Chapter 6
Future Directions: Emergent Social Media Technologies and the Potential for Higher Education

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ABSTRACT
This chapter considers future directions for emerging social media technologies and their potential for teaching and learning practice in higher education. While technologies that support social media constantly change, it provides some simple and practical guidelines to assist teachers with their practice and use of social media technologies in their classrooms. This chapter acknowledges the evolving nature of the technologies available in today’s teaching and learning context as well as ones that are considered to impact higher educational learning and teaching in the future, including descriptions of augmented and virtual reality and gamification and gamified learning.

INTRODUCTION
Technology has always brought change to society. New electronic tools and activities that social media and educational technologies facilitate seem to offer promise with tremendous potential to transform educational environments (Veletsianos, 2010). However, a solid definition of emergent technologies is difficult to define and is as nebulous and ever-changing as the technologies seem to be. What exactly are emergent technologies and what are the potentials of these technologies in higher education? How can emergent
social media technologies be defined, if in a continued state of change? What about technologies that seem to embed social media elements such as live, online chats and forums, commonly referred to as social media affordances? Veletsianos describes emergent technologies in terms of its ‘importance of impact’ (Veletsianos, 2010). ‘Importance of impact’ is viewed as ‘leading edge’ because it is unknown and seems to have an edge of possibility that has not yet been investigated (Veletsianos, 2010).

However, social media is more often defined through example (Tess, 2013). We know what the technologies are or when they appear in our classrooms with students, however, how can we define emergent in the educational context? While social media has not traditionally been designed for educational contexts, what are the current social media technologies and technologies with social media affordances that can potentially throw light onto the future potential of social media use in higher education? While it is impossible to predict the future, we can attempt to contextualize emerging technologies and the potential of those technologies as possible indicators for future social media trends (Parsons, 2014). This chapter considers the emergent state of social media and social media affordances present in emergent technologies and considers possible future directions and potential in higher education.

**BACKGROUND**

Worldwide use of social media will continue to grow (Chaffey, 2017). Based on the sheer numbers of active users of social media for business and personal use is approximately 24% of the world’s population; growth will continue globally with great potential for use in tertiary settings (Chaffey, 2017; United Nations, 2017). While the digital divide remains an issue, access to the support technologies and infrastructure can be facilitated by governmental programs (Adams Becker, Cuminis, et al., 2017, 2017; Unesco, 2016). Underlying infrastructures, technologies and affordances of devices will continue to change creating potential opportunities. A greater number of programs and applications are offering the affordances of Web 2.0 technologies enabling some form of social interaction, e.g. the ability to conduct live chats while editing in a Google Doc. Moreover, augmented reality, virtual reality and gamified learning offer even more social media alternatives and potential for the higher education classroom. The lines are becoming blurred as to
Media and Participation: A Site of Ideological – Democratic Struggle

www.igi-global.com/article/media-participation-site-ideological-democratic/76896?camid=4v1a