

USC Annenberg

School for Communication
and Journalism

W.E.B. Du Bois Survey Results

In preparation for the W.E.B. Du Bois Lecture series, Dean Wilson commissioned a survey to help gauge the social media usage of Black/African American students at USC. The survey was not conducted with academic rigor, but instead was simply designed to help inform future possible areas of research for an ongoing Digital Du Bois Project.

The survey was sent via email to all Black/African American students in the USC Annenberg School of Communication and Journalism and as part of a larger note sent to all Black/African American students via the Center for Black Cultural and Student Affairs' email list serve. A total of **19 students** completed the survey. To encourage responses, students who submitted their email addresses were entered into an opportunity drawing for a free lunch.

While the number of replies is quite small and skews female, among the results that clearly emerge from these respondents: While the students use Facebook as their social media of choice, they do not think that W.E.B. Du Bois would. (See questions 2 and 3); and none of the students say they visit Black/African American oriented web sites "daily." (See question 7.)

Demographic Information

- 3 males
- **16 females**

Education Level

- 14 undergraduates
- 5 graduates

Program of Study

- 3 Broadcast and Digital Journalism
- **5 Communication**
- **1 Communication/Print and Digital Journalism**
- **2 Communication Management**
- 1 Economics/Math
- 1 Print and Digital Journalism
- 2 Public Relations/Spanish
- 1 Sociology
- 1 Sociology/Psychology (double major)
- 1 Social Work
- 1 Urban Planning

Ethnicity (self reported)

- **12 African American**
- 5 Black
- 1 Black American
- 1 Nigerian American

Survey Responses

1. How many hours per week do you estimate that you spend using social media?
 - 0-3 hours- 2
 - 4-7 hours- 3
 - **8-13 hours- 5**
 - 14-20 hours -2
 - 21-27 hours- 4
 - 28 or more hours- 3
2. Which of the following social media sites do you use the most?
 - **Facebook – 10**
 - Twitter- 3
 - Tumblr- 2
 - Instagram- 2
 - LinkedIn- 1
 - Pinterest – 1
3. If you are familiar with the life and work of W.E.B. Du Bois, then which social media site do you think he would use?
 - Facebook – 1
 - **Twitter- 7**
 - Tumblr-4
 - Instagram- 2
 - LinkedIn- 4
 - Pinterest – 1
4. What specific reference material is missing from this web page that you recommend the Dean add to the Resources page of www.digitaldubois.net?
 - Something about what black America means to different racial groups.
 - Some general background on W.E.B. Du Bois' mission; I know it is referenced throughout the website but having a dedicated space with some of his writing/teachings might be helpful.
 - What other, alive individuals who are similar to Du Bois are currently saying.
 - I would love to see a link to a photo gallery of W.E.B. Du Bois photographs. With such a heightened focus on the photography incorporated into social media platforms, a dialogue on the progress of the photograph (and presentation of the black male) would be very interesting to explore. Are there any galleries of Du Bois photographs to share?
 - Social justice Tumblr pages such as <http://sonofbaldwin.tumblr.com/>
 - Maybe more information about Du Bois and his work.
 - Black Journalist Association of Southern California
 - <http://www.howard.edu/msrc/> Info from the Moorland-Spingarn Research Center
5. What is the one Twitter feed that @digital_du_bois should follow?
 - @Toure
 - @goodmenproject
 - Barack Obama

- @Oprah
- @naacp
- @uscadj,
- @RevRunwisdom
- @rap-up
- @marclamonthill
- @MHarrisPerry
- @AfricanaCarr

6. Which, if any, African-American/Black oriented websites do you visit (multiple answers acceptable)?
- Music sites- 7
 - **The Griot- 7**
 - The Root -2
 - Others sites - (Two write-in votes for My Black is Beautiful. One write-in vote each for Clutch Magazine, The Fashion Bomb, , The Melissa Harris-Perry Show, Ebony, Essence, "natural hair blogs" and verysmartbrothas.com)
7. How often do you visit African-American/Black oriented websites?
- **Less than Once a month- 8**
 - 2-3 times a week-3
 - 2-3 times a month- 3
 - Once a month- 2
 - Daily- 0
8. If you could create a new social media site that targets the African-American/Black community, what would you address?
- Politics, community trends, **education**
 - Style, **education**, creative activism
 - African-Americans in politics, science, health, and mathematics
 - Going beyond the stereotypes
 - Health, nutrition, **education**
 - Family, poverty, **education**, success, corporate life
 - Music, television, politics
 - Fashion, media, and culture
 - Financial literacy and personal savings strategies.
 - Women's issues, relationships, new age racism
 - Social responsibility, **education**, family
 - I'm not sure that I would want to create or use a social media site that target the Black community.
 - Education, sexuality, succeeding in America, community service, political issues, connecting with the rest of the African Diaspora, fashion & music
 - Gangs, violence, **education**
 - Family, poverty, **education**, success, corporate life.
 - **Education**
 - The achievement gap, the inadequacy of "color blind" admissions systems such as those at UCLA that hurt under-resourced minority communities [**education**]
9. Do you believe mainstream social media sites adequately cover African-American/Black issues?
- I think when something is labeled a "black issue" in social media, it means that black people own it and nobody else can identify. This makes it hard for conversation to include anyone else but this ethnic group. I know in my own personal group that I address "black issues" (natural hair, racial prejudice, and the many shades of black society) with other African

- Americans because I don't think that others can comfortably identify. This could come from a whole slew of reasons, but I can tell that black issues can be uncomfortable subject matter for some. In addition, one always imagines a physical to represent a social presence, even if a picture isn't given or this presence is a collective; furthermore, the presence will have a voice that can represent itself in a way that many will associate with certain racial groups. Although one would assume the social media allows one's physical identity to be passed over, we look even harder to create a face with the voice. So in a round about way, I will say that mainstream media does not adequately cover African-American/Black issues because they do not believe they are in a political/social climate in which they think they can.
- Social media content is populated by its users; so the adequacy of the news depends on the amount of people of color online.
 - I believe that social media sites portray blacks in a negative light and hardly put emphasis on our achievements.
 - We do not receive much coverage by mainstream media in general, so I would think that applies to social media as well.
 - Mainstream social media most often covers gossip/celebrities/trends, rarely social issues.
 - In some ways I do think that these sites express the general needs of the African-American population, however I also feel like the issues appeal to a very specific "type" of Black person. Black people in America are as varied and colorful as can be, and represent a wide spectrum of personal tastes, cultures, interests and points of view. Maybe embracing this diversity would ultimately help members of the Black community celebrate our differences and multi-dimensionality as people.
 - They focus on solutions after problems arise, rather than presenting and broadcasting current political issues that will affect its audience.
 - Social media sites aren't designed to cover anyone's issues. They're for socializing. Us black kids get to do as much of that as the white ones.
 - I do not think that African-American issues are covered adequately on mainstream social media sites. I think the way in which mainstream media (and social media) shies away from racial topics makes it increasingly difficult (or un-cool) for youth to voice their opinions on the shape of racism today. I also think that social media and the Black press/media needs to be increasingly critical of their own inadequacies on covering Black issues.
 - Our issues are relegated to small sub group such as Huffington Post's "Black Voices"
 - Typically they are negative and limited in their perspective
 - On social media sites, most issues affecting the Black community are twisted to criminalize, dehumanize and/or mock the Black community
 - There is a lack of diversity and not so great representations of African Americans in mainstream media.
 - They usually present one narrative, but African Americans are so diverse that they all can't fit into one narrow category.
 - The Huffington Post, The Washington Post, The LA Times, The New York Times use their online presence to cover Black issues

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