher education. In this study Twitter was considered as a potential tool for use in teaching and instruction. The research showed no evidence of impact on anything

in an educational context including learning, relationship building, student engagement or class attendance (Elavsky 2011).

In a similar study by Fox and Varadarajan (2011), the research focused on assessing the effectiveness of using Twitter to encourage interaction between faculty members and students. Students in this study were required to tweet a minimum of ten times throughout several classes and were then given a survey to express if they felt an increase in anything class-related through the use of Twitter. Similar to Elavsky's 2011 study, Fox and Varadarajan (2011) concluded that 71% of students indicated that Twitter was distracting, 69% believed it prevented note taking, and more than 80% of students indicated that it facilitated class participation and allowed an opportunity to voice opinions. No conclusions were drawn as to whether or not Twitter was seen as a knowledge enhancing tool. As a result of the conclusions drawn the recommendation given by the researchers was that educators and instructors looking to use Twitter in their course materials and teaching must balance the positive uses of the platform with the negative interferences it offers.

A study by Lockyer and Patterson (2008) identified and observed five stages of knowledge in the context of social media and online communities: sharing/comparing, dissonance; negotiation/co-construction; testing tentative constructions; and statement/application of newly-constructed knowledge. Twelve students were observed over a thirteen-week semester; the class was delivered fully online and students had the option to attend one face-to-face meeting halfway through. The social media platform Flickr along with other unmentioned online communities were used to facilitate live chats and discussion forums. The study concluded that students felt more deeply engaged using Flickr but did not necessarily feel that their knowledge or learning was enhanced.

Another author who looked at social media use for knowledge building was Moody (2010), who did not conduct original research but rather wrote an article providing tips for using Twitter for teaching. The author discusses the benefits of integrating social media into classrooms with a focus on finding information with ease and having real-time conversations with other students. The use of social media platforms for knowledge building also poses the question: *do the use of social media platforms enhance the process of student learning?* An additional question this theme poses is: *does the use of social media help students to learn in a group setting?*

Social Media Tools

A considerable amount of research found in the review of literature on the topic of student's use of social media has been on the use of Twitter (Welch & Bonnan-White 2012; Brook & Oliver 2003; Hentges 2016). A significant number of these studies have also taken the form of quantitative research, using surveys to gather data looking specifically at student use of Twitter as directed by an instructor. Focusing on use of social media in an educational setting, Welch & Bonnan-White (2012) explored whether the use of Twitter in a university lecture produced a difference in levels of self-reported student engagement. Students did report that using Twitter helped them to feel more engaged overall. No significant difference was found in this study as it pertains to the use of Twitter and learning. However, students in the control group who were using Twitter in the classroom did report an overall perception of increased academic engagement (p. 334). The distinction found in the conclusions indicated that when instructors led class engagement through Twitter, students perceived more academic engagement. When students used Twitter without instructor direction there was no increase reported on academic engagement. This literature poses the question: *can social media platforms increase student*

engagement? A secondary question to examine from here could be: *do using social media platforms increase student engagement during groupwork?*

The research conducted by Brook and Oliver (2003) suggests that social networking sites (SNSs) can be used most effectively in distance education as a means for improving communication between students, compared to other delivery methods when students are in a face-to-face environment in a classroom. Although this study focused on students communicating with one another it would be interesting to examine how groupwork occurs in distance education courses through the use of social media.

Lastly, Hentges (2016) looked specifically at Twitter and the use of hashtags for collaboration. Although this was not a formal research study, the author does argue that Twitter gives students new spaces to explore and connect with other students and ideas. Evans (2013) considered the use of Twitter for teaching. Undergraduate students reported on attitudes and experiences with Twitter: a positive correlation was found between Twitter usage and student engagement in school-related activities including “information sharing; course-related tweeting was not related to interpersonal relationships” (p. 5).

As it relates to previous literature on student’s use of social media in an educational context, Facebook was also used as the social media platform of choice. Akcaoglu & Bowman (2016) and Matzat & Vrieling (2016) conducted research studies related to Facebook and self-regulated learning. Analysis of the data showed that students participating in a class Facebook group reported more interest in and perceived more value in course content, felt closer to the course and viewed their instructors as having more involvement overall. Facebook is such a popular social media platform as it lives in both the public and private domains, compared for Twitter for example, which lives mostly in the public domain. What this means is that there are

ways to use Facebook as a tool to communicate with others privately—in a specific group—and publicly. An example of a private tool offered within Facebook is Messenger, a messaging application typically used in a one-on-one or smaller group conversations. A second example of a private Facebook tool is Groups, a private space for a select number of individuals to have conversations and share information. An example of a public tool within Facebook is a Wall—a space on a user's profile where other Facebook users can share information or communicate in a space where many Facebook users can view the conversation. Although Twitter offers a private message function and a public feed for any Twitter user to take part in, it does not offer spaces specifically designed for two or more people to interact as a group. As such, two questions worth exploring further are: *how do students use Twitter for groupwork?* And *how do students use Facebook for groupwork?*

There is considerable research on Twitter and Facebook (Akcaoglu & Bowman 2016). Given the widespread use of Facebook and the role it can play in an educational context, there is a need for conducting more research especially this platform. Furthermore, due to the nature of the complexities found within use cases of Facebook, more research is needed to understand the full scope of how students are using the platform for groupwork in an educational context. How the tools offered within Facebook are used make it a worthwhile social media platform to explore further. Lampe, C., Wohn, D.Y. & Vitak, J. (2011) examined how undergraduate students use Facebook to engage in classroom-related collaborative activities, concluding that Facebook use in a classroom setting can increase motivations for further collaboration. A question that could be posed from this research is: *how is Facebook used for collaboration?*

The Need for Further Exploration

Research into how social media is being used in an educational context reveals a complex topic that connects and intersects a variety of components: what social media tools are being used in an educational context, why students using these platforms and for what purpose. Collaboration, distance education, self-regulated learning and knowledge building are distinct themes that appear in the literature on the subject of how students use social media in an educational context. Groupwork is a crucial part of any educational experience as it can create an environment where students teach and learn from one another (Center for Research in Innovation and Teaching: “Group Work in the Classroom”). Groupwork is a theme that occurred repeatedly during the literature review within each of the four categories of collaboration, distance education, self-regulated learning and knowledge building. However, the most overlap with groupwork was found within the theme of collaboration. Typically, in a groupwork scenario discussion through social media has been initiated by students. As such, more research in this area is needed to better understand student-led use of social media in an educational context. Furthermore, the literature also poses the following questions: *does the use of social media help students to collaborate? What are student and instructor behaviours with social media for the purposes of groupwork?*

We can be confident that students are using social media platforms in some way to engage in communication and information sharing, but we do not know how this behaviour differs when in an educational setting. More research is needed in the following three areas: First, an exploration of the in-depth behaviours of students use of social media. Second, as social media platforms grow in popularity and new platforms emerge more research will be needed to look at the behaviours and use cases of students and instructors with these newly emerging

platforms in an educational context. Finally, the use of social media platforms in an educational context was covered in previous literature by various authors, but an in-depth analysis of student behaviours at different educational levels is needed. *How is social media used by students at the college postgraduate level specifically?*

A valuable study of social media use in an educational context was conducted by Churchill (2009), who aimed to understand the research question “in what ways does a blog environment supplement classroom teaching and lead to an improved learning experience?” (p. 179). Churchill focused on postgraduate student use of blogs and concluded that aspects of blogging contribute to student’s overall learning. This included reading blog comments, viewing the work of others and learning new perspectives (p. 181-182). Although an interesting scope to use when approaching groupwork and the use of social media by students in an educational setting, an exploration of how Facebook is used in an educational setting would further contribute to the literature and increase learnings in the educational landscape. To build on the presented research in the literature review, this study will look at collaboration as a way to explore groupwork, specifically in the context of post-graduate students. It is through the lens of collaboration that I will examine the use of Facebook in an educational setting.

Research Study

Literature available on the subject of student’s use of social media has shed light on how social media is used with groupwork and collaboration as an emerging theme, but more research is needed to gain a better understanding of student-led behaviours with social media in this context. As such, this research study will focus specifically on understanding how students are using a social media in an educational context for collaboration.

This research study will draw on Uses and Gratifications Theory, Variation Theory and Social Media Integration Theory to help gain perspective. Uses and Gratifications Theory will assist in understanding how using Facebook for collaboration satisfies a particular need that a student may have. Variation Theory will assist in learning if Facebook use in an educational context contributes to the process of absorbing and sharing information. Lastly, Social Media Integration Theory will provide a lens to analyze the two-way process of information sharing and communication that occurs through the use of Facebook. The research will use these theories to seek to uncover how social media satisfies certain needs, how Facebook can affect the process of information exchange, and how adding variation with Facebook to an educational context affects groupwork and collaboration. This research hopes to provide insight on how curriculums and instructional plans can be redesigned to better fit the evolving digital classroom. It is worthwhile to further explore how students use Facebook—and the variety of tools within the platform—in an educational context.

As previously mentioned, the tools offered within Facebook make it a platform worth exploring further. Research on student's use of social media in an educational setting has revealed the potential for Facebook to be used as an increased motivation for students (Lampe, C., Wohn, D.Y. & Vitak, J. 2011). However, further exploration into how students are using Facebook in an educational setting is needed, specifically when examining through the lens of collaboration.

One of the key themes the literature reveals were found within the context of students and their use of social media in an educational context: collaboration. For the purpose of this paper the term collaboration will be used to refer to describe occurrences when two or more people achieve a goal by working together (Martinez-Moyano 2006).

This research study proposed will explore the question: *How are postgraduate college students using Facebook for collaboration in an educational context?*

Chapter 3: Research Design & Methodology

Introduction

Social media tools offer students a new way to conduct groupwork and therefore research on the subject of student's use of social media needs to be explored further. If the current understanding of how students use Facebook for collaboration in an educational setting can be expanded, there is potential to improve student learning and experience through collaboration. The purpose of this study is to understand perceived student behaviours with Facebook in an educational context. Furthermore, this study seeks to understand if these perceived student behaviours with Facebook have a connection to collaboration. As we need to understand considerably more about this domain, an exploratory approach will be taken. Through an exploratory approach to understanding this there is potential for instructors and curriculum designers to expand their understanding of collaboration using social media.

The exploration of Facebook is important as it is the largest social media platforms in the world with over two billion monthly active users (Facebook Company Info, 2018). Facebook also has public and private elements that can be used in a variety of ways to allow for communication and potentially collaboration within an educational environment. An example of a private use for Facebook is Messenger, a chat function allowing users to have confidential conversations one-on-one or in small groups. An example of a public function of Facebook is interactions with a Page, which allows for interaction between users and/or a business in a space where any Facebook user can read the conversation.

Design

Much of the previous research on the subject of students and social media has taken a qualitative approach, looking at which social platforms students use in an educational setting (cf. Barnes 2014; Bosman 2011; Brady, Holcomb, Smith 2010). From the literature we have a good understanding of *why* students are using social media, but to better understand *how* they are using these platforms in a self-directed manner more research is needed (cf. Elavsky 2011; Evans 2013). Previous research done on the subject looks at potential uses for social media in an educational context, focusing on instructor-led scenarios. I am seeking to understand the feelings and perceptions that students hold about using social media in this context. Also, as this research is seeking to collect information about how students use social media in an educational context, a qualitative approach seems appropriate.

This study seeks to understand how people behave and operate in their own lives using Facebook. James Spradley explains the concept of ethnography in his book *The Ethnographic Interview*:

Ethnographers adopt a particular stance toward people with whom they work . . . ‘I want to understand the world from your point of view. I want to know what you know in the way you know it. I want to understand the meaning of your experience, to walk in your shoes, to feel things as you feel them, to explain things as you explain them’ (Spradley, J.P. 2016, p. 34).

Mayan (2009) echoes this notion, describing the discipline of ethnography as “...grounded in a commitment to the firsthand experience and exploration of a particular social or cultural setting...” (p. 37). For this research study there is a desire to better understand perceived

behaviors and experiences, and ethnography offers a tool to do this. As such, this study will be conducted through an ethnographic lens as this seems most appropriate. I plan to use focused ethnography to assist me developing an understanding of the students use of Facebook for collaboration.

An important element of this research study will involve gaining an understanding of how students use Facebook for information sharing and exchange in groupwork and to use this to further understand collaboration. An important reason to why Facebook was chosen for the study is because the tools available within Facebook make it a platform worth further exploring as it relates to groupwork and collaboration. More specifically, trying to gain an understanding of how students share data, have conversations, work on projects, study, etc. through the use of Facebook and the tools within the platform itself.

To gain an understanding of postgraduate student attitudes and behaviors with using social media in an educational context, focus groups were considered. Focus groups are a good method to understand how groups discuss and interact around the topic at hand, which is oriented towards collaboration, a group process (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 103). Focus groups are also an appropriate method for this study as there is a desire to understand the collective student experience of using social media, groupwork. Kitzinger further explains the benefits associated with choosing this method:

...focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method . . . [focus groups are] particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and can be used to examine not only what people think but how they think and why they think that way (p. 299).

Focus groups are a good fit with the characteristics found in this research study especially in relation to the topic of groupwork. This is because characteristics of a focus group include interaction between participants; discussing shared experiences; understanding how people make sense of information; and deeply exploring beliefs and attitudes (Carey & Asbury 2012). In this exploratory study the researcher is seeking to see if there is a consensus—or no consensus—around how students approach Facebook. Consensus will be defined here as “a generally accepted opinion or decision among a group of people” (*Cambridge Dictionary*, 2018).

The goal of this study is to gain insight into the perceived behaviours that students have with Facebook. Another goal of this research is also to capture rich details from participant interactions. As such, I plan to conduct focus groups to examine student behaviours and attitudes on the use of Facebook in an educational setting. The discussion that is built in focus groups allows for group interaction to capitalize on synergy and it is in this interaction that rich details are elicited (Carey & Asbury 2012, p. 28). Data collection in a focus group setting is appropriate for this type of study as the researcher can conduct the session and probe the discussion—seeking further information and more detail on the subject (p. 64). Furthermore, the group setting is what makes a focus group unique and appropriate for this study. Questions asked by the researcher will focus on what tools within Facebook are used and how. Asking questions in a focus group versus a method like observation, for example, is an appropriate choice for this study. This is because the researcher will be able to guide the discussion with questions and probe when necessary to gain a better understanding of student’s perceived behaviours with Facebook.

The aims of this research study are to specifically understand in detail, how postgraduate college students use Facebook for collaboration on their own in an educational context. The researcher’s goal is to facilitate an open dialogue between students to understand their opinions,

experiences and perceived behaviours. Students have experience with the subject matter at hand—using Facebook—and the researcher’s goal is to engage them in a discussion that will help understand their experiences with this particular topic. Postgraduate students are also likely to have had experience with collaboration and Facebook use, therefore assisting the researcher in collecting rich data points. To properly examine perceived behaviours with this target audience, a case study approach is useful. Case studies allow the researcher to learn more detailed and full information in a single environment—a particular college, as opposed to collecting information from multiple institutions of the same type.

The literature covers a wide scope of undergraduate and postgraduate students. This study will look specifically at postgraduate college students as the researcher is specifically interested in this level of education. As a college postgraduate instructor and course designer the researcher has an interest in understanding postgraduate student perspectives. Examining postgraduate students is also appropriate for this study because groupwork is a common element of postgraduate programs at Conestoga College. For the purpose of this study, “postgraduate” will refer to a course of study undertaken after completing a first undergraduate degree.

The researcher has specific topics to cover but also wants to give the participants and the conversation room to move in the direction participants take it in. As such, a semi-structured approach will be used—a question guide will be prepared but the researcher will use probing questions to expand the discussion more. A semi-structured approach will ensure that the researcher is prepared with questions to guide the conversation, while also allowing for flexibility for students to take the conversation where they may. This approach allows for the opportunity to better understand the participant’s perspective – another benefit of focus groups is the interaction between participants.

As mentioned previously, this research study is interested in understanding the behaviour of students who can provide rich descriptions of their perceived experiences and behaviours. This reasoning has led to the choice of conducting focus groups with former postgraduate students specifically at Conestoga College. Convenience sampling will be used to select participants who will likely be able to speak on the subject. Students will provide written consent upon starting the focus group through a signed consent forms (see Appendix B).

Focus Group Structure

The researcher will start each focus group with open-ended questions. From here the researcher will facilitate discussion with and amongst students to gain a better understanding of what social tools they use and how they use them. All questions will be structured in a way that attempts to encourage students to express their attitudes and perceived behaviours (see Appendix A).

The researcher plans to start with general questions about social media and its use in an educational context and narrow in on the specific research topic as the focus group progresses. That topic is, understanding how postgraduate college students are using Facebook for collaboration in an educational context. A broad approach that narrows in on the research topic will give participants a chance to come to terms with the research at hand. Focus group sessions will start with a general discussion around what collaboration means. The researcher wants to learn how participants define collaboration and then it is planned that the researcher will provide participants with a specific definition that will be used subsequently. This will ensure participants are using a common definition to discuss the topics that follow. This approach is consistent with the research and recommendations from DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006).

Once a working definition has been established, the focus group will continue to move onto questions asking how students see social media being used in an educational context. It is a goal of the research to provide a definition of collaboration before going into questions as this may help the researcher to feel confident that participants are referring to the same definition and concept of collaboration in their discussion. Questions will then dive deeper into how Facebook is being used for specific educational purposes including test preparation and assignments, as well how specific components within the platform such as Messenger, Pages and Groups are used. As such, the goal of the focus group questions is to first understand what they use Facebook for and second to probe further for detail into how exactly they use it in an educational setting.

As the goal is to understand perceived student behaviours with Facebook, it is important to conduct small discussions with an appropriate number of students in which the researcher can feel that an adequate amount of data has been collected. It is planned to conduct two focus groups. The initial invitation will be sent to twenty potential participants—ten participants for each focus group. The researcher will accept anyone interested and once participants have committed, will make efforts to balance focus groups for gender and race. The proposed makeup of the participant group is planned to mirror what a typical class makeup looks like in a postgraduate course. After completion of both focus groups and analyzing the data, if there are substantive differences *between* the two groups and no consensus found, the researcher plans to conduct a third focus group. Consensus will be determined to be established if results from focus groups are consistent. If discussion within each focus group presents similar topics and opinions I will consider this as consensus between groups.

Inclusion Criteria

The aim of this research is to understand the perceived behaviours with Facebook in an educational context with students from a particular level of education. Furthermore, an important consideration in this study will be ensuring the makeup of the focus groups is consistent with the makeup of the students the researcher teaches. As such, the criteria for inclusion are: the participant must be a former postgraduate student who has graduated from the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) program at Conestoga College. Each participant must also be an active user of Facebook. In this case, “active” will be defined as engaging with Facebook at least once weekly. This should ensure the participants have enough regular experience with the platform to speak about it.

Setting

Focus groups will be conducted in a private room that will be rented out. The benefits of this location are convenience for students without a vehicle, comfort, privacy and minimal interruptions. This location has also been chosen for its quiet setting, accessibility, and a consideration was by having a neutral, off-campus site, that could lesson any potential power dynamics with former students.

Procedure and Ethical Considerations

Following approval from the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board, the focus groups was conducted in the spring of 2018. Several measures will be taken before, during and after this research study to ensure privacy of the participant data, integrity of the data collected, and conclusions drawn. This is a minimal risk research study; please see Appendix B for details of Information Letter and Consent Form.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Morse et al. (2002) explain that analyzing data soon after collecting it helps to ensure that reliability and validity of the data are preserved. As such, data analysis will be conducted immediately following data collection. To ensure data collection and interpretation is representative and consistent, the researcher will record the focus group discussion with a digital voice recorder and will take handwritten notes throughout. A second notetaker will also be present. After the completion of each focus group the researcher will transcribe the audio recordings to identify themes and code the data. Although notes will be taken during the discussion and a second notetaker will be present, audio recordings will be relied on for accuracy and verification of findings.

Data from the first focus group will be collected and analyzed soon after the focus group concludes so the researcher can develop an emerging understanding about research questions which help to inform the questions being asked (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree 2006). Although the focus groups will be independent of one another, discussion from the first focus group could affect the questions asked in the second. Furthermore, data will be analyzed using thematic analysis—pinpointing, examining, and recording patterns (or "themes") within data (Braun & Clarke 2006).

Coding data will consist of three stages. Stage one will involve reading all the data, highlighting interesting sections, and making notes in the margins. This process of identifying words, phrases, or concepts within the data “so that the underlying patterns can be identified and analyzed” (Mayan 2009, p. 94). Stage two of the coding process will involve categorizing sections of text into common themes or groups. The final stage of the coding process will be to write summaries for the data found in each category or theme. To understand the specific

platforms and student's classroom social media use, content analysis—the process of identifying, coding and coding primary patterns in the data (Mayan 2009)—will be used. This will assist the researcher in narrowing the specific topics that emerge and ways in which students use social media in the classroom. Content analysis is also a good fit with this research as it is an exploratory study with the goal of exploring the research question and redefining the problem.

Hsieh & Shannon (2005) identify three streams of content analysis with varying approaches to the coding process. One of these streams is summative content analysis which involves “counting and comparisons, usually of keywords or content, followed by the interpretation of the underlying context” (p. 1278). Using an approach structured similarly to a summative content analysis approach should assist me in comparing common keywords or phrases used by students in focus groups. Furthermore, this approach should help me to identify commonalities in my interpretation of their responses and underlying views of the use of Facebook for collaboration in the classroom.

After coding the data I will analyze themes and look for possible consensus. As mentioned above, if consensus has been reached, the researcher will report on this in the findings chapter. However, consensus will be determined to be established if results from focus groups are consistent and the discussion of students perceived behaviours and attitudes are similar. If discussion within each focus group presents similar topics and opinions I will be able to report on that as perceived consensus.

Chapter 4: Findings

Two focus groups were conducted for this study. All participants had graduated from the Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) program at Conestoga College. Focus Group A consisted of five participants, two men and three women and lasted 90 minutes in length. Focus Group B consisted of four female participants and lasted 75 minutes in length. Audio from the focus groups was recorded and in addition, the researcher took notes and had a second notetaker present (see Appendix C for focus group transcripts). The findings from this study are reported below. In order to maintain the anonymity of the participants in the study findings, the two focus groups will be referred to as Group A and Group B, and individual participant names have been removed and anonymized in the transcripts. The findings from this study have been organized and will be presented as themes that emerged from both focus groups.

Defining Collaboration.

The researcher started each focus group by asking participants what collaboration means to them and how they define it. All participants shared similar descriptions and definitions. Group A described collaboration as working toward something *actionable*, *brainstorming*, *collective creativity*, *working toward the same goal* and *a group effort*. Group B described collaboration is *synergy*, *active participation*, and *a group effort*. Ultimately after discussing the terms used by each individual, “working toward a common goal” was the agreed upon term for how students define collaboration across both focus groups, across all participants. The researcher then read aloud a definition to be used throughout the discussion to ensure participants were using the same definition in their discussion. The working definition of collaboration used throughout the remainder of the focus groups was *when a group of people work together to realize or achieve a goal*.

When discussing the use of social media in an educational context participants most often referred to their experiences across a variety of classes. Students had experience in using Facebook some way in more than one class during their postgraduate student experience. The researcher did not focus on a particular course or program of study in the discussion.

Facebook Tools

This section includes the findings regarding the various Facebook tools that appeared in the focus group discussions: Walls, Groups and Messenger. These tools are defined and explained below.

Facebook Groups.

When asked about how they use Facebook in an educational context, both focus groups described their use of two tools within the Facebook platform. The first of these was Facebook Groups, a “place for small group communication and for people to share their common interests and express their opinion” (Facebook 2018). Participants noted Facebook Groups were created by students at the start of a program and were inclusive to the entire class. In each focus group participants described Facebook Groups as something that was created by students, for students. Focus Group A described their Facebook Group use cases to include photo sharing, having short conversations between class members, and getting answers to questions. A participant in Focus Group A said,

So, if anyone had any questions or any comments about an assignment, it would be posted there. And whoever had the answers or whoever knew what the answer is, they would comment and reply to that post.

A number of students also mentioned that Facebook Groups were used to get answers from one another and to share information with students in the class. Students felt that the speed to get an answer was faster through Facebook Groups and that if one person did not know the answer, Facebook Groups gave the entire class an opportunity to chime in with a response as everyone in the course was in the Facebook Group.

When asked by the researcher if they would like to have instructors included in Facebook Groups, responses from Focus Group A participants were split. Focus Group B participants did not express an interest in having instructors in their Facebook Groups. It was suggested by a participant in Focus Group B that perhaps there could be two Facebook Groups—a student-only Facebook Group as well as a student and instructor Facebook Group. The value noted by participants in having instructors in their Facebook Groups was due to speed of having questions answered, getting clarification on assignments, and easier access to instructors without having to send an email. When asked about the content in the Facebook Group discussions, participants described these use cases as mostly relating to questions about course content, tests or assignments.

In addition to the similarities found between focus group discussion, Focus Group B participants did bring up an additional use for Facebook Groups—that the class used Facebook Groups as a way to get to know each other—an icebreaker, as one participant in Focus Group B put it. Another participant in Focus Group B said Facebook Groups were a place for students to vent about programs or classes, which contributed to the hesitation with having instructors in these Facebook Groups. The last comment brought forward by a participant in Focus Group B was around Facebook Groups and Facebook Walls—an area on a user's Facebook Profile where Facebook Friends can share content publicly. The comment made was in reference to Groups

being a place for potential synchronous conversations unlike Walls which was reserved more for one-way, asynchronous conversations. The introduction of Facebook Walls was something uniquely discussed in Group B. A participant in Focus Group B said,

...if you learn something, and then you were interested about it, you might post it on your own Facebook page. Like an article about it or something and then other people would chime in with their perspectives. Even... Not even like some deep theory, because anything people could bring to the table to have a conversation.

After this comment the researcher probed and asked if Facebook Walls would be a space for instructors to join students. All participants indicated “no” to this question, as this would mean students and instructors would have to be “Facebook Friends”, that is connected personally through the platform. One participant in Focus Group B brought up the topic of needing to have school separated from personal life:

I wouldn't want to necessarily be able to receive a message from [instructors] on my phone, because for me it would be like compartmentalizing things.

This participant's comment sparked further discussion amongst the participants during which all participants agreed that privacy was a concern.

Both focus groups described the timeline in which students first created their Facebook Groups—at the beginning of the course. They noted that the Facebook Group was created because they were enrolled in the same course and could use it throughout as a common place for discussion, questions, etc. Additionally, consensus was achieved within each focus group in that Facebook Groups were best used for sharing information (in the form of written text or photos), getting answers to questions from other students and working together to solve problems. Focus

Group A felt there could be a second Facebook Group for instructors and students, while Focus Group B did not feel there was a space for instructors to take part in any Facebook Group.

Facebook Messenger.

The second tool that came up often throughout both focus groups was Facebook Messenger, a messaging application within Facebook. In Focus Group A the participants noted that Facebook Messenger—similarly to Facebook Groups—was not something mandatory that instructors indicated that students should be using, but rather something students initiated using on their own. Participants in both focus groups discussed their experiences using Messenger as a scheduling tool and as a way to communicate and clarify individual responsibilities in a course-related group assignment. As one participant explained, “...you can say, *Hey, I did my part, here it is. Are you going to be ready in time?*” A second participant chimed in – “Yeah, it’s like, Okay, just letting you know what’s happening on my end. Now, when are we going to meet in person?” Participants placed value on the confidence that Facebook Messenger gives to communication, as those sending the message can see a time stamp of when it was sent and read by the recipient. A representative comment was made by a participant in Group A:

I also think that with Messenger it’s more of a quick, constant communication. With the group it’s more of a delayed response. Someone could take a day to respond to you, but with Messenger it’s, *Okay, you got the notification, you answer it right away.* There’s more of an urgency with the Messenger.

The value of Messenger as an alternative to exchanging phone numbers was also introduced by a student, which sparked further discussion about privacy concerns. This time participants discussed that using Messenger enables students to communicate with one another

without having to give out private phone numbers. In reference to not having to add Facebook Group members as Facebook Friends, one participant described that this gave students some privacy while still allowing them to communicate with one another:

...you can just easily get rid of them after the group is done. And you just delete the group. You're not my friend on Facebook, you can't really contact me, so our business is through here.

One participant said that Facebook Messenger was better for specific conversations in a setting of 1-3 individuals, while Facebook Groups were seen as the better choice for general discussions across the entire class. This sentiment was confirmed to be consistent across focus groups.

Although the majority of participants indicated that Facebook Messenger has many positive use cases in an educational context, one participant reported strong feelings again related to privacy. The participant noted that Messenger also can interfere with your personal life outside of school because the communication can come to an individual's cell phone. This started a discussion amongst Focus Group B participants, indicating that using Facebook in an educational context could blur the lines between personal and student life. One participant suggested that the collaborative workplace tool Slack would likely be a more professional alternative to Messenger. The researcher asked, "So, what's the difference between having a conversation over something like Slack and having a conversation over Messenger?" The same participant replied,

I think, with Messenger, it's associated with your entire Facebook profile, where you have put personal details. There're photos, there's stuff with your friends that maybe you don't want your instructors to be privy to.

Another participant chimed in noting that Slack is not used for personal use and may be a better option for work or school related discussions.

Consensus was reached across both focus groups in that Facebook Messenger was a good tool to use for scheduling and communicating between students. Having noted a reluctance to have instructors involved in their Facebook Groups, this was also true for Messenger. Focus Group A thought having instructors in their Facebook Groups would be valuable, and Focus Group B spoke often of the potential for Messenger to blur the lines between student-teacher confidentiality and their school-home life balance.

Facebook Use Cases

Sharing Information.

The first component of collaboration—sharing information—came up often and unprompted by the researcher in the discussions with both focus groups. This section will look at the ways in which participants discussed using Facebook for the purpose of information sharing. Although some topics were probed by the researcher, unless otherwise noted, topics came up in discussion unprompted by the researcher. Messenger allows students to share information in short conversations and participants agreed that the time stamps and ability to know who has read the conversation is important. This importance was linked closely by participants to accountability—when working as a group, Messenger allows students to share information—one-on-one or in a small group—quickly while ensuring they as individuals can feel confident

knowing the information was received and read. “I think it helps keep people accountable, because you can call attention to somebody if they say, have a specific task in the assignment...” one participant explained. Information sharing for test preparation often took place in a Facebook Group, where members of the class could post photos of the board, slides and their notes. Messenger was used to share information with specific members of a working on a course group assignment and usually took the form of assigning and confirm roles of group members. Facebook Groups were used to ask the class a general question, usually taking the form of asking for clarification. In an attempt to clarify what participants were saying the researcher asked if Messenger was used as a scheduling tool. Participants agreed.

When asked about the number of individuals involved in using Facebook to share information, participants agreed that Facebook was most useful for sharing information both as a class and in smaller groups. One participant said that information shared often came in the form of documents like photos or slides from class time: “Document sharing. Like if there's notes on the whiteboard, somebody would take pictures of it and then put it in the group. So not everybody had to write it down.” Another participant expanded on this noting that Facebook was a great tool for getting last minute clarification for assignment, tests or on an ask from an instructor. Participants often focused less on how Facebook could be used and more on the challenges of using the platform in an educational context. One of the challenges mentioned throughout the focus groups was around information sharing and that often it is only a handful of students doing the work to share their knowledge and others can take advantage of that. Again, the topic of privacy emerged as students expressed concerns with sharing information and having everyone in the class read the conversation. A participant then implied additional value of using Messenger saying, “that’s why we sometimes just chat in small groups in Messenger.”

Participants across both focus groups agreed that Facebook was used in an educational context to support the sharing of information.

Improved Communication.

A constant theme found in the discussion with both Focus Groups as it relates to use of Facebook for collaboration was the reliance on Facebook to enhance the speed of communication. In both focus groups participants often spoke of test preparation. One participant in Focus Group A noted he would use Facebook to get answers or help from other students: “So, we would say, *Oh, I'm stuck on this question. Anybody?* And you crowdsource an answer. Yeah.” Many other participants seemed to agree with this sentiment. Regardless of whether it was asking a question, confirming a time to meet or discussing an assignment, all participants seemed to agree that the process of communication was fastest when conducted through Facebook.

As mentioned in the above section, participants across both focus groups often discussed communication in the context of being synchronous—that is, occurring at the same time—as part of scheduling times to meet with other students, in short conversations specifically using Messenger. This was a function of Facebook that was discussed as differing from other communication channels. Students described frustrations that individuals can experience in a group when they have not heard from another group member while working on the same assignment. They suggested that communication through Facebook eased the frustrations and helped students to work together more efficiently.

A big part of Facebook’s involvement in group assignments was the role that it played in allowing group members to communicate about the project before getting together in person.

One participant in Focus Group A said that Messenger was great for asking targeted questions to classmates or group members. “It was kind of there where you find common things that are unclear. And somebody would reach out on behalf of everybody to the prof or whatever for clarification.” All participants nodded in agreement. It was during this discussion that privacy concerns also came up. On one hand students discussed the benefits of using Facebook to communicate with one another. On the other, they expressed concerns around not wanting to share their personal information on Facebook with classmates with whom they were not friends. One participant noted that students only use Facebook Groups while they are enrolled in school and are cautious about posting on other student’s Facebook Walls or adding other students as Facebook Friends. This participant also expressed how Facebook makes the communication process easier for students:

I think like in some ways to communicate with people that you have gone to school with, but maybe aren't that close with, but the odd thing comes up and you're like oh, I'll send them a message, but it's not someone that you're talking to that regularly. It's easier to use it on Facebook, and I think in some ways when you're not that close with them, using Messenger seems a little less personal than texting them when you're not that close to them.

When asked if they would communicate with instructors over Facebook, one participant said “maybe”, another nodded but said nothing out loud, and a third said

no, I wouldn’t want messages from an instructor coming to my phone ... like if I was out on a weekend I wouldn’t want to see my instructor’s name.” The fourth participant said “I think so. Yeah.

When the researcher probed the discussion further, participants seemed to be open to communicating with instructors through Facebook, but implied that they would not like to be Facebook Friends with their teachers.

Speed and ease of communication was one area across both focus groups in which a strong consensus was found. Participants across both focus groups agreed that Facebook could be used as a preferred, faster alternative than more traditional methods like email for communication in an educational context.

Working Together.

When the researcher asked participants about using Facebook to complete a group assignment together one participant said it was less about actually working on an assignment through Facebook but rather more about confirming the work that needed to be done so they could then get together to work in person. Other participants chimed in noting Facebook Groups and Messenger are both useful when trying to clarify an ask from an instructor, problem solve something said previously in class, or problem solve an upcoming assignment. One participant clarified that Facebook is not used to work together on assignments, but rather to do the legwork required to meet in person to work on the assignment.

Accountability was another topic that came up when discussing how students use Facebook to work together—a recurring theme from the discussion with both focus groups. One participant brought up working together to solve a problem, answer a question, or confirm scheduling or meeting times to keep people accountable—a second theme that appeared repeatedly in both focus groups. The process, they said, would start with Facebook Groups to ask the entire class and then move to Messenger to ask an individual or a select few. Messenger, in

comparison to Facebook Groups, was perceived to be a tool that makes communication more efficient when students are working together.

... [through Messenger] we talk about like content of assignments too. Yeah, just so like everyone can see it, and everyone can see that we talked about it. And kind of accountability, making sure that we've talked about it, it's been dealt with, and then we can refer back to it instead of just talking about it all in person.

All participants agreed that working together was made easier through Messenger as it this work was usually with a smaller group of individuals and led to more detailed, specific conversations. Furthermore, it was indicated that in some cases not all students are wanted in every conversation that takes place on Messenger.

Participants in both focus groups noted that Facebook was not the platform of choice when it came to working on assignments with other students. Participants indicated their preference for working on assignments was Google Docs because this tool—as perceived by the participants—allows students to write assignments while seeing other student's real-time edits, changes and comments. Consensus was revealed across both focus groups as participants confirmed that Facebook was used in an educational context to work together to prepare to work together in person. In both focus groups, working together was also implied to have an additional meaning – working together to solve problems.

Facebook in an Educational Setting.

Most participants noted that they have never had an instructor introduce a social media platform for educational purposes—versus personal use—and thus had never given using it in this context much thought. Overall participants agreed that there is potential for Facebook to be used

in an educational setting. However, it was indicated that this is not without a need to overcome obstacles that students may see in using Facebook in an educational context. One participant suggested that there is a generational gap—that users of Facebook are older, versus newer platforms that have younger users—and that Facebook is trailing behind other social media platforms with educational offerings. She said,

...this newer generation doesn't really rely on Facebook the same way that we did. And don't necessarily have it. Because a lot of older people still have Facebook. They see it as more like, *Oh, my parents are on Facebook. I don't want them seeing my stuff.* And specifically, with classrooms, I find that my younger siblings' school has gravitated toward platforms like Google, where they have a structure called Google Classrooms, where it's a place where they're able to dump their assignments.

This further indicated a fear that participants had in using Facebook for educational purposes—not wanting anyone from their student life to see parts of their personal life on Facebook.

Furthermore, participants noted that although they did not think Facebook could replace the in-class experience, they did see a use for Facebook to help with student-student and instructor-student collaboration. One participant suggested that Facebook video tools could be utilized more in the classroom, both through live video and pre-recorded video. Building on this, the participant stated, “I don't know if that's specific in Facebook, because there are lots of other video conferencing tools. But Facebook does have one, so why not use it, I guess.”

Some participants revealed hesitations about Facebook being involved in an educational context. Hesitations around this topic centered mostly on privacy concerns and that there are other tools that are more advanced, thus addressing the privacy issues, for students to use. Although students were taking the initiative to work together, share information and

communicate through Facebook, they overall felt other platforms would help them to actually get the work done. This was mainly because participants said Facebook did not offer a tool like Google Docs—a collaborative platform designed to have multiple users edit a document at the same time—in which they could work on a document for a group assignment with other members at the same time.

When the researcher brought up Facebook as a tool to be used in an educational context, many participants seemed open to the idea but discussed concerns about adoption by instructors. One participant in Focus Group B spoke of the lack of effort by instructors to use Facebook in the classroom, suggesting that if it has not been used in the class already it will be hard to have students adopt it this late into Facebook's existence. Other participants seemed to agree that newer social media tools would perhaps be more easily adopted in an educational setting because users would not have had previous experience in a personal context with the tools.

Many participants revealed an openness to having Facebook involved in an educational context if it was introduced by instructors first at the beginning of the program.

Chapter 5: Discussion

This chapter will discuss where consensus was found, what can be done with the findings and where it is suggested that future research be conducted.

Collaboration.

Findings from both focus groups indicated consensus in the definition of collaboration and this definition was consistent with the one used by the researcher. One focus group characterized collaboration as *actionable, brainstorming, collective creativity, working toward the same goal and a group effort*. The other focus group described collaboration as *synergy, active participation, and a group effort*. Both focus groups indicated that working together was a key element of collaboration but the initial discussion with one focus group centered more around creativity while the other focus group concentrated their descriptions on active participation.

The foundations of collaboration discussed across focus groups included information sharing, communication and working together. This is consistent with the approach by Gikas & Grant (2013) while exploring teaching and learning in higher education through the implementation of social media technologies. The researchers found that the use of mobile devices and social media platforms created opportunities for interaction and collaboration while allowing students to engage in content creation and communication (p. 33).

Similarities were found across focus groups in a few areas. First, analysis of the data and discussions with both focus groups noted three elements of collaboration—information sharing, communication and working together. These three components were used most often by students when describing their social media and collaboration experiences. Second, many students

indicated that they were using Facebook Messenger and Facebook Groups to share information, work together and communicate for group work. It was noted by participants that group work through the use of Facebook was more efficient and effective than other tools.

When asked about use cases for Facebook in an educational context (test preparation and assignments), participants across both focus groups agreed that they were already using Facebook in an educational context but that there was potential to use the social network more. Students in both focus groups discussed sharing information, working together and communicating using Facebook as the tool to do so. As it relates to the definition of collaboration—*when a group of people work together to realize or achieve a goal*—the researcher can make conclusions in a few areas related to where students potentially work together to achieve a goal. These areas include that Facebook Messenger can be useful as a scheduling tool; that Facebook Groups are a preferred place to ask questions and share information with other students; and that students see potential for instructors to be involved but it is very important that there is a student-only space to use Facebook with one another.

Furthermore, the researcher can conclude that both focus groups indicated that they were using Facebook to collaborate in groupwork for the three elements, sharing information, working together and communicating. When the researcher presented these three elements of collaboration for discussion, participants across both focus groups agreed that collaboration must contain at least one of these three elements. Of the three elements working together fit the least in the context of using Facebook for collaboration. Facebook plays a key role in helping students to ask questions, share knowledge, and information. When it came to using Facebook to work together the participants described perceived value but noted it was a tool to help group members prepare to get work done rather than acting as the platform where the actual work on an

assignment was occurring. Although this is not necessarily a role social media is supposed to fill, it is worth noting that this did come up in conversation with participants more than once. It was the perception of the focus group participants that the role of Facebook in collaboration could not stand alone but rather would need augmentation from other tools. Lastly, the educational context in which participants indicated students most frequently noted using Facebook to collaborate was a place where questions could be asked and answered, specifically as it related to preparing for a test or assignments. This conclusion came out of both focus groups. One participant explained the process:

...for some group assignments, we would use our individual Facebook groups for our smaller groups. To keep on top of deadlines and have a pinned post that had all of the deadlines marked down so we knew what everyone was working towards.

As mentioned above this study has identified ways in which tools within Facebook can be used by students to collaborate. Although participants identified Facebook as a valuable tool to in-class time it could be suggested that the secondary relationships in online communities and social networks lead students to communicate and engage in more complex activities. In *Design to Thrive* (2012), author Tharon W. Howard describes this exact situation citing the work of Clay Shirky (2009). In his book *Here Comes Everybody*, Shirky lists three activities occurring in online communities and social networks: sharing, cooperation and collective action. Cooperation occurs in online communities when members of an online group each contribute what they know on a particular subject, a concept Shirky calls “collaboration production” (Howard 2010, p. 19). Results of this study add to literature like this as it suggests that through tools within Facebook like Groups and Messenger students can use Facebook to achieve a common goal—collaborate. Furthermore, using the definition of collaboration in this study the researcher can conclude that

Facebook Messenger and Groups are tools used by students to communicate efficiently and quickly, share information, and work together in some way.

Working Together versus Preparing to Work Together.

In the literature review Marinez-Moyano (2006) brought forth a definition of collaboration: “two or more people or organizations work together to realize or achieve a goal.” Although it was clear how students were using Facebook to communicate and share information, they were not actually using Facebook to work together on assignments, but rather as a tool for organization as they prepared to meet in person to work on assignments. It should be noted that this could be because of proximity and might have been different if the students had been at a distance. When the researcher probed this discussion further the topic of distance education came up and students noted that Facebook would not be the best platform to work on course related group assignments. However, they did not note a platform that could serve a purpose for everything students would need. As described by participants this is because Facebook is not conducive to working on assignments at the same time, but rather for planning and preparing to meet to work on the assignment in person. This was when participants brought up tools like Google Docs, a platform that was purposefully built to have individuals work on a document or assignment together, at the same time. It perhaps could be suggested that Facebook could be used as a communications tool while Google Docs could be used as a tool for working together, suggesting that when these platforms are used together collaboration can occur. Brook and Oliver (2003) suggested that social networking platforms can be used most effectively in distance education as a means for improving communication between students. This is because social media platforms like Facebook give students the opportunity to communicate more often, which potentially gives them the opportunity to increase their effectiveness in distance education

courses. Furthermore, the results of this study suggest that Facebook tools like Messenger and Groups would allow students to share information as well, thus improving their collaborative experiences and allowing individuals to communicate regularly and share information.

Furthermore, Google Docs is a specific tool that participants thought would be helpful for collaboration and groupwork. One participant explained their interest and reasoning for using Google Docs:

I really like Google Docs. Yeah, I think in some ways it would definitely be more convenient being able to have the features in Google Docs right within our Facebook Groups, so we're already using for communication and planning.

Students placed value on being able to work on an assignment with others, seeing their work, but not being in the same place. The discussion around Facebook Groups and Messenger always seemed to come back to not having a place to work on assignments in an efficient manner. One student mentioned uploading versions of assignments to Facebook Groups or Messenger, but it viewed as a hassle because students never knew who had the most recent version. Existing Facebook tools are good for planning and organizing but not actually working on a common document together, so tools like Google Docs could provide this and compensate for the gap. This is how participants viewed collaboration from a distance education perspective, but it is suggested that more research be conducted in this area. However, this solution is currently outside of Facebook and was not explored further in the Focus Groups. This was another reason, participants explained, why Google Docs was so far ahead of Facebook from an educational use-case context. As such, participants seemed to view the two as mutually exclusive.

Test Preparation and Assignments.

Akcaoglu and Bowman (2016) found that students who engage in a class Facebook Group report more interest in and perceived more value in course content, felt closer to the course and viewed their instructors as having more involvement overall. Although similarities can be found between this study and Akcaoglu and Bowman's study, this study did not focus on student's perceived value in course content as it pertains to the use of Facebook. As such, findings from this study and the findings from Akcaoglu and Bowman suggest a need for more research into instructor use of Facebook in an educational context and its impact on student learning. Although the results from this study pointed to ways in which students find value in using Facebook Groups, they were not asked specifically about increased interest or perceived value in their courses through the use of this Facebook tool and this would be worthwhile to explore in the future.

Participants in each focus group discussed how Facebook Groups and Messenger were used for test preparation and assignments. Facebook Groups were used throughout the entire course by the majority of students in the class to discuss questions and get clarification from other student's on direction given on an assignment by the instructor. There was a distinction made between how students use Facebook for individual assignments versus group assignments. For individual assignments, students used Facebook Groups to ask questions to the whole class and clarify their understanding of what was being asked. Facebook Groups were also used by the entire class to share photos of slides and for students to share the notes they had taken in class. For group assignments, Messenger was used amongst group members to schedule a time to meet, to set expectations for individual responsibilities and to communicate about progress made.

Instructor Office Hours.

An interesting concept brought forward by a participant in Focus group A was the idea of instructors holding office hours through Facebook Messenger. A unique perspective brought to the discussion and a potential alternative to having instructors join students in Facebook Groups, as it allows students to message an instructor by choice, without having the instructor reading all posts and engaging in all discussions that take place in a Facebook Group. The participant said,

I remember ... all of our professors had office hours ... I never went to them during office hours. If they had said, "I'm going to be on Messenger from this time until this time. Feel free to message me," or, "I'm going to be monitoring the group from time X to time Y. Anybody has questions...The only catch is they have to be public questions, so everybody can see. That way I don't get the same question over and over again." Or something like that. I think that might be even better than office hours. That way they can just go home.

Participants in that focus group appeared to agree with this suggestion, some noting that the instructor would have to introduce this concept and the expectations associated with it at the beginning of the course. This is a useful idea to the research for a few reasons. First, we know that students are using Messenger to communicate and ask questions, so holding office hours on Messenger will keep the communication tool consistent for students. Second, it allows for flexibility as the instructor and student do not have to be in the same physical location to talk. However, this will not be able to be implemented without challenges. The first challenge is that instructors who implement this will need to set clear expectations and guidelines upfront. One way for instructors to set expectations would be to clarify that for instructors to share with students at the beginning of the course that communicating through Messenger does not require the student and instructor to be 'friends' on Facebook. As described by participants, the

advantage of using Messenger versus other communication tools like Skype or Hangouts is because students are already using Facebook tools like Groups. Thus, the ease of access to using Messenger is perceived as important to students. Second, instructors should communicate that email is still an option, but if students desire synchronous communication, the instructor will be on Messenger to chat live on certain days and times throughout the week. Implementing office hours through Messenger is also a good opportunity for distance education students and part-time students who work to still get the support they need from instructors.

Previous research on the subject of instructor and student engagement through social media suggests that there is potential for office hours to exist on Facebook. One of these studies was conducted by Fox and Varadarajan (2011) who assessed the effectiveness of using Twitter to encourage interaction between faculty members and students. They concluded that more than 80% of students indicated that using Twitter facilitated class participation and allowed an opportunity to voice opinions. These findings align with Bacon (2009) who suggested that online communities are the foundation for how online group members “work together, share goals and ambitions, and build social relationships between each other” (p. 67). In his book *The Art of Community*, Bacon describes the three primary areas that communication can be divided into: incoming, outgoing and internal. Internal communication is “meetings in the community to discuss objectives, goals, conflict, and other issues” (p. 67). This further suggests that if instructors hold their office hours through Facebook it could potential to build a strong sense of community within the group and that giving students the opportunity to communicate could lead to higher achievement and success within the group.

Facebook in an Educational Context.

In *Building Successful Online Communities* Kraut and Resnick discuss the process and challenges involved in starting new online communities. The authors introduce three challenges in starting a new community: carving out a niche; defending the niche in an ecology of competing communities; and getting a critical mass of participation (2011. P. 231). An additional challenge found within carving out a niche community and getting people to participate is competing with platforms that have a similar offering and are already being used (p. 248). This challenge was also discussed by participants in Focus Group B specifically when they spoke of working on assignments together, noting that Google Docs already serves as a tool for this. Again, this is an example of how participants viewed Facebook and Google Docs as mutually exclusive, despite Google Docs not necessarily bring a community but rather a tool that allows students to work on assignments as a group.

Participants also discussed the need to compartmentalize their lives and disconnect school life from personal life. They liked the idea of having access to materials, other students, and instructors but did not want it fully integrated with their personal lives. Students predominately have been using Facebook for personal use which is where they are comfortable, and now a different use is being proposed and students are voicing that they do not want it to interfere with their existing use of Facebook. Furthermore, they noted that if Facebook offered the ability to switch from a personal view to an educational view—like Business Manager—they would consider using it. One student explained this further saying,

They have Facebook for Business. They should do Facebook for Education ... because then Facebook for Business is kind of like Slack, but it's more... Like, you have a profile and stuff. So, if they did Facebook for Education, you could connect your regular

Facebook or not have a Facebook and create an Education profile. Then you could interact with your teachers and stuff. But be separate.

When participants discussed Facebook as a good option for sharing information and communicating quickly, they suggested that the ideal platform for groupwork in an educational setting would be a combination of Facebook and Google Docs. One participant noted that Google Docs is a great tool for working on assignments as a group and said if Facebook offered this, they would likely use it. As other participants gave their thoughts on the subject the researcher noted that students agreed with this, and it was suggested that a new social tool—what they called ‘Facebook for Education’—be created. This would be used for educational purposes only as it allows students more privacy within their student and personal lives and would give students the opportunity to share information, communicate and work together all in platform. It would have features like Facebook Groups and Messenger, but also incorporate elements of a variety of other tools, including Google Docs, so students would have a space to actually work on assignments together, at the same time, regardless of their physical location. A question for further exploration on having a ‘Facebook for Education’ tool would be the consideration of where instructors fit. It is likely that this education-focused social media tool would be built for instructors and students to use together, collaboratively, assuming that privacy concerns are met. This could function similarly to Facebook for Business, which allows Facebook users to operate as Business Administrators on the platform without having to “friend” their colleagues.

Discussion with both focus groups suggested that more research needs to be done around what a potential social media tool for education would look like in regard to functionality and the tools within it, but also how students would be trained on how to use it. This connects back to the ‘Social Media Virtual Classroom,’ a concept brought forth by Howard Rheingold (2008) who

suggested that under this model students can use multiple online media in their exploration of classroom texts and materials. Rheingold further suggests that although students are willing to learn new media tools, it is not an innate skill and requires onboarding to ease the learning curve. In other words, students will need to learn how Facebook works and how to best use it in an educational context. Perhaps a “Social Media Virtual Classroom” could be implemented using Facebook and Google Docs, thus creating the “Facebook for Education” participants showed a desire for. Results from this research study combined with the suggestions from Rheingold indicate the potential for Facebook to be used in an educational context. However Rheingold’s recommendations further suggest a need for understanding student and instructor needs and wants for an educational tool, as well as a need for training to ensure the platform is used for its created intention.

Facebook for Flipped Classroom Collaboration.

Participants often discussed using Facebook as a means to share information and communicate about a course prior to in-class time. Although they did not discuss using Facebook directly as a tool to work together on assignments, they did imply that through photo and information sharing Facebook enabled them to prepare for tests and assignments. Specifically, participants indicated that Facebook was a good tool for discussion about assignments—versus working on assignments—and getting answers to questions prior to seeing their instructors in class. Furthermore, perhaps there is an opportunity for instructors to use Facebook in their courses to help students prepare for tests and assignments prior to their in-class time. In their book *Flip your Classroom: Reach Every Student, in Every Class Every Day*, Bergmann & Sams (2012) discussed how they pioneered what came to be known as ‘the flipped classroom’. They used online videos to deliver content to students as homework and used their class time for

assignments, testing and practical application which they predicted would give instructors more time to address individual student concerns. In this type of classroom students use technology outside of the classroom to help prepare them for in-class learning. To successfully be used in a flipped classroom, Facebook would need to be used regularly by all students and the instructor

Furthermore, in the book *Flipping 2.0*, author Jason Bretzmann (2013) discusses implementing technology into the classroom, specifically noting the positive aspects of incorporating technology into a flipped classroom structure:

...high student ownership of learning, class time is adaptive to student needs, students feel more confident in their learning because the stress of one-time performance is removed, and class time is collaborative and engaging (p. 14).

In Bretzmann's book guest writer Kenny Bosch introduces a concept called *part-time flipping*, in which instructors use technology to help students prepare for assignments prior to coming to class. He gives an example of how this could work explaining that instructors can provide a link to a video explaining an assignment and showing the rubric in advance, allowing students the opportunity to come to class prepared with questions (p. 219). Although Bosch and Bretzmann do not mention social media explicitly, the book offers use cases like the one mentioned above that could be used while incorporating the use of Facebook in an educational context.

Flipped Classroom Use Cases

A flipped classroom provides a method to use Facebook's tools effectively. Here is use case example of how a flipped classroom could be implemented in an educational context for a postgraduate college course. At the start of a course an instructor creates a Facebook Group with students and in that Facebook Group posts a video about an upcoming group assignment. The

video is a visual of the assignment's rubric and the instructor's voice plays over audio. Also, if necessary the instructor could post a video of a previous assignment done on the topic, walking students through what needs to be included. Students would then be encouraged to create a conversation with their assignment group in Facebook Messenger where they can discuss who will take on what role and complete which part of the assignment. Although Groups and Messenger could allow for efficient conversations within small groups, Messenger is a more appropriate choice as participants indicated it was more efficient for synchronous communication. Once the students come to class they will have a better idea of the task at hand and will be prepared to ask the instructor questions. If it was a three-hour class, the first half would be a lesson and the second half of class would be a lab-style class in which students work independently on what they are learning and ask the instructor questions as needed. As students' progress through working on their assignment they will have the option to ask their instructor questions during the instructor's Facebook Messenger office hours and share a live document via a collaborative, word-processing tool, where the instructor can add comments or message students in real-time on Facebook Messenger.

Another important consideration to be made includes addressing the implications of student's privacy concerns in using Facebook to collaborate. To successfully implement the use of Facebook in a flipped classroom, instructors should introduce Facebook to students and set expectations. What this means is the instructor will create the Facebook Group and show students how to use the tool. It also means the instructor could set specific dates and times in which they will be on Messenger and available to students. Part of this will involve showing students how to use Messenger to contact the instructor, noting students and instructors are not required to be Facebook friends prior to communicating on Messenger. It should be noted here

that virtual office hours and flipped classrooms are not dependent on one another and do not have to both exist for a successful flipped classroom to be implemented.

This research study has suggested that Facebook has the tools that could be used by students for collaboration in an educational context. Furthermore, the researcher also notes that there are additional ways social media might be used by instructors, the flipped classroom being one example. Furthermore, the researcher suggests two examples of how instructors can use Facebook. First, through the use of Facebook Groups educators can share information and communicate with students, answering questions and clarifying as needed. Collaboration in this context can take place among students but also between students and the instructor. This is different from a more traditional setting where students typically communicate only with one another. Second, through the use of Facebook Messenger instructors can offer scheduled office hours to give students the opportunity to receive one-on-one counselling in a structured way that is better suited to their lifestyles and schedules.

Research Effectiveness

Theory

Looking at the topic of student's use of social media in an educational context was guided by three theories: Uses and Gratifications Theory, Variation Theory and Social Media Integration Theory. These theories provided perspective into student's perceived behaviours. Through the lens of Uses and Gratifications Theory the researcher was able to understand how using Facebook in an educational context satisfies a particular need that students have. Results from this study have indicated that Facebook could potentially be a useful tool in the process of two-way information exchange, a perspective taken through the lens of Social Media Integration

Theory. Lastly, when taking the perspective of Variation Theory, this study has provided insight to the potential ways in which Facebook can be used to contribute to the process of absorbing and sharing information.

The Method

The choice of focus groups succeeded in getting the kind of information the researcher had planning for. Focus groups allowed the researcher to gain an understanding of participant's shared experiences through group discussion. A semi-structured approach ensured the researcher's ability to guide the discussion and use probing questions to dive deeper into content of the discussion when needed. Although the participants had graduated in different years, it would be helpful to have had former students from various programs within the college participate as well. Having participants from different programs may have led to different perspectives on the topic at hand. Focus groups seemed to be an ideal method for gathering student perspectives. The size of the focus groups (4-5 participants in each) worked well but having a slightly larger group would have made room for various perspectives and potentially more discussion. If this study were to be replicated it would be a useful idea to conduct additional focus groups, separating current students from those who had graduated. This is because students who have graduated have an additional perspective that includes what they may have done different whereas students who are currently using social media may describe use cases that they are actually experiencing. The researcher found that because participants had graduated, their comments on how Facebook was being used in an educational setting was more about what they remembered doing versus what they did do. Additionally, it could be helpful to have participants with varying degrees of experience with Facebook—some who were just

introduced to it and others that have more extensive history with using the platform. These participants would be separated into different focus groups to keep the two perspectives separate.

Future Research and Conclusion

The focus of this research was on students and it is suggested that future research also focus on instructors. This kind of research focus might contribute to a better understanding of how and if instructors are using social media in their courses and could provide insight and learning for instructors to embrace social media tools in an educational context. Furthermore, this study provided insight into how students are using Facebook in an educational context but did not look at how instructors use Facebook in an educational context. Future research could also involve taking a deeper dive into understanding how social media is being used in postgraduate courses. Second, it could be useful to also gain insight into how student collaboration in an educational context is happening from an instructor's perspective.

Additionally, future research should look at other social media platforms as well, particularly new ones that perhaps do not have as much research conducted on them. These platforms might include Instagram, Snapchat and YouTube. It would be useful to know if newer social media platforms have a higher potential for integration into an educational environment. After learning that Facebook Messenger and Groups were particularly useful to students, future research could address use cases of tools within other social media platforms.

Privacy and boundaries was a topic that came up throughout the discussion as a potential issue for students when it came to using Facebook in an educational context. Privacy and boundaries were noted as an important consideration by participants in this study. As such, it could be valuable to better understand the roles of privacy and boundaries in using social media

in an educational context. It would also be useful for future research to look at investigating how students separate their discussion and responses when it comes to use of Facebook in their personal lives and in an educational context. This is partially because the researcher found it difficult to engage students in a discussion about their use of Facebook in an educational context without it intersecting with their use of Facebook in a personal context. The use of social media is evolving and looking at people with different experiences with social media is a worthwhile topic to explore.

Results from this study have given perspective to how students use Facebook in an educational context—to share information, to work together and to communicate. This is based on the definition of collaboration used throughout the study. Results from this study also suggest ways in which students can leverage Facebook Groups and Messenger in an educational context.

Elavsky (2011) explored the research question: “Can social media be used to enhance the process of learning by students in higher education?” Results of this study reveal an example of examining Facebook in an educational context, but research on other social media platforms is needed. Furthermore, this study focused on the use of Facebook for collaboration and did not examine how Facebook contributes to student learning. Learning—to some extent—was an underlying theme, since if students are using Facebook effectively in an educational setting it would be a reasonable assumption that it may contribute to learning. More research on how social media contributes to learning could also further research in the field of education.

After conducting this study the researcher can conclude that what remains are important questions about exploring how instructors use and could use social media and how students can use Facebook and other social media tools to work collaboratively on tasks such as group assignments.

I am now more confident than ever that there is potential for Facebook—and potentially other social media platforms—to be involved in the student-to-student and student-to-instructor process of information sharing, communication and working together. I hope this study is the beginning of a long road toward understanding use cases for social media in an educational context.

This study indicated that postgraduate students are—in some ways—using Facebook in an educational context to collaborate. However, the ways in which they are collaborating is limited and therefore should be researched further. As such, this case study concludes there are a number of areas where additional research is warranted, including:

- How are instructors using Facebook in an educational context?
- What instruction do instructors' think would be helpful to successfully use social media in the classroom?
- How can social media platforms support collaboration in education?

References

- Abe, P., & Jordan, N. A. (2013). *Integrating Social Media into the Classroom Curriculum*. About Campus, 18(1), 16-20. doi:10.1002/abc.21107
- Akcaoglu, M., & Bowman, N. D. (2016). *Using instructor-led Facebook groups to enhance students' perceptions of course content*. Computers In Human Behavior, 65582-590. doi:10.1016/j.chb.2016.05.02
- Alexander, B. (2006). Web 2.0: *A New Wave of Innovation for Teaching and Learning?* EDUCAUSE Review, 41(2), 33-34.
- Bacon, J. (2012). *The art of community: Building the New Age of participation*. Sebastopol, CA: O'Reilly & Associates.
- Barnes, Kassandra; Marateo, Raymond C.; and Ferris, S. Pixy (2007) *Teaching and Learning with the Net Generation*. Innovate: Journal of Online Education: Vol. 3 : Iss. 4 , Article 1. Available at: <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/innovate/vol3/iss4/1>
- Barnes, M. (2014). *Teaching the iStudent: a quick guide to using mobile devices and social media in the K-12 classroom*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications Inc.
- Bergmann, J., & Sams, A. (2012). *Flip your classroom: Reach every student in every class every day*. Eugene: International Society for Technology in Education.
- Blankenship, Mark. *How Social Media Can and Should Impact Higher Education*. The Education Digest; Ann Arbor 76.7 (Mar 2011): 39-42.

- Bosman L., Zagenczyk T. (2011) *Revitalize Your Teaching: Creative Approaches to Applying Social Media in the Classroom*. In: White B., King I., Tsang P. (eds) *Social Media Tools and Platforms in Learning Environments*. Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Brady, K. P., Holcomb, L. B., & Smith, B. V. (2010). *The Use of Alternative Social Networking Sites in Higher Educational Settings: A Case Study of the E-Learning Benefits of Ning in Education*. *Journal Of Interactive Online Learning*, 9(2), 151-170.
- Braun, Virginia; Victoria Clarke (2006). "Using thematic analysis in psychology". *Qualitative Research in Psychology*. **3** (2): 83. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa
- Bretzmann, J. (2013). *Flipping 2.0 practical strategies for flipping your class*. New Berlin: Bretzmann Group.
- Brook, C., & Oliver, R. (2003). *Online learning communities: Investigating a design framework*. *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, 19(2).
- Cambridge Dictionary | English Dictionary, Translations & Thesaurus. (2018). Retrieved from <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/>
- Canada, G. O. (2016, November 23). *Postsecondary enrolments by institution type, registration status, province and sex (Both sexes)*. Retrieved November 25, 2017, from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/tables-tableaux/sum-som/l01/cst01/educ71a-eng.htm>
- Carey, M. A., & Asbury, J. (2012). *Focus group research*. Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press.
- Carpenter, Jeffrey P. & Krutka, Daniel G. (2014) *How and Why Educators Use Twitter: A Survey of the Field*. *Journal of Research on Technology in Education*, 46:4, 414-434, DOI: 10.1080/15391523.2014.925701 Center for Research in Innovation and Teaching: Group

- Work in the Classroom. (n.d.). Retrieved August 14, 2018, from <https://cirt.gcu.edu/teaching3/tips/groupwork>
- Churchill, D. (2009). *Educational applications of Web 2.0: Using blogs to support teaching and learning*. British Journal of Educational Technology, 40(1), 179–183.
- Ciampa, M., Thrasher, E. H., & Revels, M. A. (2016). *Social Media Use in Academics: Undergraduate Perceptions and Practices*. Journal Of Educational Technology, 12(4), 10-19.
- CL1 - More Information: What is Collaborative Learning? (1997). Retrieved July, 2018, from <http://archive.wceruw.org/cl1/CL/moreinfo/MI2A.htm>
- College Profile / Stats | Conestoga College. (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.conestogac.on.ca/about/profilestats.jsp>
- Craig, R. T., & Muller, H. L. (2007). *Theorizing communication: Readings across traditions*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications.
- Dabbagh, N., & Kitsantas, A. (2012). Personal Learning Environments, social media, and self-regulated learning: A natural formula for connecting formal and informal learning. *The Internet and higher education*, 15(1), 3-8.
- David L, "Uses and Gratification Theory," in *Learning Theories*, January 26, 2016, <https://www.learning-theories.com/uses-and-gratification-theory.html>
- DiCicco-Bloom, B., & Crabtree, B. F. (2006). *Making sense of qualitative research*. Blackwell Publishing.

Dinsmore, D., & Parkinson, M. (2018, July 18). Self-Regulated Learning - Education - Oxford

Bibliographies - obo. Retrieved from

<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780199756810/obo-9780199756810-0112.xml>

Dominic, D. D., & Hina, S. (2016, August). Engaging university students in hands on learning

practices and social media collaboration. In *Computer and Information Sciences*

(*ICCOINS*), 2016 3rd International Conference on (pp. 559-563). IEEE.

Ellison, N. B., Steinfield, C. and Lampe, C. (2007), The Benefits of Facebook “Friends:” Social

Capital and College Students’ Use of Online Social Network Sites. *Journal of Computer-*

Mediated Communication, 12: 1143-1168. doi:10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00367.x

Elavsky, C. M., Mislan, C., & Elavsky, S. (2011). *When talking less is more: Exploring*

outcomes of Twitter usage in the large-lecture hall. *Learning, Media and Technology*, 36, 215–233.

Evans, C. (2013). *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

Facebook Company Info. (2018, March 31). Retrieved from [https://newsroom.fb.com/company-](https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/)

[info/](https://newsroom.fb.com/company-info/)

Facebook. (2018, March). Retrieved from [https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/facebook-](https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/facebook-tips-whats-the-difference-between-a-facebook-page-and-group/324706977130/)

[tips-whats-the-difference-between-a-facebook-page-and-group/324706977130/](https://www.facebook.com/notes/facebook/facebook-tips-whats-the-difference-between-a-facebook-page-and-group/324706977130/)

- Fox, B. I., & Varadarajan, R. (2011). *Use of Twitter to encourage interaction in a multi-campus pharmacy management course*. American Journal of Pharmaceutical. Education, 75(5), 1–8.
- Garcia, I. (2015, February 07). Social Media-Integration-Theory-Model. Retrieved June 08, 2017, from <http://www.socialmediatoday.com/content/social-media-integration-theory-model>
- Gikas, J., & Grant, M. M. (2013). *Mobile computing devices in higher education: Student perspectives on learning with cellphones, smartphones & social media*. The Internet and Higher Education, 19, 18-26.
- Government of Ontario. (2018). Blended Learning. Retrieved from <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/elearning/blend.html>
- Graham, C. R. (2004). Blended learning systems: Definition, current trends, and future directions. In C. J. Bonk, & C. R. Graham (Eds.), *Handbook of blended learning: Global perspectives, local designs*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc., Pfeiffer Publishing, 89 Market Street, San Francisco, CA.
- Gülbahar, Y., Rapp, C., Kilis, S., & Sitnikova, A. (2017). *Enriching Higher Education with Social Media: Development and Evaluation of a Social Media Toolkit*. International Review Of Research In Open And Distributed Learning, 18(1), 23-39.
- Howard, T. W. (2010). *Design to thrive: Creating social networks and online communities that last*. Burlington, MA: Morgan Kaufmann.

- Hentges, S. (2016). *Toward #SocialJustice: Creating Social Media Community in Live and Online Classrooms*. *Transformations: The Journal Of Inclusive Scholarship And Pedagogy*, 26(2), 230-238.
- Hsieh, H., & Shannon, S. E. (2005). Three Approaches to Qualitative Content Analysis. *Qualitative Health Research*, 15(9), 1277-1288. doi:10.1177/1049732305276687
- Irene Nga Yee, C., Janet Kit Yan, C., Suria Suet Yee, K., & Kenneth Mei Yee, L. (2016). Effectiveness and obstacle of using Facebook as a tool to facilitate student-centred learning in higher education. *Asia-Pacific Forum On Science Learning & Teaching*, 17(2), 1-14.
- Kitzinger, J. (1995). Qualitative research. Introducing focus groups. *BMJ: British medical journal*, 311(7000), 299.
- Kraut, R. E., Resnick, P., & Kiesler, S. (2016). *Building successful online communities: Evidence-based social design*. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Lampe, C., Wohn, D.Y., Vitak, J. et al. Computer Supported Learning (2011) 6: 329. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11412-011-9115-y>
- Levy, Mark; Sven Windahl (1985). "The concept of audience activity". *Media gratifications research: Current perspectives*: 109–122.
- Lockyer, L., & Patterson, J. (2008). *Integrating social networking technologies in education: A case study of a formal learning environment*. In P. Díaz, I. Aedo, & E. Mora (Eds.), *Proceedings of 8th IEEE International Conference on Advanced Learning Technologies* (pp. 529–533). Los Alamitos, CA: Conference Publishing Services.

Martinez-Moyano, I. J. *Exploring the Dynamics of Collaboration in Interorganizational Settings*, Ch. 4, p. 83, in Schuman (Editor). *Creating a Culture of Collaboration*. Jossey-bass, 2006. ISBN 0-7879-8116-8.

Matzat, U., & Vrieling, E. (2016). *Self-regulated learning and social media – a ‘natural alliance’? Evidence on students’ self-regulation of learning, social media use, and student–teacher relationship*. *Learning, Media & Technology*, 41(1), 73-99.
doi:10.1080/17439884.2015.1064953

Mayan, M. J. (2009). *Essentials of qualitative inquiry*. Walnut Creek: Left Coast Press.

McCracken, G. (1988). *The Long Interview*. Sage Publications.

Midgley, S. (2018). What is Distance Learning? Retrieved from
<https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/distance-learning/what-is-distance-learning/>

Moody, M. (2010). *Teaching Twitter and Beyond: Tips for Incorporating Social Media in Traditional Courses*. *Journal Of Magazine & New Media Research*, 11(2), 1-9.

Morse, J.M., Barrett, M., Mayan, M., Olson, K. & Spiers, J. (2002). Verification strategies for establishing reliability and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 1(2), 13-22.

Morse, J. M. (2015). “Data Were Saturated...” *Qualitative Health Research*, 25(5) 587–588. Doi: 10.1177/1049732315576699

MySpace and Facebook: Applying the Uses and Gratifications Theory to Exploring Friend-Networking Sites. John Raacke and Jennifer Bonds-Raacke. *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 2008 11:2, 169-174

Oliver, M. & Trigwell, K. (2005). Can 'Blended learning' be redeemed? *E-learning*, Volume 2 (Number 1), 17-26.

http://www.worldwords.co.uk/pdf/validate.asp?j=elea&vol=2&issue=1&year=2005&article=3_Oliver_ELEA_2_1_web Retrieved July 27, 2018.

Program Department. (2018). Retrieved from <http://program.yourschools.ca/early-learning/the-inquiry-process-in-kindergarten/knowledge-building/>

Rheingold, H. (2008). *Using social media to teach social media*. *New England Journal of Higher Education*, 23(1), 25–26.

Schoper, S. E., & Hill, A. R. (2017). Using Facebook to Promote Learning: A Case Study. *Journal Of Learning Spaces*, 6(1), 34-39.

Shirky, C. (2009). *Here comes everybody: How digital networks transform our ability to gather and cooperate*. London: Penguin.

Spradley, J. P. (2016). *The Ethnographic Interview*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press. Smith, A., & Anderson, M. (2018, March 01). Social Media Use in 2018. Retrieved August 13, 2018, from <http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>

Stanojevic, M. (2003). Integration Platform for De-Centralized Investment Projects Appraisal. *Adaptive Technologies and Business Integration*, 96-108.
doi:10.4018/9781599040486.ch016

T. (2016, March 28). Incorporating & accounting for Social Media in Education | Harry Dyer | TEDxNorwichED. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZteEZbAtsNI>

Welch, B. K., & Bonnan-White, J. (2012). *Twittering to increase student engagement in the university classroom. Knowledge Management & E-Learning: An International Journal (KM&EL)*, 4(3), 325-345.

West, Richard; Turner, Lynn (2007). *Introducing Communication Theory*. McGraw Hill. pp. 392–409.

What is Self-Regulated Learning? (2017, June 08). Retrieved from https://serc.carleton.edu/sage2yc/self_regulated/what.html

What is web 2.0? Business Dictionary. (2018). Retrieved from <http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/web-2-0.html>

Appendix A: Focus Group Question Guide

1. Let's talk about collaboration. How do students define collaboration?

**After group discussion, definition of collaboration for the purpose of the study will be defined.*

The goal of this research is to explore how students use social media to share information, to communicate, and to work together. As such, I have developed a research question to guide my study: How are postgraduate college students using Facebook for collaboration in an educational context?

2. How do you currently see social media being used?
3. What do you see Facebook being used for by you and those around you?
4. How do you see Facebook being used at school?
5. How do you use Facebook on your own or in a group setting? What do you like or dislike about this?
6. Tell me how you see Facebook messenger being used.
7. Tell me about the messenger conversations you see.
8. Tell me about group pages.
9. How does Facebook play a role in test preparation?
10. How does Facebook play a role in working on group assignments?
11. Do you see other roles for Facebook to play or have in future courses?
12. How do you use Facebook to communicate?
13. Tell me about how Facebook is or is not involved in the process of studying.
14. Do you use Facebook to communicate with other students?
15. Do you use Facebook to communicate to with instructors? Tell me about it.
16. How has Facebook changed from when you started school to now?
17. Is there anything you see about how Facebook will continue to change in the future?

Appendix B: INFORMATION LETTER and CONSENT FORM

Study Title: College Students: Understanding the Use of Facebook in an Educational Context

Research Investigator:

Rebecca Grieb
Master's student (MACT)

grieb@ualberta.ca

519.404.5666

Supervisor:

Dr. Stanley Varnhagen
Communications & Technology

sv1@ualberta.ca

780.492.3641

Background

- Invitation to participate in research project:
 - There is increasing attention being given to social media as a platform for use in the classroom. While a review of the literature provides an understanding of why social media is being used outside of the classroom and in the classroom by instructors and students, there is limited depth in understanding of how students are using social media in an educational context.
 - You have been asked to participate in this study to both enhance the scholarship found on the subject, but also to strengthen college instructor's understanding and knowledge of these platforms. Your contact information was obtained via the program through which you were enrolled.
 - As a current student in the Master of Arts in Communication and Technology (MACT) program at the University of Alberta, I am interested in understanding how post-graduate college students are using social media in the classroom.
 - As an instructor at Conestoga College I also hope that findings from this study will enable faculty and those working in education to better use social media in their teaching and in curriculum development. Furthermore, findings from this research study hope to assist college faculty and instructors in developing stronger classroom curriculums and lesson plans.
 - The study's findings will be used as a submission to the Faculty of Extension at the University of Alberta in partial fulfillment for the degree of Master of Arts in Communications and Technology.

Study Procedures

- Proposed are two focus groups which have been arranged directly with participants based on availability. Each focus group session is expected to last 60 to 90 minutes in length.

- The study will be completed in the summer of 2018. Although results of the study will not be directly sent to participants, if you are interested in reading the capstone project paper, it should be available in the fall by following this link: <https://goo.gl/nknAcX>. Results of this study will be available to Conestoga College in the same fashion.
- Focus group participants will be voice-recorded for transcription purposes only.

Benefits

No monetary benefits. There may not also be any direct benefits for some participants.

Risk

There are no known risks.

Voluntary Participation

- You are under no obligation to participate in this study. The participation is completely voluntary, and you are not obliged to answer any specific questions.
- Even if you agree to be in the study you can change your mind and withdraw after consent has been given. If you choose to withdraw, you can notify the researcher at any time. However, data cannot be withdrawn.

Confidentiality & Anonymity

- Participants will not be personally identified in reports or findings, but rather identified through assigned participant numbers or an alias.
- Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity is a shared responsibility with the researcher and the participants, but this cannot be guaranteed. It is important that each participant not discuss who attended or what was said, outside of the focus group.
- Data will be digitally stored in a secure location (password protected) for a minimum of five years following completion of research project, and when appropriate destroyed in a way that ensures privacy and confidentiality.
- There is a possibility that data obtained in this study may be used to inform future research, with approval by the Research Ethics Board.
- Every effort will be made to protect the identity of respondents, including designing questions to avoid personal information capture that could be used to identify the study's participants. Aggregated results will be presented, and names will not be used.

Further Information

- If you have questions or require additional information, please contact Rebecca Grieb, research lead, at grieb@ualberta.ca or by phone at 519-404-5666.
- The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines by a Research Ethics Board at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Research Ethics Office at (780) 492-2615.

Consent Statement

I have read this form and the research study has been explained to me. I have been given the opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered. If I have additional questions, I have been told whom to contact. I agree to participate in the research study described above and will receive a copy of this consent form after I sign it.

Participant's Name (printed) and Signature

Date

Name (printed) and Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

Date

Appendix C: Transcripts

Group A

Okey dokey. I'm going to just hand you some consent forms to have a little read and then we'll go through it as a group. Here you go.

- Thank you.

Here you are.

- Thank you.

Okay. Let's doublecheck this is recording. It is. Okay.

Okay. So, thank you for coming. Oh my gosh. Thank you for coming. [Laughs] I know it probably feels as long for you as it has for me. Some of you have actually been with me since I first started the program, so. I'm in the last couple months of my Master's and I'm very, very excited to be very close. [Laughs] You can feel the excitement, yeah. So, this information letter was in the email that I sent you. So, if you've had a read, that's great. If you haven't, I'll walk you through a couple key things now. And then I put some pens on the table. Sign it whenever you're done, please. And if you need water, snacks, washroom breaks, anything like that while we're going, please feel free to just get up and help yourself. Okay. So, as you know, I am Becca. Thank you so much for coming. This is [notetaker name]. [name] is my note taker today. She is here to help me take some notes. Just here to observe and we are recording the session. So, if you have any questions after the session, if you want to hear anything, you can let me know and I'll have that available for you as well. Okay. So, I'm going to go through a couple things in this sheet, just to cover a couple key points. So, on page 1 under Background, I'm just going to read the first bullet there around the Invitation to Participate and where that kind of came from. So, it says, "There's increasing attention being given to social media as a platform for use in the classroom. While a review of the literature provides an understanding of why social media is being used, outside the classroom and inside of the classroom by instructors and students, there is a limited depth in understanding how students are using social media in an educational context specifically." As you know, I'm enrolled in the Master of Arts in Communications and Technology Program at the University of Alberta. I'm about 3 months out from finishing my thesis and this is the final step in doing that. So, thank you again for coming.

[Laughs] A couple things under Study Procedures. Today's Focus Group is scheduled for about 90 minutes, so it's 5 after 7 now. We should be done here wrapping up by 8:30. Might be done earlier but 8:30 we'll for sure be at a hard stop. And I'm hoping to have this available in the fall if anyone would like some reading material, I can give that to you as well. And I'll share some of the results with you from what I've learned in today's Focus Group as well as tomorrow's Focus Group. Voluntary participation, so you're under no obligation to participate today. I'm very grateful for your help. If at any time you feel that you have to withdraw your participation, you're allowed to leave at any time. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data won't be withdrawn, so if we're talking for 60 minutes, and you decide, if for some reason, you have to leave, I can't withdraw the information you've previously given. So, just a heads up on that. And then, under Confidentiality, so you will not be identified by your name. We'll give you what is called anonymized identifiers. So, you will be given numbers and nowhere in the data will your name be given. And then, the only other ask as this is being recorded is that you maintain the integrity of the data by not sharing what we discuss here today and not identifying other participants in the study as well. Does anyone have any questions? Take a minute and have a read if you do, and if you give consent to participate, please sign on the bottom of page 2 and page 3 and then we'll go from there.

- What is today's date?
- The 5th.
- The 5th.

Oh, June 5th.

[Laughs]

It's a [INAUDIBLE 00:07:25].

[Laughs]

The air has decided to join us again, yes.

[Laughs]

Thank you.

Thank you.

[INAUDIBLE 00:08:06]

- Yeah, just after Randy [PHONETIC] probably. Yeah.
- Okay.

[Laughs]

Awesome. Thank you.

- I did both pages because I wasn't sure.
- Just for luck?
- Just for luck.

Perfect.

- I'm one of those people that my sheet will be the one to mysteriously disappear.

[Laughs]

Thank you. Awesome. Can I get anyone a water?

- I'm good.
- I'm okay.

Okay. Cool. Alright. So, I'm going to go through a couple questions. Try and participate if you think you can, if you have anything to say. There's really no right or wrong answers in this. The purpose of a Focus Group is for me to learn from you. You are the experts here, I'm not the expert and that's why we're here today so I can learn from you. So, please feel free to give honest open answers. I wanted to start with talking about my research question a little bit to give you an idea of what I'm studying and what I'm hoping to learn and then we'll kind of dive into a couple questions from there. If you have any questions at any time, please feel free to ask. So, I wanted to start by talking of the concept of collaboration. So, very generally, when you think of your experience as students, being in the classroom, being at school. How do you define collaboration? What does collaboration mean to you?

- Working together to achieve the same goal?
- Working together to achieve the same goal. Okay.
- I also think brainstorming is a big part of it. Hearing other people's ideas and working from the "what to say".

Okay, brainstorming, working together.

- Work on the same page, so everything's on track.
- Be on the same page so everything's on track. Okay.
- I definitely say "engagement" so that it's not just one or two people that are continuing that conversation, but it's really an active conversation from everybody. You tend to find

when you're doing collaborative work that some people will be a lot more vocal than others and so you have to make that extra effort to make sure that everybody is talking.

- Okay. Active participation from everybody.
- Yeah, from everybody.

Okay. Anything else?

- Group effort.

A group effort. Okay. Great. So, a comment being that I'm kind of hearing, is, "Collaboration is always about working as a group." So, whether you're brainstorming or you're engaging, you're making efforts to be actively engaged as in a group setting. You said, "Working towards a common goal." What do you think about that? Do you think collaboration means that you're trying to achieve the same thing? Or just that you're working together? Or maybe that everyone in the group is engaged. Maybe not working towards the same goal.

- I say it's almost always working toward the same - a common - goal. Yeah. Yeah. I'm trying to find or think of scenarios where it wasn't. And you find that if it's collaborating, it means that you've identified a problem or a situation where you need to bring in other people because you can't solve it on your own.

Okay. Anybody else? Okay. So, that's great. It's pretty closely aligned with the definition that I have been working with. Part of what's interesting about this research is that I'm not using a definition that I've pulled from a dictionary, I'm using it from previous literature that's been found on other people who have studied students and how they define collaboration. So, I'm going to read for you a short snippet of what I've found and I want to see how you feel about the definition that's been given. So, the goal of this research is to explore how students use social media to share information to communicate and to work together. So, the general definition that we've found through about 10 years of reviewing the literature is that students define collaboration in 3 ways. Sharing information, communicating, and working together. Do you agree? Disagree? Still feel that your definition is more relevant? We talked about working together toward a common goal, versus sharing information, communicating, working together.

- Maybe this is the creatable aspect to working together. You're not necessarily sharing information, you're creating something. I don't know if I'd call that information.

Okay. So, you're saying less information sharing, more creative.

- Yeah. And you happen to be trying to create the same thing, but you all approach it differently.

Okay. Great.

- Like I said, I guess work sounds a bit different than collective creativity.

Collective creativity, okay. What does anybody else think about that?

- Well, I agree with your point. That I think it's less about information and more... I feel with collaboration it's almost working toward something actionable. It's not necessarily just sharing information. It's almost like a half a step forward from that.

Okay.

- It's kind of like you have a piece of information already, and it's kind of like the collective understanding and you're kind of trying to build on that. And you're trying to have this little community of creativity and figuring out what that can manifest itself into.

Great.

- I think that sharing information is maybe a little bit different if I think of some of the group projects that we did in school. Everybody was kind of assigned a different role within, so you're not necessarily sharing your personal information, like what you are gathering for the project with the other people in your group. Unless you're working on the same topic and all writing the same thing. But if you think about planning an event or that course, each group, I guess, was tasked with a different thing. So, some people

would be responsible for the social media and other people for the procurement of supplies, so the people in the procurement of supplies weren't necessarily sharing information with the social media team but they were working together for that common goal of having a successful event. But I can't say that sharing information would only encompass what that role looked at.

- *Right. Okay. Great.*
- Is it anything around role fulfillment or something? You fulfill your role properly.
- Yeah.
- I guess [INAUDIBLE 00:16:22].
- Okay.
- But ultimately that does affect the success of what you're goal is, I think. If people don't pull their weight, it's... Your outcome isn't going to be your desired outcome that you want.

Right. Great. Awesome. Okay, that's great. That's a perfect start. So, I brought my research question. I wanted to have a brainstorm first so we're kind of working with your definition of collaboration. But I want to share my research question because I think it will help you to answer some of these questions. So, my research question is, "How are post graduate college students using Facebook for collaboration in an educational context?" So, I want to know how Facebook is being used specifically for collaboration in an educational context. So, educational context can mean in the classroom, in school, for schoolwork, for studying, for assignments, any of those kinds of things. But collaboration. So, if we've talked about themes of working together, working toward a common goal, how does Facebook kind of fit into that in an academic setting? So, a couple questions related to collaboration and then we'll dive a little bit into Facebook and you might have more success with some questions than others. So, feel free to jump in as you can. Okay. So, my first question is pretty general. So, how do you see social media being used at school?

- Toward the education purpose?

In any context.

- Well, for assignments we'll create a group in Facebook and chitchat about that. Maybe, create a poll, just so we don't have to meet just for a little question. Or ask anyone, there's an option to create poll in Messenger. And you can easily create a poll and take everybody's opinion on that.

What kind of questions would you ask in polls?

- Any like, "We are doing this marketing campaign and what would be the budget?" And then we set up the budget between 1,000 to 2,000, 2,000 to 5,000, 10 to 15. Everybody would vote on that.

Okay. Okay, interesting. Polls on Messenger. Okay.

- I'm just trying to think back to, this was just recently, but with as [name] said, we had an IMC 2018 group. So, if anyone had any questions or any comments about an assignment, it would be posted there. And whoever had the answers or whoever knew what the answer is, they would comment and reply to that post. I also, being a student, I remember using Snapchat a lot. Filters, "This was my day at school." Instagram, just stories like, "This is what we're doing. Today we went on a field trip to a grocery store," or something like that.
- Yeah.
- Just updates on what was going on within the program. Because it was very interactive.
- Right.
- So, I think that's how it was used at school.

- Yeah, I use Snapchat a lot. [Laughs]
- Snapchat his entire class.

[Laughs]

- Yeah, I Snapchat an entire class, during class, yeah.
- I do vaguely remember that.

[Laughs]

- I'll pretend I didn't. [Laughs] Any other ways social media is being used at school? And if not, that's okay. I just want to make sure.
- I remember people working on certain projects, and then updating everybody else with photos, for example. Like when we had to build props, I remember we would say, "Hey, what do you think of this?" And then everybody would see it and then we would get a comment on it. I remember building... I didn't build it. [Laughs] But I remember looking at it and criticizing it. Like constructively to make it better. Or I think it built a bit of morale for the class. Like, "Oh, wow." It would make us excited, even when we weren't at school to see how we were working on certain projects together.
- Nice.
- That was helpful. And also, documents. It was a great place to put links to... I remember, well I know it's not social media. But we would link to a lot of Google Docs. So, it was a great hub for all of our... It was like a file for all of the different documents we were working with. I remember that.

Right. Okay.

- I remember a couple of different ways with social media and they all ended up centering around Facebook. Just because of the time that I went to school, where Snapchat was more about personal use and Instagram was also more about personal use at that time. When I very first started postsecondary it was because I was coming from out of town, that was the way you were able to connect with basically the school. Everybody who was a first year. It was the easiest way of finding out everything from frosh and that would just be a general group where you could share events. And that made the transition really easy. And Facebook, at that time, everybody had it. So, it was the perfect medium to be able to use just to get somebody's attention. Because if you weren't so familiar with them, you didn't want to contact them through your phone. You didn't want them to have your phone number. So, even when I moved into graduate programs, because the groups were just like that perfect number of people, when you created the group on Facebook, it wasn't completely chaotic. Where you had a hundred people just spamming all the time. You can actually make it very proactive where you're sharing assignments and you can actually communicate to one another. And you also didn't feel that pressure of having to add your classmates, just because they were your classmates and share those kind of different forms and those links and so Facebook, I have to say, was the big one during my time in school.
- Right.
- And it progressed from a very social, "networkie-type" environment to a very academic space where you can actually utilize it properly.
- Right, nice. Okay. Sorry.
- No, I was just saying, "Yeah."

Okay. So, I wanted to dive a little bit more into Facebook specifically in the classroom. So, first question is when you are in class whether physically being in class or at school, how are you using it on your own versus with a group? Or were you using it on your own or as a group?

- I think as a group, just class or assignment purposes.

Okay.

- Any event coming up, or are we doing anything together, or a field trip or something, or anybody need help with something. Or anybody want to borrow some books so they post it, "I want this book, if anybody have it. From this to this time I'd like to read it."
- Right.

But no...

- In your class group?
- Yeah, in the class group.

Okay.

- But not as a personal use, as like a texting. Especially you like to actually message to the person, "Hey, I know you have this book. Can I borrow it?"

Yeah, okay.

- For me it wasn't like when I used Facebook on my own. It was more personal use, it wasn't very academic. But when I was using Facebook it was more stuff for academic purposes, like collaboratively. Like for an event, we would just... It would be an easy way to get in contact with all the group members. As you mentioned, instead of giving your number out, you were able to connect with them through Facebook. And also with class, if someone missed a day of school or they missed a class, you could just take a picture of the board but send them the lesson that they missed. Which was an easy way to pass on information.

Okay. Okay. Take a picture of the board and share it in...?

- Group.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- Yeah.
- Yeah, we've done two of them.
- Especially on snowy days when there weren't that many people.
- Yeah.
- And then assignment, like [instructor name], when we post assignment and instruction on the board [INAUDIBLE 00:25:05].

[Laughs]

- That's always on group.

[Laughs]

- I love how we laugh [INAUDIBLE 00:25:15].

[Laughs]

Do you count Messenger as part of this? Or...?

- I do. Yes.
- Alright. So sometimes, this happened a few times where I guess we.... I didn't do it, but some people would. Shit talk other people, like that got abused, and it was... Not in a... In a group, a little bit. But yeah, sometimes that happened on Messenger.

Okay.

- And...yeah.

Okay.

- Airing your frustrations more privately with another member of the group, "You know what, we're just all at our wit's end at this point. And it's going to cause a problem if I actually confront the situation and I just need to vent this right now, because I know you're frustrated, too."
- Right.
- So, it's like a little safe space. But again, if you're only just doing a group project with somebody, and you're never going to see them in the rest of your program. Like a 4-year program, you can just easily get rid of them after the group is done. And you just delete the group. You're not my friend on Facebook, you can't really contact me, so our business is through here.

Okay. So, I'm hearing a lot of communication. Like talking to other people, sharing photos. Would you say that communication over Facebook is the same as collaboration or is part of collaboration, is not part of collaboration?

- I think it helps keep people accountable, because you can call attention to somebody if they say, have a specific task in the assignment. And you can say, "Hey, I did my part, here it is. Are you going to be ready in time?" And it makes confrontations not as... People won't take them as personally.
- Right.
- Because it's not like you're being more physically confrontational where you're just going up to that person. You're making a point of talking to them to their face, "Hey, where's the assignment?" So, it's almost like that little barrier, but there's still that need to meet in person. Like I found a lot of it was, "Okay, just letting you know what's happening on my end. Now, when are we going to meet in person?" It was easy to figure out when you're meeting. And you can do things like the polls, like what day are you available, what time are you available, who's booking the room? And getting all these pieces together electronically, so that when you meet in person you're able to utilize your time best. Because you've kind of gone all that little, like the little pieces of information settled already. So, when you get there, you can be as productive as possible.

Okay. So, it's almost like a planning, like a scheduling tool?

- Yeah.
- Definitely.

Okay. Okay.

- And a responsibility tool, like you were saying. So, ensuring that everybody is responsible for the set pieces. So, I'd say communication is a huge part of collaboration because it shows you where you have to be and what the expectations are in fulfilling your due diligence, I guess.
- Right.

- And it's kind of a track record, too, of whether or not you reached out to that person. Nobody can say, "Well, I don't remember you ever telling me that."
- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- So, it's like you have...
- And it's timestamped.
- Yeah, it's timestamped.
- It's nice that you can see that they've read it.

[Laughs]

- Yeah.
- You can see... Yeah, they read it.
- That they can read the conversation.
- Yeah, so you see how many people have seen the post or seen your personal message to them.
- Yeah, that was a good way of figuring out, maybe, how honest some of your group members were. Because if they would swear up and down that they never saw it or whatever, and you had proof of it on Facebook. I wouldn't necessarily say something,

but it would be like, "Okay. Well, maybe I need to keep this person at an arm's length." Yeah. Just maybe either, "Now, you're a little bit suspect, because I have evidence."

[Laughs]

- I think that's the difference with Facebook Messenger or Gmail. They can easily say, "I never got that email," or, "I looked at my Inbox, it probably went to my Spam." You can make up so many different excuses, but with using that tool you can see who has seen the message or who has gotten it.
- Yeah.
- And when you talk with people who have seen messages, are these groups students-only groups? Or students-and-faculty groups? Or..."
- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- Students-only.
- I wouldn't say it's very common that you even can add faculty to faculty to Facebook. That's never really been my experience, that they're allowed to engage with you on social platforms. Or at least, from high school I knew that was a condition. While you're still my teacher, I can't have you on Facebook. But the moment I graduate, I can add you.
- Rite of passage.
- Yeah, rite of passage. It was such a wonderful rite of passage, too. When you look at teacher's Facebooks.

- Yeah.
- [Laughs]
- You kind of carry that. Or at least my impression was carry it through post-secondary work where it's just... You didn't feel comfortable adding those members because you just didn't think it was necessarily appropriate.

Okay.

- That's why you have LinkedIn.
- Yeah, exactly.

Would you want to have your teachers in these groups?

- No.
- No. Well...
- I like the distance.
- Yeah.
- The degree of separation.
- Yeah.

- And I feel like you can be more honest in some ways.
- Yeah.
- Yes.
- When you don't have teachers that are watching your things or seeing what you post.
- Yep.
- Yeah.

Okay. Okay.

- Maybe there's separate groups, but you always need a separate space just for students.
- It's fine if it's program-wide because then it's more like a community group rather than an assignment group. You don't want your teacher knowing that you left it until the day before. [Laughs] At 10 p.m. on that night going, "Oh my gosh, guys. I totally forgot about this assignment. Anybody have any insight?"
- "Who started this [INAUDIBLE 00:31:49]?"
- "Who started it? Did anybody do it yet?"
- "Maybe we can get him to change the day."

[Laughs]

Okay. So, I just want to revisit the definition of collaboration that I gave you at the beginning. So we said, "Collaboration, looking at collaboration as sharing information, communicating, and working together." Just kind of taking a halfway check. How do you feel about that definition? We've talked a lot about communication. Do you still think collaboration still involves sharing information, working together, communicating?

- I would say so, yeah.
- Yeah.
- Okay.
- Yeah, definitely in the context of Facebook. Sharing information is huge, right? I mean, what's Facebook used for if it's not for sharing information, right?
- Okay.
- There is a large part of the social aspect but I would say sharing information, especially in a student context.

Okay. So, if we stick with that definition. So, sharing information, communicating, working together. Can you tell me a little bit more about collaboration in that context? In Facebook groups and pages. How do you work together, how do you share information, how do you communicate?

- I actually cannot collaborate on the assignments part or research part. We don't usually use Messenger on that. We just text that this is posted on Google Docs [INAUDIBLE 00:33:42] about that on Messenger.

So, you don't use the page or the group, you use Messenger?

- Yeah, the Messenger. We do use page but the page is just for the updates on stuff, not the actual contact of assignments. Nobody wants to share at the groups.

Okay. Okay. So, why use... If you're working on an assignment, unless you would do something different, why would you use Google Docs and communicate that with Messenger instead of creating a Facebook group?

- Well, the Google Docs is on computer. Messenger's usually phone.

Okay.

- Computer, phone, computer, phone. [INAUDIBLE 00:34:29] clicking off the screen.

Okay.

- That's the one reason I can think of quick, but I think that's the easy way to do it. You can still pop up Facebook on your computer and then change it doing the clicking things, but I think this is easy. That's one reason.

Okay.

- I guess I see groups as more like a permanent fixture, for lack of a better word. I would see a group as something... You wouldn't create a group just for one small assignment. Because it's easier to communicate via Messenger because you can get that notification every time versus a group would be like the whole class is a part of it and you know that after graduation, for the 8 months of the program, it will be last. But this one assignment that you're working on might only be 3 weeks. So, it doesn't make sense to make a separate group just for your group, I guess.
- Yeah.

- I also think that with Messenger it's more of a quick, constant communication. With the group it's more of a delayed response. Someone could take a day to respond to you, but with Messenger it's, "Okay, you got the notification, you answer it right away." There's more of an urgency with the Messenger.
- Accountability.
- Exactly.
- Yeah.
- ...than there is with the actual group itself.

Okay.

- I see group as kind of a feed. It's your main points and notes that you need to say. It's like, "Alright, here is what this person is supposed to be doing, this person is supposed to be doing, this person's supposed to be doing." And you know you can always reference back to it, because it is a little bit more of a permanent fixture. It's more high-level information that you know you're going to need later on, as well. So, it's not like something you put up as a temporary message. Whereas with Google Docs, you find that not only are you able to all kind of work on the same document and you see that people are all working there. But it's more of a... You're able to do a lot of information all at once. That's where you can really make the assignments. Whereas if you were to just put that into something like the Groups feed and post, it's like this body of text that it's just there, and it's taking up all that space. And you can easily have it buried in all of this other information. You could bury something important by making it about this more temporary thing that you're working on.

Okay. That's really interesting how you talk about the permanence of groups, but Messenger is this active, quick, responsive kind of platform. Okay. So, when you think about your experiences in the classroom, maybe just outside of the classroom. Does Facebook play a role in test preparation? Mark, you're nodding yes.

- Yes. Yeah, I'm sorry. Yes. Yes.

[Laughs]

- I forgot. Yeah, definitely. During the cram period, we were, "Oh, you weren't there? Here are all the slides for our Marketing class." So, people who weren't there could review them. Absolutely. Test preparation was huge. Or if we had like a... I don't know if we did a...not a mock test, but I remember doing some kind of quizzes.
- Yeah.
- Right. So, we would say, "Oh, I'm stuck on this question. Anybody?" And you crowd-source an answer.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- That type of thing, if you were doing review. Or, "Can anyone explain the difference between Public Relations and Marketing?" For example. And then someone would chime in.

And where are you having those conversations.

- I remember being on the page. The IMC page that we had.
- The IMC page.
- I think it was a Group.

- At the group.
- At group, yeah the group. It was a page, wasn't it?
- Put it on comments.
- Like each, I think, I guess each graduating class is a different group, like 2016, 2017, 2018.
- Yeah.
- So pages are public?
- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- So, that...
- Oh, then I guess it...

So that would be an IMC page and groups are private.

- Oh, okay. Okay. Then it was a group, sorry.

In a group?

- Yeah, yeah.

Okay.

- I'm a summer student.
- No, that's fine. So you're sharing slides?
- Yes.
- Someone has a question and they don't know the answer, you're helping them.
- Yes, absolutely.
- And sharing photos. So, say we went over what was going to be on the test. Sharing that with people that weren't there [INAUDIBLE 00:39:07].
- Yeah.

Okay. Also, was this about studying? Or test preparation? Okay. This is... You can tell me about studying.

- Okay, well. It's tangentially related. It's like where... We put a lot of book deals, like if anyone found the textbook. It's unrelated, sorry.
- No, it's great.
- If anyone found... Yeah, that was a huge thing. We would...Deals, deals or...
- Like if Amazon has a Public Relations textbook for \$37.

- And if... I'm getting off, but I'm changing here. But I remember you shared with me if there were discounts on certification materials. That was also a great, great resource. That way everybody could see it.
- Okay.
- Yeah. That was really good. So, it was a great place to prepare for the life after school, as well.
- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- Like any related links or print information that people would be interested within the program.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- That would benefit us.
- It worked for job posts.
- Yeah.
- Yeah, that was a big thing, too. Big thing.
- Yeah. I don't want this job but there may be somebody out there that does.

- Yeah.

[Laughs]

- And you actually didn't have to enter a program that somebody had posted a job posting and then somebody actually got it.
- Yeah.
- Nice.
- Somebody in one of our Facebook groups.
- Yeah.

So, when do you typically create these groups?

- September.
- Right at the beginning.
- In the beginning.
- Mark made ours at the beginning of September.
- Yeah, I did it the second...the first week, the first day [INAUDIBLE 00:40:37] yes.

- Yeah.

- Yeah.

Okay.

- Like very early.

And you use them through the whole year?

- Yes.

- Yep.

- Yep.

Do you use them after?

- Yeah.

- To certain points.

- Yeah.

- A little bit.

- I get... Yeah, go ahead.

- Sorry. I was just going to say, I found that I still used it about a year and a half after the fact. Because I was still very much in that job search phase and I knew that other people were. And even when I got my full-time position, I had seen a couple that, within those first couple months. I was like, "Oh, this would have been so great; I would have applied to this." I'll share it with somebody on the group, but you notice it gets very quiet after a certain point. After graduation. Where everyone just kind of disconnects, and I'd say, I notice that more around the 9-month mark, everyone's still kind of engaging after 6 months because a lot of people are still searching. They could have either taken some time off and then gone and searched. Or they were just not finding a lot of luck. But after that, you don't really find people are using the group. You may see them on LinkedIn, but there is kind of this phase-off period. Where unless you have a personal connection to someone within that program, you're really not communicating with anyone from the program.

Okay. So, it's an active when-you're-in-school kind of thing.

- Yeah. I actually kept in touch with some classmates. On LinkedIn, not Facebook.

Okay.

- Yeah. Like it shifted over to that.
- And if it would be Facebook, it would be Facebook Messenger.
- Yes. That's right.

Okay.

- Because you have that personal connection that you've kind of made over the year.

Okay. So, test preparation...

- You use the group for... No, it's good. For sharing slides, it's great. It's all great information. So, you're preparing for tests, you're sharing slides, you're sharing photos, you're talking about topics, asking questions. Does that differ or change when you're working on assignments? We've touched on this a little bit.
- It depends if they're group assignments or individual.
- Oh well...I...yeah. I remember... Go ahead.

[Laughs]

- I remember, oh yeah, a lot of our posts we're frustrated about, "What the hell are we supposed to do for this assignment?" And then, us debating. Having a debate in the group about what this instruction means and then, basically us kind of saying, "That's it. Tomorrow, we're cornering an unnamed professor.[Laughs]
- Yeah.
- And we are demanding that they just spell out... Yeah, it was a way of I guess really getting a... What do you call it? A feel for the atmosphere or the public mood in the class. And nobody understands what the hell is going on. We all pretended we did in class. And now we don't, and it is a way of realizing we need to do something. We don't understand this assignment.
- Like a general consensus.
- Yeah, that's right. Yeah, it was like a poll. Well, like an informal poll, not an actual one. Yeah. I remember that happening more than once.
- Yeah.
- Yeah.

So, [participant name]. You said something interesting about group versus individual assignments. So, [participant name], were you talking group assignments?

- I'm talking about group assignments.
- Yes, this is what it means.
- Yes. yes.

Consensus, you said general consensus.

- And individually there, too.
- Yeah, if we all had gotten the sheet to do ourselves and like, "What the hell is this?"
- Yeah.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- Like the guidelines.
- Like an individual assignment, it means we were all working on the same part. Versus like a group, we could all have different sections of the assignment to do. So, I know for some material, it was just divided up. So the different types of advertising. There were some groups that had to do emotional and factual advertising and had some had to do, I don't know, positive and negative humor. And so, everybody had a different thing so it didn't really make sense for people to say to the whole group of all of the students, "I don't really understand how to do this." It made more sense to go to your little group of

people that were just working on the one. But if we all would have been assigned emotional and factual advertising, then it would have been a group conversation.

Okay. Okay. So, if we look at Messenger groups on Facebook, Facebook groups and Facebook pages, and you had to take and say yes or no to those three with its use for group and individual assignments, is there one that's used more in group? One that's used more for individual? Are they not used for one? So, if we start with Messenger. Using Facebook Messenger. Do you use it?

- For groups.
- Yeah, it did kind of [INAUDIBLE 00:45:34] groups.
- For sure.

Is there a purpose for Messenger when you're working individually on something?

- Individual... go ahead.
- I think if somebody has a question and they know that that person has finished the assignment, people would say, "Hey, I know you finished this assignment, can you help me with this little section that I don't understand?"

Okay.

- More on a personal level.
- Yeah.
- Yeah.

- Yeah.
- Yeah like how...
- But you have to have a good personal relationship with them in class for somebody to...
- It has to be very specific, like a targeted question. It's not just like, "Hey, so how'd you feel about the whole thing?" Right? "Wanna help me do my assignment for me? With me?"

Okay.

- Like asking for [INAUDIBLE 00:46:18], "What did you do?" Especially, like, "How many pages you done?" So, I have an overall... Especially the [INAUDIBLE 00:46:24] question.
- Page counts.
- "How many pages you have? So, I can do at least half of it, because I don't understand."

[Laughs]

- "How long did that take you?"

So, I'm hearing Messenger is being used for personal one-on-one conversations with targeted questions. You said targeted questions.

- Yeah.

So, groups. We've talked a lot about the use of groups. Those are those more general consensus kind of questions.

- Yeah.
- But they're also groups on Messenger.
- Yes.
- Yeah, that's right. For different assignments.

So, groups on Facebook versus Messenger groups. There is a distinction. So, when working on a group project, you would have a group on Messenger.

- Yes, I remember doing that a lot.
- Yeah.
- So, you have 3 people in your group and yourself, all 4 of you on Messenger together.
- Like a group chat.
- Yeah.
- Yes.
- Yeah, group chat.

Are the discussions different when it's, say, 4 people instead of 2 on Messenger?

- Yeah.
- Yes.
- Yeah, yeah.
- I think so, yeah.
- And it's not just one 4-people group. I would have 4 group assignments with a different bunch of people. Instead of 4 groups on Messenger, it's just 4 people or 3 people.
- Oh, wow.
- So, every group is different. Every communication with each group is different. Because people are different, too.

What do you mean the people are different?

- Like, I'm with her, and 3 of us on one assignment, then I'm with him on one assignment.
- So, different people on different assignments.
- So, different people. And on different topic, right? Yeah, different assignment.

Okay.

- That's why you always name those groups, too. Because you can have multiple assignments overlap. Or you can have, let's say, I have two different assignments where you're in it, but we're in one group together. And then, we're in one group together. So, I'll name ours the one assignment we're working on and I'll name ours the one assignment. Because, at a glance, I could easily mistake the two assignments.

And you mean physically naming it in Messenger?

- Yeah.
- Yeah, so you name the group what the assignments are. Or whatever. You can name them whatever you want but it's easier to name the assignments, so people remember what [INAUDIBLE 00:48:31].

Okay. So, if we... We've talked a lot about Messenger being for those quick, timely conversations for diving into specific questions. Does that change from one group to another? Is it different when the size of the Messenger group changes? If it's a group of 3 people versus a group of 8 people? Or is it still used for those specific questions and more targeted conversations?

It still depends on the project you're working in. Yeah.

- And also I find the larger the group gets, the more disorganized you find the Messenger gets. And so, if it's a large enough group, you know you can't have quick conversations. Because the feed will just bury everybody's comment, and it will just become spam and it's not productive.
- Yeah.
- And so it's more of a tool saying, "We are meeting up this time, this place. We are not doing this electronically. We are just making sure everybody knows where we're going to be physically."

Okay.

- And it also kind of depends, when it comes to groups, the tone. So, not just because of the assignment but how much you actually like those people.

Okay.

- That's another way you want to say, if you know somebody might not be as reliable, you'll probably communicate more on Messenger. So that you have that level of accountability with them. So you know that they've seen it. You have a written record that things were communicated.

Okay.

- Versus if you like the people you're working with, the conversation's not just purely the academic. It's a lot more lighthearted and you can say whatever you want about productivity, it depends on those people. But you just notice the tone's a little different and you might just use it to make sure you're all getting together at the same time where everyone knows what deadlines are.

Okay. That's interesting.

- Yeah, I think it gets to the point where I think maybe 5 and over within a [INAUDIBLE 00:50:49] Messenger group, I think it's a bit overwhelming. I think under 5 is more manageable. Because, as you were mentioning, it does get disorganized and everyone... It's hard to communicate in such a big group. So, I think once it gets to that point, I think it's more useful a tool for scheduling meetings, making sure everyone's on the right track versus actually brainstorming and actually conducting the work that needs to be done.

Okay. Interesting. Okay. Do you see any roles for Facebook to play in classrooms? So, when you're in your classroom during class time or just for educational use in general, other than what we've already talked about? Have you ever thought about using Messenger in a different way? Or groups or pages? Do you wish you could do something in the classroom that Facebook can't do?

- I'd say for the classroom, at least having a younger sibling, I've seen how different social platforms have adapted to be able to break into that market. And you notice that one, this newer generation doesn't really rely on Facebook the same way that we did. And don't necessarily have it. Because a lot of older people still have Facebook. They see it as more like, "Oh, my parents are on Facebook. I don't want them seeing my stuff." And specifically with classrooms, I find that my younger siblings' school has gravitated toward platforms like Google, where they have a structure called Google Classrooms, where it's a place where they're able to dump their assignments. Because Drive is pretty user-friendly and bigger fonts, and it's just aesthetically simple. And you just see that they've become a little more of a robust tool. Because they're not a social media platform, so they're able to kind of be seen a little bit more as a business platform. And being able to utilize them for assignments and whereas, for Facebook, you still see people are utilizing a lot more for community spaces and Facebook events. And just a lot more community or instant messaging. I wouldn't instant message anybody off of Google Hangouts. It's just not a good tool for that, because it doesn't work for everybody. But Facebook you can absolutely use Messenger.

Okay. So, it's not that you see it necessarily playing a different role, just that other tools serve a better purpose for certain parts of those conversations?

- I think part of it is that while Facebook was becoming a community communication platform, other platforms were trying to be more business and focused and go towards institutions. And they kind of got that leg-up while Facebook was doing what it does best. So, if it does become something, it may be interesting but you find that younger people just aren't attracted to Facebook as much as us. And I think with... There was also a big scare with... When you end up moving into the professional realm, you're warned that your social media presence may have an impact on your ability to get a job. And so now I find that my relationship with Facebook is completely different. I don't have anything publicly available other than profile pictures. I don't have any posts. I don't let people see my likes. You have to be approved in order to have a tagged photo of me and that is extremely purposeful. So, I don't even use it the same way that I used to because it can impact my professional life.

Okay.

- And I think what she's saying, too, is that People that aren't on Facebook aren't going to join just because they're in school, right? Because there are other platforms that serve the same purpose. I think especially with the launch of WhatsApp and things like that, people are already using WhatsApp for things outside of the classroom. Where in our

generation people are using Facebook for things outside of the classroom, right? So people aren't going to join just to be a part of the school [INAUDIBLE 00:55:55].

Right. Okay.

- I think the video function could be used a little more. For example, sometimes we have guest speakers and they are limited to people who are local. But I'm sure our professors had contacts. One of our professors was a Brit and I'm sure... And he worked at a very famous media company but they were out probably back in Britain, so that would have been cool if we get someone from them just to give us a 20-minute chat on Facebook and we could prepare some questions. So, I don't know if that's specific in Facebook, because there are lots of other video conferencing tools. But Facebook does have one, so why not use it, I guess.

Right. So, when you say video on Facebook, do you mean live video? Recording?

- Yeah, yeah. Interactive. Both, both. Like I think also as a... What was I going to say? Oh yeah. I think you need to see lots of good examples of what corporate or not-so-corporate pages are. So, it would be great to just scour Facebook for content and use...and bring real examples of, "Look, when you're in charge of your small companies, Facebook pages, some of us are. Here are some good examples." That would be great. Or how do... Maybe, learning how to navigate Facebook in a different way other than, "I just use search." I'm fairly limited in how I find information on Facebook, maybe. So, using it as a... Learning how to use it more as a user, to exploit all of its capabilities.

Okay. Okay. [INAUDIBLE 00:57:47] two of these already. Actually, if curious. So, one of the questions I had here we've already talked about. It was, "What role does Facebook play in studying?" Did we cover that? We talked about test preparation. Do you have any other thoughts around studying? We talked about information sharing, passing slides along to people. Is there anything you do as an individual, while you're studying, that incorporates Facebook?

- I think for the purposes of this program that we were in, I think reading more about this advantage or things like that on Facebook itself was beneficial. But other than that, I don't see myself using Facebook as a study tool, personally.

- Yeah.

Okay.

- Yeah, I agree with that. I think the most I ever did with Facebook in a study respect was just messaging somebody if I didn't understand something or setting up a study date with somebody, or just more of a communication. But I really just texted them. D2L sucked.

Okay.

- Because I just, the type of studying that I did. It needed to be in-person, it wasn't very independent.

Okay.

- But I think that there is potential for Facebook to become more of a studying tool if you have a group with professors or a page or something like that. Where, say, you had a digital tools group with your professor. And you had a question while you were studying. I think there's definitely potential for Facebook to become more of a studying tool, or taking over some of that Conestoga student portal thing where you can watch your lectures.

[Laughs]

- Yeah.
- Facebook could become that place where you would post your lectures, and you would have a group.

D2L?

- D2L, yeah.
- D2L.
- That'd be nice since after graduating, I didn't have access to any of that because specifically Conestoga. Right before I graduated, I downloaded everything I could possibly do and that my computer could hold.
- Yes.
- Because specifically with Conestoga unlike the university I went to beforehand, you don't always have access. I still technically have access to my university login information, but Conestoga deletes it after a certain point.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- And I think that just kind of the way social networks work, a student might feel more inclined if they had their professor in their group and the professor had posted lecture notes or something, to reach out and say, "Hi professor. I just had a question about slide X," instead of sending an email. Just because it's a more accessible platform. So, I definitely don't think that...I don't think Facebook is really used for studying right now, but I do see potential that it could be used for that.

That's interesting. So, in the beginning you said you...I believe you came to the consensus that you wouldn't want your instructor in your group. Is it that you would want a separate space?

- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- A separate space.

- Yeah, for that specific course. Also, like as we were mentioning before, crossing that line with having a professor as a friend on Facebook while you're their student, it doesn't really have to...that doesn't have to get crossed. It could still be a teacher student relationship over Facebook without adding them as a friend. You could still have that communication without being friends.
- But, on that point, I think it'd make it easier to bridge that gap afterward where you feel like you've developed a little bit more of a relationship with them. You feel more comfortable actually talking with them. It's so important after graduation to still keep in contact with these individuals because the learning doesn't really stop there. And Facebook could be that medium to bridge that gap afterward to still stay connected with that person. And then you feel more comfortable to engage them in your post-graduation life and see what other opportunities might come up and resources they share. Like IMC [Phonetic] has a blog but it's posted off of a separate forum, so you get email notified about the blogs. But it would be just as easy if that existed through Facebook.

Interesting. Okay.

- And I think that, yeah, like you said. Post-graduation and developing those relationships and things like that. I know in our group that we have just the students in our class. People have said, "I just started a job doing this. Does anybody have Becca's [Phonetic] lecture notes from when we studied this," and somebody said, "Oh yeah, I have them. Let me email them to you." But if you have a group with your professor it would be easier to reach out and say hey, you know? Or you would have access to all of the lecture notes that you had posted for that semester.

Interesting. Okay.

- Or even sharing job posting with those professors afterwards saying, "Hey, I don't know your new class but if anybody from the new graduating year is interested in this position. Like, I remember my experience at IMC and I know that they would qualify for this position." So, you can even share those more directly to them because an email just seems so formal that if you're just spamming your teachers who are teaching lectures and, like, with a whole new class now, all these random job postings you don't know whether or not that you're bothering them. And if you had...
- That's exactly what...Like, bothering is a good work for sure.

- Yeah.
- That's what I thought. Because there's been several times I thought, "Oh, I should reach out to this old professor about this because I have a question about this," and then I think, "I'm sure they're busy getting ready for next year. Like, I should just leave it." I'm not going to bother them with an email. But if I would have had that relationship on Facebook where I knew that they consistently commented back on students' things and were engaged with their class, I would be much more likely to ask them. And it's just an accessibility thing [INAUDIBLE 01:04:20] informal.
- And even having, like, a group where it's like once people become alumni and are looking for positions, then you really can build that community even better. Because the only forms you really seem to have is either your graduating class's group or you have the email addresses of your previous professors, or that's it. Those are your forms and you don't whether or not people have seen it. If it gets buried, if it's even relevant, but you know that some people could benefit off of that information. And one of the things that you learn I remember from IMC is, there was a course where we specifically had to reach out to people within the industry and get coffee with them, and just talk to them about how things are. And it would be great to be able to utilize the alumni that way because it feels a lot less invasive. You remember that that was an aspect of your program and then you feel more like you're contributing back. And you're like, "Yes, I remember your position. It's not that scary. Hey, I even have old textbooks if you really want them."

That's really interesting. So, I came into this, like, three competing thoughts... Came into this wondering how students use Facebook to collaborate and it's not... I heard a lot about information sharing. A lot about using Messenger for those scheduling conversations or using groups to, you know, keep yourselves on the same page and communicate. But I never really thought about... I kind of thought instructors were off the table. Like, it was never even an option or a desire to have more communication with instructors. So, I'm kind of curious. Just when you think about Facebook in general, or social media in general, what your thoughts are on collaborating with your instructors. So, a good example would be if I was your instructor and I said, "You know, we're going to do group projects. I create whatever it is, a group for each group that's working on the assignment or maybe you could just communicate with me over Messenger." Is that something you would like to do? You could see yourselves doing? Or is there still that desired separation between instructors and students?

- I think as like we mentioned, instead of giving someone your number you're like, "Hey, let's talk over Messenger." So, I think there's still, like, a line there with giving your personal phone number it's more, obviously, personal. So, I think with being able to communicate with your instructor over Messenger, it's a bit different. It's more of an... I know, like, D2 [Phonetic] also has an instant chat that noone uses. So, I think Messenger would be a great way to communicate constantly with an instructor.
- D2 you got to log in and it's a long process. It's time taking.
- Right.
- If the system's even working.
- Yeah.

[Crosstalk]

Okay.

- I remember [INAUDIBLE 01:07:39]. All of our professors had office hours. I never went to them during office hours. If they had said, "I'm going to be on Messenger from this time until this time. Feel free to message me," or, "I'm going to be monitoring the group from time X to time Y. Anybody has questions...The only catch is they have to be public questions, so everybody can see. That way I don't get the same question over and over again." Or something like that. I think that might be even better than office hours. That way they can just go home.
- Yeah.
- Right? Some professors have long commutes. They have one class and then they have to stick around for like five hours, so it was... Yeah.

- That's interesting.
- The only time I guess I really used office hours was when it was crunch time. Like, there was a huge project. Like, [INAUDIBLE 01:08:33] IMC plan. That was it. Everything else...yeah. But you have to keep office hours your entire year. So...
- Yeah.
- I think it depends too on how your professor sets expectations. So, I know that in our program it was more of a formal relationship where a couple of professors that just, like, I wouldn't think of messaging them on Messenger because of their age and because of their... You know, just how they kind of set the formal distinction between professor and student from day one. But, there's another professor that I would feel comfortable with jumping on Messenger and asking questions to. So, I think there's huge potential for sure, as long as those expectations are set from the beginning. And knowing that the professor will reply is another big thing, right?
- Mm-hmm.
- Yeah.
- Because, I mean... Yeah, having those clearly defined expectations at the front. I'm on Messenger, I'm accessible. I'd be happy to check with you on Facebook. Things like that. You would definitely have to mention that from day one. And I know some courses we were even taught formally how to communicate via email and so from that point on you feel like your relationship with your professor is a formal thing, right?
- Right.
- And so, I think... Yeah. It just depends on the professor's attitude. And I think it's a really great idea, but everybody has to be on board or nobody can be on board. Because it's not really fair to have one professor in your program that's willing to do it and then the rest kind of look down on it. Or go, "Why do they do that?" You know, it has to be a team.

- Right.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- I think on that too, with both of your points, I like the idea of how one, you can do it publicly so everyone kind of has this more shared space of, "He answered this question perfect. Let's go race toward the answer," and that more private one on one Messenger question if is more specific or... You can just be so much more honest, because the intimidation factors not there. Like, I can't count the amount of time that I wanted to go to office hours but maybe one bad experience, with maybe not even that professor, just prevented me from going there. Because you just felt really stupid when you asked the question, or they would explain it to you... Or, you would ask the question but then you realized they took it wrong and then you're like, "Oh, no. I don't want to re-explain it." And then you pretend that you understood it and you go back home and you're frantically messaging your classmate going like, "I still don't understand but I already asked him the question. And I really don't want to have to go back there and say I don't understand." There is that wall where you not have to be in front of that person and you ask very honestly. And even like with language barriers, where maybe that person... Not language barriers. With speaking patterns. Maybe that person kind of slurs when they talk. Or they're not very clear. Or they just sound very confusing. So, it's nice to have a written response because then you can go over it a couple times, then being like, "Okay, what do they mean by that?" And then you just read it over a couple time and you're like, "Oh, I get it. That's perfect. Yes, I get it." And you don't have to ask that question over and over again and you can really strip away that intimidation. And I feel like it would just make the learning process a lot smoother.
- Yeah, maybe if the professor were more of a moderator than a... Like, that person who... Yes, it would be their group, but they wouldn't always answer. They would leave it up to the students and then they'd chime in if necessary. So, then, like, as the resident expert. Or, "Oh, I noticed last night that a lot of you guys were talking about this. Well, here's the answer," in class next day. That way it keeps... I don't know. It's like...you're right, it's like another form of feedback that people are too shy to maybe admit in the class, but for some reason on social media we're a little... I don't know. People say all kind of crazy political stuff on social media that they would never say in person.

- Right.
- Even though it's totally public. So, it's free I suppose?

So, you think if the class and the instructor were in the classroom and in a Facebook group, there would be more of a willingness to ask questions through Facebook?

- Yeah.
- Yeah.
- Yes. And as a second point, it's also a liability issue. That way you have a record of what was said between the professor and the student. Which, unfortunately, is more and more important.

Okay.

- And just one last note with that, I think part of the reason why people can be so much more honest on like an online forum is that you can have a very honest reaction to something. So, if somebody posted something and you just think it was the stupidest thing that somebody could have ever written but you need to answer back professionally, you can have that immediate reaction of, "Oh, my God. Really? Okay, I need to respond. I need to compose myself." But you can have that very honest reaction whereas if you're in person you need to do a straight face. You cannot show your cards. And then you're almost so concentrated on that appearance that you need to give. That just because you need to keep that relationship professional and you need to not lose your composure. Because, let's say it's the beginning of the school year and you have a very honest reaction to something, you could have just jeopardized your relationship with that person whether that was a professor or with a student until the end of that year. Or, until the end of that assignment or whenever. So, you just feel like you're more concerned about the impression you're giving off than properly understanding the material.

Okay. Okay.

[INAUDIBLE 01:15:23]

Quick time check. It's 8:15. This is good timing. I have one question left. You briefly touched on this actually at the beginning, talking about how Facebook has changed. I think back to when it first came out everyone was really actively using it in certain ways and based on this discussion alone I think it's changed a lot. So, this question's kind of in the context of being a student and education. How has Facebook changed from, you know, when you started postsecondary to now? You can say high school to now. Through your career. How has it changed?

- I think just like she mentioned, from high school for like a class to class and sharing everything. Even personal chit chat or rumors about stuff. But once you got in college and graduate it's more for professional. You don't post. You update your privacy. You update your taglines and everything. So nobody can tag me in other pictures so other people can see my social media. Oh, if this person tags me... This person's probably connected with that, that's [INAUDIBLE 01:16:35] my reputation goes down if that person is not [INAUDIBLE 01:16:40] business or... Yeah.
- Right.
- So, that could impact... That's the main major change when you go from high school to actually in the job [INAUDIBLE 01:16:49]. Yeah.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- I think for me, where I'm at right now, Facebook is the in between of [INAUDIBLE 01:16:58] and Instagram and Twitter and those personal accounts. Because with Facebook you still have to remain... You have to maintain this sense of professionalism because it can impact your job and your professional life. But, you also want to show a personal side as well. So, I think it's like that medium where you bridge both. But, I have seen a difference from when I was in high school because during that time there weren't as many platforms. It was just strictly Facebook and I would post my selfies, I would post whatever I was doing, stupid statuses or whatever. When you're immature in high school you would just post whatever, but now as we're going into the professional world you're

more conscious and aware of what you're posting and how it could be perceived and your reputation, I think. So, it has changed. For sure.

Okay.

- Especially following people on Facebook. Just like example, now I don't follow Logan Paul. I used to. I used to like his YouTube video but not anymore. It does impact your reputation.

So, you've changed your engagement as well?

- Yeah.
- Yeah.

What about in the classroom? Do you use... Did you, I should say, use a tool near the end of your formal education that you didn't maybe when you were in high school? Or, your undergrad?

- Just like she said, putting selfies with friends and doing stuff. Like, it was a school trip. Pictures and stuff. That's all deleted. That's all gone. It's just my profile picture and the places I worked and the school I go, the city I lived in. That's basic information about me, yeah.
- Yeah.
- As limiting as possible. And I think part of that change is also that Facebook, as an entity, has kind of changed from when we first started using it to what it is now. So, for example, I try to limit as many of even my likes on Facebook, because I will get personalized ads. Or, those likes will be shared with certain people on my Facebook that I would rather not and it's a little tedious to go through and just personalize who can see what for you. Especially when you have enough people on that platform. But, I also would say at one given time I did completely delete my Facebook. Like, you can't just

delete. You have to actually email into them, otherwise you deactivate it. I completely delete it and then was essentially forced back onto the platform because of serving groups that I was a part of that were volunteer related. And that were almost exclusively through Facebook. So, I still could see that usefulness for Facebook through groups outside of a classroom context in the exact same way that used it in a classroom context. But now, my relationship to Facebook is a lot different and it's a lot more limited because of just the information that gets shared from Facebook's end. With how they deliver information to me in personalized ads and things that I would just rather not be right there for them.

Okay.

- I have not been a heavy Facebook user. I have used... I still use it. But, I've seen at least with people who do use it heavily, is they went from being very naive to now like everything is under lock and key. Like, it's becoming very suspicious of how they're being watched. I assume everything I do, even before Cambridge Analytica, that scandal broke...I assume everything I did on... I mean, you give them your name, your birthday. Of course, they're going to... When something is free, you are the product. So, yeah. I don't know, I was always... Yeah. I saw a lot of people wising up. Like, even myself, I used to have drinking photos and now they're all gone. Never find them.
- Only me.
- Yeah.
- Yeah, definitely. The same. It's moved to more of a professional thing to me where, like, I had even some of my clients adding me on Facebook just as an easier platform for keeping in touch and I just don't feel comfortable sharing pictures of, you know, things that I wouldn't want them to see.

Okay.

- Facebook is, I would say, it's still a platform that you can quickly reach to the person. Even from the high school I have a question. Like, far, far, back from high school, the person I know is still... I don't have contact. No numbers. But I still have him on Facebook, so I just give him a quick message.

- Run after them and then they know everything about you.
- Well, yeah, that's true. But...

Okay. So, in the last couple minutes I just want to revisit the definition of collaboration that we came to a rough consensus on in the beginning. So, collaboration is all about sharing information, communicating, and working together. Do you have any, in any way, other comments around Facebook in collaboration? Anything at all? And if you don't, that's okay too. Anything that was said that you want to emphasize that you agree with? That you disagree with? And if you don't...

- Yeah, I don't think I can... I think it just can supplement the in-person stuff. I don't know. But, I don't think it can replace it.
- Yeah.
- That's what I would say. It's a nice tool, but nothing beats... There were reasons why we would meet in the library and the group study rooms. You have to do that. There's no... Facebook is good for helping you plan but there's no replacement.
- Yeah, I think it only goes so far. Like, you can't collaboratively work and engage as much as you would in person. In, like, a face to face interaction. It helps to just get a better understanding of what's going on or what to do next. But, I do think that nothing beats, as you mentioned, face to face interaction.

Yeah. Okay. All right. With seven minutes to spare. We are done. That concludes the formal focus group. Thank you so, so much for participating. I am truly, truly grateful for your help. So, thank you very much for giving me your time tonight.

Group B

Okay, cool. Thank you for coming.[Laughs] I'm super excited. Okay. I'm just going to turn my phone off quick her. I wanted to make sure everyone got [INAUDIBLE 01:38:43]. So, thank you for coming. I know of some of you have been hearing about this for quite some time. But, I'm going to walk through the research project in general. I'm just going to go through a couple of consent things to start. And then we'll get going. This will take about 90 minutes, so it's just before 7 and we will be done for sure by 8:30. This is [notetaker name]. [name] is our note taker today.

- Hi.
- Hello.

She's just going to just sit and take a couple notes as we're chatting to help me out. So, that's why she's here. I'll be recording today's session, so if you need anything, and when we're done, you want to hear anything. When we obtain the results, I can give all the results to you when we're complete and I've drafted everything up. So, I have everybody's signed form, now. I have electronic copies as well that I can send you if you need a copy of your signed form. So, I just wanted to go through a couple things in here. I am Rebecca, as you know. Thank you for coming today. I just have a couple things that I want to make sure that I point out so we're all on the same page. So, the first point in the Information Letter talks about what the research project is actually about, so I'm going to walk you through that and I'll tell you a little bit more about my research question. So, it says, "There is increasing attention being given to social media as a platform for use in a classroom. While a review of the literature provides an understanding of why social media is being used outside of the classroom and inside of the classroom by instructors and students, there is a limited depth in understanding of how students use social media in educational context." So, a lot of our conversations today will be about using social media in the classroom, using it for school work, and for assignments and tests, all that kind of stuff. I'll try and hear from you what your experiences have been or what your opinions are. The purpose of a Focus Group that makes it different from other ways to collect data is that you are the experts, so I'm here to listen to you and about your experiences. I'm not the expert here, so anything that you say is totally valid and totally contributes to the research that I'm trying to collect. So, please feel free to speak honestly and openly about your experiences. There aren't any wrong answers. I'm an instructor at Conestoga College, so I have an interest in understanding how curriculums can better be developed, possibly using social media in the classroom. So, that's kind of where this research question has come from. Just a couple things on the second page under Confidentiality. Your names will not be used in the research. I'll be giving you anonymized identifiers, so your names won't appear anywhere in the final results. I'd

ask that you don't discuss anything that we talk about today outside of the Focus Group or name anyone that was participating or wasn't participating, as well. Data will be stored with me after the Focus Group. But again, as I mentioned in the beginning, if you have anything that you want to learn or you want a copy of, you can contact me and I can get that to you. And if you have any questions during or after, you can contact me, again, by [INAUDIBLE 01:41:54] phone number, as well. I'm trying to think if I missed anything else. I don't think so. Does anyone have any questions? Okay. I'm dreaming about saying that now. Okay. Awesome. So, I've brought my research question with me. I wanted to guide you through kind of how I developed my research question and why I'm using it. But I wanted to start by picking your brains first. So, I wanted to talk about the concept of collaboration and to ask you what collaboration means to you. So, very generally, in the classroom, outside the classroom, what does that term mean to you?

- For me, it's bringing a bunch of different experiences and different ideas together and finding a way for them to work together. So, the concept of synergy.

Okay.

- Which is $1+1=1$ +whatever it is.
- Synergy. Bringing experiences together, okay.
- Just, a group of different skill sets working towards a common goal, probably.
- Working toward a common goal.
- Yeah.
- Playing towards each other's strengths, so you can develop something better overall than you could individually.
- Like a sports team.
- Sure.

- Like a sports team. What do you mean by that?
- Like they're all working together, but also performing their own roles. But it's all towards a common goal.

Okay. So, working together, working towards a goal. Okay. Bringing experiences together. Can you expand on that a little bit?

- Well, I think anytime more than one person comes together, yes you have different skill sets, but you also have completely different experiences that you bring to the table. And that can impact how you collaborate with other people, how you work on your own. I just think that's a huge part of... Not even being self-aware of it, but how you work with other people.

Nice. Okay. Awesome. Okay, so I wanted to get your thoughts on collaboration first. I've reviewed a ton of literature over the last 10 years or so. Students have general, there's been conclusions drawn about what collaboration means to students. So, I have a rough definition here that I want to get your thoughts on. So, collaboration is involving sharing information, communicating and working together. What do you think about that? Do you think that's accurate?

- Can you read it again?

Collaboration is sharing information, communicating and working together. So, it involves all those three things.

- Yeah.
- Where the sharing information could really come straight from the experiences, I feel. So, I feel it kind of builds on that. But I'd say that's a good [INAUDIBLE 01:45:21].

- And then, strong communication. You can't, based on your experiences or the knowledge you have, unless you can communicate that properly with somebody, it's not useful.
- MmmmHmmm.
- Yeah. Good way to put it.

Okay. Awesome. Okay. So, I'm going to tell you a little bit about my research question now, so you know where these questions are coming from. My research question is, "How are postgraduate college students using Facebook for collaboration in an educational context?" So, I'm looking at Facebook, specifically, and seeing how students are or aren't using it to collaborate. So, we're talking about collaboration, we're talking about sharing information, communicating and working together. So, based on that, I want to learn a little bit more about how you see social media being used at school, in any context. In the classroom, in the school as a building or in some sort of context as it relates to your educational experience. How do you see social media being used?

- We had, in our year, we had multiple Facebook groups. Like one for the whole class, and then one for each group project that we were working on.

Okay.

- Just so we could put all our information in one spot instead of doing it via email. Yeah.

For your class and for groups.

- Yeah.
- Yeah, yeah.

Okay.

- So everyone was in one and then we created our own for smaller group assignments.
- Right. Right.
- Yeah.

Okay. Facebook Groups. Anything else?

- Well, I think that's the private side of it. I think on the public or outward facing, there's an opportunity for students to take things they've learned and have further conversations with maybe people who aren't in that same course as them or something. So, again, bringing different perspectives to whatever topics they may be. Like, I don't know, I don't even think we used it. Did we have Facebook? Yeah, we had Facebook. But in University, if you learn something, and then you were interested about it, you might post it on your own Facebook page. Like an article about it or something and then other people would chime in with their perspectives. Even... Not even like some deep theory, because anything people could bring to the table to have a conversation. There's potential for that.

So, sharing information publicly on your wall. For people outside of your program? Or the people...for anybody?

- Both. Because sometime... Depending, I mean, it would differ from program to program. But if your program has content that is kind of relatable to other people, interesting to share. Like, I was in Communication Studies, so I had a lot of media things. And so, people were interested in that. So, even if they weren't in my program, and I was posting some silly... I can't even think of an example, what it was. I could get other people slightly engaged, and they didn't have to be in my program, but....

Okay, great. So publicly with your wall, privately with Facebook groups. Okay. So, what about... Because we're going to dive more into specifics, so what about when you're prepping for assignments or working on assignments, does Facebook play a role in that?

- For distraction.

[Laughs]

- When you turn it off.
- Yeah.
- It used to be that people would deactivate their accounts during exam time.
- Yeah.
- Okay
- That was good.

Okay.

- I actually... Well during, going back to University, it did really help. Because there were a bunch of people in these huge classes who I didn't even know. And people weren't that social when the classes were that big. So, clarifying certain things for assignments. And you'd see a lot on that, before a due date, or stuff like that. And then, it was kind of there where you find common things that are unclear. And somebody would reach out on behalf of everybody to the prof or whatever for clarification.
- Right.
- And then, post grad, I actually didn't have Facebook, so. And a lot of... And I kind of felt left out, but a lot of these discussions were basically the same thing. A lot of clarification, so it was thoroughly used for assignment purposes.

So, clarifying what?

- Expectations and stuff like that.

So, how would it be used? Are people having...?

- Yeah, if people are at a roadblock and they're not sure what is expected of them. They ask their peers for clarification.

Through? through Facebook?

- Through Facebook, posting on an active group.
- Posting in group, okay. So, clarification of assignments.
- And for some group assignments, we would use our individual Facebook groups for our smaller groups. To keep on top of deadlines and have a pinned post that had all of the deadlines marked down so we knew what everyone was working towards. So that it was there, in a common spot, so everyone could see it all of the time. And then, there was no way to argue about what those deadlines were either, especially when groups were setting our own deadlines for ourselves. Then it was very cut and dry for everyone to see.

Okay. So, I still hear some information sharing. What about working together? We talked about what collaboration is. Sharing information, working together, communicating. I'm hearing definitely the communicating and information sharing. Is working together a part of Facebook? Is Facebook used when working with other people? Or more so for those moments of clarification?

- I think so, from my experience it's mostly asking questions, usually at the very last moment or something like that. But no true discussions going back and forth or working in that sense.

Okay.

- Yeah, my experience, it would always be taken to a different platform, so the collaboration actual work would be done in, say, a Google Doc or something separate.

Okay.

- But something like Facebook would be easier to have a conversation casually, and it's like an off-the-record thing.
- Right, exactly.
- So, back in the day when we had... I don't think we ever used Facebook groups for anything I did. But we would have another platform that was more of a formal discussion or forum. But then, if we had anything negative to say, we'd take it somewhere else.

[Laughs]

- Okay.
- We shared files and stuff.
- I'd say one way that we probably did use our Facebook groups more for collaboration was when we were doing design work.
- Yeah.
- Because we could post a screenshot of what we had designed for the other members of our group to take a look at it and give feedback. And then we were able to tweak the

design and share it again to see whether we had kind of made the changes they were looking for or suggesting.

- Or if we were planning something, like if we were in a competition for Events class and we wanted to plan something but didn't want the rest of the class to hear what we were working on, we would go in our group chat and...

In your group chat.

- On Facebook, on Messenger.

On Messenger?

- Yeah.

Okay.

- And figure stuff out.

Do you share... So you'd share files in Messenger during your group, with the group you were working on at the same time.

- Yeah. On Messenger and in the group.

And in the group, okay.

- So then, we had all our files. We also had them in Google Drive, but it was between Facebook and Google Drive.

Okay. Okay. Are the Facebook walls ever used for assignments? Or more so?

- I don't use my Facebook wall.
- I was going to say, I don't think it's used for anything, let alone assignments.

Okay. So, that's good for assignments. I'm curious if it's the same or different for tests. If you're preparing for a test, does Facebook play a role in that in any way?

- I feel like it would be similar to the last discussion where you'd be last-minute clarification.
- Yeah.
- If you're studying last-minute and you panic, just message somebody.

Okay. No study groups happening Facebook, just last-minute questions.

- Yeah. Like in my undergrad for a couple of my math courses, we were allowed to have formula sheets, but we had to generate them as a class rather than them being given to us by the instructor. So, we used our Facebook group for everyone to give input as to what formulas needed to be on it.

Okay.

- And then, one person then compiled everyone's feedback to make the overall sheet.
- So sharing, information sharing.
- Yeah.

Okay

- And then, I just remember, kind of off-topic, but I just remember in one of my groups in my post grad, there was someone who didn't have Facebook. So, then she had to make a fake account just so she could be a part. Like, she made it just to be involved in the group. I don't even remember what we used, because I wasn't [INAUDIBLE 01:55:15] in groups back then.
- Why would someone join a program and then you join Facebook just for the program. What purpose does that serve? You join Facebook to [INAUDIBLE 01:55:28].
- I think it was just so, if there's a group chat or something, that you're in on it.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- Kind of stay in the loop.
- If that's the platform of choice by the group.
- Yeah, someone in our year did that, too. In one of our groups.
- Yeah.
- I offered, but everyone said, "No, do something else."
- Work around it.

- But then, there were things that I hear all the time, "When did that happen?" "Oh, it's in my Facebook group." I'm like, "Oh, well."

[Laughs]

Okay. So if you were in a Facebook group, was it typically created before you started the program, during, at the beginning, at the end?

- I made it at the beginning.
- I was going to say, I think it was the first day at lunch. Everybody was sitting together and it got made.
- First day.
- Yeah.
- Yeah.

Okay. And then you added everyone to the group?

- Yeah. Yeah.
- Okay. I think we announced it in class, and said to search for it and join it.

Okay. Alright. I'm curious about instructors. Do you communicate over Facebook with your instructors?

- No.

- No.

Would you communicate, if you had the option?

- Yeah, I think it depends the level of education that you're at. I don't think undergrad students would be willing to do that. Just because it's like a parental figure.
- Yeah

[Laughs]

- At that time and you usually, at that page, you're trying to keep everyone separate and away from your social media. I think it's different when you're older.
- Right.
- Also, it would depend on what else you have going on in your Facebook. That would really determine whether you allow someone into that realm.

What do you mean by something else going on?

- Like the type of content that you post outward. Photos, you know.

Okay.

- I'd rather use something else like Slack or something. That you have an account specifically for school. And then, the teachers, you can still have groups and stuff. But yeah, if it was communicating with instructors, I would rather it be on Slack.

Okay.

- Because that's perceived as less social, more communication.

Okay.

So, what's the difference between having a conversation over something like Slack and having a conversation over Messenger?

- I think, with Messenger, it's associated with your entire Facebook profile, where you have put personal details. There's photos, there's stuff with your friends that maybe you don't want your instructors to be privy to. Same kind of thing.

Okay.

- You don't have control over that. Their view of what they see.
- Some people might not [INAUDIBLE 01:58:40] it.

[Laughs]

- Yeah.

Privacy concerns, okay.

- And you don't have to force people to sign up for Facebook just to... Facebook, yeah. I wish I could delete Facebook.

You wish you could delete Facebook? Why is that?

- I deleted it for a year during undergrad and it was amazing. But now, since I work in social media, I have to have it. And, yeah. I think it's too time-consuming and you always are wondering what's going on. I'd rather be on Twitter.

What do you mean by what's going on?"

- Like there could be something happening, but it's all the same stuff on the other platforms but you still think there might be something there.

Okay.

- Yeah.

Okay. So, if you were to give a rough percentage. You're in the classroom, you're on Facebook, what percentage of that time is for school-related anything? Conversations with a classmate, anything.

- When you're on it only in class?

When you're in class.

- Probably 20% of it would be related to that.

And would you say when you're in class, you're typically posting in your group to the entire class, or you'd have more one-on-one conversations over Messenger?

- I would say if you're in class, it's probably more one on one, because if you're posting stuff related to the class, it's probably because you're thinking about it later, or working on something. In my experience, I found that when people are in class, they were like maybe not all there. They were more engaged when they weren't in the classroom.

Okay. Okay. Okay, so Facebook has changed a lot. It's been around for a long time. I'm curious whether it's from high school to now, or it's from your undergrad to now, postgrad to now, whatever it was, how has Facebook changed as it relates to how you use it as a student? So, it could be changes in the platform. It could be changes in how you see students using it, or how you used it.

- Well for me personally, a lot rolled out after my post grad, so it changed a lot between undergrad and post grad. So, something like Messenger, which is probably one of the most commonly used features of it to communicate with other students, I'm pretty sure that was not around when I was in my undergrad, or maybe like at the end. I have no idea when that started, because we used MSN. That's how you had to talk to people on a one-on-one basis. So yeah, communication, like finding people that are in your class. Like maybe you kind of know their name, and you have a question, or you don't know anyone in your class, you can find them through Facebook, and then have a private conversation. You don't have to message them publicly on their wall, which is how you had to do it previously, so then everyone can see your conversation about like CS101 or whatever it would be.
- Yeah, so there's been changes in privacy, lots more one-on-one conversations you can have now.
- Which means better information probably, because you're talking more and more openly, because you know that nobody's watching.
- Better conversations.
- Yeah, like when you're within Messenger versus like posting on a wall or something, you're probably willing to give more detail and stuff

like that than if it was just a conversation that's out in the open for everyone to see.

Okay. Something interesting that has kind of been coming up in conversation is kind of around Messenger, and when you're in a group, there are things you don't post that maybe you would post in Messenger, or to a smaller group, or that sort of thing. It kind of got me thinking about communication with instructors, because Messenger is so much easier to use, in some ways, than other tools. Would you, in any way, communicate with an instructor? If you could go back to school, and your instructor said I'm going to run my office hours over Messenger. I'll be available two days a week from these times. Would you use that?

- No.
- I don't think so.
- I like being able to talk about things in person with a teacher.

Okay. If you had to use Facebook or another online platform, would you stick with other online platforms? Or would you stick with Facebook.

- I don't know. Like I just would rather be offline, but if the choice was only between two things, I would choose the one that's no Facebook I think.

Anybody else? Would you use Messenger to communicate with your instructor?

- So, my first instinct with that was no, because I wouldn't want to necessarily be able to receive a message from them on my phone, because for me it would be like compartmentalizing things. So, if it was something like a school email, or like a formal class platform, or whatever the communication method is, I know I can log in and check that, and I'm not necessarily going to receive that information from an instructor to my personal.

Okay. To your personal device?

- Yeah, because you don't to be with your friends, and then you're like oh, my instructor.
- Got to worry about something.
- The panic sets in.
- That's a good point.
- Just to clarify, do you mean they're just readily available, and they can reach out to you whenever they need to? Or is it just certain office hours when they're present, and you can chat with them when you need to.

Yeah, that's a really good question. I mean more so if I say I'm available. So, if you have a question about an assignment, I'm available Tuesdays and Thursdays from 12 to 2. You can use Messenger to get ahold of me, and I'll respond right away.

- First of all, I feel like there's, with the whole privacy thing, the minute the professor, the instructor is saying that they're completely open to this, the situation isn't as weird. So, I think I would use it, just because that is so super convenient. Maybe the office hours. Maybe I can't make it, or something like that. So, I feel one-on-one definitely useful, especially if it's something serious or whatever, but I feel having that on the go, I feel that would be super useful, like a certain time.
- That's actually really interesting, because you're saying you don't want the instructor coming to you, and like [INAUDIBLE 02:06:20] you to talk about like.
- Barrier. But that might not be everyone. I'm like that with my work emails too. I don't like to get them to my phone.
- Okay, okay. And you're talking about the other way it works, just that availability of having it. Okay. Alright.

- It could be really good for distance students, or people who travel a lot or something.

What do you mean by distance?

- Like if it's not specifically like postgrad, or if they're doing an online postgrad, because you don't really have a way to get to a university or college to do office hours.
- Because it's so much more personal than email.
- Yeah.

Okay. So, I want to go back to something that you said about your two different Facebook groups. So, you have a group with the class, and then a couple groups with students that were doing assignments. Were there any differences in how you communicated in those groups? Did you talk about different kinds of things? Can you tell me a little bit about that?

- Not really, and most of them were the same people. We just had them separated just so we could keep. So, like one of them was for budgeting, the budget assignment. One of them was for a design assignment, so we just keep the things compartmentalized in different groups. It was the same people in all of them.
- I mean I could imagine it could get overwhelming if so many topics are being discussed in one channel. So that makes sense too.

What happens to your Facebook groups when you leave school?

- They're still floating around up there.
- They're on my phone.
- Do you use them?

- No.

Okay. Are students still in the groups?

- Can I check?
- There's people in our main one.
- I'm sure I have one from like however many years ago, and like the odd time I get a notification so and so has logged in.
- Or like every once in a while, someone will post a job or something.

Okay, posting jobs.

- Yeah, like share of an opportunity that like maybe is of where they work, or something like that. It's like hey, if anyone's looking, there's this.

Okay, and do people engage with that?

- No, I don't think so.
- We just ignore them and then text each other that's weird.

Okay, is there anything, when you think back to being a student, that you did communicate over Facebook for schoolwork, or you didn't that you think maybe now that could have been useful for me, or maybe that wouldn't have been useful for me? We talked a lot about Facebook groups, and Messenger, and Pages. Is there anything that you maybe didn't have when you were in

school that you think would be more useful now? Or something that you used that you would use differently.

- Yeah like in my undergrad, Facebook wasn't as big as it is now. Like I feel like I was way more productive in post grad, because we were so connected. But like in undergrad, everyone's so isolated. So, I think I would have done better in undergrad if we had had Facebook groups, at least for seminar classes.

Okay, why is that?

- Just because you kind of go to class, and then you leave. But you don't have people in the same classes as you, so you have like a couple friends in your program.

Okay.

- That's how it was in my school at least. I know you probably had a different experience.
- No, I was going to agree with that partially, that there's some features in groups now that we used in our post grad that I definitely didn't use in undergrad, and like we had one general group in undergrad, but that was in. But then anything else we would try to do in Messenger or stuff like that. But then you're like losing files in Messenger, just like as everyone else is commenting, whereas one thing that we used a lot in groups was like if you post a document for everyone to look at, and someone makes a revision, there's a feature that allows you to post the revision like right back to that initial post, rather than it being separate, and then it was a lot easier to track collaborative documents that way.

In the group?

- In the Facebook group, versus in my undergrad when we would just try and send them back and forth in Messenger, and you were never 100% sure of what one really was the most recent.

Right. Would you work on those documents together through the group, or just to upload new revisions?

- Generally, just to upload new revisions. If it was something that everyone was going to be working on at once, we would usually use Google Docs, and then someone would usually download it to do all the final formatting, and then share it back to the Facebook group that way. And then if someone had something to add after that final formatting, then the revision could be uploaded, and it's right there with the initial one, and it's easy to track.

Okay. That's interesting. What about other social platforms? Do you use any in a classroom studying tests, assignments?

- I would say that Twitter, so I'm going to kind of say this from a different perspective, where I manage Twitter accounts now. And I've had students, I think they're in high school, reply to certain tweets that I've sent on behalf of a company and tag their teacher in it. So, I'm guessing they've had some kind of an assignment where they have to go find an article on, this happened to be an energy efficiency thing, and they found this blog I had tweeted on behalf of a company. And then their class all liked it and shared it.
- Interesting.
- That's so cool.
- It was interesting.
- Okay.
- So that's why I think Twitter, from like an information source, is good for students.
- From my experience, it's more so just sharing, like check out this article. Sharing articles relevant to a common field.

On which platform?

- Twitter.
- On Twitter?
- Mhm.

Okay. Would you share that type of content that got that engagement on Facebook?

- Yeah, so this is kind of skewed because it's from a company perspective. Like personally I use platforms a little bit differently, and Twitter I don't even use my own Twitter ever, but I think it would depend on the type of content.

Okay. So, I want to walk through a scenario, because this has kind of been a common theme that's come up. So, you start a program. Someone creates a Facebook group for the class, I think. What happens from there in general? Anything?

- I don't remember.
- How did people join the group?
- Like the people we're sitting with joined it, and then I think the next day at school we announced it to the class, like we asked Kim to do it and then we talked about it in class, and then I think I sent the link out or something. And then people just started using it, like posting stuff from class.
- Okay, okay.
- Oh, I was just going to say, and my memory might be foggy, because it was a while ago, but in my experience, we all joined a group, and then just nothing happened with it.

And then nothing happened. Okay. Was that your experience as well?

- Well for me, it was like oh, then I guess I'll just get on Facebook. I won't add any friends or anything, because I don't want to be overwhelmed with that, but I'll just do it for the sake of joining your group. And then I've been told oh, you don't need to. Like it's not important. People are just being annoying, or asking unnecessary questions, or stuff like that. So that's the reaction I got from everybody else when I said I would join.

Okay.

- Yeah, there's definitely a lot of just commentary.
- Yeah, I was going to say like it definitely had its useful aspects, but there was a lot of stuff that was just useless that didn't need to be there. It served no real purpose.

What would you say the useful aspects were?

- Document sharing. Like if there's notes on the whiteboard, somebody would take pictures of it and then put it in the group. So not everybody had to write it down.

Take pictures of?

- Like of the whiteboard, and then put it in the group.

Okay. And then post it in the group?

- Yeah.

Okay, with the whole class?

- Yeah.

Okay.

- Yeah, one where we used that a lot is like when we split into groups within the classroom, so like for case studies or something within a classroom. If each of our groups was writing on a separate section of the board, then we'd go around and discuss it and share our ideas with the class, but then someone would take pictures of each group's work and post it, so everyone had it, rather than everyone trying to furiously scribble down what everyone else has written.

Okay. What about asking questions, if you have questions about assignments, or you're studying for a test, do you communicate with other students over Facebook for that?

- Yeah.

Can you tell me a little bit about that?

- I mean, I think in some ways, like to start off, we would maybe use Messenger to touch base with a couple people that we're closer with in the class to ask them, but then if everyone still kind of has the same sort of unsure about it, then it usually ended up as a post to the whole group just to see what everyone else's feedback was. But I would say a lot of the time it started out in smaller groups trying to get the answer that way before posting it to the entire class.

Okay, trying to get answers. Okay. Something came up in discussion in a previous group that I just want to talk about a little bit around accessibility for conversations. So, you're studying for a test, and the test is in a couple days, and there's kind of this notion of using Facebook when you want to get a quicker response. If you were to ask a question to another student, or a teacher, would Facebook be your go to platform for quicker communication, or would you still use email or another form?

- Yeah, I'd use Facebook for an instant answer.

- For an instant answer?
- If it was someone in the class.
- Yeah, I would say I would use Facebook over email to get an instant answer, but I know there was cases within our groups that like you'd post something looking for that instant answer and then not get it, and then I'd find myself texting someone else that's in the class to be like look at what I posted on Facebook. We need to figure this out, if you didn't get that instant response.
- And then if no one knew, we would email the teachers.

If no one knew? What do you mean by that?

- Like if we didn't get an answer within a sufficient time, like probably 20 minutes, or half an hour, or if it was less urgent the next day or something, then we would email teachers.

So, trying to get answers to tests like for preparation for a test, or clarity on assignments.

- Yeah, I would say for like clarity on assignment. Like if someone was unsure of something and posts the question to the group, and either didn't get an answer, or couldn't get a consensus from the class, like there was still varying opinions on what it was, then the breakdown of what our discussion had been, and what the two viewpoints were would get sent to the instructor for clarification. We'd be like okay, we've tried figuring this out. We've narrowed it down to basically being option a or b, like what is correct? What way are we supposed to be going about this?

Okay, so everyone kind of gives their two cents, shares what they know, and the rest goes to the instructor.

- Yeah.

- MmmmHmmm.

So, when you think about Facebook five years from now, ten years from now, what does it look like to you?

- Completely different.
- Yeah.
- Like [INAUDIBLE 02:20:22].
- Well, just because I'm on it every day for work, and every day something changes. I guess it's more so on the business page side, but there are changes all the time. I think it's almost like splitting people in that everyone used to be very active, but now there's super oversharrers, or people that don't share anything at all, and there's a very not the middle anymore. It's kind of a binary thing, and then it's older also, and I kind of see that continuing, because teenagers, for example, are like my mom is on Facebook, I can't be on there.

Older in age you mean?

- Yeah, it's not even in their top three social networks anymore. So, like my younger cousins in high school don't have Facebook. And not that I use it that much, but it's weird to me that you're in high school and don't have Facebook.
- Yeah, what do those conversations look like when you say are you on Facebook?
- I don't know. They don't even really have any reasoning not to, other than none of their friends are, so why would they?

Okay.

- And then I've talked to, I guess they're early 20s, or late teenagers, and they have like an attitude about it in my experience. They're like oh, I don't go on Facebook.

Interesting. Why do you think they have an attitude about it?

- Well because it's like the same thing where it's not cool, because it's like the original social media that their mom uses now. So, they're all over Snapchat and Instagram instead.

Okay. What does your Facebook use look like as it relates to communicating with people you went to school with? It doesn't have to be in those groups. Do you talk to people over Facebook that you once went to school with?

- Yeah. Like I will use Facebook Messenger instead of having somebody's phone number and like text them with Facebook Messenger.

Messenger instead of texting them.

- Yeah.

Okay, why is that?

- Just because it's already there. I don't need another phone number. It's just easier.
- Yeah, and I think like in some ways to communicate with people that you have gone to school with, but maybe aren't that close with, but the odd thing comes up and you're like oh, I'll send them a message, but it's not someone that you're talking to that regularly. It's easier to use it on Facebook, and I think in some ways when you're not that close with them, using Messenger seems a little less personal than texting them when you're not that close to them.

Oh, interesting, so more convenient but less personal?

- Yeah.

Okay. So, would you typically message people, but you won't have them as a Facebook friend?

- No, like I'm friends with them on Facebook still. So, I guess not really less personal, but like to me, texting someone would be someone that I am friends with and talk to more regularly, whereas people that I've gone to school with, yeah, I still have them as a friend on Facebook, but it's not like I'm hanging out with them on the weekend or like talking to them regularly. But if something comes up it's easy enough to get ahold of them through Messenger if I needed to.
- Yeah, I feel like it's people from school that are like my friends, but I don't consider those just school people. So, anyone that's from school that I probably generally don't talk to, but the odd time I'll just give them a like on a photo, at least to acknowledge that we know each other. Like that's kind of the middle ground for those people. Like you haven't been deleted yet, so I'm going to acknowledge this post. But I'm not going to send you a message.

One thing that came up yesterday was around the, I could call them timestamps, I don't know what else to call them, but like in a Facebook group, someone knows at this day on this time you had a question and it was answered, or I send you a message, and I can see that you read it. Is that valuable when you're a student? Do you have any experiences with that?

- Well like one thing in groups, especially when you're trying to meet a deadline, if you're posting something and you see that people have read it, like they've seen it, but they just don't answer or acknowledge it, it leads to issues within the group. Like for your own piece of mind yeah, it's great that you know that they've actually seen it, but then it's like okay, where's your input? We're supposed to be working on this together.
- Accountability.
- Yeah.
- So, it's like when they read it, it's like you must acknowledge it.

- Yeah, it's like okay, I know you've read it.
- [INAUDIBLE 02:25:28] The next day and be like oh I didn't see it. You did.
- Yeah, exactly.
- The read receipts.

So that's interesting. It's like accountability that you know they've seen the conversation, but at the same time frustrating because they're not responding, so you expect their input.

- Yeah, like I know in one of my groups we had a couple instances where it was like okay. We always met at the same time for the one group on Tuesdays or whatever, but we would rent a meeting room in the library, which would change depending on what daily availability of the rooms were, and there was one group member that week after week, we'd post what room was rented. It would show that they had read it, and then they would show up half an hour late to the meeting and say that they were walking around the library trying to find us, that they didn't know what room we were in. But you could see that they had read the post that blatantly said we are in room three.

Okay. That sounds frustrating. Okay. So, it sounds like you're using it. You said you booked a room. You're saying here's a room. Here's a time. Here's a place. Are there any discussions about the content in your assignments that happens in those discussions? Or is it a scheduling tool essentially to confirm those quick kinds of shorter conversations?

- We talk about like content of assignments too. Yeah, just so like everyone can see it, and everyone can see that we talked about it. And kind of accountability, making sure that we've talked about it, it's been dealt with, and then we can refer back to it instead of just talking about it all in person.

Okay.

- Yeah, and the one thing that one of my groups would sometimes do is like one person would take notes of the key things that we talked about in a meeting, and then they would post it within our Facebook group so that everyone had it there for reference of like this is what we went over. This is the consensus we came to as a group so that it was there in writing that we all had kind of agreed to it, and then it was there if we needed to go back to it afterwards.

Okay, so you used the group to get some sort of consensus to say we're all on the same page, this is what's happening.

- Yeah.
- Yeah.

Okay, tell me a little bit about Facebook and video. In the classroom, in the school, where does video play a role, or does it?

- I don't think so.
- I mean like videos that are going to auto play as I'm scrolling. I mean that's a good distraction if I don't want to be doing what I should be doing, but I don't think video on Facebook really adds much education wise.
- It's so time consuming to make a video instead of doing something else.
- Like I could see how it could be useful if it was like a course material or something, and it already existed, and you were just sharing the link to it or something, but I think most of the time it wouldn't be something that was actually posted in Facebook.

Okay, that's interesting. So, course material. If you had videos, let's say you created a group and you were all kind of posting videos, or you had videos there, would you use the group to watch those course related videos?

- I don't know necessarily about watching them, but I think if you had to have a discussion about a video, that would be kind of like a common ground platform, because it's something that can read the video, and you can have it kind of organize the discussion under, versus you're not going to watch the video on YouTube and then try to have a discussion with each other in those comments. So, unless you can bring everything in one platform, I think that's the only way I could see it working.

Okay, what about photos. I know someone mentioned taking a picture of a white board. What other role do photos play with Facebook? Just the whiteboard?

- Yeah, and like jokes.
- I was going to say comic relief.
- Yeah, mostly like pictures of notes, pictures of things in the classroom just so people don't miss it.

Things in the classroom, like slides?

- Yeah.
- Or?
- Yeah, I guess so. Yeah.

Okay.

- Yeah. I think it's whether it's taking a picture of a page in your notebook or slides or something, it's just purely informational.

Okay. So, it sounds like a lot of information sharing. A lot of smaller discussions but not actual, like you're not working on assignments on Facebook.

- Yeah, it's a lot more of kind of the planning of assignments and that sort of thing versus the actual work of the assignments, so.
- Yeah.

Okay.

- Yeah.
- I would say, based on my experience, because I think it's a little bit different, because I was, maybe, before. The Facebook interaction with students, like if I had a polygroup [PHONETIC] but it might have just been... I can't even remember how we would have communicated. But it was more, "Are we gonna set this time to get together to do the actual work?" And then it was more just social and bonding stuffing. So, I don't know you, or we're getting to know each other and then it's kind of an easier way to get to know each other with jokes and whatnot. And then when you get into the in-person meeting or whatever, it would be then that's when the actual work would get done.
- Mm-hmm.

That's interesting. So, Facebook's almost like the before to hanging out. It's the icebreaker.

- Yeah, totally.
- Yeah.
- Yeah, in my undergrad it was just planning times to meet at, like planning where we were going to sit in class.

- Okay.
- Yeah.

Okay. What about your communication with the actual school? So, if you went to... Whether you went to university or college, did you communicate in any way with the school over Facebook? Or receive communications from the school.

- Yeah, like announcements, news.

What kind of announcements?

- Announcements like snow day or if it was some form of emergency or drill. Something like that.

Okay. Okay.

- I'd say it was a bit more of one-way communication.
- Yeah.
- Like the school would post it. Not necessarily, but as students we were interacting with it. But it was a quick and easy way to get the information from the school for certain things like that.

Okay.

- Maybe it's because become more official, but I used to be, like, I have to get the email. That's how it has to be official.

- Yeah.
- An email from...?
- The school, like someone mentioned snow day or something. I actually can't remember if I followed anything while I was in it. But I definitely had a more after school, I felt like the alumni group.
- Yep.
- I was more, maybe engaged with, than when I was at school.

Interesting. Alumni groups. Are you still in an alumni group now?

- So now in group I follow LREI [PHONETIC] Alumni is a page that just posts stuff that other alumni are doing.
- Yeah, I follow Carleton Alumni now.

Do you think your experience being a student versus being alumni has changed how you engage on social media?

- I think I look an alumni with it's more like a pride thing.
- Yeah.

So, you see other alumni have done something, and you're like, "Oh, I'm going to engage with this more likely than something else." Like, I probably never would have done that. Not that they had that equivalent when you're in your undergrad or postgrad, but I think they made a lot of money.

[Laughs]

Okay. Okay. Does anybody have any other thoughts around Facebook in any sort of school context, whether it's you have strong feelings that it could be used wrongfully. Feelings that it couldn't. Maybe you have an idea that something Facebook should do that it's not currently doing as a platform? Do you have any, any thoughts at all?

- They have Facebook for Business. They should do Facebook for Education.

Facebook for Education?

- Yeah. Because then, Facebook for Business is kind of slack, but it's more... Like, you have a profile and stuff. So, if they did Facebook for Education, you could connect your regular Facebook or not have a Facebook and create an Education profile. Then you could interact with your teachers and stuff. Be separate.
- What about them having full access to your regular, everyday Facebook?
- Yeah. But it would still be a familiar interface.
- So, that's... Kind of on that note, what I was just going to say. I see Facebook more as being the liaison between getting to know someone, getting their contact information, and then launching into a different platform. And so, in my experience I never used Facebook as a collaborative tool for school, but it would be getting information, setting meetings, and then using Google Docs or any other platform, really. So, I see it as like a launching platform for your communication.

So, what would happen on Facebook that would be different from Google Docs?

- Well, because you can't actually do any of the work. Like if you were creating, say, a report together. You're not... Like, I never would be writing in Facebook. We'd be working on it together in a live document, because it avoided multiple files and also it

was something that was automatically going to be saved there and not lost in a conversation.

- Yeah.

Okay.

- Just seeing who's there, who's away, and who's typing where. It's just...
- In Google Docs.
- In Google Docs.
- Yeah, Google Docs is awesome.
- It's a huge difference from Facebook. You don't see people's presence as active, I guess? So, I think that's... I mean, if Facebook did something similar, I think that would really change. The way people use Facebook would change. But as of right now, Google Docs is kind of taking over.

Okay. So, it sounds like, correct me if I'm wrong. It sounds like... So, you said they should have Facebook for Education, and you're talking about how Facebook is like that, "Let's kind of chat and get to know each other," platform, but not actually do our work in Facebook. If there was a Facebook version of Google Docs, would that change your willingness to use Facebook?

- I think it would have 4 years ago, but I'm so in Google Docs now.
- I feel the same.
- Like, I think it would be really cool, but I really like Google Docs.

- Yeah, I think in some ways it would definitely be more convenient being able to have the features in Google Docs right within our Facebook groups, so we're already using for communication and planning. To be able to actually execute the work that way. But...
- For the generation that hasn't discovered Google Docs, sure.
- That was what I was just going to say. I feel like it would be very hard transitioning, for me, into something like that. But, I mean, for younger generations that are using Facebook and they aren't working collaboratively with other people on Google Docs and introducing that first would probably.
- And I think it would depend on the nature of the work, too. Because, and like I said before, compartmentalizing. Like someone said, a few years ago, it might have been a great feature to have in Facebook, but I know, personally, now I would never do that if that was a feature. Because I'd be, "I don't know where this information is going. This is my social thing, not my document.
- Yeah.
- Process or whatever it's called.
- Yeah, so for you, Facebook had a completely different platform for just Education. Not even signing into your personal and then flipping to an Educational Group. But if they had Facebook for Education or something totally different, that would probably help you compartmentalize.
- Separate act.

[Laughs]

- Now I can see it.

So, yeah. I think that's a good way to explain it. If we talk about Facebook for Education, what does that look like? What's in... We're all working for Facebook, we're going to create Facebook for Education. What does that look like?

- I know it's... Oh, go ahead.
- Sorry. Just a complete shift in content. Nothing really personalized. I see a lot of tips for studying or for, I don't know, a lot of information sharing. Articles or certain education events, videos or, "Look at what this school has done, and this school." And sharing experience that way and influencing one another...
- Within a school?
- Within a school or even a district or even a country. I feel like you could. The sharing of information could be there very fast.

Okay.

- Yeah.
- I see a thing something like D2L, where you have a home page for your school. Like, we had Carleton Central, and that's where we would get updates about snow days and stuff that never happened, but...
- Aww.
- Whatever.

[Laughs]

- Yeah, so like updates from your school and then you could go into your courses. And then you'd have discussion boards and stuff and a profile and yeah.

So, you'd still have a profile, like, "I'm [name], here's who I am?"

- Yeah, I think so. Yeah, it wouldn't be as robust as your personal one.
- Okay.
- So yeah, I was going to say conceptualizing this from something like Facebook's perspective, I think it would be a huge branding project because you can't control the sentiment of what people post, but you would, ideally, in an educational sphere not want to be the same. Probably, you would want it to be more positive than regular Facebook. And I think sentiment, like I said, you can't control that at all. But it would come down to how they brand it and kind of mold people to use it. Which would then probably get completely out of their control.
- So true.

[Laughs]

- And I think for an Educational Facebook, it would need to be a bit more kind of forum-based, so that you'd be able to easily find what you're looking for or versus like regular Facebook it's just like everything everywhere. Whereas, like you said, for having an [INAUDIBLE 02:41:14] school age and breaking down the courses so you can easily navigate to the topic of discussion you're looking for versus trying to do a search and finding who-knows-what. But have it more of like a flowing tree to narrow down what you're looking for.

Okay.

- Yeah, that's great.

What do you think students are looking for? If there was a forum? What do you go to the forum for?

- Answers? At someone's basic level.
- To?
- You would hope that somebody... Either somebody else asked the same question that you have or you would post a question and hope that somebody could answer it for you.

So, about assignments...

- Yeah.
- ...or...
- Topics, yeah.
- Okay.
- Yeah.
- For me it would be more so the next steps. Career advice.
- Oh, that's right.
- Stuff like that.

So, less, "I'm a student in this course," more, "I'm a student," in general, talking to other students outside of your program?

- Mm-hmm.

Okay.

- So, I was going to say, too, it would be useful from an instructor's perspective to host discussions or forums, if that was a platform. But on the other hand, you can't force people to join it. If it's participation and it's also an accessibility thing. Where you can't assume everyone's going home and has the internet. Or McDonald's next door.

[Laughs]

- And can use it.
- Unless it's a platform the school has adopted and they use it instead of their D2L or whatever.
- Yeah.
- Platform, so.

Okay. Alright.

- Yeah, I did a semester before my postgrad, after my undergrad program at Algonquin and it was like a Distance Program. And they... Like we had to participate in discussions in the Algonquin infrastructure.
- Right.

- Which was kind of weird, but it's also... It actually got people talking, so. It would be cool to have discussion boards like.
- I had that for an online class where it was a requirement to be a part of a discussion.
- I have, too.
- Yeah.

What do those discussions look like?

- It's people copying and pasting a textbook.
- Yeah.

[Laughs]

- We wait until the last minute.
- It's like, please. In my experience with it, it was a LREI online course and it was, you had to post, be part of media one discussion a week. You had, throughout the semester, begin one discussion. So, if you were participating in one, you were just kind of seeing what the topic was. Find something relevant and write that sentence.

Okay.

- Like, it makes you look like a... That was what a lot of people did. You read it, and you were, "This is not casual conversation, these are not opinions, these are just like things that do not go together."

[Laughs]

- This is just things that's going to get [INAUDIBLE 02:44:24].
- They're from the same chapter, that's what they have in common.
- Yeah.
- Because it's more like forced communication versus an organic conversation that's flowing. You're just participating in it only because you have to, not because you actually...
- Well, it was... The questions usually weren't opinion-based, they would be a stat or what's the answer to this question? So then, why wouldn't you just take it from the textbook?
- Yeah.
- It's like, "I don't have firsthand research in this."

Yeah. Do you think that would feel any more or less forced if you were using D2L, Desire to Learn, or any sort of internal software, versus a social platform. Do you think that that changes that at all?

- I think it was a social platform, it might feel more casual and more... You might get people opening up a little bit more, because they're used to. I think also a lot of it would have to do with interface. If you're comfortable with that interface and it's not like your brain's not associating it with school or it's being associated with your social life. And you talk to your friends all the time, and you open up a little bit more and put out a little bit more information.

Okay.

- And if there's part of it... Part of it would have to be without the instructors. Because that's where people are going to ask hard questions.

So, you said, "Part of it." Would there be a part with instructors?

- Yeah, there could be a part with instructors but there would have to be at least some discussion boards or wall-based stuff that would be without... Like, just for students.

Okay.

- Yeah.

Okay. Okay. So, that kind of wraps up our formal discussions. Five after eight. I just want to revisit the definition of collaboration we talked about in the beginning and then we'll cut out. See what your thoughts are after that discussion. So, the definition that we talked about has three components. So, collaboration involves information sharing, communicating and working together. So, after all that discussion about what Facebook is, what Facebook could be, do you see any potential for Facebook to play a role in education?

- So, I'm actually, since you read it the first time, farther away from it now. Because it's kind of reminding me that on social media, people are not good communicators. In a very casual context. If there was a structure and it was topic-driven, maybe. But when people see an article and then they just get in a fight with the other person, they're not really communicating properly. They're not really reading and hearing what the other person is saying. They're just one-way spouting their opinions, so that collaboration would be affected. Communication and... What was the last thing?
- Information sharing?
- And yes. Which is, it's less sharing and more just like projecting.

Okay. Okay.

- I think in terms of the Facebook groups, it has the communication aspect, it has the information sharing aspect and the fact that you can share a finalized document or something like that. But it's lacking the ability to actually be a collaborative setting to get work done in.
- Like working together.
- The actual collaboration execution of the projects, there isn't that ability in Facebook.

Okay.

- So, you're able to share information but not actually work on assignments.
- Yeah.
- Okay, and so...
- It's a good reference point, but that's all it is. The planning, the check-ins, making sure things are done or things are clarified. But in terms of really in-depth collaboration and working teamwork and stuff like that, I don't see it as a useful tool. At the moment as is.
- And even, I was going to say, even the checking in if things are done and it's only half-effective in that, too. Because it could just be, "Are you done this one thing?" But it's not good for project managing because you would take that, again, into another platform if you had a fairly in-depth project with different pieces.
- True. And it all comes down to this accountability piece because, from my experience, there's so many times where people do try to make sure that everyone's done something or acknowledge it in some form of way and then you still have to go to class the next day and approach certain people, "Did you see my Facebook post? Do you agree or do you not agree? What's your feedback?" So, definitely big accountability gap there, I feel.

- Mm-hmm.

Okay.

- I was thinking about what you said. Facebook would have to change their messaging to make it not a mean place. Like...
- Not as [INAUDIBLE 02:49:22]
- Like a rude...
- A mean place?
- Yeah, yeah. Like if they were ever to branch out into Education, like I guess they already have with business. They're not a fundamentally helpful company. They weren't built with people's well-being in mind. So they would have to completely shift their way of thinking to be able to help students.
- Versus like LinkedIn where everything is so professional and people are so positive and always sharing such great information. You actually feel good scrolling through your Timeline versus Facebook where it doesn't always [INAUDIBLE 02:50:03].
- It's so depressing.
- Yeah.

Okay. Any last comments?

- That's why I think that integrating something like that into the existing platform will still not gather enough traction. So, back to my original point. If they had... They set up something completely different, incorporating the different messaging and it's a

completely different vibe, then I feel they have a chance for people to actually use it and catch on to it. But as is, I feel they could make certain improvements, but there's still going to be that issue of how people are.

- Yeah.
- On Facebook.
- I don't think you can change the sentiment of an entire platform, because if you look at Facebook, a lot of the only positive things are lions and babies and you don't have those in the other platforms. Other than that, it's just like people fighting about politics.
- Yeah, people are really mean on Facebook. It's just... People would have to change the way they look at the platform.
- And then it might also, if it was an Educational site, forced people to also look at themselves and how they might be less transparent on something like that. Which is not the worst thing.

[Laughs]

- Yeah.

Okay. Okay, awesome. Okay, I think that kind of concludes things. You get 20 minutes back of 90 minutes. That was really great. It's great to hear from you and hear what you think and envision for the future of Facebook or don't envision, maybe. I really, really appreciate it though. It's real helpful to hear it from you and I appreciate you coming very much today. So, thank you for giving up your Wednesday evening for me.

- No problem.
- Good luck. I hope it goes well.