NetGENgagement:

How the Net Generation College Student Uses Social Media in Academic and Social College Experiences

by

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ABSTRACT

The landscape of higher education is constantly evolving. Similar to a wave that washes ashore and transforms the shoreline, the same is occurring with higher education and its "shoreline". With the influx of technology and social media on college and university campuses, higher education institutions have had to grapple with whether or not to implement the technology (e.g. mobile devices) and the social mediums (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) that accompany these technologies into the academic and social college experiences of the tech-savvy students enrolling in higher education institutions.

Higher education's new shoreline is largely being produced by the new paradigms of technology and social media adopted by the Net Generation college student. The forces of the evolving nature of technology are having an enormous impact on higher education practitioners. The prolific transcendence of Smartphones, tablets, and social mediums and the expansion of broadband (e.g. Wi-Fi) are changing student expectations of how higher education practitioners engage, communicate, and connect with the Net Generation college student. The assumption that many higher education practitioners have of social media is that social media primarily consists of Facebook and Twitter. Arguably Facebook and Twitter comprise the primary social avenues students traverse when communicating with friends and family but additionally, these sites can also be utilized for academic and social purposes advantageous to colleges and universities in enhancing the college student experience.

The purpose of this study is to understand and describe how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college experiences. Through the use of a descriptive analysis, this action research study described how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college student experiences.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandmothers, Marianne Marconi and Bernadette Sesterhenn. Thank you for always believing in me and instilling in me a strong sense that I can accomplish anything I set out to do. To my "papas": Papa Jim and Papa Bob, thank you for guiding me and watching over me throughout this journey. You are loved and missed.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

The landscape of higher education is constantly evolving. Similar to a wave that washes ashore and transforms the shoreline, the same is occurring with higher education and its "shoreline" (McHaney, 2011). With the influx of technology and social media on college and university campuses, higher education institutions have had to grapple with whether or not to implement the technology (e.g. mobile devices) and the social mediums (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube) that accompany these technologies into the academic and social college experiences of the tech-savvy students enrolling in higher education institutions (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Tapscott, 2009; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

Higher education's new shoreline is largely being produced by the new paradigms of technology and social media adopted by the Net Generation college student. The label *Net Generation* (NetGen) has been used to describe the generation of students arriving at today's colleges and universities primarily because they grew up with and predominantly communicate through the Internet, Smartphones, videogames, and social mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, Instant Messaging and text messaging (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Tapscott, 2009; Twenge, 2006). The Net Gen college students are entering college and university campuses as digital natives with the expectation that social media plays an integral role in their education as it does in their day-to-day lives (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2001; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

The forces of the evolving nature of technology are having an enormous impact on higher education practitioners. The universal nature of Smartphones, tablets, and social mediums and the expansion of broadband (e.g. Wi-Fi) are changing student expectations of how higher education practitioners engage, communicate, and connect with the Net Generation college student (McHaney, 2011; Rigby, 2008).

The Problem

As a result of the ubiquitous nature of social media and technologies adopted by the Net Generation college student, practitioners in higher education have had to rethink new ways to teach, communicate, and engage this generation of students (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). It is important for practitioners in the field of higher education to have a basic understanding of how students are communicating and interacting within their college experiences. Student affairs practitioners, specifically, must use this technological and social medium landscape to their advantage in order to engage students into the campus culture of the institution (Jenness, 2011). For example, students are entering college campuses more technologically savvy than previous generations (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Watkins, 2009). Thus, higher education practitioners need to understand how students prefer to be notified of campus academic program updates and social events through methods that the 21st century Net Generation students has become accustomed to using such as Facebook, Google Documents, text messaging, or YouTube.

Purpose of the Study

As a student services practitioner in higher education whose primary role is working directly with students, it is important that I understand the characteristics that make up the Net Generation student profile. Students of the Net Generation are the most ethnically and racially diverse group of college students compared to previous generations (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Twenge, 2006). In addition to their diversity, this generation of students is the most technologically advanced group of students matriculating to colleges and universities (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011). As evidenced by their birth year (1982-2000), Net Generation college students have grown up with technology and are comfortable with using a wide variety of technologies and social mediums to enhance their college academic and social experiences (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Manafy & Gautschi, 2011; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

In order to gain a better understanding of how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college student experiences, it was important that I became familiar with 1) the technologies these students currently use, 2) how they use social media in their academic experiences, 3) how they use social media in their social experiences, and 4) how they prefer social media be used by the university and college/academic program in communicating and/or disseminating information.

The assumption that many higher education practitioners have of social media is that social media primarily consists of Facebook and Twitter. Arguably

Facebook and Twitter comprise the primary social avenues students traverse when communicating with friends and family but additionally, these sites can also be utilized for academic and social purposes advantageous to colleges and universities in enhancing the college student experience (Jenness, 2011; Junco & Cotton, 2010; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011). In other words, higher education professionals *need to learn* how to integrate social media into the 21st century college student's academic and non-academic experiences (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

The purpose of this study is to understand how the Net Generation college student, students born between the years of 1982 and 2000, use social media in their academic and social college student experiences. As an assistant dean of students, I interact daily with Net Generation college students through my roles as a student government advisor, coordinator of new student orientation, and supervisor of the student tutoring program. In this role it is important that I understand what technologies the students are using and how the students apply social media through these technologies. In my role as assistant dean of students, the students with whom I interact on a daily basis have made it clear that communication through email is outdated. Aligning with the scholarship on social media use among Net Generation college students, I have found in my own professional experiences students prefer to communicate through social mediums such as Facebook, text messaging, and Twitter (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

As a higher education practitioner, it is my duty to recognize where students are engaging and interacting and ascertain how to utilize the tools and social mediums students are using in order to engage and maximize their academic and social college experiences. A fundamental component to achieving this task is to be cognizant of how students use social media in their academic and social college experiences and to find ways to integrate social media into the day-to-day operations of the university. Further, it is important to recognize how communication, dissemination and attainment of information, (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube), can be more user-friendly for the students in their educational experience. For example, the president of Arizona State University, Michael Crow, used Vimeo (a video-sharing website) to deliver a university-wide message that outlined the tuition proposal for the 2012-2013 academic year; the video garnered 9,700 views from February 29, 2012 through April 4, 2012 (ASU Office of the President, 2012).

Significance of the Study

Social media has come a long way from primarily being used for text messaging and gaming (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Tapscott, 2009; Prensky, 2010). Smartphones, Facebook, and Twitter have evolved from being viewed by faculty as distracters in the classroom to becoming tools that enhance the academic experiences of the Net Generation college student. Students can learn about various cultures, beliefs, and religions sitting in an Anthropology class at one point and then with the click of a button are "Skyped" in to a classroom across the globe and all the while sharing information with one another (Aaker &

Smith, 2010; Friedman, 2005). These same social mediums have also impacted campus social experiences outside of the classroom through Twitter and Facebook applications that allow for mass invitations and communications to generate interest in a variety of activities such as community service, sporting events, or student government elections (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Tapscott, 2009). Social media can also be used to facilitate discussions where introverted students may not feel comfortable speaking face to face or in the presence of a large lecture hall. For example, Twitter has gained credibility in engaging students who are more reticent in classroom discussions (Junco & Cotten, 2010). Thus, while these discussions may not take place in the presence of a brick and mortar classroom, it is important to note they are taking place, and students are engaging and interacting academically and socially in their college experiences (Jenness, 2011; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011).

Generally speaking, social media can no longer be viewed as a distraction in the college classroom. It is imperative that new professionals take Friedman's (2005) concept of "flattening the world" into institutions of higher education to interact and communicate with college students through the social mediums they are using such as Facebook, text messaging, and Twitter. As future practitioners in higher education adopt and integrate social mediums into the student college experience, there is greater potential to provide more engaging academic and social experiences. To this end, as technology continues to advance and evolve, higher education leaders and practitioners must facilitate discussions in how to

further utilize social mediums to maximize the college student's academic and social experiences.

Research Question

This study will seek to understand and describe how does Net Generation college students use social media in their academic and social college experiences?

Overview of the Study

Based upon my own interest and use of social media I began this study with two assumptions: 1) Since the generation of students who are on college and university campuses today are considered digital natives the students in my study would desire social media in their academic and social experiences and, 2). Facebook and Twitter would be the primary social mediums used by the Net Generation students in my study. I established these claims based on my own personal observation of students walking to class with laptops and Smartphones in tow and my experiences as a user of social media.

Through my role as a current higher education practitioner in Student Affairs, I examined my own community of practice for this action research study. As a user of social media in my professional and student life, I created this study with the purpose of learning and understanding how Net Generation college students use social media in their academic and social college student experiences (Jenness, 2011; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco & Cotten, 2010; McHaney, 2011). To that end this action research study is positioned along the constructivist lens and approach. Through the constructivist paradigm, reality is socially

constructed based on multiple realities or interpretations of one single event (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). I selected constructivism because this lens maintains the view that individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This approach was congruent with how Net Generation college students have utilized social media in higher education based on each individual's knowledge and experiences.

I designed this action research study with a quantitative approach. I conducted two evaluations: one with a purposeful sample and the second through a snowball sample, and collected my data through online surveying. Based on the results of the initial evaluation of my purposeful sample, I determined it was beneficial and critical to utilize graduate students in my sample, as graduate students also comprise and meet the criteria of Net Generation students set forth in this action research study with respect to birth year (1982-2000). Based on my role as a graduate student who uses social media, the graduate student experience is an important component to this study as it is consistent with the action research model (Dick, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006).

In my final evaluation of the sample, I invited undergraduate and graduate students through multiple listservs at Arizona State University to participate in my study. Although I collected 61 completed responses, I was unable to determine a response rate since the survey link was disseminated among multiple listservs. I conducted a descriptive analysis to examine how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college experiences (Trochim, 2006). Descriptive analysis provides a general summary of tendencies

within the data collected using descriptive statistics (mean, median, mode and standard deviation) and selected variables based on participant responses (Creswell, 2009). I triangulated my findings against the scholarship on social media, my experiences as a user of social media, and my community of practice (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011; McHaney, 2011; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). The research methods will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3.

There were two limitations in my study. The first limitation is that I used a snowball sample. As a consequence of the use of a snowball sample, the researcher forfeits knowing exactly what individuals will be in the sample (Creswell, 2005). Further, snowball sampling eliminates the possibility of identifying those individuals who did not complete the survey for the purposes of a follow-up email and those responding may not be representative of the population the researcher is studying (Creswell, 2005).

The second limitation of this study is the use of a small sample (Davies, 2007). By using a small sample, N=61, the results only apply to the specific participants in the sample and not generalizable to the population. For example, I will not be able to render large generalities for the entire undergraduate and graduate population across higher education institutions (Davies, 2007).

Key Terms

- Higher Education Practitioner: A person who works in the field of higher education (e.g. Student Affairs, Academic Affairs). The term

"practitioner" is often used interchangeably with professional (NASPA, 2010).

- Digital Divide: Circumstances where faculty may be older or simply have no comfort or knowledge with assimilating social media into the classroom. The digital divide also exists between students from different ages, ethnicities, and class (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001, 2010).
- Digital Immigrant: Individuals who were not born into the digital world of social media and technology; may simply not be as likely to embrace new technologies; born before 1980 (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001).
- Digital Native: Individuals born in the digital age; native speakers of the digital language of computers, video games and the Internet; born after 1980 (Prensky, 2001).
- Net Generation: Students born between 1982-2000; considered technology "experts" and technologically savvy. Also known as "Net Gen".
- Social Media: An array of digital tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, videos, and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter that enable people to create their own stories, videos, and photos and manipulate them and share widely (Kanter & Fine, 2010).

  Social mediums listed in the online survey:

  - Blackboard: a tool that allows faculty to add resources for students to access online (Blackboard.com).

- Blogs: writing in web-based journals and posting the entries in a public or semi-public forum (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).
- Facebook: a social networking website that allows individuals to share content, post profiles, and add friends (Facebook.com).
- Flickr: photo management and sharing tool (Flickr.com).
- Foursquare: location-based social networking site where friends can share favorite locations or points of interest (Foursquare.com).
- Google Docs: tool that allows the sharing of documents and presentations; editing can be performed in real-time (docs.google.com).
- Google +: a social-networking site with a wide array of features such as circles, stream, messenger, and hangouts (google.com/+).
- Instant Messaging: real-time synchronous communication (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).
- LinkedIn: business-related social-networking site (LinkedIn, 2012).
- Skype: software application that allows users to make phone calls over the Internet (skype.com).
- Text Messaging: the use of cell phones or other enabled hand-held devices to send and received short messages (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).
- Tumblr: a micro-blogging platform and social-networking site that allows individuals to create and share web-blogs (tumblr.com).

    - Twitter: an online social-networking service and micro-blogging platform. (Twitter.com).
    - YouTube: a video-sharing website in which users can create, upload and share videos (youtube.com).
- Technology: For the purposes of this study, technology is defined as the tools/devices used to access social media applications. These tools include Smartphone, computer (desktop/laptop), iPad, iPod etc.

Summary

This chapter presented the purpose, significance, and an overview of the problem my action research study addressed. Chapter 2 will focus on the relevant scholarship, while Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and approach used to describe the findings of how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college experiences. Finally, Chapter 4 will present the findings of this study to describe what occurred within the data collected, and a discussion on how the findings align with the current scholarship. I will conclude with recommendations for the 21st century higher education practitioner, and what takeaways this study provided me as a Student Affairs professional.

Chapter 2 - Review of Supporting Scholarship

Overview of 21st Century Higher Education and Social Media

With the advent of the digital campus (campuses that have transitioned into using technology for the purposes of performing routine services through social media such as Facebook, Blackboard, Instant Messaging, and Twitter), technology has impacted the way students and higher education institutions interact (Wankel & Wankel, 2011). In the beginning, technology was utilized primarily as a way to revolutionize data processing and tedious administrative tasks; however, technology evolved into a means of interpersonal communication and connecting with students. The emergence of social media technologies have brought to the 21st century college campus innovation and opportunities for students, faculty, and practitioners to interact, communicate, and facilitate knowledge through ways that the Net Generation college student (students born in between 1982-2000) is accustomed (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

A primary component to higher education is the social integration of students. Students who are involved in their university community (e.g. a resident assistant in campus housing; leadership position in student government; membership to a fraternity/sorority; intramural and/or inter-athletic sports; involvement in a student organization) are more inclined to persist in their education until graduation (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003; Tinto, 2000). Social mediums such as Facebook and Twitter provide students with the opportunities to expand their social network and become informed about events and programs on

campus (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). For example, students who are away from home for the first time can use Facebook and Twitter to stay connected with friends and family while forming new social networks in their university community. The ability to stay informed and connected with friends and family plays an important role with lessening homesickness and the inclination to drop out of school to return home (Junco & Mastrodica, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2001). Integration into the university community is essential in order for students to feel a sense of belongingness to the university (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 2003;Tinto, 2000). Prior to the technology and social media boom, students obtained information about campus events and floor meetings through posters or fliers (Jenness, 2011; Kolowich, 2011; Love & Estanek, 2004). The changing student culture and the expectation Net Generation college students have for higher education and social media to merge has caused higher education to "rethink" student engagement (Jenness, 2011).

Today's College Student

According to the National Postsecondary Student Aid Survey published in 2010 by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* ("Who are"), the undergraduate student population entering college and university campuses range from teenagers who are coddled by their helicopter parents, actively involved parents who are fully engaged in their college students' academic lives such as choosing their majors or courses (Twenge, 2006; Wilson, 2004), to students who have been greatly impacted by the Internet and technology (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010). Popular depictions of the typical

undergraduate describe a young adult trekking their way through post adolescence trying to "find themselves" (Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005; "Who are", 2008). Although a majority of undergraduates leave home at the age of 18 to live on college and university campuses, there are those undergraduates who still live at home, work part-time or full-time jobs, are commuter students or are parents ("Who are", 2008).

Roughly 22 million undergraduate students attended college at some point between 2007 and 2008. More than one-third of undergraduate students attend school part-time, and most of these students are not affluent (NPSAS, 2008). More than twice as many undergraduate students attend the University of Phoenix online campus as opposed to an Ivy League school (Who are the Undergraduates?, 2010).

Net Generation

Net Generation students were born between 1982 and 2000. This generation of students is considered the most wired (technologically savvy) group of students to enter college and university campuses today (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010). Initially the Net Generation may appear to be aloof, uninterested, and unconnected to the world around them (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). In reality, these students are extremely connected to their friends and world through the use of technology and social mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, and Text Messaging. Net Generation college students are very interested in being

successful in both college and career (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010).

The Net Generation is the most diverse generation in United States history (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010). The 2000 Census reported that more than 31% of this generation is non-white. Additionally, this generation has been exposed to more people with racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, which has been shown to be an important first step in a college student's identity development and acceptance (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Cross & Fhagen-Smith 2001).

The Net Gen students have been described as having seven common traits: they are special (special attention by families), sheltered (protection from harm), confident (exude optimism), team-oriented (like to congregate), conventional (share parents' values), pressured (focus on academics and community service), and achieving academic success (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Strauss & Howe, 2006; Twenge, 2006). They are racially and ethnically diverse, interested in new technologies, prefer working in groups, and tend to identify with their parents' values more than any other generation (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Reesor & Schalabach, 2006). Net Gen students are more familiar with the various technologies today and are online more frequently than previous generations (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). Social networking sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are very popular among the Net Gen student population. Fifty-five percent of teenagers between the ages of 12-17 used a social networking site like Facebook (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Net Gen teenagers visit social networking

sites with 48% reporting they log in daily or more often (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). Although Net Generation college students are online daily, they may not necessarily be checking status updates; this particular generation tends to use the social networking sites to seek out relevant content. Aligned with their team-oriented approach, Net Generation college students rely on the recommendations of their social networks (e.g. Facebook and Twitter) and search engines (e.g. Google and Yahoo) to explore their world of choices and customize their surroundings based on their interests (McHaney, 2011).

Engagement

Student engagement among college students has primarily been defined as activities that are linked to desired outcomes of a college or university "*and* what institutions do to induce students to participate in these activities" (Kuh, 2003, 2009a). The meaning and applications of student engagement have resulted in a complex relationship between the desired outcomes of the higher education institution and the amount of time students invest in their studies and other activities deemed educationally purposeful (Kuh, 2009b: Wolf-Wendel, Ward, & Kinzie, 2009). Desired outcomes include cognitive development (Astin, 1993; Kuh, 1993, 1995; Pascarella, Seifert & Blaich, 2009; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005), psychosocial development, self-esteem, locus of control (Bandura, Millard, Peluso, & Ortman , 2000; Chickering & Reisser, 1993), moral and ethical development (Jones & Watt, 1999; Liddell & Davis, 1996), and persistence (Berger & Milem, 1999). Supporting this relationship is the amount of time and

energy students put forth (student engagement) which is positively linked with desired outcomes of undergraduate education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005).

The National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE), directed by George Kuh (2009b), is the predominant tool that measures college student engagement. The NSSE data specifically targets the undergraduate student population. Five benchmarks are the constructs used to define the term engagement as it relates to student interaction with their college or university. The seven common traits of the Net Generation discussed previously are closely aligned with the NSSE benchmarks. The five benchmarks are active and collaborative learning, student-faculty interactions, enriching educational experiences, academic challenge, and supportive campus environment (NSSE, n.d.). Engagement measured through these constructs is defined in terms of face-to-face learning and interactions. Since the rise of Facebook, which launched in February 2004, Twitter, which began in March 2006, and other social network sites, engagement has provided a different outlook as to how campuses communicate and interact with their students. Fliers and food do not make programs successful as they did in the past; rather interaction through the mediums with which the Net Generation communicate has placed a whole new spin to engaging with students.

Academic engagement. Net Generation college students expect their faculty to incorporate technology into the classroom experience as well as expect the technology to be purposeful in their learning (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011; Wilson, 2004). Interaction with professors is important to the Net Generation college student.

Course management programs such as Blackboard have provided an opportunity to explore group dialogue and interaction among classmates. However, depending upon the knowledge and use of Blackboard features by the professor, there are components of Blackboard that are either outdated or not used when compared to other technologies that keep the interest of the Net Generation college student and meet their need for real-time, instant gratification communication.

Net Gen students want to learn and come to their own conclusions about topics covered in the classroom (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Twenge, 2006). This generation is proficient at surfing the Internet and obtaining information on their own; this same process is true for learning in their real-world environment. Oblinger and Oblinger, (2006) assert that rather than sitting in a lecture about the Civil War, the Net Gen students would rather search the Civil War archive on the Internet and reach their own conclusions (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Twenge, 2006). Although this generation prefers classrooms to be technologically enhanced, they still prefer some face-to-face interaction and discussion in the classroom (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

Social engagement. Net Gen students have been accustomed to "friending" on Facebook and "tweeting" with friends and acquaintances on Twitter (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). These students have a variety of technological ammunition in their repertoire. Facebook, Twitter, Instant Messaging (IM), and blogs are just a few components of technology in the Net Gen arsenal. Faculty and higher education

practitioners need to shift the traditional paradigm of conversation into Net Gen terms such as using social mediums like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and Instant Messaging (McHaney, 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). According to Junco and Mastrodicasa (2007), Net Gen students perceive instant messaging as a conversation and may state that they "were talking with" friends while in reality they were using IM. Net Gen students may text-message their friends if they do not have access to IM or if they do not wish to make a phone call. In addition, the Net Gen is prolific at blogging, especially when they wish to reach friends and strangers at the same time. From the Net Generation perspective, blogs have become the journal of the virtual world (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

Social Media's Potential in Higher Education

As future leaders and scholars in higher education, it is important to encourage students to broaden their perspectives in subject matters they choose; social media allows for students to engage their perspective-taking both locally and globally (Friedman, 2005; Rigby, 2008;Wankel & Wankel, 2011). Many faculty use social media in their courses to bring about interaction, through both online web searches and actual dialogue, with diverse cultures and populations. Without the inclusion of social media, students in a gerontology class would not have been able to understand global aging issues. The course was able to partner with faculty from across the globe to bring real-world experiences to the classroom and engage students in discussions related to aging with students from other countries (Bart, 2010).

Incorporating social media into the classroom provides another lens to understand how students use social media to engage in social and academic environments. The research of the 2009 NSSE look at various ways in which students are engaged at colleges and universities. For example, the NSSE looked at whether or not students asked questions in class or contributed to class discussions, participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course, participated in activities to enhance spirituality, or had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity. Although there are few studies that have examined the link between Facebook and student engagement, the researchers at the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) looked at the relationship between student engagement and technology use. For example, researchers looked at use of social networks among 31,500 students via Your First College Year (YFCY) survey and found that 94% of these students used social networks weekly without spending any less time studying. Researchers found 94% of first year students spend at least some time on social networking sites each week and that high users, defined as more than 6 hours per week, reported more problems with time management and study skills (Ruiz, Sharkness, Kelly, DeAngelo, & Pryor, 2010). Further, the time spent on social networking sites were less than on academic activities and socializing through face-to-face interaction (Ruiz et al., 2010).

Digital Divide

In spite of the seemingly positive attitude towards social media use in higher education by Net Generation college students and technology advocates,

there exists a digital divide. The digital divide emerges in situations where faculty may be older or simply have no comfort or knowledge with assimilating social media into the classroom. The digital divide also exists between students from different ages, ethnicities, and class (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001, 2010). Digital immigrants, those individuals who were not born into the digital world of social media and technology, may simply not be as likely to embrace new technologies (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2001). The digital divide can be addressed with support from institutions of higher education by offering training and educational opportunities to faculty who want to learn more about this phenomenon, especially if they want to remain competitive with their digital native colleagues.

Digital natives, on the other hand, prefer and expect to receive information at a fast pace. Parallel processing is the norm for digital natives as evidenced through their ability to multi-task (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010). The instant gratification and the need to access information immediately also are indigenous to the digital native (Prensky, 2010). Universities are using many strategies to close the digital divide such as training for faculty, outreach to pre-kindergarten-12th grade, and technology camps for underserved children and schools. Colleges and universities are recognizing the importance of including faculty in decisions that affect the integration of technology into courses.

Information technology departments are considered the experts in campus technology; reliance on the information technology (IT) departments across

campuses has increased due to the integration of technology and curriculum. As such, it has become necessary to depend on faculty to become more involved in the integration of technology and their specific course development. Roundtable discussions, workshops, and professional development in-services and seminars have become available to faculty in order to be trained and better equipped at implementing technology and social media into the classroom (Juniu, 2005; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). Recognizing the Net Generation digital natives that are entering college and university campuses, and the divide between the technology skills of the Net Generation and the faculty, institutions of higher education are making available professional development opportunities to assist faculty in enhancing their technological skills. While technological skills are important, professional development opportunities should also focus on how the Net Generation processes and communicates knowledge (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). These skills would assist faculty in adapting their teaching and communication styles to the Net Generation classroom.

Addressing the digital divide is essential since the Net Generation's use of technology begins early, not only in the home, but also as early as pre-kindergarten through high school. Math and science are being taught through interactive video games as well as on the computer. The interactive medium enables concepts to be taught and communicated in ways that are fun and innate to how children are accustomed to learning (Office of Educational Research and Improvement, 1997). Teachers are incorporating Twitter and other microblogging sites into the classroom with the use of "back channels" (Gabriel,

2011). Back channels are real time live streams that allow students to comment and pose questions that can be answered by the teacher or other students in the class; these live streams have helped the more reticent students interact and contribute to the classroom discussion (Gabriel, 2011).

The digital divide is indiscriminate on so many levels, including students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. According to the PEW Internet and American Life Project Surveys, households with an annual income of $75,000 or more were three times more likely to have broadband access and utilize the Internet than people of lower socio-economic backgrounds (Horrigan, 2006). This is an important issue since technology will impact all students throughout their education. Technology camps have been established to help level the playing field for students who are not adept at technology or using computers as educational tools. Students attending schools in lower socio-economic areas were more likely to utilize the computer for academic practice and quizzing as opposed to students attending schools in more affluent areas who were more likely learning how to program computers (Brown, Higgins, & Hartley, 2001; Milone & Salpeter, 1996; Pisapia, 1994; Warschauer, Knobel, & Stone, 2004).

Program Development

Social media has infiltrated many facets of society. Corporations (Apple), governmental entities (the White House), marketing (Mashable), and institutions of higher education (Arizona State University) have joined the social media bandwagon. The social media phenomenon has brought enormous changes in not only how programs are offered, but also how students use social media

technologies in their college student academic and social experiences (Apple, 2012). YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook are utilized by faculty, staff, and residence life to generate interest and participation in various programs and events. Since the Net Generation predominantly utilizes these mediums, it is imperative that marketing of various activities and programs be communicated in ways that this generation of students is accustomed if the goal is to connect with students and increase participation. Gone are the days in which the primary means of advertising an event was through the use of fliers taped to doors and windows across the campus (Jenness, 2011). Facebook Events, a social calendar type of invitation, have replaced the traditional paradigm of advertising an event (Facebook, 2012a). Through Facebook Events students are provided with specific information regarding the event, a list of those students invited, and who is attending. As the event date nears, students see a reminder on their Facebook page. This is just one example of communicating through the social medium students predominantly utilize. Another example of how students have used social media to connect and involve other students locally and globally is Spirit Day, the social media event where students across the country were invited on Facebook and Twitter to wear purple in honor of the young gay teenagers who committed suicide due to bullying (Facebook, 2010). Not only did Facebook's Spirit Day event allow leaders in higher education the opportunity to utilize social media to engage students, but it also brought awareness to a global issue.

Social Media's Impact on Teaching and Knowledge Delivery

Knowledge delivery through the traditional instructional paradigm where instructors used the banking method to "deposit" knowledge into students' minds has shifted (Freire, 1973). Newer learning paradigms involving instructors and students designing active learning environments encourage students to construct their own ideas, which corroborates with one of the major characteristics of the Net Generation college student (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Twenge, 2006). For example, mobile devices can be used as learning tools. The tool encourages students and instructors to be collaborators in the learning process. Discussions amongst students and faculty either prompted or impromptu can be facilitated anytime and anywhere. Students who academically engage in their own learning become scholars along with their peers and instructors (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010). Knowledge is shared and constructed in an environment that encourages interaction and participation. Most importantly, collaboration and discourse occur in the virtual/digital-learning framework from which this Net Generation has grown accustomed (Prensky, 2001; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). Digital immigrants may find this means of teaching and knowledge delivery out of their learning comfort zone, but easing into more technologically friendly modes such as Twitter, text, or instant message first may assist with the resistance (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Presnsky, 2010).

Communication with Current-Prospective Students

University admissions and student affairs departments across the country are using various modes of social media in communicating with current and prospective college students (http://www.youtube.com/futurebuckeyes). YouTube videos featuring college presidents showcasing their campuses and online blogs and chats that connect students are just a few of the ways social media has bridged the engagement gap with students as well as providing tools for mass outreach to prospective college students (http://shc.osu.edu/blog/flash-mob-at-union-see-president-gee-dancing). Through the use of social media, prospective college students are able to take a virtual tour of a campus, read blogs from staff and students describing campus culture, and obtain a miniature picture of the college or university. The various social mediums of YouTube, blogs, Facebook, and Twitter provide prospective students the opportunity to engage and interact with faculty, staff, or students at the college or university with which they are interested. This virtual tour allows the student to make an informed decision on whether the particular campus is worthy of a plane ticket to visit (http://www.asu.edu/tour). Utilizing different modes of communication displays a sense of understanding that students use various forms of mediums to communicate (McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). There is a perception that when using social media leaders are cognizant of the importance of technology to the Net Generation and are making valid attempts to speak in the Net Generation's terms (Junco & Mastrodicasa 2007; Junco et al., 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

Working with Diverse Populations

Social media and technology have bridged the diversity gap, recognizing ethnic and racial minorities will comprise a majority of the nation's population in a little more than a generation, such that accessibility to students all over the world is now at one's fingertips (Roberts, 2008). Students can learn about various cultures, beliefs, and religions sitting in an Anthropology class at one point and then with the click of a button are "Skyped" into a classroom across the globe and share information with one another (Aaker & Smith, 2010; Friedman, 2005). Social media can also be used to facilitate discussions where introverted students may not feel comfortable speaking face to face or would rather take the time and put more thought into what they want to say before having a discussion. Thus, while the discussion may not take place in the presence of a brick and mortar classroom, it is important to note they are taking place (Aaker & Smith, 2010; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010). Communication is more open and perhaps less intimidating thanks to social media (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010;).

As social media infiltrate institutions of higher education, the impact social media will have on the Net Generation college students' academic and social experiences is transforming, redefining, and evolving as evidenced by global movements in the Middle East (Zakaria, 2011) and national movements in the United States such as Wisconsin's collective bargaining issue being dissolved without input from the people (Colin, 2011). In Tunisia and Egypt, it is safe to say that technology such as satellite television, computers, mobile phones, and the

Internet played a powerful role in informing and educating the people of the region (Zakaria, 2011). As such, this powerful role empowered the people and disempowered the state. In the 1930's it was easier to use technology (radio stations) to favor those in power and communicate the information the government wanted the people to know. Today, there are too many technologies and networks connecting everyone therefore making it difficult to suppress information (Zakaria, 2011). "From 1970 to 2007, 80% of all outbreaks of conflict occurred in countries where 60% or more of the population was younger than 30" (Zakaria, 2011, p. 30). This statistic is important in that social media, which is predominantly used by the younger generation, which has played a crucial role in the uprising in the Middle East. Twitter and Facebook became the outlet through which information was communicated. Although Egypt attempted to shut down the Internet, executives at Google, Twitter, and Facebook took to the airwaves and assisted with providing outlets that allowed information to flow freely (Zakaria, 2011). In an effort to help people in Egypt stay connected during a difficult time of civil unrest, Google created a speak-to-tweet service which provided a way of placing messages onto the Internet without using an Internet connection (BorderExplorer, 2011).

Social media has come a long way from primarily being used for text messaging and gaming (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011). Smartphones, Facebook and Twitter have evolved from being viewed as distracters in the classroom to becoming tools used by the Net Generation in their college student academic and social experiences (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007;

McHaney, 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011; Watkins, 2009). As the world observed the revolutions occurring in the Middle East through the front-seat viewing allowed via social media, it is clear that social media has been the dominant force in allowing free communication on a global scale (Friedman, 2005; Zakaria, 2011). Malcolm Gladwell (2010) stated that the revolution "will not be tweeted"; one must wonder if Gladwell has changed his mind with regards to that statement. Although sit-ins still exist, as is evident with the union workers in the state of Wisconsin (Clews, 2011), the revolutions occurring in Egypt and Tunisia have shown that social media has been the catalyst behind the masses and has become the new model of engagement from a social, academic, and political perspective.

Researcher's Community of Practice

As a higher education practitioner at a private, four-year institution, I am cognizant of the influence social media has on the social and academic college student experiences. Although I am not a product of the Net Generation, I have become immersed in the social media world with caution and excitement. I recognize the important influence social media has had and continues to have on how I interact and navigate within a global society as well as within higher education. Social media has flattened the world, using Friedman's (2005) concept of society becoming more global and accessible. This concept of flattening the world has shaped how I view social media's influence on the academic and social college student experiences within higher education. Academically, students utilize social media to participate in classroom assignments, engage with faculty

and fellow students, and access current information in real-time (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011). Socially, students access social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter to update their status, read about what friends are doing, and educating their social network about causes or events on a local and global level (Aaker & Smith, 2010; Diaz-Ortiz, 2011). While face-to-face meetings or activities play an important role in the college student's academic and social experiences, in my worldview it is becoming increasingly necessary that higher education practitioners embrace the role that social media plays in the life of the Net Generation college student. Furthermore, institutions of higher education should incorporate new technologies and ways of learning. Since the Net Generation college students are carrying Smartphones and mobile technologies like an appendage, higher education practitioners must rethink how social mediums such as Facebook and Twitter are viewed; rather than regard them as a distraction, practitioners should find ways to make these social mediums work in the college student experience (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel 2011). As a current student and leader in higher education, I am fortunate enough to traverse both sides of the social media phenomenon and view the importance of social media as critical to the academic and social engagement process. My study will further the discussion about the use of social media both inside and outside the classroom and gain a better understanding of how the Net Generation college students use social media in their academic and social college experiences.

Study's Significance

Social media can no longer be viewed as a distraction in the classroom (Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010; Watson, 2009). It is imperative that new professionals take Friedman's (2005) concept of "flattening the world" into institutions of higher education to engage and communicate with college students through social mediums such as Facebook and Twitter on a daily basis. Future practitioners in higher education should consider integrating social mediums into the college experience; there is greater potential to provide more engaging experiences, academically, and socially (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). To this end, as technology continues to advance and evolve, higher education practitioners must facilitate discussions in how to further utilize social mediums to maximize the college student experience.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

Chapter three will present the research design utilized in this action research study on 21st century Net Generation college students. The chapter begins with a brief portrayal of my journey as researcher and practitioner in higher education. The chapter continues with an overview of the purpose of the study, the approach used, and the theoretical orientation of the study. Next I will describe the data collection, participant recruitment, how I managed the data, and achieved my response rate. Finally I will describe how I designed this action research study, the analysis used, the reliability and validity of the study, researcher bias, and the limitations of the study.

Researcher's Journey

The plethora of technologies (e.g. laptops, Smartphones, tablets and e-readers) and social media tools (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, instant messaging, and text messaging) that are available have made a tremendous impact on the experiences and interactions of today's college students (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). As a practitioner with fifteen years of experience in higher education and a current doctoral student, I have the unique opportunity to view the student's higher education experience from both a practitioner and student vantage point. This study is borne out of my interest in the perceived apathy that some higher education administrators have of students' lack of engagement, both academically and socially. Specifically, my interest was to better understand how the 21st century college students' new appendage, "mobile technologies", influences their academic and social lives.

In my role as a practitioner who works directly (e.g. individual meetings and facilitating the student peer tutoring program) and indirectly (e.g. adjudicating disciplinary issues and planning new student orientation) with students, it has become clear that 21st century Net Gen college students (students born between 1982-2000) use new forms of communication in their daily correspondence with peers, professors, and practitioners. For example, today's college student rarely uses standard university or other email, such as Yahoo or posts and/or responds to hard copy fliers to communicate (Kolowich, 2011). Rather, Facebook, Twitter, and other social mediums have become the new "flyer" to advertise an event and communication tool to reach out to students (Jenness, 2011). The permeation of the various technologies and social mediums on college campuses is a result of today's college students' access and knowledge of a wide array of technological and social tools (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al. 2011; Watkins, 2009).

I have always been captivated by the rapid growth and adaptation with which technology has impacted my life both personally and professionally. For example, cellular telephones were primarily used as a means of voice communication; today the cellular telephone has morphed into a Smartphone with voice, text, and Internet capabilities that have become my primary means of interacting personally, academically, and professionally. The availability of mobile technologies such as laptops, tablets, and Smartphones has become integral in how I work and study. Using these on-the-go devices is like having an encyclopedia, global positioning system (GPS), and communication tool at my fingertips. These devices provide me with the ability to work and study from

anywhere; I am more inclined to respond to emails or work on class related activities at coffee shops or places that provide me inspiration. Through the advancement of technology my office or study is not confined to one space.

My interest in social media piqued in 2007 when I witnessed professional colleagues and classmates constantly accessing Facebook and Twitter on Smartphones and laptops during classes and meetings. The more I saw students using Facebook and Twitter for social causes (TOMS shoes), class meet-ups (ASU Facebook), and invitations to campus events (Greek Life Rush activities), it became clear to me that students were finding numerous avenues to interact and engage with one another.

In my current position as Assistant Dean of Students at a private, four-year university, I interact with a number of students on a daily basis. Through these interactions students have informed me that they rarely check their university email and communicate primarily through Facebook, Twitter, or text messaging. I learned many of the student organizations have their own Facebook pages where events are advertised and students can join the organization. As an advisor to the Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) student organization at my institution, I assisted in facilitating the GSA Facebook page and invited the campus community to join. The GSA Facebook page provides students with information specific to on-campus events as well as off-campus events at other institutions are provided to students as a way to meet other students at local campuses and to partner for putting together speakers for large events. One large event involved coordinating a campus-wide "It Gets Better" video (SavageLove, 2010), which described

students' personal coming out stories and how these stories impacted relationships with families and friends. Students from the various health professions programs (Osteopathic Medicine, Pharmacy, and Occupational Therapy) went on camera to share their story as a person who is gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (GLBT), as well as heterosexual allies to the GLBT community.

Through these personal experiences with technology and social media, it is crucial as a higher education practitioner, that I listen and learn how today's 21st century college student integrates their communication tools into the university and their personal experiences. If higher education practitioners want to optimize learning and social experiences with their students, they need to ensure that they are incorporating the social mediums and technologies that students utilize in their daily lives. This is not to dismiss the importance of face-to-face interactions but rather be inclusive of other ways of communicating with students.

It is important for practitioners in the field of higher education to have a basic understanding of how students are communicating and interacting within their college experiences. For example, students are entering college campuses more technologically savvy than previous generations (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Watkins, 2009). Thus, higher education practitioners need to understand how students' prefer to be notified of campus academic program updates and social events through tools that the 21st century Net Generation students has become accustomed such as Facebook, Google Documents, or YouTube.

Social network sites such as Facebook and Twitter provide a multitude of ways to communicate and integrate oneself into the university (Jenness, 2011). According to social penetration theory, individuals must engage in low levels of self-disclosure if they wish to create new social relationships (Altman & Taylor, 1973). The design of social media allows for students to engage in low level self-disclosure such that students can reveal small amounts of information about themselves as a way to gauge whether or not their identity, interests, or personal views are aligned with the circle with which they are seeking to engage--in other words, a sense of belongingness within a peer group (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; McElvain & Smyth, 2006). For example, Facebook allows posts or personal information to be "hidden" from specific friends in a person's contact list. If I have a friend that posts offensive language on their status updates, I have the ability to "hide" those updates so they do not appear on my news feed (posts in real-time of my Facebook friends). In face-to-face interactions, students may be reluctant to disclose certain parts of their identity or experiences for fear of being "face threatened" (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010).

Face-threatening occurs when individuals in the social circle disagree with the identity the student has chosen to disclose (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Brown & Levinson, 1987; Lampe, Ellison, & Steinfield, 2008). Face-threatening can be problematic for higher education practitioners in that students' fear of not being accepted may cause the student to isolate and withdraw themselves from social circles. Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are casual in their purpose, whereby messages can be sent, received,

responded to, or ignored fairly easily (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). The casual nature of social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter put the students in control of how much they wish to disclose and at what pace those disclosures take place. Through this process, Facebook, Twitter, and other social networking sites can eliminate barriers such as disclosing personal information (e.g. a GLBT student "coming out") or turning down a request to engage in a behavior that is uncomfortable to the person (e.g. a keg party) and situate interactions with professors, peers, and new friends in a less intimidating and more productive context (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). As such, social media is the 21st century tool for students to navigate, communicate, and participate in their college experience (Barkhaus & Tashiro, 2010; Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Junco & Matrodicasa, 2007; Lampe et al., 2008; Wankel & Wankel, 2011)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand how the Net Generation college student, students born between the years of 1982-2000, use social media as a catalyst in their academic and social college student experiences. As a higher education practitioner who works with Net Generation college students, it is important that I gain a more thorough understanding of what technologies the students are using and how the students apply social media through these technologies. Further, results from this action research study can be used to inform other higher education practitioners on how the Net Generation college students utilize social media in their academic and social experiences.

A primary goal of 21st century higher education is to provide college students with the tools (e.g. knowledge and technology) necessary to compete in a global society (Altbach, Berdahl, & Gumport, 2005; Friedman, 2005; Love & Estanek, 2004; Prensky, 2010; Rigby, 2008). This preparation, specifically collaboration between student affairs-a department of higher education that specifically provides services, programs, and resources for students that help students learn and grow outside of the classroom (NASPA, 2010) and academia (curriculum specific services, Sandeen & Barr, 2006; Wankel & Wankel, 2010). Love and Estanek (2004) assert that faculty typically are more focused on the classroom, collegiality, reflection, and self-governance. Student affairs practitioners, on the other hand, emphasize teamwork and activity over reflection. Recognition from both areas on the commonalities and benefits of their respective priorities continues to be a challenge to administrators who manage integration efforts between these two areas. (Friedman, 2005; Love & Estanek, 2004; Sandeen & Barr, 2006).

The origins of student affairs can be traced back to the late 19th century when most of the functions that are considered student affairs today were under the responsibility of the faculty; in other words, faculty were responsible for all aspects of a student's collegiate experiences, both academic and non-academic (Sandeen & Barr, 2006). As faculty roles and responsibilities changed and their focus became more academic oriented, questions surfaced as to who would be responsible for the students if faculty were not available. The role of dean of women and dean of men were created, and as those functions became more

complex, student affairs, as it is known today, was established. As higher education strives to achieve its goal of competing in a global society, it is important to have a basic understanding of the historical origin and present day role student affairs plays in the education of students not only in the academic dimension, but the non-academic as well (Coldwell, 2006; Kezar, 2003; Sandeen & Barr, 2006).

The function of student affairs' responsibilities in the early 1990's was the concept of educating students using a wellness model, which incorporated six dimensions to address student needs ranging from physical to occupational. Hettler's (1984) wellness model was adopted at many higher education institutions because of its emphasis on the whole student, and is still used today with some universities adding an environmental dimension. The wellness model specifically concentrates on the wellness dimensions of physical (getting regular exercise), social (expanding one's social network; respecting others' values and beliefs while staying true to one's own), emotional (ability to cope and adjust to challenges in a healthy way), intellectual (continuing learning and gaining new knowledge), spiritual (finding purpose and meaning in one's life) and occupational (personal satisfaction and enrichment in one's life through work) (Hettler, 1984). These dimensions provided the foundation for delivering a "well-rounded" student experience.

The concept of the well-rounded student experience included replacing dorm-style living (e.g. a place to eat and reside) with residence hall living (Astin, 1993; Sandeen & Barr, 2006). Residence hall living provided students with a

place to sleep and eat, but also provided space where students could work out in the fitness center; educational programming such as speakers or trips to cultural centers; social activities such as movie nights and dinners; and community building amongst residents. Residence hall life became the primary focus to provide the student with experiences that would enable him or her to become more independent and autonomous in decision-making and critical-thinking skills beyond the classroom. Since the goal of achieving community building and educational and social programming was based on attendance, these experiences were primarily measured on face-to-face involvement (Astin, 1984; Love & Estanek, 2004; Pascarella & Whitt, 1999).

Since the Net Generation college student was born in the digital age with access to video games, Smartphones and other technologies, they expect to have access to technology in their college classrooms and other areas of the college campus (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011; Watkins, 2009) For example, Arizona State University's (ASU) school-centric model assigns school specific academic advisors to undergraduate students to track their academic progress towards graduation. Students are required to meet with their specific advisor face-to-face during their freshman year to ensure the student is registered for core courses required for their specific program. Students are also required to meet with their advisor in person during their junior year to be sure the student is on track to graduate. However, ASU has been at the forefront of other higher education institutions in the academic advising arena through the implementation of e-advisor, an online advising and personalized student support

platform that assists students through the academic advising process (https://eadvisor.asu.edu/). ASU has also introduced "devil2devil", a social networking site for admitted undergraduate students (https://students.asu.edu/devil2devil). These examples showcase ASU's efforts to incorporate social media into the academic and social experiences of the Net Generation college student. Although social media has slowly permeated its way through institutions of higher education, the value of social media with respect to engaging (interacting and connecting) with students academically and socially has caused some apprehension among higher education practitioners. For example, there is still the belief amongst college faculty and staff that students accessing social networking sites and applications on their laptops or Smartphones during class or outside activities causes the students to be less focused on the task at hand (Watkins, 2009).

The assumption that many higher education practitioners have of social media is that it primarily consists of Facebook and Twitter. Arguably Facebook and Twitter comprise the primary social avenues students traverse when communicating with friends and family but additionally, these sites can also be utilized for academic and social purposes advantageous to colleges and universities in enhancing the college student experience (Junco et al., 2011). In other words, higher education professionals must continue to learn how to integrate social media into the 21st century college student's academic and non-academic experiences (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007).

Action Research Approach and Design

Action research offered me a unique lens to study how college students use social media in their college student experiences (Coghlan, 2006; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Through action research, the participants, Net Generation college students, are situated in the design and methodology of the research (Coghlan, 2006; Herr & Anderson, 2005; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). There is a tendency for action researchers, such as myself, to be insiders to their professional settings, which allows an individual to be both researcher (e.g. doctoral student) and practitioner (e.g. Assistant Dean). There are many facets to action research, however arguably the most important feature is the ability for action research to "shift its locus of control in varying degrees from professional or academic researchers to those who have been traditionally called the subjects of research" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p.2). The very nature of action research is collaborative and reflective. In other words, action research is "inquiry that is done *by* or *with* insiders to an organization or community versus *to* or *on* them" (Herr & Anderson, 2005, p.3).

Coghlan (2006) asserts that action research is based on the participant's experience of the situation as opposed to being removed from it. My interest in how students use social media in their college student experiences coupled with my insight as both a practitioner in higher education and doctoral student who uses social media affords me, by definition, an optimal situation as an action researcher to be placed in the center of the study. While I do not identify as a digital native, defined by Prensky (2010) as being born in the digital age, I would

not consider myself a novice user of social media; I use Facebook and Twitter on a daily basis. Since a primary component of action research calls for the researcher to participate and be at the center of the study, I was better equipped to determine how to interpret the results of the study and make suggestions for implementation in the higher education context.

The action research approach allowed me to examine how 21st century college students use social media as a catalyst in their academic and social college student experiences. I use the term catalyst similarly as it is used in the social media blogosphere as a tool for transformation (Schaffer, 2011). One recent example of how social media was used to catalyze a social movement was in the Egyptian revolution on January 25, 2011 where protestors took to the streets to demand the overthrow of Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak (Gustin, 2011). In short, the 21st century student is catalyzing the transformative leverage of the social media movement and as a result, social media initiatives are having a transformative impact on collegiate life (Wankel &Wankel, 2011). For example, Junco (2009) looked at the impact Twitter had on academic achievement in the classroom. While no significant impact on grade point average (GPA) was discovered, there was an impact on the interactions students had in the classroom with not only each other, but also with the professor.

The researcher used action research to examine the social media phenomenon and concomitant student experiences among her community of practice (Creswell, 2009). First, in my professional role as an assistant dean of students, I maintain dual roles as an academic and student services practitioner

which has allowed me to understand the impact of social media from two unique worldviews. Second, as a user of social media in my professional and student life, I am aware of the convenience and user-friendliness of Facebook and Twitter and other social mediums as they pertain to communication and interaction. The 21st century Net Generation college student has grown up with technologies that can fast-forward through commercials that interrupt a television show, watch snippets of videos on YouTube, and give attention to small bits of information. Said differently, the Net Generation could also be referred to as the "Sound Byte Generation" (Ewing, Personal Communication, 2011) in which Net Generation college students prefer information in smaller "bytes." Social media demonstrates this very well through the utilization of various social networking sites (e.g. YouTube, Vimeo, podcasts) which is conducive for this sound byte slant (Williams & Page, 2010).

The foundation of this research study was shaped through my experiences within my communities of practice with the intent to inform current and future leaders in higher education on how the Net Generation use various social mediums and how social media is an important component in the direction towards which colleges and universities are headed. For example, at Arizona State University, a major branding model has been the New American University (NAU) implemented by President Michael Crow (Crow, 2002). One of the primary concepts within the NAU model is innovation. Innovation is defined as integrating a different approach to an existing practice or process to enhance it in a more efficient manner (ASU Office of the President, 2012). For higher

education practitioners, social media is the conduit to innovation, providing the tools to engage with the flattened world by providing access to and relationships with, communities of scholars across the globe (Freidman, 2005). Social mediums such as Facebook, Twitter, Skype, and YouTube provide unique opportunities for students to engage in academic (e.g. MIT open source courses) and social experiences that span the globe at the press of a button, or in this case, accessing an application (app) on a Smartphone or computer. An app is a computer program that is designed for a particular solution or device. It performs specific tasks such as gaming, banking, communicating, and media viewing (Mann, 2011).

The researcher's ability to critically self-reflect and identify as an instrument of the research is crucial to the integrity of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Merriam, 2009). In other words, everything the researcher brings to the study (i.e., biases and assumptions) must be self-identified in the research. My worldview is embedded in this study through my role as a user of social media in my communities of practice as a doctoral student in higher and postsecondary education and as a practitioner in higher education. Using a constructivist lens permitted me to design an action research study that allowed for a cyclical or spiral methodological approach where the data drives the design of the study (Creswell, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Dick, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Since the constructivist point of view seeks to understand the world in which one lives and works, the data gleaned from the participants' experiences and perspectives will lend support to examining the overall phenomenon and

evaluate it against the scholarship that is currently available. The spiral methodological approach will allow me to recognize and structure essential aspects that need further understanding (Dick, 2002; Zuber-Skerritt & Fletcher, 2007). While the intent of this study is not positioned as causal, it is necessary to look at how this study reflects against the current literature.

To this end, this study will specifically try to understand and describe how 21st century college students, the Net Generation, utilize social media in their academic and social college student experiences. It is my intent to use the findings of this study to support my belief that faculty and higher education practitioners must collaborate and integrate social media into their curriculum and departmental operations in order to fully realize social media as an integral part of today's college student experience.

Theoretical Orientation

The theoretical orientation of this study is positioned along the constructivist approach. Through the constructivist paradigm, reality is socially constructed; there are multiple realities or interpretations of one single event (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 2009). Through this approach, Creswell (2007) claims individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work. Individuals develop subjective meanings of their experiences as such, "leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2007, p.20). This approach was congruent with how Net Generation college students have utilized social media in higher

education based on each individual's knowledge and experience of social media. Vocabulary within the Net Generation has introduced such words as "friending", "facebooking", "Googling", "texting", and "tweeting." These new forms of social media provide a more interactive and engaging dialogue that can be done in "real time" (synchronous) as opposed to waiting for a person to respond to an email.

All too often higher education institutions lean toward the "one size fits all" mentality, at times dismissing generational changes and keeping with what is familiar. Students often express frustration with their perceptions of higher education's response to technology and often view professors' teaching and knowledge delivery behind the times and out of touch with the social media and mobile technologies available (McHaney, 2011). Watkins (2009) contends that Net Gen students are walking onto college and university campuses already armed with technology such as Smartphones and laptops. In order to serve students, it is essential higher education practitioners gain a better understanding of the Net Generation student population and how to engage them through the use of social media technologies.

McHaney (2011) asserts that higher education has encountered a new digital shoreline where tech-savvy millennial students, also known as Net Gen, that have matriculated to college and university campuses across the world have influenced this digital shoreline. Taking Watkins' (2009) assertions a step further, the arrival of the Net Gen to campus has forced educators and higher education professionals to alter how they frame learning theories, pedagogies, and interactions with students and peers (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney

2011; Prensky, 2010; Rigby, 2008). To this end, technology should not be used for the sake of technology; rather there should be clear objectives and purposes that align with the pedagogical framework and relate to the real world experiences of the Net Gen student.

The digital shoreline has provided the impetus for higher education to realize the need for engaging, purposeful learning. The Net Gen student is more tech-savvy in their daily activities and expect more interaction for the purposes of learning (McHaney, 2011). In other words, the Net Gen want ways of learning that are meaningful to them, that allow them to see immediately that the time they are spending on their formal education is valuable, and in ways that make good use of the technology they are accustomed (Prensky, 2010). The Net Gen student realizes that significant components of their overall success involves informal learning and self-learning.which occurs through networks of friends, online searches, social and student communities,and through social networking (Bisoux, 2009; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

My constructivist theoretical lens aligns itself with social media technologies and their influence on the college student academic and social experiences, within the paradigm of the new digital shoreline that is impacting higher education. I contend that framing social media technologies as interactive and engaging learning tools, as opposed to viewing them as a distraction, can allow professors, practitioners, and students the ability to become more engaged in a way that students feel more at ease and productive. For example, Junco et al. (2011) used Twitter in their classrooms to determine its impact on academic

engagement in the classroom. An advantage to Twitter is that tweeting (communicating via Twitter) can be immediate or be well thought out before being sent. In other words, tweets can be used "in the moment" or a person can reflect on content that was discussed in class and construct a well thought out tweet. Since tweets are limited to 40 words, thoughts must be conveyed in a concise and succinct manner.

While it can be argued that social media technologies may stifle critical thinking and students can become isolated with texting, tweeting and Facebooking, social media technologies can be purposeful tools that engage and enhance the learning environment (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). Students that have grown up with technology at their fingertips have learned how to broaden their technology to be used in a variety of ways; for example, email has evolved into text messaging which has evolved into tweeting, which has evolved into blogging.

Gone are the days of only offering traditional lectures, PowerPoint presentations, and paper exams; students are now able to learn from You Tube videos, blogs, and their cell phones. The Internet is at one's fingertips; if a student does not know the answer to something, they Google it. Information is available 24-7 and has changed the culture of learning. As such, learning environments must adapt to this 24-7 information age culture in order to keep students engaged and interested in what they are learning.

The Pilot Study

A primary component of an action research study is the pilot study (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). The pilot study allows the researcher the ability to become familiar with the action research process, data collection, and the survey tool itself. The pilot study also enables the researcher to examine whether or not the questionnaire is gathering the data needed, as well as if the questions being asked are clear to the respondents (Bradburn, Sudman, & Wansink, 2004). The intent of my pilot study allowed me to become familiar and comfortable with the survey tool, the software used to conduct the survey, QuestionPro, and to test the language used in the survey to ensure it was congruent with the terms familiar with the Net Generation college student (Dick, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). Dillman (2007) emphasizes the importance of a pilot study is to "emulate procedures proposed for the main study" (p. 146). The ability to pilot the survey language provided me the capacity to develop and strengthen the language for the main survey.

For the purposes of the pilot study I asked four undergraduate students and one graduate student who met the criteria of Net Generation set forth in this study (birth year, completion of a minimum one-year part-time or full-time credit hours, and actively use social media in the form of Facebook and/or Twitter on a daily basis) to take the pilot survey. This pilot student sample was determined based on personal contacts. The pilot participants helped me vet the pilot survey by providing me with the unique perspective of current Net Generation college students. The pilot sample feedback enabled me to consider other technologies

that are available to students and to revise language (e.g. “networking” vs. “friending”) and technologies (camera on a cell/smart phone versus stand alone camera) that may not be familiar or used by the Net Gen college student.

The pilot study permitted the researcher to look at whether or not useful information was being obtained in the open-ended questions, if large sections of the survey are being skipped, and ascertain response rate expectations based upon the pilot survey feedback (Bradburn et al., 2004; Dick, 2002; Dillman, 2007). The end result of the pilot sample and survey construction process was to produce a document that has gone through the testing and re-testing process in preparation for dissemination (Dillman, 2007).

Sampling Process

An appropriate sample should be comprised of participants who best represent or are familiar with the research topic (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003; Charmaz, 2003; Creswell, 2005). Based on the results of the pilot study I determined it was beneficial and critical to utilize graduate students in my sample, as graduate students also comprise and meet the criteria of Net Generation students set forth in this action research study with respect to birth year (1982-2000), credit hours, and daily social media use. I met face-to-face with the sample of students in my pilot study to go over the survey questions that seemed to cause some confusion based upon the analysis tool in QuestionPro. The senior student in the pilot study sample offered great insight into how social media during his tenure at ASU changed from his first year student experience. From this information, I determined that by surveying graduate students I would have

the opportunity to obtain a broader understanding of the potentially far-reaching effects of social media in the academic and social undergraduate and graduate college student experiences.

In the spirit of action research and my role as a graduate student who uses social media, the graduate student experience is an important component to this study as it is consistent with the action research model (Dick, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). While the undergraduate student experiences with social media are crucial to higher education practitioners' understanding and implementation of social media on campus, the graduate student component offers a broad perspective in relation to the overall college student experience. For example, an increasing number of graduate students take classes part-time, in the evening, or online (Woods & Ebersole, 2004). Through the lens of the graduate student experience, higher education practitioners can examine how social media can bridge the gap in giving graduate students the opportunity to feel a sense of belonging on the campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Woods & Ebersole, 2004).

The selection of the sample for this study was accomplished through snowball sampling. Snowball sampling provided the researcher the advantage of recruiting a large number of participants (Creswell, 2005). As the purpose of this action research study was to describe how Net Generation college students use social media in their college student experiences, I followed the advice of research scholars who recommend to sample and target those individuals who reflect typical characteristics of the population being studied (Creswell, 2009;

Davies, 2007). Since this study involves naturally formed groups (classroom, student organizations, and/or individuals known to the researcher fitting the criteria) and volunteers, a snowball sample is the most applicable option (Creswell, 2005, 2009). I chose the use of multiple listservs with the intent on gaining a large sample that was demonstrative of the Net Generation population at ASU. Although I do not identify as a Net Generation college student based on birth year, I am a doctoral student who uses social media as well as a higher education practitioner; this criterion is integral and lends itself to the action research model (Creswell, 2009; McNiff and Whitehead, 2006).

Participant recruitment. I cast a wide net to capture a large distribution of students who fit the Net Generation criteria using birth year, credit hours, and social media use. I contacted prospective participants through a listserv (not an official roster provided by the University Registrar), provided to me by the director of the ASU M.Ed. Higher Education (HED) program. High-ranking representatives (e.g. Directors, Assistant/Associate Directors) from various departments on the ASU campus were asked to disseminate the survey to the students in their respective programs and departments. Through the use of multiple listservs, I reached out to a large number of college students and invited their participation in my online survey. The multiple listservs that I used were representative of diverse departments within Arizona State University (e.g. Athletics; W.P. Carey School of Business; Hispanic Mother-Daughter Program; Student and Cultural Engagement; and Residence Life). I contacted these individuals through the ASU email system with a brief introduction of my survey

and a link to the survey, which was hosted by QuestionPro, an online survey tool that will be discussed further in the section describing 'Data Management.' Once the prospective participants reached QuestionPro, instructions were provided that briefly described the survey, indicated that participation was voluntary, and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time; participants were also informed that they had the right to not answer all questions in the study. Prior to beginning the survey, each participant had to acknowledge the message approved by the ASU Institutional Review Board (see Appendix A), which briefly outlined the study, any unforeseeable risks of participating in the study, and how to access the survey.

Data Collection

Online surveys, like other research tools, have their strengths and limitations. A primary benefit of online surveys is participant accessibility since access to the survey is relatively effortless to disseminate and administer, especially with the increase in Internet usage (Evans & Mathur 2005; Pealer & Weiler, 2003). Further, the relative convenience and ease of accessing the survey results in the reduction of participants' response time (Evans & Mathur 2005; Granello & Wheaton, 2004). For example, if required, the researcher is able to facilitate a shortened response time with follow-up emails to those participants who have yet to respond; these emails often can result in increased response rate as well (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Sax, Gilmartin, and Bryant (2003) claim the convenience of both email and online surveys allows participants to complete the survey during the participants' leisure time. An added benefit to online surveys is

that participants can be required to complete all questions of the survey before the survey can be submitted (Evans & Mathur, 2005). Deutskens, de Ruyter, Wetzels and Oosterveld (2004) claim that an "appropriate response rate for online surveys should range between 17.5% and 25%" (p. 33). The survey launched on January 26, 2012 and closed on February 10, 2012. This will be discussed further in the data management section.

Technological advances with respect to the Internet and social media are not immune to outside forces such as computer viruses or slow wireless connections that tend to cause an application to "time out." I had to shift the original launch date of my survey from January 23, 2012 to January 26, 2012 due to the ASU email system being compromised. I did not want to send an email invitation to my survey to prospective participants until enough time had passed for the ASU email system to return to normal status. Rather, I wanted to provide prospective participants enough time to retrieve all of the emails that were still in queue due to the system being compromised.

Limitations to online survey research can also include technical difficulties that can stem from dial-up modems or using survey software that may be too advanced for certain computers resulting in the system to crash without the survey being submitted (Evans & Mathur, 2005; Granello & Wheaton, 2004). Dillman et al. (2008) assert that poor response rates may stem from questionnaires being too elaborate; therefore participants' lack of understanding or interpretation of the questionnaire may result in poor response rates or survey incompletion. Oversaturation of online web surveys is another reason for lower response rates.

Online surveys are inexpensive and easy to implement which explains the prolific nature of using this method of data collection. The oversaturation of surveys being delivered to email addresses and other social networking sites have created a situation where potential respondents are less inclined to participate in the survey (Customer Research, 2011).

Since the link to my survey was disseminated to participants through multiple listservs, I was unable to determine an actual response rate because it was unknown how many participants were provided the link to the online survey. However, the demographic data (gender, race/ethnicity) obtained through the QuestionPro analysis tool will be compared against the same demographic data of ASU. This information will be presented in Chapter 4.

Data Management

The survey tool QuestionPro was the chosen method of online surveys for this study as it is equipped to address many facets of question types, designs and analysis (QuestionPro, 2010). QuestionPro offers several features that are advantageous to researchers without the cost of additional fees. Such features include the ability to collect and analyze basic data while the survey is live, branching logic, which allows participants to skip questions that may not pertain to them, and importing data collected into Excel (QuestionPro, 2010). Branching logic is an important feature to have in a survey in order for the participant to feel that the survey speaks to their specific circumstance. If questions are not branched to allow a participant to skip questions that do not pertain to them, participants may be more inclined to drop out of the survey, creating room for larger errors in

response rates. Branching logic can be virtually invisible to the respondent through web-based surveys and are user friendly for the researcher to design (Dillman, 2007).

My online survey was launched on January 26, 2012 to a wide distribution of undergraduate and graduate students fitting the criteria of the Net Generation with a close date scheduled for February 6, 2012 since ten days was a recommended length in the scholarship (Archer, 2003; Dillman, 2007). However, one of the representatives that I contacted at ASU indicated that his students would be in testing during the dates of my survey and he had 350 students to whom he would provide the survey in live lecture. Since this was a voluntary survey and this individual was willing to assist me with a student population of 350, I extended the close date to February 10, 2012.

Archer (2003) purports that it is important for the researcher to shorten the timing between notice and reminders when following up with participants. According to the scholarship specific to online and web-based surveys, after a period of five days participants should be solicited a final time about their participation in the survey (Creswell, 2009; Deutskens et al., 2004; Truell, 2003). My original plan was to send out a reminder prompt to the participants on day five of the survey; however, by day five of the survey I had already received 51 completed surveys and was anticipating additional completed surveys with the 350 students being solicited in a live lecture. Due to the fact that I did not have specific individual email addresses of students who had not yet completed the survey, I was unable to send out a prompt reminding students to complete the

survey. Further, I felt it was inappropriate to ask my initial listserv contacts to re-send an email to their respective communities.

Maintaining confidentiality in the study is of utmost importance. It is important to distinguish between confidentiality and anonymity (Dillman, 2007). When a person's response cannot be tied specifically to the participant, it is appropriate to indicate responses will remain anonymous (Dillman, 2007). Confidentiality conveys that all answers will be summarized and individuals will not be identified by their answers nor will collected data be shared with others in such a way that a participant's identity will be revealed. The researcher secured participants' willingness to participate in the survey and explained the process of the survey and provided a copy of the Institutional Review Board approval letter (see Appendix B). The researcher stored all survey data in an Excel database and external hard drive which was kept in a secure place at her home.

Descriptive Analysis

The primary objective in descriptive analysis was to provide a summary of general tendencies within the data collected using descriptive statistics which can include the mean, median, mode, and standard deviations of the responses from the participants, as well as other descriptors based on select variables (Creswell, 2009). The researcher looked for patterns among the data collected to identify respondents' understanding of social media along with how respondents use various social mediums throughout their college student experiences. For example, demographic data such as race and ethnicity was cross-tabulated with the type of social media students used in their preparation for their classes.

The initial analysis of the data provided the researcher insight into which social media technologies were used more frequently, how participants used social media in their academic and social experiences, as well as what types of social media would be beneficial for a first-year student (e.g. if the participants could design an app for a first-year student). The instrument for this study was an online survey that included open-ended, Likert, and ordinal scale type questions (Creswell, 2005).

As I began the analysis, I examined the demographic data and defined codes with specific categories. For example, gender had three codes: 0 = male, 1 = female, and 2 = transgender. Once I assigned codes to the demographic data, I explored the data that was specific to social media technologies and how the Net Generation college students in my survey used them. Since there were several technologies to select from in my survey it was necessary that I also used the coding process to make sense out of the text data and collapse the codes into broad themes (Creswell, 2005). When coding the open-ended text data and the social medium technologies, I was careful to use codes that were clear and concise to their specific category or theme (Miles & Huberman, 1994). As I analyzed the innumerable apps that the Net Generation college student used, I was able to group the apps in specific categories. For example, social networking was used to describe Facebook and Twitter, gaming/entertainment described iTunes, Pandora, and Angry Birds, information/current events applied to the Weather channel, ESPN, and MSNBC.

Descriptive statistics illustrated which social media technologies the respondents used in their academic and social college student experiences and how the respondents used social media inside and outside the classroom. This will be discussed further in Chapter 4.

QuestionPro and Excel. QuestionPro and Excel are two programs that assist researchers in understanding data in a multitude of ways. For the purposes of this action research study, the survey tool QuestionPro was the online survey tool used since it addresses many facets of question types, designs, and analysis (QuestionPro, 2010). QuestionPro was developed in 2000 and is equipped to assist researchers in the development, distribution, and analysis of data collection. The ability of QuestionPro to collect data in real-time is one of the key assets offered by this program (QuestionPro, 2010). Excel was created in 1993 to assist in the organization, management, and manipulation of data. The researcher used Microsoft Excel as a means of managing and analyzing the data collected. Excel provided the researcher the ability to perform statistical calculations such as on the data for analysis and decision-making, extract subsets of the data based on defined criteria, and sort the data to help identify various themes that become evident among the data collected (Dick, 2002). This was of great importance as participants' understanding of the concepts surrounding social media use in college students' academic and social experiences varied.

QuestionPro allowed me to build the survey, conduct analyses and store the data behind a password-protected portal. Once the survey data was loaded into the analysis tool within QuestionPro I was able to examine the 72 completed

surveys that were collected. Through cross-tabulation tables and charts within QuestionPro and Excel I gained a better understanding of what was happening within the study (Trochim, 2006). QuestionPro had a cross-tabulation tool that provided statistical information for each concept within the survey. Through cross-tabulation of various concepts, QuestionPro allowed me to determine which questions demonstrated to be statistically significant (>0.05) when analyzed against demographic data.

The survey was launched through multiple listservs representing various departments across ASU: 132 viewed the survey within QuestionPro and 85 started the survey. However, of those 85 who started the survey, 72 were registered as actual completions. Further analysis of the participants indicated 10 of the 72 completed surveys were from participants who did not qualify as Net Generation based on birth year (e.g. participants who were born prior to 1982) and were excluded from the data because the participants with whom the research focused on were born between the years 1982 and 2000; thus, 61 completed surveys represented the Net Generation college student population in this study.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability in action research is described in terms of consistency in the methodological approach to data collection (Creswell, 2009). The researcher's ability to carefully describe in detail the rigor used in data collection and the consistency in the results with which other researchers repeating the same study would find (Creswell, 2009; Davies, 2007). Validity, on the other hand, speaks to the accuracy of the findings through the procedures the researcher employs, such

as triangulation (Davies, 2007). Triangulation is the use of different data sources to examine if similar results or themes emerge (Creswell, 2005; Lincoln & Guba, 2000). According to LeGrange and Beets (2005), "validity is one of the traditional touchstones of assessment practices. However, the definition of validity has evolved over time along with changes in assessment practices" (p. 115). I triangulated the data collected in this action research study against the current scholarship on social media (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Oblinger and Oblinger, 2005), my experiences as a user of social media, which is the basic premise of action research, and my community of practice (higher education practitioners within student services).

Since social media's impact on college students' academic and social experiences is evolving and the research on social media is beginning to surface and become prevalent throughout higher education, the parameter of validity in my study is through the lens of catalytic validity, that is, validity as having a transformative or empowering outcome (LeGrange & Beets, 2005). The very nature of social media's 'in the moment' and interactive attributes has transformed and empowered countries, people and governments (Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Rigby, 2008; Zakaria, 2011). Hence, viewing the use of social media as a catalyst in the college student academic and social experiences allowed me to frame my research with the intent of achieving catalytic validity.

Limitations

A chief limitation to this study is the use of a snowball sample. First, through the use of a snowball sample, the researcher forfeits knowing exactly

what individuals will be in the sample (Creswell, 2005). Second, snowball sampling eliminates the possibility of identifying those individuals who did not complete the survey, for the purposes of a follow-up email (Creswell, 2005). Third, another limitation of this study is the use of a small sample (Davies, 2007). By using a small sample, the results only apply to the specific participants in the sample and not generalizable to the population. For example, I will not be able to render large generalities for the entire undergraduate and graduate population across higher education institutions (Davies, 2007). However, for the purposes of this action research study, generalizability was not the intent. The intent was to describe how Net Generation college students use social media in their college student academic and social experiences. Lastly, an additional limitation involves the online survey. Do the questions involving participants' understanding of social media and how it relates to the college student academic and social experiences capture the variations within how the Net Generation college students come to experience these concepts? In other words, various degree programs may have a different perception of how social media is utilized in various academic and social experiences compared with how the Net Generation college student uses social media within their academic and social college student experiences. The researcher understands these limitations and will utilize this study as a platform to further examine the social media phenomena in future research.

The researcher foresees two possible outcomes of this study. The first outcome involves the researcher's ability to gain a more thorough understanding of how the 21st century Net Generation college student uses social media in their

academic and social college student experience to inform her community of practice. A second outcome of this study will stem from the researcher's ability to identify and describe specific social mediums that enhance the college student academic and social experiences in order to make recommendations within her community of practice about the Net Generation.

Summary

An action research design was carried out through the use of an online survey. Data collection came from 61 participants who are undergraduate and graduate students fitting the criteria of the Net Generation college student (birth year, completion of a minimum one-year part-time or full-time credit hours, and actively use social media in the form of Facebook and/or Twitter on a daily basis). Descriptive analysis was utilized to understand and describe how the Net Generation college students use social media in their academic and social college student experiences. Chapter 4 of this action research study will present the findings and describe what occurred from the data collected, how those findings align with current scholarship, and recommendations will be offered to my community of practice.

Chapter 4 - Findings and Discussion

The purpose of chapter 4 is to present and discuss the research findings. The chapter begins with an overview of the survey and the demographic information of the participants. The second section of the chapter describes how the participants in the survey who identified as Net Generation college students used social media in their academic and social college experiences. The third section provides an overview of the five specific areas that I chose to focus on from the survey findings: 1) the technologies (tool/device) used when accessing social media (e.g. computer, camera, Smartphone) 2) which social mediums students used 3) how social media was used in the student's academic college experience 4) how social media was used in the student's social college experience, and 5) how students preferred to be contacted by the university and college/academic program. At the conclusion of each section I will discuss how the findings relate to the scholarship and my role as a higher education practitioner who uses social media in my own community of practice. To conclude I will present the reflective practice I used to understand the phenomenon and summarize the findings; then I will provide a summation and discussion of the relevance of the findings to my own community of practice and future higher education practitioners working with the 21st Century Net Generation college student.

Section I: Participants

Demographics. The findings involve data collected from an online web survey. The online survey was distributed to participants through 14 listservs

provided to me by the director of the ASU M.Ed. Higher Education program; thus an exact number of the population asked to complete my survey cannot be determined. The statistical summary of the surveys completed was as follows: 132 individuals viewed the survey, of which 85 individuals started the survey, and 72 individuals completed the survey resulting in an 84.71% response rate. However, after cleaning the data and removing the responses from participants who were born prior to 1982, the number of completed surveys produced a final *N* of 61, which produced a response rate of 72% (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003; Creswell, 2005; Pearson, 2010).

The online survey tool provided greater potential to cast a wide net and obtain a large target population specifically as more households and college campuses have Internet and Wi-Fi coverage areas in order to achieve a significant participant response rate, which was crucial for this study's snowball sample (Anderson & Kanuka, 2003; Creswell, 2005; Dillman, Smyth, & Christian, 2009). The online survey had a total of forty-eight questions with twelve demographic questions and six open-ended response questions designed to understand how the 21st century Net Generation college student utilizes social media in their academic and social college student experiences.

The web survey used open-ended questions which helped me ascertain how the 21st century Net Generation college student uses and integrates social media (e.g. apps, gaming, social networking sites, and YouTube videos) into their academic and social collegiate experiences, as well as experiences outside of the

college campus (e.g. friends and family from home). The full survey used in this study can be found in Appendix C.

Since this study looked at the Net Generation college student, it was essential that individuals who took the survey were born between 1982 and 2000 to fulfill the criteria of Net Generation (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010). Participants who took part in the survey and were born outside of the parameters established for defining Net Generation (1982-2000) were removed from the analysis (Creswell, 2005). A total of 11 participants of the 72 were removed from the survey data that resulted in a final *N* of 61 participants.

Gender was the first category I examined in the demographics of the 61 participants in my study. Using the most recent Arizona State University (ASU) enrollment information for fall 2011, the percentage of females (50.5%) that attended ASU was slightly greater than males (49.5%, ASU, 2011). While the percentage of females in my study was higher (73%) than the percentage of males that completed the survey (27%), the general representation of more female participants than male participants is similar to ASU as shown in Table 1. The second demographic I explored was the race/ethnicity breakdown of the 61 participants, as shown in Table 1. My study had a higher percentage of student racial/ethnic diversity than that of the ASU student profile: 26% of the students identified as Hispanic or Latino in comparison to ASU with 16.9%; 4.9% identified as Black similar to ASU's 4.9%; 3.28% of the students identified as Pacific Islander compared to ASU's 0.2%; and 4.92% of the students identified as Asian compared to ASU's 5.5%, thus slightly lower than the general profile

(ASU, 2011). Finally, I looked at the academic year in school of the participants. For the purposes of this study I defined academic year in school as undergraduate and graduate student. There were 40 undergraduate students (66%) in this study compared to ASU's undergraduate student profile (80%); and 21 graduate students (34%) compared to ASU's graduate student profile (19%) (ASU, 2011). The purpose in describing the participant demographics is to illustrate that within this small sample, the demographics aligned closely with the enrollment data on gender and race/ethnicity at ASU where the sample was derived.

Table 1

Gender and Race/Ethnic Diversity

	Female	Male	Transgender	Prefer Not to Answer
Asian	1	2		
Black/African American	2	1		
Hispanic/Latino	13	3		
Pacific Islander	1	1		
White	24	6	1	
Other	3	1		
Prefer Not to Answer	1			1

Note. Source—survey. $N = 61$.

The majority of participants, 40 of the 61 (66%), were undergraduate students and 21 of the 61 were graduate students (34%). There were 17 out of 21

graduate students who identified as female (81%), 1 participant identified as transgender (.05%), and 3 participants who identified as male (14%). The undergraduate students who completed the survey totaled 40 participants with 28 out of 40 who identified as female (70%), 11 out of 40 identified as male (28%), and 1 participant preferred not to identify their gender (.02%).

Looking at the race/ethnicity of the participants, 24 out of 40 participants who were undergraduate students were White (60%), 12 participants were Hispanic/Latino (30%), 2 participants identified as Pacific Islander (.05%), 1 undergraduate student identified as Asian (.03%) and 1 participant identified as Black/African American (.03%). The graduate student racial and ethnic composition was 10 out of 21 participants identified as White (48%), 6 identified as Hispanic/Latino (29%), 4 identified as Black/African American (19%), and 1 participant identified as Asian (.04%). There were no Pacific Islanders in the graduate student group. A breakdown of gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year in school, grouped by undergraduate and graduate, of the participants who responded is represented in Tables 2 and 3. A disaggregated breakdown of the participants who responded is represented in Table 4. For the purposes of this study, the data will be discussed in terms of the aggregate group (N=61) since the N for the disaggregated participant data is small.

Table 2

Gender and Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate)

Gender	Undergraduate	Graduate
Female	28	17
Male	11	3
Transgender	0	1
Prefer Not to Answer	1	0

Note. Source—survey. $N = 61$.

Table 3

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate)

	Undergraduate	Graduate
Asian	1	1
Black/African American	1	4
Hispanic/Latino	12	6
Pacific Islander	2	0
White	24	10

Note. Source—survey. $N = 61$.

Table 4

Disaggregated Demographic Data by Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate)

Asian N=3			Black/African American N=3			Hispanic/ Latino N=16			Pacific Islander N=2			White N=31		
Gen	UG	GR	Gen	UG	GR	Gen	UG	GR	Gen	UG	GR	Gen	UG	GR
F	1	NA	F	NA	2	F	8	5	F	1	NA	F	16	8
M	1	1	M	1	NA	M	3	NA	M	1	NA	M	5	1
												TG		1

N= 61

Note: Source Survey

Note:

Other Prefer Not to Answer *There were 4 students who chose "other" for their race/ethnicity There were 2 students who chose "prefer not to answer"; 1 student chose this answer for both gender and race/ethnicity; 1 student chose this answer for race/ethnicity.*

Note:

UG=Undergraduate
GR=Graduate
TG=Transgender

Participants were next asked who in their family attended postsecondary education but did not get an associate's (2 year degree) or a bachelor's (4 year degree). The purpose of this question was to see how many participants were first generation college students. The initial number of first generation college students was 30 out of 61 participants (49%), which was a high number of participants who identified as first generation college students. However, after analyzing this question further I determined this particular question was not framed well to glean

a clean response. For example, the question that asked who in your family attended but did not get a 2 year (associates) or 4 year (bachelors) degree. Some of the students in this study responded "none" but then in the next question about who in your family graduated, students named their family members who graduated, which indicated to me that the student was not a first generation college student.

Discussion. The demographic data on gender and race/ethnicity presented in this study align with the data information on enrolled students at Arizona State University (ASU), a public 4-year research higher education institution. The majority of participants in this study also were representative of the age breakdown of enrolled students at ASU with 37 participants out of 61 born between 1990 and 1994 (60%), 18 participants out of 61 born between 1985 and 1989 (30%) and 6 participants out of 61 born between 1980 and1984 (10%). Further, a total of 47 participants out of 61 were under 25 years of age (77%) and 23% of participants in this study were 25 years of age or older. These numbers are demonstrative of the enrollment data of ASU students under the age of 25 (68.5%) compared to students 25 years of age and older 31.5% (ASU, 2011). It is important to reference the birth year of the participants in this study, as it is a fundamental criterion of the Net Generation college student, as defined in the scholarship (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

The racial and ethnic breakdown of the participants in this study is an important component for a variety of reasons. First, the number of college

students who will be enrolling in universities is rising. College enrollment is projected to continue setting records between fall 2011 and the year 2019 across public and private institutions combined by 14% from 20,625 in fall 2011 to 23,448 in fall 2019. This continual rise in college student enrollment is expected to see an even greater number of students from diverse racial and ethnic backgrounds (Snyder & Dillow, 2011). Second, research indicates that a gap exists between minority students and White students when discussing access to technology (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Junco & Cotten, 2010).

Hargittai and Hinnant (2008) conducted a study on the variation in Internet skills and uses among digital natives (e.g. how information is accessed and used on the Internet). Race and ethnicity were examined against laptop ownership, number of access locations, number of use years, times per week spent on the web, online skill (experience surfing the web), and the number of types of sites visited weekly (YouTube, Facebook, Google). Based on these variables, Hargittai and Hinnant (2008) evaluated participants on how adept they were on each aspect of the web (access, use, time spent) and were coded with a corresponding score. African American and Hispanic students scored lower than whites in each area with one exception; African Americans spent more time surfing the Internet compared to their peers (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). Recognizing the minority gap and technology use, it is important to consider the racial and ethnic breakdown of the participants and their access to technology when trying to better understand how social media is used in the college academic and social experiences of the Net Generation college student.

Access to technology is a contributing factor when describing differences in the use of technology across gender, race and ethnicity (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Data from the Department of Commerce National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA, 2010) examined computer ownership based on gender and race/ethnicity using data from the U.S. Census Bureau. The percentage of households that indicated ownership of a desktop, laptop, netbook (e.g. small, lightweight laptop) or notebook only (no handheld device) is depicted in Table 5.

Table 5

Computer Ownership by Demographic Characteristics, 2010

Household	Desktop, laptop, netbook or notebook only (no handheld)	Handheld, mobile device alone or combination	No computer
White	60%	19%	20%
Black	50%	14%	35%
Asian	61%	25%	14%
Hispanic	52%	14%	34%
Female	57%	17%	26%
Male	59%	20%	21%

Note. Source: U.S. Census Bureau

This information helps to explain differences in use. Information from the U.S. Census Bureau was included in this study not as a comparison to Net Generation

college students' use in college but rather to further elucidate circumstances that describe differences in access, or lack of, to technologies prior to college enrollment. Net Generation students do share cultural similarities (e.g. avid users of the internet, grew up with interactive video games, influenced by hip-hop culture) even though they come from diverse backgrounds. However, differences exist in technological skills among Net Generation students relative to gender and race/ethnicity (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). In a study conducted on parents of children from 6 months to 6 years of age, children from Latino families were less likely to use computers than children from White families (Calvert, Rideout, Woolard, Barr, & Strouse, 2005).

Section II: Net Generation College Student

As a student services practitioner in higher education whose primary role is working directly with students it is important that I understand the characteristics that make up the Net Generation student profile. Students of the Net Generation are the most ethnically and racially diverse group of college students than previous generations (Coomes & DeBard, 2004; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Twenge, 2006). In addition to their diversity, this generation of students is the most technologically advanced group of students matriculating to colleges and universities (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011). As evidenced by their birth year (1982-2000), Net Generation college students have grown up with technology and are comfortable with using a wide variety of technologies to enhance their college academic and social

experiences (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Manafy & Gautschi, 2011; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

In order to gain a better understanding of how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college student experiences, it was important that I became familiar with 1) the technologies (tools/devices) these students currently use, 2) what social mediums Net Generation college students use, 3) how they use social media in their academic experiences, 4) how they use social media in their social experiences, and 5) how they prefer social media be used by the university and college/academic program. I conclude this section with what these findings describe as they relate to the scholarship to help me better understand how social media is utilized by the Net Generation college student in their academic and social college experiences.

Section III: Use of Social Media in Academic and College Social Experiences

Area #1: Technologies Net Generation students use to access social media. Technologies, for the purposes of this survey, were framed as the devices or tools (e.g. Smartphone, laptop, iPad) used by the Net Generation college student to communicate, share their experiences, interact, and engage in their academic and social worlds. At the beginning of the survey participants were asked to indicate what technologies they currently use and then select from a list comprised of a variety of technologies. The intent of this question was to ascertain which technologies were commonly used among the Net Generation college student in order to provide me with a foundation of the types of technologies the

study could focus on and determine how these findings align with the current scholarship.

I first looked to uncover specific technologies used by the Net Generation college student and found that 61 participants out of 61 (100%) used some form of technology. I mention this data for two reasons: 1) this data aligns with the scholarship on characteristics of the Net Generation college student as being technologically savvy, connected, and wired (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Twenge, 2006) and 2) although the sample size is small, it emphasizes how important of a role technology plays in the lives of the Net Generation student.

Technologies across demographic data. Although there is a high adoption rate of technologies among college students, social inequalities still exist (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Junco & Cotten, 2010). Technology adoption, ownership, and use vary among the college student population, especially across gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic status (Junco & Cotten, 2010). While socioeconomic status is an important lens to study, my demographic focus was on gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate).

In a study conducted on multi-tasking and academic performance at a large public university, the research found that female and White college students were over twice as likely to own a cell phone as males and African Americans (Junco & Cotton, 2010). African American students were more apt to use text messaging than White students and spend more time talking on their cell phones than other student racial/ethnic groups (Junco & Cotton, 2010). On the other

hand, female students typically text message more than male students (Junco & Cotton, 2010). Females, African American, and Hispanic/Latino students reported knowing less about the Internet (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). Hispanic/Latino students were less likely than White students to use Facebook, and students whose parents graduated from college were more likely to use Facebook than students whose parents did not graduate from college (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008).

Gender. Compared to the studies conducted by Hargittai and Hinnant (2008) and Junco et al., (2010) the gender, race/ethnicity analysis closely aligns with the breakdown of technologies used across gender based on the participant responses in the online survey. The computer (desktop/laptop) was the most popular of the technologies used among females. Forty-four out of 45 female participants (97%) chose this technology. The second most popular technology chosen by females was the cell phone camera, with 40 out of 45 (88%) participants. Finally, the Smartphone had 33 out of 45 (73%) female participants who selected this particular technology. The most utilized technologies male participants selected were the same as the technologies chosen by females, however, there were some difference in the order of popularity. Similar to the female participants, the computer (desktop/laptop) was the most utilized with 14 participants out of 14 (100%) who identified as males. The next most used technology for males was the Smartphone with 13 participants out of 14 (92%). Finally, all 12 (100%) participants selected the cell phone camera. (see Table 6)

Race/ethnicity. It became apparent to me in my analysis the differences in how the Net Generation college student accessed and used various technologies in their academic and social college experiences (Creswell, 2005). I took into account the literature on social inequality (access and use) among digital natives and Internet use when I ran a demographic cross-tabulation to gain a better understanding of technologies used across race and ethnicity (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008). For this question I found that there was a difference in the top three technologies used based on race and ethnicity. Participants who identified as White indicated their top three technologies utilized; all 31 participants selected the computer (desktop/laptop); twenty-nine out of 31 (93%) participants chose the cell phone camera. Lastly, 27 out of 31 (87%) identified the Smartphone as one of their top utilized technologies.

Participants who identified as Hispanic or Latino listed their top three technologies most used. Both cell phone camera and computer (desktop/laptop) garnered 93% with 15 out of 16 participants selecting them as their technology currently used. The iPod or mp3 player was the third most utilized technology with 13 out of 16 (81%). One hundred percent of the 3 Black or African American participants chose the computer (desktop/laptop) as their top technology. Finally, 2 out of 3 (66%) participants chose both the cell phone camera and Smartphone as their utilized technology. The most utilized technologies identified by Asian participants included the camera, the computer (desktop/laptop), and the digital camera, all producing a 100% response. Finally, Pacific Islander participants

unanimously (2 out of 2 participants) chose the computer (desktop/laptop), cell phone camera, and Smartphone (Table 7).

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Next I cross-tabulated academic year in school (e.g. undergraduate/graduate) with the technologies currently used. Undergraduate students were classified as one large group (e.g. I combined the undergraduate years of freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). I tallied each category of the technologies listed, which resulted in the top three technologies of the undergraduate participants unanimously as computer (desktop/laptop), cell phone camera as the second choice with 34 out of 40 participants (85%), and iPod as the third choice with 25 out of 40 participants (62%) who selected this response.

The graduate student participants preferred similar technologies as the undergraduate students. Twenty out of 21 (95%) graduate students chose the cell phone camera and computer (desktop and laptop) as their top technologies utilized. The Smartphone was the technology most used by 18 out of 21 graduate students (85%, see Table 8).

Table 6

Gender and Technology Currently Used

Female (N = 45)		Male (N = 14)	
Computer (desktop/laptop)	97%	Computer (desktop/laptop)	100%
Cell phone camera	88%	iPod	92%
Smartphone	73%	Cell phone camera	85%

Note. Source: Survey.

Table 7

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Technology Currently Used

Asian N=3	Black/ African American N=3	Hispanic/ Latino N=16	Pacific Islander N=2	White N=31
Camera 100%	Computer (desktop/ laptop) 100%	Camera on Cell Phone 93%	Camera on Cell Phone 100%	Computer (desktop/ laptop) 100%
Computer (desktop/ laptop) 100%	Camera on Cell Phone 66%	Computer (desktop/ laptop) 93%	Computer (desktop/ laptop) 100%	Camera on Cell Phone 93%
Digital Camera 100%	Smartphone 66%	iPod 81%	Smartphone 100%	Smartphone 87%

Note: Source: Survey

Table 8

Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate) and Technology Currently Used

Undergraduate N=40		Graduate N=21	
Computer (desktop/laptop)	100%	Computer (desktop/laptop)	95%
Camera on Cell Phone	85%	Camera on Cell Phone	95%
iPod	62%	Smartphone	85%

Note. Source: Survey

The Internet and broadband (e.g. Wi-Fi) population has become more diverse shortening the gap between Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and White households (Pew Research, 2010). Internet users who are Black/African American or Hispanic/Latino have nearly doubled between 2000 and 2010 from 11% to 21%. However, Blacks/African Americans are still less likely than Whites to go online (Pew Research, 2010). Both Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino individuals use a wider scope of their mobile phones with 70% using text messaging (just over half of Whites), listen to music, instant message, and watch videos (Pew Research, 2010). The move towards a mobile society has also impacted laptop ownership with Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, and Whites owning a laptop with over half in each group. Laptop ownership among the Black/African American population has grown from 39% in 2009 to 51% in 2010 (Pew Research, 2010). The growth of mobile technology and Internet access and use among minority households will have an impact not only on eliminating the social inequality discussed in Hargittai and Hinnant's (2008) study, but also on how the various technologies will be utilized in the academic experiences of the Net Generation college student.

Discussion. This section presented the technologies used by the Net Generation college student. It is critical to note that all participants used some form of technology. This is important for practitioners in higher education to understand because students are entering the college and university campuses armed with technology and expecting technology in their learning environment (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011). Smartphones have become

popular with the Net Generation college student for reasons other than talking on the phone. Smartphones allow for students to access the Internet and download various web applications (apps) that range from social networking sites (e.g. Facebook) to study apps (e.g. Study Blue) at the touch of a button. Mobile devices such as laptops, Smartphones, and tablets (e.g. iPad, Kindle, Nook) integrates the way the Net Generation college student communicates and engages in their world with the learning environment of the classroom (McHaney, 2011). Said differently, mobile devices are ubiquitous among the Net Generation; higher education practitioners need to recognize this fact and look at ways in which mobile devices can benefit not only how practitioners engage with students, but also provide students with a more interactive and engaging environment that speak to their multi-tasking behaviors (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2001).

McHaney (2011) purports that many classes in higher education have stated in their syllabi a statement regarding cell phone use. The message sent to students is typically to turn off or silence cell phones during class. This statement indicated learning devices may be a distraction versus a learning tool. Students have embraced mobile technology, as evidenced in the information presented in this section. Overwhelmingly, the most utilized technologies were the computer, Smartphone, and cell phone camera across the demographic landscape of gender, racial/ethnic diversity, and academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Technologies of the Net Generation are evolving at a fast pace (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Rigby, 2008). Higher education

practitioners cannot ignore the influence technology has on the lives of the Net Generation college student.

Area #2: Social media used by the Net Generation. Participants were next asked about social media and which social mediums they used. The intent of this question was to gain a working framework of the types of social media the Net Generation are familiar with and which ones they use more regularly. Before participants were asked to select the various social mediums they used I provided a working definition of social media for their reference in order to be consistent in the terminology. The definition was to think of social media as an array of digital tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, videos, and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter that enable people to create their own stories, videos, and photos and manipulate them and share them widely (Kanter & Fine 2010). This question and definition provided participants with a framework of social media as they selected various social mediums from a list suggested by the student sample in the initial pilot study that were known to be popular. It is interesting to note that for this question, once again, all participants, 61 participants out of 61, indicated they used some form of social media.

As I reviewed the responses of the participants, I discovered that I had included camera (not on cell phone), camera (on cell phone), and digital camera as choices from which the participants could select a response. These choices did not align with the definition of social media that I provided the participants; therefore I did not include those responses in my determination of the social mediums selected by the participants in this study. The three social mediums most

used by the participants as an overall group were Blackboard, with 56 participants (91%), and Facebook and text messaging each chosen by 54 participants (88%). These percentages were tabulated using all 61 participants.

Social mediums across demographic data.

Gender. I cross-tabulated gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year (undergraduate/graduate with the types of social media used. The cross-tabulation illustrated that for individual demographic groups the top three social mediums used were the same as the aggregate group. Forty-four of the 45 (97%) female participants indicated their most used social medium was text messaging (92%). Blackboard and Facebook were tied for the next most used social medium with 43 participants out of 45 (95%) who chose those social mediums. For the male participants, Blackboard and Facebook were unanimously chosen by all 14 participants as their most used social medium followed by text messaging with 13 out of 14 participants (92%). It was interesting to note that students considered Blackboard a social medium since it is marketed to colleges and universities as a course management system specifically designed for course content and academic related information (Blackboard.com).

Race/ethnicity. Participants who identified as Black/African American unanimously chose Blackboard and Google Docs as their most used social mediums with 3 out of 3 participants, followed by blogs with 2 out of 3 participants (66%). Hispanic/Latino participants identified Blackboard as their most used social medium with 15 out of 16 (93%) participants. Google Docs was the second most used social medium with 10 participants out of 16 (62%). Lastly,

5 out of 16 participants (31%) chose YouTube as their most used social medium most utilized. There were only 2 participants that identified as Pacific Islander and thus they only identified one social medium, Blackboard, as the most used. For participants who identified as Asian, Blackboard and Instant Messaging were the most popular as each garnered 100% based on 2 participants out of 2 while 2 out of 3 (66%) participants chose blogs as the most used. Finally, all 31 participants who identified as White chose Blackboard; twenty-three participants out of 31 (74%) chose YouTube and 14 participants out of 31 (45%) chose Google Docs.

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Undergraduate students utilized several social mediums among those listed in the online survey. I chose to list the top three social mediums that appeared consistent across all four years (freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior). The social mediums most used for undergraduate participants were Blackboard, with all 40 participants who selected this social medium, followed by text messaging, with 38 out of 40 participants (95%) and Facebook as the third most utilized social medium, with 37 out of 40 (92%) participants who selected this social medium. Participants who identified as graduate students chose the same social mediums as the undergraduate participants. Facebook was the most utilized with 21 participants out of 21. Blackboard and text messaging were equally chosen as the most used social mediums with 20 participants out of 21 (95%). A breakdown across all races and ethnicities can be found in Tables 9-11.

Table 9

Gender and Social Media Used

Female N=45	Percentage Using	Male N=14	Percentage Using
Text Messaging	97%	Blackboard	100%
Blackboard	95%	Facebook	100%
Facebook	95%	Text Messaging	92%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 10

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Social Media Used

Asian N=3	Black/African American N=3	Hispanic/Latino N=16	Pacific Islander N=2	White N=31
Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 93%	Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 100%
Instant Messaging 100%	Google Docs 100%	Google Docs 62%	Not applicable	YouTube 74%
Blogs 66%	Blogs 66%	YouTube 31%	Not applicable	Google Docs 45%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 11

Academic Year in School and Social Media Used

Undergraduate N=40		Graduate N=21	
Blackboard	100%	Facebook	100%
Text Messaging	95%	Blackboard	95%
Facebook	92%	Text Messaging	95%

Note. Source: Survey

I was surprised Blackboard was considered a social medium since Blackboard has always been framed in my college classes as a course management system. I assumed social networking sites, specifically Facebook and Twitter, would have garnered a higher percentage of the social mediums used among the participants. With over 845 million users of Facebook (Facebook, 2012b) and 100 million users of Twitter (Sullivan, 2011), it would seem that those social networking sites would have placed in the top three in all categories among participants in this survey. Additionally, from the information gleaned in the pilot survey, the small sample indicated that Facebook was the most popular among college students. It appears from the data presented in this section that the participants in this study utilize Blackboard, text messaging, Google Docs, and YouTube more than Facebook; which contrasts with the scholarship which focuses primarily on Facebook and Twitter and the Net Generation college student (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010; McHaney, 2011).

Area # 3: Social media used in the academic college experience.

***Social media use during class*.** Once the data indicated which social mediums participants currently used, the next step in the survey was to find out how they used social media for the purposes of their classroom (academic) experiences. There were two questions in the survey that addressed this issue. The first question was to solicit information about how the participants used social media during their classes (e.g. in the classroom setting), and the second question asked about how the participants used social media when preparing for their classes. The participants were provided with a list of social mediums and then asked to choose all that applied to their individual experiences. The top three areas students used in their academic experiences included 1) share presentations and papers for group projects (e.g. Google Docs), 2) create study groups, and 3) ask questions or discuss information related to class lectures. Although the survey question focused on the use of social media during class, participants indicated they accessed social media for purposes that were not related to class activities. Some of the participants indicated they would text friends during class (13%) and accessed social networking sites to check status updates of friends (11%). This specific issue corroborates with the scholarship that depicts the Net Generation college student as a multi-tasker (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco & Cotten, 2010; Twenge, 2006). Net Gen students are less able to pay attention for long periods of time as evidenced by the need for these students to text friends and to log on to Facebook during class time (Prensky, 2001).

Gender. Social media's use in the classroom across gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year (undergraduate and graduate) was similarly aligned with the aggregate data. Female participants, 37 out of 45 (82%), used social media to share presentations and/or papers for group projects; twenty-eight female participants out of 45 (62%) indicated they used social media to create study groups. The third most utilized means of using social media during class was to ask questions or discuss information related to class with 27 participants out of 45 (60%) indicating this. Male participants used social media during class to text their friends as indicated by 8 participants of 14 (57%); half of the 14 respondents used social media during class to create study groups (50%), and half (50%) of the 14 male participants indicated they used social media during class to share presentations and/or papers for group projects.

Race/ethnicity. Among participants who identified as Asian, it was unanimously (100%) indicated they used social media during class for the purposes of sharing presentations for group projects and/or papers as well as to ask questions or discuss information related to class. The next highly selected use for social media during class for participants who identified as Asian was for real-time, 'in the moment' classroom discussion with 2 out of 3 (66%) participants. The participants who identified as Black/African American indicated as their first reason they used social media in the classroom was to ask questions or discuss information related to class with 100% of the participants responding. The second and third most selected social media use during class garnered the same number of responses with 2 out of 3 (66%) participants and those are to create study

groups and to share presentations and/or papers for group projects. Hispanic/Latino participants indicated their top reasons they used social media in the classroom were to share presentations and/or papers for group projects with 13 participants out of 16 (81%), text friends, 9 participants out of 16 (56%), and create study groups with half (50%) of the participants who selected this response. Participants who identified as Pacific Islander equally chose the top three ways they used social media during class with 50% indicating they used social media to create study groups, 50% used social media to share presentations and/or papers for group projects, and 50% used social media to discuss professors. Finally, participants who identified as White used social media to share presentations and/or papers for group projects with 23 participants out of 31 (74%) who listed that response; twenty-one participants out of 31 (67%) opted to use social media during class to create study groups and 18 out of 31 (58%) chose to use social media to ask questions or discuss information related to class.

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Undergraduate students used social media during class to create study groups, to share presentations and/or papers for group projects with 27 out of 40 participants (67%), to create study groups, with 25 out of 40 participants (62%) who selected this response, and to text friends, with 23 out of 40 participants (57%). Graduate students use social media to share presentations and/or papers for group projects, with 18 participants out of 21 (85%), to ask questions related to class (12 participants out of 21 who responded), and to create study groups (indicated by 10 participants out of 21, 47% (Table 12-14).

Table 12

Gender and Social Media Used During Class

Female N=45	Percentage Using	Male N=14	Percentage Using
Share presentations, papers for group projects	82%	Text friends	57%
Create study groups	62%	Create study groups	50%
Ask questions related to class	60%	Share presentations, papers for group projects	50%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 13

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Social Media Used During Class

Asian N=3	Black/ African American N=3	Hispanic/ Latino N=16	Pacific Islander N=2	White N=31
Share presentations/ papers for group projects 100%	Ask questions or discuss information related to class 100%	Share presentations /papers for group projects 81%	Create study groups 50%	Share presentations/ papers for group projects 74%
Ask questions or discuss information related to class 100%	Create study groups 66%	Text friends 56%	Share presentation/ papers for group projects 50%	Create study groups 67%
For real-time 'in the moment' classroom discussion 100%	Share presentations/ papers for group projects 66%	Create study groups 50%	Discuss professors 50%	Ask questions or discuss information related to class lectures 58%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 14

Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate) and Social Media Used During Class

Undergraduate N=40		Graduate N=21	
Share presentations/ papers for group projects	67%	Share presentations/ papers for group projects	85%
Create study groups	62%	Ask questions or discuss information related to class	57%
Text friends	57%	Create study groups	47%

Note. Source: Survey

Social media used to prepare for class. The other aspect of the academic experience included looking at how the Net Generation college student utilized social media when preparing for their classes. The intent of this question was to seek out whether or not social media was applied to the academic experiences when used outside the classroom. In other words, once students stepped outside of the formal confines of the classroom, I wanted to examine whether they used social media to continue engaging with classmates about the class specifics (e.g. class content, study guide) or if it was primarily used as a social tool (e.g. texting about things other than class). Participants were asked to select from a list of responses that were provided. The top responses for social media in preparing for

class provided by 45 participants out of 61 (73%) was to look up information related to class; the next response came from 41 participants (67%) who indicated they used social media in preparing for class to write/edit group project papers while for the third, 36 participants (59%) indicated they used social media as a study guide for readings, quizzes, and tests when preparing for classes.

Gender. Once again I cross-tabulated the demographic data of gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year in school (undergraduate and graduate with the question on the survey that addressed how participants utilize social mediums to prepare for their classes. Females used social media to look up information related to class, with 36 out of 45 (80%) participants, to write/edit group project papers, with 35 participants out of 45 (77%), and finally, as a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, and tests, with 31 participants out of 61 (68%). Males, on the other hand, used social media to look up information related to class (9 participants out of 14--64%); half of the participants, 7 participants out of 14, used social media to chat with classmates using Facebook chat and half of the 14 respondents indicated when they used social media to prepare for class, they texted their friends.

Race/ethnicity. When looking at race/ethnicity and social media use when preparing for classes, all participants who identified as Asian, 3 participants out of 3, used social media to look up information related to class. The remaining responses for how the participants who identified as Asian were equal, as 2 participants out of 3 (66%) indicated they used social media to chat with classmates using Facebook chat and/or Instant Messaging and the same number of

participants, 2 participants out of 3 used social media as a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, and tests.

Participants who identified as Black/African American evenly used social media to create study groups, write/edit group project papers, and to look up information related to class with 2 participants out of 3 (66%) who listed those responses. Hispanic/Latino participants were similar in their responses. A majority of the Hispanic/Latino participants, 12 out of 16 (75%) used social media to write/edit group project papers, look up information related to class chosen by 10 participants out of 16 (62%), and use social media as a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, and tests selected by 9 participants out of 16 (56%). The participants who identified as Pacific Islander equally chose responses relative to how they utilize social media to prepare for classes. Pacific Islander participants chose chatting with classmates using Facebook chat and/or Instant Messaging (50%), looking up information related to class (50%), and checking status updates (50%). Finally, among White participants, looking up information related to class was most popular as a way social media was utilized with 24 participants out of 31 (77%), writing/editing group project papers was chosen by 22 participants out of 31 (70%), and lastly, 17 participants out of 31 (54%) utilized social media to create study groups.

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Undergraduate participants used social media when preparing for class to look up information related to class with 29 out of 40 participants (72%) who selected this response; as a study guide for materials with 26 out of 40 participants (65%); and readings,

quizzes, and tests, and to write/edit group papers with 23 out of 40 participants (57%) who chose this selection. Graduate students used social media for writing and editing group project papers, with 18 participants out of 21 (85%) selecting this while looking up information related to class with selected by 16 participants out of 21 (76%). Finally 11 out of 21 (52%) of the participants who identified as graduate student chose using social media for the purposes of peer reviews for papers (Table 15-17).

Table 15

Gender and Social Media Used to Prepare for Class

Female N=45	Percentage Using	Male N=14	Percentage Using
Look up information related to class	80%	Look up information related to class	64%
Write/edit group project papers	77%	Chat with classmates	50%
As a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, and tests	68%	Text friends	50%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 16

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Social Media Used to Prepare for Class

Asian N=3	Black/ African American N=3	Hispanic/ Latino N=16	Pacific Islander N=2	White N=31
Look up information related to class 100%	Create study groups 66%	Write/edit group papers 75%	Chat with classmates using Facebook chat, IM 50%	Look up information related to class 67%
Chat with classmates using Facebook chat, IM 66%	Write/edit group papers 66%	Look up information related to class 62%	Look up information related to class 50%	Write/edit group project papers 70%
As a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes and tests 66%	Look up information related to class 66%	As a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, and tests 56%	Check status updates 50%	Create study groups 54%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 17

Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate) and Social Media Used to Prepare for Class

Undergraduate		Graduate	
Look up information related to class	72%	Write/edit group papers	85%
As a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, and tests	65%	Look up information related to class	76%
Write/edit group papers	57%	Peer reviews for group papers	52%

Note. Source: Survey

Area #4: Social media used in the social college experience. Another aspect of the Net Generation college student experience that I examined was how social media was used in the student's social college experience. The question that I asked participants to answer addressed how the participant used social media to communicate about campus social events outside of the classroom. The top three modes of communication for campus social events among all participants (N=61) were 1) for participation in on campus activities (e.g. sports, Greek Life, student clubs) with 33 participants out of 61 (54%), 2) networking, with the same response by participants (54%), and 3) for invitations of friends to participate in various social events (e.g. parties, movies, theater, and concerts) with 32 participants out of 61 (52%) who selected this response.

Gender. Data on how the Net Generation college student communicates about social events across gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year (undergraduate/graduate) were similar across all demographics cross-tabulated. Female participants in the study used social media to participate in on-campus activities (e.g. sports, Greek Life, student clubs) with 27 participants out of 45 (60%), to invite friends to participate in various social events (e.g. parties, movies, theater, concerts) with 25 participants out of 45 (55%), and to network, with 22 participants out of 45 (48%) who chose this response. Male participants made similar choices. However networking was predominantly chosen by 10 participants out of 14 (71%); half of the male participants (50%) used social media to invite friends to participate in various social events, and 35% of the male participants used social media to participate in on-campus activities.

Race/ethnicity. Similar to gender, the choices among the different racial/ethnic backgrounds were somewhat consistent among each other. Since there was such a small sample of participants who identified as Asian, there were only two data identified for this group 1) Networking (66%), and 2) invite friends to participate in various social events (33%). All participants who identified as Black/African American in the study, 3 participants out of 3 (100%) listed participate in on-campus activities as the reason they use social media when communicating about campus social events; second, among Black/African American participants was networking, with 2 participants out of 3 (66%) and finally, 33% of the participants who identified as Black/African American

indicated they used social media to invite friends to participate in various social causes (33%).

Participants who identified as Hispanic/Latino used social media to network, with 9 participants out of 16 (56%); the same number of participants, 9 out of 16 (56%) also indicated they used social media to invite friends to participate in various social events, while 6 participants out of 16 (37%) used social media to participate in on-campus activities. Participants who identified as Pacific Islanders used social media to network (100%), participate in on campus activities (50%), and to invite friends to participate in various social causes (50%).

Finally, looking at participants who identified as White, 21 participants out of 31 (67%) used social media to participate in on-campus activities, 20 participants out of 31 (64%) used social media to invite friends to participate in various social events, and lastly, 16 participants out of 31 who identified as White indicated they used social media for networking (51%).

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Undergraduate participants primary use of social media to communicate about campus social events was to participate in on-campus activities, with 25 out of 40 participants (62%); to invite friends to participate in various social events, with 23 out of 40 participants (57%); and networking was the third reason for how students use social media to communicate about campus social events, with 21 out of 40 participants (52%). Graduate students used social media to network, with 12 participants out of 21 (57%) who responded. Nine participants out of 21 (42%)

indicated they used social media to invite friends to participate in various social events, and 8 participants out of 21(38%) used social media to participate in on-campus activities (38%) (Table 18-20).

Table 18

Gender and How Social Media Was Used to Communicate About Campus Social Events

Female N=45	Percentage Using	Male N=14	Percentage Using
Participate in on-campus activities	60%	Networking	71%
Invite friends to participate in various social events	55%	Invite friends to participate in various social events (parties, movies, theater, concerts)	50%
Networking	48%	Participate in on-campus activities (sports, Greek life, student clubs)	35%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 19

Race/Ethnic Diversity and How Social Media Was Used to Communicate About Campus Social Events

Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Pacific Islander	White
Networking 66%	Participate in on-campus activities (sports, Greek life, student clubs) 100%	Networking 56%	Networking 100%	Participate in on-campus activities (sports, Greek life, student clubs) 67%
Invite friends to participate in various social events (parties, movies, theater, concerts) 33%	Networking 66%	Invite friends to participate in various social events (parties, movies, theater, concerts) 56%	Participate in on-campus activities (sports, Greek Life, student clubs) 50%	Invite friends to participate in various social events (parties, movies, theater, concerts) 64%
Only 2 options were selected	Invite friends to participate in various social causes 33%	Participate in on campus activities (sports, Greek life, student clubs) 37%	Invite friends to participate in various social causes 50%	Networking 51%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 20

Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate) and How Social Media Was Used to Communicate About Campus Social Events

Undergraduate N=40	Graduate N=21	
Participate in on-campus activities (sports, Greek life, student clubs) 62%	Networking	57%
Invite friends to participate in various social events (parties, movies, theater, concerts) 57%	Invite friends to participate in various social events (parties, movies, theater, concerts)	42%
Networking 52%	Participate in on-campus activities (sports, Greek life, student clubs)	38%

Note. Source: Survey

Discussion. The findings in this section have showcased how Net Generation college students use social media to communicate about campus social events. The students in this study have indicated they use social media for the purposes of engagement on the college campus with the intent of meeting new people (networking), participating in on campus events (Greek Life, student clubs) and to invite friends to participate in various social causes. The social aspect of the Net Generation college student experiences are important for many reasons, most important is arguably for student persistence. Students who feel a sense of belonging on campus will be more inclined to continue in their collegiate endeavors as opposed to withdraw from the university and return home (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh, 2003, Wankel, & Wankel, 2011). Social networking sites

such as Facebook can be used to help students form relationships with their peers (e.g. classmates, residence hall floor mates). Facebook can also be useful through some of the features of the social networking site to help students identify relevant student groups/organizations; campus social activities (e.g. collegiate football games, intramural sports); and shared interest groups (social causes, academic related clubs; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Wankel & Wankel, 2011). The findings in this section provide a glimpse into how the Net Generation college students in this study used social media to communicate about on campus social events which is supported by the scholarship on social media and student engagement (Ellison et al., 2007; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Wankel & Wankel, 2011)

Area #5: Net Generation college students' preferred means of communication by the university and academic college/program.

Preferred method of communication by the academic college/program.

The final variable that I chose to examine was how students preferred to be contacted by the university and the student's specific college/academic program. There were two questions in the survey that addressed this issue. The first was to solicit information about how the participants preferred to be contacted by their academic college/program, and the second question asked participants what social media they would like the university to use for notices related to academics (e.g. guest lecturers, course offerings for registration). The participants were provided with a list of options based on input from the sample in the pilot study and then asked to choose all that applied to their individual experiences. The top three

areas that were selected by the overall group (N=61) included 1) Blackboard, 2) Facebook, and 3) text messaging.

Gender. The preferred method of communication by participants' academic college/program across gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year (undergraduate and graduate) was similarly aligned with the overall group (N=61). Female participants, 40 out of 45 (88%), preferred their academic college/program to contact them through Blackboard; ten female participants out of 45 (22%) indicated they preferred to be contacted through Facebook; and 8% of female participants preferred to be contacted by text message. Male participants preferred Blackboard as indicated by 12 participants of 14 (85%); three of the 14 respondents preferred text messaging (21%), and two (14%) of the 14 male participants indicated they preferred to be contacted by their academic college/program through Facebook.

Race/ethnicity. Among participants who identified as Asian, it was unanimously indicated they preferred to be contacted through Blackboard. The next highly selected method of communication for participants who identified as Asian was Facebook with 2 out of 3 (66%) participants. The participants who identified as Black/African American indicated Blackboard as their one and only preference of communication by their academic college/program with 100% of the participants responding. Hispanic/Latino participants indicated their top preferences of communication by their academic college/program was Blackboard with 14 participants out of 16 (87%), and Facebook and text messaging were equally preferred with 2 participants out of 16 (12%). Participants who identified

as Pacific Islander chose text messaging as their only preferred method of communication by their academic college/program. Finally, participants who identified as White preferred Blackboard with 29 participants out of 31 (93%) who listed that response; six participants out of 31 (19%) opted to be contacted through Facebook and 4 out of 31 (12%) chose text messaging as their preferred method of contact by their academic college/program.

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Similar to gender and race/ethnicity, undergraduate students preferred Blackboard as the primary method of communication by their academic college/program with 37 participants out of 40 (92%); Facebook was second with 7 participants out of 40 (17%) who selected this question; and third was text messaging with 6 participants out of 40 (15%) who chose that method. Graduate students preferred the same methods of communication as the undergraduate students in this study with 16 participants out of 21 (76%) who preferred Blackboard; five participants out of 21 (23%) chose Facebook; and 1 participant out of 21 (4%) preferred text messaging (Table 21-23).

Table 21

Gender and Preferred Method of Communication by Academic College/Program

Female N=45	Percentage Using	Male N=14	Percentage Using
Blackboard	88%	Blackboard	85%
Facebook	22%	Text messaging	21%
Text messaging	8%	Facebook	14%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 22

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Preferred Method of Communication by Academic College/Program

Asian N=3	Black/ African American N=3	Hispanic/ Latino N=16	Pacific Islander N=2	White N=31
Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 87%	Text Messaging 50%	Blackboard 93%
Facebook 66%	Not Applicable	Facebook 12% (tie)	Not Applicable	Facebook 19%
Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Text Messaging 12% (tie)	Not Applicable	Text Messaging 12%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 23

Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate) and Preferred Method of Communication by Academic College/Program

Undergraduate N=40	Percentage Selecting	Graduate N=21	Percentage Selecting
Blackboard	37%	Blackboard	76%
Facebook	17%	Facebook	23%
Text messaging	15%	Text messaging	4%

Note. Source: Survey

Preferred social media for notices related to academics (by the university). The other aspect of the academic experience included looking at what social media the Net Generation college student preferred the university to use for notices related to academics. The intent of this question was to seek out what social mediums the Net Generation college students in my study preferred to be used by the university. Participants were asked to select from a list of responses that were provided based upon the input from the student sample in the pilot study. The top response provided by 56 participants out of 61 (91%) was Blackboard; the next response came from 23 participants (37%) who indicated they preferred Facebook; and third, 14 participants (22%) indicated text messaging as their preferred social media they would like the university to use for notices related to academics.

Gender. Once again I cross-tabulated the demographic data of gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year in school (undergraduate and graduate) with the question on the survey that addressed what social media would participants like the university to use for notices related to academics. Females preferred Blackboard, with 42 out of 45 (93%) participants, followed by Facebook with 15 participants out of 45 (33%), and finally, text messaging with 11 participants out of 45 (24%). Males were similar in their preferences with Blackboard as the preferred method (13 participants out of 14--92%); 8 participants out of 14 (57%) preferred Facebook; and 3 of the 14 participants (21%) indicated they preferred text messaging.

Race/ethnicity. I examined race/ethnicity and preferred social media participants would like the university to use for notices related to academics. All participants who identified as Asian, 3 participants out of 3, preferred Blackboard followed by Facebook with 2 participants out of 3 (66%). Participants who identified as Black/African American unanimously preferred Blackboard; followed by Facebook with 2 participants out of 3 (66%); and finally, text messaging, with 1 out of 3 participants (33%). Hispanic/Latino participants were similar in their responses. A majority of the Hispanic/Latino participants, 15 out of 16 (93%) preferred Blackboard; seven out of 16 participants (43%) preferred Facebook; and 2 out of 16 participants (12%) preferred text messaging. All participants who identified as Pacific Islander chose Blackboard as their only preferred social medium. Finally, among White participants, Blackboard was the preferred social medium with 29 participants out of 31 (93%), followed by

Facebook and text messaging, which were equally chosen among White participants with 9 out of 31 participants (29%).

Academic year in school (undergraduate/graduate). Undergraduate participants answering the same question of what social mediums they would like the university to use for notices related to academics indicated they preferred Blackboard with 37 out of 40 participants (92%); Facebook, with 14 out of 40 participants (35%); and text messaging with 8 out of 40 participants who preferred this social medium (20%). Graduate students were similar to the undergraduate students in the social media they preferred the university used for notices related to academics. The most preferred social medium was Blackboard with 19 out of 21 participants (90%); Facebook was the next preferred social medium with 9 out of 21 participants (42%); followed by text messaging with 6 out of 21 participants (28%) (Table 24-26).

Table 24

Gender and Preferred Social Mediums for the University to Use for Notices Related to Academics

Female	Percentage Using	Male	Percentage Using
Blackboard	93%	Blackboard	92%
Facebook	33%	Facebook	57%
Text messaging	24%	Text messaging	21%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 25

Race/Ethnic Diversity and Preferred Social Mediums for the University to Use for Notices Related to Academics

Asian	Black/ African American	Hispanic/ Latino	Pacific Islander	White
Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 93%	Blackboard 100%	Blackboard 93%
Facebook 66%	Facebook 66%	Facebook 43%	Not Applicable	Facebook 29%
Not Applicable	Text messaging 33%	Text messaging 12%	Not Applicable	Text messaging 29%

Note. Source: Survey

Table 26

Academic Year in School (Undergraduate/Graduate) and Preferred Social Mediums for the University to Use for Notices Related to Academics

Undergraduate	Percentage Selecting	Graduate	Percentage Selecting
Blackboard	92%	Blackboard	90%
Facebook	35%	Facebook	42%
Text Messaging	20%	Text Messaging	28%

Note. Source: Survey

Discussion. The findings in this section presented how the Net Generation college student preferred to be contacted by the university and their academic

college/program. The primary social medium that students in this study preferred was Blackboard. Facebook was the next preferred social medium ranking a distant second in comparison to Blackboard, followed by text messaging. The fact that Blackboard was preferred over Facebook can be for many reasons too numerous to speculate. However, I contend that based on the responses of the students in this study, Facebook is a social medium that students would like to keep "social" and not to have the university or academic college be a part of the student Facebook world. This argument is supported in studies by Lampe et al. (2008) which found that most students do not expect to interact with university faculty or staff on Facebook. Furthermore, some students have stated they find it intrusive to be contacted by university faculty and staff through Facebook (Wankel & Wankel, 2011). The strong use of Blackboard as a social medium across gender, race/ethnicity, and academic year in school (undergraduate and graduate) in this study provides a basic understanding of how students in this study wish to be communicated by the university and academic college/program at ASU. A high preference in Blackboard use among the students in this study may either be due to students not wanting to be intruded upon on their personal social networking site by the university or academic college/program or it may be due to the fact that students are consistently on Blackboard because it is a requirement of their classes.

Reflective Practices

A key component among action research scholars is the ability for the action researcher to engage in critical reflection (Dick, 2002; McNiff &

Whitehead, 2006). Action research benefits from the use of a cyclical or spiral process from which the researcher alternates between action and critical reflection (Dick, 2002). As I navigated through the process of data analysis, presentation of the findings and writing I utilized two forms of reflective practice, observation of students' use of social media in my professional role as assistant dean of students; and journaling, in my personal journal designated specifically for the doctoral research process, my observations about student social media use as well as any new literature that was specific to social media and the Net Gen college student, to gain a better understanding of what was occurring within the social media phenomena (Creswell, 2005, 2009).

As the data was coming in I would frequently check to see what tendencies, if any, were emerging among the participants in their use of social media and various technologies. I would compare those emerging tendencies with not only what the scholarship reported but also what I could observe within my own community of practice as they related to social media and technology use among the Net Generation college student.

Since technology and social media are constantly evolving, observations of what was happening directly around me gave me the ability to keep current with how social media and technology impacted academic and social experiences of students at my university. For example, I volunteered to serve on a social media focus group at the university where I work. The focus group was composed of faculty and staff representing a variety of areas across the campus (e.g. student affairs, information technology, office of communications, registrar).

The purpose of the focus group was to brainstorm ideas about how the various departments could disseminate information to students using apps that could be accessed through using technologies such as Smartphones, iPads and laptops.

The second reflective practice of journaling, allowed me to record my personal and professional experiences thoughts, and questions on the phenomenon along with conversations with colleagues, committee chair, mentors, and peers in order to determine how my observations and experiences impacted my research and roles as student and researcher. For example, in my professional role as assistant dean of students, I noticed the number of emails that would "bounce back" as undeliverable because a student's mailbox was full, which resulted in a number of academic and social activities going unnoticed because the emails did not reach the intended recipient. Similar to the participants in my survey and in the literature, students are engaging in more interactive and immediate forms of communication such at text messaging, instant messaging, and social networking sites rather than email (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2011; Roblyer, McDaniel, Webb, Herman & Witty, 2010).

These reflective practices allowed me to remain engaged and at the center of this action research study (Creswell, 2009; Dick, 2002; McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). The reflective process provided me insight into my own transformation as a scholar and leader. I have been able to share my knowledge regarding the impact social media and technologies have had on me as a practitioner and also with colleagues within my community of practice. Through my professional role in directly working with students, I have become more familiar with the impact

social media and technology had on the academic and social experiences of the Net Generation college student.

Another example of why the reflective process was critical to my action research study occurred while I triangulated the findings with the scholarship on social media and technology. In looking at the scholarship on social media, most research has focused on Facebook and Twitter as the top social mediums (Aaker & Smith, 2011; Junco & Mastrodicasa 2007; Junco et al., 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011), which I assumed would carry over into my own research as being the most used across academic and social college student experiences. However, based on the participants in my small sample, Blackboard was the most utilized followed by Facebook and text messaging (Table 27).

Table 27

Social Mediums Used by the Net Generation (# of Participants Using)

Blackboard	Facebook	Text Messaging
59	54	54

Note. Source: Survey

To refrain from making generalized claims based on my data, the journaling process helped to keep me realistic and authentic to my action research intent. Since the sample size in this study is so small, I can only report on the data

relative to my data since the intent of this action research study was to describe how the Net Generation college student in my study uses social media in their academic and social experiences. Part of the action research reflective process I found rewarding was the ability to use self-authorship (e.g. include my own experiences) to help me frame data, scholarship, and discussion (Baxter-Magolda, 2004).

Summary of Findings

The three sections, survey and participant demographics, technologies used by the Net Generation and social mediums used by the Net Generation provided tables and current scholarship to describe and contextualize how the Net Generation uses social media in their academic and college student experiences. The demographic profile of the participants in this study aligns with the demographic profile of enrolled students at Arizona State University (ASU, 2011). The technologies used by the Net Generation college student in their academic and social college experiences were consistent with the technologies discussed in the scholarship (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et. al., 2011; Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; McHaney, 2011; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). The use of social media in the academic and social college experiences of the Net Generation college student aligned with the current research and scholarship; however, the social mediums used by the sample in this study showed a slight difference (e.g. the students in this study used Blackboard) than what the scholarship conveyed (e.g. Facebook and Twitter are the primary social mediums students use in the academic and social college experiences) (Junco &

Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005). Next a summation and discussion of this action research study will be addressed in three parts: 1) what the findings and literature say about the use of social media in the Net Generation college student academic and college student experiences 2) how this research study impacted me as a current practitioner in higher education and, 3) the immediate and future actions of this dissertation study to my community of practice.

Summation and Discussion

The 21st century Net Generation college student. The purpose of this action research study using descriptive analysis was to describe how the Net Generation college student uses social media in their academic and social college experiences. Based upon my own interest and use of social media I began this study with two assumptions: 1) Since the generation of students who are on college and university campuses today are considered digital natives the students in my study would desire social media in their academic and social experiences and, 2). Facebook and Twitter would be the primary social mediums used by the Net Generation students in my study. I established these claims based on my own personal observation of students walking to class with laptops and Smartphones in tow. Additionally, with over 845 million users of Facebook (Facebook, 2012b) and 100 million users of Twitter (Sullivan, 2011), I assumed these two social networking sites would be incorporated throughout the academic and social experiences of the Net Generation college student. This same generation of students is constantly checking their phones for text messages or to access

Facebook for the most recent status update of one of their many friends on Facebook and Twitter (Hargittai & Hinnant, 2008; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010).

This study was cultivated out of my own personal interest and use of social media in my academic and social experiences as well as the scholarship on social media use in higher education (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; Prensky, 2010; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

There is a definite divide among students and higher education practitioners in not only the use of the various technologies and social mediums, but also in how they are perceived. For example, in the classroom there are faculty who use social media and technology throughout their class for the purposes of learning, and there is the perception from other faculty who view social media and the accompanying technology as a distraction (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010; Tapscott, 2009; Watkins, 2009). The intent of my study was to understand which technologies and social mediums the students in my sample utilized and to describe the types they used in their academic and social experiences.

In order to compete and participate in a global society students need to expand their knowledge beyond the local community and respond to opportunities and challenges critically, creatively, and collaboratively; but most importantly to respond to such challenges and opportunities with innovation (Freidman, 2005; Gee & Levine, 2009; Tapscott, 2009). By allowing students to utilize technology and social media in the classroom provides an opportunity for innovation,

collaboration, and creative thinking (McHaney, 2011; Tapscott, 2009). This also holds true for higher education practitioners. The expectation is not that practitioners become as adept at technology as the digital native students, but rather be comfortable with both using the technology and producing with technologies such as YouTube, blogs, and social networking sites (Gee & Levine, 2009; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Prensky, 2010). As a user of social media and a higher education practitioner, I focused this study on the population of students with whom my community of practice directly interacts and engages both academically and socially.

I chose to examine how students, who are considered to be Net Generation based on birth year, use social media in their academic and social college student experiences because 1) I work directly with the Net Generation college student in my professional role as assistant dean of students, 2) I have a strong interest and use social media in my own academic and social experiences, and 3) social media has evolved into an important component in academic and social student use (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010; Tapscott, 2009; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

Through the findings of this study I contend that social media (e.g. Blackboard, blogs, Facebook, instant messaging) plays a primary role in the Net Generation college student's academic and social college experiences. Results of the survey show 61 participants who completed the survey, 100% indicated they use some form of social media in their academic and social experiences. This finding aligns with the scholarship describing the Net Generation college student

and their digital native perspective (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Oblinger & Oblinger, 2005; Prensky, 2010; Tapscott, 2009). I further support this assertion through the analysis of the responses to an open-ended question on the survey that asked students to describe what would be on an app if they could design one for a first-year college student. I was interested in looking at what social mediums, in this instance, apps, the Net Generation college student found helpful to a first year college student. This question received an overwhelming number of responses that encompassed both academic and social experiences for the first-year college student. The responses of the participants were varied and too numerous to analyze in this survey; however I chose to share some emerging themes for the purposes of illustrating the importance of social media on the Net Generation college student's academic and social college experience. For example, some of the common responses that emerged included: a Blackboard "how to" app, an app about ASU orientation 101-what to expect, class registration, a calendar with pre-set to do lists that would send alerts to the student's phone (categories for social events, academics, study times), interactive Google map that displays not only the building the classroom is located but also "walks" the student to the classroom through a GPS locator; and finally, an app that has a list of resources to help with the transition to college as well as a list of students in the class. These examples indicate to me that the Net Generation college student uses social media for a wide variety of reasons. The qualitative data suggest students are thinking about new ways social media can be developed to transform their college student experiences; once again putting them at the center to catalyze their learning.

Based on the findings in the study, and the review of the scholarship on the Net Generation college student, I am able to provide four primary outcomes from this study. First, the Net Generation college student is connected through various technology and social mediums as was evident in their response to why college students utilize social media (stay connected with friends, communicate about class assignments, networking, see what activities are going on, access information easy and fast, entertainment purposes, and as a news source/current events). Second, students use social media in their academic experiences both during their classes and when preparing for their classes. The survey found that students primarily use social media to share presentations and/or papers for group projects (e.g. Google Docs) and to look up information related to class content. Third, students use social media for a variety of reasons when communicating a social event (invite friends to a particular on-campus event, invite friends to an off-campus event, networking, and invite friends to participate in various social causes). Lastly, the findings in this study indicated that students prefer to keep Facebook separate from the academic world, although the Facebook chat function was utilized to chat with classmates when preparing for classes, which may suggest a more social aspect as opposed to academic being in the classroom. In other words, anything social as far as on-campus events (e.g. sporting events, Greek Life, student clubs) could be announced through invites on Facebook but announcements related to academics or the specific college program should utilize Blackboard or email.

Resulted Actions and Future Research

Through the results of this action research study I recommend two actions: 1) for the higher education practitioner, and 2) for future research. Finally I close this dissertation with the proficiencies this study provided me as a current practitioner in 21st century higher education.

Higher education practitioner. Wankel and Wankel (2011) assert that through effective and creative implementation of social media technologies the potential exists for social media to enhance university life and community development. Although social media is an emerging phenomenon within higher education, the impact it has had on the academic and social college experiences has been transformative. Through the results of my study I can demonstrate from a small survey sample that social media was utilized in a variety of ways within the parameters of the Net Gen student's academic and social experiences. Said differently, there was not one specific social medium used for academic and/or social experiences but rather a myriad of social mediums that were versatile in their use (e.g. Blackboard, blogs, Facebook, YouTube). Based on the findings in this study regarding social media use in academic and social experiences, I would suggest that practitioners in higher education find ways to utilize the social mediums that are popular among the Net Generation to further enhance the academic and social environment of the university/college experience. Resulted action is a more relevant and dynamic environment, which can add to matriculation and graduation into the globalized 21st century work force

(Friedman, 2005; Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prenksy 2010).

A second recommendation, based on this study, is to allow Net Generation college students the ability to use technologies and social media more freely in the classroom. Net Generation students want freedom of choice and to customize things to make them their own such as looking up information on their laptops or Smartphones during class and reaching their own conclusions (Howe & Strauss, 2000; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Tapscott, 2009; Twenge, 2006). Gee and Levine (2009) state that the United States is in the midst of a growing student engagement crisis. It is important that educators find new ways to motivate learners. Social media holds the potential to engage students in ways in which they are not only consumers of information but can be producers through YouTube videos, blogs and even simulated games in virtual worlds (Gee, 2003; Gee & Levine, 2009). It is important to understand that a characteristic of Net Generation college students is collaboration. Therefore, practitioners do not have to be proficient in social media and the various technologies of the Net Generation but rather co-producers or collaborators where each learns from one another (Tapscott, 2009). Eighty-two percent of the participants in my study indicated that they chose to use social media in their classes whereas 72 % of the classes required the use of social media. This high use illustrates the important influence social media has on student engagement and speaks to the interactive nature of the Net Generation college student. As Aaker and Smith (2010) point out, social networking sites are not just about sharing what a person had for

breakfast; social media technologies can be leveraged strategically toward a specific goal. As higher education practitioners it is important to understand that social media is not just about updating a Facebook and Twitter status; rather social mediums like these can be used for more purposeful means such as communicating and working with other students across the globe on a social cause, or learning about the revolution in Egypt and the Middle East through YouTube videos. Students of the Net Generation do not want to be lectured to but rather conversed *with*, engaged (Tapscott, 2009). Net Generation students would much rather surf the web and see the Eiffel Tower live through a webcam than read about it in any book (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Tapscott, 2009). Higher education practitioners need to be cognizant of the interactive nature of the Net Generation college student and continue to adapt the way information and communication is delivered.

Future research. A key component of action research is that it allows practitioners to research their own communities of practice (Herr & Anderson, 2005; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011; Stringer, 2007). As I studied the Net Generation college student's use of social media in their experiences within the parameters of academic and social, it became clear to me that action research was the best method to examine this phenomenon as the outcome could be used to inform my own community of practice (Dick, 2002; Creswell, 2009; McNiff & Whitehead, 2011). This study taught me how to understand what was occurring within the phenomenon, how to collect, manage, and analyze the data, and interpret the data so that I could inform my community of practice.

Based upon my newly acquired skill as an action researcher, I would offer these recommendations for future research. First, I would build more time into the study to conduct participant follow-up interviews. Although the participants were provided the opportunity to respond to open-ended questions, I would have liked the opportunity to probe the participants to elucidate more definitive interpretations from their responses. For example, I would have liked to explore aspects of social media use further within the parameter of academic so that I had a better understanding of why the participants framed Blackboard as a social medium and whether that impacted how they framed Facebook and other social mediums within the academic environment.

Second, I would have been more direct in my question about identifying as a first generation college student. The question, as stated in the survey, asks about first generation in an obscure way: who in your family has attended but did not get an associates (2 year degree) or a bachelor's (4 year degree)? Students who responded may not have thought of themselves as first generation with how the question was structured.

Third, I would keep the choices of technologies to a minimum (e.g. five) and organize the technologies and social mediums into more similar groupings (e.g. camera not on cell phone and digital camera could have been listed as camera). I provided too many technology choices which may have caused some confusion and likely resulted in surveys not being completed. Additionally, I would have designed the demographic questions that did not meet the criteria of

Net Generation (birth year) so that the participant would automatically exit the survey.

Finally, I believe there is some discrepancy in the literature when defining technology and social media (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). For example, some scholars refer to technology as Facebook, Twitter, and text messaging; for the purposes of this study, I defined technology as the tool and/or device used to access web applications such as Facebook, Twitter, and text messaging. Perhaps as the research expands, a more consistent framework of technology and social media will emerge. There is a vast amount of literature about technology use in higher education, specifically in the classroom environment (Dare, Zelna, & Thomas, 2005; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011). However, social media use in higher education is an emerging phenomenon. While research on digital natives and the Net Generation are abundant, the focus needs to turn to how higher education practitioners can take what has been learned about the Net Generation and find ways to implement these findings into the overall college student experience (e.g. admissions, new student orientation, laboratory components-Anatomy lab). Social media is here to stay; higher education practitioners need to be more innovative in their use of social media or lose opportunities to influence the learning and lives of today's 21st century college students (Banchero & Simon, 2011; Junco et al., 2011; Wankel & Wankel, 2011).

Implications for the 21st Century Higher Education Practitioner

As I reflect on my journey through this research process I have learned how to conduct an action research study and have gained a better understanding

of the way Net Generation college students communicate and interact using social media technologies. This is important for me as a current practitioner within higher education for two reasons 1) the students are in integral part of my community of practice where my primary responsibility is the student's academic and social experiences, and 2) higher education institutions are the very place where creative, critical and innovative thinking occurs and social media is an embedded tool in the innovation movement (Gee, 2009; Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; Junco et al., 2011; McHaney, 2011; Tapscott, 2009). To this end, I will present my professional takeaways this action research study provided me as a current higher education practitioner.

First, as an assistant dean of students, it is imperative that practitioners, not just faculty, integrate technology and social media into their daily operations with respect to communication, engagement, and information dissemination; to use a cliché higher education practitioners need to 'meet where the students are' (Junco, 2010). Students are walking on to campus with their laptops and Smartphones ready to connect with the university and rather than operate under a resistance paradigm higher education practitioners should view this as an opportunity to connect with students in ways they are accustomed (Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007; McHaney, 2011; Prensky, 2010; Watson, 2009). It was clear from my data that social media is being used by students in multiple capacities (i.e., not just for the sole purpose of connecting with friends on Facebook).

A second takeaway from this study is that higher education practitioners need to be aware of where information is communicated and disseminated.

Participants in this study made it clear that they prefer university, college, and academic communications to occur through Blackboard (42% -university; 51% college/academic program) with Facebook as the next preference (17% - university; 13% college/academic program). This aligns with the scholarship that purports students prefer to keep Facebook social and separate from academic life (Junco & Cotten, 2010; Young, 2010). This poses an interesting situation and something that has recently emerged where some faculty and higher education practitioners have a campus Facebook profile to communicate with students in their capacity as an administrator or faculty member (Junco & Cotten, 2010; Young, 2010). Whether or not this would change student perceptions of communication with higher education practitioners or faculty members on Facebook is yet to be seen.

Finally, higher education practitioners must find ways to learn about the popular social mediums students use whether this learning comes from professional development opportunities or through personal experiences with colleagues, peers, or family members. Although I am not a digital native, my own knowledge and use of social media provided me the opportunity look within my own professional role as assistant dean of students and how I use social media with students based on what I learned from this study. For example, as the primary coordinator for new student orientation, I have transformed how orientation information is disseminated to the incoming first-year students. In the past students were mailed hard copies of letters, schedules, and other resource information in a large orientation packet. As a result of my study and my own use

of social media and understanding that students of the Net Generation expect immediate and interactive communication, I have implemented an online orientation course that presents information to the students in a format that is interactive and engaging. A digital divide remains between the digital natives (students) and digital immigrants (practitioners), but with new knowledge, and by taking risks in using social media, higher education practitioners can impact th academic and social experiences of the Net Gen student in preparation for a 21st century globalized workforce and career.

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APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

Date

Dear Participant

I am a graduate student under the direction of Dr. Kris Ewing in the Mary Lou Fulton Teacher's College at Arizona State University.

I am conducting a research study to examine how Net Generation college students utilize social media in their academic and social college experiences. I am inviting your participation, which will involve completing an electronic survey that should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your name and identifying information will not be captured by the electronic survey system. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time; there will be no penalty. Your responses will remain anonymous.

By participating in this study, your responses will help higher education professionals better understand how current college students apply social media academically and socially in their college student experiences and how higher education professionals can utilize this understanding to transform or redefine the use of social media to facilitate the academic and social experience of college students.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team of Dr. Kris Ewing at Kris.Ewing@asu.edu or Shannon Sesterhenn at Shannon.Sesterhenn@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Submission of your responses to the questionnaire will be considered your consent to participate.

Sincerely,
Shannon M. Sesterhenn
Ed.D. Candidate
Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College

[Insert text of appendix here. Do not repeat appendix title.]

APPENDIX B

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

ASU Knowledge Enterprise Development

Office of Research Integrity and Assurance

To:	Kris Ewing ED
From:	Mark Roosa, Chair Soc Beh IRB
Date:	10/07/2011
Committee Action:	**Exemption Granted**
IRB Action Date:	10/07/2011
IRB Protocol #:	1109006891
Study Title:	NetGENgagement: Social Media in the College Student Social and Academic Experience

The above-referenced protocol is considered exempt after review by the Institutional Review Board pursuant to Federal regulations, 45 CFR Part 46.101(b)(2) .

This part of the federal regulations requires that the information be recorded by investigators in such a manner that subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects. It is necessary that the information obtained not be such that if disclosed outside the research, it could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

You should retain a copy of this letter for your records.

APPENDIX C

WEB SURVEY

Hello:

I am conducting a research study to examine how Net Generation college students utilize social media in their academic and social college experiences. I am inviting your participation to complete an electronic survey that will be comprised of 49 questions that should take no more than 20 minutes to complete.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. Your name and identifying information will not be captured by the electronic survey system. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw from the study at any time; there will be no penalty. Your responses will remain anonymous.

By participating in this study, your responses will help higher education professionals better understand how current college students apply social media academically and socially in their college student experiences and how higher education professionals can utilize this understanding to transform or redefine the use of social media to facilitate the academic and social experience of college students.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the research team of Dr. Kris Ewing at Kris.Ewing@asu.edu or Shannon Sesterhenn at Shannon.Sesterhenn@asu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Thank you very much for your time and support.

Please begin the survey now by clicking on the Continue button below.

2. What is your race/ethnicity?

- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Pacific Islander
- White
- Prefer Not To Answer
- Other

3. What is your gender?

- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Prefer Not To Answer

4. What is your academic year in school?

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate Student

5. Are you a full-time or part-time student?

(Undergrad: Full-Time=12 credit hours or more; Part-Time = 9 hours or less; Graduate: Full-Time=9 hours; Part-Time=6 hours)

- Full-Time
- Part-Time

6. What is your current GPA?

- ☐ 1.5 or below
- ☐ 1.6-2.0
- ☐ 2.1-2.5
- ☐ 2.6-3.0
- ☐ 3.1-3.5
- ☐ 3.6-4.0
- ☐ 4.1-4.33

7. Are you employed?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No (Skip to Question 9)

8. How many hours per week do you work?

- ☐ 1-4 hours/week
- ☐ 5-8 hours/week
- ☐ 9-12 hours/week
- ☐ 13-16 hours/week
- ☐ 17-20 hours/week
- ☐ 20+

9. Do you receive financial aid or scholarships?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Prefer Not To Answer

10. Who in your family has attended but did not get an associates (2 year degree) or a bachelor's (4 year degree)? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Brother(s)
- ☐ Sister(s)
- ☐ Significant Adult (foster family member, step-parent, caretaker, legal guardian)
- ☐ None of the Above
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

11. Who in your family has graduated from a 2 or 4-year college? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Father
- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Brother(s)
- ☐ Sister(s)
- ☐ Significant Adult (foster family member, step-parent, caretaker, legal guardian)
- ☐ None of the Above
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

12. Which of the following technologies did you have in your household growing up? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Computer/laptop
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Television
- ☐ Video Consoles (Playstation, Wii, Nintendo)
- ☐ Handheld Games (Nintendo DX, Game Boy)
- ☐ Digital Music Players
- ☐ Video Camera
- ☐ None of the Above
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

13. Where did you have access to the technologies listed in question 12? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Home
- ☐ School
- ☐ Church
- ☐ Community Organizations (Big Brother/Big Sister, YMCA, YWCA, Boys/Girls Club)
- ☐ Friend's house
- ☐ Public Library
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

14. Please select the academic area that best describes your undergraduate degree of study:

- ☐ Business
- ☐ Design & the Arts
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Engineering
- ☐ Health Science
- ☐ Journalism
- ☐ Liberal Arts
- ☐ Nursing & Health
- ☐ Public Programs
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

15. How many online classes did you take in high school?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-4
- ☐ 5-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ All
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

16. Did you attend an online high school?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17. How many online classes have you taken in college?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-4
- ☐ 5-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ All
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

18. How many hybrid (the class is taught half online and half face-to-face) classes have you taken in college?

- ☐ None
- ☐ 1-4
- ☐ 5-10
- ☐ 11-15
- ☐ 16-20
- ☐ All
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

19. What technologies do you currently use? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Camera (not on cell phone)
- ☐ Camera (on cell phone)
- ☐ Computer (Desktop and/or Laptop)
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Digital Recorder
- ☐ Gaming system (e.g. Wii, Playstation, Xbox)
- ☐ iPad
- ☐ iPod or other mp3 player
- ☐ Smartphone
- ☐ Tablets (e.g. Kindle, Nook)
- ☐ None of the Above
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

20. What are your top 3 favorite apps that you use?

21. For the remaining questions on this survey please refer to the following definition of social media as used for the purposes of this survey:

Social media is an array of digital tools such as instant messaging, text messaging, blogs, videos, and social networking sites like Facebook and Twitter that enable people to create their own stories, videos, and photos and manipulate them and share widely.

Which types of social media do you use (Select all that apply)?

- ☐ Blackboard
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Camera (not on cell phone)
- ☐ Camera (on cell phone)
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Google Docs
- ☐ Google+ (Plus)
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

22. What types of social media do your professors use in your classes? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Blackboard
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Google Docs
- ☐ Google+ (Plus)
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

23. How do you use social media during your classes (e.g. in the class)? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Create study groups
- ☐ Share presentations, papers for group projects (Google Docs)
- ☐ Ask questions or discuss information related to class lectures
- ☐ For real-time immediate "in the moment" classroom discussion
- ☐ Register for classes together
- ☐ Discuss professors
- ☐ Check status updates on social networking sites
- ☐ Text friends
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

24. How do you use social media when preparing for your classes? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Create study groups
- ☐ Chat with classmates using Facebook chat, Instant Messaging etc.
- ☐ Write/edit group project papers
- ☐ Look up information related to class
- ☐ Peer reviews for papers
- ☐ As a study guide for course materials, readings, quizzes, tests
- ☐ Check status updates on social networking sites
- ☐ Text friends
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

25. How many of your classes require the use of social media (i.e stated in the syllabus)?

- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 6+
- ☐ None

26. In how many of your classes do you choose to use social media?

- ☐ 1-3
- ☐ 4-6
- ☐ 6+
- ☐ None

27. On average, how many times per day do you use social media for academic purposes (think in terms of from the time you wake up to the time you go to bed how often you use social media)?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+
- None

28. What new social media have you learned in class?

- Blackboard
- Blogs
- Digital Camera
- Facebook
- Flickr
- Foursquare
- Google Docs
- Google+ (Plus)
- Instant Messaging
- LinkedIn
- Skype
- Text Messaging
- Tumblr
- Twitter
- YouTube
- None
- Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

29. What social media do you use to find out information related to financial aid and scholarships? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ School website
- ☐ Social media (Twitter, Facebook, ASU)
- ☐ Search engines (Google etc)
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

30. Why do you use social media with friends you established before coming to Arizona State University? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ As a tool to communicate
- ☐ As a tool to stay connected
- ☐ Check status updates
- ☐ Job searches
- ☐ Cost efficiency
- ☐ To lessen homesickness
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

31. On average, how many times per week do you use social media to communicate with friends established before Arizona State University?

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 20+
- ☐ None

32. How do you use social media with college friends you met at Arizona State University? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ As a tool to communicate about classes
- ☐ As a tool to communicate about social events (both on and off campus)
- ☐ As a tool to stay connected
- ☐ Check status updates
- ☐ Meet new friends-e.g."friending" on Facebook and/or Twitter
- ☐ Create study groups (within same major or class)
- ☐ Create social groups (on-campus and off-campus activities)
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

33. On average, how many times per week do you use social media to communicate with friends established at Arizona State University?

- ☐ 1-5
- ☐ 6-10
- ☐ 11-20
- ☐ 20+
- ☐ None

34. How do you use social media to communicate about campus social events outside of the classroom? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Participate in on campus activities (Sports, Greek Life, Student Clubs)
- ☐ Networking
- ☐ Invite friends to participate in various social causes
- ☐ Invite friends to participate in various social events (e.g. parties, movies, theater, concerts etc.)
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

35. On average, how many times per day do you use social media to communicate about campus social events?

- 1-5
- 6-10
- 11-20
- 20+
- None

36. How does your specific college/program (e.g. Department of Psychology) use social media in their communications with you? (Select all that apply)

- Post university events
- Post program announcements or events
- Advising appointments
- Meet classmates in the same program
- None
- Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

37. Was your student orientation in your specific college/program:

- Face-to-Face
- Online
- Both Online and Face-to-Face
- None
- Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

38. How do you prefer to be contacted by your college/program? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Blackboard
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Camera (not on cell phone)
- ☐ Camera (on cell phone)
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Google Docs
- ☐ Google+ (Plus)
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

39. How do you use social media to learn about current events? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Through news feeds on Facebook
- ☐ Through news feeds on Twitter
- ☐ Through status updates on Facebook
- ☐ Through status updates on Twitter
- ☐ Through viral YouTube videos
- ☐ Through check-ins on Foursquare
- ☐ Through text messages
- ☐ Through Tweet-ups
- ☐ Through Facebook event invites
- ☐ Through the university website
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

40. List the top three reasons you believe college students use social media.

41. List the activities you are involved with on the Arizona State University campus (outside of classes).

42. What social media would you like the university to use for notices related to academics (classes)? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Blackboard
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Camera (not on cell phone)
- ☐ Camera (on cell phone)
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Google Docs
- ☐ Google+ (Plus)
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

43. What social media would you like the university to use for notices related to campus social events? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Blackboard
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Camera (not on cell phone)
- ☐ Camera (on cell phone)
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Google Docs
- ☐ Google+ (Plus)
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other

44. What social media would you like the university to use for notices related to campus emergencies (e.g. ASU Alert)? (Select all that apply)

- ☐ Blackboard
- ☐ Blogs
- ☐ Camera (not on cell phone)
- ☐ Camera (on cell phone)
- ☐ Digital Camera
- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Flickr
- ☐ Foursquare
- ☐ Google Docs
- ☐ Google+ (Plus)
- ☐ Instant Messaging
- ☐ LinkedIn
- ☐ Skype
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Tumblr
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ YouTube
- ☐ None
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

45. Are you signed up for the ASU Alert System? (If no, skip to Question 47)

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

46. How are you registered for the ASU Alert System?

- ☐ Facebook
- ☐ Text Messaging
- ☐ Twitter
- ☐ Other (Please Specify in the Space Below)

47. What social media have you learned as a college student?

48. If you could design an app for a first year college student, what would that app include?

49. If you are willing to be contacted for an interview, please enter your name and e-mail address below:

Name

Email address