

Humans R Social Media - Open Textbook Edition

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FOUNTAIN

The iVoices Media Lab of the University of Arizona
Tucson



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Welcome to an evolving world, and an evolving “book.”

I began writing this book in 2017 with college students in mind. Since then, this text has expanded with years of teaching and collecting responses from students and with more media content. In 2020 we even began integrating student media pieces into this book through our iVoices Student Media Lab. Frankly, calling this a book has begun to feel awkward. If you are a college student, this means that a lot of the content in this book is like social media itself, created and interpreted by your peers using social networking sites like Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, LinkedIn, Reddit, Instagram, and more. It is drawn from the web, including blogs, videos, social media posts, and comments, on fixing cars, following a favorite band, exploring fashion, search engines, and maps that let you mark places. If visitors can weigh in or post their input for others to see, it’s social media, and this book may cover it.

A NOTE ON IMPERMANENCE



Many books pretend permanence. This one is unusual in acknowledging that books today – indeed any written information today – will not hold steady value for long. The value of this webbook is directly proportional to the human attention it can manage to sustain.

All informational content today, and particularly online content, is comprised of structures built on shifting foundations. Books, and especially online books, are like the New Jersey beaches I grew up on. On those beaches it is easy to forget that the sands beneath treasured the boardwalks and evening bingo games are [drifting](#) into the sea, to settle on ocean floors and other shores.

In the case of this book, the sands on which it is built are always shifting and changing; some of the channels that will suck them away fastest are already in view. First we will lose the hyperlinks, as one, then a few, then many links lead to disappeared pages; indeed I wouldn't be surprised if a link or two is already broken today on the first day of publication. Second, the platform on which

this book is published could be compromised. (We hope not. As an Open Educational Resource drawn from open source development, Pressbooks has an advantage over other proprietary platforms. But things happen.) Third and last, this book’s truths will be cast into doubt as new information emerges around situations about which I’ve written.

I will do my best to keep this book relevant through all of these shifts. And I hope readers will find my writing voice human enough to contact me and alert me when something has slipped out of place.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The above caveats notwithstanding, this book has value, and truths, and evidence of the interaction of people with people and with technologies and information. The University of Arizona’s School of Information and College of Social and Behavioral Sciences were the incubators for insights in this book, and students and graduate assistants in the eSociety class Social Media and Ourselves helped it grow. For audiovisual content, I am indebted to spectacular repositories offered via Creative Commons, Wikimedia Commons, Flickr, and Pixabay. I am indebted to open source developers of platforms like Pressbooks, and the University of Arizona Libraries for negotiating their use for faculty at UArizona. I am especially grateful to the Center for University Education and Scholarship, who have funded this book’s migration to Pressbooks and its opening of authorship to students.

HOW TO READ THIS BOOK

This “webbook” is currently hosted on Pressbooks. If it looks to you the way it does to me when I preview it, the menu – a stack of lines icon – at your upper left will drop down to show you the book’s major Parts, which can then be expanded with a + sign to show you

the chapters within each part. The arrows at the bottom also help you navigate to the next chapter.

Below is more information on Pressbooks if you need it.

<https://guide.pressbooks.com/chapter/what-is-a-webbook/>

You can learn the most about social media through this text if you perform, as you read, some critical self-reflection – that is, intense inward examination – of your own use of online social networking technologies. What do you do online, and why? Really? What makes that a good idea? Is it possible it’s not a good idea? Why does that process look as it does? Can you envision it working differently? I invite you to critically engage with the content covered in this book. To examine social media critically, you will need to challenge your own beliefs and practices, as well as social norms, institutions, corporations, and governments.

ABOUT THE QUESTIONS IN THIS EBOOK

About each chapter’s Core Concepts

This book contains a glossary of terms interspersed throughout the book and also listed at the bottom of specific chapters. However, memorization Please, think beyond the specific definitions given to the meanings of these concepts.

About each chapter’s Core Questions

There are also questions in each chapter that will help you process what you are learning and express yourselves.

A. Qualitative questions are asked first at the bottom of each section.

Some of our qualitative questions prompt you to consider situations and stories from your own experiences with technologies. Users make sense of technologies personally, ideologically, and culturally. This does *not* mean youth or any other users are “digital natives,” as there is no such thing as a digital native! But the sense you make of technologies in your own familial and cultural ways is a valuable form of knowledge that belongs to you. Honor it by thinking seriously about the questions asking you to reflect on your tech lives.

Other qualitative questions at the bottom of these chapters ask you to think imaginatively. In these scenarios, you have the power to manipulate the past, the future, or both. Think deeply about social media decisions, their impacts, and your potential power in these.

B. Multiple-choice questions are also asked in the bottom of each chapter. Use these to test how well you have comprehended what you’ve read.

ABOUT THIS EDITION OF *HUMANS R SOCIAL MEDIA*



The social media landscape changes so quickly, it's wise to question whether any book on the subject can remain relevant. One answer to this wise question is that any book or knowledge source remains relevant longer when it's dynamic, or embracing of continuous change. This Open Textbook edition of *Humans R Social Media* is a culmination of work by the [iVoices Student Media Lab](#), funded by the Center for University Education and Scholarship, the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and the iSchool at the University of Arizona. The goal of iVoices is to integrate student voices including narratives and media into instruction about technologies, and – beginning in Fall 2022 – to broaden our understandings of youth and new media experiences through research and scholarship.

Students hold extraordinary knowledge and experiences in our social media-saturated world, as I learned when I began inviting student perspectives in the Social Media and Ourselves [podcast](#). Now, with iVoices running from 2020 through 2023, we are all in. Our student Media Lab workers help design assignments and train students in the large General Education course I teach, to produce media based on their experiences with technologies. Our team of iVoices interns training in Library and Information Science then

carefully describes, tags, selects, and integrates student stories and media into the textbook. This edition you are reading now is the product of this extraordinary collaborative effort.

I am thrilled to broaden this book to include more student stories and media, and just as thrilled that you are here to read and share it.



A SoundCloud element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=18>

OUTTAKE: ON INTEGRATING STUDENT CONTENT IN CURRICULA

Intern Experience with Student Content

Audio: “My Experience with a Social Media Cleanse” ...and a furry friend.



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=18#h5p-86>

Integrating hundreds of stories into a textbook can be a tedious process, but sometimes, student stories like this one grab your attention.

As part of the intern team in 2021, I was part of multiple phases of integration including tagging student media. I had been working for hours on tagging when I stumbled across this audio clip. Even though I love this story because it highlights how stepping away from social media can be as impactful as being on social media, it really made me smile for another reason. Most of the audio disruption we get is a result of static noise or technical difficulties. Imagine my laugh of surprise when I recognized the familiar sound of a cat purring! It made me so happy, I just had to share it with the other members of our team. It was such a special, endearing thing to find, we even made “cat purring” a tag in our tagging system.

~ Randi Baltzer, iVoices Intern, Spring 2021

About the Author of this audio

Noe Becerra is a student at the University of Arizona. He is studying business and plans to one day run a business of his own. He enjoys Golfing and hanging out with his friends – and, presumably, his cat.



Enjoy *Humans R Social Media*.

GRATITUDE



THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

Center for University
Education Scholarship

Many thanks to the University of Arizona iSchool, College of Social and Behavioral Sciences, and Center for University Education and Scholarship, along with Ellen Dubinsky of UA Libraries, Amy Song of Pressbooks, our partners at UA Digital Learning, and especially to Open Pedagogy specialist Cheryl Cuillier of UA Libraries, for supporting this work and the project and labor behind it.

Tremendous thanks also to the media lab students Maria José García, Lizette Arias, Gabe Stultz, Jacquie Kuru, and Kathryn Millar for sharing their skills with our classes; to our invaluable TAs Ally Fripp and Sam Winn; to students in our classes; and to our excellent team of interns who worked tirelessly to integrate these student stories, including Randi Baltzer, Mario Villa, Jasmine Torrez, Crystal Brannon, Kaitlin Butler, Molly Ingram, Jenn Jones, Paige Carlson, and especially team lead Emily Gammons.

My work in this book is dedicated to my son and daughter, whose

navigation of social media today is a continuous inspiration; and to Andre Newman, a friend lost too soon. ~ Professor Diana Daly

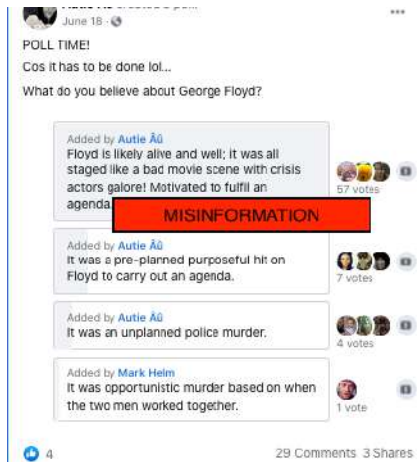
INTRODUCTION



A protest in Philadelphia in May 2020 over the killing of George Floyd and systematic racism in US history.

It's June 2020. The streets host surging protests against systematic racism in the US, and [polls](#) show a majority of Americans in favor of the Black Lives Matter movement at the protests' foundation. However, [social media metrics](#) show at least seven of the ten top trending posts on major social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter are highly critical of Black Lives Matter.

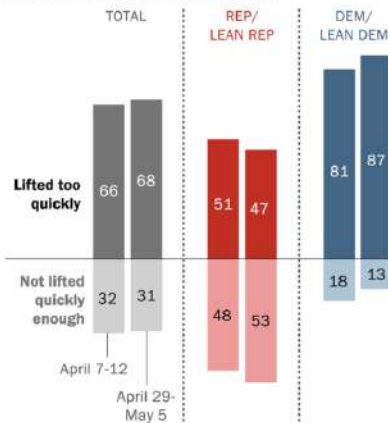
The mismatch seems unusual, except we don't need to look far back to see other serious misrepresentations of the social world on social networking platforms. Another example began in May 2020. [Polls](#) showed a majority of Americans trusting medical experts on coronavirus, agreeing with coronavirus-related restrictions, and in fear of going to work with the virus still spreading. Nonetheless, [posts](#) about government overreach and misinformation skeptical of the coronavirus threat were top trends on social media platforms including Twitter, Facebook, and even TikTok. Drummed up and networked through connecting with these posts, in the midst of lockdown people staged "Reopen protests" that are widely covered by the media (including [this author](#)).



A misguided but widely spread Facebook poll drumming up conspiracy theories about George Floyd, who was killed by Minneapolis police in May 2020.

Broad concern that states will lift public COVID-19 restrictions too quickly; divide between Republicans, Democrats grows

% who say their greater concern is that restrictions on public activity imposed by state governments in response to the coronavirus will be ...



Note: No answer responses not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted April 29-May 5, 2020.
PEW RESEARCH CENTER

It's time we stood together as one US. We did what you asked and flattened the curve and we lightened the load on hospitals. Protect those at high risk and let the rest of us start living life again. All jobs are essential. [#ReOpenAmerica!](#) [#CoronaVirus](#) [#COVID](#)

— Joe Pags Pagliarulo (@JoeTalkShow) [May 14, 2020](#)

These mismatches signal important and often forgotten factors that distort social media's image of public life in America. Social media are *not* simply mirrors of society. Social media platforms, content, and algorithms influence societies and societies influence them, in continuous cooperation and struggle.

Social media metrics and feeds today offer limitless data and indications of what society is expressing today, but the science on new media shows this data is systematically skewed. They may show us only what we want to see, over-represent the ideas of entities who pay more or game the system, under-represent social groundswells developing offline, and leave some people or ideas out altogether. While they may reflect *some* of what people are talking about, social media insights can be more like funhouse mirrors than clear reflections.

While social media buzz does not simply mirror society, insights found on social media are not fully disconnected from real social life either. Understanding the nature and design behind the trends and even individual posts across social networking sites (SNS's) can have great value in understanding networked communication, including impacts of social networking on social life, and human social influences on SNS's. One goal of this book is to guide the reader and participant through these complex layers of understanding.



Social media can distort our understandings of society unless we understand its nature and design.

A RELATIONSHIP OF MUTUAL INFLUENCE

How are we influenced by social media? How is social media influenced by us? And why have this book title represent humans *as* social media? The swirl of life immersed in social media begins and ends with ourselves as active human players in it. We produce social media content, we consume it, and we create and influence social media algorithms. Human practices and tendencies feed the systems that produce feeds for us in turn. In the end, our own careful human interpretation of these feeds will produce knowledge about the mutual influence humans and social media have on one another.

The explosion of social networking and Web 2.0 sites since the early

2000s gives us an opportunity to examine how we do *everything* – relationships, work, social life, politics, government, and even life itself – through social media. This can tempt us to the overwhelming conclusion that the study of social media means the study of everything, everywhere. Luckily, we can always return to the basics, beginning with what social media are by definition.

WHAT ARE SOCIAL MEDIA, REALLY?

Consider the terminology. The term *media* is the plural form of *medium*, which is anything through which impressions or force are transmitted to affect things on the other side. *Social* describes the kind of media we are talking about, because they relate to people interacting. The term social media usually refers to digital technologies that help people interact. So it's technically correct to write "Social media are [awesome, stupid, elemental, detrimental, whatever]." But it's also ok if you write "Social media is [changing the world, turning my friends into zombies, etc]" because the singular form is in common usage. I will use the term "social media" as both plural and singular in this book.

This is the thing about social media: it is grounded in how people talk and behave, not in rules set by any authorities. Almost any standards at work in social media can be changed by users if enough of us start pushing against those standards. We create social media. Tech developers respond to us as they create software apps, also known as software platforms. Then we tweak their apps, using them in ways that developers never planned because these unforeseen uses fit our lifestyles. Or we choose other apps that fit us better. And then those developers respond to us again.

And yes, social media does influence us too. But it can be surprising how much of what we do online was in practice in our society before social media became "a thing," and how societal and cultural phenomena independent of technologies weave their ways

into our online behaviors. Unpacking these influences requires explorations of history and theories in communication, sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science.

WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

Student Content

Social Media: In my eyes



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=22#h5p-65>

Music: "[Be Positive](#)" – Cjbeards, SoundCloud, CC-BY.

What is Social Media? In reality, that question can be answered very quickly by most; by just saying "Oh you mean like instagram?" or "snapchat?". But "social media" is much more than just "instagram and snapchat"; much more any of those apps.

To break it down more through my eyes, "social media" is an internet based application of social interaction, widely used by the entirety of the world as a virtual playground for getting ones feelings, thoughts, and ideas out to the public. This source of interaction is new to most, as it is constantly evolving into something more and more unfamiliar, just to become familiar to everyone once again so quickly. Constantly "refreshing", both by the user and by the producer; allowing us to never get old of our new pocket sized virtual world.

When on any these social interacting platforms, you are constantly connected to other people using that same platform. These people could be your family, friends, celebrities,

random people around the world or even now a days... dogs. These people pretty much can be anyone, and they all come together around you as the “public” of that platform; just like we have the public around us outside of social media. Except this public is much different than the one in the real world, as they are on the platform for only two specific reasons, to share their experiences and to watch other peoples. They are drawn to the daily doing of other peoples lives, and in specific, your life.

When you first create a profile on one of these social media platforms, you soon form a following out of people in this “public”. The “public” sees everything you put out onto this platform, and then uses what they see as a reflection of the type of person you really are. Because of this, people usually tend to form a specific persona on the platform they are using; as other people using this platform can only get an idea of who you are through what they see on your profile, and not who you are in person. This layout has multiple design flaws, as one can never truly tell who someone really is through what they see on their screen. It is simply impossible. Not only that, people allow this layout to take over their life.

Now this next part doesn't apply to all using social media; but I feel as if it does to most. See with the power to produce any “impression” on anyone who views you by creating the “perfect you” or the “you” that you want to make as who people recognize you as is a dangerous thing. On social media, people will only post things that they want people to recognize them by, or only post things that fit the certain persona that they have displayed on their profile to their “public”. This is done because of the underlying obsession people have with virtual impressions. Impressions go hand and hand with public, as both are created by the same thing; the viewing of your virtual profile. Although impressions are something that you can't see, it can sometimes be interpreted as something you can see, being “likes” and “comments” but these are simply just interactions, which is just a sub form of impressions. Impressions is much more of the “what if” question of social media, the “what if *blank* saw this?”

Impressions are all about the viewing of your profile, what people see and ultimately what people's first “impression” is about you. With this people will become addicted with trying to create the ultimate persona for themselves on their social media profiles, in order to satisfy the “first impression” in which they want to receive. Some people do this without even realizing, and I am sure you do as well. Because no one just doesn't care what they

put out on social media, and if you, that just means you actually do care. As you're creating that impression on the people who view your profile, whether you realize it or not.

So in the end, to answer the question, social media has no "true" definition. Sure you could categorize what could be defined as "social media", but that doesn't really answer the question. There's no "key phrase" or "app", that can truly define what social media is; as social media more relies on you to create that definition. For yourself and for everyone else around you within this "pocket sized virtual world". So that now leaves us with a better question, "what is social media to you?"

About the author

My name is Cameron Monteferrante, I am from Scottsdale, Arizona and when writing this I was a first semester freshman here at the University of Arizona. I am a Pre-Business Major, and plan to go into the marketing field at the end of the road!



IS THIS DIGITAL? IS THIS EVEN NEW?



Human behavior today can appear utterly transformed by digital technologies. When we look more closely, there are many moments today that echo behaviors of the past before digital technology played a key role. And there are many societal changes that have a variety of causes, some playing

much larger roles than technology. Still, people love to claim that a technology has transformed society, perhaps because they benefit from the claim, or because it makes changing the world look easy with the proper tools. It isn't.

The impacts of social media in our world are complicated. Misunderstandings around these technological platforms and practices in our world are common outcomes of flawed thinking or **fallacies** about this new force in our lives. In this section, we will break down some of these fallacies behind simplistic and exaggerated claims about social media in our world.

Utopian and dystopian thinking are among the most fallacies in thinking around social media. We are all familiar with utopian visions of social media – as though entering the golden gates of social media means leaving behind all the troubled communication practices that came before. A **utopia** is an idealized or perfect imaginary view of society. The utopian view sometimes imagines social media as a miracle disconnected from all prior human communication; other times, social media represents a more evolved social media world, where we have moved beyond all bias. The media theorist Clay Shirky [conjures](#) utopias as he describes social media's effects on how we organize, as though they might connect everyone in the world. He is a great speaker; when I listen to him I feel comforted by the humming machines watching over us, extending our powers with God-like equanimity.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=22>

Conversely, it is also common to find social media use viewed as the [downfall of society](#) – a **dystopia**, or imagined society where everything is terrible. The increasing reliance of our society on social media for everyday communications looks nightmarish to some. Teens never look up from their phones. Computers make life-or-death decisions or at least remove humans from making them. Our brains are rewiring to cut out human emotions like compassion as we become robotically trained to pursue likes and

connect with people we never see. Such dystopian thinking can make people jump to conclusions, and even deploy data and scientific research as hasty “proof” of their extreme conclusions, leading to **moral panics** or fears spread among many people about a threat to society at large.

Technological determinism is among the broadest fallacies around social media use. Technological determinism is the belief that technologies are fully responsible for grand shifts in our world, instead of acknowledging the more complicated interplay of forces behind the phenomenon in question. While social media technologies have enormous effects on our lives, human cultural and societal factors are usually also at play. The following are two claims about social media that exemplify technological determinism and explanation of their more complicated realities.

Claim: Twitter “made” the Arab Spring

Misunderstandings about the **Arab Spring**, an explosion of protests against governments in the Middle East in 2011. Contrary to many [claims](#) in the media, Twitter was not responsible for the [Arab Spring](#). Twitter was an important tool there, but relationships sustained in face-to-face interaction, and old-fashioned protest in public spaces like Tahrir Square, were the foundations of the Arab Spring, as researcher Paulo Gerbaudo found and presented in his 2012 book [Tweets and the Streets](#). Zeynep Tufekci’s research in the Middle East and in activist movements with online components has also found that while speed and ease were benefits of organizing movements online, toppling regimes as protestors in the Arab Spring accomplished required substantial offline interaction including [countless cups of tea](#). Video footage from the Egyptian protests in media including the [song lyrics](#) and music video [#Jan2](#) reveal intensely organized physical encounters.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=22>

Claim: Youth are addicted to social media, and this is a new phenomenon

Today's North American teenagers choose to spend much more of their time with friends online, according to [Pew Research Center](#), while past generations socialized more in person. However, there are many factors responsible for this other than today's ubiquity of digital technologies. One factor is that [youth are not allowed](#)

[to be out](#) as much as they once were. Today's youth deal with parents who hover more closely and give them less freedom in public spaces than their parents were given themselves, and [curfews and other restrictions](#) remind teens that they are unwelcome in public spaces. For her 2014 book *[It's Complicated](#)*, danah boyd conducted qualitative research, including interviews with teens and observations of their homes and neighborhoods. She found that teens were responding through social media use to physical restrictions on their movement, pursuing social relationships in their homes, online.

To understand the human condition in a digital era, we must critically consider claims of human transformation by and revolution through digital technologies. In other words, it is important to study what social media are actually doing in our world, as opposed to human assumptions, hopes, and fears about them.

RELY ON THE SCIENCE YOU UNDERSTAND

Scientific research is a crucial tool for understanding any phenomenon in our world, yet the scientific methodology behind many claims around social media is misleading or poorly understood by those spreading it. Here is an example: [claims](#) that social media is ruining people's brains are often based on [interpreted](#) neuroscience from entities like the UCLA Brain Mapping Center to support these arguments. Yet neuroscientific findings require some understanding of neuroscience and a critical approach; without these, researchers have [found](#) that neuroscientific findings can be used to add support to any claim, regardless of truth. Many turn to neuroscience when they want to add weight to their beliefs about social media, but too often that weight comes at the cost of validity and accuracy.

It is important to learn the ways these media really impact how we communicate and behave, but we can achieve considerable

new understanding by using observations and conversations or interviews as human research instruments – this is the practice of **qualitative inquiry** or qualitative research. We can ask ourselves and those in our lives how social media shapes our world, and pursue the answers through looking, listening, and carefully interpreting. What can we learn about this new world of communication by simply sharing our stories and impressions of our behavior with social media in our lives? When we collect these accounts and analyze across them for themes – that is, when we examine social media and ourselves using qualitative inquiry – we may not feel the need for neuroscience to confirm our new knowledge.

INFINITE DATA, LIMITED INFORMATION BRIDGES, AND RARE KNOWLEDGE

Even if claims around today's technological "revolution" may be overblown, our minds and information practices are certainly changing as we use social networking sites. Among the starkest of these changes is in how we deal with ways of knowing about our world, through concepts in the discipline of Information. To understand societal changes in which social media plays a role, it is best to first understand the concepts of data, information, and knowledge. Think of **data** as raw material in the world of ideas and information concepts: a list of millions of likes on Instagram. A glimpse of a scene you see walking down the street but do not yet fully understand. **Information** is the bridge to making meaning from that data: a research article interpreting findings from a study, or a newspaper article making sense of observed phenomena such. **Knowledge** is what we should ideally *do* with information. We synthesize the information by considering it in our minds among all of our understandings of and experiences in the world, in order to truly *know* it as knowledge. The scene you saw on the street may be explained by the newspaper article you read.

However, you may also realize from your own experience including conversations with friends around the topic that the newspaper article author presented a biased view of what you saw, or that you understand things about the scene now than the newspaper author did not.

The web allows us to take in limitless new data from many sources, and to seek out information to make sense of that data – although this will not always be *good* information. With so many streams of information coming in, we have trouble carefully forming knowledge, that deep sense of all we learn. Knowledge is both the most important and the most ignored stage of knowing in the digital age. In [this interview](#) for the podcast Hidden Brain, computer scientist Cal Newport describes **deep work**, or the act of sustained thinking and creation, as one of the few forms of human labor that computers cannot easily replace. Newport also discusses deep work in [this Ted Talk](#).

Digital systems such as computers present us with a lot of new data points, such as pulling keywords from Twitter posts. Computers can sometimes even transform these data points into knowledge, such as by combining keywords from Twitter posts into news stories automatically emailed to you. However, to process what publics express on Twitter in the most valuable ways, posts must be studied critically – are they bots? Are they deceptive? – and carefully – what is the history behind this trend? What are the unseen forces shaping it? Journalists and analysts and many other interpreting forces online can help us make sense of this data as information, but can we trust them? Is the information true, and are their other ways of interpreting these findings that we should also seek to understand? Most importantly, what do we really *know* about this situation that can serve us moving forward? How can it be applied to more broadly explain phenomena in the world or predict interactions in our world?

Computers cannot create knowledge in the way it is conceptualized here, and they may never be capable of doing so.

Humans can, but only if we just give ourselves time to think, study, question, and theorize. Knowledge requires processing across multiple sources of information to create new ideas.

In short, we are in an Information Age in which human knowledge is growing rarer, even as data and information proliferate. Your own knowledge must come through you. This is why in this book you will be asked to reflect on your own experiences, stories, and visions around social technologies. This will not only help you to understand how social media is impacting you; it will help shed light on a world that is often broadcast, yet little understood.

Core Concepts

fallacies

types of flawed thinking including utopian and dystopian ideas and technological determinism

utopia

an idealized or perfect imaginary view of society

dystopia

an imagined society where everything is terrible

technological determinism

the belief that technologies are fully responsible for grand shifts in our world, instead of acknowledging the more complicated interplay of forces behind the phenomenon in question

Arab Spring

an explosion of protests against governments in the Middle East in 2011

qualitative inquiry (or qualitative research)

using observations and conversations or interviews as human research instruments

data

raw material in the world of ideas and information concepts: A list of millions of likes on Instagram, with little understanding yet applied

information

the bridge to making meaning from data, such as a research article interpreting findings from a study, or a newspaper article making sense of observed phenomena

knowledge

the outcome of synthesizing information by considering it in our minds among all of our understandings of and experiences in the world

deep work

computer scientist Cal Newport's term for the very human act of sustained thinking and creation

Core Questions

A. Questions for qualitative thought:

1. Write about a phenomenon you experience that you feel is distorted by its representation in media including social media. How do you know what you know about this phenomenon? If you can find information sources to support your understanding of it, cite or otherwise refer to them, and explain. If not, envision what information source[s] you could create based on your knowledge of the phenomenon.
2. Create a concept map of data, information, and knowledge you would consider to respond to the question above.
3. Consider a belief you encounter commonly that is rooted in one of the fallacies described in this chapter. Describe the belief and link to or cite an example of the flawed thinking, and identify the type of flawed thinking it is. Then, refute it.

B. Review: Which is the best answer?



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RELATED CONTENT

HEAR IT: HOW FACEBOOK IS UNDERMINING 'BLACK LIVES MATTER

Listen to / read the transcript of this 27-minute episode of the podcast The Daily, "[How Facebook is undermining 'Black Lives Matter'](#)". Then consider: What were your experiences around the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter protests, online and offline? Identify examples of data and information sources about them you have been exposed to, and ultimately, how your own knowledge about the protests was formed. Finally, consolidate your knowledge of the summer 2020 Black Lives Matter movement into one "finding," or statement describing what you know about them.

CONSIDER IT: ONLINE QUALITATIVE INQUIRY ON THE “REOPEN” PROTESTS

In April 2020, shortly after the threat of coronavirus transmission led to the shutdown of many US businesses, protests ensued. I was invited to use qualitative online research to help people understand the demands of “Reopen” protestors. Read this article and then consider these questions.

1. How did I perform this online qualitative inquiry? Describe the process in your own words based on what I wrote.
2. Write a summary of your knowledge today about the “Reopen” protests. Include what you learned from the article as well as other data and information sources and your knowledge and experiences. Consider especially truths you know about the world around these protests at this time that are not included in this article.
3. This article is information for you, but I wrote it based on my knowledge. Draw a concept map of the data and information that go into your knowledge of the “Reopen” protests today.

WHAT ARE THE 'REOPEN' PROTESTERS REALLY SAYING?



Protesters in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, on April 20 call for the governor to lift restrictions meant to help combat the spread of the coronavirus.

[AP Photo/Matt Slocum](#)

[Diana Daly](#), [University of Arizona](#)

The “anti-lockdown” and #Reopen protests in the U.S. have [powerful and secretive backers](#), but there are real Americans on the streets expressing their opinions.

As an [ethnographer](#) – someone who studies cultural participation – I’m interested in who those Americans are, and why they’re upset.

I spent the last week in what you might call an online road trip, studying 30 posts of protest footage from events in 15 cities. I found some shared themes, which don’t fit well with popular narratives about these protests.

Protesters object to handouts, but want work.

1. POVERTY IS TABOO, BUT WORK IS 'ESSENTIAL'

Despite the economic toll the lockdowns are [taking on America's poor](#), no protesters put their own poverty on display, such as posting signs asking for help.

Instead, they held signs with more general language, like "[Poverty Kills](#)," or expressed concerns like the restaurateur in Phoenix, Arizona, who told a passing videographer he was worried about his 121 "[suffering, devastated](#)" employees.

Their messages made clear that they didn't want to ask for a handout or charity – but they were asking to be allowed to work. Protesters across many states asserted their work – or even all work – was "essential."

In one video from an "Operation Gridlock" protest in Lansing, Michigan, where [activists planned to block traffic](#), a protester filmed out the window of his car when he drove past a sign saying "Give me work not money." The protester himself called out in approval, "[Give me work not money, I hear that!](#)"

A young man at an Olympia, Washington, event described work as a source not only of money but identity: "[I wanna go back to work!](#) That pride that you feel every day when you go home from work? That's like nothing that can ... be taken."

Protest signs in [Denver, Colorado](#), included the plaintive "I want my career back" and the entrepreneurial "Dogs Need Groomers."



Outside the Missouri Capitol on April 21, some protesters wore masks – though others didn't.

[AP Photo/Jeff Roberson](#)

2. THE THREAT OF THE VIRUS IS SERIOUS

Despite alarming news reports that protesters were [ignoring social distancing](#), many of the protesters observed safety guidelines. Photos showed at least some people wearing masks. A [TikTok video](#) recruiting participants for Michigan's Operation Gridlock encouraged protesters to be safe; [drone footage](#) shows that most participants [at the state capitol](#) stayed in their cars, away from other people.

Protesters' signs didn't really downplay the threat of the virus, but rather compared it with potential harm from the lockdown. For instance, a sign in Denver was headed "[Trading Lives](#)" and featured a scale with virus deaths on one side, with unemployment, suicide and homelessness on the other.

Protesters in cars are, in general, observing social distancing guidelines.

3. ANTI-SCIENCE DISPLAYS ARE ON THE FRINGE

There were protesters at several rallies who wore anti-vaccination T-shirts and held signs suggesting they don't trust public health experts and scientists.

But only one protest was dominated by that theme. At that one, on April 18 in Austin, Texas, hundreds of attendees chanted "[Fire Fauci!](#)" referring to Dr. Anthony Fauci, director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, who has been a frequent public face of the federal government's efforts to fight the virus. That was also the rally where [right-wing radio host Alex Jones, who runs a conspiracy-theory website](#), drove around in a truck [egging on attendees' chants through a megaphone](#).

At the other events, it appeared protesters had been expecting higher numbers of infections than actually happened. Rather than seeing that as evidence of the success of social distancing, they seemed to interpret this as saying the science was no longer valid. "[The models were wrong](#)" was on more than one sign, suggesting protesters had paid attention to the scientific models at first but had come to believe the disease's seriousness had been exaggerated.

Idahoans rally to fight the outbreak's effects in ways they have dealt with more familiar problems.

4. PEOPLE WANT TO FIGHT THE VIRUS IN FAMILIAR WAYS

Even when protesters acknowledged the threat of the virus, few of them were calling for medical experts to provide the solution. I saw none of the demonstrators calling for more widespread testing, for instance.

When they did express concern, protest signs coupled it with a desire to fight the contagion. In Boise, Idaho, one sign read "[Freedom over Fear](#)." In Denver, one said "[Don't let your mask be your muzzle](#)."

However, the protesters wanted to fight the virus in ways that were more familiar to them and, perhaps, more empowering: In Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, a giant green truck had "[Jesus is my vaccine](#)" scrawled on its side.

Some protesters demanded governments allow people to make their own decisions, and

even displayed the pro-choice slogan "[My Body My Choice](#)." Others showed up with [guns](#). One man in Frankfort, Kentucky, [blew a shofar](#), a Jewish religious instrument made from a ram's horn blown at the start of a battle.



Armed protesters were among the crowd in Michigan on April 30.

[Jeff Kowalsky/AFP via Getty Images](#)

5. 'TYRANNY' DEPENDS ON WHO GOVERNS, NOT HOW

In many of the events across different states, protesters objected to what they called "tyranny," and held up the [Revolution-era "Don't Tread On Me" Gadsden flag](#) to symbolize their resistance to government rules. They were not objecting to President Donald Trump's April 13 declaration that, as president, his "[authority is total](#)" over the nation.

Instead they were objecting to governors' lockdown rules, which they highlighted as overreaching their power. Many protesters likened the government's behavior to Nazis, with protesters adding "Heil" before Democratic governors' names.

No male governor was targeted as viciously and overtly as female Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer. A widely circulated poster depicted her [dressed as Adolf Hitler, giving a Nazi salute beside a swastika](#). Other demonstrators talked about Whitmer as though she were mothering them instead of governing them, like one who insisted, "[We're not her children!](#)"

Michigan protesters speak out about their concerns.

6. RACE IS A FACTOR

One clearly visible theme in the #Reopen protests is [how white the attendees are](#) – but not just in terms of their own race. Their compassion also seemed limited to fellow white people. None that I saw were calling attention to the fact that the coronavirus doesn't hit all populations equally: Blacks and other racial minorities had [less access to high-quality health care](#) before the outbreak, and as a result are less healthy and less able to fight off the virus when it strikes.

There was overt racism toward the Chinese, too, echoing words of the president and other political leaders, as on the Jefferson City, Missouri, sign that read "[Tyranny is spreading faster than the China virus.](#)"

There's potential for a wider movement.

7. DIVIDED AND DISTANCED, IS IT A MOVEMENT?

Most protesters did not refer to these protests as a movement. I found just one video offering a vision that they could form one. In that livestream from Operation Gridlock, at one point the videographer shouted, "[merica!](#)"

Then, his unseen companion replied in a meditative tone about the potential he saw on that road: "Together we're strong, divided we're weak. That's the establishment's biggest fear, for the people to get together and not be divided. ... That's what they fear the most. Because we have the power." It was not clear if those people with the power included the much greater number of people across America who were sheltered in place.

[You need to understand the coronavirus pandemic, and we can help. [Read The Conversation's newsletter.](#)] image

[Diana Daly](#), Assistant Professor of Information, [University of Arizona](#)

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PART I

MAIN BODY

CHAPTER 1

Identity

Identity, once an elusive concept, is now expressed constantly online.

We introduced this book with me. Now we move on to you – all of you, through whom culture passes and takes new shape. You are a huge part of social media – but what are the factors that come together to make you into you? **Identity** is an iteration of the self that links individuals with how they are perceived by others. Identity combines how you see yourself and how others see you, in an endless riff that becomes your positioning in publics and in the world.

ANONYMOUS TRASH TALKING

Student Content

My personal knowledge of social media



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When it comes to my knowledge of online culture it only amounts to the online gaming community. Growing up my parents didn't allow me to have social apps until middle school. However by then I was never interested in social media since I was able to interact with my friend by using my PlayStation Party. All through high school I would hang out with my friend playing online games like Minecraft, Rainbow Six Siege, and most Call of Duty's.

What was hard for me was that whenever I meet new friends that would ask for my Snapchat or Facebook. Having to tell people that I didn't make me feel awkward. I did not want them to believe that I just did not want to give it to them. Eventually after taking this class I decided that it was time for me to spread my social media presence by getting the other accounts.

Even though I got the app I made sure that I was careful of what I post and what my name is attached to. Many of my accounts don't have my name attached to it. I know myself that one day I would slip up and post something bad.

I don't regret not having social media apps since PlayStation party chat and game chat. These game chats taught me a lot. The most important was to develop thick skin over time. One thing that many games have is a toxic environment that I learn to love.

Anyone new to this community may struggle to understand the enjoyment of trash talking. Terms that can be thrown around can be like *simp*, *trash*, or *garbage*. These might not be that bad, however these are the words I consider safe to say right now – many times bad words are thrown around like nothing. Getting hurled insults left, right, and center teaches you to have thick skin.

Many people consider people who play games to be anti-social. I believe that they are one of the most social people out there. What made being social online so easy was that

there was no picture or name attached to you. When you create an account it is rare for people to have their real name. Many accounts didn't allow pictures so they had icons instead. So with this in mind can build confidence in people who might be shy in person. This lack of link to your real identity is what leads to a toxic environment.

Other online environments are quite new to me. I want to try to expand my online environment. By getting more social media and exploring the community inside them. The closest I had before the other apps was YouTube which probably has the largest diverse community. But even with all those communities by my finger tip I would still tend to hover around the gaming side of YouTube. Overall I believe that the online gaming community is complex having a side of people. Those who are toxic to anyone or those who are just there to have a fun time with their friends.

About the Author

Hey, my name is Jorge I'm majoring in Physiology I want to become a plastic surgeon. I love to play game and watch anime. My favorite food are hot Cheetos. One day I wish to be sponsored by Arizona tea.



NEXT STEP: CREATE A PROFILE



Male and female identities are often the only options given to users building an online profile. This reinforces gender divisions and performances enacted on those sites, making people present themselves as more strictly male or female than they otherwise might.

Let's imagine that you were told that you must create a **profile** to continue reading this book or get a grade associated with it. Who would you be? I imagine many of you would reply, "Well I'm not sure yet. Who is the profile for?" The audiences or **publics** with you intend to interact shape your identity at any given time.

If the profile you are creating is simply for other students and instructors in the class you are taking, perhaps you'd craft the profile to reflect student

teams or organizations you are part of; or perhaps you would keep it vague, if the student community on your campus feels large or impersonal. Compare that to the profile you might craft for a professional site, like LinkedIn, and you might see distinct differences. When students in my courses share LinkedIn profiles they often look very different from the same students' profiles in our Course Management System (CMS). On our CMS students upload small, fuzzy photos if they upload photos at all, whereas on LinkedIn those same students look directly at the camera, proudly wear suits, and boast of their accomplishments. In class, they want to blend in; but when applying for jobs, they want to stand out. And now compare your student and professional profile to the profile you might use in online dating. Is it different? I imagine so! Perhaps the focus moves to looking attractive and inviting to attract those you are interested in.

"PERFECTION"

Student Content, Fall 2020

Body Image on Social Media



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With my personal experience on social media, I have been influenced in unhealthy ways to change myself. By having multiple different apps on social media since I was as young as a middle schooler, I have grown up with the example of social media influencers and super models being the center of attention that most people followed. With apps coming out such as facetune, which is an app that allows you to completely edit and change your body and skin, everyone in our generation began to use this app to make themselves look like these influencers, even though they did not look like this in person. This causes people to be mentally drained from reality, as they are changing their entire complexion for the public to see.

Along with facetune, many people struggle mentally thinking that they are not good enough to be posting their natural selves, so they physically try to change themselves in unhealthy ways. Eating habits are extremely important in life, yet people are changing the way that they eat and the quantity they eat so their body can change in a way that matches the ideal body image that influencers portray. This is physically and mentally unhealthy and causes our generation to grow up in a messy environment. Although it is

not influencers' intentions to cause this type of habit, this is the result of growing up with the visual of a "perfect body."

In my personal experience growing up, I have been surrounded by all of my friends who constantly edit and change the pictures that we take together to make them meet society's standards of a perfect body. There is never a selfie, which is a photo taken by oneself of oneself, that gets put online without it going through facetune first. Not only do my friends and I facetune, but when we scroll along our feeds and see a picture that seems too good to be true, we often jump to conclusions and claim that the person who posted edited his or her picture. This is not a trend that only my friends and I are accountable for, but I know many people that call others out on facetune errors too. This is a toxic trait that our generation unfortunately has to deal with.

Influenced by other bodies, I have dealt with personal friends that struggled with eating disorders due to the influence of social media influencers. I know people who would go as long as they can without eating to allow their bodies to lose weight, which is extremely unhealthy physically and mentally. Other friends had tendencies where they throw up after meals because their minds feel so guilty after eating because they do not want to gain more weight and not look like your ideal supermodel. Each generation has struggles with body image, but growing up with social media, young kids are exposed to this type of behavior at an earlier age, causing a longer and more common issue.

Yael Hotz is a sophomore at the University of Arizona. She enjoys relaxing on the beach.



You may find your self-presentation of your identity is limited or enhanced by what options or features the platform you use offers. These are **affordances**: cues in an environment that communicate how to interact with features or things in that environment and that can also communicate to others. A button affords being pushed; snapchat's snap streaks afforded keeping a visible running count of two people's interactions with one another. Affordances can also be expanded, as they often are by users in

social media platforms. For example, many platforms that do not afford the claiming of gender identities other than *male* or *female* find users exploiting creative ways to express gender fluidity.

Of course users of social media are not always seeking to express their most “realistic” selves. Some platforms are desirable to users because they afford fantasy filters or the trappings of other identities. Video game avatars offer compelling examples of profiles that embody other lives and beings. But does that mean you don’t spend much time designing that avatar, since it’s “not you?” Of course not; it has become standard in the gaming industry to charge significant sums for downloadable content to customize your avatar or “skin” – because your avatar is you, for one or more gaming publics. And that avatar and profile will influence how people treat you in-game; they constitute your in-game identity.

Below: “Outsourcing” the labor of expressing yourself online to other types of identities is common...and complicated.



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WHO ARE YOU? OFFLINE? ONLINE? ACROSS MODALITIES?

Like the concept of information, identity is a notion that used to be amorphous and philosophical. You couldn't easily set "identity" apart from the human to whom the identity belonged. Today, though, humans try to project every unseen aspect of our lives onto the binary-minded digital world. And that means the formerly

shapeless concept of identity has to take shape, and if we want it to represent us online, we have to know what we want and put it out there.

As a human, you don't just have one identity, or even one online identity and also one offline identity. Our legal world and policies from platforms [like Facebook](#) may limit people into having one identity, but in life, both online and offline, we play many roles and thus have many identities.

Two theorists have given us important tools to understand these identity roles, although both theorists began writing about these roles before the internet drew so many of us to craft identities online.

Backtrack to the 1950s. Social roles in North America were rigid. Then the sociologist Erving Goffman put forward a whole new way of looking at identity in his 1956 book, *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (see overview in the video embedded below). Goffman wrote that we are all actors on a “**social stage**,” who play particular roles to create our identities and that these roles change as we interact with different people and situations. He also wrote that our selves can only really be understood when we look at all of the roles we play.

Then the cultural critic and feminist theorist Judith Butler advanced and honed the notion of identity roles in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble* (overview in the video embedded below), focusing on the roles that define gender. Butler's theories introduced the notion that gender itself is our playing of roles like “boy,” “girl,” “man,” and “woman,” rather than these being “natural” or connected to our biologies. Butler's concept of **performativity** says that roles like gender are only constructed through our performances of them; they would not exist without our acting them into existence.

If these theories have truth in them – and I believe they do – what does this mean for our identities online? Well, our online identities offer some additional evidence that gender and other

be associated with both your dating *and* your LinkedIn profiles? And also visible to your network where you connect with family? If this idea makes you feel uncomfortable, you are experiencing the threat of context collapse. **Context collapse** is when the different contexts or worlds you associate with overlap or become mixed together. Friends snicker at an embarrassing comment your mother makes in reply to your photo online. A job recruiter sees an Instagram photo of you partying and decides not to recruit you.

Political views expressed online can lead to particularly fraught situations. White supremacists preparing to demonstrate in Charlottesville, Virginia in August 2017 discovered this when [AirBnB canceled demonstrators' Charlottesville reservations](#) after being alerted to the demonstrators' intentions. After the demonstrations, [a campaign on Twitter to identify and publicly shame protestors](#) led to problems for some protestors, who were prepared to promote white supremacy when surrounded by sympathizers but not prepared to defend these views before broader network contacts.

Context collapse is a constant danger as our online identities proliferate. In her research, new media scholar danah boyd found that teens develop strategies for dealing with context collapse, including using coded language to communicate. It is also common practice for people to try to keep their social media accounts separate and hide some details or even entire accounts from specific people and publics (as we'll discuss in more detail in Chapter 3).

What keeps us using platforms even when our interactions feel uncomfortable or compromising? Well, **network effects**, which means that the more the platform is used – the more often we go there to interact with family, or friends, or customers, or all of these – the more valuable it becomes.

When my 'professor' and 'mother' roles overlap



I deal with context collapse too. As a professor of social media, I encourage my students to embrace their online experiences as part of their real worlds; in this professor role, I recognize the value in online interactions. And then I head home from class to find my teenaged son or daughter has been on social media for hours. I freak out. *Enough screen time!* I shout. *I don't care what you're doing on there!*

It feels hypocritical that I behave so differently in these two roles. So why do I do it? I ask myself this a lot, but I only have tentative answers; they have to do with what I perceive as distinct responsibilities in each role I play. When I teach, I don't want my students to shut me out; I know from experience that they are only willing to examine their online interactions in my class when they feel comfortable I'm not judging them. But my job as a mother is not to help my son understand his online life. My job is to keep him safe and healthy, and when he spends too much time in virtual worlds, his safety and health slip out of my control.

WHY CONTEXT COLLAPSE IS MORE EXTREME ONLINE

You could say I am getting off easy with my own professor-mother context collapse. My mother role is mostly an offline role, so context collapse between my mother and professor roles online is not frequent, and it doesn't last forever online. Whatever roles you feel the need to keep distinct in your life, it is likely their online expressions that you worry about the most. There are **four key affordances of online communication** that danah boyd emphasizes are far more pronounced than they would be offline ([It's Complicated](#), pg. 11). They are:

- *persistence*: online content and expressions can last for a very long time
- *visibility*: many audiences and publics may be able to see what you post over time
- *spreadability*: it's nearly effortless to share content posted online
- *searchability*: content posted online can be searched for

The four affordances identified by boyd raise the stakes of online context collapse and communication in general. When we consider who controls our data, and what we agree to when we agree to use their services, it can be especially chilling to realize how easily what we express online might become *visible* to unintended audiences. They may *spread* this information to other publics, who will be able to search and find it easily. Finally, this threat will *persist* for a very long time.

CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

CORE CONCEPTS

identity

identity is an iteration of the self that links individuals with how they are perceived by others

"social stage"

sociologist Erving Goffman wrote in his 1956 book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* that we are all actors on a "social stage," who play particular roles to create our identities, and that these roles change as we interact with different people and situations. Our selves can only really be understood when we look at all of the roles we play

performativity

in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler's concept of performativity says that roles like gender are only constructed through our performances of them; they would not exist without our acting them into existence

context collapse

context collapse is when the different contexts or worlds you associate with overlap or become mixed together

network effects in platforms

a concept meaning that the more the platform is used, the more valuable it is – because

the more likely it is where we go to interact with family, or friends, or customers, or all of these. A shorthand definition is “the more, the merrier”

affordances

signals or cues in an environment that communicate how to interact with features or things in that environment

four key affordances of online communication

there are four affordances of online communication that danah boyd emphasizes are far more pronounced than in offline communication (It's Complicated, pg. 11). They are: persistence (online content and expressions can last for a very long time), visibility (many audiences and publics may be able to see what you post over time), spreadability (it's nearly effortless to share content posted online), and searchability (content posted online can be searched for)

CORE QUESTIONS

A. Questions for qualitative thought:

1. In what ways have a social media platform's affordances on how you can present your identity felt restrictive to you? If you were in charge, how would you rewrite them?
2. Write about an example of context collapse you have seen or experienced online. Who were the intended publics, or audiences, or each presentation of self involved? How did the situation end up?

3. Consider one or more aspects of yourself that do not feel like they have places to be expressed online. What is happening with these aspects of yourself that cannot be expressed online? How does it feel? Envision and describe or map out a platform where this type of expression can be shared.

B. Review: Which is the best answer?



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Scholarly Sources on Identity (cited in APA):

boyd, d. (2013). White flight in networked publics. How race and class shaped American teen engagement with MySpace and Facebook. In L. Nakamura & PA Chow-White (Eds.), *Race after the internet*, 203-222. [Find in Google Scholar](#)

Pitcan, M., Marwick, A. E., & boyd, d. (2018). Performing a vanilla self: Respectability politics, social class, and the digital world. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(3), 163-179. [Find in Google Scholar](#)

About these sources: Racial and cultural identities are expressed online through everything from choice of platform to user language choices. These articles use interviews and observation of online environments to unpack how such choices culminate in cultural coding of online spaces and performances.

RELATED CONTENT

READ IT: INTERNET SOCIETY'S UNDERSTANDING YOUR ONLINE

IDENTITY



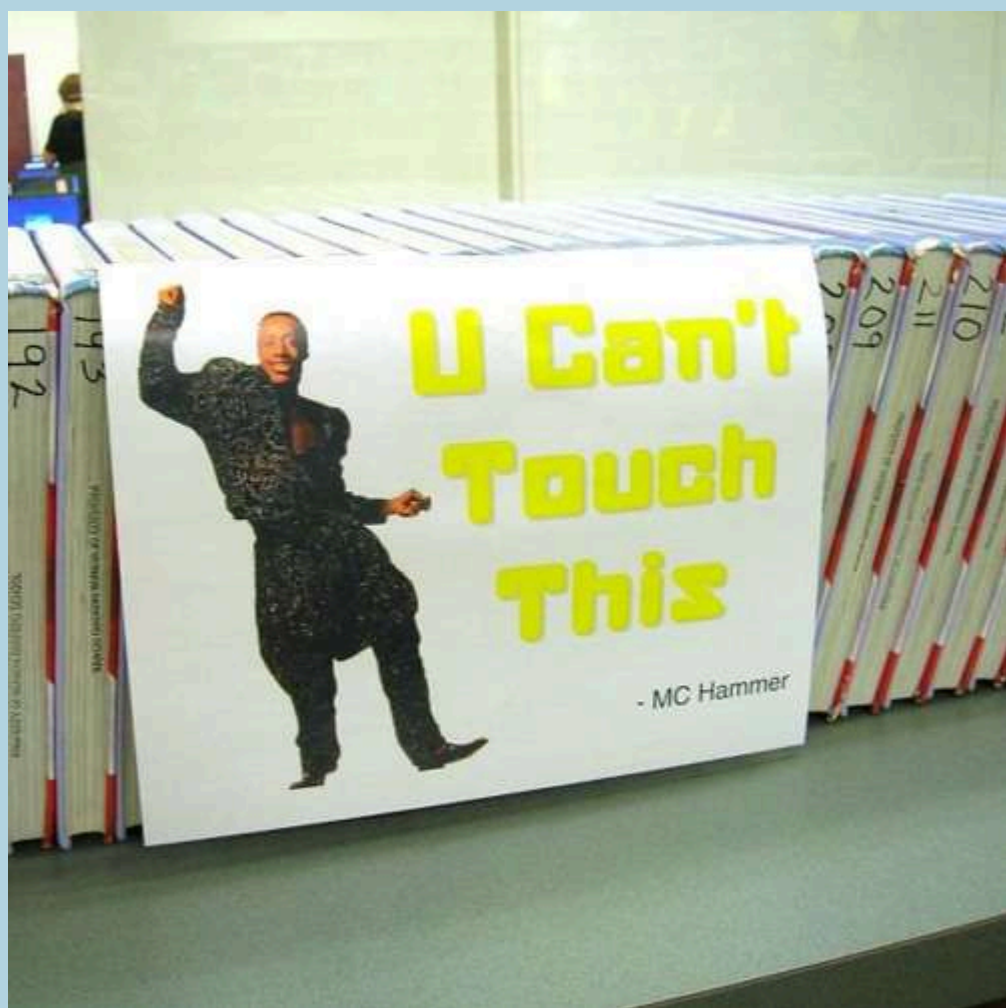
The organization Internet Society, or internetsociety.org, was founded in 1992 to manage and guide technical and social standards for internet use. Today they are “a global cause-driven organization ...dedicated to ensuring that the Internet stays open, transparent and defined by you.”

Online identity can be viewed through many lenses. The internet society has dived deeply into online identity through the lens of technical infrastructure, and found that not only public policy, but public education is essential in managing identity-related data collection and privacy online.

Click here to open the short reading “[Understanding Your Online Identity](#)” by InternetSociety.org, then highlight the passages you find useful. Be sure you understand the terms below.

Term	Definition	Example
Identity	The complete set of characteristics that define you	Name, nicknames, birth date and any other unique characteristics that combined make you who you are
Identifier (according to InternetSociety.org)	A way of referring to a set of characteristics	Your email address (myID@me.com) or user name (RaulB) or an account number (7633)
Partial Identity (according to InternetSociety.org)	A subset of the characteristics that make up your identity	Demographic information about you or any purchase history is stored in your account at a website
Profile (according to InternetSociety.org)	Information collected by others about your actions and characteristics. (See also chapter definition.)	A search you conducted for “discount shoes” or a list of websites visited
Persona (according to InternetSociety.org)	A partial identity created by you to represent yourself in a specific situation	A social network account or your online blog

**HEAR IT: "TIMELESSNESS" FROM THE SOCIAL MEDIA AND
OURSELVES PODCAST**



A SoundCloud element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=29>

Listen to / read the [transcript](#) of this second episode of the podcast Social Media and Ourselves, "Timelessness." Then consider: What were or are your past "selves" captured on social media? If they can still be found online, are you comfortable with that? If not, imagine you had the power to right this situation from the tech side. How would you change things. Envision making changes not only so that these past selves no longer haunt you online, but so that the shame of a past self online does not affect so many younger people in the future.

CHAPTER 2

Old to New Media

Social media have evolved through human cultural practices along with technological affordances.

MAY WE HAVE YOUR ATTENTION: FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERIENCES

Student Content, Fall 2020

At what age should a child have social media?

In today's society it is impossible to go out in public, and not see someone looking down at their phones. Our phones are the first thing we look at in the morning, and the last at night. We have become so glued to them, it can be difficult to hold a simple conversation. We even use our phones for the sole purpose of not having to interact with others in public. When we use our phones out in public just to avoid conversing with other people we are not only being very anti social, but we are practicing civil inattention. Everyone always says it's teens who use their phones the most, and maybe that's true, but why is that the case? Is it because we have more social media accounts, or more followers? Or is

it because we choose to use our phones to distract us from the real world? I believe this is true for a number of reasons but the main one being, we've never known any different.

iPhones were first released when today's teens were very young, and many of us acquired our first phone before we even hit our teenage years. It seems kids today are on social media at a much younger age, and now even elementary school kids have cell phones. The childhood experience is so different from what it used to be, but now so is the normal adulthood experience. Before iPhones we all had to get our news from broadcast media, and now we check our social media for updates on the world.

So what age is too young for a social media presence? I interviewed a Freshman at The University of Arizona to share her first experiences with social media, and get her take on how young is too young.

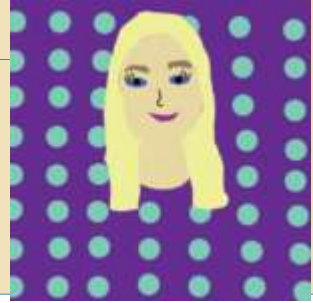
Amara (a pseudonym) is 18 years old, and has an iPhone just like every other college student her age, but the difference between her, and many other of these students is that she didn't even have a phone until she was 16 in her Sophomore year of high school. Amara's parents were very strict about phones and didn't want their only child active on social media at such a young age, and since the only phone she wanted was an iPhone, where it is extremely easy to access social media, she was not allowed a phone until she turned 16. This was difficult for Amara for a few reasons, the first being she couldn't contact her parents after school when they needed to pick her up, she couldn't talk to her friends outside of school, and she always felt very out of the loop. Vine was very big the year all of Amara's friends started getting phones and when they would all talk about the latest videos she couldn't participate in any of the conversations. Amara's parents valued their young daughter's privacy over her social life, and at the time this upset Amara very much, but now as she's older she feels happy that she had different experiences than her classmates.

While other kids talked only through their phones, Amara had to meet up with her friends in person, and she had to have the childhood experiences her classmates never would. She played outside, and did normal kids stuff. This is why I believe that parents should wait as long as possible to get their kids phones, because every child should have those experiences of making plans with friends in person, and playing together outside of school. Kids need the experience of being kids, before they should have any presence on social media. Amara's parents were also worried of any harm that may have come to their daughter if she had had a phone at a younger age. Cyberbullying is so common, and it is

so easy for kids to be mean behind a screen. Younger kids especially think it's ok to say hurtful things over the phone because they can't see the other person, so they think it's no big deal. Kids should not be active on social media until they are mature enough to use it properly. Kids should enjoy their childhood while it lasts, and then enjoy all the good of social media when they are old enough to appreciate it.

About the Author

May Otzen is a student at the University of Arizona. She spends her days watching Netflix, and using various social media apps like Instagram, Tik Tok, and Snapchat. She loves spending time with her friends, and playing with her cat, Bruce.



It is important to understand the relationships between older media and social media. By older media, I mean the industry-produced form of mass communication available in the US before digital social media became a thing, such as television, radio, newspapers, books, magazines, etc.

Older media can be referred to by other names, such as traditional media. And then there are subcategories of older media: broadcast media are one subcategory of older media, including television and radio, that communicates from one source to many viewers at once. Print media are a paper-based subcategory of older media such as newspapers, books, and magazines, that many users access individually.

MEDIA CONVERGENCE

New digital media devices inherit many qualities and functions of older media and forms of communication.



Mobile Phone Evolution: The shapes of mobile phones have evolved over time to become less similar to older analog phones.

Here's an example: When your phone camera snaps a digital photo, it probably makes [this sound](#) or something like it. That sound is the sound of a shutter opening and closing. It is a sound that analog (non-digital) cameras have to make in order to function.

Digital cameras don't have shutters; they function through chips that sense light coming into the lens. So why do so many digital cameras make that shutter sound? Because developers wanted your device to signal to you that the photo was taken, and that sound has become associated with picture taking in our society. Media scholar Henry Jenkins calls this type of blending of old and new media "technological

convergence." (Convergence just means coming together while moving through time.) Technological convergence is one of [several types of media convergence](#) that Jenkins writes are crucial to understanding our media world today.

Our technologies are full of convergences with older, traditional media helping us make sense of new media. Some signs of technological convergence go away over time as we become more comfortable with technologies. For example, mobile phones were once shaped more like analog phones, which helped people feel more comfortable calling and talking on them. However, as they

gained more entertainment-related affordances, they began to appear more like remote control devices.

THE HISTORY OF COMMUNICATING WITH MANY AT ONCE

Traditional media can be limiting when viewed as the only influence on new social media. Think of a famous athlete's Facebook post seen and raucously responded to by thousands of people. Would that have been possible through traditional media like a paper newspaper or radio broadcast? No. But now imagine it in this ancient amphitheater in Syria (below). That athlete could have shouted an insult at an opponent, and gotten roars of approval and disapproval from the crowd. Spectators may even have gotten into fights with one another. Those types of interactions have a long social history.



The Bosra pano in Syria: This amphitheater from the ancient Roman empire afforded viewership by a large crowd that also interacted with one another.

Humans can communicate to broad and distant audiences using many other means outside of print or broadcast media. These include:

- Vocalization and voice amplification
- Staging for visibility
- Oversize objects
- Movement and dance repertoires
- Songs and repetition

Some of these means of communication are very old. But the smartest developers and users of new media let every possible means of communication and visibility inspire their designs and practices.

It is important to recognize that when we use media, we communicate and spread our ways of interacting with these media, not just the content delivered by the media. Theorist Marshall McLuhan referred to this with the phrase, "The medium is the message."

When developers consider new features, they have to consider what is present in the cultures that will interact with

those media. If a feature relies upon brand new methods of



This giant puppet is one example of a means developed before digital social media to communicate a message to many people using performance and imagery.

interaction, it increases the likelihood that those media will confuse users. See one interesting way people are looking at new gestures developed in the digital age [here](#).

A MILLENNIAL SHIFT: WEB 2.0 AS USER CONTRIBUTIONS

It is with traditional media in mind that New York University Journalism professor Jay Rosen wrote [The People Formerly Known as the Audience](#) in 2006. He claimed that these people were taking over the media by using social media, and that his statement was their “collective manifesto.” He claimed the people were speaking out to resist “being at the receiving end of a media system that ran one way, in a broadcasting pattern, with high entry fees and a few firms competing to speak.”

Today’s media exist in a different era from the turn of the millennium. Rosen reminds us that broadcasters used to refer to viewers as “eyeballs.” Think about what that metaphor means. An eyeball has only two powers: To look, and to look away. There are plenty of media content creators who still only care about whether or not people are looking. But far more now allow users to “take part, debate, create, communicate, [and] share.” It increases their viewership, for one thing. And whereas the traditional media model involved advertising to the individual, the new model involves persuading the individual to advertise your product to their contacts.

The term Web 2.0 refers to sites that afford user contributions, such as likes and votes. O’Reilly Media coined the term Web 2.0 in 2004; [you can read about that here](#). They were referring to social media sites popping up all over the web at that time. These new sites were different than the static sites of the 1990s and 2000s, the “Web 1.0” era. Web 1.0 sites would provide information or maybe some entertainment, but would not allow user contributions. You might say they were designed for eyeballs only – although creative

users found ways to connect on Web 1.0, as we will learn when we learn about the Zapatistas in Chapter 5.

Web 2.0 sites that emerged in the early 2000s offered new capabilities, or affordances, to users. With Web 2.0 affordances, users can weigh in with likes and votes. They can comment or write their own posts. They can upload content, like images and videos. They can connect with others, and offer their own profiles and content to connect to.

TOOLS OF CHANGE: ONLINE CULTURES

The result of Web 2.0 is sites that are shaped by user cultures. Culture is a concept encompassing all the norms, values, and related behaviors that people who have interacted in a social group over time agree on and perpetuate. Think about the Web 2.0-enabled social media spaces you frequent. Perhaps when you spend time on Tumblr, you see that people talk about their emotions, and you talk about your own. Meanwhile, in League of Legends chat you don't talk about your emotions because you know you will get attacked if you do. On Facebook and LinkedIn, you might wear a high-buttoned shirt, as you have seen is the norm; but you might appear in a robe on Snapchat, or a bikini on Instagram. Culture encompasses how users talk to each other, present themselves for one another, and take cues from and influence each other as they collectively decide what's in and what's out.

Software platform developers do influence culture in their user designs. For example, Facebook has its own shirt buttoned up rather high, with its plain white background and limitations on user customization of profiles. Online cultures do take some cues from developers, and users are restricted or guided by their affordances. But users have a lot of agency as they develop and share cultures within these sites.

HYPEBEAST: A PLATFORM FOR MEN'S FASHION

Student Content, Fall 2020

The construction of my social media

Hypebeast: Person who wears high fashion clothing, typically a person who has experience with reselling luxury items and trades for higher priced pieces. Person who can either afford or not afford this expensive lifestyle.

In the present world, social media possesses the ability to shape a person by his/her interests and through this, a person has the volition of choice to either have a positive impact on the internet or to have a negative attitude to certain topics. Even though I have had a rough past from relationship issues to cyberbullying, I chose to create my social media to be positive on the world and for me to not let my enemies' thoughts dwell on my life. This stance symbolizes how I am set apart on all my social media platforms because of how I have different uses for each app.

On my Instagram, I am the most active because I utilize my Instagram feed as a reselling service for the hypebeast community. In this community, I found my closest friends where we built our own unique reselling business and sold hundreds of items, each ranging from \$100 to even \$4000. This business allowed me to grow as a person and discover a unique side of myself I never thought I owned. I greatly enjoyed my time reselling in NYC with my friends and through this experience, I now have connections all across Manhattan in New York.

Part of being a member of the special community, I was involved with heavy acts of networking because of how my friends and I connected with buyers first on the internet and then in person to finalize the transaction. With the initial connection online, we were able to communicate with the buyer prior to meeting to identify if the buyer is serious on purchasing the item. If the transaction were to be successful, the buyer would then spread the word of our business and we would then have an increase of potential buyers, each with his/her own taste for fashion. Random people soon became some of our best buyers that we still keep in contact and these buyers led to more transactions. With the success of

the small business with my friends, I was able to give the money to my parents and help pay for the bills.

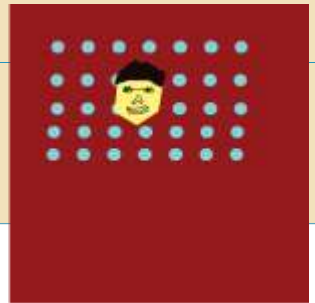
At the time, my family was not financially stable but because of the hard work, I was able to obtain a taste of what determination is in reality. I was determined to help my family and with the extra income, my mom was able to become a well-known real estate broker in New York City and my father became a phlebotomist. With all of my family experience mixed with social media, I can testify that I am different from anyone and that the cultural knowledge of reselling aided me in becoming a better person.

My Snapchat, on the other hand, is not used for reselling purposes. I mainly use my Snapchat as a method of talking with old friends and classmates who need a lending ear. I tell people that if they ever need to talk about anything without judgement, my Snapchat is always open. I have had many conversations with friends and family where I would give them advice on work or relationships. I vowed to myself that I would be there for all my friends and family because my desire is to help those who need it even though I did not receive aid in my darkest times. I want to place others above myself and help whenever I am capable of a task.

All of these moments in my life molded me into a better person and my life illustrates that in life, it is not how you begin a race but how a person finishes. A person can either finish strong or finish weak. The choice is left to the runner.

About the Author

My name is Matthew Kim and I am an engineering student at the University of Arizona. I am a retired reseller of clothing, gamer enthusiast, miniature comedian, and adventurous!



DOMINATING TODAY: THE PLATFORM ECONOMY

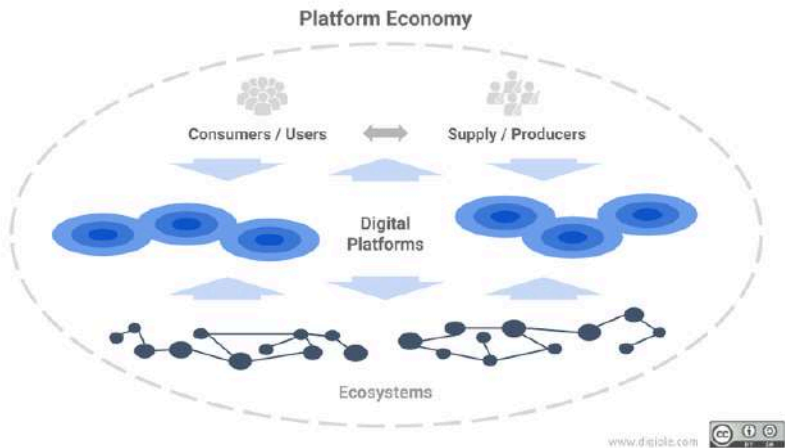
...we are in the middle of a contest to define the contours of what we call the “platform society”: a global conglomerate of all kinds of

platforms, which interdependencies are structured by a common set of mechanisms.”

– José Van Dijck and Thomas Poell, [Social Media and the Transformation of Public Space](#). Social Media + Society, July-December 2015: 1.

Human-to-human connection is what social media is supposed to be about. This belief, this *hope*, was an impetus for this book when I began writing it in 2016. Historically, human-to-human connection was also what the internet itself reached for, at least in the dreams of its creators. This Web 1.0 or the “read-only” web as it would later be called was quite limited in its reach compared to today. And yet...that potentially infinite web of networks was still a wonder, and a site of international connections and information wars (as you’ll see in Chapter 5 with the Zapatistas).

Then what happened? Well on the surface, the web simply became more social. By the early 2000s with Web 2.0 and the “read/write web,” great excitement and euphoria surrounded the participatory cultures that blossomed on Web 2.0 sites. The wonder of the web refracted across our lives, as we marveled at how easily we could connect with one another. This world of connections broadened our human imaginations and expectations in irreversible ways. And many were overjoyed when, by 2009, all this human connection grew teeth – which is to say viability in the form of real currency exchange – with the “sharing economy” that enabled regular folk to share services and goods with one another. Platforms that began as tiny businesses with few assets gained tremendous value as the places to go to socialize online, with family, with customers, with friends, with influencers. The more real or potential network connections we had who used a platform, the more certain we became that we had to use it too. In the platform economy, the more, the merrier. These **network effects** continue to drive audiences to platforms at dizzying rates, rapidly [eclipsing](#) product pipelines and business models that dominated in times past.



Behind the visible connections, all this sociality also marked the beginning of voracious – yet invisible – intermediaries. We were giddily giving up our data in exchange for the peer-to-peer exchange of services, a backroom exchange with implications few would recognize for nearly another decade.

And today? Welcome to the “platform society,” in which we are connected to one another, but only through platforms that derive immense power from and over our human connections.

What are platforms?

I define a **platform** as follows:

Platform: An ecosystem that connects people and companies while retaining control over the terms of these connections and ownership of connection byproducts such as data.

Google, Apple, Facebook, and Amazon: These are the major platforms that [José Van Dijck](#) argues have defined how society and both public and private life function today. These platforms reach deeply into human lives worldwide, with their publicly understood purposes forming only a fraction of their activities and profits. And

rippling from these big four platforms are smaller ones, which emulate their models in various ways. These platforms and their stakeholders transform not just what we buy and enjoy but what we need to live and thrive: how we educate, how we govern and are governed, and how we structure our societies.

The impact of globally operating platforms on local and state economies and cultures is immense, as they force all societal actors—including the mass media, civil society organizations, and state institutions—to reconsider and recalibrate their position in public space. (Van Dijk and Poell, 1.)

Platforms have a profound effect on how societal life is organized. Airbnb has changed not just the hospitality sector, but also neighborhood dynamics and social life. Uber has not only affected the taxi industry; it has affected the construction of roads and public transportation services. We do not yet vote through platforms, yet they have had irreversible effects on our elections. Today almost every sector of public life has become platformized: Higher Education. News and Journalism. Fitness and Health. Hospitality. Transportation. And in these platforms, transactions that are visible to consumers are undergirded by other transactions in which consumers become unwitting producers, their data a form of currency that subsidizes the transactions they chose to engage in in the first place.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS IN THE ONLINE WORLD

With so much human activity and cultural expression enabled in Web 2.0, what is Web 3.0? Look this up on the web and you will find no shortage of responses. There is no consensus – no agreement among experts or among users. We don't even know if we are already using Web 3.0, because it is hard to know where Web 2.0 ends.

Surely one valuable perspective on the present and the future of

the internet would come from Tim Berners-Lee, who invented the internet in 1989. (It was released to the public in the 1990s; [read more of that history here.](#))

Today Tim Berners-Lee has a new mission – to make sure we really are connected by the internet. He describes what drove him to pursue this mission this way:

“Now people feel very disempowered, because the end result is that they’re telling their computer who their friends are, and who’s in the photographs, and planning things and designing things — and those plans and designs and friendships are sucked up and held by these social networks. And they’re not really social networks, they’re silos.”

The data you create as you move across online spaces is often controlled and owned by those spaces. Berners-Lee is now working to develop new methods of linking data across virtual space without relying upon governments, corporations, or the many others with an interest in controlling that data. You can read more about this new mission in [this TechCrunch article](#).

“Right now we have the worst of both worlds, in which people not only cannot control their data, but also can’t really use it,” Berners-Lee said in the project’s announcement last year. “Our goal is to develop a web architecture that gives users ownership over their data.”

ATTENTION! FIRST SOCIAL MEDIA EXPERIENCES

Student Content, Fall 2020

Social Media has been a part of my life since 6th grade. I didn’t have a lot of friends then, as I had just moved to a new state and a new school. It was the only way of staying in contact with my friends for a while, until life got too busy for that and I eventually found my own friends in Washington. Looking on where I am now, nothing much has changed,

especially with the pandemic. I use social media now to keep in contact with all my friends back in Tuscon and in Seattle.

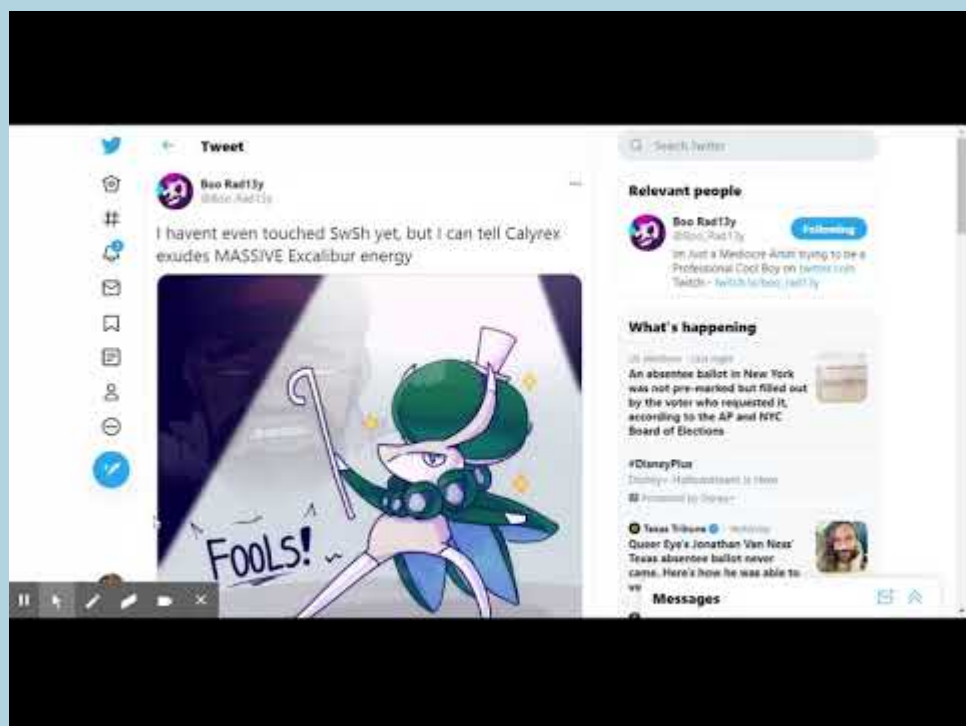
However, keeping in contact with friends is something we all use social media for. What makes my experience unique is what else I use it for. I draw a lot, and post a lot of my work to twitter. I've been able to not only grow a following of people who like and even buy my art, but also have been able to make several friends online. I mainly interact with online communities like **Furries**, and video game or film related fanbases. Especially since quarantine, by interacting with a few publics I already spent time with, I built relationships online with people who shared those same interests with me. Not only that, I've been able to gain a lot of experience and skill with my art thanks to these friends

Social media has given me a lot of opportunities both with my own personal work and with making new friendships, hell, I met my first boyfriend online. People think that a lot of the people who try to build relationships online are perverts or criminals or something. While I won't deny there are definitely predators online, 99.9% of the time they're just normal folk. Social Media has shown me that there's a lot more good people in the world than there are bad people, despite how much social media might make that seem the opposite. The best way to parse the genuine people and people who are looking to mess with you is just learning to read profiles and how they interact with others.

Now why can I make these claims of people wanting nothing but good for others? Well, other than my friends, I've seen that kind of kindness from complete strangers. Ive been commissioned to do art plenty of times, and every time, they offer to pay up front, take as much time as I need, tip me very generously, or any mix of the three. People are grateful for your business, and even to talk to you, and having that generosity given to you makes you want to pass the feeling forward. So you be kind to artists, and that makes you want to just be kind to everyone. Weirdly enough, social media has done nothing but boosted my confidence, as well as my social skills in real life. The stereotype is that a lot of people who spend too much time online don't have those kind of skills, but my time online has done nothing but helped me appreciate my time and friends in real life.

Also by this author: [Twitter](#), [Algorithms](#), and [Artists](#)

Editorial note: This is not the full video, but this excerpt demonstrates how the affordances of a platform can shift, challenging content creators.



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<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=36>

About the Author

Jack Rogers is a Student at University of Arizona. He spends a large amount of time drawing, talking with friends, and watching some weird show called Kamen Rider.



CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

CORE CONCEPTS

broadcast media

one subcategory of older media, including television and radio, that communicates from one source to many viewers

print media

a subcategory of older paper-based media such as newspapers, books, and magazines, that many users access individually

technological convergence

blending of old and new media. For example, cellular phones were once shaped more like analog (non-digital) phones

Web 2.0

sites that afford user contributions, such as likes and votes

culture

a concept encompassing all the norms, values, and related behaviors that people who have interacted in a social group over time agree on and perpetuate

net neutrality

a shorthand name for a key set of features that have made the internet what it is today
platform

an ecosystem that connects people and companies while retaining control over the terms of these connections and ownership of connection byproducts such as data

network effects

the more a platform is used, the more likely that platform is where we go to interact with family, or friends, or customers, or all of these. In other words, in the platform economy, the more, the merrier

CORE QUESTIONS

A. Questions for qualitative thought

1. What are examples of qualities that digital media have inherited from traditional media other than those discussed here? Try to think of some that

don't make the new media work better.

2. Can you give an example of a site that allows you to create and share? And then of one that still treats you like little more than “eyeballs”? Explain.
3. Do you think you are part of “the people formerly known as the audience?” Is it still possible to feel that you are only an audience (not a participant) in the age of social media? Or are there different terms we should use now?
4. Try to conceptualize a platform that you use. Make it a place, familiar or imaginary. How is it organized? Who is there? How are they behaving?

B. Review: Which is the best answer?



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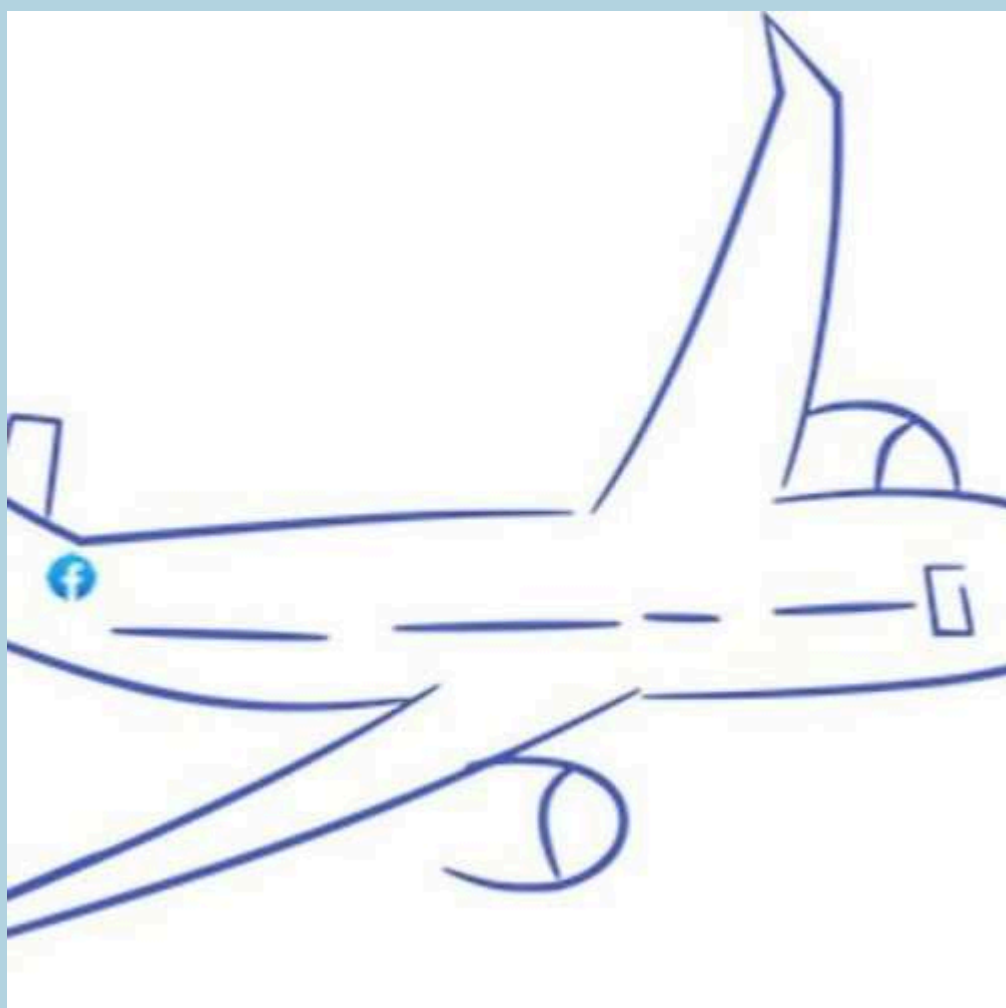
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RELATED CONTENT

HEAR IT: AIR FACEBOOK

Platforms can be difficult to understand and conceptualize. Humor can help; so can illustration, and imagination. Here is how I imagine one platform that's been significant in my life, but that I find it difficult to leave due to network effects.





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Social Media and Ourselves · Air Facebook/div>

CHAPTER 3

Privacy and Publics

Online norms around privacy are dynamic, and stakes are high.

When you use social media, who are you communicating with? And who else is paying attention? This chapter is about producing, consuming, and controlling online content. It's also about the data, cultural norms, and terms of service that you create, accept, and influence.

NOT "THE PUBLIC" – THEY'RE PUBLICS, AND THEY'RE NETWORKED

Let's go back to that amphitheater in Chapter 2. We envisioned an athlete on the ground, spewing insults about her opponent. ([Yes, there were women athletes and gladiators in Ancient Rome.](#)) I imagine the athlete shouting, "I say before the public that my opponent has the [stench of a lowlife latrine!](#)" And we have a mass of spectators roaring in approval, disapproval, excitement, laughter.



Statue of woman gladiator performing for one or more publics in Ancient Rome

That mass of spectators is **a public**. The definition of a public is complicated (see danah boyd, [It's Complicated](#) pp 8-9). But for simplicity's sake I define a public as "people paying sustained attention to the same thing at the same time."

When the gladiator calls the mass of spectators "the public" it deepens the effect of her insult to suggest that "everyone in the world" is watching. Although it is imaginary, "**the public**" is a powerful idea or "construct" that people refer to when they want to add emphasis to the effects of one-to-many speech. But really, there is no "the public." There is never a moment when everyone in the world is paying sustained attention to the same thing at the same time. There only are various publics, overlapping each other, with one person potentially sharing in or with many different publics.

If you use social media, you interact with many publics that are connected to one another through you and likely through many others. Publics that intersect and connect online are "**networked publics**" (pg. 8.) In the terminology of social network analysis, whenever an individual connects two networked publics (or any two entities, such as two other people), that connector is called a **bridge**. Think about the publics you form a bridge between. How are you uniquely placed to spread information across multiple publics by forming bridges between and among them?

Bridging information between publics can be exciting, and controversial. Networked publics really work each other up, forming opinions, practices, and norms together. And they occasionally get in fights in the stands, clubbing each other with ancient Roman hot dogs and Syrian tabouleh.

DIFFERENT CULTURAL PUBLICS

Student Content, Fall 2020

Social Media Based on Culture



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Everyone has different perspectives and experiences on social media. These different perspectives and experiences mainly depend on the different traits that identify you and make you who you are. Such as being raised in a different place, having different cultures, different hobbies, and who you interact with on a daily basis.

I was born in Chile and recently just moved to the United States five years ago. Being from somewhere else really expands your knowledge on everything, since you are surrounded by specific communities. In the five years that I have been here I have noticed that individuals here have a different perspective about social media and several different topics.

I have had the amazing experience of being able to understand and put myself in someone else's shoes when it comes to social media. The fact that I am foreign gives me the opportunity to look at social media in a different way. I grew up with technology since I was little. I got my first phone around 10 and then I was introduced to different platforms. What really surprised me when I moved to the United States is that people here were more attached to their phones and their instagram pages, or snapchat or other apps.

I grew up with people posting things on their social media that were simple, you could

see that the person posting that did not put much thought into it and just wanted to show what their real interests were. Now individuals spend hours and hours checking what they are going to post concerned about what others will say. This makes me think that others take what others say under consideration too much instead of just being themselves.

My social media page differs on several things from those of my friends that I made here. Since I am Hispanic, I have different interests and also use other platforms more than others. For example, people here use snapchat a lot more than instagram, however I use instagram more because I am still connected to my friends and family that live all the way across the world and they do not use snapchat anymore.

Something else that I have noticed that social media here is different than from where I am from is that people cyber bullying here is a much bigger thing that in a Hispanic country. That is the reason why people worry too much about what they are posting and what others will think of them when they see who they really are and what their real interests are. However people should not be afraid of what others say and then they would have a better experience when it comes to technology. People could see all your real talents and maybe one day be recognized for that.

I think I have showed my friends here the difference in social media and they see how people in other countries relate to social media compared to here. Even though there are some differences on how people express themselves on the different platforms, most teenagers still are way too worried on what others think about them and that is something I have brought to everyone's attention here.

Even though people have different backgrounds and perspectives on things when it comes to life and publishing it on social media, at the end of the day we are all trying to show others who we are.

About the Author

Sofia Diaz is a first year student at the University of Arizona. She spends her time walking and napping with her beloved dog, Boss.



PRIVACY NORMS IN ONLINE PUBLICS

It is important to understand networked publics because they help us understand that the dichotomy of private vs public is an oversimplification of social relationships. When you post on social media, even if you post “publicly,” you probably envision certain people or publics as your audience.

Controlling the privacy of social media posts is much more complex than controlling the privacy of offline communication. On social media, as boyd notes, what you post is public by default, private by design ([It's Complicated](#), p. 61). Face-to-face, you can generally see who is paying attention and choose whether to speak to them, making your communications **private by default, public by design** – note that is flipped from how it is on social media. While popular media claim younger generations do not care about privacy, there is a great deal of evidence that youth care a lot about privacy and are developing norms to strategically protect it.

Norms take time. There are norms that societies have developed over many centuries of face-to-face communication. These offline norms have long helped members of these societies get along with each other, and negotiate and protect their privacy. Let's study one of these offline norms: civil inattention.

CIVIL INATTENTION

It's time to imagine an awkward face-to-face scenario, together. You're in an eatery, which is bustling with people. You're engaged in a conversation with two friends – and suddenly a passing stranger stops to lean over you and tries to join in your conversation. Another person from the next table over is also blatantly staring at you and your friends talking. You weren't even talking to these people, and now they're in your business!



Crowd at Katz's Deli in NYC: Social situations like these would be impossible to navigate without the norm of civil inattention

That scenario is unlikely to happen in real life, because of a social norm sociologist Erving Goffman named **civil inattention**. In crowded spaces, civil inattention is the common understanding – by you and by others in that society – that you don't get in other people's business. You may acknowledge that you are sharing the space with them through small interactions, such as holding the door for the person behind you, making eye contact, and nodding or smiling. But you don't stare, or listen in, or join in without an invitation.

So is civil inattention also an online norm? Well, that may depend on who we are and which publics we interact with online.

The online world is young, and norms in our networked publics are still being decided. Online norms are also dynamic, which means they are based on a changing set of deciders, including software developers and evolving publics of users. It could be that the most effective forms of privacy protection online will be based on social and cultural norms as we develop these.

But once we figure out what works in the online world in terms of privacy, we will have to articulate it – and then fight for it, because our data is immensely profitable for developers of the platforms we use.

NAVIGATING THE TIES AND THREATS OF NETWORKED PUBLICS

Student Content, Fall 2020



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=42#h5p-81>

Ibrahim Sadi's Story

My knowledge and understanding of social media are much more different than a lot of people I know and my friends. Growing up as a kid I always wanted to have a social media platform, but when you get older you realize the beneficial things and negative things that could happen to yourself being on social media. For a younger kid like I was, I had

Facebook at a young age, I'm sure many kids did as well. Being an Arab and coming from Jordan makes me much different than most people I know, especially on social media.

There have been times on social media, people have tried to put me down for being Arab or making disrespectful comments to me on a social media platform as well. People do this because they think they're funny but the person being made fun of is being bullied, it's hard sticking up for yourself when 20 other kids are laughing at you, and you're the only person that you have. The good for me on social media was talking with my family, sharing cool memories with good friends, and getting jobs off social media as well!

What makes social media unique for me is the interests I have and bringing my family more business as well. My family has a local business and during a time like this, it's very hard to make money as a local owner because of the business loss during COVID. Without having social media, I wouldn't have been able to get extra customers to help support my Father's local business, I wouldn't have been able to get more people to apply to father business either. The interests I have for social media could be all kinds of things, like watching UFC which is my favorite hobby to do when I have nothing better to do. Learning cool recipes to cook for my family and me, watching all kinds of national sports like football, basketball, and soccer.

Another reason why using social media so unique for me is because of Job opportunities, without social media I wouldn't have the job I have today. Being able to "share"-this is my GL it wouldn't work by trying to make it a GL term. your interest in jobs and share your thoughts through social media to your friends and family is also why social media so unique Job opportunities are so important for our generation especially because everything nowadays is almost based on technology. For example, students right now are going through a pandemic we have never been in and we are using the app "zoom" to do basic home school.

About the Author

Ibrahim Sadi is a second year student at the University of Arizona.



When publics fixate, attack, troll, and bully

The term **cyberbullying** received a great deal of attention as the internet reached widespread adoption, and it is entangled moral panics that caused and used it. As parents and educators in the early 2000s struggled to recognize the longstanding issue of bullying in online discourse, they sometimes conflated bullying with all online interaction. Meanwhile, many of the cases the media labeled cyberbullying are not actually **bullying**, which is a real phenomenon with specific criteria: aggressive behavior, imbalance of power, repeated over time. (These criteria were laid out by Swedish psychologist Dan Owleus; an excellent analysis of cyberbullying in the context of these is in boyd's fifth chapter of [It's Complicated](#).)

Still, some online interactions are toxic with cruelty, whether or not we can scientifically see them as bullying. Another term in popular use to describe online attacks is trolling, perhaps derived from the frequent placement of trolls' comments below the content, like fairytale trolls lurking below bridges.

- Individuals troll. Some seem to lash out individually from personal loneliness or trauma, as with a [Twitter troll to whom celebrity Sarah Silverman recently responded with surprising compassion](#).
- Mobs also troll. [A distinctly frightening modern scourge](#) is when critical networked publics and trolls attack in a coordinated effort, or mob. More visible examples of online troll mobs include hateful vitriol directed at a [13-year-old musician's Youtube explorations](#), at a [black actress in a sequel to a white male film](#), and at a [columnist who is proud to call herself fat](#) – but trolls attack less visible people incessantly as well.
- Not all are affected equally by trolling. While attacks do plague some men online – and specifically men of color – online hatred is directed more often and more viciously at women. Women of color are particularly vulnerable. [Many online spaces with widespread usership such as Reddit have cultures of sexism and bigotry](#) – and while there is [evidence of efforts to combat toxic online cultures](#), many of these sites have a long way to go.

John Suler wrote in the early days of the internet about the **online disinhibition effect**, exploring the psychology behind behaviors that people engage in online but not in person; he noted while some disinhibition is benign, much of it is toxic. [More recent research connects online trolling to narcissism](#). As we perform before online publics, we enter an arena of unleashed and invisible audiences.

WHY PRIVACY IS SUCH A TANGLED ISSUE ONLINE

Privacy is a notion relating to self-determination that is too complicated to be reduced to one simple idea. Privacy can be defined in many ways – and so can invasion of privacy and its potential consequences. This is one of the reasons software companies' Terms of Service or TOS are never adequate protections for users of their services. How do we demand protection of privacy when it is so multilayered and impossible to define?

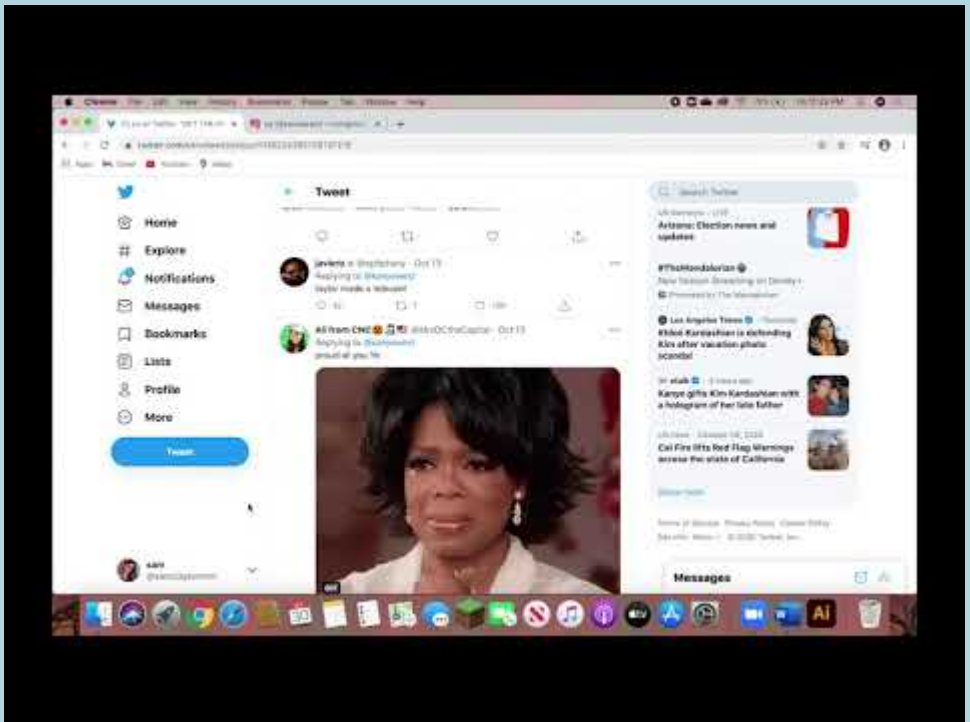
Consider these two passages by Daniel Solove in his article, "[Why Privacy Matters Even if you have Nothing to Hide.](#)"

Privacy... is too complex a concept to be reduced to a singular essence. It is a plurality of different things that do not share any one element but nevertheless bear a resemblance to one another. For example, privacy can be invaded by the disclosure of your deepest secrets. It might also be invaded if you're watched by a peeping Tom, even if no secrets are ever revealed.

Privacy, in other words, involves so many things that it is impossible to reduce them all to one simple idea. And we need not do so.

I agree with Solove that privacy is too complicated to be reduced to one simple idea. But often we are still called on to present a simplified definition of our privacy – for example, we have to justify why it is wrong to give companies such rampant uses of our data.

Samantha Clayton's Social Media Experience



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Social media has become a very popular place that people go on for a variety of reasons.

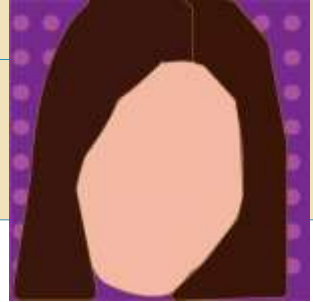
Whether it be a reason to go on for the latest gossip, daily news, to post your fresh new haircut, a good laugh, or even to get up to date on the latest trends. Although, in my opinion, I'm terrified of social media and I really don't believe a lot of people are. When I first joined the world of social media, I was endlessly tweeting random ideas I had, silly pictures of my friends, and too many memes. Even though I wasn't tweeting anything to personally attack or offend anyone I had learned, the more I used social media, and the older I got, it's a huge risk to be active on a social media account nowadays. People will find absolutely anything to be offended by and you will never hear the end of it if you do offend someone in any possible way.

I like to call myself an observer. I hardly post on social media, but I actively use it. I don't necessarily like, share someone's post, retweet, comment, etc. on any posts on social media platform, I just sit back and watch. I feel as if it's better that way because people are constantly looking for a fight on social media. I can't lie, I do post on social media but it's a rare occurrence when I do. What I do post and what I only will post is photos of me/friends/family with no caption or an emoji as a caption and use my platform to spread awareness or touch base on something serious like the Black Lives Matter Movement, justice for George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and the other Black lives that have been taken away by the police.

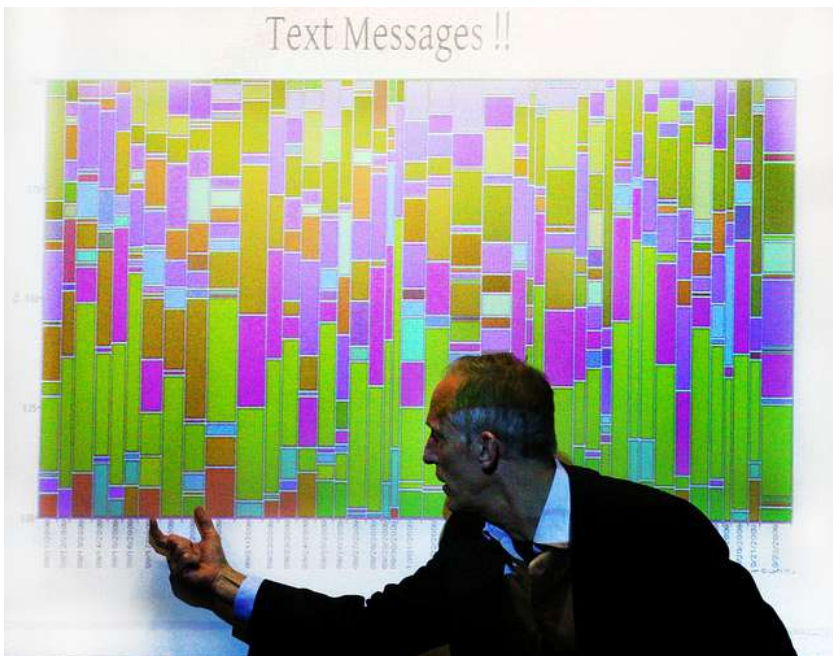
My perspective on social media is literal fear. People I don't even know are in my direct messages constantly. It ranges from people saying they know where I live (basically blackmail), old men asking me to have sex with them for money, and hackers trying to get me to share my passwords. These occurrences have also made me afraid to post on social media, but the block button has been my best friend and has solved a lot of these problems I have faced on social media. I'm not sure if any other women, or even men have experienced this issue or if the people attacking me in my direct messages are even real. I like to think it's just a robot of some sort but I'm still reading those scary words when I go on any of my social media accounts. (It mostly happens on Instagram). Social media should never have to be a place where people are afraid to go on to speak their mind (only if it isn't offensive or bullying), be able to share photos without having some predator after you, etc. Hence exactly why I like to call myself an observer due to the many problems I have faced just by going on different social media apps.

About the Author

Samantha Clayton is a sister, future teacher, activist, women's rights advocate, and she love cats!



THE VALUE OF HUMAN DATA



Data mining: Users generate immense value online, but do not usually profit from it.

We are learning the hard way that we must fight for our privacy

online. As an early leader in the social media platform market, Facebook set very poor standards for the protection of user privacy because access to personally identifiable user data was immensely [profitable](#) for the company. Before Facebook, it was standard for users of online sites to use avatars and craft usernames that didn't connect to details of their offline lives.

Still, countless online sites permit or encourage users to create online identities apart from their face-to-face identities. Many of today's younger internet users choose platforms with higher standards for privacy, limiting the publics that their posts reach and the periods of time that posts last. Youth frequently have "finsta" accounts – "fake" Instagrams that they share with nosy family and acquaintances, while only good friends and in-the-know publics have access to their "real" Instagrams. Practices like these force developers to offer users more control over [user privacy](#) and the [reach of their posts](#), at the risk of losing users to competitors.

Users shape platforms and platforms shape user behavior. And social and cultural norms shape both user behavior *and* software platforms.

CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

CORE CONCEPTS

a public

people paying sustained attention to the same thing at the same time

the public

a construct; an idea of "everyone, everywhere" that people imagine, and refer to when they want to add emphasis to the effects of one-to-many speech

networked publics

these are sets of people paying sustained attention to the same thing at the same time that intersect and connect online

bridge

In the terminology of social network analysis, whenever an individual connects two networked publics (or any two entities, such as two other people), that connector is called a bridge

public by default, private by design

a phrase used by danah boyd to emphasize the work required to control the privacy of social media posts – the opposite of face to face communication, which is private by default, public by design. (It's Complicated, p. 61)

civil inattention

the common understanding in crowded spaces that you don't may politely acknowledge others, but you do not get in their business

cyberbullying

a term entangled in moral panics that caused and used it as parents and educators in the early 2000s struggled to recognize the longstanding issue of bullying in online discourse

bullying

a real phenomenon with specific criteria: aggressive behavior, imbalance of power, repeated over time. Defined by Dan Olweus

online disinhibition effect

the psychological theory that people behave online in ways they would not in person. For more information see Suler, J. (2004). The Online Disinhibition Effect. *Cyberpsychology & behavior : the impact of the Internet, multimedia and virtual reality on behavior and society*, 7 3, 321-6

dynamic

based on a changing set of deciders, including software developers and the evolving practices of publics of users

privacy

a notion relating to self-determination that is too complicated to be reduced to one simple idea

CORE QUESTIONS

A. Questions for qualitative thought

1. Consider at least one recent post you wrote on the last three social media platforms you used. What publics were you intending to reach with those posts? What language use, visual displays, and other strategies did you use to gain the attention of those publics? If you were facing those publics face to face, how might your self-presentation have differed?
2. Consider something you have seen online that did not seem to be intended for you in particular to see it. What factors were responsible for its visibility to you? Then consider something you have posted on social media that was seen or commented on by someone you did not have in mind as its audience. How did that situation resolve, and what lessons did you learn from it?
3. Imagine you are one of the people in charge of a new online world. Your job is to define the communication norms and policies for everyone invited into that world. Which are the key norms you implement? And how do you present them to people so that they will follow them?

B. Review: Which is the best answer?



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RELATED CONTENT

CONSIDER IT: CANCEL OR CALLOUT CULTURE

CANCEL CULTURE: WHAT VALUE DOES IT HAVE? WHAT LIMITS MUST IT HAVE?



A mural by the artist Banksy serves as a vivid visual representation of Cancel Culture and the real economic and identity-level threats it poses.

A popular topic at the time of this writing is **cancel culture** or callout culture, a collective attack built upon the practice of using social media to call people out for perceived wrongs. Cancel culture is arguably linked to positive social change, as Spencer Kornhaber asserts in the article linked below from the Atlantic. Yet as John Ronson shows in the NYTimes article linked below, cancel culture is also linked to devastating losses of employment and identity, and is sometimes directed at people who had little else of value in their lives.

Cancel culture is not good or bad. This is not a prompt to decide whether it is positive or negative. Read the two articles below and consider: How should cancel culture or a better version of it look, and where should it end, if it has value in your society or culture? If you find it is not valuable, then when might it be valuable to use networked publics' attention to stop people from doing harm online?

[**How One Stupid Tweet Blew Up Justine Sacco's Life from the New York Times**](#)

[**It's Not Callout Culture. It's Accountability from the Atlantic**](#)

CHAPTER 4

Algorithms

Invisible, Irreversible, and Infinite

Nearly any software platform you use performs its work based on algorithms, which enable it to make rapid decisions and respond predictably to stimuli. An **algorithm** is a step-by-step set of instructions for getting something done, whether that something is making a decision, solving a problem, or getting from point A to point B (or point Z). In this chapter, we will look into how computing algorithms work, who tends to create them, and how that affects their outcomes. We will also consider whether certain algorithms should be used at all.

(ANTI-)SOCIAL MEDIA ALGORITHMS

Student Content, Fall 2020

Social Media During School

barriered SMP's: *A platform where it is relatively difficult to maintain a viewership compared to, say, something like Instagram*

hookability: *ease at which one can go from one piece of media to the next, on the same platform*

branchability: *the degree of freedom one has to go from one piece of media to the next while doing the least physical work possible. example: the suggested videos on youtube (not **all** the videos as that is not least work as you'd have to search it up)*

Growing up in the age of technology there was something really compelling to me about *not* joining a lot of the mainstream social media platforms. The only platforms I used were the ones with substantial barriers, or barrier SMP's, as I like to call them, like YouTube, which basically is the type of media where it is hard for small start-up users to maintain a healthy and large channel. On IG or tiktok, the same is much easier, which is proved by the fact that a whole lot of your friends will maintain their social media presence on IG rather than YouTube. Honestly, I can't tell you why, I just felt that I couldn't be trusted if I had something like Instagram or tiktok on my phone; I would use it whenever I had the slightest whim.

I feel like in the last year of high school I was this non-participating observer of the effects of social media use in school (especially in my group of friends). There was this very odd escapism about it. When we stopped talking to each other to just stare down into our phones, it seemed to me that the hyperbolic technological deterministic line of kids' brains being trashed because of their phones had some weight to it.

Commonly enough, it'd always be Instagram or tiktok. Almost never anything else. The reason I think this is so is because of the fact that these two social media platforms have a really high hookability and the media pieces were very short.

Hookability refers to the ease at which one can go from one piece of media to the next, on the same platform. It is not an affordability, as it has nothing to do with how people communicate, and it has everything to do with addictivity. If paired up with the right algorithms, a high hookability measure can make almost anyone addicted to the platform. Hookability measures, say, the ease to go from one video on YouTube to the next.

But the problem with IG and tiktok was that, despite the high hookability, the media pieces were of a much shorter duration. So instead of just watching one five-minute YouTube video, you have to go through nearly ten times as many tiktoks or scroll through

quite a few more IG posts. The addictive nature of the media platform is reduced by this, as you'd get fatigued quicker. So the fatigue combats the high hookability to reduce overall addictivity.

This idea of branchability exists too, and again depends on the algorithm, and the greater the branching choices, the better audience retention. But it's tricky with shorter media items. More choice will lead to more fatigue, so that could be a negative effect, but also if you don't have enough choices then how are you going to keep them watching? You can't have them searching for the next video every time, can you?

It seems like there exists a problem of optimization with constraints. To get the maximum amount of people addicted, which as you could imagine would be the *only* aim for platforms (as they'd get more profits), they have to consider a plethora of variables, which is in no sense easy.

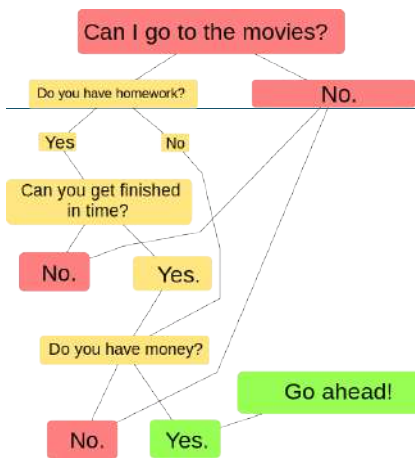
And the amazing thing here is that in school, we have an option to do something better! Many a times we find ourselves really fatigued but we just keep scrolling through, because of our inertia, and though we'd much rather do something else, we don't *have* any other feasible thing to do, so we just stick to doing what we were doing. But in school, we look up from our phones and see our friends, so this inertia is much, much easier to break than if you were sitting all alone at home and were bored as frick.

I think it's important to say that I haven't done any rigorous research on this, but I feel like it really makes sense and I see these patterns in nearly all the social groups that I'm in.



About the Author

Omar Amanullah is a freshman at UofA. On a sunny day, he likes to stay inside and eat mac n cheese with chicken nuggets. A not very well known fact is that he graduated high school. But of course he did.



Algorithms: They can all be reduced to simple steps, which computers need in order to follow them.

HUMANS MAKE COMPUTERS WHAT THEY ARE.

Most platforms have many algorithms at work at once, which can make the work they do seem so complex it's almost magical. But all functions of digital devices can be reduced to simple steps if needed. The steps have to be simple because computers interpret instructions very literally.

Computers don't know anything unless someone has already given them instructions that are explicit, with every

step fully explained. Humans, on the other hand, can figure things out if you skip steps, and can make sense of tacit instructions. But give a computer instructions that skip steps or include tacit steps, and the computer will either stop working or get the process wrong without human intervention.

Here's an example of the human cooperation that goes into the giving and following of instructions, demonstrated with a robot.

As an instructor, I can say to human students on the first day of class, "Let's go around the room. Tell us who you are and where you're from." Easy for humans, right? But imagine I try that in a mixed human/robot classroom, and all goes swimmingly with the first two [human] students. But then the third student, a robot with a computer for a brain, says, "I don't understand." It seems my



Feefee the robot: Having a computer for a brain makes a robot dependent upon very exact instructions. Human students are more forgiving.

instructions were not clear enough. Now imagine another [human] student named Lila tells the robot helpfully, "Well first just tell us your name." The robot still does not understand. Finally, Lila says, "What is your name?"

That works; the robot has been programmed with an algorithm instructing it to respond to "What is your name?" with the words, "My name is Feefee," which the robot now says. Then Lila continues helping the robot by saying, "Now tell us where you're from, Feefee." Again the robot doesn't get it. At this point, though, Lila has figured out what works in getting answers from this robot, so Lila says, "Where are you from?" This works; the robot has been programmed to respond to "Where are you from?" with the sentence, "I am from Neptune."

In the above example, human intelligence was responsible for the robot's successes and failures. The robot arrived with a few communication algorithms, programmed by its human developers.

Feefee had not been taught enough to converse very naturally, however. Then Lila, a human, figured out how to get the right responses out of Feefee by modifying her human behavior to better match behavior Feefee had learned to respond to. Later, the students might all run home and say, “A robot participated in class today! It was amazing!” They might not even acknowledge the human participation that day, which the robot fully depended on.

TWO REASONS COMPUTERS SEEM SO SMART TODAY

What computers can do these days is amazing, for **two main reasons**. The first is cooperation from human software developers. The second is cooperation on the part of users.

First, computers seem so intelligent today because human software developers help one another teach computers. Apps that seem groundbreaking may simply include a lot of instructions. This is possible because developers have coded many, many algorithms, which they share and reuse on sites like [Github](#). The more a developer is able to copy the basic steps others have already written for computers to follow, the more that developer can then focus on building new code that teaches computers new tricks. The most influential people known as “creators” or “inventors” in the tech world may be better described as [“tweakers”](#) who improved and added to other people’s code for their “creations” and “inventions.”

The second reason computers seem so smart today is because

```
1 // This line basically imports the "stdio" header file, part of
2 // the standard library. It provides input and output functionality
3 // to the program.
4 #include <stdio.h>
5
6 // #
7
8 // function (method) declaration. This outputs "Hello, world" to
9 // standard output when invoked.
10 void sayHello() {
11     // printf() in C outputs the specified text (with optional
12     // formatting options) when invoked.
13     printf("Hello, world!");
14 }
15
16 // #
17
18 // This is a "main function". The compiled program will run the code
19 // defined here.
20
21 void main() {
22     // Invoke the sayHello() function.
23     sayHello();
24 }
```

Source code of a simple computer program:

This code written in the C programming language will display the “Hello, world!” message.

users are teaching them. Algorithms are increasingly designed to “learn” from human input. New algorithms automatically plug input into new programs, then automatically run those programs. This sequence of automated learning and application is called artificial intelligence (AI). AI essentially means teaching computers to teach themselves directly from their human users.

If only humans were always good teachers.

TEACHING MACHINES THE BEST AND WORST ABOUT OURSELVES



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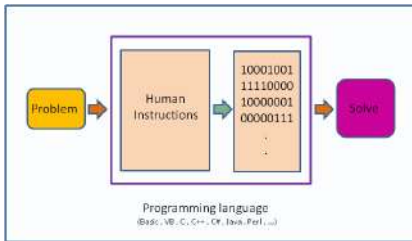
In 2016, Microsoft introduced Tay, an AI online robot they branded as a young female. Their intention was for Tay to learn to communicate from internet users who conversed with her on Twitter – and learn she did. Within a few hours, Tay's social media posts were so infected with violence, racism, sexism, and other bigotry that [Microsoft had to take her down and apologize](#).

Microsoft had previously launched [Xiaolce](#), an AI whose behavior remained far less offensive than TAY, on Chinese sites including the microblog Weibo. However, the Chinese sites Xiaolce learned from were heavily censored. The English-language Twitter was far less censored, and rife with trolls networked and ready to coordinate attacks. [Developers and users who were paying attention already knew Twitter was full of hate](#).

Tay was an embarrassment for Microsoft in the eyes of many commentators. How could they not have predicted and protected her from bad human teachers? Why didn't Tay's human programmers teach her what not to say? It certainly involved a lack of research, since bots like [@oliviatasters](#) have been more successful and even benefited from a shared [list of banned words](#) that could easily be added to their algorithms.

In addition to these oversights, Tay's failure may also have been caused by a lack of diversity in Microsoft's programmers and team leaders.

PROGRAMMING AND BIAS



Programming languages: Basic, C++, and Java are just a few of these. All translate human instructions into algorithms, which are instructions computers can understand.

Humans are at the heart of any computer program. Algorithms for computers to follow are all written in programming languages, which translate instructions from human language into the computing language of binary numerals, 0's and 1's. Algorithms and programs are selective and reflect personal decision-making. There are usually different ways they could have been written.

Computer programming languages like Python, C++, and Java are written in source code. Writing programs, sometimes just called "coding," is an intermediary step between human language and the binary language that computers understand. Learning programming languages takes time and dedication. To learn to be a computer programmer, you either have to feel driven to teach yourself on your own equipment, or you have to be taught to program – and this is still not common in US schools.

Because computer programmers are self-selected this way, and because many people think of the typical tech geeks as white and male (as suggested by the Google Image search to the right), people who end up learning computer programming in the US are more likely to be white than any other race, and are more likely to identify as male than any other gender.



*A Google search for “tech geek”:
The many images of young white male
“tech geeks” help
explain why youth who are not white
or male may feel out of
place teaching themselves to code.*

HOW CAN COMPUTERS CARRY BIAS?

Many people think computers and algorithms are neutral – racism and sexism are not programmers’ problems. In the case of Tay’s programmers, this false belief enabled more hate speech online and led to the embarrassment of their employer. Human-crafted computer programs mediate nearly everything humans do today, and human responses are involved in many of those tasks. Considering the near-infinite extent to which algorithms and their activities are replicated, the presence of human **biases** is a devastating threat to computer-dependent societies in general and to those targeted or harmed by those biases in particular.



Google Glass was considered by some to be an example of a poor decision by a homogenous workforce.

Problems like these are rampant in the tech industry because there is a damaging belief in US (and some other) societies that the development of computer technologies is antisocial, and that some kinds of people are better at it than others. As a result of this bias in tech industries and computing, there are not enough kinds of people working on tech development teams: not

enough women, not enough people who are not white, not enough people who remember to think of children, not enough people who think socially.

Remember Google Glass? You may not; that product failed because few people wanted interaction with a computer to come between themselves and eye contact with humans and the world. People who fit the definition of “tech nerd” fell within this small demographic, but the sentiment was not shared by the broader community of technology users. Critics labeled the unfortunate people who did purchase the product as “glasssholes.”



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I was born and raised in a small town in the county of Kent in England. In 2012, through my father's company, my mother, my father, my brother, my two dogs and I moved to Los Gatos, California. Five years prior to me moving to the United States, the first iPhone came out on June 29th, 2007. I got my first phone at around age ten and my first iPhone at around age twelve. Once I got my first iPhone, I downloaded KIK, Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat. I fell in love with these social media apps. I would spend hours every day using these apps to talk to friends, see what others were doing, post funny memes, and so much more. I thought this was the only side to social media and this was everything to see on social media. Little did I know, that moving to the United States would expose me to a completely who knew side of social media.

My own personal and cultural knowledge of social media that makes me different from others is living in two different countries and experiencing the two different cultures on social media. While residents in England and America speak the same language, the two cultures are very different. Due to this difference in the culture I have been exposed to different trends, different purposes for using social media, different apps, and more. Through experiencing social media in both countries, I now have a more cultured knowledge of social media.

Social media in England and the United States are very different. These differences are caused by algorithms. Because the cultures are different, users are going to like, dislike, comment, subscribe, etc.. to different things and different people. These differences will affect algorithms and continue to show users similar to social media content. Owners of these social media apps use what is called **social media analytics**.

Social Media analytics is defined as data that is collected from social media websites

and apps that give a clear picture of your online actions and presence. Everyone's **social media analytics** are different. As I live in California in the United States some of my **social media analytics** may be similar to someone else who is from California as we are exposed to similar cultures. If you were to compare my **social media analytics** to someone living in England, there would be similarities but also a lot of differences as we are exposed to different cultures.

When I first moved to the United States, I did not understand a lot about social media. The humor was different, trends were different, the way people represented themselves online was different. It took adjusting, but now I fully understand the humor, the trends, the way people represent themselves, and more. I have now lived in the United States for 8 years now and I can fully say I have adapted to the culture here. If I was to look at social media in England, even though that was my first time on social media, it would be different and harder for me to understand.

About the author

Issy Brooker was born and raised in Kent, England. She moved to the United States in 2012. Issy Brooker is currently 19 years old and a first year student at the University of Arizona.



Code: Debugging the Gender Gap

Created in 2015, the film [Code: Debugging the Gender Gap](#) encapsulates

many of the biases in the history of the computing industry as well as their implications. Women have always been part of the US computing industry, and [today that industry would collapse without engineers from diverse cultures](#). Yet there is widespread evidence that women and racial minorities have always been made to feel that they did not belong in the industry. [And the numbers of engineers and others in tech development show](#) a serious problem in Silicon Valley with racial and ethnic diversity, resulting in [terrible tech decisions](#) that spread racial and ethnic bias under the guise of tech neutrality. Google has made some headway in achieving a more diverse workforce, but not without [backlash founded on bad science](#).

Below is the trailer for the film. The film is available through most University Libraries and outlets that rent and sell feature films, and through [Finish Line Features](#).



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EXACERBATING BIAS IN ALGORITHMS: THE THREE I'S

In its early years, the internet was viewed as a utopia, an ideal world that would permit a completely free flow of all available information to everyone, equally. John Perry Barlow's 1996 [Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace](#) represents this utopian vision, in which the internet liberates users from all biases and [even from their own bodies](#) (at which human biases are so often directed). Barlow's utopian vision does not match the internet of today. Our social norms and inequalities accompany us across all the media and sites we use, and worsened in a climate where information value is determined by marketability and profit, as Sociologist Zeynep Tufekci explains in [this Ted Talk](#).

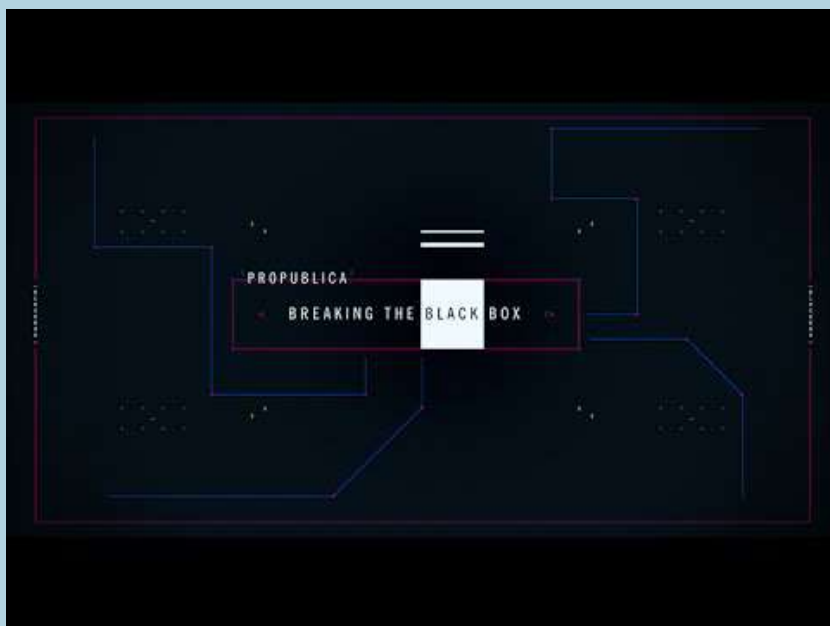
Because algorithms are built on human cooperation with computing programs, human selectivity and human flaws are embedded within algorithms. Humans as users carry our own biases, and today there is particular concern that algorithms pick up and spread these biases to many, many others. They even make us more biased by hiding results that the algorithm calculates we may not like. When we get our news and information from social media, invisible algorithms consider our own biases and those of friends in our social networks to determine which new posts and stories to show us in search results and news feeds. The result for each user can be called their echo chamber or as [author Eli Pariser](#) describes it, a **filter bubble** in which we only see news and information we like and agree with, leading to political polarization.

Although algorithms can generate very sophisticated recommendations, algorithms do *not* make sophisticated decisions. When humans make poor decisions, they can rely on themselves or on other humans to recognize and reverse the error; at the very least, a human decision-maker can be held responsible. Human decision-making often takes time and critical reflection to

implement, such as the writing of an approved ordinance into law. When algorithms are used in place of human decision-making, I describe what ensues as **The three I's**: Algorithms' decisions become *invisible*, *irreversible*, and *infinite*. Most social media platforms and many organizations using algorithms will not share how their algorithms work; for this lack of transparency, they are known as **black box algorithms**.

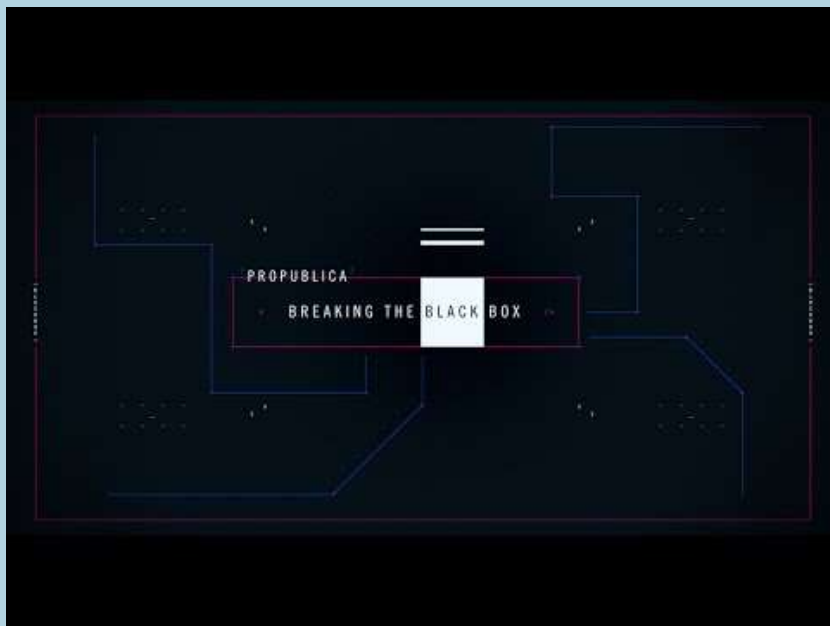
EXPOSING INVISIBLE ALGORITHMS: PRO PUBLICA

Journalists at Pro Publica are educating the public on what algorithms can do by explaining and testing black box algorithms. This work is particularly valuable because most algorithmic bias is hard to detect for small groups or individual human users. Studies like ProPublica's presented in the "Breaking the Black Box" series (below) have been based on groups systematically testing algorithms from different machines, locations, and users. Using investigative journalism, Pro Publica has also [found](#) that algorithms used by law enforcement are significantly more likely to label African Americans as High Risk for reoffending and white Americans as Low Risk.



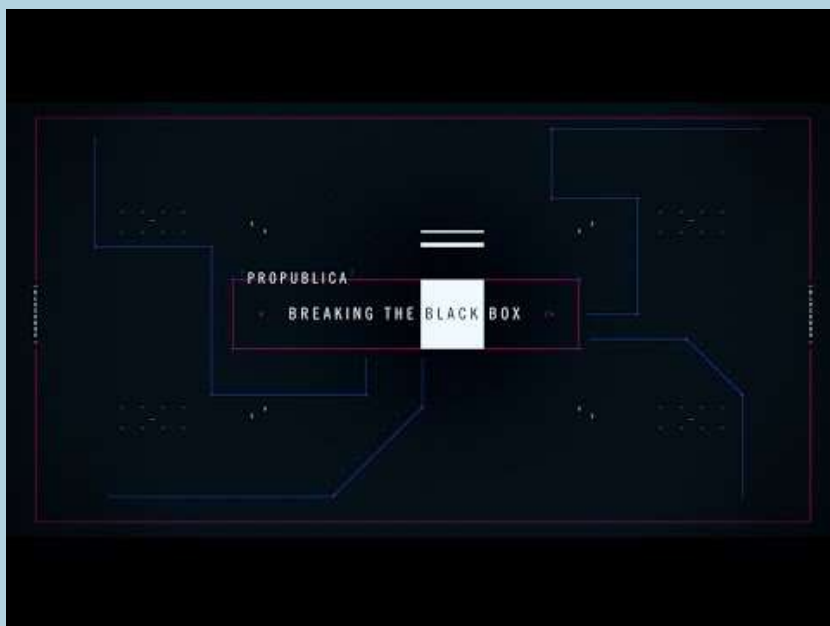
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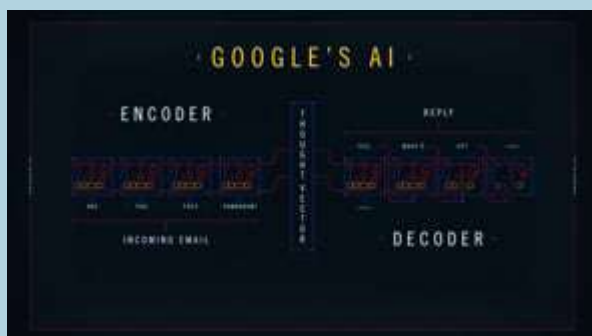
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FIGHTING UNJUST ALGORITHMS

Algorithms are laden with errors. Some of these errors can be traced to the biases of those who developed them, as when a facial recognition system meant for global implementation is only trained using [data sets](#) from a limited population (say, predominantly white or male). Algorithms can become problematic when they are

hacked by groups of users, like Microsoft's Tay was. Algorithms are also grounded in the values of those who shape them, and these values may reward some involved while disenfranchising others.

Despite their flaws, algorithms are increasingly used in heavily consequential ways. They predict how likely a person is to commit a crime or default on a bank loan based on a given data set. They can target users with messages on social media that are customized to fit their interests, their voting preferences, or their fears. They can identify who is in photos online or in recordings of offline spaces.

Confronting the landscape of increasing algorithmic control is activism to limit the control of algorithms over human lives. Below, read about the work of the Algorithmic Justice League and other activists promoting bans on facial recognition. And consider: What roles might algorithms play in your life that may deserve more attention, scrutiny, and even activism?

THE ALGORITHMIC JUSTICE LEAGUE VS FACIAL RECOGNITION TECH IN BOSTON

MIT Computer Scientist and "Poet of Code" Joy Buolamwini heads the Algorithmic Justice League, an organization making remarkable headway into fighting facial recognition technologies, whose work she explains in the first video below. On June 9th, 2020, Buolamwini and other computer scientists presented alongside citizens at Boston City Council meeting in support of a proposed ordinance banning facial recognition in public spaces in the city. Held and shared by live stream during COVID-19, footage of this meeting offers a remarkable look at the value of human advocacy in shaping the future of social technologies. The second video

below should be cued to the beginning of Buolamwini's testimony half an hour in. Boston's City Council subsequently [voted unanimously](#) to ban facial recognition technologies by the city.



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CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

CORE CONCEPTS

algorithm

a step-by-step set of instructions for getting something done to serve humans, whether that something is making a decision, solving a problem, or getting from point A to point B (or point Z)

why computers seem so smart today

cooperation from human software developers, and cooperation on the part of users

biases

assumptions about a person, culture, or population

filter bubble

a term coined by Eli Pariser, also called an echo chamber. A phenomenon in which we only see news and information we like and agree with, leading to political polarization

black box algorithms

the term used when processes created for computer-based decision-making is not shared with or made clear to outsiders

The three I's

algorithms' decisions can become *invisible*, *irreversible*, and *infinite*

CORE QUESTIONS**A. Questions for qualitative thought**

1. Write and/or draw an algorithm (or your best try at one) to perform an activity you wish you could automate. Doing the dishes? Taking an English test? It's up to you.
2. Often there are spaces online that make one feel like an outsider, or like an insider. Study an online space that makes you feel like one of these – how it that outsider or insider status being communicated to you, or to others?
3. Consider the history of how you learned whatever you know about computing. This could mean how you came to understand key terms, searching online simple programs, coding, etc. Then, reinvent that history if you'd learned all you wish you knew about computing at the times and in the ways you feel you should have learned them.

B. Review: Let's test how well you've been programmed. (Mark the best answers.)



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RELATED CONTENT

HEAR IT: RABBIT HOLE

How might algorithms have helped lead to the polarization of societies and the information we believe in? In the [podcast series Rabbit Hole](#), New York Times tech reporter Kevin Roose explores how powerful algorithms developed by YouTube and other platforms learn what users like, then direct them toward endless streams of content that is similar, but in some cases more extreme or radicalized.

Listen to / read the transcripts of the NYTimes podcast Rabbit Hole. In particular:

- Episode One [Wonderland](#)
- Episode Two: [Looking Down](#)

Then, consider your own history of use of YouTube through 2018 (before the platform

stated they would change their recommender algorithms in early 2019.) Did the recommending algorithms have an impact on your ideology? If so, how? If not, how might YouTube's recommendation algorithms have changed the world around you by affecting other users?

CHAPTER 5

Equity

This is a special chapter devoted to a selection of activist causes to improve the lives of women. We look closely at two online movements outside of the US, one in each hemisphere. Both integrate the global and the local; both work to liberate women from systematic violence. Then we look at a few movements in the US.

But first let's briefly broaden our lens to online activism in general.



Passionate public protests: Many protests for women's rights use the publics of the web to expose private worlds of violence, enacted behind closed doors and silenced with shame.

In the following chapter, we will discuss five strategies evident in creative online activist movements today, including speed, visuals, performances, inclusiveness, and masked leadership. These five strategies can be found in many gender-focused online movements as well. But from my perspective, what is salient – what stands out – about women's movements are the ways the internet is used to enable public conversation around topics previously kept private. Social media in particular affords **exposure**, the affordance of

social media to draw matters society guards as private into the public sphere.

People who identify as “men” and people who identify as “women” have lived in the same neighborhoods and households across cultures and time periods. This quality makes gender relationships and activism distinct among activist movements. Issues that arise between groups of different ethnicities, races, and classes are often clearly expressed out in the open; but gender issues are not expressed as openly. Because men and women co-exist so closely in every community, issues between people of different gender identities tend to leak out in whispers and remain more hidden.

WOMEN AS A GENDER IDENTITY: A DISCLAIMER

In order to look closely at two important online movements for women, I have had to exclude many other movements, moments, and identities from this chapter. The premise of the chapter admittedly works against complex understandings of gender, by presenting “women” as a fixed identity group. My goal in chapters 5 and 6 is to give you a selection of histories, tools, and examples to help you understand online activist movements.

As [the Wikipedia page on gender](#) reflects, a deep understanding of gender and sexuality must also consider where the boundaries between genders come from and what is left unspoken when we rely on binary gender categories. Movements for the rights of transgender women have evolved within, alongside, and sometimes in response to movements by cisgender women, but these histories are often collapsed into a single narrative. I encourage you to explore and analyze these complex histories with the tools we will discuss in chapters 5 and 6.

CHALLENGING GENDER NORMS: A EXAMINATION OF AN ANDROGYNOUS SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCER

Student Content

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I decided to take a look at a public figure, and that public figure is Jeffree Star. I chose to examine Jeffree's Instagram account for qualitative observation because in the influencer and social media culture, he is a very controversial and interesting figure to observe.

As I explained in my video and to give a little background, Jeffree Star is one of the biggest YouTubers of our time, as he has 17.1 million subscribers. Not only does he have a ton of Youtube subscribers, he has almost 15 million followers on Instagram as well. It's compelling to check out his Instagram feed...when you have a lot of followers, a lot of opinion and judgement comes with the territory. You are constantly on display. Some people are crazy about him, and some hate him to the core. I think it's both important and fascinating to see everyone's beliefs on such a well known social media figure.

Jeffree Star provides makeup tutorials while promoting his own makeup line and accessories. He films his famous Youtube debriefs about on-trend beauty looks and makeup. He has built an empire and gotten very wealthy in the process! Part of his appeal is his dramatic look, the self expression, his outrageous remarks, and the sometimes offensive images he uses. On a variety of topics, Jeffree seems completely comfortable giving his precise and very blunt opinions. Sometimes the comments are crazy and even racist in nature. The man has no filter whatsoever, and is apparently not concerned with backlash or hateful comments from anyone, as he continues to say and do ridiculous things that frequently gets him cancelled from his channel. Not only does he do and say as he pleases, but he is consistently caught in the midst of crazy drama, leading some to believe the whole persona is made up and attention-seeking. I would say I consider him as more of a "lone wolf" in the influencer industry because of his narcissistic, yet courageous ways.

I feel like Jeffree Star definitely includes **exposure** into his life because he doesn't care about personal, private information getting out and is willing to share anything to get a rise out of people for publicity.

When looking over his Instagram feed, I noticed the comments on specific posts about his beauty line, makeup, and glam image are overall positive. His fans are very vocal, supportive and fond of who he is and what he does, as it shows in his likes.

Jeffree uses **crowd culture** by promoting and selling his beauty items through his Instagram and Youtube channel to his fans.

As for the posts that contain sexual, explicit and profane content, there are less likes and more hostility all around. You can really tell that most of those comments come mainly from his haters, because there is much more hostility expressed than with other posts. They attack his sexuality, his morality, and more, showing they do not condone what he stands for. Whether you like him or not, he is highly entertaining and his controversial brand is what makes him so popular.

About the author

Mikaela Zamora is a student at the University of Arizona. She is originally from Boulder, Colorado. She loves spending most of her time with friends and family and walking her dog.



SAUDI WOMEN: ONLINE AND DRIVING CHANGE

Saudi Arabian laws and culture [enforce](#) a system of **male guardianship** over women, whereby every woman must get the approval of a male guardian for decisions about her body and life including passport applications, travel, and marriage. Online activism helps women who are resisting the system of male

guardianship to connect with fellow activists, read the climate for what they are asking, and connect with specific publics who may support their causes.

#savedinaali

Like campaigns for other identity groups, many social media campaigns for women are branded as leaderless or have masked leadership. A particular feature of social media campaigns for women is the naming of the campaign after a woman who has been persecuted, even though she is not organizing the campaign. Sadly, due to the violence women face that leads to these campaigns, the woman the campaign is named after is often one whose persecution has already ensued.

One example is the campaign to [#savedinaali](#). Dina Ali fled Saudi Arabia but was detained in the Philippines and returned to her family, whom she said would kill her. It is unknown if Dina Ali is severely injured or even alive, but organizers started the [#savedinaali](#) campaign to help her and women in similar situations, and draw attention to the human rights abuses of Saudi women. Raising awareness around the situations of particular imprisoned women may lighten the punishment inflicted on them – though it does not guarantee safety or survival.

RECOGNIZING THE SMALL BEGINNINGS OF LARGE MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

Activist movements that become large usually began as small, local efforts for change. This is especially true around women's rights; whispers about a case or pattern of abuse first spread locally, then grow into regional or global social movements once it's clear that the abuse is systematic. Take for example the extensive Human Rights Watch campaign (also linked above) to end Male Guardianship in Saudi Arabia. It was many small campaigns like

the one to save Dina Ali that led Human Rights Watch to produce a 2016 report entitled [Boxed In: Women and Saudi Arabia's Male Guardianship System](#). The campaign uses the hashtag #TogetherToEndMaleGuardianship along with video and other content.

Human Rights Watch (HRW) is a large, global organization, but small movements gave them key examples and networks on which to build a larger campaign. HRW's decision to focus on Twitter as a platform required the organization to monitor smaller movements for evidence that Saudis would use and respond to Twitter hashtags for activism. Those small movements provided the core of the larger networks HRW would use in their campaign.

One prior online network example for campaigns for Saudi women is the campaign to allow them to drive. Women have been putting themselves on the front lines and driving – and celebrating this civil disobedience online. In 2011-2013 the hashtag #W2drive (women to drive) was used by Saudi activists to gather a public interested in women's right to drive, as did the account @SaudiWomenSpring on Facebook.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE RIGHT TO VOTE

Student Content, Fall 2020

My Perspective and Experience with Social Media

I have come a long way with social media. I have encountered the negatives, as well as the positives that come with using social media. In my personal experience, I have always been involved with the use of social media, especially at a very young age. Being exposed at a very young age to so much criticism and opinions all on different platforms in my opinion is a factor of shaping who you are and how your views on certain topics are made. I am positive that with my generation, while growing up in an age where we were the internet

generation also known as Generation Z, that we all had experiences with how social media influenced us at a young age.

Which is why I wanted to touch upon the political side of how the internet allows and influences us in many ways, while also giving everyone a platform to voice our opinions to each other. Many of those times that I have seen result in arguments caused by a disagreement in the comment section of a post. In today's time, the internet is filled with hateful comments towards one another about having opposite opinions. Today you see grown adults shaming young adults for the decision they made in the comments of the post.

In my experience during election time, I find that I see lots of advertisements, and political campaigning that takes place, and inevitably consumes a lot of what people see and hear surrounding the election. I found this organization this past year amidst the fact that the year 2020 is the year of the most recent election. I began to see lots of my own peers finding themselves conflicted and even considering not voting in the 2020 election. Quite honestly, I found myself in the same position. This is the first time I am able to vote in a presidential election. I should have been excited to exercise my fifteenth amendment right, but I was not solely because of the hateful opinions on social media. I felt that I was going to be judged by people for who I voted for and ultimately felt discouraged. I later began looking into different organizations whom I supported and saw how patriotic they were about voting and especially because I am Native American our voice, in my opinion, is suppressed. I began to see things in a new light and later made my mind up about actually going out and voting. I then began to advocate for all voices to have a say in how we vote and how our vote counts, the difference it makes when people do vote.

I find that these types of organizations are truly helpful for those such as myself that really focus on influencing positivity on social media. Social media can be extremely toxic to your mental health and I think overthinking things such as what I did can really affect certain outcomes. If I had not looked into organizations that I like and follow I would not have gotten the courage to really be proud of having the right to vote.

Also by this author: **Rock the Vote!**

*Rock The Vote is an organization that encourages young/new
voters to go out and vote.
Acknowledging that their vote counts!*

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About the Author

Trinity Norris is a sophomore majoring in Journalism with an emphasis in Digital Journalism. Minor in Information Science and Esociety.



MEMING OF HASHTAGS AND MORE

The use of any hashtag can expand and complicate the spread of a message across a global audience, particularly if the meme flips to become sarcastic or changes direction.

Hashtags relating to Saudi women's rights led to numerous memes, but most just added force to the movement. #TogetherToEndMaleGuardianship was of course translated – you might also say, imitated or memed – into Arabic, and it is that tag which Arabic-speaking social media users began spreading prolifically. #StopEnslavingSaudiWomen is another tag channeling similar publics. Like #HandsUpDontShoot in the Black Lives Matter movement, it is a phrase speaking directly to an oppressing force, telling them to change their behavior.

However, there is some evidence of the spread of misinformation through hashtags related to Saudi women. For example, [a story](#) about Saudi male scientists declaring women “not human” started out on a satirical website, but it spread to other publics – including some who believed it was true, and others who found it useful in spreading fear of Islam. As this example shows, hashtags are easy targets for **appropriation** – use for a different cultural purpose than originally intended.

HOW SOCIAL MEDIA CAN HELP WOMEN'S CAUSES IN

PARTICULAR

To understand women's online movements, including those for Saudi women and women in the Americas (in the next section), it is important to consider relationship communication. First, let's consider who Saudi women can and cannot speak to and when or where those conversations take place. In traditional Saudi society, women have limited face to face contact; they rarely gather or communicate with people beyond their immediate family, and external communications may be under constant surveillance. This limits the communication of women activists with those who are geographically close to them and to moments of low surveillance.

However, communities devoted to women's activism can interact online on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Snapchat, and other social media platforms. So the most important affordance of social media for women's movements is this: movement organizers can orchestrate gatherings and strategies through the use of social media. An example of this is the campaign #women2drive, which Saudi women have been pushing for several years to challenge male guardianship incrementally by focusing on the right to drive.



women2drive is a campaign in Saudi Arabia that counteracts the prohibition of women in public spaces through online, networked publics

Another affordance of social media for women's movements is this: social media can extend and deepen communication among activists, transforming short or casual encounters into opportunities for a more profound exchange of ideas. Social media can allow people who will be gathering in person to get a sense before the event of what others are thinking. It also allows people to continue

sharing their ["staircase thoughts"](#) after they leave the meeting (think of the old TV series Columbo, where the detective seems to be leaving the suspect alone but then turns around just before going downstairs and says: "Oh, there's just one more thing..."). Staircase thoughts are sometimes considered simply wit that we thought of too late. But l'esprit de l'escalier or "wit of the staircase" as French philosopher Denis Diderot called it, can deepen communication, especially in activist movements that involve covert communications.

A third affordance: Social media gathers and focuses global publics. The web is chaos! But social objects like hashtags cut across the chaos to connect publics focused on certain topics, at times despite great geographic dispersal and distance. Publics drawn to pay attention to online activism include people who are not necessarily organizers of an activist movement but who are paying attention to activist causes.



Staircase thoughts over mobile phones can deepen communication that was cut short or monitored in person.

Some of the publics gathered by social media include large organizations with resources to support movements, leading to a fourth affordance in creating a global movement: Social media connects activists with their publics. Saudi women can feel the support of women activists across the globe with the hashtag #suffrage, and I imagine that is important at moments when the national culture seems to be changing too slowly. Connecting with supportive publics can also lead to organizational and financial support.

The publics gathered through hashtags around Saudi women's rights and specifically the push to end male guardianship in that

country demonstrate how publics can build on and connect to one another, through hashtags among other tools. Saudi women have pushed to end male guardianship in the past, and the gathering of publics by these early movements led to the taking up of the cause by larger organizations.

DEMONSTRATIONS ONLINE AND ACROSS THE AMERICAS AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE



Ni Una Menos, Vivas Las Queremos

NI UNA MENOS, VIVAS LAS QUEREMOS

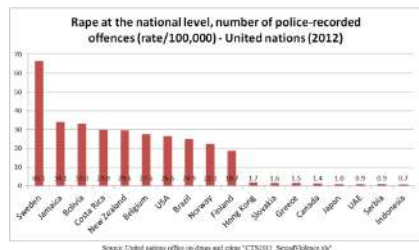
Beginning in 2016, a new hemispheric movement is underway expressing outrage over violence against women in the Americas. **Ni Una Menos** began in summer 2014 in Argentina, culminating in an August 2016 demonstration in Lima that was [characterized as the largest demonstration ever seen in Peru](#). It was reactivated in South American cities including Buenos Aires and Rio Di Janeiro in October 2016, in [response to the drugging, rape, and murder](#) of a 16-year-old Argentinian girl.

Hemispheric hashtags coordinating these movements include #niunamenos (not one less or not one fewer) and [#vivaslasqueremos](#) (we want them alive) – proactively worded demands that not a single woman or girl be killed by systematic violence. This proactive framing makes every death cause for further protest.

One striking strategy in this movement is its theatricality. From [dressing as death in Mexico](#) to applying makeup to simulate bruised and bloodied faces and crotches in this [demonstration in](#)

[Buenos Aires, Argentina](#), these movements rely upon visual impact. In the United States, it is common to embody the unjustly dead – in #blacklivesmatter, the #icantbreathe hashtag for Eric Garner and hoodie-posing to say “we are Trayvon Martin” are two of many examples of resurrection through performance. But this practice of embodying a bruised, bloodied woman is distinct from most feminist protests seen in the US.

The performative, graphic strategies in the Latin American #niunamenos demonstrations were not replicated in the massive Women’s March in the US in January 2017, although many women face violence in the US. Perhaps marchers in the US sought to embody the [“they go low, we go high” approach](#) – as in Michelle Obama’s speech at the DNC following the recording of Trump boasting of using his wealth and stature to grab women “by the pussy.” But the difference may come down to class more than nationality.



Although the US has significant issues with sexual violence, protests do not usually include the graphic performances embodying the abused women that are seen in Latin American protests.

The performative demonstrations in Latin America reflect the grim reality of being unable to “go high” and hide abuse for many of its survivors. Many abused women wear their visible bruises on their faces. The sounds of abuse are more evident on city streets and in smaller apartment buildings than in large houses and suburbs. Abuse of poor women is more visible than abuse of wealthier women – even when poor women don’t live on the streets, lower-class status is generally accompanied by a lack of personally owned or controlled space. As [Margaret Rodman has written](#), “The most powerless people have no place at all.” In these

hemispheric demonstrations, the streets become women's place, with demonstrators of all classes increasingly marching them. By making the marks of women's abuse and murder public, they drag into the public eye what has long been understood as a feature of women's private lives in the Americas.

Update: #metoo

After this book was released, the #metoo movement ensued, in late 2017. As I write this update, [the #metoo movement is sweeping the US and other nations](#), as charges and evidence of long histories of sexual harassment and abuse circulate in the media and online. The movement has pervaded the academic and political spheres in the US and other nations as well.

SEXTORTION

Student Content, Fall 2020

500 Word Reflection

Sextortion: A serious crime that occurs when someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don't provide them images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money. Sextortion is a serious crime that occurs when someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don't provide them images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money. Often used through social media.



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Have you ever posted a photo on social media? Have you ever let a random person follow you on social media? Have you ever heard of Photoshop? Have you ever heard of a person's face being photoshopped onto another person's naked body? Have you heard of those people, no, victims being extorted for money, fame, worldly possessions or even real naked photos? If you have then you know what sextortion is. That's right it has a name, and as you can tell from the audio story I attached above my friend was a victim of this. Sextortion is a serious crime that occurs when someone threatens to distribute your private and sensitive material if you don't provide them images of a sexual nature, sexual favors, or money.

I think that the story I spoke about gives me a unique perspective of social media because it is such a understated problem related to the Internet. Quite frankly, a lot of people don't know what they're posting when they post something, nor do they know who is actually seeing it. This experience was very painful for my friend who had this happen, as well as eye-opening for me as an observer. I watched firsthand the absolute panic and potential crumbling of her future happen before my eyes.

When a provocative photo of you, whether it be real or not, is posted and shared around the Internet it can follow you around for the rest of your life. Plenty of people used sex tapes to extort famous people for money and shared fame. Or they use it against politicians and judges to discredit them, but you don't think it will happen to a 19-year-old girl who hasn't begun her professional life. This experience gives me my own personal and cultural knowledge of social media that is different from others due to the fact that I am more aware and a lot more careful with who I allow to follow me on social media platforms.

I know a lot of young women my age who are public and have a ridiculous amount

of followers for just being an average college student. These women don't know where their photo is going, they don't know what could be done on Photoshop nor do they use caution when posting. I thoroughly encourage all young men and women on the Internet to use protection and take precautions in regards to sharing their face, name, school, family and especially where they live. You never know when a person you've never met will use sextortion to change or potentially ruin your life.

Our experience with the police in regards to the sextortion scandal was very concerning. The blatant disregard for her panic as well as the assumption that she was lying about the photos, really showed the older generation's attitude towards this type of extortion. He spoke very condescendingly, he shook his head and said "you're just a young girl, why would you send a photo like this" and shook off any idea that it wasn't actually her in the photos. I feel like the younger generation needs to be made aware of this type of scandal as well as the older generation. Because when people who are my age get extorted like this, they need the help from the older generations and when they don't even know what sextortion is, then nothing can be resolved. I know that my friend's case file is just sitting on a computer or in a cabinet, soon to be thrown out with the trash. I am saddened by our absence of knowledge regarding this crime, and hope we educate ourselves soon.

About the author

Melanie Norris is a sophomore at the University of Arizona. She can often be found spending time with her roommates and friends!



Critiques of the #metoo movement are also circulating. One example is the [response #whataboutus by working-class women](#) that draws attention to the limits of #metoo in telling their stories. Another critique elevates [discomfort among feminists](#) with #metoo's simplistic image of women as victims, and of the collapsing of such a vast range of behaviors into the concept of "harassment."

The creative online activism explored in these chapters is remarkable for its inclusiveness and complexity in the face of these critiques. Branding is hard. **Oversimplification** is a threat faced by any spreading movement; in this phenomenon, complex causes can be reduced to a simplistic phrase or meaning as the movement spreads. Oversimplification of a message seems inevitable for it to gain national or global traction, as critiques of the #metoo movement charge. Yet the Black Lives Matter movement has remained complex, so why not #metoo?

As of this writing, I do not include the US-based #metoo among the movements I label creative online activism – yet. Although the Hollywood actresses whose accounts received the most attention

are very visible, the movement's strategies are not highly visual, or performative; rather, the movement has gained traction through the voices of people who already have access to significant public attention and national platforms. Imagine if they used their skills at performance and visibility to redirect the attention of their audiences to working-class women and women in nations with oppressive regimes? I hope #metoo advocates where the movement is most visible will turn attention to the women who need help most, rather than celebrating #metoo as a simple success.

Social and activist movements take time. Decades may pass before the effects of a movement are in full view.

In the next chapter – as we explore cultural branding – keep activist movements in mind. But also remember that whereas the goal of cultural branding is immediate influence, the goal of social and activist movements is long-term cultural change.

CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

Core Concepts

exposure

the affordance of social media to draw matters society guards as private into the public sphere

male guardianship

the system in Saudi Arabia whereby every woman must get the approval of a male guardian for decisions about her body and life including passport applications, travel, and marriage

appropriation

use for a different cultural purpose than originally intended

staircase thoughts

the affordance of social media to allow people who will be gathering in person also to get a sense of what others are thinking before they meet face to face, and continue sharing their ideas after they leave the meeting

Ni Una Menos

translated from Spanish as “not one less”, this is a hemispheric movement expressing outrage over violence against women in the Americas, this movement began in Argentina and led to an August 2016 demonstration in Lima that was characterized as the largest demonstration ever seen in Peru

oversimplification

the threat faced by any spreading movement for complex causes to be reduced to a simplistic phrase or meaning as the movement spreads

A. Questions for qualitative thought

1. Start looking at hashtags online used alongside #metoo and also look at stories posted in #metoo over the last several years. In your groups, choose one or two posts to discuss. What do the stories using like hashtags have in common, and what are some ways that they differ?
2. What are the some of the smaller impacts you have noticed in the years since #metoo and companion hashtags and practices have come about? In your own experiences or those you know about.
3. If you were aware of the women's movements discussed in this chapter before, what had you heard about them? Do these movements influence you to think differently about women's roles in the cultures from which these movements came? Explain.

B. Review: Which is the best answer?



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RELATED CONTENT

CONSIDER IT: AMERICANS' EXPERIENCES AND BELIEFS AROUND #METOO

WORRIED ABOUT SEXUAL HARASSMENT – OR FALSE ALLEGATIONS? OUR TEAM ASKED AMERICANS ABOUT THEIR EXPERIENCES AND BELIEFS

From The Conversation



In a survey, 81% of women and 43% of men said that they had experienced sexual harassment or assault at least once.

[Mihai Surdu/shutterstock.com](https://www.shutterstock.com/author/mihai-surdu)

[Anita Raj, University of California San Diego](#)

Since the launch of #MeToo, there's been [a lot of attention](#) on problems of sexual harassment and assault in the U.S.

Unfortunately, this has not amounted to much progress in terms of reductions in sexual harassment and assault or improvements in conviction rates. This is in part due to the social and political dissension regarding [the veracity of accusations](#) and what constitutes [fairness of due process when cases arise](#).

[Our new study](#), published April 30 by nonprofit Stop Street Harassment, in partnership with our team at UC San Diego's Center on Gender Equity and Health, as well as others, looks closely at the scope of these issues in our country.

The headline figure is that, as has long been known, sexual harassment affects most women and many men.

However, our study dug deeper, providing insight into three questions that are central to today's media coverage of #MeToo.

1. HAVE THE RATES OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT CHANGED WITH THE #METOO MOVEMENT?

In the nationally representative sample of the approximately 2,000 Americans whom we surveyed in early 2019, 81% of women and 43% of men said that they had experienced sexual harassment or assault at least once in their lives.

Eighteen percent of women and 16% of men reported recent sexual harassment or assault in the last six months, which is [not a significant change from 2018](#).

The overall prevalence of sexual harassment or assault throughout one's lifetime also showed no change.

These findings suggest that [improved awareness of #MeToo](#) and [potential backlash against it](#) have not altered the incidence or reported prevalence of these abuses.

However, while these data indicate no change in survey reports, U.S. crime data indicate that more people are [reporting sexual harassment and assault to the police](#), possibly due to greater comfort engaging the criminal justice system thanks to #MeToo.

Nonetheless, high rates of sexual harassment and assault, particularly for women, continue to be a norm in the U.S.

2. HOW SAFE FROM SEXUAL HARASSMENT ARE STUDENTS AND WORKERS?

Our study suggests that most sexual harassment occurs on the street or in other public venue.

However, 38% of women and about 15% of men have experienced sexual harassment in the workplace and at school.

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/FWbhj/1/>

Harassment in high school was particularly common, reported by 27% of women and 11% of men. Smaller but significant groups said they had experienced harassment at their middle school and college campuses.

This suggests that, despite concerns about sexual harassment in U.S. schools and

workplaces, long-standing federal policies from [the Department of Education](#) and the [Equal Employment Opportunity Commission](#) against these abuses are not effectively preventing perpetrators from acting anyway, typically with impunity.

3. HOW SAFE ARE BOYS AND MEN FROM FALSE ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL HARASSMENT AND ASSAULT?

[False allegations](#) of sexual harassment and assault against high-profile individuals are a growing public concern. Some have expressed worry that there is great risk for [unfair and unfounded accusations against men and boys](#).

These fears were raised by some, for example, in national discussions of the allegations against [President Donald Trump](#) and Supreme Court Justice Brett Kavanaugh.

While our data reveal that most people believe survivors to varying degrees, one in 20 women and one in 12 men felt that most or all of the allegations in recent high-profile cases were “false and that accusers are purposefully lying for attention or money.”

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/hDB3F/2/>

While one-third of respondents reported ever perpetrating sexual harassment or assault, only 2% of men and 1% of women said they had ever been accused of these abuses. That shows that, while ongoing public perceptions of false accusations as a major risk persist, any accusation, including false accusations, is in fact very rare.

WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN?

Sexual harassment and assault is a persistent issue in the U.S. Our study underscores that it's particularly common for American children, disproportionately girls. Furthermore, many are also enduring this harassment in the workplace.

When these abuses occur, most bear them in silence, without accusations against those at fault. How do I know this? Well, this is the part where I cannot tell you based on our research, but because I did not tell anyone when I was sexually harassed in school and early in my career: #MeToo.

We say nothing because it is not worth the burden – of tackling institutional accountability when there is [little likelihood of repercussions](#) for those who victimize us; of trying to justify or prove ourselves in environments where people continue to [believe that](#)

[false accusations and confused memories are common](#); of taking the time to process what happened rather than just focusing on moving forward, and avoiding those trying to harm or impede us.

I believe that the U.S. does too little to educate the public regarding the nature and scale of problem, or the fact that men are far more likely to be victims of these abuses rather than of false allegations related to their perpetration.

My team's hope with this work is to give light to the risk and harms of sexual harassment and assault as a social epidemic in our country. Given how rare it is for those affected to seek help, the U.S. needs to prioritize its prevention for the benefit of all, regardless of gender.

[Anita Raj](#), Professor of Society and Health, Medicine, and Education Studies, and Founding Director of the Center on Gender Equity and Health, [University of California San Diego](#)

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CHAPTER 6

Activism

Before the internet was an effective product marketing tool, it was a tool of activism – and social media has extended and complicated the ways activists can use it (in other words, its activist *affordances*). This chapter takes a few key movements as examples – from 1994 when Mexico's Zapatista movement forced the Mexican government into a ceasefire, to 2017 when Black Lives Matter hashtags now quickly activate publics in the US and beyond. I refer to these movements under the umbrella of **creative online activism**. What ties these movements together is their creativity in using the affordances of the internet to promote activist agendas and avoid the pitfalls of oversimplification and appropriation.

Note: This chapter focuses on movements that have coalesced (formed) around racial and ethnic identity groups, as well as income inequality and political decisions.

The Zapatistas

In early 1994, only a tiny percentage of the world was online, and the term “social media” did not exist. The internet was very young and very Web 1.0, with static pages that did not allow visitors to contribute. (You can review Web 1.0 vs Web 2.0 in Chapter 2). Yet our first example of creative online activism begins here, with Mexico’s **Zapatistas**.

Creative deployment of the affordances of a young, sparse internet both saved indigenous protesters in Chiapas, Mexico from slaughter *and* allowed them to influence the new global economy.



Zapatistas in Chiapas used early social media to advance their cause and protect their lives.



NAFTA signing by leaders of Mexico, Canada, and the US

NAFTA signing by leaders of Mexico, Canada, and the US
The beginning of the story was the end of life as many in rural Mexico knew it. Governments of the US, Canada, and Mexico began negotiating the **North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)** in the early 1990s, forging interdependence between

their economies. Among other deals, this trade agreement would subsidize corporations taking over Mexican land to grow cheap crops. Many Mexicans – particularly the native, or *indigenous*, people – foresaw that this would lead to drastic

alteration of the land and to farming by genetic crop modification and spraying of chemical pesticides.

As their political leaders worked toward NAFTA, Mexican farmers fought it using traditional methods. In the early 1990s, protestors staged in-person demonstrations at the zocalo (town square) in Mexico City. And they organized and wrote [impassioned statements in print media](#) about the devastating consequences NAFTA would have on farming and many other aspects of life in their country. But North American governments ignored these offline pleas and signed NAFTA into effect in 1992 and 1993.

On January 1st, 1994, NAFTA became the law of the land in the US, Mexico, and Canada – and the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) rose up against the Mexican Government under the leadership of a masked man known as Subcomandante (Subcommander) Marcos. This army of “Zapatistas” – an army of mostly poor, rural, indigenous people inspired by the historic Mexican revolutionary Emiliano Zapata – peacefully occupied the city of San Cristóbal de las Casas in the state of Chiapas, to demand that their protests against NAFTA be seen and heard. Rising up against the Mexican government seemed like a catastrophic move by the EZLN occupiers, many of whom were poor indigenous farmers from the Chiapas area.

The Mexican government was enthusiastic about NAFTA, as they would benefit financially from corporate NAFTA investment even if their farmers suffered. So it seemed certain the formidable Mexican army would covertly slaughter the small EZLN forces before their protest could make Mexico look bad as corporate investment. But ironically, in this case the internet was what [Martinez-Torres](#) describes



The internet can be “a Janus machine, an engine of liberation and an instrument of repression.” (L. Dery via Martinez-Torres, p. 348).

as *Janus faced*, helping governments repress people *while* helping those people protest that repression at the same time. While young, online global networks made it possible for economies to globalize and to crush poor people in the process, they also made it possible to mobilize networks of popular protest and fight back.

Enter information warfare

When on-the-ground resistance alone got the Zapatistas little traction in their resistance to NAFTA, they turned to the internet and began a campaign of *information warfare* – the strategic use of information and its anticipated effects on receivers to influence the power dynamics in a conflict. Thanks to the affordances of the early internet to connect people in similar struggles in different places, international peace activists were already networked online in the mid-1990s; the [Internet Archive has lists and snapshots of pages describing some of these organizations](#). Some of these activist organizations were witnessing or supporting similar struggles in other countries, as poor people battled transnational trade agreements that would destroy their ways of life.

The EZLN Army got the international word out about their cause with remarkable speed, thanks to these online peace networks. With the charismatic masked leader Subcomandante Marcos as a spokesperson, the EZLN Zapatistas created a dramatic campaign online. Their vivid imagery of the EZLN's masked army of farmers spread rapidly across international online networks.



*Subcomandante Marcos (on left):
Masked spokesman for the EZLN army
of "Zapatistas" in Chiapas, Mexico*

At the height of their online visibility, twelve days after declaring war on the Mexican Government, the Zapatistas publicly called for a ceasefire. The Mexican government still had the physical power to annihilate EZLN – but now the world was watching. Once EZLN called for peace, any action against their forces [including women and children](#) would make Mexico look evil – and risky as a corporate investment destination. As a result, the Mexican government was forced to accept the EZLN ceasefire. They could not reverse NAFTA; it would take more than an awareness campaign to reverse such a powerfully backed agreement. But [the EZLN protesters lived and continued their demands for social change](#).

The EZLN's Information War has inspired many civil society movements visible today. These include current movements against genetically modified food and for "fair trade" compensation of farmers. In terms of online strategies, the Zapatistas' activist campaign was an early example for activists of how media can be used sociopolitically to demand civil rights – and to recognize how, Janus-faced, [those same media](#) can also work against those rights.

In the next sections I demonstrate now the Zapatistas' strategies

fall under the umbrella of creative online activism and why such strategies remain powerful.

CREATIVE ONLINE ACTIVISM IN RECENT TIMES

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Student Contribution, Fall 2020



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Music: Automaton en Avant by Scanglobe, [CC-BY-NC](#).

The Accessibility of Politics on Social Media

One of the main features I enjoy about social media is the level of accessibility it provides. In one tap, you can connect with an old friend, find entertainment, get news and so much more. One “old school” medium that has found new life on social media is politics. The accessibility of politics via social media has made politicians and issues easily available to the general public thanks to their integration of the new media into campaigns.

Tana Mongeau is a twenty-two year old influencer who gained a lot of followers from her Youtube “storytime” videos. She tries to be as transparent as possible with her audience, and is not afraid to be herself. Mongeau has over 5 million Youtube subscribers which means that a lot of people value her opinions. I have watched Tana Mongeau’s Youtube videos before and I always admired how authentic she was with her audience. Tana usually tries to stay out of controversial situations because she has gotten herself into trouble in the past on social media leading to her almost being cancelled. This is why I was a little surprised to see her actually campaigning which usually means half the people in your audience will disagree with you. I do not look into politics on social media because I never know if there is misinformation from an unreliable source. I will also see a lot of disinformation where people will intentionally spread fake news to make one politician look better than the other.

Because social media allows for everyone to have a voice, there is a lot of that gets spread around by people who do not actually care about politics, but rather the attention. When I first saw “Booty For Biden”, I thought that it was probably just a meme trying to get Biden’s name out. However, Tana was very passionate about campaigning for Biden and said that it was true. This campaign strategy has proven to be successful with “naked philanthropists” such as Kaylen Ward who fundraised over 1 million dollars for Australia during their fire crisis. They tend to reward people who donate, or in this case vote, with a naked picture of themselves.

However, once again, Tana got a lot of backlash about her Biden endorsement campaign. Lots of people noticed that what she is doing can be considered “vote buying” which is an electoral crime. Vote buying is defined as, “when offering an expenditure to any person, either to vote or withhold his vote or to vote for or against a candidate”. Punishments can include fines and up to two years in prison. It is also illegal to take a

picture of your ballot in sixteen states and unclear in thirteen. In light of this knowledge, Tana decided to change her requirements. Instead of sending her a photo of your ballot, you could just send her a video saying that you voted for Biden. With these lower demands, it is hard to account for how many people truthfully sent her proof, but Mongeau claims that she got “tens of thousands” of people to say they are voting for Biden.

Tana’s campaign ended up costing her some Youtube subscribers. She lost twenty thousand subscribers in September, which was around the start of her “Booty For Biden” campaign. Even though her channel took a hit, I believe her passionate dedication to the Biden campaign is admirable even if she may have lost some followers. In the end, she was able to use her platform to shine a light on a topic she was passionate about, which may have even swung some votes and led to Biden’s victory. Having her political view accessible to social media allowed for her to be even more transparent with her audience as well as earn herself some credibility by addressing a newsworthy national topic. “Booty For Biden” generated a lot of attention for the Biden campaign. Whether someone was pro-Biden or not, they were engaged in the political process albeit in a somewhat roundabout way. Perhaps that led to people finding more information on politics, even though it may have simply stemmed from wanting to see a nude pic.



About the Author

Jessica Nickerson is a sophomore at the University of Arizona studying Pre-Business. She enjoys spending time with her hedgehog and going on long drives. Jessica has been active on social media ever since 2011.

Organizers have continued using the internet to mobilize, and their work has arguably been made easier with the development of

mobile phone apps and social media. This [timeline](#) by Mashable gives a selective overview of noted online activist movements through 2011.



Arab Spring

Creative online activism has developed in conjunction with social media apps since the mid-2000s. These apps are certainly not created equal when it comes to facilitating activism; in fact, some have been found to intentionally hinder the exposure of social injustice. For example, although they have had a huge user base for the last

decade, [Facebook algorithms have been found to hide or slow controversial and “negative” stories from its users’ feeds](#), making it a poor platform for activism.

But the platform is only a small part of the recipe for an activist movement. Human creativity has facilitated the use of technologies in activism in ways software developers never imagined. In a typical example of human shaping of technology, [Twitter leadership didn’t build hashtags](#) into the platform intentionally and even rejected the idea that they would be widely used; human users proved them wrong. Several years later, [Twitter hashtags](#) began playing important roles in online activism, including in the [Arab Spring protests](#).



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About the Author

Lilly is a first year student at the University of Arizona who enjoys traveling and having a good time.

Social media platforms like Twitter are sometimes practically credited with creating movements, but this technological determinism fails to recognize how much complex human wrangling is required to run an online campaign and [keep control of its message](#). Only a small percentage of protestors used Twitter to exchange key information and then disseminated that information through face-to-face communication and other media. All messages that spread widely online face the threat of oversimplification and appropriation; only the best-executed retain their depth and complexity. And, regardless of platform, the real

work for social change still happens across various digital and analog (non-digital) platforms – and most crucially, on the ground.

THE BLACK LIVES MATTER MOVEMENT



Alicia Garza
July 13, 2013 · 🌐 ▼

black people. I love you. I love us. Our lives matter.

Like · Comment · Share



Esteban Rodriguez, Anthony Julius Williams, Christopher Cook and 112 others like this.



Patrisse Marie Cullors-Brignac
July 15, 2013 · 🌐 ▼

Alicia Garza myself, and hopefully more black people than we can imagine are embarking on a project. we are calling it [#BLACKLIVESMATTER](#)

[#blacklivesmatter](#) is a movement attempting to visiblize what it means to be black in this country. Provide hope and inspiration for collective action to build collective power to achieve collective transformation. rooted in grief and rage but pointed towards vision and dreams. Tonight I will be talking about this project as well as the actions that have taken place the last couple days in the city of Los Angeles. Jackelyn Denise Ixchel Alvarez will be joining me on air with [Flip the Script](#) on 90.7FM @ 8:00pm.

Like · Comment · Share

One of the most well-known online movements to date is [Black Lives Matter](#). The central phrase and hashtag of this movement came from Alicia Garza and Patrisse Marie Cullors-Brignac in July 2013 in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman in the killing of 12-year-old Trayvon Martin. Armed with this concise phrase – and fueled by outrage over injustices against black citizens by American institutions including law enforcement today – **Black Lives Matter** has built into a sophisticated movement online and offline with profound influence on government policy and popular consciousness.

Although its signature phrase began online, [the Black Lives](#)

[Matter movement gained traction](#) over the next year as Twitter users deployed #blacklivesmatter to mobilize on the ground. Subsequent hashtags used in connection with #blacklivesmatter networked protestors and helped them assemble massive on-the-ground demonstrations very quickly after subsequent police killings. These included #ferguson to organize protests in Ferguson, Missouri after police were acquitted in the killing of Michael Brown there in November 2014.



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Project 3

I chose the public of The Mayfair Group because it is an account that I am very familiar with and have been following for a long time. I think the content they create and post is

incredibly inspiring and relatable to all. Their profile is very unique and full of creativity. It is a newly founded company and does a great job of reflecting some of the younger generations' ideas. The Mayfair Group specializes in the sectors of public relations, social media, sales, graphic design, branding, events and creative content. Their Instagram account inspires me to think out of the box, reflect on my life, and to be more original.

The Mayfair Group's Instagram account affords exposure because it draws matters society guards as private into the public sphere. For example, they post very honest quotes about deeper emotions and the sides of life people do not normally portray. They feature real-life issues such as climate change, mental health, politics, and female empowerment. The brand specifically focuses on gender equality. They provide very positive content, especially things that improve your mental health. It is evolving and revolutionizing as a company and has grown immensely. With a following of over 400k on Instagram, The Mayfair Group has a great deal of influence. Their posts receive a lot of comments from people sharing their own thoughts and beliefs about the topics being discussed. It goes beyond their platform as they plan collaborations, events, social and PR campaigns for specific brands to give them exposure.

The account brings a lot of people from many backgrounds together to fight for one cause. This is a great example of an organizational layer. Modern activist movements are often ignited through interactions between key personalities, and networked groups of people who respond together. On posts discussing activism topics, the comment section is flooded with users who all share the same belief.

The Mayfair group also is a fashion company and many of their products reflect these strong positive quotes and movements. This will bring a greater exposure because as the products and garments are worn, others who are not involved in the public will see it and possibly look into the brand. I am also especially interested in this brand and their public because it relates very well to my current major. I am majoring in marketing and I am extremely passionate about fashion, and the entertainment industry as a whole. The modern feel of this company is something I hold very high and hopefully will be able to work for a brand similar to The Mayfair Group. I pay close attention to the way they market their products and their choices of posts because everything is connected. I find it incredible that they have never paid for ads, followers, promotion. This is a very successful marketing story and I can learn a lot from this brand. The CEO says, "It all comes down to hustle and building relationships – that's how a business should be built".

About the Author

Created by student for iVoices Media Lab.



CREATIVE ONLINE ACTIVIST STRATEGIES IN BLACK LIVES MATTER AND BEYOND



A Black Lives Matter demonstration: broad, inclusive online activism for the 21st century

Black Lives Matter campaigns have deployed several strategies that were key to the EZLN campaign, as well as to other online activist movements. To make it easy to understand the strategies these movements deployed in common, I will list them and describe them in the next section.

Five strategies deployed by creative online activist movements:

- 1. Speed
- 2. Visuals
- 3. Performances
- 4. Inclusiveness
- 5. “Masked” leadership



Speedy response has been key in the Black Lives Matter movement

1. Speed

Like the Zapatista online campaign, it was crucial in 2015 that Black Lives Matter protestors mobilize with speed. Responding fast to the actions of government or authorities allowed both movements to gather large publics when outrage over authorities' decisions was high. In Black Lives Matter, an immediate response also sent the message that this public would not tolerate police violence any longer – effective immediately.



Hands up, don't shoot is a powerful phrase: It became a hashtag, an easily recognized gesture, and an on-the-ground synced performance.

2. Visuals

In both the Zapatista and Black Lives Matter movements, campaign organizers gathered attention through effective use of *visual* content. Images of the masked Zapatista army are still widely circulated online. This [article](#) in WIRED Magazine explores the spreadable content of the Black Lives Matter movement, especially the visuals – photographs easily shared online that evoked the in-person experience of being black, in protest.

3. Performances

We must also remember the *performances* involved in each of these protests. The Zapatistas called a truce at a dramatic moment that would have cast the Mexican government as the villain if they continued to fight the small EZLN army. In Black Lives Matter, hashtags like #handsupdontshoot remind us that these protestors moved together in synced gestures that gave tremendous energy to their on-the-ground protests. Reenactment has also been an effective performance strategy, exemplified in protestors using the

#icantbreathe hashtag to reenact the video of Eric Garner dying after police ignored his repeated pleas of “I can’t breathe.”

Online activism scholar [Paulo Gerbaudo](#) phrases it this way: Online media can be used for the “*choreography of assembly*” in organizing on-the-ground demonstrations. That is, online organizers can choreograph individual acts of cultural repetition (memes, discussed more in Chapter 7), such as clothing or gestures protestors can repeat to recognize and reinforce one another’s work. And they can organize the meeting places, escape routes, and conduct of massive groups of people. Gerbaudo notes that these actions can influence public consciousness most powerfully when they occur in a **symbolic center** – some meaningful public place that serves as a theatrical stage for activism to be seen and performed. A park at a city center, a football field, the Olympic medal ceremonies, a memorial statue: All of these have been symbolic centers for protest in the US and abroad.

4. Inclusiveness

Black Lives Matter’s strategy was also similar to the Zapatistas’ in the *inclusiveness* of the campaign. It was understood and stated by those in the movement that women must have equal access to the rights being fought for, and that in-family violence was part of what they were fighting. In Black Lives Matter, rights around gender and sexuality were always part of the discussion, as exemplified in this movement “[herstory](#).”

Today’s social media-fueled movements tend to use rhetoric that acknowledges differences in power among the people they fight for or represent. This sets modern rights campaigns apart from some rights movements in the past. Both the Civil Rights and Black Panther movements focused on black men more than other citizens. The 20th-century women’s rights movements focused more on white women than any others. The 20th-century gay rights movement centralized the identities of white gay men. “Not your grandfather’s civil rights movement,” is one way Black Lives Matter has been described, reminding us that today’s movements broaden

the focus from fathers and grandfathers to the rest of the family, the organization, and the community.

Zapatistas

Powerful Zapatista Imagery

5. “Masked” organizers

In modern online activism, leaders wear *masks* – literally, and sometimes, figuratively. In the 20th-century, a much-remembered feature of social activism campaigns like the Civil Rights Movement was their visible leadership and culture of “heroes.” Dr. Martin Luther King is commonly remembered as the “father” of the Civil Rights Movement. Meanwhile, as [this article by Jamil Cobb on Black Lives Matter reminds us](#), there were other strategies at work in the Civil Rights movement as well as leaders who shunned the spotlight, like Ella Baker of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. Today, the branding has shifted, with many declaring today’s online activist movements “leaderless.”



Anonymous as masked activist

The Zapatista spokesman Subcomandante Marcos was a bridge between these two styles of organization, the 20th-century heroic leader versus the 21st-century decentralized campaign. Marcos was the Zapatistas' most visible "hero." But he wore a mask, hid his true identity, and chose the false title of "Subcommander" (subordinate Commander) rather than "Commander." A decade later, the "hacktivist" group Anonymous began organizing actions on 4chan in which the identities of the organizers and participants were not known; Anonymous made significant appearances during protests against the World Trade Organization. More recently, there have been figurative masks on many popular online movements including Occupy Wall Street, with all insisting there are no leaders. The strategy of "masked" organizers makes a

movement difficult to defeat, while also resisting the persistent surveillance that is a function of the internet, and that can get activists jailed or killed.

ADVANCING AND AND COMPLICATING SOCIAL ACTIVISM THROUGH ONLINE ENGAGEMENT

There are many critiques of online activism as [inferior](#) to more traditional forms of activism. For example, techno-sociologist Zeynep Tufekci argues that by removing the hard work and shared risk of social organizing, social media technologies gather demonstrators too quickly for them to understand one another and think together. In another critique, scholar Evgeny Morozov uses the term “[slacktivism](#)” to characterize certain low-risk levels of “activism” such as signing online petitions, which offer participants the illusion they are contributing significantly, at zero risk to themselves. While these critiques may overlook the subtle shifts in the public consciousness that online chatter can effect, they have merit. As illustrated by the Zapatistas in Chiapas and Black Lives Matter in Missouri, online activism is at its most powerful when on-the-ground action provides roots to online campaigns.



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However they are branded, successful online activism movements are never dependent only on leaders, and they are also never leaderless. Rather, modern activist movements in the US in particular are often ignited through interactions between key driving forces or personalities, and then mobilized networked groups of people who respond together. This idea, which author David Karpf has called an “organizational layer” of American political

advocacy, may be the closest we can come to accurately describing the real effects of the internet on how we do activism.

CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

Core Concepts

creative online activism

activist movements that deploy creativity in using the affordances of the internet to promote activist agendas and avoid the pitfalls of oversimplification and appropriation

Zapatistas

an army of mostly poor, rural, indigenous people rose up against the Mexican government in 1994, and successfully used the early internet to reach out for witnesses and support

Janus Faced

a symbol, derived from ancient Roman mythology, of something that simultaneously works toward two opposing goals

information warfare

the strategic use of information and its anticipated effects on receivers to influence the power dynamics in a conflict

North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)

an agreement between the US, Mexico, and Canada in the early 1990s forging interdependence between their economies, including subsidies for corporations taking over Mexican land to grow cheap crops

Black Lives Matter

a sophisticated movement online and offline, fueled by outrage over injustices against black citizens by American institutions including law enforcement today

Five strategies deployed by creative online activist movements:

Speed, Visuals, Performances, Inclusiveness, Masked leadership

choreography of assembly

Paulo Gerbaudo's term describing how successful online organizers preplan social activist movements that will ensue on the ground

symbolic center

Paulo Gerbaudo's term for a meaningful public place that serves as a theatrical stage for activism to be seen and performed, such as park at a city center, a football field, the Olympic medal ceremonies, or a memorial statue

slacktivism

coined by Evgeny Morozov, this concept relates to critiques of online activism as inferior to more traditional forms of activism, with organizing online perceived as so fast, easy, and risk-free, it results in insufficient gains or change

organizational layer

political scientist David Karpf's term for the networked groups of people responding together who he argues form the most important agents for change in American political advocacy today

Core Questions



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RELATED CONTENT

CONSIDER IT: A NEW ERA IN ONLINE ACTIVISM?

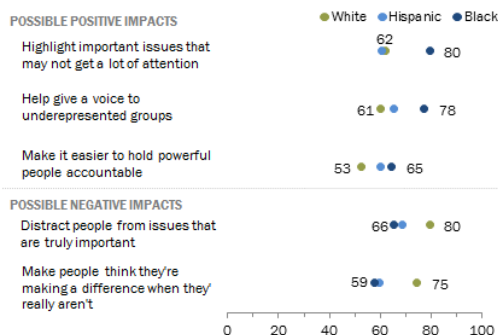
First, read the article "[The Second Act of Social Media Activism](#)" by Jane Hu, published in June 2020 in *New Yorker Magazine*.

Also consider findings from the [Pew Research Center's 2018 study](#) of American perceptions of the internet as a tool for social activism.

Techno-sociologis Zeynep Tufekci argued in 2015 that the tools to organize activist movements online may move too fast to build coalitions that "think together". Whether that was true then, is it now? Support your answer, including what might you say to others in the Pew polls who think differently than you in order to explain your views.

Eight-in-ten blacks say social media help shed light on rarely discussed issues; the same share of whites say these sites distract from more important issues

% of U.S. adults who say the following statements describe social media very or somewhat well



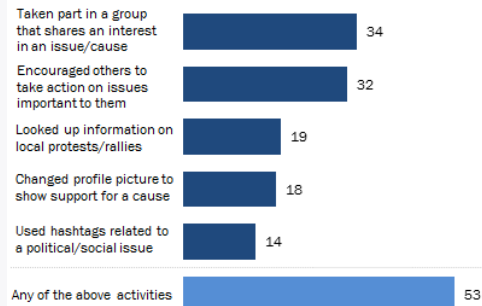
Note: Whites and blacks include only non-Hispanics; Hispanics are of any race. Respondents who gave other responses or who did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 29-June 11, 2018.

Activism in the Social Media Age

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Roughly half of Americans have been civically active on social media in the past year

% of U.S. adults who say they have done the following activities on social media in the past year



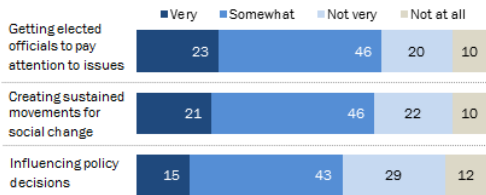
Note: Respondents who gave other responses or did not give an answer are not shown. Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 29-June 11, 2018.

Activism in the Social Media Age

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

A majority of Americans say social media are important for getting politicians to pay attention to issues, creating long-lasting social movements

% of U.S. adults who say social media are ___important for ...



Note: Respondents who did not give an answer are not shown.
Source: Survey of U.S. adults conducted May 29-June 11, 2018.
Activism in the Social Media Age

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Graphics by Pew Research Center.

READ IT: GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS MUST CONSIDER THE COSTS OF DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS (DELIA DUMITRICA, THE CONVERSATION)

GRASSROOTS ACTIVISTS MUST CONSIDER THE PERSONAL COSTS OF DIGITAL CAMPAIGNS



Attendees at the women's March on Edmonton, Alta on Jan. 21, 2017.

Mylynn Felt, Author provided

[Delia Dumitrica, Erasmus University Rotterdam](#) and [Mylynn Felt, University of Calgary](#)

Widespread use of social media has made it easier to mobilize collective action, yet citizen activists struggle to navigate these digital tools and increasingly report feeling burned out. Our research on grassroots digital activism in Canada has revealed some of the [strategies organizers employ when dealing with the technological, interactional and personal barriers of digital activism](#).

People's use of social media for activist purposes clashes with the commercial goals of

these platforms. For example, as these platforms prioritize popular and recent content, activist messages have to be constantly updated and liked or shared in order to remain visible to wider audiences. This places the burden to adapt upon activists, who must make the best of these tools within the constraints set by the platforms' algorithms.

DILUTION OR DISSEMINATION?

Social media can enhance activist communication at the cost of loss of control over the message. This matters in collective action, because a clearly communicated set of demands and complaints is essential to obtaining political recognition.

[During the 2014 teachers' strike in British Columbia](#), three parents came up with the idea of hosting playdates in front of the offices of members of the B.C. Legislative Assembly (MLAs). The parents wanted to pressure the provincial government to negotiate with teachers and end the strike. As they circulated the idea of [#MLAPlaydates](#) on social media, they reflected on the possibility of message dilution:

It's not the traditional command and control. It's like: here's an idea, why don't you play with it and see what you can do. You share, you pass on stuff.... So, it's a different framework of activism.... It's like beta testing, you don't know where it's going to fly.

Their solution was a form of "open-source activism," which entailed monitoring social media to reinforce the message and prevent it from being co-opted, while inviting supporters to adapt and personalize this message.

ECHO-CHAMBER EFFECT

Filter bubbles of like-minded people make it difficult for digital activists to get their messages outside of individual networks. Yet, some platforms are more public than others, using different algorithms to make content visible to their users.

Organizers of [Alberta's #SafeStampede](#) wanted to call attention to the rape culture around the annual Calgary Stampede. They found that:

Facebook is far and away the best place to have actual discourse [around these issues], but again, you're mostly talking to your own friends, so it does become a bit of a feedback loop.

To combat this barrier, organizers created public profiles on more open platforms like Twitter and Tumblr to breach the echo chamber effect.

POPULARITY CONTESTS

On social media, visibility is often enabled by the newness and reactions a message receives. Activists need to constantly monitor how algorithms push content to the top of other users' newsfeed. This pressures them to think and act like digital marketers, strategizing their message production and circulation.

The digital activists in our research spoke to the necessity of adapting to platform-specific practices, as well as the learning curve of understanding these practices in the first place.

You have to be careful of the algorithms, so if you're posting too much, you're not going to get as wide of an audience.... With Instagram, if you posted three or four really good pictures with good descriptions and hashtags a week, you're going to get more of a response than if you're posting like, you know, five times a day every day. So, you want to be kind of conscientious in what you're posting, and how often.

ALLIES AND TROLLS

Alongside algorithms, interaction on social media brings along its own challenges to digital activism.

For [the #SafeStampede organizers](#), social media platforms helped them find each other through their existing networks. Online connections grew into face-to-face meetings and relationships, facilitating critical backstage efforts to their public social media campaign:

I don't think anything exclusively happens on social media anymore. There needs to be a point where things transcend social media and you end up having real conversations with people and you build relationships.

Social media also opened the campaign up for abuse and trolling. This was also the experience of another gender-related movement, the [Women's March in Alberta](#). The organizers described how people searching terms like "transgender" and "pussy hat" launched a gender-biased calculated attack a few days before the march. To deal with the backlash, the organizers resorted to a strategy of "block, delete, report, repeat," pointing out that:

It had to be done, and we just tried really hard not to let all of our time and emotional energy get sucked up by that.

The camaraderie built online and offline helped mitigate the toll of these confrontations. Still,

online attacks and trolling can easily deplete the already scarce resources that citizen activists have at their disposal.

BURNING OUT AND DROPPING OUT

While our participants minimized the personal and professional costs of their digital activism during our conversations, they also spoke of burnout making long-term involvement unsustainable.

The emotional cost of trolls, backlash and hyper-aggression on social media was difficult for organizers to escape as social media tied their public names to their activism:

You attract negative comments on you ... attract people who feel they have the right to attack you ... I try not to think about this too much, having too much information out there leaves me open to potential stalkers, or people who want to harm me or my child.

Distancing one's self, either from the movement or from the potential risks of your activities, seems to be the only possible strategy for organizers in these situations.

Furthermore, because social media algorithms display the messenger alongside the message, organizers also expressed concern that their visible activism may create potential career risks.

DIGITAL ORGANIZING STRATEGIES

The citizen activists interviewed in our research employed various strategies to navigate barriers to digital activism. Here are some of their lessons for other activists:

- Stay up-to-date with how algorithms are designed and updated for the platforms you are using.
- Use multiple platforms to reach different audiences and mitigate the effects of echo chambers.
- Allow some for some change in your message, but monitor the conversation in order to maintain its core.
- Connect with fellow organizers and supporters offline.
- Join a local, regional or national collective so you have fellow activists to lean on

and pass the baton to when you need to step away.

- Anticipate the costs and risks of activism, and reflect on where you need to draw your own boundaries.
- Build flexibility and adaptation into your tactics of action.

While digital activism can be a crucial part of any successful campaign, activists need to remain aware about the costs and limitations of social media.

[Delia Dumitrica](#), Associate professor, Department of Media and Communication, [Erasmus University Rotterdam](#) and [Mylynn Felt](#), PhD Candidate, Communication, Media and Film, [University of Calgary](#)

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CHAPTER 7

Memes

Often when people talk about what works in advertising online, they make it sound like it's the content itself that decides to spread. This is the idea behind the word *viral*: It suggests some content is just irresistible and spread by its human hosts almost without their choosing.



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The Salt Bae meme, from Turkish chef Nurs_ettin Arslan

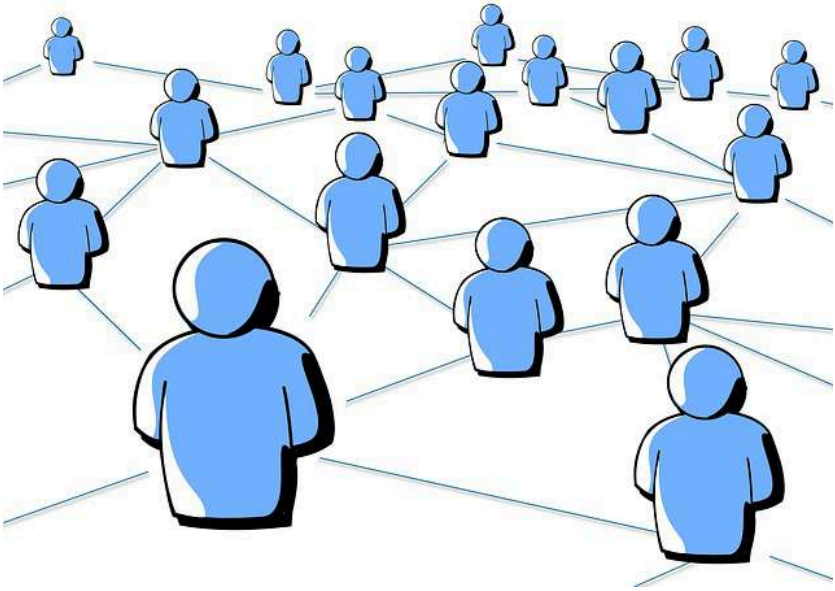
Think about this. This virus idea just isn't how media works. There wasn't some virus that made you share a **meme** last year, or a song, or a video. If you shared [that Salt Bae meme](#), it was because you wanted people to see it, and you wanted them to see it coming from you. You have human agency when you share things online, and you invest a piece of your identity in everything you share. You

also may have strong reasons for sharing content, whether those reasons are personal, social, political, satirical, or all of these.

Why do larger, experienced companies sometimes falter in making their content spreadable while some gestures, phrases, pics, and videos spread in ways even their creators could not predict and maybe [didn't even want](#)? Misunderstandings abound as humans try to make sense of the relatively new world of social media content trends.

Still, in this chapter, we will brave the pitfalls and offer some explanations and strategies for spreading content online. And we look at a few cases of companies and creators who have succeeded in making content spreadable, along with some spectacular failures.

WHAT IS SPREADABILITY, AND WHY IS IT IMPORTANT?



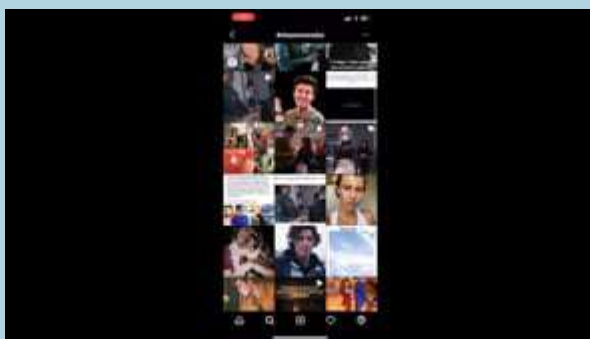
Social networks: To reach viewers today, advertisers must reach their contacts, because social media users are looking at each other, not directly at advertisers

The vocabulary used to refer to online sharing trends is unstable, with users adopting and spreading terms by users that may misrepresent what they name. Humans understand new phenomena in the world by comparing them to what we already know – which can be problematic, as the old and new phenomena will not be the same.

Take the word *meme*, for example. It originated in the work of a biologist (Richard Dawkins, in his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*) to describe something that spreads like a gene, only by cultural rather than biological means. But this definition is based on a metaphor rather than on observation of how content spreads. A better definition is one that acknowledges the qualities of memes – for example, noting that users often modify them as they spread them.

So it is with the concept of the media virus. Users and popular media outlets refer incessantly to media “viruses” and “viral” media. But viruses are biological phenomena. Can cultural phenomena really behave the same way?

The theorists Jenkins, Bell, and Green have written critically of the notions behind the concept of “viral media;” what they offer instead is the notion of **spreadability**. This relates to concepts we began discussing in Chapter 2 of this book, in the section on “The People Formerly Known as the Audience.” In the 20th century, advertising depended on one broadcasting outlet keeping the eyes of audiences directly on that broadcaster’s content. In the age of social media, though, users are not looking at that one broadcaster or television station; they are looking at each other. And with limitless choices and content online vying for their attention, to attract views you have to convince users to share your content with their publics: their families, “friends,” and networked contacts.



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The Influence of Social Media

For this project, I chose to analyze Shawn Mendes and his fan group. I tried to focus specifically on Instagram, Twitter, and Tik Tok and looked to see what fans were posting in relation to Shawn Mendes. I began by starting with a very broad search of simply #ShawnMendes. This was a good start to my research because it showed me a culmination of all the possibilities for fan postings and other related content. Through this initial search, I saw that posts ranged anywhere from simply reposting original videos of Shawn Mendes as well as his social media posts and could also be fan edits and memes created through his content.

As I began to dig deeper into other posts related to Shawn Mendes, I switched over to a very popular platform right now – Tik Tok. Instead of viewing fan accounts on Tik Tok I simply viewed Shawn Mendes' own account. Here I was able to see that after the most recent release of his song Wonder many fans had been trying to get Shawn Mendes'

attention through dancing and reacting to his music video. These videos that fans created ranged anywhere from simply doing the dance he did in his music video to very cool edits of Shawn Mendes. Fans would post in order to get his attention with the hopes that Shawn Mendes would repost their content as he has done with so many videos.

As you can see through the rest of the screen recordings and videos other content that is posted is also from other celebrities as well as fan accounts. Posts from other celebrities can simply be a picture of merch that Shawn Mendes may have sent them or banter between the two celebrities. Fans often jump on top of this media and repost it again creating an even bigger community surrounding one celebrity.

It is very obvious that one celebrity can have a major impact on many fans. This community of fans as well as the creator's impact creates a sort of crowdculture around the celebrity. Fans of the celebrity, other celebrities, and even the celebrity himself get involved in creating content and reposting in order to create a sort of community. Shawn Mendes' die-hard fans even have a name for themselves – The Mendes Army.

This large public that is created surrounding Shawn Mendes is not exclusive to this one artist. Many other celebrities have a large crowd following as well. For example, Justin Bieber's fans call themselves the Beliebers and Miley Cyrus fans call themselves the Smilers. Social media is an amazing way to connect celebrities who you may never meet down to the individual fans that are listening to their music or watching their content. As a fan, you may never get to meet the celebrity you follow but one comment or repost can truly make your day and make you feel as though you can interact with your favorite celebrity.



About the Author

A student at the University of Arizona. She is currently studying prenursing in hopes of becoming a pediatric nurse.

One of the crucial points in Spreadable Media is that online cultures work together as agents to make content spread. A company cannot do it alone. Consumers of the media content a company desires to spread must become sharers, and even producers: liking, reposting, sharing with specific publics, meming, creating fanfiction offshoots, and making the content their own. *Spreadability* is Jenkins, Bell, and Green's theory of how content spreads online – though *spreadability* is not a strategy any one agent can control. Indeed, *spreadability* requires some loss of control of content by the creator.

To begin to understand how to make content spreadable in this way, let's look at an example of content that spread almost inadvertently – without anyone really even planning for it to explode.

CASE STUDY: KEN BONE AS MEME, TRUCE, AND UNICORN

Ken Bone during the 2016 presidential debate.

During the second presidential debate in 2016, a man named Ken Bone asked a question and became an internet sensation via #BoneZone. Why?

I always speak with my students about social media news. The day the Ken Bone memes exploded, I asked one insightful group I had *why*. Why did everyone go nuts over Ken Bone? In the discussion that followed, we went over several factors that helped Ken Bone spread so fast. Here are four of them:

1. Ken Bone was easy to meme.

His sweater was red. His face was small. His glasses were neat rectangles. His shape when cut out was roundy like a cloud. Ken Bone was so memeable he was [drawn by Disney before his persona was born](#). With his collar shirt buttoned up all white and snug he appeared to have been lovingly dressed by his mom. In Pictionary, it would take at least 60 seconds to draw most people. Ken Bone, maybe 6 seconds. Instant recognition enables easy imitation, making Ken Bone's image a very spreadable social object. Plus his name only takes up 7 characters. That's spreadable.

2. Ken Bone was a regular guy – very unlike both 2016 Presidential candidates.

While their backgrounds were different, candidates Trump and Clinton had both long occupied the high halls of the privileged. Watching them battle one another on stage was like watching Godzilla and Mothra. Fascinating... but where were the humans to be tossed around in their struggle? Election cycles have grown so long, the American public's attention span for the two candidates had begun to peter out. And then came the human caricature Ken Bone – like switching the channel first to a reality TV show, then a cartoon.

3. Ken Bone was a national ceasefire.

It has been a brutal election battle, with most of the American public in filter bubbles echoing with rage, and occasionally coming into hostile contact with the opposite side. And then came Ken Bone – a [Twitter user](#) called him, “a human version of a hug,” which

a popular blogger subsequently rephrased as “[a hug, personified](#).” Everyone could like him. He was a safe topic at family gatherings. And maybe he was a messenger dove, cooing in his kind voice that after that awful election, political enemies might eventually be able to talk to each other again.

4. Ken Bone was an undecided voter – a unicorn.

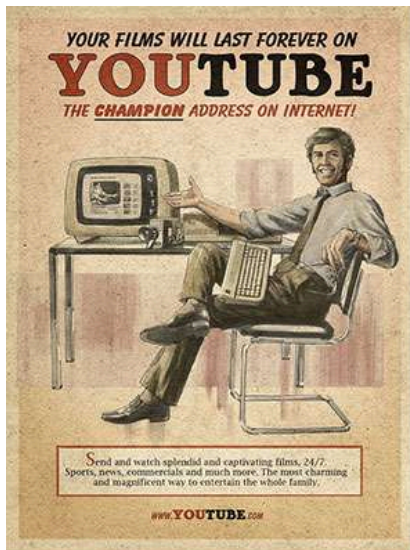
For many, it was difficult to believe any Ken Bones even existed. Viewers marveled when he appeared: *There are undecided voters? In this polarizing election? Where do they live? Is it quieter there? Do rivers sparkle with the ether of forgetfulness? Oh my goodness... there's one now!* Bone's fame only grew when it was discovered that before that pivotal 15 seconds of exposure, he had only 7 Twitter followers – and two were his grandmothers. What a wonderful little public that must be.

The end of Ken Bone's fame

Of course. the truce between Clinton and Trump supporters could not last. Bone, online searches revealed, [had posted things online](#) in the past that not everyone could love. His brand was compromised. If only he'd lasted through Thanksgiving, we might not have needed [Adele](#).

The internet is a dangerous place for unicorns.

BRANDING ON SOCIAL MEDIA



What each major social media platform can do and is known for, as well as how advertising has changed.

So if you are an advertiser, how do you do what Ken Bone did –

combined with what viewers created out of what Ken Bone did – and how do you keep the resulting culture going? How do you make a lasting brand with spreadable content?

One worthwhile analysis of this topic is in Holt's [Branding in the Age of Social Media](#) in the March 2016 Harvard Business Review. Some important terms to understand from the article are *branding*, *crowdcultures*, and *art worlds*.

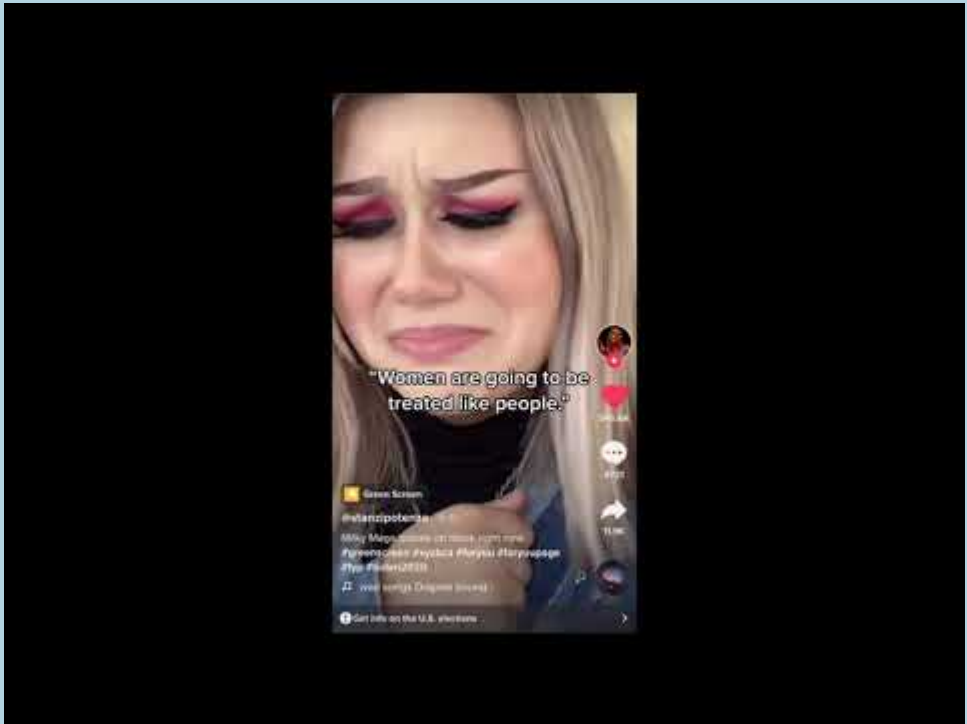
In the article, Holt explains branding as “a set of techniques designed to generate cultural relevance.” What this means is, branding requires paying attention to cultures online. Cultures are kind of like publics, except cultures have much deeper roots. Cultures are practices, symbols, meanings, and much more shared by people who have coexisted in a place or other site or context. To brand successfully today you have to learn about the cultures you are marketing to: their inside jokes, trends, taboos, and so much that can be hard to understand to cultural outsiders.

Holt writes that much of the internet is based in crowdcultures, which are cultures around certain concepts, including products. Crowdcultures can come from two sources, subcultures or art worlds. These crowdcultures may be subcultures – people who are deeply devoted to these concepts. Or they may come out of art worlds, with people talented in creating online content and making a culture more attractive and resonant even if it's all very new. Ken Bone grew out of art worlds, with artistic people quickly meming him into videos and images, which attracted a crowdculture that continued to spread him.

How did those initial art world creators know that Ken Bone would spread quickly? Maybe they didn't. But if they did, they understood some of the beliefs and interests of the American people who spread him. They knew how to read the culture their crowd would come from.

GEN Z MEMES WITH ANTI-BULLSHIT THEMES

Student Content, Fall 2020



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=71>

The #Trump2020 page on TikTok may not be what you think it is...

Now I know when I think of #Trump2020, it's not a page filled with democratic gen-z'ers. On TikTok though, if you were to look up #Trump2020 you would find endless videos of democratic teenagers and young adults who have turned this page into a kind of prank. This happened as a result of another trend where conservative republicans were posting videos spreading or being just a little too dramatic, that it was seen as a way to spark fear into some people. These kids ended up clapping back by starting a whole trend of making fun of these videos, as a way to discredit the false information being spread. Now, when you first hear this it sounds a lot like cyberbullying, which I understand and I think that some people can definitely take it too far, but overall all the videos are lighthearted and funny. I chose this topic, as an observer, to get a deeper look into how people have come up with new and entertaining ways of shutting down false information.

One specific video that particularly caught my eye and millions of other people on the app, was a video of a Trump supporter who's overall message on her video was that if Biden wins vaccines will be made to be mandatory and are bad. She made it like it was a scene from a movie, she commented on her video that she calls vaccines "the mark of the beast", which is a chilling and frightening thing to have pricked into your arm. In her video she demonizes and makes vaccines out to be a scary thing that is enforced by horrible people; these people being President Biden and other democrats.

Now, if I were a 13 year old on the app and I watched this without knowing any information I would be terrified and never want a vaccine. But the fact is that vaccines are good at preventing the spread of illness, and especially in light of the current situation

we're in with Covid, vaccines could help us reduce the lives being taken. Her video is terrifyingly spreading false information that is especially dangerous in a time like this, where we should be supporting the idea of vaccines. And I know that vaccines can be scary, because I am terrified of needles and am 19 years old and still ask for the nasal spray when I go in for my flu shot. But to make it be anything more than that, a scary needle, is bullshit. Now, some have responded to this video by leaving mean comments on her video calling her dumb, etc. But the responses that have gotten the most attention are gen Z democrats who have turned her into a meme. They respond with similar videos that just show how over dramatic and silly she was in her video. It's a real life version of what her dramatic film like representation showed.

I think that this kind of retort is smart and very much a common trend today in social media, yes we still have twitter where we respond with words, but for the most part today we respond with memes. This example I felt was very strong because it discredits the false information the original video was spreading while also being funny and not being mean. This trend is smart because there is a plethora of false information being spread (on both sides), but especially a spread in fear and it is a creative way for people to physically show how someone else is wrong. Overall this hashtag started out as a platform for people to spread a lot of false information on TikTok, but these groups on gen Z democrats, the same group who pranked Donald Trump and his rally over the summer, have once again struck by turning this hashtag and its content into a meme.



About the Author

Alyssa De Leon is a current sophomore at the University of Arizona. She is a film and television major from northern California. She spends quarantine watching reality tv and baking.

Holt breaks down to five steps the process for reading and marketing to a culture. Below I list each of these steps followed by an explanation. What is important to understand is that your company cannot do it alone; you need the help of users, tastemakers, bloggers, and others to become an internet sensation.

1. Map the cultural orthodoxy.

To read a culture and understand how to market to its members, first ask, “What are the conventions to break from?” If you want to attract the attention of Americans entrenched in pre-election political warfare, you might notice at this point that the cultural orthodoxy around the #debate at that time is intensely negative and partisan.

2. Locate the cultural opportunity.

The cultural opportunity means finding whatever is missing from the current landscape around that culture and seeing how you can fill that gap. If you noticed that election debate viewers are surrounded by negative, partisan media, the cultural opportunity might involve imagining something refreshingly hopeful and nonpartisan.

3. Target the crowdculture.

Once you’ve located the cultural opportunity, you must next locate the tastemakers and hubs for spreading content in that culture. What networks should you plug into once you have content to spread? For example, BuzzFeed found some of the initial user-created Ken Bone memes on social media sites like Twitter and Reddit and then spread them more widely.

4. Diffuse the new ideology.

Your new content piece is the new ideology, and it should “embrace subcultural mythologies” – joining the active conversations already taking place in the networks and cultures you are targeting. Still, you must be careful here to avoid whatever your content is trying not to be. No content mentioning Trump or Clinton spread in the Ken Bone meme. Talk of the candidates had

been the orthodoxy, and everyone was tired of them! Referring to previous internet memes, however, might reactivate meming internet cultures.

5. Innovate continually, using cultural flashpoints.

[Chipotle – Back to the Start](#) from [Nexus Studios](#) on [Vimeo](#).

This is where many brands face challenges for continued success; new flashpoints are essential. Chipotle (as seen in the video embedded above) got the content part right long enough to do very well as a brand of healthy, natural food. But over time they struggled to remain relevant, and several outbreaks of foodborne illnesses drew into question Chipotle's wholesome branding.

The internet is full of content sensations that never became brands. #BoneZone and many other Ken Bone memes were initially unstoppable! But Ken Bone did not last long as a highly successful brand...which may have been ok with him as he never endeavored to be a brand in the first place. Remaining relevant in the age of social media requires constant monitoring of the cultures you must entice to promote your brand with you. And if you're a countercultural meme (or even a countercultural brand), [you can only last as long as your icon resists being taken over by the mainstream](#).

FAILING AT BRANDING: PEPSI'S 2017 "BLACK LIVES MATTER" AD

In one of the worst advertising mishaps in recent years, a large company attempted to follow the steps for **cultural branding** – but severely misread the targeted cultures and their own product. In a [2017 commercial](#), the Pepsi corporation tried to capitalize on widespread attention to the Black Lives Matter movement (discussed in Chapter 6), while failing to hear all of the demands of the protestors at the center of that culture. Immediate backlash led them to take the ad down within 24 hours.

How could Pepsi, a multinational corporation with decades of marketing experience, have gotten it so wrong?

It is easy to speculate some of what Pepsi was going for. From the imagery in the ad, we can reasonably assume that Pepsi ad executives were inspired by dramatic [images of real Black Lives Matter protesters](#) that struck chords with online publics. And Pepsi execs may also have been trying to match the massive success their competitor Coca Cola had achieved with their Hilltop Ad, in which their product idealistically bonds young, attractive people across national, racial, and ethnic boundaries.

But that Hilltop ad was 1971. And those dramatic images of Black Live Matter protestors involved real people putting themselves at risk to address persistent, thorny issues. Black Lives Matter had indeed gathered a formidable crowdculture – but a can of Pepsi had no place in their conversations. Placing a white woman with a Pepsi as the problem solver at the center of an explosive racial issue was deeply insulting to many people. Whichever Pepsi executive dreamed up the 2017 ad, it was a bad idea.

This brings up a more important question: How did such a bad idea make it out of the drawing board room? Eric Thomas, a LinkedIn Brand Specialist, [connects](#) what happened in that room to a lack of diversity:

“This is what happens when you don’t have enough people in leadership that reflect the cultures that you represent. Somewhere in the upper levels where this commercial was approved, one of two things happened. Either there was not enough diversity — race, gender, lifestyle, age or otherwise — or worse, there was a culture that made people uncomfortable to express how offensive this video is.”

Internet cultures can dupe also advertisers in multiple ways. First, the level of bias and cultural appropriation online within connected publics may make fool advertisers into seeing widespread acceptance of these culturally insensitive practices. [A recent exploration of “digital blackface” by New York Times journalist](#)

[Amanda Hess](#) captures one example of a common online practice big advertisers would be wise to avoid.

The other misleading quality is that brands today are far more [global](#) than in the past, so branding is particularly tricky. Reading cultures well requires teams of people who acknowledge their own biases and think deeply about social issues. The takeaway from Pepsi's spectacular failure, then, may be this: Diversity is essential in successful branding in the digital age. We have to welcome, listen to, and become all the voices at the table to get it right – or at least avoid spectacular wrongs.

LOSING CONTROL OF THE NARRATIVE: THAT POLAR BEAR AND THE HOT MESS OF SPREADABLE SCIENCE MEMES

You probably saw it.

From National Geographic's YouTube Channel

[A "viral" video of an emaciated polar bear](#) in 2017 led to significant chatter about climate change on social media. Yet there is another heating climate that has my colleagues and I worried as Information Scientists. Social media is a hotbed for videos, images, and memes about science: not just climate change but news on NASA activities, the EPA, vaccinations, and many other fiery topics for the American public. In this hot mess, our concern was – and remains – how difficult it has become to tell the truth.

Why shouldn't science be packaged and spread online? In recent years there has been an understandable push by scientists and those who fund our work to make our findings accessible. This has meant moving beyond peer-reviewed journals and science-focused publications, creating flashy media that will interest non-scientists, and unleashing it on social networks. These strategies seem reasonable: Our work is funded by the public, so it should be accessible to the public. More importantly, to fight human-caused phenomena like climate change we need to inspire shifts in human

behavior on a massive scale. Social media seem designed for the mass appeal that our mission to educate requires.

The problem arises when we chase public attention at the expense of good science. Yes, it is essential that scientists tell engaging stories – but the stories have to be about our findings, not just our *observations*. The video of the polar bear filmed by a photographer for [SeaLegacy](#) was first spread with no text on the video itself, separating that project's observations from deeper analysis.

Was the bear's sad condition related to climate change? Yes – but [in complicated ways](#) that the video did not convey. This lack of analysis invited users and media outlets like [National Geographic](#) to omit the initial poster's description and [meme it with their own interpretations](#) on social media. The video and these less-than-scientific interpretations of its meaning spread like wildfire, prompting a mass reckoning over the effects of human behavior on our world – but also [legitimate complaints about the accuracy of claims attached to the video](#). This spark of legitimate debate then quickly ignited across [networks of climate change skeptics, playing as evidence](#) that scientists lie.

It is so tempting to package our stories to sell, rather than tell the whole truth. Researchers have found that [content based on exaggerations and lies spreads faster on Twitter than content based on truth](#). The less true a story is, the more it may appear to be breaking news, and the easier it is to make it flashy.

Is it worth it, burning past steps in the scientific method, to spread our message? Even in a warming world, we don't think so. A [2016 Pew study](#) found that less than a third of Americans believed scientists on the causes of climate change, and under one fifth trusted scientists in general "a great deal." More than half selected the second-highest option, saying they trusted scientists "a fair amount." When we allow one video of one bear to take the place of analyzed findings, we trade a fickle public's attention for the more valuable asset of public trust. In August 2018 [National](#)

[Geographic published an acknowledgment](#) that they “went too far” in reducing the bear’s condition to the effects of climate change.

We estimate that an astonishing 2.5 billion people were reached by our footage. The mission was a success, but there was a problem: We had lost control of the narrative. The first line of the National Geographic video said, “This is what climate change looks like”—with “climate change” highlighted in the brand’s distinctive yellow. ~ SeaLegacy photographer Cristina G. Mittermeier, in the 2018 issue of National Geographic Magazine

Today’s scientists must all be good media producers. We need to understand the climate not only of the Earth we live on, but of the world that receives, spreads, and memes that media. We need to transcend tribalism and understand how our messages spread, to those who trust us and those who do not. Most importantly, we need to apply the same rigor to our media production that we apply to our studies. Seeing a starving polar bear on snowless terrain did make some social media users sweat over their own energy use. But it also burned a little more public trust in scientific research and institutions.

CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

Core Concepts

crowdculture

a (digital) culture built around certain concepts, which could include products

cultural branding

a branding strategy that tries to exploit existing crowdcultures and/or build new crowdcultures

art world

an inspired, collaborative competition among artists and content creators

spreadability

the ability for media to be spread to many people, who may then choose to use, modify, and/or spread it further

meme

something culturally significant – a concept or a form of media – that spreads from person to person, often being modified as it does so



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RELATED CONTENT

READ IT: PIVOT TO CORONAVIRUS –HOW MEME FACTORIES ARE CRAFTING PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGING

(CRYSTAL ABIDIN, CURTIN UNIVERSITY, FOR THE CONVERSATION)



United Nations COVID-19 Response//unsplashMemes might seem like they emerge “naturally”, circulated by like-minded social media users and independently generating momentum. But successful memes often don’t happen by accident.

I’ve spent the past two years studying the history and culture of “meme factories”, especially in Singapore and Malaysia.

Read more:

[*Explainer: what are memes?*](#)

Meme factories are a coordinated network of creators or accounts who produce and host [memes](#).

They can take the form of a single creator managing a network of accounts and platforms, or creators who collaborate informally in hobby groups, or groups working as a commercial business.

These factories will use strategic calculations to “go viral”, and at times seek to maximise commercial potential for sponsors.

Through this, they can have a huge influence in shaping social media. And – using the language of internet visual pop culture – meme factories can shift public opinion.

WHEN MEME FACTORIES WERE BORN

The first mention of meme factories seems to have been a slide in a [2010 TED talk](#) by Christopher Poole, the founder of the controversial uncensored internet forum [4chan](#).

4chan, said Poole, was “completely raw, completely unfiltered”. He introduced his audience to the new internet phenomenon of “memes” coming out of the forum, including [LOLcats](#) and [Rickrolling](#) – the largest memes to have emerged in the 2000s.



'LOLcats' were one of the meme forms of the 2000s.

Clancy Ratliff/Wikimedia Commons, [CC BY-SA](#)

Today, corporate meme factories systematically [churn out](#) posts to hundreds of millions of followers.

They [commissioned artists](#) to "live-GIF" the 2012 US Presidential Election debates in an assembly line of soft political content. They [congregated on a closed Facebook group](#) to decide who could "take credit" for a school shooting. They created [sponsored political posts](#) for Michael Bloomberg's Presidential campaign.

On reddit's gaming communities, activating a meme factory (sincerely or in jest) requires willing members to react with coordinated (and at times, inauthentic) action by [flooding social media threads](#).

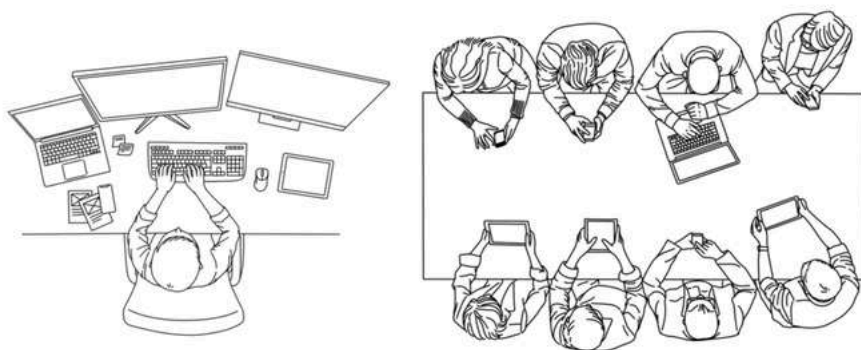
Amid K-pop fandoms on Twitter, meanwhile, K-pop idols who are prone to [making](#)

[awkward or funny expressions](#) are also affectionately called meme factories, with their faces used as reaction images.

THREE TYPES OF FACTORIES

In [my research](#), I studied how memes can be weaponised to disseminate political and public service messages.

I have identified three types of factories:



Meme factories can be single curators or collaborative groups.

Crystal Abidin, Author provided

Commercial meme factories are digital and news media companies whose core business is to incorporate advertising into original content.

For instance SGAG, owned by Singaporean parent company [HEPMIL Media Group](#), has commissioned memes for various business partners, including promotions of [radio stations](#), [groceries](#) and [COVID-19 recovery initiatives](#).

Hobbyish niche meme factories, in contrast, are social media accounts curating content produced by a single person or small group of admins, based on specific vernaculars and aesthetics to interest their target group.

One example is the illustration collective [highnunchicken](#), which creates original comics that are a critical — and at times cynical — commentary about social life in Singapore.

[STcomments](#), meanwhile, collates screengrabs of “ridiculous” comments from the Facebook page of The Straits Times, calling out inane humour, racism, xenophobia and classism, and providing space for Singaporeans to push back against these sentiments.

The third type of meme factory is meme generator and aggregator chat groups – networks of volunteer members who collate, brainstorm and seed meme contents across platforms.

One of these is [Memes n Dreams](#), where members use a [Telegram](#) chat group to share interesting memes, post their original memes, and brainstorm over “meme challenges” that call upon the group to create content to promote a specific message.

FACTORIES DURING CORONAVIRUS

Meme factories work quickly to respond to the world around them, so it is no surprise in 2020 they have pivoted to providing relief or promoting public health messages around COVID-19.

Some factories launched new initiatives to harness their large follower base to promote and sustain small local businesses; others took to intentionally politicising their memes to challenge censorship laws in Singapore and Malaysia.

Factories turned memes into public service announcements to educate viewers on topics including hand hygiene and navigating misinformation.

They also focused on providing viewers with entertainment to lighten the mood during self-isolation.

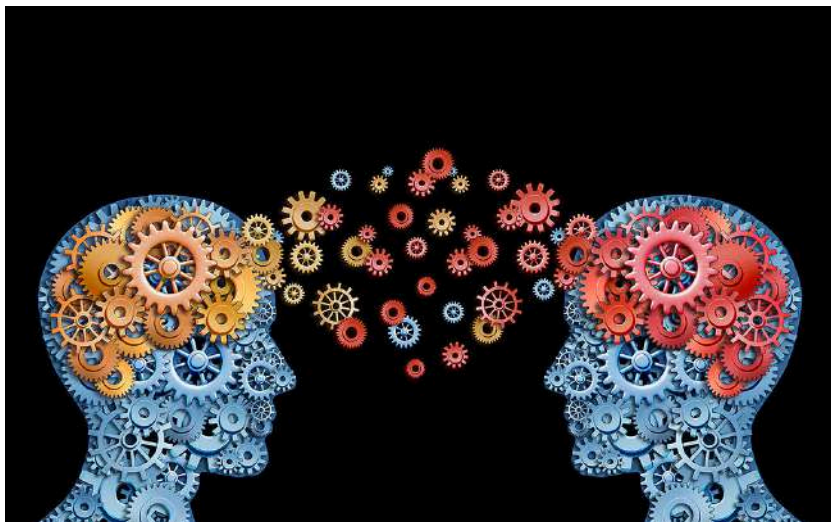
Memes are highly contextual, and often require insider knowledge to decode.

Many memes that have gone viral during COVID-19 started out as satire and were shared by Millennials on Instagram or Facebook. As they spread, they evolved into misinformed folklore and misinformation, shared on WhatsApp by older generations who didn't understand their satirical roots.

An early Facebook meme about how rubbing chilli fruits over your hands prevent COVID-19 (because the sting from the spice would burn and you would stop touching your face) very quickly evolved into a WhatsApp hoax saying the heat from chilli powder would kill COVID-19 viruses.

Information

In the age of social media, the notions of truth, information, and knowledge are all changing. These notions were once amorphous and invisible – the kinds of airy, invisible topics only philosophers and a few scientists studied. But today truth, information, and knowledge are all represented, constructed, and battled about online. Page views, shares, and reactions clue individuals and companies in to what spreads from machine to machine and mind to mind. Content editable by users online is negotiated and changed in real time. In this chapter we'll look at the problems and opportunities afforded by social media in relationship with truths and knowledge.



Knowledge is always based on multiple pieces of information, and usually involves finding coherence across them when they conflict.

"FAKE NEWS" AND "POST-TRUTH"

Much has been made in recent years of ["fake news."](#) This is a term, favored by the President of the United States among others, that circulates ubiquitously through social as well as traditional media. In 2016, Oxford Dictionaries presented ["post-truth"](#) as its "word of the year." But what do these terms mean, and what do they have to do with social media?

To understand these terms, we have to look closely at what we expect with the word "news" and notions of truth and "fake"-ness. These conversations start with the concepts of objectivity and subjectivity.

THE SPREAD OF FAKE NEWS IN POLITICS DUE TO MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

Student Content

Reflection

For the election-related online public, I choose settle for Biden. Settle for Biden is a Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook account as well as a hashtag. While I have lived in the United States for the past five years and am up to date with politics, I am not a United States citizen and can not vote in any of the elections. Therefore, I am not apart of this public and instead am just an observer of this public.

Settle for Biden is a grassroots group of former Elizabeth Warren and Bernie Sanders followers who understand Joe Biden's flaws but believe that the United States will not last four more years with Donald Trump as president.

When exploring this public on Twitter, I found that one of the main goals of the Twitter account was to stop fake news about Biden. **Fake news**, as defined by Diana Daly is "a term recently popularized by politicians to refer to stories they do not agree with". On Twitter, the settle for Biden page has retweeted and commented on several tweets from news stations and famous people and correcting them on their information. In the era of technology and how fast information can spread online, it is easy to spread fake news without the general public realizing that it is fake news.

After diving deeper into exploring more about the spread of fake news, I came to the conclusion that there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation present in the tweets that are retweeted by the Twitter account Settle for Biden. **Misinformation**, as defined by Diana Daly, is "inaccurate information spread without the intention to deceive" and **Disinformation**, as defined by Diana Daly as "information intended to deceive those who receive it". There are a lot of retweeted quotes from famous people and news stations that are using their platform to disinform others. A lot of citizens of the United States will read these tweets and instantly believe that they are true due to it being from a famous person or a news station. Just seeing who the tweet is tweeted from can make others

believe that whatever they say is true just because of their standing in society. As well as disinformation there are also a lot of retweets from settle for Biden from citizens of the United States that are tweeting information that they may believe is true but is actually incorrect or are making their own assumptions up about Biden and his policies and are essentially misinforming society. Disinformation and misinformation are the main two reasons why the settle for Biden Twitter account retweets these tweets so that they can prove them wrong and inform society on the correct information.

These behaviors and strategies used on the settle for Biden Twitter page show the era we live in. Every part of the election can be found online and shows how easy it is to spread fake news and be misinformed and disinformed. It is important to check the reliability of the source and compare sources to see if those sources have similar or different information to understand what the truth really is.

About the Author

Issy Brooker was born and raised in Kent, England and moved to the United States in 2012. Issy Brooker is currently 19 years old and a first year student at the University of Arizona.



OBJECTIVITY AND SUBJECTIVITY

To be objective is to present a truth in a way that would also be true for anyone anywhere; so that truth exists regardless of anyone's perspective. The popular notion of what is true is often based on this expectation of objective truth.

The expectation of objective truth makes sense in some situations – related to physics and mathematics, for example. However, humans' presentations of both current and historic events have always been subjective – that is, one or more subjects with a point of view have presented the events as they see or remember them. When subjective accounts disagree, journalists and historians face a tricky process of figuring out why the accounts

disagree, and piecing together what the evidence is beneath subjective accounts, to learn what is true.

MULTIPLE TRUTHS = KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

In US society, we have not historically thought about knowledge as being a negotiation among multiple truths. Even at the beginning of the 21st century, the production of knowledge was considered the domain of those privileged with the highest education – usually from the most powerful sectors of society. For example, when I was growing up, the Encyclopedia Britannica was the authority I looked to for general information about everything. I did not know who the authors were, but I trusted they were experts.

Enter Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, and everything changed.



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The first version of Wikipedia was founded on a more similar model to the Encyclopedia Britannica than it is now. It was called Nupedia, and only experts were invited to contribute. But then one of the co-founders, Jimmy Wales, decided to try a new model of knowledge production based on the concept of [collective intelligence](#), written about by Pierre Lévy. The belief underpinning collective intelligence, and Wikipedia, is that no one knows

everything, but everyone knows something. Everyone was invited to contribute to Wikipedia. And everyone still is.

When many different perspectives are involved, there can be multiple and even conflicting truths around the same topic. And there can be intense competition to put forth some preferred version of events. But the more perspectives you see, the more knowledge you have about the topic in general. And the results of negotiation between multiple truths can be surprisingly accurate when compared with known truths. [A 2005 study in the prominent journal *Nature*](#) comparing the accuracy of the Encyclopedia Britannica and Wikipedia found they had around the same numbers of errors and levels of accuracy.

WHAT ARE TRUTHS?



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So what qualifies as “a truth?” Well, truths are created and sustained from three ingredients. The first two ingredients are evidence and sincerity. That is, truths must involve evidence – pieces of information that could or can be seen

or otherwise experienced in the world. And truths must involve sincerity – the intention of their creator to be honest.

And the third ingredient of a truth? That is you, the human reader. As an interpreter, and sometimes sharer/spreader of online information and “news”, you must keep an active mind. You are catching up with that truth in real-time. Is it true, based on evidence available to you from your perspective? Even if it once seemed true, has evidence recently emerged that reveals it to not be true? Many truths are not true forever; as we learn more, what once seemed true is often revealed to not be true.

Truths are not always profitable, so they compete with a lot of other types of content online. As a steward of the world of online information, you have to work to keep truths in circulation.

ACCESS OF INFORMATION AT A CONCERT

Student Content

Rolling Loud Miami 2019 Experience



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Last summer, three of my best friends and I flew to Florida for the first time to celebrate

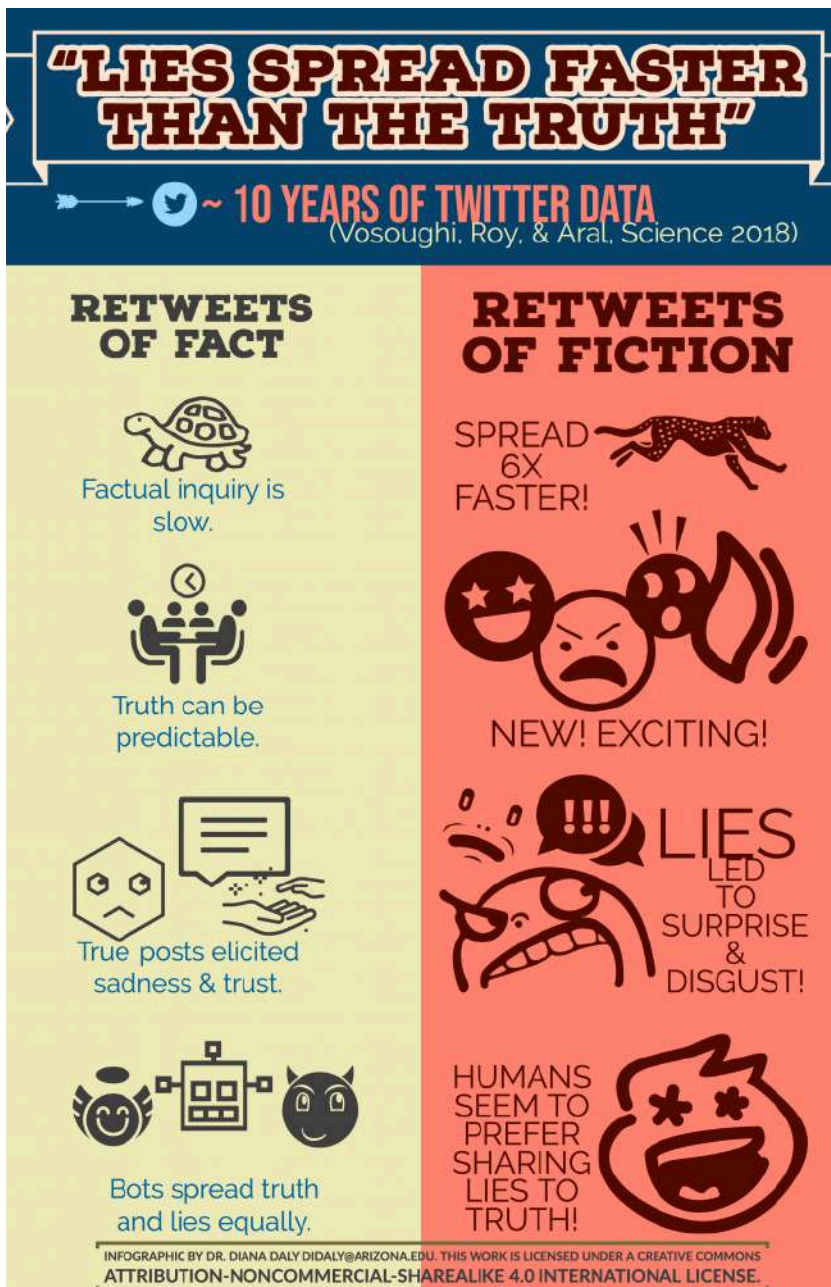
a birthday. We traveled from Phoenix, Santa Barbra, and Colorado to all meet in the tropical, yet the very humid, city of Miami. The first night was Ariana's birthday, she has been my best friend for over 15 years. She wanted to go to Ayesha Curry's (wife of Steph Curry, Golden State Warriors point guard) restaurant, which was barbeque style and so delicious, I can still remember our meal. Exploring Miami was so much fun, but it wasn't the only reason we were there. For three days, we went to the Rolling Loud Festival. It had many of our favorite rap artists, it was a concert we all couldn't miss. Social media benefited our experience in several, life-changing ways. It was recommended by the festival to download their app and follow their Twitter to stay updated with stage times and weather delays. One day, there was a lightning storm and everyone at the concert had to shelter under the Hard Rock Stadium or wait at home until it cleared for the show to go on. In my interview with Ariana, she noted that she found the app very informative, especially to people like us who were not familiar with the area. On the other nights, it was very traumatic when there was a potential active shooter. I remember hearing a gunshot, people screaming, and seeing thousands run toward us in a stampede. If you didn't run with the crowd, you would get crushed by the crowd. The lack of civil inattention was apparent as people ran in terror. It happened multiple times and we were extremely scared each time we ran for our lives. The audience as a whole seemed to not care about anyone, just ensuring individual safety. The main concern in my mind was to stay with my friends and remain calm. I can still vividly picture these standout moments of being pushed through a charging crowd. In that situation, it is easy to forget about common curiosity when there is a threat nearby. The Rolling Loud Twitter account posted there was a potential threat of an active shooter or stabber at the stadium. The news spread rapidly to the networked publics. The audience was constantly checked their phones and verbally announced any updates. It was reassuring that we all were connected online to stay informed and safe. Ariana mentioned in our interview that even her brothers in California were apart of this networked public. Their attention was drawn to the Rolling Loud Twitter because the potential shooter or stabber was trending. Her brothers immediately contacted us and wanted to make sure we were okay. I am very thankful that no one was hurt and that I had social media to stay informed. Without Twitter and the app, I would have been confused and even more scared in that situation. I chose to interview Ariana because we both shared the experience with similar and different emotions. We laughed about reliving those crazy memories in Miami. I picked this topic

after brainstorming in class with a peer and we talked about social media and the Fyre Festival incident, which reminded me of Rolling Loud. When editing the interview, I had fun picking sounds that described how we felt. Although it was terrifying, we used our resources to be socially aware of our new surroundings.

About the Author

Nicole Cortopassi is a senior at the University of Arizona, who will be graduating in May 2021. She enjoys the beach and going on walks with her sister and their golden retriever.





Infographic by Diana Daly based on the article by Vosoughi, S., Roy, D., & Aral, S. (2018). The spread of true and false news online. Science, 359(6380), 1146-1151.

WHY PEOPLE SPREAD “FAKE NEWS” AND BAD INFORMATION

“Fake news” has multiple meanings in our culture today. When politicians and online discussants [refer to stories as fake news](#), they are often referring to news that does not match their perspective. But there are news stories generated today that are better described as “fake” – based on no evidence.

So why is “fake news” more of an issue today than it was at some points in the past?

Well, historically “news” has long been the presentation of information on current events in our world. In past eras of traditional media, a much smaller number of people published news content. There were codes of ethics associated with journalism, such as the [Journalist’s Creed](#) written by Walter Williams in 1914. Not all journalists followed this or any other code of ethics, but in the past, those who behaved unethically were often called out by their colleagues and unemployable with trusted news organizations.

Today, thanks to Web 2.0 and social media sites, nearly anyone can create and widely circulate stories branded as news; the case study of a story by Eric Tucker in [this New York Times lesson plan is a good example](#). And the huge mass of “news” stories that results involves stories created based on a variety of motivations. This is why Oxford Dictionaries made the term [post-truth](#) their word of the year for 2016.

People or agencies may spread stories as news online to:

- spread truth
- influence others

- generate profit

Multiple motivations may drive someone to create or spread a story not based on evidence. But when spreading truth is not one of the story creators' concerns, you could justifiably call that story "fake news." I try not to use that term these days though; it's too loaded with politics. I prefer to call "news" unconcerned with truth by its more scientific name...

BULLSHIT!



Bullshit is a scientific term for information spread without concern for truth.

Think I'm bullshitting you when I say **bullshit** is the scientific name for fake news? Well, I'm not. There are information scientists and philosophers who study different types of bad information, and here are some of basic overviews of their classifications for bad information:

- ***misinformation*** = inaccurate information; often spread

without intention to deceive

- **disinformation** = information intended to deceive
- **bullshit** = information spread without concern for whether or not it's true

[Professors Kay Mathiesen and Don Fallis at the University of Arizona](#) have written that much of the “fake news” generated in the recent election season was bullshit, because producers were concerned with winning influence or profit or both, but were unconcerned with whether it was true.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=77>

Bullshit and other deceptive “news” stories were particularly prevalent around the 2016 Presidential election, when tensions were high and influence on the minds of US voters held great value.

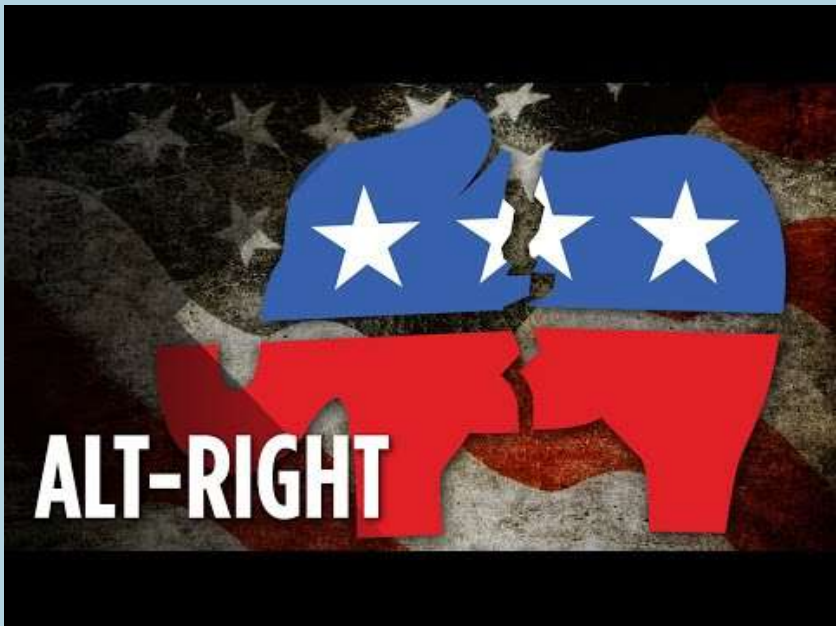
It is not always possible to know the motivation(s) behind a story’s creation. Indeed, it can be difficult to determine the source of information on social media. But there have been some cases where identified sources were clearly trying to deceive, or were bullshitting – creating content that would spread fast without caring whether it was true.

Cases of bad information spread reveal different intentions, including destabilization of the US government, and profit. There have been multiple cases of “news” story “factories,” in which people work together informally or are even employed to create news stories. The New York Times investigated [one factory in Russia](#), a nation whose government’s interference in the US election was the subject of a federal investigation. And Wired Magazine [reported on a factory in Macedonia](#) in which teens created election-related news stories for profit.

There is [evidence](#) that the systematic creation of election-related stories had a considerable effect on the 2016 US Presidential election. Donald Trump’s victory was considered a victory by self-proclaimed “trolls” (see Chapter 3 for a longer discussion of this

phenomenon) and others who collaborated in publishing online content to defeat Hillary Clinton. Some of these content creators celebrated their campaign, including its disregard for truths, in an event they called the [Deplora-Ball](#).

Mark Zuckerberg initially denied responsibility for Facebook's spread of deceptive stories. Now [Facebook moderators are beginning to flag "disputed news."](#) But it is likely "news" factories will continue to produce stories not based in truth as long as there are readers who continue to spread them.



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THE ALT-RIGHT: FROM FAKE NEWS TO DOMESTIC TERRORISM

2016 saw the fast growth online of a right-leaning political aggregate in the US known as the Alt-Right (first mentioned in Chapter 5). The Alt-Right and related “white nationalist” groups [have framed themselves in response to movements based on identity politics](#) – groups that rally or identify around a race, ethnicity, upbringing, or religion rather than a political party. But [many refute the notion that these groups are formed around identity](#), particularly when white supremacy – which centers on oppressing other races – has been so closely associated with Alt-Right media and demonstrations.

What seems to have brought the Alt-Right together more than identity politics is their approach to news – which they often discount as biased – and truth or “reality” – which in their culture it has been acceptable to manufacture for political use. Karl Rove of the second Bush administration was an early purveyor of Alt-Right ideology, who insisted that people in power create their own reality (and therefore truths.) The Alt-Right movement has followed this philosophy, recruiting followers through memes [that imagine situations that fit with their politics](#). One Alt-Right blogger professed clear political intentions behind disinformation he spread [in a profile by the New Yorker Magazine](#) – disinformation which spread widely prior to the 2016 election.

We're an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you're studying that reality—judiciously, as you will—we'll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that's how things will sort out. We're history's actors ... and you, all of you, will be left to just study what we do. ~ Karl Rove to a NYTimes reporter in 2002

BULLSHIT THAT REALLY TOOK OFF

According to [PolitiFact](#), some big headlines from 2016 of stories not based in truth included these:

- Hillary Clinton is running a child sex ring out of a pizza shop.
- Democrats want to impose Islamic law in Florida.
- Thousands of people at a Donald Trump rally in Manhattan chanted, "We hate Muslims, we hate blacks, we want our great country back."

[Buzzfeed](#) tracked the rates at which election stories spread on Facebook in 2016, and found these false stories out-performed true election stories:

- "Pope Francis Shocks World, Endorses Donald Trump for President"
- "WikiLeaks CONFIRMS Hillary Sold Weapons to ISIS"
- "IT'S OVER: Hillary's ISIS Email Just Leaked and It's Worse Than Anyone Could Have Imagined"

None of the listed stories was based in truth, but readers spread them wildly across their social networks and other online spaces. And many readers believed them. Take "[pizzagate](#)": In response to the pizza shop story, one man showed up with a gun at the pizza shop at the center of the story and fired shots, attempting to break up what he believed was a massive pedophilia operation.

Which leads to a new question. We now understand some of the reasons bullshit and other bad information spreads online. But why are readers and social media users so ready to believe it?

BUGS IN THE HUMAN BELIEF SYSTEM



Fake news and bad information are more likely to be believed when they confirm what we already believe.

We believe bullshit, fake news, and other types of deceptive information based on numerous interconnected human behaviors. Forbes recently presented an article, [Why Your Brain May Be Wired To Believe Fake News](#), which broke down a few of these with the help of the neuroscientist Daniel Levitin. Levitin cited two well-researched human tendencies that draw us to swallow certain types of information while ignoring others.

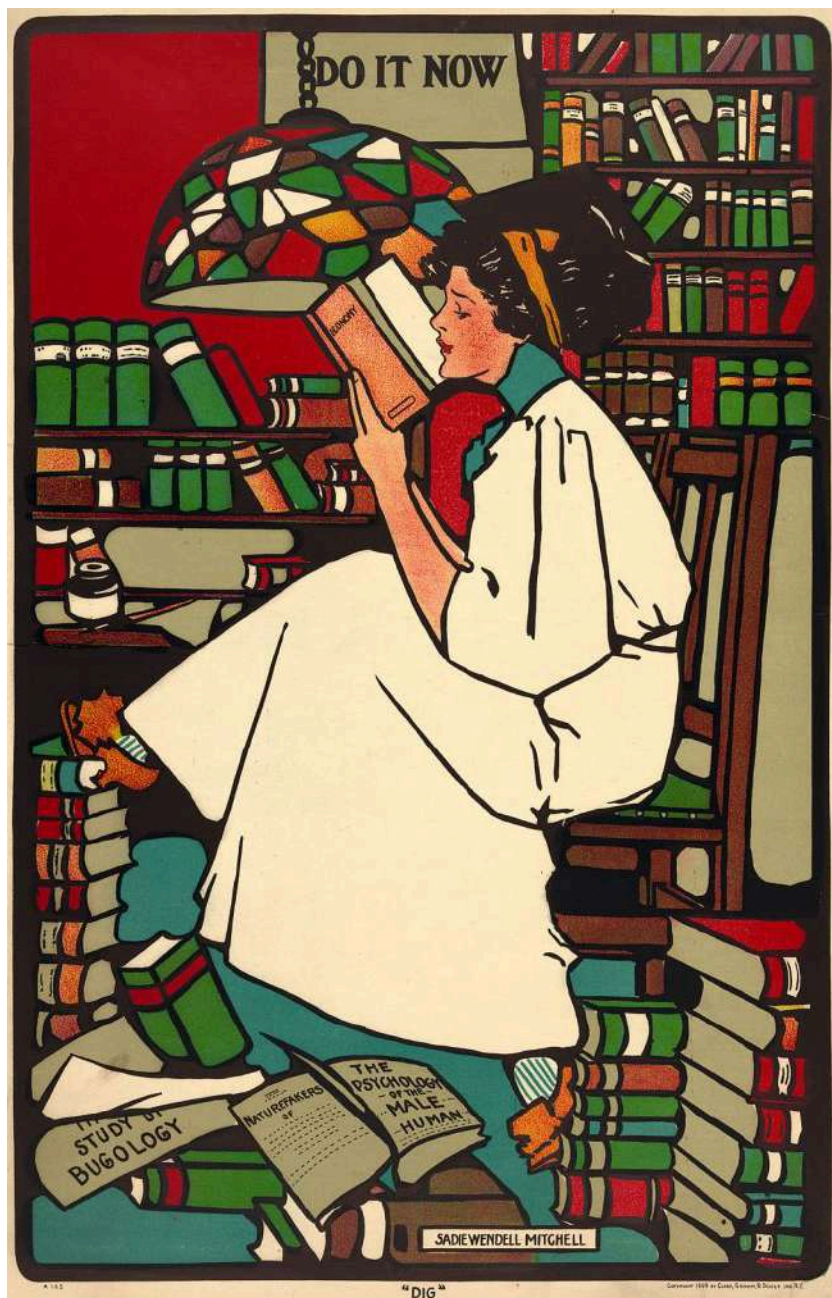
- One tendency is **belief perseverance**: You want to keep believing what you already believe, treasuring a preexisting belief like Gollum treasures the ring in Tolkien's Lord of the Rings series.
- The other tendency is **confirmation bias**: the brain runs through the text of something to select the pieces of it

that confirm what you think is already true, while knocking away and ignoring the pieces that don't confirm what you believe.

These tendencies to believe what we want to hear and see are exacerbated by social network-enabled filter bubbles (described in Chapter 4 of this book.) When we get our news through social media, we are less likely to see opposing points of view, which social networking sites filter out, and which we are unlikely to see on our own.

There is concern that youth and [students are particularly vulnerable](#) to believing deceptive online content. But I believe that with some training, youth are going to be better at “reading” than those older than them. Youth are accustomed to online content layered with pictures, links, and insider conversations and connections. The trick to “reading” in the age of social media is to read all of these layers, not just the text.

DR. DALY'S STEPS TO "READING" SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS
STORIES IN 2020:



Reading today means ingesting multiple levels of a source simultaneously.

1. **Put aside your biases.** Recognize and put aside your belief perseverance and your confirmation bias. You may want a story to be true or untrue, but you probably don't want to be fooled by it.
2. **Read the story's words AND its pictures.** What are they saying? What are they NOT saying?
3. **Read the story's history AND its sources.** Who / where is this coming from? What else has come from there and from them?
4. **Read the story's audience AND its conversations.** Who is this source speaking to, and who is sharing and speaking back? How might they be doing so in coded ways? ([Here's](#) an example to make you think about images and audience, whether or not you agree to Filipovic's interpretation.)
5. **Before you share, consider fact-checking.** Reliable fact-checking sites at the time of this writing include:
 - politifact.com
 - snopes.com
 - factcheck.org

That said – no one fact-checking site is perfect.; neither is any one news site. All are subjective and liable to be taken over by partisan interests or trolls.

fake news

a term recently popularized by politicians to refer to stories they do not agree with

misinformation

inaccurate information spread without the intention to deceive

disinformation

information intended to deceive those who receive it

bullshit

information spread without concern for whether or not it's true

knowledge construction

the negotiation of multiple truths as a way of understanding or "knowing" something

confirmation bias

the human tendency for the brain to run through the text of something to select the pieces of it that confirm what you think is already true, while knocking away and ignoring the pieces that don't confirm what you believe

belief perseverance

the human tendency to want to continue believing what you already believe

Core Questions



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<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=77#h5p-32>



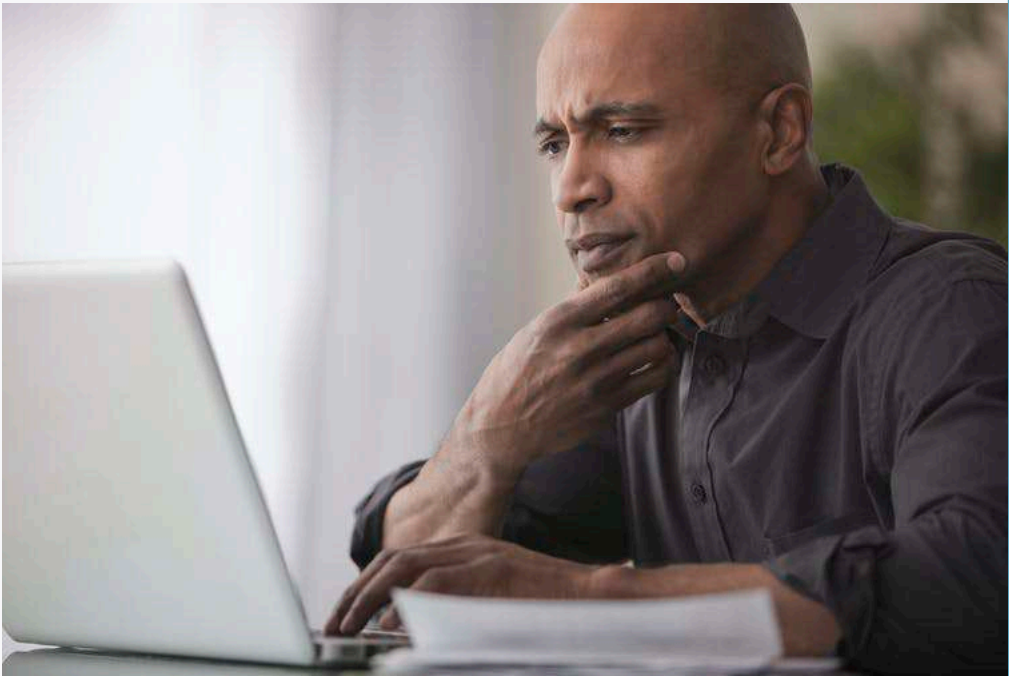
An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=77#h5p-33>

RELATED CONTENT

CONSIDER IT: HOW TO BE A GOOD DIGITAL CITIZEN DURING THE ELECTION – AND ITS AFTERMATH

(Kolina Koltai, University of Washington, from *The Conversation*)



You are a key player in efforts to curb misinformation online.

[John Fedele/The Image Bank via Getty Images](#)

[Kolina Koltai, University of Washington](#)

In the runup to the U.S. presidential election there has been an [unprecedented amount of misinformation](#) about the voting process and mail-in ballots. It's almost certain that misinformation and disinformation will increase, including, importantly, in the

aftermath of the election. Misinformation is incorrect or misleading information, and disinformation is misinformation that is knowingly and deliberately propagated.

While every presidential election is critical, the stakes feel particularly high given the challenges of 2020.

I [study misinformation online](#), and I can caution you about the kind of misinformation you may see on Tuesday and the days after, and I can offer you advice about what you can do to help prevent its spread. A fast-moving 24/7 news cycle and social media make it incredibly easy to share content. Here are steps you can take to be a good digital citizen and avoid inadvertently contributing to the problem.

ELECTION MISINFORMATION

Recent reports by disinformation researchers highlight the potential for an enormous amount of misleading information and disinformation to spread rapidly on Election Day and the days following. People spreading disinformation may be trying to sway the election one way or the other or simply undermine confidence in the election and American democracy in general.



U.S. intelligence services have reported that the Russian government is orchestrating disinformation campaigns aimed at the U.S. elections and pandemic response.

[AP Photo/Pavel Golovkin](#)

This [report](#) by the Election Integrity Partnership (EIP) details narratives meant to delegitimize the election and show how uncertainty creates opportunities for misinformation to flourish.

In particular, you may end up seeing misleading information shared about voting in person, mail-in ballots, the day-of voting experience and the results of the election. You may see stories online circulating about coronavirus outbreaks or infections at polling locations, violence or threats of intimidation at polling locations, misinformation about when, where and how to vote, and stories of voting suppression through long lines at polling stations and people being turned away.

We likely won't know the results on Election Day, and this delay is both [anticipated and legitimate](#). There may be misinformation about the winner of the presidential election and the final counting of ballots, especially with the increase in mail-in ballots in response

to the coronavirus pandemic. It will be important to know that not every state finalizes their official ballot count on Nov. 3, and there may be narratives that threaten the legitimacy of the election results, like people claiming their vote did not get counted or saying they found discarded completed ballots.

WHAT IF THE SOURCE OF MISINFORMATION IS ... YOU?

There is a lot you can do to help reduce the spread of election misinformation online. This can happen both accidentally and intentionally, and there are both foreign and domestic actors who create disinformation campaigns. But ultimately, you have the power to not share content.

Sharing mis/disinformation gives it power. Regardless of your demographic, you can be susceptible to misinformation, and sometimes specifically targeted by disinformation. One of the biggest steps you can take to be a good digital citizen this election season is not to contribute to the sharing of misinformation. This can be surprisingly difficult, even with the best of intentions.

One type of misinformation that has been popular leading up to the election – and is likely to remain popular – is [“friend of a friend” claims](#). These claims are often unverified stories without attribution that are quickly spread by people copy and pasting the same story across their networks.

You may see these claims as social media statuses like a Facebook post or an Instagram Story, or even as a bit of text forwarded to you in a group chat. They are often text-based, with no name attached to the story, but instead forwarded along by a “friend of a friend.”

This type of misinformation is popular to share because the stories can center around the good intentions of wanting to inform others, and they often provide a social context, for example my friend’s doctor or my brother’s co-worker, that can make the stories seem legitimate. However, these often provide no actual evidence

or proof of the claim and should not be shared, even if you believe the information is useful. It could be misleading.

HOW TO AVOID SPREADING MISINFORMATION

Many useful resources are available about how to identify misinformation, which can guide you on what to share and not to share. You can improve your ability to [spot misinformation](#) and learn to [avoid being duped](#) by disinformation campaigns.

[https://youtube.com/](https://youtube.com/watch?v=gE9dFM4Bs0k%3Fwmode%3Dtransparent%26start%3D0)

[watch?v=gE9dFM4Bs0k%3Fwmode%3Dtransparent%26start%3D0](https://youtube.com/watch?v=gE9dFM4Bs0k%3Fwmode%3Dtransparent%26start%3D0)

Tips for spotting misinformation online.

A key approach is the [Stop, Investigate, Find and Trace](#) (SIFT) technique, a fact-checking process developed by digital literacy expert Mike Caulfield of Washington State University Vancouver.

Following this technique, when you encounter something you want to share online, you can stop and check to see if you know the website or source of the information. Then investigate the source and find out where the story is coming from. Then find trusted coverage to see if there is a consensus among media sources about the claim. Finally, trace claims, quotes and media back to their original contexts to see if things were taken out of context or manipulated.

Finally, you may want to share your own experience with voting this year on social media. Following [the recommendation of Election Integrity Project](#), it is a good idea to share positive experiences about voting. Go ahead and share your “I voted” sticker selfie. Sharing stories about how people socially distanced and wore masks at polling locations can highlight the positive experiences of voting in-person.

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However, EIP cautions about posting about negative experiences. While negative experiences warrant attention, a heavy focus on

them can stoke feelings of disenfranchisement, which could suppress voter turnout. Further, once you post something on social media, it can be taken out of context and used to advanced narratives that you may not support.

Most people care about the upcoming election and informing people in their networks. It is only natural to want to share important and critical information about the election. However, I urge you to practice caution in these next few weeks when sharing information online. While it's probably not possible to stop all disinformation at its source, we the people can do our part to stop its spread.

[Kolina Koltai](#), Postdoctoral Researcher of Information Studies, [University of Washington](#)

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PS...CORONAVIRUS

I am creating this page on April 14th, 2020. Today it has been about one month since the coronavirus and responses to it began truly transforming life where I live in Tucson, Arizona; and weeks or months longer since life was transformed in earlier hotspots including China. The pandemic of coronavirus is causing depression and destruction on a global scale, and it is also giving us a distinct view of information as matter that depends on time and space, as well as geopolitics and culture.

In this chapter, I will reflect on the last month from the context of information about this virus, providing good information and challenging rumors, misinformation, disinformation, bullshit, and confusion.

[Enter Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[Below is from this page of the CDC website on 4/14/2020](#)

COVID-19 is caused by a new coronavirus. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common in people and many different species of animals, including camels, cattle, cats, and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can infect people and then spread between people such as with MERS-CoV, SARS-CoV, and now with this new virus (named SARS-CoV-2). The SARS-CoV-2 virus is a betacoronavirus, like MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV. All three of these viruses have their origins in bats. The sequences from U.S. patients are similar to the one that China initially posted, suggesting a likely single, recent emergence of this virus from an animal reservoir.

~ From the [Centers for Disease Control](#)

The Landscape of Information that Coronavirus Encountered

The coronavirus entered our world and the US in particular in the midst of some very polarized online conversations. The camps and tribalism in the US that were established before the virus were already connected and disconnected in numerous ways that are now being built upon. Any further fissures may also be exploited, similar to Russian hacking in the past.

For those of us who study information, the urgent necessity was and is clear be very cautious of what we believe in this landscape.

To begin arming yourselves against bad information on coronavirus, check the fact-checking site [Infotagion](#).

How do we wade through all the information on coronavirus?

1. Trust good science and excellent journalism as superior to personal experience.

This is a global phenomenon where human sharing of good information is our best line of defense. This virus is a bit like climate change in that many of us were being asked to change our behavior before we could see the effects of not changing our behavior. My trust in the CDC, the New York Times, and other high quality sources of information were what convinced me to social distance, to have that hard conversation with my kids about no play dates, and seeing hard lessons learned elsewhere continues to make me vigilant.

2. Recognize those moments of weakness when we want to believe something untrue, and face the emotions behind that.

One very important factor we've come to understand about bad information online is that emotion is what fuels its spread. There's a lot of fear, and sadness, and loneliness right now that's associated with the truth. The bugs in our human belief systems make information more believable to us when we believed it already, or when we really want to believe it.

In practice, this means we must resist the urge to mob onto easy solutions. We have to acknowledge how we're feeling, and accept that there are some bad situations we cannot control.

In one of my social media networks recently I saw numerous posts sharing information on a local herbalist and insisting that steaming creosote would protect people from the virus, although this idea had never been tested.

I saw it for what it was: An attempt to feel empowered. I believe in herbal medicine in enhancing immunity, but you have to be so careful how to present such a tentative solution. If it makes people less protective, or drives them to deplete resources in some rush for a solution, it could be disastrous. On a national scale, I see the same happen with people's belief in a malaria drug as a solution.

Until the science shows it conclusively works, protect yourself and those you connect with – from the virus and premature information on solutions.

One Thing We Know About the Future: Global Cooperation Holds Great Promise.

Yes the bad information machine is still chugging, but the virus has also bridged countless divides. It's enriched how deeply many of us communicate online. Have respect for people experiencing this in different ways, but learn the whole story. Social media-shared perspectives are often not in-depth, and can come across as or actually be bad information.

When you realize people are scared, it can be easier to understand where they're coming from. The value in this understanding is not to decide you believe a false claim, but to understand the emotions they were having that led to it and are leading to it being shared. If you can address that underlying reasoning more calmly, you can change minds.

Our Transformed Selves

MANAGING OUR PUBLICS LIKE PROS

In the world of mutual influence in which technologies and humans exist, are our selves changing? It would certainly appear so in an online search. Identity construction online is sophisticated and constant; not just a full-time job but an activity occupying all hours of our lives.

The need to manage our identities is a new phenomenon – right? Well, mostly. One culture that has been dealing with context collapse as an essential part of their work and lives is celebrity culture. And an increasingly popular strategy for pleasing multiple audiences in various contexts is to post like a celebrity.

Enter the phenomenon of **microcelebrity**, a way of presenting yourself like a celebrity: setting up your profile and “brand” online, gaining followers, and revealing things about yourself in strategic and controlled ways. The goal of microcelebrity is to make your brand – the marketing of yourself – valuable. The entire system around microcelebrity is called “the attention economy,” because with so much information out there vying for people’s attention, anything people choose to look at is perceived as more valuable,

including ourselves. Microcelebrity leads social media users like you and I to apply marketing perspectives to our own identities.

Microcelebrity is [big business](#). It can make ordinary people famous, as when Youtubers can become household names with lucrative marketing contracts. But more often, microcelebrity helps ordinary users participate in social media culture while managing their contexts with polish. We understand increasingly that our social media presences are like art exhibits of ourselves, and we spend extra time in curating them.

SOLO MEDIA: POSTING FOR YOURSELF

Student Content, Fall 2020



An interactive H5P element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=84#h5p-75>

Social media has become a major part of everyone's daily life within the last 10 years. Being 20 years old, I grew up without smartphones being invented yet until I was probably 11 or 12 years old. Even then, it was limited in the number of apps that were at your personal disposal during this time. I remember the first-ever social media site that I ever belonged to was Facebook and I rarely used the app, simply just to say I had a profile on the site.

The next social media app that I was exposed to was Instagram, and Instagram really changed how social media sites worked in the future. It's crazy how much the app has changed over the years, not just the format, but how people interact with the app as well

as becoming Instagram models or even social media influencers. Social media was never really an important part of my life until I got to high school and then just because everyone else cared how they were portrayed on social media, then all of a sudden I had to care. I would post on my personal Snapchat story of the things that I was doing during the day to try and seem cool or popular. It could have been peer pressure or was I finally being dragged into the world of social media?

It wasn't until I got to college that people do not care about the little things anymore. I started to develop this mindset and just realized that people do not care what you do during your day unless it personally impacts them. I also noticed that so many people want to become a social media influencer because they believe that they live their best lives. Little do most people realize is that social media is all based on what you want people to see unless you become famous and have people consistently watching over your back all the time. Most of the time social media influencers post pictures that show the good things in life, not the hardships.

In college social media is still very prevalent. From what I have witnessed it is more so used in Greek Life, than people not associated with Greek Life. For example, what I have noticed around Sorority girl's Instagram pages is a similar theme to their own personal profile. Even with Fraternity guys, they each have their own personal theme to their page. Is this intentional or is it simply just the culture of being in Greek Life and having an Instagram account? I think it has something to do with that, many people don't want to be different, they don't want to stand out. There is nothing wrong with that, but why would you not want to be different? Being different is amazing because it brings out another side of the people that people are not used to seeing and people are generally curious.

I recently started taking up photography during quarantine and I have had a blast doing it because I found myself too really love it and share my perspective of the world with others on Instagram. I started posting on my main Instagram page and the love that I received was something that I was not expecting. I was expecting to get hate or just nothing at all, but people who truly care about you are going to show support no matter what you do. This is when it finally hit me that it doesn't matter how many likes I get on pictures because at the end of the day I have shared what I think is truly beautiful and hopefully I can make somebody's day better. Self-respect is a huge part of being able to finally let go of everyone's opinion. It's not about how much praise or recognition you get from others it is about how you feel about what you uploaded.



About the Author

I am an African American male who is a sophomore at the University of Arizona. I am an avid photographer and it is one of my passions / hobbies!!



A "backstage" selfie with First Lady Michelle Obama and Ryan Seacrest demonstrates the demotic turn in celebrity.

Media theorist Alice Marwick has written about a paradox in microcelebrity: As ordinary people are acting more famous, famous people are acting more ordinary. Kim Kardashian presents a selfie of herself and Kanye West in a bathroom; Michelle Obama and Ryan Seacrest mug goofily for a selfie. Graeme Turner called this leveling of the everyday toward celebrity culture and vice versa **"the**

demotic turn" in celebrity culture. "Celebrity culture is increasingly populated by unexceptional people who have become famous and by stars who have been made ordinary," according to author [Joshua Gamson](#).

Social media has accelerated the demotic turn in celebrity. Many

people quote Andy Warhol's comment in the past that each person, no matter how ordinary, would have 15 minutes of fame. Today, technologically connected societies offer a lifetime of potential discovery by audiences. High-profile celebrities perform the masses for the masses. And you all are superstars, to at least a small public.

HOW TO BE DIFFERENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Student Content, Fall 2020

Social media has and will continue to evolve and with that it will continue have a serious impact on not only my life but the lives of billions in this world. In my life I have decided to strive to have a different presence on social media, being constant in not necessarily posting or using this social media in terms of the "norm" by posting for desired attention or to prove how great my said life is. However, I post things that I care about and you can see in my media that there is a consistency in the media. With that I think what separates myself in a personal aspect of social media is that I have a unique story and perspective. I have something very much worth sharing. I would call this desired media. I have defined desired media as a source of media or media itself that wants the consumer wanting more and leaves them walking away feeling good. I believe personally most of my media is desired media in terms of it makes the consumer feel good, and especially those who know me well can relate with some of the media in their own lives as well, which can help contribute to that desired media.

In terms of being different on social media, many many people are trying to be "different" in order to receive fame and accolade for this, however, that is not what being different entails. I would say being different on social media means having a purposeful message and using it with a purpose. For example, using media to promote something you really care about. So in my instance I am an advocate for Phoenix Children's Hospital and their Cancer and Blood Disorder branch. With that I help promote their fundraisers and then get their message out to those who may not be aware of what their goals are and the

impact you can have. Speaking on impact, this can make someone feel good about using their media to better themselves and have an impact on the community.

In terms of the culture of social media, it is constantly changing and will continue to change. As we all see the rise of and fall of some social media for example, the ascension of TikTok and even the different cultures on that application in general. You have people and kids that are striving for fame and that is their only goal. Then you have the group that uses it just as something for fun, and that just uses it as a different use and change of pace from other medias. Culture is important when it comes to anything, a workplace culture is what builds that places character and is essential to each workplace. The same goes for social media applications and the use of them. In a world that is constantly finding ways to scrutinize individuals for their success, especially on social media, the culture of social media is something that if the culture is on the right track, so will social media for the most part, and it goes both ways. Overall, in terms of my social media I have learned that having a purpose in using, using it because you genuinely care, and work towards building a good culture are what separates myself in social media and can for you as well.



About the Author

I am a student at the University of Arizona and I am studying broadcast journalism and sports management.

CONCLUSION

Why is it important to know ourselves in order to understand social

media? I called this book *Humans are Social Media* because the development of social media culture, including norms and technological affordances, is wrapped up in you, and me, and other humans. And we are also wrapped up in that culture; as we shape it, it shapes us.

I've tried to show the ways the partnership between social media technologies and human culture play out in this book. We began with the reverberations of this partnership on identity. We examined our society's communication practices informing early social media technologies. We looked at how human-created algorithms bounce against human behaviors, reinforcing them but also sometimes being rejected by them. We learned about the ways humans have learned to use social technologies to seek what we want through online activism, branding, and lying. And we looked at the ways our bodies and needs for love play out in the digital landscape, performing new relationships and spectacular selves.

I hope this book has helped you to understand how important your role is as a human in a technological revolution.

And I hope that you will share what you've learned.

Core Concepts

microcelebrity

a way of presenting yourself like a celebrity: setting up your profile and "brand" online, gaining followers, and revealing things about yourself in strategic and controlled ways

"the demotic turn" in celebrity culture

Graeme Turner's term for the leveling of the everyday toward celebrity culture and vice versa (*Understanding Celebrity*, 2004)

Core Questions



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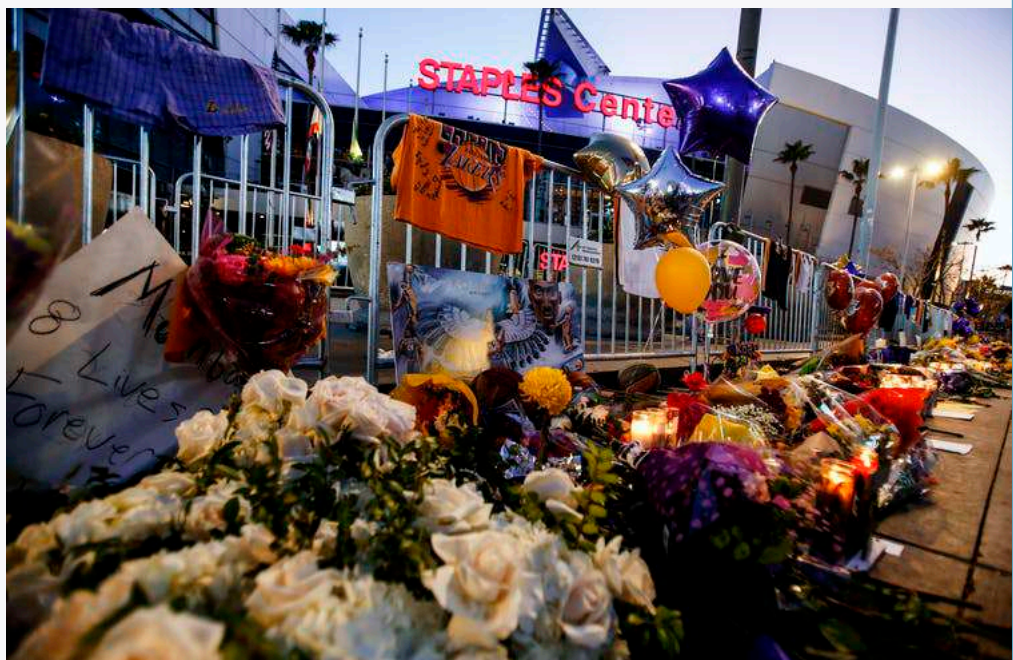
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Question for Qualitative Thought:

Consider the branding practices on social media of yourself or a non-celebrity acquaintance you know. Compare these practices to an actual brand. Are the practices similar? How does it feel to brand oneself – what is emphasized, and what is left out?

RELATED CONTENT

WHY LOSING KOBE BRYANT FELT LIKE LOSING A RELATIVE OR FRIEND (BY EDWARD R. HIRT FROM *THE CONVERSATION*)



Flowers and messages are placed at a memorial for Kobe Bryant in front of Staples Center in Los Angeles.

[AP Photo/Ringo H.W. Chiu](#)

[Edward R. Hirt, *Indiana University*](#)

On the afternoon of Jan. 26, I was at the Indiana men's basketball game when a chorus of cellphones in the crowd pinged, alerting them to the news of [Kobe Bryant's death](#). I

was astonished at how quickly fans' attention switched from the game to utter shock and disbelief at the news of Bryant's passing.

Soon, it seemed like the entire nation was in mourning.

Sure, we might expect the basketball world to grieve the passing of one of its all-time greats. But grief came from all corners. The Grammy Awards featured [poignant tributes](#) to Bryant. [President Donald Trump](#) and former [President Barack Obama](#) offered their condolences. People who had never met Bryant told reporters they felt like [they had just lost a family member](#).

How can so many be so deeply affected by the death of someone they've never even met? Why might some people see Kobe Bryant as a family member?

[As a social psychologist](#), I'm not surprised by these reactions. I see three main reasons, grounded in psychology, that explain why Bryant's death had such a profound effect on so many people.

1. FEELINGS FORMED FROM AFAR

Psychologists Shira Gabriel and Melanie Green [have written about](#) how many of us form what are called "[parasocial bonds](#)" with other people. These tend to be one-way relationships with people whom we've never met or interacted with, but nonetheless feel intimately connected to.

Although ideas about parasocial bonds were first developed in the 1950s, they've garnered a lot of attention over the past couple of decades. For example, loyal fans of Oprah Winfrey and Ellen DeGeneres watch their shows almost every day, [with the hosts actively trying to build a warm rapport with their viewers](#) and [their audience developing intense feelings of attachment](#).

But interest in parasocial relationships [has exploded](#) in the age of social media. People who follow celebrities on Twitter and Instagram get access to their relationships, emotions, opinions, triumphs and travails.

Even though it's a one-way relationship – what are the chances a celebrity actually responds to a fan's message on social media? – [fans can feel a profound level of intimacy with the famous people they follow](#). Kobe Bryant, with over [15 million followers](#) on Twitter and nearly [20 million followers](#) on Instagram, clearly had a massive following.

2. THE 'WHAT IF' FACTOR

Still, there was something about Bryant's death that seemed particularly tragic.

There's no way to measure whether the outpouring of public grief surpassed that of recent celebrity deaths like Michael Jackson, Prince or Robin Williams. But it's certainly possible that the unique circumstances surrounding Kobe Bryant's death evoked stronger emotions.

Bryant died in a helicopter during extremely foggy conditions. This can lead to a lot of "what ifs," otherwise known as "[counterfactual thoughts](#)." Work by psychologists Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky [has shown](#) that when we can easily come up with ways to undo an outcome – say, "if it had been a clear day, Kobe would still be alive" – it can intensify the anger, sadness or frustration about a negative event. It makes the death seem that much more random – and make us feel like it never should have happened in the first place.

Furthermore, Bryant's 13-year-old daughter, [Gianna](#), died in the accident, along with seven others. This broadens Bryant's identity beyond the basketball court, reminding people of his role as a father of four daughters – three of whom will now have to live without their sister and father.



Students walk beside a mural of Kobe Bryant and daughter Gianna at a basketball court in Taguig, Philippines.

[AP Photo/Aaron Favila](#)

3. IT'S ABOUT US, NOT HIM

I'd also add that our grief over Kobe's death may actually be less about him – and more about us.

According to "[terror management theory](#)," reminders of our own mortality evoke an existential terror. In response, [we search for ways to give our lives meaning](#) and seek comfort and reassurance by connecting with loved ones. I found it striking that following the news of Bryant's death, his former teammate Shaquille O'Neal [said that he had called up several estranged friends](#) in order to make amends. Bryant's death was a stark reminder that life's too short to hold onto petty grudges.

Similarly, after the loss of loved ones, we'll often hear people suggest hugging those we love tightly, or living every day to the fullest.

Many had felt like they had gotten to know Bryant after watching him play basketball on TV for 20 years. His death was random and tragic, reminding us that we, too, will someday die – and making us wonder what we'll have to show for our lives.

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[Edward R. Hirt](#), Professor of Psychological and Brain Sciences, [Indiana University](#)

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PART II

GUEST CONTRIBUTIONS

This section includes contributions by guest authors who are graduate students or whose work was made available through Creative Commons.

VR and AR: Bringing Closeness to Learning

Meet Dr. Bryan Carter



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here:

<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=90>

[TASL for Music:] [Feels Good 2 B By Jason Shaw](#), CC-BY

[View this video with transcript](#)

Virtual and Augmented Reality are technologies making rapid

inroads into social media. Their popularity today is dependent in part on the need for closeness and intimacy in an increasingly distanced world. Below, educators who work with AR, VR, and other technologies discuss how they help engage students, and humans, in closer connections.

VIDEO: DR. BRYAN CARTER ENGAGES STUDENTS IN LEARNING THROUGH HIS VIRTUAL HARLEM PROJECT AND OTHER USES OF AUGMENTED AND VIRTUAL REALITY.



A YouTube element has been excluded from this version of the text. You can view it online here: <https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrrsm/?p=90>

Blog Post: Being there (by Steve Wheeler)

From Learning with 'e's: My thoughts about learning technology and all things digital. (March 28, 2020)

Ever wondered how we can overcome feelings of loneliness and disconnect in distance education? It's a question that online educators have been grappling with for a long time.

When you're online, or using your smartphone to communicate, do you ever feel 'connected' to the person at the other end? It's a common psychological phenomenon to feel that although you are separated by distance, the technology actually mediates your connection with someone else. Conversely, if you feel disconnected, remote or in some way out of tune with the person at the other end, dialogue can be limited, and connection brief. This is where the technology may have failed to support the interaction. Feelings of intimacy, or warmth, or common understanding through technology all fall under the category of [social presence](#). It's a term psychologists and technologists use to describe the ability to project physical, social and emotional presence and also

to experience it from others during interactions. It's almost like being there alongside them.

Short, Williams and Christie (1976) argued that there is a spectrum of social presence inherent in the affordances of available technologies. That is, some technologies are better at creating the conditions for good social presence than others. When I was conducting the research for my research thesis (Wheeler, 2007), I used this principle to differentiate between the pedagogical power of four modes of communication: face to face (the richest), video conference, telephone, and e-mail (the poorest).

Today we have many more communication technologies to call upon, including handheld videoconferencing (Facetime and Whatsapp for example), social media in various formats, online discussion groups, virtual reality, social gaming, and other options still emerging. Teachers who wish to use these technologies to support learning at a distance need to realise that each of these tools have various [affordances](#) (Gibson, 1966) some of which are more conducive than others, depending on the activities they are supporting.

So, when designing online activities and content, it is useful for educators to consider firstly what technologies are available to the student and secondly which of these technologies is best suited to support the activities. Almost always, social presence is a deciding factor in whether students persist in their remote studies, or whether they give up (Wheeler, 2007).



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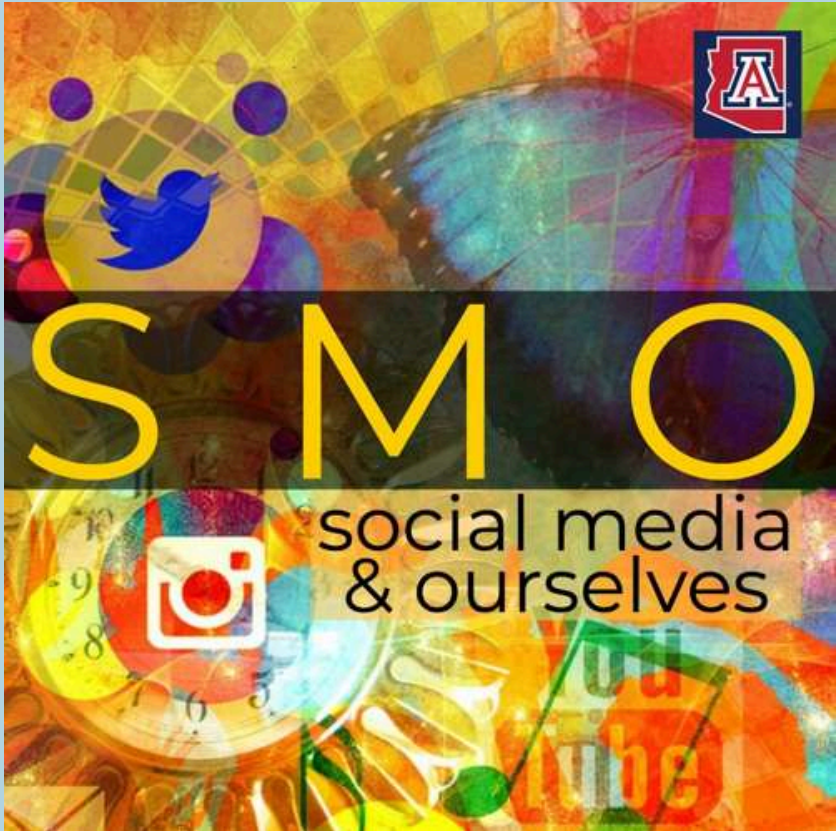
Short, J. Williams, E. and Christie, B. (1976) *The Social Psychology of Telecommunications*. London: John Wiley and Sons.

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Being There.... by [Steve Wheeler](#) was written in Plymouth, England and is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported License](#).

Social Networks and Online Communities

ANNA LEACH



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connections form a social network. Social networks are held together by pre-established interpersonal relationships between individuals. You know everyone that is directly connected to you; your friends, your family, and people that you meet through other people. Each person has one social network, but a person can have different social graphs depending on which relationship we want to focus on (Wu, 2010).

WHAT IS A SOCIAL NETWORK?

A **social network** is a network of individuals connected by varying levels of interpersonal relationships. These individuals can be family, friends, acquaintances, friends of friends, friends of family, someone with a similar interest, or coworkers. “A social network consists of *actors* and some form of *relation* among them” (Brandes et al., 2014, p. 805). Social networks exist outside of social media. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat, are ONLINE social networks. For another view on what a social network is, check out a YouTube video: [Social Networking in Plain English](#). The video is older and references sites like MySpace, but has a great, simple definition of social networking.

Michael Wu identified the following characteristics of **social networks**:

1. Social networks are held together by pre-established interpersonal relationships between individuals – you know everyone that is directly connected to you.

2. Each person has one social network. But a person can have different social graphs depending on what relationship we want to focus on (see [Social Network Analysis 101](#)).
3. They have a network structure (Wu, 2010).

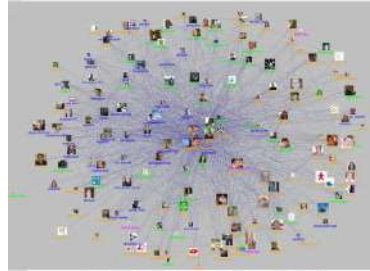


Image of a twitter social network using NodeXL

SOCIAL NETWORKS CAN ALSO DIVIDE AND ISOLATE.

danah boyd's chapter titled White Flight in Networked Publics in the book "Race After the Internet" discusses the division that emerged during a study of the 2006-2007 school year (2011).

...Those who adopted MySpace were from different backgrounds and had different norms and values than those who adopted Facebook. White and more affluent individuals were more likely to choose and move to Facebook... Page 204

...The college-centered nature of Facebook quickly appealed to those teenagers who saw college, and thus Facebook access, as a rite of passage... Page 207

220 • danah boyd

My impression is that MySpace is for the riffraff and Facebook is for the landed gentry.

Compared to Facebook, MySpace just seems like the other side of the tracks—I'll go there for fun, but I wouldn't want to live there.

My impression is [MySpace is] for tweens, high school kids that write emo poetry, and the proletariat. once the younger demo goes to college, they shift to Facebook. the proletariat? everyone knows they never go to college!

Just as those who moved to the suburbs looked down upon those who remained in the cities, so too did Facebook users demean those on MySpace. This can be seen in the attitudes of teens I interviewed, the words of these commenters, and the adjectives used by the college students Watkins (2009) interviewed. The language used in these remarks resembles the same language used throughout the 1980s to describe city dwellers: dysfunctional families, perverts and deviants, freaks and outcasts, thieves, and the working class. Implied in this is that no decent person could possibly have a reason to dwell in the city or on MySpace. While some who didn't use MySpace were harshly critical of the site, others simply forgot that it existed. They thought it to be irrelevant, believing that no one lived there anymore simply because no one they knew did.

To the degree that some viewed MySpace as a digital ghetto or as being home to the cultural practices that are labeled as ghetto, the same fear and racism that underpinned much of white flight in urban settings is also present in the perception of MySpace. The fact that many teens who left MySpace for Facebook explained their departure as being about features, aesthetics, or friendship networks does not disconnect their departure from issues of race and class. Rather, their attitude towards specific aesthetic markers and features is shaped by their experiences with race and class. Likewise, friendship networks certainly drove the self-segmentation, but these too are shaped by race such that departure logically played out along race lines. The explanations teens gave for their decisions may not be explicitly about race, ethnicity, or class, but they cannot be untangled from them, just as fear-based narratives about the "ghetto" cannot be considered without also accounting for race, ethnicity, and class.

In some senses, the division in the perception and use of MySpace and Facebook seems obvious given that we know that online environments are a reflection of everyday life. Yet, the fact that such statements are controversial highlights a widespread techno-utopian belief that the internet will once and for all eradicate inequality and social divisions. What unfolded as teens adopted MySpace and Facebook suggests that this is not the case. Neither social media nor its users are colorblind simply because technology is present. The internet mirrors and magnifies everyday life, making visible many of the issues we hoped would disappear, including race and class-based social divisions in American society.

In James Surowiecki's [TED talk about the power and dangers of online crowds](#) he says that although there are benefits to our online network, there is a dark side. The more tightly linked we become to each other, the harder it is for each of us to remain independent. Once you are linked in the network, the network begins to shape your views and your interactions with others. Groups are intelligent as long as the individuals have the ability to maintain independent thinking (begins at minute 13 of TedTalk below).



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As we build our social networks, we may be forced or unknowingly fall into silos of exposure; we do not meet different people. As boyd

discusses, we make assumptions on what a social networking site is and how it will help us build our network. In doing so we may be exposed to a limited amount of people and ideas! Furthermore, as we utilize our social networks, consider Surowiecki's point that we need to maintain individual thinking as we interact within our network. Social networking sites should be a tool for connection.



*"marketing-with-social-networking-sites"
by shopeal is licensed under CC BY
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These *social networking sites* (sometimes referred to as SNS) are defined by [techopedia](#) as an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website. Social networking sites usually have a new user input a list of people with whom they share a connection and then allow the people on the list to confirm or deny the connection. After connections

are established, the new user can search the networks of connections to make more connections. A social networking site is also known as a social networking website or social website.

HAVE YOU EVER CONSIDERED WHAT IS AT THE CENTER OF YOUR SOCIAL NETWORK?

YOU are the center of your social network. The network extends from you and who you know. What does this mean? It means that your exposure is limited to your connections. The relationships are built from who you know.

Social networks are not the same thing as a community. For example, your social network could consist of your siblings or cousins. These are family members that you are connected with, but you may not share common interests. People connecting over a common interest are a community.



"me on delicious network explorer" by Noah Sussman is licensed under CC BY 2.0 & Modified by Anna Leach (added blue ink with "you")



"Wyverstone Community Cafe" by oatsy40 is licensed under CC BY 2.0

Communities, from Wu (2010), are:

1. Held together by some common interests of a large group of people. Although there may be pre-existing interpersonal relationships between members of a community, it is not required. So new members usually do not know most of the people in the community.
2. Any one person may be part of many communities.
3. They have overlapping and nested structures.

"[T]he single most important feature that distinguishes a social network from a community is how people are held together on these sites." (Wu, 2010)

HOW DO WE FEEL CONNECTED IN THESE ONLINE COMMUNITIES?

[Elijah van der Geissen](#) asked the question "how important is it to you to feel a sense of community with other community members?" (2018). **Online communities** are groups of people, connected online, that share a common interest, and research has found both that they are everywhere and that they have characteristics in common. McMillian and Chavis (1986) study **elements of community**.

One element is *membership*. Membership is the feeling of belonging or of sharing a sense of personal relatedness. People feel they "can trust people in this community".

A second element is *influence*, a sense of mattering, of making a difference to a group and of the group mattering to its members. People feel that the community can influence other communities.

A third element is *reinforcement of needs*: integration and fulfillment of needs. This is the feeling that members' needs will be met by the resources received through their membership in the group. People connect strongly with the belief that "being a member of this community makes me feel good."

The last element is shared *emotional connection*, the commitment and belief that members have shared and will share history, common places, time together, and similar experiences. People anticipate being part of the community for a long time and feel hopeful about the future of the community.

COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

One model of community in the fields of social science and education is the **Community of Practice** (CoP).



Image source: <http://frailtyicare.org.uk/making-it-happen/community-of-practice/>

CoP's can be distinguished from other communities through these three main points (Carol Ormand, 2017):

1. *Members learn from others' expertise while sharing their own.* I am part of a crochet group that meets every 1st and 3rd Friday of the month at a local coffee shop. We each bring our crochet projects and chat while we work. I have been crocheting for about 8 years. When someone needs help reading a pattern or picking out new yarn, I am happy to help. When I need help with a particular stitch or idea for my next project, they help me. Another

CoP that I am a part of is a Data Science slack group. Here we share tips and tricks for analysis. I learn from their experience and they help me to improve my skills.

2. *Members are motivated to continue to develop their own skills.* By attending the crochet meetings I continue to be motivated to finish my projects and show off the finished piece. We are also intrinsically motivated to try new patterns because we encourage each other to try different yarns and patterns. In the Data Science slack group, we also share Python code that can help us improve our processes. I am motivated to stay connected with the group because I will improve my skills as a data scientist.
3. *Members are resources for each other.* As was shared in the previous points, my CoPs are resources for information and I am a contributing resource for them. One of the best parts of these CoPs is that we also communicate online. The crochet CoP, has a Facebook page where we exchange information about meetings, pattern ideas, crochet items on sale, or fun memes! The Data Science Slack group is all online and we have never met face-to-face. These online CoPs are convenient for quickly sharing information and asking questions. I don't need to see them in person to connect with them.

A LITTLE MORE ABOUT YOUR GUEST WRITER FOR THIS CHAPTER...

Anna Leach is a PhD student at the University of Arizona. After completing her Masters of Learning Technology, she decided to research the use and interpretation of data in Learning Management Systems through the iSchool. She worked as a graduate assistant with Prof Daly in the fall and spring of 2018-2019

for the ESOC 150: Social Media and Ourselves class. The following summer, she and Prof Daly researched the student-pay model of instructional technology. Then in the fall of 2019, Anna worked on this book chapter with Prof Daly through an independent study and taught ESOC 211: Collaborating in Online Communities. If this chapter was of particular interest to you and you would like to learn more about how we collaborate online, check out ESOC 211 for your next semester!

CORE CONCEPTS

social network

a network of individuals held together by pre-established interpersonal relationships

online communities

a group of people, connected online, that share a common interest

social networking sites

online platforms that allow users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website

elements of communities

membership, influence, reinforcement of needs, and emotional connection

communities of practice

groups of people informally bound together by sharing expertise and passion for a joint enterprise

CORE QUESTIONS

Questions for qualitative thought:

1. How are offline social networks and online social networks different from one another? In what ways are they similar?
2. Consider your online communities. What are they? What makes them a community? Talk about the elements of communities with respect to your online communities.
3. What community of practice are you a part of? What about that community of practice has helped you learn from others, stay motivated, and be a resource for each other? Are you an active member or a peripheral member? What are the benefits or disadvantages of your level of activity within the community of practice?

Review: Which is the best answer?



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Related Content

Social Networking is about a person's connections on and offline. They are important and there are many benefits. Explore this article that examines the importance of social networks and why real world connections matter.

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/social-networking>

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Online Activism in Indigenous Languages

AMY FOUNTAIN

Meet Dr. Amy Fountain



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<https://opentextbooks.library.arizona.edu/hrsm/?p=103>

I'd like to begin this chapter by introducing [myself](#). I earned my PhD here at the University of Arizona in 1998, in the Joint Program in Anthropology and Linguistics. I am now an Associate Professor,

Career Track, in the [Department of Linguistics](#). I identify as a linguist, although I value and use my training as an anthropologist as well.

Linguists are scholars whose object of study is human language ([Rickford 2017](#)), a communication system that appears to be a part of our biology as well as our society. We study languages as they are used within real human communities, and we observe patterns of regularity and exceptionality in order to better understand how this system really works. Linguistics is one of the few academic fields that is included in both the National Science Foundation's STEM category, and as a member of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

I became a linguist largely by accident. I grew up in two small towns in Eastern Washington State ([Yakima and Wenatchee](#)), and was the first in my family to go to graduate school. My first language is English, and it's still the only language I can carry on a conversation in. I am white, and my heritage is mostly European. I have never experienced discrimination based on language, as the language my family used at home was basically the same as the language that was rewarded in school. Until I was a graduate student, here in Tucson, I did not know that there were speakers of several Indigenous languages in and around my hometowns. I learned that based on books, not based on experience.



*Tohono O'odham Kekel
Ha-Mascamakud, Tohono O'odham
Community College shield, founded
1998*

In



*Eastern Washington cities
like Yakima and Wenatchee
grew up around apple
orchards and wheat fields
made possible by the
damming of the Columbia
River.*

graduate school, I also learned about the variety of Indigenous languages of Arizona. The Tucson basin is the longest continuously occupied site in North America, and Arizona is home to [22 Federally recognized sovereign Native Nations](#). Each Nation includes at least one language community, some include several. For example, the Gila River Indian Community, which is near the Phoenix metro area, includes both Akimel O'odham and Piipash speakers. The languages of the Akimel O'odham and Piipash are members of two different language families, they are as different from each other as English is from Arabic.

Since beginning to study the local languages of this place, I have also learned that there are students, staff and faculty who speak Indigenous languages at home, with friends, and in their communities – but rarely at school. And there are students, staff and faculty whose parents or grandparents speak these languages, but who have not had the opportunity to acquire them. Some are studying their languages in [classes at the University](#), in many cases this work is a part of maintaining, creating and sometimes repairing

connections with home, family and heritage. So the first lesson of this chapter is that Indigenous languages are all around us, even if they're not used in public.

As a graduate student I was able to study two local languages, Tohono O'odham and Navajo (Diné Bizaad) in a classroom environment. In the Tohono O'odham language, I would be identified as a *mi:lgan*. In the Navajo language, I would be identified as a *bilagáana*. Each of these words is a borrowing of the English word 'American' into the Indigenous language. In each case, the term has come to mean something like 'white person' or 'outsider', though as I understand it, neither is an insult or a slur. My mastery of these languages is poor, and the words I share with you here are the product of my classroom study, not actual usage. If you know these languages, I hope you'll excuse any errors, and know that they are not the fault of my wonderful teachers.

But enough about me. Let's take a *linguistic* approach to the study of online activism in Indigenous languages.

By most counts, there are at least 7,000 languages used by contemporary human communities ([Eberhardt et al 2020](#)).

Each language reflects thousands of years of cumulative cultural, ecological, social and scientific knowledge, and each also reflects a myriad of human connections – between family members, among friends and neighbors, and across generations. Each language is as thoroughly modern as it is ancient, because human language is almost infinitely adaptable and changeable, and it is used to fulfill human needs both noble (prayer, art, law, education) and mundane (gossip, small-talk, scolding, teasing). These languages are all either spoken or signed. Most are used in multilingual



Flag of the Navajo Nation

contexts, often contexts in which they are economically and politically devalued – but none is less complex, intricate, systematic, creative or useful than any others. All are survivors. But most are under threat.

And most of those 7000+ languages are also [missing from the internet](#). Facebook (which is the most multilingual of the major social media platforms) currently supports only about 110 languages, and [98% of the web pages on the internet in 2018 were written in just 11 languages](#). Of the 7000+, more than 2,500 languages — representing about 5000 unique cultures and including more than 370 million people — are Indigenous languages ([United Nations 2019](#)). Almost all Indigenous language communities are confronted with some form of linguistic and cultural endangerment. The United Nations and UNESCO recognized the year 2019 as the International Year of Indigenous Languages, and at the close of that year, agreed to extend the work and declares 2022 through 2031 to be the [International Decade of Indigenous Languages](#).

An **Indigenous language** is one that is counted as a heritage language by an *Indigenous community*. Indigenous communities are those that have status as both native to a particular place, and not one whose history in that place predates colonialization, modern waves of immigration, and other forms of expansion by external groups. Indigenous communities in the US are typically referred to, when identified as a single group, as *Native American* or *American Indian*. Whether the label is one of these, or *First Nations*, or *Aboriginal*, or any of a number of others, Indigenous communities have in common with each other both an enduring

connection to a place and a history of successful resistance. Each individual community, however, has its own linguistic, cultural and social practices, and its own particular identity – a fact that is often overlooked in English language discourses about Indigenous people.

Explore Your Linguistic Environment

Using this [interactive map](#), see if you can find out what the **Indigenous languages** are for any of the places you've lived. Then ask yourself the following questions:

Were you already aware of the Indigenous languages of your area? If so, how and where did you learn about them? If not, why not?

The map only has relatively complete data for North America and Australia. It has some data for Central and South America, and some for the Circumpolar North. If you live outside those areas, can you find information about the Indigenous languages around you? Why might it be hard to do that?



In English, dog. In Tohono O'odham, gogs. In Diné Bizaad lééchqǫ'íi



In English, the word is saguaro. In Tohono O'odham, it is ha:şañ. In Diné Bizaad, it is hosh.

In our class discussion, we won't make that mistake. Instead, we'll focus on two Arizona communities whose languages: the [Tohono O'odham Nation](#) and the [Diné \(Navajo\) Nation](#), and we'll explore issues and approaches associated with online activism in these communities, in their languages, in 2020.

Hear University of Arizona Regents Professor Ofelia Zepeda read one of her poems in Tohono O'odham in the video below.



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Get a video lesson in Diné Bizaad from youtuber Daybreakwarrior below.



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#metoo and Twitter: The Feminist Movement on Social Media

A Sociolinguist's Perspective

CLAIRE-ANNE FERRIÈRE

On October 15, 2017 the actress Alyssa Milano ignited a spark with a Tweet.



Alyssa Milano ✓

@Alyssa_Milano

Following

If you've been sexually harassed or assaulted write 'me too' as a reply to this tweet.

Me too.

Suggested by a friend: "If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote 'Me too.' as a status, we might give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem."

1:21 PM - 15 Oct 2017

24,207 Retweets 52,619 Likes



67K 24K 53K

With this tweet, Miliano was urging those in her publics who had ever been victims of sexual assault and/or harassment to identify as such by saying, 'me too.' She did not launch the hashtag as such, but it appeared very quickly – in the following minutes.



In 2007, activist Tarana Burke began a movement for women of color which was echoed a decade later by Milano's tweet and the responses.

Alyssa Milano and her friend were not the only women who came up with the idea of 'me too' to help people express ugly circumstances and violation. Tarana Burke, a civil rights activist, had launched an offline "me too" movement back in 2006 to "give young women, particularly young women of color from low wealth communities, a sense of empowerment from the understanding that they are not alone in their circumstances" (Burke, 2013).

In 2007, activist Tarana Burke began a movement for women of color which was echoed a decade later by Milano's tweet and the responses. Milano's access to expansive networked publics gave a similar sentiment to Burke's the visibility and affordances of an online movement.

Burke's and Milano's uses of the phrase "me too" have come to be considered as two benchmarks in one movement due to the connected nature of events they describe. Through the hashtag #metoo survivors' accounts of being harassed and violated are **aggregated**, or digitally pulled or presented together as related. The societal norms of sexual harassment and abuse became entrenched in the past through many individual incidents that were normalized in families, cultures, and societies. By aggregating survivors' memories of these events, the Me Too movement has led to a cultural shift that centralizes survivor experiences, and shifts the blame to those who caused their pain.

The rapid spread of the Me Too movement is directly linked to the Harvey Weinstein case which started on October 5th, 2017,

when The New York Times published an article entitled “Harvey Weinstein paid off sexual harassment accusers for years”, written by Megan Twohey and Jodi Kantor (Kantor & Twohey, 2017). Dozens of women have come out denouncing sexual abuse and harassment from the movie mogul, and demanding that the situation in Hollywood change. #Metoo occurs after that case, opening the demands and claims out of Hollywood. Several other events also followed from #metoo, such as the second Women’s March in January 2018 and the opposition to the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court of the United States over the summer of 2018, to mention only a few. All those events are therefore linked together and organized around common claims, which is why we can consider that all those events constitute a movement, and #metoo plays an essential role in the construction of this social movement. However, it does not play exactly the same role as social media did in the movements of performative activism, tackled in the previous chapter.

In order to get a full grasp of the “me too” movement on social media and how it is used, **sociolinguistics** comes in handy. Sociolinguistics studies the relationship between language on the one hand (-linguistics – the study of language) and society on the other hand (socio-), more particularly social relations; in other words, it studies how human beings use language and to what purpose. It is therefore an interesting approach to study how social media are used, and how they shape social relations. In this feminist movement, women spoke up, through language, denouncing systemic abuse and demanding that changes be made in society and in social relations between men and women. The movement was built progressively; interestingly, social media was not used the same way throughout the movement, and sociolinguistics helps us understand why it is so.

1. The Harvey Weinstein Case

In order to understand the relevance of the #metoo movement within the larger feminist movement as well as the relevance of the use of social media, we need to go back to the Weinstein case and its characteristics.

Indeed, if #metoo really turned to social media, the Weinstein case developed primarily through traditional media – i.e. in those forms of mass media that existed before the advent of the digital age (also called the new media age, as a matter of fact), for example, print media, radio broadcasting, and the television among other things. However, it is still important to keep in mind that, even if the denunciations against Harvey Weinstein were mainly done through traditional media (72 out of the 90 denunciations that were made public), all of them can be found on the internet, facilitating their diffusion. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that those women should first choose traditional media to make their denunciations and claims public. On the contrary, very few were made through social media. One element that is essential to take into account is that the two newspapers that extensively covered the case, with in-depth investigations and analyses, were The New York Times (“Harvey Weinstein Paid Off Sexual Harassment Accusers for Decades”, by Megan Twohey and Judi Kantor) and the The New Yorker (“From Aggressive Overtures to Sexual Assault: Harvey Weinstein’s Accusers Tell their Stories,” by Ronan Farrow (Farrow, 2017)), two renowned and reliable newspapers. As a matter of fact, these two newspapers were awarded the Pulitzer prize for public service in 2018 for the reporting done by the aforementioned three journalists.

The stories these women were reporting were disruptive – Harvey Weinstein was a very prominent man in the business and even outside of it – and as such, they needed to establish their legitimacy in order to be believed. One way they had of doing

so was actually by having their stories backed up by established, reliable newspapers. Not all newspapers through which the victims testified are as renown as The New Yorker or The New York Times – some denunciations were published in Variety or Deadline, for example – but the important element here is that it feels like the victims are never alone. Either the stories are reported by journalists, who lend their legitimacy to the victims, or if the victims write in their own name in opinion sections, they still have the legitimacy and weight of the newspapers backing them up. The same goes for the TV or radio shows.

The **theory of denunciation** put forward by Luc Boltanski et al. (Boltanski et al., 1984) supports that idea. In a nutshell, they argue that the higher the profile of the alleged aggressor and the bigger the difference between their status in society and that of the accuser is, the less “normal” the denunciation seems to be, “normal” in the sense of plausible, even possible. To put it bluntly, the more an alleged aggressor has to lose – status, some important position, wealth, etc. – the more suspicious people are because they might believe that the denunciation is not completely disinterested. In our case, even if some of the women who came out first against Harvey Weinstein were somewhat high-profile people too, Ashley Judd for example, some others were “mere” employees or former employees of one of Weinstein’s companies, and in any case, none of the accusers were actually as high-profile as Weinstein was. Having the support of newspapers such as The New York Times or The New Yorker is therefore extremely important to restore some balance between accuser and alleged aggressor.

This need to legitimize their stories is also apparent in the language they use, more particularly in how they speak about what they went through. Here is an example of a testimony delivered by one of Harvey Weinstein’s alleged victims, Louise Geiss.

(from 5’29 to 10’47)



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In linguistics, we often start from our own impressions, how we react to a text, and then we try and find some formal elements to back this up. We can think in terms of positive impressions, as in I felt/think that, or negative impressions, I didn't expect that/I would have thought it would be more like that.

One of the first things that is striking in the denunciations against Harvey Weinstein is the very "stick to the facts" style. Indeed, these

denunciations are very descriptive, detailed, and sometimes very graphic in what they describe. They are presented as if everything that was done and said during the assault is being reported. Moreover, the denunciations are symptomatic of what we call a **paratactic style**, also called the additive style: elements are presented, one simple sentence after the other, and there are few elaborate sentences, as follows:

After about 30 minutes, he asked to excuse himself and go to the bathroom. He returned in nothing but a robe, with the front open, and he was butt naked. He told me to keep talking about my film and that he was going to hop into his hot tub that was adjacent to the room, just steps away. When I finished my pitch, I was obviously nervous, and he just kept asking to watch him masturbate. I told him I was leaving. I quickly got out of the tub, he grabbed my forearm as I was trying to grab my purse, and he led me to his bathroom, pleading that I just watch him masturbate.

This gives, once again, the impression that they are just providing the plain truth and facts as they happened. On the contrary, it seems that emotions are not so present, as one could have expected of a woman recounting and reliving the assault she suffered. These denunciations are therefore more fact-oriented than emotion-oriented. This also participates in legitimising and having their denunciations accepted and believed.

At that stage – or at the very least in the first ten days of the contestation – the movement was precisely not a movement: it was only centered on one particular man, Harvey Weinstein, and when claims were made; they were also quite specific, around the issues of the relationship between men and women in Hollywood. It was therefore limited to the world of Hollywood, which is also fitting with Boltanski's theory of denunciation that was previously

mentioned: it is only logical that such a disruptive movement in society should start with women who are renown and have some status compared to “ordinary” people. The movement and its claims needed to be legitimized by well-established people before being broadened to society at large with #metoo.

What we now consider to be the next stage of the movement, #metoo, is quite different from the Weinstein case, on different accounts.

2. #metoo

Tarana Burke gave a Ted talk in November 2018 called [“Me too is a movement, not a moment,”](#) (Burke, 2018) and indeed, this stage of #me too was essential in the development of the Weinstein case as a moment into a fully-fledged feminist movement.

First, what we witness quite evidently in the #metoo movement compared to the Weinstein case is an opening up of the denunciations and demands. Indeed, #metoo is not limited to Hollywood anymore, nor is it concerned with the deeds of one particular man.

With #metoo, tens of thousands of people are saying that they too, were victims of similar kinds of assault. This was made possible through the use of social media, in particular Twitter, as a new and massive medium of protest. Twitter is accessible to anyone with an account: in the United States, in the third quarter of 2017, there were 69 million monthly active users according to the numbers released by Twitter (Clement, 2019). This represents a great change compared to the 90 women or so who reported having been assaulted by Harvey Weinstein. Moreover, more than numbers, the status of the people denouncing abuse changed. They are now “ordinary” people, like you and me, not Hollywood stars: the movement is not limited to Hollywood anymore, but broadened to society in general.

This is confirmed by the linguistic analysis of “me too” tweets. More than fifty thousand such tweets were posted in the first twenty-four hours following Alyssa Milano’s first tweet; for purpose of ease, we will only focus on the first hour of “me too”, which represents 3,847 tweets. When analyzed with specific software tools that scan the corpus (here, the set of tweets) to identify some of its linguistic characteristics, those tweets show that the most significant themes and concepts that come up are all linked to sexual assault and harassment that women suffer. Indeed, some of the most recurrent words in those tweets are “me too” of course, but also “sexually,” “harassed,” “assaulted,” and “women.” The results therefore show a direct thematic link with the Harvey Weinstein case, and outline the scope of the movement.

What these results also show is a tendency towards generalization. Indeed, there are very few details about the types and circumstances of the assault that people tweeting “me to” are reporting; contrary to the Weinstein case in which denunciations were very specific, with the “me too” movement, specificities are somewhat smoothed and all different types of assaults are gathered under the umbrella expression “sexually harassed or assaulted”, which is used 273 times in the first hour. On the contrary, any more specific kinds of assault, such as reference to rape, being groped, etc. only occur sixty times in the corpus (out of the 3,847 tweets). This tendency not to go into details with the “me too” movement as opposed to what happened in the Weinstein case can of course be imputed to the format of the tweets itself. Indeed, tweets are limited to 240 characters, which prevents victims from giving too much detail of their individual experiences of assault. It is nonetheless significant that the movement should have moved from traditional media to social media, and not any media, to Twitter in particular, with the character limit. It shows that Alyssa Milano’s intention in launching this movement on Twitter was not to provide people with a space to explain what they went through, but rather to identify as part of a community.

This community is built on what the members feel they have in common, in this case, the fact that they all suffered experiences of sexual abuse or assault. The specificities of the assault do not matter at this stage anymore. This is also quite evident in the use that is being made of the expression “me too”. What is interesting with this expression is how it is used. Indeed, the software tools can identify what we call **collocations**, that is to say words that often occur together in the corpus. In our case, some of the most significant collocations are “me too”, which was expected, but also “too me,” “me me,” and “too too,” which is striking. This shows that not only is the expression “me too” often used, it is often used on its own, with no details provided, creating series of tweets only composed of the expression “me too,” which the software tools then identify as collocations. Here is an excerpt taken from the corpus:

too 1st time: 13, babysitting the dad drove me home. In my drive, he groped my leg while i was still buckled up i unbelted and bolted
 too.
 too
 too
 too.
 . Me, too. At work.
 too. https://twitter.com/Alyssa_Milano/status/919659438700670976~t
 too
 too
 too.
 eToo
 too
 too
 too
 too.
 etoo https://twitter.com/alyssa_milano/status/919659438700670976~t
 too. If all the women I know who have been sexually harassed and/or assaulted wrote "me too" as a status... <http://fb.me/9UyX6eu2~t>
 eToo
 eToo
 too
 too.
 . Rapes laughed off/not taken seriously. Harassment at work not believed or boss too powerful/more important. #MeToo #WomenWhoRoar <https://twitter.com/eToo> <http://thepandaabroad.tumblr.com/post/151382954096/why-i-dont-make-eye-contact-with-men~t>
 too
 too
 too
 too
 too. https://twitter.com/Alyssa_Milano/status/919659438700670976~t
 too
 too.
 too
 too. ... If all the women who have been sexually harassed or assaulted wrote "Me too." as a status, we might... <http://fb.me/zOyNCnLR~t>

As we can clearly see, there are series of tweets only composed of the expression "me too," analysed as "me too me too me too me too..." by the software tools, hence the collocations that we saw. This confirms the idea that, contrary to the Weinstein case, very few details are given by the victims who posted "me too" and that the expression itself comes to epitomise all kinds of experiences of assault that women suffer.

This tendency towards generalization is also evident in the reference to women that is made in the corpus. The term women is referenced 471 times in the corpus, and only 65 times in the singular form woman. We can therefore conclude that in this corpus, women are presented as a group, not as individuals, which confirms this generalization tendency: what matters is not the individual experiences of every woman who identifies as a victim, but the commonalities between all the different experiences of these women (which is actually one of the reproaches that was made to the movement).

What comes out of the analysis of those first tweets of the “me too” movement is therefore the generalization process that is put into place. The different experiences and victims are gathered together into one community, a community that is built through this network of tweets. There are several ways through which this network is constructed, and which are already evident in the first hour of the movement.

First, it is important to keep in mind that the online movement began from one tweet, posted by Alyssa Milano, encouraging people to write “me too” as a reply if they identified as victims of sexual assault too. This process of reply is essential in the building of the network: indeed, out of the 3,847 first tweets, 2,053 are direct replies to Alyssa Milano’s tweet. All the replies are therefore linked together through the original tweet posted by Alyssa Milano. Moreover, 227 tweets tag Alyssa Milano directly with the @ function of social media, and there are also 1,207 tweets using the hashtag #metoo, although it was not mentioned in Alyssa Milano’s tweet. All those means participate in building a network of tweets, with people identifying with a community of victims of sexual assault, on a general level.

The “me too” movement therefore stages a depersonalization and a generalization of the movement, from the particular Harvey Weinstein case to thousands of women saying that they too, suffered sexual assault. Specificities and individualities are left aside to focus only on commonalities. What is at stake with the “me too” movement is the move from the personal to the political, which is an essential step in transforming a moment into a movement, to use Tarana Burke’s expressions. This notion of the personal being political dates back to 1970: Carol Hanisch (Hanisch, 1970) explained in an essay bearing the same name that according to her, individual, personal experiences of oppression that women were experiencing were not isolated but on the contrary repeated, systemic at the level of society, and as such, required not individual solutions, but social, political ones. The important step is therefore

to recognise the commonality of all individual experiences, to connect them:

So the reason I participate in these meetings is not to solve any personal problem. One of the first things we discover in these groups is that personal problems are political problems. There are no personal solutions at this time. There is only collective action for a collective solution. I went, and I continue to go to these meetings because I have gotten a political understanding which all my reading, all my “political discussions,” all my “political action,” all my four-odd years in the movement never gave me. I’ve been forced to take off the rose colored glasses and face the awful truth about how grim my life really is as a woman. (Hanisch, 1970).

The meetings she mentions are consciousness-raising meetings at which women share their personal experiences in order for them to recognise patterns in other women’s experiences. This is what the “me too” movement is doing. It is connecting thousands of similar experiences and highlighting the systemic, social character of those experiences in order to move from the personal to the political. Thus, the depersonalisation and generalisation process that is at stake with the “me too” movement also entails a politicization of the movement, that is to say, recognising that this is a social problem that needs to be addressed at the level of society. It is therefore an essential stage in the construction of the movement, which transforms an individual and seemingly isolated case into a social and political movement.

Nevertheless, social media do not play the same part here as they did with other social movements, such as the Zapatistas, or the Arab Spring movement. In cases of performative activism, social media are an organising and communication tool supporting a movement offline. #Metoo strictly speaking has no reality, existence outside of social media. It led to other stages, such as the Women’s March of January 2018 and the opposition to the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh at the Supreme Court of the United States in the summer of 2018, which, as far as they are concerned

can be considered as forms of performative activism. However, the movement #metoo itself only occurred on social media, in particular Twitter. In a sense, we can even say that it was its own performance: the sheer scale of the movement is in itself performance enough in the sense that it makes an impression and is a very clear statement for the rest of the movement.

3. Social media after #metoo

The use of social media in the feminist movement after #metoo is quite different and is on the contrary closer to creative online performative activism. Social media was for example used during the different Women Marches to organize the events, communicate, and motivate people. The different elements defining performative activism can be identified here too. For example, after Trump's election, activists needed to organize with speed to mobilize people for the first Women's March, which was held the day after Trump's inauguration. If speed is less of the essence for the following Marches since organizers could coordinate the events ahead in time, speed was also important for the opposition to the nomination of Brett Kavanaugh. Social media enabled organizers to spread the word and mobilise people.

As far as visuals are concerned, the different events organized around the feminist movement also rely on symbolic visuals, such as the feminist symbol, pictures from previous marches, or, as in the case of the "National Walk Out" event organized as part of the protest against Brett Kavanaugh, pictures of women walking out of the homes or places of work as a sign of dissent. The visuals are both shared before events to mobilise people and during the performances. Hashtags are also used a lot in the different events, also creating a form of unifying visual element.

There are performances that are organised, such as marches of course, but also rallies against Brett Kavanaugh when, among other events, hundreds of protesters flooded a Senate office building,

shouted slogans, and displayed banners to express their anger. Chants are also used in those events as another form of performance.

The latest feminist movement really emphasized its inclusiveness to all women – or more particularly to all people who identify as women – all races, religions, social backgrounds, and so on. Inclusiveness, or **intersectionality** as it is theorised in feminism (the theory according to which different forms of oppression intersect and must be taken into account – for example, a black woman suffers discrimination both from being a woman and a black person. It also aims to recognise that not all experiences of women are similar), is an essential element for the feminists involved in this movement.

Finally, organizers are not masked per se, on the contrary, they do not hesitate to publicly express their minds, unmasked, and in their own names. Nevertheless, the movement is also coordinated through different organizations, either feminist groups which existed before the movement or organizations created as part of the movement. Organizations such as the Women's March communicate on social media under the name of the organization, through which activists therefore take a step back and therefore let the faceless organization speak.

We can therefore clearly see that the use of social media in the #metoo movement and the rest of the feminist movement is not the same. #Metoo is quite particular in this respect and developed solely online, contrary to the other events, for which social media is used as a communication and organising tool and which therefore corresponds to creative online performative activism.

CORE CONCEPTS AND QUESTIONS

aggregate

to pull or present content together online as related

sociolinguistics

the study of how human beings use language and to what purpose

theory of denunciation

the more a “called out” person has to lose – status, some important position, wealth, etc. – the more suspicious people are of those who call them out or denounced them, because they might believe that the denunciation is not completely disinterested

paratactic style

also called the additive style, this is a linguistic style in which elements are presented, one simple sentence after the other, and there are few elaborate sentences; often used by speakers wanting to be taken seriously

collocations

a collection of words that often occurs together

intersectionality

the theory according to which different forms of oppression intersect and can worsen oppression overall

Core Questions

A. Questions for qualitative thought

1. Why does the author assert women used traditional media rather than social media to initially denounce Harvey Weinstein? What do you believe would have happened had they relied more on social media initially?

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