Original Paper

Educators' Impression Construction: Considering Perceived Social Media Missteps

Adrie A. Koehler[1*] & Erin D. Besser[2]

[1] Curriculum & Instruction, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

[2] California State University, Fullerton, CA, USA

[*] Adrie A. Koehler, Curriculum & Instruction, Purdue University, West Lafayette, IN, USA

Abstract

Social Media (SM) provide exciting instructional opportunities for educators. However, a simple Internet search reveals professional implications that have resulted from educators' SM usage perceived as missteps. In this research, using an impression construction lens, we considered cases of educators' SM missteps as perceived by stakeholders and as presented in the news media. From this analysis, a description of what is perceived as inappropriate teacher SM use is provided, explanations of the highlighted SM usage are considered, and a discussion of findings from an impression construction perspective is included. Results suggest impression construction in SM settings is a complex endeavor for educators that prompts varying opinions from stakeholder groups. Suggestions for professional SM use are included.

Keywords

educators, social media, impression construction, societal standards, news media

1. Introduction

Social media use for enhancing teaching and learning purposes (Kimmons, 2014; Naghdipour & Eldridge, 2016) and promoting professional identity (Veletsianos, 2012) continues to be explored. While social media offer educators exciting options for connecting teachers with students, peers, experts, and content, these interactions also present the need for additional considerations. For instance, the inherent openness of social media (Clark & Roberts, 2010) paired with the realities of the teaching profession (e.g., educators viewed as role models) sometimes leaves the social media impression created by educators at-risk for being scrutinized. This analysis considers educators' social media missteps as perceived by stakeholders and presented in the news media in order to understand how

educators can successfully manage the impression they are constructing in social media spaces.

Depending on specific interests and goals, individuals can choose among several social media (SM) applications (e.g., Facebook with over 2 billion monthly users, Twitter with 335 million users, Instagram with almost 1 billion active users), and while SM are often an extension of face-to-face relationships or developed from an "offline connection" (boyd & Ellison, 2007), computer-mediated communication differs considerably from face-to-face interactions. For instance, physical appearances and nonverbal cues are often not readily available in computer-mediated communication as in face-to-face communication (Walther, 2007). Additionally, SM bring new levels of potential mass-public openness and electronic preservation (Clark & Roberts, 2010). Specifically, SM *afford* the opportunity for conversations to be available to other, sometimes unintended, site users (Marwick & Ellison, 2012) and at the same time, to be preserved in an electronic format long after the conversation has taken place. Therefore, the advent and continued usage of SM provide communication implications for users and new opportunities to communicate in evolving and diverse ways.

1.1 Educators, Social Media, and Impression Management

At a very basic level, impression management or self-presentation theory contends that "when an individual appears before others he will have many motives for trying to control the impression they receive of the situation" (Goffman, 1959, p. 15) or more directly stated it is "the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 34). Educators' impression management behaviors have been considered in both traditional educational settings (Davis, 2011; Freeburg & Workman, 2010) and electronic environments (Carter, Foulger, & Ewbank, 2008; Foulger, Ewbank, Kay, Popp, & Carter, 2009; Russo, Squelch, & Varnham, 2010). Specifically, noting the rise of disciplinary action against in-service educators' SM use, many researchers have focused on pre-service teachers' SM usage (Foulger, et al., 2009; Olson, Clough, & Penning, 2009; Steinbrecher & Hart, 2012). Steinbrecher and Hart (2012) analyzed pre-service teachers' SM profiles and found that over half had questionable materials posted (e.g., photos of drinking, discussing students from field experiences).

Perhaps, one of the most striking evolutions of impression management from an original conceptualization to the current realities created by SM use, is the idea of an interaction. Originally, an interaction was defined as "all the interaction which occurs throughout any one occasion when a given set of individuals are in one another's continuous presence" (Goffman, 1959, p. 15). While SM allow users to communicate in synchronous ways (e.g., chat), a majority of communication in SM is done through asynchronous methods (e.g., discussion threads, shared images). Users create electronic profiles through SM that are available for many to view. If individuals do not utilize privacy settings on their SM account, they cannot be sure who is viewing their information. At the same time, even individuals taking advantage of SM privacy settings cannot be totally sure who is viewing their

electronic information, as individuals with whom they have granted access could share this "protected" information with others. Therefore, while an interaction may generally occur when someone is in the electronic presence of someone else, people with SM profiles can never be totally sure with whom they are actually interacting.

As a result of more complex interactions in SM, segmentation of audience-appropriate behavior also becomes more challenging with SM. In face-to-face interactions, individuals operate in more clearly bounded "regions" (e.g., contexts of different formality and/or audiences) (Goffman, 1959). While various SM accounts could be representative of a region or context that is at the very least bounded by membership to the site, other sub-regions likely exist within this larger dimension composed of the various social and professional contacts that have been granted access to the SM profile. Specifically, Goffman (1959) discusses two distinct regions: a "front" region (e.g., a specific appearance is presented to a particular audience) and a "back" region (e.g., "suppressed facts make an appearance" that possibly contradict the appearance given in the front region, p. 112). In SM settings, these front and back regions can exist in multiple ways, and situations can potentially exist when an individual is accessing both regions simultaneously (e.g., an individual may have both close friends and professional colleagues as connections on her SM account).

In face-to-face interactions, an individual is often dealing with one audience at a time, and as previously discussed, in SM settings the challenge of "context collapse" emerges. While a need for adjusting self-presentation exists when interacting with diverse audiences, dealing with different audiences in SM settings is challenging as it collapses "multiple contexts" and brings "together commonly distinct audiences" (Markwick & boyd, 2011, p. 2). Overall, while individuals from any profession should likely consider how SM membership and activity can impact their job and career, educators using SM, perhaps, run an even greater risk of SM behavior affecting their career because of the unique attributes of their profession.

1.2 Impression Management and the Teaching Profession

After an extensive literature review, Leary and Kowalski (1990) suggested that impression management comprises a two-component model: impression motivation ("Under certain circumstances, people become motivated to control how others see them." p. 35) and impression construction ("Once motivated to create certain impressions, people may alter their behaviors to affect others' impressions of them." p.35).

1.2.1 Impression Motivation

Arguably, educators are motivated to effectively manage the impression they create for several reasons. First, Leary and Kowalski (1990) argue that people are motivated to manage their impression when it relates to specific goals and to meet desired outcomes. For instance, individuals are more concerned with behaviors that afford more publicity and when "a person is dependent on others for valued

outcomes" (p. 38). The very nature of educators' work involves an openness to the public and charges many stakeholders with the direction and decision-making of the profession: students, parents, community, and society as a whole. From these groups, many opinions are formed about acceptable educator behavior (Weber & Mitchell, 1995). Possibly unlike other professions, educators must be equally concerned with managing impressions with superiors and subordinates. Historically to present, educators have been charged with serving as role models for young people (Lumpkin, 2008). In general, fair or not, this societal expectation holds educators to a much different, much higher standard than other professions (Carter et al., 2008). This reality suggests that teachers may be motivated to impression manage not only as a result of personal goals but also by goals set by societal standards.

Finally, Leary and Kowalski (1990) suggest that individuals are motivated to change current perceived impressions to match how they desire to be perceived following an embarrassing incident, or to preemptively shape their image to prevent an embarrassing situation from occurring. Overall, the specific realities of the education profession appear to create inherent motivators for professionals working in this field to effectively impression manage. At the same time, these impression management motivational factors still seem relevant in SM settings, as educators are often interacting with key stakeholders.

1.2.2 Impression Construction

Leary and Kowalski (1990) suggest that five factors influence how individuals construct a specific impression: self-concept, desired and undesired identity images, role constraints, target values, and current or potential social image (see Table 1). While many intrapersonal and interpersonal factors can impact how educators construct a specific impression, the specific affordances of SM (e.g., preservation of conversations and media, networking with others, Treem & Leonardi, 2013) potentially interact with these features to impact how educators are constructing a specific professional image. At the same time, unlike some of the impression motivators inherent to the education profession, how educators construct a specific impression is less clear, especially in SM settings.

Table 1. Overview of Leary & Kowalski's (1990) Impression Construction Framework

Impression Construction Factor	Description
Self-Concept	Individuals share aspects of themselves they value, aspects they believe will help create a specific impression, and aspects they believe are consistent with who they are
Desired and Undesired Identity Images	Individuals impression-manage based on "how they would like to be and not be"
Role Constraints	Specific social and professional roles come with expectations that influence the behavior of individuals assuming these roles
Target Values	Individuals construct a specific self-image based on "perceived values and preferences of significant others"
Current or Potential Social Image	Individuals construct impressions based on "how they think they are currently regarded by others and by how they think others may perceive them in the future"

2. Purpose

Although educator SM usage continues to be viewed less critically and more pedagogically acceptable, over the years, many cases of educator missteps on SM have surfaced in news media coverage. Fair or not, given the realities of their profession (e.g., being held to a higher standard than other professions; Carter, Foulger, & Ewbank, 2008), educators must consider how social media conversations and interactions with friends, family, and colleagues can potentially have lasting professional consequences. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyze cases of educators' SM missteps as perceived by stakeholders and as presented in the news media. By focusing on the cases in the news media, we were able to identify SM behavior perceived as controversial and examine educators' explanation of the SM activity being questioned.

At this point, we feel compelled to note that the judgments made in the news media articles considered in this study do not reflect our own beliefs, and rather, our hope was to capture and analyze these cases so that a description of what is perceived as inappropriate teacher SM use could be constructed in order to consider impression construction. Specifically, we used the following research questions to guide our investigation:

• What types of educators' social media usage related to impression construction are presented in news media as perceived missteps?

• In cases of perceived educator social media missteps presented in news media, how did educators explain their social media usage?

3. Method

3.1 Research Design

We used an explanatory multiple-case study approach (Baxter & Jack, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Yin, 2014). When locating examples of educators' SM missteps, searches were conducted in multiple databases looking for news articles. These searches used the following key terms: 1) educator and synonymous terms (e.g., teacher), 2) social media and variations (e.g., social networking site, Facebook, Twitter), and 3) misconduct and related words (e.g., discipline). To locate additional cases, we also completed Internet searches using the same search terms. Cases were taken from multiple organizational websites, including news broadcasting, education associations, and newspaper sites. Using cases from news sources provided an interesting way to consider the phenomenon of questionable SM usage by educators, as news media serve as a means for individuals to make sense of world events (Entman, 1993) and offer a way for individuals to stay abreast on current topics (Brossoie, Roberto, & Barrow, 2012). While news media present a perspective controlled by the individual or organization reporting the event and may or may not represent the educators' full perspective, examining this viewpoint offers the opportunity to see how information is being presented to the public and impacting perceptions.

3.2 Cases

From the searches, 103 cases concerning educators' SM missteps were identified, spanning 2006 to 2018. Of the identified cases, 63 involved female educators; 36 involved male educators; in 3 cases, gender information was not provided in the story; and in 1 instance, the story focused on a group of male and female teachers. In cases where age information was available (n=26), educators ranged from 21 to 56 years old. Perceived controversial behavior was present in several different SM applications: MySpace (n=9), YouTube (n=3), Facebook (n=64), Instagram (n=1), Twitter (n=20), and SnapChat (n=5) (one case was counted in both YouTube and Facebook, as both applications were involved). Additionally, two cases involved the use of blogging and one involved a podcast. Finally, the educators were employed in various professional roles, including teachers at various levels (e.g., preschool, elementary, middle school, high school), teaching aides, substitute teachers, school administrators, college professors, and administrative support.

From our searches, there were three types of cases that surfaced that were not included in this investigation: 1) SM use that illuminated criminal behavior (e.g., an educational worker encouraged students to fight, videoed the incident, and posted the results on SnapChat), 2) SM use that shared information about personal sexual orientation (e.g., a female teacher posted photos on Facebook of marrying her wife and was fired), and 3) SM use involving an educator created by someone else (e.g., a friend posted photos on Facebook of a teacher at a bachelorette party, a student videoed a teacher and shared the results on SM). While related in some aspects, these cases represent a type of SM use that

did not fit our investigation.

3.3 Data Analysis

Once a case was located, key aspects of the incidence were recorded. First, if available, basic demographics of the educator were identified (e.g., job title, gender, location of incidence, age at the time of the incidence). Second, rationale for the news media coverage action was captured, including specific quotes taken from the SM site (e.g., teacher posted racy pictures on Facebook). Third, when provided in the news account, the response or defense of the educator was also gathered (e.g., "I wasn't doing anything illegal."). Fourth, if provided, the action that instigated the investigation into the educator's SM profile was documented (e.g., administrators received a complaint from a student). Finally, the specific disciplinary action taken by school administration was recorded (e.g., teacher was dismissed).

Themes were established based on quotes from each news story of the alleged behavior and used to frame the questionable behavior being featured in the media. After both research questions were considered, Leary and Kowalski's (1990) five factors for impression construction were matched against identified themes in order to gain a deeper understanding of the events and frame a discussion on the topic. Overall, in this research, two aspects needed consideration in order to gain a full understanding for how educators experienced news media coverage as a result of their perceived-questionable SM behavior: 1) types of behaviors leading to publicity or discipline and 2) explanations of events enabling these behaviors.

4. Results

In over a third of the cases (n=39), data were available as to how administrators uncovered the questionable SM activity. SM behavior was observed and/or reported by parents, students, colleagues, community members, and law enforcement. Based on the reported behaviors, educators faced a range of actions following the perceived questionable event: investigation, administrative leave or suspension, termination, resignation, and reassignment. In some cases, even though the news media reported the case of the questionable SM usage, the educator received no formal disciplinary action. In addition to these basic findings, several themes and sub-themes were identified.

4.1 What Types of Educators' Social Media Usage Related to Impression Construction Are Presented in News Media as Perceived Missteps?

Using key quotations from the news stories, four themes emerged as to how educators' SM usage was being presented as impression construction missteps in the news media: 1) SM behavior sharing personal or social interests or activities, 2) SM discourse *about* key stakeholder groups, 3) SM discourse *with* key stakeholder groups, and 4) SM usage sharing personal beliefs. While many of the cases contained only one of these themes, in eighteen cases, educators' SM usage crossed into two or

three of these areas. Table 2 provides an overview of the themes mapped to specific sources.

4.1.1 SM Behavior Sharing Personal or Social Interests or Activities

The publicized cases (n=31) documenting SM behavior sharing personal or social interests or activities highlighted a range of behaviors: sharing comments or pictures (e.g., oneself, a friend, or memes) that were sexual in nature or considered offensive; using profanity or language viewed as inappropriate (e.g., referring to women as whores see Lehmert, 2007); and discussing or using alcohol or marijuana. For instance, in one case, a high school teacher resigned after being confronted about a picture on her Facebook page showing her holding alcohol (Melancon, 2009). In another case, a middle school teacher was placed on administrative leave after posting a picture of herself on Facebook looking down the barrel of a gun (Associated Press, 2009). In other instances, educators sharing their personal hobbies received media attention (e.g., writing sexual poetry, Simpson, 2013; naked artistic photos, May, 2006; painting with buttocks, Calos, 2008; pole dancing, Norwood, 2018). Finally, in one instance, a teacher shared details about her Thanksgiving vacation after she had called in sick the day before and after the holiday (Edelman, 2012a). Unlike the other cases in this theme, which seem to indicate behaviors not meeting a specific societal standard, this individual's SM usage was perceived as dishonest in nature.

4.1.2 SM Discourse about Key Stakeholder Groups

In some cases (n=42), educators' SM usage focused on stakeholder groups. In several instances, news media shared stories of educators expressing dislike of students (e.g., "I hate my students." Helms, 2008), referring to their students using unflattering terms (e.g., "dumb" Special ed teacher's "dumb" comments spark outrage, 2011; "devil's spawn" Newman, 2013; "rude" Rourke, 2011), sharing students' work and feelings about student work and choices (e.g., dreading listening to specific students' presentations, Edelman, 2012b; failed students for not standing during the Pledge of Allegiance, Dowdy, 2017), and posting pictures of their students with commentary (e.g., mocking a student's hairstyle, Teacher mocked student's "Jolly Rancher" hairdo on Facebook, 2011; sharing a video of a crying student, Wichita teacher accused of cyber-bullying child no longer in classroom, 2018). In Florida, in a Facebook post, an elementary music teacher described one of her students as being "the evolutionary link between orangutans and humans," while revealing the initials of the boy (Duerson, 2012). In another case, a middle school math teacher shared that she had found a way to keep her students quiet along with a picture of her students with tape on their mouths (Lopez, 2013). Additionally, the cases in news media focused on other stakeholder groups: parents (e.g., a high school science teacher made fun of a parent, Menno, 2012), community members (e.g., a high school science and math coordinator referred to community residents as "snobby and arrogant," Heussner & Fahmy, 2010; a high school art teacher created caricatures of community members, Hines-Dochterman, 2009), and school officials (e.g., a student teacher discussed challenges with her host teacher, Judge sides with

university against student-teacher with "drunken pirate" photo, 2008; a middle school teacher shared concerns about administrators handling a threat of violence, Gray, 2018).

4.1.3 SM Discourse with Key Stakeholder Groups

In six cases, news media focused on education personnel's communication with students, describing the interactions as "inappropriate" (Lindner, 2011) and "overly familiar" (Neurburger, 2008). In one case, a professor and student argued about a quiz question in a Facebook discussion (Ohm, 2017), and in another case, an educator was reported as awarding students bonus points for friending him on Facebook (Chiaramonte & Gonen, 2010). Finally, a school social media manager was terminated after correcting a student's misspelled word in a tweet (e.g., …but then how would you learn how to spell "tomorrow"?,   Cerullo, 2017).

4.1.4 SM Usage Sharing Personal Beliefs

The type of educator SM usage most often covered by news media focused on cases where educators shared their personal beliefs (n=42). The sharing of these beliefs often focused on heated topics (e.g., LGBT rights, gun legislation, election results, immigration) and typically came following a specific political, news, or school event. For instance, during Brett Kavanaugh's hearing to become a Supreme Court Justice, news stories covered educators' SM usage on both sides of the controversy. On one side of the issue, a middle school teacher tweeted against Kavanaugh's confirmation: "So whose [sic] gonna take one for the team and kill Kavanaugh?" (Correll, 2018). On the other side of the issue, a university dean created a tweet doubting one of Kavanaugh's accusers (Anderson, 2018). In response to the ongoing immigration issue in the U.S., a group of elementary teachers dressed up as Mexicans and a border wall for Halloween (Vagianos, 2018). In other cases, educators created SM posts following a school event. For example, responding to a school display featuring lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender topics, a high school special education teacher posted that "homosexuality is a perverted spirit that has existed from the beginning of creation" (Hu, 2011). In Indiana, in a Facebook post, a middle school teacher shared a standardized test question she believed to be politically motivated (Associated Press, 2009).

Table 2. Research Question 1 Themes

Theme	Examples	Mapped Cases
SM behavior sharing personal or social interests or activities	• Using profanity or alcohol • Discussing sexually-related content • Sharing revealing pictures • Making jokes deemed inappropriate • Posting about personal hobbies that were considered unacceptable	Associated Press, 2009; Calos, 2008; Edelman, 2012a; Fitzroy, 2007; Helms, 2008b; Hines-Dochterman, 2009; Horvath & Bushouse, 2008; Judge sides with university against student-teacher with "drunken pirate" photo, 2008; Kent, 2017; Kim, 2012; Klein, 2013; Lehmert, 2007; Leibowitz, 2013; May, 2006; Melancon, 2009; Menno, 2012; Neuburger, 2008; Norwood, 2018; Shapira, 2008; Simpson, 2013
SM discourse about key stakeholder groups	• Posting pictures of stakeholders • Using language that was critical of stakeholders • Sharing examples of students' work • Documenting classroom events	Associated Press, 2008; de Bruijn, 2017; Dowdy, 2017; Duerson, 2012; Edelman, 2012a; Edelman, 2012b; Fahmy, 2010; Gray, 2018; Helms, 2008; Heussner & Fahmy, 2010; Hines-Dochterman, 2009; Hoover, 2017; Horvath & Bushouse, 2008; Ingersoll, 2017; Is it legal?, 2010; Judge sides with university against student-teacher with "drunken pirate" photo, 2008; Kent, 2017; Kim, 2012; Livingston, 2014; Lopez, 2013; Mason, 2017; Memrick, 2012; Menno, 2012; Mitchell, 2018; Montoya, 2018; Newman, 2013; Romain, 2017; Rourke, 2011; School employee posts video disparaging students with autism, 2018; Shapira, 2008; Shreve, 2017; Simpson, 2013; Special ed teacher's "dumb" comments spark outrage, 2011; Suskin, 2012; Taft, 2016; Teacher mocked student's "Jolly Rancher" hairdo on Facebook, 2011; Teacher suspended for FB comments

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		about kindergartners, 2012; Townes, 2011; Verges, 2016; Waller, 2017; Wichita teacher accused of cyber-bullying child no longer in classroom, 2018
SM discourse with key stakeholder groups	• Offering extra credit to students who connected via social media • Communicating with students in ways that were considered inappropriate • Disagreeing with students over classroom experiences • Correcting a student's misspelled word	Cerullo, 2017; Chiaramonte & Gonen, 2008; Edelman, 2012a; Hines-Dochterman, 2009; Lindner, 2011; Neuburger, 2008; Ohm, 2017
SM usage sharing personal beliefs	• Sharing remarks about religious or politic beliefs in ways viewed as inappropriate • Posting a standardized test question with a political interpretation • Discussing specific groups of people in ways viewed as unacceptable • Sharing memes with political messages	Anderson, 2018; Bishop, 2012; Chiquillo, 2018; Correll, 2018; Dowdy, 2017; Edelman, 2012b; Ford, 2015; Fowler, 2017; Gallman, 2014; Gill, 2018; Grand Prairie counselor fired after Facebook comment; Gray, 2017; Hall, 2016; Hayes, 2008; Hernandez, 2018; Hoover, 2017; Hu, 2011; Ingersoll, 2017; Is it legal?, 2010; Koppel, 2011; Light, 2018; Light, 2018; Mangan, 2018; McNeill, 2017; Mettler, 2016; Miles, 2017; Mitchell, 2018; Morrison, 2016; Nash, 2017; Ohio teacher's post-election Facebook rant calls out Jay-Z Fans, communists, Muslims for Obama reelection; Ortega, 2018; Parke, 2018; Romain, 2017; Schmidt, 2017; Slodysko, 2017; Suskin, 2012; Taft, 2016; Vagianos, 2018; Wootson & Svrluga, 2018; Zhao, 2018

4.1.5 Interaction of Themes

In eighteen cases, multiple themes were present in the news media story. For instance, in one case, an art teacher's Facebook use was viewed as including inappropriate communications *with* students and posts *about* recognizable community members (Hines-Dochterman, 2009). However, in some instances themes were present in a single post. A middle school teacher upset with President Obama's reelection shared the following message integrating personal beliefs with discourse about a key stakeholder group: "Congrats Obama. As one of my students sang down the hallway, 'We get to keep our fooood stamps'...which I pay for because they can't budget their money...and really, neither can you" (Suskin, 2012).

4.2 In Cases of Perceived Educator Social Media Missteps Presented in News Media, How Did Educators Explain Their Social Media Usage?

In a little over half of the cases (n=56), the educators' perspective on the SM usage covered in news media was available. Using significant statements from the educators or an individual representing the educators (e.g., lawyer), six themes emerged from the reasons that educators gave for the highlighted SM usage: 1) staying within legal boundaries, 2) viewing SM as a personal social space, 3) experiencing privacy and security issues with SM, 4) misjudging the impact of a SM post, 5) taking a stand on a topic perceived as important, and 6) responding to being victimized. In some instances, educators used a combination of these responses to explain their SM activity. Table 3 provides an overview of themes mapped to specific sources.

4.2.1 Staying within Legal Boundaries

Some educators explained the SM usage captured by news media was within their legal rights or a case of freedom of expression or religion (n=12) and defended their SM activity by sharing they "had not broken the law" (Judge sides with university against student-teacher with "drunken pirate" photo, 2008; Melancon, 2009). Also, some explained that they were expressing themselves for many reasons: personal beliefs and ideology, truth, and personal passions. For instance, a Florida history teacher posted his personal reaction on Facebook after watching a news report on the legalization of same-sex marriage in New York. He was very open about his religious beliefs and defended his Facebook posts by saying, "There's a thing in this country called the First Amendment. I firmly believe in the right to express my opinions passionately" (Koppel, 2011). In a different case involving Facebook, a North Carolina teacher described her school in the following way: "I am teaching in the most ghetto school in Charlotte" (Helms, 2008). After facing disciplinary action, her legal representative explained that based on statistics of the student population, the statement was an accurate representation of the school (Associated Press, 2008). In other instances, educators felt very passionate on a subject (e.g., heated topic, hobby, art form) and wanted to share their interest with others. In response to receiving media attention for concern over a pole dancing video, an elementary teacher shared, "I can't change

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everyone's perception of pole dancing or me, but I do like that it is getting the attention it deserves" (Norwood, 2018).

Table 3. Research Question 2 Themes

Theme	Description	Mapped Cases
Staying within legal boundaries	Educators felt that their SM activity did not break the law (e.g., 1st Amendment Rights)	Associated Press, 2008; Calos, 2008; Fitzroy, 2007; Ford, 2015; Hu, 2011; Judge sides with university against student-teacher with "drunken pirate" photo, 2008; Mangan, 2018; May, 2006; Melancon, 2009; Neuburger, 2008; Norwood, 2018; Wootson & Svrluga, 2018
Viewing SM as a personal social space	Educators viewed their SM activity as an extension of their personal life, not their professional life	Melancon, 2009; Kim, 2012; Heussner & Fahmy, 2010; Fahmy, 2010; Hu, 2011; Edelman, 2012b; Menno, 2012; Edelman, 2012a; Lopez, 2013; Klein, 2013; Ford, 2015; Gray, 2017; Montoya, 2018; Shapira, 2008
Experiencing privacy and security issues with SM	Educators 1) were unaware that their SM activity was open to the public, 2) thought that using SM privacy settings was enough to control access, or 3) suggested that their SM account had been hacked	Melancon, 2009; Is it legal?, 2010; Heussner & Fahmy, 2010; Fahmy, 2010; Memrick, 2012; Menno, 2012; Lopez, 2013; Fowler, 2017; Horvath & Bushouse, 2008; Shapira, 2008; Grand Prairie counselor fired after Facebook comment, 2013; Chiquillo, 2018; Shapira, 2008
Misjudging the impact of a SM post	Educators expressed regret for their SM activity	Bishop, 2012; Newman, 2013; Suskin, 2012; Edelman, 2012b; Menno, 2012; Associated Press, 2009; Lopez, 2013; Horvath & Bushouse, 2008; Gallman, 2014; Wichita teacher accused of cyber-bullying child no longer in classroom, 2018; Shapira, 2008
Taking a stand on a topic perceived as important	Educators felt compelled to share their opinion on a topic they believed needed	Rodriguez & Comas, 2011; Rourke, 2011; Dowdy, 2017; Schmidt, 2017; Romain, 2017; Ingersoll, 2017;

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consideration		Gray, 2018; Verges, 2016; Cerullo, 2017
Responding to being victimized	Educators reacted to feeling harmed by others	Is it legal?, 2010; Townes, 2011; Neuburger, 2008; Gallman, 2014

4.2.2 Viewing SM as a Personal Social Space

Educators also suggested that they viewed their SM postings as a personal or social space, not related to their professional life (n=19). For instance, educators explained that their highlighted usage was intended as a joke or had been misinterpreted. An early-childhood educator in California shared that she was only trying to "get laughs" from a SnapChat video she shared of a student (Montoya, 2018). In several instances, the SM postings in question were the result of venting following a frustrating event at school (e.g., a way for "blowing off steam", Edelman, 2012a). One elementary principal's response covers this sentiment: "That's my personal stuff and I don't think I need to explain it" (Klein, 2013).

4.2.3 Experiencing Privacy and Security Issues with SM

Some educators stated that they were either unaware that the general public had access to their SM activity or had used privacy settings to limit access to their SM profiles to specific individuals (n=18). In a couple of instances, educators also shared that they were hacked and claimed someone else posted from their account (Fowler, 2017; Grand Prairie counselor fired after Facebook comment, 2013). Finally, in one instance, a teacher claimed that a tweet in question was generated from a website: "Evidently, when I clicked a link to read a post, somehow a tweet got reposted as me" (Chiquillo, 2018).

4.2.4 Misjudging the Impact of a SM Post

In some cases, educators believed that they made a mistake in the publicized SM post (n=13). In these cases, they shared that they used poor judgment. One remorseful high school math teacher shared the following statement after her SM activity was captured in news media:

> "I made some remarks that were against my better judgement (sic) and sensibilities. I now wish I hadn't. Anyone who has known me for any time should know that the last thing I want to do is to hurt anyone. I apologize for what I said and sincerely wish to avoid this in the future." (Zhao, 2018).

4.2.5 Taking a Stand on a Topic Perceived as Important

In some instances (n=9), educators felt moved to share their perspective on a topic. For instance, after a controversial tweet about Barbara Bush's death, a professor in California, shared that she "felt compelled to speak up because I want people to remember history" (Wootson, & Svrluga, 2018). Similarly, the same Florida history teacher mentioned in the "staying within legal boundaries" theme also shared the following sentiment about his controversial SM activity: "If I did not stand up for my

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rights after telling my students to stand up for their rights then I would be a hypocrite" (Rodriguez & Comas, 2011). In another case, a middle school teacher posted about rumored threats of violence on Facebook after feeling concerned that school administrators "chose not to notify parents of a threat that was being investigated" (Gray, 2018). In other cases, educators described societal problems (Rourke, 2011; Verges, 2016), expressed a desire to stay true to individual beliefs (Schmidt, 2017), stood up for a student (Romain, 2017), and wanted to teach students a lesson (Dowdy, 2017).

4.2.6 Responding to Being Victimized

In a few cases, teachers explained that their questionable SM usage was a result of unjust treatment (n=4). A North Carolina middle school science teacher believed that she was the victim of a hate crime after students left a Bible and Jesus postcard on her desk (Is it legal?, 2010). In another case, a high school teacher in Connecticut felt the consequences of his MySpace use were a result of being "treated differently than his colleagues in violation of the U.S. Constitution's Equal Protection clause" (Neuburger, 2008). Finally, in two instances, teachers shared that their perceived questionable SM activity was a reaction to specific events (e.g., constant disruptions from her students and being hit by one, Townes, 2011; "a series of threatening and racist attacks," Gallman, 2014).

5. Discussion and Implications

The purpose of this research was to analyze the dynamics of impression construction for educators in documented SM cases perceived as controversial. From these cases, we were able to create a description of educators' SM impression construction missteps in order to understand these situations more deeply. Findings reveal that stakeholders questioned SM usage related to sharing personal or social interests and activities, discourse about key stakeholder groups, discourse with key stakeholder groups, and sharing personal beliefs. At the same time, educators saw SM use as a way to communicate freedom of expression, interact in a personal social space, to share opinions and mistreatments, and as a space where privacy was not totally considered, and misjudgments are sometimes made.

In general, impression construction is complex as there are several influential factors impacting individuals' decisions and behaviors, and SM create conflicting motivations when dealing with these impression construction factors. In short, in an online environment, impression construction becomes much more complex for several reasons. First, SM capture, emphasize, and preserve inconsistencies between personal and societal professional standards and private, sometimes emotional, moments. Second, SM create a medium where sometimes public and private audiences are constantly colliding, creating interactions with stakeholders with differing values. Third, lack of SM technical knowledge and desires to be perceived in specific ways can impact techniques used to segment behavior, which leaves individuals at greater risk of misrepresentation of self. Finally, as a result of complex SM interactions, individuals' ability to present themselves in a way that meets audience expectations likely

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impacts other aspects of their lives.

5.1 Self-Concept

Colliander (2019) defined self-concept as "an individual's collection of beliefs about him or herself, generally answering the question of 'who am I'?" (p. 203). In the cases highlighted in this study, the SM environment produced a complex environment for educators to create an effective digital self-concept. On one hand, educators expressed specific beliefs and then defended their posts by emphasizing self-expression rights or a need to share their perspective. These cases suggest that individuals are sharing aspects of themselves they feel are consistent with who they are and emphasize beliefs they value. On the other hand, some educators suggested that their posts were a result of a misjudgment or were seen by an unintended audience. While this finding remains consistent with SM creating overlap among distinct "regions" (Goffman, 1959; Marwick & boyd, 2011), possibly, this also suggests that, in these cases, the digital self-concept educators constructed was not equivalent to the face-to-face self-concept that they had previously constructed. In either case, SM amplified the educators' actions, beliefs, and behaviors.

Although research is mixed on the relationship between educators' SM use and students' perceptions of their credibility (see Coffelt, Strayhorn, & Tilson, 2014; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2009), self-disclosure (e.g., sharing personal information that would likely remain unknown, Coffelt et al., 2014) on SM becomes an important aspect in creating a digital self-concept, and this self-concept impacts the impression created with stakeholders. At the same time, research indicates that many factors influence how individuals choose to disclose on SM: personal attributes (e.g., self-esteem, openness, intent of SM use, Hollenbaugh & Ferris, 2015), the affordances of a specific SM application (e.g., Twitter versus Facebook, Choi & Bazarova, 2015), and the structure of the SM network that has been created (e.g., "People who have greater need for emotional expression may develop denser networks, and those who have greater need for impression management may construct larger networks," p. 347, Lin, Tov, & Qiu, 2014).

Findings in this study suggest that how educators decided to share information (e.g., perceived tone, language choice) and what information educators chose to share (e.g., personal beliefs, personal hobbies) were key to the self-concept being created and influencing stakeholders' perceptions of these self-concepts. Whether the educators in the highlighted cases had reflected on their self-concept and how this compares across face-to-face settings and digital settings is unclear. While self-disclosures might be more easily managed in face-to-face interactions, dedicating effort towards being intentional with disclosures in online settings and attempting to maintain consistency with one's self-concept could potentially lead to stronger impression construction. Unlike face-to-face settings, SM afford users, if they so choose, the opportunity to thoughtfully create messages in line with their self-concept (Archer, Christofides, Nosko, & Wood, 2015; Walther, 2011). The key then, is to take advantage of SM

affordances to create a desired digital self-concept when interacting with stakeholders versus becoming victim to other SM affordances that amplify a lack of intentionality.

5.2 Desired and Undesired Identity Images

Although Leary and Kowalski (1990) argued that how individuals construct an impression can be influenced by "how they would like to be and not be" perceived (p. 40), whether educators were always fully considering how their SM usage could be perceived is unclear. For instance, in the cases considered in this analysis, many educators were using SM with a false or an unreal sense of privacy, as they never could truly be certain who is actually viewing their information—basically creating a loss of control of a desired or undesired identity and resulting in creating an image that does not necessarily align with all interacting audiences. A middle school social studies teacher's Twitter use highlights the challenges of controlling SM interactions: The teacher's account was private, and news media "obtained screenshots of the Tweets" (Gill, 2018). In other words, although the teacher had limited access to his SM activity, this did not guarantee privacy or protection.

Privacy in a digital age creates an interesting challenge for users, as many express "a strong desire for privacy", while failing to use "mechanisms to protect personal information" (Archer et al., 2015, p. 301). "Privacy has been thought of primarily as either a process of regulating interpersonal boundaries (Altman, 1975) or as the management of one's information (Westin, 1967)" (Archer et al., 2015, p. 305). Changes in applications' privacy settings and policy (Smith, 2019), security glitches within a SM application (Tsukayama, 2018), and fake news regarding privacy (Mikkelson, 2012) further complicate an individual's ability to manage his or her information. At the same time, research indicates users' decisions related to SM privacy are influenced by several factors (e.g., trust in a SM provider, perceived social benefits, perceived impression management affordances, perceived trustworthiness of SM peers, Proudfoot, Wilson, Valacich, & Byrd, 2018). Finally, Archer et al. (2015) suggests that "many of the decisions people make in regards to their privacy are largely impulsive or unplanned" (p. 305).

Taking into consideration the results of this investigation in light of previous research provides educators guidance as to how to manage their SM in a way that aligns with effective impression construction. While SM privacy settings can certainly improve control over impression construction, one lesson learned from this research is that taking advantage of SM privacy settings is not sufficient with impression construction, as educators can never be sure who is viewing their profiles and communications. With awareness of SM settings and using privacy settings, educators can gain some control over how others post information to their personal pages and how others share any content that they create. At the same time, treating SM sites as public places, where interactions with any key stakeholder group are possible can help reduce a false sense of privacy. Additionally, to potentially mitigate future problems, when crafting a post, educators should consider "the information to be

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revealed, the relationship within which the disclosure is to take place, the context, and the potential risks and benefits" (Archer et al., 2015, p. 305). Finally, educators should be careful with posting during emotionally vulnerable times, when discussing stakeholders, and when communicating with stakeholders. Considering other outlets for venting or reacting to heated topics can be useful.

5.3 Role Constraints

As discussed previously, society places specific behavioral expectations on educators. In the cases considered in this investigation, at least three different situations related to role constraints led to the SM usage covered by news media. In the first two situations, educators viewed the impression they created on SM separate from the impression they created in professional and face-to-face settings. On one hand, in some cases, individuals expressed that their SM activity being questioned was a mistake, not an accurate representation of their true identity, and did not align with their professional persona. On the other hand, some educators believed that their SM use being questioned did not need an explanation and should be viewed separately from any professional expectations. In the third instance, by using SM, society was given insight into educator behaviors that would not otherwise be possible and could magnify educators' images that already existed. Overall, some educators in these cases seemed to overlook, disregard, or challenge the high standard to which society holds them, leaving them at risk for self-presentation that was inconsistent with societal standards.

Evolving from their original purpose, SM are continually being used for educational purposes, creating a space that generates discourse between learners and educators (Meabon Bartow, 2014). At the same time, while educators have commonly been held to a higher standard and almost forced into being role models, using SM for educational purposes creates a new dynamic for educator roles: challenging "prevailing constructions of school, of teachers and students, and of teaching and learning" (Meabon Bartow, 2014, p. 37). For instance, in addition to the many expectations placed on educators, some are looking to them to fulfill additional roles. Farrow and Moe (2019) suggest that through the use of tools like SM that come with inherent openness, educators can address post-truth narratives and prepare students to effectively evaluate the validity of claims being made. Undoubtedly, with these evolving educator roles, many considerations are necessary when using SM for educational purposes (Nathan, MacGougan, & Shaffer, 2014).

Perhaps, in some of the highlighted cases, educators simplified SM's role in society, its role in their professional life, and the interaction between these roles; failed to take into account the changing realities of teaching in the age of SM; or were reluctant to embrace an additional responsibility to an already demanding profession. Although educators may have established skills when interacting with key stakeholder groups in face-to-face settings, SM complicate these interactions, and utilizing SM requires a different skillset, as educators are potentially interacting with key stakeholder groups, close friends, family members, and strangers simultaneously and in a medium that is in some aspects

unforgiving. Analyzing the cases reveals that the educators being disciplined or publicized could strengthen the impression they are constructing with SM and refine skills for effectively managing interactions with diverse simultaneous audiences. At the same time, as SM continue to be used for educational purposes, educators should consider how SM change these established roles. These are important findings as they can inform policy for acceptable use, guide the education of users, and build awareness among educators.

5.4 Target Values

In SM environments, educators build networks of people, including individuals whose beliefs often align with their personal beliefs and individuals whose opinions they value. At the same time, posts educators craft on SM are likely influenced, both positively and negatively, by these individuals within their network—that is, potentially, educators post to gain compassion or attention from others in their network, as they believe others share similar beliefs or might offer support after an upsetting experience. However, as a public figure working with stakeholders with diverse beliefs, sharing similar values as everyone with which they interact is unlikely, and SM bring to light these differences. Additionally, seeking support via SM is likely not the best strategy for educators feeling victimized.

Shakya and Christakis (2017) compared Facebook users' responses to perceived well-being with specific use measures (e.g., "the number of times in their history of Facebook use that they had clicked 'like' on someone else's content," "the number of links they had clicked in the past 30 days, the number of times they had updated their status in the past 30 days"). They found that with increased Facebook use, individuals' well-being decreased, suggesting that viewing others' posts impacted how they perceived themselves. Colliander (2019) explored how individuals' handled fake news on Facebook and found that "the comments and actions of other users in social media can indeed affect the reactions to, and spread of, fake news online" (p. 205). In a similar vein, Chakraborty, Vishik, and Rao (2013) found that what "older adults" disclosed on Facebook was influenced by sharing habits of online friends.

In short, how an individual interacts with others and information within an SM environment can influence how they share information and possibly how they decide to share their own beliefs. Perhaps, some of the perceived questionable SM behaviors in this study were a result of these influences, and possibly, educators are not aware of how these interactions influence their values and the sharing of these values in a public space like SM. Dedicating some time reflecting on personal motivations behind SM activity could generate increased awareness and lead to stronger impression construction decisions. Also, seeking support after a harmful event in ways other than SM would be more effective.

5.5 Current or Potential Social Image

Leary and Kowalski (1990) contend that "people are reluctant to present themselves in ways that are inconsistent with the information others have about them" (p. 42) and that "being perceived in certain

ways also entitles people to claim certain images" (p. 42). Yet, in some instances, the educators in the cases considered in this study seemed to do just that—that is, they presented themselves in a way that was inconsistent with how others were perceiving them. At the same time, perhaps being an educator entitled these individuals to an image that they may not have personally claimed, rather society decided for them.

Educators' professional identity has been defined as an ever-changing "process of negotiating the teacher-self in relation to personal and emotional experiences" (Zembylas & Chubbuck, 2015, p. 174). This process is quite complex without involving SM, and with the inclusion of SM, personal and professional identities can become further entangled (Carpenter, Kimmons, Short, Clement, & Staples, 2019). While there have been calls for careful, ethical use of SM by professionals in many fields (see O'Regan, Smithson, & Spain, 2018), perhaps these analyses do not embrace the complexity involved. For instance, after analyzing educator Twitter profiles and activity, Carpenter et al. (2019) found that while educators' accounts did "reflect non-professional identities" related to family, politics, and religion, overall use maintained a "professional focus." While educators' reluctance to discuss hot topics might suggest effective management of audience interaction, possibly, this overprotectiveness stifles the sharing of one's identity. At the same time, by "openly disclosing their personal views on controversial issues in ways that model appropriate civic dispositions," educators could possibly serve in a role they are often expected to (Carpenter et al., 2019).

As professional identity relates to educators' success (Carpenter et al., 2019), teacher educators should facilitate pre-service teachers' reflection on the professional identity they are creating and the role SM play in this process. At the same time, facilitating discussions on respectfully and effectively discussing beliefs connected to identity could help pre-service teachers develop strategies for sharing personal truths. Practicing educators can complete a self-evaluation of their SM use to see how it aligns with their professional identity.

6. Conclusion

The findings from this investigation capture the complexity involved with impression construction in an ever-digital world. Several influential factors impact individuals' decisions and behaviors, and SM use creates conflicting motivations when dealing with these impression construction factors: 1) societal expectations placed on educators and professional norms generated for educators, 2) SM affordances that prompt disclosure and an amplification of private life, without mechanisms capable of protecting privacy, and 3) the negotiation of teacher roles given contemporary realities. With so much content generated on SM applications, dismissing much of what is said may be an easy option for consideration. However, research indicates content generated and shared via SM matters and can influence societal understanding (Gruzd, Jacobsen, Wellman, & Mai, 2017). The cases considered in this investigation

highlighted a diverse set of SM interactions, behaviors, content, and decisions. Perhaps, this diversity indicates that all SM use is not equal, yet gets measured by the same mechanisms, suggesting a reevaluation of the societal norms placed on educators may be in order. Simultaneously, fair or not, what educators say has the power to be more impactful than other SM users in some instances.

While some educators' SM usage has been sensationalized in news media as controversial, arguably, these cases are not the norm. In the U.S., in K-12 education, there are over 3 million teachers and 90,000 administrators (Riser-Kositsky, 2019). While in post-secondary education, there are more than a million teachers or professors and 180,000 administrators (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019a, 2019b). At the same time, approximately 70% of American adults are SM users (Pew Research Center, 2019). The cases considered in this investigation represent a small percentage of total educator SM use. Many educators successfully use SM without generating negative perceptions from stakeholders or at least not at a level that is brought to the attention of news media. The message from this research then is not that there is an epidemic of poor impression construction among educators. Rather, the point is that consideration should be given when creating an *intentional* digital impression in a field where stakeholder perspectives are diverse, influential, and pervasive.

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Note

Note 1. *indicates cases that were analyzed as a part of this study.