E-Professionalism and Signed Language Interpreters: Considering Social Media, Online Disclosure, and Small World Ethics

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ABSTRACT

This article explores the concept of e-professionalism—an expansion of the professionalism paradigm to include behaviors and attitudes displayed in online environments—as it may relate to signed language interpreters. The rising importance of e-professionalism is illustrated by examining research showing increasing participation in online social networking activities across all generations of society and the possibility of a shifting cultural landscape online. The concept of small world ethics is applied to the Deaf community, and it is argued that the new cyber culture is rendering an already small community metaphorically even smaller via social media. It is argued that there is a need for more formal research into how social media is impacting the interpreting profession, and there is a call for interpreter educators to proactively incorporate e-professionalism into interpreter training and continuing professional development programs. The article concludes with considerations to foster professional usage of SNS and a reminder that while the avoidance of unprofessional online behaviors is one component, e-professionalism awareness should also incorporate knowledge of how the power of social media can be effectively harnessed to an individual's professional advantage.

As the world becomes increasingly connected via social media, more opportunities and challenges arise for all professionals using this technology. This article aims to serve as an overview of potentially relevant concepts and research regarding professional social media use to encourage greater reflection and formal research in regard to sign language interpreting.

This topic is of increasingly important relevance when one considers that most of the population is logging into social media (*Social Networking Fact Sheet*, 2014), and there is some research that suggests that frequency of Internet use may be linked to greater disclosure online. The U.S. based Ethics Resource Center reported in the 2012 National Business Ethics Survey (NBES) that people in general are talking more freely about their jobs on social media (ERC, 2013). Important data were also collected on what was termed Active Social Networkers (ASN), individuals who spend at least 30% of their day linked to one or more social networking sites. It was found that ASN are much more likely to be under 30 years of age, have a greater tendency to create content on social media rather than passively view what others have created, and are more likely to publicly comment about professional situations at work (ERC, 2013).

While the criterion used in the NBES study to designate an ASN as an individual spending 30% or more of their time per day on a social networking site may seem like an exorbitant amount of time, it was found that more than one in ten workers classify as ASN (*National Business Ethics Survey*, 2012). Similarly, researchers in Taiwan studying medical students'

professionalism report findings linking time spent on social networking sites to professionally unacceptable or questionable online behavior (Lee & Ho, 2011). Among Taiwanese medical students in this study, those who reported higher frequencies of use of Facebook or the largest online social forum used by Taiwanese youth known at PTT, scored lower in the medical professionalism scale, particularly on measures of integrity and humanism (Lee & Ho, 2011). The results were so remarkable that the researchers concluded their report by stating that, "Although the scale for medical professionalism is a proxy and does not indicate actual behavior, the inverse correlation between the frequency of social networking site use and score on the medical professionalism scale is alarming," (Lee & Ho, 2011, p. 523).

Considering research findings such as this that suggest connections between social network usage and online professional behavior, it may be useful to begin exploring professional participation on social media platforms within the signed language interpreting profession. While collating the existing research done on professional social media usage for this article, no research was found directly pertaining to signed language interpreters; however, there are several useful concepts and constructs that we may consider in order to guide professional social media usage and instigate targeted formal research. To begin with, a useful basic construct for conceptualizing the professional use of social media is e-professionalism (Cain & Romanelli, 2009).

E-PROFESSIONALISM

E-professionalism is an expansion of the professionalism paradigm to encompass the overall behaviors and attitudes of traditional professional paradigms as conveyed through digital media (Cain & Romanelli, 2009). E-professionalism includes an online persona and any online information that provides an indication as to attitude, behaviors, and overall professional identity expressed digitally, oftentimes originating in personal settings and rendered public in online environments (Cain & Romanelli, 2009). Opportunities and dilemmas associated with e-professionalism often manifest through social media and social networking sites (SNS), and the relatively recent advent of such sites means that lapses of professionalism in the digital realm are just beginning to be acknowledged (Spector et al., 2010).

Harshman, Gilsinan, Fisher, and Yeager (2005, p. 233) report that "e-health care is the most advanced in grappling with the changed nature of practice and the ethical challenges that brings to the profession." Like the medical profession, interpreting is a practice profession (Dean & Pollard, 2013). It may, therefore, prove beneficial for interpreters to examine the approaches taken by this other practice profession to learn of pertinent research regarding professional social media usage by practitioners and effective efforts to improve upon it.

There are further parallels between the medical and interpreting professions regarding professional usage of social media other than both being practice professions. Spector et al. (2010) made a call to the medical profession for educators to continue to raise awareness of e-professionalism with case-based curricula, establishing best practices, identifying behaviors, innovating remediation strategies, and creating policies. Similarly, the International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) reports ("Recommendations," 2012) that the Heads of Interpreting Services of major international institutions made a call for professional associations

and interpreter training programs to use explicit references to the proper use of social media in relation to professional ethics and conduct ("Declaration," 2011).

This call, made within both the medical and interpreting professions, to incorporate explicit references to professional social media use is pertinent because research done with medical students has shown that raising awareness is of key importance in fostering e-professionalism (Cain, Scott, & Akers, 2009; Lee & Ho, 2011). More research needs to be done to determine how often such explicit e-professionalism awareness is incorporated into signed language interpreter training programs. The potential reach, permanence, and possible implications of professional social media usage make such explicit training important, but it may be even more significant when one considers the possible applications of further concepts relating to social media usage within a small community such as the Deaf community.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND SMALL WORLD ETHICS

When one is posting anything online, DeJong (2014) reminds us that venting frustration or anger, poor use of humor, or thoughtlessness can all lead to the distribution of confidential information. While the topic of whether or not to post publicly when one is upset or emotional is a frequent discussion, many other possibly questionable posts pertaining to confidentiality may happen mainly due to a lack of awareness. This may especially be the case when one considers that signed language interpreters work in a linguistic minority community which is small in comparison to the general population, thereby making information that would otherwise seem irrelevant rife with potentially identifying information. This possibility is explained by the concepts of small-world ethics and overlapping relationships.

Lannin and Scott (2013, p. 136) suggest that in order to understand the implications of social media and how to effectively handle it, we should look to the experiences of "small world" rural psychologists. They explain that rural psychologists practice in an environment with frequent incidental contact, increased self-disclosure, and inescapable multiple-role, overlapping relationships.

Schank and Skovholt (1997) describe such multiple-role relationships as involving overlapping professional relationships, overlapping social relationships, overlapping relationships with the practitioner's family, and overlapping relationships involving a practitioner's clients with other clients. Lannin and Scott (2013) explain that such situations necessitate small-world ethical thinking, typified by a heightened awareness that such an environment will likely result in ethical dilemmas surrounding violations of boundaries through self-disclosures and multiple-role relationships; though this need not become unmanageable. These very same characteristics, the authors argue, also manifest in the use of social media. Hence current practitioners could look to the experiences of rural psychologists when navigating the world of social media for an example of how to flexibly apply ethical principles to cultures with great transparency, such as online social media culture (Lannin & Scott, 2013).

It could be argued that signed language interpreters—working and often involved within the small linguistic minority community of signed language users—may have at times found themselves in comparable positions to rural psychologists with multiple-role and/or overlapping relationships, even prior to the advent of social media. Interesting points for future research

might include an exploration of whether signed language interpreters have typically honed such small-world ethics skills in the same way that Lannin and Scott (2013) describe of rural psychologists. Other relevant considerations for possible future research might include whether traditional small-world ethics strategies have been developed by signed language interpreters and effectively transferred into the online realm, and if so, how exactly this is manifesting. If it is found that experienced interpreters, like rural psychologists, have honed their skills with small-world ethics in the traditional sense before the proliferation of SNS, then it might be illuminating to investigate if these interpreters are signing on to social media or using it in the same way as younger or more novice interpreters. Do novice and/or younger interpreters therefore have the role models—or access to the online profiles of role models—for effectively navigating small-world ethics online? Or is having access to such role models even necessary or helpful for fostering e-professionalism? These are all questions that could be explored further and may potentially prove useful to the development of training and awareness of e-professionalism for signed language interpreters.

Such questions are thought provoking as it is worth considering that SNS may have made an already small-world—the Deaf community—metaphorically even smaller, fundamentally influencing the way small-world ethics would need to be practiced by a signed language interpreter using SNS anyhow. An important message of Lannin and Scott (2013) is that such blurred boundaries between the personal and professional and overlapping relationships in small-world settings need not be considered unmanageable. A complicating consideration, however, is that SNS allow such small worlds to quickly reach the entire literal world, thereby adding a layer of complexity to how manageable ethical dilemmas may become.

In a small community made even smaller by the technology of social media, it may prove useful to consider the possibilities of inadvertently divulging any potentially identifying information through posts to online social media, as it might be possible that an otherwise innocuous mention posted on social media (e.g., checking in at a job location or mentioning something about a person or environment) may carry unintended consequences in a small, hyper connected world.

OVERLAPPING RELATIONSHIPS AND PERSONAL VERSUS PROFESSIONAL PROFILES

It is sometimes suggested that individuals keep separate personal and professional accounts on social networking sites to separate one's friends and family from one's colleagues and clients (Butler, 2012). Even if one wishes only to manage a single profile, it is still possible to separate personal and professional activities online as many social media networks allow users to selectively share content. For example, there are circles in Google+ where only those in designated circles may see specific information, groups in Facebook where only those in the group may see certain postings, lists in Twitter, and private videos on YouTube.

While it may be an advisable endeavor to separate online contacts into those that are personal (friends and family) and professional (colleagues and consumers), signed language interpreters may find that there is frequently an overlap so that a clean and simple division may not be entirely possible. Colleagues are often friends, and even if specific consumers are not online friends, in a small community such as the Deaf Community, chances are good that there will be overlapping relationships. If this is the case, the reasons may lie in the demographics of

who signed language interpreters typically are or with the types of experiences necessary to gain the requisite skills to become a signed language interpreter.

Cokely (2005) explains that while interpreters were once selected by the Deaf community, interpreters are now able to self-select and enter the profession through sign language classes and interpreter training courses. This is relevant to a discussion on social media when one considers that in order to interpret effectively, an interpreter must not only have linguistic skills but also cultural awareness of both parties in an interaction. For those born into the Deaf community, these facilities will probably be acquired naturally, and these individuals will most likely have close contacts in the Deaf community who are relatives and friends, both offline and online, thereby potentially creating overlapping relationships.

Interpreter educators often encourage their students to socialize in the Deaf community for the benefits it begets language and cultural acquisition. Especially for interpreters self-selecting, it is necessary to become involved in the community to sufficiently learn both the language and the culture. For all professionals, to be accepted into small communities and to be trusted by the people with whom they work, community involvement is integral to community acceptance and the establishment of trust (Schank & Skovholt, 1997). If this community involvement is genuine, one would expect that friendships and community ties would develop naturally, both offline and online, also inevitably leading to overlapping relationships in a "small world" (Lannin & Scott, 2013).

Furthermore, 'friendships' online need not necessarily equate to what would traditionally be considered a friendship. On an online SNS platform, a user may have hundreds of 'friends.' These relationships may run the gamut between relatives and close friends to distant or weak acquaintances to those met briefly at some point and now no longer remembered some time later. Boyd (2006) researched the social media platform called Friendster and found that friending in online communities often flattens all types of connections into the single category of 'friend.' Similarly, Lewis and West (2009) found that most Facebook 'friendships' were typified as being low-commitment, weak connections. Given these considerations, it may be highly likely that interpreters may have online 'friends' from the communities in which they are involved and in which they work, 'friends' which then may have access to an interpreter's personal profiles and whatever they choose to post. This may present the types of overlapping relationships and resulting ethical navigations mentioned by Lannin and Scott (2013).

As a practice profession (Dean & Pollard, 2013), interpreters engage with people, and online friending is often used as a way to forge or maintain connections. With the majority of the population using SNS (ERC, 2013), and with people naturally inclined to learn more about the character of those involved in their lives and community, it may not be surprising that easily available avenues would be requested to gain further insight into certain individuals. Others may simply desire to extend the offer of creating or virtually strengthening an interpersonal connection online, albeit possibly an arguably weak one (Lewis & West, 2009). The weakness and commonality of that online interpersonal link (Lewis & West, 2009), however, may make it seem relatively harmless, thereby fostering the initiation or acceptance of such a request. There are also social costs to rejecting someone's request (Boyd, 2006), potentially leading to the acceptance of friends or followers.

For these reasons, bifurcation of online contacts to either personal or professional profiles may not necessarily be a fail-safe if there are overlapping relationships. Furthermore, with regard to online professionalism in the medical field, Greysen, Kind, and Chretien (2010, p. 1227) concede that within their profession, "[S]ome of the online content that has been identified as unprofessional…may not clearly violate existing principles." Though more research needs to be done, one such area which may possibly fall into this category of not clearly violating an existing principle—and which may theoretically happen on either personal of professional profiles— is that of online self-promotion.

SELF-PROMOTION

Zweig (2014) delves into the cultural proliferation of self-promotion through social media and examines certain professions—including a U.N. interpreter—and concludes that some professions are less noticed the more flawlessly they are done. Zweig (2014) argues that ultimately the integrity of the work should be prioritized above self-promotion in certain professions. This may be at odds with the fact that many signed language interpreters operate on a freelance basis and personal branding and self-promotion may be considered important tactics for growing one's business (Raines, 2011).

Greysen, Kind, and Chretien (2010), explain that the public may utilize social media not only to view a professional's qualifications but also to gauge individual character, and that it must be considered that some may view a practitioner's online postings as a proxy for the judgment and trustworthiness exercised by an individual in their general professional responsibilities. Therefore, the interpreting profession may find it beneficial to conduct research exploring which types of posts by signed language interpreters are viewed as self-promotional and how these posts in the online domain are generally perceived by other interpreters, consumers, and providers of interpreting services. Such research may offer additional insights into how the interpreting and Deaf communities view the ethicality of such posts.

PROFESSIONALISM AND PERCEPTIONS OF THE PROFESSION

Online environments remove many social inhibitions, creating environments where individuals may express thoughts and attitudes that they might repress in face-to-face settings, a phenomenon that Suler (2004) calls the online disinhibition effect. This phenomenon is propelled by the fact that in digital interactions, verbal and nonverbal social cues that aid in regulating the impression one puts forth are largely absent or lessened (Cain & Romanelli, 2009). The impacts of such indiscretions are also amplified by the wide reach of social media much more so than would be the case in a face-to-face encounter (Greysen, Kind, & Chretien, 2010). For these reasons, professionalism online may require a conscious awareness of factors, such as the online disinhibition effect and focused attention to how online behavior might influence the views of a wider audience.

While one has a right to express oneself, membership in a profession may limit attitudes and behaviors to those considered appropriate (Cain & Romanelli, 2009), particularly with remarks made about events directly tied to one's work and those one is working with. This is because, when identified online as a member of a profession, one may in effect be seen as representing that group (Cain & Romanelli, 2009); therefore, in addition to an individual's

professional image, a lapse in judgment on the part of a single interpreter also has the power to affect public perception of the entire profession.

Research has been conducted amongst medical students, residents, and other health care providers and has shown that, within this profession, the posting of unprofessional content is common (Greysen, Kind, & Chretien, 2010). It may not be an unreasonable leap to find that the same holds true for people involved in other practice professions such as interpreting. As society is in a trial and error period of discerning what is and what is not appropriate information sharing in the online domain (Anderson & Rainie, 2010), the interpreting profession may find it beneficial to proactively and more widely incorporate e-professionalism into interpreter training programs and continuing educational development so as to be in a position to more strongly influence the developing online social norms to follow a framework of traditional conceptions of interpreter professionalism.

DIGITAL GENERATIONS OR DIGITAL FLUENCY?

Driving considerations of e-professionalism is burgeoning technology offering society new opportunities for interaction. There seems to be a debate in the literature over whether if when one was born—one's digital generation—is more important in shaping online behavior than the time in which we are all now living and one's individual ability to use the new technology. While some authors point out differences in how older and younger generations use the Internet—a concept known as digital generations —others point to an overall change in society at large and look at one's proclivity and ability to use the technology rather than one's age, a concept known as digital fluency.

Over a decade ago, Prensky (2001) argued that a new generation of technologically savvy individuals was entering university who were fundamentally different than their predecessors due to growing up surrounded by tools of the digital age. Prensky (2001) labeled this generation as digital natives and identified this group as comprised of those born after 1980. Older generations who must learn and adopt technological advances were labeled as digital immigrants (Pensky, 2001). This is important and relevant to a discussion on e-professionalism because Spector et al. (2010) report that when defining appropriate behavior, there are generational differences.

Joiner et al. (2013) further divided digital natives into first and second generations, with first generation digital natives being individuals born after 1980 and second generation digital natives being those born after 1993. These researchers found that second generation digital natives had a significantly higher Internet identification score, a more positive attitude about the Internet, a lower Internet anxiety score, and that they engaged in more Internet activities and did so more frequently than first generation digital natives (Joiner et al., 2013). This research suggests that those born as Internet usage becomes more established and commonplace become more comfortable with it and use it more often.

Other researchers cite generational differences as being relevant to a cultural shift happening online and claim that "new social norms that reward disclosure are already in place among the young," (Anderson & Rainie, 2010, para. 6) and that "the Millenial generation will lead society into a new world of personal disclosure and information-sharing using new media"

(Anderson & Rainie, 2010, para. 1). This ties in with the NBES report mentioned at the beginning of the article which found that ASNs are much more likely to be under 30 years of age and more likely to publicly comment about professional situations at work (ERC, 2013).

Qualman (2013, p. 45) sums up generational differences with the statement that the next generation "needs more guidance" in various areas pertaining to navigating the social world of business through an online domain as they are "less likely to understand boundaries." This may be because personal and professional boundaries are not as clear online as they are in traditional contexts (Cain & Romanelli, 2009), and younger generations may be less familiar with the traditional distinctions. Likewise, because traditional paradigms of professionalism typified much clearer boundaries, older generations may struggle to grasp the new philosophical nuances of the complexities of the digital age (Cain & Romanelli, 2009).

When one considers that a significantly greater percentage of younger than older adults are using SNS (*Social Networking Fact Sheet*, 2014), and if it is the case that younger generations are more apt to disclose information online and are professionally using social media differently than their older counterparts, it is worth considering that younger interpreters may be encountering more online-specific ethical dilemmas than their older colleagues.

Some researchers, however, contend that one's technological capability more strongly influence Internet usage than one's generation. Wang, Myers, and Sundaram (2013) report that while digital immigrants are usually laden with the assumption that, unlike their younger counterparts, they are generally averse to new technology and struggle to accept and use it, this is not necessarily the case as several other factors come into consideration. Instead of perceiving the digital generations as mutually exclusive of one another in terms of technological savvy, the concept of "digital fluency" was put forth. This concept posits a continuum of technological skills an individual may possess which can broadly be defined as "the ability to reformulate knowledge and produce information to express oneself creatively and appropriately in a digital environment," (Wang et al., 2013, p. 409). The mention of expressing oneself appropriately is important to the discussion at hand and suggests that digital fluency may be considered a prerequisite of e-professionalism.

In regards to social media, the overall applicability of the premise of a digital fluency continuum along which all technology users may somewhere lie regardless of age is bolstered by the fact that by 2009, Facebook reported that its fastest growing demographic was women over the age of 55 (Smith, 2009). The Pew Research Report (*Social Networking Fact Sheet* , 2014) has also identified significant growth of all age groups using social networking sites since 2005, and DeJong (2014) reports that the oldest generation, those 74 years of age and up, are responsible for the fastest growth in social networking, increasing four-fold since 2008 from 4%-16%.

Increasingly, we live in what Fuchs (2014, p. 52) refers to as a participatory culture, a term "used for designating the involvement of users, audiences, consumers, and fans in the creation of culture and content." As more and more members of society have access to the technology which allows for the participation in the formation of an online culture, more members are signing in as participants across all generations.

Wang et al. (2013) identify this opportunity to access technology as a key factor in developing digital fluency, and the Pew Research Report (*Social Networking Fact Sheet,* 2014) shows the growing use of smartphones to access social media sites. Dejong (2014) also credits tablets, smartphones, and cell phones with Internet capability as increasing the ease of access to social media. Therefore, while it is the case that the Pew Research Report (*Social Networking Fact Sheet,* 2014) shows that more people of the younger generations are using social networking sites—90% of participants from the youngest age bracket of 18-29 and decreasing in increments down to 46% in the oldest age bracket for users above the age of 65— the fact that social networking is becoming more easily accessible via mobile technology and increasingly ubiquitous mean that all segments of the population in areas with this technology are becoming increasingly digitally fluent with social media and able to influence the developing participatory culture. Overall, e-professionalism is therefore a concept that applies to all professional generations of a digital society.

The changing online culture (Fuchs, 2014) is framed by Anderson & Rainie (2010) as an opportunity for society, as we are currently in a trial-and-error period where people are adjusting to the new realities of social media and social consensus is developing over what information is appropriate to share online. Therefore, proactively researching what we see happening in the interpreting profession online, as well as what interpreters and consumers would like to see happen, could lay the framework for the standards of e-professionalism in our field.

IS THERE A COMMON SENSE MYTH?

The Pew Research Internet Project reports that as of January 2014, 74% of online adults were users of social networking sites (*Social Networking Fact Sheet*, 2014). The ubiquitous nature of social media in our society may lend it a familiarity that consequently assumes that users are naturally versed in proper social media usage, including appropriate professional usage. If this is the case, a rough analogy can be drawn to early assumptions made about the signed language interpreting profession.

In a recent interview, Professor Jemina Napier explained that in the profession's early days, it was assumed that if you could sign—either through being a linguistic native or a second language learner through significant exposure--then you could interpret (Best, 2015). The assumption seemed to follow naturally; in essence, one might say that it was a common expectation, common sense. As researchers and educators now attest, there is much more to interpreting than simply knowing two languages, and formal interpreter training programs enhance an individual's interpreting performance and professionalism (Downing & Tillery, 1992).

To draw the analogy, just as possessing proficiency in sign language is not enough to make one an effective professional interpreter, simply knowing how to use social media may not be enough to adequately equip one for appropriate and effective professional utility. If there is an underlying assumption that there is correlation between proficiency and professional application of social media, could this also be attributed by some to common sense?

AIIC's recommendations for social media usage issued by the Heads of Interpreting Services place an emphasis on interpreters using "common sense" when using social media ("Recommendations," 2012, para. 1). If, however, there actually is a cultural shift happening online, and/or if it is the case that younger generations use social media differently, then we may find, as the old adage goes, that common sense is not so common. Just as we have found with signed language interpreting, there may be reason to consider that more is needed beyond the basis of proficiency for satisfactory professional performance, and formal training may prove beneficial.

E-PROFESSIONALISM CONSIDERATIONS

As social media begins to shift social norms, more research needs to be done into how this may be manifesting within and subsequently affecting the interpreting profession. In the 2011 study by Lee and Ho of Taiwanese medical students, students who reported a heightened awareness about the potential impacts of social media usage actually scored higher than their less aware peers on measures of ethics and accountability. Cain, Scott, and Akers (2009) report that an intervention targeted at increasing awareness of the various considerations may be all that is necessary for some students and professionals. The interpreter community, therefore, may find it advantageous to raise awareness by proactively delivering specified instruction in e-professionalism.

On the popular blog for sign language interpreters, www.streetleverage.com, Butler (2012) suggests that the United States Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf add an entire tenet regarding social media usage to the NAD-RID Code of Professional Conduct. Dean and Pollard (2013) explain that many such codes are traditionally deontological in nature and argue for a more teleological approach to ethics. Furthermore, Lannin and Scott (2013) define small-world ethics by the need to prudently but flexibly apply ethical principles to situations in which there is great transparency. Therefore, in the new digital domain where norms are still being socially decided (Anderson & Rainie, 2010), it could be argued that teleological approaches, as opposed to prescriptive tenets for social media usage, would more adeptly fit the quickly evolving nature of technologically-mediated interactions.

This type of teleological approach would also be suitable since Cain and Romanelli (2009) explain e-professionalism as the traditional notions of professional values as manifested in the digital realm. Essentially, the professional values are the same whether in person or online, so entirely new tenets would be redundant.

The following suggestions, therefore, do not prescribe rules for online interactions or behavior. Rather, they are considerations professional interpreters may choose to address in order to reflect and potentially improve upon e-professionalism.

1. Be aware of one's online persona. Although not all facets of an online persona should fall under the e-professionalism umbrella, such as those that are political and religious (Cain & Romanelli, 2009), careful consideration should be paid to elements that are work-related and adjustments made as necessary.

2. To be proactive and protective online, one must achieve a certain level of digital fluency regarding SNS. Be aware of privacy settings (Butler, 2012), and remain cognizant of who can see posts that are made. Stay abreast of changes to privacy policies of SNS.

3. Consider the differences between perceived and actual audiences before making a post. Often times, one may make a post on SNS with an intended audience in mind while neglecting to consider that many others also have access to it.

   a. Keep in mind the online disinhibition effect (Suler, 2004) and consider whether the same thing might be said as freely in a face-to-face interaction

   b. Consider how information may be perceived be all who may see it, both for oneself professionally and the profession at large

   c. Consider the need to set viewing restrictions on certain posts

   d. If overlapping relationships may be present, consider small-world ethical implications

CONCLUSION

Society, culture, and generations define professional behaviors (Hammer, 2009). As the new generation changes with the culture and society, notions of professionalism need to be applied to the digital realm to guide online professional behaviors. While a premise of this article is that more research is needed and that interpreters and interpreter educators should become proactive in shaping the development of the burgeoning digital culture so that it is amenable to a framework of traditional professionalism, the goal should not entirely focus on curtailing unprofessional behavior. Social media can offer myriad opportunities for positive, quick collaboration and professional growth. Wilson, Ranse, Cashin, and McNamara (2014) cite the importance of Twitter, for example, for nurses to network with other professionals and organizations in their field and say that the platform actually serves to enhance professional development. Sign language interpreters may find that they receive the same type of benefits from social media platforms.

Meaningful and insightful professional discussions can take place in the appropriate forums and under the appropriate viewing restrictions. Interpreters are able to learn a great deal from one another through blogs and microblogs, and humorous spoofs on sites such as Tumblr provide a cathartic, entertaining outlet for interpreting dilemmas and experiences. Students and practicing interpreters need to have an awareness of the professional use of social media not only to appropriately monitor information sharing to maintain the integrity of themselves and the profession, but also so that they may understand how to leverage the immense power of social media to their professional advantage.

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