

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of social media as part of an engaged individual choreographic process. It addresses the following questions in an exploration of the possibilities present in an academic use of social resources: How are students currently using social media? Where in the choreographic process are there inherent opportunities to engage socially? What can social interaction via online platforms add to the choreographic experience from beginning to end? What should we be addressing curricularly in utilizing these platforms in the classroom? This study was completed in a specialty arts course of ten female graduating seniors as a part of their project-based capstone concert assignment. Data collected includes excerpts from student reflection in a traditionally written format, in online micro-blogging via Twitter and in blog posts on a student created and curated web-page. Additionally, anecdotal comparative evidence is also presented. Effectively, this study presents dance educators with opportunities to integrate instruction with the social platforms our students engage with as regular outlets for communication. It explores the social aspects of an artistic process used by students and educators alike, and opens new avenues for peer participation and critique as well as for audience interaction. Finally, it proposes a new kind of online summative portfolio; one which can be utilized and contributed to throughout the artistic process in a consistently evolving and relevant way.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the use of social media as part of an engaged individual choreographic process in the high school setting. Fully 95% of today's adolescent aged children are online and consider internet connected communications as a regular part of their social constructs. As adolescent's social spheres migrate towards the media landscape in an increasingly relevant way, the field of education's hesitation to embrace social platforms and utilize them in the classroom puts us in disconnect. Learning to engage our students in an analytical, evaluative and reflexive way via social platforms allows us a more intimate and ultimately realistic connection to authentic thoughts and processes.

In utilizing platforms like Twitter, Google Sites and Google blog posts, this study encouraged students use online resources and their online communities in their creation of a summative artistic product. This included documenting and illustrating process online in order to respond socially and reflect socially. All these measures were enacted in efforts to engage students with their own thoughts and the thoughts of their peers and audiences on a deeper level, provide real-time, enduring documentation of a project-based choreography experience and bring the choreographic process into the digital era.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

I graduated from James Madison University in 2009 and quickly found application for my double major in dance and media arts and design in the marketing

department of a regionally well-known ballet company. As the youngest member of the organization's marketing team, I was tasked with creating, maintaining and promoting the company's Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Blogger presence, which included generating and producing content, engaging with users and strategizing social media campaigns, a relatively new marketing practice at the time.

During my employment I participated in Social Media For Non-Profits' January 2012 conference in New York City where I attended sessions on a range of topics including content curation, inviting interaction, measuring what matters, multi-channel strategy, and innovations and trends. It was in sessions presented by noted marketing professionals from organizations like Charity: Water, the ASPCA and Save the Children where I first heard the term 'audience engagement' in regards to social media.

In the digital marketing realm, it is considered more valuable to have 100 involved followers than 1,000 apathetic ones and thus, the goal of any online marketing campaign (social or otherwise) becomes getting users to interact with the message, not only consume it. When users engage with the material on that deeper level, they find personal investment in it and become champions of the message themselves. This is the reason why social media is a marketers dream; if it's constructed correctly in a manner which appeals to connection and interactivity, a message can be spread throughout vast networks of people in very short periods of time once one person finds enough relevance to personally connect with the message...and it involves basically no expended capital! As one of the only performing arts organizations represented at the conference, this concept struck me as particularly significant, as the term took on such dual meaning and import.

To put it in marketing terms, in the artistic realm audiences are the consumers of our message and we never want an audience to leave having only *seen* the work. This results in only a surface level appreciation of artistic product. As artists, we want our audience to react viscerally, to connect with intention and to find personal relevance in the work we present. It's the way work is valued, appreciated and recalled, and this meaningful association between message and personal connection is the reason artistic expression and consumption is valued as a part of society.

The concept of audience engagement took on a real importance to me and resulted in a consideration of how it may be more relevant to have 3 audience members who actually engage with the work an artist presents than to have a full-house simply viewing what's presented on a superficial level.

Numerous other concepts of relevance to this topic were presented during the Social Media for Non-profits Conference. For example, during Google's session where former-marketing executive Alex Abelin introduced Google+ to those assembled I tweeted, "google+ hangouts could have tremendous implications for the arts—connecting audiences and artists/art face to face in realtime #sm4np" (1/30/12, 3:04pm). The idea of directly connecting artist to audience isn't new, but the ease with which social media could facilitate this relationship was inspirational to me and built upon the thinking which stimulated the project documented here.

Save the Children's CEO Carolyn Miles drove the potential in socially driven audience engagement home for me, talking about the reactive power of the online community and the ability of the masses to engage with messages and content. She said, "If you are just trying to push your message out, you are missing the value of social

media” (Nord, 2012). This caused me to consider what we do as artists when we create work. If an artist quests only to show work, are they fully embodying their role as an artist? I wondered how we could ask for more from our audience and how would affect us as choreographers. Could the audience’s response to artwork and the artistic process contain untapped potential for both audience growth and personal artistic growth?

I left my marketing career in April of that same year to focus on dance education and my Master’s degree, but these concepts stayed with me in my dancing and choreography, resurfacing as a subject of interest when I started my Master’s thesis and my first year of full-time, public school teaching simultaneously.

PROJECT PURPOSE STATEMENT

The purpose of this project was to explore how an academically informed use of social media could impact the students’ levels of engagement in their capstone, summative senior choreography project. This study was designed to present dance educators with opportunities to integrate instruction with the social platforms our students engage with as regular outlets for communication. It explores the social aspects of an artistic process used by students and educators alike, and opens new avenues for peer participation and critique as well as for audience interaction. Finally, it proposes a new kind of online summative portfolio; one which can be utilized and contributed to throughout the artistic process in a consistently evolving and relevant way. The study aims to answer these questions:

1. How are students currently using social media?
2. Where in the choreographic process are there inherent opportunities to engage socially?

3. What can social interaction via online platforms add to the choreographic experience from beginning to end?
4. What should we be addressing curricularly in utilizing these platforms in the classroom?

POPULATION FOR PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

The Specialty Center for the Fine and Performing Arts at Thomas Dale High School is a magnet program for Chesterfield County Public Schools. Students from anywhere in the county who are interested in pursuing visual art, instrumental or vocal music, dance, acting or theater production in academic detail may audition for placement in the program and get bused from their ‘homeschool’ to Thomas Dale for the entirety of their high school careers. Admitted students take an honors level, arts-integrated English course, and they take two additional honors level courses in their area of specialty each year. Students in the program are awarded special opportunities for arts immersion days, in and out of school field trips, several public performance opportunities per year, master classes from visiting artists and, ultimately, a seal on their diploma designating their artistic honors. As seniors in the Specialty Center program are required to produce their own capstone, summative work sample, I designed a project-based curriculum which would guide Senior students through a choreographic process using Twitter, regularly updated blogs and a student-curated website to document and record their experiences in preparation for the Senior Dance Concert, annually produced in March. These same platforms were also used to facilitate colleague and audience interaction, feedback and critique in efforts of engaging artist with audience.

METHODOLOGY

Data collected includes excerpts from student choreographers' journaling, analysis and reflection in a traditionally written format, in online micro-blogging via Twitter and in blog posts on a student created and curated web-page. Additionally, anecdotal comparative evidence is also presented as the students considered the differences between this choreographic experience against others.

Planning related to assigning and designing blog posts evolved throughout the project as I learned more about what my school system would allow, how Google Sites could support comments and feedback and the actual place of social media in adolescent communication. Similarly, the structure of Twitter conversations and lessons about valuable feedback evolved as well in order to make the social act more organic to student and classroom processes. The Senior's final reflective paper (presented both in written and shorter blog format) was planned and communicated once both the blogging and Twitter platforms were running as a smooth part of the project's design so I was able to conceive of collecting actual data which was both relevant and achievable.

ASSUMPTIONS

This project assumes that educators accept social media as a pertinent and permanent part of the communication landscape. Many educational systems—my county included—block a majority of social platforms in school and administrative buildings in an attempt to limit abuse and distraction. I am of the opinion that proper use requires education and practice. The medium will continue to develop and require us to learn new platforms, but social media and the techniques, strategies and etiquettes of

communicating in this way are important 21st century concepts we should be addressing in the academic setting in order to truly highlight their lasting and educational value.

DELIMITATIONS

I am the only dance teacher in my school and in my county, so I recognize my ability to customize my curriculum design in a way which supports this research is a luxury many other educators might not enjoy. Additionally, I recognize that in my Specialty Center setting I work with a highly motivated group of young women who are academic and artistic achievers (out of the 10 senior girls participating in this project, 4 of them are in the top 10 of our graduating class; one of those 4 is the salutatorian and 1 is the valedictorian). This study would most certainly have entirely different results if I had used my open enrollment class of 36 freshman and sophomores from the general student body.

LIMITATIONS

My county only allows the Google platform Google Sites for class web design. This limitation threw a wrench in my original plan of using Blogger which would have allowed for relatively simpler usage on the part of the Seniors and much easier navigation when it came to classmates, parents and the public leaving comments and engaging with each student choreographer. Using the county supported platform put limitations of the kinds of content which could receive comments and required login credentials from potential engagers. This limitation took the most amounts of flexibility and deviation from original planning.

Additionally, acting as both teacher and researcher can be perceived of as a limitation. While it was certainly a challenge to focus on both on the long-term goals of

the project and the immediate responsibilities of running a classroom, I also see this as a benefit, as I was able to make adjustments to my planning and my instruction as I saw need. The project was certainly in constant development from beginning to end, and did not run the traditional course of unaltered practical experimentation.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

My research focused in three specific areas in order to inform an understanding of adolescents' use of social media, existing examples of social media incorporation in the classroom, incorporation of the academic benefits of social media in the dance curriculum. I was interested to discover more about the evolving online community and reality as well as the digital native, a term for those born and raised in a post-analog world. With an understanding of the playing field, it became easier for me to design curriculum which could integrate social technologies in ways which fit seamlessly into the lives of students. Below is a detailed review of my research findings in scholarly journals, articles based in educational theory and interviews which contributed to my project design and implementation.

MOBILE USAGE IN THE TEEN POPULATION

Much of what we see as the pervasiveness of communication via social platforms comes as a result of increased mobile usage in the teen population. The main findings of Pew Research Center's 2012 study *Teens and Technology*, published in March of 2013 by The Berkman Center for Internet and Society at Harvard University, states that

Fully 95% of teens are online, a percentage that has been consistent since 2006.

Yet, the nature of teens' internet use has transformed dramatically during that

time — from stationary connections tied to desktops in the home to always-on connections that move with them throughout the day (Madden & Lenhart, 2013). 78% of high school students are a part of this constantly connected contingency, and almost half of those teens' cellphones (47%) were categorized as smart phones. Translated, this means 37% of teens in America owned smart phones—devices designed for easy internet access and web-based application (or 'app') functions—in 2012, which was an increase of 14% from 2011.

25% of teens in this study would identify as “cell-mostly” internet users, as opposed to only 15% of adults (aged 18-49). This means that a quarter of all connected teens prefer personal cell connections to computer based ones. Additionally, of particular relevance for this project, while

teen girls and boys are equally likely to have smartphones and are equally likely to use some kind of mobile access to the internet, girls are significantly more likely than boys to say they access the internet mostly using their cell phone (29% vs. 20%) (Madden & Lenhart, 2013).

In fact, teenage girls represent the leading group of cell-only internet users with 55% of smartphone using female teens saying they use the internet mostly from their phones instead of from a computer. While a desktop computer may be shared between multiple members of a family unit, these mobile devices allow for much more autonomous use.

With such ubiquitous use of mobile media in the teenage female demographic, it's easy to conclude that mobile connectivity is a regular aspect of my student's lives. The same conclusion makes the following Twitter (one of the two social platforms I chose for classroom incorporation) analytics unsurprising: Girls aged 12-17 are far more likely than

boys to be using Twitter (31% vs. 19%) with girls aged 14-17 in the most active segment (39%).

THE DIGITAL NATIVE – COMING OF AGE IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Unprecedented connectivity begs questions from parents, educators and child behavioral psychologists alike. How does this wide-spread embrace of access affect the teen population? Adolescents of today—defined as children aged 12-17—are what John Palfrey and Urs Gasser refer to as digital natives in their 2008 book *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives*. Digital natives were first defined by Marc Prensky in his 2001 article *Digital Natives, Digital Settlers* as the first group of global citizens who will live out their entire lives on the digital stage. Unlike digital settlers (the founders and developers of our digital sphere) and digital immigrants (who have lived in an analog world and since learned to integrate technology, software and social platforms into their lives as important innovations for their realities), digital natives experience these things as norms. They have never and will never live without these tools. As a result, digital technologies are a foundational part of the way digital natives work, explore, learn and interact with one another, and their developmental sense of identity, self and cognitive intelligence is inherently anchored in these platforms. In fewer words, digital natives are growing up online.

The term digital native has seen controversy due to the blanket definition it implies based solely on birth during a certain period of time, when in fact, the developers and theorists behind the original digital technologies were the first to theorize the platforms' potential importance and contributions to society. Additionally, implying that all persons born into the digital era are digital natives implies that connectivity doesn't

require a certain socioeconomic status, as Nishant Shah explains in his 2010 address to re:publica 2010 in Berlin. We must consider a user's comfort level against his/her ease and frequency of access, which require tools (smart phones, tablets, computers) attainable only to those with certain status in society.

The difference between a digital native and a digital immigrant or settler is not exclusively an age or decade difference, explains Palfrey in a blog post from 2007. While age is certainly relevant, more important for differentiation is a set of characteristics and approaches to technologies of the present which perhaps dominate the thinking of digital natives in a greater way than for settlers and immigrants. Palfrey further explains in a 2008 podcast with *The Washington Post*,

we should be prepared for the possibility that people who were born today... may well see relationships differently, they may see institutions differently, they may see access to information differently (Musgrove, 2008).

These differences in characteristics, attitudes and approaches are what separate someone who integrates technology from someone who naturally lives in the technological age. An absence of these characteristics is what makes many digital settlers and natives wary of the effects of technology on a digital native's life, especially when it comes to healthy growth and development. As millennial adolescents are the first group to fully mature online, research and practical studies are in progress, but few hard facts exist to support digital settlers and immigrants in understanding and raising children in this new era.

danah boyd Ph.D., a leading scholar in the field of internet and society, maintains that teenagers have not changed since before the digital age, only the context of the platforms they use to express their development has changed.

Speaking about her book *It's Complicated: The Social Lives of Networked Teens* during a 2014 interview with National Public Radio, boyd states, “the kids are alright (Blair, 2014),” in efforts to calm parents, educators and social commentators. Boyd explains that teens have always been and will always be interested in exploring roles and establishing their place in public, it's why they experiment with different personas and put forth conflicting messages to gauge reaction and push boundaries. What has changed, she explains and expounds on in the book, is that now adolescents explore these things in a new context; networked publics.

As opposed to traditional public spheres which acted as tangible spaces for teens to establish identity and experiment with autonomy of self,

Networked publics are publics that are restructured by networked technologies.

As such, they are simultaneously (1) the space constructed through networked technologies and (2) the imagined community that emerges as a result of the interaction of people, technology and practice (boyd, 2014).

For digital natives, boyd explains, networked publics are both a space to gather and connect and a social construct which allows teens to see themselves as members of a larger community. Adolescents want to spend time in large groups of their peers, and today's teenagers have the ability to do so online in networked publics just like more traditional publics of the past. Moreover, they want independence and autonomy on Facebook and Twitter just as they've wanted to be dropped off instead of chaperoned at

the mall or park in decades past. For digital natives, their online social life is equivalent to their face-to-face social experiences. In this way, a social network password or private profile which keeps mom and dad out of their social sphere isn't any sneakier than a phone conversation out of parental earshot or an unaccompanied trip to the movie theater. This is why teens are less skeptical of new networked autonomy than adults because there is no point for comparison; "they don't try to analyze how things are different because of technology; they simply try to relate to a public world in which technology is given (boyd, 2014)." Adults, alternatively, are equipped to compare the networked public to other publics and as a result, focus on how different and possibly harmful the networked public can be.

boyd is careful to explain that just because teens feel comfortable existing in a networked public, it doesn't mean they inherently have the ability to do so responsibly or respond to the outcomes of their online actions in a mature way. They are still teenagers struggling with the same developmental challenges of teenagers in ages past. Because of this, it becomes relevant for adults to address the online public when educating and socializing a digital native.

THE DIGITAL LANDSCAPE OF EDUCATION

Marc Prensky is the researcher who first examined differentiation for the digital native in his 2001 article *Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants*. Theorizing that digital natives coming of age in a fast-paced, media-driven world needed educational models of a similar style in order to achieve, Prensky hypothesized that teaching this generation required a media-rich approach in order to communicate effectively.

It is well-known in the field of education that students will engage most in content which is relatable and relevant to them personally. Content which draws on previous knowledge gives context for new ideas, and using student's backgrounds and interests to present content in meaningful ways allows for more personalized learning. Robin Robertson, a researcher at the University of Oklahoma focused in the relationships between teachers and students, defines relevance as the student perception that material is of interest to them and is worth knowing. She explains,

This aligns relatively well with the theory of relevance found in the related area of cognitive science. Wilson and Sperber (2004) put forth this theory in the mid-80s which posits: "...utterances raise expectations of relevance not because speakers are expected to obey a Co-operative Principle and maxims or some other specifically communicative convention, but because the search for relevance is a basic feature of human cognition, which communicators may exploit (Robertson, 2013).

In utilizing tools like social media for content dissemination, students don't need to search hard for the relevance in the delivery of material, these methods of instruction are already a part of their everyday lives. In that way it makes sense, as Prensky suggests, that online media would begin to find its way in to education. It is already a primary source for adolescent interaction and involves tools students are comfortable using in information gathering and sharing. While the case for social media education and usage in academia has been made by theorists like Palfrey and boyd, it is not at all widespread practice to use these technologies in the classroom at this point.

Charles Crook, Professor of Information Communication Technologies and Education at The University of Nottingham UK, describes the hesitations towards true integration of Web 2.0 technologies in the field of education in his piece *The Digital Native in Context: Tensions associated with importing Web 2.0 practices into the school setting*. Crook explains that integrating these technologies is more than just promoting use for the inherent benefits of expanded networks and unlimited storage and interaction. At a deeper level, Web 2.0 is a set of communication *practices* or “distinctive human activities that are made possible by this infrastructure (Crook, 2012).” As a result, the context of technology implementation in the classroom is just as important as using the tool. Setting up a Twitter account to engage in the same kind of educational activities you would engage with in any other lesson, may not be a proper use of the medium. Crook explains, “the seemingly similar uses for those tools (collaborating, inquiring etc.) could lead to rather different demands and to rather different experiences (Crook, 2012)”.

There are, of course, examples of effective usage, but they are few and far between and largely unstudied—especially at the high school level and most especially in an arts classroom. Mrs. Linda Yollis, a third grade teacher in Los Angeles, California, created a class blog in 2008 which Mrs. Yollis says has effectively “flattened the walls” (Mrs. Yollis’ Classroom Blog, 2014) of her classroom, opened her students to new audiences and collaborations nationally and internationally, eased a flow of communication with parents and extended the learning process outside of school time. Mrs. Yollis and her team of student bloggers all write and contribute media for the blog after an open discussion about online standards and practices. She finds the “authentic

audience so motivating for kids” (Mrs. Yollis’ Classroom Blog, 2014), and expresses that her students find drive in engaging with others via comments on the blog.

Dr. Monica Rankin, a history professor at the University of Texas at Dallas utilized Twitter in her lecture course of 90 students, asking for their engagement and further discussion both during class and in response to readings. Students speaking via a YouTube video expressed a multitude of benefits they found in this Twitter requirement including a decreased level of anxiety due to the opportunity to engage without having to speak out loud in front of the class, the ability to share more in a shorter amount of time, a focused approach to content (with only 140 characters with which to pose a position), the ability to participate remotely, a handy study tool in hashtagged class discussions and a more socially conscious stance on information sharing via the web (The Twitter Experiment-Twitter in the Classroom, 2009).

Both these classrooms serve as examples of socially integrated settings. Both teachers recognized the necessity of setting basic ground rules and covering basic usage related content prior to implementing a regular practice of classroom incorporation, and both teachers needed to be in constant monitor of the social platforms utilized in class, but information imparted by both teachers and students communicate the relative ease of integrating these networks into instruction and the natural fit for student application.

While social media usage in the classroom is still not fully realized regular practice, implementation is on the radars of educational organizations across the country. In 2011, The Consortium for School Networking and The Frameworks Institute hosted senior-level representatives from state and national school board organizations to discuss creating a resource which would assist educators and policy-makers in developing

practical measures for addressing new media in schools. The result was the National School Board Association's report which was released in 2011 (in collaboration with the American Association for School Administrators, the National Education Association and the Technology Leadership Network, among others), *Making Progress: Rethinking State and School District Policies Concerning Mobile Technologies and Social Media*. This document recognizes the potential of social media for student benefit: helping them to bridge in-school formal and out-of-school informal learning; construct online networks as 21st century learning environments (or utilize existing networks for critical discourse); connect in real-time to experts and resources outside of the school environment; provide real-time feedback mechanisms for peers and teachers (assessment possibilities); document work digitally and in a variety of mediums; store work in way that provides ease of access and retrieval; learn how to utilize current technologies as tools for lifelong educational potential (Making Progress Report, 2011).

Along with these benefits, the report identifies legitimate concerns of integrating social media into the classroom including sexting, cyber-bullying and harassing, inappropriate behavior and poor judgment about how much to share. Additionally the report analyzes the inequality of access and the digital divide created by technology haves and have-nots. Despite these concerns, the report demonstrates that there is recognition on a national level that "banning is not the answer" (Making Progress, 2011), and prescribes revisiting acceptable use policies on district levels as well as education for both students and teachers on the beneficial uses of social technologies.

There is hope yet for the future of new media in the classroom. As educators, it's important we consider how we can utilize an understanding of the digital native and the

digital landscape to differentiate our instruction and really hone in on the tendencies of a 21st century learner.

A PLACE FOR SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE DANCE CLASSROOM

Constructivism, and educational theory promoting learning by doing, took its initial cues from psychologist Lev Vygotsky who hypothesized that all learning is a social activity; a conglomeration of relevant social experiences and events. Doug Risner and Jon Anderson outline a student-centered approach to technology integration based in this same kind of social constructivist theory of education in *Digital Dance Literacy: an integrated dance technology curriculum pilot project*. The constructivist view aligns perfectly with our current social landscape, the authors explain, as “these pedagogical and philosophical assumptions center on collaborative learning in which the learner’s peer group figures prominently in learning, reflection, and assessment” (Risner & Anderson, 2015).

In designing a dance curriculum with an adequate focus in relevant technology, Risner and Anderson sought out approaches for review which would provide students with avenues for fostering exploration and reflection, which would adapt to the needs of 21st century learning and which would enrich a student’s education with creative experience and opportunities for real world engagement and imitation (Risner & Anderson, 2015). With these qualifications in mind, I noted similarities between the aims and methods of their project and the benefits of social media inclusion specified in the National School Board’s *Making Progress*. Both texts advocate for approaches which allow students to—in some way—design their own experiences. Both look for avenues of connection using technology whether that is between students, students and teachers or

students and the networked public. Both look to establish experiences which prepare students for the 21st century working world and, perhaps most importantly, both recognize the potential for invoking critical thought through these social mediums.

Replace the words ‘technology’, ‘social media’ and ‘networks’ with ‘dance’, ‘choreography’ and ‘improvisation’ in the paragraph above, and you get the kind of feminist and constructivist dance curriculum outlined by Sherry Shapiro in her article *Toward Transformative Teachers: Critical and Feminist Perspectives on Dance Education*. Focusing on the dance classroom as a place of shared meaning and collaboration, she prescribes shaping student learning around teacher and student experience and combined knowledge instead of the traditionally technical model of information (or technique) dissemination from teacher to student. In considering an application for social media in Shapiro’s context, the dance classroom becomes a hotbed for real-time collaborations, reflections and critiques from all participants, creating a classroom where the responsibility behind goals and outcomes are shared by student and teacher alike.

Jin Mao discovered in his study *Social media for learning: A mixed methods study on high school students’ technology affordances and perspectives* that students themselves recognized and articulated a multitude of benefits of social media inclusion in the classroom. He shares,

The benefits and examples of social media use in classrooms shared by the participants mostly focus on the fun, convenience, and ease in using them for creating media-based class projects and searching for information or using supplemental resources for textbooks...One other use of social media for learning

shared by the participants is the informal, social, collaborative online community, where students can refine their skills in certain areas or collaborate on projects (Mao, 2014).

This student supplied list of benefits spans each of Bloom's levels of Higher Order Thinking. Students *remember* using the software to document experience and knowledge, they *understand* in collaborative discussion and explanation, they *apply* these understandings in media-based class projects, *analyze* and (of particular relevance for this project) *evaluate* their ideas in opinion based blogging and micro-blogging and they *create* both embodied outcomes in relation to all these online events and electronic portfolios of blogs, tweets, photos, videos and status updates; a relative virtual archive of the learning process.

One of the areas in which I chose to focus my use of the blogging and micro-blogging practice was in the area of analyzing and evaluating student work both in self-reflection and solicited feedback. This practice goes against traditional avenues for feedback in the dance classroom, but is important in the realm of constructivist theory. In a traditional, studio-based technique class, the observable product becomes the subject of instructor feedback, not the process or work behind that product. Sherrie Barr explains in her *Examining the technique class: re-examining feedback*, explaining that often in the dance classroom, feedback is focused on the execution or the product of work, not the work itself. Barr explains, "The result is an emphasis of learning and teaching revolving around observable outcome; the inanimate 'what' overshadows the person" (Barr, 2009).

My topic of inquiry became not only, how can I utilize social media to approach Bloom's Higher Order Thinking in the constructivist dance classroom, but also, how can

we use social media to change the nature of feedback. Mao addresses this change in the dynamic of interaction when he explains why students found enjoyment in using social media to connect in new ways:

Rather than passively accessing information provided on webpages, students can interact with information, people, and their environment through social media.

Also, this active, participatory culture provides the power, freedom, flexibility, and immediacy that they cannot obtain from structured classroom learning environments (Mao, 2014).

The potential for communication and reaction exists in entirely new ways when we look at it from an online perspective. What traditionally would stay between teacher and student, and in a constructivist connected classroom might stay between the students in the class, in an online classroom is opened up to a world of observers. With each new observer comes new opportunities for feedback and engagement in real-time. Imagine the educational potential of audience interaction and comment...during a performance! This immediacy Mao talks about and I dream about for the classroom setting is the reality of digital native perspectives. Harnessing its potential speaks directly to 21st century skills, learners and real world problem solving. Mao sums it up perfectly when he says,

The informal learning generated through social media helps students become internally-motivated learners who are learning content and skills that are meaningful and relevant to their life and experiences (Mao, 2014).

Through an integration of social media in the classroom we can create formal learning from informal learning, engaging students in content by use of relevant mediums. The potential for this model is inspiring.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

This study analyzes student use of social media as part of an engaged, personal choreographic process. It uses the Senior Dance Concert capstone experience as a basis for implementation.

STUDENT SELECTION

Participating students are all in their fourth year of an intensive dance curriculum inclusive of technique (modern, ballet and jazz), anatomy and somatic studies, dance history, improvisation and choreography. These 10 Senior level student participants are Chesterfield County Specialty Center for Fine and Performing Arts students; each student auditioned as a rising Freshman to be admitted to a county-wide program wherein they are bussed by the school system from their home schools to Thomas Dale High School to complete both their core academic curriculum and course work in an area of arts specialty. Other specialty areas include vocal music, instrumental music, acting, theater production and fine arts (which is divided further into drawing/painting, graphic arts, sculpture and 3-D design and photography/film). Students admitted to this program who successfully complete the required coursework are rewarded with a Seal of the Arts on their high school diploma.

It's important to note before going forward that only 1.5% of the Thomas Dale High School student body are Specialty Center students. The rest of the 2,374 students

are districted to the school and attend as regularly enrolled students. As such, the demographics of the Specialty Center which I will go on to discuss are not indicative of the overall demographics of the school.

It is also important to note that for the 10 Senior level students involved in this study, I am their third dance teacher over the course of their 4 years in the program. Their first teacher was the founder of the dance specialty and had a successful 13-year tenure in the program. The second spent 2 years in the program. I am the third. Because of this frequent turnover in combination with a recent audit of the Specialty Center Program and a new Project Based Learning (PBL) initiative in the county, I was able to rewrite much of the Specialty Center Dance Program curriculum this past summer. All of these factors have led to inconsistencies in this particular graduating class' progression through the coursework. Along with this, as a teacher new to these students and this work, I have no point for comparison other than from the beginning of the year to the concert date. Thus, this study relied solely on student reported results. In future tests, I will be able to evaluate student growth a little more clearly from my own perspective.

STUDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Of the 10 Senior students, 7 identify Caucasian, 1 Asian and 2 African American. None of these students have IEPs or qualify for 504 services. 100% of participating students are female. All 10 students have cell phones with internet access; 9 iPhone devices and 1 Android. 8 of the students had Twitter accounts prior to this project while 2 obtained accounts in order to participate. None of the students had previously curated a website, Googlesite or blog, but several (4) had Tmbler accounts, a social networking platform which allows users to post media content in a short-form microblog.

RESEARCH TYPE

Social Media and the Choreograph Process was conducted as an active research project, or a study of an actual classroom environment and situation. Information about the students' choreographic experiences prior to this project, information about the students' regular use of social media and expectations about the project were all sought out and analyzed against a postmortem paper summarizing participant's experiences and outcomes. Additionally, actual tweets and blogposts were collected and reviewed as were the tweets of other department dancers in engagement with the Seniors. One-on-one meetings provided anecdotal material as did bi-weekly production meetings.

The opportunities for broad application of this study's results and outcomes are unknown due to the uniqueness of my program, the small nature of the sample and the controversial nature of social media strategies for the classroom. Regardless, it is my hope that this study can serve as one of the dance education field's first contributions to the discussion of social media in the secondary school setting and act as a jumping off point for others in the field to utilize similar strategies and procedures.

METHODOLOGY

In Social Media and the Choreographic Process, student work samples and interactive media excerpts compiled the data for analysis. These samples and excerpts were an outcome of qualitative, action-based research.

Hilary Bradbury and Peter Reason discuss action research as a partnership between researcher and research subjects which: is grounded in lived experience; uses the experience of working with subjects rather than studying them as a means for generating data; and which develops new ways of seeing the world, leaving infrastructure for future

use as a result (Bradbury and Reason, 2003). As I worked closely with my students throughout the process of this project to monitor their successes and failures, and regularly made adjustments to allow for increased levels of success in engagement, my work is a clear example of action-based research.

Stephen Kemmis and Robin McTaggart present a focused model of action research which fits my purposes perfectly. They call this model *participatory research*. The Kemmis and McTaggart model of participatory research involves a process of planning, acting and observing, reflecting, creating a revised plan, acting and observing again (in comparison), and then reflecting again (Koshy et al, 2011). Social Media and the Choreographic Process follows this model exactly, allowing for reflection and re-planning via collaborative efforts on Twitter and the choreographer's blog posts as a process of considering and re-planning. Similarly, the project allowed for my own reconsiderations and restructuring throughout the study as I identified successes and failures in my own structuring of the concepts. As a majority of the outcomes of this work occurred in student work samples, documentary evidence is a huge part of my researching findings.

Documentary evidence—in this particular instance photos from the concerts, screen shots of tweets, student blogs and student papers—can illustrate progress over time, capture critical moments of relevance and show evidence of engagement (Koshy et al, 2011). This evidence can be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively: in comparing the number of tweets utilizing the #scdc hashtags at the beginning of the process as well.

ANONYMITY AND PROTOCOLS

Despite the very public nature of the social media platforms utilized in this study, all of the results and outcomes presented are done so with the upmost respect for student anonymity and my county's student information protocols. None of the participating students' real names, screen names or self-identifying hashtags are used in this paper, rather, their actual identities have been replaced by falsified names. It is important to note, however, that during data collection I was very aware of the identity of each participant due to the nature of each's screen name and our hashtag system.

I modeled our classroom Twitter privacy protocol on the widely understood principle touted by my county: do not accept friend requests or follows on a personal social network account from students. As such, I created a Twitter account and handle (screen name) specifically for the dance program, @TDHSKnightsDance. I publicized this Twitter handle on our classroom's white board for a few days, and quickly grew the account's following to include current students and other school organization accounts. Over time, followers grew to include current student's parents, other teachers and even program alumni.

While many current students followed the handle, I did not follow them back, opting instead to utilize hashtags as a means of holding and organizing conversations without obtaining access to student's personal tweets in efforts to maintain their sense of privacy. By typing hashtagged words into the platform's search structure I could read focused conversations specific to our class and each Senior's projects, nothing more. The Senior Concert as a whole was hashtagged #scdcseniors and each Senior's work took on a hashtag with their name for ease of remembering, for example, #scdcilana. These

named hashtags appear in my data and this paper with the falsified names replacing actual names.

Of the 38 underclassmen students enrolled in the Specialty Center Dance program this year, 11 of them did not have Twitter accounts and did not desire or were not allowed (by parent rule) to create one. These students submit tweet length responses to in-class events or questioning to me via email, and I passed their thoughts on to the appropriate Seniors. In that way, their thoughts were never made public.

PERMISSION AND RELEASE

Due to the sensitive nature of posting photo and video content to both Twitter and the class website and blog, each student in my department was required to read, sign and have a parent sign administration-approved permission-slips consenting that images of them might be utilized in this process. These permission slips are kept on file and are included in the appendices of this paper.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK, CLASS STRUCTURE & CURRICULUM

The Dance Department's curriculum (and thus, the Senior Concert project) is based in Sherry Shapiro's model of the dance classroom as a place of shared meaning and collaboration as a result of shaping student learning around teacher and student experience and combined knowledge. This is in direct contrast to the traditionally technical model of information (or technique) dissemination from teacher to student which many of my students experience in their studio dancing. The curriculum (which I wrote during the summer of 2014) uses ballet, modern, jazz, improvisation and choreography techniques as jumping off points for studies of dance history, anatomy and somatics, theater production and critical analysis, building well-rounded skills and

experiences out of that technical knowledge which lead to a summative experience in choreography, teaching and production.

Shapiro's model is also relevant in providing foundational base for social media inclusion. In creating an open classroom which employs my student's knowledge and realities in combination with my own, social media is an obvious tool for engagement and relation. While the methods for utilizing new media in my classroom were seemingly endless due to the various Chrome extensions, Apple, Android and Google apps and social platforms available to students via their phones and computers, in efforts towards the most authentic engagement possible, I chose to use Twitter to facilitate microblogging as it seemed to be the most readily utilized platform by my students as a part of their every-day social media use. Additionally, I chose Blogger as an alternative to in-class written journaling. Ultimately, I found it necessary for logistical network purposes to switch from Blogger to Google Sites, but the concept remained same; student reflection and constructive interaction in a public, portfolio format.

Senior students in the Specialty Center program have participated in a Senior Dance Concert as the summative product of their time in the Specialty Center since the program was founded 15 years ago. I cannot say with certainty that that concert has always been made up of exclusively Senior choreography, but it certainly has been for the past 5 years, which is inclusive of this year's graduating class' time in the program.

When I rewrote the dance curriculum during the summer of 2014, I was encouraged to look at our county's Project Based Learning (PBL) initiative in designing the culminating Senior experience, and so the Senior Dance Concert this year was opened up curricularly to include any Senior projects the students wanted to produce which

would capstone their years in the program. This could include anything from choreography, to documentation of a community teaching experience, to a set of lesson plans for a unit of study or a business plan for a dream dance studio. As all 10 of these Seniors came in with the expectation of producing choreography, none of them chose alternative projects, but in consideration of the PBL initiative I provided them with the project of producing the whole concert themselves; from lights and costumes to budgets, publicity, ticketing and front-of-house coordination.

The Standards of Learning for Dance Arts in the Commonwealth of Virginia contain many learning objectives geared towards incorporation of feedback and critique as well as self-analysis and self-evaluation. In fact, this language is used in the standards for Dance I through Dance IV. In designing a program which would develop a dance student over the course of four years, I wanted to ensure that by Senior year students knew how to ask for beneficial feedback instead of superficial affirmations. The social media feedback element of this project was designed with that goal in mind.

In pursuit of that goal, I aligned Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process (wherein responder feedback begins as a response to artist questioning) with both in-person, in-class opportunities for feedback, and on-line Twitter opportunities which utilized the same practice. In this way, the Seniors were taught to present thought-out questions in attempts to solicit only the responses which would help them at that particular point in their process. This idea drove the design of the project and the analysis of the study's findings.

Establishing lessons about beneficial critique, responsible web use and leadership were at the forefront of this experience. Senior students responded to examples of 'bad'

critique by identifying what changes they could make based on the feedback which was offered (examples included “I loved it because it was pretty.”, “It made me happy because I liked it.” and “They were good dancers.”). Once students realized those kinds of critiques didn’t help them to develop movement or ideas further, they watched dance in class (and in out-of-class attendance at a collegiate or professional performance of their choice) and were challenged to analyze the work they saw in a question format. Why did the dancers do this? What was the intention of that? What about it made me feel the way I felt? They were then asked to apply that same kind of evaluative questioning to their own work. Students brainstormed how they might use Twitter to ask those kinds of questions of their dancers and illicit the kinds of responses which they’d identified as helpful to their process.

Lessons in basic web etiquette and school system web procedures and acceptable use were provided by my school system (in response to our middle school level Chrome Book implementation this year). In addition to these provided lessons, we also discussed how to administer feedback in a way which is sensitive to ones feelings. This concept was explored in Senior specific production meetings as well as lessons centered around basic teaching methods (a curricular subject for both Juniors and Seniors). We then explored how we could make feedback web appropriate. There is an inherent level of respect Seniors achieve in the department in regards to their class rank. We discussed and experimented with using this respect in a way which helps others to properly utilize the class Twitter protocols; setting examples and the like.

My Dance Repertory classes (where the Senior Dance Concert is put together) are primarily run by the two Seniors who have pieces up for rehearsal that day. They

facilitate a group warm up, agree amongst themselves which Senior will work in each space, run rehearsal and provide questions for feedback and response via the white board, their own Twitter accounts and verbal cues at the end of class. Establishing this class pattern wasn't difficult, and it really created a positive relationship between the Seniors and myself. They enjoyed the responsibility of running the process of the class, the concert and their pieces, and it provided them with more ownership over the experience as a whole.

KEY ASSESSMENTS

Seniors were required to blog once a month, minimally. For the first few entries, I kept the subject matter open to general responses to their processes, but saw that I wasn't getting the kind of analysis which would be the most beneficial to an overall evaluation of their engagement. Thus, I provided questions for response for a majority of the postings. These blogs were then able to be sourced as a chronological documentation of the process when Seniors went back for post-mortem response.

Utilizing Twitter worked in much the same way, although it proved to be a much more well-used platform when it came to underclassmen response. Seniors initially tweeted out questions for response, but they were getting minimal engagement. Consequently, I gave each Senior an opportunity at the end of their rehearsal to announce their point of question to the class and ask for responses via Twitter, almost in an exit-card format. Many more responses were contributed after that change was made.

RUBRICS

Rubrics for blog posts and tweets are included below. These rubrics are based in lessons on effective feedback and response, and while they were used to enter completion

and basic quality grades in along the way, the majority of summative data analysis is based on the outcomes described in students' post-mortem review papers which analyze the experience as a whole rather than isolated rehearsals or events.

3: An exemplary blog post addresses the blog topic provided in full, and provides numerous specific examples of experiences in class, in teaching or in reflection which demonstrate the points being made. An exemplary blog post provides implications for growth and furthering one's work.	2: A satisfactory blog post addresses the blog topic provided, and provides a few specific examples of experiences in class, in teaching or in reflection which demonstrate the points being made. A satisfactory blog post provides some implications for growth and furthering one's work, but outcomes could be further explored.	1: A below average blog post addresses the blog topic provided, but provides few specific examples of experiences in class, in teaching or in reflection which demonstrate the points being made. A below average blog post provides few to no implications for growth and furthering one's work.	0: An unacceptable blog post is incomplete or missing. It provides no specific examples to support ideas and no implications for growth and furthering one's work.
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FIGURE 1: *Blog Post Rubric*

3: The Twitter conversation is initiated in a way which elicits productive feedback. The question asks for deep response rather than superficial affirmation. The initial post is sensitive to the feelings and needs of your classmates.	2: The Twitter conversation is initiated in a way which could elicit positive feedback, but isn't deep enough to ask for real quality response. The initial post is sensitive to the feelings and needs of your classmates.	1: The Twitter conversation asks only for superficial response. The initial post may lack some sensitivity or open classmates up to experience negativity or be placed at fault. This conversation is not beneficial to your process.	0: The Twitter conversation is missing or incomplete.
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FIGURE 2: *Tweet Rubric*

DATA ANALYSIS

As noted in the above sections, data from blog posts and tweets were scored for quality and recorded for formative assessment. This was to ensure that these two platforms were serving their intended purpose of facilitating discussion and engagement only. Additionally, a portfolio of saved blog posts (as well as the public, chronological blog site) and screenshotted Twitter conversations categorized and saved into individualized student files provided both myself and the Seniors with documentation of

their process from beginning to end. Day-to-day notes about classroom experiences were taken in my own journaling format, and referenced for analysis. Finally, video of each and every rehearsal were catalogued in a student accessible Google Drive folders, sorted by student name. These measures organized student data for analysis.

In analyzing anecdotal evidence and student artifacts to explore the concept of enhanced engagement, it was decided early on that a summative sort of assignment would be needed in order for students to self-analyze and report change in behavior. This assignment was a paper exploring their Twitter feeds, blog posts, in-class experiences and performances to come to conclusions about how they changed and grew within their process. Prompts for the paper response were:

- Was this year's process and the things I asked of your process different from your choreographic processes of the past? How were those differences helpful? How were they challenging? What do you think were outcomes of those differences?
- How did the social media aspect of the Senior Dance Concert project help you feel more connected to your Senior Concert experience, if at all? Analyze your experience with the blogging and tweeting part of the project. How it help you? How did it inform your dance/rehearsals/thinking? Did it change the way you interacted with your cast/audiences in a good way? In a bad way? Explain.
- Compare and contrast the feedback you got on Twitter and the blog and the feedback you got during the in-person Critical Response Process. How was each method helpful? What was challenging about each? Which was more beneficial (if one was significantly more so) and why?

- Look back on your blog posts from throughout your process. How can looking back on it in this publicly documented way help you going forward? Have you had a resource like this to refer to from processes in the past?
- What was the biggest success of your Senior Dance Concert work? Why?
- How have you changed as a choreographer, artist and leader this year? What directly contributed to those changes? Please address all three; choreographer, artist and leader.

Most of these questions were referred to in some way or another (although not with identical language) throughout various blog post assignments. It was my hope that providing them again in this summative fashion would help students to tie together the experience as a whole and pinpoint the factors which contributed to their growth and development (hopefully highlighting the social feedback and engagement). These responses were used as additional pieces of documentary evidence.

CHAPTER IV

DATA & ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Through the action research model detailed in Chapter III, I was able to collect student artifacts including photos, video, tweets, blog excerpts and writing samples which helped to illustrate student progress towards a more engaged choreographic experience as a result of a socially integrated classroom.

In the end, the overwhelming majority of students appreciated a socially enhanced form of class communication. In blogs, tweets, class conversations and post-mortem papers, students cited benefits ranging from convenience to comfort levels and even the distance learning element provided by a socially integrated classroom-- an element I hadn't considered in much detail. While the bulk of students found themselves more engaged and invested in the concert using this project's processes, it's important to note there were 6 students who cited a lack of Twitter account (without desire or permission to obtain one) and a resultant feeling of disconnect to the rest of the class' conversation.

Overall, 90% of students reported in their post-mortem accounts that they preferred Twitter over the blog for participating in interactions with their classmates (which might be as a result of the limitations placed on the blogging format), but expressed that they learned more about their choreographer's process, subject and approach from the blog posts. 2 out of every 5 students reflected critically that in order to

improve on their participation in next year's concert, they would visit the Senior's page more often and engage via comments on the blog platform in an increased way. A great majority of the underclassmen post-mortem papers addressed successes via the Twitter platform as opposed to the blog. Incidentally, a great majority of Senior's post-mortem papers expressed the opposite.

COMMUNICATION- ENGAGED CONVERSATIONS VIA TWITTER AND BLOG PROCESSES

Both Twitter and the Senior Blog pages took on their own kinds of operational protocols, which were not dictated or required as a part of the project. This was not done intentionally, as I gave no directives on exactly *how* these outlets should be utilized for communication short of making the post and question requirements. As a result, I value the natural process which took place in the development of classroom procedures towards these mediums as it feels to be the most organic use of the two outlets.

The repost and favorite functions of Twitter-designed to allow users to share content of interest and value and to publicly affirm other's tweets-took on relevance in Social Media and the Choreographic Process. As native users of the Twitter platform, students utilized these functions in cooperative ways I couldn't have planned. Sophomore Christine explained in her post-mortem paper how she and her class grew to use the repost and favorite functions on Twitter to further engaged conversation:

[Twitter] helped connect us as dancers because someone would tweet something and if I agreed I would favorite it, that way the choreographer would know that others feel the same way. If I really agreed I would retweet it.

The majority of the company utilized this protocol when responding to and providing feedback for the Senior choreographers. Seniors recognized having seen feedback by favoring tweets as well (see example below). Again, this was not an instructed practice, but one that evolved as a result of their regular uses of the platform outside of my class requirement. In the sample tweet below one can see the respondent using both the Senior's hashtag and Twitter handle (screenname) to group this tweet into a discussion of that Senior's work. The Senior (@aliciatdhs) has favorited the tweet, indicating she's seen it

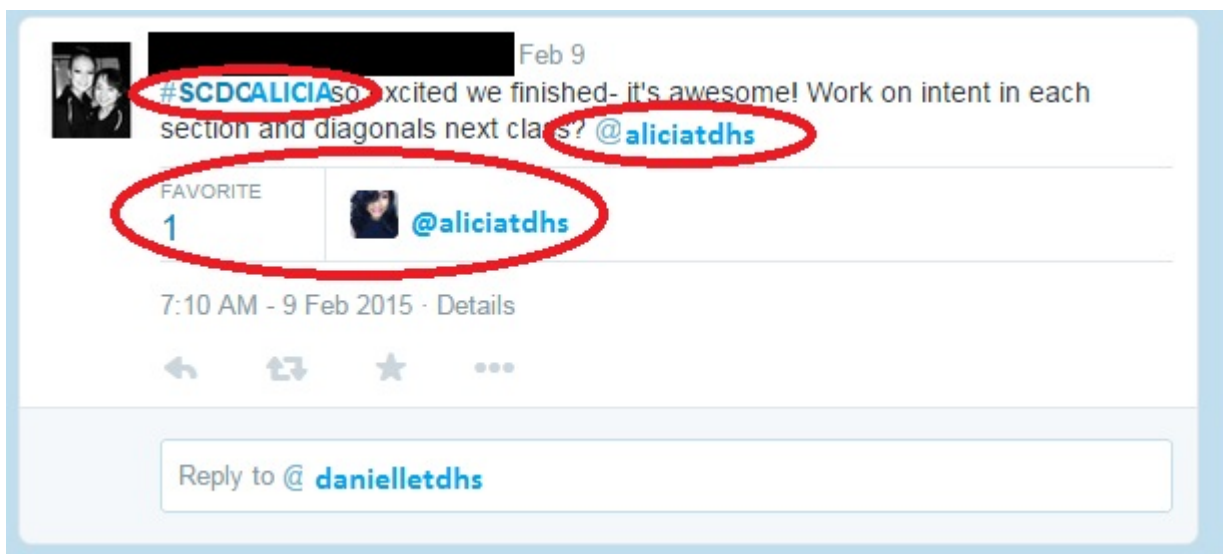


FIGURE 3: A tweet from February 9, 2015 demonstrating retweeting and favoriting protocols.

In response to the difficulties posed by the restrictions of blogging platforms, many Seniors turned to Google Form surveys which they posted to their blog pages as methods of obtaining comments and feedback responses. They then tweeted out the links to these surveys requesting response. Because the survey responses are returned to the survey creator's Google Drive and not posted publicly, these surveys did little to engage the company with each other, facilitating only one-on-one (and sometimes anonymous

depending on the survey's settings) dialogue. It was reported that fewer than 15 underclassmen participated regularly in the blog surveys.

In light of these processes and in analysis of resultant student tweets, blogs, survey responses and summative post-mortem papers, it was determined that the social choreography assignment, in particular a use of Twitter, had overwhelmingly positive results on student engagement when it came to social feedback systems, company/department morale and perceived audience response.

DYNAMIC SOCIAL FEEDBACK SYSTEMS

The success of an ongoing, interactive feedback outlet via social media was described by both underclassmen and Seniors as an overall result of integrating blog response and Twitter in the social choreography assignment, though the perceived outcomes were different depending on class. Of these results, a safe space for providing feedback, validation of ideas being heard and the ongoing nature of connection were among the top outcomes for underclassmen. Interestingly, Seniors often had opposite reactions to the various benefits and mediums than the underclassmen. Consequently, their responses have been separated out for additional analysis.

Comfort in providing feedback – Many underclassmen recognized the digital disconnect—or separation from direct face-to-face interaction—as beneficial for their level of comfort when it came to engaging in the Senior feedback process, as was highlighted in Dr. Rankin's UT classroom referenced in Chapter Two. Speaking in response to the digital disconnect, one Junior student said:

It really helps to have feedback that is not direct sometimes because some people would rather speak up in a private environment, rather than a public one. So, I

think the question and response aspect of Twitter helped dancers and their choreographers be able to interact in a positive way.

It is so interesting to recall boyd's description of the networked public when considering this student's words. It seems to indicate that to the digital native, hiding behind the screen can allow for more honest feedback without the pressure of a face-to-face conversation. This seems to be in direct contrast to the understandings of digital pioneers and digital settlers who value face-to-face dialogue for more complicated or emotional communications. Regardless of our feelings on this phenomenon, it's important to consider as educators looking for the most authentic reactions and musings from our students.

A sophomore student expounded on the same idea, recognizing an increased level of comfort asking questions and bringing up issues in-class once they'd been discussed online:

This was definitely a different way of interacting with my choreographer and fellow dancers and I believe it made the environment more relaxed because we weren't afraid to ask questions in class since we already mentioned in our tweet that we have questions.

This kind of interactive relationship was new to both Senior choreographer and underclassmen dancer, but ultimately for the underclassmen, created a closer relationship than any experienced in Senior Concerts of the past. Another Junior describes:

I felt closer and more connected to my choreographers because we were constantly sharing ideas and constructive criticism with each other. Having this student/ choreographer/mentor relationship brought out many different

perspectives and ideas throughout the choreography process that made each dance cleaner and better.

In short, a more connected conversation outside of class led to a more connected relationship in class with both choreographers and their work. It also opened up avenues of communication which wouldn't have been natural in years past. A Sophomore explains,

Freshman wouldn't really tweet Seniors every day to talk, only other Freshman or Sophomores, so this made us all talk more.

A sense of validation and contribution - Once feedback was 'heard', underclassmen found validation in their ideas and feedback being recognized and utilized. Becoming a part of the actual process—having a say in what was addressed or providing response which resonated with others—became valued. This, in turn, increased frequency and investment in attempts to provide something of meaning for both choreographers and fellow dancers. A Freshman participant explains:

I remember in Rochelle's piece I tweeted along with many of the other dancers that we needed to work on the speaking part and the loudness of it, and the next rehearsal we spent most of our time talking and working on that part. It was nice that the Seniors would actually read our tweets and then come into the next rehearsal to talk about them.

This feeling of usefulness has become a part of the overall culture in the department. For example, as Seniors sought help in the completion of their production responsibilities (the costume manager needing help organizing dressing rooms, front of house managers needing volunteers to hand out programs and seat audience members),

underclassmen students eagerly stepped up to the plate with a desire to help in their project and, thus, the department production.

The ongoing nature of connection- Students also noted that adding an online element to our choreographic process extended the work outside of the classroom, prolonging their thinking of the material into the hours they weren't in the studio or with their classmates. This had multiple benefits as well; keeping choreography and ideas fresh in the students' minds as well as providing opportunities for distance learning and cooperation.

Many students commented that they enjoyed an increased ability to access and express ideas about the work outside of class time. A Sophomore student described it this way:

Sometimes emotions are so big that people can't find the right words to say until three in the morning, and when that does happen they have to write them down but we could tweet them.

In returning to the Twitter feed, I didn't find many tweets at three in the morning, but more than half the tweets and interactions did occur during hours outside of the school day. A Junior participant also explored this idea in her reflection:

There are some days that I don't get home until 10:00, and pick up my phone for the first time since class; if I got on Twitter I would see tweets with #scdc and I would think about rehearsal and about the piece like a mini reminder from the dance gods.

That same Junior also found important benefit when it came to learning and participating from a distance. Following a death in the family, this student found herself out of state for

some of the final weeks of rehearsal leading up to performance. Her Twitter exchange (below) with her Senior choreographer is one of my favorite examples of the benefits of socially integrated learning and classrooms because the time and date stamp on the tweets shown below have them taking place during Repertory rehearsal block at the exact time these two students would have been rehearsing together. The Junior student's investment in the class and the process was so great that she was able to connect herself even from afar. This exchange is one of my favorite pieces of student data.

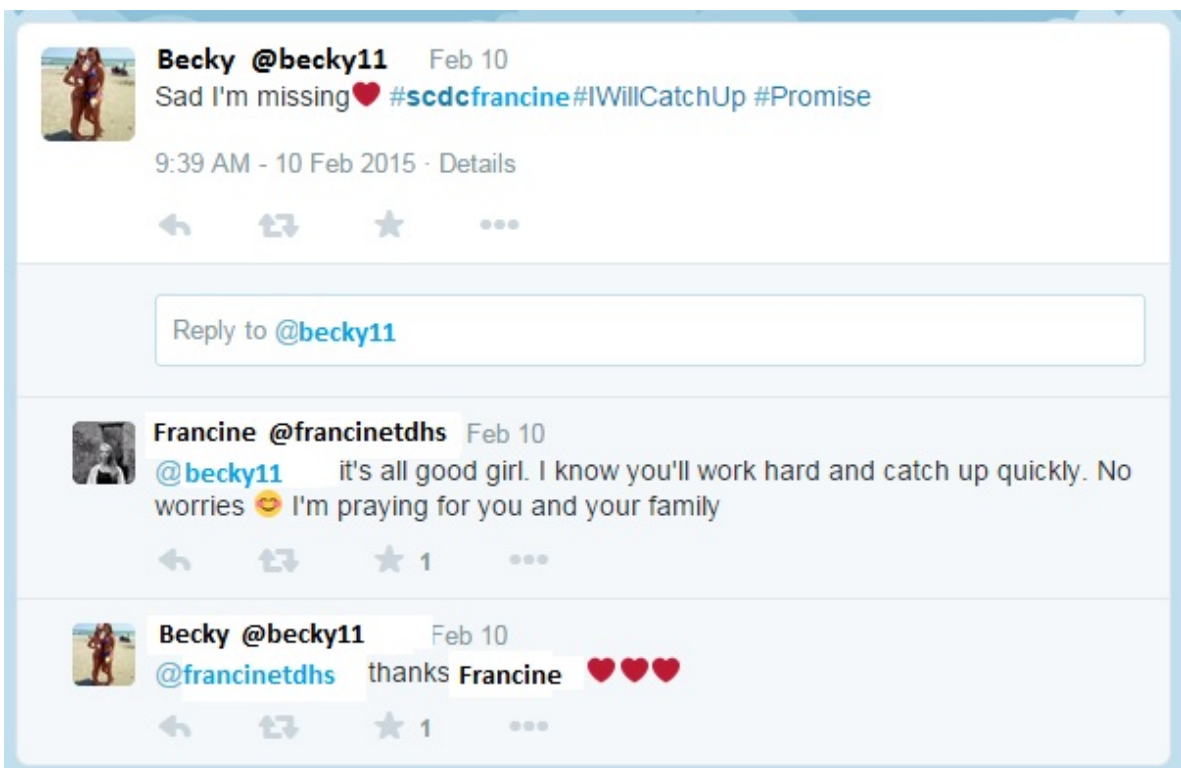


FIGURE 4: A conversation demonstrating distance learning via Twitter

The Junior participant elaborates on the experience of checking in with her choreographer via Twitter:

It was a great way when I was out of town to see what they had worked on in rehearsal that day. I felt in the loop and a part of rehearsal even if I wasn't there.

Company/Department Morale - At this point, it's important to express that student 'buy-in' was of utmost priority for me this year in response to the climate of the department after the departure of the previous teacher. If for no other reason than that collective buy-in, the resultant collaborative sense of department responsibility was an incredibly exciting, if unexpected, outcome for me in establishing a socially integrated classroom. In my own journaling throughout the process, I noted an increase in departmental investment going hand-in-hand with social engagement, even in the early stages of the project. The following excerpt is from a journal entry just two short weeks after founding the department's Twitter account:

My taking the time to communicate with the students via the new Twitter account—sometimes in the evenings, hours after we've separated for the day or in the middle of the day when they're in other classes—has really made me feel closer to them and I can assume vice versa. The number of 'likes' on the TDKnightsdance posts grow exponentially every time I tweet. Additionally, I had my first two-way Twitter interaction on the account today, where a student tweeted back a response to one of my posts, rather than just favoriting or reposting it. This started a Twitter conversation where I was able to answer her questions from my phone. This took much less time than if I'd have logged in to my email and engaged in that medium. I sound like I'm only just discovering Twitter when in fact I have significant personal and professional experience using it, but the potential for convenience and providing a sense of familiarity when conversing with a teacher is a new benefit I am discovering.

That excerpt was from October 19, 2015; my extended conversations, re-posted announcements and advertisements since that point have only furthered my hunch that this medium places me in a more approachable sphere for student interaction, and thus, provides me with a closer and more connected classroom and department feeling. The following journal response was from March 17, 2015, during tech week for the Senior's concert:

Twitter engagement is at an all-time high, and I think the hashtag system really helps to facilitate this. Students tweet multiple times a day using the concert hashtag; counting down to the show, expressing excitement, asking questions about what time they need to be where or what they need to bring, always accompanied by #scdcseniors and #scdc. Using these hashtags is identifying, it's unifying and it establishes the student's place in their collective online reality.

Again, I refer back to boyd's exploration of the networked public in hypothesizing that using these hashtags gave students a sense of belonging; classifying them into a societal group in their online public sphere. Originally conceived of as a way to organize and monitor student conversations without following their accounts, the hashtags served as an element which really united those in the department who were engaging on the Twitter platform.

The #scdcseniors (SCDC stands for Specialty Center Dance Company) hashtag was used an average of 10 times a month from October through February, almost exclusively by the @TDKnightsdance account and Seniors. There were fewer than 15 retweets to an estimated 2,500 follower impressions (assuming each person who tweeted has a following of only 100, a likely underestimation as the highest number of reported

followers in the department was well over 650, but those students newer to the Twittersphere (those who got it only for the project) averaged 20 followers).

In March alone, the hashtag was used in 32 separate tweets from accounts of all graduating classes, and those tweets were retweeted a combined 78 times. Using the same math and assuming an average of 100 followers with no overlapping accounts (again, these are not fair assumptions to make, but are the most accurate conclusions I can draw without access to detailed student accounts), these messages were distributed to almost 81,200 combined followers. The growth of participation, the developing eagerness to identify with the hashtags and the pointed rise in redistribution and public embracement of the department-centered message indicates, to me, increased investment.

Many students expressed interest, enthusiasm and support of a socially integrated department in their post-mortem review papers with a Junior student even stating,

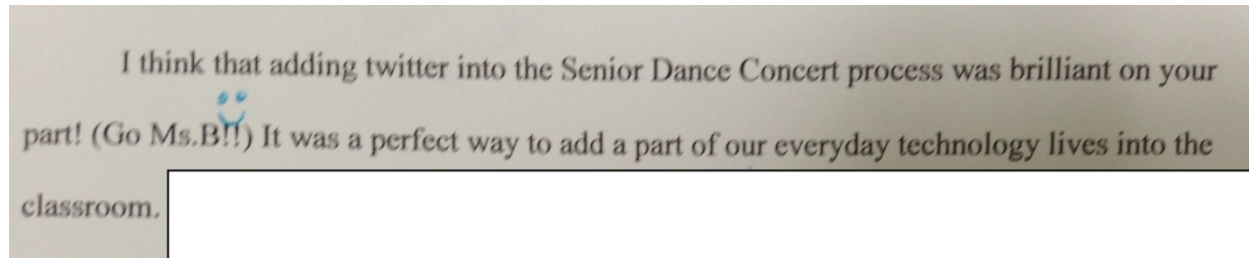


FIGURE 5: Excerpt from student post-mortem paper

Several other students made note of the modern nature of the social requirement, noting that the “*student friendly*” element (an identifier taken from a Freshman’s paper) was helpful because it used a platform they engage with regularly and familiarly to get them up-to-date and connected to the department and to class. A Sophomore participant said:

I have never been one to check my emails religiously, by you having a Twitter I have been aware of what's going on out of class as well as in class. It even helped me being prepared for class, like bringing my ballet shoes when I am needed to.

There was no clearer example of this more connected department than when we were hit with 10 snow days—almost consecutively—in the three weeks leading up to tech week. At first students were excited to be out of school, but as rehearsals got cancelled time and time again, their mood shifted. #weneedrehearsal became a popular hashtag following #scdc, and students reported actually admonishing their classmates whose tweets requested more days off.

In connecting students to the Senior Dance Concert project and to the department in an enhanced, interactive and more linked-in way, I've created an environment more open and supportive to constructivist style, student-centered learning.

Perceived Audience Response - Overwhelmingly, one of the most beneficial outcomes of integrating social media into the choreographic process expressed by dance students of all class levels was in a perception of enhanced audience response to the performance, most notably in attendance and in engagement.

1. Attendance- There were 694 audience members in attendance over two performances of the Senior Dance Concert, the highest concert attendance for this particular production in years according to every dance parent and school faculty member in attendance (as far as our school bookkeeper and I are aware, there are no records kept apart from cash box reports which wouldn't account for faculty tickets or senior citizen/child tickets which are all comp'ed). Many students hypothesized that a strong

social media presence by members of the department and a resultant strengthened concert ‘brand’ would account for this bump.

I would agree. Not only did the Twitter presence help advertise by spreading the word, but it also allowed us to widely distribute a preview video, blog links and photos from tech and dress rehearsals. These kinds of interactive elements provided potential audience members with a way of personally connecting to the message and, in turn, the media element of our marketing campaign not only increased attendance, it increased enthusiasm as well. In their report for The San Francisco Foundation and Grants for the Arts in 2011 called *Making Sense of Audience Engagement*, Allan Brown and Rebecca Ratzkin discuss this online duality of advertising and enthusiasm, explaining “the dialogue serves the dual purposes of extending the experiences of audience members who’ve seen the production, and generating interest amongst community members who have not (Brown and Ratzkin, 2011).” The authors go on to discuss the value of online opinions, “many audience members, especially younger adults, attach a premium to the personal stories of friends or acquaintances, which they consider more authentic and believable (Brown and Ratzkin, 2011).”

As in past years, the department printed posters and post cards for students to distribute around school as well as to local businesses and organizations. This year in addition, the Senior students assigned to PR and publicity as well as those assigned to manage the Senior blogs and webpage worked together to create a Facebook event (which was joined by the majority of the department so that each student could invite their own friends and families), publish a press release to the webpage and to create an online publicity strategy. A large part of this strategy was based in encouraging the

department to socially engage with the event using the hashtag #scdcseniors, #scdc or any combination of the two. This strategy came about in direct response to a class discussion of online marketing and consistent branding.

The following is an example of a student-generated marketing effort. I helped the students to create a YouTube video comprised of rehearsal footage clips which they hoped to distribute via social media feeds (Twitter and Facebook as well as posting the preview to the blog site). In response to a study of branding, the students decided the video's closing image should be just the hashtag #scdcseniors in bright white against a black background. This same hashtag was featured prominently on the posters and postcards which were distributed around school as well.

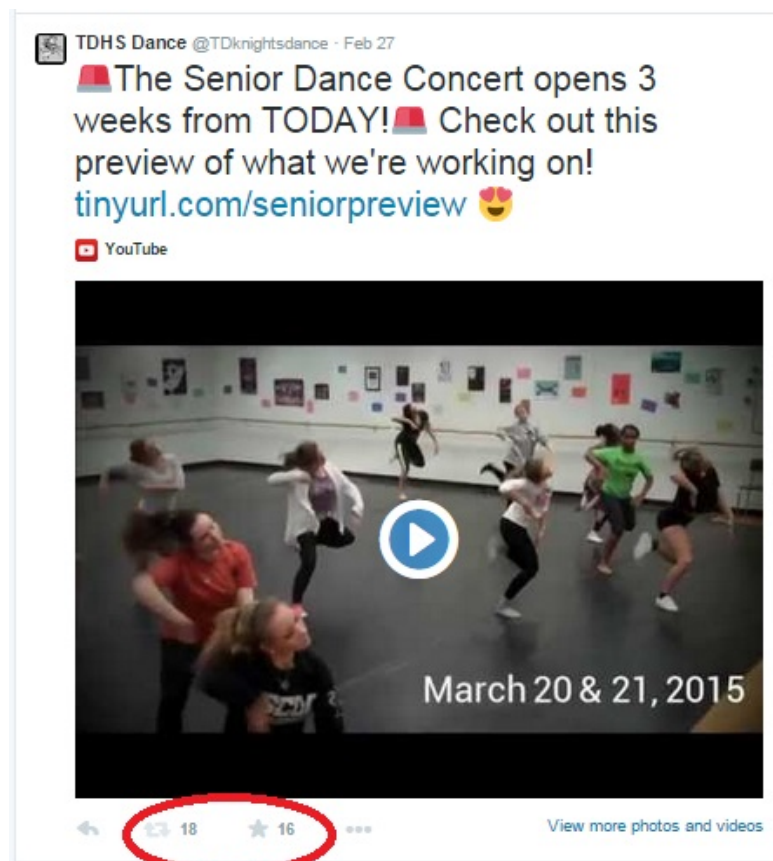


FIGURE 6: Promotional tweet featuring video preview

The students requested that the video be tweeted initially from the department account in attempts to validate the brand (assuming users who don't necessarily know them personally would be more likely to click on a link from a school sponsored account than in a personal one). The video was retweeted 18 times and favorited 16, resulting in no fewer than 4,000 impressions. The tweet pictured above is actually a bad example on my part, as it neglected to use either hashtag except in an actual viewing of the video, but it shows the magnitude to which information about the concert was being distributed and redistributed.

Numerous students were reportedly asked about the concert based on impressions from Twitter. A Junior student says:

I think it was a huge way to start advertising the show from the start of the year. For instance, when I was talking in one of my classes about the show, someone raised their hand and asked "Is that why you keep tweeting #SCDCSeniors and #SCDCFrancine?" I then got to take a couple minutes to explain how we would respond to the Seniors after each rehearsal.

A majority of students credited the SCDC social media presence for the growth in audience, and several commented on the feeling it gave them to have these kinds of audiences—regardless of their online engagement. An increased audience made for increased morale as well. Senior Francine sums up the feelings of many when she wrote:

Social media made our audience larger, resulting in the largest audience I have seen at a dance showcase since my Freshman year! I don't know that this necessarily effected my interaction with them, but it was still pretty great as it gave the dancers more energy to feed off of.

Tweets during the actual performance or following the performances also resulted in positive publicity. In response to the ‘Tweet From Your Seat’ initiative (which I’ll detail in the next section of this analysis), general permission to use social media during the concert and in reaction to all the buzz which had already been generated, many audience members engaged with the #scdcsenior and #scdc Twitter conversations from the performances. For potential audience members, these tweets were certainly beneficial from a marketing standpoint as it got images and reactions out to potential audience members.



FIGURE 7: *Mid-performance tweets featuring real-time photo*

A Junior student sums up her feelings on audience members tweeting from the auditorium:

I feel like it advertised to other people on social media to come to check out the show and see what we are tweeting about.

2. Audience Engagement- As one may recall, my goal in mounting this project was to explore social media's potential for contributing to the choreographic process, and in thinking about how social media might be used to contribute to summative reflection, audience engagement was a clear area for exploration. A buzzword of sorts in both the arts and social communities, audience engagement refers to efforts of involving the audience in the work or messages they experience. Brown and Ratzkin refer to the expositional potential for audience engagement as well as the opportunities for extension; providing audience members with context for what they'll be experiencing and then ongoing opportunities for meaning-making post experience (Brown and Ratzkin, 2011).

In a study conducted by Dance/USA as part of the "Dance Engaging Audience" initiative, it was discovered through a national survey of dance audiences that performance attendees have most interest in further engaging with dance by watching rehearsals, learning steps from a visiting choreographer or dancer, attending a pre-performance discussion of the work, watching video of the artist discussing his/her work and watching video excerpts of the work being performed (*How Dance Audiences Engage*, 2011). All of these kinds of activities can be achieved through a variety of mediums (pre and post show talk-backs, video pieces, etc.) but as the study's summary suggests, "One might infer from this a need for a new, field-wide strategy of "opening up the creative process" (*How Dance Audiences Engage*, 2011)."

When I proposed the idea described below, 100% of the students had not ever considered audience engagement concurrently with performance, but the idea of

receiving feedback—especially real time, as their work progressed—was incredibly appealing to them, and wound up being one of the most riveting parts of this work.

In efforts to marry pre and post engagement with real-time response and the effective feedback and response dialogue we had been engaging with throughout this project, I asked each Senior choreographer to generate a question for audience thought and/or feedback during the performance. I called this exercise Tweet From Your Seat. Each Tweet From Your Seat question was included in bold below the choreographer's piece listing right there in the printed program. The hope was that audience members would respond via the choreographer's individualized hashtag (again, #scdc[choreographersname]) and Seniors could receive real-time feedback and/or information about how the audience was experiencing their work.

The effectiveness of this exercise had a lot to do with the question the Senior posed. As I've explained, throughout the entire project effective questioning and positioning oneself for valuable feedback were points of curricular study, and the questions posed by each Senior reflect a gamut of understanding. The full list of Senior Tweet From Your Seat questions are included below:

- What kind of compassion do you think twins have for each other? #scdcmelanie
- Have you ever let influences control you? #scdcmary
- What's overwhelming you today? #scdcrochelle
- What do you think this dance was about? #scdcaliccia
- Have you ever had a similar experience to the one you saw in my dance? What was it? #scdcveronica
- What is one happy experience you've had today? #scdcsonny

- What's the first thing that pops into your head when you hear the word 'anxiety'? #scdcmaggie
- Do you believe memories can ever be truly forgotten? #scdckalyn
- Say hello to the person in front of you. Tell them something about your life. Tweet about the experience. #scdcdanielle
- Do you believe time is fluid or concrete? Explain. #scdcfrancine

As is evident, some of these questions and topics for consideration provide ample opportunities for engagement and others do not, but regardless, I think a Freshman participant hit the nail on the head when she said,

It allowed the audience to get some idea of what the choreographer was trying to communicate.

A Senior student agrees:

Even if they did not choose to tweet from their seat, I enjoyed giving them a question to think about. It made them more thoughtful concerning the pieces in the show, as I'm sure some people have never realized that dances have meanings and messages.

Whether or not the audience responded and whether they responded with information which the choreographers felt were valuable to their processes, in providing a Tweet From Your Seat opportunity, the Seniors provided important context for their work.

Several audience members did take the time to respond, and students were very appreciative and enthused by their participation.

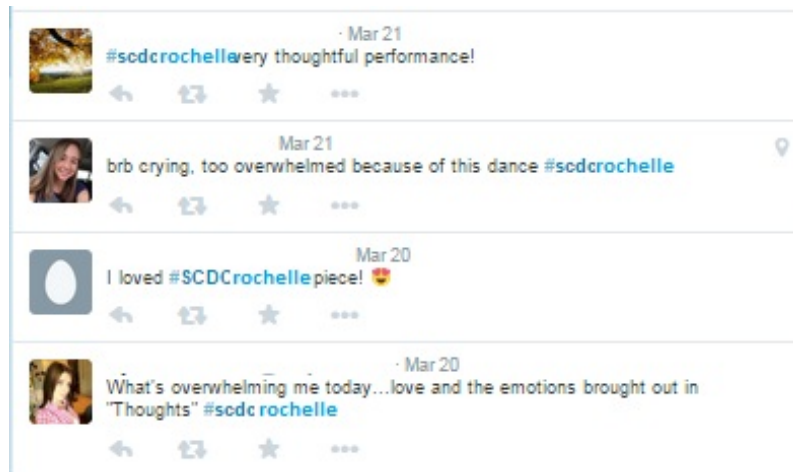


FIGURE 8: *Mid-performance audience tweet backs using Senior hashtags*

In the future, a hotspot in the auditorium would make for a larger volume of participation. Some mobile users, most notably Verizon customers, found little to no cell service in the auditorium, limiting their ability to participate in real-time.

In the #sdcmary tweets below we can really see the range in audience response. This student's question for engagement (*Have you ever let influences control you?*) was phrased in a yes or no manner. It provided little room for elaboration, and thus, quality feedback which could push her process or analysis to new levels. We can see that some audience members were engaged enough to push beyond the limitations of the question, and some were not:



FIGURE 9: *Mid-performance audience tweet backs using Senior hashtags*

Despite the shallow nature of these responses, this Senior student writes:

Usually the audience feels so disconnected, and I think this Twitter interaction helped to solve that by giving them something to connect to.

Another Senior provided similar response. She and I were both pleasantly surprised by the depth of some responses to her question, *What kind of compassion do you think twins have for each other?*

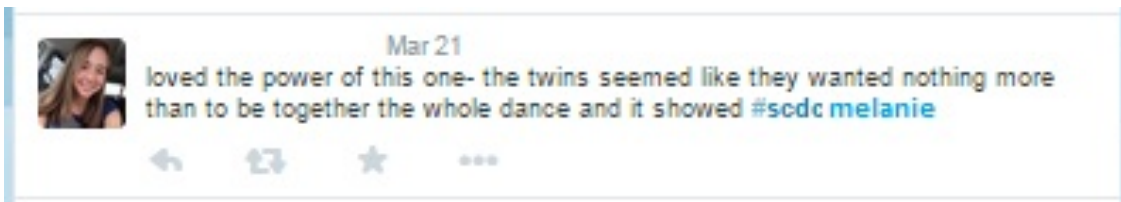


FIGURE 10: *Mid-performance audience tweet backs using Senior hashtags*

This kind of response was, more than anything else, validating, and both Seniors refer to this kind of support in their writings.

Hearing from them was inspiration because it really made me feel like they paid attention and understood my piece, giving me feedback instead of leaving me with only a nod of approval or “good job” after the show

My students’ appreciation of audience engagement is in line with what Brown and Ratzkin say most artists experience (2011). According to their research, while beneficial for audience members, informal engagement opportunities are also valuable for artists who state that they “enjoy the direct feedback, which is mostly positive and so reinforces their bond with the audience and the art form (Brown and Ratzkin, 2011).”

It is also important to note the value students placed on the real-time nature of in-performance response. Students checked the hashtagged feeds throughout the performance, excitedly sharing responses as they came in. It had an incredibly beneficial

effect on the positivity of students in the dressing rooms. A Sophomore recalled a particularly relevant tweet she read in real-time which motivated her throughout the rest of her performance:

My favorite all time tweet was Ms.Burger's tweet during the concert

"TDKnightsDance: got so many comments about how vibrant and positive y'all's energy was #xpositionworks #andimprovtoo #scdcseniors" This tweet made me so happy backstage. It showed that hard work pays off. It is beyond the best feeling in the world to hear someone comment on how you did such a great job after a long and hard few months getting it to where it is.

Senior Response to incorporation of social feedback systems - Interestingly, the Senior participants in this project often had different responses to those of the underclassmen. Many of them expressed dissatisfaction with the quality of tweets and especially with the frequency and worth of underclassmen blog interaction. Their dissatisfaction mirrored my own.

The Senior participants (especially odd calendar day Repertory Seniors who had the class time to complete Liz Lerman's Critical Response Process in addition to the social media feedback processes) unanimously agree that while social media provided interesting opportunity for social response, none of the responses they received online matched the value of in-person response. An odd day Senior explains:

Personally, I like face-to-face interaction rather than through technology because there is no room for opinions that aren't honest. I feel that if you have time to think out your criticism or your opinion, then it is not as pure and fresh as it can be after you immediately watch something.

This is so interesting when considered against underclassmen responses from earlier in this chapter, who describe the extended time to think about material as beneficial for providing authentic response. It brings up questions about authentic thought and the differences between considered response and immediate response. Which is most valuable for artists and art making?

Ultimately, all of the Seniors expressed that they found more value in blogging than tweeting, but that the blog was a failed social platform. As I explained in earlier chapters, school firewall restrictions had us using Google Sites for web hosting and blog creation, a platform which does little to support active blogging (commenting and comment engagement). Though there is the option to comment on pages, that function requires a log in. All Chesterfield County Public School (CCPS) students and employees have Google logins, but once logged in CCPS student comments are attributed to their student number (rather than their name). As a result, commenting was scarce and thus, attention to the blogs was as well.

Despite this failed structure, Seniors saw value in their blog writings, and even with little engagement, the public nature of documentation held weight. A Senior participant explains:

When I tweeted, I felt incredibly restricted by the lack of words and worried that my dancers, along with my followers, would not truly understand the point I was attempting to get across in my tweets. I had to minimize the feelings of my rehearsals and experiences to a few words that seemingly did not really fit how I felt...I felt more connected to the blog than I did with Twitter because I was able to customize my blog length, create tailored feedback questions, and incorporate

visuals through both words and pictures into the process. I have always struggled to keep a journal because I felt as though I was talking to no one. With a blog, all information is practically public and there is room to play with the audience and talk to anyone in the world who might come across one's work.

Other seniors also noted the restriction of tweet length in posing and generating any content of real value. That said, they saw benefit of engaging socially outside of class. A Senior student says:

Responses on Twitter were more helpful when asking questions that needed on word to sentence long answers. They were also better with questions that did not take too much thought. Many times it may be hard to stop a choreographer and say I am not comfortable with this movement or I do not understand this section. By allowing my dancers to ask me specific questions ahead of time via Twitter, I was able to plan to work on things in my rehearsals that my dancers needed.

Another Senior had very similar feelings to the underclassmen when it came to the digital disconnect, only she identified that feeling with blogging rather than tweeting. This student describes “*venting through blogging*” once she was outside of the learning environment and could reflect on her reactions and approaches from a more critical standpoint:

It allowed for those in my piece to go online and read my thoughts rather than thinking that I was okay with the way my dance was going due to my nice personality. It enabled me to be able to more effectively critique my piece...making the communication between dancer and choreographer smoother.

Only one Senior student wrote about the enduring nature of online media and the value she sees in blogging for future processes and intents. She writes:

In the blog posts I wrote things I could have done better and things that I performed well. If I ever choreograph a dance in the future, I will take what I wrote and apply it to future rehearsals. Also, the fact that the blog is public will make it easier to refer back to when needed.

I was enthused to see one student found this to be a benefit of this social feedback system, engaged with or not.

The majority of underclassmen never mentioned blogs in their post-mortems, which, given their minimal level of engagement and lack of a personal blogging requirement themselves, is not entirely surprising. What is surprising and encouraging is the value Senior's found despite these setbacks. A Senior participant sums up the experience of minimally helpful feedback and social response as opposed to no process for constant, dynamic feedback and social response:

While I may feel very strongly about my work, questions and comments by people watching and observing have been the ultimate key to my success. I've learned that there is nothing wrong with asking people, "how do you feel about this section?" or "is the meaning of the piece reading to you?". Being able to connect with others and receive constructive criticism has opened my eyes to the fact that your choreographic journey is not one you have to make alone. You can bring in others to help you through it, and that will ultimately make the work of art an even greater success.

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

Several additional outcomes seem relevant in light of my growth as an educator, my understandings of my students and beginning to understand how social media can continue to play a role in my classroom for choreography assignments and other academic purposes.

Tone and establishing a connected classroom- First and foremost is tone. One of the most important adjustments I've had to make as an educator engaging via these platforms is in formulating ideas about professionalism and tone when it comes to social media. The medium is informal; students use platforms like Twitter in their day-to-day lives conversationally, not academically. In composing effective tweets, and encouraging academic use, I needed to experiment with holding professional standards while also appealing to their use of the mediums in question.

For me, the following guidelines proved to guard appropriateness but not retract from informality. They allowed me to meet the students where they are in their typical usage, and they allowed for a certain level of respect to be maintained:

- Use full words and complete spelling as much as possible within character limit.
- Restrict content to TDHS dance, TDHS arts, TDHS general and dance general related material.
- Refrain from following student accounts.
- Seek out other school club, organization, department and team accounts to engage with.
- Mention student accounts only in response to direct tweets.
- Respond to student tweets only in response to @TDKnightsdance mentions.

These guidelines ensured that I was modeling effective communication strategies, controlling my message, separating myself and my department from their outside of school lives and being responsive to pointed commutations.

While those standards monitored professionalism, these helped me to meet the students in an informal space, and kept my tone appropriate for the medium. I think these are the things that made me as a teacher (and thus the department) relatable, enjoyable and intractable. This list is on-going and comes from my journaling throughout the process.

- Refer to students in tweets not as ‘students’ but as ‘dancers’ or ‘company’ or class year as much as possible.
- Use emojis! ☺.
- Congratulate students on in-class and in-school achievements in a public sphere, they love to retweet!
- Retweet funny, interesting, moving, relevant mentions from students.
- Tweet photos and videos as much as possible!
- Hashtag, hashtag, hashtag! Make it easy for accounts to associate with @TDKnightsdance, the company, the Specialty Center and performances, assignments, classes!
- Tweet about moments in class, rehearsal or performance they’re proud of.
- Ask questions, don’t just give answers.

I believe it is utilizing these kinds of approaches which grew the Twitter audience to include not only student dance accounts, school accounts, community and parent accounts, but alumni and out-of-department student accounts as well.

There were 2 instances when I knew that this approach to the Twitter account was working. The first was when an alumni tweeted a photo of several other alumni at the Senior Concert using the #scdc hashtag and captioning the shot, “*proud alum*”.



FIGURE 11: *Alumni tweet using the #scdc hashtag*

In utilizing hashtags, I opened up a space for these people to connect with the department online. That tweet was sorted in among all the other tweets from the concert weekend, allowing current students to see the comment and feel proud of their work and of the way they made their audience feel.

The second time was during the snow storms in February, a critical time for us in concert preparation and the third 9-weeks grading period. Hoping to capitalize on my

Twitter audience and generate some assessable material, I tweeted an extra credit assignment (followed up by an email for the students without accounts) challenging the students to create site specific work (a concept Advanced Dance students had been exploring in class prior to the snow days) for the snowscape outside their houses.

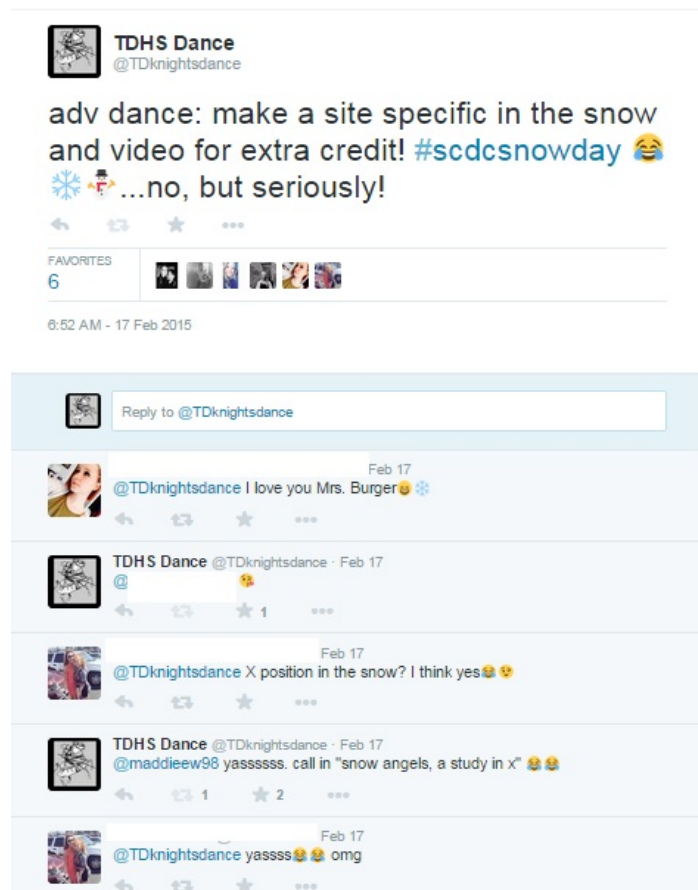


FIGURE 12: *Positive responses to a snow day assignment via Twitter*

I used my standards of tweeting: spelling out all words but using several emojis (smiley faces and snowflakes) in the instructions to make it a legitimate assignment, but also one that fit in with the rest of their Twitter feeds and didn't *look* like a homework assignment. Ultimately I had 5 students submit videos of site specific work and 2 other students mention @TDKnightdance in positive responses.

Using Twitter as a tool to keep students engaged in material during this stretch without class was so beneficial and such a valuable resource! For snow day purposes alone, I think social media and a positive social relationship with students online is beneficial for teachers, but ultimately, I think this informal platform for engagement is the key to the relationships I've formed with students. It's done wonders for establishing the kind of connected constructivist classroom we have in just the short time I've been at the school.

Self-motivation and ownership as indicators of critical thinking- More than one student made observation of the permanency of online media; welcome comments from a generation who are so often admonished for their inappropriate understandings of what to share online. Students described their careful considerations when it came to composing tweets, their ability and processes of going back to review and revise their thoughts, and their utilization of these past musings to formulate responses to overall experiences. This self-awareness and reflection on growth is an important component of engaged learning, and is indicative of higher order, critical thinking.

Several Senior students in particular made comments about their motivations for their Senior Concert project. One Senior's thoughts stand out as particularly relevant:

As I reflect back on the concert as a whole, I could not be more inspired or more overjoyed. The combined interaction and energy from the Company, the Seniors, social media, and the audience is something a Thomas Dale dance concert has never had before. This energy made me much more engaged and personally invested in the process than ever before. The entire company wanted the show to happen and pushed the other Seniors and I to deeply invest time and energy into

concepts we were in tune with on a daily basis...Although the feedback through the blogs and Twitter was minimal, it encouraged me to embrace the process and develop my thoughts in both a physical world on my dancers and in a virtual world online.

Senior blog posts' assessment grades were used as extra credit assignments and tweets by both the Seniors and the underclassmen had no grade recorded, even for completion. Student's participation in this process was entirely voluntary and entirely self-motivated...and it worked! 9 out of 10 seniors posted at least 3 reflective blogs, and 100% of Seniors tweeted about their piece and their process. Not only did students buy-in to a choreographic practice enhanced by reflection and dynamic social feedback, they saw the value of it without the motivation of a grade. I could not be more proud of that outcome.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH AND RETESTING

As a new teacher in a new school, the magnitude of new responsibilities, the gamut of new information and the struggle towards effective organization and protocols overwhelmed the focus of this project at times. In further study, I hope to hone my practice in more pointed and precise ways—a difficult task for a first year teacher or any educator working in a new unit or curriculum of study.

First, I would hope to have more of this project outlined for students effectively ahead of time. While the overarching concept was there—the goals and the desired outcomes—the avenues taken to achieve those goals were primarily reactionary. This ongoing evolution is common for action based research, but in future study, I would hope to assess what worked (tweeting) and what didn't (interactive blogging) and make efforts

to smooth out the journey from start to completion so that each requirement made sense in the context of the overall goal.

Finally, I would set clearer expectations. Several Seniors mentioned that grading response tweets and blog comments might be a way to get underclassmen students to engage. That is most certainly true, however, I wonder if the quality of response when motivated externally would be the same. So much of the value of this project's experience was in the collected responsibility of responding to work towards a collaborative result—a pivotal point of Sherry Shapiro's connected classroom where goals and outcomes are a shared responsibility. I worry that requiring this collaboration for a grade might affect the authenticity—a worry so many educators have when it comes to measuring truly engaged response.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

PROBLEM POSED

Social Media and the Choreographic Process investigated how an academically informed use of social media could impact an engaged individual choreographic process. As an unexpected result, the study also explored the implications of social media for building community and fostering a connected classroom.

The project provided curricular expectations based in constructivist style educational theory which asked the students to engage with one another's classroom experiences and shared knowledge to provide context for growth. Students were asked to consider feedback and the potentials of effective questioning for reflection. Students were also asked to examine the traditional relationship between artist and audience and to push their understandings of reflection by engaging with their audience in new ways.

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION

Social Media and the Choreographic Process was implemented in the Specialty Center for the Fine and Performing Arts at Thomas Dale High School, a magnet-style program in Chesterfield County Public Schools which allows students from across the county to audition in to school with comprehensive arts offerings in addition to the standard curriculum. 10 Specialty Center Seniors summative products were considered in this study, along with the involvements of 38 underclassmen in the Specialty Center

Dance Program. Students engaged with a Senior-curated class blog and Senior Twitter accounts as well as the TDHS Dance Twitter account in response to Senior speculated questions and prompts. Following a March concert, Seniors (as well as underclassmen) reflected on the differences between their choreographic processes and products from years past as well as the value in engaging via social media with classmates and audiences.

Outcomes are based in an analysis of a hashtagged Twitter feed, student blogs, my own journaling throughout the process and student post-mortem papers.

TEENAGERS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Fully 95% of adolescents (defined as children aged 11-17) are online in some capacity, a majority of which are mobile-only internet users (*Teens and Technology*, 2012). Though the term is somewhat controversial, teens are often considered digital natives because of their level of comfort and expectations of access to the kinds of communication, engagement and information exchange which dominates an increasingly media-driven culture.

Digital native might be a better term to describe the attitudes and approaches of a certain group of the population who are comfortable integrating current media and technologies into the regular practice of their lives with increasing frequency and at a quickening pace. As society becomes rich with these kinds of people, it would seem relevant for the field of education to utilize Web 2.0 platforms in teaching the next generation of global citizens.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN EDUCATION

Social media, though recognized as potentially beneficial by several educational organizations, is not yet a widely-used tool in the academic classroom. Based in part on the nature of online material (somewhat unregulated and unpredictable), many school systems block the kinds of platforms which could engage students in new and exciting ways.

There is little empirical evidence to this point which shows that (1) traditional educational practices (devoid of current media) can't reach the digital native and (2) that social media has positive outcomes for the quality engagement and motivation of students. The same students who regularly use social media in their out-of-school lives have come up short when instructed to use it for academic purposes, proving that the context of use is just as important as the including social media as content.

Still, social media and its inclusion in my curriculum has implications for all levels of Bloom's higher order thinking; from using public platforms to recall and summarize experience, to using it to ask deeper questions, analyze feedback and exhibit creative product and outcomes. Additionally, and unexpectedly, social media has implications for the establishment of a connected classroom, a cooperative school environment and a popular marketing tool.

SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE CHOREOGRAPHIC PROCESS (AND OTHER OUTCOMES)

As Senior choreographers, students in past graduating classes were tasked with simply conceiving of a work and then using the underclassmen students the instructor made available to set the work and perform the work. The performance was the end of

the project. Had the Senior Concert procedure remained the same, social media might not have had much of an impact on student experience or creative outcome, but, as a new teacher, I had the opportunity to create an enhanced process for the Senior Students.

Asking for my students to engage with one another online about their work required them to think about my classroom in their informal lives (or out-of-school) which had several positive outcomes. First, students were able to put some space between themselves and their experiences, allowing for some time (if they wanted) to process experiences and come to enhanced conclusions. Students also found comfort in their ability to read about other students' similar experiences; giving them confidence to ask commonly expressed questions, and providing a bit of a buffer between them and those in a more authoritative position. Seniors were also able to use these crowd-sourced opinions and questions to better plan for rehearsals and self-critique their teaching and effectiveness. Students were also able to participate in the process from a distance, leading to an increased feeling of connectedness and ease of re-entry.

Most of my students had never considered garnering feedback through audience response, and most expressed that in the past the choreographic process had ended with the last performance. In providing a Tweet From Your Seat opportunity for Senior students to publish questions and prompts for audience consideration along with their credits in the concert program, students were enthused to explore the kinds of audience reactions which came from a more informed and engaged audience. This audience feedback structure came up several times in student post-mortem responses for the sheer value of a more informed audience. Students expressed that their family and friends had more to say than just "good job" at the conclusion of the concert given the prompt they'd

been considering in connection to the piece. Feedback became more of a dialogue, an outcome the students were truly fascinated with.

Another change I made to the concert in response to the project based learning initiatives of my county was that I tasked the Seniors with producing the entire concert themselves; from casting, to choreography, costumes, lights, publicity and house-management. This project called on the Seniors to utilize all of the knowledge they'd gained throughout their time in the program, and to grow as leaders in asking for and accepting feedback and help.

The result was a real open and cohesive classroom and company environment. Social media became a place for the students to explore each other's personal connections to material and, even more importantly, a place to contribute to the success of the concert. Students positively identified with this work because they saw it as a process towards the collected good. This is evident in the way underclassmen worked to convey feedback to their choreographers in effective ways, in the way they placed value in their choreographer's implementation and inclusion of their ideas, and in the way they sought and placed value in audience engagement and response. The underclassmen's ownership of the work because of these collective processes—which were not at all factors in my early thinking about this project—proved to be one of the most pivotal outcomes of a socially integrated classroom.

There were challenges to this process and difficulties faced along the way both by myself and my students. One of the greatest challenges was in time management. As a brand new teacher, finding the time to focus on this work between planning, teaching, grading, producing concerts and navigating a new school, new policies and new

procedures was incredibly chaotic. Additionally, we had 10 snow days in my county this year—2 full weeks out of school. As a result of this time crunch, as I've expressed before, much of the re-design throughout the process was reactionary—a response to an immediate need rather than a carefully considered revision. As a participant in action-based work, the revision process was a significant part of my research design, and it allowed for me to really explore the problems, generate solutions and establish best practices, but in the future I can be better prepared for these kinds of modifications by thinking ahead and planning backwards.

Technologically, navigating my county's firewall protections in finding a web builder which would support blogging and establishing adequate cell signals in the auditorium proved to be the largest challenges. Weebly is a user-friendly host and web-template site I use frequently for other projects, but it is blocked at school. The resultant use of Google Sites was clumsy for our purposes; not at all user friendly when it came to supporting blogging (with active comment streams) and outdated in its options for templates. This hurdle definitely had a direct effect on the outcome of the blogging process, and in the future, I plan on becoming trained in Google Apps for Education so that I can better support my students' use of its web builder.

The low cell signal in the auditorium (especially for Verizon users) will need to be addressed. My personal phone gets great service (I have AT&T), and students don't often have trouble making calls from the theater so I assumed everything would be fine, but unfortunately the actual internet signal in that part of the school is a bit of a dead zone. Going forward, I would most definitely facilitate a hotspot to ensure the audience can connect in the ways we've asked them to despite their cell carrier.

For my students, remembering to engage was the biggest challenge—especially at first when the process and the concept was still new. Reminding the students to tweet and taking time at the end of class helped to inspire action, but it also took away from the authenticity of engagement. Their frequency of use increased exponentially with time. In fact, the students use Twitter for the department even now that the Senior Concert project is over. Using the hashtag #tdhsdance during April's Spring Dance Showcase, students tweeted photos, video and feedback to one another totally undirected. The collaborative effort towards departmental success and connection continues as a part of the culture at this point.

Ultimately, it is because of this collective attitude towards success that the group as a whole was able to cultivate achievement, despite these set-backs. Despite the challenges of consistent engagement and posing effective questions, the Seniors were able to utilize a social structure for reflection, finding value in the reflection which is inherent in seeking pointed response. The relationship between Seniors and underclassmen allowed each to push one another, instead of the experience being entirely Senior-focused. Ultimately, this created a stronger pull for investment, and in direct result, collective engagement. One Senior student reflected on her value of the blogging process in her post-mortem paper. She blogged:

There is nothing better than facing reality with an eager heart and alive mind.

And later considered:

I certainly have no idea where these words and ideas came from, but all I know is that exploration through the blog brought this out of me. I was no longer considering my own personal work, I was considering the larger picture and

what this dance concert meant to both my life and the lives of others. The blog made me truly feel as though I was talking with an audience and with my dancers.

MOVING FORWARD

Through an investigation of the use of social media as part of an engaged individual choreographic process in the high school academic dance classroom, I was successful in fostering a constructivist style collaborative and connected classroom and providing opportunity for self-motivated higher level thinking when it came to creating, presenting and reviewing creative product. Student reflections post-project, excerpts from student tweets and blog responses and excerpts from my own journaling and reflection have led me to these overarching conclusions.

This work most certainly necessitates more focused study. The scope of the project is large and requires a more proactive and specific approach to methodical development of each research question (and the dozen more questions which result!). That said, despite the apparent looseness of this attempt's in-practice approach, a curricular shape can certainly be drawn between effective feedback and response, constructive communication and creative product using social media as a vehicle for that conceptual framework. In future trials, I'd like to control the trajectory with a little more clarity from the start, perhaps by placing more specific requirements on each level of participant.

As is illustrated in the work of the Pew Research Center, and researchers Palfrey, Glasser and boyd, the prevalence of social media is only increasing as mobile use becomes easier and more accessible to the masses. As such, adolescents' social

development is happening more and more in the online setting. As 21st century educators, teachers have a responsibility to bring that online reality to our classrooms. boyd says,

Instead of trying to distance ourselves from teens in this new media, we have the unique opportunity to leverage visibility and face the stark and complex dynamics that shape teens' lives head on...Fear is not the solution, empathy is (boyd, 2014).

I believe this work to have tremendous implications for the field in many different areas of future experimentation and study. Empirical data regarding audience engagement and the Tweet From Your Seat construct seems particularly relevant for me, as it has implications not just for education but for concert performance as well.

This study shows that the social landscape is ideal for collaborative art making, and I'd love to explore further how it could be used in the group composition structure, rather than a project with one specific choreographer. I'd also love to explore how it could be used in class collaborations across great distances with social partnerships in other states or even countries. I'd love to consider how we as educators can engage with our students online to mutual benefit in a way which is considered all at once professional and beneficial but also familiar in a way which keeps them engaged outside-of-the-classroom. I'd love to explore the kind of longevity of relationship implied by this work; how can past Seniors' engagement online help a class of current Seniors? How can increased communications online help in that effort? Overall, I'd like to know more about how is art work changed when it is brought into the communicative processes of the 21st century. The possibilities are so excitingly endless.

Social media is a part of our student's realities and, as this study demonstrates, students are eager to use it in new and wonderfully different ways. I've seen how social

media can be a meaningful part of students' growth as artists, team members and cognitive thinkers. As educators, we have a responsibility to continue exploring its potential.



FIGURE 12: *Senior students bow at the end of the 2015 Senior Dance Concert*

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