

The Wikiest Link:

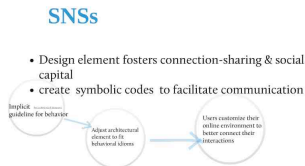
Intentionally informal use of SNS for post class discussion

Hyunjung Bae, Ph.D.
Columbia College Chicago
Chicago, IL
USA.

ELIA
11th Biennial,
Emerging Social Media in New Educational Narrative
Nante, France
October 26-30, 2010

Social Networking Sites

Facebook is the leader among Social Network Sites (SNS). With 300 million users and over one billion photo postings every month, Facebook has become a standard language of social communication. Needless to say, the majority of the regular users are so-called Net generation (age 14-29) and younger members of Gen X-ers (early 30s) closely followed by rapidly growing users among an older group of Gen-X women. Most research seems to be either psychological or political, focusing on self-presentation and privacy issues. (e.g., Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Stutzman, 2006). This study



Why Facebook

- Over 270 million ACTIVE users (2009), over 1 billion photo posting/ mo.
- To sustain contact w existing group of friends and acquaintances (2007)
- Share personal information openly and few modify default privacy setting for privacy issue

is particularly interested in the latent function of Facebook as a learning tool rather than for its utilitarian functions (e.g. submission of assignments, grading, sharing supplemental materials). One of the useful concepts for this purpose is social capital. Although the term has been defined in many ways in various disciplines, the commonality among the definitions is that it refers to the resource accrued via a network of relationships and recognition (Bourdieu and

Wacquant 1992; Ellison, Steinfeld and Lampe, 2007). Given the general trend of declining social capital (Putnam, 2000) combined with the diffusion of the Internet, social network media such as Facebook may replace conventional community experience. Particularly among the Facebook users, who are in the early stages of forming their social identity, their popularity or activities on their Facebook page becomes a good measure of individual social capital. Along with such changes in their social behavior, many research have shown that the learning style of the Net generation also is markedly different from previous generations (e.g. Ferris, 2009).

The Net-Geners

Two relevant findings in studies of the Net Geners are (1) the Net Generation learns by connectivity and discovery. Technology to them is a mere tool for learning, rather than the object/subject of learning (Barnes, Marateo, and Ferris. 2007) (2) they like collaboration (Ferris, 2009). Teamwork is a crucial learning tool in many classrooms despite the risk of diffused responsibility, loafing, dependence on the leader and such. The Net Geners value autonomy whether it is due to their age or due to their unique experience of growing up in the era of instant gratification. It is an interesting group characteristic that they like autonomy AND collaboration. They like to learn through peer-to-peer collaboration with little interference or direct supervision from authority figures.

Less is more

why less interference from instructor is good

Digital Natives

- Prosumer
- Participatory cultures; Web 2.0 is about flattening
- Multiple forms of expertise, connoisseurship, identity, and practice; Function of SNS is anti specialization
- Technology
- It is initiated by individuals;
- Self Organizing is human nature

v.

Digital Migrants

- Consumer, Recipients
- Hierarchical culture
- Specialization
- Property
- Organizations and Rule

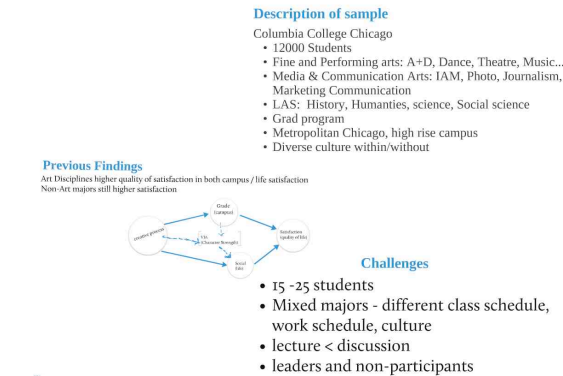
openness, peering, sharing, acting globally
 ↓
 Open Source (end of intellectual property)

Current Study

The sample was drawn from a large urban Arts and Media college with 12,000 students in 22 different disciplines. Classes are relatively small size of 12 to 15 students for production courses and 20-30 for non-production courses. Many of non-production courses heavily rely on in-class discussions. However, as with any group settings in human organization, there emerge leaders and slackers (Kayes, Kayes, and Kolb, 2005) in class discussion. This phenomenon is more pronounced when there is little social

interaction among the team members (class mates). Two proposed questions for this study are (1) Does/ How does having an exclusive (classmates only) FB page help students understand the material? (2) How do less structured interactions within a closed Facebook

page influence/ facilitate learning? The design of the study is simple. I created a Facebook page for a class where students are from many different disciplines. The page is invitation only and I assumed admin function but only for maintaining the membership. Students were encouraged to post any topics that are relevant (if it's personal, they have to explain, in their posting how the topic is related to class material). Moodle was used in a production class with Art and Design major students. It



was used for the original function of utilitarian tool although the instructor strongly encouraged the students to participate in the critique of each other's work (Moodle has a page called Forum which is used for free/open conversations).

Facebook vs. Moodle

Simply having more time to discuss the subjects that are not fully explored during the class time may increase student's understanding either via direct participation in the discussion or even merely as an audience to such discussion. Students who are less extroverted may find it easier to participate in online discussions rather than vocalizing opinions within the classroom setting. Perhaps more importantly, having an arena where they can propose new topics, ideas, and material may increase student's sense of ownership of the material, hence facilitating the understanding and the retention of the subject matter. While these findings may be conventional in their value, the working of the interaction itself is of more interest. Casual contacts on SNS with classmates with whom they may not have interaction outside of the class foster a sense of belonging and community, which in turn enhances teamwork and promotes participation.

Facebook v. Moodle

Facebook for non-production courses

- Invitation only
- Wall Posting
- Discussion topics volunteered incl. left over in-class discussion
- 1 participate, not lead
- Questions from students



Moodle for production courses

- 4 classes (12 -17 students each)
- "Contemporary issues in Digital Art"
- Profile as Assignment
- Instructor Invited critique for each other
- Feedback counted toward grade
- No intervening regarding content
- No collaboration attempted / rose
- Embedded within institutional platform (Oasis)
- Interface
- Expressively grading relevant

Findings and Discussion

Albeit the difference in the intended use of each site, Facebook listings clearly demonstrate the enhanced participation.

Moodle in the study was expressively used for instructional purposes whereas Facebook page was designated as pure social interactions among classmates. Given their preference for self-governance and autonomy, it is self-explanatory why students found the process of logging in to Moodle system a "hassle". While the effect of social interaction in the class

Class Facebook

- 40 topics cover a wide range from money to freedom of speech
- Each topic/thread has 1-20 posting
- Not direct collaboration
- Change of communication mode
- Allows porous connection
- Organic networking
- Continued communication outside the group, beyond semester

Moodle Forum

- A few comments
- 1-2 incidents of direct referrals
- No distinctive collaborative output
- "simplified assignment process"
- "hassle to get into"
- Need more study

Facebook page is observable in the in-class discussion and team collaboration, there was not visible collaboration outside of assigned class project. This may be attributable to the

fact that the sample students were already very active users of several SNS and also networked through the college's internal networking site.

Consideration for Future Studies

A critical point for the instructor to consider is that the contacts among the members of the class Facebook page must not be staged or orchestrated. The sense of belonging and community building is an organic outcome rather than a goal. The challenge for the instructors is quite similar to that of the conventional managers of large corporations: let go of control. Highly controlled, prefabricated corporate messages have lost their efficacy and have been replaced with consumer (often called prosumer) - generated messages. Class Facebook pages resemble a company R&D centre (e.g. Yet2.com, InnoCentive, Lego world) that is open to the interested, involved, and

Future Use ?

- Kyle Bowen
the director of informatics at Purdue
- Post and start threads about links, files, and other materials
 - no administrative authority
 - students are free to abstain from participating
 - Students can choose to make posts viewable by some classmates and not others.
 - **"Professors don't run the show"**
- In essence, the conversation is owned by the student."



qualified consumers. Prosumers of such Facebook pages learn networking, peering, and sharing critical to the development of arts students. Many schools are incorporating Facebook as an arena where students can directly contribute to the design, material, and management of classes. (e.g. Purdue University's Mixable program). Once again, the key to success

of these sites is the user-generated content with little interference from authority. It is tempting to conclude that the dichotomy of digital native vs. digital immigrant (Prensky, 2001) is sufficient to explain the behavioral difference between the generations. However, the level of technological proficiency among the Net Gens varies (Tapscott, 1998). And perhaps more importantly, the latecomers to SNS influence the overall picture of on-line behavior, blurring the line of native/immigrants. A new model of digital resident/ digital visitor (White, 2008)

seems to be increasingly popular among the users of all ages (Taylor, 2010). Needless to say how to use SNS such as

Digital Resident

vs.

Digital Visitor

- web supports the projection of their identity and facilitates relationship
 - banking, information retrieval, shopping etc
 - socialise and to express themselves
 - see the web as a worthwhile place to put forward an opinion.
 - all aspects of the of their lives; professionally, for study and for recreation.
 - a crucial aspect of how they present themselves and how they remain part of networks of friends or colleagues.

- uses the web as a tool in an organised manner whenever the need arises
- use the Internet for a goal, but do not need to, or have to, rely on it.

Facebook to enhance students' learning experience is an urgent topic for educators. While some of the reservations among the educators are justifiable, such as SNS is for trivial 'social' interaction, it has to be addressed that the Net Gens have an interdisciplinary approach to life; they do not differentiate social activities from academic activities (Ferris, 2009). This is the first time in human history where the youth has better knowledge and command of something that deeply influences our lives. Perhaps it is our turn to be introspective and learn from our children.

References

- Barnes, K. Marateo, R. & Ferris, S.P. (2007) Teaching and Learning with the Net Generation <http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=382>
- Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Ellison Nicole B., Steinfield Charles, Lampe Cliff (2007) *The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites* Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication Vol.12, Issue 4, 1143–1168
- Ferris, S. Pixy (2009) *Teaching and Learning with the Net Generation* Presentation given at the Lilly East Conference, April
- Gross, R., & Acquisti, A. (2005, November). *Information revelation and privacy in online social networks. Paper presented at the WPES'05, Alexandria, Virginia.*
- Kayes, Anna B. Kayes, Christopher, and Kolb, David (2005) *Experiential learning in Teams* Simulation Gaming vol. 36 no. 3 330-354
- Prensky, Marc (2001) *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants Part 1* On the Horizon, Vol. 9 Iss: 5, pp.1 – 6
- Stutzman, F. (2006, April). *An evaluation of identity-sharing behavior in social network communities*. Paper presented at the iDMAa and IMS Code Conference, Oxford, Ohio.
- Tapscott, D. 1998. *Growing up digital: The rise of the Net Generation*. New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Taylor, Bryony (2010) *visitors-and-residents* <http://bryonytaylor.com/2010/10/29/>
- White, Dave (2008) *not-natives-immigrants-but-visitors-residents* <http://tallblog.conted.ox.ac.uk/index.php/2008/07/23/> July 2008