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A COMPARISON OF SOCIAL MEDIA JOB SEARCH VERSUS TRADITIONAL JOB  
SEARCH METHODS ON EMPLOYMENT OF STUDENTS WITH  
MODERATE TO SEVERE DISABILITIES

by

Janalyn Duersch

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

in

Special Education

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2013

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## ABSTRACT

A Comparison of Social Media Job Search Versus Traditional Job Search Methods on  
Employment of Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

by

Janalyn Duersch, Master of Science

Utah State University, 2013

Major Professor: Dr. Robert Morgan  
Department: Special Education

Students with disabilities in transition programs experience difficulty with finding permanent employment. This study investigated the effects of social media on employment outcomes. Participants included 37 students ages 18 to 22 with moderate to severe disabilities in transition programs in a Western state school system. The student researcher divided 37 participants into two groups: (a) social media job search, or (b) traditional job search. Participants were systematically assigned to one of two groups based on five variables: (a) gender, (b) socioeconomic status (SES), (c) daily computer usage, (d) diagnosis, and (e) participation on social media sites. Social media and traditional groups consisted of 18 and 19 participants, respectively. Groups were further subdivided into two groups of 9-10 participants with procedures carried out in an equivalent manner across those subgroups. The control groups implemented traditional job search methods while the social media groups learned to explore social media in the context of a job search. Variables included (a) job placements, (b) job interviews, and (c)

job referrals. The students in all groups met twice weekly for 4 weeks. The researcher found that the social media job search group had higher numbers of job placements, interviews, and referrals compared to the traditional job search group. Seven participants in the social media job search group found employment compared to two in the traditional job search group. Within the social media job search group, there were nine job interviews compared to five in the control group. The participants in the social media job search group received 62 referrals compared to the nine received in the control group. These findings suggest social media may play a role in increasing employment activity and outcomes in post-high school job search endeavors.

(56 pages)

## PUBLIC ABSTRACT

A Comparison of Social Media Job Search Versus Traditional Job Search Methods on  
Employment of Students with Moderate to Severe Disabilities

by

Janalyn Duersch

This study investigated the effects of social media on employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. Participants included 37 transition students with moderate to severe disabilities in a Western state school system. The student researcher divided 37 participants into two groups: (a) social media job search, or (b) traditional job search. Social media and traditional groups consisted of 18 and 19 participants, respectively. The control group implemented traditional job search methods. The social media group learned to use social media to further employment. Variables examined included (a) job placements, (b) job interviews, and (c) job referrals. The students in all groups met twice weekly for 4 weeks. The researcher found that the social media job search group had higher numbers of job placements, interviews, and referrals compared to the traditional job search group. Seven participants in the social media job search group found employment compared to two in the traditional job search group. Within the social media job search group, there were nine job interviews compared to five in the control group. The participants in the social media job search group received 62 referrals compared to the nine received in the control group. These findings suggest social media may play a role in increasing employment for adults with disabilities.

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## INTRODUCTION

Historically, people have found jobs through nine traditional job search methods: (a) contacting public employment agencies, (b) contacting private employment agencies, (c) contacting friends or relatives, (d) contacting school employment centers, (e) sending resumes/complete applications, (f) checking union/professional registers, (g) placing or answering ads, (h) using other active search methods, and (i) contacting employers directly (Kuhn & Skuterud, 2000). However, in recent years, the public is turning to non-traditional means and methods, such as the Internet, for finding employment. According to Ask Seymour job search methods (2008) 43% of job seekers found their next career opportunity through Internet use, 25% through online published job openings, 13% through posting of their resume online, and 5% through e-mail and online networking. Furthermore, Jobvite (2012b) found that 92% of the companies they surveyed use or intend to use social networking sites (SNS) as a recruiting/hiring tool.

Though data indicated that people are moving toward the use of social media and online networking to obtain employment, there is no data to suggest that people with disabilities are using the same media. According to Moisey and Van de Keere (2007), though households without disability report 50% computer ownership and 40% online use, only 25% of those with disabilities included in the random sampling in the study state they own a computer and only 10% are online. This same research reveals that those individuals without disabilities are more than twice as likely to have used the Internet in the previous year. This lack of online connection has led to a reliance on family and friends for employment assistance. Newman et al. (2011) indicated that fewer young adults with disabilities were employed after high school than those without disabilities,

but of those employed, 90% found jobs through the self-friend-family network. SNS is the modern medium that connects friends and family to an individual. Although research is needed, this finding suggests that young adults with disabilities may benefit from more systematic and vigorous use of social media and Internet use to find employment.

Test, Fowler, White, Richter, and Walker (2009) identified multiple skills that predict successful post-school outcomes for youth with significant disabilities, including, but not limited to, career awareness, inclusion in general education, paid work experience, and student support. One support strategy pinpointed by Carter, Austin, and Trainor (2012) was for educators to develop actual paid work experiences during high school, which is “strongly associated with postschool work status during students’ first 2 years after leaving high school” (p. 58).

A period of time designed to maximize this opportunity for developing paid employment is during post-high programs, when students have the scaffolding of an Individualized Education Program (IEP) and can receive the support of special education programs. The purpose of post-high programs is to prepare young adults with significant disabilities for adulthood, including employment. Post-high school programs seem strategically positioned to assist young adults with disabilities in using social media and the Internet to find employment.

One program designed to teach unemployed individuals to find employment is called Job Club (Azrin & Besalel, 1980). The framework of Job Club is set up so students with disabilities learn to develop resumes, practice interview skills, search for jobs, advocate for themselves, complete job applications, and get jobs. Azrin and Philip (1979)

found that 95% of Job Club clients obtained employment. In comparison, only 28% of those in a group using traditional job search methods only, found employment.

Fundamental skills that are learned by individuals through Job Club procedures include advocating for oneself in a social environment, presenting oneself to others in a positive manner, communicating frequently with employers, and exploring job leads with friends and family. Contemporary SNS provide similar opportunities for networking, as revealed Brandtzaeg and Heim (2009), who found that 31% of SNS users are seeking to make new connections, 21% are striving to connect with family, friends and acquaintances, 14% use it for socializing, and 10% tap this resource for information. Facebook has nearly 850 million users, Twitter claims 465 million accounts, and LinkedIn, which is an employment-based social network, has 135 million members (Bullas, 2012). SNS may prove to be the contemporary vehicle to deliver employment results to young adults with disabilities, just as Job Club was for similar populations in the 70s and 80s. However, the use of SNS would need to be structured, goal-oriented, and outcome-based.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher explored Google, Google Scholar, ERIC through EBSCO, and Sage for supporting literature. Several articles, studies, and surveys were selected on the basis of the following criteria: applicability to the topic, credibility, and data based on evidence. Selected articles were: (a) *The Post-High School Outcomes of Young Adults With Disabilities Up to 8 Years After High School: A Report From the National Longitudinal Transition Study-2* (NLTS2) from Newman et al. (2011), (b) *The Job Club Method for the Job Handicapped: A Comparative Outcome Study* (Azrin & Philip, 1979), and (c) *Social Job Seeker Survey* (Jobvite, 2012a).

NLTS2 (Newman et al., 2011) commenced on December 1, 2000 and included a sampling of 11,280 youth with disabilities ages 13 to 16 receiving special education services in grade 7 or above in 501 school districts and 38 special schools across the United States. The NLTS2 was designed in two stages and included five waves. The data in this review are from the third wave to the fifth and ranged from 2004-2009. The data gathered in this study came from youth telephone interviews, mail surveys and parent telephone interviews.

The study included findings regarding postsecondary education, employment, household circumstances, and social and community involvement. Of particular interest to my own research was employment. Wave 5 data indicated that 60% of students with disabilities were employed outside of the home as compared to 66% of their peers without disabilities. Of the students that were employed at the time of the study, 55% reported that they found their job on their own, 18% identified family as the source of employment, and 17% of specified that friends aided them in finding work.

This study indicated the importance of the self-family-friend network. When designing curriculum for high school/post high school programs to assist youth in locating employment this finding should be taken in account.

Azrin and Philip (1979) reviewed the job club curriculum that utilized this self-family-friend network. They compared the Job Club method with alternative methods of obtaining a job. While working with 154 clients who struggled to find gainful employment, including people with physical, emotional, and social disabilities or long term unemployment. Criteria for inclusion in the study were a desire for a full-time job, attendance at two or more sessions, and a clear job-finding problem, or at least 2 months of unsuccessful job search. Clients were besought from a state hospital for people with mental illness or disability, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Office, the local General Assistance Program, the Department of Public Aid, a community mental health center, a women's group, drug and alcohol treatment centers, an early release house for prisoners, probation officers, community workshops for people with disabilities, a Veterans Administration hospital, and a newspaper advertisement.

The researchers held an initial intake at which time the clients were told that they would be randomly assigned to one of two groups. One group was involved in a 2-day lecture/discussion/role-play program while the other group worked actively on job leads. At the end of 2 months, clients were allowed to transfer to the other program, if they desired. Job Club procedures consisted of a group of 4 to 12 people meeting every day until individual jobs were acquired. Each session lasted approximately 2 ½ hrs. The program stressed finding job leads from friends and relatives, the telephone directory, other members and previous employers. This occurred in a counselor's office with

standard scripts, lesson plans, forms, and charts indicating what clients should say. Counselors listened in on phone calls (the primary means of communication) so that they could provide assistance and supervision. Every 2-3 weeks a new group began. The comparison group used a program that included informational lectures, discussion, videotapes, and rehearsal of interview behaviors. The largest difference between the comparison group and the Job Club group was that the comparison group received information about actions that were good practice while the Job Club group was required to perform the actions. Follow-up was done once per month for 4 months. The researchers found that of the Job Club clients, 95% obtained employment, compared to 28% of the comparison group. At all the follow-up periods, Job Club clients had higher levels of employment than the comparison group. The authors indicated that Job Club median time of job acquisition was 10 days, compared to 30 days for the control group. At a 12-month follow-up 90% of Job club clients continued to be employed. Salaries also tended to be higher for Job Club clients; the median salary was 22% higher for those that used Job Club.

In 2012, Jobvite conducted a *Social Job Seeker Survey*. They surveyed 2,108 adults (aged 18+). Overall, 1,266 adults were part of the workforce. Of the 1,266 members of the workforce, 948 were seeking a job, 88% had at least one SNS profile, and 318 were currently employed but not looking for a new job. Disability was not specified. Data were weighted so that the demographics of the survey population closely matched that of the nationwide population. The survey included questions regarding current employment status, the use of SNS to find job opportunities, and attitudes about the current employment market.

The survey results showed that 40% of job seekers attributed a referral from professional/personal contacts or an online SNS to employment. Furthermore, one out of six people seeking a job credited SNS with their current jobs. Another 41% found their favorite/best job from family or friends. Additionally, 23% of job seekers have been asked for SNS information in a job interview. These numbers imply that a wealth of employment opportunities are available on the Internet. Young adults with intellectual disabilities, given involvement in a structured job seeking program, may be able to utilize SNS to obtain employment. SNS combined with Job Club-type methods could provide the catalyst for young adults with disabilities to join the workforce.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this research was to determine whether or not a group of transition/post-high school aged students with moderate to severe disabilities emphasizing social media methods using SNS had better employment outcomes than students that use traditional job search methods only.

### **Research Question**

Will students with disabilities in the social media group have better success with employment outcomes (job placements, interviews, and referrals) than students who use traditional job search methods?



## METHOD

### Participants and Setting

Table 1 presents characteristics of social media and control group participants. Thirty seven students, ages 18-22, from a medium sized city in the western United States participated in this study. Participants, who had previously qualified for special education services, had moderate to severe disabilities and were participating in post-high school programs at the time of the study. The range of moderate to severe disabilities included autism, intellectual disabilities, traumatic brain injury, other health impairment, and specific learning disabilities. Post high school programs, for the intents of this study, are those that serve students with disabilities between the ages of 18-22 in the public education system. According to IDEA, transition services are coordinated sets of activities for children with disabilities 16 and older. Each post high school program teaches their students hygiene skills, social skills, and employment soft skills, such as interviewing, appropriate dress, and punctuality. Each participant was chosen by their current special education teacher(s) and vocational rehabilitation counselor for their readiness for employment, previous employment experience, and current unemployment or underemployment status. All participants must be able to form, in writing, coherent sentences. A sentence, for the purpose of this study, is a group of words that contains a subject and a predicate and that expresses a complete thought. They must also have basic computer skills including: (a) using a mouse, (b) basic keyboarding, and (c) opening and closing programs and files.

The control group ( $n = 19$ ) was comprised of ten females and nine males. The control group was further subdivided into two groups to allow for participant schedules,

maximize participant involvement, and present a manageable population to assist instructors with providing training. Nine subjects were identified as having intellectual disabilities, six with autism spectrum disorder, three with specific learning disabilities and one with a classification of other health impairment. Participants included 10 Caucasians, eight Hispanics, and one Asian.

The social media group ( $n = 18$ ) consisted of 10 females and eight males. Nine participants had intellectual disabilities, five had autism spectrum disorder, three had specific learning disabilities, and one had a traumatic brain injury. Participants included 10 Caucasians, seven Hispanics, and one African American. The groups included participants with experience in fast food, custodial labor, daycare, recycling, and stocking shelves/warehousing. Table 1 presents characteristics of social media and control group participants.

Participants in the control group met twice weekly in a computer lab in the local school district. The classroom had six rows of two tables and enough chairs for 30 participants and support staff. The classroom had paper, writing utensils, 30 computers with restricted Internet access that limited availability of SNS, a printer, telephone books, and copies of the daily newspaper donated by the local newspaper publisher. One control group had 10 participants while the other had nine for a total of 19 participants.

Participants in the social media job search group met twice weekly in a computer lab at the local applied technology college. The social media job search group was also subdivided into two groups to allow for participant schedules, maximize participant involvement, and present a manageable population to assist instructors with providing training. Both groups in the social media condition had nine participants for a total of 18.

The lab included 15 computers with Internet access, several rows of tables and chairs, a printer, paper, and writing utensils.

### **Group Assignment**

Participants were systematically assigned by the student researcher to produce “matched groups” based on five variables including: (a) gender, (b) socioeconomic status, (c) daily computer usage, (d) diagnosis, and (e) participation on social media sites. The researcher used the stratification defined by the U.S. Census Bureau (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2012) to identify the socioeconomic status of each student. The US Census Bureau defines socioeconomic status in terms of quintiles (lowest, second, third, fourth, and highest). The median income in 2011 of the lowest was \$11,239, the second was \$29,204, the third was \$49,842, the fourth was \$80,080, and the highest was \$178,020. As of 2011, the poverty threshold for a family of four was \$23,021. The researcher used these numbers as points of reference. Each participant was asked about their daily computer usage. They chose from: (a) none, (b) 1-5 hours daily, or (c) over 5 hours daily. Their disabilities were identified by their current classifications in their special education classroom. Once chosen for the research, participants were randomly assigned to: (a) social media job search group or (b) a traditional job search methods group. The student researcher first matched pairs of participants on the five variables to produce participant pairs. Second, the researcher randomly assigned a one-digit number to each of the pair of participants. Third, the researcher used a random numbers table to assign one of the two participants to the social media group and one to the traditional job search group. There were 18 and 19 participants assigned to the social media group and the traditional group, respectively. The control group and the social media job search

group were further subdivided into two groups because of participant schedules, to maximize participant involvement, and to present a manageable population to assist instructors with providing training.

### **Dependent Variable and Response Measurement**

The dependent variables measured for both groups included: (a) job placements, (b) job interviews, and (c) job referrals. Job placements were defined as wage-bearing, temporary or permanent jobs of at least 10 hours per week working for an employer in a community location. Placements did not include volunteer positions, brief work of one week or less, or paid internships. Job interviews were defined as scheduled meetings in a community employment location with a manager, supervisor, or human resource professional for purpose of competing for an available employment position. Interviews did not include unscheduled conversations between a participant and business person (or the researcher) about hiring. Job referrals were defined as verbal or written suggestions for places of employment or contact information for employers from acquaintances, friends, or family.

### **Research Design**

The research was a matched groups, post-test only design (Martella, Nelson, Morgan, & Marchand-Martella, 2013) with a treatment and control group, comparing data from a social media job search group and a traditional job search methods (control) group.

## Procedure

**Demographic data.** See Table 1 for a synopsis of demographics. The researcher collected employment history of each participant including, current employment status, previous employers, and salary. The researcher also determined if each participant had social media account(s) and, if the participant indicated in the affirmative, what social media sites he/she had access to. Of the 37 subjects, 13 reported previous employment in custodial services, nine had employment in custodial and daycare positions, six had positions in fast food, three in their school store, two in recycling, one in an amusement park, one stocking in a grocery store, and one in a factory/production setting. All of the participants reported having had paid employment though some of them received subminimum wage for their labors, including piece work. Only 17 of the 37 participants reported having previous experience with social media and only nine of the 18 that participated in the social media group had a social media account. All of those were with Facebook accounts. None were familiar with LinkedIn or Twitter.

**Social media job search.** See Table 2 for a listing of session topics. Participants congregated twice a week for 60 min with a teacher (the researcher) in a group of up to nine for purposes of reviewing accomplishments, setting new objectives, etc. Participants were assisted in posting a desire for employment and their qualifications to their social media account(s), including LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook. Twice a week, participants connected on social media with businesses of interest and expressed desire to be employed. An example statement that was published is, “I am seeking employment. Does anyone know of employers hiring? I have experience in....”

In the first session, the researcher taught a lesson regarding Internet etiquette and safety (see Appendix A) and administered an Internet safety quiz (see Appendix B) as a teaching tool to initiate conversation about the topic. Upon completion of the lesson, the participants set up Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter accounts. The researcher had the participants connect with five businesses on both LinkedIn and Twitter, per the site requirements, and request friends on Facebook. The participants then published their first posts on Twitter and Facebook requesting assistance with employment and stating their talents and experience. Some did not complete this in the first session. In the second session, participants continued to set up their SMS accounts and make their posts. They also checked for responses from their previous posts. Participants identified five more businesses on Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook that they were interested in working with in the third session. They also published a post to their Facebook and Twitter accounts requesting assistance looking for employment. The fourth session consisted of requesting letters of recommendation and references from friends and former employers on social media sites in private messages to those they chose. Participants used an example request that the researcher wrote on the white board stating, “I am looking for employment. I would like to ask you for permission to use you as a reference. I would also like to ask for a letter of reference from you.” In the fifth session, participants created resumes on the computer and saved them to thumb drives that the researcher kept. These resumes were then uploaded to their LinkedIn profiles. They completed practice applications that they kept in a folder they had access to each session. Participants reviewed the businesses they had identified on LinkedIn for any updates and checked for comments from friends regarding previous posts on Facebook and Twitter in the sixth session. They also

published another post asking for assistance with employment. In the seventh session, participants made follow-ups with employers and other contacts that had offered comments regarding employment through either email or social media. Emails to employers consisted of a statement expressing interest in the job opening, a communication that they had turned in an application, a request for an interview, and contact information. Contacts who had previously offered comments regarding employment were thanked in a private message on Facebook and asked for any further information regarding employers. In the final session, participants published one more post for assistance with employment. In each session after the first, participants completed applications, published posts soliciting assistance with employment, and checked for comments from previous posts which they followed up on.

**Traditional methods group.** See Table 3 for a listing of session topics.

Participants met bi-weekly in 60-min sessions with three paraprofessionals employed by the local school district. The paraprofessional conducted the traditional methods group. In the first session, the paraprofessionals taught a lesson plan on telephone etiquette (see Appendix C). That lesson included such topics as when to call, speaking clearly, and keeping the call short and to the point. Afterwards, with paraprofessional assistance, participants role-played phone conversations. Once the participants had mastered a phone conversation in the role-play scenario, they made a phone call to a business of interest and asked if businesses were seeking employees. Participants also looked through the want ads from the local newspaper to identify positions of interest. The second session was dedicated to contacting friends and former employers for references. At the beginning of the session, telephone etiquette was reviewed. Each participant identified

three contacts that they would like to call and ask if they could use as references. The third session was dedicated to completing a resume and a sample job application for reference. Each participant was given a hard copy resume to fill out and a sample job application. The resume was completed, entered into the computer, then saved to a thumb drive. The hard copy job application, with all relevant employment information, was placed in individual folders for each participant to access. In the fourth session, the participants searched the want ads and contacted employers by phone. Once the participants reached a business, they asked for the manager. With the manager on the phone, the participants asked if they were hiring, and if so, how they could make application. The fifth session was dedicated to application completion. Participants made application online to the businesses of interest that they had previously identified through search of want ads. Participants contacted employers by telephone to ask about employment opportunities and availability in the sixth session. The seventh and eighth sessions were comprised of searching want ads, completing applications, and contacting employers that they had previously made application to. These phone calls were requests for interviews and follow-ups on previous interviews. In all sessions but the first, the participants would use any time left in the session to complete applications for employment.

Participants used want ads and the phone book to contact employers and identify open job positions. The group did not have access to social media and Internet other than for potential completion of applications.

### **Treatment Integrity**

Tables 2 and 3 show checklists of actions carried out by group leaders. The



researcher trained six paraprofessionals in a series of three training sessions on bi-weekly Internet social media sessions and traditional job search techniques prior to the commencement of the study. The researcher provided examples of social media posts, job interview questions, sample resumes, and sample job applications. The researcher measured treatment integrity by assessing the percentage of steps accurately completed according to what the paraprofessionals would do in each group in role-playing sessions following training. Steps included introducing topics and lesson objectives, presenting new information, calling for a participant to respond, praising correct responses, and correcting errors. For social media group training, the researcher also included instruction and role-playing on accessing social media, demonstrating how to perform actions, creating posts, and guided and independent practice. See Table 4 for data on staff mastery of skills.

Once trained, an independent observer monitored both groups in 25% of sessions to check whether sessions were being conducted, whether participants were in attendance, and if not, how many were in attendance. The observer also checked for exact duration of session and whether topics as specified in Table 2 for the Social Media group and Table 3 for the control group were being addressed.

Table 5 presents data on treatment integrity from independent observers. As shown, treatment integrity was 100% for coverage of topics matching the session outlines.

### **Data Analysis**

Data for both groups were collected and expressed descriptively (means, standard deviations) relative to the response measures described above (i.e., comparisons on mean

job referrals and job interviews). Data on individual participants were described as case examples.

## RESULTS

### Data on Social Media Job Search Group

See Appendices D and E for tables and figures. Data indicated that the participants in the social media job search group were more successful in employment searches than those in the traditional methods group as indicated in Figures 1, 2, and 3. Participants in the social media job search group had better success with employment outcomes, such as job placements, referrals and interviews, than did students who use traditional methods only. Mean data on job placements, interviews, and referrals for the social media job search group exceeded mean data from the traditional methods group, as seen in Figures 1, 2 and 3. Participants in the social media job search group had 62 job referrals versus only nine in the traditional job search group. Participants in the social media job search group had nine job interviews resulting in seven jobs while those in the traditional job search group had five interviews that produced two jobs.

See Table 6 for employment data. Each job obtained in the social media job search group came directly as a result of a referral that a participant received after publishing a Facebook post. Two examples are as follows. One participant published a post soliciting assistance with finding a job. A family friend responded by saying that she would like to sit down with her and interview her for a position cleaning the family friend's home. The participant interviewed with the woman and gained a position as a housekeeper for the woman for \$10/hour for 10 hours a week. Another experience involved a participant whose father worked at a local furniture store before he died. The participant published a post on Facebook and received a response from one of his father's former co-workers, who expressed an interest in employing the participant in the

warehouse of the furniture store. The participant interviewed with the employer and was offered a position for \$10/hour, 10 hours a week. The other positions came from friends replying to participant posts with suggestions of employers that were hiring. The participants then completed application to those businesses recommended to them and followed up with phone calls. Some of those phone calls resulted in job interviews which culminated in job placements. Though LinkedIn and Twitter provided employment resources such as networking with others on a professional level through LinkedIn or researching and staying connected with businesses on Twitter, all referrals, interviews and placements came as direct results of interactions on Facebook.

### **Data on Traditional Methods Group**

The participants in the traditional job search (control) group searched want ads for available positions and made application. Once application was made, they contacted the employers by phone. Only five of those cold calls (done without referral) resulted in interviews and only two participants gained employment through this process.

### **Ethnic Comparison Data**

See Figures 4 and 5 regarding data on Hispanic and nonHispanic participants. Within the participant population, 15 of the 37 were Hispanic, or about 41%. Each one of those participants was born in the U.S. and was a legal citizen. Nine of those participants' primary language in the home was Spanish. The remainder of the participants who were Hispanic spoke English in the home and at school. There was no difference across job search groups in regards to the success of job searches by Hispanic participants. Of the seven participants who found employment in the social media job search group, three

were Hispanic. One of the traditional job search group participants who was Hispanic found employment. Of the nine job interviews in the social media job search group, four were participants who were Hispanic whereas of the five from the traditional job search group, only two were Hispanic. Participants who were Hispanic made up 25 of the job referrals in the social media job search group and only three of the job referrals in the traditional job search group.

Table 7 presents data broken down by the subdivided groups. Of the seven jobs that came from the social media job search group, three came from the first group and four came from the second group. In the traditional job search group, both jobs obtained by participants were in the first group. The first social media group had five of the job interviews whereas four of the job interviews were in the second group. The traditional job search group that was first had three of the job interviews and the second group had two of the job interviews reported for the larger group. Of the 62 job referrals in the social media job search group, 34 of the referrals came from the first group and 28 came from the second group. In the traditional job search group, three of the job referrals came from the first group and six of the referrals came from the second group.

### **Anecdotal Data**

The researcher also took anecdotal notes on observations. One of the observations of note was that participants who had larger numbers of contacts (for the purposes of this study defined as over 25 friends on their Facebook account) had more referrals than those who did not. All of those social media job search group participants who found employment had over 25 friends on the friend list.

Another notable observation was that participants who were diagnosed as having autism spectrum disorder fared better with employment outcomes in the social media group than in the control group. No participants in the traditional job search group who obtained employment were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. However, of the seven participants who found jobs in the social media job search group, three of them were diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. In particular, one young man who had a “robotic” speech pattern and social anxiety expressed himself eloquently on Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Though he had used traditional job search methods in the past with no success he was able to find employment at a local amusement park using the social media job search methods.

Another occurrence of note was the increased ability to appropriately use grammar by the participants. The researcher and paraprofessionals assisting in the social media job search group all noticed that with continued and consistent practice creating posts on Facebook, participants were able to independently punctuate and use correct grammar in the sentences that they created to solicit aid with employment by the end of the study.

Additionally, the researcher created Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn accounts to follow participants in the study and their online behavior. The researcher found that several of the participants continued to use social media to seek employment after completion of the study. All of those who created Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn accounts maintained their social media sites following the study. Online behavior also seemed to be altered. The researcher overheard two participants speaking. One participant had participated in the social media job search while the other was in the

control group. The participant from the control group expressed to the participant in the social media job search group that he was going to post pictures from a party he attended over the weekend. The participant from the social media job search group recited to the other participant a mantra repeated frequently in the social media job search group, “Never post something you wouldn’t want your boss to see.”

## DISCUSSION

Findings from this study confirm that teaching post-high school students with disabilities to use social media to search for jobs was associated with increased employment outcomes (placements, interviews, and referrals). These outcomes exceeded those associated with the traditional job search group for placements, interviews, and referrals.

An administrative decision affecting procedures and outcomes of this study is worthy of note. Two weeks prior to the commencement of the study, the school board in the school district where the research was being performed placed a ban on student use of social media sites. The student researcher then secured other physical arrangements for the study. In light of the results of this research, the researcher would like to recommend that school districts reexamine policies regarding the use of social media at least for purposes of allowing access for job search, job development, and other educational opportunities.

The researcher recognizes that traditional job search methods remain important to the job seeking process. Although social media group results were more effective, the traditional group results suggest some degree of improvement. Azrin and Besalel's (1980) Job Club manual, which outlines activities for job search, serves as a solid platform to pair with the use of social media. Social media does not serve as a substitute for training of social skills, application completion, interview skills, and resume writing, but may assist students with making valuable connections to friends and family.



### **Limitations and Future Research**

Though this study begins discussion of the use of social media and Internet as job search devices, it is limited in its scope and breadth due to the small sample size and time allocated for treatment. A larger study across a more varied population, over a larger amount of time will be necessary to confirm the results of the research. Also, systematic sampling, although designed to match characteristics of group participants, may have produced a social media group biased towards SNS responding. Future research should consider sampling procedures.

### **Conclusions**

Although this was a small and time-limited study, results favored the social media group. Not only was it determined that employment outcomes were increased by use of social media, attitudes toward the use of social media were altered as well. Additional investigation is warranted.

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APPENDICES

## Appendix A

Online etiquette and internet safety lesson plan for social media job search group

<b>Online Etiquette and Internet Safety Lesson Plan</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Student will be able to navigate the internet safely and politely in order to find long term employment.	
<i>Teacher Does:</i>	<i>Student Does:</i>
“What do you know about online etiquette?”	Student gives answers and offers suggestions.
<p>Teacher outlines on board the steps.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Remember the golden rule. Never say anything mean or hurtful just because you are not talking to the person face to face. What you say is often saved online and could come back to haunt you.</li> <li>2. Never type with all capitalized letters. People interpret it as “shouting”. Try to use correct grammar and spelling and break up large pieces into paragraphs. If sending documents and email online, try to use a format that any computer can read. Don’t use unusual fonts.</li> <li>3. After sending email or other messages to someone via the Internet, remember that they may live in a different time zone and are too busy at the moment to send a reply. Give people a day or two to respond before assuming the person has ignored you or failed to receive your message.</li> <li>4. Just because you are almost anonymous on the Internet does not mean you can break the laws of your country. Downloading copyrighted works, for example, while they may have wide availability, is illegal in this country and may get you arrested or fined.</li> <li>5. When sending an email or posting on a message board, make sure your heading relates to the information within.</li> <li>6. Be careful with humor. Humorous comments may be taken offensively when seen only in words,</li> </ol>	Student discussion & questions.

<p>particularly sarcasm or puns. If you are telling a joke, clearly express this fact first.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>7. Use polite and courteous language. Say <i>Please, thank you and have a nice day.</i></li> <li>8. Make your messages short and clear.</li> <li>9. Don't say something you wouldn't want your boss to see.</li> </ol>	
<p>“What does it mean to be safe on the internet?”</p>	<p>Listen to student suggestions</p>
<p>Give internet safety quiz</p>	<p>Answer question</p>
<p>Go over answers and give rules.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do not give out email address to everyone. Do not friend everyone that solicits you on Facebook. Make sure you know them.</li> <li>2. Be careful about opening attachments to email. Be absolutely sure you know what it is and that you know the person sending it. If you are not sure, write back to them and ask them what they sent you before opening the attachment.</li> <li>3. Be careful what pictures and messages you post. If you don't want everyone to know certain things about you then don't share.</li> <li>4. People on the internet are not always who they seem to be. You have no way of knowing if an eighteen year old boy from California is actually a 45 year old ex-con from Kentucky. Stick with what you know.</li> <li>5. Don't post provocative photos, suggestive messages or anything else you'd be embarrassed to have a parent, teacher, or boss view.</li> <li>6. Never agree to meet someone you have met online in person unless you are certain of their background and are meeting in a public place.</li> <li>7. Use a nickname when navigating the Internet.</li> <li>8. Always check that sites you are shopping on are secure. Look in the</li> </ol>	<p>Student discussion</p>



<p>bottom corner of your browser's window to see if a closed padlock is visible.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>9. Don't fall prey to phishing scams. If someone sends an email to you asking for personal information do not respond to it.</li><li>10. Do not give out personal information, even in private chat rooms.</li><li>11. Remember that you can never assume your identity is a secret. The more information you give out, the easier you make it for predators to hurt you.</li></ol>	
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Appendix B

Internet safety quiz for social media job search group

<b>Internet Safety Quiz</b>	
Mark each question either true or false	
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	When you log on to the Internet, it is a good idea to use a nickname.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	The name of your computer or workstation is your actual name.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	When you shop you always check the security of the Web site before you enter personal and credit card information.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	When children surf on the internet you should have a filter in place to protect them from potential predators.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	It is ok to give your credit card information in an e-mail if the store you were shopping at online asks for it again.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	It is all right to give your name, address and birth date when registering to use a Web site online.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	When you use chat rooms, it is OK to give private information as long as it is within a private chat room.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	It is OK to give out your Social Security number when you are on the Internet. Everyone who uses the Internet has access to it anyway.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	Blogging is a good way to voice my opinion and I don't have to use my real name.
<input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> F	It is OK to post family pictures on the internet so friends and family can view them.

## Appendix C

Telephone etiquette lesson plan for control group

<b>Telephone Etiquette Lesson Plan</b>	
<b>Objective:</b> Student will be able to place clear, concise phone calls to places of business and friends and family in order to find long-term employment.	
<i>Teacher Does:</i>	<i>Student Does:</i>
“What do you know about placing phone calls?”	Students give answers and offer suggestions
<p>Write telephone tips on the board:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Decide upon the right time to call. Too late or too early or during a business busy time or closing time will not be met with enthusiasm. Use the 9 to 9 rule. Never before 9 AM and never after 9 PM.</li> <li>2. Dial the number slowly and in good lighting so that you avoid a “Wrong number.” If you happen to dial a wrong number, express your apology, let them know you dialed a wrong number, and hang up.</li> <li>3. Let the telephone ring a reasonable amount of time. Longer for businesses than personal residences.</li> <li>4. When the telephone is answered, give appropriate greeting or salutation and your name before asking for the person you are requesting.</li> <li>5. When speaking, think of the way you sound. Make sure you enunciate your words clearly and precisely. Talk slow. Use a polite tone of voice.</li> <li>6. Make your call informative and short.</li> <li>7. When the conversation is complete, give an appropriate valediction or closing and hang-up.</li> </ol>	<p>Choose one student to model inappropriate phone call and role model with him/her.</p> <p>Choose one student to model appropriate phone call and role model with him/her.</p>
Split students up into pairs to practice appropriate phone calls	Students each take turns to practice phone calls.
Have students place phone call to ask if they are hiring and how to make application.	Student makes phone call.

## Appendix D

### Tables

Table 1

*Participant Demographics*

<b>Participant Demographics</b>
<b>Traditional Job Search Group:</b>
Total number of participants: 19
Ages: five participants age 18, three participants age 19, four participants age 20, two participants age 21, and five participants age 22
Disabilities: Nine participants were classified as having intellectual disabilities, three were classified as having specific learning disabilities, six were classified as having autism spectrum disorder, and one was classified as having other health impairments
Ethnicities: 10 participants were Caucasian, eight participants were Hispanic, and one participant was Asian
Sexes: 10 participants were female and nine participants were male
Socioeconomic statuses: 11 participants were in the lowest quintile, six participants were in the second quintile, and two participants were in the third quintile
Previous work experiences: Six participants had previous work experience in custodial/daycare work, eight participants had previous work experience in custodial work, one had previous work experience in fast food/custodial, two had previous experience in fast food work, one had previous experience in amusement park work, and one had previous experience in factory/production work
Social media connections prior to study: Eight participants had access to Facebook, 11 participants had no social media connection
Total daily computer usage: 11 participants said they spent no time on the computer, eight participants said they spent 1-5 hours on the computer daily, and one participant said he spent five hours or more on the computer daily
<b>Social Media Job Search Group:</b>
Total number of participants: 18
Ages: three participants age 19, four participants age 20, three participants age 21, and eight participants age 22
Disabilities: Nine participants were classified as having intellectual disabilities, three were classified as having specific learning disabilities, five were classified as having autism spectrum disorder, and one was classified as having traumatic brain injury
Ethnicities:

10 participants were Caucasian, seven participants were Hispanic, and one participant was African-American
Sexes: 10 participants were female and eight participants were male
Socioeconomic statuses: 11 participants were in the lowest quintile, four participants were in the second quintile, and three participants were in the third quintile
Previous work experiences: Four participants had previous work experience in custodial/daycare work, four participants had previous work experience in custodial work, four had previous experience in fast food work, two had previous work in recycling, three had previous work in a school store, and one had previous experience in stocking/grocery store work
Social media connections prior to study: Nine had access to Facebook, nine participants had no social media connection
Total daily computer usage: 10 participants said they spent no time on the computer, six participants said they spent 1-5 hours on the computer daily, and two participants said they spent five hours or more on the computer daily



Table 2

*Activities Across Eight Sessions for Social Media Job Search Group*

Session Number	Activity
1	Internet safety lesson. Email and computer etiquette such as not using all caps when typing, not using abbreviations, and treating others respectfully. Connect with social media sites of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Make first post with soliciting assistance with job search.
2	Connect with social media sites of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Make post with soliciting assistance with job search.
3	Connect with businesses of interest on different social media networks. Create post-soliciting assistance with job search. Review previous posts for comments.
4	Request letters of recommendation and references from friends on social media sites.
5	Resumé completion. Upload resume to LinkedIn. Completion of practice application.
6	Review of businesses on LinkedIn and check for posts on Facebook and Twitter. Post solicitation for job search assistance on Facebook and Twitter.
7	Email and social media follow ups with employers and other connections made over duration of study.
8	Final solicitation for assistance with job search on social media sites.

Table 3

*Activities Across Eight Sessions for Control Group*

Session Number	Activity
1	Phone call etiquette such as speaking clearly, keeping phone calls succinct, and calling at reasonable times. Search of want ads.
2	Request letters of recommendation from friends and former employers.
3	Resume completion. Complete sample job application.
4	Search of want ads and contact employers by phone.
5	Complete applications for employment.
6	Make phone calls to businesses of interest to assess need for employees.
7	Want ad search, complete job applications and make follow-up phone calls.
8	Want ad search, complete job applications and make follow-up phone calls.

Table 4

*Data on Staff Mastery of Skills Prior to Research Sessions*

Skill Mastery Data			
Performance in role-playing by percentage.			
Paraprofessional	Training Session 1 (Introducing topic & lesson topic, presenting new information)	Training Session 2 (Praising correct response, correcting response, topics by session for both groups and data keeping)	Training Session 3 (accessing social media, creating post, performing actions on computer, guided & independent practice)
P1	100 %	100%	100%
P2	100%	100%	100%
P3	100%	100%	100%
P4	100%	100%	100%
P5	100%	100%	100%
P6	100%	100%	90%  (paraprofessional assisted with traditional group only due to unfamiliarity with social media)

Table 5

*Treatment Fidelity Data From Independent Observers on 25% of Sessions*

Treatment Fidelity Data					
Date	Group	Number of Students in Attendance	Session lasted for complete hour?	Topic Match Session Outline?	Observer
3/21/13	Traditional (Control) A	7	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 1
3/26/13	Traditional (Control)A	8	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 1
4/9/13	Social Media A	6	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 1
4/11/13	Social Media A	5	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 2
5/7/13	Traditional (Control) B	5	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 1
5/9/13	Traditional (Control) B	6	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 1
5/14/13	Social Media B	7	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 2
5/16/13	Social Media B	7	Yes	Yes	Independent Observer 2
	Overall Treatment Integrity		100%	100%	

Table 6

*Data Regarding Employment for Study Participants*

<b>Employment Results</b>			
Traditional Job Search (Control) Group			
Participant	Job	Wage	Number of Hours/week
M.M.	Housekeeping	\$7.25/Hour	Variable from 15-20
K.P.	Stocking at Grocery Store	\$7.25/Hour	25
Social Media Job Search Group			
Participant	Job	Wage	Number of Hours/week
T.B.	Furniture Company/Warehouse	\$10.00/Hour	10
E.M.	Private housekeeper	\$10.00/Hour	10
S.C.	Group home support staff	\$8.90/Hour	40+
T.B.B.	Gas station cleaning, stocking & maintenance	\$7.25/Hour	15
J.C.	Amusement Park	\$7.25/Hour	30
S.S.	Fast food restaurant	\$7.25/Hour	35+
J.M.	School District janitorial staff	\$10.90/Hour	20

Table 7

*Data Regarding Employment Outcomes Across Subdivided Groups*

Employment Outcomes	Social Media Job Search A	Social Media Job Search B	Traditional Job Search A	Traditional Job Search B
Job Placements	3	4	2	0
Job Interviews	5	4	3	2
Job Referrals	34	28	3	6

## Appendix E

### Figures

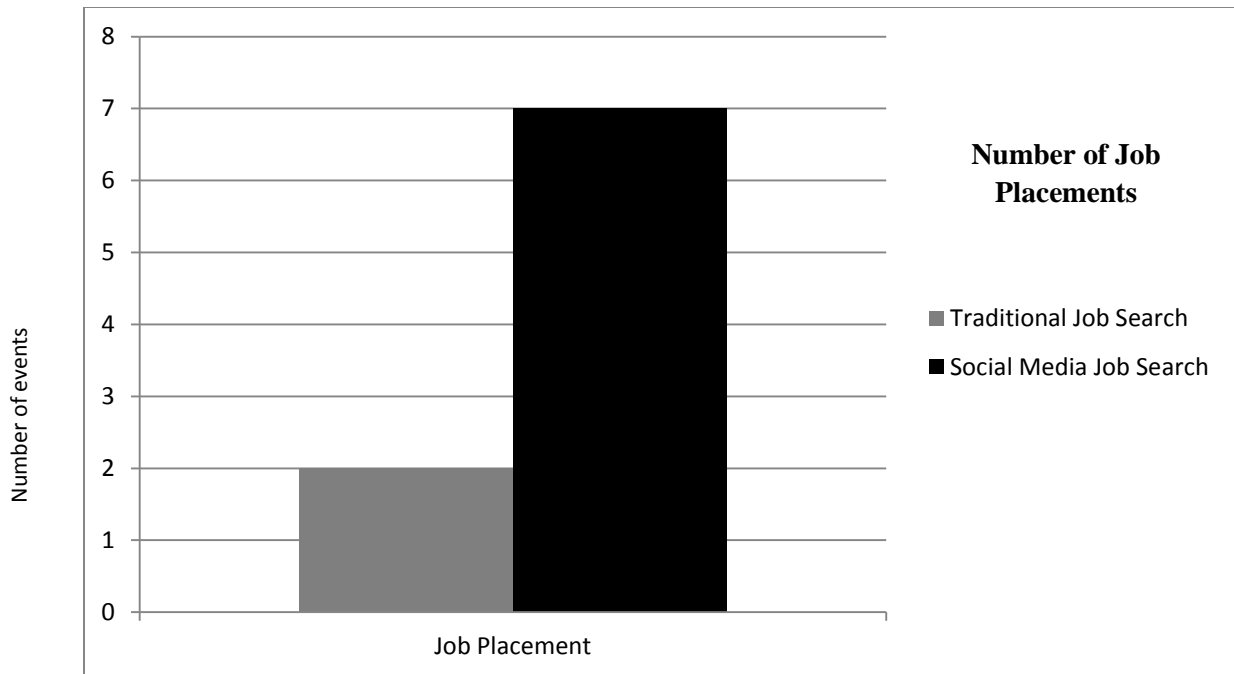


Figure 1. Job placements across groups.

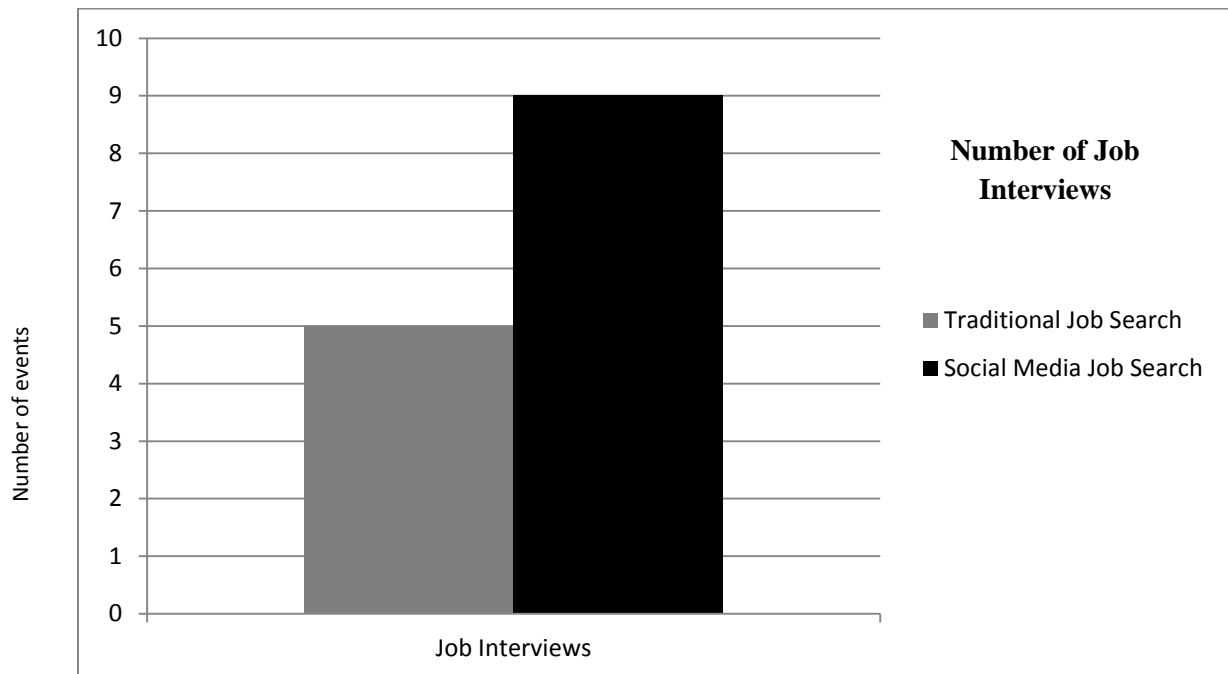


Figure 2. Job interviews across groups.

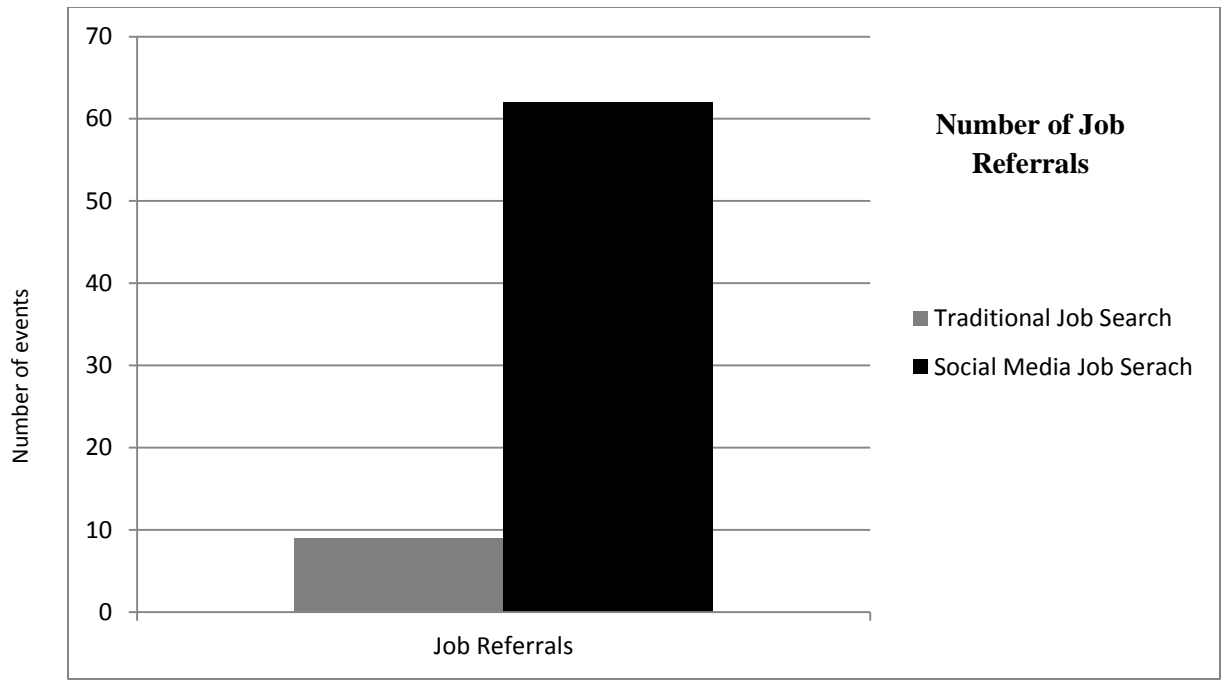


Figure 3. Job referrals across groups.

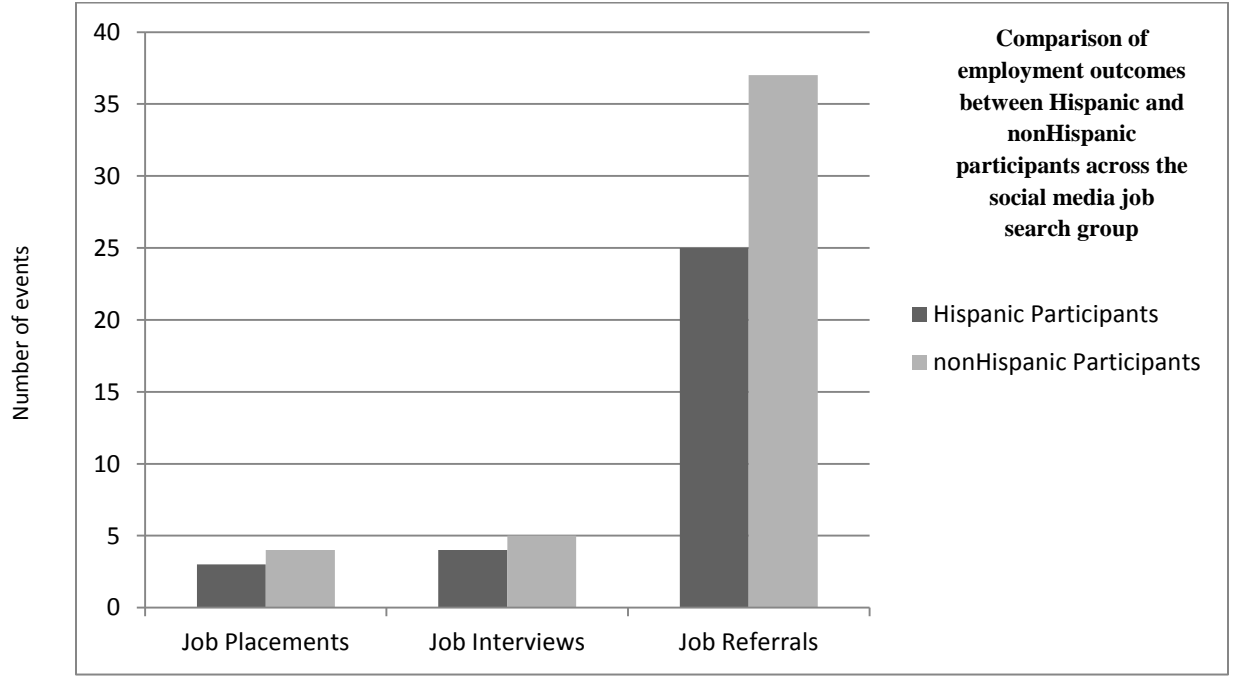
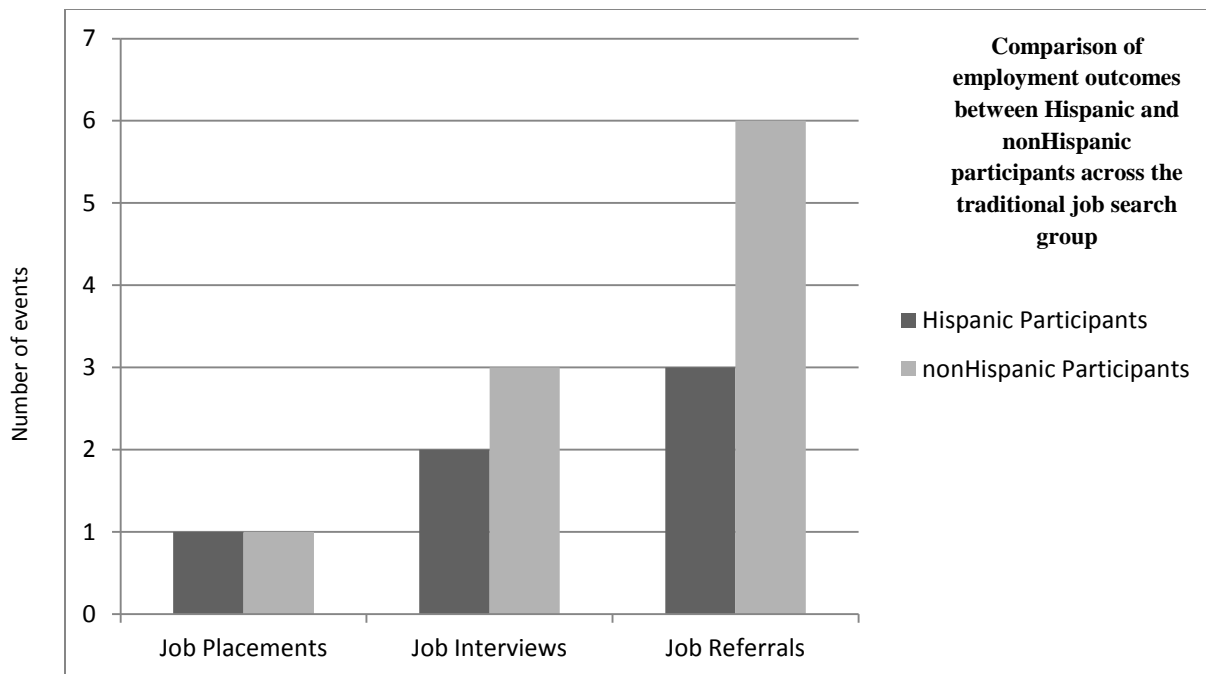


Figure 4. Comparison of employment outcomes between Hispanic and non-Hispanic participants across the social media job search group.





*Figure 5.* Comparison of employment outcomes between Hispanic and all non-Hispanic participants across the traditional job search group.