SOCIAL MEDIA AND PARENT COMMUNICATION #Doesithelp

A thesis presented

by

Cortney T. Denman

to

The School of Education

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

in the field of

Education

College of Professional Studies
Northeastern University
Boston, Massachusetts
December 2018
Abstract

This doctoral thesis afforded parents with the opportunity to have a collective voice about classroom teachers using social media, specifically Facebook, to build communication and rapport with parents and guardians. This qualitative research study focused upon the notion that social media communication is generally accepted by parents, not only as part of everyday culture, but being accepted for its usefulness for communication purposes in educational settings. To be able to provide detailed opinions and to narrow the lens of this study, the social media network of focus was Facebook. Participating parents choose to complete interviews for this research via telephone by answering open-ended questions to voice their opinions. Some themes discovered during this research study about teachers utilizing Facebook as a form of communication were timely updates, notification systems, and student privacy. Through the interviews conducted, educators may take away the understanding that parents enjoy the ability to have quick and convenient updates about their child(ren). Facebook gave them a feeling of being a part of the educational community and a sense of understanding about the happenings in the classroom.

Keywords

Academic performance, Communication, Facebook, Parental involvement, Social Media, Stakeholders
Acknowledgements

This has been a very long journey in which a peer rightfully explained it to be “like holding hands walking into a hurricane.” First, I would like to thank my thesis committee, Dr. Clemons, Dr. Beltz, and Dr. Vu for having patience and faith that I would complete this process. Second, the group of peers I found at Northeastern University have been invaluable to my success, Matthew J. Connor, Y. James Krying, Seth M. Robinson and Derek Swenson. Without the support of our small group, I have no doubt I would not have finished. Thank you to Nadine and Carlton Faulk for my beginnings both as a student and teacher in education, and for inspiring my love of learning, teaching, and education. To my friends far and wide, thank you for your kind words, motivation, and support!

A special thank you to my family for being understanding and supportive through this journey.

Finally, thank you to my Mom for always believing in me.
Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................... 2

Acknowledgements ............................................................................................................. 3

Table of Contents ............................................................................................................... 4

Chapter 1: Introduction of the Study .................................................................................. 8

  Problem Statement ........................................................................................................... 11
  Significance in a Micro Audience ...................................................................................... 12
  Significance in a Macro Audience .................................................................................... 12
  Research questions .......................................................................................................... 13
  Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................... 13
  Study Assumptions ........................................................................................................... 14
  Personal Bias ..................................................................................................................... 14
  Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................. 17
  Potential Significance ....................................................................................................... 16

Chapter 2: Literature Review ............................................................................................ 18

  Research Overview ......................................................................................................... 19
  Main Concept: Parent Communication .............................................................................. 20
  Supporting Concept .......................................................................................................... 25
  Chapter Summary ............................................................................................................. 30

Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods .............................................................................. 33

  Purpose Statement .......................................................................................................... 34
  Positionality Statement .................................................................................................... 34
Data Collection Plan .......................................................................................................................... 35
Participants ........................................................................................................................................ 35
Recruitment, Access, and Consent ...................................................................................................... 35
Data Collection .................................................................................................................................. 36
Data Storage ....................................................................................................................................... 37
Data Analysis ...................................................................................................................................... 37
Trustworthiness ................................................................................................................................. 38
Limitations .......................................................................................................................................... 39
Role of the Research .......................................................................................................................... 40
Human Ethics ....................................................................................................................................... 40
Chapter Summary .............................................................................................................................. 41

Chapter 4: Findings ............................................................................................................................ 42
Review of the Study ............................................................................................................................ 42
Introduction ......................................................................................................................................... 42
Criteria for Interview Participation ................................................................................................... 42
Demographics ..................................................................................................................................... 43
Themes of Interviews .......................................................................................................................... 54
  “I’m Already On It” ............................................................................................................................ 55
  “Facebook Is a Lot More Spontaneous” ............................................................................................ 56
  “It Makes Me Feel Much More Safer” ............................................................................................... 56
  “Fly On The Wall” ............................................................................................................................ 57

Chapter 5: Conclusion ........................................................................................................................ 58
Discussion of Findings ........................................................................................................... 58
Implication of Findings ........................................................................................................ 58
Contribution to Theory ......................................................................................................... 62
Contribution to Practice ....................................................................................................... 62
Limitations ............................................................................................................................ 64
Future Research Directions ................................................................................................. 64
Conclusion ............................................................................................................................ 65
References ............................................................................................................................. 67

Appendix ................................................................................................................................. 76

Appendix A: IRB Approval .................................................................................................... 76
  A. Investigator Information ................................................................................................. 76
  B. Protocol Information ..................................................................................................... 77
  H. Recruitment Procedures .............................................................................................. 79
  I. Consent Process ........................................................................................................... 79
  J. Study Procedures .......................................................................................................... 80
  K. Risks ............................................................................................................................. 81
  L. Confidentiality ............................................................................................................. 81

Appendix B: ......................................................................................................................... 84
Recruitment Email ................................................................................................................ 84

Appendix C: ........................................................................................................................ 85
Consent form .......................................................................................................................... 85

Appendix D: ........................................................................................................................ 86
Debriefing form ....................................................................................................................... 86
Appendix E: .............................................................................................................. 87
Interview Questions ..................................................................................................... 87
Appendix F: Copy of NIH Human Subject Training Certificate................................. 88
Chapter 1: Introduction of the Study

This study focused upon understanding how social media was used in creating an alternative means to building parental understanding of their child’s classroom climate. Teachers had previously created private social media pages for their classrooms and invited parents of the student in the class to participate. The focus of this interpretive phenomenological analysis was to determine if parents believed using social media was useful in communication if they could not be present at school due to other obligations. The study included information collected from parents of the participating classes provided through one-on-one interviews.

The current living standards require a parent to work harder in order to fulfill the needs of a child. Education cost is rising as well as the cost of living in general (Haywood, 2015). As the parents immerse themselves in work, a void is left where children do not get support. In education, three players are most important for a student to be successful: the parent, teacher, and student (Hightower et al. 2011). When one is not involved in the educational process, the student is the one who suffers.

Social media is a phenomenon that began in the early 2000s as a sustainable outlet of communication via the internet (Van Diick, 2013). Social media can be defined as an internet-based form of communication based around blogs, wikis, virtual gaming, and social networking websites (Kaplan & Haenlien, 2012). Over the years, several forums of social media platforms have come and gone, such as MySpace, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, Flickr, Foursquare, and Linkedin, just to name a few. The Pew Research Center (2014) researched and documented the increase and usage of social media through these forms of communication. Findings showed an increase in the number of users, as well as the types of people who utilize these social media
forums. For example, over the past decade, the number of adult users with a social media account has increased by 58 percent (Perrin, 2015; Duggan et al., 2014).

Initially, technology was based on primitive methods until the telephone was invented. The invention of the telephone and mail system helped to speed up communication between two or more individuals (Barnes et al., 2007). The dynamism in technology brought internet to the world and revolutionized communication. Communication with a person is at one’s fingertips with a slight touch of a button. The internet has been used for a variety of reasons, helping millions of individuals. Social media, which is a product of the internet, or rather technology, is the latest craze that has been taken up by young people in the society. The data that was gathered from these social media sites can help parents, teachers and guardians take better care of their children or students (Thompson, 2017). Facebook is a good example of a social media that many young people have embraced and was the focus of this research.

According to the Cable News Network (2017), Facebook is on course to hit 2 billion followers, which made the website the largest and fastest growing of all social media outlets. It is important to understand the age range for this growth. While the usage of social media for those in their late 20s and older (those in the age range of being parents) increases, younger generations are looking elsewhere for social media use (Anderson and Jing, 2018). This study focused on the use of Facebook as the main social media source in a teacher’s classroom to communicate with parents, as well as the students in primary grades who are not old enough to be part of social media according to their age limits. The importance of keeping students’ names and Facebook information private follows The Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), as well as Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA). Facebook allows user to create
“private” pages where only those invited to the page are able to view pictures, videos, and postings.

Today’s world consists of technology and how we use it to communicate with each other. Now, schools are beginning to get onboard with using new technologies to communicate with stakeholders (Norris et al., 2011). This gives schools the ability to control what their stakeholders “see,” but also grants instant gratification with quick responses, something frequently sought after in today’s fast-paced world (Barnes et al., 2007). Schools are embracing social media to keep their students up to date with the latest announcements or notifications.

With regard to a parent’s involvement in their child’s or children’s classroom, the usefulness of social media still lags behind. For the purpose of this study, the focus was Facebook as the social media tool. The reasoning behind a singular focus on Facebook was the following: pages were able to be strictly private and teachers could post pictures, videos, and attachments. The teacher, being given the ability to follow all FERPA laws, could control the forum.

Facebook has been used as an additional tool to keep track of young people. It can be identified that teenagers usually post nearly everything on Facebook, such as accomplishments, relationship statuses, as well as participation in school activities (Barnes et al., 2007). The advent of technology has rendered communication between a parent and a child difficult; children spend more time on devices than having verbal conversations (Taylor, 2012). These children, or rather teenagers, find it comfortable to post their frustrations and achievements online, rather than approaching a relative (Campbell et al., 2013). It is because of this situation that parents need to have the required skills to keep the track of their child’s classroom experiences through social media.
Problem Statement

This dissertation explored the experiences of parents whose children were enrolled in a classroom where social media was used as a communication tool. Parents play a major role in their child’s education. However, the number of single parent households are rising, as signified by the rising divorce rates in this country. In 1967, there were about 46% stay at home mothers compared to 2012 where it was a mere 23% (Galley, 2014). The major challenge from this is the parent’s availability to be part of their child’s educational journey, as well as their emotional state. For a parent to understand their child’s educational journey, it is important they understand classroom climate (Danielson, 2002). Classroom climate is the atmosphere of learning for a group of students. The atmosphere includes the student’s friends, the teachers, learning materials and the overall communication and relationship between the students and teachers.

Giving the teachers very precise guidelines to follow about how they should use social media can greatly help them forge a better understanding of, and relationship with, their students. For example, teachers can only post “positive” information, share classroom activities, homework, student spotlights, achievements of the class and individual students, but not sharing grades or additional information according to Family Educational Right Privacy Act (FERPA) (Bartow et al., 2016). Teachers and parents can also be given a copy of FERPA as well and a written agreement of the terms in which they can post. This helps certain discrepancies to be avoided. Although this idea has many strengths, there are challenges that may arise.
**Significance in a Micro Audience**

By using Facebook as an alternative means to communicate with parents, the teacher and parent will be able to notice if the communication format is helpful to build rapport and a sense of community for the classroom. Rosenthal & Sawyers (1996) illustrate that building communication between parent and student is a valuable tool for students to be successful in class. Teachers and schools will be able to use social media as a tool to give parents a “virtual look” into their classrooms. These tools can provide parents with homework documents, newsletters, reminders about the classroom calendar, and school events. In addition, to increase rapport, teachers may share pictures, student success stories, and topics learned in the classroom. Epstein (1988) began researching the importance of parent involvement and all key areas of what parents need to do to support their child’s success. In doing this, parents can now further establish learning at home, one of Epstein’s six types of involvement, impacting student successes by involving the parents in the learning process.

**Significance in a Macro Audience**

The use of social media in K-12 education is a novel thought. In comparing the Census from the time Epstein first began her research in the 1980s from decades before, the number of single parent households has risen (Census, 1970; Census, 1990). The change in the “nuclear family” caused a lack of time to communicate; or rather, it caused a lack of communication within the household (Epstein, 1988). The understanding of using social media as an asset in the educational system is such a new phenomenon; little research has been done on its effect in the K-12 setting. Opening up new avenues to better communicate with parents who are not able to physically be in the classroom will not only allow them to have better knowledge of what their
child is actually learning, but also how they can help support their student (Fleming, 2012). Parents’ understanding of what the student is learning increases from teacher communications between home and school (Epstein, 1986). Researching new methods of communications between parents and teachers will give the education world more information about what and how different types of communication can impact the effects of students’ learning.

**Research questions**

1. How do parents and teachers communicate through a social media platform like Facebook?
2. Does interaction through a social media platform like Facebook aid parents in better understanding their children’s classroom environment?
3. What are the common communication issues that parents face when trying to communicate with their child’s teacher?

**Theoretical Framework**

Researching Facebook’s place in education is incredibly new, and few studies exist. Blending Facebook and its use in education gave purpose as to why this study was conducted. Focusing on parental involvement, one of the six specific areas of focus was communication, the research of Joyce Epstein since the early 1980s, and continues to be her field of research to this day. Epstein’s research is valuable to this study because it gives the foundation and highlights the importance of a parent’s role in his or her child’s education, and how Facebook can be used as a tool for each area by enhancing communication. Many of her studies involve finding reasons why parents are not involved, the effects of involvement, and how to try to increase involvement. One of the early studies completed by Becker & Epstein (1982) gave teachers a platform in
which to voice the importance of parents being involved, as well as giving a better understanding of how students achieve higher accolades with parents who partake in their student’s academic journey.

### Study Assumptions

- The study assumed that all parents were willing to participate
- The school administration allowed the study to be carried out in school or over the phone
- Teachers would be willing to continually participate
- The study did not affect children and schoolwork continued as normal

### Personal Bias

Before beginning my research, I needed to establish that I was going to take a step back from what I knew from my everyday experiences and looking at the research and findings from a different angle. Explained by Machi (2012), I was able to disconnect myself with what I believed by approaching it with an intentional nature of consciousness to try to determine what was
actually true (Husserl, 1975). The quest for knowledge was able to drive me from my own personal bias (pg. 19).

My thought has always been that my parents would never let me get away with neglecting to turn in school work. As a middle school and high school student, the statement in our house was that school was the one job you had, so work hard because there was no excuse to perform poorly. I come from the background where everyone has at least one college degree. My father always told me and my siblings that money, cars, jobs, houses, family, and friends could be taken away from you, but a good education and life experiences are the only true things that would forever be yours. I understand most households are now two income families, but even if my mother was not a stay at home mom, she would still have accepted her role of the parent and checked weekly to see if I had actually submitted assigned work and made sure it was done correctly. Having such a support system also made me take more responsibility and pride in the work I was doing. Now, as an educator, I found that many parents have similar beliefs like those of my family. I see involved parenting and following up on the child as commonsense; it was hard for me to dissimilate this thinking while trying to complete my research. Education and its importance is not as commonsense as I once thought (Jupp, 2012).

Everyone wants to do well, work hard, and earn their own way in education. The idea of a student who truly cares and wants to achieve a solid education may seem to most as a naive thought, but I still have hopes that my students care. My belief was that when I talked to a student and informed them of the assignments that needed to be completed to improve their grade, the result of a higher grade should motivate them. Often, students finished my class and I never heard from them again. They moved from class to class, being motivationally “poked and prodded” like cattle, but they may not have actually felt a connection with the satisfaction of
achievement. I find that those students who are genuinely pleased with their achievements are the ones whose parents are home to make sure the student is prepared. I am an overly positive person, but when I take a step back, my view of students and their gut wanting for achievement is, at best, bleak. If I use terminology given by Birsoce (2005), I can already stereotype myself as an ideological positioned researcher before I have even gathered on one piece of research (pg. 33). Although my bias involves thinking that students are not motivated or engaged, I would like to focus on the outcome to determine why the lack of excitement exists and how it might be changed.

Predisposition comes from the root of my everyday routine. Moustakas (1994) explained that all knowledge of objects resides in the subjective sources of the self. I speak to at least four students each day about doing their assigned work. I watch them drag themselves to the computer and begrudgingly complete their assignments. Even after an assignment is submitted, I know that, in a week, I’ll be calling the same student and repeating the same lesson. The student knows what to do and how to do it, he just does not want to do the work. This type of daily conversation brings a “wet blanket” to my fire of educational excitement.

**Potential Significance**

The significance of this study was to understand social media use as a way for teachers to communicate with parents. Most students are familiar with social media but, most of the time, it does not help them advance in class. This study explored effectiveness of the practice of social media as a tool to enhance parent communication, by giving parents access and updated information as to what was being taught.

Our society is going through a dynamic shift from physical to virtual communication. This dynamism that is being witnessed in the current generation requires people to be also
dynamic especially when dealing with young people (Hightower et al., 2011). Therefore, it is important that education should embrace dynamism, or rather new communication technology in class, to improve the education system.

Summary

Little research regarding the relationship between communication, Facebook, parents and classroom activities exists. There is inadequate information to come to a proper conclusion regarding parent-student communication in regard to the use of Facebook during classroom activities. However, incorporating parental involvement and the need for communication gave enough information to make the study valid (Hightower et al., 2011). Expanding from just social media to parent involvement provided the study with not only seminal audits, but a historical trajectory as well. There will be challenges along the way, including schools still not allowing teachers to use Facebook, and parents not having Facebook available to them. However, learning from the challenges will be a major part in the experience, as well as in the study. The study gave an overview of how the technological advances in communication that is used in many other sectors can be used by teachers in an education setting.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

In the following review, recently published literature was examined to address the topic of parental involvement in their child’s education and the use of Facebook to improve students’ involvement during class. The review demonstrates there is a consensus among scholars that parental involvement is decreasing. It will highlight that reduced involvement in class can have a potentially serious impact on students and their academic performance, social growth, and daily life in general. Additionally, scholars demonstrated that there have been changes in legislation in an effort to involve parents more directly in their students’ education (Hightower et al., 2011). There is literature that depicts the influence of some parents in a negative light, insinuating that they are too involved, but despite this, a majority of the articles provide information about the importance of parental involvement and how it can be beneficial for a student. For a myriad of reasons, many parents are not physically involved at schools with their children or teachers. This tied back to the initial purpose for this research, understanding if Facebook is a helpful tool for alternative methods of communication.

The focuses of this discussion were to see how parental communication is decreasing and what effect it had on the success of students across the school or the education system as a whole. Additionally, it determined if Facebook could be used as an alternative to help increase communication among such individuals. Many studies indicate that having active parents is important, and the majority suggest the benefits are positive for the student (Oostdam & Hooge, 2012; Caskey, 2009; Nichols-Solomon, 2009; Rapp & Duncan, 2011). Even though communication and how parents and teacher communicate is perceived as impactful, the problem is the persistent decrease of parental involvement in spite of the significance of the literature (Green, et al., 2007). The studies reviewed were conducted primarily in public school
classrooms. While there is little research regarding Facebook in an educational setting, studies exist regarding marketing and sales indicating how using creative means of communication can help increase opportunities for different stakeholders. Information collected for the purpose of this review solidifies the lack of involvement and states a positive alternative.

**Research Overview**

Finding scholarly writings and applications using Facebook in the classroom will be my greatest challenge. Although there are few studies specifically geared towards using Facebook in the classroom, studies for using social media in general are becoming more widespread. Bosman & Zagenczyk (2011) detail how using social media is a tool to hit higher-order thinking among students in grade school, as opposed to focusing “within the box” learning, dealing with the changing education system. Other studies such as Buzel (2010), Lederer (2012), and Kist (2013) focus on how students can and should use social media outlets to expand their knowledge and better connect with their peers on an academic level. The progression of these studies show that social media is becoming slightly more accepted, if not useful, in the classroom. However, the focus was on the use of social media from teachers to communication with parents and building not only rapport with each other, but better understanding of the happenings in the classroom.

Many school systems do not allow the use of social media in their classrooms, so allowing teachers to post onto Facebook during school hours could be an issue. In addition, cyber bullying is known to be a problem, especially on Facebook. As such, many schools have strict rules regarding online activities, especially social media. Although using social media in the classroom is a newer concept, the issues regarding bullying and opening up the classroom to
bullying is relevant to this research. Moreover, the study was based around primary grade levels in elementary school classrooms. Since elementary students are too young to have a Facebook account, by Facebook's own rules and regulations, the focus of this study was parent and teacher communication. Therefore, making sure student information, pictures, and classroom videos are private is important for the safety of young students. The use of social media in the classroom has been frowned upon and even feared. Levinson (2010) gives detail of how the trend of going from banishing Facebook on campus to using it as a tool to communication with parents may help students achieve academic goals. The lack of exposure by schools on how this technology can work is still the main challenge for both teachers and parents.

**Main Concept: Parent Communication**

Parental involvement can be defined in several ways, but the form of involvement most pertinent to this discussion is the area in a student’s education in which a parent should be actively present. While scholars agree on the need for parental involvement, there are varying opinions regarding the most important form of that involvement (Nichols-Solomon, 2001; Jeynes, 2012; Hill, 2009; Fan and Chen, 2001).

The major findings lead Epstein (1995) to develop The Keys to Successful School-Family-Community Partnerships, through her Six Types of Involvement model. The first type is parenting, which involves supporting the student and assisting the school. The second type of involvement is communicating with the teachers and schools. Volunteering is the third type of involvement which includes building rapport by being involved in the school. Learning at home is the fourth type of involvement. It involves continuing the efforts from the classroom to the home environment. The penultimate type of involvement is decision-making where it involves a parent partaking in school wide committees dealing with changes being made in the school. The
last is collaborating with the community and reaching out as a school to understand the environment in which students live and identifying adults who can help provide services to the students to further address their needs.

Researchers have focused on several different areas and have a variety of ideas as to what comprises parental involvement. Chu (2007) listed seven types of parental involvement including parenting, learning at home, connecting, communicating, volunteering, decision making and community collaboration. These types of involvement all have a positive correlation with teachers’ trust in parents and students (Chu, 2007). Baker (1987) describes the concept as a parent becoming involved in the school by communicating with teachers and staff. Baron defines involvement as “home–school partnerships; or parental participation, even some parents as partners” (Baron, 2010). However, the government definition of parental involvement is much more in depth:

“[T]he participation of parents in regular, two-way, and meaningful communication involving student academic learning and other school activities including: Assisting their child's learning; Being actively involved in their child's education at school; Serving as full partners in their child's education and being included, as appropriate, in decision-making and on advisory committees to assist in the education of their child; and, Carrying out of other activities such as those described in section 1118 of the ESEA Section 9101(32).” (NCLB Action Briefs, 2004, para. 5)

Schools across America have Parent/Teacher Associations (PTA) and Student Advisory Committees (SAC) at the high school level for parents, students, faculty, and staff. The purpose of these committees is to come together and work as a team to deal with the direction and
governance of the school, including funding, student discipline, trends in education and
“monitoring of the School Improvement Plan (SIP)” to help the school achieve its preset
achievement goals of the current school year (Greenlee, 2007). The membership of the SAC is to
be comprised of an equal mix of parents, students, faculty, and staff of all ethnic backgrounds
and socioeconomic statuses. All those who serve on such committees are unpaid volunteers.

These types of committees were first formed to give parents a stronger voice within the
school, with the goal of making a greater impact on their children’s education. The
establishment of these parent-friendly committees was one of the first steps toward bringing
parents “back to school” after the exodus of former “stay-at-home mothers” into the workforce
during the late 1980s. More and more women secured full-time employment during this period,
leaving them less time to be involved in their child’s education, which resulted in a loss of a
parental presence and influence within the schools. Even after these teacher-parent groups were
mandated by the state legislature in the 1990s, schools continued to struggle well into the new
millennium to find a balance for dual-working and single parent households that would facilitate
more parental involvement (Masuda et al., 2012).

Parental involvement is pertinent to a child’s education (Lee & Bowen, 2006). No Child
Left Behind (NCLB), an act issued by the United States Government in 2001, was put in place to
close the gap between unsuccessful and successful schools. NCLB strives to provide the
necessary resources to all schools across America, regardless of their socioeconomic status. The
goal is to produce students capable of meeting the new higher standards for K-12 education. (It
should be noted that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that went into law in 2015 gave
state flexibility due to the rigorous plans to improve the education gap.) A portion of the new act
is the involvement of parents, taking into account that the creators of NCLB believed that
parental involvement was just as important as the schools’ involvement with the students’ academics. NCLB mandates that parents be involved in making important decisions for their children at the school level (Oostdam & Hooge, 2012; Caskey, 2009; Nichols-Solomon, 2009; Rapp & Duncan, 2011). This gives parents more of a voice in what is going on in their children’s education, increasing each individual student’s potential for success. However, after years of research indicating the positive effects parent presence can have, there is still a decrease in involvement. Getting parents involved can depend upon the attitude of the faculty and staff of the school and how welcoming they are to parents. In the future, schools that want parents to be more involved should take into account the time constraints of parents when planning events, and be specific regarding what the school requires from them to help the student (Nichols-Solomon, 2001). The sooner a school takes these measures, the more involved the parent will become, which will likely continue throughout the student’s academic career.

In today’s increasingly technologically advanced society, students need the guidance of their parents more than ever. For most exhausted, working parents, the easy option is to have their child watch television or play on the computer to occupy time after arriving home from school until bedtime. The main question, however, is what will be the cost of this parenting approach? The fast pace at which parents are living today has led to the interaction between parents and their children to two main questions: “How was school?” and “What are your grades?” This aloofness toward children on the part of parents ends up boiling over into the classroom and has a strong effect on the child’s education and social life (Oostdam & Hooge, 2012). Students at levels as low as elementary school are now treated as young adults, expected to “keep parents informed” about what is going on in the classroom, when it is really the parents’
job to stay abreast of their child’s performance at school (Caskey, 2009). The days of the
“helicopter parent” hovering over their student and watching every move appear to be over.

In the majority of households today with two adults heading the home, both parents
work—and in a single parent home, the employment of the single head of household is more
imperative. The Bureau of Labor statistics indicated that in 2012, that in a family with children,
67.1% of single mothers were employed, 81.6% of single fathers were employed, and in
households with both parents, 96.3% had at least one parent employed. Given the high level of
employment among parents, the struggle to balance one’s time between work and family is a
common situation experienced by the majority of mothers and fathers today. Those who want to
be involved in their child’s academic life may find it hard to make time to physically go to
school (Rapp & Duncan, 2011). Students in classrooms across America share their parents’ time
with the realities of hard work to keep a roof over their heads and food on the table, so mothers
and fathers often feel forced to settle for maintaining solely the communication area intact out of
the seven steps. In the following discussion, topics related to parental involvement in education
will be addressed, including:

- the Common Core and its effects;
- an examination of how to define parental involvement;
- an exploration of the reasons behind the decrease in parental involvement across
grade levels; and
- the specific case of the involvement of parents of students with disabilities, and of
  students who are racial minorities.
Supporting Concept

An important component of parental involvement in education is trust. For parents to become and remain involved, they must trust the administration, their child’s teacher, and the general direction in which the school is taking students’ education. Consequently, the first way to build trust is to demonstrate to the parents that their involvement in the school is needed and wanted (Oostdam & Hooge, 2012; Rapp & Duncan, 2011). In general, people are less likely to volunteer at an institution in which they do not believe. For example, a republican would more than likely not willingly volunteer for a democratic campaign, because he/she does not have the same ideas or beliefs as the party. Parents behave in the same manner; if they believe that a school will benefit their child, they agree with the majority of the policies, and goals set in place, then they are more likely to volunteer.

At the primary level, dropping their “babies” off at the door to Kindergarten can be a traumatic experience, not necessarily for the student, but rather for the parent. At this point in a parent-child relationship, the parents are generally still the main influence in a student’s life. They have taught the student everything they know. Students walk in the door armed only with the effort and time their parents have invested in them. To the skilled educator, the knowledge that a student possesses upon first entering school is a clear indicator of how much time the parent has spent with the student, and will be used to predict how much time they can expect the parent to spend with them moving forward in the student’s academic career. Some students walk through the door knowing the alphabet, how to spell their own name, and already equipped with the ability to count (Chan, 2009). Even at the elementary level, where parents are welcome at class parties, plays, and field day events, some parents are only seen at “Meet the Teacher” and parent/teacher conferences if their child is struggling. During this transitional stage, parents are
expected to give the teacher their trust to ensure their child is learning and, above all, safe. Platforms like Facebook could be a route used to relieve stress from nervous parents as well as a tool used to create a culture of community.

The best defense is a great offense; this rule applies to getting parents involved at school as much as it applies on the soccer field. In this case, preparing parents before their child even begins their academic journey is important. Registration and enrollment are the perfect opportunity for school administrators to communicate to parents the best ways to help their child succeed and to inform parents about the various opportunities available for them to get involved (Oostdam & Hooge, 2012). Sadly, the decrease in involvement begins at this level. The change begins from the pre-kindergarten period when parents teach children skills directly through interaction at home to the period of formal education when a parent’s role is relegated to checking homework and being the home cheerleader as support (Chan, 2009).

Many students, especially those in middle or high school as they become older and more independent, do not feel the need for parents to be involved (Bracke & Corts, 2012). However, contrary to what pre-adolescents may believe, they perform better academically when parents are present and involved in their education. Epstein’s (1995) research states that a massive drop in parental involvement occurs when students enter the middle school age group. This is a time when the student begins to form his/her own thoughts, opinions, and beliefs. This is typically the time when parents spend less time with their children and try to allow them to “be their own person” (Epstein, 1995). Nevertheless, students are believed to have a higher self-esteem reflection with “increased parental support” (Steinberg and Darling, 2017).

Remaining involved in a student’s life during the adolescent stage can require a delicate balance from a parent of being involved to one being intrusive. Giving their child more
independence is like being between, “a rock and a hard place” for a parent. Gecas’ (1971) study sheds light on the positive influences of parents on adolescents’ academic successes, calling for middle schools to “focus on parent education in services” in order to help parents develop the key skills needed to effectively address issues the student may be facing and to support them in a healthy and encouraging manner. The more resources schools provide to parents to help their children, the more likely they are to use them and, in turn, help their children strive not only for academic success, but also for a better self-reflection (Dempster and Robbins, 2017). Epstein (2001) suggests that schools take the initiative to create programs to teach parents how to help and support their children, which will help the school establish stronger relationships with parents.

As students move into their high school years, parents begin relying on them to be adults without providing them with proper guidance or presenting examples of what this means. By the time a child reaches secondary school, few parents remain active in the educational process (Dempster and Robbins, 2017). Therefore, many students are coming out of high school without the basic tools to succeed (such as study and time management skills), should they choose to further their education. Many students lack basic everyday knowledge like how to write a check or balance a checkbook. At this academic point, the excitement of school has worn off and students understand the basic expectations held by their parents regarding their role as a student. In turn, this means that parents expect their student to be active in his/her own education and to complete the assignments or tasks without being told, giving a hand, or receiving encouragement (Cooper, 2015).

Numerous factors may decrease parental involvement. First, students have more teachers and teachers have more students. Parents do not have the “homeroom teacher” bond they once
had with their child’s elementary school teacher—the sense of trust that had been built with their child’s dedicated teacher is no longer. The rigor of the coursework can also deter parents from being actively involved (Oostdam & Hooge, 2012). As the standards change, so do the levels of increasing difficulties. Parents may not have learned the topics being taught to their student and believe they are no longer useful in the academic sense. Although research proves that parental involvement at the high school level “remains in the best interest of the child” (Phelps, 1999), parents are increasingly uninvolved with the passage of each year.

An additional area to consider is the involvement of parents with students who have disabilities. Through research studying parents of students with intellectual disabilities, Cerreto (2012) found, “parental involvement in transition planning activities for their young adults with ID positively correlated with the amount of time their young adults were included in the general education curriculum.” Cerreto’s findings corroborate the existing research by indicating that parents who are involved in their child’s education give them a better chance at success. Unfortunately, this involvement becomes limited as the student reaches higher grade levels. The reason given for the decrease is because, at this point, the parents believe their child may not be able to achieve additional academics, and thus limit their goals to being able to transition into the “real world” and to function independently (Cerreto, 2012).

One specific issue that is recurrent in much of the literature on parental involvement is the type of community researched. It is widely known that parental involvement is extremely lacking in lower socioeconomic areas; as such, many of the studies referenced in this review have been conducted in impoverished urban communities. After researching the relationship between urban schools and parental involvement, McDermott and Rothenberg (2000) found that teachers were aggravated with the little involvement of parents from the African American and
Latino background in both school and home. Some parents believed they were not welcome to volunteer at the school because of their ethnicity. Typical involvement of African American parents specifically revolved around and was limited to sporting games and meetings with the teacher (Huang, 2008). The reticence of parents from minority ethnic backgrounds to participate actively in their children’s schools demonstrates that the attitude of faculty and staff toward parents can have a direct impact on increased or decreased parental involvement, something that the students do not control.

Educators found that two common problems include an inability to reach parents and lack of physical parent presence at the school. Time restraints placed upon parents can be an issue, so one way teachers are trying to involve parents and keep students engaged is by using Facebook (Mazer et al., 2007). The study topics around this area focus upon student achievement, classroom engagement, and parental involvement. Students and parents are accustomed to logging into their Facebook accounts several times a day (Mao, 2014). By using this knowledge, teachers can have an outlet to locate and reach out to parents quickly and provide help or information about what is going on in the class, an extension of the classroom (Schwartz, 2009). Facebook can be seen as an up-to-date, interactive classroom bulletin board with space for parents, students, and teachers alike to share information with each other about the class and build rapport (Mazer et al., 2009).

Additionally, students may feel as if they are being proudly placed on display and commended for their successes, using the social media sites as motivation to perform higher. Educators can use these instruments to praise students and involve parents as part of their positive praise. Benzies (2011) indicated that parents who were hard to locate outside of the classroom could easily be found on the social media site, Facebook. Since they are easy to locate
and teachers are able to “friend” them as part of their online class Facebook page, the parents are able to see what the students are doing in the class without stepping foot into the physical building. There are studies that show that the Facebook layout allows a friendly, at-ease place for students and parents to gather (Cain, 2011). Since this format, and all social media formats, are so “laid back” and allow the parent and student access to post and comment, the educator would need to diligently patrol the page to make sure the feedback remains pertinent and constructive to the student and class.

Facebook can be used as a peer tool. According to Lampe et al., (2011), by repurposing the social site for classroom communication, it will also allow students to collaborate with one another on assignments. Students, parents, and teachers can create open lines of communication by using the website to post questions about homework, problems with assignments, and general information about the class (Loving, & Ochoa, 2011; Yunus et al., 2012).

Having parents and students on one social media outlet helped to create a cohesive learning environment, a localized place to go for help, and a place for the educator and parents to publicly praise their students. Students using the website have a feeling of belonging to a group and an increased feeling of positivity towards school (Koles, 2012). Most of the questions received feedback and ended up providing ideas useful to building a positive community of communicators (Pimmer, 2012).

**Summary**

The purpose of this review was to provide more detail about the decrease in parental involvement and how it affects the student. The decrease in parental involvement is a threat to students’ realization of their full academic potential. The lack of parental involvement at all stages of a student’s academic journey from pre-kindergarten to their senior year in high school
can drastically change the outcome of a student’s success. As the earlier presented research indicates, students thrive when they have a parent or parents who “show up.”

Students need their parents. They need them to be their teachers at home, to be their tutors, mentors, cheerleaders, and guidance counselors. Once the school door closes for the day, it once again becomes the parent’s job to provide for the child at every point in their educational journey. Contemporary society has changed drastically over the past three decades, and so have the needs of the students and the rigors of their education (Benzies, 2011). It is widely known that the more support a student has, the better the student performs. Research has shown that all students perform better when they have the solid triad: the parent, the teacher, and the attitude of the school to support them.

As has been demonstrated, a decrease in parental involvement negatively impacts the student. Studies throughout this review support the need for parents to be involved in their student’s education, but most of this research also notes the lack and decrease of the parental presence in the educational life of the student. Benzies (2001) notes that although schools understand there has been a steady decrease in parental involvement, they continue to maintain their traditional, outdated stance, failing to adapt to the changing society. Changes could be made by offering parents programs in how to support the student, academic support and techniques for the parents, and adapting school events to accommodate parents’ work schedules so that they may be able to attend daytime academic events as well as the typical, traditional events held in the late evening hours. The face of the traditional parent has changed, and thus the same needs to be said about the changes in expectations and traditional ways of thinking about our schools. With change and adaptability by using social media, for example, it is likely that
parents will renew their involvement and students will have an increased chance of being well-rounded and becoming high achievers.
Chapter 3: Methodology and Methods

The purpose of this section is to discuss the way the study was undertaken and the corresponding data collection methods. This chapter includes defining the target population that was used for the study, trustworthiness of the target population, and the data itself. This chapter discusses the methods chosen for the study and its effect on the overall research. It first starts by discussing the overview of the methodology, followed by stating why the methodology selected is useful for this kind of research. This chapter will restate the research questions and justify the theories associated with the approach taken for the study. The research topics included how parents and teachers use social media to communicate, if parents have a better understanding of their child’s classroom climate because of it, and what issues parents face when trying to communicate with their child’s teacher(s).

Overview of Methodology

For this doctoral thesis, an interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was employed. As parents become more versed with smartphone technology and less able to participate in the classroom, this study will help shed light on using a creative means of communication and give parents the ability to voice opinions of communication options (Thompson, Mazer, & Flood Grady, 2015). By using this methodology, interviews were conducted to better understand parent beliefs about the use of Facebook after their experiences during the school year (Merriam, 1998). This research focused on how using Facebook, by both parents and teachers, increased the communication between the two parties, and gave parents a virtual outlet to “see” the classroom climate as well as the activities taking place in the classroom.
Research was conducted through participant interviews. The data was collected and analyzed like that of the traditional qualitative research, but instead of giving the “black and white” numbers approach of research, Noor (2008) conducts interviews to be more holistic in nature and less structured. While this allowed for more documentation and the ability to be broken down further using data to find emerging themes, the process of information occurring naturally is withdrawn, leaving the reader with a more structured information.

**Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this interpretative phenomenological analysis was to investigate, through a parent’s eyes, the use of Facebook as an alternative communication between parents and teachers.

**Positionality Statement**

As a child growing up in the eighties, classroom life was different than today. Parents were always on campus, at events, volunteering, helping in the classroom, doing special projects, and helping the teacher. During my eleven years as an educator, I have seen the number of parents physically present in the classroom dwindle down. This is not to place blame on anyone, but our society and economy is far different now than when I was a child, and families need both parents working to financially survive.

Parents have difficulty finding time to spend in the classroom and certainly do not want or need to use their hard-earned time off to spend an hour with their child’s teacher(s). So, as an educator, I began asking myself, how could I help parents? How could I let them know what was going on in the classroom? How could I keep them involved if they were not able to be present? I began to understand that, with the change of society, the educational communications we were allowed to use needed to adapt alongside our changing generations of parents as well.
Data Collection Plan

Participants
The IPA studied was completed at two separate elementary schools within the same county in Florida. Five participants were selected from each class to participate and were interviewed to provide data for the interpretative phenomenological analysis. Participants in this study consisted of the parents of students of elementary age, ranging from kindergarten to first grade. Criteria for participants included: (a) being part of the selected school district, as well as the teacher’s class (b) parent must have access to internet (c) parent must have access to an existing Facebook account. According to research, there is a significant need for parents and communication for students in primary grades, and a positive effect on the academic performance (Englund, 2004).

Recruitment, Access, and Consent
The first step to recruitment was to gain permission to complete any research before the data collection began. As Union County is a smaller school district in Florida, permission was granted quickly through email contact with the superintendent and then after a verbal discussion with the principal of the school. The steps to this process, along with Northeastern University, were followed according to their directions and guidance. Once permission had been granted to complete research, the principal presented the research study to the teams of teachers to seek out employees, based upon grade level. Email addresses for teachers willing to volunteer were then forwarded, and contact with the teacher was made. After an explanation of the purpose for the research was given, teachers were asked to post on their classroom Facebook page, asking for volunteers to participate in the study. Parents were then emailed to schedule a time to complete a one on one interview using Skype, Facetime, GoToMeeting, or over the phone. (Please see
Appendix B for a copy of email). Once a date and time were scheduled, the researcher contacted the students’ parents asking for those who would like to volunteer as participants.

The second step was to gain consent from each participant. Consent forms were sent via email to participants. (Please see Appendix C for a copy of the consent form). This form explained the role of the researcher and participant, as well as the scope for the interview process of this research. The consent form was also reviewed prior to the interview with the participant and, at that time, verbal consent was given. Following this, the interview process began. Since all participants were over the age of 18 and their children were not be interviewed, no consent was needed for the students. The participants were interviewed at little risk to the individual, and all rights were followed according to, and in adherence to, the IRB process of Northeastern University.

**Data Collection**

According to Creswell (2013), research was conducted through interviews of those participating in the study. Information was collected and analyzed like that of the traditional qualitative researcher, by the researcher conducting one on one interviews done at the school in the teacher’s classroom, via Skype, Facetime, GoToMeeting, or over the phone to be more available and flexible to work with parents based on their availability. While this allowed for more holistic interviewing, documentation and data were broken down further to find emerging themes, leaving the reader with more structured information. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was the methodology used to gather the most in depth and descriptive collection of data as possible. During this study, it was accomplished through focusing on a small collection group of parents and completed one-on-one, as phone interviews, and open-ended questions were used to allow parents to elaborate and include responses that were notable during their interviews.
Completing this research as an IPA was the most rational choice because it enabled those outside the traditional classroom setting to understand the unique perspective of the parent, and gave the ability to voice an opinion on using Facebook as a means of communication.

**Data Storage**

Data collected as part of this research will remain confidential regarding those who participated. The individual’s identities have been replaced with pseudonyms and have been used to further keep the privacy of all people intact. Interviews were recorded and then transcribed using Rev®. Rev® is a transcribing company employed to take recorded interviews and write them out, which allows transcripts to be used in conjunction with data software to find trends within the participants’ interviews. Access to transcribed interviews was given to the researcher and the advising chair, to continue to keep the information about the participants confidential. Confidentiality was enforced by encoding each file with a secure code.

**Data Analysis**

Data analysis requires a researcher to be attentive to the little details. For this study, data analysis was carried out using Smith, Flower, and Larkins’s (2009) step by step explanation of how to build an interpretative phenomenological analysis research, as most other methodologies do, defining the research question to help create the purpose behind the overall research (Walsham, 1995). The researcher then decided the trends, repeated phrases, and how to streamline the data collected to create a depth of interpretation for the reader (Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Osborn, M., 1997). Being able to understand the validity of this qualitative research study came through the in-depth interview process and trends. This was something the researcher needed to consider before commencing. While research methods may be qualitative or quantitative, almost all IPA involved research completed through interviews, the collection of
data, and documentation, but the amount can create generalization, or a more valid conclusion (Eisnhardt, 1989).

Analysis of the data was to be deciphered by the researcher and what lens it chose to “see through.” Yazan (2015) uses seminal authors to explain the analysis process in detail, comparing each route taken by each author to show the difference and the end results in the same methodology process. Yin’s (2009) focus was on examining the data to find “categories” within the data. The steps include designing the tool, questioning, units of analysis, and then interpreting his findings. Smith’s (2011) qualitative approach focused upon using the participants’ own experiences to drive the research, conducting a theoretical framework, then following through the collected data by identifying problems (Koles, 2012). The analysis process was like Yin’s in that the data was collected and then used to find purpose and clearer understanding. However, the format in which Smith found meaning was more holistic by allowing the participants to guide and change the data to incorporate more of a rounded data set. Each author and those using IPA as their methodology to follow may have all had a different approach as to how the data was analyzed, but the end results all gave readers a better understanding of the research and the participants.

**Trustworthiness**

The trustworthiness of the study was ascertained by having one person to monitor the process. The researcher carrying out the interview was required to produce the necessary papers to boost the credibility of their data collection. The interviews were produced in small-scale numbers from each class, but completed one on one, to ensure every participants’ voice and opinion was heard and recorded. The idea behind this direction was to increase in-depth understanding of the oppressed. The target group was motivated to give their best answers or
rather honest information to reduce any defects in the study. The researcher presented the correct information to ascertain whether or not parents believed Facebook was a helpful alternative for teacher and parent communication. The biggest threats to the study were dishonesty, bias, or restraint from the parents. Additionally, the parents may refuse to participate in the interview because it is time-consuming. Conversely, many parents prefer their virtual communication, such as Skype, over physical face-to-face interviews. As such, steps were taken to complete interviews so that the parents were able to participate without needing to physically be present during their interview.

**Limitations**

An underlying theme of IPA data collection is that many are completed through interviews (Larkin, M., Watts, S., & Clifton, E., 2006). Part of IPA research is to not only to hear but also to learn from the voices of participants in all different sociocultural spectrums. This gives everyone the ability not only to have an opinion but also to voice it and have it heard, as well as counted in the data, no matter the state of their personal situation (Smith, 2009). Conducting interviews “holistically” allowed participants to have a voice, which provided an in-depth knowledge and first hand perspective of those involved. Before conducting interviews, the researcher prepared how the data would be collected and interpretation of trends was to be completed. To create solid research, the researcher must be insightful enough to understand the problem or practice in which doing this interpretative phenomenological analysis would drive the research gathered.

Data can be collected in a variety of ways and several seminal authors’ techniques differ from one to another. Stark’s (1995) collection of data is defined, almost ridged, compared to other seminal authors. Rigged is the process which includes using an instrumental case and
creating categorical aggregation to establish patterns and allowing for the collection of interview data to be “holistic.” However, a limitation could be the parents having a small amount of time to be interviewed. For example, Smith (2011), another seminal author, collected data through interviews, observations, and documentation. Using a natural approach, Smith’s descriptive IPA studies focused on the overall understanding of the participant, and not changing the environment to complete the study, a “real world” collection of data. This practice can be completed in a face-to-face interview without boundaries, but with exploratory questioning. While this may be useful for Smith’s research, many parents did not have time to sit down for a face-to-face interview, and thus opted to complete interviews in an alternative manner.

**Role of the Research**

The role of the research was to ensure that parents, with the addition of teachers, had proper communication and good relationship to bolster education. An understanding of how educators can use social media outlets as a form of communication, based upon the opinions of parents, can allow growth in the area of using these outlets. The study’s role was also to ensure that research of the highest quality was achieved. This included ensuring that parents gave honest answers. It also included facilitating parents and teachers involved in the study to give accurate results. The main reason for the research was enhancing education in the country through the use of technology. The dynamism requires the education system to further embrace technology in class so that the parent and teacher can effectively and easily communicate.

**Human Ethics**

The research ensured that the confidentiality of every individual that took part in the study was kept secret. Confidentiality was enforced. The study did not harm any person in any way. Pseudonyms were used to further keep the privacy of all people intact.
Summary

The collection of data was formed by conducting one on one interviews with parents. The collection of the data looked to answer some of the questions such as what could be done to improve relationships between parents and teachers. Additionally, it attempted to establish the understanding of parents’ involvement in the communication process and understanding of the classroom climate presented via social media. The paper took considerable measures to ensure that the data provided was valid and any individual could trust the research. Measures were taken to ensure that confidentiality was maintained while keeping the names of the participants a secret using pseudonyms.
Chapter 4: Findings

Review of the Study

Introduction
This research was based around the personal opinions of parents who have children in a classroom where Facebook was utilized as a means of alternative communication. Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis was chosen as the methodology for this study to give the parents participating an opportunity to have a robust, lengthy interview that permitted them to have a voice and express their thoughts about this form of communication. For this research, the theoretical framework was focused around using Epstein’s theory of parental involvement and the importance of communication to build partnerships with the school, teachers, and parents (Epstein, 1995). All names of participants, teachers, and school will remain confidential to give privacy to those with students who are still actively in this grade level and in these classes.

Criteria for Interview Participation
The initial contact was made through the district office to ask permission to complete research within the school system. Once the superintendent, via email, granted permission, a phone meeting was set up with the principal of the participating elementary school to review the research, approach, and what was needed to complete the study. During team meetings, the principal asked if any teacher would like to volunteer. Teachers’ email addresses were forwarded to the researcher, along with permission to contact the teacher. The teachers were asked to create a Facebook posting asking for parent volunteers. The volunteers could choose their method of contact as well as the day and time they preferred to be interviewed. All who agreed to be interviewed were sent the consent form prior to the interview. This gave them time to review the form and ask any questions they might have. The participants were reminded at the beginning of
the interview that they would be recorded and that if, at any point, they did not wish to continue, they could let me know and we would halt the questioning process.

Participants for this research were comprised of volunteers from K-2 classrooms within a district and school. The teachers at the school had been using Facebook prior to this study, and had previously created the closed and private groups and pages based upon the students and parents present in this school year. Those in the group could see the postings. Teachers were asked to post contact information for volunteers to be able to reach out and schedule a time convenient for them to be interviewed. All those willing to participate chose to complete their interviews over the phone, although face-to-face times, as well as additional technologies, were offered. Only those who were part of the teacher’s Facebook group could see the listing for volunteers for this study.

Upon completion of the interview, participants were asked if they wanted to add additional comments, which gave them an additional opportunity to speak freely about their views of social media as a communication tool. After the interviews were completed, all participants were sent a debriefing email.

**Demographics**

There were eight participants in this study, seven females and one male, and all were Caucasian. All participants were given pseudonyms to protect their privacy. One participant, Stevie, was a stay at home mom with twin boys, while the others had jobs. Annie, Gladys, and Mick worked from home, and Gloria was required to travel for work regularly. The age range for all the participants was from 31-44. This was important to understand, as they were all in the age range to be considered millennials and xennials. These two generations saw the invention of
the internet, social media, as well as ever changing usage of smartphone technology as teenagers into adulthood (Wyn & Woodman, 2006).

Research for this study was conducted in Union County, Florida. Union County is the eighth smallest county in the state of Florida, with a household income median of $37,778. This makes 22% of the residence living at or below the poverty level (Census, 2016). Although the county is on the lower socioeconomic end of the scale, academically, the schools outperform other counties in the state. According to the Florida Department of Education (2016), the state average on the standardized Grade 3 Language Arts exam was a score of 59, while Union County’s was 69, and while the Grade 3 Math state average was a 63, the county’s average score was an 87.

During the interviews, the participants were asked about their personal use of social media in their daily life and how comfortable they felt using social media. This gave an understanding at the beginning of the research interviews as to if the parent had used social media outlets prior to having their child in the classes that utilized Facebook. All parents felt comfortable with social media and used it daily; they not only Facebook, but several other outlets as well. Below is an overview of the participants:
Stevie had twins in the class, they were her only children, and they focused their time on playing outside and used leisure time away from the computer and tablets. As we spoke, she explained that her children like to play outside, “anything with a ball,” but used technology for academic purposes, for example, spelling games. She used technology regularly, with her preferred social media outlets being Facebook and Instagram. Although she worked at the school and was able to speak with the teacher face-to-face, she found added value in the Facebook page. Newsletters were sent home, but the Facebook pages gave easily-accessible information about what was going on in the class. She mentioned that the newsletters that were sent home were harder to keep up with. The Facebook page was “right there on my phone.” When important information in paper form was sent home, as a reminder, the teacher placed a
post on the Facebook page to let parents know to check backpacks so these papers were not overlooked. Stevie really believed that using Facebook was a good form of communication that teachers could use to help keep parents informed and felt as though, in another class without a Facebook or other social media page, she had to keep up with what was going on in the classroom on her own and had to be the initiator of communication.

Annie had a daughter in first grade and a younger son not yet in school. They also liked to play outside when not in school but were mainly indoor children. She said about both of her children, “they are very imaginative.” In addition to playing outside, her children shared an iPad. Her daughter used it for reading, math, and doodling games, as well as watching kids YouTube videos and playing princess games. During the day, Annie used technology for her job. Previously, she used social media to help with direct sales and had a Facebook page dedicated to those grieving the loss of their pets. She felt very comfortable using technology and social media outlets. Annie’s preferred methods of social media were Facebook and Instagram, and used them, “more so than I’d like to admit.”

For the use of Facebook in the classroom, she appreciated that she had the option to interact with the teacher in this form of communication. Although she would have preferred to be able to have more face-to-face contact, she was not afforded the time due to her work schedule and not being able to physically be in the classroom. A key point made was the ability to check the page as part of her normal daily routine, and the fact that not having to open or log into another app or website saved time in her busy schedule. Another feature Annie liked was the ability to see pictures, and know that no one else, with the exception to those in the private group, could see the posts with images. Another example Annie gave was when students had field trips that she was unable to attend, it gave her peace of mind and a sense of security to
know they had gone to and come back from the trip and that everyone looked genuinely happy. The preference was to have the group closed so that only parents and those invited were allowed to see pictures, for privacy reasons. In addition to the page, teachers sent home newsletters, but the feeling was that these newsletters were “stiff,” “stale,” and “generic” due to how they were formatted. These newsletters could not be as up to date or as spontaneous as social media.

Gladys had two children, one in second grade and the other in voluntary pre-kindergarten. Both liked to play with Legos and Xbox, as well as iPads, iPods, and desktop computers, which was used for schoolwork. The parents had previously set security controls on the technology devices her children used to ensure they could not venture into areas of the internet they should not be seeing. Technology was very important to this family. Gladys and her husband worked from home, which involved using technology daily, including teleconferencing. Their daily work could not be completed without the use of technology. She felt very comfortable using social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest to keep up to date with activities, but also for entertainment purposes.

Facebook for Gladys was used mainly for updates about the happenings of the classroom. Communication with the teacher for private conversations dealing strictly with her daughter, she believed, should be mainly through email and she felt she could initiate these conversations to the teacher, or face-to-face, due to the flexibility of her work hours. The class updates, in an area at which she was already looking for entertainment purposes, was more convenient to her than having to log into personal email, because it was not for entertainment purposes. Gladys also saw using Facebook as a way of fostering a community and a connection with the teacher. During the year, she was able to see the posting from the teacher without having to reach out in other ways to try to see what was going on. However, the need to help her children build a
knowledge of how to use social media as a communication tool appropriately for security reasons was important to her. Creating an understanding that they should use caution and pre-taught skills as they get older and more versed in the use of social media for themselves would help them stay social media safe.

Carly’s family liked to play with cars and had many animals to keep them busy, but also enjoyed spending time on their Kindle Fires to play reading games and other video games. The use of technology was part of their nightly routine as a reward system to make sure the kids got their nightly chores completed.

Carly knew how to use Instagram and Snapchat, but her “go to” social media outlet was Facebook. For now, her personal use does not worry her as much as the future use of her children, which makes her a bit nervous. The communication she relied on for the classroom Facebook page were the reminders the teachers posted. She used examples such as, “remember to bring in an item for show and tell,” or themes of the week. Sending home information as a printout was sometimes difficult to keep up with, and usually “stays in the folder.” Notifications from the Facebook group were set to pop up on her phone, which helped to remind her to look in the folder or turn in whatever needed to be submitted for her child. Carly loved that Facebook was convenient and could be accessed quickly on her phone. Relating back to when she was in the same grade level as her daughter, she verbalized the change in the times of how parents could now participate without being present. Carly shared:

“Seeing pictures of me on the playground or seeing the types of activities we did in the school, in the classroom, and her teacher posts photos every day of the stuff they're doing and you feel like you get to be a part of your kid's life in a different way that some people didn't, like in the past, people weren't able to see.”
Additionally, it helped to prompt conversations at home when her daughter was done with school. Instead of simply asking how her day was, she could ask about specific activities she saw her daughter doing in a picture. That allowed her to have a more detailed conversation with her instead of just accepting the common response of, “I don’t know” when she asked what her daughter did in school during the day. This form of communication also gave her the ability to check in with her child’s teacher about her child’s anxiety at the beginning of the year and felt she could send the teacher a message during the week and sometimes weekend. She did not expect the teacher to always respond, but when she had time she would, which helped to relax her daughter and ease both of their minds.

Forming communications with other parents was also a plus for this parent. During the beginning of the year, when all the students were meeting and making new friends, she could quickly meet the other students’ parents. Carly felt that other parents were more approachable through social media and it was not as awkward and was much less intimidating to pick up the phone to say, “hello, my daughter and your child were in the same class”.

Carole was a parent with three children, one being 25 years old, and two in the primary grades, first and third. This gave her an insight of having children before and after social media came to light as a communication tool. Her younger children liked to be involved in church, played with Legos, and her daughter was beginning to take acting classes. They liked to use technology in many ways, but one trend they enjoyed was watching YouTube channels that showed other children playing and exploring new toys. It included the creative side of painting and they used the videos as guides to do the same with their own home and toys. They also enjoyed playing games such as Minecraft but used technology for academic areas such as reading. During the interview, Carole explained that she used social media to see what other
people’s children are into, not for comparison in standings, but to see the interest and what else was out there for her own children to explore. Seeing what kids were reading and what new book series were out was one example. She used Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and knew how to use Twitter, but preferred Facebook as her main social media outlet.

One appreciated area for Carole were updates about what was happening in the class that day. For example, “one child built something in class, and I talked to my daughter about it later when she got home.” However, the updates for that day are not the only thing she appreciated; Carole enjoyed being able to know what was going on that day, but also see what was happening that week, month, and any other upcoming events to help her keep up, as well as keep an eye on what papers needed to be submitted. To help with this, she set up notifications for when the teacher posted to the group so that she never missed when a new post was added. Carole said that, because of work, she could not be there all the time, but, “I wanna know what they're doing, and I want to be a part of that.” It also gave her a deeper sense of what skills were being taught, and not just a quick overview. In comparison to when her older son was a primary level student, she explained that she would have to go searching through his backpack and maybe find a paper that was due several weeks before. The ability to get information almost instantaneously made a huge difference and it gave parents a resource and an additional option to which they could be involved.

Gloria, a mother of three, began by saying they used technology more than they should. She had one middle school student, a seventh grader, and two younger children, one in first grade and the other an infant. The middle schooler used her laptop for schoolwork and gaming consoles in her free time. Her youngest daughter used an iPad for educational games and Kids YouTube, but her youngest was too young to really be interested in technology. She made a note
that in the past, too much screen time used to be a negative thing, but since mostly everything people do now is somehow related to being in front of a screen, using technology for education, educational games, communication, and entertainment is not as frowned upon anymore. She did still monitor their usage of time as well as what they were allowed to be doing on their devices.

Regarding her personal use of social media, Gloria felt comfortable using it while understanding that it is always changing and updating, but she was able and interested in keeping up with the changes. Gloria’s preferred social media networking platforms were Instagram and Facebook.

For classroom communication, Gloria used email and found the teacher to be very responsive to questions, but felt grateful that she had the option to contact the teacher through the Facebook group if needed and found this was her preferred method. She liked having the option of having both the newsletters and Facebook group that kept her up to date with activities and information about what the students were learning in class. She often found paper contacts were crumpled up, torn, and misplaced at times and was not as easy as opening up her Facebook application on her phone. Gloria did not have the instant posting notifications set up for the group, but she did check the Facebook group daily when the “red bubble notification” showed up to see if there was something time sensitive of which she needed to be aware such as signing up to be a chaperone. When she was not able to be physically involved, Gloria liked to see videos or pictures of activities and what the students were learning. Without the Facebook group, she felt she would not get complete information about what was being taught. Instead of hearing her daughter say, “I had a good day at school,” Gloria already knew that her daughter had learned about the letter “F”. The visuals aspect of Facebook through pictures also helped Gloria see her daughter’s facial expressions and whether she was happy and smiling or if she had fun at school that day. Gloria would prefer communication to be streamlined to using Facebook and further
explained that some messages from the school are not always relevant to her, just her daughter, but the Facebook group was always relevant because it was the teacher making the posting and it gave her a better understanding of what was happening in the class. It also gave her the feeling of being there when she could not, due to working and not being able to attend assemblies or events.

Gloria added at the end of the interview that she found the Facebook group useful for her younger daughter, but would caution the use of social media by educators of older, middle and high school students. Bullying was not an issue for her daughter, but she could see where there would be an open opportunity for it to occur. By setting standards of how Facebook and other social media outlets should be used, in reference to not letting students bully each other on these classroom sites, was an important issue to be reviewed. Another concern pointed out that Facebook and other social media outlets have location services, which could be a security issue for anyone but especially minors, because, “I don't know what type of people are out there.” As for now, Gloria felt comfortable with how the teacher was communicating and appreciated the convenience and ease of the Facebook group.

During this interview, Mick, a father of two, gave some description of his older son and younger daughter’s use of technology, saying that his son does have a cell phone with service, but his daughter’s phone was mainly for games. He does supervise their use of technology while they used their devices to watch YouTube and play games such as Minecraft. Mick categorized himself as an avid user of social media, with Facebook and Instagram being the top choices. The purpose for his social media usage was more for information and news related articles to see what was happening in the world at a quick, up to the moment speed. He also used it to keep in contact with family as well as entertainment purposes.
The bulk of class information was obtained by Mick through use of the Facebook group. “Classroom portals, face to face contact, and emails all have a place in parent communication, but for information about what is going on in the class at an up to date timeframe is more pervasive,” he felt the Facebook group was what kept him better informed. Notification alerts were set on his phone to let him know as soon as the teacher posted anything new, even if he could not look at it immediately after it was posted. This gave Mick a feeling of being “a fly on the wall,” by letting him know what his daughter was doing at that moment in the school day, in real time, and as he said, “opens the door to the classroom.” Having the group a closed group was important to him as he explained he wouldn’t want any information, pictures, or videos posted for the rest of the world to see and would have serious reservations if it was available for outsiders to view. He enjoyed the easy and accessibility of having information delivered to him and saw this timeliness was important, so that he didn’t have to wait for planners to come home, or a newsletter to be printed. He also believed it allowed parents to take part in the learning process and could create more parental involvement, if done correctly. One area to focus upon is the specific posts themselves. Mick wanted to make sure they were always about the topic of education, the student’s classroom, and nothing else. Another idea mentioned about posting on Facebook was visual cues. Mick used the postings to interpret what was going on in the classroom. “In the past, parents were not able to see how their children felt about being in class, or topics being taught,” but Mick went on to explain, “I get an understanding of how she's feeling and doing for that day. I can see it on her face.” In closing, he wanted to make note that Facebook was a great tool to use, but sometimes face-to-face was needed to truly build rapport with the teacher.
Debbie, a mother of one, said her daughter loves YouTube, and probably watches too much, but it is her choice of entertainment. She added that Kids YouTube had filters and, as a family, they also set filters so that nothing inappropriate could be seen. She used technology daily for work. Facebook and Instagram were her preferred methods of social media to keep up with friends and family who are not close enough in the area to visit, as well as news updates.

The classroom teacher posted regularly, which allowed her to keep up with what was going on in the classroom and she mentioned that she monitored it daily. Facebook was useful for her because she felt it was not invasive and gave her the freedom of checking in when she had time, but knew she was as up to date as any parent could be. “Other forms of communication sometimes got lost in the process; emails got lost in the spam and papers got lost in backpacks or they forget to be checked.” One example Debbie gave for how Facebook was helpful were the reminders to return paperwork. It gave her the time to get the paperwork filled out and completed to be turned in without having to do it as they were “running out the door.” Debbie felt Facebook was a great way to communicate. However, it should not replace individualized conversations; she also wanted to make sure she could speak with the teacher face-to-face. For now, at this age range, she saw it as a useful tool, but thinks it could “get a little dicey maybe if you have students interacting with teachers via social media when they are a little bit older.” Teachers using social media to communicate with students could create delicate situations, so parents needed to be hands-on and educate their children about the appropriate usage of social media.

Themes of Interviews
Based upon Epstein’s (1986) theory of involvement, three key areas were identified during these interviews: communication between school and parents, collaborating with the community, and learning at home. A research question posed earlier in this study was how parents and teachers communicate using a platform such as Facebook. Communication between the school and parents can be a challenge due to parents’ schedules, but the convenience of the teacher using Facebook created an “in the moment” setting for parents to be involved and made communication more flexible. The findings also answered the research question of aiding a parent’s understanding of classroom climate. Interviews with parents created a theme of visualization, an area that was not able to be tapped into using traditional newsletters. Parents also wanted to be supportive of what their child was learning in the classroom, but, as they stated, they were not getting details for their child or what was being taught, so they were lost in how to help. By using Facebook postings to present topics, students were learning, parents favorably expressed one of Epstein’s (1986) theory of involvement, learning at home, and knew how to support their student.

Technology was used in each family’s home on a daily basis. All subjects interviewed felt comfortable using social media and all participants said that Facebook was their preferred outlet. Several themes emerged from the interviews conducted. Each theme will be explored and explained individually beginning with most prevalent: convenience, up to date, privacy, and visualization.

“I’m Already On It”
All the parents spoke about how convenient it was for them to be able to have the teacher’s Facebook page ready to be accessed. Gloria said, “I’m already on it, so it makes it easy.” Most of these parents worked and seemingly had long hours to which some expressed
they were not able to go to school for all the events, but they did have their phones with them. Facebook also allowed documents to be uploaded to postings, so making those same papers parents are chasing down in their child’s backpack so easily available gave the parents another option to use as a tool.

“Facebook Is a Lot More Spontaneous”

As a collective voice, participants shared that being in the “now” was important to parents, and Facebook had allowed them to do that more so than any other form of communication, aside from physically being in the classroom. The postings were automatically organized in the timeline, so the parents could keep up with what needed to be submitted with due dates. This helped them keep track of what and when events are happening. Annie explained, “Facebook is a lot more spontaneous.” By the teacher posting information about the classroom and upcoming events, the parents felt more a part of the classroom. Many of them said chasing down newsletters was not as helpful as a daily post from the teacher. In addition, many said they could go onto the Facebook group to see what their child was learning and used it as an added way to communicate with their child when they returned home from school what was being taught to help reiterate the skill.

“Closed It Makes Me Feel Much Safer”

One area of caution was privacy. The parents in this research group really appreciated the fact the Facebook group was private and only those given permission by the teacher are able to see the posting. By keeping the group private the teacher had the freedom to include pictures, videos, and additional classroom specific information. These postings made the parents feel more a part of the class and as a community. One parent mentioned it was a way of allowing parents to introduce themselves to the parents of another children in the classroom, either online or face
to face, without feeling intimidated or awkward, because she knows the family was in the class.

Out of the eight parents, five brought up that the group was closed, and Mick went on to explain “closed it makes me feel much safer.” While several parents found the Facebook page to be useful for their primary aged children, others mentioned having guidelines for when students get older and are of age to have their own Facebook accounts. Some were worried about online bullying while others were concerned about the appropriateness of communication between students and teachers.

“Fly on The Wall”

An additional theme was the visualization aspect of using Facebook. Several parents explained that by seeing pictures and videos of their children, they could see how they were feeling, which is the emotional and usually unseen side of communication while students are in the classroom. By posting pictures, parents could see their children’s faces and expressions during the learning process. They could see if they were engaged, excited, feeling good, and generally happy.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

Discussion of Findings

At the beginning of this research, the six types of involvement, according to Epstein (1986), were introduced: parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with community. The purpose of this research for doctoral study was aimed to understand if Facebook was a helpful platform to improve parental involvement as an alternative means of communication. Since the county does not have an engagement specialist, social media director, and the education technology specialist works at all the schools within the district, the results of this research gave an idea of what tools parents want to be able to form strong understanding of their child’s classroom and build rapport with teacher. This study sought to give parents a platform to voice their opinions, not only about whether they liked having the option of using Facebook, but how they used it as part of their communication with the teacher.

The use of social media was an option for teachers and supported in this school district. While the district allowed their teachers to use social media platforms, it was not a requirement placed upon the teachers. However, some form of parent and teacher communication was required. This could be in the form of newsletters sent home once a week or month. Parents overwhelmingly gave positive feedback about being able to use Facebook to help keep track of updates and activities going on in their child’s class.

Implication of Findings

This study gave light to how teachers and parents could communicate outside traditional formats. The collective voice of these parents was that they were as busy as ever, but still wanted to be involved in their child’s life and education, and Facebook had been an option they enjoyed. The major finding about using Facebook was the convenience. Newsletters might not actually
make it home, and when they do, most parents either must go hunting for them or they may forget about them all together. By making classroom information and learning topics available on a site parents are already visiting for their own personal use, it gave them a sense of community and involvement, without isolation.

A challenge could be having a set standard for all educators to use such a platform. Parents find additional ease in not having to have another log in or application on their computer and phone to remember to visit, but if not all educators in the school use it, they would still have to log into other communication routes possibly for their other children. They want a “one-stop-shop” for their busy lives. While a reward for using Facebook was less preparation on the parents to remember to log in, or search a backpack to keep up with papers, it also meant less paper used by the school.

Postings on an individual’s social media account may typically paint a picture of being happy and having a great life. The same can be said for the classroom Facebook page as well. Postings of students playing on the playground, enjoying a fieldtrip, or even learning skills of the week can all be written with underlining positive tones. According to a study conducted by Donna Freitas (2017) social media is self-marketing, and people naturally want to market themselves, or in this case, the teacher’s classroom, in a positive light. Although teachers did have to keep FERPA in mind and the protection of student’s grades, parents also wanted any serious issues, as Debbie defined the situation, to be handled one on one with the parent and teacher, and never put on Facebook. Social media platforms can give a false sense of positivity, but a challenge for teachers could be keeping the balance of all positive postings and keeping the parents truly informed.
An additional theme that presented itself was setting up notification alerts. These reason this was important to the study and research was because it showed parents have the want and “need” for immediate involvement in their child’s school life. They want to know what is going on as it is going on, and as soon as possible. In order to do that, some parents turn to social media notification technology to remain as up to date as possible.

An area that was a challenge for the parents was concerned about privacy and the evolution of their children’s use of social media. When children are in primary grades, parents feel comfortable with a teacher’s use of Facebook, mainly because the child is not yet of age to have their own Facebook account. The use of social media for children moving into young adulthood is a progression that should be assisted by parents, in order to teach not only the proper etiquette for social media, but personal safety. Parents did not want their child’s picture posted for strangers to view, so teaching them about privacy settings was a must, according to parents, when they become of age to participate in social media. In addition, their social media presence and behavior has an effect on their future. By parents teaching the understanding of what a digital footprint is and can do to any future career they wish to obtain, adolescents may be more cautious as to what they post (Mostaghimi and Crotty, 2011). Learning this skill early will help students, especially those who are college bound, as universities are beginning to use Facebook to enhance teaching and learning on campus, (Junco, 2012).

In 2013 Facebook and its foundation, The Education Foundation, published a twenty-page guide titled, “Facebook Guide for Educators, A Tool for Teaching and Learning” (Fordham and Goddard.) Along with this printable guide, Facebook has an established Facebook page specifically for educators. On August 3, 2018, an article was posted on their page to help parents
and educators know the best ways to teach their children about navigating the digital world, complete with lesson plans. The option for parents to help educate their children is available if wanted.

Facebook is a free social media website, but the cost of creating postings for the class also creates a log of data analytics based around the content of the postings. The collected data could then be used to narrow the topic of what Facebook will then generate as an advertisement for the teacher and parent to see within their newsfeed. Data collection can be a double-edged sword in educational postings. If a teacher posts about learning phonemic awareness during the week, and an advertisement shows up on the parent’s newsfeed for a product helping teacher skills in phonemic awareness, it could help strengthen learning the concept at home. However, the posting has unwarranted a marketing advertisement to sell a product to the parent.
Contribution to Theory

Epstein’s (1986) study of parental involvement included communication as a key component. With this study, it indicated how parents who were raised in the era of the internet and social media use it to communicate and how they prefer it as a tool over communication techniques of the past. As communication and the standards change within our society, so too should the methods of communication educators have with their stakeholders, specifically parents.

The lack or unknown reasons as to why parents are becoming less involved make the need for educators to be able to reach out in alternative routes more important than ever before. To be able to give parents the feeling they are involved and are not missing out on their children growing up, alternative communication routes are a good way to connect. The main reason is because it is where the parents are already “at” and makes less work for them to have to try to keep up.

Contribution to Practice

A contribution to the educational practice is the understanding that parents find Facebook as a useful tool for teachers to communicate. Since Facebook was the focal point for this study, educators should examine all options, as social media continually updates and changes. Nothing can replace face to face communication and parents physically being present in their child’s classroom. Parents see Facebook as a tool, but still want the option to meet and speak with the teacher when a more serious circumstance is present.

Educating teachers on how to properly use Facebook and other platforms appropriately is a start to introduce new teachers or teachers leery of using alternative communications. Trainings, or certifications provided by the state, school, or district would help to eliminate any
questionable areas in which inappropriate behaviors may exist and help ease parents’ concerns when it comes to student protection and privacy on the end of the educators.

Privacy concerns were an area continually discussed by parents. Although they were happy with how the teachers had the Facebook pages set up for their students at this primary age level, they had concerns about when they grow older. Fodeman and Monroe (2009) explained that 60-70% of seventh grade students had Facebook accounts. Many technology classes in schools do not teach the usage of social media or understanding of a digital footprint. To support the need for individual growth of students and their exploration of social media, a shift in topic matter during technology classes to teach about social media could help students learn about the impacts of social media. To help, Facebook created an online handbook to help educators teach about social media. This online handbook includes modules as follows: Security, Privacy and Reputation, Identity Exploration, Positive Behavior, Security, Community Engagement, Content Protection, and Safety and Wellbeing.
Limitations
The number of participants, while small and yet appropriate for an interpretative phenomenological analysis, gave in-depth understanding of their opinions, but the participants are parents who were previously on Facebook, and the teacher who had previously started their classroom Facebook groups. The limitations are that of having participants already using this means of communication as a tool. Therefore, parents who are not using or able to use Facebook were not represented in this study.

Future Research Directions
Facebook is one platform of social media, one that this generation of parents prefers, but as generations continue to evolve, this could easily change. In addition to other platforms of communication further research could be excused by looking through a different lens of social media. The rise of Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter by younger generations opens the door to engage in open conversations as they come of age into parenthood of younger generations. The importance of being able to complete additional research on this topic would give those in education insight into building a better support system for students.

The use of technology and keeping up with the changes in our society has been a struggle for education, not because those in education cannot keep up, but because of the limitations caused by deeply embedded cautions in our educational systems. Having open lines of communication is important, yet education systems can be hesitant in allowing educators to use alternative communication routes to form rapport with parents.

With the changes in technology come the changes in society. Virtual learning, homeschooling, and online learning is becoming more sought after by parents to create more life-skills-related practical learning, such as socializing. Meanwhile, traditional schooling loses
dominance in a new digital world (Collins and Halverson, 2018). These researchers explore such challenges in their “vision for the future” of a coming second educational revolution, a revolution being led by technology in which parents are choosing for their children. This allows educators to use communication tools parents prefer, a way of meeting them on the same playing field.

When considering the needs of our parents and student populations, we should also consider socioeconomic statuses. Social inequalities and social media communication is another area to focus research attention. Participating in social media requires either a smartphone or computer, as well as internet access. While many businesses and public locations offer free internet connections, the ongoing costs of the output electronics are not always free. Additional studies can be created to see if schools and families with a lower socioeconomic status are left out in the digital and communication “cold” by not being able to partake, and how those families can be reached to be included in the learning community.

Discovering the usefulness of Facebook as a parent’s tool to gain knowledge about their children’s affairs in the classroom was a challenge. The usefulness was determined through a variety of ways. The real question however was if there was a connection between the students’ classwork, parent involvement and understanding of the classroom, and the use of Facebook. With the high number of parents on social media, it was evident that there was some usefulness of Facebook to their education, whether through improved connection with teachers and other parents or keeping up with the latest information around school. The parents gained insightful knowledge from Facebook regarding one’s child, especially classroom communication.

**Conclusion**

A shift in communication from face to face to now face to screen can be seen as a global
phenomenon. We can see this in daily activities just by viewing common functions of those around us, and how we continually interact with our phones and other technological devices. Through the themes of this research, and the voices of parents, they clearly want to be involved and be a part of their child’s education. Unfortunately, most did not have as much time to volunteer and be physically present on campus. While Facebook is a great tool to be able to feel connected to the learning community, parents did not believe there would ever be a replacement for face-to-face conversations with their child’s teacher.
References


Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989). Building theories from case study research. Academy of management review,


Junco, R. (2012) The relationship between frequency of Facebook use, participation in Facebook


Oostdam, R., & E. Hooge (in press). Making the difference with active parenting; forming educational partnerships between parents and schools. European Journal of Psychology of Education. DOI: 10.1007/s10212-012-0117-6


C. Congram, & J. Shanahan (Eds.), The services challenge: Integrating for competitive Advantage. Chicago: American Marketing Association, (pp. 79-84).


Appendix

Appendix A: IRB Approval

For NU IRB use:

Date Received: ________________________________  NU IRB No. __________________
Review Category: ______________________________ Approval Date ________________

APPLICATION FOR APPROVAL FOR USE OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS IN RESEARCH

Before completing this application, please read the Application Instructions and Policies and Procedures for Human Research Protections to understand the responsibilities for which you are accountable as an investigator in conducting research with human participants. The document, Application Instructions, provides additional assistance in preparing this submission. Incomplete applications will be returned to the investigator. You may complete this application online and save it as a Word document.

If this research is related to a grant, contract proposal or dissertation, a copy of the full grant/contract proposal/dissertation must accompany this application.

Please carefully edit and proof read before submitting the application. Applications that are not filled out completely and/or have any missing or incorrect information will be returned to the Principal Investigator.

REQUIRED TRAINING FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

Under the direction of the Office of the Vice Provost for Research, Northeastern University is now requiring completion of the NIH Office of Extramural Research training for all human subject research, regardless of whether or not investigators have received funding to support their project.

The online course titled "Protecting Human Research Participants" can be accessed at the following url: http://phrp.nihtraining.com/users/login.php. This requirement will be effective as of November 15, 2008 for all new protocols.

Principal Investigators, student researchers and key personnel (participants who contribute substantively to the scientific development or execution of a project) must include a copy of their certificate of completion for this web-based tutorial with the protocol submission.

☐ Certificate(s) Attached
☐ Certificate(s) submitted previously – on file with the NU’s Office of Human Subject Research Protection

A. Investigator Information

Principal Investigator (PI cannot be a student)  ____________ Dr. Kristal Clemons

Investigator is: NU Faculty  ______  NU Staff  ________  Other  ____________
College: College of Professional Studies
Department/Program: Education
Address: 360 Huntington Ave. Boston, Massachusetts 20115
- Office Phone: 850-629-9132 Email: k.clemons@northeastern.edu

Is this student research? YES X NO ____ If yes, please provide the following information:
Student Name: Cortney Denman Anticipated graduation date: May 2018
Undergrad ____ MA/MS ____ PhD ____ AuD ____ EdD ____ DLP ____ Other Degree Type ____
College: Professional Studies
Department/Program: Education/Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership
Full Mailing Address: 1774 SE 27th Loop Ocala, FL 34471
Telephone: 352-208-2554 Primary Email: denman.c@husky.neu.edu
Cell phone: _______ Secondary Email: cortneydenman@gmail.com

B. Protocol Information
Title: Social Media and Parent Communication #DOESITHELP
Projected # subjects: 8-10
Approx. begin date of project: January 15, 2018 Approx. end date: December 1, 2018

It is the policy of Northeastern University that no activity involving human subjects be undertaken until those activities have been reviewed and approved by the University's Institutional Review Board (IRB).

- Anticipated funding agency/source for project (or none) 
- Has/will this proposal been/be submitted through:
  - NU's Office of Research Administration and Finance (RAF) 
  - Provost 
  - Corp & Foundations 
  - Other 
- Grant Title: 
- Grant ID: 

C.

Will Participants Be: Yes No

Does the Project Involve: Yes No
D. What are the goals of this research? Please state your research question(s) and related hypotheses.

Goal:
The goal of this research is to collect data from interviews conducted to better understand the use of Facebook as communication between parents and teachers.

Research questions:
1. How do parents and teachers communicate through a social media platform like Facebook?
2. Does interaction through social media platform like Facebook aid in a better understanding of their child’s classroom climate?
3. What are the common communication issues that parents face when trying to communicate with their children’s teacher?

E. Provide a brief summary of the purpose of the research in non-technical language.

The purpose of this research is to give parents the ability to voice their opinion on the use of Facebook in the classroom as an alternative communication tool.

F. Identify study personnel on this project. Include name, credentials, role, and organization affiliation.

Dr. Kristal Clemons, NEU Faculty, primary investigator
Cortney Denman, NEU student, secondary investigator
G. Identify other organizations or institutions that are involved. Attach current Institutional Review Board (IRB) approvals or letters of permission as necessary.

Union County School District, Florida; Verbal consent given by Superintendent and Principal.

H. Recruitment Procedures

Describe the participants you intend to recruit. Provide all inclusion and exclusion criteria. Include age range, number of subjects, gender, ethnicity/race, socio-economic level, literacy level and health (as applicable) and reasons for exempting any groups. Describe how/when/by whom inclusion/exclusion criteria will be determined.

Inclusion: parents of students within previously selected classrooms, ranging from kindergarten to first grade (parents of 5-7 year olds), subject goal 8-10 parents, both male and female parents, all ethnicity/race, all socio-economic level, and all literacy level. The inclusion criteria will allow all who have students enrolled in the selected classes to participate.

Describe the procedures that you will use to recruit these participants. Be specific. How will potential subjects be identified? Who will ask for participation? If you intend to recruit using letters, posters, fliers, ads, website, email, PsyLink description, HIT, etc., copies must be included as attachments for stamped approval. Include scripts for intended telephone recruitment.

Upon IRB approval, I intend on contacting previous peers to whom use Facebook as elementary level teachers. Then with further approval contacting their students’ parents via email to see if they would like to participate. Once I have gathered volunteers I will email them the scope of participation, as well as a consent form.

What remuneration, if any, is offered?

I will offer $10 amazon gift cards to those willing to participate.

I. Consent Process

Describe the process of obtaining informed consent*. Be specific. How will the project and the participants’ role be presented to potential participants? By whom? When? Where? Having the participant read and sign a consent statement is done only after the researcher provides a detailed oral explanation and answers all questions. Please attach a copy of informed consent statements that you intend to use, if applicable. Click here for consent form templates.

If your study population includes non-English speaking people, translations of consent information are necessary. Describe how information will be translated and by whom. You may wait until the consent is approved in English before having it translated.
Consent forms and the scope of the interview will be emailed to the participant volunteering, as well as read aloud prior to beginning the interview. Their role will be present to the participant as a depth of knowledge to give researchers a better understanding of parent’s opinions. (Consent for attached for bottom of IRB form).

If your population includes children, prisoners, people with limited mental capacity, language barriers, problems with reading or understanding, or other issues that may make them vulnerable or limit their ability to understand and provide consent, describe special procedures that you will institute to obtain consent appropriately. If participants are potentially decisionally impaired, how will you determine competency?

This study will not include these populations.

*If incomplete disclosure during the initial consent process is essential to carrying out the proposed research, please provide a detailed description of the debriefing process. Be specific. When will full disclosure of the research goals be presented to subjects (e.g., immediately after the subject has completed the research task(s) or held off until the completion of the study’s data collection)? By whom? Please attach a copy of the written debriefing statement that will be given to subjects.

The debriefing process will be concluded at the end of the study’s data collection. This will include a written explanation of the finding, and explanation of the study. The debriefing will be sent to the participants, teacher of the classroom, as well as the head administrator of the school. (Debriefing statement below IRB application).

**J. Study Procedures**

Provide a detailed description of all activities the participant will be asked to do and what will be done to the participants. Include the location, number of sessions, time for each session, and total time period anticipated for each participant, including long term follow up.

Participants will be asked to meet in the teacher’s classroom at either within the Union County School District after school hours (during the hours of 3:30-6:30), for one session to be interviewed and recorded one on one. This will take roughly 20-30 minutes, depending upon the participant’s length in responses. Follow up will include the debriefing statement, which will be sent via email.

Who will conduct the experimental procedures, questionnaires, etc? Where will this be done? *Attach copies of all questionnaires, interview questions, tests, survey instruments, links to online surveys, etc.*
Cortney Denman, NEU student, will conduct the interviews as the experimental procedures. This will be completed at the school of the teacher.

(Interview questions listed below).

K. Risks

Identify possible risks to the participant as a result of the research. Consider possible psychological harm, loss of confidentiality, financial, social, or legal damages as well as physical risks. What is the seriousness of these risks and what is the likelihood that they may occur?

There are no identifiable possible risk.

Describe in detail the safeguards that will be implemented to minimize risks. What follow-up procedures are in place if harm occurs? What special precautions will be instituted for vulnerable populations?

Participants will be told they may withdraw from the study at anytime.

L. Confidentiality

Describe in detail the procedures that will be used to maintain anonymity or confidentiality during collection and entry of data. Who will have access to data? How will the data be used, now and in the future?

All interviewees will be told prior they will be recorded during their interview. Those recordings will then be saved on my personal computer, and sent to Rev to be transcribed. Once they are placed in written form and sorted for trends, all information will be encrypted and password protected, with passwords only being provided to Dr. Clemons and myself.

How and where will data be stored? How will electronic data be encrypted? When will data, including audiotapes and videotapes, be destroyed? If data is to be retained, explain why. Will identifiers or links to identification be destroyed? When? Signed consent documents must be retained for 3 years following the end of the study. Where and how will they be maintained?

Data will be stored on my personal hard drive, and password protected. All collected data and recordings, and link to identification will be destroyed upon successful defense of dissertation and completion of this program.

M. If your research is HIPAA-protected, please complete the following;

Individual Access to PHI

Describe the procedure that will be used for allowing individuals to access their PHI or, alternatively, advising them that they must wait until the end of the study to review their PHI.

Research is not HIPAA protected, N/A.
N. Benefits

What benefits can the participant reasonably expect from his/her involvement in the research? If none, state that. What are potential benefits to others?

Benefits to participant:
None.

Potential benefits to others:
An understanding of a parent’s opinion of using Facebook as a form of communication with their child’s teacher, and if they find it beneficial.

O. Attachments

Identify attachments that have been included and those that are not applicable (n/a).

X Copy of fliers, ads, posters, emails, web pages, letters for recruitment *
N/A Scripts of intended telephone conversations*
X Copies of IRB approvals or letters of permission from other sites
X Informed Consent Form(s)* (see our templates for examples)
X Debriefing Statement*
X Copies of all instruments, surveys, focus group or interview questions, tests, etc.
X Signed Assurance of Principal Investigator Form (required)
X NIH Human Subject Training Certificate(s) (required if not already on file at HSRP)

*(Approved forms must be stamped by the IRB before use)

P. Health Care Provision During Study

Please check the applicable line:

_____ I have read the description of HIPAA “health care” within Section 4 of the Policies & Procedures for Human Research Protection. I am not a HIPAA-covered health care provider and no health care will be provided in connection with this study.

_____ I am a HIPAA-covered health care provider or I will provide health care in connection with this study as described in Section 4 of the Policies & Procedures for Human Research Protection. This health care is described above under “Study Procedures,” and the Informed Consent and Health Information Use and Disclosure Authorization form will be used with all prospective study participants.

If you have any questions about whether you are a HIPAA-covered health care provider, please contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection at n.regina@neu.edu or (617) 373-4588.

Completed applications should be submitted to Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection with the exception of applications from faculty and students of the College of Professional Studies, which should be submitted to Kate Skophammer, IRB Coordinator for CPS.

Nan C. Regina, Director

CPS applications only
The application and accompanying materials may be sent as email attachments or in hard copy. A signed **Assurance of Principal Investigator Form** may be sent as a scan, via fax or in hard copy.
Appendix B: Recruitment Email

Subject Line: Participants being sought for an education research study

Greetings.

My name is Cortney Denman and I am a doctoral student working with Dr. Kristal Clemons at Northeastern University. We are conducting a research study about classrooms using Facebook. I am emailing to ask if you would like to be a participant in an interview for this research, which can be completed face to face, phone, or via Skype. Participation is completely voluntary and your answers will be anonymous. If you are interested, please respond back by: (Date to be update upon IRB approval), and interview to be completed (date to be updated upon IRB approval). If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me denman.c@husky.neu.edu. Thank you for your time.

Regards,
Cortney Denman
Graduate Student Northeastern University
Appendix C: Consent form
Northeastern University, Department of: Name of Investigator(s): Dr. Kristal Clemons, Cortney Denman

Title of Project: Social Media and Parent Communication #DOESITHELP

Request to Participate in Research We would like to invite you to take part in a research project. The purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of parent’s thoughts as to the use of Facebook as a form of communication between parents and teachers.

You must be at least 18 years old to be in this research project.

The study will take place via phone, facetime, GotoMeeting.com, or Skype, and will take about 20-30 minutes. If you decide to take part in this study, we will ask you to complete a one on one interview about your thoughts on using Facebook to communicate with your child’s teacher.

There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to you for taking part in this study.

There are no direct benefits to you for participating in the study. However, your answers may help us to learn more about adapting and alternative communications in education.

Your part in this study will be handled in a confidential manner. Only the researchers will know that you participated in this study. Any reports or publications based on this research will use only group data and will not identify you or any individual as being of this project.

The decision to participate in this research project is up to you. You do not have to participate and you can refuse to answer any question. Even if you begin the study, you may withdraw at any time.

You will not be paid for your participation in this study, however dinner will be provided during your interview.

If you have any questions about this study, please feel free to call Cortney Denman, 352-208-2554, denman.c@husky.neu.edu, the person mainly responsible for the research. You can also contact Dr. Kristal Clemons, 850-629-9132, k.clemons@neu.edu, the Principal Investigator.

If you have any questions about your rights in this research, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 260 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@northeastern.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish.

You may keep this form for yourself.
Thank you.
Cortney Denman
Appendix D Debriefing form

Thank you for your participation in today’s study. Researchers and those in education are interested in understanding the impact of using Facebook as a communication tool. Some studies have indicated that, for example, students perform better academically when their parent is able to communicate with the teacher. This is a relatively new area of research, and has been rarely examined as the usefulness in the primary education levels. Our experiment today concerned the thoughts and opinions of parents to gain a better understanding to whether teachers using social media to inform and communicate the classroom climate with parents is useful.

All the information we collected in today’s study will be confidential, and there will be no way of identifying your responses in the data archive. We are not interested in any one individual’s responses; we want to look at the general patterns that emerge when the data are aggregated together.

Your participation today is appreciated and will help educators discover alternative ways of communication with parents. We ask that you do not discuss the nature of the study with others who may later participate in it, as this could affect the validity of our research conclusions. If you have any questions or concerns, you are welcome to talk with Dr. Kristal Clemons at k.clemons@neu.edu of the NEU College of Professional Studies. If you have any questions about subjects’ rights, you may contact Nan C. Regina, Director, Human Subject Research Protection, Mail Stop: 560-177, 260 Huntington Avenue, Northeastern University, Boston, MA 02115. Tel: 617.373.4588, Email: n.regina@northeastern.edu. You may call anonymously if you wish. If you would like to learn more about this research topic, we suggest the following references:


THANK YOU AGAIN FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.
Appendix E: Interview Questions

- What is your current age?
- How many children do you have?
- Tell me about your child: how old is he or she, what grade is he in, what does he like to do outside of school?
  - Does he use technology?
    - If yes, how does he use it? Do you do any time of activities do you do together involving technology? What type do you feel you need to supervise?
    - If no, do you?
- Tell me how you incorporate technology into your life.
  - Do you use social media outlets?
- How do you use social media outlets?
- How comfortable do you feel using social media?
- Tell me about the interaction you have with your child’s teacher? Email, phone, text, website, portal?
- How do you know what is going on in your child’s classroom? Activities, tests, important dates?
- Do you monitor your teacher’s Facebook page?
- What are your feelings about this form of communication?
  - Can you give me an example?
  - Describe your thoughts on this experience.
  - How did you feel?
- Do you feel using social media keeps you updated in your child’s classroom?
  - If yes, tell me about an experience?
  - If no, how so?
- How do you feel about the teachers use of social media to communication with parents?
- How is this experience different from others forms of communication?
  - Can you give me an example?
  - Describe your thoughts on this experience.
  - How did you feel?
Appendix F: Copy of NIH Human Subject Training Certificate

Certificate of Completion

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) Office of Extramural Research certifies that Cortney Denman successfully completed the NIH Web-based training course “Protecting Human Research Participants”.

Date of completion: 06/13/2015

Certification Number: 1782706