The Impact of Social Media on Freshman And Their Connection to Campus and Community Life

In Partial Fulfillment for the (Degree: Doctor of Ministry Degree)
Biola University
Department: (Dept. Name: Psychology)
Project Chair/Director: (Name: John Smith)

This form requires your signature. To submit your signature electronically, read the following text and provide your electronic signature by typing your first and last name below.

I certify the forging information is accurate and has been approved by my project chair/director and acknowledge this is my signature.

(type your name here)  
Researcher Signature  
Date

(Researcher’s Name)
(Street Address)
(City, State, Zip code)
(Phone number)
(Date)

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Proposal

Please answer all of the following questions by inserting the requested information. You may copy and paste this ☐ as needed.

1.0 Give a brief, one paragraph overview of the nature and purpose of the research:
This study examines how Twitter is used to build connection among incoming freshman college students to their campus and community. The use of Twitter is examined in light of the theory of Bandura’s social learning theory, Tinto’s three stages, and Astin’s Involvement Theory. This pilot study examines three sections of incoming freshmen students through their First Year Seminar course, who have never used Twitter or have had a Twitter account but do not regularly tweet. The study seeks to examine how social media can be used to increase students’ connection to the campus community and leveraged as a medium of peer learning.

2.0 Give a full description of participants:
2.1 General Description
Participants will be students in three First Year Seminar (FYS) Courses in the Fall 2013 semester. Two sections will be from the Elementary Education major sections and one section will be from the Sociology major. The professor of the FYS: Elementary Education sections is the primary researcher for the study.
2.2 Number of participants: Total = 49 (26 Elementary Education + 23 Sociology)
2.3 Age range: 18-19 years old
2.4 Place of recruitment: In First Year Seminar course for Elementary Education and Sociology majors
2.5 Method of recruitment: Verbal announcement in course
2.1 Compensation for participation: No
2.2 Are any participants minors?
X No Yes—Please describe
2.3 Are any participants part of a vulnerable population?
X No Yes—Please describe

3.0 Provide a detailed account of the procedures that will be used in your study. In other words, describe what the participant will experience:
All students in the three FYS sections (two sections from Elementary Education and one section from Sociology) have been required to create a Twitter account for their course. They have been asked to regularly “tweet” throughout the week on topics such as, but not limited to: 1. what they are learning in class, 2. new discoveries about the Biola campus, 3. sharing about activities or ministries they are involved in, 4. their freshman experience or, 5. questions they hope their peers can help them answer regarding class or co-curricular events. The creation of this social media account is a part of their class requirement, as one of the objectives of the course is to help students transition into the Biola community.
At the last session of the FYS course (third week of November), the researcher will inform the students about the option of participating in a study that involves both the survey and focus group. However, students may choose to participate in only the survey and not the focus group. Students will be handed a hardcopy of the consent form and the researcher will review the consent form with the participants. Those who choose to participate in the study will turn in the consent form and will be emailed an online link to where they can take the survey that asks them about their experience using Twitter for the course. The survey will be comprised of 30 multiple-choice questions, 6 open-ended questions, and will be disseminated through Google Forms. The survey should take no more than 30 minutes. The survey will not be a class requirement. Rather, it will be a way to gather data on their use of social media in their FYS class and their user experience as it relates to their connection to their peers in the class and the campus community.

Following the survey, students who wish to participate in a focus group interview will have the opportunity to do so. They will indicate their wish to participate in a focus group on the survey. Focus groups will comprise of 6-8 students at a time and will last between 30-40 minutes. The focus group interviews will be audio-recorded so that the researcher and go back and listen to the recording as a way to ensure that the data will be accurate when being reported. Students who choose to participate in the focus group will be informed ahead of time that the interviews will be audio-recorded.

Students who complete the survey are not required to participate in a focus group. It is completely optional. Both survey and focus groups are completely voluntary. However, it will be recommended that students who participate in the focus group will have completed the survey, as the focus group will serve as a means to gain deeper understanding of responses to the survey.

4.0 Give a full description of the potential benefits, if any, to the individual, group, and/or society as a result of the research:

Every fall new incoming students enter college with high hopes of connecting to their new campus community, finding new friends, and adapting to the new academic structure. Many students move away from the familiarity of their home environment and their friends and transition into adulthood, starting with a new sense of independence. However, according to U.S. News and World Report 2012, as many as one in three first year students don’t come back for their sophomore year. Often times, the reason for the low retention rate can be attributed to finances, family problems, loneliness, and academic struggles.

Higher education institutions have addressed this issue of separation from the familiar to transitioning to the new college environment with freshmen orientations filled with activities for an entire week. Student affairs professionals schedule dorm events, floor events, bonfires, and university rituals during orientation week all in the hopes of helping these new students become acclimated to the new environment. However, once classes begin, the orientation activities quickly cease.
as students make the shift to focusing on their new academic career as new college students.

With the rapid adoption of social media by this native digital generation, the study seeks to find whether the integration of social media in a classroom will improve new students’ connection to their campus community and classroom peers when aligned to the goals of the class objectives. In return, the study seeks to better understand whether social media can be used in certain classroom contexts to address issues of community and connectedness as it impacts one’s learning experience.

5.0 Risk Assessment:
5.1 Describe the potential risks to the individual, group, and/or society due to the procedures of the study:
There is very minimal risk to the individuals who choose to participate in the study.

5.2 Describe risks involved due to the sensitive nature of the instruments being used (e.g., published or researcher-generated questionnaires):
Participants will be asked to respond to online survey questions that ask their opinion of their experience using Twitter in their course. Some may feel uncomfortable expressing their views and the same feelings may arise in the focus group interviews. However, both survey and interview options are completely voluntary and do not affect their grade for the course. Further, course grades will have already been calculated and posted prior to the students having access to the online survey link.

6.0 Means taken to minimize:
6.1 General risk minimization strategy
The researcher will take careful steps in alleviating any concern of participants regarding their participation. The information that participants provide will only be accessible by the researcher. Participants will need to consent in order to participate in the survey and interview. In addition, participants can choose to opt out of the study at any time, even after they submit a consent form. There will be no ramifications to them should they choose to withdraw from the study or not participant in the study at any time. Any information they have provided up to that point will be discarded and completely eliminated from the study. Though some students may feel inclined to participate in the study, the students will be reminded and ensured that their participation in the study is completely voluntary and does in no way affect their course grade. Further, the students will have their final course grade calculated and posted prior to the online survey for the study sent out to them for their participation.

6.2 Describe how the participant’s personal privacy will be protected
Survey respondents will not be asked to provide their name when submitting the survey. Those who choose to participate in the focus group will have chosen to be self-identified. However, when data is presented, no names will be used and pseudonyms will be used in order to protect the privacy of all participants in the study.

6.3 Describe how the confidentiality of the information obtained will be protected
Survey responses, audio recordings, and interview transcriptions will solely be in the possession of the researcher’s computer. The computer will be password protected. The researcher will personally transcribe the focus group interviews and destroy the audio recording of the focus group interview once the study is completed. The research will refrain from discussing any of the findings or identify any of the participants of the study. Again, no actual names of participants will be used in the study.

6.4 Assess the likely effectiveness of these precautionary measures:
The risk-minimizing strategies that will be invoked are effective precautionary measures that have proved to be so from the researcher’s personal previous research studies and also ones in which other have used in the past to conduct similar peer-reviewed studies.

7.0 Written informed consent:
7.1 Give a description of the procedures to be used in obtaining and documenting the prior informed consent of the participant.
Students will be informed about the study in their last class session of FYS. During that time, the students will be given a hard copy of the consent form should they want to participate in the study. Again, they will be reminded that their participation in the study will not affect their course grade as their course grade will have already been calculated by the time the study is announced in their last class. The students will be reminded that their participation in the study is completely voluntary. If they choose to participate in the study at that time, they can return the consent form immediately. However, this does not lock them into having to participate. They can still choose to opt out of the study.

7.2 Explicitly describe whether any of the participants are minors and how parental consent and minor assent will be obtained
The researcher does not anticipate any participants to be minors.

7.3 Please attach a copy of the following:
7.3.1 Consent Form—Check if attached X
7.3.2 Verbatim instructions—the exact language you intend to use when you present the instructions and consent form to the participants—Check if attached X

7.3.3 Minor Assent Form (if needed)—Check if attached

7.4 If you research involves any of the following see the proposal instructions for further information:

7.4.1 A waiver of informed consent
7.4.2 Minors and/or vulnerable groups
7.4.3 Mandated reporter
7.4.4 Audio and/or video recording of behavior or interviews
7.4.5 Medical risks

8.0 Attach copies any questionnaires, surveys, or inventories you are using – Check if attached X

9.0 Are there any special or unusual circumstances regarding the research that you believe could be relevant to the PHRRC’s decision in reviewing the project:
X No
Yes—Please describe those special or unusual circumstances

10.0 Please check the box most relevant to your research:

No Risk: Research involves no risk to human participants if it includes only (1) observation of public behavior or the use of information available to the public, and/or (2) data used in a manner that is strictly statistical and anonymous – information cannot be traced to a specific individual, and (3) meets the criteria for MINIMAL RISK research. (Very few proposals fall into this category.)

X Minimal Risk: Research involves at least minimal risk to human participants when it includes non-public behavior or data and/or allows for connection of the response to the individual’s identity. “Minimal risk” research includes no deception of participants: no sensitive, culturally taboo, or socially controversial material or responses by participants. Also the research procedure is unlikely to impact or change the participants' physical, social, psychological, or spiritual status.

Moderate Risk: Research involves at least moderate risk to human participants if the procedure involved deception of participants; sensitive, taboo, or controversial material; is physically intrusive; or may impact the physical, social, psychological, or spiritual status of the participants. The use of organs, tissues, or bodily fluids may create medico-legal risks, or expose the participant to public embarrassment or humiliation through breach of confidentiality and invasion of privacy.
Please note the following:

1. The proposal, as approved by the Protection of Human Rights in Research Committee (PHRRC), becomes part of the agreement between Biola University and the researchers about the way in which a project will be conducted. Therefore, the proposal must be an accurate description of the research project. The proposal, informed consent documents, and other supporting materials become part of the public record of the PHRRC’s deliberations. Any change in the approved proposal, including supporting documents, must be approved by the PHRRC. In order to ensure the integrity of the research study, the proposal will not be available for review by the public until the research project is completed.

   I affirm that this proposal is an accurate description of the way this research will be conducted

   Initial  Date

   I affirm that this proposal has been approved by my project chair/director (only applies to student proposals)

   Initial  Date

2. It is the responsibility of the principal investigator to submit two documents of the proposal (along with copies of recruitment materials, questionnaires, interview schedules, informed consent documents, and other supporting materials) to the PHRRC. The documents should be as follows:

   One (1) full document with complete information
   Check if attached X

   One (1) blind document (all identifying information removed). The blind document should have blanks inserted at the name of the investigator, supervisor, department, phone number(s), location, country, tribe, or any other identifying information
   Check if blind document is attached X
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**Informed Consent Form**

I authorize Dr. (Researcher’s Name Here) of the Department of (Researcher’s Institution Here), Biola University, La Mirada, California, and/or any designated research assistants to gather information from me on the topic of Twitter is used to build connection among incoming freshman college students to their campus and community.

I understand that the general purposes of the research are gain an understand of how the use of social media, such as Twitter, can influence one’s connection to their campus and class peers, and that I will be asked to participate in a survey and, if I so choose to, also participate in a focus group interview, and that the approximate total time of my involvement will be 30 minutes for the survey and 30-40 minutes in the focus group interview, should I choose.

The potential benefits of the study are to understand how social media can be used in certain classroom contexts to address issues of community and connectedness as it impacts one’s learning experience. Another benefit of the study can be to better understand whether social media can be an addition medium of learning in the course.

I am aware that I may choose not to answer any questions that I find embarrassing or offensive.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to participate or discontinue my participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which I am otherwise entitled.

I understand that if, after my participation, I experience any undue anxiety or stress or have questions about the research or my rights as a participant, that may have been provoked by the experience, Dr. (Researcher’s Name Here) will be available for consultation, and will also be available to provide direction regarding medical assistance in the unlikely event of physical injury incurred during participation in the research.

Confidentiality of research results will be maintained by the researcher. My individual results will not be released without my written consent.
I have read the information provided above. I have been given a chance to ask questions. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

Please check all that apply:

☐ I agree to participate in the survey. Please send the online survey to my email address: ________________________________

☐ I agree to also participate in the focus group interview and be audio-taped.

_________________________________________  ____________
Signature                                      Date

There are two copies of this consent form included. Please sign one and return it to the researcher with your responses. The other copy you may keep for your records.

Questions and comments may be address to:
If the researcher is a Biola faculty/staff member, then you may use your department contact information:
(E.g. Julie Chen-Smith, Biola University, Office of University Effectiveness, x3859)

If the researcher is not a Biola faculty/staff member, then you must use your personal contact information:
(E.g. Julie Chen-Smith, 168 Main Street, Los Angeles, CA, 90501, (310) 251-8888)