Findings on Facebook in higher education: A comparison of college faculty and student uses and perceptions of social networking sites

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ABSTRACT

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook are one of the latest examples of communications technologies that have been widely-adopted by students and, consequently, have the potential to become a valuable resource to support their educational communications and collaborations with faculty. However, faculty members have a track record of prohibiting classroom uses of technologies that are frequently used by students. To determine how likely higher education faculty are to use Facebook for either personal or educational purposes, higher education faculty ($n = 62$) and students ($n = 120$) at a mid-sized southern university were surveyed on their use of Facebook and email technologies. A comparison of faculty and student responses indicate that students are much more likely than faculty to use Facebook and are significantly more open to the possibility of using Facebook and similar technologies to support classroom work. Faculty members are more likely to use more "traditional" technologies such as email.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Facebook and the future of teaching and learning

Even as electronic technologies accelerate the pace of their encroachment into every aspect of our lives, the education community continues its decades-long struggle to establish the role these innovations should play in effective teaching and learning. Traditionally, students come to school "powered-up" and wired with the newest technologies available – but often they must leave them at the door, since faculty do not use them in classrooms and may even regard them with suspicion. The most recent example of a potential disconnect between tools preferred by students and those used by teachers is the category of social media known as Social Networking Sites (SNS). The study described here explores several issues related to faculty and student acceptance and use of one such SNS: the community-building resource called Facebook.

1.2. Growth of social networking: everywhere but in education?

Higher education has a well-established trend toward non-adoption of new technologies. Though the movement toward online instruction has somewhat altered this picture in recent years, since most institutions currently offer at least some online courses (Allen & Seaman, 2008), many – and perhaps most – higher education faculty remain laggards when it come to adopting these and other technology innovations. For example, a recent report (Kleiner, Thomas, Lewis, & Greene, 2007) on educational technology use in teacher education programs by the National Center for Education Statistics concluded that faculty reluctance remains a major barrier to effective integration of technologies in teacher preparation. Some 73% said faculty lack of interest was an impediment; about a quarter said it was a moderate to major issue. This contrasts with findings on students' willingness to integrate technologies. The study found that "... 54% (of institutions) reported that (teacher) candidates' lack of interest was not at all a barrier, and 41% reported it as a barrier to a minor extent" (p. 11). In sum, students are willing; faculty members are not.

When it comes to SNSs, the fastest-growing and most popular of the Internet-based technologies with young people, is there any reason to believe this non-adoption trend among higher education faculty will be any different? There are characteristics of this innovation that may lead to higher rates of acceptance, depending on the type of SNS being considered. One feature of SNSs such as Facebook is that they function primarily as communication tools and

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faculty may view them as akin to email, a technology on which most of them already rely. A great deal of communication between students and instructor about courses already goes on via email. Faculty may be likely to adopt a technology if they perceive it as a way to facilitate communication with students.

A second aspect is the social one. Faculty who see teaching as establishing a relationship with students may view Facebook-like technologies as an efficient, even business-like way to accomplish that connection. Though recent experiences by some educators and students has demonstrated the problems that this kind of activity can entail (Flynn, 2009; Stansbury, 2009; Young, 2009), many educational institutions seem to be sold on the idea of communicating with students in this way. They have their own Facebook pages and actively seek to link with those of their students. This modeling may help persuade educators that SNSs of this kind are a practical solution to teachers' need to keep in close contact with students.

1.3. Study purpose and research questions

The SNS trend is a relatively new one and little research has been reported on its acceptance and use in education. The study reported here was designed to gather preliminary evidence of the current adoption of SNSs such as Facebook by students and faculty, as well as their willingness to segue their use of these tools from the social arena to the instructional one. The study proposed the following questions:

- How does college faculty adoption and uses of SNS compare to that of college students?
- Do college students and faculty communicate as much or more using Facebook than they do with technologies traditionally used in colleges (e. g., email)?
- What proportion of students and faculty who use social networking sites use them for communication on instructional matters?
- How do student and faculty perspectives compare on using Facebook to support classwork?

2. Background and theoretical framework

2.1. Background on social networking sites

Today's SNSs began in 1997 with the launch of SixDegrees.com which "allowed users to create profiles, list their Friends and, beginning in 1998, surf the Friends list" (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 214). Since that time, SNSs have hit the mainstream with a vengeance. Two websites in particular have become very popular: MySpace and Facebook. Vincci Kwong (2007) says, "Both MySpace and Facebook are social networking websites that provide personalized and interactive services based on users' interest and activities on the web" (p.1). Facebook is one of the most popular SNSs for college students and was by far the one website that helped "tip" SNSs into the mainstream culture. MySpace launched in 2003 and built up an audience for the SNSs that followed (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 214).

Boyd and Ellison (2008) observe, "…MySpace differentiated itself by regularly adding features based on user demand and by allowing users to personalize their pages. This 'feature' emerged because MySpace did not restrict users from adding HTML into the forms that framed their profiles; a copy/paste code culture emerged on the web to support users in generating unique MySpace backgrounds and layouts" (p. 217). Other functions that MySpace offered included creating a personal profile with the option to share photos, choosing a profile song, stating/choosing personal interests and personality traits, identify schools and universities that the user attends or attended, announcing upcoming user events, developing a user calendar, and maintaining a personal journal or "blog" (Kwong, 2007, p. 53–55).

In early 2004, Facebook was created. According to Hirschorn (2007), "Facebook was started by Mark Zuckerberg, 23, while he was a student at Harvard in 2004. The general concept was to digitize the legendary (Harvard) freshman-year 'facebook,' and allow students not only to gawk at one another's photos but also to flirt, network, [and] interact" (p. 154). At first, Facebook.com was limited to college students at Harvard with a university email address (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 218). Later, the Facebook phenomenon spread like wildfire when opened up to all college students. Boyd and Ellison (2008) affirm, "As Facebook began supporting other schools, those users were also required to have university email addresses associated with those institutions, a requirement that kept the site relatively closed and contributed to users' perceptions of the site as an intimate, private community" (p. 218). This changed in 2005, when Facebook opened its doors to people outside the university network (Boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 218). With over 350 million subscribers worldwide (according to Facebook.com statistics retrieved in March, 2010), Facebook, now has a diverse community of users at all levels of education and areas of society, including companies and universities.

Facebook is similar to MySpace relative to user capabilities. As with MySpace, the user can create a profile and provide information such as personal interests, list schools in which the user attends, and upload photos (Kwong, 2007, p. 55–56). Furthermore, the users can blog under the "My Notes" section of Facebook (Kwong, 2007, p.56). Like MySpace the user can join groups based on interests and post events much like the functions in MySpace (Kwong, 2007, p.56). Finally, as with MySpace, messages can be exchanged between the users (Kwong, 2007).

2.2. Current uses of social networking sites among young people and schools

The 2001 report from the Pew Internet & American Life Project (Lenhart, Rainey, & Lewis, 2001) was an early indication of the increasingly social role that communications technologies would play in the lives of young people. It found that three-quarters of all teens between ages 12 and 17 were using the Internet and instant messaging (IM) and that these technologies were becoming an important aspect of their lives:

- 76% of online teens said they would miss the Internet if they could no longer go online.
- 48% said their use of the Internet improves their relationship with friends.
- 32% say Internet tools help them make new friends.

Also noteworthy was the role these technologies were playing as a substitute for in-person events in teens' social communications. More than a third of teens use IM to have social communications they don't want to say in face-to-face conversations with their peers, like asking someone out (17%) or breaking up with someone (13%).

When the Pew Internet & American Life Project updated the results in 2007 (Lenhart, Madden, Smith, & Macgill, 2007), they found that the number of online teens had risen and their uses of online resources were increasingly social. "Some 93% of teens use the Internet, and more of them than ever are treating it as a venue for social interaction – a place where they can share creations, tell stories, and interact with others" (p. 3i). The report also found that teens' use of other technologies such as email was decreasing, even as social networking increased. Use of IM dropped from 75% in 2004 to 68% in the 2007 study. However, as the report noted, "This does not necessarily mean that instant messaging is declining in popularity among teens. Rather, it could be that instant messaging functionality has been integrated into so many social networking and gaming applications that teens no longer recognize instant messaging as a separate technology" (p. 27).

Though designed for social uses, SNSs appear to be in the process of transitioning to other areas of teen life, including education. Karlin (2007) reported that "Almost 60% of students who use social networking talk about education online, and more than 50% talk about specific school work" (Karlin, 2007, p. 7). In light of this, it is not surprising that high schools are beginning to experiment with SNSs. The Saugus Union School District describes its use of an educational equivalent of MySpace and Facebook (O'Hanlon, 2007, p. 44). O'Hanlon (2007) explains that,

"Saugus' social networking site [also known as SUSD Community] is being used for everything from daily newscasts on the district's web page to oral reports about colonial life. One class, for example, is producing the *New Colony News*, a podcasted news show written as if it were being created during the country's dawning days" (p. 44). Furthermore, teachers are "using the site's blogging feature to engage their students in various academic topics ranging from science and literature" (O'Hanlon, 2007, p. 44).

One of the sites creators further describes uses of the SUSD Community sites explaining that "Through the SUSD Community sites, individual members can employ any of a diverse set of content creation and sharing tools, each of which provide the option of sharing the created content creation with the general public, site members only, small groups, or even just themselves. … Currently, there are approximately 350 teacher users and approximately 450 student users (Klein, 2008, pp. 2–3).

Klein (2008) reports that, "One of the key benefits of this initiative has been improved communication and the establishment of a sense of community. Departments now have an effective vehicle for delivering news, updates, forms, and files to the staff as a whole (now nearly 2000) that is easy to use, flexible, timely, and more effective than traditional paper newsletters, Web sites, or centralized document distribution" (p. 3). Although still in the early stages, academic gains have been reported. It was noted that the district has "already discovered that teachers leveraging the tools to bolster science curriculum through group projects and lesson reviews have seen an average nine-point gain in test scores and student achievement" (Klein, 2008, p. 3). Similarly, teachers have seen the same results in the areas of writing and language fluency (Klein, 2008, p. 3). All of these benefits are realized at a relatively low cost to the school district.

The National School Board Association (2007) finds that use of SNSs seems to be an emergent trend. "Almost seven in 10 districts (69%) say they have student Web site programs. Nearly half (49%) say their schools participate in online collaborative projects with other schools, and almost as many (46%) say their students participate in online pen pal or other international programs" (p. 5). Even more surprising, "More than a third (35%) say their schools and/or students run blogs, either officially or in the context of instruction. More than one in five districts (22%) say their classrooms are involved in creating or maintaining wikis, web sites that allow visitors to add, remove or edit content" (National School Boards Association, 2007, p. 5).

O'Hanlon (2007) maintains there is value in exposing students to SNSs in high school arguing, "Teachers are … the gatekeepers of these sites, reading over everything their students wish to publish, including profile information, and blog entries, both for school and personal use … "[Teachers] use this leverage as a tool for learning, erasing students' blog entries if they do an assignment incorrectly, and allowing them to redo it before it posts and their classmates have a chance to see it, which actually benefits students because the nature of blogging enables and encourages peer reviews and corrections" (p. 42). O'Hanlon also reports that many instructors require that the student strictly obey proper English when blogging or chatting online. The National School Boards Associations (2007) also found that "Safety policies remain important, as does teaching students about online safety and responsible online expression, but students may learn these lessons better while they [are] actually using social networking tools" (p. 9).

2.3. Current uses of social networking sites at the college level

2.3.1. Library uses

A growing number of college libraries are tapping into Facebook and MySpace. At Georgia Tech, the information services librarian reports using Facebook to network with mechanical engineering students (Matthews, 2006). "With the undergraduate enrollment for mechanical engineering around 1,700 students, I was surprised to discover that more than 1,300 of them were on Facebook. This presented an intriguing opportunity to directly market the library to more than 75% of my target audience" (p. 306). Matthews felt that Facebook had help accomplish his goal of promoting the library as a subject liaison and helped meet the needs of his students (Matthews, 2006, p. 307).

However, librarians also report hurdles to be overcome when using Facebook. Miller and Jensen (2007) explain that, "Unfortunately, Facebook firmly outlines in its terms of use that a group or entity cannot register a user Profile, so it deleted them. Facebook managers encouraged librarians to replace the deleted institution user Profiles with new personal Profiles and to form Groups to promote library services to patrons" (p. 18). (Facebook seems to have changed this rule since that time.) Miller and Jensen (2007) also utilize Facebook in their library and argue that "You have to connect with your patrons before you can effectively promote your services to them" (p. 18). Many libraries across the United States are using MySpace and Facebook to reach students, announce library events, and answer research library-related questions.

Farkas (2007) explains this phenomenon, contending, "Many academic libraries have developed a presence in online courseware with links to library services targeted to online learners. Similarly, the Brooklyn College Library has provided a MySpace portal to its services … that contains links to the catalog and databases, as well as, documentation on how to access library resources off-campus" (p. 27). In fact, in one study, librarians wanted to determine which source students would use more to ask reference and research related questions: email, phone, instant message, Facebook, or in-person (Mack, Behler, Roberts, & Rimland, 2007, p. 5). Students in this study preferred asking their reference and research related questions using Facebook and email even more than face to face.

However, the picture is not all positive. Based on a survey she did of 366 Valparaiso University freshmen to gauge their perspectives on libraries using Facebook and MySpace as outreach tools, Connell (2009) recommended that librarians "proceed with caution" on this decision. She found that though most students seemed open to the idea of the library contacting them in this way, some (12%) reacted negatively because of the potential to infringe on their sense of personal privacy. A previous study by Chu and Meulemans (2008) also reported some ambivalence on the part of students to using Facebook or MySpace to connect with libraries. Some noted that email seemed to them a more appropriate avenue for this kind of communication. A study by Hendrix, Chiarella, Hasman, Murphy, and Zafron (2009) found data were "inconclusive in determining whether or not Facebook is a useful and effective application for health sciences libraries."

2.3.2. Faculty uses

SNS uses are also beginning to emerge in college classrooms. Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds (2007) found that, "This [Facebook] network is increasingly being used not only by students but also by [college] faculty. According to a Facebook spokesperson, approximately 297,000 Facebook members identify themselves as faculty or staff" (p. 3). This has potential for both benefits and consequences. Mazer et al. (2007) say that "Students may perceive a teacher's use of Facebook as an attempt to foster positive relationships with his or her students, which may have positive effects on important student outcomes … (However), teachers may violate student expectations of proper behaviors and run the risk of harming their credibility if they utilize Facebook. Despite this potential consequence, teachers may enhance their credibility among students by signifying an understanding of contemporary student culture" (pp. 3–4).

Mazer, Murphy, and Simonds found positive perceptions from students about faculty use of Facebook. "The primary purpose of this study was to explore the impact of teacher self-disclosure on Facebook on student motivation, affective learning, and classroom climate. Findings suggest that higher teacher self-disclosure may lead students to higher levels of anticipated motivation and affective learning and lend to a more comfortable classroom climate" (p. 12). In this study, SNSs seem to work to improve classroom climate for the instructor.

2.3.3. Administrative uses

The most prevalent use of SNSs in the university community is creating profiles and groups to communicate events with users. Colleges are also using SNSs for university marketing campaigns. Facebook seems to be perceived as "… an excellent mechanism for communicating with our students because it allows us to go where they already are; it is an environment that students are already comfortable with" (Mack, Behler, Roberts, & Rimland, 2007, p. 4).

Southern Illinois University's College of Business at Carbondale reports using Facebook to communicate and market school events as well as activities to students and alumni. The university department reported 400 members on its Facebook group, allowing " … members to receive school news and communicate easily with students, faculty, alumni, and others in the school community" (Reaching Students Where They Live, 2008, p. 60). One university official explained the perceived benefit. "The group offers the school an easy, no-cost way to post school announcements, recruit for student organizations, and upload photos. In the future, the school may use Facebook to survey students on different topics. Facebook also makes faculty seem more approachable and opens up new avenues of communication" (Reaching Students Where They Live, 2008, p. 6) Facebook, as well as other SNSs, have been used to open the communication lines between students and universities by informing them of college events and other collegiate activities.

2.4. A proposed theoretical framework: how SNS could enhance learning

The growing popularity of SNSs indicates that by providing additional avenues and purposes for communications among students and faculty, social communications can become a contributor to successful learning. Interaction has long been recognized as a key indicator of quality in online courses. In developing a rubric for assessing interaction in online courses, Roblyer and Wiencke (2003) identified five components: socially-designed interaction, instructionally-designed interaction, interactivity affordances of technology, student engagement, and instructor engagement. Each type of interaction contributed to the overall quality and potential impact of an online course. The social and interactive nature of SNSs presents the intriguing possibility that by enhancing social interactions with and among students through the use of an SNS such as Facebook, instructors can increase the overall quality of engagement in a given instructional setting and, thus, create a more effective learning environment. SNSs also provide easily-measured evidence of both student and instructor interaction.

Schwartz (2009) also finds that "mentoring theory" may provide a theoretical basis for defining an instructional role for SNSs. Schwartz cites Fletcher and Ragins' work on "relational mentoring" in *The Handbook of Mentoring at Work: Theory, Research and Practice*, saying that " … there is developmental potential in even a single (such) interaction" (p. B13). The relational mentoring model suggests that " … growth in relationships happen when both people experience … increased energy and well-being, potential to take action, increased knowledge of self and other, a boost to self-esteem, and an interest in more connection" (p. B13). As a higher education instructor, Schwartz judges her own experiences with students on Facebook as meeting most, if not all, these criteria and as having comparable benefits to an after-class meeting. Thus, SNS exchanges theoretically can be both a valid form of highly-interactive instructional communication and an opportunity for pedagogical mentoring.

3. Study methodology

3.1. Study procedures and data sources

To compare student and faculty uses of Facebook, as well as their perceptions of its utility as a classroom support tool, data were gathered via an online survey administered to personnel at a mid-sized, southern public university. Various on-campus student groups were solicited to participate by stationing personnel in the university's student union

building and inviting people to go to the online site and take the survey. The 120 students who completed the survey represents a convenience sample of the university's student population. Five department chairs in the university agreed to email their faculty members the SurveyMonkey link and lent their support to the study by encouraging their faculty members to complete the survey; 62 of a possible 150 fulltime and part-time faculty members (41% return) responded. Background information on these respondents is shown in Table 1.

The survey focused on whether or not each group had a Facebook account and, if so, how much and for what purposes they currently used it and whether or not they would be open to using it in the future as a classroom support tool. A copy of the survey is shown in Appendix A.

3.2. Data analysis procedures

Due to the ordinal nature of data from the survey responses, various nonparametric analyses were performed to address the research questions of interest. Mann–Whitney U tests were used to compare students and faculty as to how likely they were to have a Facebook account and, if they did, how often they checked their accounts. Use of a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test to compare both faculty frequency of checking email versus Facebook accounts and students frequency of checking these same sources yielded data to compare the practices of these groups. Pearson Chi square tests were used to gauge the comparative frequency of student and faculty uses of Facebook for various purposes and to compare faculty and student perspectives on their frequency of agreement with statements about Facebook being used for classroom support.

4. Study results and implications

4.1. Overview

Data from this survey, while limited as to the percentage of return from the total population, paint an interesting picture of Facebook and email uses and perceptions among students and faculty. Findings are reported here by research question of interest in this study.

4.2. Comparisons of college faculty and college student adoption and uses

To address the question, "How does college faculty adoption and use of SNS compare to that of college students?" results of a Mann–Whitney U test found that students and faculty differed significantly ($z = -4.548$, $p < .01$) on how likely they were to have a Facebook account. Some 95% of students had an account, while about 73% of faculty had one. Still, it is of note that three-quarters of faculty responding to the survey did have such an account, though admittedly the overall response rate was low enough that results may be skewed by faculty members who have accounts volunteering to respond in greater numbers than those who did not. Results of a Mann–Whitney U test also indicated that students and faculty did

Table 1
Background information on survey respondents: ethnicity and sex (frequencies and percentages within role).

	Students	Faculty	Total
Ethnicity			
African–American	33 (28.4%)	3 (6.6%)	36
Asian/Pacific Islander	2 (1.7%)	0 (0.0%)	2
Caucasian	73 (62.9%)	55 (90.2%)	128
Hispanic	1 (.9%)	1 (1.6%)	2
Multiracial	6 (5.2%)	1 (1.6%)	7
Totals			$n = 175^*$
Sex			
Male	56 (46.7%)	30 (48.4%)	86
Female	64 (53.3%)	32 (51.6%)	96
Totals	120	62	$n = 182$

* Total on ethnicity does not add to total $n = 182$ because not everyone gave a response to this item.

Table 2
Frequencies, percentages, and Chi square comparisons of various Facebook uses by college faculty and students.

Facebook purpose (total $n = 182$)	Faculty use (# and % of group)	Student use (# and % of group)	Overall use (# and % of total)	x^2
Keep in touch with friends	39 (62.9%)	111 (92.5%)	150 (82.4%)	26.49 ($p = .000$)
Communicate on class projects	4 (6.5%)	5 (4.2%)	9 (4.9%)	.454 ($p = .366$)
Let others know what is happening in my life	18 (29.0%)	48 (40.0%)	66 (36.3%)	2.128 ($p = .097$)
Connect with people I have lost touch with	27 (43.5%)	72 (60.0%)	150 (82.4%)	4.729 ($p = .022$)
Do career networking	11 (17.7%)	13 (10.8%)	24 (13.2%)	1.704 ($p = .142$)

not differ significantly in how often they checked their Facebook accounts ($z = -.566$, $p > .05$). The most frequent indication for both groups was checking Facebook 1–5 times per day, though about a quarter of each group also checked their accounts less than once a day and another quarter checked it 5–10 times a day. There seems more variation within each group on frequency of Facebook checking than there is between groups.

4.3. Comparisons of email and SNS uses

Results of a Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test comparing students' use of Facebook and email with faculty uses of the same technologies indicated that students and faculty do differ in the frequency with which they use these communication mechanisms. College students tended to check both email and Facebook with equal frequency ($z = -.915$, $p = .36$), while faculty were significantly more likely to check email than Facebook ($z = -4.48$, $p = .00$). These data indicate that students communicate as much with Facebook as they do with technologies traditionally used in colleges (e.g., email). However, even faculty who have Facebook accounts do not turn to them for daily communication as much as they do email.

4.4. College faculty and student uses of SNS

To explore and compare the portion of time that students and faculty use social networking sites for instructional and other purposes, a crosstabs analysis and Chi square comparison of the frequency of these uses by group was done. Results, shown in Table 2, indicate that faculty and students do not use Facebook a great deal for instructional purposes; in fact, this was reported as the least-common use of this technology. The two college groups also do not differ in their use of Facebook for this kind of communication. Social uses were far more common, as might be expected. Students, however, are significantly more likely than faculty to use Facebook to keep in touch with friends ($x^2 = 26.495$, $p = .00$) and to connect with people they have lost touch with ($x^2 = 4.729$, $p = .02$).

In the open-ended "other" category, nine faculty members also reported Facebook uses not in the list of survey choices. These included communicating and keeping in touch with family members (e.g., grandchildren at a distance) and community groups. However, two reported university-related purposes such as keeping in touch with alumni and former students and study abroad program groups.

4.5. Comparison of student and faculty perspectives on SNS for classwork

A crosstabs and Chi square analysis was also done to compare student and faculty perspectives on using Facebook for classwork-related purposes of any kind. Results of this analysis, shown in Table 3, indicate that these groups differ somewhat in their views on this topic, but neither

can be viewed as particularly warm toward the possibility. Students are significantly more likely to agree that it would be convenient ($x^2 = 26.495$, $p = .00$). Instructors are significantly more likely to agree that "Facebook is not for education," but neither seemed to feel privacy is an issue in this context. The response to "I don't care" was significantly different between faculty and students, but was difficult to interpret. Students were nearly twice as likely to agree with this position ($x^2 = 4.991$, $p = .03$).

5. Conclusion: Facebook's future in education and society?

Results of this small-scale survey in one location indicate that faculty and students differ somewhat in their current and anticipated uses of SNSs such as the currently-popular Facebook. Of particular note is the significant difference between the perceived role of this tool as social, rather than educational. Students seem much more open to the idea of using Facebook instructionally than do faculty. However, as the rapid evolution in societal perceptions and uses of the Internet has shown in the last decade, attitudes toward technologies tend to change over time. This data "snapshot" could be only a prelude to a much greater role to come.

Yet despite its rapid growth and current popularity, it is still unclear whether or not Facebook and similar resources have a future as a mainstream communication tools in our society, let alone as supports for education. Heffernan (2009) reports a trend toward disillusionment in the midst of Facebook's popularity noting, " … Facebook attracted 87.7 million unique visitors in the United States in July (of that year). But while people are still joining Facebook and compulsively visiting the site, a small but noticeable group are fleeing – some of them ostentatiously." Reasons for this observed exodus range from simple boredom with the activity of online networking to a movement toward other tools for social networking and communication, e. g., Twitter.

Schwartz (2009) is among those who see benefit to these forms of communication, saying that "I now see Facebook as part of a larger commons, a space in which we stay connected … (it helps) keep my metaphorical door open, and that increases the potential for realtime, face-to-face conversations that are rich with connection, depth, risk-taking, and growth" (p. B13). The results of the study reported here provide limited and tentative evidence that, as of this time, students see that potential more than do the faculty who teach and mentor them. Unless this tendency changes and faculty perceive Facebook and its sister technologies, both current and those to come, as additional opportunities for educational communication and mentoring, SNSs may become yet another technology that had great potential for improving the higher education experience but failed to be adopted enough to have any real impact. In any case, study results reported here indicate it remains a trend worth watching and tracking with future research "snapshots."

Table 3
Frequencies, percentages, and Chi square comparisons of college faculty and students on Facebook uses in education.

Perspectives on Facebook in education (total $n = 182$)	Faculty agreeing (# and % of group)	Students agreeing (# and % of group)	Overall agreement (# and % of total)	x^2
It would be convenient.	13 (21.0%)	56 (46.7%)	69 (37.9%)	11.470 ($p = .000$)
I would welcome the opportunity to connect with faculty/students on Facebook.	13 (21.0%)	32 (26.6%)	45 (24.7%)	.713 ($p = .256$)
Facebook is personal/social — not for education!	33 (53.2%)	27 (22.5%)	60 (33.0%)	17.464 ($p = .000$)
My privacy would be invaded.	14 (22.6%)	18 (15.0%)	32 (17.6%)	1.621 ($p = .143$)
I don't care.	8 (12.9%)	33 (27.5%)	41 (22.5%)	4.991 ($p = .018$)

Appendix A. Faculty survey

Directions

The purpose of this survey is to gather information on faculty use of email and Facebook, and to solicit faculty perceptions of Facebook as an instructional tool. Click the radio buttons to select an answer.

This survey has only 9 items and should take you longer than 5 minutes to complete. If you have questions, please contact: Michelle McDaniel at mmcdanie@mtsu.edu

Thank you for completing this survey!

* 1. How many years have you been teaching?

   ○ 1–5 years   ○ 5–10 years   ○ 10–15 years   ○ More than 15 years

* 2. How old are you?

   ○ 29 years or younger   ○ 30–39 years   ○ 40–49 years   ○ 50–59 years   ○ 60 or old

* 3. What is your ethnic background?

   _____

* 4. Are you:

   ○ Male?   ○ Female?

* 5. Do you have a Facebook account?

   ○ Yes?   ○ No

* 6. On average, how many times each day do you check your Facebook account?

   ○ NA/no Facebook account   ○ 6–10 times a day   ○ More than 20 times a day

   ○ Less than once a day   ○ 11–15 times a day

   ○ 1–5 times a day   ○ 16–20 times a day

* 7. For what purpose(s) do you check your account? (You may choose more than one answer.)

   ☐ NA/no Facebook account   ☐ Let others know what is happening in my life   ☐ Other

   ☐ Keep in touch with friends   ☐ Connect with people I have lost touch with

   ☐ Communicate with my students on class projects   ☐ Do career networking

Other (please specify)

   _____

* 8. On average, how many times each day do you check your University email account?

   ○ Less than once a day   ○ 6–10 times a day   ○ 16–20 times a day

   ○ 1–5 times a day   ○ 11–15 times a day   ○ More than 20 times a day

* 9. What are your feelings about using Facebook for class? (You may choose more than one answer.)

   ☐ It would be convenient.

   ☐ I would welcome the opportunity to connect with students on Facebook.

   ☐ Facebook is personal/social - not for education!

   ☐ My privacy would be invaded.

   ☐ I don't care.

   ☐ Other

Other (please specify)

   _____

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