



Research that Matters

When considering the content of their Communication Studies courses, students often reflect the practical aspects of the discipline and, in particular, how the study of human communication can make it possible for one to be a competent contributor to personal, professional, and civic life. Although practical applications are a key component of the information students learn in Communication Studies courses, it is also important to recognize the rigorous research that is completed in order to help students and scholars determine, for example, which forms of communication are going to be the most effective and ethical in a given circumstance. Understanding the breadth and depth of Communication Research helps us understand why some forms of communication can be so powerful.

In the stories featured on the following pages, Texas State's Communication Studies faculty were asked to discuss a research project that they were in the process of completing. Because the faculty at Texas State actively engage in research, the work they are doing will eventually inform the content being taught in courses at this institution. Our hope is that by examining these research projects in their early stages, it will be possible for those interested in the study of human communication to make some predictions about the future of the field. Often, faculty pursue these research ideas in collaboration with both graduate and undergraduate students, which prepares the next generation of scholars and teachers to conduct research of their own that extends our knowledge of the field even further.

We're excited to present these interviews and present some of the most cutting-edge research in the field of Communication Studies. If you are interested in learning more about a project, consider contacting the faculty member and/or registering for a course with them, declaring a major/minor, or even pursuing graduate school. We hope you enjoy learning more about the future of Communication research.

Dr. Stephanie Dailey

Why Do People Talk About Work on Their Personal Social Media?

Dr. Stephanie Dailey is an Associate Professor of Communication Studies. Her research interests focus upon organizational membership, wellness, and social media. As Dr. Dailey notes in her bio, “Throughout my academic career, I have been interested in how people learn about and feel part of organizations. My research, therefore, seeks to advance research at the intersection of organizational socialization and organizational identification scholarship.” Courses that students could take from Dr. Dailey to learn more about her research include COMM 4327: Social Media in Organizations, COMM 3319: Introduction to Organization Communications, and COMM 3301: Empirical Research Methods in Communication. Students can sign up for a course with Dr. Dailey in Fall 2022.



We asked Stephanie to talk about an ongoing research project that she describes as, “Why do people talk about work on their personal social media?” As she explains, this project is designed to help us understand why people use their personal social media to express work-related information and how it affects both work & home life.

Question: What is the current status of the project—what are you working on right now to keep the project moving forward?

Dr. Dailey:

Last spring, graduate students in my Qualitative Research Methods class collected this data. Specifically, students observed and interviewed people who were posting about work on social media. This semester, I’m starting to analyze the data that were collected and begin writing manuscripts.

Could you explain what this project is about in a few sentences that might be understood by an audience that is not very familiar with communication research?

1. Communication scholars don’t see social media as a static tool that we all use in one uniform way. One growing trend I’ve noticed is that people are increasingly talking about work in their personal social media posts. Whether it’s bragging, ranting, or selling, we are all seeing more work-related information on social media. I included a few examples in the Appendix if that helps! (*Please see below*)
2. This project explores personal social media use for work by studying what people are doing, why they’re doing it, and how that might affect our lives.

Please explain what it is that makes this research especially important.

This is the BEST question, and I genuinely believe it should drive all our research. I see this research as important because it’s something that many people do, often subconsciously, but that can have a big impact on our home and work lives. Social media is expanding organizations’ boundaries – allowing us to talk about the places we work, play, volunteer, and worship on social

media. Sharing our work and our organizational affiliations on social media can be helpful, because it can help us perform or show multiple aspects of our selves (i.e., the different “hats” we wear throughout life). But it can also be a challenge, because it blurs the boundaries of our identities, which often conflict to a certain extent (e.g., my “mother” hat is different from my “academic” hat). Because we encounter this paradox when sharing work-related information on social media, it’s important to learn more about it.

What was it that prompted you to begin this project? Is there a story behind it, a challenge that you faced, an interesting observation, any connection to your own personal interests, another project, or some other inspiration?

Personally, I’ve been seeing more people talk about work on social media – recruiting for jobs, sharing successes, or using social media a space for activism – all of which fascinates me. I’ll share a small example of this growing trend. I’ve been teaching a course on “Social Media in Organizations” for about five years now. When I first began teaching that course, it was a challenge to find organizations who were actively posting on social media (there were only a handful), and I could only find a few examples of people talking about organizations on social media (again, I had to really dig!). Now when I teach the course, these phenomena are so prevalent, students are doing entire projects on them! So, that prompted my research interests.

Like most scholars, there’s also more nerdy stuff that led me to want to study work-related information on social media. While attending our discipline’s International Communication Association conference, I watched a top-paper presentation about “personal social media use for work.” I had no idea people were researching this topic, so I grew really excited! However, scholars’ current conceptualization and operationalization – the way “personal social media use” is being defined and measured – is missing a few key features in my opinion. I’m hopeful my research can fill in those theoretical and methodological gaps in our academic literature.

Could you please complete this sentence: “I am most excited about this research project because...”

it's something novel, timely, and practical!

How would you respond if someone asked how the potential discoveries and conclusions from this project are going to matter ... either for my life or the lives of others?

I’m hoping that this project will help us better balance work and life. I trust that every employee would like to improve their well-being. I have a hunch that conclusions from this project will matter, because they will enhance our lives, both at home and at work.

What do you plan to do with the project when it’s complete?

Like all my work, I’m hoping that this project will be published in an academic journal or book, so that it will advance our discipline’s knowledge of organizational communication and technology. I also hope that I can disseminate findings from this research with the public, through secondary news articles, interviews, and podcasts. This project will also inform my teaching, so students will learn more about personal social media use for work and hopefully use this information in their lives outside the University

What is one question that you want someone to ask you about your research project (and what is the answer)?

I wish someone would ask, “why did you involve students in your research?” because it would give me the opportunity to share how much I love mentoring and involving students in research. Not only does it help increase the scope of work I’m able to do (helping hands are the best!), but involving students in research allows me to teach and advise budding social science researchers. It’s a win-win!

Thank you for your time, Dr. Dailey!

Dr. Stephanie Dailey is currently on academic leave to continue her research. She will resume teaching in Fall of 2022.

Appendix

An Instagram example (from my personal account):

