#BESTSCHOOLEVER:

A Mixed-Methods Analysis of How Institutions of Higher Education Utilize <u>Social</u> <u>Media</u> for Student Recruitment





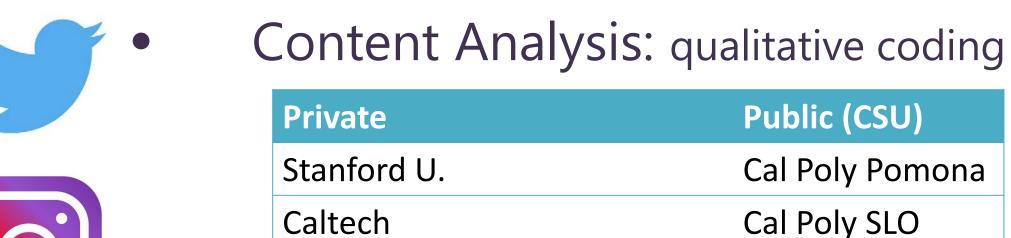
Mentor: Dr. Faye L. Wachs Kellogg Honors College Capstone Project



abstract:

Using a mixed methods approach that included interviews, surveys, and content analysis of a year's worth of Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter posts from five public and five private university's social media pages, THIS RESEARCH HOPES TO GATHER INSIGHT OF HOW UNIVERSITY PROGRAMS USE SOCIAL MEDIA TO INTERACT WITH STUDENTS TO INFORM, PREPARE AND RECRUIT THEM FOR HIGHER EDUCATION. Using a critical theory approach, it was determined that social media was used as a tool for framing the academic priorities of the university, as reflected by social media related to on-campus research, affiliations, recognitions, and student life. However, it should be noted that the posts seemed to be selectively focusing on particular themes, i.e. student research in the STEM fields, done with the intention of targeting particular students in an attempt to sway their attention to apply to a particular university. Implications leads to the conclusion that while universities use social media to subtly deliver messages of their undergraduate and graduate programs, each university focusing on delivering a constructed message that is in accordance with their new institutional colf interest.

methods:



RESEARCH QUESTION: How are institutions of higher education using **social media** as a tool to advertise, inform and recruit prospective students to their programs



U. Southern California	CSU Fullerton
Pepperdine U.	CSU Chico
U. San Francisco	CSU Long Beach



Open-ended interview

results:

Cotogorical Subi	este of Social Madia Docta	Facebook						
	ects of Social Media Posts	University of Southern California	California State University, Chico	California State University, Fullerton	Cel Poly Pomona May 16, 2017 · 🚱	California State University, Long Beach	California State University, Fullerton	California State University, Long Beach
Subject	Definition	"I'm interested in so many different things. It's so hard to pick — I wish I could have five different careers."	More good news: California State University, Chico's College of Business graduate program is one of 267 outstanding on-campus MBA programs profiled on The Princeton Review - College and Beyond as part of Best Business Schools for 2018.	Congrats! CSUF graduate student Sarah Rahman hopes to assist youth in the South Asian-American and Muslim communities.	Cal Poly Pomona makes another ranking of top universities.	Inagine yourself here, where all students are welcomed and wanted. Today is the first day to apply for Fall 2018. http://www.csulb.edu/apply/#NoBarriers #LongBeachState #inclusive #Fall2018	Under the fields of registered nursing, nursing administration, research and clinical nursing for degrees awarded to underrestudents, Cal State Fullerton was listed as 22nd for graduate 32nd for bachelor degrees. http://bit.ly/2BWVWYD	From the lab to the field, our students make groundbreaking discoveries. They are learning why pandas are black and white, explaining how hammerhead sharks suntan, and researching with the help of a \$24 million
On-campus	Post will include information of past, on-							
Research	going, or future research being conducted at	Creating new heart muscle out of stem cells? This grad student is doing it	Best Business Schools 2018 The Princeton Review We rank the Best Business Schools based on ratings from real MBA students. Find out which top business schools have the best career prospects and more. PRINCETONREVIEW.COM	Counseling Student Among 30 in Nation to Receive Fellowship	Cal Poly Pomona Ranks Among Top Producers of Latino Doctorate Recipients	NO.		
	the university by students or faculty	PhD student Joycelyn Yip ultimately hopes to test treatments that won't put patients at risk Twitter	Caltech @ @Caltech · 20 May 2017 Manan Arya (PhD '16) had a space problem. Origami was the solution. R at breakthrough.caltech.edu/story/origami #CaltechAlumni #CaltechIu	NEWS.FULLERTON.EDU	Cal Poly Pomona is among the nation's top 55 institutions for producing Latino graduates who go on to earn their doctorates. POLYCENTRIC.CPP.EDU	BARRIERS To the best and brightest	CSUF News Center - Nursing Program Ranks Diversity Leaders In a recent issue of Diverse Issues in Higher Education, Cal State Fu undergraduate and graduate nursing programs were ranked among t	BARRIERS
	members. Research will usually be original	Chico State @ @ChicoState - 7 Nov 2017 Chico State makes Top Management Degrees' top 50 list of Most Affordable MBA Programs: bit.ly/2zm2X7W #ChicoState		Caltech 🤗 @Caltech · 7 Jun 2017	Like Comment Share	A CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS	NEWS.FULLERTON.EDU	APPLY FALL 2018
	and /or groundbreaking. Ex: Stanford	TOP 50		Caltech Congrats, Caltech postdoc Jessica Watkins! You're going to #NewAstronauts @NASA	o space! Pepperdine University © @pepperdine · 6 Apr 2017 Learn about @PeppLaw's new Master of Laws (#LLM) and Sports degree here: newsroom.pepperdine.edu/I	Like USC © @USC - 3 Nov 2017 James Askew, a graduate student at @USCDorm species of orangutan ow.ly/opBu30gloZT	Programs: Strategies for the	Obscure." RSVP: bit.ly/2vaUAqD
	research team being the first to complete	MOST AFFORDABLE		126		species of orangutan ow.iy/opBu30glo21	Applying	g to
	successful human heart transplant.	2018			DEDDEDE		Gradua	ate

Affiliations

Recognitions

Campus/Student

Life

Apply

Post will include information regarding

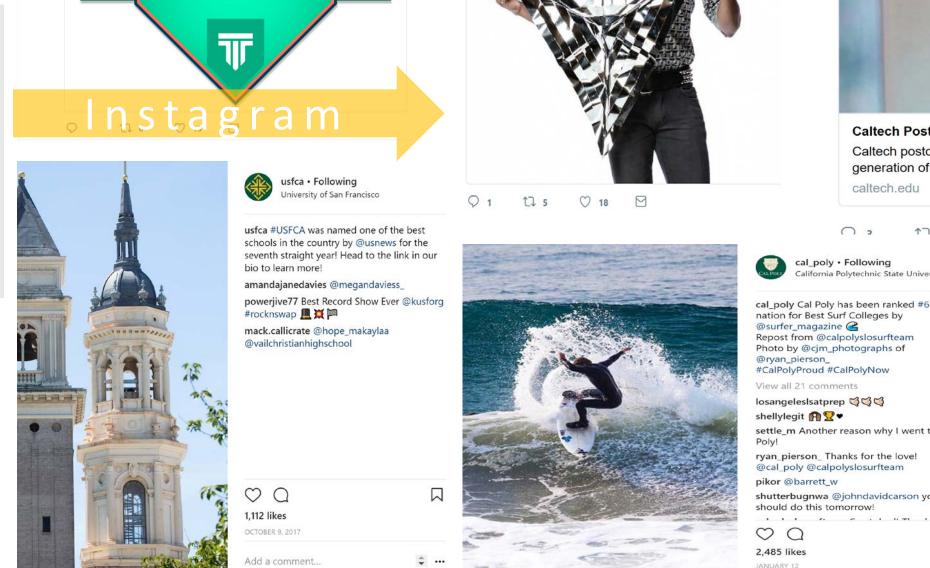
affiliations with people (students/faculty), places, goals/achievements or things that is traditionally recognizable to the school. Ex: USC and football Recognition of a person/place/thing and provide a brief narrative of what it is/who they are and what makes it worth commemorating. Recognitions can be of the

past or present; not necessarily in current existence. Ex: Nobel prize winning professors; students being accepted into

PhD program.

Post will provide information or updates of student and campus activities, traditions, environment. Ex: Cal Poly agriculture/farmlife; CSULB beach life; commencement. Post will contain information

encouraging/directing the viewer to apply to a certain program, event, or degree. Ex:





PEPPERDINE SCHOOL OF LAW csulongbeach • Following sulongbeach Everyone is welcomed #TheBeach. 🎔 We're committed to havir #NoBarriers to inclusiveness and success for all students. #Geniuses #Inclusive #EveryoneWelcome #GoBeach #LongBeachState dakotajasmine @akiwistory You go, girl. natasha.hahaha #strongbeach 👹 🖤 ulongbeach @natasha.hahaha #GoBeach roy.gaut Does Csulb welcome all political csulongbeach @roy.gaut right, left, up or down... an open mind is an informed mind im052997 It is hard to become accepted into society, but we are all humans. I don' care if we talk strange or have unusual TO INCLUSIVENESS habits, we respect our ideals. $\bigcirc \bigcirc$ We welcome all races, colors, genders and geniuses. 588 likes We're happiest when everyone NOVEMBER 16, 2017

feels at home here.

Add a commen

Through in depth content analysis, survey data, and interview, implications point to social media (SM) having an important role between students and universities. While most students express interests in higher education, an increased understanding of university programs can be achieved through the dissemination of meaningful content via SM networks. SM is reflected as capable of reproducing and maintaining school ideology, which can affect student decision.

themes:

QQ

5,342 likes

PRIL 28, 2017

ld a commen

stanford • Following

tanford "Until I got to high school, I wa

the only black person," said @clairegrams

onnecticut. "A lot of people experience

he same things that I do and yet, a lot of

epicting peoples' lives through the lens of

lassroom. As an Earth Systems advisor, she

interests in art and diversity. Named after

tories aren't told that should be told.

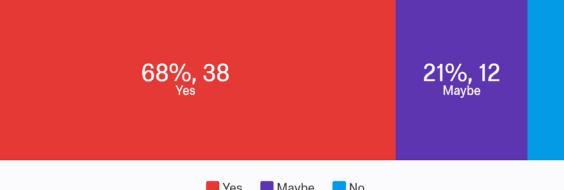
camera helps Claire make connection

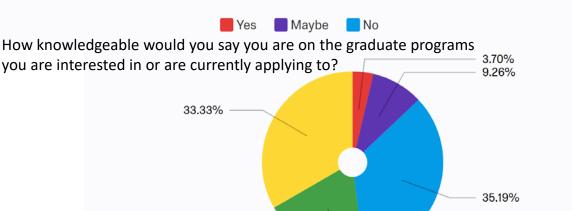
hat don't always come across in the

reated a legacy project that links he

17, an Earth Systems major from Newtown,

Do you play to pursue graduate school after completing your graduate training, whether immediately following graduating or in the upcoming years?





CONTENT ANALYSIS (of social media posts)

,609 likes

Framing an Image...

- PUBLIC: emphasis in: 1. promoting the institution as competitive to other top-ranking universities in the United States 2. student life, inclusivity, and opportunities for student success
- PRIVATE: emphasis placed towards on-campus research activity and the work of graduate students and professional staff. Research, for example, becomes the normative expectation, in effect, branding the university by the predominant outward "presentation of self," presented via social media

...maintaining the ideology.

Most universities are hold longtime "things-they-are-known-for" factors that aid in the maintaining of their school image, i.e. CPP = agriculture and engineering school; Caltech = tech/astronomy campus. This creates a kind of "affiliation through recognition" serves as a self-sustaining market campaign that promotes institutional interest. **Additionally**, participant activity on social media aid

<u>S U R V E Y</u>

 Sample indicates majority interest amongst undergraduate students to pursue graduate school education

Programs

Ryan Leack

M.A, English Cal Poly Pomor

PhD Candidate, English UC Riversid

- However, most possess limited understanding and/or knowledge of programs of interest
- Likewise, few students have encountered or used social media as a medium for learning about higher-ed programs
- Social media confirms to have a positive effect in a students understanding of the university, and contributing to the subsequent decision to applying to universities of interest.

reminder for approaching Fall enrollment

deadlines.

Note: in some instances more than one category can be used

to describe a single post on social media.

Acknowledgements:

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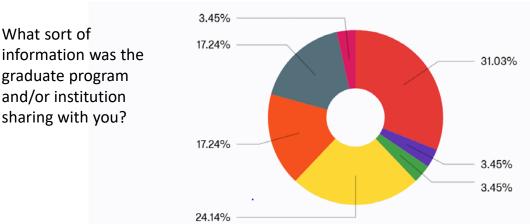
- Won Choi
- Sandra Harper



Extremely well Very well Moderately well Slightly well Not well at all What are the top 3 Social Media accounts you use every day?

22%	22%	22%	16%
Facebook	Instagram	Snapchat	YouTube

📕 Facebook 📕 Twitter 📕 Instagram 📕 Snapchat 🧧 Pinterest 📕 LinkedIn 📕 YouTube 📕 Reddit 📕 Other (please specify)



Degree programs
 Campus life
 Housing
 Financial Aid
 nissions process/Application deadlines
 Networking opportunities
 Campus visits/tours
 Research conferences
 Other (please specify)
 Other (please specify)

universities in the re-propagation of media through their comments, sharing, and liking of online posts—creates a pattern of the consumption of self-produced media.

Critical Connection

MISLEADING REPRESENTATIONS: attention must be given to the ethnic, gendered, and class demographic that is being portrayed in media AND HOW IT COMPARES to the ACTUAL representation within the university's enrolled student body; question the motive, analyze and assess the reality, and to who's ultimately benefitting from these endeavors THE PRIVILEDGE OF PARTICPATION: what groups within the university body are allowed to self-

represent on social media, who CONTROLS this procedure, and which groups PROFITS (financially and symbolically) ex: emphasis on STEM over Social Science research (think funding: effects on student decision to enroll, diversity of student body, potential for student success).

<u>INTERVIEW</u>

- Social media posts generally lack substantial, useful information regarding undergraduate and/or graduate programs
- However, participants share that social media is usually not a primary tool used to learn about universities of interest.

Rate of appearance of people of color (POC) in social media posts					
Person Type	Rate of	Total			
	appearance				
POC Male	25	60			
POC Female	35	(POC)			
White Male	14	33			
White Female	19	(White)			