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**THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS**

by

Tara M. Heffner

A Thesis

Submitted to the Department of Psychology  
College of Science & Mathematics  
In partial fulfillment of the requirement  
For the degree of  
Master of Arts in School Psychology  
at  
Rowan University  
April 14, 2016

Thesis Chair: Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

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## **Dedications**

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my parents, Robert W. Heffner & Tina M. Heffner.

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to express my appreciation to Professor Roberta Dihoff for her guidance and help throughout this study. I am fortunate enough to have had a great mentor who has given me the tools I need to excel in my field. I look forward to furthering my education and pursuing my dream of becoming a School Psychologist.

I would like to thank my mom, dad, and my two brothers: RJ & Colton, for their continued love and support throughout my academic career.

## **Abstract**

Tara M. Heffner

THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE IN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS  
2015-2016

Roberta Dihoff, Ph.D.

Master of Arts in School Psychology

The purpose of this study were to see how social media use by undergraduate students affects their academics as well as their social life in college. Participants consisted of undergraduate students at Rowan University aged 18 and older (n=116). In order to obtain data on this topic, students were asked to participate via online survey. Students expressed what types of social media they use, such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and SnapChat. They were also asked how much time they spend on social media, their current GPA (grade point average) and whether their GPA has increased or decreased due to the amount of time they spend using social media. Data was analyzed using SPSS.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

In today's society, especially our generation, social media has become a part of our everyday lives. We have access to all types of information in the palm of our hands through our cellphones, iPads and other handheld devices. They can provide us with a weather forecast in ten seconds or less, e-mails, banking, and most importantly, social media. Social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, etc., has taken the technology world to a whole new level. Although we see how it can serve as a positive thing by being a good source of communication, it can also serve as a negative thing such as cyber bullying and the new phrase "cat fishing." But what happens when social media use comes in to play with academics on an undergraduate level?

#### **Purpose of the Study and Hypothesis**

The purpose of my study is to see how social media use by undergraduate students affects their academics as well as their social life in college. My hypothesis would be that social media use by undergraduate students would positively affect their academics and social life in college. I believe that my hypothesis will be supported because; social media can be used for different aspects of academics. Nowadays, professors encourage their students to use social media to either be kept up to date with things that are going on in the classroom or even using it for educational research. Also, some professors use social media for classroom assignments, which enable the students to keep in contact with one another in regards to class work.

(Michikyan, Subrahmanyam, & Dennis, 2015) conducted research on Facebook use and how it affects college students and their academic performance. They have found

that students with lower GPAs are involved with more activity on Facebook than students with higher GPAs. Research by Michikyan (2015a) stated that “However, our findings imply that students who are experiencing difficulties at college and who are not fully engaged in their studies may be those who are most likely to turn to Facebook for distraction and entertainment or even to cope with their frustrations.” Using social media to cope with academic frustrations can be a good outlet, especially if the student is connecting with another student that is having the same problem. Social media allows students to get connected with other students, which can be very beneficial because it can allow them to discuss class material via social media as well as help them network.

The key parts that will be measured will be the type of social media used, how often it is used, when it is typically used, and the effect it has on academics such as GPA. The data will be collected through a survey. The significance of the study is to be able to show undergraduate students that social media can positively affect their academics as well as increase their networking skills with other classmates.

**Definitions:**

- *Social media*: websites and applications that enable users to create and share content or participate in social networking
- *Cyber bullying*: the use of electronic communication to bully a person, typically by sending messages of an intimidating or threatening nature
- *Cat fishing*: the phenomenon of internet predators that fabricate online identities and entire social circles to trick people into emotional/romantic relationships over a long period of time

- Facebook: spend time using the social networking Facebook
- Twitter: make a posting on the social media website Twitter

While conducting this research, limitations should be taken into consideration. One limitation is that everyone may not participate in the survey given to measure how much time the students spends on social media. The students may also not be truthful when answering the questions, which could alter results. Assumptions that can be made is that the study will be geared towards regular education students, which would exclude all special education students such as students who receive special accommodations for their academics. It will also be taken into consideration that the number of men and women who will be taking the survey will not be equal and their class level will not all be the same, for example, not everyone taking the survey will be seniors, juniors, etc. Instead, their class level will vary across the board.

Conducting research on this topic can be beneficial for many undergraduate students as well as graduate students. The information gathered throughout this study will also be beneficial to me as well. It will be neat to see how the use of social media can increase GPAs.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

Social media is constantly being used by undergraduate college students across the globe. Social media can be accessed through a computer, cell phone, iPad, and so much more. The newest way of getting in touch with social media is now a watch. Technology is constantly changing and is always finding a way for different generations to have access to different forms of social media right at their fingertips. The generation that is now in college was named the “Millennials.” According to a survey conducted by the American Press Institute (2015), “The survey measured the use of seven different social networks as pathways to news and information. That analysis provides a landscape view of social media and news. One striking finding, is that every one of these social networks, to greater or lesser degrees, are now news platforms. Fully 88 percent of those surveyed get news from Facebook at least occasionally, 83 percent from YouTube, and 50 percent from Instagram.”

“For young adults between 18 and 29 years old, social media use is even more common-as of 2010, it was 72% (Lenhart et al., 2010). The use of social media in college can be deemed useful when it comes to making connections with your teachers and other classmates. One study focused on the impact of social networking sites on social connectedness and cognitive abilities. “In order to provide a reliable measure of cognitive skills, standardized tests of verbal ability, working memory, and academic attainment, were administered. Students also responded to questions about the length and type of social media use (Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter). The findings indicated that young

people who has used Facebook (but not YouTube) for more than a year had higher scores of verbal ability, working memory, and spelling, compared to their peers who had used it for a shorter time period” (Alloway et al., 2013). One researcher described how social media use could benefit the life of college student when it comes to social support. This study focused on two scales: FoMo (Fear of Missing Out) and SME (social media engagement). SME measured how social media was utilized in the classroom. Millennials were the primary focus of this study because they are the ones that grew up with the bulk of technology and are usually better at social interaction and connectedness with family, friends, etc. by text messages, chat rooms, email and much more. “These techniques might play a significant role in keeping college students connected to family and friends to obtain social support, as a buffer to “excessive” levels of stress they experience as they grapple with a host of academic, personal, and social pressures” (Alt, 2015).

Research conducted by Blaschke (2014) supports that students could benefit from social media use throughout their college years. It could also mold them into a better learner as well. “From this case study research, it is evident that social media alone is not the exclusive factor in influencing cognitive and meta-cognitive development in learners. Rather it is the combination of the pedagogy in the course design and delivery, together with the technology, that creates the kind of nurturing environment for this development to occur.” The students felt as though learning through online resources throughout the duration of the class has helped them in their academics. “A heutagogical approach combined with social media technology also provides opportunities for students to actively create, connect, and collaborate- a significant factor to consider when designing a course where the majority (71%) of the students surveyed indicated that they preferred

to learn-by-doing.” Although some college students may not be affected by learning via social media or even just using social media in college, majority of them are affected. One study looked into the effects of social ties, social anxiety and academic achievement during the college years. 942 college students from a mid-sized university located in Southern Ontario participated in this study by completing annual assessments of social ties, social anxiety, and academic achievement over the course of three years. “The results from an autoregressive cross-leg path analysis indicated that social anxiety had a significant and negative relationship with academic achievement. Moreover, the negative indirect effect of social anxiety on academic achievement through social ties was significant, as was the opposing direction of effects” (Brook & Willoughby, 2015).

Various social networking sites are used by college students such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, are the most popular ones. Twitter, especially, has been used in medical education as well as others majors. A study consisting of 36 physical therapy students who were enrolled in a Professional Interactions course that met weekly for four weeks during their first year of their program, were introduced that they will be participating in class discussions via Twitter. “At the beginning of the course, 35 students reported that they used one or more social media sites at least once per week for personal purposes. Twenty-two students reported using one or more social media sites at least once per week for academic purposes, and 7 students reported that they use social media at least once per week for professional purposes. At the end of the course, personal social media use remained high, and there was an increase in both academic and professional social media use” (Gagnon, 2015).

Another study that also sees social media as a solid resource for college students was conducted at the Penn State Hershey College of Medicine. The purpose of this study was to integrate different forms of social media into two medical humanities courses in order to promote student learning. Research by George and Dellasega (2011) found that “social media applications provided platforms that enabled novel moments of learning to occur. In the classroom, tools such as Skype and YouTube enriched learning by connecting students both with external experts and novel educational content. Outside the classroom, Twitter and blogging applications sustained and augmented learning conversations, enabling real-time dialogue to take place between instructors and students; his ultimately made homework assignments a more dynamic experience, while encouraging creativity on mediums familiar to a generation of students facile with such technology.” It is shown that most college students prefer to use social media in order to help them academically, emotionally, etc.

One study consisting of health professions students as participants were asked to fill out an assessment based on their media preferences as well as how they respond to advertisements that were shown on those social media sites. “The results indicate that an overwhelming majority of the health professions students prefer to get their information online. Further, similar to findings by the national surveys by Anderson Analytics<sup>10</sup> of traditional students, we found that Facebook is used heavily by health professions students, with very little use of Twitter and LinkedIn or any other social networking site. Our graduates are using Facebook to keep connected to their fellow alumni, which suggests that it spans both personal and professional bounds. Further, the majority also reported not clicking on Facebook or Twitter’s advertisements or to gather more

information for educational programs” (Giordano & Giordano, 2011). Another study was used to determine if social media use positively or negatively affected a student’s grades. Research by Jacobsen and Forste (2011) found that electronic media use, or otherwise known, as social media use is negatively associated with a student’s grades. Although their research found that social media use can also facilitate social interaction and the development of different social networks.

Research by Jacobsen and Forste (2011) stated, “The current college population is more digitally active than any previous generation.” They conducted a study that measured social media use and academics. They had their participants construct time diaries, in which they wrote down specific things they did that day and for how long they did them for. For example, if they chose to study, how long did they study for? If they chose to go to class that day, how long were they in class for? If they chose to go to a party, instead of doing homework, how long did they stay at the party? In conclusion, the study found that electronic media use is negatively associated with grades. In a way, the students found a way to balance their social life and academic life, while monitoring their time spent on social media.

One of the most popular social networking sites used is Twitter. Twitter allows individuals to post statuses about their life, in regards to school, work, social life, etc. But, it can also be used to share news and other useful information. One study focused on how Twitter can impact college student engagement and grades. The study consisted of two groups, one utilized Twitter for educational purposes such as tweeting to the professors as well as other classmates, submitting assignments, etc. The other group did not use Twitter; hence they were the control group. They later found that the students

who were able to utilize Twitter for educational purposes actually had better grades and higher GPAs. “In addition to engendering motivation to engage students on the part of the faculty, the use of Twitter created a culture of engagement between students. As was reported in the results, students interacted with each other a great deal around academic and co-curricular issues, which led to deepening of their interpersonal connections” (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2011).

Even though social media use can be used for increasing academics, it is also widely known for increasing social adjustment as well. A study conducted by Kalpidou, Costin, & Morris (2011) found that, “Having a lot of Facebook friends was positively related to both social adjustment and attachment with the institution for upper-class students, thus offering support to the hypothesis that Facebook strengthens social adjustment by improving social networks. Social adjustment refers to having a feeling of fitting in with the college community and being satisfied with established social connections and the social activities offered on campus.” “Social network sites can help to address the relationship development and maintenance needs of young adults at a point in their lives where they are moving away from home and into the university. They face challenges in maintaining former connections while being open to potential friendships with a new set of peers encountered through classes, new living arrangements, and other college activities” (Steinfeld, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008).

Another study focused on how different types of social media use enabled college students to stay in touch with friends and family. Interviews were used for this study as well. “Our students reported that technology interfaces with friend connections is more complex and nuanced ways. Facebook was a popular interaction tool for undergraduates.

In fact, Facebook was the social network of choice” (Palmer, Boniek, & Turner, 2014). Park, Song, & Lee (2014) found that, “that students who used Facebook only demonstrate a lower degree of acculturative stress and a higher degree of psychological well-being.”

“Facebook is useful in maintaining social connections, leading them to spend more time using the site, which contributed to better social adjustment in college. They engaged in more Facebook interaction with on-campus friends, which in turn facilitated social adjustment in college and satisfaction with college life” (Yang & Brown, 2015). Research by Valenzuela, Park & Fee (2009), found “positive relationships between intensity of Facebook use and students’ life satisfaction, social trust, civic engagement, and political participation.”

In today’s world, a lot of college students are very big into playing video games. So why not combine video games with learning? One study did just that. They had one group use an interacting learning game along with their curriculum, while the other did not. “This study investigated the effects of a networked interactive learning game on students’ perception toward learning and test performance. To sum up, the results show that (a) networked interactivity between students in an educational game has positive effects on students’ feelings of social presence, evaluation of learning (sense of competition, satisfaction, and perceived efficiency of the learning method), and test performance, and (b) having feelings of social presence during the game session mediates the effect of networked interactivity on the evaluation of learning” (Lee et al., 2011).

“Social learning theory and the concept of self-efficacy have both been applied with varying degrees of success to the challenge of explaining, predicting and influencing behavior. From the user perspective, an SNS consists of a network of friends or relevant

people and the contents they create. This content can be shared by people in the SNS. Social learning theory insists that people learn by observing in social situations and that they will act like people they observe without external rewards. In accordance with social learning theory, the results of this study suggest that university student learning outcomes can be enhanced by SP, SA and AT. Social learning theory focuses on reciprocal human interactions within an environment. It assumes that human behavior is a function of personality, cognition and the environment. As university students in Korea are comparatively young, their peer relationships, interactions with others and mobility are important in the university culture. SNSs may enrich this type of culture as well as the accompanying learning opportunities (Park et al., 2014).

Studies show that social media has been linked to increasing career development. Social media offers diverse networking opportunities, all of which can enhance career development. These opportunities are made possible through several unique features of social media. First, its focus on user-generated content encourages scholarly inquiry and dialog among users. Second, its easy access through the Internet allows users to participate in events around the world” (Roman, 2014). Social media can also be beneficial when it comes to specific areas of academics. For example, the medical field uses social media for assignments, interacting with other medical students, etc. “Social media websites and applications are online environments where users contribute, retrieve, and explore content primarily generated by fellow users. Social media tools have the potential to build on the interactivity of e-learning with additional features that are more learner-generated, collaborative, and engaging” (Cheston, Flickinger, & Chisolm, 2013).

Research conducted by George & Green (2012) found that “more than 90% of medical students use online social media.”

It is also common for people to associate poor academic achievement and procrastination with social media use. “On average, college students report that they engage in academic procrastination between 30 and 60% of the time” (Fogel, & Nutter-Upham, 2011). “Academic procrastination can be understood as knowing that one is supposed to, and perhaps even wanting to, complete an academic task but failing to perform the activity within the expected or desired time frame” (Senecal, Koestner, & Vallerand, 1995). Research conducted by Seo (2011), found that “there was not a relationship between students' procrastination and academic achievement and that, even though procrastination increased the likelihood of flow-like experiences, the procrastinators were not likely to perform better in an examination because of flow.” Research carried out by Glick & Orsillo (2015) found that “Given the negative consequences of procrastination on academic performance and emotional and physical health, the frequency of this behavior is of concern. Unfortunately, despite a recent increase in research in this area, there is still much to learn about the causes and maintaining factors of procrastination.”

Procrastination is bound to happen during the college years, but it depends on the student, the workload and how much time they allow themselves to complete the work. “Findings indicate that procrastination was most clearly related to students' beliefs regarding their ability to complete academic tasks successfully and their desire to avoid hard work or extended effort when completing school tasks” (Wolters, 2003). Ferrari et al. (1992), found that “students who are more confident in their abilities tend to

procrastinate less often than other students.” Distraction can also be connected with procrastination. For example, sleep is very crucial, especially for a young college student. But there can be many distractions as to why the student is not acquiring as much sleep, as they should be. The amount of homework, parties and social media use can all be possible factors as to why their sleep hours are cut short. One study decided to look closely into what exactly distracts college students from sleep. “In the present study, sleep problems predicted both time spent watching television, as well as time spent on social networking websites. On the other hand, neither time spent watching television nor time spent on social networking websites predicted sleep problems. Thus sleep problems was a predictor and not an outcome of media use among our sample of emerging adults” (Tavernier & Willoughby, 2014).

Social media has been used more and more frequently in the classroom in order to encourage to student to interact more as well as be more engaged in their academics. A study carried out by Clauson et al. (2013) recruited a sample of first-year pharmacy students and asked them to fill out a survey in regards to their social media use and how it affects their integration in the classroom as student. They were also asked about certain tools that they use to complete coursework, such as Wikipedia, video sharing, social networking sites, etc. In conclusion to the study, “Selectively targeting social media for educational integration and instructing pharmacy students how to employ a subset of these tools may be useful in engaging them and encouraging them in lifelong learning.”

“Ultimately, success with social media in higher education probably depends on exploring and validating students’ choices of the tools to hand, with which they are comfortable and familiar and that make sense for the task. Educators might be best to

avoid specifying technologies: and instead specify processes and let students discover how the two might interact” (Tay & Allen, 2011). Research by Wellman et al. (2003) found that “social media, at least as a current cultural practice, leads to “networked individualism”, in which Internet technologies both increase the amount of connectivity between people, yet reduce the intensity of the cooperation and collaboration thereby achieved.”

Students’ formal learning through class lectures and activities can be contrasted with learning that occurs by way of networking, which is less formal and includes hallway and library conversations, study groups, and outside interactions with professors (Poell et al., 2000). A study conducted by Hwang and Kessler (2004) focused on two important types of networking: vertical networking (professors) and horizontal networking (students). “The stronger vertical networking to grade performance may reflect the more accurate information that a professor could give to students, which in turn leads to better grades. Overall, the results showed both horizontal and vertical networking activities to be beneficial to students, and where resources permit, different networking channels should be used to maximize learning outcomes.” According to Baker (2000), “Having diverse network targets (e.g. both students and professors) are potentially more beneficial because they provide access to a wider range of information.”

“We find that emerging adults spend more time using the media than they spend doing any other activity, with the most time being spent on the Internet and listening to music” (Coyne, Padilla-Walker, & Howard, 2013). When it comes to gender, it seems as though women are more prone to use social media use in relation to their social life as well as academics. Research conducted by Walsh et al. (2013) focused on multitasking. It

was reported that women typically spend about 12 hours per day using social media. Social media consist of texting, listening to music, using the internet and of course using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. “In general, media use was negatively associated with academic outcomes after controlling for prior academics and demographics. Results show that female college students are heavy users of new media, and that some forms of media use may adversely impact academic performance.”

“Social media is becoming increasingly more prominent in our lives. More and more individuals, groups, and organizations are joining and using social media networks as a primary means for communication. Although previous research has attempted to understand the impact of social media and characteristics of its early users, measurement issues and poor scale development have hindered progress in this emerging area of research. Social media use is often defined and measured by looking at “quantity” indicators focusing on behavioral frequency of use and amount of interaction with social media. However, our results suggest that the quantity of social media use is not as useful as measuring how one integrates this use into social routines as well as one’s emotional connection thereto (Jenkins-Guarneri, Wright, & Johnson, 2013).

One study has proven that the use of social media does not affect school performance. They focused primary for need for cognition (NFC) and GPA. “College students’ use of socially interactive technologies appears to be wholly unrelated to college students’ GPAs and their levels of NFC. Implications of these findings, both in terms of relationships among social and traditional media use and success at school as well as relationships among shifts in young people’s media use habits and possible related shifts in their levels of cognitive processing, are explored” (Turner & Croucher,

2014). Wang (2013) found that, “Facebook use in instruction assists students in achieving better grades, higher engagement, and greater satisfaction with the university learning experience. Thus, the use of Facebook as an educational communication and interaction tool to enable faculty to assume a more active and participatory role in teaching and learning.”

Another study decided to make a Facebook page for a classroom to see if it would help get the class more involved and also give the class a better chance to interact with each other. “The majority of students agreed that Facebook could be a suitable learning environment. The “Insights” tool revealed globally distributed fans with considerable Page interactions. The use of a faculty administered Facebook Page provided a venue to enhance classroom teaching without intruding into students' social life. A wider educational use of Facebook should be adopted not only because students are embracing its use, but for its inherent potentials in boosting learning. The “Insights” metrics analyzed in this study might be helpful when establishing and evaluating the performance of education-oriented Facebook Pages” (Jaffar, 2014). Research by Cotten and Junco (2012) found that “Facebook and texting while doing schoolwork were negatively associated with overall college GPA. Engaging in Facebook use or texting while trying to complete schoolwork may tax students’ capacity for cognitive processing and preclude deeper learning.”

Research by Roblyer et al. (2010) also elaborated on how Facebook can be beneficial in the classroom. “A comparison of faculty and student responses indicates that students are much more likely than faculty to use Facebook and are significantly more open to the possibility of using Facebook and similar technologies to support classroom

work.” “As such, the most immediate significance of social media for higher education is the apparently changing nature of the students who are entering university. In a practical sense, the highly connected, collective and creative qualities of social media applications are seen to reflect (and to some extent drive) more flexible, fluid and accelerated ways of being. Social media are therefore associated with an increased tendency for young people to multitask, to rely on a ‘digital juggling’ of daily activities and commitments”

(Subrahmanyam & Šmahel, 2011). According to Selwyn (2009), “Many universities now maintain profiles and groups on social networking sites such as Facebook, where students and faculty can interact, share resources and express ‘learner voice’.” Mason and Rennie (2007) contributed that, “shared community spaces and inter-group communications are a massive part of what excites young people and therefore should contribute to [their] persistence and motivation to learn’ . “

“Even when able to access the technology, the types of social media tools that an individual uses, the ways in which they are used and the outcomes that accrue are all compromised by a set of second- order digital divides. For instance, recent studies suggest that students’ preferences for particular social media applications over others follow class-based patterns of taste and distinction. In terms of social networking, for example, Hargittai (2008) reports that US college students’ preferences for an application such as Facebook as opposed to MySpace appear to be patterned consistently along lines of social class and educational background.” “From the former perspective, many educators maintain that social media can be used successfully to support the provision of what Goodyear and Ellis (2008) term ‘serious student-centered learning’. Of course, even the most structured implementation of social media in university settings implies a degree

of ‘user-driven’ education—that is, allowing learners to take more active roles in what they learn as well as how and when they learn it. Nevertheless, many higher educators believe that universities are capable of accommodating (and benefiting from) these shifts in emphases.” As George Siemens (2005) puts it, “learning can therefore be conceived in terms of the ‘capacity to know more’ via social media rather than a reliance on the individual accumulation of prior knowledge in terms of ‘what is currently known’.”

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

#### **Participants**

My convenience sample size consisted of 116 participants. Participants consisted of undergraduate students at Rowan University, and will remain completely anonymous. My inclusion criteria were male and female undergraduate students. The starting age for participants was 18, but there is no end age because not everyone who is in undergraduate courses is the same age. Ethnicity and socioeconomic status were not considered issues in regards to the study. Exclusion criteria consisted of graduate students and students with special needs.

Participants were notified about the study and its survey via Rowan e-mail, and/or their professor. The study required consent, so we used the consent form that is located on the eIRB website. The survey was free to take part in, but as far as compensation, their professor may offer extra credit for partaking in the survey.

#### **Materials**

The survey aimed to ask the participants about their social media use, academics, and their GPA (grade point average). The introduction to the survey lasted approximately three minutes, the survey took no longer than 10 minutes to complete, and the debriefing lasted approximately three minutes. An intervention was not needed for this type of study.

## **Design**

The study conducted used a correlational design. The independent variable was social media use and the dependent variable was GPA and whether it increased or decreased.

## **Procedure**

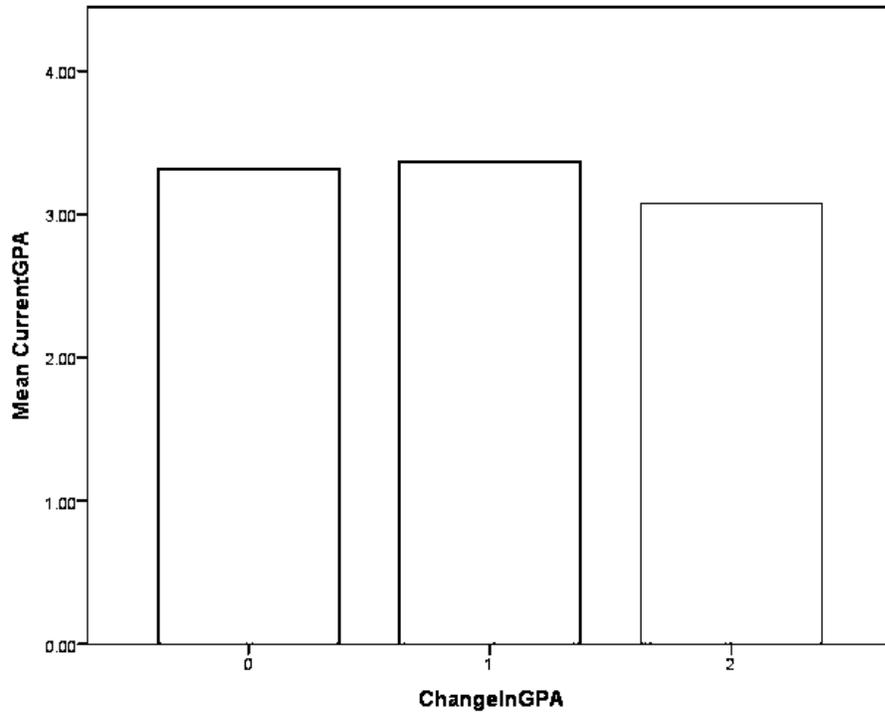
SPSS was used to analyze and interpret the data received from the survey. Charts, descriptive statistics, frequencies, etc. will be displayed in the tables and figures section of this paper. The data collected was stored online and protected by a password that only I, myself and the supervisor of the study, Dr. Roberta Dihoff have access to. The data will remain in the system at Rowan University for more than five years.

## Chapter 4

### Results

The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship between GPA and how much time undergraduate students spend using social media. Descriptive statistics for all inferential variables can be found in Table 1. After the data was analyzed, it was shown there was no correlation between GPA and the amount of time spent using social media. Although our results do not agree with the hypothesis, results show that it was not significant ( $r = -.236$ ,  $p = .011$ ). The study showed that a student's GPA is more likely to decrease due to the amount of time spent using social media.

GPA was broken down into percentages and will be displayed in a pie chart. 0.8-4.2% of students had a GPA between 2.00-2.50. 0.8-9.2% of students had a GPA between 2.51-3.00. 0.8-9.2% of students had a GPA between 3.01-3.50. 0.8-9.2% of students had a GPA between 3.51-4.00. In regards to change in GPA, 25% of students declined to answer, while 38% of students claimed that their GPA increased and 38% of students claimed that their GPA decreased. Current GPA ( $M = 3.2465$ ,  $SD = .4600$ ), Change in GPA ( $M = 1.11$ ,  $SD = .789$ ).



*Figure 1.* Comparison of Current GPA and Change in GPA

\*1=increased, 2=decreased.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

#### **Summary**

It was hypothesized that social media use by undergraduate students would positively affect their academics and social life in college. The results found do not agree with the original hypothesis, meaning that social media use by undergraduate students does not positively affect their academics and social life in college. Previous research supports the findings and assumption that there is an approaching significance between social media use and GPA.

#### **Limitations**

There were also notable limitations in this study. The study could have benefited from a larger sample. Prior to analyzing the results, there were 122 participants. It was later narrowed down to 116 participants, because 11 students refused to answer the question that asked them to report their current GPA.

#### **Future Directions**

Graduate students could have also been included in the sample size. Future studies should replicate, but in a larger sample. Future studies should also include other forms of social media, such as Flickr, MySpace, Tumblr, etc. It is essential that the next replication of this study be informed about newer types of social media because some of the current social media may be outdated by that time. Dating websites could also be considered for future studies as well.

## **Implications**

In conclusion, undergraduate students should monitor how much time they spend using different types of social media. Social media can be beneficial when it comes to academics, such as discussion boards amongst classmates, Facebook pages for school programs, etc. Social media can also be beneficial for social adjustment amongst undergraduate students. Research by Yang and Brown (2015) found that “Facebook is useful in maintaining social connections, leading them to spend more time using the site, which contributed to better social adjustment in college. They engaged in more Facebook interaction with on-campus friends, which in turn facilitated social adjustment in college and satisfaction with college life.” Although undergraduate students are always using social media, it is important that they maintain a healthy balance between how much time they spend using social media, and how much time they spend on their academics.

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## Appendix: Survey

### Social Media Use & Academics Survey

1. Which of the following Social Media Websites do you use daily? (Check all that apply)

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_

Instagram \_\_\_\_\_

Twitter \_\_\_\_\_

Snap chat \_\_\_\_\_

2. Which of the following Social Media Websites do you use most often during the course of a day?

Facebook \_\_\_\_\_

Intsagram \_\_\_\_\_

Twitter \_\_\_\_\_

Snap chat \_\_\_\_\_

3. How much time do you spend using these Social Media Websites per day?

1 hour or less \_\_\_\_\_

2-3 hours \_\_\_\_\_

4-5 hours \_\_\_\_\_

6 hours + \_\_\_\_\_

4. What is your current GPA (Grade Point Average)
- 

5. How much time do you spend on your academics per day?

1 hour or less \_\_\_\_\_

2-3 hours \_\_\_\_\_

4-5 hours \_\_\_\_\_

6 hours + \_\_\_\_\_

6. Do you check Social Media Websites while completing assignments?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

7. Do you use Social Media Websites for your assignments?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

8. Do your professors encourage the use of Social Media Websites for assignments?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

9. Do you find yourself distracted by Social Media Websites while completing assignments?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_

10. Has your GPA increased or decreased due to the amount of time spent on Social Media Websites?

Increased \_\_\_\_\_

Decreased \_\_\_\_\_