



Transitions in Social Media Use Between High School and College:



From Panopticon to Wild West?

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Overview

When high school students transition to college, the social media oversight and guidance that they experience from the adults in their lives may change. During high school, social media use is simultaneously discouraged and monitored by many parents and teachers/schools, whereas in college settings it tends to be institutionally ignored and parents may no longer be in a position of direct oversight.

The purpose of this study is to examine closely how social media habits and attitudes develop as young adults transition from high school to college, to see if the shift from heavy to minimal adult oversight results in a concurrent shift in social media activity. Specific areas of investigation include transitions in (a) privacy beliefs and habits, (b) social media use among peers, (c) social media use for extracurricular purposes, and (d) perceptions of monitoring.

High School



- Most had social media accounts by middle school.
- Personal rules for sharing were developed during high school.
- Self-directed use of online resources to support learning is high; use of social media (instructor or student-led) to support learning is low.
- Social media savvy was developed through trial and error, peers, and parents; experiences vary greatly, especially with parents.

Participants

Undergraduate students at a large public university in the United States. 18 to date.

Data Collection & Analysis

Students are interviewed for approximately 1 hour each, with questions focusing on how they used social media during high school and how they use it now that they are in college. Analysis focused on identifying transition points in habits and beliefs.



Adults keep out! Don't friend teachers or professors. "It's not allowed, is it?"



Rules upon rules: Guided by peers, parents, school, fear, bad experiences.

Patterns stick! Whether surveilled or living the laissez-faire lifestyle, privacy habits hold.

Handles over digits: Don't give out that phone number!

Overview of Findings

Participants who reported using social media for school activities and job seeking maintained a strong sense of being monitored by others, as found by Freitas (2017). While they knew they should be cautious about what they post on social media they lacked a sense of how to interact with adults online. Interestingly, while students reported being on social media heavily, they indicated a very low level of sharing online.

Implications and Next Steps

Next steps include a survey as well as additional interviews. Let us know if you want to be notified of new publications and findings from this project!

This study has implications for social media education and guidance for students at the high school and university levels.

College



- High school networks may still be in place, but are less active.
- Concerns about future employment begin. LinkedIn represents the next frontier.
- Self-directed use of online resources to support learning is high; use of social media (instructor or student-led) to support learning is low.
- Minimal if any guidance is provided regarding how to effectively use social media.



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