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7 Social Media Use in Organizations

Exploring the Affordances of Visibility, Editability, Persistence, and Association

Jeffrey W. Treem and Paul M. Leonardi

Northwestern University

The use of social media technologies—such as blogs, wikis, social networking sites, social tagging, and microblogging—is proliferating at an incredible pace. One area of increasing adoption is organizational settings where managers hope that these new technologies will help improve important organizational processes. However, scholarship has largely failed to explain if and how uses of social media in organizations differ from existing forms of computer-mediated communication. In this chapter, we argue that social media are of important consequence to organizational communication processes because they afford behaviors that were difficult or impossible to achieve in combination before these new technologies entered the workplace. Our review of previous studies of social media use in organizations uncovered four relatively consistent affordances enabled by these new technologies: Visibility, persistence, editability, and association. We suggest that the activation of some combination of these affordances could influence many of the processes commonly studied by organizational communication theorists. To illustrate this point, we theorize several ways through which these four social media affordances may alter socialization, knowledge sharing, and power processes in organizations.

Recently, numerous commentators have suggested that social media technologies—blogs, wikis, social networking sites (SNS), microblogs, or social tagging[1] tools—may facilitate communication practices in organizations that differ from those associated with traditional computer-mediated communication (CMC) technologies like e-mail, teleconferencing, intranets, decision-support systems, and instant messaging (Grudin, 2006; McAfee, 2006; Steinhuser, Smolnik, & Hoppe, 2011). In addition to the scholarly literature on the role of social media use in organizations, the business press has issued a number of bold proclamations such as: "Social media will change your business" (Baker & Green, 2008) and asked such daring questions as: "Can social apps kill enterprise software?" (DuBois, 2010). Whether or not one believes or discounts such statements, social media adoption within organizations is occurring at a rapid pace. According to a survey by global consulting firm McKinsey, 65% of companies reported the use of Web 2.0 technologies in their organizations (Bughin & Chui, 2010). Forrester Research

predicts that corporate spending on enterprise social media will reach more than $4.6 billion annually by 2013 (Young et al., 2008).

Yet despite the increased adoption of social media by firms, the implications of these new technologies for organizational processes are not yet well understood by communication researchers. Scholars have suggested that social media adoption *in organizations*[2] is outpacing empirical understanding of the use of these technologies and our theories about why they may alter various organizational processes (Raeth, Smolnik, Urbach, & Zimmer, 2009). Because the implications of social media use in organizations are not well understood, we use this chapter to accomplish three primary tasks. First, we explore the emerging body of research on the use of social media use in organizations for evidence that social media constitute a set of communication technologies that are distinct in their implications for organizational processes from traditional CMC technologies. We find that scholars treat social media as a new class of technologies that may alter organizational dynamics in profound ways. Given this finding, our second task is to explicate the distinct ways social media merge with ongoing communicative processes that occur within and constitute organizations. We employ an "affordance approach" that allows us to organize findings reported in empirical studies into four categories describing consistent ways organizational members use the material features of social media technologies to accomplish their work. Using this categorization we then commence our third task, which is to draw implications for how the use of social media within organizations may affect particular organizational processes that are of great interest to communication researchers.

Defining Social Media: Toward an Affordance Approach

What Are Social Media?[3]

To address the question of whether social media technologies are distinct from other forms of CMC commonly used in today's organizations it is helpful to briefly trace the history of social media technologies. The first known use of the term *social media* in print is believed to have occurred in 1997, when then-AOL executive Ted Leonsis commented that organizations needed to provide consumers with "social media, places where they can be entertained, communicate, and participate in a social environment" (Bercovici, 2010). The first publicly popular SNS, SixDegrees.com, which let users create online personal profiles and lists of friends, was launched that same year (boyd & Ellison, 2007). During the following decade, a number of other popular social media technologies such as the blogging platforms LiveJournal and Blogger (both in 1999), the wiki-based encyclopedia Wikipedia (2001), the social bookmarking service Delicious (2003, formerly del.icio.us), the SNSs MySpace (2003) and Facebook (2004), and the microblogging service Twitter (2004) made their debuts. As adoption of these technologies grew, social media moved quickly from the domain of the tech-savvy to the mainstream (Shirky, 2008). The Pew

Internet and American Life Project has reported that 61% of adults (18 years and older) have used SNSs and 32% have read a blog (Zickuhr, 2010).

As social media have begun to enter popular consciousness, some scholars have treated them as just another genre of CMC (Herring, 2004), while others have attempted to define social media, broadly, as a distinct category of technologies. Following the latter strategy, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), for example, refer to social media as "Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (p. 62). In lieu of providing a clear definition of social media, the default approach in many academic writings has been to define the term *social media* by pointing toward the types of technologies that people recognize, implicitly, as social media (e.g., blogs, wikis, SNSs, social tagging, etc.).

However, a referential approach to a definition of social media focuses people's attention on what the technology itself does (or does not do) instead of the ways the technology becomes mutually constituted with the organizational context in which it is embedded (Leonardi, 2009). Moreover, studies that focus on the features of specific technologies in organizations provide limited insight into why use of a technology produced particular effects (Nass & Mason, 1990). In sum, many studies of social media use provide insights about a specific tool, in a particular organizational context, but they do not develop theory about the consequences of social media use for organizing. Current definitions of social media are either too application-focused, preventing generalization across contexts, or too broad, obscuring the ways the technology may influence behaviors. To aid theory development around social media use in organizations this paper eschews a definition of social media based on features, and considers the *affordances* they offer users.

An Affordance Approach

In an effort to explain how animals perceive their environments, James Gibson (1986), a perceptual psychologist, argued that an object like a rock could be used very differently by distinct animals because each animal perceived a particular set of activities for which the rock would be useful. He suggested that animals perceived not what an object is, but rather what kinds of uses it affords and called such perceptions of an object's utility an "affordance." In Gibson's formulation, people do not interact with an object prior to or without perceiving what the object is good for. As he suggests, the physical features of an object exist apart from the people who use them, but those features are infused with meaning "relative to the posture and behavior of the animal being considered" (pp. 127–128). Although the features of an object are common to each person who encounters them, the affordances of that artifact are not. Affordances are unique to the particular ways in which an actor, or a set of actors, perceives and uses the object. To this end, Gibson (1986) offers an explanation of the relationship between materiality and affordances:

> The psychologists assume that objects are composed of their qualities … color, texture, composition, size shape and features of shape, mass, elasticity, rigidity, and mobility.… But I now suggest that what we perceive when we look at objects are their affordances, not their qualities. We can discriminate the dimensions of difference if required to do so in an experiment, but what the object affords us is what we normally pay attention to. (p. 134)

Because the material out of which an object is made can provide multiple affordances, it is possible that one object can produce multiple outcomes.

Scholars who study the relationship between new technologies and social practices have found great utility in the affordance concept because it helps to explain why people using the same technology may engage in similar or disparate communication and work practices. Since Gibson's formulation of the notion of affordance, some scholars have used the concept to explore the ways in which new technologies can be better designed (Gaver, 1991; Norman, 1990), while others have used it to explore the dynamics of technologically occasioned social change (Orlikowski & Barley, 2001; Zammutto, Griffith, Majchrzak, Dougherty, & Faraj, 2007).

Today, the most nuanced writings on the relationship between technology and organizational change emphasize the relational character of affordances. In this view, affordances are not exclusively properties of people or of artifacts—they are constituted in relationships between people and the materiality of the things with which they come in contact. "Materiality" here refers to the features of a technological artifact—whether that artifact is a piece of hardware or software. In this formulation, materiality exists independent of people, but affordances do not. Because people come to materiality with diverse goals, they perceive a technology as affording distinct possibilities for action. In the relational view, affordances of an artifact can change across different contexts even though its materiality does not. Similarly, people may perceive that an artifact offers no affordances for action, perceiving instead that it constrains their ability to carry out their goals. Building on this relational approach, Leonardi and Barley (2008) and Leonardi (2011) argued that the affordances of one technology are often the same or similar across diverse organizational settings because the material features of the technology place limits on the kinds of interpretations people can form of it and the uses to which it can be put.

As several recent studies of technology use in organizations have noted (Hutchby, 2001; Leonardi, 2010; Markus & Silver, 2008), using a relational approach to affordances to explain how a new technology merges with an existing organizational system is useful for theory in at least four ways. First, focusing on affordances that arise as individuals begin to use features of a new technology helps explain consistency of effects within and across organizations while avoiding deterministic images of technologically induced organizational change. Second, focusing on the relationship between a user and a technology's material features avoids privileging social determinism in explaining

organizational changes and ignoring the properties of the technology itself. Third, focusing on affordances, rather than exclusively on either material features or social practice, develops theories of sociomaterial dynamics, as opposed to theories of specific technologies (which may soon become obsolete anyway) or theories of organizations that ignore the empirical reality that most all practice is bound up with the use of particular technologies (Orlikowski, 2007). Finally, an affordance approach encourages the researcher to look at communicative actions enabled by the relationship between an organizational context and a technology's functionality. In other words, it is agnostic to particular features of a technology and, instead, asks what combinations of material features allow people to do things that were difficult or impossible to do without the technology (Leonardi, 2011). For example, IBM's SNS SocialBlue (formerly Beehive) has an "About You" feature through which individuals can decide to enter information that will be displayed to other users as part of the employee's profile on the site (DiMicco et al., 2008). Following an affordance approach, the existence of the "About You" feature is not important in and of itself. Rather, it is only important insomuch as it affords people the ability to communicate in new ways. From an affordance approach, the researcher would ask, "what does the 'About You' feature afford people the opportunity to do?" and then he or she would examine the features of other social media to discover whether those other technologies have a feature (that is perhaps different from the "About You" feature in SocialBlue) that affords the same type of communicative behavior.

We argue that defining social media by describing what kinds of behaviors they typically afford across various organizations is one way researchers can transcend the particularities of any technology or its features, and focus on communicative outcomes. Moreover, defining social media by enumerating its affordances may allow for a nuanced understanding of when, why, and how social media occasion change in organizational practice.

Organizational Affordances of Social Media Use

To explore the affordances of social media use for organizational communication we reviewed the literature for any studies that mentioned "social media," "Web 2.0," "enterprise 2.0," or "social software" *in organizations*.[1] Our decision to focus on social media use in organizations, as opposed to social media use generally, was informed by research suggesting that people's perception of the utility of a technology is formed differently when that technology is used in the workplace rather than outside of it (O'Mahony & Barley, 1999; Wellman et al., 1996). Consequently, our goal was to assemble a wide array of studies that examined use of social media within organizations. We believed that this strategy would highlight affordances of social media use in organizations, as opposed to social media use elsewhere, and enable tentative generalizations about the effects of social media on core organizational communication processes.

Not surprisingly, given that these technologies are only just beginning to proliferate throughout organizations, we found few articles in communication journals that addressed our issue of interest. To expand the pool of empirical studies, we cast our net wider to include work from the areas of Human-Computer Interaction (HCI), Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW), and System Sciences. All of these disciplines explicitly address issues of organizational communication, though often from the standpoint of designing (as opposed to using) technology to facilitate particular outcomes. We restricted our review to papers that focused on one or more of the following five technologies that are commonly classified as "social media": wikis, SNSs, blogs, social tagging applications, and microblogs. Once a relevant article was identified, we reviewed the articles cited by that work to identify additional material. This process was repeated until no new literature was revealed.

We reviewed this set of studies with two specific questions in mind: (a) What affordances commonly emerged from social media use in organizations? (b) How did these social media affordances differ from those enabled by other forms of organizational CMC technologies? To answer the first question, we used a two-stage inductive coding scheme. In the first stage, we examined each paper to determine what new affordances the technology enabled that users did not experience before its introduction. We sorted papers with similar affordances into categories and revised those categories as we read more papers. Categorization was not mutually exclusive in that papers could be placed in multiple categories. Four distinct affordances emerged from this stage of analysis: visibility, persistence, editability, and association. In the second stage, we examined all papers within each category to enumerate a list of the specific technology features that interacted with the organizational context to produce that affordance. We followed the same process of comparison and recategorization that we conducted in the first stage. The resulting lists of features for the four affordances can be found in Tables 7.2 to 7.5.

To answer the second question, we created Table 7.1, which lists the five types of social media that were the focus of our analysis as well as a list of traditional (nonsocial media) CMC technologies—this list of nonsocial Media CMC was compiled using examples taken from Culnan and Markus (1987) and Rice and Gattiker (2001). In this table we also provide examples of types of popular forms of social media and traditional CMC applications used outside of and within (enterprise applications) organizations. We then ranked each of these types of technologies based on the degree (high to low) to which they enable each of the four affordances uncovered in our review. As the table shows, more traditional forms of organizational CMC enable some of these affordances, but lack a consistent high distribution of these affordances across the four categories. For example, e-mail certainly affords editability because users can carefully craft messages prior to sending, and the medium has high persistence for individual users who can save, store, and search through their own messages. However, e-mail does not afford much visibility into other's communications, as the messages a person receives are limited to those addresses

Table 7.1 Comparison of Affordances Across across Social Media and Bbetween Social Media and other Organizational CMCs

Technology	*Example Applications*		*Affordances*			
	Public	*Organization*	*Visibility*	*Editability*	*Persistence*	*Association*
SOCIAL MEDIA						
Wikis	Wikipedia	Socialtext , MediaWiki	High	High	High	High
Social Networking Applications (SNA)	Facebook	IBM's Social Blue Sales Force's Chatter	High	High	High	High
Blogs	Wordpress, Blogger,	Most can be installed in organization	High	High	High	High
Social Tagging	Delicious	IBM's Dogear; PARC's SparTag	High	High	High	High
Microblogging	Twitter	Yammer	High	High	High	High
OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL CMC						
Instant Messaging (can be recorded, but rarely is)	AOL Instant Messenger, GChat	Jabber	Low	Med.	Low	Low
E-mail	Hotmail, Gmail	Outlook Exchange	Low-High	High	High	Low
Teleconferencing (can be recorded)	Skype	Webex	Low	Med.	Med.	Med.
Shared Database	Dropbox	Microsoft Access/ Sharepoint	Low-High	Med.	High	Low

indicated by the message's sender. Social media, by contrast, rate uniformly high on their ability to foster these four affordances. We argue that in combination, visibility, persistence, editability, and association are four affordances that help to characterize what is new and, quite possibly, consequential about social media for organizational communication processes.

In the following sections we review each of these affordances individually. For each affordance we first briefly discuss how the concept has been addressed in communication technology scholarship (not solely in regards to organizational social media). We then review the literature to exhibit how use of the features of social media creates these specific affordances in organizational contexts.

Visibility

The papers in our sample suggested that social media afford users the ability to make their behaviors, knowledge, preferences, and communication network connections that were once invisible (or at least very hard to see) visible to others in the organization. Our notion of visibility is tied to the amount of effort people must expend to locate information. As research shows, if people perceive that information is difficult to access, or they do not know what information exists for them to access, they will likely not seek it out (Brown & Duguid, 2001). In this regard, information about people's work behaviors, tasks, knowledge, or whatever else, though it may be theoretically available for people to uncover, may be, for all intents and purposes, invisible. Additionally, individuals may be functionally *invisible* to others because even those colocated may not have domain knowledge to understand the work practice of someone form a different specialty (Cross, Borgatti, & Parker, 2003; Nardi & Engeström, 1999).

If social media technologies enable people to easily and effortlessly *see* information about someone else, we say that the technology was used to make that person's knowledge visible. Bregman and Haythornthwaite (2001) note that visibility "refers to the means, methods, and opportunities for presentation; in our usage it primarily addresses the speakers' concerns with the presentation of self" (p. 5). Whether through posts, comments, status updates, votes, friending, revisions, or pictures, contributions to social media are visible to all who have access to the system. Scholars have noted that social media's ability to provide increased visibility into both behaviors and information separates them from other technologies and creates unique consequences (boyd, 2010; Grudin, 2006). Other forms of CMC common in organizations, such as e-mail or instant messaging, make information visible, but not in the communal manner afforded by social media.

Table 7.2 provides an overview of which features of various social media were found by authors to afford visibility when the organizational need arose.

Below, we outline three types of information or actions that are made visible through the use of social media in organizations: (a) work behavior, (b) metaknowledge, and (c) organizational activity streams.

Table 7.2 Social Media Features Affording Visibility

Social Media Technology	*Features Affording Visibility*	*Illustration in Literature*
Wikis	• Displays text and graphic content contributions • List of edits to entries • Notification when changes have been made • to entries Personal Profiles	(Danis & Singer, 2008; Holtzblatt et al., 2010; Kosonen & Kianto, 2009)
Social Networking Sites	• Status updates • Pushes activity to connections • Lists of "friends" or connections • Personal Profiles • Visible in Search Engines • Allows comments and opinion expression (e.g., the "like button") on content • Recommender algorithm shows similar others	(DiMicco et al., 2009; Farzan et al., 2008; Holtzblatt & Tierney, 2011)
Blogs	• Content publishing consisting of text, video or audio • Pushes content to subscribers • Personal Profiles A • llows comments on content • Entries indexed by search enginesInbound links	(Brzozowski et al., 2009; Efimova & Grudin, 2007; Farrell et al., 2008; Wattal et al., 2009; Yardi et al., 2009)
Social Tagging	• Content publishing consisting of comments and descriptions of entries • Displays number of people who bookmarked same content • Pushes content to subscribers • Shows others with similar entries	(Damianos et al., 2007; Millen & Feinberg, 2006; Muller et al., 2006; Pan & Millen, 2008; Thom-Santelli & Muller, 2007)
Microblogging	• Content publishing consisting of text or hyperlinks (limited in number of characters) • Pushes content to subscribers • Shows subscribers and those to whom user subscribes • Personal profiles, indexed by search engines	(Schondienst et al., 2011; Zhang et al., 2010; Zhao & Rosson, 2009)

Work Behavior. One of the most common and basic features of social media is that they present content communally, which means contributions can be easily located and viewed by other employees. Efimova and Grudin (2008) interviewed 34 employee bloggers at Microsoft regarding the reasons why individuals maintained organizational blogs and how they perceived readership.

Bloggers interviewed felt the ability to self-publish content allowed employees to more easily communicate directly about work. The authors concluded that "In employee weblogs, ideas that were previously unarticulated or hidden in personal archives become visible, interlinked, and searchable" (p. 11). Farrell, Kellogg, and Thomas (2008) reviewed studies on the use of internal blogs, wikis, social tagging, and SNS at IBM[4] and also concluded that social media helped people communicate and share work across organizational boundaries. Specifically, they noted how comments on blogs could result in far-reaching organizational conversations and that the iterative nature of wiki contributions could sustain and share communication.

The affordance of visibility was also found in organizational microblog use. Zhang, Qu, Cody, and Wu (2010) studied use of the microblogging tool Yammer by 458 employees inside a Fortune 500 company. The researchers manually coded 300 Yammer messages and found the most commonly shared material was internal company news. They commented that the communal nature of the tool afforded employees "a place to publish their local news at the corporate level, which was close to impossible to do previously" (p. 126). Social tagging applications served a similar function of publicizing behavioral information to the organization. Pan and Millen (2008) conducted a year-long field study of social tagging at a large, multinational company to understand how the tool was used by different work groups. Results suggested that bookmarks reflected the respective goals of business units. The research-focused group tagged more external, trend-focused bookmarks while headquarters and software development employees tagged more internal material. The researchers noted "the very act of creating a bookmark is an explicit indicator of the utility or value of the internet and intranet information resource" (p. 9).

Users of social media in organizations sometimes recognized the visibility of their work behavior afforded by the use of the technology, and were strategic in presenting themselves to others. For example, in their analysis of wiki use over 20 months at an industrial research organization, Danis and Singer (2008) found that workers recognized that posting information to a wiki might provide stakeholders (such as funders) access to works-in-progress. Because employees wanted to be seen as competent, and viewed wiki contributions as "official" communication, workers often documented with other less visible media—like access-controlled project repositories—that did not permit outsiders to see content (Danis & Singer, 2008, p. 7). Similarly, Holtzblatt, Damianos, and Weiss (2010) interviewed 26 wiki users at MITRE, a technology research organization, and found that individuals were, "uncomfortable sharing documents that were still in a draft state" and instead kept unfinished content in personal repositories such as hard drives and e-mail systems (p. 4667). These examples of wiki use and nonuse indicate that the features of the technology, in this case communal publication of material, afforded workers ways to make communication more or less visible.

Many employees valued the visibility of communication possible through social media. Thom-Santelli and Muller (2007) interviewed 40 users of IBM's

dogear social tagging tool regarding the motivations behind the tags chosen. Results indicated that employees found the visibility of the social media useful for attracting the attention of specific organizational audiences. In another study conducted at a large communication technology company, Kosonen and Kianto (2009) held two group interviews to examine how employees were using wikis to manage information. Employees noted that the open nature of social media encouraged informal collaboration and supported knowledge sharing among workers. Many employees liked that the "open-source ideology" afforded by social media opened communication and eliminated decisions regarding who to include, a choice workers faced when using other CMCs (p. 27). Work by Damianos, Cuomo, Griffith, Hirst, and Smallwood (2007), who studied the introduction of a social tagging system at MITRE, and research by Millen and Feinberg (2006), which examined 8 months use of the dogear tool at IBM, revealed that despite options to keep tags private, the overwhelming majority of users chose to make information publicly available to others. Public tags could be used both to find desired information and to direct others' attention to specific content.

Metaknowledge. The visibility of social media can also provide metaknowledge about the type of people in the organization and what they may know. As one example, DiMicco, Geyer, Millen, Dugan, and Brownholtz (2009) reviewed three months of activity by 285 IBM employees on a internal SNS named Beehive and interviewed nine participants to determine how individuals used the tool. Beehive let employees create profile pages that contained photos, corporate directory information, and a summary of content contributed by the individual. Findings showed employees used the visible information contributed to learn more about the backgrounds, interests, and activities of coworkers (DiMicco et al, 2009). In another instance, Muller, Ehrlich, and Farrell (2006) investigated user behaviors at IBM following the implementation of a prototype technology that allowed workers to supplement corporate directory information with tags that would be visible to others. Usage data found that 79% of users tagged content about themselves and for more than half (51%) of users this constituted their only tagging activity. The authors noted that although this form of overt self-presentation could be seen as selfish, it might also help inform others of skills available for potential collaborations (Muller et al., 2006).

Shami, Ehrlich, Gay, and Hancock (2009) surveyed 67 users of an expertise locater system in a global technology company and found that employees were more likely to contact users of social media for information. Workers felt social media users were both more knowledgeable in particular domains and were more likely to respond to inquiries. John and Seligman (2006) discussed how collaborative tags may be used to identify experts in an organization and demonstrated how this information could be integrated into a communication system at the business communication company Avaya. The researchers noted that an underlying premise of their approach to expertise identification was

that tags "may be presumed to be representative of user interests and expertise" (p. 1). This ability to advertise one's areas of knowledge may promote social media use in organizations. Schondienst, Krasnova, Gunther, and Riehle (2011) asked survey respondents familiar with microblogging to imagine a "Twitter-like" tool was in use at their place of work, and collected responses regarding expected behaviors and outcomes. Data from 82 individuals found that workers who believed microblogging use could increase one's reputation were the most likely to post material or follow others' contributions.

Organizational Activity Streams. Social media afford individuals the ability to see information related to the status of ongoing activities in the organization. Zhao and Rosson (2009) interviewed 11 Twitter users at a large IT company and asked how microblogging might influence organizational communication. Respondents felt microblogging could assist in "keeping a pulse on what is going on in others' minds" by providing access to streams of comments from individuals across the organization (p. 249). In another study, Brzozowski (2009) reviewed the use of social media tools at HP and described the design of a tool that used contributions to blogs, wikis, and social tagging tools to help identify novel and popular organizational content. He commented that employees viewed social media content in the company as "a way to orient themselves in the organization" (p. 7).

The ability to see coworker activity through social media use also influenced decisions to actively communicate. To examine what influenced blog adoption in organizations, Wattal, Racherla, and Mandviwalla (2009) examined log data from 2,667 employees at a multinational electronics corporation. The study found that blog use by one's manager and others in one's office was associated with a greater likelihood of individual blog use. Blog participation can also be influenced by the knowledge one has about the viewers of contributed material. Yardi, Golder, and Brzozowski (2009) analyzed a year of log data on an internal blog server at a global technology company and interviewed 96 employee bloggers of various activity levels. Workers expected posting material to social media to provide increased social recognition in the organization, and lack of recognition deterred continued participation. In a related study conducted at the same organization, analysis of log data revealed that blog authors published more frequently if they saw they received many comments on prior posts (a visible form of information), but the number of actual clicks on one's blog (not visible) had no effect (Brzozowski, Sandholm, & Hogg, 2009).

Farzan et al. (2008) studied the implementation of an incentive system in IBM's Beehive SNS that was designed to motivate contributions of photographs, lists, comments, and profile updates by providing points and labels to users for adding information. An experiment comparing employee SNS use in the incentive condition against that of those in a nonincentive condition found the visible incentives increased contributions. Additionally, interviews with six

employees in the incentive condition found that users monitored and compared their standing relative to coworkers.

Persistence

Communication is persistent if it remains accessible in the same form as the original display after the actor has finished his or her presentation (Bregman & Haythornthwaite, 2001; Donath, Karahalios, & Viegas, 1999). This affordance of persistence has also been referred to as "reviewability" (Clark & Brennan, 1991), "recordability" (Hancock, Toma, & Ellison, 2007), or "permanence" (Whittaker, 2003). When a poster to a blog or SNS logs out, that information remains available to users and does not expire or disappear. In technologies such as instant messaging or video-conferencing, the conversation is normally bound in time, and a record of the interaction does not exist beyond what participants remember. Because social media enable conversations that persist past the time of their initial posts, communicative acts can have consequences long past the initial point of presentation. For example, an individual who is given an assignment during a teleconference or over an instant message conversation may later find another coworker claims responsibility for the task, and have few means by which to clarify the dispute. However, if tasks are assigned via a team wiki, a communal record persists that is difficult to discount. As Erickson and Kellogg (2000) noted, "persistence opens the door to a variety of new uses and practices: persistent conversations may be searched, browsed, replayed, annotated, visualized, restructured, and recontextualized, with what are likely to be profound impacts on personal, social, and institutional practices" (p. 68). Table 7.3 provides an overview of which material features of various social media were shown to afford persistence.

Persistence can aid in the development of common ground in communicative settings, which has been shown to aid the transmission of complex ideas (Clark & Brennan, 1991). Having a record of previous communication can allow presentations of information to be properly contextualized and provide people with the time to better understand conversations (Gergle, Millen, Kraut, & Fussell, 2004; McCarthy, Miles, & Monk, 1991). If a worker is confused about the directions a manager gives over an instant messaging system he or she has little recourse except to ask the manager to clarify. Alternatively, if a manager gives directions using a microblog tool the individual could review the original communication in hopes of gaining understanding. Or, because the information remains over time, another user could later see the original communication and contribute with further useful information.

In what follows, we summarize three ways in which the literature shows how the affordance of persistence affects organizational action: (a) sustaining knowledge over time, (b) creating robust forms of communication, and (c) growing content.

Table 7.3 Social Media Features Affording Persistence

Social Media Technology	*Features Affording Persistence*	*Illustration in Literature*
Wikis	• History of activity and discussion recorded • Entries indexed by search engines	(Ding et al., 2007; Giordano, 2007; Grudin & Poole, 2010; Holtzblatt et al., 2010; Kane & Fichman, 2009; Majchrzak et al., 2006; Poole & Grudin, 2010; Rober & Cooper, 2011; Wagner, 2004; White & Lutters, 2007)
Social Networking Sites	• Profiles indexed by search engines • Allows catalogs of photos • Displays past activity of individuals on site	(DiMicco et al., 2009; Geyer et al., 2008; Mejova et al., 2011)
Blogs	• Links to past content • Entries indexed by search engine • Reverse chronological format provides timeline of content	(Huh et al., 2007; Jackson et al., 2007; Kolari et al., 2007)
Social Tagging	• Catalogs history of bookmarking activity • Profiles indexed by search engines • Contributions searchable	(Millen & Feinberg, 2006; M. Muller, 2007a, 2007b)
Microblogging	• Catalog of entries • Profiles indexed by search engines	(Gunther et al., 2009; Riemer & Richter, 2010)

Sustaining Knowledge Over Time. The persistence of content created and stored in social media allows the knowledge individuals contribute to the technology to develop and remain available over time. Majchrzak, Wagner, and Yates (2006) conducted a survey of 168 corporate wiki users to investigate if wikis are sustainable in organizations, what benefits the tool might provide, and if there were different types of content contributors. Respondents reported that wikis could remain active over the course of months, and wikis that persisted saw increased participation over time. Kolari et al. (2007) examined internal blogs at IBM over a three-year period to explore the network structure of blog communication that developed inside the organization. Analysis of the degree of distribution of blog users and their respective posts showed that participation created a scale-free network in which a minority of contributors garnered the majority of attention. One implication of this network formation is that even if a moderate number of blogs or bloggers ceased activity in the network it would not significantly affect the ability of users to connect to information of interest on others' blogs. Jackson, Yates, and Orlikowski

(2007) also studied internal blog use by exploring participation in a global IT company. The authors analyzed usage statistics, interviewing heavy and non-blog-users, and conducted a web-based survey of different types of blog users identified through use (heavy, medium, and low). Survey results indicated that high blog use was not required in order for organizational members to perceive value from the information available (Jackson et al., 2007).

Research indicates that wikis, even more so than other social media tools, have afforded individuals the opportunity to work over long stretches of time in an asynchronous, collaborative, and distributed manner. In their case study of wiki use at MITRE, Holtzblatt et al., (2010) noted that wikis afforded individuals the means to independently add to tables and lists over time, providing a distinct advantage to the existing document-based method where workers modify the content of previous contributors. Additionally, Kane and Fichman (2009) reviewed attempts to utilize wikis in academic settings and found individuals were willing to use the technology to share and reuse current materials but were reluctant to engage in discussion about content. White and Lutters (2007) conducted phone interviews with seven individuals regarded as champions of wiki use at their respective organizations and concluded that wikis are effective as "a flexible knowledge repository" (p. 2). Similarly, in tracing the role of wikis relative to other knowledge management technologies, Wagner (2004) noted wikis can be particularly effective in ad hoc work—like addressing an organizational crisis—because they can generate information incrementally, and in a centralized form that is historically indexed. For example Majchrzak, Jarvenpaa, and Hollingshead (2007) documented how the use of a wiki in the wake of Hurricane Katrina allowed individuals across the world to quickly contribute and coordinate information regarding rescue and recovery efforts. Only 4 days after the hurricane the wiki was being accessed more than 1 million times a day and hosted information related to finding missing people, assisting relocation efforts, and locating government assistance.

Creating Robust Forms of Communication. When information and communications are persistent, content can be reused and reanalyzed over time to help refine it and make it more useful and robust. By "robust" we mean how difficult it is to destroy, compromise, or abandon content. In their review of social media use at IBM, Farrell et al. (2008) argued that the technologies could create a more "socially resilient enterprise" because "tracking and recording various interactions allows the possibility of *analyzing* interactions over time to improve their effectiveness and efficiency" (p. 3). In a specific example, Millen and Feinberg (2006) conducted an eight-month field study at IBM of how workers searched for information on the dogear social bookmarking tool. Usage data indicated that workers nearly universally viewed existing tags when searching for information, and commonly reused tags or consulted other individuals' lists of tags. Keeping existing tags and lists available to subsequent users of the social media made reuse easier and increased the likelihood that material would be popularized through ongoing use.

Social media also afford reuse of organizational content. Mejova, Schepper, Bergman, and Lu (2011) examined instances of presentation reuse in an internal file repository at IBM to explore why people would choose to reuse an existing file. Results indicated that workers were significantly more likely to reuse a presentation created by an employee that they had friended on the internal SNS tool. The reuse of content in social media also supported the formation of tighter relationships within organizations. In a set of related studies at IBM, researchers concluded that the use of social tags in the company's social bookmarking system, over time, coincided with the formation of communities of practice (Muller, 2007a, 2007b). These emergent communities of practice aided organizational learning by creating pools of knowledge that could be held and displayed in social media. Similarly, in an investigation of the use of lists on a SNS inside of IBM, users interviewed by Geyer et al. (2008) mentioned the lists operated as a template for other workers looking to contribute information to the site.

Further, unlike other technologies used for organizational knowledge management, social media may not require tremendous investment or maintenance by organizational officials. Rober and Cooper (2011) presented a case study of the development of JPL Wired, a Wikipedia-like resource inside NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL). After tracing the genesis and evolution of the tool, the authors asserted that the wikis were a "bottom-up" form of media that was heavily sustained by lower-level employees. Additionally, the researchers noted that the ability to easily capture and keep employee-contributed information in social media was particularly attractive to new and early career employees. Organizational newcomers could access the wiki instead of having to ask colleagues basic questions such as where to find office supplies or what were nearby places to eat (Rober & Cooper, 2011). In their study of blog use at a large IT company, Jackson et al. (2007) also found newer workers used the social media to gain access to an established community of information and resources.

Growing Content. The nearly limitless space afforded by social media such as blogs and wikis facilitates the growth of communication through the addition of posts and pages. Huh, Bellamy, Jones, Thomas, and Erickson (2007) interviewed 14 internal bloggers at IBM and found one use of the technology was as repositories for knowledge that employees brought in from outside the organization. Poole and Grudin (2010) conducted interviews and online discussions at a large software company in an attempt to categorize types of organizational wikis. One way people used wikis was as a personal information management tool for storing materials, which allowed for the ongoing addition of relevant information. Riemer and Richter (2010) conducted a case study of microblog use at the German software company Communardo, using text analysis and seven interviews to determine if participation could be separated into different genres of use. Analysis found that organizational microbloggers who recognized that social media could hold information

for future use occasionally used the tool to record knowledge such as login identifications and meeting minutes. Though this practice was not common, the authors found that users appropriating the technology for the purpose of information storage knew information would be indexed by search engines and could be easily called upon later.

One consequence of this seemingly unlimited storage is that the content embedded in social media tools can become unwieldy over time. In discussing the use of wikis in IBM's research group, Ding, Danis, Erickson, and Kellogg (2007) noted that maintenance quickly became an issue, and Grudin and Poole (2010) found that most wikis at the software company they studied were quickly abandoned. Giordano (2007) chronicled efforts among public-health oriented nonprofits in London to use wikis for shared learning and discovered the clutter of content caused users to "trip over" entries and discouraged use (p. 271). However, social media also provide individuals with the means to find content with filters and search tools. Gunther, Krasnova, Riehle, and Schoendienst (2009) conducted four focus groups aimed at gathering individuals' perceptions about microblogging in the workplace and building a model of adoption of the technology. Comments indicated that though some individuals were concerned with being overwhelmed by information, others felt microblogging, by allowing users to control who and what information streams they follow, could be a useful tool with which to manage content.

Editability

Editability refers to the fact the individuals can spend a good deal of time and effort crafting and recrafting a communicative act before it is viewed by others (Walther, 1993). Dennis, Fuller, and Valacich (2008) describe a similar affordance, rehearsability, that they assert enables a sender to compose a message with the exact meaning that he or she intends. Editability is a function of two aspects of an interaction: communication formed in isolation from others, and asynchronicity. A speaker need not worry about regulating nonverbal cues or involuntary reactions when using an asynchronous CMC; instead, they can focus on the form of the message they hope to convey. When communicating through a teleconferencing technology people can view the physical displays and reactions of counterparts. But when using social media tools, users need not worry about nonverbal cues.

Editability can also refer to the ability of an individual to modify or revise content they have already communicated (Rice, 1987), including straightforward acts such as editing a spelling error or deleting content. For example, an individual who includes a typographical error in an e-mail can do little to fix this mistake, and anyone viewing that e-mail will see the error. Users of a wiki, blog, or SNS can correct errors they identify and later viewers may never know a mistake occurred. Thus, the communicator retains some degree of control over content after the original communicative display. In Table 7.4, we

Table 7.4 Social Media Features Affording Editability

Social Media Technology	*Features Affording Editability*	*Illustration in Literature*
Wikis	• Asynchronous text-based entries • Previous history of edits available • Revisions permissible	(Arazy et al., 2009; Danis & Singer, 2008; Giordano, 2007; Grudin & Poole, 2010; Hasan & Pfaff, 2006; Holtzblatt et al., 2010; Yates et al., 2010)
Social Networking Sites	• Asynchronous text-based entries • Revision of own content on site permissible • Content contributions of others on individual's site can be deleted	(Dugan et al., 2008; Farzan et al., 2008)
Blogs	• Asynchronous text-based entries • Revision of content on own site permissible	(Huh et al., 2007)
Social Tagging	• Asynchronous text-based entries • Revision of content on own site permissible • Previous entries of others recommended for potential re-use	(Farrell et al., 2007; Muller et al., 2006; Thom-Santelli et al., 2008)
Microblogging	• Asynchronous text-based entries • Contributions on own site can be deleted	(Riemer & Richter, 2010)

indicate which material features of various social media were shown to afford editability.

By offering individuals the time to craft and compose messages, editability allows for more purposeful communication that may aid with message fidelity and comprehension. Dennis, Fuller, and Valacich (2008) argue that low synchronicity in a communication medium is particularly useful when the organization's goal is to convey information, or share knowledge that was previously unknown. Additionally, editability allows communicators to take into consideration the context in which their message is likely to be viewed (or later, after it was made, view the actual context in which it was viewed) and tailor their ideas accordingly.

In the sections below, we summarize three ways in which the literature suggests that the affordance of editability is used to shape behavior: (a) regulating personal expressions, (b) targeting content, and (c) improving information quality.

Regulating Personal Expressions. The editability of content entered into social media allows users to strategically manipulate the ways that personal information is shared with others. For example, as discussed earlier, IBM's SNS contained an "About You" feature that allowed people to determine what information they wanted displayed to others in their personal profiles. Dugan et al. (2008) reviewed usage of the SNS over eight months and found that the percentage of users taking advantage of the free-form "About You" feature was higher than rates for other content categories such as lists, photographs, or comments. Furthermore, results from Farzan et al.'s (2008) experiment regarding incentives for SNS participation at IBM suggested many users patterned contributions in a way that would increase recognition from others and garner rewards. Similarly, studies examining social tagging at IBM found that organizational members used the ability to dictate labels as a form of impression management (Muller, Ehrlich, & Farrell, 2006) and "observed that most people tended to be extremely aware of tagging as a social activity. People think about how others will react to the tags they give" (Farrell, Lau, Wilcox, Nusser, & Muller, 2007, p. 99).

Targeting Content. Studies indicated that users of social media often tailor messages for specific audiences. Because they have a high level of editorial control, communicators using social media can time when they present information and reshape messages based on the perceived responses from audiences. For example, research on the use of wikis in organizations revealed that individuals are reluctant to share works in progress and that they use the technology to control when particular audiences can view material by strategically timing when they contribute (Danis & Singer, 2008; Giordano, 2007; Holtzblatt et al., 2010). In their study of wiki implementation at a software company, Grudin and Poole (2010) found that users took advantage of the ability to control contributions and commented that users "created content to share information opportunistically" (p. 4). Similarly, interviews with organizational bloggers at IBM by Huh et al. (2007) indicated that participants often had an audience in mind when sharing knowledge and provided information they thought would appeal to potential viewers. Although social media can share information widely, the editability afforded by technology provides users with greater control of how content is viewed by others.

Improving Information Quality. Social media allows employees to edit, revise, and alter organizational content long after the time it is first displayed. A survey by Arazy, Gellatly, Soobaek, and Patterson (2009) of 919 wiki users at IBM found that users valued the technology's flexibility and the "change control" offered, including the maintenance of revisions (p. 62). Workers at a research organization who were interviewed by Danis and Singer (2008) reported that the ability to review and edit content was fundamental to the perceived value of the technology resulting in greater collaboration and a more valuable end product.

Hasan and Pfaff (2006) examined four cases of wiki implementation in organizations in an effort to investigate the opportunities for knowledge sharing presented by the technology. The authors concluded that because it was so easy to publish and maintain content on wikis, novices—not just technical experts—would likely use social media to contribute domain specific information. Research by Yates, Wagner, and Majchrzak (2010), which explored content changes that organizational members made to wiki pages found that some people in the organization assumed responsibility for editing and integrating wiki content, and that willingness to assume this role was not related to one's position in a company. By affording the open-editing of content, wikis provided individuals with a way to take control over the contributions provided by others in a way not available through other CMCs. Thom-Santelli, Muller, and Millen (2008) interviewed 33 users of a social tagging system at IBM and found participants anticipated how others would find information and shaped contributions accordingly. Riemer and Richter (2010) coded the text of microblogging contributions in a German software provider and found that workers often shared messages in order to coordinate ongoing or future activities. By enabling participants to carefully craft communication, the editability afforded by social media provided individuals with the opportunity to revise, reshape, and coordinate content more easily than with existing CMCs.

Association

Associations are established connections between individuals, between individuals and content, or between an actor and a presentation. Associations in social media exist in two forms. The first type of association, of a person to another individual, is most commonly referred to as a social tie. A social tie is best expressed through one's friends on a SNS, following a microblogger, or subscribing to another's tags. This type of association indicates an explicit relationship, albeit of no discernible strength, between two people. Over e-mail, unless someone is included on a communication exchange, there is little information displayed regarding whom individuals communicate with and what the nature of a relationship may entail. boyd & Ellison (2007) argue that a focus on relations is one of the defining characteristics of SNSs. As they noted, "What makes social network sites unique is not that they allow individuals to meet strangers, but rather that they enable users to articulate and make visible their social networks" (p. 211). The other form of association is of an individual to a piece of information. Exemplars of this form of association are a wiki contribution, a blog contribution, or the tagging of an article. The association displayed here is of an individual with a piece of information that they have either created or recognized. Alternatively, a database system that houses documents may not display who contributed specific information, and even if it does it would only be revealed to those who interact with that material. Table 7.5 indicates which material features of various social media were shown to afford association.

Table 7.5 Social Media Features Affording Association

Social Media Technology	*Features Affording Association*	*Illustration in Literature*
Wikis	• List of editors for each entry • List of privileges, rights and contributions in profiles	(Ding et al., 2007)
Social Networking Sites	• Relations to others displayed (e.g., Friends) • Comments and opinion (e.g., "Like" Button) on entries • Activity of related others displayed on page	(Chen et al, 2009; Daly et al., 2010; DiMicco, Geyer, et al., 2009; DiMicco, Millen, et al., 2008; Farzan et al., 2009; Ferron, et al., 2010; Freyne et al., 2010; Steinfield et al., 2009; Wu et al., 2010)
Blogs	• Links to other blogs (both on page and in entries) • Identifies commenters with links to profiles or personal sites	(Dugan et al., 2010; Jackson et al., 2007)
Social Tagging	• List of individuals who bookmarked same content • Displays individuals of whom user has subscribed to receive content (e.g., fans) • Shows topic to which user has subscription to receive content	(Millen & Feinberg, 2006; Thom-Santelli, Cosley & Gay, 2010; Thom-Santelli, Muller, & Millen, 2008)
Microblogging	• Displays those to whom user receives and sends content (e.g., followers and following) • Use of tags to show reuse of content or directed messages (e.g., @) • Use of tags to show contribution to topic (e.g., #)	(Ehrlich & Shami, 2010; Zhang et al., 2010)

Although associations are most often conceptualized as actor-initiated (e.g., friending someone on Facebook), social media differ from other forms of CMC in that recommendations for additional association are often provided by the technology itself (e.g., Facebook suggesting people you may know or the prompting of related bookmark tags on Delicious). Numerous social media applications such as SNSs and social tagging use algorithms to recommend content and associations to users based on patterns of use or contributed information.

The associations of people to other people, people to content, or content to content afforded by social media have potential implications for both users and potential audiences. First, research has shown that relationships formed through a variety of CMC media can provide individuals with a form of social capital (Blanchard & Horan, 1998; DiMaggio, Hargittai, Neuman, &

Robinson, 2001; Wellman, Haase, Witte, & Hampton, 2001). Contrary to some arguments that online communication would isolate users, this line of research has shown that the connectivity afforded by CMC can create a bridge between individuals, supplement existing relationships, and help build a greater sense of community. Specific to social media use (but not in an organizational setting), Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe (2007) found that use of the SNS Facebook provided college students with increased social capital among peers. Social media afford a number of different associations through both active connections and those suggested through the features of the technology.

Below, we outline three outcomes that the literature suggests arise when social media afford association with other individuals or content: (a) supporting social connection, (b) access to relevant information, and (c) enabling emergent connection.

Supporting Social Connection. Social media afford individuals a way to make associations more explicit. One way in which this explicitness is achieved is through the signaling of relationships with others. For example Thom-Santelli et al. (2008) classified different types of social tagging practices in a large technology organization based on interviews with users and found that workers are often "concerned with using tags to articulate social connections to others in the group" (p. 1042). Additionally, interviews with and log data from users of an SNS inside of IBM revealed that employees used the technology to establish associations with individuals about whom they knew little, and, unlike in nonorganizational contexts, there was less SNS activity among close, colocated colleagues (DiMicco, Geyer, et al., 2009; DiMicco, Millen, et al., 2008).

The ability to forge new associations between people and content through social media influenced the development of social capital in organizations. Steinfield, DiMicco, Ellison, and Lampe (2009) surveyed users of a SNS at IBM regarding use of the technology and social capital and found that increased usage of the tool was correlated with increased social capital among new and existing relationships. Subsequently Wu, DiMicco, and Millen (2010) surveyed IBM SNS users regarding their perceived personal and professional closeness to coworkers. The study looked at the relationship between perceived closeness and behaviors on the SNS site such as viewing a coworker's page, contributing content, or friending others. The results of a regression analysis found that explicit friendship connections, recommendations of content to another person, and time spent viewing another's content were all associated with closeness between coworkers. Ferron, Frassoni, Massa, Napolitano, and Setti (2010) also studied the issue of organizational SNS use and social capital. The researchers surveyed more than 300 employees at an Italian research institute and found workers with SNS access reported significantly higher levels of social capital than those without SNS access.

Beyond increasing social capital of individual users, the use of social media and its support for associations may facilitate the creation of a larger com-

munity to support employees. Jackson et al.'s (2007) interviews of bloggers at a large technology company found that users viewed participation as a way to associate with others in the organization, become a part of a community, and build personal networks. Even in organizational microblog use, where associations are not labeled as friendship connections, use may help individuals feel closer to the rest of the company. Ehrlich and Shami (2010) analyzed the messages of 34 IBM employees using an internal microblogging tool, and interviewed 25 of the identified users in order to examine the purposes for participation. The study concluded that use of the technology, particularly among distributed workers, helped individuals feel closer to the rest of the company by providing an ongoing sense of what was happening. Social media increased social connections by facilitating easy affiliation and interactions among users.

Access to Relevant Information. In addition to the creation of person-to-person ties, individuals also established explicit associations with the content found in social media. For example interviews with wiki users at IBM by Ding et al. (2007) revealed that the use of keywords and tags in entries served as a way for users to view the explicit connections among projects (2007). In another instance of social media use, Millen and Feinberg (2006) examined the social tagging behaviors of IBM employees and found that nearly all individuals using a social tagging application looked at the tags or bookmarks of other individuals at some point. Thus associations should not be thought of merely as existing ties, but also pointers to potential relationships between content.

Associations to information can also benefit the organization by allowing existing experts to share knowledge. Thom-Santelli, Cosley, and Gay (2010) studied the implementation of a social tagging system at a museum gallery, comparing the tagging behaviors of 15 novices with those of 15 experts. Results indicated that experts contributed more content to the system and were more likely to down-vote the tags of novices, causing the researchers to conclude that the tool afforded experts a chance to act in a manner that reaffirmed their superior knowledge. By making explicit associations regarding the source, quality, and usefulness of information, social media may improve content use in organizations.

Enabling Emergent Connection. In addition to supporting the active, purposeful creation of actor-initiated connections, features such as rankings and recommendations in social media afforded emergent forms of associations and suggested ways to improve existing associations or initiate new ones. For example Zhang et al. (2010) studied the use of the microblog tool Yammer at a global Fortune 500 company, coding 300 random messages, interviewing 18 users, and conducting a survey with 160 employee responses. More than half of users responding to the survey indicated the microblog tool helped them connect with strangers. The researchers suggested that a feature recommending people to follow on the microblog tool may facilitate connections, though

in this particular case that feature was not widely used. In another study of recommender systems in organizational social media Freyne, Berkovsky, Daly, and Geyer (2010) extracted log data on instances when IBM SNS users clicked on information in the activity stream of friends' behaviors. Then, offline, the researchers entered in the activity stream information, applied an algorithm to help identify information that would be relevant to the user, and compared the results to the user's actual clicks. Results suggested that the use of algorithms to process content on an organizational SNS could help personalize news delivered to users and prevent information overload. Showing how social media can match users with helpful content, Dugan, Geyer, and Millen (2010) studied reactions to an application at IBM that matched blog authors with topics of interest. Analysis found that the feature resulted in increased blog traffic and interactivity among users.

These emergent associations generated by social media tools are unique in that single uses of the technology afford additional opportunities for relevant interaction with people and content. In other words, the tools helped people develop associations to others or information beyond the intentions of the original communicative act. For example, Farzan, DiMicco, and Brownholtz (2009) implemented a rating system in IBM's SNS Beehive that allowed selected users to promote content to others by applying a visible badge to content that indicates material of interest to another user. This feature was effective in getting workers to view more diverse sources of information. Additionally, research by Shami et al. (2009) on the use of social media to identify expertise in IBM found that individuals were more likely to contact others active in social media at the company because users not only signaled expertise but also that they may be more likely to respond to inquiries. It is important to note that though recommender systems have been shown to be effective in increasing connections among organizational SNS users, different forms of recommendation systems may make certain associations easier to form, more salient, and more likely to be accepted by individuals. In related studies, researchers found that implementation of four different friend recommender systems in the SNS at IBM all expanded friend networks in different ways (Chen, Geyer, Dugan, Muller, & Guy, 2009), and concluded that organizations might want to try different algorithms to support connections in order to find a way to support desired associations (Daly, Geyer, & Millen, 2010).

Implications of Social Media Affordances for Organizational Communication Processes

As we have demonstrated in the previous section, the use of social media across various organizational contexts seems to result in at least four relatively constant affordances for organizational communication: a high degree of visibility, persistence, editability, and association. Given the prevalence of these affordances in the current body of research on social media use in organizations (see Tables 7.2 to 7.5 for summary), we argue that communication

scholars should take seriously these affordances in their theorizing about various communicative processes that occur within and constitute organizations. Certainly, other CMC technologies have features that are used to produce occasions of these four affordances. A database system entry may have the same visibility of a blog post, a worker may carefully craft an e-mail just as she would a wiki entry, an employee may record and look back through an instant message conversation just like a microblog thread, and viewing a teleconference could provide similar insights in association as seeing one's friend list on an SNS. However, we argue that social media differ in that they afford *all* of these four communicative outcomes simultaneously, and consistently in an organizational setting. The potential presence of all four of these affordances may offer users greater flexibility in the ways that they employ these communication technologies and enact behaviors with them, which in turn could influence organizational communication processes.

In the following section we conduct a thought exercise by considering how these four social media affordances might alter three processes that have, historically, been of great theoretical concern to organizational communication scholars: socialization, information sharing, and power relations. These three processes were chosen because, as we will discuss, researchers have already recognized, either implicitly or explicitly, that the four social media affordances identified are relevant to these areas of organizational communication theory. By no means do we attempt an exhaustive theoretical exposition of how social media affordances alter the dynamics of these three communication processes, nor do we claim that these are the only constructs affected by social media use. Rather, we use this thought exercise to show the usefulness of the affordance typology established above for integrating social media research into existing organizational communication concerns. In conducting this thought exercise, we raise a number of potential research questions that scholars might explore when examining the implications of social media affordances for each of these three processes (Tables 7.6 to 7.8). As these potential research questions reveal, there are many ways in which social media use in organizations may alter dynamics important to organizational processes. Although intended only to be examples of the utility of adopting an affordance approach, our application of visibility, persistence, editability, and association makes it clear that seemingly stable scholarly knowledge may become more volatile as social media enter into organizational practice. We hope that the exercise conducted below, and the potential research questions it inspires, will seed ideas for research that focuses specifically on how social media use is implicated in the accomplishment of organizational communication.

Socialization

Research on socialization has a long history in the field of organizational communication (Feldman, 1976; Jablin, 1984; Miller & Jablin, 1991; Stohl, 1986; Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Communication is the primary avenue

through which individuals manage the uncertainty related to entering a new organizational setting (Jablin, 2001), and research has shown that socialization outcomes can be influenced by the medium through which organizational messages are communicated (Wesson & Gogus, 2005). As Flanagin and Waldeck (2004) noted about the increase in communication technologies available to organizations, "in addition to understanding the dynamics of traditional socialization, researchers must examine how advanced technologies alter the nature and content of socialization-related communication" (p. 138). We consider the ways in which social media affordances might affect processes related to three of the most commonly discussed topics related to socialization (a) people processing tactics, (b) information seeking, and (c) relationship formation. Table 7.6 highlights some key research questions that should be explored to understand how the affordances of visibility, persistence, editability, and association affect these three processes.

People Processing Tactics. In a seminal discussion of socialization tactics, Van Maanen and Schein (1979) developed a framework for the dimensions of organizational people processing. They noted that tactics used by organizations could be divided into two main categories: (a) Custodial people processing tactics designed in a formal, singular form aimed at providing a uniform experience for workers, or (b) an innovative approach offering flexible, informal tactics aimed at supporting individual experiences. The principle guiding the choice of people processing dimensions was that an organization's socialization strategy should match the context of the job an individual is entering. However, the visibility afforded by social media may undermine organizational efforts to provide a distinct socialization strategy. For instance, because social media used in organizations have been demonstrated to support widespread informal communication, even among people who do not know each other personally (Zhao & Rosson, 2009), social media use may undermine formal socialization efforts based on strict control of information doled out to employees. Similarly, the persistence afforded by social media, which offers employees the ability to view and search records of communication, may conflict with organizational efforts to structure the timing of information given to employees. Both the visibility and persistence of information may result in diverse socialization experiences for employees and allow greater choice regarding the material that employees access or encounter.

Information Seeking. Organizational entry is a time of great uncertainty for employees as they seek information about roles, norms, and appropriate behaviors (Van Maanen & Schein, 1979). Employees use a variety of communication tactics to gather information during organizational entry (Miller & Jablin, 1991) and the usefulness of information for socialization is closely related to the communication technology people use to find it (Flanagin & Waldeck, 2004). Therefore, it is important to consider how social media might afford individuals novel ways to seek information. For instance, the persistence

Table 7.6 Potential Research Questions Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Affordances and Organizational Socialization Processes

Affordances	*Research Areas in Organizational Socialization*		
	People Processing Tactics	*Information Seeking*	*Relationship Formation*
Visibility	Does the increase in visibility afforded by social media undermine formal socialization efforts?	How does the visibility afforded by social media affect decisions to seek information from others?	Will newcomers form relationships more or less quickly with individuals who post content similar to them than they will with those who do not?
Persistence	Under what conditions will the persistence afforded by social media use result in individualized versus collective socialization experiences?	Does the persistence afforded by social media use result in less active information seeking?	If new entrants to the organization find content posted by someone in the past, will they assume that the poster is still working in this content area and try to form relationships with him or her?
Editability	In an attempt to influence new members, will long-tenured organizational members edit old content to re-create organizational histories?	When looking to reduce uncertainty about organizational norms, how will information providers edit messages that are intended for select newcomers but that are disseminated to all organizational members?	Under what conditions and how will individuals edit their self-presentations to build relationships with others in the organization and what effects will the recognition that others are doing such editing have throughout the organization?
Association	Under what conditions does the development of online relationships with experienced organizational members undermine managerial socialization tactics?	If content is associated with someone whom an individual trusts, will that individual continue to seek out information, or stop because of a belief believes that his or her trusted friend has the "right" answer?	Does the increase in association afforded by social media use result in larger organizational networks?

of content, over time, may be attractive to organizational newcomers hoping to learn about the company and access information that preceded their arrival (Jackson et al., 2007). Indeed, research at IBM found that both early career employees and workers distant from the organization's headquarters used the company's SNS more heavily than others for acculturation activities like learning about issues surrounding culture and values (Thom-Santelli, Millen, & Gergle, 2011). Alternatively, the visibility afforded by social media use may result in more efficient information seeking by allowing access to more knowledge sources. An example of this occurred at IBM where researchers found that users of a microblogging platform felt they were able to find quality information more quickly than through other forms of communication (Ehrlich & Shami, 2010).

The persistence and visibility of social media can also afford information seeking that does not require direct, interpersonal social interaction. The ability for a person to seek information passively through social media extends arguments by Ramirez, Walther, Burgoon, and Sunnafrank (2002) that forms of CMC, "liberate communicators to seek information in new and unique ways. Contrary to some widely held beliefs about the nature of [technology] as a tool that constrains behavior, we contend that it frees communicators to pursue information in qualitatively significant ways" (pp. 218–219). These affordances create a qualitatively different experience because social media users can decide how visible they want their information seeking behaviors to be to others. Indeed, although social media use is most commonly associated with content contributions, studies in organizations have recognized the presence of lurkers who view content without making their presence visible to other users—a finding that holds for SNS (Farzan et al., 2008), blogs (IP & Wagner, 2008), and microblogging (Zhang et al., 2010). Because many individuals are likely to never contribute actively to an online community (Takahashi, Fujimoto, & Yamasaki, 2003), the visibility and persistence afforded by social media allow more individuals to access the information provided by heavy users (Jackson et al., 2007). Research has shown that decisions by organizational newcomers to seek information are influenced by the perceived difficulty in obtaining the information (Morrison & Vancouver, 2000). The mix of active and passive information seeking strategies afforded by social media may shift perceptions of information accessibility and future research should examine how this change might alter socialization processes and outcomes.

Relationship Formation. The associations afforded by social media can be a powerful way for employees, particularly newcomers, to establish relationships with others in an organization. Social media offer workers the opportunity to find individuals with similar interests, or discover potential mentors, particularly when they do not know others personally. For example, a social networking application might afford the means for an association with an employee at a different location with similar interests (DiMicco et al., 2008). Also, the lightweight nature of the associations, which are often

accomplished through a simple click of a computer mouse, may, in turn, facilitate the formation of a wider organizational network.

The associations afforded by social media use can also exercise a form of social influence that restricts the type of relationships formed. As one example, research on internal blogging at a large, multinational company found that managerial use was strongly related to the level of participation by employees (Wattal et al., 2009). Employees using social media may feel the need to replicate the associations made by senior employees or peers in a business unit, creating a more insular network of connections. Individuals may also want to use social media to display connections with known experts or highly regarded others, regardless of whether they intend to interact with these individuals. Thus the associations afforded by social media may promote symbolic associations that give the appearance of diversity or prestige through relationships.

Knowledge Sharing

Many organizational communication researchers are interested in the processes by which people create and transfer knowledge within and across organizational boundaries (Argote, Ingram, Levine, & Moreland, 2000; Brown & Duguid, 1998; Carlile, 2004; Cramton, 2001; Leonardi & Bailey, 2008). We consider how the affordances enabled by social media use may affect four processes that organizational communication researchers argue are central to effective knowledge sharing in organizations: (a) capturing tacit knowledge, (b) motivating knowledge contributions, (c) overcoming organizational boundaries, and (d) identifying expertise. Table 7.7 outlines a number of important research questions that arise when we consider the ways in which the affordances of visibility, persistence, editability, and association create opportunities for and constrain the knowledge sharing processes detailed below.

Capturing Tacit Knowledge One of the paramount challenges faced by organizations is how to capture and learn from the tacit knowledge held by workers (Nonaka, 1994). The visibility afforded by social media allows workers to present personal information in a publicly available setting such that they can surface many of the nuanced aspects of tasks, routines, and know-how. A case study of participation on IBM's BlogCentral platform found that blogs were used to express individuals' tacit knowledge (Huh et al., 2007). The blogs were useful for capturing tacit knowledge because talking about one's tasks in a public forum forced individuals to work hard to articulate how they conducted tasks. In essence, the visibility of the medium afforded people the opportunity to turn their tacit knowledge into explicit knowledge because they knew others were watching their actions and wanted to appear competent. However, Huh et al. also noted that users often had an audience in mind when sharing knowledge, which implies that users took advantage of the affordance of editability when communicating. If one of the leading motivations to participate in social media use in organizations is to gain recognition in an

Table 7.7 Potential Research Questions Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Affordances and Organizational Knowledge Sharing Processes

Affordances	*Research Areas in Organizational Knowledge Sharing*			
	Capturing Tacit Knowledge	*Motivating Knowledge Contributions*	*Overcoming Organizational Boundaries*	*Identifying Expertise*
Visibility	To what extent does the visible knowledge afforded by social media use reflect the tacit knowledge of workers?	Does the increase in visibility afforded by social media encourage or deter contributions of knowledge?	Does mere visibility of the activities of others through social media result in a greater understanding of other work groups?	Will organizational social media result in more accurate identifications of experts?
Persistence	Does an accumulation of poor conversions of tacit into explicit knowledge encourage or deter individuals from trying conversions yet again?	Is there a point of saturation for social media use such that large quantities of content deter further contributions?	Does the discovery of old content used by individuals from across a boundary build positive affect such that individuals are motivated to try to build mutual understanding in the here-and-now?	Can the mining of old documents (either quantitatively or qualitatively) shed light on who is and who is not an expert and can this knowledge shift current-day interactions?
Editability	Can the requirement to enter knowledge into a social media tool compel individuals to carefully articulate tacit processes such that they become explicit?	Under what conditions do individuals revise their old knowledge contributions? What effects do these revisions have on organizational learning?	As individuals from other parts of the organization find the need for information contained in social media tools that does not address their concerns, will they edit this information to align with their needs and, consequently, produce more generalized organizational knowledge?	Does the editable nature of self-presentation allow people to be deceptive about their true knowledge and, hence, alter others' perceptions of where expertise lies in the organization?
Association	Do systems that recommend associations between people or between people and content create connections that enable individuals to convert tacit into explicit knowledge?	Do associations afforded by social media use support social or task-oriented communication?	How can social media use facilitate more working relationships beyond one's existing group?	How can organizational social media use best create and support communities of expertise?

organization (DiMicco et al., 2008; Yardi, Golder, & Brzozowski, 2009) then it stands to reason that users may craft messages in ways that present them as knowledgeable even if it is not an accurate reflection of their knowledge. Future research should consider how the editability of social media influences perceptions of individuals' knowledge and whether this matches actual knowledge.

Motivating Knowledge Contributions. Traditional examinations of communal information technologies have treated decisions for individuals to contribute as discretionary (Connolly & Thorn, 1990; Kalman, Monge, Fulk, & Heino, 2002) and have been largely concerned with how to motivate users to contribute individually held knowledge (Beenen et al., 2004; Cress, Kimmerle, & Hesse, 2006). This concern is similar in much of the research on social media use in organizations, in which scholars discuss a desire amongst progenitors of these technologies to generate the greatest volume of participation and contributions possible (DiMicco et al., 2008; Dugan et al., 2010; Farzan et al., 2008). However, Yardi et al. (2009) note that internal corporate blogs create a paradox in that the goal is for employees to contribute knowledge, but the more knowledge that it is contributed the harder it is to find any specific piece of information. The persistence of content in social media means that there may come a point of diminishing returns where knowledge contributions produce more noise than value. Because research on social media in organizations is largely based on initial adoption, future work should explore whether the growth of content alters motivations to contribute knowledge.

Additionally, associations afforded by social media may do little to actually contribute to task-related knowledge contributions or organizational goals. Mirzaee, Iverson, and Khan (2008) concluded in their study of social tagging that although social media facilitated exploration of knowledge within the organization, it was not likely to be relied on in task-specific situations. One reason that social media may not be seen as valuable in task situations is that communications are often more relationally or personally oriented. For example, Zhao and Rosson (2009) interviewed organizational microbloggers and found that the medium was largely used to promote informal communication. Given the ways that social media support relations, motivating contributions may merely increase social exchanges and not necessarily increase organizational knowledge.

Overcoming Organizational Boundaries. Information and communication technologies, such as social media, are commonly viewed as a means to organize knowledge and place it in a form accessible to other organizational members (Flanagin, 2002). However, individuals often have trouble understanding communications from other organizational members because they have different vocabularies and situated understandings of work (Bechky, 2003; Cramton, 2001). This issue has been identified as a problem with social tagging systems in organizations—empirical research shows tremendous

disparity in tagging terms used across applications and individuals, even within a single firm (Muller, 2007b). One way that social media use can addresses this issue is through the affordance of visibility—social media makes the activities of other individuals and work groups more visible, which helps individuals make connections with people or content that facilitate their own interests. Another way that social media use may help individuals overcome organizational boundaries is through easy associations that encourage workers to explore new relationships. For example, a study by Green, Contractor, and Yao (2006) showed how a social networking application with algorithms to make emergent associations between people and user-generated content spurred cross-boundary interactions and knowledge sharing in environmental engineering and hydrological science research. This increased collaboration occurred because once users learned that others were interested in similar topics to them, individuals were more willing to work to overcome cross-boundary differences and understand one another, even if they did not share a common store of domain knowledge. Additionally, at IBM, the implementation of a feature in an internal SNS that allowed users to recommend content to others resulted in more diverse exposure to the activities of organizational members (Farzan et al., 2009). Future studies should consider the ways that social media can be used to help overcome organizational boundaries.

Identifying Expertise. The ability to accurately identify the expertise of organizational members allows managers to assign individuals to appropriate organizational tasks and, as research suggests, improve group performance (Brandon & Hollingshead, 2004). The visibility afforded by social media use is one way that individuals can recognize the expertise of others, particularly those with whom they have had little or no interaction (Shami et al., 2009). For example, organizational social tagging is able to leverage the personal act of bookmarking in a way that also shares knowledge with others (Pan & Millen, 2008). Associations also aid in the ability to recognize expertise. Social media bring similar content and activities together, creating communities of knowledgeable individuals (Muller, 2007b) and one's ratings of another's content can be used to signal or assert expertise in work groups (Thom-Santelli et al., 2010). In sum, individuals not only look to visible content, but also to associations in order to develop attributions of expertise.

Power

The processes of managerial power enactment, and resistance to it, have occupied a great deal of organizational communication scholars' attention since the early 1990s. Some scholars take a resource dependency view of power, exploring the asymmetry in distribution of organizational resources (e.g., knowledge, information, money, social capital) and the power dependencies they create (Conrad, 1983; Pfeffer & Davis-Blake, 1987; Scott, 2004), while others have adopted a critical-cultural stance on power, arguing that power is exercised

through the enactment and perpetuation of organizational discourse that privileges the interests of some and marginalizes the voices of others (Deetz, 1992; Deetz & Mumby, 1985; Mumby & Stohl, 1991). Across these two perspectives, three processes are often discussed in the relationship between power and organizational communication: (a) resource dependencies, (b) discursive construction, and (c) surveillance. Table 7.8 lists potential research questions that fall at the intersection of these three power processes and the affordances of visibility, persistence, editability, and association.

Resource Dependency. The knowledge contained in social media is a potential source of power for individuals in organizations. By making information visible to others in the organization, individuals may be able to subtly signal that they possess knowledge. If that knowledge is then perceived as valuable, it can be a source of power that can result in increased influence in decision making (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1974). Research on social media has revealed that visibility can both consolidate and distribute power. Individuals who garner increased attention may become influential figures (Efimova & Grudin, 2007). Alternatively, the ability of any employee to make him- or herself visible through social media may have a democratizing effect on knowledge contributions (Hasan & Pfaff, 2006). As an example of the inclusive potential of technology, the addition of social media to the innovation process at MITRE, the research and technology organization, resulted in more comments on proposals from a wider group of employees (Holtzblatt & Tierney, 2011). Additional research should explore the conditions under which social media use creates a more inclusive or exclusive knowledge environment.

Another way that individuals may become less dependent on others in an organization is through the ease of associations made through social media use. Unencumbered by time and space, workers in organizations can use social media to expand their networks and build social capital across boundaries (Ferron et al., 2010; Steinfield et al., 2009). These associations can provide access to thought leaders that would be otherwise difficult to obtain, thus reducing or eliminating the role of gatekeepers who controlled access to these individuals (Ehrlich & Shami, 2010). Moreover, the use of social media allows individuals to develop weak ties and create a more robust organizational network (DiMicco et al., 2008). Employees using social media, particularly those in less powerful organizational positions, may be able to use the ease of associations to garner social resources.

Participation in Discursive Construction. Organizational scholars operating in the critical-cultural tradition have developed a perspective that views power as constituted by discursive formations created and reproduced in practice (Mumby, 1987). Social media, by facilitating visible text, can be viewed as an inherently discursive space where individuals are able to put forth arguments and engage in public deliberation. In such studies, researchers are interested in how everyday talk (*d*iscourse with a small *d*) shapes and sustains broader

Table 7.8 Potential Research Questions Exploring the Relationship between Social Media Affordances and Organizational Power Processes

Affordances	*Research Areas in Organizational Power Processes*		
	Resource Dependency	*Participation in Discourse Construction*	*Surveillance*
Visibility	When others can see who uses social media and who does not, does increased social media use result in an increase in perceived power in the organization?	Can the increase in visibility afforded by social media facilitate more diverse participation in Discourse construction?	Does the increase in visibility afforded by social media use result in more monitoring of colleagues?
Persistence	Does the documentation of past dependencies that are revealed through the persistence of older organizational documents have an imprinting affect on one's ability to exercise or enact dependencies today?	Does old content that persists in social media platforms continue to shape Discourse in organizations even if the content's proponents are no longer with the organization?	How do organizations use social media to monitor employees over time?
Editability	Can individuals present content in such a way so as to highlight or obscure critical dependencies on others? If so, can dependencies be controlled through strategic content editing?	Are there conditions under which organizational members might revise past documents to re-shape people's memories of the dominant organizational Discourse? If so, do such changes actually work?	If people feel that others are watching them through social media use, what will it take for them to begin to strategically edit their self-presentation and what consequences will this strategic editing have for communication processes throughout the organization?
Association	Does the association afforded by social media use result in less dependency on senior employees who are normally sought because rank is a proxy for power/status/knowledge?	How can organizations motivate individuals to consider new forms of discourse?	Does a system that suggests associations between people or between people and content lead to more or less surveillance than a system that does not suggest associations?

ideologies (*D*iscourse with a big *D*) and how powerful actors marginalize the contributions of other forms of *d*iscourse so as to maintain their positions of power (Alvesson & Deetz, 1999). Studies of social media in organizations have noted that the visibility of content is seen as an effective way for employees to get a feel for what is happening in an organization (Brzozowski, 2009; Jackson et al., 2007; Zhao & Rosson, 2009). Individuals or groups in the organization who are able to shape *D*iscourse and participation in this space will wield power over the narrative around how the social media ought to be used and, in so doing, will perhaps be able to control the larger *D*iscourse that controls perception in the organization. However, the visible, informal nature of social media participation may encourage open communication that may make it difficult for any individual to dominate discourse (Kosonen & Kianto, 2009; Zhao & Rosson, 2009).

Additionally, the associations afforded by social media may exert normative pressure for conformity around Discourse. Individuals may use the medium to coalesce support for the existing organizational discourse and the persistence of social media may increase inertia to maintain the status quo. For example, minority voices may be discouraged from communicating because lack of attention from management deters participation in social media (Yardi et al., 2009). Evidence also suggests that absent explicit incentives to encounter diverse content, individuals using SNS in organizations may restrict views to material in their own network (Farzan et al., 2009).

Surveillance. Scholars have long recognized that technology offered management new ways to monitor workers (Attewell, 1987). Social media, by making the practices and contributions of employees more visible, may increase surveillance of workers. Visible participation via communications technology carries with it a form of accountability on the part of the communicator (Brown & Lightfoot, 2002). Research suggests that workers may recognize the accountability of participation, with findings showing that individuals who used social media in organizations were reluctant to contribute works-in-progress because they knew contributions would be viewed by others (Giordano, 2007; Holtzblatt et al., 2010). Research should explore the processes by which individuals monitor the social media activity of coworkers.

Additionally, the persistence of social media makes surveillance activities easier as information is stored, aggregated, and searchable. At one global IT organization studied, the communications department monitored the activity of internal bloggers to identify any emerging issues or inaccuracies (Jackson et al., 2007). Surveillance also emerges from the associations afforded by social media. This form of surveillance is built into social media through subscriptions such as notification of when an edit has been made on a wiki, or when a blog author has constructed a new post. For instance, when users logged on to the SNS site at IBM they were shown a list of activities in which all of their connections had recently engaged, and the site updated users as statuses

change (DiMicco et al., 2008). In sum, social media creates a record of activity that may be used for a variety of surveillance purposes by managers and peers.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we have argued that social media are of important consequence to organizational communication processes precisely because they afford new types of behaviors that were previously difficult or impossible to achieve before these new technologies entered the workplace. Our review of existing studies of social media use in organizations uncovered four relatively consistent affordances enabled by these new technologies: visibility, persistence, editability, and association. We suggested that these four affordances could bring substantial changes to the way that many of the processes, which are core to concerns of organizational communication theorists, are carried out in organizational contexts. To illustrate this point, we engaged in a thought exercise in which we explored what consequences these four social media affordances might have on socialization, information sharing, and power processes in organizations.

Clearly, the study of social media use in organizations is in its infancy. We urge scholars to move forward cautiously. The academic landscape is littered with many studies of *new* communication technologies that are now outdated because their authors focused on particular technologies, exploring what consequences the use of those technologies had on social and organizational dynamics. With the swift development of new communication technologies the particular social media we use today are not likely to be the ones we use in the future. We have argued, herein, that an affordance approach, which focuses attention not on any particular technology, but on the types of communicative practices that various features afford, is much more likely to have staying power because it builds theory about the relationship between technology and communication without foregrounding one concept or the other. Much empirical study is needed on the role that social media affordances play in organizational processes if communication research is to remain important, timely, and applicable. We offer this chapter as an early effort to encourage organizational researchers to undertake this important task and we hope that within it are some bold ideas and provocations that help researchers decide how and where to begin.

Notes

1. Social tagging in organizations has also been commonly referred to as social bookmarking (e.g., Damianos, Cuomo, Griffith, Hirst, & Smallwood, 2007; Pan & Millen, 2008). We use the term *social tagging* to refer to technologies that allow users to apply tags or labels to a variety of online content, not just websites.
2. We recognize that there is a wealth of communication research on social media use in a variety of contexts (e.g., political communication or among college students; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Our intent is not to discount the con-

tributions or findings of these studies, but rather to argue that the affordances of social media may have consequences unique to organizational settings.

3. The technologies that constitute social media are often recognized in the literature as Web 2.0 (e.g., Chong & Xie, 2011; Fuchs-Kittowski, Klassen, Faust, & Einhaus, 2009; Scholz, 2008; Stocker, Dosinger, Saaed, & Wagner, 2007; Tredinnick, 2006) or social software (e.g., Raeth et al., 2009; Steinhuser et al., 2011; Warr, 2008). For the sake of consistency we use the term *social media* throughout this paper.
4. We recognize, and regret, that a disproportionate number of studies included in this review are the result of research conducted at IBM and involving that organization's employees. At this point, researchers at IBM are the most active in publishing work related to social media use in organizations, in part because it is related to the development of the company's products. Wherever possible we tried to include studies from other organizations. It is our hope that future research will consider social media use in more diverse organizational contexts.

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