Managing Student Digital Distractions and Hyperconnectivity: 
Communication Strategies and Challenges for Professorial Authority

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Abstract

Recent debates on the use of technology in classrooms have highlighted the significance of regulating students’ off-task and multitasking behaviors facilitated by digital media. This paper investigates the communication practices that constitute professorial authority to manage college students’ digital distractions in classrooms. Findings from interviews with American professors illustrate how they constitute their authority through distinct communication strategies including the enactment of codified rules, strategic redirection, discursive sanctions, and deflection. Furthermore, results highlight the multiple constraints and tensions in instructor communication to manage digital distractions in everyday and routine interventions. Insights generated in this paper contribute to deepening understanding of the (re)construction of contemporary pedagogical authority in times of digital hyperconnectivity, as well as its adaptions and challenges.

Keywords: authority, digital distractions, technology, classroom management, communication, multitasking, hyperconnectivity