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Secondary Educator Experiences Using Social Media to Influence Students' Empowerment Skills

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Walden University
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Abstract

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by

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MA, University of St. Thomas, 1994

BS, College of St. Thomas, 1987

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education: Learning, Instruction, and Innovation

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Abstract

Social media is a sociopolitical phenomenon with the potential to impact people's psychological empowerment. The problem is that little is known about the experiences of secondary educators who teach students to use social media in empowering ways for social change. The purpose of this study was to explore secondary educator experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills to understand diverse opinions about community issues and proactively work for social change. This study's conceptual framework was connectivist theory that learning occurs through online connections and the psychological empowerment principle that people feel in more control when they understand issues and work for social change. This study's research questions centered on social media instruction to understand issues, discover diverse opinions, learn decision-making skills, and publish to influence social change. A basic qualitative approach was used with semi-structured interviews of seven secondary educators from the United States who used social media for sociopolitical purposes with students. Participants were recruited from online professional learning networks. Data analysis included open coding of verbatim interview transcripts to determine common themes. Key thematic findings for this study revealed that secondary educators teach their students to use social media to locate credible information, discover diverse opinions, establish a positive digital footprint, learn decision-making skills, amplify student voice, and increase civic engagement. The findings of this study could contribute to positive social change by influencing pedagogical practice and educational policy.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who gave me the love and emotional support I needed to finish my doctorate journey. First, my husband, Mike Brandt, made me so many amazing dinners, and I loved hearing, “I’ve got dinner and dishes; you go work on Walden.” Thanks to my son, Dr. Joe, who inspired me to start down the dissertation journey on the day I watched him being hooded at his medical school graduation. It was that day that I thought: “I want a hood even though I am nearing retirement.” Thanks to my daughter Sarah for providing me so many ideas and articles about internet misinformation. Her work with librarians and educators at NewsGuard, a company that fights misinformation by providing news source credibility ratings, provided me many insights into credible online engagement. Thanks also to my daughter-in-law Kenna whose nightly FaceTime calls brightened my day and gave me a break from my dissertation to sing and talk with my Grandson, Everett. His smiles, laughter, and love inspired me to work for a better future for everyone’s grandchildren.

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Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Effective civic engagement and citizenship often requires psychologically empowered young people to work for social change in their communities. Social media is a powerful tool young people can use to learn information and advocate for sociopolitical issues in their local communities (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Farmer, 2020; Gedik & Cosar, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Greenstein, 2012; Hodges, 2017; Kasra, 2017; Rutledge et al., 2019). Social media skills and civil online dialogue are especially important during a time of political polarization and news misinformation (Greenhow & Chapman, 2020; Manca et al., 2021; Nettlefold & Williams, 2021). These online, social media skills have also become essential during the COVID-19 pandemic which revealed that social media platforms could be effective and engaging teaching tools during distance learning (Greenhow & Chapman, 2020; Tajik & Vahedi, 2021). Even though these social media skills are needed, secondary educators often neglect to teach students the skills necessary to use social media in transformative ways for social change (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Huguet et al., 2021; Nettlefold & Williams, 2021; Rutledge et al., 2019). In my study, I analyzed and described the experiences of secondary educators who have used social media with students for social and political engagement to address a gap in the field of digital literacy and education.

In this chapter, I provide information about my study. I begin with background information on the prevalence of social media in young people's lives and the educational

applications of social media in secondary schools. This is followed by the problem statement, purpose, research questions (RQs), and conceptual framework that informed my study. Additionally, I discuss the nature of the study which involved using a basic qualitative approach, in addition to key definitions, assumptions, scope and delimitations, limitations, and significance of the study for educational practice and policy to bring about social change.

Background of the Study

Young people who know how to use social media effectively may effect positive social change because they are empowered to advocate for social and political issues as engaged citizens. Since 53% of U.S. adults use social media to engage in sociopolitical activity (Anderson et al., 2018), using social media effectively in a media-saturated world is now becoming an important part of being an engaged citizen (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Farmer, 2020; Gleason, 2018; Manca et al., 2021; Nettlefold & Williams, 2021). However, many young people do not engage with the political process through social media because they are afraid of sharing controversial opinions (Gleason, 2016). Secondary educators could help students address that fear by teaching responsible and effective social media skills. With those lessons, secondary educators may influence young people's psychological empowerment skills so that they use social media in transformative ways for social change. Therefore, it was important to study how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

Secondary educators are beginning to use social media in translational, transformational, and transcendent ways (Magana, 2017). Educators use social media in translational ways for communication and online discussions in closed groups (see Abualrob & Nazzal, 2020; Colwell et al., 2018; Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019; Loomis, 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2018; Wu, 2020). Translational social media use also involves students learning to identify credible information online (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018; Horn & Veermans, 2019; Johnson & Ewbank, 2018; Kuruliszwili, 2018; Little, 2018; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). Educators use technology at the transformational level through the production of digital artifacts. Student blogs are a common transformational tool where students showcase their digital artifacts, discuss course content, and receive feedback online (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Casey & Evans, 2017; Kornbluh, 2019; Magana, 2017; Scheihing et al., 2018). Transcendent technology uses include educators employing inquiry design, product creation, and service-learning (Gruno et al., 2018; Kornbluh, 2019; Miller, 2018; Wargo & Clayton, 2018). Even though educators see success using social media, they face challenges like dealing with inappropriate content, student safety, polarized political discourse, time management, and educational efficacy (Burtch, 2018; Li et al., 2018; Thunman & Persson, 2018).

Secondary educators are also beginning to incorporate teaching practices for improving student intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral psychological empowerment. Intrapersonal psychological empowerment opportunities for students include self-advocacy, student voice, and leadership (Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018; Eisman et al., 2016; Gutuskey et al., 2016; Mathé, 2018; Wargo & Clayton, 2018).

Interactional psychological empowerment involves strategies that allow students to build supportive adult relationships and understand multiple perspectives of community issues (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Kornbluh, 2019; Weybright et al., 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2018). Behavioral psychological empowerment involves strategies that allow students to understand community issues and proactively work toward social change (Eisman et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Overall, secondary educators can influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

Understanding the literature involving social media integration and best practices for improving student psychological empowerment helped me address literature gaps to explore in my study. Researchers have studied teenagers and their use of social media for information gathering, discussions, and mobilizing activities (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Hodges, 2017; Kasra, 2017). However, there is a gap in the literature involving secondary educator experiences using social media and its connection to psychological empowerment. More research was needed about secondary educator experiences with intentional skill development in terms of using social media to locate credible information, build relationships, engage in meaningful political discourse, and bring about positive social change. Through my study, I contributed to filling this gap in the literature by providing secondary educator descriptions in these areas.

Problem Statement

The problem of this study was the lack of information about how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students'

psychological empowerment skills. A literature gap exists regarding secondary educator experiences using social media and its connection to psychological empowerment. Filling this gap was especially important since using social media effectively is a needed skill in an age when civic engagement increasingly relies on social media. Even though a societal need exists for educators to include social media skill development in the curriculum, secondary educators are hesitant to use social media with students because of privacy concerns, cyberbullying, time management, and polarized political discourse (Burtch, 2018; Casey & Evans, 2017; Li et al., 2018; Thunman & Persson, 2018). Therefore, more research was needed to provide educators with pedagogical guidance to meet these challenges and provide ways to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Stronger psychological empowerment skills could influence students' social and political engagement. By analyzing described experiences of secondary educators who have used social media with students for social and political engagement, my study addressed a gap in the field of digital literacy and education. The study could also lead to social change by providing insights for educators to reform their pedagogy and include social media strategies to provide their students with the skills needed to use social media to advocate for local community issues. The study could also inform educational policy by showing students' need for social media skill development.

Research Questions

The four RQs of this qualitative study were used to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

RQ1: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to help students understand current and local community issues?

RQ2: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach students to discover diverse opinions about current and local social and political issues?

RQ3: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach decision-making skills about current issues affecting students' local communities?

RQ4: How do secondary educators describe their instruction to students in terms of how to publish social media content to be proactive regarding current and local social and political issues?

Conceptual Framework

Principles of connectivism and psychological empowerment supported the RQs and basic qualitative approach for my study. Siemens (2005) said connectivist theory involves learning occurring within complex networks that provide diverse opinions. Connectivism further stresses the importance of social media tools in terms of promoting connections between people and communicating thinking (Del Moral et al., 2013). My study was framed by the concept that students construct knowledge by being connected with others. For the purposes of this study, connectivism was used to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to connect students

with others regarding social and political issues. The following two constructs of connectivism related to my study's RQs: diversity of opinions and decision-making as learning (see Siemens, 2005). These two components of connectivism also guided data collection and analysis in my study.

The second component of the conceptual framework for this study was Zimmerman's (1995) psychological empowerment model. Zimmerman said psychological empowerment occurs when people feel in control of situations through understanding sociopolitical issues and proactively working for social change. Zimmerman's research incorporated ideas from the Sociopolitical Control Scale, a survey to assess how people feel about their power in social and political systems (Peterson et al., 2011). My study was framed by the concept that students can influence their psychological empowerment when they proactively seek to understand and solve community issues. The psychological empowerment model guided data collection and analysis for this study related to two psychological empowerment constructs: being proactive and understanding community issues. These two constructs were selected because secondary students' psychological empowerment can be influenced in these two areas through inquiry-based learning where students explore community problems and work to develop solutions (see Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017). These two components supported my study's RQs, interview questions, and data analysis plan.

The conceptual framework of connectivism and psychological empowerment were selected to guide my study because the intersection of the two has implications for secondary educators who use social media to help students build digital literacy skills to

understand and communicate about their world (see Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019). Chapter 2 includes a more thorough explanation of each of the models as well as connections between connectivism and psychological empowerment as they relate to my study.

Nature of the Study

I selected a basic qualitative approach to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. This approach was appropriate because I was seeking a practical understanding of teacher experiences to inform the field of education and provide pedagogical direction (see Patton, 2015). Twelve participants were selected from my professional learning network who had experience using social media with secondary students. Through interviews with educators, who indicated that they met inclusion criteria, data were collected to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. I conducted data analysis of interviews through iterative open coding (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I used Dedoose, a qualitative data management program, to assist me in the coding process. Chapter 3 details more specifics of my study's methodology.

Definitions

This list of definitions guided my study:

Connectivism: A theory that learning occurs within complex networks, and those networks provide a way to foster diverse opinions and connect ideas across time and space (Siemens, 2005).

Psychological empowerment: A conceptual model that frames how people perceive personal control, proactive approaches to life, and understanding of one's sociopolitical environment (Zimmerman, 1995).

Secondary educator: For the purposes of my study, I defined secondary educator as a professional who works with secondary students directly in the classroom or indirectly as a media specialist or instructional coach.

Secondary student: For the purposes of my study, secondary students were defined as either middle or high school students. In the United States, that is typically sixth through 12th grade.

Social media: Any internet-based Web 2.0 application used to connect people through user-generated content (Obar & Wildman, 2015).

Sociopolitical engagement: People's perceptions regarding their control and capabilities to change their communities (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991).

Transcendent technology use: Technology use that makes global connections in such a way that students achieve unexpected learning outcomes. Transcendent use involves innovation through inquiry design, product creation, and service-learning (Magana, 2017).

Transformational technology use: Technology use that requires technology to share online creations with a global audience. Transformational use includes production of online products that reach a global audience as well as creating online products that contribute to the learning of others (Magana, 2017).

Translational technology use: Technology use that could have been completed in an analog way such as a digital worksheet. Translational technology use involves online communication with a closed social media group and media consumption where students learn to locate credible information online (Magana, 2017).

Assumptions

I assumed that the conceptual framework for my study was appropriate to address this study's methods and findings. Additionally, I assumed that participants truthfully answered questions during participant selection process. I assumed that all interview participants provided accurate and honest descriptions of their experiences with secondary students and using social media as part of instruction. Finally, I assumed that all participants were engaged during interviews and transcript reviews. Since my basic qualitative study involved interviews and relied on participants accurately describing their experiences, these assumptions were necessary for the context of my study.

Scope and Delimitations

This basic qualitative study involved exploring how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. This focus was chosen because social media and youth political engagement are growing phenomena, yet there is a gap in the literature in terms of how secondary educators are intentionally teaching skills so that students are prepared to be engaged and effective citizens in the social media arena. For data collection, I limited my participants to 12 secondary educators whom I could reach from my professional learning network or a university's participant pool and had experience with using social media with students

for sociopolitical purposes in the last 5 years. Participant selection helped define the scope of the study, as I did not explore primary or elementary educators, nor did I explore higher education faculty.

One delimitation of the study was that participants were limited to educators who work with adolescent students since that is the age when students commonly begin using social media and are ready for skill development in that area (see Gedik & Cosar, 2020; Horn & Veermans, 2019; Rutledge et al., 2019). Participants were limited to my online professional learning network and the online participant pool of a university's center for research quality. This delimitation of online recruitment was justified because a study on social media would have potential participants active online. Another delimitation of my study was participants' understanding of the definition of the term social media. Social media platforms are constantly changing, and educators have different understandings of what platforms might be considered social media. To address this delimitation, I acquainted participants with the Obar and Wildman (2015) definition of social media in the recruitment Google form and follow-up emails to set up interviews.

In qualitative studies, the transferability of findings becomes more trustworthy with purposeful sampling and inductive coding for analysis. Transferability also improves when researchers include thick descriptions to support themes and describe participant context (Anney, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my study, I employed purposeful sampling to select knowledgeable participants, inductive coding to discover themes in the data, and thick descriptions so that readers could decide on the transferability of my findings.

Limitations

Although findings from a basic qualitative study are limited and not generalizable, trustworthiness occurs when a researcher uses a rigorous methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For this study, I addressed limitations through interview guides, verbatim transcripts, a codebook, and engaging in constant comparison by analyzing data after each interview. Furthermore, I used thick descriptions and a transparent presentation of findings to improve credibility and address the study's limitations (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

My study had a few limitations. One limitation of the study was the participant boundary, which was limited to people in my professional learning network and people who found my study through a university's online participant pool. Another limitation involved the time I spent with each participant. Because educators worldwide have faced an increased workload given the implementation of distance learning during COVID-19, I limited my participant time commitment for data collection to 1 hour for the interview and another 15 minutes for participants to review the transcript. Additionally, no observations of classroom practices or follow-up interviews were part of this study.

Another limitation of my study was the potential for fraud. Although I assumed honesty from my participants, I was aware that in online research, participants can more easily misrepresent their identity and volunteer for studies even if they do not meet inclusion criteria (see Chandler & Paolacci, 2017; Hydock, 2017). In fact, Hydock (2017) found that a "small but nontrivial portion of participants" in online survey studies "misrepresented their identity for the chance of financial gain" (p. 1566). Patton (2015)

also warns that compensation for participation can impact data quality. Since my methodology did not include a step where I verified through an employer that participants were in fact a secondary educator who used social media with students, participants could potentially fake or exaggerate their experiences. In a struggling pandemic economy, the $20 Amazon gift card, which I gave as a thank you gift, could be enough of an enticement for participants to exaggerate their experiences, claim to meet inclusion criteria, and complete an interview. Overall, the transferability of findings from qualitative studies are limited, and I addressed those limitations by discussing lessons learned instead of conclusions in my findings. I also provide thick descriptions of participant context and interview data to help readers decide on transferability.

Significance

Social media is used as a major platform for political discourse, dissemination of information, and social change efforts, and young people could benefit from intentional skill-building in this area. Social media's impact was especially felt during 2020 and 2021 in the United States. For example, the Black Lives Matter protests after the killing of George Floyd were largely organized through social media (Heaney, 2020; Hockin-Boyers & Clifford-Astbury, 2021; Pillay, 2020). During the COVID-19 pandemic, social media was used to spread misinformation about the disease, prevention, and vaccines (Baines et al., 2021; Brill & Crovitz, 2020). Additionally, on January 6, 2021, protestors at the U.S. Capitol relied on the Parler social media platform to coordinate their activities (Munn, 2021). Much of the world also saw a rise in hate and extremism because of social

media exploitation (Pantucci & Ong, 2021). Since social media greatly impacts society, educators would benefit from learning pedagogical practices for using social media.

Educators have not ignored social media in their instruction. Secondary educators have used social media with students in empowering ways. However, they often neglect intentional skill development regarding social media for social change (Manca et al., 2021; Nettlefold & Williams, 2021; Rutledge et al., 2019). Educators should no longer neglect this area of skill development since young people would benefit from learning to use social media effectively and appropriately for social and political empowerment.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. The findings in this study could impact practice in the fields of education and digital literacy by providing educators with strategies for using social media to help students use social media to improve communication, information literacy, collaboration, and citizenship skills. This study's findings could also impact educational policy makers who might be considering educational standards for using social media effectively and appropriately. These potential pedagogical and policy impacts could ultimately lead to social change if social media platforms are used more effectively.

Summary

In this chapter, I have shown that social media has become a common phenomenon in the lives of educators and students. I have also shown that the educational implications of this growing phenomenon have not been fully explored. Secondary educators have begun using social media in translational, transformational, and

transcendent ways with their students. For example, educators have implemented translational technology uses by conducting discussions in closed social media groups. They have used transformational strategies by moving artifact sharing to digital platforms like blogs and wikis. A few educators have also implemented transcendent practices to allow students to learn and advocate for community issues. Even though these examples of educator experiences exist in the literature, studies focus on one educator or program. No studies exist that explore common themes that emerge when a broad collection of secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

In this chapter, I have also summarized the purpose of my study, which was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. My study's RQs were designed to discover a broad range of educator descriptions regarding social media teaching strategies. Additionally, the RQs were aligned with Siemens' connectivist theory and Zimmerman's psychological empowerment model. Chapter 2 includes more details on this study's conceptual framework, social media uses in the classroom, and best practices for influencing students' psychological empowerment.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The world is increasingly connected to social media for social and political purposes. However, the research problem of my study was the lack of information about how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Siemens (2005) said learning occurs within shifting and complex networks. Social media networks are one platform that connects ideas across time and space (Del Moral et al., 2013; Siemens, 2005). In addition to connectivism, Zimmerman's psychological empowerment model informed the conceptual framework of my study. Psychological empowerment involves how people perceive personal control, proactive approaches to life, and critical understandings of their sociopolitical environment (Zimmerman, 1995). Therefore, the purpose of my qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

In the first part of my literature review, I address the conceptual framework of connectivism and psychological empowerment by explaining their origins, guiding principles, and components most relevant to my study's RQs. In my literature review, I also discuss recent research that explores how educators use social media to build student skills in translational, transformational, and transcendent ways. In the final section of my literature review, I discuss best practices in terms of teaching students the skills needed for psychological empowerment. Overall, my literature review and study contribute to the field of digital literacy as well as provide insights for secondary educators who wish to include social media platforms as part of learning, instruction, and innovation.

Literature Search Strategy

My literature search involved topics related to my conceptual framework as well as social media uses in secondary education for intentional student skill-building. My literature review includes published print books as well as several digital and peer-reviewed articles. My literature search was conducted through the online Walden University Library and began with the Thoreau database in January 2019. I began my literature review search with transcendent uses of social media because I anticipated that those uses would appear less frequently in the literature. These transcendent use studies aligned with my study about how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

To expand my search, in February 2019 I followed the recommendations of a Walden librarian and used Education Source, ERIC, SOCindex, and Academic Search Complete databases. My last search was completed in June 2021. Online search terms and keywords were: app, augmentation, best practices, citizenship, civic engagement, critical consciousness, community issues, digital footprint, educators, Facebook, high school, inquiry learning, Instagram, learning, modification, policy control, product, project-based learning, psychological empowerment, relationships, research design, secondary education, service-learning, social media, sociopolitical control, student voice, substitution, teachers, teaching strategies, transcendent, Twitter, virtual field trips, writing skills, and writing strategies. Overall, my search strategies allowed me to reach saturation regarding topics in my literature review.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for this study was Siemens' connectivism theory and Zimmerman's psychological empowerment model. Connectivism theory states that learning occurs within complex networks, and those networks provide a way to foster diverse opinions and connect ideas across time and space (Siemens, 2005). The psychological empowerment model is used to frame how people perceive personal control, proactive approaches to life, and critical understandings of sociopolitical issues (Zimmerman, 1995). Both connectivism and psychological empowerment guided data collection and were lenses through which data were analyzed.

In this study, connectivism was used to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Furthermore, two constructs of connectivism, diversity of opinions and decision-making as learning, further focused my study. I explored the intersections of those two connectivist constructs with two psychological empowerment principles. The two psychological empowerment principles that I used to frame my study were understanding community issues and being proactive in helping to solve community issues. Overall, this study was framed by the concept that people construct knowledge by being connected with others, and this knowledge can empower people to understand and act on current social and political issues in their communities.

Connectivism and Siemens

Connectivism is a relatively new educational theory that has arisen in the digital age by combining ideas from theories involving chaos, networking, and self-organizing.

First, the science of chaos acknowledges the connections of everything—this is also known as the butterfly effect (Siemens, 2005). Secondly, networking theory involves how personal knowledge flows into a network, and that network comes back to the individual with even more information, making learning partly a social process (Downes, 2010; Siemens, 2005; Wang et al., 2014). This social learning process is accomplished through the posting of information on personal online platforms (Downes, 2010; Wang et al., 2014). Social learning is further enhanced through online collaboration, which is easier when people are connected by a variety of networks (Del Moral et al., 2013). Last, the self-organizing ideas in connectivism relate to how people evaluate and synthesize information found online (Siemens, 2005).

Origins of Connectivism

Connectivism has its origins in Piaget's work about constructivism. Constructivist and connectivist theorists share the belief that knowledge should be constructed and that learners actively work at making meaning, even when learning is messy and unstructured (Downes, 2010; Siemens, 2005). With both constructivism and connectivism, the learner is at the center of the learning process. However, constructivism has limitations in today's digital age since people now need to be able to evaluate what they are learning in online formats (Del Moral et al., 2013; Siemens, 2005). Connectivism also makes personalized learning and differentiation easier because educators can use technology to address different student cognitive styles (Del Moral et al., 2013; Wang et al., 2014). For example, connectivist educators personalize instruction by embracing online games and simulations as part of the learning environment (Downes, 2010). Ultimately,

connectivists believe that connections with people are more important than the products created in a constructivist framework (Del Moral et al., 2013; Siemens, 2005).

Theoretical Propositions of Connectivism

In addition to believing that networking is a key component of learning, connectivist theorists further believe that the advent of computer technology is impacting the way people's brains function, especially for digital natives (Downes, 2010; Siemens, 2005). With the advent of computers, information can now be stored outside of people's brains, changing the way people think. Therefore, knowing where to find information is more important than memorization (Siemens, 2005). With changes in thinking processes, students also need to learn how to use social media to communicate thinking and connect with others (Del Moral et al., 2013; Siemens, 2005). Education systems embracing social media are also practical since 84% of the U.S. population between the ages of 18 and 29 use social media (Auxier & Anderson, 2021).

Connectivist Constructs in My Study

Two connectivist principles align with my study. The first principle that aligns is that knowledge requires people to understand a wide range of diverse opinions (Siemens, 2005). When people belong to a variety of social media networks, they encounter a variety of diverse perspectives (Del Moral et al., 2013; Siemens, 2005). Understanding multiple perspectives is especially important in the social media world of today where Twitter was "*the* rhetorical platform for U.S. President Donald Trump" (Gleason, 2018, p. 167). Because understanding multiple social media perspectives is gaining importance in society, educators can help students gain skills in effectively using social media to

understand a variety of opinions and be engaged citizens (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Farmer, 2020; Kornbluh, 2019; Skoric et al., 2016).

The second connectivist principle that was used as part of the conceptual framework is that decision-making is a learning process and is dependent on a person's context in terms of time, geography, and other life factors. Decision-making is a form of digital literacy where people read information online and learn to think critically about issues, ultimately making informed decisions (Siemens, 2005). Ideas gathered for this decision-making often come from social networks (Siemens, 2005; Wang et al., 2014).

Rationale for Using Connectivism for My Study

Connectivism was an appropriate theory to use as part of the conceptual framework for my study because the theory involves the importance of technology in educational contexts. In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Connectivism emphasizes that learning occurs when people are connected to others through technology (Siemens, 2005). Social media platforms are a way that educators can provide those technological connections for a powerful learning environment (Canbek & Hargis, 2015; Del Moral et al., 2013; Greenhow & Chapman, 2020; Manca et al., 2021). Connectivism guided the development of RQs in this study. The diverse opinions and decision-making as learning principles of connectivism also align with the four RQs for my study (see Table 1). Overall, connectivism provided operational language to inform the phenomenon explored in this study as well as language and ideas for research.

Table 1

How Research Questions Relate to the Conceptual Framework

RQ	Connectivist Principle (Siemens, 2005)	Psychological Empowerment Principle (Zimmerman, 1995)
RQ1: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to help students understand current and local community issues?	Knowledge requires people understanding a range of diverse opinions.	Interactional psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues.
RQ2: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach students to discover diverse opinions about current and local social and political issues?	Knowledge requires people understanding a range of diverse opinions.	Interactional psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues.
RQ3: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach decision-making skills about current issues affecting students' local communities?	Decision-making is learning but depends on a person's context in terms of time and location.	Interactional psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues.
RQ4: How do secondary educators describe their instruction to students in terms of how to publish social media content to be proactive regarding current and local social and political issues?	Knowledge requires people understanding a range of diverse opinions.	Behavioral psychological empowerment increases when people proactively work to solve community issues.

Psychological Empowerment and Zimmerman

In addition to connectivism being used as part of the conceptual framework for this study, I also used Zimmerman's model of psychological empowerment to frame RQs and provide a lens for data analysis. Psychological empowerment occurs when people feel in control of situations through understanding social and political issues in their communities and proactively work for social change. Furthermore, the psychological empowerment model contains intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral constructs. Intrapersonal constructs include self-perceptions, motivation, and emotions. Interactional constructs relate to how people develop skills to gain a critical understanding of community issues to aid in decision-making and problem-solving. The behavioral psychological empowerment construct involves how people change their environment through proactive community involvement (Zimmerman, 1995). The two psychological empowerment constructs that were used as part of this study were the interactional construct of understanding community issues and behavioral construct of being proactive to help solve community issues (see Table 1).

Origins of Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment has its origins in the relationship between individuals and their community, especially in terms of how people understand issues impacting their community (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Li, 2016). Psychological empowerment differs from the community psychology construct of self-esteem, which centers around a person's perceived control of personal outcomes not political ones. Psychological empowerment also differs from the general psychology terms of

competence and confidence since those concepts do not include sociopolitical factors (Zimmerman, 1995).

Zimmerman's psychological empowerment framework has its origins in earlier research with Zahniser that centered around the development of the Sociopolitical Control Scale. This earlier research was based on Bandura's work on self-efficacy and confidence. The Sociopolitical Control Scale is a survey where people report their perceptions regarding their capabilities to control and change their communities (Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Since my qualitative study focused on educator experiences with skill-building and not student perceptions of their sociopolitical control, the Sociopolitical Control Scale was not used as a measurement instrument in my study.

Although the Sociopolitical Control Scale quantifies empowerment, Zimmerman (1995) later claimed that a global measure of psychological empowerment may not be possible since psychological empowerment is related to a person's social context, beliefs, and skills, which could fluctuate over time. Therefore, psychological empowerment has limited generalizability and likely may not be reduced to a universal set of skills or single definition (Li, 2016; Zimmerman, 1995). However, Zimmerman (1995) said that if researchers consider the context of a research situation and life experiences of participants, studies involving a psychological empowerment framework can be completed without a global measure of psychological empowerment. Hipolito-Delgado and Zion (2017) completed one such study by using a psychological empowerment framework in a defined context and found that inquiry-based learning improved understanding of and involvement in community issues for students. In my study, I

considered participants' context and life situations to meet Zimmerman's idea that a psychological empowerment framework study can be completed without quantifying psychological empowerment.

Rationale for Using Psychological Empowerment Constructs

The interactional and behavioral psychological empowerment constructs were appropriate models to include as part of the conceptual framework for this study. Psychological empowerment relates to my study's RQs. See Table 1 for the relationship of psychological empowerment constructs to the RQs for my study.

Since I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills, the study aligned with Zimmerman's (1995) psychological empowerment model. Students can use social media to gain a diverse understanding of current issues and proactively help solve complex problems in their communities (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Greenstein, 2012; Kornbluh, 2019; Magana, 2017; Manca et al., 2021). Moreover, the interactional and behavioral psychological empowerment constructs fit my study because researchers have found that psychological empowerment can increase for secondary students in these areas through inquiry-based learning where students explore a problem in their community and work to develop a solution (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Kornbluh, 2019). Overall, psychological empowerment provided operational language to inform the phenomenon explored in this study as well as language and ideas for the RQs.

Rationale for Using Connectivism and Psychological Empowerment

The intersection of Siemens (2005) connectivism and Zimmerman's (1995) psychological empowerment closely relates to my study. The intersection of these two models have implications for secondary education since technology has been found to assist students in building digital literacy skills to understand and communicate about their world (Kornbluh, 2019; Manca et al., 2021). Furthermore, connectivism and psychological empowerment combined are connected to transformational educational outcomes where students create and share authentic products with a global audience through social media (Kasra, 2017; Magana, 2017). In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. This study builds on a growing body of research on using social media for educational outcomes (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019). Together, Siemens' connectivism and Zimmerman's psychological empowerment provided an appropriate conceptual framework to inform the exploration of how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

Social Media Uses in Education

Educators continue to reform their pedagogy through technology integration that transforms their students' learning and skill development so that students can connect with people from around the world (Couros, 2015; Gleason, 2018; Greenstein, 2012; Magana, 2017; Manca et al., 2021). These instructional practices relate to connectivism,

the conceptual framework of my study because learning occurs within shifting, complex networks (see Siemens, 2005).

Researchers have found that when educators use social media as a learning tool, they prepare students for college, careers, and civic life (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018; Farmer, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kuruliszwili, 2018; Miller, 2018). In this literature review, I explore how educators use social media in translational, transformational, and transcendent ways. Magana (2017) uses these three terms to describe the levels of technology uses in education. In my literature review, I explore previous studies on social media and secondary educators' experiences to determine the gaps in how educators describe their use of social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. I begin the literature review with a broad overview of the prevalence of social media in daily life. I continue by discussing the latest studies in social media for skill development in translational, transformational, and transcendent ways. I also include a section on the challenges that educators face. I end my literature review by exploring the best educational practices in psychological empowerment skill development to influence students' sociopolitical control.

Prevalence of Social Media Use in Daily Life

Social media is prevalent in teenagers' lives and impacts information acquisition, communication strategies, and digital footprints (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Hodges, 2017; Kasra, 2017). Several researchers have studied the prevalence of social media in the lives of teenagers. Gedik and Cosar (2020) found that 79% of Turkish middle schoolers used social media. In a study in Finland, nearly 90% of students

reported that they used social media every day, with Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, Reddit, and YouTube being the most visited platforms (Horn & Veermans, 2019). In a study in Tonga, 81% of secondary students reported using Facebook (Sopu et al., 2016). Gray (2018) surveyed teenagers in the United Kingdom and found similar results, with 75% of surveyed students using social media several times a day. Researchers in the United States have found similar rates of social media use. Rutledge et al. (2019) found that 98% of high school students in Florida used social media. In a suburban California high school, 73% of surveyed students used Instagram, 68% Snapchat, 34% Twitter, 26% Facebook, and 16% YouTube (Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018). Additionally, Instagram was found to be the most used platform in several studies (Buchanan et al., 2017; Gray, 2018; Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018; Martin et al., 2018). Regardless of the preferred platform, researchers have found that social media use among teenagers is prevalent worldwide.

Researchers have also explored gender differences with social media use. Gray (2018) found that female students used social media more frequently than males. Martin et al. (2018) found statistically significant gender differences regarding social media use. Specifically, they found that girls start using social media at a younger age and check their social media feeds more frequently (Martin et al., 2018). Researchers even found that gifted girls felt so much pressure to be on Facebook each day because of their school micro-celebrity status, even to the point of causing anxiety (Price et al., 2016). Overall, researchers have found gender differences regarding social media exist.

In addition to exploring the preferred platforms and gender differences, researchers have also explored why teenagers use social media. Researchers have found

that secondary students mainly use social media to learn about community issues and communicate with others. Gray's (2018) survey revealed that 9% of students used social media to keep up with world events. Rutledge et al. (2019) discovered that 70% of high school students used social media for informal learning on issues and interests. Kuruliszwili's (2018) survey found that 90% of Polish students sought information from the internet every day, and 62% of students stated that the internet was their first choice for information. In another survey, Little (2018) found that 46% of students got their news from online sources, and Snapchat Discover was a popular source. Gedik and Cosar (2020) found that 30% of Turkish middle schoolers used social media to gain information about issues. Overall, using social media to discover news and information was a common activity for secondary students.

Researchers have found that one problem with young people relying on the internet for their news and information is that young people are not always able to distinguish between credible social media posts and websites from misleading or false ones (Horn & Veermans, 2019; Johnson & Ewbank, 2018; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). This problem has led social scientists to discuss that the educator's role must evolve to build student skills in telling the difference between real and fake information online (Gleason, 2018; Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018; Huguet et al., 2021; Little, 2018; Nettlefold & Williams, 2021; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). Because social media has become an important tool in teenager's lives, I explored how educators describe teaching students the skills needed to accurately locate online information as part of data collection in my study.

In addition to using social media to learn information, teenagers use social media to communicate with others. Martin et al. (2018) found that the two main reasons that students used social media were to chat with friends and keep informed about what their friends were doing. Communication on social media is also a way to organize activities for sociopolitical engagement (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kasra, 2017; Li, 2016). When teenagers use social media to communicate their ideas and activities, they create a digital footprint. Kasra (2017) claims that teenagers need to protect themselves from leaving a permanent record of negative images because even when deleted, digital images are often saved elsewhere.

Social scientists have also theorized that a lack of a positive digital footprint could be as damaging to a person's future college and career prospects as a bad digital footprint (Buchanan et al., 2017; Couros, 2015; Greenstein, 2012; Magana, 2017). In terms of college admissions, a 2016 survey found that a positive digital footprint can increase a student's chances of admission to college since 35% of college admissions officers reported that they research applicants online, looking for evidence of strong writing skills and community service (PRNewswire, 2016). Additionally, Buchanan et al. (2017) found that most children, even as young as 10, understood the concept of a digital footprint in terms of implications for a future job search. In my study, I explored how secondary educators helped students use social media to communicate with others as well as how educators discussed the importance of establishing a positive digital footprint as part of data collection.

Rationale for Using Magana's T3 Framework

In the upcoming sections of my literature review, I discuss social media uses in educational contexts while organizing the studies found by Magana's (2017) T3 framework of translational, transformational, and transcendent student skill-building. Translational uses of technology are those that could have been completed in an analog way like a digital worksheet. Transformational uses are those that could not be completed without technology, like sharing online creations with a global audience. Transcendent technology uses are those where students achieve unexpected learning outcomes through online connections (Magana, 2017). Magana's T3 framework was selected because it goes a step further than previous educational technology models like TPACK, which stands for Technological Pedagogical Content Knowledge, and the SAMR model, which stands for substitution, augmentation, modification, and redefinition. Mainly, the TPACK and SAMR models focus on technology as a teaching tool rather than the skills that students learn; in contrast, student skills are at the center of Magana's T3 framework. Magana's T3 framework also supported my conceptual framework of connectivism, which involves using technology for networked learning.

Furthermore, secondary educators have a practical reason to incorporate skill development in the translational, transformative, and transcendent areas of technology integration. Specifically, the translational uses of effective automated communications and media consumption are prescribed by the Common Core State Standards in the United States (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019; Greenstein, 2012). These standards further indicate that secondary students should have the skills to present

knowledge, write clear arguments supported by claims, research relevant information, and use the internet to distribute information (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2019; Greenstein, 2012). Internet publishing is central to transformative and transcendent uses of technology. Another practical reason for using social media in the classroom is that school administrators are starting to call for pedagogical incorporation of social media. In a recent survey of secondary principals across the United States, 62% of 1,244 respondents stated that they wanted their educators to begin using social media more for classroom activities (Dodson, 2020). In the upcoming sections of this literature review, I explore the research on translational, transformational, and transcendent uses of social media while discussing how those studies point to gaps in the literature that were addressed by my study's RQs.

Translational Uses of Social Media

Magana (2017) defines translational tasks as those that could have been completed in an analog way like a digital worksheet. Educators employing translational technology is an important scaffolding step in building student skills (Couros, 2015; Magana, 2017). Educators can take the first step and use social media in the translational ways of automated communication and media consumption. Translational automated communication is sharing content online with a limited audience. Translational media consumption involves students learning to locate credible information online. Since students spend so much time on social media, they need to understand the implications of sharing online content as well as the importance of consuming credible information (Horn & Veermans, 2019; Johnson & Ewbank, 2018; Kuruliszwili, 2018; Nettlefold &

Williams, 2021; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). In this section of my literature review, I explored how translational uses of social media for automated communication and consumption connect to my study's purpose and RQs.

Social Media for Translational Communication

One translational, automated communication area is when educators use social media in closed groups to share administrative, non-instructional information. Researchers have found that students were more engaged when educators used social media to communicate class information (Hershkovitz et al., 2019; Hoffmann & Ramirez, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019; Loomis, 2018; Rosenberg & Asterhan, 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2018). For example, one educator used hashtags to track common subjects, themes, or questions (Loomis, 2018). Hoffmann and Ramirez (2018) found that 76% of surveyed secondary students felt more engaged in their learning when educators communicated with them via social media.

The researchers in several WhatsApp studies discovered that students preferred communicating with their educators on WhatsApp over face-to-face communications (Hershkovitz et al., 2019; Rosenberg & Asterhan, 2018; Rosenberg et al., 2018; Zan, 2019). Elhay and Hershkovitz (2019) also found that WhatsApp was the preferred communication tool for 121 secondary educators in Israel, even beating out the telephone and email as the preferred way to contact students outside class. Educators in Israel also reported that being Facebook friends with students improved their relationships (Forkosh-Baruch & Herskovitz, 2019). Additionally, during the COVID-19 pandemic, Tajik and Vahedi (2021) found that Iranian educators preferred social media as the main class

communication tool during distance learning with 51% of educators using WhatsApp. In this same study, 81% of the 593 surveyed students reported that they used social media as part of distance learning (Tajik & Vahedi, 2021). In contrast, in a study about Facebook communication between educators and students, researchers found that students feared that Facebook distorted and potentially harmed their relationships with their educators (Herkovitz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2019). Even so, researchers have shown that when educators use social media to communicate with even a limited audience, students appreciated their educators using these communication tools.

Researchers have also found that closed social media groups were used for students to discuss course content, further illustrating automated communication at the translational level. For example, in Kornbluh's (2019) study, 11 out of 12 interviewed students indicated that they improved online communication skills in terms of considering message purpose and multiple perspectives when using Facebook for discussions. Other researchers also reported that closed Facebook groups were a successful tool for class discussions. (Loomis, 2018; Wu, 2020). Additionally, Colwell et al. (2018) explored literature discussions with 12 teenagers using a closed, social media Ning network and discovered that students discussed literature in terms of the author's style and personal connections. They also found that students supported their claims with textual evidence in their discussion posts (Colwell et al., 2018). WhatsApp was also found to be a helpful discussion tool for chemistry and biology students (Abualrob & Nazzal, 2020; Zan, 2019). Overall, researchers have found that discussions on closed

social media groups can be an effective automated communication strategy when educators translate an analog classroom discussion into a digital space.

Social Media for Translational Consumption

Magana (2017) defines "media consumption" as "accessing some digital form of content-related information or knowledge" (p. 31). Researchers have explored how educators incorporate teaching strategies to improve student media consumption skills to discover information about sociopolitical issues (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Magana, 2017). One skill studied is how students examine online information for bias or false information (; Horn & Veermans, 2019; Johnson & Ewbank, 2018; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). For example, students were taught credibility cues like examining the author's reputation and whether the information can be confirmed in another source (Johnson & Ewbank, 2018; Little, 2018). Students have also been taught that several likes and comments on a social media post does not equal trustworthiness (Johnson & Ewbank, 2018; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). Another idea related to media consumption is finding diverse perspectives online. Cladis (2020) reported that school assignments were one way to force students to explore ideas outside of their pre-conceived beliefs. It is also important to note that students need these evaluation skills to impact social change since society cannot rely on social media companies or the government to eliminate all internet misinformation (Johnson & Ewbank, 2018). Overall, researchers have studied how educators teach students to identify and consume credible information online.

In addition to using social media in translational ways to teach media consumption, researchers have studied how educators have used social media to teach writing and language acquisition. For example, Loomis (2018) observed that students used critical thinking and editing skills as they learned to write concise tweets. Loomis (2018) also reported that student creativity improved when students began using images combined with words to express their thoughts. Students in an online book discussion study were also found to employ formal, academic language and argumentation in their posts (Colwell et al., 2018). Additionally, in a study of English Language Learners, students improved their English language skills while learning to collaborate on video creations (Rosli & Idrus, 2017). Even with these studies, a gap in the literature exists in terms of student skill development in the areas of automated communication and media consumption. The studies examined in my literature review focused on student outcomes and not what educators were explicitly doing to improve student skills. In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences when social media was used to develop students' psychological empowerment skills.

Gap in the Research on Translational Skill Building

Gaps in the literature exist in the two translational technology areas—automated communication and media consumption. Elhay and Hershkovitz (2019) stated that more studies were needed about how social media impacts out-of-class communication between educators and students. Hershkovitz et al. (2019) specifically called for qualitative studies about social media for educator communication so that more detailed aspects of this phenomenon are discovered. In terms of media consumption, Arceneaux

and Dinu (2018) stated that little research exists on the impact of social media on students understanding global issues. Another gap in the literature involved educator experiences with purposefully instructing on combining texts and images for richer, multimodal automated communication. For example, Colwell et al. (2018) noted that although technically feasible in Ning, book discussion participants did not include hyperlinks or images to illustrate their text. Likewise, in a study by Abualrob and Nazzal (2020), only 0.2% of WhatsApp posts included links to further the discussions about chemistry and biology content.

Furthermore, a meta-analysis of 271 articles about educators and social media uses in the classroom that were published between 2005 and 2016 revealed that there is a general gap in knowledge about ways to use social media successfully in educational contexts (Van Den Beemt et al., 2020). In fact, of the 271 studies that qualified for this meta-analysis, only 31 concentrated on experiences in secondary schools, and most of the articles discussed case studies (Van Den Beemt et al., 2020). In another meta-analysis, Manca et al. (2021) discovered that few studies examined specific skill development for social media literacy. Manca et al. (2021) also discovered that only 4% of social media studies from 2011-2019 were conducted in K-12 education environments. Results from my study contributed to the overall gap in the use of social media in secondary education by reporting on the experiences of a range of secondary educators.

Transformational Uses of Social Media

When educators go beyond the translational stage of technology use and purposefully develop student skills in ways that are not possible without using

technology, those educators are designing transformational learning experiences (Couros, 2015; Magana, 2017). Understanding the ways that educators transform their pedagogy by using social media to connect students and develop psychological empowerment skills aligned with my study's conceptual framework. This understanding also provided insights into educational reforms where secondary educators help their students use social media for social and political change. One way that educators have transformed learning experiences is by having their students connect with people around the world through social media to increase their sociopolitical engagement (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Skoric et al., 2016). In this section of my literature review, I explore the research around how educators use social media strategies to build student skills in the areas of digital artifact production and contribution as well as ways to provide student feedback and engage students in learning. My analysis of previous social media studies in these areas helped me identify gaps in the literature.

Production of Authentic Digital Artifacts

Educators who use technology at the transformational level employ a variety of teaching strategies with social media to promote student skill development through the production of authentic digital artifacts. Transformational *production* involves students creating online products that reach a global audience (Magana, 2017). Videos and podcasts are examples of digital artifacts that students use to showcase their understanding of complex problems on social media. Wargo and Clayton (2018) were participant observers who examined the strategies educators used to teach video creation

skills with 23 high school students who created social change public service announcement videos to share on social media platforms. In another study, Gruno et al. (2018) explored how one educator taught students to use Instagram to promote healthy lifestyles by posting photos of their workouts and inspirational quotations. Overall, few studies have been conducted about digital artifact production for social change.

Researchers have also studied social media platforms as a way for educators to have students showcase their authentic digital productions in online portfolios. Educators have used Blogger, Tumblr, Ning, or other cloud-based social media platforms for these digital student portfolios (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Casey & Evans, 2017; Magana, 2017). One school district even implemented digital portfolios with over 10,000 students, kindergarten to grade twelve (Couros, 2015). Students who start a blog portfolio in kindergarten can keep representative products from their entire educational career in one digital space (Magana, 2017). Blogs as a digital portfolio platform also allow students to reflect on their growth as writers, creators, and thinkers as part of the blog posts that showcase their work (Couros, 2015; Greenstein, 2012; Magana, 2017). Blogging takes on a transformational nature in education as an online repository of student work that has the potential to reach a global audience.

In addition to using blogs as a repository to showcase student work, educators have used blogging to help students develop an authentic, academic writing voice (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Couros, 2015; Levy et al., 2015). In a case study using interviews, Akdag and Ozkan (2017) discovered that 6 of 14 students reported that blogging motivated them to write. Levy et al.'s (2015) study is older but important since it is the

only study that specifically addresses blogging about political issues as part of a class assignment. Levy et al. (2015) found a connection between blogging and writing skills in a mixed-methods study of over 300 high school students in U.S. government classes. Levy et al. (2015) revealed that students in blog-focused classes displayed more confidence when writing about politics than the students in a comparison group. In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to teach digital production skills, online publishing, and writing to supplement the limited research in this area.

Contribution of Artifacts to Teach Other Students

Researchers have found that some educators go beyond simply having their students create digital products to having students share artifacts to contribute to the learning of others. Magana (2017) defines *contribution* as a transformational component where students use technology to teach other students about ideas or share knowledge as part of a learning community. Instagram is one micro-blogging platform studied to determine the impact of students contributing artifacts to teach others in the global community. Gruno et al. (2018) wrote an action research paper that discussed how students enjoyed being the teacher as well as learning from their classmates by creating Instagram posts as part of their physical education class. Facebook and WhatsApp were other social media platforms where students were found to post questions about schoolwork and have other students comment for learning support (Campbell, 2019; Kasperski & Blau, 2020; Zan, 2019).

Educators can also have students create authentic digital artifacts to build cultural understanding. Kornbluh (2019) found that high school students in an urban area of the United States began mixing across race, gender, and geographic lines because of a Facebook project when they previously had not mixed. In a study in Chile, Scheihing et al. (2018) explored how educators used the micro-blogging platform of Worklog to build relationships and cultural understanding among students from different geographic areas in Chile. Scheihing et al. (2018) analyzed 20,250 Worklog messages and found that students were mainly writing posts to establish relationships between students. Another interesting finding was that rural educators in this study reported in interviews that they were more motivated to use the micro-blogging platform than their urban counterparts (Scheihing et al., 2018). Blogging was found to be a way to build cultural understanding.

Besides contributing to others' knowledge by sharing general information in short posts, contribution artifacts can go more in-depth when students create tutorials to help other students learn course content (Magana, 2017). Wikis and Nings are two social media platforms that can be used as tools for tutorial artifacts (Casey & Evans, 2017; Chu et al., 2017; DeWitt et al., 2017). In a mixed-methods study, Chu et al. (2017) explored whether using wikis as a collaborative tool impacted writing quality for 219 secondary students in Hong Kong. Participant interviews revealed that students in all 30 groups felt PBworks was a useful and convenient tool for group writing (Chu et al., 2017). In another study, DeWitt et al. (2017) used wiki document analysis and pretest and posttest comparisons to discover that science scores were significantly higher for students who participated in the wiki project with a *t*-value of 7.230. DeWitt et al. (2017) also analyzed

student interactions on wikis, finding that 29 of 45 groups interacted with the course content and information on wikis. These studies revealed that educators have students use social media to contribute to the learning of others.

Educator Strategies for Student Feedback

The global connections possible through social media platforms not only enhance student production and contribution, but they also provide a platform for authentic student feedback. Karal et al. (2017) studied the impact of participation in a Facebook group where students provided feedback on each other's writing. Document analysis of Facebook posts revealed that students corrected each other's spelling and punctuation errors in the comments section of the posts (Karal et al., 2017). In another study, survey and interview results show that blogging improved learning in dance classes because students were more actively involved in their learning because of peer feedback (Li et al., 2018). The educators in this study also reported that grading was more accurate because the educators could see how much time students spent watching videos and evaluating other students (Li et al., 2018). In short, having an online audience allows students to receive feedback from someone other than their educator.

Another way that educators can provide authentic feedback to students is through cooperation with professionals in their content area. Walsh and McGowan (2017) completed a document analysis of social media feedback and found that students revised their projects based on feedback from professional scientists. Specifically, coded document analysis revealed that 16 of 17 student-created infographics scored higher on the final rubric when students incorporated feedback from professional scientists (Walsh

& McGowan, 2017). In another study of social media feedback, Casey and Evans (2017) reported that interviews revealed that students felt that peer feedback on their Ning posts was generally positive, and they appreciated the immediate feedback. Overall, these researchers have shown that educators can employ authentic assessment and feedback strategies by using social media in transformational ways. In my study, I explored ways that educators used social media to provide feedback from the educator, student peers, and professionals outside the school community.

Educator Strategies for Student Engagement

When educators include social media lessons and strategies in the areas of digital production, contribution, and feedback, those educators are using motivating and engaging tools for students (Casey & Evans, 2017; Chu et al., 2017; Kosic, 2018; Zan, 2019). In one study, participant interviews revealed that wikis were motivating for students because they provided an easy and efficient communication platform between group members even outside of school hours (Chu et al., 2017). Akdag and Ozkan (2017) specifically reported that 6 of 14 student participants stated that blogging was fun and entertaining. Kosic's (2018) participants also reported that they enjoyed collaborating with their peers when creating movies for their YouTube channel about mental health issues. Additionally, Klein (2019) found that social studies educators are starting to have students create Tik Tok videos as an engaging way to show their understanding of historical events. WhatsApp was also found to be a motivating tool for students to engage with course content for mathematics and chemistry classes (Campbell, 2019; Zan, 2019).

For example, through surveys and focus groups, Campbell (2019) found that the social aspect of a WhatsApp mathematics peer-tutoring program motivated students to learn.

Furthermore, using social media may be especially motivating for quiet or socially isolated students (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Couros, 2015; Karal et al., 2017; Kasperski & Blau, 2020). In an interview, one educator stated that a quiet student became more confident online, even becoming one of the most active posters, and that student's confidence transferred to face-to-face classroom discussions (Karal et al., 2017). Kasperski and Blau (2020) also found that social media as a classroom tool allowed shy students to gain social capital by communicating their ideas more freely. Chapman and Greenhow (2020) found that Twitter helped amplify the voice of socially isolated students, especially students in the school's Gay Straight Alliance. Overall, social media applications have been shown to influence student engagement.

Another way that students are engaged with their learning through technology can be found by analyzing the relationships that they form with educators and other students. Researchers attest to the power of social media to connect students and educators in transformative ways, even improving their relationships (Akas, 2018; Espinoza-Celi & Morocho-Pintado, 2020; Gruno et al., 2018; Karal et al., 2017; Kasperski & Blau, 2020). Additionally, through action research, Casey and Evans (2017) found that teenagers in Australia formed relationships with Romanian and Russian students by engaging in virtual conversations through Ning. Forming relationships with others is a part of the connective power of social media.

Student Skill Outcomes Through Transformational Social Media

In addition to the literature showing that educators can employ social media to provide students with opportunities for digital product creation, authentic feedback, and motivational tools, my literature review also revealed that educators can achieve specific learning outcomes regarding student skill development. Several researchers have discovered that social media platforms provide an effective tool to improve communication skills (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Annamalai, 2016; Burtch, 2018; Chu et al., 2017; Espinoza-Celi & Morocho-Pintado, 2020; Karal et al., 2017; Klein, 2019; Walsh & McGowan, 2017). Additionally, several researchers have found that when students learn production and contribution social media skills, they can become more psychologically empowered digital citizens (Gruno et al., 2018; Levy et al., 2015; Li, 2016). Therefore, in this section of my literature review, I explore the strategies that educators have used to incorporate social media tools in transformational ways for intentional skill development.

Impact of Transformational Social Media Use on Communication Skills

Studies have shown that educators who use social media in transformational ways can improve their students' basic writing skills like grammar and punctuation (Annamalai, 2016; Chu et al., 2017; Karal et al., 2017). For example, in Karal et al.'s (2017) study, one educator commented that competition on the Facebook group might have fueled careful attention to writing mechanics, which ultimately led to improved writing skills. Additionally, through document analysis of Facebook comments, researchers discovered that although Facebook comments focused on grammatical errors

and word choice, social media comments were an effective writing instruction tool (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Annamalai, 2016). Espinoza-Celi and Morocho-Pintado (2020) found that Twitter was an effective tool for improving the writing skills of their English as a Foreign Language students. Furthermore, in a case study of 14 ninth-grade students in Turkey, Akdag and Ozkan (2017) discovered that student writing improved from initial blog posts with simple sentences to more complex sentences and sophisticated vocabulary later. Regarding wikis, participant interviews revealed that all students felt PBworks was an effective and convenient tool for group writing, allowing for active revisions (Chu et al., 2017). Overall, researchers who studied using social media for writing instruction suggested that these tools can help educators improve student writing at the punctuation, vocabulary, and conventions level.

In addition to transformational social media practices improving writing at the mechanics level, researchers have found that strategies using social media can improve higher-order writing skills like rhetoric and argumentation. Burtch (2018) reports that students gained rhetorical analysis skills by analyzing tweets and Instagram posts as well as the rhetoric of emojis. These rhetorical skills transferred to student writing as students paid more attention to audience and purpose when writing social media posts (Burtch, 2018). Walsh and McGowan's (2017) study on feedback from professional scientists showed that students improved argumentation by supporting claims with evidence. Kosic (2018) also observed that students learned rhetorical analysis skills when discussing their peers' YouTube videos. The results of these studies suggested that educators who provide students with social media writing opportunities can improve rhetorical writing skills of

students. Since writing is an important skill for full civic engagement, exploring the literature on writing skills was an important part of my study.

Impact of Transformational Social Media Use on Psychological Empowerment

One area of production of digital artifacts and contribution to the learning of others that straddles the transformational and transcendent levels of technology integration is when students use social media for social change. Although using social media for psychological empowerment will be discussed in more depth in the transcendent section of my literature review, previewing a few key studies at this point is needed because of a blurred boundary between transformational and transcendent uses.

For today's youth, social media systems are central to their politically engaging actions (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Farmer, 2020). Arab Spring, Ferguson, and Black Lives Matter are examples of political movements fueled by social media (Hodges, 2017; Kasra, 2017). In a longitudinal, 5-year study of nearly 1,000 adolescents in Sweden, Ekström and Shehata (2018) found that student interaction with social media coincided with their political engagement. Additionally, after analyzing the literature, Gleason and von Gillern (2018) concluded that educators who use social media can help develop the digital citizenship of high school students, even providing a platform for students to connect with elected officials. Furthermore, Skoric et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis of 22 studies showed that a positive relationship exists between social media consumption and civic and political participation.

In terms of skill development, researchers have found that when social media is used in an educational context, social media can foster collaborative discourse and

provide an opportunity to gain diverse perspectives, which are essential psychological empowerment skills (Annamalai, 2016; Burtch, 2018; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019). Although researchers explored how students use social media for psychological empowerment, they did not explore how educators were involved in the skill-building process, which was a focus of my study.

Gap in the Research on Transformational Skill Building

In the transformational technology section of my literature review, I discovered many areas that need further study. Regarding skill development, the most researched area appeared to be writing instruction. Even so, Akdag and Ozkan (2017) claim that more studies are needed to discover if blogging improves writing skills and learner autonomy. Annamalai (2016) discussed that more research needs to be conducted on ways that educators encourage higher-level thinking when students comment on each other's work on social media. Additionally, DeWitt et al. (2017) said that further studies are needed to determine the scaffolding strategies that educators provide when students complete projects using social media. Moreover, Rutledge et al. (2019) said the education field needs a comprehensive examination of how educators can leverage social media as a way of "providing rich learning experiences and building school community" (p. 26). Other researchers have called for more research on social media so that social media can become a common classroom tool for active learning (Greenhow & Chapman, 2020; Manca et al., 2021; Zan, 2019). In terms of psychological empowerment, most studies on social media and psychological empowerment were conducted outside educational contexts, yet Manca and Grion (2017) report that this type of engagement in education is

important and should be investigated. In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills to help fill these gaps in the literature.

Transcendent Uses of Social Media

The third level in Magana's (2017) T3 framework for using educational technology is labeled *transcendent*. Educators who incorporate transcendent uses of technology provide students with classroom experiences that go well beyond normal experiences, resulting in unprecedented growth in student skills. The transcendent level of Magana's framework stresses innovation through inquiry design, product creation, and service-learning. Moreover, when educators implement the transcendent strategies of inquiry design, product creation, and service-learning, they are teaching their students communication, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking skills (Couros, 2015; Gleason, 2018; Magana, 2017; Manca et al., 2021; Soparat et al., 2015). Siemens' (2005) connectivism, the conceptual framework for my study, aligned with these transcendent educational uses of social media since students learn in complex, shifting networks. In this section of my literature review, I explore the research on educators who use inquiry design, product creation, and service-learning to teach their students the skills needed to use social media for psychological empowerment and sociopolitical engagement.

Inquiry Design

One type of transcendent technology use includes inquiry design where students are at the center of the learning experience, and they research problems that matter to them (Akas, 2018; Couros, 2015; Magana, 2017; Soparat et al., 2015). In inquiry design,

students can use social media as a tool to investigate problems, gather evidence, receive feedback from experts, and communicate their findings to a global audience. Kornbluh (2019) found that students increased their civic participation when they used Facebook as part of their social justice project on health issues in their school communities. In an older inquiry design study, Soparat et al. (2015) used a participatory action research method to explore how eight teachers used project-based learning in connection with social media with 212 students in four schools. They found that during inquiry design, students displayed creative thinking and problem-solving skills during their project on renewable energy, and students gained the life skills of collaboration and goal setting. In short, researchers have shown that students gain skills through inquiry design that uses social media. However, a gap in the literature existed since few studies existed in this area, and Soparat et al.'s (2015) study is older. Additionally, the researchers in these two studies did not explore the specific strategies that educators used to achieve psychological empowerment skill development.

Product Creation

The second type of transcendent technology use includes product creation or social entrepreneurship (Couros, 2015; Magana, 2017). Social entrepreneurship occurs when a created product improves the lives of others by meeting an authentic need (Magana, 2017). When educators create these types of transcendent tasks, they capitalize on the highest level of cognitive engagement, which is the creation level (Couros, 2015; Wang et al., 2014). Product creation even allows the classroom to begin functioning like a start-up company, providing students with entrepreneurial skills like creative thinking

and product design (Magana, 2017; Soparat et al., 2015). In one article on product creation, Akas (2018) reported on how sighted students learned social entrepreneurship skills by developing manipulative tools to teach blind students geometry skills, and these students then marketed their creations and lessons on Twitter. Magana (2017) also reported on how students gained marketing skills during virtual field trip projects to the Arctic and Amazon. Additionally, students in Wargo and Clayton's (2018) study created public service announcements about social issues as part of a social change project, using social media to advocate for their causes and share their public service announcements. Overall, social media provides an economical and easy-to-use platform for educators to have their students engage in social entrepreneurship (Ekström & Shehata, 2018).

Service Learning

Social entrepreneurship, inquiry design, and service-learning overlap in some ways since they are often part of student research projects. Service-learning, specifically, occurs when educators use community involvement activities so that students learn skills while helping others at the same time (Akas, 2018). Education and advocacy are two components of service-learning that can benefit from using social media tools. In fact, researchers have examined educators who use social media to provide students with a greater understanding of community issues and advocate for social change (Akas, 2018; Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Gruno et al., 2018; Miller, 2018; Wargo & Clayton, 2018). For example, Gruno et al. (2018) discussed how students using Instagram could influence a global audience about health and fitness issues. These health students also learned about the power of reaching a global audience when Wahoo,

a heartrate monitor company, started following the student's Instagram account and ended up donating 30 heart monitors to the class to track the impact of their exercise program (Gruno et al., 2018). Additionally, Miller (2018) reported on a service-learning project where students used Facebook and Twitter to advocate for more people to become Family and Consumer Sciences educators by spreading positive social media messages. Although researchers have shown that social media can be used as an educational tool as part of service-learning projects, little is known about specific strategies educators use for psychological empowerment skill development through service-learning.

Gap in the Research on Transcendent Skill Building

Overall, researchers have found a positive relationship between active social media use for students and their sociopolitical engagement in terms of educating others and advocating for causes (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Hodges, 2017; Li, 2016; Skoric et al., 2016). However, limited information is available about specific social media strategies that educators use for psychological empowerment skill development. The problem of my study is that little is understood about how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Transcendent uses of social media are at the heart of this psychological empowerment skill development. In fact, social media is a powerful tool that students can use for social change to advocate for social and political issues (Farmer, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Greenstein, 2012; Hodges, 2017; Manca et al., 2021). To be able to teach these social media advocacy skills effectively, educators may need professional development and a deeper understanding of the research

in this area (Nettlefold & Williams, 2021; Rutledge et al., 2019; Soparat et al., 2015). Data from my study contributed to the gap in understanding the specific strategies that educators use to teach social media advocacy.

Challenges to Using Social Media in Educational Contexts

Although using social media can impact student skill development, researchers have discovered that educators encounter several challenges when using social media with students. Since I examined the breadth of educator experiences in my study, my literature review needed to explore research studies that discovered challenges to using social media. The challenges found in the literature can be classified into themes of inappropriate content, student safety, polarized political discourse, time management, and educational efficacy.

Inappropriate Content

Educators who use social media strategies need to be aware that students might post inappropriate content online. In fact, social media can be used to disseminate prejudicial and hateful messages and images that can have a permanent, negative impact on a student's digital footprint (Kasra, 2017). Some researchers have noticed inappropriate posts and comments during document analysis of social media accounts in their studies, or their participants reported being offended by social media content from other study participants (Burtch, 2018; Casey & Evans, 2017; Gleason, 2018). Additionally, one educator stated that there is so much content on social media that the educator needed to rely on students to monitor the content of their peers, even though the educator reported that it was difficult giving control to the students (Casey & Evans,

2017). Additionally, Challenor et al. (2018) analyzed 298 randomly selected teen social media accounts and found that although the teenagers rarely included sexually explicit photographs, they found that 50% of teenagers included emojis of a sexual nature on their social media profiles. In short, educators employing social media with secondary students need to have a plan for dealing with inappropriate content.

Student Safety

Educators using social media for educational purposes also need to address safety concerns such as privacy and cyberbullying. Manca and Grion (2017) discovered that a Facebook advocacy project failed since students were reluctant to share their opinions because their comments were not private, and they feared they would get in trouble for expressing their thoughts. Gruno et al. (2018) also discovered that some health students were hesitant to share information or photographs of themselves on social media for privacy reasons. Wargo and Clayton's (2018) field notes indicated that student fears about oversharing might be warranted since some adults in the school, such as secretaries, administrators, and police liaison officers, complained that the student-created public service announcements put the school in a negative light. Klein (2019) also found that some secondary students were hesitant to feature themselves in class Tik Tok videos out of a concern for privacy. Likewise, Herskovitz and Forkosh-Baruch (2019) found that 227 of 667 secondary students in their study felt that connecting with their educator on Facebook was an invasion of privacy. Secondary students in Kasperski and Blau's (2020) study also were hesitant to friend their educators on Facebook because of fears about privacy.

Educators also have privacy concerns. In focus groups in Sweden, educators discussed the ethical considerations of crossing the privacy boundary between professional and personal relationships with students. These educators reported that they often limited what they posted on their social media accounts (Thunman & Persson, 2018). Additionally, chemistry teachers using WhatsApp with students reported that the academic boundary between educator and student became blurred (Zan, 2019). Educators in Forkosh-Baruch and Herkovitz's (2019) study also reported that they feared the blurred boundaries between students and educators when they became Facebook friends, which resulted in educators limiting what they posted on their Facebook pages. Educators in this study also feared that the blurred lines could result in students not respecting their educators as much. One way that educators have met this privacy challenge is by creating separate social media accounts for personal and school lives (Casey & Evans, 2017). Another way that educators have maintained privacy is by controlling the membership of social media groups (Campbell, 2019; Casey & Evans, 2017; Colwell et al., 2018).

Privacy and safety issues are most concerning when social media is used as a platform for cyberbullying (Alshawareb & Alnasraween, 2020; Martin et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Enríquez et al., 2019). Half of the surveyed students in a First Nations study reported that they had been victims of cyberbullying, and 20% of surveyed students admitted that they had cyberbullied someone (Laronde et al., 2017). Gray (2018) also found that 47% of surveyed students were upset by something posted online about them. Rodríguez-Enríquez et al. (2019) found that 40% of secondary students in their study reported that they were cyber-victims. Additionally, in Li et al.'s (2018) study, some

students used fake usernames and made mean comments during dance critiques. In fact, the educators in this study eventually had to turn off the social media comments feature because it was too much work to monitor the comments.

Even though privacy and safety issues are a challenge, researchers reported that educators have met this challenge by seeking parent permission, establishing procedures, and addressing cyberbullying. For example, researchers found that educators often gained parent permission to use social media as part of classroom activities (Abualrob & Nazzal, 2020; Campbell, 2019; Casey & Evans, 2017; Gruno et al., 2018; Loomis, 2018). For example, Loomis (2018) communicated to parents the reasons for using Twitter as a tool to personalize learning and promote collaboration. Loomis also made sure to establish class etiquette and procedures for posting to social media, making those discussions an extension of the classroom. In another study, the educator was clear with students that they could opt-out of sharing on social media (Gruno et al., 2018). Researchers also found that educators met social media challenges by confronting cyberbullying with a variety of interventions like direct curricular instruction, consoling the victim, talking to the bully directly, and getting administrators involved (Del Rey et al., 2018; Gimenez-Gualdo et al., 2018; Zeichner, 2019). School counselors also have a part to play in cyberbullying prevention. Altundag and Ayas (2020) found that professional development programs for school counselors were successful in giving educators strategies to deal with cyberbullying. I designed my study so that I might be able to add to the literature regarding the safety challenges that educators experience when using social media with students.

Polarized Political Discourse

Political disagreements can often arise on social media, so educators need strategies to handle those situations. Levy et al. (2015) interviewed an educator involved in a U.S. Government course that purposefully taught political writing skills through blogging. Even though this was a government class, the educator did not engage with students online nor require students to respond to other posts for fear of heated political exchanges (Levy et al., 2015). Additionally, Gleason and von Gillern (2018) caution educators that it might be inappropriate to have students engage in political opinions and contact elected officials as part of a school assignment. In contrast, Burtch (2018) posits that political polarization should not stop educators from using social media as a teaching tool because political polarization in the United States may be caused partly by education systems that fail to teach these skills. Manca et al., (2021) also acknowledge that people need information literacy skills because of the "polarized information driving a surge in hate and discrimination" on social media (p. 2). One case study also examined how five social studies teachers used Twitter for civic education, embracing the political polarization for active learning (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020). Since the research is unclear regarding if educators should use social media for student political discussions, my study can contribute to filling this gap.

Time Management

Another practical concern for educators is that incorporating social media assignments into the curriculum can be time-consuming for both educators and students. For example, some researchers reported that students felt they needed more training time

to learn to use the technology (Kosic, 2018; Li et al., 2018). Through student interviews, Li et al. (2018) found that students reported that blog posts for dance class became intrusive and consumed too much time. Social media has also been found to be time-consuming for educators in terms of monitoring content and commenting on posts (Burtch, 2018; Casey & Evans, 2017; Gruno et al., 2018; Li et al., 2018; Zan, 2019). For example, chemistry educators in Zan's (2019) WhatsApp study reported that students continued to send messages to them late at night. Likewise, educators in Forkosh-Baruch and Herskovitz's (2019) study felt the pressure to be available to students at all hours when they were Facebook friends. Time management was an educator concern.

Educational Efficacy

Another challenge that educators face is deciding on the educational efficacy of using social media with secondary students. Researchers have noted negative student and educator attitudes about using social media in the classroom. For example, researchers have found that some students preferred face-to-face discussions and believed Facebook was a social tool for pleasure and should not be part of their academic space (Hershkovtiz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2019; Manca & Grion, 2017). Additionally, Levy et al. (2015) discovered that student self-advocacy online did not translate to external actions, which is a finding that led these researchers to question the efficacy of using social media for social and political engagement. Furthermore, educators and students also worried about equity issues in terms of all students having equal access to social media connections (Forkosh-Baruch & Herkovitz, 2019; Herkovitz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2019).

Researchers have also found negative educator attitudes. For example, Nettlefold and Williams (2021) found that Australian educators were frustrated that teaching social media literacy skills fell to educators, and 25% of those surveyed educators did not feel they had the skills to teach students to vet online information for accuracy. Additionally, Sarac's (2018) qualitative study of 42 middle school educators found that many educators had negative attitudes about using social media, comparing social media to harmful concepts in a metaphor activity. Williams (2021) also found that 10 educators in a qualitative study who were born before 1974 had negative attitudes about social media and students. These educators felt social media was a distraction that "breeds drama that infiltrates the classroom" (Williams, 2021, p. 114). In contrast, researchers have noted that educators found social media to be an efficacious tool to use with students and do so even when doing so is restricted (Elhay & Hershkovitz, 2019; Hershovitz et al., 2019; Hershovtiz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2019). Since some negative attitudes about using social media exist, my study on a broad range of educator experiences may contribute further understanding on this issue.

Best Practices for Psychological Empowerment Skill Building

Educators are beginning to incorporate strategies and curriculum to influence students' psychological empowerment skills to support their students in becoming engaged citizens. When people feel in control of situations through understanding the sociopolitical issues in their communities and work proactively to solve them, they feel a sense of psychological empowerment (Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). In my study, I explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using

social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills so that students have the skills to understand community issues and proactively work for social change. I selected these two psychological empowerment skills as part of my study's conceptual framework because researchers have found that psychological empowerment can increase for secondary students in these two areas through inquiry-based learning about community problems (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Mathé, 2018; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). Furthermore, Zimmerman (1995) categorized psychological empowerment into the three components of intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral psychological empowerment. In this section of my literature review, I explore educator best practices for student skill development in the areas of intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral psychological empowerment.

Psychological empowerment is tangentially related to the term *critical consciousness*. Specifically, Ladson-Billings (2009) defines critical consciousness as the component of Culturally Relevant Teaching that captures how educators work to develop sociopolitical awareness and skills in their students. Critical consciousness skills include understanding multiple perspectives, critical thinking, problem-solving, and decision-making so that students feel empowered to advocate for social change in their communities (Godfrey & Grayman, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Styslinger et al., 2019). Although critical consciousness is tangentially connected to psychological empowerment, for the purposes of alignment for my study, I focused my literature review on the intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral components of psychological empowerment.

Best Practices in Intrapersonal Psychological Empowerment

Intrapersonal psychological empowerment involves policy control through self-advocacy, student voice, and leadership skills. Zimmerman (1995) defines intrapersonal psychological empowerment as a person's "self-efficacy, motivation to control, perceived competence, and mastery" in various aspects of their life (p. 588). In reviewing the literature on intrapersonal psychological empowerment, I found that educators demonstrate best practices in intrapersonal psychological empowerment when they provide opportunities for students to gain skills in self-advocacy, student voice, and leadership through activities involving civic engagement.

Self-advocacy

Self-advocacy skills are related to the concepts of self-confidence, self-determination, and critical hopefulness. Researchers have found that educational programs can promote feelings of self-confidence for students (Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018; Eisman et al., 2016). For example, researchers using a quantitative study with pretest and posttest survey results found that teenagers who participated in an afterschool program called Youth Empowerment Solutions improved their intrapersonal psychological empowerment (Eisman et al., 2016). In a survey of 1,039 educators in Taiwan, Chao and Chou (2017a) found that 76% of educators taught psychological empowerment skills like self-advocacy, with female educators more likely to teach these psychological empowerment skills. In a second study, these researchers found that a positive correlation existed between self-determination and academic achievement for junior high special education students in Taiwan with a .47 bivariate correlation between

psychological empowerment and scores on state academic tests (Chao & Chou, 2017b). Overall, researchers have found that self-advocacy and self-determination skills can increase for secondary students when educators provide certain learning environments.

Another term closely related to self-advocacy is *critical hopefulness*. Christens et al. (2018) define critical hopefulness as when someone has a high level of both emotional and cognitive control over their life. They studied the emotional and cognitive components of psychological empowerment in youth by surveying 389 high school students in an urban area of the Northeast U.S to determine levels of social justice orientation, civic engagement, and sense of community. Data somewhat supports their hypothesis that youth have greater levels of critical hopefulness than adults. These findings led Christens et al. (2018) to caution educators not to assume that young people are at a deficit in terms of intrapersonal psychological empowerment. In fact, these results may indicate that young people have higher levels of intrapersonal psychological empowerment than adults, so educators may want to capitalize on this area of student engagement. In sum, no matter the term at the heart of the study of self-advocacy and psychological empowerment, researchers have found that students can benefit from skill development in this area.

Student Voice and Leadership

Researchers have found that secondary educators can influence students' intrapersonal psychological empowerment through student leadership opportunities and amplifying student voice to advocate for community issues. In fact, researchers have found that psychologically empowered students had educators who encouraged student

voice in the classroom by engaging students in authentic conversations about critical community issues (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019; Mathé, 2018; Wargo & Clayton, 2018). For example, in a qualitative study based on interviews with nine Norwegian secondary students, Mathé (2018) found that students believed that school provided an important forum for learning to discuss politics. Additionally, several participants in a focus-group study stated that Black Studies courses provided an opportunity for increased student voice because students of color were more comfortable speaking about their experiences in the United States (Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018). In fact, student voice in the classroom was found to be an important component of intrapersonal psychological empowerment.

Researchers have also discovered that digital writing assignments can increase the psychological empowerment of young people by amplifying their voice beyond the classroom walls. Wargo and Clayton (2018) studied how urban youth used technology to create public service announcements and a documentary to amplify student voice for social change. Levy et al. (2015) discovered that students in blog-focused social studies classes were more interested in politics and displayed more confidence when communicating about politics than the students in a comparison group. The educators in Chapman and Greenhow's (2020) study reported that students were empowered to use Twitter to contact government officials and amplify their civic voice. In sum, researchers have shown that digital writing can amplify student voice, a component of intrapersonal psychological empowerment.

Students who display intrapersonal psychological empowerment also often have strong leadership skills. Gutuskey et al. (2016) found that participating in a student-led, healthy eating program helped students grow as listeners and leaders. Additionally, Lardier's (2018) survey of students of color who were active in their community found that these teenagers saw themselves as leaders able to organize people. Having strong skills in the areas of leadership, voice, and self-advocacy remain important parts of intrapersonal psychological empowerment.

Best Practices in Interactional Psychological Empowerment

Students can feel empowered through self-advocacy on their own; however, working with others leads to a higher level of interactional psychological empowerment. According to Zimmerman (1995), interactional psychological empowerment involves understanding community issues and developing the skills needed to mobilize resources and relationships for social change. Researchers have shown that best practices for increasing interactional psychological empowerment include building supportive adult relationships, using social media for mobilizing activities, and understanding the diverse perspectives of community issues.

Supportive Adult Relationships

Zimmerman (1995) asserts that young people need mentors to teach them empowering adult activities so that adolescents find their voice and increase their interactional psychological empowerment. Other researchers have confirmed that a supportive adult in educational contexts is a factor in increasing interactional psychological empowerment for secondary students (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017;

Weybright et al., 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2018). For example, supportive adult relationships through intergenerational collaboration were found to increase interactional psychological empowerment (Zimmerman et al., 2018). Students of color also showed higher psychological empowerment when nurturing Black professors were role models of academic excellence who held students to high standards (Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018). In yet another study, Weybright et al. (2017) interviewed 61 teenagers in an intergenerational 4-H program. They found that youth felt equal to adults in the program, and the teenagers valued the insights that adults brought to the program. The teenagers also reported that their self-confidence grew through personalized feedback from their adult partners (Weybright et al., 2017). In sum, researchers have shown that supportive adult relationships are an important element in developing interactional empowerment.

Social Media for Mobilizing Activities

In addition to supportive adults being mentors who assist teenagers in their psychological empowerment development, researchers have also found that teenagers who use social media for mobilizing activities can improve interactional psychological empowerment. Ekström and Shehata (2018) completed a 5-year longitudinal study that surveyed nearly 1,000 students, with the study starting when participants were in middle school and continuing through their high school career. These researchers found that interacting with social media had a clear impact on political engagement, with as many as 65% of adolescents engaged in political activities. In a qualitative study based on document analysis, Gleason and von Gillern (2018) analyzed the Twitter accounts of three high school students over 2 years and found that all three used Twitter to engage

with politics, using multiple sources of information to support their posts. Additionally, Skoric et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis found that positive relationships existed between social media use and political participation, and the meta-analysis dismissed a common misconception that social media was merely a toxic platform for political engagement. Moreover, Manca et al. (2021) discuss that the highest level of social media literacy involves using social media for social and political purposes for social change.

In contrast, Mathé (2018) found that all interviewed students were reluctant to discuss politics on social media because they believed that they could not sway another person's opinion through a social media post. Even so, Mathé (2018) urged educators to provide students with the skills needed to participate in political discussions online since social media has become an important sphere of political debate. It is important to note that the studies cited in this section were about adolescents outside of school. However, I have included them since few studies exist about secondary education and social media use for political engagement to influence psychological empowerment skills, and this phenomenon was at the core of my study. I designed my study so that I might be able to contribute to this gap in the literature.

Understanding Community Issues

Another component of interactional psychological empowerment is that people need to have a critical awareness of issues impacting their community. This critical awareness relates to the psychological empowerment constructs of decision-making and problem-solving (Zimmerman, 1995). Researchers have found that educators have used inquiry learning that focuses on decision-making and problem-solving to increase their

students' abilities to think critically about social issues (Eisman et al., 2016; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Kornbluh, 2019; Zimmerman et al., 2018). For example, Hipolito-Delgado and Zion (2017) studied inquiry-based learning in a critical civic inquiry curriculum where students researched a problem and engaged in conversations with adults about potential solutions. The 111 students in this study were compared to a control classroom, and data from surveys at the start and end of curriculum implementation show that inquiry-based learning improved self-efficacy and psychological empowerment for marginalized students (Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017).

Inquiry learning when combined with using social media may also increase a teenager's understanding of issues. Ekström and Shehata (2018) measured youth online political engagement and found that secondary students learned political information from blogs, videos, or websites. Skoric et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis revealed that the strongest positive relationship between social media use and political engagement existed in terms of using social media to gain information about community issues. Specifically, the relationship was "positive and significant across all studies" with a correlation size of $r = .37$ (Skoric et al., 2016, p. 1833). Kornbluh (2019) also found that social media can increase a student's sociopolitical awareness. Even so, researchers advocate for more research in educational contexts regarding social media for increased civic expression (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Kornbluh, 2019; Manca et al., 2021). Since the literature is limited in this area, I explored these gaps in my study.

Best Practices in Behavioral Psychological Empowerment

The behavioral component of psychological empowerment is defined as "actions taken to directly influence outcomes," such as being involved in community organizations (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 590). Researchers have found that when young people understand community issues, they have greater behavioral psychological empowerment and policy control because they can proactively help solve community issues (Eisman et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1995; Zimmerman & Zahniser, 1991). In fact, the greatest understanding of behavioral psychological empowerment comes from exploring the studies that examine the overlap of intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral psychological empowerment.

Two such studies evaluated the Youth Empowerment Solutions program in Flint, Michigan to determine what factors impacted student psychological empowerment in terms of intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral control (Eisman et al., 2016; Zimmerman et al., 2018). In Eisman et al.'s (2016) study, researchers surveyed 367 middle school students in this afterschool program. They confirmed that psychological empowerment can be classified into the three components of intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral control. Their results also support the idea that educators should collectively teach the three psychological empowerment components for the greatest levels of positive psychological empowerment development. Zimmerman et al. (2018) also evaluated this afterschool program by examining 367 middle school students working on a social change project. They used an experimental, pretest/posttest design with a control group to compare students in the Youth Empowerment Solutions program

to students in the usual afterschool program. They found an increase in student psychological empowerment and other prosocial behaviors like responsible decision-making and academic effort (Zimmerman et al., 2018). Overall, these psychological empowerment studies were important to my study because they examined how the intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral elements of psychological empowerment can be taught collectively. I designed my study to explore the connection of teaching psychological empowerment skills alongside teaching social media skills so that I might be able to contribute to filling this gap in the literature.

Gap in the Psychological Empowerment Literature

Although I have discussed studies that explored psychological empowerment in educational contexts, my literature review revealed an overall gap in this literature for educators. In fact, I found that most psychological empowerment studies were conducted in the areas of health care or community programming. Researchers have specifically called for more studies of psychological empowerment in educational contexts (Chao & Chou, 2017b; Gutuskey et al., 2016; Skoric et al., 2016). In a meta-analysis, Christens et al. (2018) located only one previous study that had examined psychological empowerment for both emotional and cognitive components of psychological empowerment, and that study was conducted with adult participants. A gap also exists between the specific connection of psychological empowerment to social media for sociopolitical engagement. For example, Levy et al. (2015) point to an overall gap in the literature regarding youth political participation. Other researchers also assert that more research in this area is needed because of the growing impact of social media on politics

(Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Manca et al., 2021; Skoric et al., 2016). In my study, I addressed this gap by exploring how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence the psychological empowerment constructs of leadership, advocacy, and understanding sociopolitical issues.

Summary and Conclusions

In Chapter 2, I explained the problem of my study which is that little is understood about how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Social media is a powerful tool that citizens, including students, can use to advocate for social and political issues (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Farmer, 2020; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kornbluh, 2019). Researchers have also found that when educators use social media as a learning tool, they prepare students for college, careers, and civic life (Arceneaux & Dinu, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Kuruliszwili, 2018; Miller, 2018). Educators are beginning to reform their pedagogy by instructing their students on using social media to connect with people from around the world (Couros, 2015; Gleason, 2018; Greenstein, 2012; Magana, 2017). Additionally, educators who are using social media with students face challenges like safety, privacy, bullying, time management, and educational efficacy (Burtch, 2018; Gimenez-Gualdo et al., 2018; Gray, 2018; Laronde et al., 2017; Li et al., 2018; Martin et al., 2018). However, when these challenges are addressed, educators have used social media in translational, transformational, and transcendent ways. These three areas of skill-building, taken from Magana's (2017) T3 framework, supported the

purpose of my study, which was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills.

In this chapter, I have shown that secondary educators are beginning to use social media strategies to influence the intrapersonal, interactional, and behavioral psychological empowerment of students to help students become more engaged citizens. Intrapersonal psychological empowerment involves opportunities to gain skills in self-advocacy, student voice, and leadership through activities involving civic engagement (Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018; Eisman et al., 2016; Gutuskey et al., 2016). Although students can feel empowered through self-advocacy on their own, working with others leads to higher levels of interactional and behavioral psychological empowerment, especially when students build supportive adult relationships, use social media for mobilizing activities, and work to understand community issues (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Hipolito-Delgado & Zion, 2017; Weybright et al., 2017; Zimmerman et al., 2018). In short, psychological empowerment skill development aligned with my RQs because of its connection to social and political engagement with current community issues.

In conclusion, researchers have studied teenagers and their use of social media for information gathering, discussions, and mobilizing activities. Researchers have also studied social media with adult students for political discourse. However, there was a gap in the literature in terms of studies on social media and its connection to psychological empowerment at the secondary level. In fact, researchers have not developed a complete picture of the experiences of secondary educators who use social media to intentionally provide their students with the skills needed to influence their psychological

empowerment skills for greater social and political engagement. More research was needed around secondary educator experiences with intentional skill development in the areas of using social media to locate credible information, to establish a positive digital footprint, to build relationships, to engage in meaningful political discourse, and to advocate for community issues to bring about positive social change. Through my study, I examined the gaps in the literature that exist at the intersection of psychological empowerment and social media skills for educators. This gap was examined using a basic qualitative study, and the research methods that I used are detailed in Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. By examining the experiences of educators who use social media to develop student skills, I was able to contribute knowledge to the gap in the field of secondary learning and instruction regarding social media skills, psychological empowerment, and digital citizenship.

Current research exists regarding social media and sociopolitical engagement of young people. However, a gap in the literature exists regarding specific social media teaching strategies that secondary educators use for psychological empowerment skill development and sociopolitical engagement. Using social media effectively in a media-saturated world is becoming an important skill for young people to become engaged citizens.

This chapter includes a rationale for employing a basic qualitative approach to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences with using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Additionally, this chapter provides details about participant selection, data collection, and data analysis procedures. This chapter concludes with a section on how I addressed issues of trustworthiness and ethical procedures throughout my study.

Research Design and Rationale

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological

empowerment skills. The four RQs involved descriptions of experiences. Furthermore, the principles of connectivism and psychological empowerment aligned with RQs for my study. The principles of connectivism that related to my study are that people need an understanding of diverse opinions and decision-making is part of learning. The principles of interactional and behavioral psychological empowerment that relate to my study are people can feel empowered when they understand community issues and proactively work to solve them.

The RQs that were used in this study are:

RQ1: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to help students understand current and local community issues?

RQ2: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach students to discover diverse opinions about current and local social and political issues?

RQ3: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach decision-making skills about current issues affecting students' local communities?

RQ4: How do secondary educators describe their instruction to students in terms of how to publish social media content to be proactive regarding current and local social and political issues?

For my study, I selected a qualitative approach instead of quantitative or mixed methods study. Quantitative approaches and mixed methods require numerical answers (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015). Quantitative methods did not fit my study since I was not seeking relationships between variables or concentrating on statistics. Mixed methods also did not fit my study because that approach also has statistical and quantitative

components. Since my study did not have a quantitative component, I rejected both of those approaches. Instead, in my study, I gathered detailed descriptions of social media use and not numerical answers. Moreover, social media use in secondary education is an emerging area of academic inquiry, and during my literature review, I did not find a quantitative instrument for social media use to influence psychological empowerment in an educational context. Therefore, I eliminated quantitative and mixed methods because those approaches both require numerical data.

Besides eliminating quantitative and mixed methods approaches, I also considered many other approaches using the qualitative framework like case study, systems theory, auto-ethnography, narrative study, grounded theory, and phenomenology. After consideration, I decided on the basic qualitative approach because that approach best aligned with my RQs. I eliminated the case study, systems theory, narrative, and autoethnography approaches because I was exploring experiences from a broad range of educators. A case study analyzes one specific educational setting (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In my study, I did not concentrate on one educational setting, so I eliminated the case study design. I also eliminated the systems theory approach because my RQs did not analyze systems in one specific organization (see Patton, 2015). Likewise, I eliminated the narrative approach. Narrative qualitative studies capture the experiences of just one person (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In my study, I discovered a broad range of educator experiences involving using social media with students, not just one educator's experience. Additionally, since an auto-ethnography approach captures the researcher's personal experiences (Creswell,

2013; Patton, 2015), I eliminated that approach because my study was not about my personal experiences with secondary students and social media. Overall, I eliminated approaches that had a narrow participant scope.

I also eliminated approaches that had broader aims when analyzing findings like the grounded theory and phenomenological approaches. The grounded theory approach involves developing a new educational theory (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I eliminated the grounded theory approach since the purpose of my study was to gain detailed descriptions of educator experiences, not develop a new educational theory. Eliminating the phenomenological approach was more difficult since my RQs seemed to point to studying the phenomenon of teaching social media skills. However, phenomenological researchers address essence of experiences for all participants while concentrating on details about a single concept (Creswell, 2013; Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015). I was gathering information about multiple concepts in my study and not aiming to arrive at the essence of experience for all participants. In sum, I rejected other qualitative approaches and determined that the basic qualitative approach best fit my RQs.

After due consideration, I selected a basic qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews as the main method of data collection. The basic qualitative approach is also known as generic qualitative research (Caelli et al., 2003; Kahlke, 2014;). The basic qualitative approach also directed the procedures of my study by aligning interview questions to the study's research questions and conceptual framework.

I selected the basic qualitative approach because RQs in this approach explore practical applications (Kahlke, 2014; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Furthermore, my RQs aligned well with the generic qualitative inquiry core question that asks: "What are the practical consequences and useful applications of what we can learn about this issue or problem?" (see Patton, 2015, p. 99). In my study, I sought a practical understanding of educator experiences to inform the field of education and provide pedagogical direction.

Additionally, RQs in basic qualitative studies are broad and involve understanding broad ideas and in-depth participant experiences instead of generalizing findings (Creswell, 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). My RQs broadly explored how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. Moreover, the basic qualitative approach often involves in-depth interviews (Patton, 2015). I employed in-depth interviews as the main data collection tool in my study. For these reasons, the basic qualitative approach best aligned with my RQs.

My selection of a basic qualitative approach was also influenced by a few studies that I encountered during my literature review. Gutuskey et al.'s (2016) basic qualitative study informed my research design selection because their study, like my study, involved semi-structured interviews to explore educator experiences regarding teaching strategies as well as psychological empowerment as a conceptual framework. In another basic qualitative study, Mathé' (2018) explored student perceptions about political participation and citizenship using semi-structured interviews. Overall, my RQs about broad

experiences aligned well with the basic qualitative approach that aims to discover detailed descriptions to answer RQs.

Role of the Researcher

For this basic qualitative study, I functioned as the sole researcher. This role involved interviewing study participants from my professional learning network who met inclusion criteria. In my role as sole researcher, I selected the approach, designed the study, determined data sources, developed procedures for recruitment, and created the interview guide as my data collection instrument. In addition, I was responsible for all data analysis and using strategies that improve the trustworthiness of this qualitative study. Since qualitative studies also acknowledge the experience that interviewers bring to the study (Caelli et al., 2003; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021), I made my experiences explicit in my procedures and methodology. For example, as part of recruitment documents, I informed potential participants about my use of social media with my high school English students. In addition, my role as researcher did not conflict with any current paid position since I am a retired high school English educator.

Methodology

In this section, I explain the methodology of my study. I start by explaining the logic behind participant selection and sampling strategies. I also discuss recruitment and consent procedures. Then, I detail the interview protocol, data collection procedures, and data analysis strategies that I employed in my study.

Participant Selection

Participants in my study included 12 secondary educators who self-identified as using social media with students. I used a purposeful sampling strategy to find secondary educators who self-identified as using social media with students for instructional purposes in the past 5 years. Ravitch and Carl (2021) defined a purposeful sampling strategy as deliberately selecting participants who are knowledgeable about and have specific experience with the topic being studied. A purposeful or purposive sampling strategy is justified in qualitative studies to increase the transferability of findings and study trustworthiness (Anney, 2014; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Patton (2015) said purposeful sampling is appropriate when researchers select participants who are information rich in terms of the topic central to the study. For these reasons, a purposeful sampling strategy was justified for my basic qualitative study.

To ensure purposeful sampling, I identified potential participants based on specific inclusion criteria. Participants self-identified that they were classroom educators, instructional coaches, or media specialists who work directly or indirectly with students in grades six to 12. Participants also self-identified that they had used social media with secondary students at some point in the last 5 years in at least two ways related to my RQs. I established these inclusion criteria because I wanted participants who had experiences related to my RQs, and I wanted participants who had a variety of perspectives (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). My literature review revealed that educators from a broad spectrum of curricular content areas such as history, physical education, mathematics, and language arts used social media with secondary students. Therefore, I

included secondary educators who met inclusion criteria regardless of their content area. During participant selection, I also asked participants how many years they had been using social media with students so that I could compare perspectives regarding time during data analysis for data triangulation (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Thurmond, 2001). Participants who only worked with students younger than sixth grade or older than 12th grade or who had not used social media with students in the past 5 years were excluded. I felt that excluding educators who work with elementary students was appropriate and justifiable since many social media platforms require users to be over 13 years old (Herskovitz & Forkosh-Baruch, 2019).

Participants were identified during four phases of online recruitment that targeted educators in my professional learning network and a university's participant pool. I shared an infographic with a link to a Google form if the potential participant was interested in learning more about the study. Before they viewed the informed consent form, they answered questions to determine if they met inclusion criteria for the study. Those who stated they met the inclusion criteria then read the informed consent form, and those who wanted to participate gave their implied consent by selecting "I consent" on the Google form. I limited the number of participants to 12 since when using purposeful sampling in a qualitative study that does not generalize findings, my set sample size was sufficient to reach data saturation (see Guest et al., 2006; Patton, 2015; Percy, et al., 2015; Sim et al., 2018).

Instrumentation

I employed semi-structured interviews with an interview guide. The interview guide approach for semi-structured interviews is an appropriate data collection method for generic qualitative studies (Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015). I developed an interview guide by following recommendations from qualitative research experts. Experts recommend using open-ended questions and aligning questions to a conceptual framework (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I also designed interview questions that involved neutral phrasing, and I began the protocol with less controversial questions to help build rapport with interviewees (see Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Additionally, expert qualitative researchers recommend including main questions as well as probing follow-up questions on interview guides (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I followed the advice of these expert qualitative researchers when developing my interview guide. See Appendix A for the complete interview guide.

To ensure the content and rigor of interview questions, I aligned interview questions to RQs and conceptual framework of my study. I included key concepts from the RQs in either the main interview questions or follow-up prompts. The main concepts that I included in my interview questions were terms related to my conceptual framework: making online global connections, understanding diverse opinions, understanding local issues, using decision-making as learning, and advocating for sociopolitical issues. Researchers recommend creating a matrix to map interview

questions with RQs to ensure alignment (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). See Table 2 for the question alignment of my study.

To ensure that I had an appropriate interview protocol, I practiced the protocol on two educators who were not part of my participant pool, and those data points were not included in the final analysis. Using practice participants allows researchers to improve their skills and instruments (Castillo-Montoya, 2016; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Table 2

Alignment of Questions with the Conceptual Framework

RQ	Interview Questions	Relationship to Conceptual Framework
RQ1: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to help students understand current and local community issues?	1 2 3 5	Connectivism states knowledge requires people understanding a range of diverse opinions. Interactional psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues.
RQ2: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach students to discover diverse opinions about current and local social and political issues?	1 2 3 5	Connectivism states knowledge requires people understanding a range of diverse opinions. Interactional psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues.
RQ3: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach decision-making skills about current issues affecting student's local communities?	1 2 3 5	Connectivism states decision-making is learning but depends on a person's context in terms of time and location. Interactional psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues.
RQ4: How do secondary educators describe their instruction to students in terms of how to publish social media content to be proactive regarding current and local social and political issues?	1 4 5	Behavioral psychological empowerment increases when people proactively work to solve community issues

Note. Principles of connectivism from Siemens (2005). Psychological empowerment principles from Zimmerman (1995).

Procedures

In this section, I explain the procedures for my study. I start by explaining the procedures for online recruitment from my professional learning network and a university's participant pool. I also explain the procedures for participation. Then, I detail the data collection procedures in my basic qualitative study.

Procedures for Recruitment

To ensure that I received the number of participants I needed, I developed four phases of recruitment. For phase 1 of recruitment, I posted an infographic on my personal Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram social media pages to reach members of my professional learning network. For phase 2, with the permission of the page moderators, I shared the recruitment infographic on educator Facebook pages that are part of my professional learning network. I asked these moderators to send me a direct message saying that it was okay for me to post to their page. See Table 3 for a list of these Facebook pages and the number of members. For phase 3 of recruitment, I had a professional educator organization share my recruitment infographic on their electronic newsletter. For phase 4 of recruitment, I shared my study information on a university's participant pool. I selected the first 12 people who self-identified as meeting the inclusion criteria and who consented to participate. Once I had identified 12 participants, I replaced the Google form recruitment link with a message that stated: "Thank you for your interest, but I have filled all of the study participant spots."

Table 3

Professional Learning Network Facebook Groups

Facebook group name	Number of members on 1/25/2021 during recruitment
Teaching During COVID-19	137,400
Culturally Conscious Action Educators	7,000
National Network of State Teachers of the Year	1,100

In relation to recruitment, I posted my infographic on social media pages and an organization's newsletter to reach members of my professional learning network who could be potential participants for my study. The recruitment information was also posted on a university's participant pool webpage. The recruitment documents included a link to a Google form for potential participants to complete. The recruitment documents, infographic, and Google form also informed participants that they would receive a $20 Amazon gift card for participating in the interview, even if they did not answer all the questions. See Appendix B for the recruitment infographic.

The link on the recruitment posts directed potential participants to a Google form with six sections. Sections 1, 2 and 3 asked screening questions where potential participants self-identified if they met inclusion criteria. If individuals clicked on a form response that indicated that they did not meet inclusion criteria, the form navigated the individuals to an exit page thanking them for their time, and those non-qualifying individuals never provided personal information. Section 4 of the Google form contained the Letter of Consent for participants to learn more about participation in the study. The letter of consent also included the Walden University IRB approval number of 12-18-20-0453525. At the bottom of section 4, individuals were asked whether they wanted to

participate, and they were given directions on how to give digital consent. Section 5 of the Google form captured demographic details and contact information to assist me in setting up interviews. Section 6 was the exit page thanking them for their time. Since recruitment occurred asynchronously, participants had adequate time to review the Letter of Consent and ask questions before they gave electronic consent. The information from the Google form of participants who were part of my study was saved on both my Google Drive and my personal computer, both of which were secured with a password and backed-up nightly at off-site facilities.

Procedures for Participation

In relation to participation, I conducted a series of procedures to make sure participants were comfortable with the interview process. First, I sent participants a follow-up email to confirm their interview time and preferred teleconferencing tool. Second, if a participant volunteered information about their social media accounts on the Google form, I reviewed participants' latest social media posts as one way to build rapport in the warm-up phase of the interview. As another way to build rapport, the recruitment Google form included my social media handles so that participants could explore those if they desired. Rubin and Rubin (2012) advise that learning about participants before an interview helps to build a relationship.

Procedures for Data Collection

In relation to data collection, I conducted virtual interviews and kept a reflective journal. For interviews, I used the telephone and Zoom, a teleconferencing tool. Even though participants can more easily misrepresent their experience in online research

(Chandler & Paolacci, 2017; Hydock, 2017), I opted for online videoconference interviews as an inexpensive way to get a wide range of participants (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted my ability to conduct face-to-face interviews. Virtual interviews on Zoom emerged as a common qualitative methodology during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sha et al., 2020). Additionally, since my participants would likely be spread throughout the United States, I eliminated focus groups as an instrumentation technique to save extensive airfare and lodging costs to gather participants together. Likewise, I eliminated observation techniques since those would require extensive travel time and expense to collect data. The COVID-19 pandemic also impacted my ability to travel, to conduct focus groups, and to observe face-to-face classroom settings (see Sha et al., 2020). The data collection methods that I adopted at my convenience provided me with sufficient data to answer my RQs.

In terms of interview data collection procedures, I used the interview protocol that I developed (see Appendix A). I conducted virtual interviews via Zoom or telephone. The method depended on the participants' preferred platform so that participants might feel more comfortable. During the interview, I made two audio recordings in case one piece of technology failed. For the Zoom interviews, I used the Zoom audio recording feature with a back-up recording on my cell phone. For the telephone interview, I used my computer's audio recording app and an external digital recorder. I kept interviews under 60 minutes to honor time commitments. I saved interview audio files on my home computer and Google drive, which are both password-protected and backed-up nightly to remote servers. I will delete these audio files in 5 years.

My data collection procedures also included creating verbatim transcripts. Verbatim transcription is the best way to capture interview data to analyze for patterns and themes (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Shortly after each interview, I used Kaltura captioning software to begin the transcription process. I then listened to the audio recording while comparing it to the Kaltura transcription, editing as needed to ensure accurate, verbatim transcripts. Additionally, researchers suggest that transcripts should be revised for punctuation, spelling, and notation of garbled words (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015), so I revised transcripts accordingly. I also redacted personal information such as participant names, school, and social media accounts so that I did not compromise confidentiality. In fact, I labeled participants with P1, for participant 1, P2, P3, and so on to protect participant privacy. I saved the transcripts on my home computer and Google drive, which are both password-protected and backed-up nightly to remote servers. I will delete these transcripts in 5 years.

I also employed a participant validation strategy as a data confirmation procedure to improve my study's credibility. I emailed my participants their transcripts so that they had an opportunity to review them and clarify their responses (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). The email informed participants that they had 10 days to review the transcript and let me know if the transcript was an accurate representation of the interview or if any responses needed clarifying. Six of the seven participants responded to my transcript review email. Two said the transcript was okay as presented, and four indicated minor corrections. I made those suggested revisions to the verbatim transcripts. This transcript review was

justified because participant review helps establish credibility and reliability of data (see Bashir et al., 2008; Caelli et al., 2003; Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

In addition to data collected from interviews, a second data source for this study was my reflective journal entries and memos written after interviews. When researchers compose memos about listening strategies, probing questions, body language, and silences, then these memos can be part of data collection (Orange, 2016; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). During interviews, I took brief notes and composed a memo about the interview shortly after the interview concluded. In addition to interview memos, my reflective journal included entries about recruitment, collection, and analysis decisions to help with my study's confirmability and credibility (see Bashir et al., 2008; Houghton et al., 2013; Orange, 2016; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). As needed, I shared journal entries with my committee for feedback. My researcher journal helped ensure that participant experiences were described accurately. Overall, the interview transcripts, participant validation strategy, and reflective memos were part of my data collection and confirmation procedures.

Data Analysis Plan

For this basic qualitative study, I completed an iterative thematic pattern analysis through constant comparison of verbatim transcripts after each interview. Since data analysis in qualitative interview studies begins with careful verbatim transcription of recorded interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015), I created transcripts by uploading the audio recording to Kaltura captioning software. Then I listened to the audio recording and carefully proofread the transcript while also referring to my

interview reflective memos to make sure that the transcript reflected any silences, emotions, or body language that I noted during the interview. Additionally, constant comparison allowed me to complete inductive analysis by analyzing data after each interview and comparing the data to previously analyzed data in terms of emerging themes (see Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). With constant comparison, I was able to complete multiple levels of analysis, starting right after the first interview (see Percy et al., 2015). Following the procedures of iterative coding, I modified my codebook throughout the data analysis process to help me reduce a fixed mindset (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

I conducted iterative, constant comparison data analysis at three levels. At the first level, I reviewed the verbatim transcripts using inductive coding, also known as open coding. Open coding uses inductive reasoning to discover patterns and themes without trying to organize data into already established categories (Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015). During the first level of data analysis, I used Dedoose, a qualitative data management program, to organize my data and create a codebook. Researchers suggest that creating a codebook early in data analysis improves a study's credibility (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Smith & Firth, 2011). Therefore, I created a codebook with the following three components: (a) code names; (b) detailed definitions of the code including key words, synonyms, inclusion criteria, and exclusion criteria; and (c) an illustrative example of a data text segment from an interview response (see DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011). Overall,

using a codebook and the iterative process of open coding allowed me to capture text segments and ideas that were related to my RQs and conceptual framework.

In addition to beginning to see broad themes when developing the codebook, I began capturing illuminating text segments to serve as thick description for data analysis. Since capturing clarifying examples, or a notable quotes collection, is a first step in building potential data for thick description (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), I used a code called "good quotes" throughout the coding process. Throughout data analysis I continued to capture thick descriptions, which is an important part of data analysis and findings in qualitative studies (see Jorgensen, 2009; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Since thick description provides "layer upon layer of meaning" to "get beyond superficial description" in qualitative studies (Jorgensen, 2009, p. 70), I was sure to capture thick description at all levels of data analysis so that I had ample data to report in my findings. When reporting thick descriptions, I provided researcher and participant context so that I was including faithful narratives while working toward shared yet nuanced understandings in my findings (see Jorgensen, 2009).

At the second level of data analysis, I examined the data for patterns, which is known as a cross-case thematic analysis. The definition of cross-case thematic analysis is when a qualitative researcher discovers common themes while maintaining the integrity of individual cases and interview responses (Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Furthermore, a cross-case analysis involves analyzing the data to identify initial themes and codes before synthesizing ideas to get connections between themes (Smith & Firth, 2011). Those initial themes and codes were developed during the first level of analysis.

Using Dedoose to help manage data, I completed the cross-case thematic analysis by reading the data multiple times and attaching code tags to relevant text segments. Starting to see patterns in this inductive process helped me discover themes in terms of similar actions, perceptions, and experiences (see Patton, 2015; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Using a qualitative data management program helped me analyze my data while keeping human critical thought at the forefront of my analysis.

At the third level of data analysis, I compared participant perspectives in terms of number of years using social media with students for data triangulation. Data triangulation is an important part of qualitative studies to improve credibility and reduce bias (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Thurmond, 2001). For my study, data triangulation occurred during data analysis by comparing perspectives regarding time using social media (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Thurmond, 2001). Ravitch and Carl (2021) define comparison data triangulation as "within-methods triangulation" where researchers use just one method, like interviews, but have "different comparison groups in the interviews" (p. 174). In my study, data comparison occurred as a third level of data analysis to determine broad themes for educators who are relatively new to using social media with students compared to educators who are more experienced with using social media with students. For within-methods triangulation, I compared data from three participants who had used social media with students for over 10 years with four participants who had used social media with students for under 5 years. This comparative analysis was important to data triangulation in my study.

Part of a data analysis plan is knowing how to treat discrepant data. Discrepant data are ideas that do not fit a researcher's "current understanding of the data" (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 285). Analyzing and reporting discrepant data strengthened the validity of my findings by challenging my preconceived notions to increase the reliability of the study, allowing me to present a broad range of participant experiences (see Bashir et al., 2008; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Moreover, thick descriptions from outlier participants provided me with a way to be meticulous and faithful when reporting my findings (see Jorgensen, 2009). Overall, my systematic data analysis was part of my efforts to ensure the trustworthiness of my study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is important to qualitative research to bring credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to research findings. Trustworthiness occurs when a researcher uses rigorous methodology (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). During my study, I implemented a rigorous methodology to improve the trustworthiness of my study, including paying careful attention to ethical procedures. These trustworthiness practices are explained in this section.

Credibility

For qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) define *credibility* as truth, accuracy, and the believability of findings. The first step to achieving a credible study begins with the alignment of RQs to study design, data triangulation, and careful procedures from data collection to analysis (Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To improve credibility, I followed careful

procedures at each step of the research process (see Bashir et al., 2008; Carlson, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In terms of data collection, I used a set interview protocol where each participant was asked the same questions to yield more credible results (see Patton, 2015). During interviews I also used probing questions as checks for candor and honesty to make sure that I was collecting credible data (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I also employed audio recordings, verbatim transcription, and a participant validation strategy to increase data credibility. After each interview, I composed a memo where I reflected on my communication style and participant engagement as another way to improve credibility (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I also used participant transcript review to confirm the data by sending the verbatim transcripts to participants so that they could clarify responses. During transcript review, I worked to avoid one common problem. Sometimes interviewees change the transcript so much that the data change, which can be a problem in iterative analysis like in my study (see Carlson, 2010). Therefore, when I ended each interview and in the transcript review email, I told participants that they should simply clarify responses and not make substantive changes to the transcript (see Carlson, 2010).

Credibility is also improved through careful data analysis. For example, constant comparison helps a qualitative researcher maintain consistent codes to increase credibility (Patton, 2015). For this study, I created a codebook and engaged in constant comparison by analyzing data after each interview. I also used thick descriptions and non-judgmental presentation of findings to improve credibility (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Additionally, I compared participant descriptions based on years using social media with students for

within-methods data triangulation (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Thurmond, 2001). I also improved credibility by examining negative cases, which can provide insights into different directions of data analysis (see Patton, 2015). Negative case analysis shows that the researcher did not just look for data to confirm certain assumptions, but instead searched for multiple perspectives (Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). During data analysis, I made sure to examine the areas where participants shared discrepant ideas as one way to confirm my findings. In sum, to improve my study's credibility, I employed set data collection methods and a data analysis plan that included a codebook, constant comparison, within-methods data triangulation, and discrepant data.

Transferability

Ravitch and Carl (2021) define *transferability* as the ways qualitative studies are transferable to "broader contexts while still maintaining their context-specific richness" (p. 168). In qualitative studies, the transferability of findings becomes more trustworthy with purposeful sampling (Anney, 2014) and inductive coding for analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my study, I used purposeful sampling to identify 12 participants, and I used inductive coding during data analysis. Transferability also improves when researchers include thick descriptions to support themes and describe participants' contexts (Anney, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In the data analysis and findings report for my study, I included thick descriptions so that my readers could decide on the transferability of my study to their context. In my study's final report, I also include information about me, the researcher, so that readers can better determine that contextual part of the study for transferability (see Patton,

2015). Furthermore, since researchers should not generalize findings for transferability in qualitative studies (Anney, 2014), I state "lessons learned" instead of conclusions when reporting my findings (see Patton, 2015, p. 714). Overall, in terms of transferability, I made sure that my conclusions were modest and that I did not generalize findings (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Dependability

Patton (2015) defines *dependability* as stability or "a systematic process systematically followed" (p. 684). In other words, the dependability of a study begins with a systematic, reasoned design and alignment of methods to the study's RQs (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). In my study, I aligned the chosen approach, data collection, and analysis procedures to my RQs. For example, the interview questions were aligned to the study's RQs and conceptual framework to improve the dependability of my study. In addition, the dependability of findings can be ensured with proper coding techniques and an audit trail of raw data and interview notes (Anney, 2014; Houghton et al., 2013). For example, qualitative researchers can code and then re-code data to check agreement (Anney, 2014; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). During data collection and analysis, I followed these dependable techniques and kept reflexive memos about interviews, coding, and analysis. I also used Dedoose, a qualitative data management program, to keep track of analysis decisions (see Houghton et al., 2013). I also developed a codebook and employed three levels of inductive coding as part of my dependability strategies. Overall, these aligned and reasoned strategies impacted the dependability of my study.

Confirmability

Houghton et al. (2013) define *confirmability* as data accuracy. To ensure rigor in terms of confirmability, qualitative researchers need to engage in reflexivity and keep an audit trail (Houghton et al., 2013; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Orange, 2016). Confirmability also requires researchers to reduce their bias and make sure that biases do not affect the interpretation of the data (Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I engaged in reflexivity during data collection and analysis to reduce researcher bias (see Orange, 2016; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). For example, I employed participant review of transcripts for confirmability of data. I also kept an audit trail of all steps from recruitment to data collection to data analysis by writing reflexive memos. For example, I compared the transcripts to the audio recordings to make sure that transcripts were accurate, and I noted any inaudible sections. My reflexive interview memos were also part of transcript review. In addition, confirmability requires that interpretations be supported by data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In my research report, I support my data interpretations with specific data and thick description. Engaging in these procedures improved the confirmability of my study.

Ethical Procedures

The trustworthiness of qualitative research also depends on the steps that researchers take to follow ethical procedures (Kahlke, 2014; Patton, 2015). For this study, I followed the guidelines set forth by the Institutional Review Board (IRB). I made sure to follow proper recruitment and informed consent processes (see Patton, 2015). My letter of consent included all IRB requirements such as the nature of risks and privacy concerns. During data collection, I reminded participants that they were being recorded

(see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I also followed IRB guidelines about where and for how long data are stored and who has access to data to protect the confidentiality of my participants (see Patton, 2015). The IRB approved my research procedures and assigned my study the approval number of 12-18-20-0453525. As much as possible, my dissertation committee faculty members did not know the identity of my participants. Identifying information was also removed from my research report to protect participant confidentiality. Additionally, the interview transcripts and recordings will be deleted after 5 years. Furthermore, I honored the agreed-upon commitments with my participants (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Specifically, I kept interviews to the agreed-upon timeframe of 45 to 60 minutes, and I promptly emailed my participants their digital $20 Amazon gift card as a thank you. Overall, I was transparent with my participants at all steps of the research process and followed IRB ethical guidelines (see Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

Summary

In Chapter 3 I have explained the details of my study's methodology and rationale for my choices. First, I reasoned that the basic qualitative approach best aligned with my RQs and conceptual framework because I explored a broad range of experiences regarding the relatively new phenomenon of educators using social media with students for psychological empowerment skill development. Second, this chapter outlined my participation selection logic, sampling size, and recruitment procedures. Third, I explained how the interview protocol was an appropriate data collection instrument to gain insights into a broad range of educator experiences. Fourth, I discussed how a basic

qualitative study about a new phenomenon aligned with inductive coding so that preconceived notions and researcher bias did not influence data analysis. Finally, I discussed how my methodology selections improved the trustworthiness and ethical nature of my study.

Chapter 4: Results

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences when using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. To accomplish this purpose, I employed a basic qualitative approach using interviews as my main data collection tool with interview questions aligned with my four RQs.

RQ1: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to help students understand current and local community issues?

RQ2: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach students to discover diverse opinions about current and local social and political issues?

RQ3: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach decision-making skills about current issues affecting students' local communities?

RQ4: How do secondary educators describe their instruction to students in terms of how to publish social media content to be proactive regarding current and local social and political issues?

These RQs allowed me to explore a range of ideas that secondary educators expressed about their use of social media for student skill development in the areas of understanding issues and using social media as a tool to advocate for social change.

In this chapter, I report the results of my basic qualitative study. Chapter 4 includes a description of my study's setting and demographics of participants. In addition, this chapter details procedures that I implemented for data collection, data

analysis, and trustworthiness during all steps of the study from recruitment to reporting of findings. Chapter 4 ends with a detailed description of the results of my qualitative study.

Setting

Data for this basic qualitative study were not gathered from one specific setting since interviews were conducted virtually with participants from a variety of settings. My online professional learning network was used for recruitment and the unifying factor for participants in this study. Three participants were identified through my social media, four from an electronic newsletter distributed by a national educator organization, and five from a university's participant pool. Additionally, participants completed virtual interviews in personal settings of their choosing and selected their preferred technology. Eleven participants elected to complete interviews via Zoom teleconferencing software, and one participant opted to complete the interview via telephone.

Several organizational conditions may have influenced the interpretation of study results. Four participants indicated that they had their social media practices questioned in some way by school district stakeholders, mostly parents and administrators. Even so, these participants were candid in their interview responses, so I do not believe that stakeholder criticisms impacted their responses. This information about their school setting was volunteered during interviews and not part of any inclusion criteria for my study. This specific school setting information is included to provide a better understanding of the context for participant experiences.

Demographics

Participants in this study included seven secondary educators who completed virtual interviews at locations chosen by them. I originally planned to have 12 participants. However, during the data collection phase of my study, I eliminated interview data from five of the 12 original participants for reasons that will be explained in the "unusual circumstances" section. In this section, I will provide details about the seven participants who remained in my study.

All seven participants for my study were classroom teachers, and their teaching experience ranged from 8 to 32 years. Participants' use of social media with students ranged from 2 to 23 years. Geographically, participants all taught in the United States with locations ranging from East Coast to Midwest to West Coast. At the time of data collection, five of the seven participants were teaching at the high school level, one at the middle school level, and one at both secondary levels. Since the gender of participants was not relevant to my data analysis and some participants are well known on social media, I use the singular "they" when discussing participants to ensure identity confidentiality. Additionally, all seven participants discussed student lessons in the context of student work with reading, writing, research, and other communication areas. Courses that participants discussed were filmmaking, communications technology, school publications, media studies, English Language Arts (ELA), and English language development. Although participants often discussed social media in a general sense, the social media platforms the educators discussed specifically can be found in Table 4 which also lists specific information on participant demographics.

Table 4

Participant Demographics

Participant	Years teaching experience	Years using social media with students	Teaching context	Social media platforms mentioned
P1	32	23	High school multimedia	Ning, YouTube, Twitter, Periscope, Blogs
P2	18	12	Middle and high school multi-disciplinary	Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, Sway, LinkedIn, Blogs
P3	24	10	High school Communications Technology	Weebly, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube
P4	13	10	High school ELA, humanities	Twitter, Facebook, Instagram
P5	26	2	Middle and high school English Language Development & service learning	Facebook, Instagram
P6	8	7	High school ELA & publications	Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, YouTube
P7	14	5	High school ELA	Twitter, blogs, LinkedIn

P1 had been teaching for 32 years and was teaching at a public high school in the Midwest at the time of data collection. P1 stated that they may have been one of the first educators in the United States to begin using social media with students, starting with using Ning in 1998. P1 taught multimedia courses that focused on innovation, creativity, filmmaking, collaboration, personalized learning, and digital storytelling. P1 discussed lessons that provided students with opportunities for making global connections through social media.

P2 had been teaching for 18 years, serving as an educator at a variety of grade levels from preschool to high school. Since 2009, P2 had been working with middle and high school students, concentrating on innovative uses of technology in the classroom. P2's interview responses focused on experiences teaching at a private secondary school in the Western United States. P2 discussed using multiple social media platforms so that students could make connections with others around the world.

P3 came to education as a second career, working in journalism prior to teaching. P3 had been teaching for 24 years with the last 10 years at a high school in the Eastern United States. Prior to teaching high school, P3 taught at the middle school and college level. In fact, P3 was teaching at both the high school and college levels at the time of their interview. P3's interview responses focused on teaching 8 levels of communications technology courses. The senior levels of courses were independent study courses, allowing for seniors to personalize their learning and leave high school with a Weebly portfolio that showcased their high school communications work.

Education was a second career for P4, coming to education from the arts. Because of their background in the arts, P4 integrated art in the classroom when possible. At the time of data collection, P4 had been teaching for 13 years. Although P4 used social media as part of instruction early in their career, they had recently rejected social media because of political polarization and the fact that young people preferred platforms that P4 did not find successful for classroom applications. P4 also discussed the voluntary nature of social media in the classroom and how students could opt to turn in paper simulations of tweets or other social media posts.

At the time of data collection, P5 had been teaching for 26 years and was working with seventh and eighth graders on English language development. P5 was a classroom teacher at a public middle school in the Western United States and had been in that position for 5 years. Most of P5's middle school students had been living in the United States for about a year and were reading at the first or second grade level. P5 had been using social media with students for the past 2 years. During the interview, P5 also discussed the use of social media with students as a service-learning adviser. P5's student voice and advocacy responses centered around service-learning work with students.

P6 had been teaching at a midwestern high school for 7 years, using social media with students since starting at that high school. During the interview, P6 mentioned some social media uses as part of lessons in their ELA classes, but mainly discussed social media lessons with students as part of instruction with high school journalists. P6 was the advisor of their school's student newspaper and yearbook. Both of those credit-bearing courses have an online and social media presence.

At the time of the interview, P7 had been teaching ELA for 5 years at a midwestern high school, having previously taught for 9 years in Texas. P7 began using social media with students when they began teaching at the midwestern high school. Although P7 occasionally discussed social media uses with ninth and tenth grade students in ELA courses, P7's interview responses centered around a senior elective course called mass media. P7 shared detailed lessons about the mass media course, even dropping social media lesson plan documents in the chat during the Zoom interview.

The seven participants in my study provided ample information for me to reach data saturation and answer my RQs. More information about the length of interviews and the depth of thick descriptions provided through participant responses will be discussed in the "Data Collection" section.

Data Collection

I received IRB approval on December 18, 2020 and began data collection soon after. For this basic qualitative study, I collected data from two sources—interviews and my reflexive journal entries. Data collection procedures also included participant transcript reviews to confirm data. My second data source, reflexive journals, were an important data source to ensure the credibility of my data. Unless noted, data were collected as described in Chapter 3. During data collection, I did encounter some unusual circumstances, which I detail in the "unusual circumstances" section.

Interviews

One data source for my study were virtual interviews. I conducted a total of seven virtual interviews with six completed in Zoom and one over the telephone. I used the

interview protocol described in Chapter 3 and Appendix A. I audio recorded interviews in two ways to ensure that I had backup recordings in case technology failed. For Zoom interviews, I used the Zoom record feature to capture audio recording and the Voice Memos app on my cell phone as a backup recording. For the phone interview, I used a voice recording app on my computer and an external digital recorder. I needed to modify recording procedures for the phone interview since the Voice Memos app on my cell phone did not allow me to record a phone call in progress.

I completed the seven interviews over a 1-month period. Interviews lasted between 40 and 60 minutes, with five of the interviews lasting the entire 60 minutes, which was the maximum length that I had set with participants during recruitment. My last interview question was an open prompt asking participants to share any last thoughts that they had about students and social media. Before that last interview question, I informed participants how much time was remaining in their 60 minutes so that I could be respectful of their time. See Table 5 for the interview logistics regarding date, length, method, and transcript review.

To support responses during interviews, all seven participants shared some supporting documents with me. Although my methodology did not include document analysis as part of data collection, these documents were volunteered by participants to support their interview responses. When reporting findings about these documents, I only included information from these documents if information provided in the document had a direct connection to something in the verbatim transcript. In my reporting of results, I

clearly indicated how participants referred to documents in interviews to find more information via supporting documents, links, or social media accounts (see Table 6).

Table 5

Interview Logistics

Participant	Interview date	Interview length in minutes	Technology method	Transcript emailed for review	Transcript returned after review
P1	1/15/2021	60	Zoom	1/23/2021	1/23/2021
P2	1/24/2021	60	Zoom	1/30/2021	1/30/2021
P3	1/29/201	60	Zoom	2/2/2021	2/3/2021
P4	1/29/2021	50	Zoom	2/4/2021	2/8/2021
P5	1/30/2021	39	Cell phone	2/5/2021	No response
P6	2/3/2021	60	Zoom	2/9/2021	2/12/2021
P7	2/10/2021	41	Zoom	2/15/2021	2/17/2021

Table 6

Documents Voluntarily Shared by Participants

Participant	Documents voluntarily shared	Information from demographic questionnaire or verbatim transcript
P1	Twitter account	Twitter shared on demographic questionnaire.
P2	Facebook page; articles; links to student work	A former professor "sent me a document -- I'll send it to you – because it might be relevant." "I'll collect and send to you" examples of student work for a positive digital footprint.
P3	Twitter account; course website with links to student digital portfolios	Twitter account name shared on demographic questionnaire. "Click on any of those kids" on the website name shared to investigate examples of student publishing and voice.
P4	Twitter account	Twitter shared on demographic questionnaire.
P5	Facebook & Instagram accounts	Examples of students posting about their service-learning experiences are "on our Facebook page." Go to Instagram and look up XXX. "There's just probably a few posts there."
P6	Facebook & Instagram accounts	During interview, spelled out Instagram and Twitter accounts for teacher account and two publication accounts for me to review.
P7	Google docs with lesson plans shared in Zoom chat.	"Is there somewhere I can share [the lesson plan] with you? Do we have a chat?"

To prepare interview data for the data analysis phase, I transcribed the audio recordings to make written and verbatim transcripts. To create transcripts, I first uploaded audio files to Kaltura software and made a caption request. Then I copied the Kaltura captions to Microsoft Word. I then listened to the audio recordings and revised the transcripts in Microsoft Word, adding punctuation and revising as necessary to arrive at an accurate verbatim transcript. Part of my revision process involved redacting any personal information from the transcripts that could identify my participants. I then emailed the verbatim transcripts to participants to review for accuracy as I described in the transcript review procedures of Chapter 3. Six of seven participants replied to the transcript review email. Of the six who responded to the transcript review request, three participants had minor changes, and three reported that the transcript looked okay as is. After revising the transcript to reflect the minor revisions from my participants, I uploaded the Microsoft Word file to Dedoose software in preparation for coding.

Reflective Journals

Reflective journals were an essential part of my data collection, and I kept two types of journals. I kept a handwritten journal where I recorded my thoughts and actions during recruitment and data collection. I also completed typed reflective journal entries immediately following the interviews. I composed these post-interview reflective journals in Microsoft Word. These entries included interview logistics including length and unusual circumstances, world events occurring in social media at the time of the interview, my first impressions of main ideas presented in the interview, and my first impressions of codes. I shared my first reflective journal with my dissertation committee

for feedback on format and depth of thought so that my subsequent journal entries would provide me with rich data. I prepared the reflective journal data for analysis by reviewing my handwritten thoughts to type up those that would be relevant for my final report or to share with my dissertation committee. During data collection and analysis, I continued to refer to these entries.

Unusual Circumstances

One of my methodological assumptions was that participants would be honest during interviews. I also knew that a limitation of my study was the impostor potential of online research where a participant might exaggerate their experience to receive compensation as a research participant (see Chandler & Paolacci, 2017; Hydock, 2017). However, an unusual circumstance occurred during data collection. After my fifth interview, I shared a lengthy reflective journal with my committee outlining my suspicion that three of the five participants already interviewed were frauds since I noticed patterns in interview logistics and inconsistent responses on both the demographic questionnaire and in their interviews. When I designed my study, I had not anticipated the extent of participant fraud that could occur with Zoom interviews. I suspected that since Zoom had emerged as a commonly used piece of technology during the COVID-19 pandemic, imposter participants could be emerging as an even greater limitation to my qualitative study than I had anticipated. I even suspected that participants could be creating a fake persona and were not even educators who used social media with students. Creating a fake online persona is known as *catfishing*, which Nolan (2015) defines as "the current internet trend of creating and portraying complex fictional identities through online

profiles" (p. 54). Therefore, I shared my "catfish*"* suspicions with my dissertation committee in a reflexive journal and asked for their advice on how to proceed.

My reflexive journal detailed my suspicions that imposters were completing interviews to receive the $20 Amazon gift card. My suspicions were based on the following patterns for my first three suspected imposters: 1) cameras were off during the three Zoom interviews; 2) the three phone numbers shared were Google voice accounts; 3) a baby was crying in the background of all three interviews; 4) all three interviews were completed at 9:00 a.m. Eastern U.S. time as requested by the participant; and 5) all three verbatim transcripts contained inconsistencies that brought the truthfulness of their responses into question. For example, sometimes an interview response directly contracted a response on the inclusion criteria Google form. One participant had indicated on the inclusion Google form that they taught lessons on posting social media content about social and political issues. However, during the interview when asked this question again, they responded: "We never posted." At other times, suspected imposters contradicted statements made earlier in the interview. For example, one participant detailed a lesson about the presidential inauguration that students completed in class, but later in the interview stated they were on maternity leave and not currently teaching. When probed about this contradiction, the participant admitted to providing hypothetical situations to interview questions. I discussed my reflexive journal and these contradictions and interview patterns with my dissertation committee.

My dissertation committee reminded me that qualitative methodology allows for a change in procedures and taking a "real-time approach" to methods adaptation when

study design issues arise (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 228). Therefore, under consultation with my committee, I decided to change my procedures to make sure that I only included trustworthy data in my study. On subsequent interviews I asked even more probing questions to check for "candor and consistency" (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 60). I also filed and was granted a "change in procedures" with IRB to require participants to share social media account information to verify their identity.

Before receiving an IRB "change in procedures" approval, I completed another suspect interview. This participant entered the Zoom room under a future participant's name. When questioned about the Zoom name, the participant said that they were "using their cousin's computer." This irregularity was further confirmation of my suspicion that the same person might be completing multiple interviews to receive multiple $20 Amazon gift cards. I completed this interview and sent them the $20 Amazon gift card. However, since by this time I had been granted IRB permission to require information from participants to verify their identity, I emailed the upcoming "cousin" participant to ask for social media account information or other online documents to verify that they met my study's inclusion criteria before they completed the interview. The email to "the cousin" participant went unanswered for 5 days, so I canceled that interview.

I ultimately decided to eliminate data from participants that I could not completely trust. I was able to verify that seven participants were candid, consistent, and trustworthy in their responses. I could verify that these seven met the inclusion criteria for my study through a review of their social media accounts and other documents that they volunteered during their interviews. I also did not find any contradictions in the

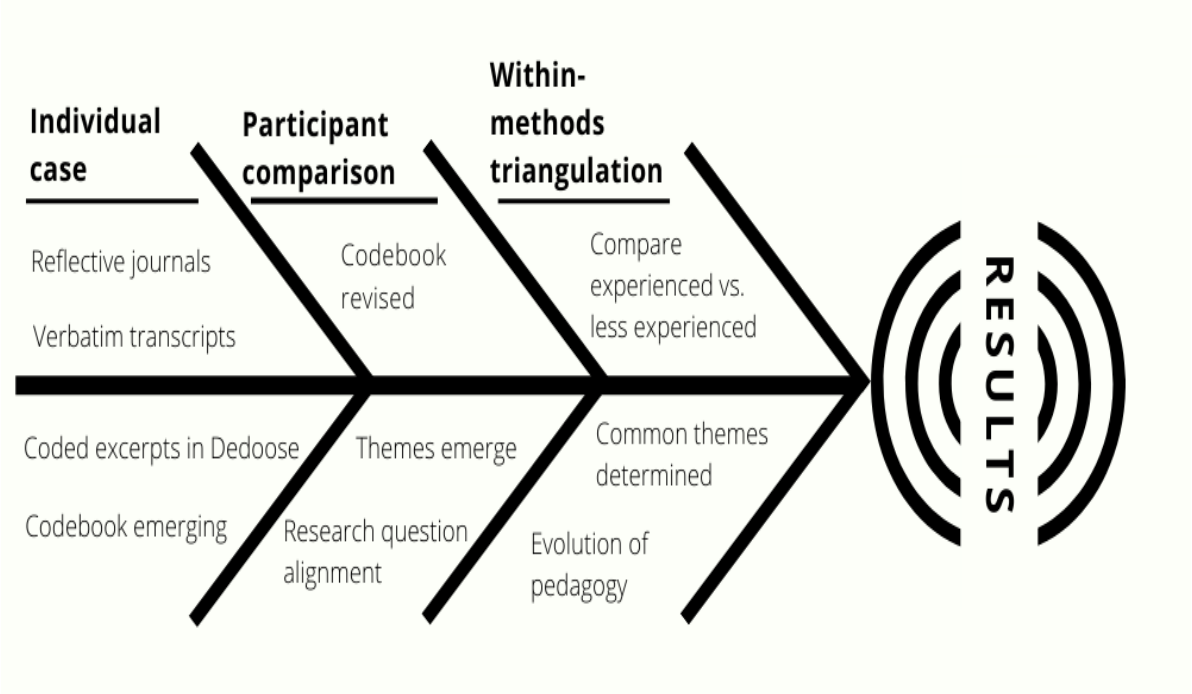
interview responses of these seven participants. Furthermore, since I had achieved data saturation with these seven candid participants, my committee agreed that a new round of participant recruitment and interviews to replace the five eliminated participants was not necessary. One reason that I was able to reach data saturation with the seven remaining participants was that all seven of these participants voluntarily provided supporting evidence of their work with social media in educational contexts. These seven participants shared with me social media accounts, lesson plans, articles, and links to public student work that showcased social media uses with students. These seven trustworthy participants were the only ones who ultimately provided data to be analyzed in my study.

Data Analysis

I used thematic analysis for my study, which Percy et al. (2015) recommend for a basic, or generic, qualitative study. To arrive at themes, I used iterative, open coding and constant comparison of participants, which Ravitch and Carl (2021) recommend for basic qualitative research. I conducted data analysis at three levels—individual case, participant comparison, and within-methods data triangulation. See Figure 1 for a graphic representation of my three levels of data analysis.

Figure 1

Three Levels of Data Analysis

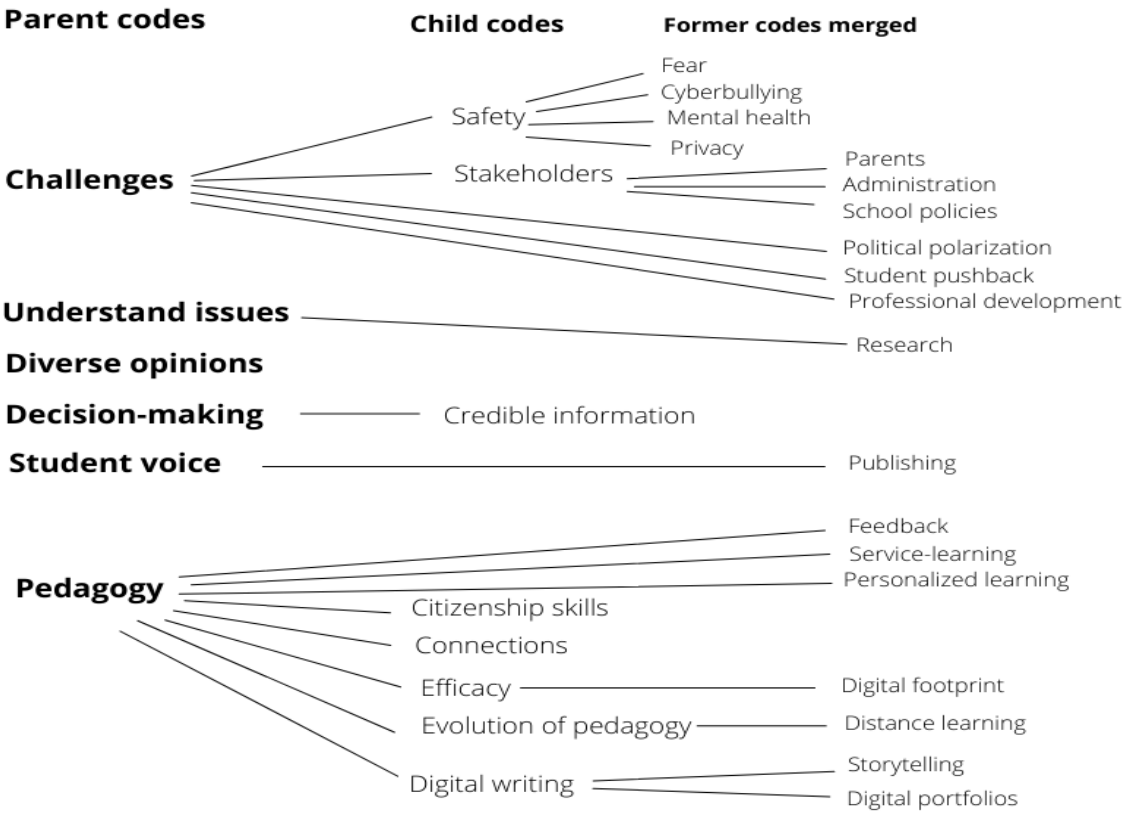


During the first level of individual case data analysis, I did not try to fit each participant's data into already established categories (see Patton, 2015; Percy et al., 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Sutton & Austin, 2015). Instead, I analyzed each participant separately. This individual case level of analysis began immediately following interviews when I wrote reflexive journal entries with my first impressions of participants' ideas and possible codes. I referred to my journal entries throughout data analysis. I then created verbatim transcripts and sent those to participants for validation as described in Chapter 3. Verified, verbatim transcripts were uploaded to Dedoose. I then coded individual case transcripts in Dedoose.

To aid in the coding process, I developed a codebook with three components, code name, description, and excerpt example, as described by DeCuir-Gunby et al. (2011). I updated my codebook throughout the coding process. Early in the coding process I set up a code for each of my four RQs to align my data analysis to my RQs. During codebook revision, I also merged codes when further analysis revealed that codes were closely connected. Additionally, I merged child codes directly into their parent code when the child code had fewer than five excerpts. See Figure 2 for a hierarchical code tree that shows parent and child codes as well as former codes that were merged. See Appendix C for an alphabetical listing of the 14 codes in my final codebook. The description column of Appendix C contains information about inclusion criteria. Exclusion criteria for all codes included ideas that did not relate to social media uses for student empowerment.

Figure 2

Hierarchical Code Tree for Final Codebook



At the second level of data analysis, I used cross-case thematic analysis to discover common themes while maintaining the integrity of individual cases and interview responses (see Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). At this level of analysis, I read the transcripts again and began comparing participant responses to discover common themes. I also continued to revise my codebook and merge codes as connections between ideas emerged. Continual codebook revision at the second level of data analysis yielded a total of 14 codes. After my codebook was finalized, I reviewed all coded excerpts again to verify that they still met my inclusion and exclusion criteria and added and removed

tags as appropriate. Using a codebook and reviewing the transcript code tags increased my confidence in my data and the credibility of my study (see DeCuir-Gunby et al., 2011; Patton, 2015; Rubin & Rubin, 2012; Smith & Firth, 2011).

At the second level of data analysis, cross-case thematic analysis allowed me to compare participant responses to determine themes related to similar actions, perceptions, and experiences of educators using social media for student empowerment (see Patton, 2015; Sutton & Austin, 2015). I analyzed the data to discover the most prevalent connections between codes to arrive at themes. I was aided in my thinking during this level of analysis by the code co-occurrence chart in Dedoose. The code co-occurrence data analysis chart was "a useful feature" that allowed me to see how "frequently the same codes are applied to the same data excerpt" (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 279).

Figure 3 shows the code co-occurrence chart that was created from my data. The overlapping codes impacted my thinking about themes. After analyzing code co-occurrence, I reviewed transcripts again to make sure that I did not miss any excerpts that fit the code co-occurrences. I ended up removing and adding code tags as appropriate to arrive at the final code co-occurrence chart.

Figure 3

Code Co-occurrence Data Analysis Chart

Codes	Challenges	Safety	Stakeholders	Good quote	Pedagogy	Citizenship skills	Connections	Digital writing	Efficacy	Evolution of pedagogy	RQ 1 Understand issues	RQ 2 Diverse opinions	RQ 3 Decision-making	Credible information	RQ 4 Student Voice	Totals
Challenges		7	7	4	2	1	2	1	8	7	3	4	4	4	7	61
Safety	7		16	2	1	2	8	2	3	8	3	4	1		9	66
Stakeholders	7	16		1	2	2	5	5	6	5	6	6	5	2	15	83
Good quote	4	2	1			1	2	3	9	5	3	3	2	1	6	42
Pedagogy	2	1	2			1	3	5	4	1	3	2	3	2	15	44
Citizenship skills	1	2	2	1	1		2	1	2	2		3	1		4	22
Connections	2	8	5	2	3	2		8	12	8	12	6	2	3	22	95
Digital writing	1	2	5	3	5	1	8		13	4	3	4	3		24	76
Efficacy	8	3	6	9	4	2	12	13		13	13	8	5	4	24	124
Evolution of pedagogy	7	8	5	5	1	2	8	4	13		7	3	1	3	11	78
RQ 1 Understand issues	3	3	6	3	3		12	3	13	7		25	11	21	15	125
RQ 2 Diverse opinions	4	4	6	3	2	3	6	4	8	3	25		10	14	11	103
RQ 3 Decision-making	4	1	5	2	3	1	2	3	5	1	11	10		11	8	67
Credible information	4		2	1	2		3		4	3	21	14	11		6	71
RQ 4 Student Voice	7	9	15	6	15	4	22	24	24	11	15	11	8	6		177
Totals	61	66	83	42	44	22	95	76	124	78	125	103	67	71	177	

At the third level of data analysis, I completed within-methods data triangulation by comparing common themes of experienced participants to less experienced participants. Within-methods triangulation is appropriate for qualitative studies that use interviews as the main data collection tool (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021; Thurmond, 2001). I analyzed how data from three participants who had used social media with students for over 10 years compared to data from four participants who had used social media with students for under 10 years. My first look at this data was the Dedoose code presence chart that allowed me to see if any participants did not discuss certain codes. I noticed that the citizenship skills code had the most gaps, and those skills were more common for experienced participants. See Figure 4 for the code presence chart.

Figure 4

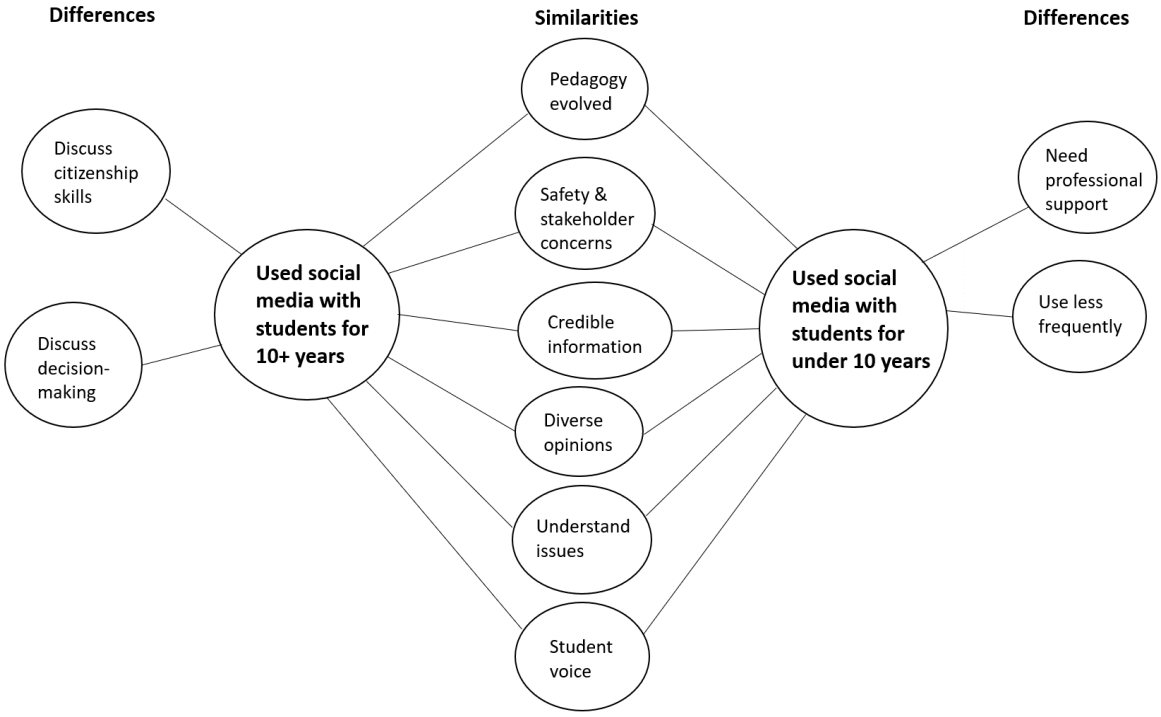
Code Presence Data Analysis Chart

Media \ Codes	Challenges	Safety	Stakeholders	Good quote	Pedagogy	Citizenship skills	Connections	Digital writing	Efficacy	Evolution of pedagogy	RQ 1 Understand issues	RQ 2 Diverse opinions	RQ 3 Decision-making	Credible information	RQ 4 Student Voice
Participant 7 verbatim	1	1	1	1			1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 6 Verbatim	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 5 Verbatim	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 4 Verbatim	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 3 Verbatim	1	1	1	1	1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 2 Verbatim	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
Participant 1 Verbatim	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

Although examining Dedoose charts provided one way to look at data patterns and emerging themes, Dedoose could not replace my critical thinking as a researcher. Therefore, to facilitate my analysis and make my thinking explicit for within-methods data triangulation, I created a double bubble thinking map to compare and contrast the two sets of participants (see Hyerle & Yaeger, 2007). Using a double bubble map instead of a Venn Diagram allowed me to capture each similarity and difference in its own bubble, and this allowed me to see distinct themes between experience levels (see Hyerle & Yaeger, 2007). See Figure 5 for the double bubble map. Overall, within-methods data triangulation allowed me to improve the credibility of my qualitative study.

Figure 5

Double Bubble Map Comparing Educators by Experience



After completing three levels of data analysis, I organized codes into themes—one for each RQ of this study. Codes are included for themes when transcript data from 5 of 7, or 71%, of participants appeared at the intersection of the theme and code. Table 7 includes a summary of themes, their most relevant codes, and a sample quotation.

Discrepant data do not fit a researcher's "current understanding of the data" (Ravitch & Carl, 2021, p. 285). I included discrepant data to strengthen the validity of my findings by presenting a broad range of participant experiences (see Bashir et al., 2008; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). Although discrepant data were considered throughout analysis, I was sure to include data from two participants who had previously used social media with students but were now skeptical about using it. P4 had quit using social media with students because they had "turned on social media personally." P7 rarely used social media since they were "silenced" by school administration. Overall, discrepant data allowed me to arrive at a broad range of educator experiences.

Table 7

Summary of Research Question Themes

RQ	Themes	Codes	Sample quotations
1	Understand issues	Diverse opinions Credible information Efficacy	P7: "The nature of the student now is you are attached to that phone at all times. By default, they're getting news on social media platforms…They read something, and this is fact."
2	Diverse opinions	Decision-making Credible information	P2: "If you have access to people on social media … then you can go to someone who has expertise in that area and ask multiple people."
3	Decision-making	Understand issues Credible information	P3: "We talk about in news, you have to make a decision: just because you can, doesn't mean you should."
4	Student voice	Efficacy Digital writing Connections Stakeholders Evolution of pedagogy Challenges Safety	P1: "We used social media to talk with people around the world…an 18-year-old kid can have a voice on the global stage."

Evidence of Trustworthiness

I upheld issues of trustworthiness in several ways. In this section I will describe how I ensured credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability by using a rigorous methodology (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I implemented a rigorous methodology to improve the trustworthiness of my study that aligned my methods to my RQs as well as the best practices detailed in the literature for basic qualitative research design.

I ensured credibility in my study by following careful procedures at each step of the research process that I described in Chapter 3 (see Bashir et al., 2008; Carlson, 2010; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). During data collection, I used a set interview protocol where each participant was asked the same questions to yield more credible results (see Patton, 2015). Additionally, I used audio recordings, verbatim transcripts, participant transcript validation, and reflexive memos to improve the credibility of my study (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). I also improved my credibility by creating a codebook and completing multiple levels of data analysis including considering discrepant data and capturing thick descriptions (see Jorgensen, 2009; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021). One adjustment that I made from my Chapter 3 plan was to add even more probing questions as checks for candor and honesty to make sure that I was collecting credible data, especially after unusual circumstances began emerging (see Rubin & Rubin, 2012). I also needed to adjust my participant size when I eliminated participants that were deemed untrustworthy.

I ensured transferability by considering broader themes while maintaining the richness provided by each participant (see Ravitch & Carl, 2021). To ensure transferability I followed the strategies suggested by Anney (2014) that I described in Chapter 3. I used purposeful sampling and thick descriptions of participants' contexts so that my readers could better judge the transferability of my findings (see Anney, 2014). I also made sure that I did not generalize findings too much, which is appropriate for qualitative research (see Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2015; Ravitch & Carl, 2021).

I ensured dependability by following a systematic design and research methods aligned to my RQs. I designed my study following the strategies suggested by Anney (2014) that I described in Chapter 3. To ensure the dependability of my findings, I employed proper coding techniques by creating a codebook, re-coding, and keeping track of decisions about merging codes (see Anney, 2014). I also used Dedoose software to keep track of analysis decisions (see Houghton et al., 2013). During data collection and analysis, I kept reflexive memos about interviews, coding, and analysis to help ensure that I employed dependable techniques for a basic qualitative study.

I ensured confirmability by engaging in reflexivity and keeping an audit trail of research activities in my journal. I followed the strategies suggested by Ravitch and Carl (2021) that I described in Chapter 3. I shared my reflexive journal entries with my dissertation committee when unusual circumstances arose so that I could benefit from their reflexive consultation. I continued to read my journal entries and data transcripts throughout data analysis to confirm my coding and thematic thinking. I also employed

participant review of transcripts to confirm my data. Overall, the systematic strategies that I implemented throughout my study allowed me to arrive at trustworthy results.

Results

In this section, I organize the results by the four RQs in my study. I also include a table listing the relevant co-occurring codes that have at least a 57% participant frequency. The tables also include the total number of transcript excerpts that met the specific code co-occurrences. To further illustrate my results, I support the discussion of themes with thick descriptions and direct quotations from participants. I also used information derived from document analysis which supported participants' quotations.

Research Question 1

RQ1 was: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to help students understand current and local community issues? Providing lessons for students to learn to use social media to gain skills in understanding local, community issues was important to the majority of participants in this study. Three codes helped answer RQ1, and that data is detailed in Table 8.

Table 8

Codes to Support Research Question 1

Theme	Code	Frequency %	Total code co-occurring excerpts
Understand issues	Diverse opinions	86%	24
	Credible information	86%	21
	Efficacy	86%	14

Note. The frequency % was calculated by dividing the number of participants who discussed the code co-occurrence out of total participants, $n = 7$.

Understanding Issues Enhanced with Diverse Perspectives

The majority of participants in this study discussed the need to teach students the skills to use social media effectively to understand issues while also providing students with strategies to read diverse opinions about issues. For example, 5 of 7 participants specifically discussed the danger of social media's echo chamber, caused by software algorithms, where students encounter only opinions that agree with their own perceptions of an issue. For example, P3 posited that political polarization in the United States exists in part because people find a social media "comfort group and stay in that comfort group." Participants also specifically discussed the echo chamber and algorithms of social media platforms with their students. For example, P5 described how they used excerpts from the documentary, *The Social Dilemma*, to teach students about "the danger of getting your news only from social media" because algorithms set up an echo chamber.

Participants also shared ideas about how to teach students to go beyond their social media echo chambers. For example, P2 required students to support claims with evidence from at least three sources with at least two contrasting perspectives. P5 described a lesson about the U.S. Capitol incident on January 6, 2021, where students learned the importance of understanding events from multiple perspectives. P5 described the lesson: "I showed them a social media clip from Trump. I showed them a clip from Biden, and then we read an article…and talked about…whose perspective is being featured? Whose perspective is missing?"

Understanding diverse perspectives to fully understand local, community issues was especially important to two participants who taught student journalists. P3 and P6

encouraged students to use social media to gather diverse opinions about issues impacting their communities. P6 required student writers to synthesize multiple perspectives for all news articles and opinion pieces. P6's students created both print and online versions of the school newspaper, and they shared articles on class Twitter and Instagram accounts. P3 also required students to include at least two perspectives in their news stories, which were broadcast on YouTube and shared on a class Twitter account. The need for multiple perspectives was even connected to one goal of P3's classes: "Give voice to the voiceless." P3 felt that goal was important to prepare students for real-world situations that require a deep understanding of issues.

Reading Credible Information Important to Understanding Issues

Locating credible information was also found to be an important step in understanding local, community issues. The majority of participants described specific lessons in online information credibility. P6 detailed a lesson that they used to help students understand social media misinformation:

> I found a research study out of Stanford University…where they presented social media facts to students …to determine the credibility of sources…I mimicked that in the classroom…One of the examples…a tweet from MoveOn.org…shows a statistic that…"Two out of three gun owners support background checks. The NRA is out of touch with its members." And then they link a research study…We go through the process: "Who is MoveOn.org? What is their bias? Do they have a bias? Is it proven?" Then we look a little bit at the study…It turns out that the

> study was asking gun owners if they supported background checks but not necessarily NRA members. So then, misleading information.

P2 also described lessons they did on misinformation, with one lesson on John Green's "Crash Course" video series on misinformation on social media. [This 17-minute video is designed for students and discusses strategies for navigating digital information and misinformation on social media.] Even though P2 shared many specific lessons on combatting misinformation, P2 opined that education overall was not doing enough to combat online misinformation and fake news.

Another strategy discussed for combatting misinformation was engaging school librarians. P3 and P7 discussed how school librarians took an active role in teaching about credible online information. P3 was thankful for "an excellent library program here, and they really have sowed the seeds to effectively vet online and social media" information. P7 said the librarian came to their classroom and did a lesson called "cut the CRAAP." The librarian explained that this acronym for credibility stood for "currency, relevancy, authority, accuracy, and purpose." Overall, participants in this study were actively including lessons to combat misinformation so that their students gained skills in vetting information they encounter on social media.

Efficacy of Teaching Social Media Skills to Understand Issues

Participants discussed the efficacy of teaching students to use social media to understand community issues. Although P5 commented that their middle school students mainly used social media to "post crazy videos on TikTok," the majority of participants believed students use social media, in part, to learn about issues. P4 recalled a time when

they asked students where they got their news, and "most of them say from my parents or from … YouTube." Additionally, P7 stated that students are so attached to their phones that "by default, they're getting news on social media." Furthermore, P2 discussed that teaching social media skills is efficacious and necessary. They opined:

> I think that knowing digital media and social media are not going away, that… we need to get smarter as a whole system of education in preparing kids for that wild west that they're going into and are living in right now…. I think there's a sense of urgency I have right now, but at the same time, this sense of futility…Is it possible to shift people's mindset if they're not seeing it themselves?

Overall, data in this study support a theme that educators teach social media skills so that students learn to engage with credible online information that represents a variety of perspectives for a more complete understanding of local, community issues.

Research Question 2

RQ2 was: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach students to discover diverse opinions about current and local social and political issues? The majority of participants in this study discussed the need to promote diverse opinions and multiple perspectives in the classroom. Data that helped answer RQ2 about diverse opinions included the two codes detailed in Table 9.

Table 9

Codes to Support Research Question 2

Theme	Code	Frequency %	Total code co-occurring excerpts
Diverse opinions	Decision-making	71%	10
	Credible information	57%	11

Note. The frequency % was calculated by dividing the number of participants who discussed the code co-occurrence out of total participants, $n = 7$.

Understanding Diverse Opinions Connects with Decision-making

Five of seven participants in this study discussed the connection between understanding diverse opinions about local, community issues and student decision-making skills. For example, P2 encouraged students to discover different perspectives on issues before deciding where they stand on an issue. P2 stated: “There are so many complicated issues that if you come up with the quick and easy answer…you haven't prepared them.” P1 also described how they helped students gain decision-making skills in connection with multiple perspectives. P1 explained, “I tell my kids that you need to go look and see if there's another shoulder to the left or another shoulder to the right. And then …make your best judgment.”

The connection between diverse opinions and decision-making was also at the center of classrooms that function like newsrooms that use social media to share stories. When describing how students brainstorm story ideas, P3 detailed their decision-making process. The school district’s Communication Director and P3 helped students consider a variety of perspectives before the students decided whether to do a story. Decision-making continued when students critiqued stories to determine missing perspectives. P3

said the critique process helped students improve decision-making skills for future stories. P6's news classroom also included decision-making skills to navigate differences of opinions regarding stories. P6 also noted that these conversations were difficult to have over a Google Meet, which was the main method of classroom conversation because of distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source Credibility Important for Accurate Diverse Opinions

The majority of participants in this study discussed how providing students with diverse opinions also required vetting online information for credibility. P5 discussed how they talked about point of view in connection with propaganda. P3 required student journalists to write stories with multiple perspectives supported by fair and accurate facts. Additionally, P2 discussed how social media can help students discover diverse opinions. P2 explained, "If you have access to people on social media…then you can go to someone who has expertise in that area and ask multiple people." Although educators reported success in teaching students about credible online information, P7 detailed a story where they knew a student was citing false information in a research paper. P7 stated, "We had to have some uncomfortable conversations…about the credibility of sources and why this wouldn't be the best source." Despite these conversations, P7 said the student refused to revise the paper because the student "had a message to prove and to say. And he wasn't going to let anyone tell him otherwise" even if he would receive a lower grade on the research paper. Overall, data in this study show that educators described that understanding diverse opinions about community issues is impacted by students learning decision-making skills and how to vet online information for credibility.

Research Question 3

RQ3 was: How do secondary educators describe their use of social media to teach decision-making skills about current issues affecting students' local communities? Much of the data for RQ3 has already been discussed in the results sections for RQ1 and RQ2 where similar ideas overlapped. However, to fully answer RQ3, a synthesis of ideas as well as additional data are included in this section. Data that helped answer RQ3 included the two codes detailed in Table 10.

Table 10

Codes to Support Research Question 3

Theme	Code	Frequency %	Total code co-occurring excerpts
Decision-making	Understand issues	100%	11
	Credible information	86%	11

Note. The frequency % was calculated by dividing the number of participants who discussed the code co-occurrence out of total participants, $n = 7$.

Decision-Making Skills Needed to Understand Issues

Helping students learn to make decisions was at the center of understanding issues. In fact, the code co-occurring frequency for decision-making and understanding issues was 100%. P5 stressed that one goal of teaching English is helping students "reason and think," even connecting that goal to the Common Core Standards. P2 also discussed that decision-making is at the core of understanding issues because a goal of education "is getting kids to question deeply, constantly question everything." Even though P2 felt critical thinking was crucial, they felt that educational systems were not set up to support that level of thinking. P2 opined:

> But most of the structure of our education for years has been on don't question the teacher. Get the right answers…We're training them to do what a machine would do, not what our brains have the capacity to do -- of being able to see nuances in things, to question things, to show curiosity of things that seem dissimilar. Most of education doesn't teach kids to do that.

Furthermore, participants shared specific strategies for improving student decision-making skills. For example, P6 and P7 both discussed that they had students analyze the rhetorical devices to make decisions about the purpose, accuracy, and relevancy of sources. P3 discussed that teaching students decision-making skills often "comes down to individual students in my one-on-one interactions with them." Additionally, P1 discussed that one way to foster student decision-making skills is to remind students that they should have trusted sources "from both sides of the aisle" and find people to push back on their opinions. Overall, participants expressed a need to teach students decision-making skills in the context of using social media tools.

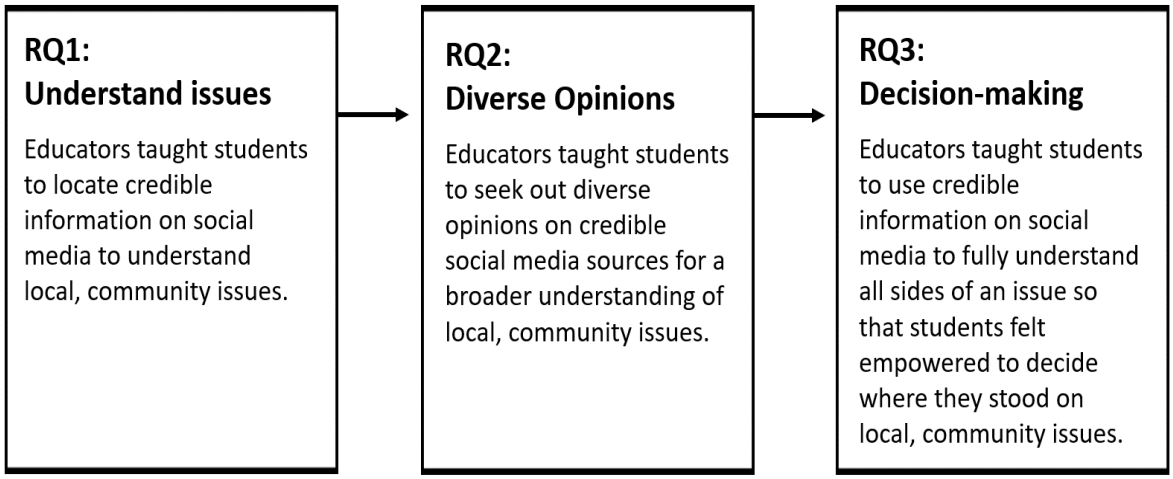
Decision-making Connects with Reading Credible Information

The data in this study revealed that decision-making was a process that required the earlier steps of understanding issues and gaining diverse opinions. That process also required students to read credible information. In fact, the credible information code overlapped with all four RQ codes at a frequency percent of 57% or higher. Data from this study show that teaching students about finding credible information on social media can help students reach a fuller and more accurate understanding of community issues to be empowered to decide where they stand on those issues.

Within-methods data triangulation revealed that the two participants who had been using social media with students the longest were concerned that educators were not doing enough to teach students about online misinformation. For example, P1 commented on teaching misinformation on social media by saying: “I don't think there's probably a place in the United States that is doing this very well. I think we’re way behind the eight ball, and I think it is … incredibly scary.” P2 shared similar views and thought falling for misinformation was human nature. P2 supported their belief with an old article that discussed how people were susceptible in the past to propaganda because people often cannot tell fact from opinion (Sayers, 1948). Overall, data in this study revealed that educators described that teaching decision-making was a complex process. This process required teaching students to read credible information from diverse perspectives so that students learn to make informed decisions about where they stand on issues. That finding spans three RQs in my study (see Figure 6).

Figure 6

Flow Map of Findings on Credible Information



The key finding for RQ3 was that educators described that teaching decision-making was a complex process that required teaching students to read credible information from diverse perspectives so that students learn to make informed decisions about where they stand on issues.

Research Question 4

RQ4 was: How do secondary educators describe their instruction to students in terms of how to publish social media content to be proactive regarding current and local social and political issues? Educators described that publishing on social media allowed students to amplify their voice at the local level as well as on a global stage. Data that helped answer RQ4 included the seven codes detailed in Table 11.

Table 11

Codes to Support Research Question 4

Theme	Code	Frequency %	Total code co-occurring excerpts
Student voice	Efficacy	86%	24
	Digital Writing	86%	24
	Connections	86%	22
	Stakeholders	71%	15
	Evolution of pedagogy	71%	11
	Challenges	71%	7
	Safety	57%	9

Note. The frequency % was calculated by dividing the number of participants who discussed the code co-occurrence out of total participants, $n = 7$.

Efficacy of Encouraging Students to Publish on Social Media

The majority of participants in this study believed that incorporating publishing on social media in educational contexts was an important and empowering skill for

students. In fact, P5 began using social media with students just 1 year ago after 26 years as an educator. P5 explained their motivation:

> We have to prepare them for their future .... They're going to be required to do digital portfolios and social media …You can't get around it … why not adapt our instruction to what they're interested in and what their world is…We can't always just have students conform to our teaching.

Likewise, P7 commented on the need for educators to include social media skills, stating, "This is our future generation, and they are smart, and if they had the tools to know how to effectively use social media, I think we'd see a lot of change in a positive way." Additionally, P6 discussed the need for student journalists to publish on social media because social media "is where journalism is going."

In addition to sharing general motivations for using social media with students, participants discussed that publishing on social media could empower students by providing them with a positive digital footprint. For example, P2 discussed the need for students to establish a positive digital footprint, especially to help in the college search process. P2 detailed a story about a student asking them for a college recommendation letter, and P2 told the student that they could go back and review the social media posts that the student created over the years. P2 recalled that the student responded: "I wasn't even thinking about my future at that point…I can't believe you were thinking about my future." P3 also discussed how a positive digital footprint may prove important for the college search process. P3 explained that graduates tell students that "colleges are looking at your social media when they're looking for acceptance to the college."

Therefore, P3 required students "to walk out the door with something positive" by creating digital portfolios that included their YouTube news stories and other social media activities.

In addition to a positive digital footprint being an efficacious outcome of publishing on social media, two experienced participants discussed the impact of social media on citizenship. P2 described citizenship discussions with students:

> I talk to them about education being at the center of a democracy being able to thrive, and if the purpose of education is to help prepare someone to live in a society that has these tensions of freedoms, and balances chaos and order, that extends to social media as well.

P1 also discussed that social media helps students be "prepared to take their rightful place on the global stage." Overall, the majority of participants in this study felt it was efficacious for secondary educators to incorporate social media publishing skills into their classrooms.

Digital Writing and Connections Empower Students

Digital writing was a specific area of social media pedagogy discussed by 6 of 7 participants in this study. Those participants described digital writing on social media as an empowering opportunity for students. For example, P4 discussed how writing on social media can sometimes amplify voices that might otherwise be silenced. P4 explained, "Social media is not constrained by traditional standard English.…Students of color and Latinx students…are not intimidated to use…Twitter language or emojis." P1 also commented on the power of social media to amplify student voice: "We used social

media to talk with people around the world, to talk as filmmakers and storytellers…an 18-year-old kid can have a voice on the global stage."

Participants also shared detailed stories of how digital writing on social media was empowering for students. For example, P2 shared a story how their students used social media to amplify their voice:

> When COVID hit, there were a group of kids who got really passionate about making sure there wasn't stigma associated with the virus in Asia and creating a video that was short enough that it could go on Instagram and YouTube and sharing that out for positive messaging.

P6 also shared a detailed story about the empowering nature of Twitter:

> When the school board was deciding if they were going to go full distance learning or stay in hybrid, a few of the student journalists started live tweeting the event. And it got a lot of good traction… A journalist…started…following our account because of that. So it's interesting…how that spreads to professional connections.

Although P6's story about live tweeting a school board meeting was an answer to an interview question on publishing on social media to amplify student voice, the story illustrates another empowering aspect of social media—the ability to network for professional connections and expanded personal relationships. In fact, the majority of participants in this study described how digital writing on social media tied into making connections with others. P1 stated, "We're helping somebody replant 60 million trees in Malawi … And we interact through social media." P5's students promoted their service-

learning projects on Instagram and Facebook, even using hashtags to make connections with others when they painted rocks with positive messages and placed them around the community.

Furthermore, two participants discussed the power of social media for career networking. P3 discussed how social media was an important part of students making connections with graduates of the school's Communications Technology program. These students could network and explore journalism careers with alumni. P7 also discussed the power of social media connections as part of career exploration. P7 reported:

> We had the kids open up a Twitter account, and we talked about how to do that, and we had them search blogs, search LinkedIn…Research what people were saying, what innovative leaders in their job fields were doing, and how they were marketing themselves on social media. They tracked their networking journey…to see how often these innovators were posting about their job field.

Overall, social media was found to be an important tool that secondary educators used to teach digital writing for advocacy and networking connections.

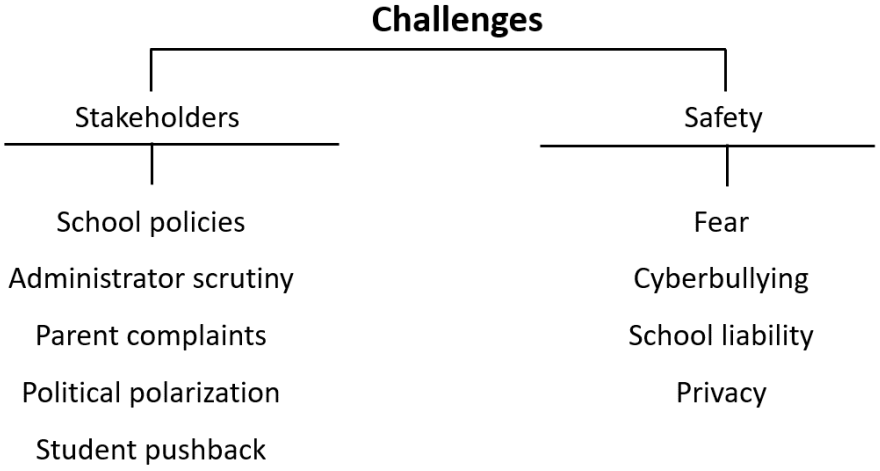
Educators Face Challenges When Using Social Media with Students

Although participants discussed challenges in relation to all four RQs, coded excerpts were most prevalent for RQ4 about teaching students to publish information on social media. Therefore, challenges will be discussed in their entirety in this section. It is also important to note that when educators were using social media in a media consumer role, they faced fewer challenges. P7 commented that they rarely faced challenges because they never had students publish information on social media because it "was

safer" to use social media that way. See Figure 7 for a tree map the classifies data about the challenges that participants discussed throughout their interviews.

Figure 7

Challenges Tree Map to Classify Stakeholders and Safety Data



Stakeholder Concerns. Following school policies was one stakeholder challenge for secondary educators who use social media with students. P1explained how school policies often involved blocking websites so that students could not use them for educational purposes:

> Social media was a taboo of society…They block everything. I mean we blocked Wikipedia up until probably 3 years ago because it wasn't a trusted source, an up-to-date source. And I said, "The encyclopedias in the library don't have the Kennedy assassination in it. You tell me which one is easier to update, and which one is more relevant." So it took a long time, but I have a superintendent now that believes in what we do.

P6 also discussed how students do not always wait for the proper permission to use a social media tool. P6 stated: “The yearbook staff started a TikTok…They have since slowed down publishing until I can find more information about if it's allowed…So it’s sort of ask forgiveness not permission.”

Administrator and parent pushback was another common stakeholder challenge for social media educators, and participants discussed that this pushback was often connected to political polarization in the United States. For example, P5 stated that after a lesson about social media and the U.S. Capitol incident on January 6, 2021, they were called into the assistant principal’s office and told that a parent complained about the lesson, calling it liberal indoctrination. P7 had similar fears about getting in trouble if they used social media with students because of the need to remain politically neutral. P7 commented: “I did not feel comfortable as a non-tenured teacher being active on social media for any reason…It was important that I … maintain this really neutral image to keep a job.” Additionally, P2 commented that families were the biggest challenge because they sometimes used social media to complain about teachers. P2 explained:

> Parents or caregivers who haven't learned digital citizenship themselves…who will not talk to a teacher face-to-face and say I have a concern with whatever, who find it more validating to leave out some pieces of information, post it publicly to social networks to get huge levels of support from others.

P2 continued that sometimes this social media backlash got so intense that parents were even afraid to have their students’ accomplishments highlighted on social media for fear

of negative backlash. Overall, parent pushback and administrator concerns were social media challenges that educators faced.

Furthermore, secondary educators teaching student journalists also commented on how they navigated social media in a politically polarized climate. For example, P3 sometimes felt caught between not talking about politics and running a news program that is an open forum for expression. Additionally, P6 discussed the need to keep social media posts simple and not sensational. P6 explained, “We basically listed just the title. Like a short description of the event and then the title of the op-ed.” Even though P6 said the students were careful about what they posted on the publication’s social media accounts, they still sometimes received social media backlash for stories they published.

Another challenge to using social media with students was pushback from the students themselves. For example, P4 explained how their students were “jaded about social media in general. They don't use it as much as students did … 10 years ago.” P4 also discussed that the social media platforms change so fast that “even to admit to my students that I’m on Facebook, you just are already putting a barrier between you and them because they know that only old people use Facebook .... So the eye rolling made me reconsider what I was doing.” Additionally, P3 discussed how they sometimes get pushback from students, especially when students want to do news stories that would not be allowed because of school policies. For example, students often want to write retrospectives for students who have died. P3 described this type of situation:

> Our school's policy is—it’s acknowledged. That we have support systems in place, but everything is as normal as it was. Because especially if it's like a

> suicide, they're afraid of copycats, and they want consistency. And so it's pushing back to students to say, hey, you have to understand this.

In sum, stakeholder challenges from administrators, parents, and students were faced by secondary educators who used social media with students.

Safety and Privacy Issues. Another common challenge to using social media with students were safety and privacy concerns. Fear was a common safety concern discussed by participants. P1 said, "There was definitely a big fear of letting kids interact with anybody out there…I mean there are just bad people." P5 also discussed how their school district was fearful of innovation in general, and district officials especially feared liability issues if students posted on social media. Another safety concern discussed was the cyberbullying students faced. P2 even discussed how they were personally bullied on social media by parents. However, P2 persisted in using social media despite this and explained: "I want to send a message to the kids that I value their voice more than I value the discomfort of the ongoing cyberstalking, social media attacks."

Safety concerns discussed by participants also included privacy concerns for students. For example, P6 discussed how following students on social media has privacy implications. Therefore, P6 set up separate teacher social media accounts, and students can request to follow those teacher accounts. P6 waits for students to follow them before following students back. Additionally, P1 said that to mitigate privacy concerns, students follow the district policy that students use only their first name and last initial when posting on social media for school activities. Moreover, five participants discussed how that at some time they used class social media accounts so that students could publish on

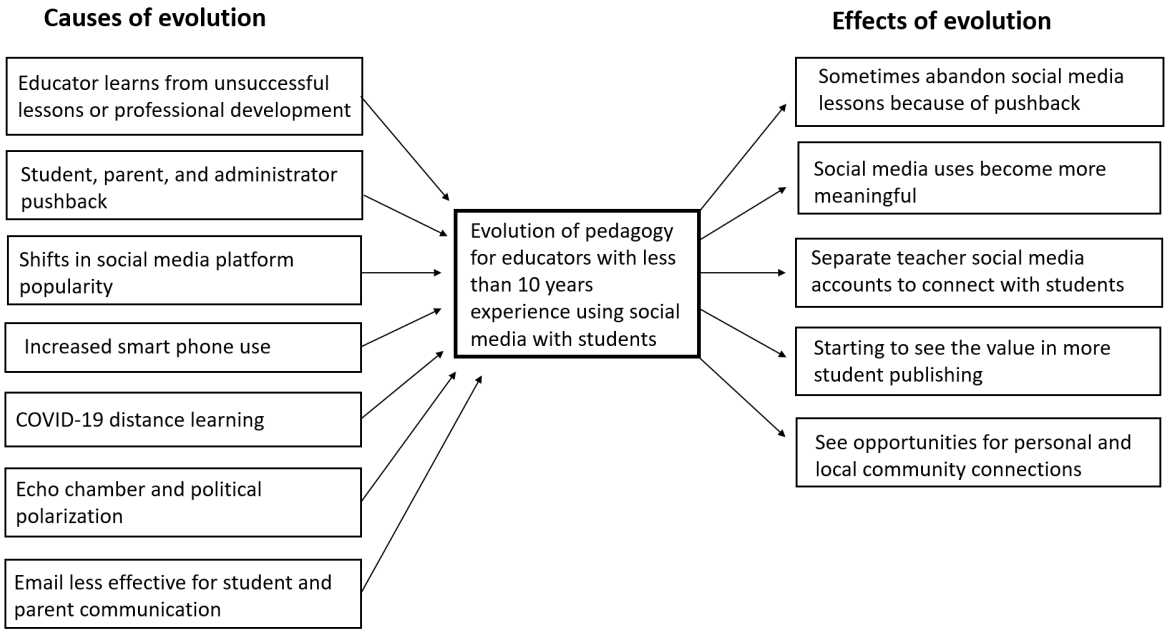
social media yet maintain privacy. Dealing with privacy challenges was an evolving strategy for P2. P2 started with class accounts to protect student privacy, but then evolved to individual accounts with first name and last initial. However, P2 realized that student full names were needed for students to create a positive digital footprint that was searchable by future college or job prospects. Therefore, P2 explained to parents the benefits and risks of letting students use their full name, and then some students went back to add their full names if they had parent permission. In sum, the majority of participants encountered challenges when using social media with students.

Experience Leads to Evolution of Pedagogy

Participants in this study discussed that as they gained more experience in using social media, they changed the way they implemented lessons. As part of within-methods data triangulation, I created two multi-flow thinking maps to analyze cause-and-effect relationships about educators and their pedagogy (see Hyerle & Yaeger, 2007). One multi-flow map analyzed less experienced social media educators, and one analyzed the more experienced ones. By creating these two separate multi-flow maps, I discovered how pedagogy evolved based on educator experience levels. See Figure 8 for the multi-flow map that captures the evolution of pedagogy data for participants with less than 10 years of experience using social media with secondary students. It is important to note that in a multi-flow thinking map, causes do not "have a one-to-one correspondence with the effects" (see Hyerle & Yaeger, 2007, p. 62).

Figure 8

Pedagogical Evolution for Less Experienced Educators



Participants with less than 10 years of experience using social media with students told stories about times they realized they needed to learn more about social media to be an effective educator. For example, P5 discussed how they were unfamiliar with creating social media platforms, so they relied on a teacher with these skills to coach them through the process. Additionally, P6 stated that they needed to figure out some of the technology on their own. P6 explained:

> I need to learn…that analytics side of when you post something whether it's on TikTok or Instagram or Twitter or wherever. How can you see who is seeing it? How is it being shared? That data side of it. That is something that I don't know, and I never thought I would need to know.

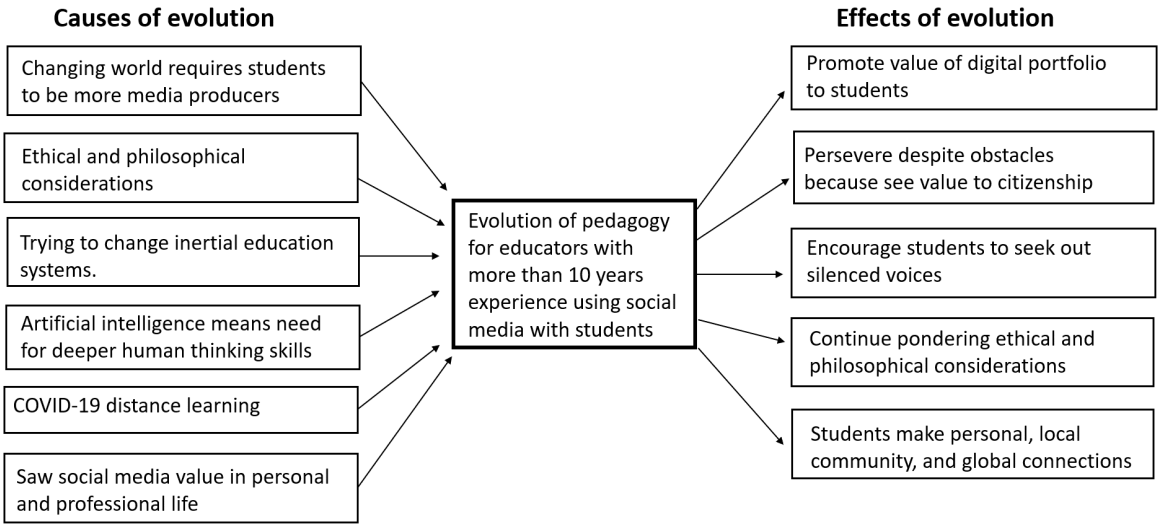
P6 also discussed how their pedagogy evolved as the field of journalism evolved to include more social media. P6 had to restructure the school newspaper's editorial board to focus on publishing more content directly to social media.

Two of the less experienced social media educators also evolved their pedagogy to a point where social media became almost non-existent in their classrooms. P4 discussed how a "tweet of the day" as an exit card used to be fun, but now the novelty of social media was wearing off for students. Therefore, P4 abandoned using social media in the classroom. Additionally, P7 felt "silenced" by school administration because of political polarization, and P7 was hesitant to use social media with students. Instead, P7 used "fake" social media assignments where students created posters that looked like Instagram feeds or wrote fake tweets on paper. P7 explained, "It's innocent fun, and no longer do we discuss kind of the intricacies that surround global citizenship or how to be an effective user." Overall, the less experienced educators were concerned with learning the technical side of social media or abandoned using social media.

In contrast to the less experienced educators, data for participants who had been using social media with students for over 10 years revealed that these experienced participants persisted despite obstacles and were more concerned about the overall future of social media's impact on education. See Figure 9 for the multi-flow map that synthesized the evolution of pedagogy data for participants with more than 10 years of experience using social media with students.

Figure 9

Pedagogical Evolution for More Experienced Educators



Data reveal that experienced educators were concerned about education reforms and evolving pedagogy systemwide to keep up with the changing world of technology. For example, P3 discussed how the focus of education should be changing in the K-12 system from students being media consumers to students being media producers. P1 also discussed how producing media is easier than ever because students now have "a studio on their phone." Additionally, P2 discussed how distance learning during the COVID-19 pandemic had some positive impacts because it pushed educators into using technology whereas technology reforms had been relatively inertial in the past. P2 opined, "It just up-ended everything and showed what was – what a lot of us knew was faulty for years." All three of these experienced educators also discussed how social media could be part of a student's digital portfolio.

The experienced participants also discussed the ethical and philosophical considerations of social media. For example, P1 and P2 were concerned about the impact that artificial intelligence would have on social media, and they were concerned that educators might not be ready to teach students about how artificial intelligence would impact their lives. P2 even discussed how they had been researching and writing about how artificial intelligence is a "whole other dark side of social media." Likewise, P1 has been working with an international group on the implications of artificial intelligence on education, and they explained that "there's an AI [artificial intelligence] out there that writes its own blog." P1 suggested that artificial social media content would have huge implications for educators. In sum, although experienced educators commented on broader implications of social media education, all participants in this study discussed how their pedagogy around using social media evolved in some way.

Overall, the key finding for RQ4 was that despite having to deal with challenges and learn to evolve their pedagogy, secondary educators could teach students empowering skills for publishing information about social and political issues.

Summary

Based on data analysis I organized a key finding for each RQ. The key finding for RQ1 was educators teach social media skills so that students learn to engage with credible online information that represents a variety of perspectives for a more complete understanding of local, community issues. For RQ2, educators described that understanding diverse opinions about community issues is impacted by students learning decision-making skills and how to vet online information for credibility. The key finding

for RQ3 was that educators described that teaching decision-making was a complex process that required teaching students to read credible information from diverse perspectives so that students learn to make informed decisions about where they stand on issues. Finally, the key finding for RQ4 was that despite having to deal with challenges and learn to evolve their pedagogy, secondary educators could teach students empowering skills for publishing information about social and political issues.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. In this basic qualitative study, secondary educators described ways they used social media to help students understand and advocate for community issues. Data were collected through virtual interviews with seven participants. I conducted data analysis of interview transcripts using iterative open coding. Since little research has been conducted regarding educators using social media for student empowerment, the findings of this study may add to the literature on digital literacy by providing secondary educators and policy makers with strategies for implementing social media in educational settings so that students use social media effectively for positive social change.

In this chapter, I present an interpretation of key findings and discuss ways that this study confirms, disconfirms, or extends knowledge in the discipline of digital literacy and social media use in educational contexts. Through data analysis, I arrived at a key finding for each of my four RQs. The key finding for RQ1 was educators teach social media skills so that students learn to engage with credible online information that represents a variety of perspectives for a more complete understanding of local and community issues. For RQ2, educators described that understanding diverse opinions about community issues is impacted by students learning decision-making skills and how to vet online information for credibility. The key finding for RQ3 was that educators described that teaching decision-making was a complex process that required teaching

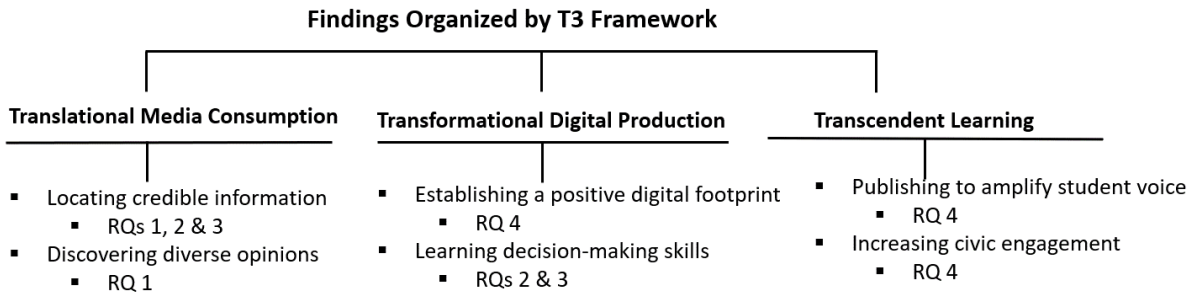
students to read credible information from diverse perspectives so that students learn to make informed decisions about where they stand on issues. Finally, the key finding for RQ4 was that despite having to deal with challenges and learn to evolve their pedagogy, secondary educators could teach students empowering skills for publishing information about social and political issues.

Interpretation of the Findings

Secondary educator experiences using social media to influence students' empowerment skills were viewed through the conceptual framework of connectivism and psychological empowerment. I avoided generalizations in my interpretation of findings and discuss findings that confirm, extend, and disconfirm ideas found in my literature review. I present findings thematically, organized by Magana's T3 technology framework since I used that to organize my literature review. I also present findings thematically since my findings overlapped with this study's RQs. The T3 framework stands for translational classroom technology uses that could have been completed in an analog way, transformational uses that require technology to share products with a global audience, and transcendent uses that lead to unexpected learning outcomes. See Figure 10 for a summary of the interpretation of findings organized by the T3 framework. Figure 10 also includes references to RQs that correspond with each theme. After discussing T3 framework themes, I interpret findings about challenges educators faced when using social media, and I discuss connections to the conceptual framework of this study.

Figure 10

Interpretation of Findings Organized Using Magana's T3 Framework



Locating Credible Information

My study confirms previous research regarding educators using social media as one way to teach students to discover information during research or inquiry projects (see Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Magana, 2017). Moreover, in a review of the literature on social media consumption, researchers found that students need skills to distinguish credible online information from misinformation (Horn & Veermans, 2019; Huguet et al., 2021; Kuruliszwili, 2018; Little, 2018; Stanford History Education Group, 2016). The findings of my study confirm these ideas because the participants taught students to vet online information for truthfulness. The findings of my study also extend pedagogical knowledge by providing specific teaching strategies for locating credible information on social media, including internet resources as well as ways to partner with school librarians for credibility lessons.

Discovering Diverse Opinions

In a review of the literature on social media consumption, researchers discovered that educators use social media to help students gain diverse opinions about issues

(Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Cladis, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Farmer, 2020; Kornbluh, 2019). The findings of my study confirm this idea since participants discussed how they promote multiple perspectives and use social media as one way to help students discover diverse opinions. The lessons learned in this study also extend knowledge in the discipline of digital literacy by providing specific teaching strategies about social media's echo chamber and algorithms. My study further extends understanding by describing ways to incorporate contrasting perspectives when publishing on social media, especially ideas for journalism educators.

Establishing a Positive Digital Footprint

In a review of the literature on digital student portfolios, researchers found that secondary educators promote digital portfolios to showcase student work and establish a positive digital footprint (Akdag & Ozkan, 2017; Casey & Evans, 2017; Magana, 2017). My study confirms this since participants required students to create digital portfolios with social media products showcased. Previous studies also discussed the need for a positive digital footprint to help students with future college and career exploration (Buchanan et al., 2017; Magana, 2017). My study confirmed this since participants discussed how former students thanked them for helping them establish a positive digital footprint that helped students during college and career searches.

Learning Decision-Making Skills

In a review of the literature on decision-making and social media, researchers found that inquiry learning and critical thinking increased a student's ability to make decisions about community issues (Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Hipolito-Delgado & Zion,

2017; Kornbluh, 2019; Zimmerman et al., 2018). My study confirms this idea since participants described teaching students decision-making skills in the context of using social media. Participants discussed how decision-making was a complex process that required rhetorical analysis, vetting information, considering multiple perspectives, and one-on-one conversations with students. My study also extends pedagogical knowledge by discussing decision-making in journalism classrooms that publish on social media.

Publishing to Amplify Student Voice

In previous studies, researchers found that educators transformed teaching by empowering students to connect with a global audience on social media (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Gleason & von Gillern, 2018; Gruno et al., 2018; Wargo & Clayton, 2018). My study confirms that educators used social media so that students could amplify their voice at the local level and global stage. Participants also discussed how social media publishing allowed students to make personal and professional connections.

Increasing Civic Engagement

Previous studies have shown that publishing on social media empowers students by amplifying their voice and thereby increasing their civic engagement (Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Ekström & Shehata, 2018; Gleason, 2018; Wargo & Clayton, 2018). My study confirms what is understood about civic empowerment since participants discussed the impact of social media on citizenship. Participants also discussed how social media was an important component of service-learning activities designed to increase civic engagement.

Social Media Challenges

In a review of literature on challenges of using social media in educational contexts, researchers found that educators faced challenges involving student safety, cyberbullying, inappropriate content, and polarized political discourse (Alshawareb & Alnasraween, 2020; Laronde et al., 2017; Martin et al., 2018; Rodríguez-Enríquez et al., 2019). My study confirms knowledge about social media challenges in educational contexts since participants discussed their fears about student privacy and cyberbullying as well as the need to follow school policies to help mitigate these safety concerns. However, the findings of this study may disconfirm the literature that educators deal with students posting inappropriate content on social media (see Burtch, 2018; Casey & Evans, 2017; Gleason, 2018). None of this study's participants discussed students posting inappropriate content. Instead, participants seemed more concerned with student mental health and cyberbullying. Perhaps educators have become more focused on more serious safety concerns than off-color comments.

Another challenge discussed in the literature was the difficulty of using social media with students because of polarized political discourse (Burtch, 2018; Chapman & Greenhow, 2020; Manca et al., 2021). My findings confirm this idea because participants discussed dealing with administrator and parent pushback, even being labeled liberal indoctrinators when doing lessons on social media credibility and multiple perspectives. My study also extends understanding on polarized political discourse by describing experiences of journalism educators who discussed navigating tensions of running a news program in a politically polarized climate.

The findings of my study can also be interpreted by the conceptual framework of this study. First, Siemens (2005) said knowledge requires people understanding a range of diverse opinions and decision-making is learning. This study's findings confirmed those ideas by describing ways that educators used social media to help students gain diverse opinions and make decisions. Second, Zimmerman (1995) said psychological empowerment increases when people understand community issues and proactively work for social change. My study confirms those ideas by describing ways that secondary educators use social media to help students understand multiple perspectives about issues while reading credible online information. The findings also highlighted how social media is a tool students can use in empowering ways to make social change. Overall, findings of my study confirm previous research showing that educators who incorporate social media in their classrooms can influence their students' empowerment skills.

Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study involved the number of participants. Participants were limited to my professional learning network of educators who could be contacted via social media or a university's participant pool. Although I identified and selected the first 12 participants who claimed to meet my study's inclusion criteria, I was only able to use the data for seven trustworthy participants. Five participants were found to be dishonest about meeting study inclusion criteria and during the actual interviews, and their data were removed from my study before data analysis. Using only honest participants improved the trustworthiness of my study.

Another limitation of my study involved participants' content areas. This study's inclusion criteria were not limited to only communications or language arts educators; however, all seven participants ended up discussing that type of coursework. Even though participants discussed work with students closely related to communication skills, I was able to achieve data saturation because interview questions focused on reading, writing, research, and communication. Even with this limitation, the transferability of findings for this study is still applicable to the field of digital literacy since communication skills are relevant for this academic area.

Recommendations

Recommendations for further research are based on results and limitations of this study. The first recommendation is related to findings about teaching credible information and diverse opinions when society is politically polarized. Since participants discussed how these lessons were sometimes criticized by parents and administrators and labeled liberal indoctrination, researchers could study whether educators are reluctant to teach credibility of source information and diverse opinions because they fear reprisal.

A second recommendation is related to a limitation of this study. Participants in this study focused their discussions on social media strategies in communications-focused classes. During my review of the literature, studies about social media use included participants from math, science, and health fields. Since my study did not include participants from those content areas, my study should be replicated with participants from the hard sciences to determine if results are similar in terms of using social media to influence student empowerment.

A third recommendation is related to an overall gap in the literature regarding longitudinal studies of educators who use social media with students to determine ways their pedagogy evolves. Within-methods data analysis in this study revealed differences between experienced and less experienced participants. Experienced participants seemed to persist through challenges and evolve their pedagogy to meet those challenges and take their students' learning to transcendent levels. A longitudinal study of secondary educators would help answer questions about why educators either abandon teaching social media skills or embrace challenges to teach students the skills needed to keep up with the changing world of technology.

Finally, a fourth recommendation for this study relates to the basic qualitative methodology and use of virtual interviews for data collection. Since faking online personas has become a growing phenomenon in society, qualitative researchers need to consider data collection procedures that protect them from selecting participants who may be dishonest about inclusion criteria and interview responses. Researchers could perhaps study how including a participant verification step could help protect against imposter participants or how requiring participants to use the video feature during interviews with teleconferencing software would protect against participants completing more than one interview with a fake persona.

Implications

This study contributes to positive social change in several ways. At the individual level, secondary educators can learn strategies for using social media to influence student empowerment skills. They can also learn reasons why other educators are motivated to

include social media lessons in their classrooms. At the organizational level, educators and school administrators can learn about the challenges educators face when using social media with students and ways to mitigate those challenges. At the societal level, education policy makers may learn from this study that young people could benefit from intentional skill-building in social media, especially since it is a major platform for political discourse, dissemination of information, and social change efforts. Overall, this study may advance knowledge in the field of education by providing ideas about learning, instruction, and innovation as it relates to digital literacy generally and social media skills specifically. This advanced knowledge could lead to positive social change through improved professional practice for educators who use this knowledge to influence their students' empowerment skills so that these students embrace their place as global citizens and work to make positive social change.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore how secondary educators describe their experiences using social media to influence students' psychological empowerment skills. The findings of this study add to the body of literature about using social media for student empowerment. This knowledge is important since social media is a powerful tool young people can use to learn information and advocate for sociopolitical issues in their local communities (see Farmer, 2020; Gedik & Cosar, 2020). Additionally, social media has even become the main tool of political discourse and protest in much of the world (Heaney, 2020; Pillay, 2020). However, social media has the potential to be misused to spread misinformation or extreme views (Brill & Crovitz,

2020; Munn, 2021; Pantucci & Ong, 2021). Therefore, students would benefit from learning skills for using these platforms for effective civic engagement. Secondary educators can provide students with the social media skills they need to be empowered citizens who understand community issues and work for positive social change.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide

Introduction Script:

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my dissertation study on secondary educator experiences using social media to influence student skills to help students be more active citizens. After the interview, I will send you the transcript for your review. Also know that you can end this interview at any time, and you may skip questions that you do not want to answer. This interview will last between 45 and 60 minutes.

Pre-Interview Question: I would like to start with hearing a little bit about your background in education.

Transition to IQ#1: Thanks for sharing that information. Now I would like to explore your experiences with students and social media. For the purposes of this interview, I am using Obar and Wildman's (2015) definition of social media to include any internet-based, Web 2.0 application used to connect people through user-generated content.

Interview Question 1: In what ways have you used social media with your students?

Follow-up Prompts:
Could you share a brief story about (some participant mentioned use of social media)? Follow up with any mention of a connection to distance learning during the COVID crisis.

Transition to IQ#2: Thanks. Now, I'd like to delve into specific strategies that you have used for student social media skill development.

Interview Question #2: What strategies have you used to teach students to use social media to discover diverse opinions about issues in the news and their community?

Follow-up Prompts:
Could you share a specific story that illustrates that your social media lessons helped a student understand multiple sides to social or political issues? Follow up with any mention of a connection to distance learning during the COVID crisis.

Transition to IQ#3: Thanks. Now I'd like to narrow the discussion about social media and information gathering to credibility and trustworthiness of information.

Interview Question #3: What lessons have you employed to teach students to evaluate the credibility of news and information they find on social media?

Follow-up Prompt:
Do you have any stories about a student discovering or sharing false information on social media?

Transition to IQ#4: Thanks. We are now more than halfway through the interview, and we have been talking for _____ minutes of our 45 to 60-minute conversation. Now, I'd like to go from understanding issues to acting on them for social change.

Interview Question #4: What specific examples can you share about times when you have taught students to use social media to advocate for social and political issues?

Follow-up Prompt:
Could you share a story about a student who used social media advocacy to amplify their voice and/or develop leadership skills?

Transition to IQ#5: Thanks for sharing those student stories of social media having an impact on student voice. I'd like to move on to challenges.

Interview Question #5: What are the biggest challenges that you've faced with having young people use social media as part of school assignments?

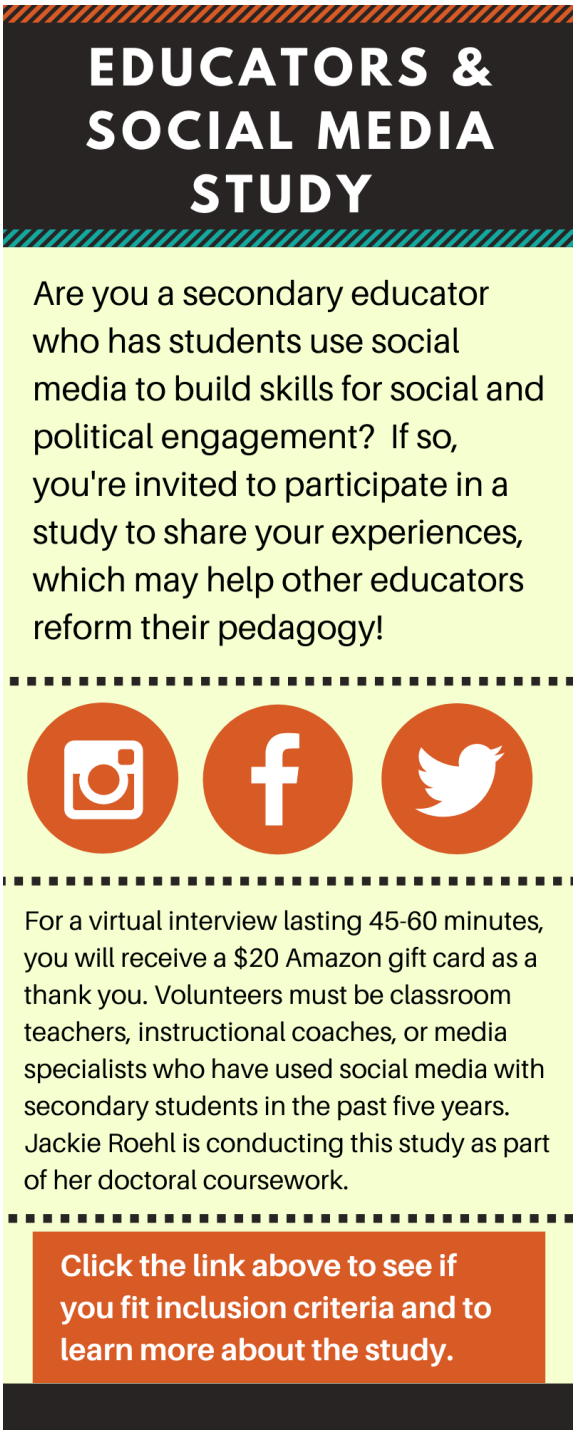
Follow-up Prompts:
Do you have any specific examples of problems encountered about privacy, safety, or school district policies? How have you overcome those challenges?

Closing Question: Is there anything else about your use of social media with students that you'd like to share with me?

Closure Script:

Thanks. That was my last interview question. Thanks again for participating in my research study. Within the next 7 days, I will transcribe this interview and email you the transcript for you to review for accuracy. In the meantime, if you would like to contact me, please text or call XXX-XXX-XXXX. Or email me at XXXX.XXX.edu. In the next few days, you will receive an email with the $20 Amazon gift card code. Please let me know if you do not receive that within the week.

Appendix B: Recruitment Infographic Shared on Social Media



Appendix C: Final Codebook

Code name	Description	Sample excerpt
Citizenship skills	The relationship between social media and citizenship.	P2: "I talk to them about education being at the center of a democracy."
Challenges	General challenges and polarization, pushback, and professional development.	P7: "I felt a little restricted with what I could really speak about … as an untenured new teacher to the district."
Connections	Social media promotes connections and relationships.	P1: "We interact through social media."
Credible information	Skill building in finding credible information on social media.	P7: "We had to talk about bias. We had to talk about the echo chamber."
Decision-making	Social media helps students decide where they stand on issues.	P1: "I tell them my job is not here to help you decide your ethics."
Digital writing	Social media for writing, storytelling, and digital portfolios.	P4: "I would put their tweet of the day on my teacher Twitter account."
Diverse opinions	Educators discussed students need to understand diverse opinions.	P3: "I encourage them to get as many different perspectives as they can."
Efficacy	The efficacy of social media as a learning tool. Also, digital footprint.	P3: "Colleges are looking at your social media."
Evolution of pedagogy	How social media use evolved. Also, distance learning descriptions.	P4: "I found myself just growing away from it, partly because of the echo chamber."
Pedagogy	Strategies including feedback, service-learning, & personalization.	P3: "The students produce their own YouTube show as seniors."
Safety	Issues about safety, fear, privacy, cyberbullying, and mental health.	P6: "I will follow them back…I have a Mr.___ social media account."
Stakeholders	Stakeholder concerns and school policies.	P5: "The district…is very scared of liability."
Student voice	Social media publishing for class tasks.	P5: "Social media can be used for… positive social movements."
Understand issues	Teaching students to use social media to understand current issues.	P3: "Students … use social media in order to do their research."