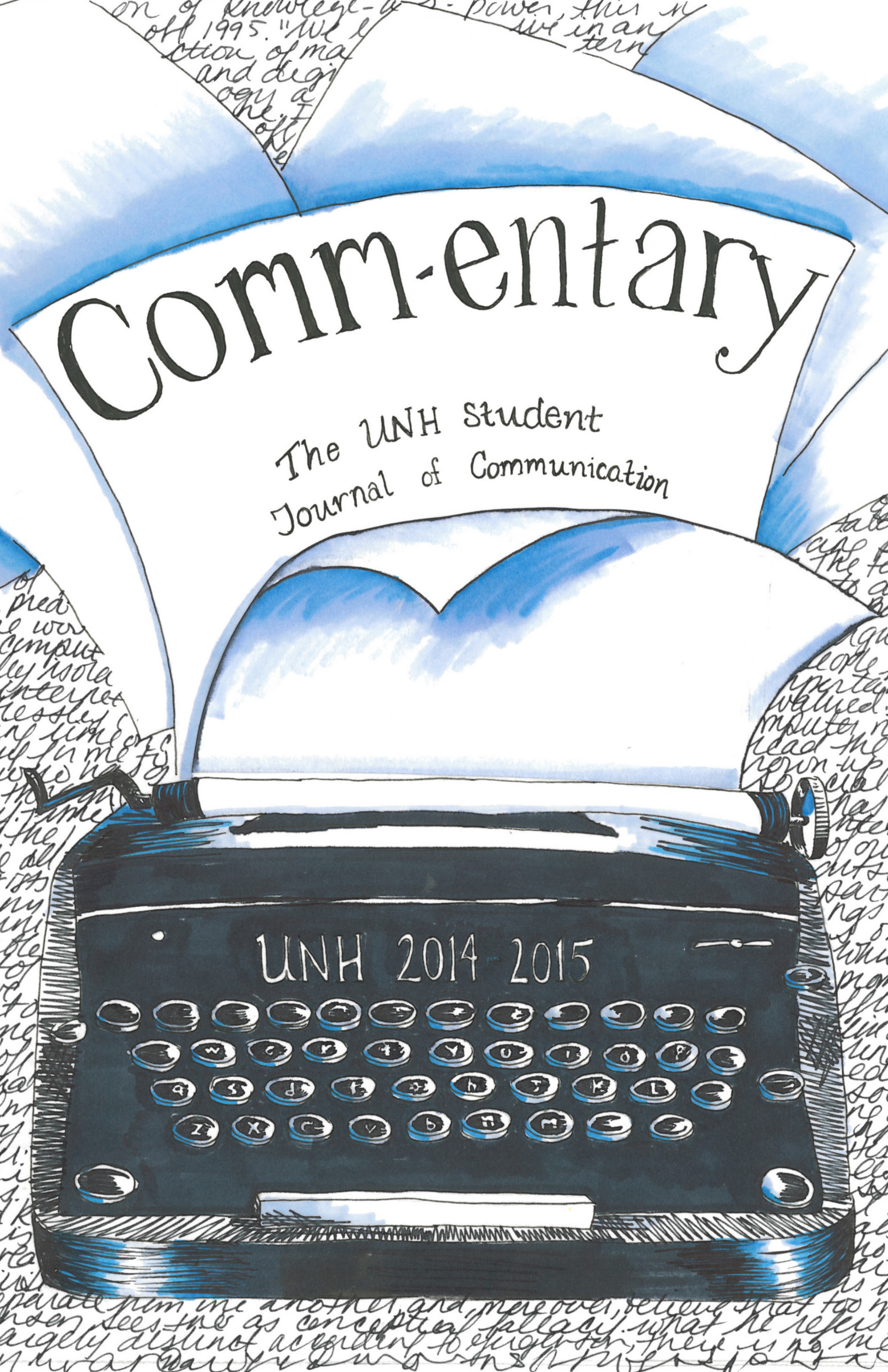
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MR. FOX COMPOSTING:
Changing the World through "Garbage"

BY: JEFF FISHWICK

Introduction - Composting for the Future

Compost is an organic product that is made through the combination of decomposing food waste and "green" waste, most commonly leaves and generic yard waste. The food waste provides the necessary nitrogen needed for the decomposition process and the green waste provides the carbon that is needed. The other ingredients that are left for the necessary decomposition are oxygen and water. For this process, the oxygen and water are created through the decomposition of the combination of the food and green waste and eventually decompose enough to turn into fully decomposed compost, equivalent to most organic soils. It works wonders for gardens because it is a nutrient-rich soil, which "fuels plant growth and restores vitality to depleted soil" (Composting). Composting also creates many benefits for everyone in the long run. It can act as a soil conditioner, which creates rich humus for lawns and gardens, and can also divert up to 30% of household waste away from a garbage can (Composting). In addition, composting introduces important microscopic organisms into the soil, which can "break down organic material for plant use and ward off plant disease" (Composting). Lastly, composting is great for the overall environment. The organic soil it creates is a natural alternative to soil with chemical fertilizers and it also helps greatly reduce the amount of waste that goes into already overflowing landfills across the world (Composting).

One up-and-coming compost company in the Seacoast area of New Hampshire is Mr. Fox Composting. Previously EcoMovement Consulting and Hauling, this company provides a compost service for companies and residents in many New Hampshire and Maine towns. Mr. Fox Composting's owner, Rian Bedard, describes the company as "a compost collection company, primarily, but we also service some of our customers and offer trash and recycling pick-ups so we can do zero-waste service for them. We do a lot of education, where we go into schools and we educate kids and we speak to a lot of local organizations, like rotaries, to educate communities, as well as donate compost back to the schools and donate compost to the residents. (Bedard). In regards to their residential pickups, he says that they “also have a residential collection program, as well, where we provide a bin, liner, list of what goes in it, and pick up from residents homes either weekly or bi-weekly” (Bedard). The food waste they pick up then goes to their compost facility in Eliot, Maine. Bedard also adds, “Now we go full circle. We have not only a compost collection route, but we have an end site where we make the compost as well and we will be able to sell and market that product in bulk, in bags” (Bedard). Their ultimate goal is to make a closed loop, where they pick up food waste and they then turn into soil. That soil then goes to local farms to grow more food and that food then goes back to the local community, resulting in a better economy and better food quality in local communities. On their website, mrfoxcomposting.com, it is made very clear that their mission is simple and that composting can be easy and fun for everyone. The “About Us” section says, “It’s simple really. We believe that food waste shouldn’t have to go in plastic bags and be thrown into landfills. We believe that the future of our planet is dependent on the majority of us changing small habits. “We believe that composting our food is a small habit that can change the world” (mrfoxcomposting.com).

Digital media disrupts the cultural and economic status quo, creating opportunities for localism and community, as Mr. Fox Composting is doing, while also raising the threat of monopoly and consumer surveillance. This paper will describe the pitfalls and potentials of the digital economy by contrasting the problems of big business with the potential demonstrated by the local company, Mr. Fox Composting, through their success of using digital and social media to advertise and market their company, as well as getting the word out about sustainable living. This case study will provide some insight into how we can move forward responsibly in the digital economy, toward a local, community-based democratic ideal, while avoiding some of the concerns raised by digital media scholars.

Historical Context - An Internet Shift

The Internet has come a long way since it’s origin during its startup during the Post-WWI era. The Internet was originally “designed as an open and designable technology” where “scientists could contribute easily in a nonhierarchical environment” (McChesney 99), unlike the closed systems of corporate telecommunication companies. It was developed through government-funded research, with the help of the United States military and leading research universities. Paul Baran was a computer scientist who imagined a massive decentralized network during the 1960’s, but was scoffed at by AT&T saying that he “didn’t know how communication worked” (McChesney 99). The Internet predecessor, ARPAnet, had no central control which left the power to develop specific applications to people on the outside, who participated as they wished. McChesney says, “This decentralized network meant that all of machines on the network were, more or less peers. No one computer was in charge (McChesney 99). At first, the National Science Foundation Network, who was the forerunner of the Internet, limited the network to only noncommercial use (McChesney 102). Of course, this did not last. The first commercial email was sent in April 1994 to every board on the Usenet System. These users were adamant about the noncommercial Internet culture and were upset about this email. Advertising had already saturated their lives through mass media and they did not want anymore while using the Internet (McChesney 102). As McChesney says, “The Internet was to be the one place where citizens could seek refuge and escape the incessant sales pitch” (McChesney 102).

Bound to happen, commercial companies wanted to see how they could capitalize on the Internet through marketing and other commercial tactics. At first, these marketers feared that their efforts would be greeted with a tidal wave of opposition from academics and intellectuals who regarded a commercialized Internet as an “advertising hell,” (McChesney 102) but in no time at all, they would be striving with the help of the Internet. McChesney shows the start of commercialized Internet with saying that the first email was sent in 1972, which was created by a hacker and considered the first “killer app” (McChesney 103). Email soon surpassed all other forms of computer resource sharing with support from ARPAnet. In 1982, MCI then created the first commercial email system. It was formally launched in 1989 and considered the birth of the commercial Internet (McChesney 103). Other commercial applications that began around this time, in an effort to commercialize the Internet, was a wave of online computer services. “These proprietary networks included America Online, Compu-Serve, and Prodigy” (McChesney 103). These services provided a type of walled in space where the service providers controlled the content. Although most of these services failed after the emergence of the World Wide Web in the 1990’s, America Online was able to succeed through use of dial-up Internet access (McChesney 103). This commercialization of the Internet, through the late 1980’s and into the 1990’s, is a complete shift away from the original values of what the Internet was created for. The Internet went from a place where every computer was a peer and no one was in charge, to a platform where a user would have to be connected to a service that was actually in charge of every moment of their time online.

Today, business strives and relies on the Internet. This was created by the eventual commercialization of the Internet and the vast marketing and advertising companies that rule the modern day Internet. As seen today, commercial businesses rely on the Internet to succeed, which is much different from the original reasons that it was created for in the first place. Over-commercialization of the Internet will hurt small businesses in the long run. Digital media monopolies will make it much harder to start up small businesses because they will own all the rights and means to advertise and market through different digital and social media companies. The Internet holds endless opportunities for small businesses, like Mr. Fox Composting, but it will only help these small businesses if they are allowed to have the means to advertise and market to their local communities, which seems as though it may be in jeopardy someday.

Emphasis on Digital Media - Business Through Social Media

Mr. Fox Composting has been able to successfully use digital and social media recently to advertise and market their company to their local communities. They were able to completely rebrand their company, from EcoMovement Consulting and Hauling to Mr. Fox Composting, and come up with new advertising and marketing strategies to gain customers and public awareness. Their goal was to come up with something cool, fun, and exciting to appeal to customers and make composting a fun activity for residents, families, and business patrons to do. In regards to this, Rian says, " Where we took a good turn on social media was doing a rebrand of our old company name. So with the rebrand came a much cooler, more approachable logo, which made it much easier to get out there and do t-shirts, hats, and all those things and what we saw when we transitioned the name was that that branding was so powerful that there was an immediate change in the way people perceived our brand and the amount of people that signed up for our service. So, the whole branding aspect of our business is huge, especially in dealing with residents, but in overall exposure, long-term, it's been largely beneficial. So, by having a new brand and building a brand new website, that was designed really well, having video content on there and also tying in Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter we've done a really good job getting the word out there and making our brand fun, easy, and cool" (Bedard).

Social and digital media has also helped Mr. Fox Composting gain their amount of overall customers over the past few months since their rebrand. Rian says, "The rebrand and our new approach to marketing has totally increased the amount of customers we have, at least by 50-70% I would say. It just makes it a lot more exciting for people, where before it was kind of for people who were in the know like EcoMovement, but now we're getting people that are like, this is a cool brand and then they're like, oh it's composting, maybe we'll give it a shot. So, we're reaching a lot more people because we're not just catering to one audience. We made a cool brand and that way it makes composting cool and more people will sign up" (Bedard).

In addition, Mr. Fox Composting used social and digital media to sell products that were related to their new brand. This helped market their company while also gained awareness for sustainable living in a fun way. Rian says,

> "By having a cool brand, it made me get really excited about making stuff. At first I wasn't sure what the reception would be, but the reception was so phenomenal that I was like, well let's do a flannel or a camp mug, because I was on Instagram, and Instagram is amazing because you can see trends happening in real-time, and so a lot of brands I really admired were doing camp mugs so I decided that we should do a camp mug. It was hard to find a way to make them, but we sold them like crazy. So, we were seeing what was popular, but also doing things that we loved. So, in doing that we searched out brands that we loved, one being Coalatree Organics that I really admire. They had seen my brand and are very into agriculture, so they understand the importance of what I do, so when I contacted them they got really excited and wanted to partner with us and were willing to help us and promote us. So, we did our flannels and sold out of them all in one week. We just did things that we love, things that we would wear, things that we would use, so I think that is why we were able to sell stuff, but it helps to have a really cool logo" (Bedard).

Social and digital media has also been seen to help gain awareness for the environmental movement across the country, which Rian absolutely agrees with. He says,

> "In my opinion, the whole environmental movement, the better we do at making it more of a common thing, rather than making it like you're an environmental extremist, that's the only way you'll get involved is if you're environmentally conscious, but when I do talks to different

organizations I approach it as I’m just a guy with a certain knowledge base and they’re going to think I’m going to come in and preach at them, but I find that if you come at it at an angle saying okay I’m a human being, you’re a human being, I wasn’t born like this, I had to learn this stuff as well, I’m not perfect, we can make this easy, fun, and do a great thing, but you can’t come at people that they’re horrible. Scare tactics can work to an extent, but the better the industry looking to change people’s minds, regardless of non-profit or socially conscious companies, the better we do to brand what we do as cool will make more people sign on. You have to come up with a message that reaches a broad audience, make it really cool to do it and more people will sign up to do it. I see compost as a gateway drug. They start composting it will make them much more aware of everything and if we can get them passing through that gate, we’ll have a better response long-term to people making daily changes” (Bedard).

It is quite clear that Mr. Fox Composting has been able to use digital and social mediums to help their company, but also to help awareness for sustainable living. If media companies keep monopolizing and over-commercializing the Internet, examples like this may one day be a think of the past, instead of helping the future of the world.

Implications for Democratic Culture - Digital Monopolies

Mr. Fox Composting has clearly been using social media for the betterment of their local area and, in turn, the entire world. Through social media, they are enhancing the sense of localism in two different ways. They are creating it in a business sense, through building their local business, and are also creating localism through a cultural sense, by creating a sense of community that shares common values, such as sustainability. They are not using it solely for their own advertising and marketing gains, although it comes hand in hand for them, but some big businesses do. Monopoly or near-monopoly businesses in the digital economy are hurting local businesses, like Mr. Fox Composting, in the sense that they are using social media for their own good, rather than getting a positive word or thought out to the public. Two authors, Robert McChesney and Joseph Turow, both voice their thoughts on these kinds of businesses in the digital economy and the concerns they individually have about them.

Joseph Turow’s book, The Daily You: How the New Advertising Industry is Defining Your Identity and Your Worth, has a chapter titled “The Long Click.” This long click he speaks of is combined into two activities that large companies use for target advertising. The first is that “they use the social graph together with other information to identify those individuals they conclude are worth pursuing for specific products and using a particular set of incentives” and the second is that “they follow the targeted individuals across as many geographical locations and devices as possible” (Turow 139). These tactics are part of this process in order to “identify likely customers; use databases to encourage them to click on personalized content and relevant ads; reinforce their responses across a variety of websites and mobile devices; serve these customers personalized commercial messages at the moment of sale, and convince them to swipe their frequent-shipper card, credit card, or debit card to complete the gauntlet - and offer up more data” (Turow 139). Businesses that use these advertising and marketing tactics are hurting the reputation of local businesses, such as Mr. Fox Composting, that are relying on digital and social media in an effort to change the world in a positive way. Mr. Fox Composting uses social and digital media to advertise and market to their local communities. They have no reason to use something like the long click in order to find their target audience. They are not trying to reach everyone in the world per say; they are only trying to reach people in their immediate and surrounding communities that will actually benefit from using their compost service. After reaching this smaller audience the thought of sustainable living can then be spread from community to community, rather than people being over-saturated with information and advertising on their social and digital media sites.

Robert McChesney talks about consumer surveillance on behalf of marketing and advertising industries in his chapter “The Internet and Capitalism II: Empire of the Senseless?” in his book Digital Disconnect. He voices many concerns about digital media monopolizing advertising and marketing in the digital world, which has the opportunity to harm small, local businesses like Mr. Fox Composting. McChesney voices a concern that digital giants are turning into masters of the Internet, which in turn make them “masters of much of our social life” (McChesney 130). This has been achieved through the monopolization of the Internet, which “has become one of the greatest generators of monopoly in economic history” (McChesney 130). He also voices another concern about how the Internet has been converted “into an advertising-based medium, and how the new digital advertising industry is a radical departure from advertising (McChesney 130). McChesney uses the example of “cookies,” which are “small files secretly downloaded to users’ computers that would make it possible to track Internet users surreptitiously and create profiles of their activities so as to segment them for marketing" (McChesney 147). Mr. Fox Composting, or any local company for that matter, needs to use this type of marketing. Instead of tricking people into seeing their advertisements, local businesses only target their local community. They put all their effort and money into their immediate surroundings, which leads to a higher success rate with less money being wasted on alleged target marketing.

McChesney also mentions how digital media is turning the Internet into a monopoly market. He says "the Internet exhibits what economists term network effects, meaning that just about everyone gains by sharing use of a single service or resource" (McChesney 132). He also says that monopolies are being encouraged due to "the importance of technical standards, which become imperative if different firms and consumers are going to be able to use the Internet effectively (McChesney 133). McChesney sees this making everything worse because "the profitability of the digital giants is centered on establishing proprietary systems for which they control access and the terms of the relationship, not the idea of an Internet as open as possible" (McChesney 135). This idea of monopolistic digital media would harm local businesses, like Mr. Fox Composting, mainly because they would have less opportunities to harness social and digital media for their local advertising and marketing. Large social and digital media companies would make it close to impossible for small businesses to use their sites to reach their desired audience without paying for the "free" service or sacrificing things that they stand for.

Conclusion - Small Business Barriers

Small businesses are being cut off from using social and digital media for their advertising and marketing means due to larger companies creating monopolies and, in turn, creating over-commercialization of the Internet. There needs to be some protection for small businesses to be able to reach their customers in ways that are efficient for them. One way to ensure this would be for social media companies, such as Facebook, to introduce artificial barriers for small businesses in order for them to have unrestricted access to reach their customers. Facebook has been making it harder and harder for small businesses to thrive with their marketing and advertising tactics on their social media site. They have started to try to make it necessary for companies to pay in order to reach their customers on the site. In order for small businesses to succeed, like Mr. Fox Composting, these tactics by the monopolized Internet companies need to stop.

Small businesses need all the help they can get, especially when starting, and these big companies are going to make it impossible if things stay the way they are going. These larger companies should be happy that they are getting more customers because of small business traffic. Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram are getting more user traffic because of small businesses. Mr. Fox Composting used Instagram to sell some apparel and other brand-related products. If someone were curious about what they were selling, they would inevitably have to go onto Instagram to check it out. Once they are on the website or app, they are bound to stay on it and check out more products and pages. Small businesses have to effectively help social media websites as much as they are helping the small businesses.

One lasting statement Rian had about composting was, “Don’t be afraid to fail. Just fail and give things a shot. My first attempt at composting and gardening were horrible, I just failed so bad. My first attempt at riding a fixed-gear bicycle was hilarious, but just don’t be afraid to fail. I do what I love so I think everyone should do what they love and are passionate about” (Bedard). If more people have this mindset with being environmentally conscious, then the world would be changing much quicker than it is. As long as the Internet allows Mr. Fox Composting to advertise and market as they have been, they will continue to put this mindset into more and more people’s minds around New Hampshire and Maine. If digital and social media allows, they may be able to get their message out to more and more people, which may actually make a difference one day. It may take a long time, but Mr. Fox Composting has the right attitude and drive to change the world, one bag of “garbage” at a time.

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HOW TO LIVE

BY: GENNIFER DAVIDSON

Do you look at the glass being half full or half empty? It is so easy in our society to be put in a negative situation and look at it in a pessimistic way. We are constantly being told to make the best out of a bad situation and to live our lives to the fullest. These actions are easier said than done. It can take being exposed to other people's lives to change your prospective on your own. Renee C. Byer was able to capture moments from Cyndie French and her son, Derek Madsen's, lives as Derek battled cancer. These photographs argue that you should not give up when life is hard and that you need to keep fighting. They are a visual testament to the power of positivity and the unstoppable nature of the human spirit. These photographs teach us how to live, how to die, and how to love. They offer hope to anyone going though a hard time and provide guidance on how to deal with a bad situation.

The Photo Essay

Figures 1-8 are all images from Renee C. Byer's 2007 collection of photos entitled "A Mother's Journey." These photos document Cyndie French and her 10-year-old son, Derek Madsen's, fight against cancer. Figures 1-8 were selected from a larger twenty-picture photo essay that won a Pulitzer Prize in 2007. The eight photographs selected were kept in chronological order to best illustrate the journey that both Cyndie and Derek took during his fight against cancer. For each figure, Renee wrote a paragraph describing what was going on in each photograph. These textual additions supplement the power of the photographs and give the viewer a more specific understanding of the subjects within the photo (Barrts, 269). The power of pictures coupled with the power of words give a clear representation of how to never give up.

Photographs freeze time and Byer was able to capture moments that had the ability to show viewers that although life can be short, unexpected and often challenging, it is still worth living. Viewers are able to follow along this journey with Derek and actually see how the love and support of family, positivit, and perseverance can make even the most heartbreakingly short lives magical.

The first time we see an image of Derek is in figure 1. The text introduces Derek Madsen and explains that this photograph was taken seven months after he was diagnosed with Neuroblastoma, a rare childhood cancer. In this photo, his mother is pushing him through the hallways of the hospital. Derek has a smile on his face that stretches from ear to ear, his head is tilted back, his eyes are clenched shut, and he has both hands in the air. Both hands are formed into a "peace sign," a gesture in American culture that represents the idea of happiness and freedom (Crawley, 63). In figure 1, Derek is bald and in a wheelchair. The image can be jarring; as most boys that are 10-years-old have a full head of hair and are often running around faster than anyone can keep up with. Seeing something shocking like a young boy who is bald in a wheelchair can trigger the emotion of sympathy (Sontag, 34). However, Derek is happy and having fun in a wheelchair, which is seen as inspirational and provides us with hope that he is going to be okay.

Besides providing us with hope, figure 1 captures the relationship between Derek and his mother, Cyndie. Cyndie is pushing Derek through the hallways of the hospital barefoot and Derek has his head back, hands in the air. and smile on his face, proving he is happy. Cyndie is represented as playing a direct role in his happiness, even if it is momentary. The text partnered with figure 1 describes the image as "successfully distracting him during the dreaded wait before his bone marrow extraction." This shows that Cyndie's role as a mother was to keep her son optimistic and happy during these trying times and one of the ways she did this was by distracting him from any bad things going on (Mattson, 31). Cyndie is described in figure 1 as "racing barefooted after kicking off her flip-flops," this proving her desire for her and her son to feel free instead of feeling trapped by cancer.

Figure 1 was able to capture a happy moment where Cyndie was able to successfully distract Derek from thinking about his illness, while figure 2 captures a moment of comfort. Figure 2 is an image of Cyndie hugging Derek. Cyndie's face looks devastated; her eyes are shut and she is holding him tightly, trying to comfort him. Derek on the other hand, has his arms out instead of hugging his mother back. It is clear that this photo is taken in a doctor's office because of the medical equipment on the walls. The text that is partnered with figure 2 explains that the photo was taken just after learning that Derek requires surgery to remove a cancerous tumor in his abdomen. This helps us understand the look of devastation on Cyndie’s face. The text also conveys that Derek might not be hugging his mother back because he is still in shock. Cyndie asks the photographer, Renee C. Byer, “How can anyone maintain a nine-to-five job and do this?” The message that goes with this photo communicates to viewers that it is not easy to be someone’s support system. It is hard work and emotionally takes a toll on you to take care of a sick loved one. The photo of a mother holding her sick son looks natural and effortless, but when paired with the mother’s verbal admission of how hard it is to be someone’s support system, becomes heartbreaking to the viewers. Through this image we are able to empathize with Cyndie always being there to love and support her son, despite how hard it might be emotionally.

Cyndie physically and emotionally being there for her son becomes a theme throughout these photographs. Figure 3 is a photograph of Derek lying in a bed screaming in pain. He is the center of the photograph and the look on his face clearly depicts his pain. A coded iconic message in our culture is to hold someone’s hand when they are going through something painful (Barthes, 270). You often see this image when someone is getting a shot, a piercing, or a tattoo. This photograph shows Derek’s hands being held by two different people, although you can’t tell who they are. The text informs the viewer that it is his mother Cyndie and his brother Micah holding his hands. Derek is getting a “tattoo in preparation for radiation therapy.” This photograph is able to capture the physical pain of Derek’s cancer and his treatment very well. Closing your eyes tightly, screaming, or clenching on to someone’s hand are often signs that represent pain in our culture. This photo is also able to capture the love of his family by having both his mother and brother holding his hands attempting to relieve the pain, but more importantly being there for him as a support system.

Even though Derek is suffering a substantial amount of pain, the photo essay focuses more on the fact that he is still able to live his life. Figure 4 is of Derek sitting on his Mom’s lap attempting to drive a car. This image is very positive as both Derek and Cyndie have a smile on their faces. Cyndie has her hands in the air, allowing Derek to take full control of the steering wheel. The text for this photograph reads, “realizing that Derek may never have an opportunity to get his driver’s license, something he told her he is anticipating, Cyndie French defies the rules and lets him drive up and down their street.” The text speaks the lengths Cyndie is willing to go to in order to make her son happy. It is one of Derek’s goals to be able to drive a car and not knowing if he will ever achieve this goal, his mother breaks the rules and allows him to steer her car while sitting on her lap. Being able to drive a car on your own is linked with freedom. As a teen, getting your drivers license is something that you look forward to because of the freedom to go wherever you want, whenever you want. Cyndie allowing her son to sit on her lap as she teaches him to drive a car is her way of providing him with hope that someday he might be able to do it on his own. Figure 4 captures a fun and happy moment shared between a mother and her son.

Smiles are quickly replaced with frowns in figure 5. This is an image of Derek crying in a doctor’s office. He is sitting in a chair, and both the doctor and his mother are crouched down to his eye level. Cyndie seems to be a little in his face by leaning into Derek’s chair. Derek, on the other hand, looks like he is extremely upset and does not want to talk about the subject matter; his eyes are looking at the ground instead of at his mother or his doctor. The text to this photo informs us that both the doctor and Cyndie believe that a series of radiation treatments to shrink the tumors in Derek’s body would be the best way to alleviate the condition. The text documents a conversation between Derek and Cyndie where Cyndie tells her son, “Derek, you might not make it if you don’t do this.” Derek’s response with, “I don’t care! Take me home. I’m done, Mom. Are you listening to me? I’m done.” The conversation between Cyndie and Derek bring the photograph to life. You can tell by the look on his face that he is exhausted and just wants to go home, while his mom is in his face, telling him that he needs to keep fighting in order to live. Figure 5 was able to capture a conversation between mother and son, as Cyndie was encouraging Derek not to give up.

The tragic moment of finding out that Derek had to go through a series of radiation treatments in figure 5 is followed up by a moment of joy in figure 6. This is a photograph of Cyndie and Derek having a silly string fight outside of the hospital. The main focus in the photo is Cyndie standing in the center. She is covered in silly string and has a can of silly string in her hand. Derek is sitting in his wheelchair, pointing a can of silly string at his mom, laughing. Figure 6 captured a moment between Cyndie and Derek celebrating life. The caption for this photo enlightens the audience that Cyndie always tries to take the ‘sting’ out of Derek’s doctor appointments by sharing a fun activity. This proves that she is a caring mother trying to plan fun things to make her son’s bad days better.

Despite all of her efforts, it is hard to keep a sick boy in positive spirits. Figure 7 illustrates a fight between Derek and his mother. In the photograph Derek looks extremely angry, as his teeth are clenched together and he is pointing his finger. Pointing your finger is a coded iconic message for blaming something on someone else. Pointing your finger is also looked upon as something that is rude in American culture (Cochet, 86). Cyndie's hands in this photo almost look like she is blocking herself from being pointed at. Her face seems upset, but looks more sad than angry. The caption for figure 7 tells the audience that Derek has refused to take his pain medications because they are damaging his organs. The photo describes what is captured as Derek raging at his mother, "blaming her for not making him healthier." His mother tells him that he needs to "calm down and help me, help you." This photo captured a moment where Derek is lashing out at his mother because he is frustrated that he is not getting better. He is pointing his finger and blaming her, when she has done everything in her power to make her son healthy again.

Despite her efforts to make Derek better, he continues to get worse. In figure 8, Derek is bald, lying on the couch at home in his underwear. His eyes are barely open and he looks emaciated. Cyndie is holding what appears to be some form of medicine with a frown on her face and looks like she is on the verge of tears. The caption for this photo lets the viewers know that the hospice nurse is about to administer, "a sedative that will give the 11-year-old a peaceful death." The caption is powerful in figure 8 because without it, viewers might not know that the image is capturing assisted suicide. This seems shocking because Derek and Cyndie have fought so hard in order to allow Derek to live his life to the fullest. "I know in my heart I've done everything I can," Cyndie says. This quote shows that as a mother Cyndie feels like she has done everything to try and make her son healthier and to live a happy life. Despite her efforts Derek is suffering and she agrees it is time to let him go.

Renee C. Byer's collection of photos entitled, "A Mother's Journey" takes us through the journey of the last year of Derek's life and teaches us how to live. These images show Cyndie's positive attitude towards her son's cancer. From pushing him down the hallway in a wheel chair, to holding his hand when he is going through a painful procedure, she never leaves his side. She is always trying to cheer him up, and through her actions, she encourages him to keep living his life as if he was not sick. From having him sit on her lap and attempt at driving a car, to taking him outside and playing with silly string, Cyndie inspires her son to keep pushing. The important messages this collection of photos communicates, is that you have to live life to the fullest, celebrate the time you have left, never give up, and be there for one another - no matter what. The collection teaches us to love and care for one another when times are bad and that any situation can be made better with good sprit and a positive attitude.

Celebrate Life

The photo collection, “A Mother’s Journey,” teaches everyone to celebrate life. It shows that sometimes life is tough, but one cannot let the bad stop them from living for the good moments. The photo collection captured several moments filled with bad news and painful procedures, but it also captured several moments where life was celebrated.

Figure 2 and figure 5 both capture moments where Derek finds out he has cancerous tumors and that they need to be treated. Finding out that you have cancer can make you feel scared, uncertain, or angry (The Emotional Impact of a Cancer Diagnosis). There is nothing fair about cancer or any illness and discovering that you must go through treatment is devastating. Figure 2 shows Derek is shocked and upset, his mother is hugging him and he is barely hugging her back. The next image shows him in extreme pain getting a tattoo for radiation therapy. With all the negative information and painful experiences that Derek suffers from, the photographs clearly explain his frustration and his sadness. It would be extremely easy for him to give up at any time, but instead he keeps fighting, which allows him to celebrate his life. Figure 2 and figure 3 are followed by a happy moment where in figure 4, Derek is shown having fun as he attempts to drive a car with his mom.

In figure 5, Derek finds out he has to go through another series of radiation treatments to shrink the tumors. He tells his mom that he is done and does not care about fighting his cancer anymore, even with his understanding that if he does not get treatment, he might not survive. Following the pain of this moment is a jubilant silly string fight, as depicted in Figure 6. This image continues to communicate that battling through the hard times can still lead to something happy and light. Those moments are worth waiting for, proving that life needs to be celebrated.

Sad and tragic events leading to happy and fun moments is a theme represented in is this photo collection.

This reminds us all that life is worth fighting for because there will always be good moments, even in hard times. It gives us the strength to move forward and shows us how important it is to celebrate life.

Live Life on the Edge

The concept of living life on the edge is all about taking risks and it is directly linked to living life to the fullest. The collection of photos entitled “A Mother’s Journey” captures several moments where Derek and his mother, Cyndie, were living life to their fullest. The moments captured of the mother and son forgetting the rules and having fun became the moments that were the most memorable.

The first photo in the collection, figure 1, is a photo of Cyndie barefoot racing through the hallways of the hospital pushing her son Derek in a wheelchair. Derek has both of his hands in the air, his head tilted back, and his eyes are clenched shut. The photo is filled with happiness and joy, but it could not be done without some rebellious actions. This image breaks several social norms we have created in our society and it takes the breaking of rules to achieve this freedom and joy. As a society, we are taught that you should not run in the hallways because you can get hurt. We are also taught we need to wear shoes in public places. By kicking off her shoes and racing barefoot down the hallway, Cyndie is being rebellious. It is these rebellious actions that make Cyndie and Derek feel alive and free (Gaillet, 295). Figure 1 captures a moment between a mother and son where they are just being happy and free.

Figure 4 also captures a rebellious moment that brings joy and freedom into Derek and Cyndie’s lives. It is a law that you have to be at least sixteen years old in order to drive a car. In fear that Derek might never be able to drive a car on his own, Cyndie breaks the rules and lets him drive down a street in their local town. This action creates a memory that Cyndie will forever cherish; she was able to teach her son how to drive. Cyndie was able to provide her son with the opportunity to do something that he might never been able to do on his own.

Another moment of living life on the edge that was captured in this photo collection is in figure 6. This photo is a silly string fight between Cyndie and Derek. Silly string can be seen as a symbol of being youthful. It is most commonly used to celebrate special occasions like birthday parties, carnivals, and weddings (About Silly String

Products). It is seen as an act of celebration, but also can be seen as rebellious and freeing because you are spraying silly string into the air and it is messy.

In figures 1, 4 and 6, Cyndie contributes to Derek's happiness. Through her acts of rebellion she allows Derek to feel free and live life on the edge. Time and time again Cyndie makes sure her son is living the best life he can. These photos capture moments where Derek is "living like he is dying."

Love One Another

Throughout the entire collection Cyndie does not leave her sick son's side. She goes above and beyond any expectations of a mother. She is there for Derek through all the bad times and she helps create the good times for him. The photo collection is entitled, "A Mother's Journey" because Derek did not go through this journey alone, his mother was there for him every step of the way.

Loving someone is being there for them through the good times and the bad times. Cyndie was there to comfort Derek each time he found out he had to go through radiation therapy because his cancer tumors had come back (Figure 2, Figure 5). Cyndie was there to hold his hand when he was going through painful procedures, like in figure 3. She also let him blame her for the cancer and didn't fight him back (Figure 7). Cyndie was constantly there for Derek, giving him words of encouragement to not give up.

Caring is not just being there for someone when things are hard, but it is being compassionate enough to help give them the power to move forward. There were several times when Derek wanted to give up, but Cyndie loved him so much that she would not let him. Actions speak louder than words, so instead of telling him that his life is worth fighting for, she made it so by filling his life with happy moments (Figure 1, Figure 4, Figure 6) that would make him want to live.

This collection of photos illustrates the love that was shared between a mother and son. It is pretty obvious that Cyndie would have done anything to make her son healthy and happy. Sometimes, the best thing a mother can do is be there for her child and let them know that things are going to be okay (Figure 5). Cyndie was there for Derek until the last moment of his life, when a hospice nurse gave him a peaceful death. "I know in my heart I've done everything I can," said Cyndie. Figure 8 was not Cyndie giving up, it was her allowing her son to live the best life he could have and die peacefully. As a mother, deciding whether or not to keep your son alive or continue to suffer, or die peacefully so he no longer feels pain, must have been one of the hardest decisions she ever had to make. Instead of watching her 11-year-old son suffer, she allowed him to die with dignity.

Conclusion

"A Mother's Journey" teaches us that even in the face of the worst circumstances, life is worth living and fighting for. It reminds viewers that a successful life consists of moments shared with the ones you love and that you must cherish them because life can also be unexpected. The rawness of the photographs communicate to the audience that life can be amazing and tragic at the same time and shows us how to never hold back or play by the rules. The series teaches us that the power of loving one another with all your heart and being a support system throughout all the up's and down's is what truly matters. The photo collection explains to us why it is important to look at the glass of life as being half full. "A Mother's Journey" reminds us that even though life can be chaotic and painful, it is also filled with love, hope, and happiness. Derek and Cyndie's journey is able to teach us, through photographs, how to live.

Photo Index

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

Figure 6

Figure 7

Figure 8

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STUXNET:
THE FASTEST EVOLVING VIRUS IN THE WORLD

BY: LIA WINDT

Introduction

Technology has changed our way of thinking and our way of being into something completely different unlike ever before. It is the most adaptive organism in the animal kingdom, being both powerful and extremely dangerous. It is a virus, constantly evolving to fight the antidotes security experts put in place to keep people safe from fraud, identity theft, and other situations. Embedded within the technology virus' DNA are hackers that want to steal information and benefit only themselves. Like any virus, the more we fight back with vaccines, or antivirus software, the more hackers erupt and develop new ways of breaking in. We are in a constant state of defense and it will never end.

What about the offense? Should the U.S. ever enter the fighting ring with digital technology? In every conflict there is the struggle to trump the opponent. Better planes, missiles, bombs, tactics, weapons, etc. correlate with better chances of winning the fight. For a long time, these offenses were visible and could cause physical damage to the enemy. For a long time, conflicts had been in either the physical world or the virtual world, but not both; that is until the invention of a new type of weapon.

Cyber weapons are now real, and Stuxnet was the first one. It is a computer virus that can manipulate real-world machinery without alerting the engineers that a malfunction is occurring. It is one of the most dangerous weapons ever developed, and it is entirely built out of computer code.

With this kind of power, who should be in charge? The government is designed to regulate laws and protect its people. There have been failures and successes in every government's history that have given it enough experience to better understand whether or not certain actions would benefit or hurt the nation. The Internet is all too unstable, however, and no one can fully control its behavior. For this reason there must be enough people working together to help establish a better understanding of the possible consequences. This paper will describe past incidents in which the government tried its hand at cyber security. This will set up context for better understanding the consequences of Stuxnet and how a weapon this powerful should not be under the sole control of one group, such as the government. Solutions on how to encourage government transparency will also be discussed in order to ensure the government remains, to this day, the people's democracy.

The Government and Cyber Security

The situation with the government and cyber topics is complex at best. Since the Internet is relatively new, the laws that are set in place tend to be experimental. These technologies are so unpredictable and widely used, so there is a constant state of paranoia from the government's point of view. This paranoia forces the government to enact laws that are absurd by the public's standards. Since the attacks on the World Trade Centers and the Pentagon in 2001, security has been heightened, naturally, in order to fight this War on Terror. "The transition from the Cold War, in which America's antagonists were known and the conflicts could (and did) eventually end, to the so-called War on Terror, in which the enemies are largely unseen and their activities unknown, has been a boon for the national security state. The War on Terror will last as long as our leaders tell us it must last; in other words, it is permanent… The leaders are to be trusted, their budgets approved; to challenge them is to be unpatriotic, if not treasonous" (McChesney, 160). The government depends on this obscurity in order to provoke fear in citizens. Once people are afraid, the government would have the power to enact laws that should theoretically protect the people and create a safer environment. However, using this principle as an excuse, the government is freely enacting laws that may not necessarily play a role in our safety but rather violate our privacy. To add insult to injury, these laws were done in secret from the public; no one knew that the government was listening in on our phone calls until Edward Snowden released the documents detailing the invasive operation. Instantly, the public felt a mistrust of the government and there was very little chance of gaining back this trust.

This is a perfect illustration of a complete lack of transparency and democracy in the American government. There was neither a vote nor knowledge of the unfolding events. How can the U.S. identify as a democratic nation when the government itself does not give its people the right to decide on important issues? The government broke laws and once the public discovered this, it amended them so that officials could not be punished for breaking them. "In 2001 the NSA started an illegal warrantless wire-tapping program on U.S. citizens, monitoring phone calls with deep-packet inspection technology…When the operation became public - thanks to a whistleblower - no prosecutions were made, no heads rolled. Instead, Congress passed a full retroactive immunity for the telecom firms in 2008" (McChesney, 163-64). There is no longer a stable democratic government when secrets are kept from the public. Plus, when the rules are changed in favor of saving government supporters, the people lose faith in the government and some negative repercussions develop as a result. With the government being as closed off as it is, it is difficult for people to know what is happening and whether or not the choices that are being made are in the public's best interest. "Governments, even democratic ones, are capable of acting unconscionably and undermining the very freedoms that are necessary for self-government to be effective. When they grow secretive, the likelihood that they are representing powerful interests grows. Everyone understands that governments often identify their enemies as terrorists to justify persecuting them; it is par for the course in authoritarian nations" (McChesney, 170). These instances draw the American government further and further away from being a democratic one and closer to a totalitarian state.

In some situations, however, there may be the need to keep operations private from citizens, such as when the country is in a state of war or struggle with another country. One delicate operation that took place in secret for a long time was Stuxnet.

The Creation of Stuxnet

Back in August of 2004, a group of leftist Iranian exiles discovered documents revealing the location of a nuclear power plant in Natanz, Iran. This plant was incredibly elaborate and completely invisible to the United Nations, which posed as a threat because Iran had tense relations with countries within the U.N. Many efforts were made to stop Iran from creating these uranium enrichment plants. Although there was a temporary halt on expanding these plants in November of 2004, it quickly continued in 2006 after Mahmoud Ahmadinejad was elected president of Iran (nytimes.com). The combination of an unstable leadership and a fast-growing nuclear power plant forced the U.S. to create a weapon unlike anything that has ever been used before.

For a long time after the discovery of Stuxnet in 2010, it was a total mystery as to who created it. Many assumed that the U.S. or other highly resourced groups must be responsible, primarily because of how sophisticated the program is. Edward Snowden later confirmed in 2013 to ABC News that the U.S. and Israel co-wrote Stuxnet. Stuxnet was the secret cyber weapon that was used to shut down Iranian enrichment facilities and it was made entirely out of computer code (Ferran).

Stuxnet is a computer worm; when it infects one computer, all the other computers in the network (as long as they are running the same software, in this case Siemens Step7, a Windows-based software) would be infected as well. In order to infect a computer, it had to be inserted via a thumb drive and the virus would then exploit "zero-days" vulnerabilities, or back door holes in software. Essentially, someone from the inside had to physically install the virus onto a machine. The virus was not aiming to attack just the computers in the Natanz nuclear facility; it was intended to alter Supervisory Control And Data Acquisition (SCADA) systems. These systems are crucial in ensuring that different valves, pumps, and centrifuges are functioning correctly. SCADA systems also keep the plant safe in the instance of a malfunction. Some valves have to be adjusted within a fraction of a second to prevent failure, which is clearly something a human worker is incapable of doing (Langner). Stuxnet compromised the SCADA systems and then slowly adjusted the rotating speed of the centrifuges so that they would crack and become irreparable. The disturbing aspect of this worm is that no one knew the computers were infected and Stuxnet actually provided false feedback to the engineers by showing on the computer monitors that the centrifuges were functioning normally when in fact they were causing a meltdown.

This is the first known instance of computer code that can alter physical-world machinery. SCADA systems are not only found in uranium enrichment facilities, but all over the world in oil pipelines, power grids, and several other industrial facilities. The dangers of this code are unpredictable if they fall in the wrong hands; Stuxnet's open-source code can be potentially leaked and uploaded to the Internet for the world to see.

Concerns

It is arguable that Stuxnet was a success. It did, after all, suspend Iran's nuclear production for several years. If action did not take place quickly, it could have been disastrous if they made uranium material, potentially for weapons. On the other hand, however, there were some serious consequences as a result of the creation of Stuxnet.

Now that Stuxnet is out for the world to see, anyone can decide to alter the code and create their own weapon using Stuxnet as a blueprint. Stephen Spoonamore is a cybersecurity consultant who has spent years pursuing hackers. "Now that it's released, numerous other people will take that and go, "aha"' … He thinks that some other group may now be able to take the Stuxnet computer code and modify it slightly to create its own cyber superweapon" (Gjelten [2]). These malicious groups can attack power plants or any facility that has SCADA systems or the equivalent. The worrisome part is that no one can know for sure whether or not there is an infected system and by the time it is discovered, it is already too late.

U.S. defense is trying to step up its security so that they can be better prepared. In Idaho Falls there is a training program that takes place in the Idaho National Security laboratory. In this program there is a simulation in which a group of hackers try to access computer networks in a mock industrial company. This hacker group is known as the red team. Then there are trainees on a separate floor from the hackers in a setting much like an industrial company, where they try to prevent the attack from happening; these people are on the blue team. During a mock attack covered by NPR, the red team was able to gain access to the blue team's computers without anyone noticing. They were then given the order to shut down the power of the facility, and the computer screens in the blue group's area turned black. The trainees were helpless as they could not try to defend the computers; all they could do is watch as the water pumps start up on their own, controlled by the red team, and eventually fail out of the blue team's control (Gjelten [2]). It seems that even in training situations it is very difficult to block these kinds of attacks. Now, there are potentially several malicious hackers with Stuxnet code and they could be perfectly capable of attacking an industrial facility similar to the mock one, or an enrichment plant. Experts do not give reassuring advice on how to prevent these attacks. "Joseph Weiss, an expert on the industrial control systems widely used in power plants, refineries and nuclear facilities like the one in Iran…[said] 'Some of these systems can't be protected…We're going to have to figure out how to recover from events that we simply can't protect these systems from'" (Gjelten [2]). In other words, there is no sure way of protecting ourselves or large-scale companies from these potential threats; it is a matter of hoping the damage is not too significant and that we can recover from it gracefully.

Should there be government regulations to stop Stuxnet from appearing on the Internet? Perhaps, but the process is unrealistic. The idea of a "kill switch" for the Internet has been done before, but again with many repercussions and consequences. In June 2010, Khaled Said was killed by police for trying to expose police officers for their corruption. This was based on the fact that they acquired drugs from a bust and split the money and drugs amongst themselves. Using social media, Egyptians planned events and gatherings to protest the unfortunate death of Khaled Said. The situation was out of control and the government panicked so much that they used a "kill switch" in which telecommunications companies in Egypt were contacted and forced to shut down their services so that no one could use the Internet or phones. Although it stopped protests for a while, there were still back-door ways of communicating, such as using neighboring countries' telecommunications services or fax machines (Andrews, 61-2). Despite the efforts of the government to stop these protests, groups still found a way to gather on the streets and protest for their cause. In the U.S. there are several telecommunications companies, but there are a few that dominate the market, such as Verizon and AT&T. Therefore, the government could cease operations momentarily. However, as aforementioned, there are many alternatives. Fax machines may be harder to find since it is an older technology, but apps are being released that go around the typical Internet web. "Firechat is a peer-to-peer framework that allows for wireless mesh networking. It lets you communicate regardless of whether you have a data connection by connecting nearby devices to one another over Bluetooth, Wi-Fi networks, or peer-to-peer Wi-Fi" (Bonnington). With these types of technologies emerging at an incredible rate, a kill switch for the Internet in the U.S. to prevent Stuxnet from spreading is both futile and a waste of man power.

There is little evidence to show where or when Stuxnet was released onto the Internet. It is possible that once it was found it was shut down and silenced so that no one would be able to see the source code. However, it is possible that whoever released it to the Internet already told people about it and the code could have easily been copied or downloaded within seconds. A kill switch would also be ineffective after the fact since Stuxnet typically infects via thumb drive.

> "According to Internet security expert Jonathan Zittrain, 'it's not clear that government intervention would make any difference' in the event of a massive computer-virus attack. He points out that the ISPs would already be doing everything they could to counter the attack and the government would not 'have any comparative advantage in understanding the situation better than the Internet engineers themselves.' And by creating more centralization, Homeland Security's tagging system might actually make the system more vulnerable to anyone with access to the tags

or who is targeting the tags" (Andrews, 70).

Although the government was responsible for the creation of Stuxnet, there is no telling how they would be able to defend from this attack. Defense against a virus is much more complex than creating one. Many software companies like Microsoft, Windows, Adobe Reader, etc. pay hackers to hack into their software to find zero-day exploits. IOS is willing to pay hackers as much as $250,000 to find these exploits (Greenberg). Zero-days are major problems in software and are very difficult to detect. Just because the government was able to create a worm that can access these exploits, does not mean that they know all of the possible exploits in all software. This is a matter of cooperation and transparency needed to make defense more secure and stable.

Solutions and Conclusion

Since cyber warfare is a relatively new concept, there should be more minds and opinions participating in debates on whether or not certain actions, such as using Stuxnet, are worth the risks. One way to do this is to ensure the government remains transparent about its decisions. It is an important step in involving Americans to participate and having experts illustrate potential risks and benefits that could arise from a cyber-attack. "Transparency shines a light on underperformance and inefficiencies in public services. It allows citizens and the media to hold governments accountable, strengthening civil society and building more open societies" (Maude). The Internet itself relies on this foundation of openness; it is the sharing of information that makes it so appealing to societies. If the government is willing to use cyber-attacks to protect the country, then it has to use the foundations of the Internet to succeed.

One important tool to use for transparency would be the media. "[The founders of the American republic] regarded the press system as the key institution that would keep people informed of what was taking place and give citizens the capacity to resist tyranny and protect their freedoms" (McChesney, 171). Through media, the government can clearly illustrate its plans for the future and how it will carry them out. The Internet can be used in favor so that the public can know more about what is happening and how to help. For top secret missions, there should be a board of representatives outside of the government that can vote on delicate situations. The key is to have involvement outside of the government so that there can be a greater range of ideas and it can remain a democratic nation.

Another solution is to be more knowledgeable as to how coding works to understand the situation and provide better input for debate. Douglas Rushkoff mentioned how we are becoming a nation that is all too satisfied with the surface of computer programs rather than how they work on the inside.

> "In the short term, we are looking at a society increasingly dependent on machines, yet decreasingly capable of making or even using them effectively. Other societies, such as China, where programming is more valued, seemed destined to surpass us … We will be driven toward the activities that help distract us from the coming challenges - or stave them off - rather than the ones that encourage us to act upon them" (Rushkoff 147).

The United States was successful in creating the first cyber weapon ever. In order to continue the legacy as an innovative country that influences the world, there must be coding education for the future and a transparent, democratic government willing to accept the voices of the American people. There is a way to make sure there are little to no consequences of government actions and that is by having the great minds of the public cast their votes in a democracy.

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THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF CRYPTOCURRENCY:
AN INVESTIGATION OF BITCOIN

BY: LAUREN RHODES

Introduction and Overview

Transferring money from one person to another used to be as simple as handing someone a dollar bill. Of course, people still use tangible cash today, but what happens if you need to get money to someone across the country or across the world? For this, we have credit cards, which come with various external fees preventing the receiver of the money from seeing the entire intended sum of cash. For international transactions, there is also a conversion fee to change one currency into another. In short, there was never a practical way to digitally transfer money from person to person without external regulation by banks or government - that is until 2008, when the concept of Bitcoin was developed.

A person, or group of persons, under the pseudonym Satoshi Nakamoto, developed Bitcoin. In 2008, Nakamoto published a paper describing the Bitcoin currency. In 2009, Nakamoto released the software, developed the first Bitcoins, and launched the Bitcoin network all while remaining virtually anonymous. Bitcoin is, in essence, an unregulated and decentralized virtual currency. This is to say that all transactions and transfers are done online and are not regulated by any third parties including banks or governments. Bitcoin is obtained through "mining", which is done by powerful computer programs. These programs work through complex software algorithms that are used to validate recent Bitcoin transactions. These math problems have the capacity to release new Bitcoin. Whichever of the Bitcoin miners solves the equation first, gets a reward of a certain amount of Bitcoin called "blocks". This process of obtaining the currency is intended to mimic the production of a tangible commodity such as gold. In many ways, Bitcoin is similar to gold. Like gold, Bitcoin is a hedge against inflation. The total number of Bitcoins that can be mined is 21 million. Both gold and Bitcoin are unregulated by banks, and the value depends entirely on investors' confidence in the commodity (Carmody).

One can also obtain Bitcoin buy purchasing it from a Bitcoin exchange like CoinBase or one can accept it as payment for products or services. Bitcoins are stored in Bitcoin Wallets. Each person's Bitcoin Wallet has a different electronic signature associated with it , which are essentially long strings of numbers and letters. There are four main types of Bitcoin wallets: web wallets, software wallets, mobile phone wallets, and hardware wallets. Bitcoin is often interpreted as a "pseudo-anonymous" network. This means one can hold an electronic signature or address, without revealing any identifying factors about oneself in the address. Theoretically, one person can have multiple Bitcoin addresses with nothing to indicate that one person owns them all. On the other hand, every transaction made with Bitcoin is traceable. They are all locked in the blockchain, a public ledger of all Bitcoin transactions (Carmody).

Bitcoin is very volatile, meaning, its value is impacted and fluctuates every day based on a number of factors. Geopolitical events or news stories suggesting that Bitcoin is going to begin to be regulated often sway the confidence of investors. News about security breaches, although rare, produce a similar effect on the value. Technically speaking, there is no real reason why Bitcoin should have value. It does not have value as a physical commodity but, economically speaking, it has value because people desire it. Like gold, Bitcoin has value because it is useful as a physical commodity, not because the government grants it legal tender status like it does with paper money.

In short, Bitcoin has many benefits as a currency having largely to do with the fact that it is an unregulated, peer-to-peer network. As stated above, it is internationally friendly because the value of a Bitcoin is the same all over the world. Because it exists in a peer-to-peer network, no third parties can intercept transactions and no taxes can be enforced. The government cannot seize Bitcoin, meaning, someone's wealth cannot be frozen. Additionally, unless a user publicizes their Bitcoin address, nobody can trance transactions back to him or her. Lastly, the transaction fees are extremely low compared to those of credit cards and other traditional methods of money transfer. The Bitcoin protocol is designed so that each block takes approximately ten minutes to mine. This is how each transaction is verified. The process is secure, relatively quick, efficient, and convenient.

The economic potential for the currency is unbounded. The ease of use combined with the tiny transaction fees and lack of international conversion fees, make for a truly versatile and practical currency for businesses to adopt and accept. This investigation will examine just three of the seemingly endless applications in which Bitcoin can potentially revolutionize what we as a society can do with money and the internet, should investors remain confident in the commodity.

Bitcoin has the potential to change the way we pay for journalism online. Lately, many news organizations have employed the use of paywalls on their websites as many news outlets move toward primarily digitized formats. Using Bitcoin, news organizations could offer an alternative to paywalls for less frequent news consumers. Users could have the option to pay by article using micro-payments of Bitcoin, as opposed to paying monthly, weekly, or yearly online subscriptions. Bitcoin can also provide a means in which immigrants can send funds back to family in their home countries. This eliminates foreign exchange fees as well as the need to utilize companies such as MoneyGram or Western Union, which charge high transaction fees. Thirdly, Bitcoin could theoretically become the currency of international business due to the fact that it is a universal currency. The international trade industry could benefit from a decentralized currency if businesses are educated on the potential benefits of investing in the commodity. This investigation, will explore the concepts of digital journalism as a product in which to invest the potential revitalization of remittances and international trade as areas that could benefit from the utilization of a cryptocurrency like Bitcoin. Additionally, it will examine how these ideas are conducive to furthering our economy and enhancing our democratic climate.

The Role of Technology in Democracy

Evgeny Morozov, author of “The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom”, recognizes that all too often, new and emerging technologies spring up with the intention of “empower[ing] the individual [but instead,] strengthen the dominance of giant corporations, while technologies that were supposed to boost democratic participation produce a population of couch potatoes” (Morozov). In the case of Bitcoin, however, the opposite is true. The lack of government regulation puts the power directly into the hands of the users. This idea of regulation by the people is consistent with the idea of democracy put forth by the founding fathers, as a system of government run by the people. As for the role of the Internet in a society governed by the people, it is an information superhighway. Additionally, the Internet is a place of open exchange in which access is free, open, and the barriers to entry are minimal. Beyond the concept of operation by the people, democracy also includes the idea of the pursuit of happiness. Philosopher Jacob Needleman describes this as, being “a matter of the spirit of man, his moral and intellectual faculties in harmony with nature as it exists both outside of himself in his environment and within himself in the processes of his own body and soul” (Needleman 149). Additionally, democracy also encompasses the investment in the public interest to ensure that citizens have the means to support their right to stay informed.

In terms of the usage of micropayments of Bitcoin for online news articles, this opens up an alternate way for smaller, struggling news organizations to bring in funds. With the upsurge of new, often politically neutral journalism outlets, news consumers are offered a varying perspective beyond those of major media conglomerates that often lean to one side or another. This is an example of investing in the public’s right and responsibility to stay informed. The potential for immigrants to send remittances to family in their home countries with minimal transaction fees, is an example of how this technology can help to jump-start the pursuit of happiness for foreign-born Americans. Lastly, Bitcoin’s potential to revolutionize international trade means that due to the efficient peer-to-peer network, the people involved in the trade do not have to deal with currency exchange. The idea that it is no longer necessary to set aside exchange fees and that the transfer of Bitcoin is so convenient, means that this simplicity may one day contribute to furthering the economic output of international trade; this being due to the currency’s lack of third party intervention.

Implications for Digital Journalism

Journalism is in jeopardy. With so many local newspapers and small news organizations at risk of going out of business, several news outlets have turned to the use of paywalls to generate money from society’s demand for digital content. This has led to some backlash from users who argue that the Internet should be a free and open source, but it is easy to lose track of the reality that journalists need to earn a salary. Paywalls exist in two primary forms: hard paywalls allow little to no access to content without paying a subscription, and soft paywalls allow more flexibility such as a certain number of articles per week/month before a subscription is required. Both models present a problem, which exists for the news consumer who is inconsistent with his or her weekly/monthly intake of articles. This is when employing a pay-by-article model would offer up a unique solution. Of course, credit card companies take a portion of every transaction made, meaning, a credit card payment method would be fiscally inefficient for a pay-by-article model. This is where Bitcoin micropayments would offer a new means of compensation (Isaacson).

Robert McChesney, author of “Digital Disconnect”, recognizes the struggle of new organizations to attempt to make money in the midst of an upsurge of digital media. “The pure pursuit of profit has generally produced sensationalism, corruption, and crisis for the news media. It has also meant that control over political information has been places in the hands of a small number of very wealthy people” (McChesney 83). In order to combat the struggle of smaller, less wealthy news outlets, consumers of news need to be willing to pay for content. Micropayments of Bitcoin could contribute to the fiscal success of these organizations, and keeping them afloat is investing in the public’s right to stay informed. In 2009, Walter Isaacson, a writer for Time Magazine, stated, “The key to attracting online revenue, I think, is to come up with an iTunes-easy method of micropayment. We need something like digital coins or an E-ZPass digital wallet-a one-click system with a really simple interface that will permit impulse purchases of a newspaper, magazine, article, blog or video for a penny, nickel, dime or whatever the creator chooses to charge.” Later, in another article written in October of 2014, Isaacson addressed Bitcoin as a potential solution. In this article, he spoke highly of programs like ChangeTip, which allows users to easily make small payments of Bitcoin. It is no secret that internet users appreciate simplicity and with the Bitcoin’s ease of use, we the people, have the power to help keep news organizations afloat and invest in the public’s right and responsibility to stay informed. This method would be most efficiently employed with a web widget that allows a deduction of a small amount of money (between about 10 and 30 cents per article) with the click of a button. The journalism industry could benefit greatly from a company that offers users a simple one-time sign up and a way to link up their Bitcoin wallets with the account. Any website that offers the widget as a method of payment can install the button (similar to a Facebook “like” button) on article previews, and with the click of a button a micropayment of Bitcoin would be deducted from users’ Bitcoin wallets and they will obtain access to the article. Users would have to keep enough Bitcoin in their Bitcoin wallets in order for the transactions to go through, but obtaining articles would be as easy as clicking a button.

News websites can use the Bitcoin in a few different ways that would be left entirely up to the individual organizations. They can exchange the Bitcoin for their currency of choice at a Bitcoin exchange such as Bitstamp, or they can choose to use it to pay for their own expenses. Whatever they choose, this method would be effective because it captures a little extra revenue from consumers who would otherwise turn away because they are unwilling to commit to a subscription. The utilization of Bitcoin means the individual media companies would not have to succumb to credit card fees.

Remittances with Bitcoin

There are about 43 million immigrants living in the United States today and collectively, they make up a $50 billion remittance industry. Around the world, the sum totals about $500 billion. Immigrants often come to the United States for job opportunities with their primary intention being to send money back to their home countries. In order to get money from America to their families back home, immigrants often turn to services such as MoneyGram or Western Union, which charge large transaction fees of nearly ten percent. A recent documentary film called Bitcoin in Uganda focused on a woman named Ronah, who immigrated to Massachusetts in 2011 from Uganda, and regularly sends tuition money to her brother in Uganda using Bitcoin. Ugandan migrants worldwide send about $700 million back to family in Uganda each year. In the film, she explained that sending $40 through MoneyGram would cost her about $10, and she wanted to find a better way. "It's more expensive depending on when you want the person to pick up the money," said Ronah. This method, of course, depends entirely upon whether or not there is a demand for Bitcoins in the respective countries. Ronah's brother was able to successfully find someone who was willing to exchange the Bitcoin for Ugandan shillings. As Bitcoin becomes more widely accepted as a universal currency, this process of sending funds using this method has the potential to become more commonplace.

In this example, Bitcoin is an assister in the pursuit of happiness. It breaks down a barrier that immigrants would otherwise have to jump through to assist family by sending remittances. Companies like Western Union and albeit convenient, are examples of corporations that recognize their control over a market and use it to their advantage. America is a country of immigrants and Bitcoin has the potential to assist these Americans on their quest to furthering the quality of life for their loved ones back home.

Revolutionizing International Trade

The area of international trade turns over about $12 trillion annually (WTO.org). Generally, with international transactions, businesses use an intermediary to purchase a letter of credit, which is a document from a bank guaranteeing that the buyer's payment to a seller will be received in the correct amount and on time. These are necessary often because buyers are concerned about the distance the money has to travel and varying laws in different countries. These letters can cost anywhere from about .75% in excess of $100k, to as much as 1.5% in some underdeveloped countries (Gleeson).

Traders are generally accustomed to dealing with volatility of non-native currencies, so the use of Bitcoin in international trade could begin to grow sooner than later. As Bitcoin becomes more widely accepted by investors, its volatility could work in investors' favor, or the value could plateau. Regardless, the peer-to-peer transfer of funds means no external fees from third parties (i.e. banks), as well as quick and secure transactions. After the transfer is made, companies like BitPay will convert Bitcoins into various currencies without charging a transaction fee. BitPay CEO

Stephen Pair, sees the benefit in utilizing the currency to further the international trade industry. "With Bitcoin, you can take an international payment with no risk of credit card fraud," says Pair. "We sometimes forget that there are many countries where you can't take a credit card payment. Those countries become isolated from the rest of the Internet economy... For many of these countries, if this payment system works, if the U.S. and Congress can support and tolerate a reputable, well-paid industry, this will be a big connector to the world economy" (nationalgeographic.com). Bitcoin has the potential to provide a means in which we can trade with foreign countries without having to pay excess third-party fees. This way of revolutionizing trade can theoretically contribute to economic growth in underdeveloped countries. Again, the lack of third-party intervention and the regulation by the people suggest that Bitcoin may represent the democratization of money, and therefore, be a key contributor in strengthening the economy.

Conclusion

So much of the reason why Bitcoin could contribute to the furtherance of democracy has to do with the fact that it is unregulated by third parties. Bitcoin is governed by the people. It represents the democratization of currency. There is a low barrier to entry and anyone with Internet access can partake. Of course, a peer-to-peer money transfer network means that it has the potential to be used illegally. People have purchased drugs with Bitcoin just as they have purchased drugs with tangible cash. Digital money is by no means perfect, but the potential that it holds is virtually limitless. Nobody can question the legitimacy of transfers. The program was written as such. So, if law professionals suspect certain activity, they can theoretically get a warrant to obtain a person's Bitcoin address and investigate as necessary. Reality is, people have exchanged more than just money for drugs and in the scheme of things, Bitcoin is just another commodity.

In early October of 2013, Ross Ulbricht was arrested at a library in San Francisco as he was "literally caught with his fingers at the keyboard, running Silk Road" (Jeong). Silk Road was the website in which illegal drugs, fake passports, and counterfeit money could be sold and purchased with Bitcoins. Attorneys believed that they had a reasonable amount of evidence to suspect Ulbricht was the "infamous kingpin" of Silk Road (Jeong). Because of Bitcoin's anonymity and lack of regulation, an operation like Silk Road could operate for an extended period of time without law enforcement successfully tracking the origins. Security and anonymity come at a cost and New York State’s top financial regulator, Benjamin Lawsky has said that in an effort to begin regulating the currency, he will begin issuing “BitLicences” to companies that deal with Bitcoins. Lawsky states, “Our objective is to provide appropriate guardrails to protect consumers and root out money laundering -- without stifling beneficial innovation” (Pagliery). This marks the beginning stages for attempting to prevent illegal activity, such as that of Silk Road.

Like with handing someone a dollar bill, Bitcoin can get a sum of money from one person to another. Unlike with alternate methods, the transaction fees are tiny. This opens up a world of change for struggling industries like that of journalism, immigrants looking to send money home, or international traders fed up with banks taking advantage of their business. We as consumers in a democratic society cannot ignore the economic benefits that the cryptocurrency has to offer. Since its worth depends so much on investor’s confidence, we as consumers have the power to make Bitcoin a key player in our democratic society.

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BEYOND DIGITAL DUALISM:
THE CONCEPTUAL FALLACY OF THE ONLINE/OFFLINE DICHOTOMY

BY: LAUREN NAWFEL

"While the Internet beckons brightly, seductively flashing an icon of knowledge-as-power, this nonplace lures us to surrender our time on earth."

- Clifford Stoll, 1995

"We live in an augmented reality that exists at the intersection of materiality and information, physicality and digitality, bodies and technology, atoms and bits, the off and the online. It is wrong to say "IRL" to mean offline: Facebook is real life."

-Nathan Jurgenson, 2014

On February 26th, 1995, Newsweek headlined an article by Clifford Stoll titled "Why the Web Won't be Nirvana." Stoll writes of computers and multimedia in education, of virtual communities, and of online databases replacing print news. The term he uses to describe all of these predictions? Baloney. Stoll (1995) argues that what is absent from the online world is human contact, claiming that computers and networks would actually isolate people from one another (para. 8). Stoll contends that on the Internet, "important aspects of human interactions are relentlessly devalued," implying that living satisfying lives and spending time on computer networks are mutually exclusive (para. 8).

It is fascinating for me to read the Newsweek article in today's digital world, as someone who has grown up learning in Internet-enhanced classrooms, interacting through social media networks, and having the world's knowledge merely a Google search away. Time has proven Stoll and many other early digital naysayers mistaken, as the Internet has infiltrated so many aspects of human life. Yet, despite all our technological change, Stoll's cynical view, that "real" life exists outside of, or disconnected from, the digital realm largely remains part of popular discourse. Many people embrace Stoll's notion; we hear warnings of the online and veneration of time spent offline around dinner tables, on nightly news casts, in advice columns and opinion pieces (most of which are, of course, published and read via the Internet). This perspective promotes the concept of a strong online/offline dichotomy – that time spent offline is “real life” and that time spent online is something else, something less than real, genuine, or authentic.

Yet, as the online/offline dichotomy remains a core tenet of public discourse, the conceptual understanding of our digital world is increasingly challenged. Social media theorist Nathan Jurgenson (2012c) contends that the Internet, followed by social media and Web 2.0 platforms, has led to an ever deeper interweaving of physical and virtual life, resulting in the online and offline as inherently connected domains rather than distinctly separate spheres (p.85). His work stands in contrast to scholars such as Sherry Turkle, David Riesman, Robert Putnam, and others who hold opposing positions on this issue and suggest that technology is responsible for replacing what is real with something that is unnatural or unreal (Jurgenson, 2013, n.p.). Jurgenson (2013) labels individuals who share this vision as “Disconnectionists.” Disconnectionists, he explains, view the online and offline as separate from one another, and moreover, believe that too much time spent online is detrimental to our time spent offline (n.p.). Jurgenson (2012c) sees this as a conceptual fallacy, what he refers to as digital dualism, or the habit of viewing the online and offline as largely distinct (p.84). According to Jurgenson, there is no meaningful detachment between the online and offline worlds or the idea of there being a “real” versus “virtual.” Technology has become inherent to how we think about and perceive the world; thus, Jurgenson suggests that people are never truly offline. More to the point, he argues, there is no offline – at least in the popular conception of the term. He alternately proposes that digital technologies “effectively merge the digital and physical into an augmented reality” (Jurgenson, 2012c, p.84). To clarify, an augmented reality represents the position that atoms (what make up humans and the physical world) and bits (what make up computer data and the virtual world) are concurrent in creating reality (Jurgenson, 2011, n.p.). Holding atoms and bits as conceptually separate is to ignore the fact that “lived reality is the result of the constant interpenetration of the online and offline (Jurgenson, 2012b, n.p.).”

With today’s ubiquitous digital immersion, it is difficult to support the online/offline dichotomy. The growing prominence of mobile devices and social media in everyday life compels us to confront whether there is a meaningful distinction between the physical and the virtual. As online and offline life continue to blend, the rules and values of society, as well as the decisions we make, how we think of ourselves, and how we consider the world around us, are changing and adapting accordingly. As Jurgenson's work implies, the Internet and social media are a part of us; they are intrinsic to who we are, and therefore, not something that we can avoid or bracket off as "not real." To better understand the fallacy of digital dualism and the potential repercussions of holding onto the online/offline dichotomy, I examine how technology has trickled into our everyday lives; specifically our relationships, thoughts, and how we perceive the world. The more that technology becomes connected to our actions, habits, and behaviors, the more inconsequential the online/offline dichotomy becomes. Furthermore, and perhaps most importantly, preserving the conceptual language of online and offline or "real" versus "virtual" hinders our ability to fully understand and address the existing challenges of living in the digital age.

Conventional wisdom suggests that the digital age has brought with it a shift in cultural behavior. We are constantly spending the majority of our time interacting with, or thinking about, technology. According to Danah Boyd (2012) in "Participating in the Always-on Lifestyle," a cohort of people who are always-on is becoming the norm in society, and many of us as individuals are a part of it (p.71). Referring to a constant connection to the network, the term always-on does not necessarily imply that one is permanently accessible to others, although that is often the expectation (Boyd, 2012, p.72). Instead, the term simply relates to the idea that information on the network is accessible to the individual at any moment that he or she wishes to retrieve it. Yet, more importantly, Boyd contemplates what it actually means to be online. She states that, "…the online is always just around the corner. I can look up information, multitask by surfing the web, and backchannel with friends. I'm not really online, in that my activities are not centered on digital bits of the Internet, but I'm not really offline either" (Boyd, 2012, p.71). Like Jurgenson, Boyd emphasizes that everything we do is increasingly related to being online. Consequently, we could be considered as being online at any time, perhaps always.

The Internet is such a regular and integral part of life that using it and thinking about it is more often than not automatic and involuntary. Jurgenson (2012a) calls this "the Facebook Eye," or the idea that our brains are conditioned to think in a way that always reverts our thoughts back to online activities. The concept of the Facebook Eye demonstrates how we, as digitally savvy individuals, never seem to escape the Internet - even mentally. Jurgenson defines the Facebook Eye as "always looking for moments where the ephemeral blur of lived experience might best be translated into a Facebook post; one that will draw the most comments and 'likes'" (n.p.). The very fact that we mechanically think about being online, even when we are not, demonstrates how we are psychologically connected to our technology at all times. This idea builds on a broader contention introduced decades ago by media theorist Marshall McLuhan. McLuhan (1967) argued that all media are extensions of man and are part of our sensory perception of the world (pp. 26-41). Building on the concept of the always-on lifestyle and on McLuhan's theory, the Facebook Eye describes our thought process and how we are constantly thinking about sharing content. Jurgenson states that we are increasingly conscious of how our lives will appear as a Facebook status, Instagram photo, or tweet on Twitter. He cleverly writes "Twitter lips and Instagram eyes: Social media is part of ourselves; the Facebook source code becomes our own code" (Jurgenson, 2012b), n.p.). Being always-on and digitally-minded is now a part of our psyche as much as it is a part of our culture; it is conceivably an innate characteristic of the average American citizen.

However, many people remain skeptical of Jurgenson's claim that the online and offline are meshing together. They take pride in emphasizing the time they spend offline in comparison to how often they are online. In the "IRL Fetish," Jurgenson points out the growing fixation behind achieving an Internet free lifestyle. He says that the obsession over the need to announce or to celebrate when one is disconnected or resisting technological intrusions is an absurd fascination. People should not feel obliged to declare when they are abstaining from the always-on lifestyle because, in reality, very few actually can (Jurgenson, 2012b, n.p.). Recognizing the opposing view, Jurgenson references Sherry Turkle, who is well known for her skepticism and her cautions regarding Internet use. Turkle and her supporters suggest that we must resist technology's seductive nature. They also warn that overindulgence will hinder our ability to live wholesome lives in the physical world. Jurgenson quotes Turkle (2012) who wrote in an op-ed for The New York Times that she longs for the recent past when people were not so inherently bound to technology. She reminisces when she could walk along the beach and find passersby enjoying the nature around them, writing, "not too long ago, people walked with their heads up, looking at the water, the sky, the sand and at one another, talking. Now they often walk with their heads down, typing… so I say, look up, look at one another" (Turkle, 2012, n.p.). Turkle advises Internet users to acknowledge and to embrace the physical world that surrounds them.

In her ever popular and widely accepted book Alone Together, Turkle (2011) explains her belief that technology provides people with substitutes for interacting with each other face to face (p. 11). She details that we often end up “alone together,” physically occupying the same space yet completely alone in our own worlds (Turkle, 2011, p.14). The book struck a chord and worried many people about the implications of excessively overusing technology, social media, and the Internet. From Turkle’s perspective, technology is comparable to a phantom limb, an idea that connects back to Boyd’s notion of the always-on lifestyle as well as McLuhan’s theory. She distinguishes this characteristic as a negative and worries that technology might not provide us with the life we want to lead, as it is reshaping us emotionally (Turkle, 2011, p. 17). Overall, in Alone Together, the claim is that society has become more narcissistic due to the way we use technology, and Turkle suspects that this makes us susceptible to desire engagement with sociable technology rather than to pursue wholesome interactions with physical human beings. She fears that we are increasingly becoming less genuine and progressively losing the authenticity of human life. Many cynics adopted Turkle’s opinion as their own and continue to remain concerned with her assertions about technology’s impact on humanity.

Jurgenson (2012b) acknowledges that scholars such as Turkle are urging us to “turn off [our] phones, log off social media, and learn to reconnect offline”, in other words, defy technological interferences and aim to consume less information (n.p.). Yet, Jurgenson’s argument represents the other side of the coin. In opposition, he points out the irony in Turkle’s argument, particularly the example of noticing passersby engrossed in their technological devices while walking along the beach. Though experiencing nature in the real world, Turkle was simultaneously thinking about Facebook (Jurgenson, 2012b, n.p.). She might have been physically offline, but her thoughts were not completely disconnected from the virtual world of social media. Jurgenson (2012b) reveals that, “[Turkle’s] stroll ultimately was understood as and came to be fodder for her op-ed, just as our own time spent not looking at Facebook becomes the status updates and photos we will post later” (n.p.). Jurgenson would likely agree that our genuine and authentic life experiences are the foundation of our virtual behavior; online actions are indeed largely shaped by occurrences offline. In Jurgenson’s (2012b) language, “What is most crucial to our time spent logged on is what happened while we were logged off; it is the fuel that runs the engine of social media,” and he could not be more correct in this statement (n.p.). What fun is scrolling though social media if we are unable to discover how other people are spending their time in the physical world? There would essentially be no point, and social media would be considerably less intriguing.

Jurgenson affirms that the Internet and social media have everything to do with reality and that opposing views, such as Turkle's, fail to acknowledge the augmented reality that lies before all of us. While I do understand Sherry Turkle's concerns about the potential social and addictive dangers of the Internet, I find Jurgenson's argument informative and convincing. Utilizing technology does not necessarily make us less interactive on a face to face basis. The way I perceive it is that we can criticize technology and worry about its social implications day in and day out. However, the truth is that technology will never disappear or cease to be a fundamental part of our daily routines. As Jurgenson states, "we are far from forgetting about the offline," but we are also incapable of ignoring or resisting it because technology is now a natural and normal component of life (Jurgenson, 2012b, n.p.). We never can truly be mentally disconnected, not in this digital age, because our lifestyles are ones that are always-on. Frankly, the only way that an individual can be fully offline is if he or she has never been consistently online; we are not truly offline if we need to make a conscious effort to be disconnected. At any particular moment, an individual might not be tangibly connected to or physically interacting with Internet platforms or technological devices, but this does not imply that he or she is free of the online mindset. As Jurgenson's overall argument preaches, social media is a part of us. He claims that it is central to who we are, burrowed deep into our consciousness, and therefore, not something that we can escape (Jurgenson, 2012b, n.p.). Ultimately, viewing the online and offline as two separate spheres is a fallacy, a failure to recognize how intrinsic technology is to our daily lives. Believing in the substance of an online/offline dichotomy restrains us from confronting the challenges of the digital age in a meaningful and useful way.

Online dating is a perfect example exhibiting how technology has brought new challenges to the forefront of the digital age. Writers such as Dan Slater, Peter Ludlow, and Rob Horning explore the fact that romantic relationships are increasingly the product of online dating platforms. However, more importantly, the authors go beyond online dating as a popular culture phenomenon and demonstrate how dating sites may be changing our perception of romance, particularly of the possibilities and opportunities that accompany searching for a partner online. Never before did the possibility exist to exclude those who express dissimilar interests or to research a date's favorite color, political views, educational background, or photo gallery. Presently, with social media and online dating platforms, that information is available to individuals in a quick and easy snooping session. How can we claim a distinct dichotomy between the online and offline worlds when online dating is so prominent? Online dating effectively represents the imploding of atoms and bits and demonstrates how our conceptual online/offline vocabulary should be replaced by a more widespread, representative language that better reflects our present day society.

Traditionally, the search for a romantic companion ends when two people settle down and make the choice to commit to one another. This used to be the norm in society, but online dating, and digitally-networked relationships are creating new standards. Author Dan Slater (2013) describes the for-profit model of online dating sites in "A Million First Dates," revealing that people who have long become inactive on online dating platforms continue to receive notifications about potential love connections and about people who are viewing their profiles. The increased popularity of online dating, Slater argues, will mean an overall decrease in committed relationships. According to Greg Blatt, CEO of Match.com, online dating is forcing people to call into question whether or not commitment is a worthwhile life value (Slater, 2013, n.p.). Noel Biderman, founder of Ashley Madison, draws attention to the fact that online dating platforms make it extremely easy and convenient to find a new partner. They constantly provide the opportunity for users to look for someone who might be a better fit, challenging and threatening traditional views regarding monogamy. Psychological studies show that three components typically measure the strength of commitment in a relationship: 1) satisfaction, 2) invested time and effort, 3) and quality of perceived alternatives. Slater acknowledges that "two of the three—satisfaction and quality of alternatives—could be directly affected by the larger mating pool that the Internet offers (n.p.)." Researchers have determined that people become cognitively overwhelmed when they are presented with a plethora of potential romantic partners. Slater ultimately concludes that online dating is "a litany of alternatives," and that having these "appealing alternatives" is a likely indicator of low commitment, and consequently broken, unhealthy relationships (n.p.).

Similarly, Peter Ludlow (2013) writes about the ease of finding such appealing alternatives in "The Many Problems of Online Dating's Radical Efficiency." He suggests that online dating increases the efficiency of the "dating marketplace," because the practice makes it more convenient to find people to pursue, eliminating scarcity and encouraging people to walk the path of least resistance (Ludlow, 2013, n.p.). According to Ludlow, finding a partner used to be expensive and inefficient, but now with a frictionless market, one can simply log online and pick someone. The emotional labor and risk of failure is largely reduced (Ludlow, 2013, n.p.). The overarching question becomes a matter of what should be done to address these new problems brought about by the way that online dating platforms have changed the nature of relationships. If we take seriously that the solution is not to retreat into the offline world as a separate sphere, we can better address the actual problems that face relationships in a world where scarcity is diminished and our digital networks guarantee an ever growing promise of connection and possibility.

The digital age has not only brought about significant changes socially, in terms of how people think and behave on and offline, but also commercially, by gathering personal data on individuals. Perhaps the most prominent societal shift due to the changing nature of relationships is the way in which the Internet and advertising industries have worked together to commodify our romantic relations. Rob Horning (2012) states specifically in the article "Single Servings" that online dating is an experiential good, and that romantic relationships have essentially become commercial products. He proclaims that online dating shatters the concept of scarcity and replaces it with a free market, one with endless opportunity for acquiring more (Horning, 2012, n.p.). Free dating sites encourage users to want more and to stay active for as long as possible so that they can gather more information about them (Horning, 2012, n.p.). Ironically, online dating companies work with advertisers, not to help find users compatible lovers, but to help distinguish products that users will love. Horning reveals how dating sites use gamification as bait, giving rewards for answering personal question. Smart? Most definitely, but also very sneaky. Sociologist Eva Illouz agrees with Horning, arguing that, "romantic relations are not only organized within the market, but have themselves become commodities produced on an assembly line to be consumed fast, efficiently, cheaply and in great abundance (Horning, 2012, n.p.)." Ultimately, technology drastically changed the dating process which steered us deeper into a market driven, consumer focused society where our offline lives are of utmost concern for marketing online.

Not only is online dating an example supporting why Jurgenson's disapproval of the online/offline dichotomy is credible, but search engine optimization also defends a connection between the physical and virtual worlds. Horning (2010) expands on this in his article "SEO & the Disappearing

Self," describing how data trails are created when users like a post or click on a social media link, embedding the logic of marketing into our human relationships. He discusses how Facebook actually "prioritizes updates that prompt 'user engagement'" (Horning, 2010, n.p.). The strategy guarantees that users will generate data trails for Facebook's review. In addition, Horning writes that Facebook users are constantly developing sales pitches of their identities. However, in pitching one's identity to the Facebook community, Facebook gets everything that it wants; and what it wants is data and more data (Horning, 2010, n.p.). Social media platforms are sly, but Facebook is no less devious than businesses and corporations. Commercial entities, such as Amazon and other retail providers, are persistently gathering and utilizing personal information to develop commercial profiles for the purpose of selling more products and for enhancing corporate profit (Horning, 2010, n.p.). Commercial data aggregation and targeted advertising could not be a more fitting example of how the online and offline worlds rely heavily on one another.

Ultimately, there remains a question of "so what?" So what if we hold onto the conceptual language of the online/offline dichotomy? What difference does it make? As we can see with online dating and search engine optimization, Jurgenson and other critics of digital dualism call into question the larger, overarching issue that our distinctly separate online/offline conceptual language makes it difficult to effectively address the changes in lifestyle that technology has initiated in our digitally dominated society. The separation that the terms online and offline imply no longer accurately describes the processes and procedures in our lives today. Accepting Jurgenson's view and redefining our conceptual language will help us to better understand this technologically dependent world and how to more vividly recognize, embrace and/or cope with the way life has changed. Moreover, it is worth noting that the networks, platforms, and applications through which we live our lives are not neutral platforms. They are designed and controlled by powerful entities whose interests may not align with our own or with the social good. If we retreat to an idealized "offline" as the solution to our problems, we will not be able to fully understand or confront the bigger challenges we face as individuals or as a society.

Neither our relationships nor our identities can be considered or discussed without recognizing the prominence of the Internet. If this is so, then how can we accept the prevailing view of Sherry Turkle and others who imply that the physical and virtual realities are distinctly detached? Jurgenson (2012b) confronts this directly by countering that, "Facebook is real life" (n.p.). What happens online is no less real than what takes place offline because of the augmented reality. Our virtual and physical thoughts and behaviors are intertwined and inseparable.

Much has evolved since the first email was sent in 1971. We have seen a peer-to-peer social infrastructure develop in the wake of what was once an unorganized, unindexed sea of information. Each new invention has quickened the pace of life, and I feel it is safe to say that further progression of the Internet will continue to do the same. It will make tasks more expedient and result in making information more easily accessible. Our mindset is consequently set to an always-on status, and most of us do not even think twice about how this has affected our actions, habits, and values. Precisely, the Internet is changing societal norms and it will only continue to do so as it progresses. In brief, it is altering the conventional view that the virtual is separate from the physical, and it is not difficult to imagine that Jurgenson's more refined and nuanced concept of augmented reality will become the norm. We can only understand the world around us via the language that we use. Our current conceptual language is not helpful and should be changed so that we are better able to understand the digital world in which we live. Whether or not Jurgenson's "augmented reality" takes off in the popular lexicon remains to be seen. Perhaps someone else will help conceptualize living in the digital age. Will it be you?

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SOCIAL MEDIA:
A NEW PLATFORM FOR ACTIVISM?

BY: BRITTANY MOSIER

Social media and the use of the Internet have been on a drastic rise in recent years. Social media has created a way for people to connect with one another all over the world. Recently, social media has taken on a new role in organizing and carrying out activist movements all across the globe. Activism, defined as the policy or action of using vigorous campaigning to bring about political or social change, has transformed a lot over the decades. It began as something that was done in the physical world and only shown through protests and campaigns in a physical setting. Nowadays, activism has developed into something beyond just that. Activism is now enforced all over the Internet and social media sites. With the rapid rise in social media use, the Internet has turned into one of the best places for activism to be carried out. Throughout this paper, the focus will primarily be on the Arab Spring and the use of Twitter and Facebook for different roles, while also touching upon other examples such as the Facebook Whole Foods boycott, the Occupy Wall Street Movement, the TOMS movement and Anonymous.

The Arab Spring refers to the democracy movements that began in Tunisia and eventually spread to many of the other nearby countries. The citizens of the countries of Tunisia, Libya, Yemen, and Egypt fought strong and hard to overthrow their dictators in order to fight for their democratic rights. This revolution would have had nowhere as big of an impact if it were not for social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter. The Internet played one of the most crucial roles in helping to organize these protests and ultimately overthrow the country's corrupt government systems. The uprising all began when Mohamed Bouazizi set himself on fire in front of the governor's office because of the corrupt bureaucracy. Protests soon broke out and when the media refused to show coverage of the event, it created even more anger in the citizens. YouTube videos of the man on fire and the abusive state quickly started circulating the Internet. Citizens of the country began to occupy space in the city and post pictures and videos of the treatment from the government to their Facebook pages. Soon after, the government tried to put a ban on Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube and monitored Internet use to all extreme capabilities. However, this did not stop the citizens; they found ways around the surveillance and ultimately, the Internet Kill Switch.

One of the major reasons social media use was so abundant and worked so well during this uprising was because of the tech-savvy, young people that took a stand in this movement. Tunisia had about 93 mobile phone subscribers per every 100 people and Egypt had about 67 mobile phone users for every 100 people (Howard, Hussain 2013, 48). This indicated that most of the population was connected and had access to social media and/or the Internet. As the protests got more involved and grew, the use of social media became extremely crucial. On January 18, 2011 a 26-year-old Egyptian activist, Asmaa Mahfouz, posted a YouTube video to Facebook that called all Egyptians to Tahrir Square on January 25 to join in protest. In her video, she explained the corrupt actions of the government and begged for the help of her fellow Egyptian citizens on something she dubbed the "Day of Rage." This was one of the many examples of how Facebook was used to organize protests and alert fellow Egyptians about why protests needed to occur.

However, due to the tight of the Internet, protesters had to out think the government. According to the move, The Square, Facebook users would post more information about some of the smaller protests in order to distract the police away from the larger protests. Ultimately, in most cases it worked and the police were drawn to the smaller protests and the larger ones grew enormously with fewer police attendance. The extensive use of Facebook led to this being known as the "Facebook Revolution" (Harlow, 2013. 61, 64). The Facebook group "We Are All Khaled Said" was considered one of the key groups that helped to organize and promote the protests. The page had roughly 380,000 followers, which allowed massive amounts of people to receive information about the protests. According to the movie, The Square, Facebook was one of the biggest contributors to the organization of protests, but had one major downfall: the citizens could not remain anonymous. With the extremely tight regulation and surveillance of the Internet by the government it was very dangerous for people to post about the protests because of the chance of being arrested or even killed.

Since the regulation and surveillance was so strictly enforced on the Internet, it led Egyptians to turn to another social media site: Twitter. Twitter allows its users to remain anonymous and create an identity under any name of their desire. This was very crucial because it allowed activists to post about almost anything regarding the uprising without living in fear of being arrested or killed. Twitter also has the feature of retweets, which allows information to spread from person-to-person extremely fast. Additionally, Twitter has a "hashtag" feature, which allows keywords to be marked with the # symbol and posted to a discussion channel (Lindgren, 2013, 210). According to the movie, The Square, Twitter was highly crucial for updating citizens about the size of the protests, the activity of the police, and the locations of protests. Twitter was a constant live feed update filled with retweets and hashtag, about what was going on in the front line. The extensive use of Twitter for activist rights can also be known as the “Twitter Revolution” (Lindgren, 2013, 209). Some examples of tweets from the February 17th uprising include: “@ShababLibya: #Benghazi your city is calling you, Take to the streets. Head for Maydan al Shajara #feb17 #libya” and “@ShababLibya: try to include a hash-tag with your post, for example #Libya or #feb17” (Lindgren, 2013, 216). As shown from the tweets, the hashtag feature of twitter was very important for allowing people to quickly search a keyword and find out what, when, and where the protests were happening. This just shows that the use of Twitter was important for communicating across a wide span of people in order to achieve freedom from their dictator.

Overall, it is evident that the use of social media was extremely important in organizing the activist movements and sharing news with citizens across the countries that led to the Arab Spring. Social media contributed to collective action in four major ways: by making it easier for disaffected citizens to act publicly in coordination, by creating information cascades that bolstered protesters perceptions of the likelihood of success, by raising the costs of repression by the ruling regimes, and by dramatically increasing publicity through diffusion of information to regional and global publics (York, Youmans. 2012. 317). Both of these social media sites were very crucial for the sole purposes of their differences in anonymity. As Facebook has a policy that its users must use their names and their true identity (York, Youmans, 2012, 319), Twitter has the policy that being anonymous is completely acceptable. From watching the movie, The Square, it was evident that having anonymity during the uprising was very important to the activist’s safety. However, during the movie, one of the women activists felt that being able to post a video of herself on Facebook where she addressed the reasons for protesting and showing her face led to a more intimate bond between herself and the viewers. She discussed how she wanted the viewers to realize these were real people, fighting for real democracy, and they needed their fellow citizens’ help. Regarding Twitter’s anonymity policy, Twitter allowed activists to create false identity accounts and spread the news of the protests without the constant worry of being caught. Twitter was the easier way to quickly spread information, while Facebook was needed for creating events, getting activists to like the Facebook pages created, and allowing activists to more personally connect with viewers.

Another example of social media being used for activism is the Facebook Whole Foods boycott that happened in 2009. This movement was in response to the CEO of Whole Foods Market, John Mackey's, reaction to the Obama administration's proposed health-care reforms. John Mackey wrote a column in the Wall Street Journal, "The Whole Foods Alternative to ObamaCare." His article argued that health-care reform in the current financial situation was an irresponsible action that would bring the country to collapse. Later in his article he argued, "health care was not an intrinsic ethical right and that it was best provided through voluntary and mutually beneficial market exchange"(Kang, 2012, 562). His article and all of his opinions raised strong reactions from the public. Whole Foods had been seen as a brand of environmental concern, fair trade, and labor consciousness, but this article quickly made customers question all of that. The same day his article was published, the Facebook group "Boycott Whole Foods" was created and gained 30,000 members within 2 weeks. Because of this active Facebook group, at the end of 2009 Whole Foods reported a 2.3 percent fall in sales compared to the previous year. Kang says that after this campaign on Facebook, social media was seen as a resource for radical grassroots politics (Kang 2012, 563).

The use of Facebook for this boycott let people link their personal pages to the boycott and show their identity in support of the movement. With Facebook's ability to share pages and invite friends, the protestors were able to quickly share and invite people to join the page. The Facebook page was able to contain hyperlinks to other media sites in order to share further information and alert customers of the problems. Facebook gave the opportunity for wall posts, group info, discussion boards and comments that lead to more information being passed around. This Facebook page was linked to Twitter, which lead to the information being further spread and retweeted with the hashtag #boycottwholefoods.

The Occupy Wall Street Movement is also an example of how social media was used for activism. The Occupy Wall Street Movement began in New York City on September 17, 2011. After much media coverage and protests, Twitter quickly became the technological platform most closely associated with the Occupy Wall Street Movement. As the movement grew, Twitter served the purposes of coordinating activities and publicizing their critiques of contemporary capitalism by using the #occupywallstreet slogan (Dadas, Caroline 2014, 75). Twitter allowed activists to tweet and retweet locations and information about the movement that was outside the coverage of the mass media sources. Dadas and Penney say the use of technology to aid in activism has intensified the dialect between internal and external publics because the messages posted on social media have the capability to find audiences all over the world (Dadas, Penney 2014, 77). According to Dadas and Penney, Twitter played seven major roles in the Occupy Wall Street Movement. Twitter not only facilitated face-to-face protests, but also created live reporting from the protestors, retweeted information and incorporated links, expressed personal views about the movements, engaged in discussion regarding the movement, made connections with fellow activists, and facilited online-based actions (Dadas, Penney 2014, 79-84). All of these roles helped to strengthen ties between activists, pull more people into the movement, and quickly spread information about the status of the movement. Here, Twitter's anonymity allowed strong activists to take on different identities within the movement, such as reporting on face-to-face actions or having an "official" Occupy Wall Street account.

The next movement that was influenced by the use of social media was the TOMS movement. TOMS manufactures shoes that can be purchased online and then once the purchase is made, a second pair of shoes is sent to a child in need in a variety of countries. TOMS used Facebook and Twitter as a way to get people involved in their movement. In 2013 the TOMS Facebook page had over 250,000 fans. Meyer says that, "today emerging adults speak through primarily a technological voice" (Meyer, 2013, 54). This meaning that the TOMS shoe company saw social media as the best outlet to gain involvement in their movement because that is the fate of our generation. In this case, the TOMS shoe company was not trying to start a protest or an uprising, but instead wanted to spread awareness about their company. The company encouraged customers to tweet about their shoes and company and use the hashtag, #TOMSmovement. The company also used Facebook to explain their mission statement and encouraged people to comment and share the page.

The last movement that is relevant to social media and activism is the work done by the group called Anonymous. Anonymous is a hacktivist group that hacks social media sites, personal websites, and almost anything you could think of on the Internet in order to bring justice where they deem it needed. The group, Anonymous, felt they were needed in a case where the Big Red High School football team's members allegedly raped a girl in Louisville, Ohio in August of 2012. The team members involved in the rape were refusing to come forward and own up to their crime. In this case, Anonymous felt it was necessary to step in and bring justice to the victim. Anonymous posted a video to the football team's website threatening to expose personal information about the people involved if they refused to come forward and apologize (Samer 2012). Anonymous said they had hacked into the school's website and personal email of Jim Parks and found nude pictures that could be child porn. Jim Parks supposedly would have the team members go party-to-party and send him pictures of girls they took advantage of. Anonymous also found photos of the alleged rape victim and threatened to expose their identities to everyone. This work of activism was solely to bring justice to an innocent girl and the other victims that were impacted by the work of the Big Red High School football team "Rape Crew."

Overall, it is obvious that social media sites such as Twitter and Facebook have been extremely beneficial to activism. Both social media sites have grown into platforms used for purposes beyond just connecting with friends and sharing our lives. They have been extremely beneficial for activism and social movements by allowing people to jump on board with the masses and spread awareness quickly to endless points of the world. An example of this would be how America and other countries found out about the Kill Switch in Egypt and then started sending information to Egyptians about how to get around the Internet shut down. The Internet and social media were also extremely important because they showed a lot of things that the mass media platforms did not cover. The media tries very hard to filter what they do not show and social media gave people an outlet to see first hand the things going on in the protests without a filter. The last benefit to social media that I think is one of the greatest, is the fact that social media breaks down racial, cultural, and geographical borders. Social media allows anyone and everyone to connect regardless of race, religion or whatever else. Social media has allowed people all over the world to connect, join together, and fight for their rights and freedoms. Social media has most definitely changed the way that activism is played out. Overall, social media has brought great benefits that will continue to help in the future.

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NEWS JOURNALISM IN THE DIGITAL AGE:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

BY: AMANDA COTE

Introduction and Overview

With the growth of the digital age, there have been advantages and disadvantages for industries across the board, but nearly no other industry has felt the iron hammer of technology more than the field of print journalism and news media. As print newspapers—and the advertisements that sustain them—all fall increasingly out of favor with the average consumer, publications across the country and world have been forced to make some serious changes. These changes include going out of business completely, filing for bankruptcy and reorganization, making budget cuts and downsizing or exploring other options to continue on in their industry successfully.

Aside from the financial well being of newspaper corporations and families, the survival of journalism is essential for democracy in America to prevail successfully with the original intent of the Founders. A true democracy requires some type of platform for distributing all the information people need for decision making and governing themselves successfully. In most cases, the press fulfills this role, but with the future of journalism lying in wait of a miracle, one can only wonder what will happen. Newspapers and media organizations have made changes in recent years that have delivered short-term, mediocre solutions for the transition onto the Internet and into the digital era. Experts have met, discussed and deliberated potential long-term solutions for the survival of this industry - one that will continue its service as a democratic institution with the values on which our democracy was founded.

The Role of Journalism and News Media in a Democracy

Upon the building of the United States of America, its Founders had the hope for a different kind of government system. Their hatred of rule by a select few through monarchy, tyranny, the empires that had plagued Europe, and more specifically Great Britain, drove them to the idea of democracy, a rule by the people. According to Jacob Needleman in his book, The American Soul, the Founders of America sought after a form of governance that instead of limiting its people with unjust regulations would "protect and preserve the ongoing work of society to orient itself through the dictates of conscience" (Needleman 23). Needleman describes this kind of democracy as having two different, yet related definitions: a narrow definition and a broad definition. In a narrow sense, democracy can be defined as a social system of governance and laws, but in a broad sense, it can also be defined as a tool in the pursuit of inner freedom and happiness. Essentially, democracy was intended to have a shell of government, laws, and structure inside which its people would seek and actively pursue an inner sense of purpose, meaning, and happiness beyond that of instinctual needs and goals made solely for personal satisfaction.

From the mid-19th century to present day, journalism has become known in itself as an institution of democracy: attempting to maintain the peace between the average citizen and those in positions of wealth or authority and further keeping the citizens of America and the world aware of current events, issues, and concerns. In a democracy, journalism and news media potentially has several roles, including "distributing all the information people need to govern themselves, holding those in power responsible for their actions, representing all people, and addressing democracy's need for a forum" (Craft & Davis, 5-6). When journalism fails to meet one or more of these roles, a democracy strays further and further away from its purest state. Perhaps one of the most important to uphold of these roles is the ability and responsibility of news organizations to act as a check on the government. "By exposing corruption and the abuse of power, the press should act as a watchdog on government, which is considered the main threat to individual freedom" (Hackett, 16). When news media is unable to maintain this balance in society, those in positions of authority can attain too much power, the average person becomes weaker in society, and corruption is inevitable. In that case, a democracy is no longer a democracy, but rather a monarchy.

In Robert McChesney's chapter, "How Can the Political Economy of Communication Help Us Understand the Internet," the roles of healthy, democratic journalism are outlined further. In addition to holding the government and authoritarian organizations accountable for their actions, journalism must also be capable of separating truth from lies, remaining objective, and providing a wide range of informed opinions on relevant issues (McChesney, 83). Separating truthful statements from fabricated information, maintaining reliable, relevant and trustworthy sources, and excluding bias allows the journalism industry to keep the citizens of a society well informed. In turn, news media in a democracy acts as the mediator between the shell of governance, structure and laws, and the broader sense of desire the people in society have to pursue inner purpose, freedom and happiness through serving others. Thus, when in its purest, most complete form, journalism assists democracy in protecting American society, like the Founders originally intended. However, in recent years, with society leaning towards a digital lifestyle, print journalism and newspaper companies have been suffering to keep up and maintain journalistic tradition.

Journalism and Print Newspapers in the Digital Era: Challenges and Opportunities

Recent decades have brought new opportunities for the journalism industry, but not without significant challenges. The invention and increasing popularity of the Internet has brought with it advertising and news organizations born and thriving online. This creates immense competition for media organizations that previously relied on print circulation and advertising as main sources of revenue. These changes have forced innumerable newspapers and media organizations to turn to drastic measures, including going out of business completely, filing for bankruptcy reorganization, conducting mass layoffs, merging with other companies, reducing news content, and several other means in an attempt to remain successful. Until a more permanent solution has been proposed, the remaining newspapers and media companies will essentially have to ride the wave and find their own methods to stay afloat and segue into this digital age that is consuming journalism, news media and thousands of other industries.

Along those lines, the Graham family, the owners of The Washington Post and the Post Company, made a business decision in hopes of generating greater success in the future; they sold their company to Internet entrepreneur, independent billionaire, and founder of Internet retail giant Amazon.com, Jeff Bezos. Like other family-owned newspapers, The Washington Post had been suffering in the last ten to fifteen years with decreases in circulation resulting in a loss of revenue generated by classified advertising. According to an article in The Washington Post published around the time his family announced the sale, Graham believed that “The Post could have survived under the company’s ownership and been profitable for the foreseeable future. But we wanted to do more than survive. I’m not saying this guarantees success, but it gives us a much greater chance of success” (Farhi).

According to the Graham family, quoted in the aforementioned article in The Post, the idea of selling their paper and company was not even a consideration until the prospect of selling to Bezos was on the table. Bezos is optimistic for the future of The Washington Post under his watchful eye and understands its importance as an institution of information for the public. In an interview, Jeff Bezos said, "I don't want to imply that I have a worked-out plan. This will be uncharted terrain, and it will require experimentation" (Farhi). He believes there would have been immense change with or without a shift in ownership and wants people to know that the values of The Post will not be altered. On the business end of things, Bezos intends to make the company a private entity, which means he will not have to report quarterly earnings to shareholders and will not be subject to profit demands. This will in turn allow Bezos to experiment with the paper and different digital and Internet platforms without having to show an immediate return on investment.

Members of the Graham family, Post Company, and news community have had mostly positive reactions to the sale of The Washington Post to Internet entrepreneur, Jeff Bezos, paired with skeptical reactions from experts in the fields of digital media and publishing. The Washington Post's own investigative journalists and associative editors, Bob Woodward and Carl Bernstein, also widely known as the reporters who broke the Watergate scandal decades ago, are optimistic of the decision to sell the paper. Carl Bernstein was quoted in a round-table discussion on Democracy Now on the matter, "…seems to me exactly the kind of inventive and innovative choice needed to bring about a recommitment to great journalism on the scale many of us have been hoping for—while employing all the applicable tools and best sensibilities of a new era and the old" (Amy Goodman et al). From this celebrant point of view, the sale to Bezos was a very important and necessary one. For an organization in financial and popularity decline, change is inevitable, whether it is at the hand of its executives or the less-desirable alternatives. With the interest of readers not straying far from the Internet, social media, and smartphones, the clock is ticking for The Post to find means for improvement in their online newspaper, mobile applications, and social networking exposure now more than ever. Given that, a decision to sell to Jeff Bezos, someone who has built successful businesses online and proven his expertise and mastery of digital platforms, seems in simple terms to be a very logical one.

However, other experts in the digital media and publishing fields have expressed concern over the recent developments in the ownership of The Post and the similar fate of other media organizations. In a discussion on Democracy Now with experts like Robert McChesney, author of Digital Disconnect, Jeff Cohen of the Park Center for Independent Media, and Dennis Johnson, publisher at Melville House on the topic of The Washington Post's new owner illustrated specific concerns on the matter. According to McChesney, in this society supported almost entirely by commercial enterprise, journalism is dying and unable to provide us with the information we really need, the real journalism, the kind that informs the public on war plans and keeps an eye on government agencies like the NSA (Amy Goodman et al). The current system of news media is corrupt, as a few billionaires and companies are buying up smaller organizations and using this monopolizing power as a means of political investment to promote their individual political agendas.

Similarly, as Dennis Johnson explained in the round-table discussion, the entity that is Amazon.com is essentially a government-sanctioned monopoly, and one that, despite the latter, has evaded taxes since its inception and only offers minimum wage jobs. Johnson believes that Bezos "probably doesn't care" if he makes the Post Company more profitable, and although his statement is full of bias, it also is very thought provoking. Further emphasizing Bezos' relations and dealings with the government and the intelligence community, McChesney discusses the 2010 WikiLeaks incident with Johnson and Cohen on Democracy Now. Amazon representatives claimed "it had canceled its relationship with WikiLeaks not because of 'a government inquiry,' but because it decided that the organization was violating the terms of service for the program" (Savage). Essentially, when the government expressed displeasure with the WikiLeaks organization—whose web domain was hosted by Amazon.com, which as we know is owned and operated by Jeff Bezos—the Amazon Company removed WikiLeaks from their servers. This was done with no direct pressure whatsoever from the government, yet the government still reached its goal of temporarily shutting the program down.

The concern in this situation specifically lies in the cozy relationship between Jeff Bezos, his Amazon.com company, and the government. What will happen to the integrity of The Washington Post? This institution has hallowed journalistic tradition of being investigative (i.e., the Watergate scandal) and of using editorials to push public and governmental opinions (i.e., the Iraq Invasion). In the words of Jeff Cohen, "The Washington Post of the last decade is a pillar of U.S. foreign intervention and policy" (Amy Goodman et al). With Bezos having a friendly relationship with the government, will the face of The Post change? Will its famous tradition of investigative reporting and convincing editorials remain the same or fall by the wayside and become governmental propaganda over time? The potential for significant changes over time in the journalistic tradition of The Washington Post is immense, but the potential for success in the digital realm is equally as extensive. The question lies in which of the two will happen, or which of the two will happen first.

Separately, in McChesney's chapter, "The Internet and Capitalism II: Empire of the Senseless," he addresses a few concerns for the evolution of the Internet and thus the transition of the journalism industry as a whole, onto the Internet. The first concern he expresses is the fear of the growing organizations and billionaires of the Internet turning into monopolies driven mostly, if not solely, by profit. For news and journalistic organizations across the board, this poses a problem as a means of profit not always benefitting the public good, which is one of the characteristics of journalism in a democracy. In its purest state, investigative journalism and news media provides the tools society needs to be a true democracy, one where the people's voices are heard and the government and corporations are kept in a balance of power. McChesney addresses in this chapter and in the aforementioned discussion on Democracy Now, the fact that most Internet retail giants, including Bezos and his Amazon.com, have a mutually beneficial relationship with government agencies and the intelligence community. The current state of news media is struggling to separate governmental agenda and opinion from the whole truth in the struggle to maintain tradition in the digital age. The buying out of family-owned newspapers by Internet retail giants with close relationships to the government is of striking concern. Alternate solutions, other ways to bring the fully unbiased truth to the members of society with the government as an uninvolved, separate entity, are still being thought out.

However, this particular case is not the only example of retail giants potentially monopolizing newspapers and generating concern in this industry. Recently, telecommunications giant, Verizon Wireless, has launched "SugarString," a self-proclaimed online tech news publication, which will offer brand-publishing. This is part of a new trend among corporations who have begun pushing their own stories through news sites. The latter is not the main concern, however, it is the content its editor-in-chief has chosen not to publish. According to an article in The Washington Post, "Cole Stryker, the site's editor-in-chief, told would-be writers for the publication that they'd need to avoid covering the touchy subjects of net neutrality and government surveillance, areas in which Verizon has particular business interests and sensitivities" (Scola). If retail giants are pushing into news websites and publications through means other than advertisements, who is to say they will not eventually control most of the industry of journalism and turn it into propaganda. Even more concerning is the idea that these corporations and retailers have mutually beneficial relationships with the government and its interests. The most important role of journalism and news media is to keep a check on the government and corporations, to ensure there is a balance of power. If the government and corporations make their way into this industry, however, the future of pure and complete journalism looks grim.

While The Post's intended solution for the impending fall of print journalism and increased popularity of digital platforms is still in question, there are other solutions that have been tested and proven less than desirable. In Robert McChesney's chapter, "Journalism is dead? Long Live Journalism," he talks of some of the various approaches other newspapers have experimented with and the problems they potentially cause for the industry and journalistic tradition. For example, some of the approaches included salvaging corporate news through relaxing anti-trust laws, which would allow one newspaper multiple news company holdings, advertising online, and implementing paywalls. However, relaxing anti-trust laws would inevitably lead to downsizing newspapers and programs and a large decrease in the diversity of content going out to readers. Websites like Craigslist would still provide steep competition, even with ads placed online. Paywalls would create unfair competition between non-profit and for-profit organizations, thus creating a stark imbalance of power in the industry. McChesney cites the now-former CEO of The Washington Post, Don Graham, in saying that paywalls are "backwards-looking" and only work for institutions that have paid circulation across the country (McChesney, 186). For the remaining organizations that lack paid national print circulation, paywalls would be staggeringly unsuccessful. Other than that, only a tiny percentage of readers decided paying to see the content was worth their while.

In light of the aforementioned proposed and relatively unsuccessful solutions, McChesney also provides for his readers in his chapter, "Journalism is dead? Long Live Journalism," an alternate strategy of public subsidization, as outlined in 1787 by our nation's Founders and supported by examples from other democratic nations. In the opening paragraphs of the chapter, McChesney quotes Thomas Jefferson during the drafting of the Constitution of the United States, describing that in this new idea of democracy, the people should be given "full information of their affairs thro' the channel of the public papers…every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them" (McChesney, 203). For centuries after, this version of a subsidized journalism supported by the government existed and flourished in the United States, successfully serving the true values of its democracy. For a time, newspapers were distributed by mail and the Post Office collected revenue on its distribution, but that arrangement was altered in the most recent century with the emergence of a new profit-mongering news media. The fear amongst Americans now is that the government will become too involved in the finer points of journalistic tradition and eventually will exercise censorship over news organizations and news will thus become government-sponsored propaganda. In dispute of this fear, McChesney uses several other democratic nations with journalism subsidies, which have not been censored and continue to exercise press freedom to the fullest extent.

More specifically, McChesney also speaks of a specific voucher system in which a "government agency can be set up to allocate the [predetermined amount of] funds and determine eligibility according to universal standards that err on the side of expanding rather than constraining the number of serious sources covering and commenting on the issues of the day" (McChesney 212). A system such as this would provide the industry of nonprofit digital news with the funds to hire full-time reporters, editors and the like and finally become self-sufficient, and thus providing healthy competition and variety of content among other newspapers in the country. While there appears to be no perfect solution to the crisis facing the journalism industry in this digital age, one in which truthfully and accurately informing the public is of priority over the worry for making sufficient profit is one that will bring America's journalism back to its original democratic values.

Conclusion: Moving Forward, Responsibly

In the present day, the journalism industry is in a state of free fall, with no concrete path into the increasingly pertinent digital society in America. Given the relationship between an effective journalism and a true democracy, the previous statement comes with much concern for American democracy, which has already fallen from its original values from this and other factors. The concern of most experts in the field of journalism as well as digital media is the use of capitalism as a crutch for most business and recreational operations on the Internet. The latter is something most would call the evil of the digital age, and that this problem will eventually fall on news organizations that made the transition and rely on the Internet for publication and revenue. As

Robert McChesney eloquently states in his journalism chapter, "The hand of capitalism seems heavier and heavier on the steering wheel, taking us to places way off the democratic grid, and nowhere is the Internet's failure clearer or the stakes higher than in journalism" (McChesney 215). Given that, all we can do in the meantime is experiment and work tirelessly to find solutions that allow journalism and news media to not only survive under a capitalist ideal, but also continue the effort to remain a public good under America's original democratic ideal. We must capitalize on the good, the opportunities offered by a transition to the Internet and digital means, and minimize the evil of the capitalist influence on the form of Internet that exists today.

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WHAT IS EXPECTED OF A MAN

BY: EMILY SOREY-BACKUS

Men are often left out of conversations around gender roles and their abundant enforcement in our society. It is often assumed that because men tend to be situated in dominating power positions, they do not feel the burden of gender policing. However, in many popular culture artifacts it is made very clear which representations of masculinity are acceptable and which are not. When engulfed in a patriarchal society in which femininity and masculinity are both homogenized and a binary is created, it is impossible not to feel a slight pressure to conform. Society makes it quite clear which types of men are to be condemned through television shows, advertisements, movies, and political discourse.

In advertisements, it is evident to see the ways in which it is acceptable to appear in society. Men have begun to identify with magazines and feel more pressure about their appearances as time has gone on. Until the late 1980s, magazine publishers did not target males often because they did not think they were a relevant or interested audience. However, this all changed in the 1990s and beyond when the male targeted magazine market boomed (Pompper, Soto, and Piel 525). This adherence to magazines and advertisements among men has clear implications. While men have always felt pressured to behave and look a specific way through peer groups, these images create a hegemonic view for them.

The ideal image that men should seek to embody is reported in many different contexts, but often these descriptions do not greatly differ. Beauty, or handsomeness, for men has even possibly a smaller scope of acceptability than female beauty standards. Pompper, Soto, and Piel explain that men will report the ideal male body type as triangular (V-shaped), muscular, and well proportioned (Pompper, Soto, and Piel 526). They also explain how the norm among American men has traditionally been, “young, married, white, urban, northern, heterosexual Protestant father of college education, fully employed, of good complexion, weight, and height, and a recent record in sports” (528). Maxine Gesualdi gives a very similar explanation of manhood when she says that, “hegemonic masculinities depict the “most powerful version of manhood” as “male, white, physically and mentally fit, upper middle class, not too young (and yet not too old), and heterosexual" (Gesualdi 306). Clearly, it is not possible for many to fit into all or sometimes any of these categories; thus many men are left feeling inadequate and unacceptable. Elizabeth Fish Hatfield quotes an article from Esquire Magazine in which they explain the definition of a man. The article states:

> "A man carries cash, A man looks out for those around him—women, friend, stranger. A man can cook eggs. A man can always find something good to watch on television. A man makes things—a rock wall, a table, the tuition money. Or he rebuilds—engines, watches, fortunes. He passes along expertise, one man to the next. Know-how survives him. This is immortality…a man knows how to bust balls… A man gets the door. Without thinking" (Hatfield, 526).

Of course, not all of the things in this extensive list are characteristically bad, but policing how a man can act inherently policies how he should not act.

These rules and regulations create a binary between what women's traits are and what men's traits are, therefore forcing men to see clearly what they could be criticized for. Simon Lindgren and Maxime Léliévre explain in their examination of the show, Jackass that "A real man" should not act like a "sissy." A real man must be seemingly clear of all femininity and to achieve this he needs to take part, at any cost, in practices that will distinguish him from women (Lindgren and Léliévre, 394). Some go as far as to say that there could be no male stereotypes without female ones. Gesualdi quotes Messerschmidt in her article saying that, "hegemonic masculinity has no meaning outside its relationship to emphasized femininity—and to nonhegemonic masculinities" (Gesualdi, 306). Without an opposite it is impossible to decide which traits are acceptable to embody on which side of the binary. The creation of this binary is where the problem starts.

Aside from society's tendency to equate a man's appearance with how romantically or sexually appealing he is, men also learn that their societal standing depends upon how they look as well. "For most males, the ideal body and high self-esteem equate with potency, dominance, power, and contrast with the physically ugly who are considered deformed, powerless, and impotent" (Pompper, Soto, and Piel, 526). Men fear aging because with age comes the loss of many of the lifestyle expectations they have come to know, as well as the unavoidable loss of the looks they may have had in their younger years. The pharmaceutical industry pushes drugs for things like erectile dysfunction, sex enhancement, and hair loss (Pompper, Soto, and Piel, 528). These are issues that usually arise with age. The huge presence of drugs to avoid these issues in society taps into how men appear to be losing self-esteem in their later years.

Men are taught to show their power through how stereotypically masculine they are. Elizabeth Fish Hatfield explains how, “Reynolds argues that masculinity gains power through performance: Performing power is performing masculinity” (Hatfield, 527). If a man’s physical appearance does not match what they, or those around them, see as appropriate, they are seen as less masculine and therefore less powerful. Likewise, their traits beyond their outward appearance are analyzed in such a way as well.

Furthermore, men play an interesting and very prominent role in politics. Historically having only male presidents in the United States, and primarily males in every other sector of the government, there is not much room for stereotypical “female traits”. However, “feminine traits” are occasionally welcomed in political discourse because they make the candidate, representative, etc. seem “more human” or “relatable”.

In her article, “Man Tears and Masculinities: News Coverage of John Boehner’s Tearful Episodes”, Maxine Gesualdi examines news coverage around John Boehner, Speaker of the House, who tends to cry more often than many of his other political counterparts. While it may seem that he would be shunned or poked fun at by the media because of this, the rhetoric around Boehner has occupied an interesting place. Gesualdi explains that the discourse around Boehner has established “a way to show how the publically accepted image of a male political leader has shifted to include the humanizing behavior of crying” (Gesualdi, 314). Though this may be true, it cannot be concluded that politicians can now behave solely based off emotions. Gesualdi quotes Norman who wrote that, “These days it is no longer fatal if a politician momentarily loses his or her composure…Still, politicians are expected to err on the side of stoicism whenever possible” (314).

It is very important to acknowledge the reasons why John Boehner is able to behave the way he does and be accepted for it. Boehner is a republican, white, American male, who stretches the boundaries of hegemonic masculinity. This contrasts Barack Obama who is a black, democratic man. Obama inherently holds less privilege by being non-white and a democrat. Democrats are often criticized for being too emotional and caring too much for other people; thus they must remain stoic as to avoid seeming unprofessional. Gesualdi finally concludes that, “Overall, the findings of this study show that although there is a plurality of masculinities performed by men today, the hegemonic form is still privileged in politics" (Gesualdi, 318). Boehner is able to wield his political power in a varying way because of the privileged positions that he naturally falls into.

Television is an important artifact in popular culture because it provides viewers with an idea of what the supposedly average person acts or looks like. Viewers are supposed to be getting a glimpse into Typical American Life. This becomes troublesome because there is no such thing as a Typical American Life. Furthermore, the identities provided are almost always flawed because they tend to be exaggerated as to prove a point. Also, the acceptable and unquestionable identifications become clear through the actions of characters that display certain behaviors and identities.

The television show Two and a Half Men, which in 2010 was the second most popular television show among 18-24-year-old male viewers, was developed to be a show about men. The creators explained that, "we were looking to do something that was a little more male-centric, that reflected a bit more about our experiences as men…men wrestling with being men" (Hatfield, 530). The show follows two brothers, Charlie and Alan, who both embody different "versions" of masculinity. Within these embodiments, it becomes clear which is acceptable and which is questionable.

Charlie plays the character of the hegemonic ideal of masculinity. He appears to have many less struggles than his brother Alan, because "his lifestyle of effortless convenience appeals to the traditional male" (Hatfield, 545). This makes sense because Charlie's character encompasses almost exactly what is believed to be the acceptable embodiment of a man. For instance, he has a successful job in which he makes enough money to support himself and others, he owns a nice car and house, and has relatively good looks. Charlie has privilege based off of the fact that he is a white, heterosexual man, and he uses that privilege to his advantage.

Alan is also a white, heterosexual man; however, his personality traits are more stereotypically effeminate. Rather than accept Alan's alternate embodiment of masculinity or "portray Alan's masculinity in a positive or even neutral light, it is endlessly mocked" (Hatfield, 545), it is repeatedly assumed that Alan must be homosexual because of the way he behaves. Even though Alan is not a gay man, it is constantly insinuated that he must be. This serves to "degrade his masculinity by refusing to legitimize effeminate heterosexuality as an appropriate form of masculinity" (545).

Alan possesses a good job as well, but will never be as successful as his brother. He will also never be as alluring to women, which is the main reason he is mocked.

This striking difference between the ways that the two characters are treated is not a new phenomenon. However, the fame of this show means that there are many people watching and therefore huge amounts of people are being exposed to this treatment of different masculinities. If men or boys are consuming this popular culture artifact, they are likely consuming others as well. In those pieces of media, it is unlikely that the representations will vary much, creating repeated unrealistic expectations for themselves and the other men around them.

Reality television is a realm in which one would think that there would be a more accurate and authentic depiction of the types of people that exist in our lives. However, while the people in these shows are actual human beings, the choices of who goes on television and exactly how they can act is monitored to represent the acceptable forms of being. An example of a reality television show that features almost exclusively men is MTV's Jackass. Jackass follows a group of men who perform stunts that are often disgusting, painful, or life threatening. The show has been examined in many different ways, but frequently people simply dismiss the show as "boys being boys."

Simon Lindgren and Maxime Léliévre's study, "In the Laboratory of Masculinity: Renegotiating Gender Subjectivities in MTV's Jackas,s" they examine 25 episodes of the show and two spinoff movies. They found that the show embodies some fluctuating ideas concerning gender. Men are shown doing dangerous and painful stunts, but usually playing it off as though they did not hurt them, which demonstrates their power. At the same time, the Jackass crew could be analyzed as performing a sort of "irony" or "caricature". Regardless of whether the intention is to be ironic, this television show definitely has some aspects of hegemonic masculinity. Lindgren and Léliévre's analysis lands somewhere in the middle. They write that,

> "Our spontaneous tendency to want to label Jackass as either "for" or "against" the category of hegemonic masculinity—which is then mistaken for being static and fixed—is related to the prevailing power of "the heterosexual matrix." Our argument is that the performance of masculinity in Jackass must not be read from the perspective of this clear-cut grid" (Lindgren and Léliévre 408).

The focus here is that hegemonic masculinity has the ability to change, to accept, or to deny the experiences of different sorts of men. This could mean that a man could do everything in his power to avoid being condemned, but still land himself in a place of rejection.

In terms of blatantly laying out rules that men are expected to follow in society, MTV's Guy Code is as transparent as it gets. Although Guy Code cannot be simply denounced as complete nonsense, it plays a dangerous role in attempting to establish a set of social rules, or a code, that men are expected to follow. The show explains "Guy Code" as an "internal equation that corrects their mistakes" and therefore insinuates that all men think and behave in similar or the same ways. The show addresses topics such as when it is acceptable to cry, how much and what hygiene routines a man should be participating in, how they should feel about money and many other topics.

On the topic of crying, Guy Code explicitly states that, "In a man's life he'll be a winner and he'll be a loser, but he should never be a cry baby. Ever" ("Crying, Drinking like a Man, Rules of Karaoke, Hygiene."). This partially contradicts what was previously stated about John Boehner and the fact that he had the ability to cry and have that be portrayed as a humanizing trait as opposed to one that delegitimizes him as a leader. This new perspective of men and emotions very much mirrors what boys are often taught to believe about how they should act—they are to be detached and impassive. Dean Edwards, a member of the cast, explains that, "There are rare times in a man's life that he's allowed to cry." The episode continues to explain the exact times that a man should cry and the times when it is absolutely unacceptable. They explain that you can console your friend who is upset in the moment, but then make fun of him later.

In terms of hygiene, it is often expected that men stay clean and presentable, but if they talk too much about their hygiene or in some way appear too put together, there is fear that they will be marked as homosexual. Being considered homosexual is dangerous because gay men have less power in our society for many reasons. One is the fact that some of their traits are more stereotypically effeminate. By behaving more "like women," men lose power because that forces them to identify with something on the other side of the gender binary or hierarchy.

Melanie Iglesias, a female contributor on the show, explains about body products that "you can use special shower gels and take extra care in the shower just I wouldn't go bragging about it to some women or some guys" ("Crying, Drinking like a Man, Rules of Karaoke, Hygiene"). Likewise, April Rose notes that, “a guy can use a luffa in the shower or a sponge, but I don’t wanna talk about it.” Another episode that discusses “Manscaping” explains that it should never be talked about (“Manscaping, Sexting, Bottle service & Camping”). Charlamagne Tha God says that he, “thinks back hair is disgusting. Like, back hair is for gorillas and werewolves that are getting caught in mid-change” (“Manscaping, Sexting, Bottle service & Camping”), but other body hair is perfectly acceptable, such as a beard or chest hair. This creates confusing rules for men because they are expected to perform certain tasks, but also know exactly which tasks to not speak about to others, and especially to their female romantic partners.

Masculinity has historically always been paired with being the breadwinner of the family. Guy Code explains that money is, “the one thing women look for in a man”, but that they also should never talk about money (“Drugs, Money, Ex-Girlfriends, Competitiveness”). The show has some legitimate advice on dealing with money, but this is likely because men are the ones who are expected to handle money. Near the end of the segment, Andrew Schulz says that, “the goal should never be the money. The goal should be greatness, and then with greatness comes money.”

The fourth season of Guy Code premiers in 2014 and thus far, the show has been very successful among a variety of audiences. The show brings in guest stars quite often, which ultimately gains MTV more ratings and also legitimizes their advice to men by showcasing men’s role models in the episodes. Although the show features some very helpful, wholesome, and relatively unbiased advice, much of the themes surround hegemonic masculine trends. This show is yet another way for men to either legitimize their actions and their way of being, or more likely, to lose self-esteem for the way they naturally look or behave.

Though sometimes men are dismissed from conversations about the woes of gender policing, within a patriarchal society it is possible and likely for everyone to feel the pressure to conform to specific rules. Just because men are usually placed at the top of an imaginary pyramid in society, does not mean that they do not have rules and regulations that they feel they need to conform to. There are many easy ways for men to symbolically lose power, and with this loss of power, runs the risk of domineering and subordination in society. Only certain performances of masculinity are to be legitimized and exalted, and society makes the code for that clear in a myriad of ways.

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(RE)DEFINING POLITICAL ACTIVISM IN POST-MODERNITY

BY: JESSICA WOJENSKI

Social activism has historically been defined and its successes measured by standards that are increasingly proving too exclusionary in the digital age. Portable technology has made the connection between individuals constant and instantaneous, and the internet has offered people a seemingly unlimited expanse of information, people, and ideas. The relatively accessible nature of the internet—if not necessarily always the most recent technology—has provided a tool to the common person that allows for instant publication of their ideas to a potentially expansive audience, as well as the ability to consume ideas that were previously unavailable (either because of one's lack of access to them and/or because of the author's inability to be published and distributed). The fairly effortless spread of ideas enabled by the internet, has allowed for the dissemination of counter-narratives to the master narratives of modern society. It has thus supported a resurgence of social movements seeking to upset the oppressive status quo enforced upon disempowered members of modernity's social hierarchies. There is great debate as to the efficacy of such online activism, but I intend to demonstrate how expressions of disbelief in its power stem from deeply rooted modernistic conceptions of what constitutes proper political engagement, and a consequential need to redefine our understandings of what constitutes political engagement to include forms of post-modern activism employed by the youth of today that are, at their core, political.

In order to conceptualize my arguments for what constitutes political action, describing the distinctions I employ between modernity and post-modernity is imperative for context. I particularly enjoy Meyrowitz's expansion of McLuhan's "medium is the massage" theory for this purpose, as it offers a compelling proposition about the formation of mentalities stemming from the primary communicative practice of the time. Whether or not you ascribe to his proposition, this theory at least offers a rich illustration of the major ideologies within each era.

Modernity is therefore marked by the development of modern print culture. Meyrowitz explains the theory that physical environments, societal structures, and ways of thinking began to mimic the nature of print as linear, or alternately, "progressive," "rational," and "step-by-step." He explains how the abundance of knowledge that became available and widely disseminated through the use of the printing press, created a need for indexing, separation, and categorization, and how that transferred into social structure and design. "The world comes to be seen as naturally layered and segmented, with a distinct place for everything and everything in its place" (59). Hierarchy became naturalized, and thus inequality became naturalized. Inequalities only became more pronounced and aggressive as the modern print culture developed and advanced. Different abilities and characteristics were ascribed different values, and those with characteristics who were ascribed more value were given the power to define the further trajectory of societal structuring. All of this affected the stories that were told, so that only stories from those with power were voiced, disseminated, and immortalized within texts; "when information is expensive and scarce, powerful or wealthy individuals or groups have a disproportionate impact on how information circulates" (Johnson 121).

Post-modernity, then, is marked by what Meyrowitz calls the "Post-Modern Global Electronic Culture" (59). He theorizes that electronic culture brought back aspects of humanity's foundational oral culture, in that electronic patterns of experience and communication diverged from the neat linear structures of print-influenced ranks and hierarchies and became more "round" and free-form. A significant result of this is that those who previously did not have access to tools that could disseminate their voice to others now have a way to add their stories to cultural dialogues. Inevitably, "greater sharing of information and communication options increases the demand for (and often tensions over) more equal roles and opportunities at the local, national, and global arenas" (Meyrowitz 61). Shirky expands on the effect of this technology in relation to social change by stating that:

> Significant changes are based not on the fanciest, newest bits of technology but on simple, easy-to-use tools like email, mobile phones, and websites, because those are the tools most people have access to and, critically, are comfortable using in their daily lives. Revolution doesn't happen when society adopts new technologies—it happens when society adopts new behaviors. (160).

Synonymous with the eras of modernity and post-modernity are the economic eras of Fordism/industrialism and post-Fordism/informationalism, as outlined by Vincent Miller in Understanding Digital Culture. Drawing a connection between these institutional eras is important, because it supports the proposition that we are within a major shift in culture, comparable to that which occurred after the invention of the printing press. Fordism is defined by hierarchical structures, specialization in the workplace, nationalism or localized work, unions, benefits, and job stability. These conditions provided people the ability to generally follow a master narrative for their life course, and are congruent with modernistic constructions of society. Post-fordism, alternatively, is characterized by globalization, adaptability, "flexible specialization," decentralization, teamwork, networking, employer benefit-provision avoidance, and a normalization of job insecurity. Master narratives dissolve and anxiety increases as people's paths in life become uncertain, and the fluidity and constant change of post-Fordism are pillars of post-modernity as well. In this sense, our world today can be characterized by "the fragmentation of traditional institutions and the increasingly unpredictable nature of life trajectories" (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 9).

Clarifying the realities of our post-modern world should hopefully contextualize the behaviors of today's youth, and provide the basis for my argument as to why new forms of political activism should be supplemented into modernistic definitions, as they are essentially in response to the massive cultural shift we are currently experiencing. In our post-modern society, "globalization has disrupted the continuity between citizenship and the nation state, deregulation and privatization have reduced participatory opportunities in the public sphere, and individualism has undermined collective identifications" (Harris 484). The world for today's youth is not the world that it was even a few decades ago, and it is not as hospitable to the traditional forms of political engagement that were historically possible. Yet, because of divergence from customary definitions, many people have been slow or resistant to recognizing alternative forms of engagement as political, instead concluding that a lack of youth participation in traditional political forms is due to generalized apathy and disengagement from politics. These conclusions ultimately reflect a lack of critical analysis of the factors informing young people's lives today; "while policy and research interest has focused on young people's political apathy, it is also important to note that political structures, processes and debates marginalize young people (not least by legal age requirements for political and other citizenship rights)" (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 20).
In actuality, "young people are relatively well attuned to the major issues of deindustrialized, globalized times" (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 19). As such, they are also quite aware that the society they live within does not best serve their

interests or needs:

> These young people expressed little interest in participating in conventional politics through conventional political forums because of a lack of faith in formal politics and the institutions of the state to listen to or act in the interests of citizens, and especially to facilitate the participation of young people. (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 22)

The lack of engagement with the traditional political system is not one of apathy, but of disillusionment and “a rational choice to dissociate themselves from alienating and impotent institutions” (Harris 484). Not only does the traditional political structure’s roots in modernity cause post-modern youth to evaluate it as outdated and inefficient, but young people do not feel as though they have a voice within this political system; “even when young people make efforts to articulate their concerns in ‘political’ language, there is a perception that politicians are too embedded in modern processes to understand the issues of the late modern world that face young people” (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 21).

A perceived lack of representation is, at least in part, why many have sought alternative places for political participation. Another factor has been the co-opting of previously public spaces by capitalistic constructions:

> “young people have less public physical space to occupy… what is left of the public sphere is now ‘colonized by the private’ and ‘the public display of private affairs,’ all of which leaves young people with fewer spaces for self-expression, critique and collective deliberation of political and social issues” (Harris 484).

In combination, it is understandable why young people would feel drawn to non-traditional spaces for political participation. Certain avenues of the internet, such as social media sites, blogs, and forums offer such unmediated locations where they feel their voices can be heard;

> The internet offer[s] a virtual forum for the expression and debate of social and political concerns…it filled the space once occupied by civic associations, political groups, and other participatory organizations where young people of a previous generation were able to join with others to engage in democratic practice. (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 26)

However, their use of this space as a public realm does not mean that it necessarily exactly replicates the behaviors carried out in traditional public realms regarding political action. Indeed, many forms of their participation would not have been previously regarded as political, but “activism need not necessarily be a public or group activity. Powerful forms of activism can be individual and private. This individual activism may or may not inspire public protest, in contrast to what traditional studies of social movements suggest" (Sowards and Renegar 69). This focus on regarding personal acts as political is paramount to the ideologies surrounding online social justice activists, and many of these personal acts are carried out within online social media platforms. These are "personal strategies to create social change, including modifying one's own behavior, having discussions with friends and family, and using expressive and aesthetic techniques" (Harris, Wyn, and Younes 23). These acts can be considered political involvement because "in many cases bringing issues to a wider audience may be the sole purpose of activism" (Howard-Spink), and by obviously incorporating political thought with everyday practices, attention is inherently continuously drawn to issues that would otherwise have remained marginally discussed. Instead, issues of oppression, corruption, and social injustice can remain omnipresent in the social consciousness of those on the internet who utilize social media in post-modern activist ways. These websites can offer public forums for people to "combine personal points of view, political analysis, strategies for activism, artwork, links to other relevant sites, and information about 'real-life' activities" (Harris 486). I say these are part of post-modern activism, because they stress the inherent fluidity between personal and public life:

> What is sometimes frustrating for analysts is that these forums are not necessarily outcome-oriented, or rather their end function is often simply to exist as a space for expression and debate. They tend to operate for information sharing dialogue, consciousness-raising and community building, but can also be playful and leisure-oriented and mix up personal and political material. They often focus on having a voice and building a place for speaking rather than agitating for change through appeals to political institutionalization, the state and its actors. (Harris 486)

Beyond the fact that the internet has created a place where young people feel empowered enough to explore, express, and engage with political topics, the act of using social media itself can be argued as enhancing democratic principles as "creating a public self…is the first step in seeing oneself as a citizen" (Harris 489), and "participatory culture has the potential to enhance youth participation in politics. It promotes the key democratic values of involvement and openness" (Kann et al.).

Recognizing the fluidity between personal and political life is not the only dualism that must be deconstructed in order to fully understand the argument for the validity of post-modern activism; the idea of a stark separation between the "real world" and the "virtual world" must also be devalued, as it has become an insignificant and increasingly irrelevant division to make. The fact is we carry our embodied lives into our virtual ones, and our virtual lives into our embodied ones. Jurgenson argues, "if we can fix this false separation and view the digital and physical as enmeshed, we will understand that what we do while connected is inseparable from what we do while disconnected." Insisting on viewing online and offline as two separate categories is a decidedly modernistic understanding of a post-modern reality, and deconstructing this distinction will allow for the recognition that "online and offline participation are not necessarily mutually exclusive forms of citizen engagement" (Christensen). They are inherently cohesive realms of interaction, and "there is no evidence to suggest that internet activism is replacing traditional political participation. If anything, it is helping mobilize citizens by increasing awareness of contemporary issues" (Christensen).

A final step in redefining what constitutes political activism is to recognize that traditional definitions were born out of modernistic thinking that was inherently influenced by hierarchies, and are definitions constructed by those with power to suit those with power. The lack of recognition of post-modern youth activism is, at its core, born out of an ageist hierarchy, where:

> "Good participation" is defined as young people's membership, taking part, or sharing decision-making in pre-existent programs, forums, bodies and activities that have been crafted by adults…young people's participation in activities with one another, outside adult control, is often trivialized and/or problematized. (Harris 484)

This may seem a lofty claim to make, but to further illustrate my argument that understandings of valuable political participation are born out of normalized social power dynamics, I defer to Harris in her elucidation of the inherent sexism in current definitions of political participation:

> One of the most significant critiques has come out of feminist approaches to citizenship studies and their expansion of definitions of participation beyond standing for office or joining a party to include acts that occur within the broader public sphere, including civil society. This is especially important if women's participation is to be properly accounted for, as it is often through less formal activities, such as grass-roots organizing, voluntary associations and local networking around seemingly private issues that women engage in politics. A strict division between the public and private obfuscates these activists. Feminism establishes how traditional definitions of both

> what political participation is and where it should happen are in fact gendered definitions (Harris 483).

I include this explanation to contextualize my argument for an expanded definition of political participation because it demonstrates how original definitions are inherently exclusive, and are founded within modernistic hierarchies and the institutionalized oppression that upholds them. Political activism for social justice, at its core, seeks to dismantle oppression, and as such cannot "use the master's tools to dismantle the master's house" (Lorde).

It is clear that there is a significant and tense interplay developing between modernistic constructions of oppressive societal hierarchies, and post-modernistic mentalities that eschew these constructions fundamentally. These tensions are aggravated by the "democratic and emancipatory potential of new technologies, and the capacity for cultural participation to actualize that potential" (Howard-Spink), and also by a consequence of these technologies; the development of "virtual communities…[with the] capacity to empower the marginalized and to deliver more democratic modes of communication" (Harris 489). Young people have demonstrated how "a broad interpretation of participation is necessary to capture young people's citizenship practices today, because they are more likely to be involved in informal socially constructive activity than formal, organized types of participation" (Harris, Wyn, Younes 22). They reject modernistic structures, which they recognize are failing them, and embrace new technologies that offer them the location, community, and platform to express political concerns, feel as though their voices are heard, and spread awareness of political issues into pervasive realms that can be accessed by others. "By expanding the number of potential activists and easing the spreading of information, the internet creates fertile ground or more direct involvement in political matters" (Christensen). It is also important to illustrate that these post-modern activists:

> seek to define themselves against the homogenizing and universalizing logic of the global megaculture of modem mass communication as a debased pseudopublic sphere, and to voice needs and articulate oppositional values which the 'culture industry' fails to address. These new sites of oppositionality are multiple and heterogeneous and do not converge to form a single revolutionary moment. (Felski 70-71)

To truly recognize that these actions are supplements to traditional understandings of political activism, one must recognize the imperative need to reject modern frameworks for assessing and ascribing value; these are largely defined by the powerful beneficiaries of modernistic social hierarchies, and as such, post-modern actions cannot and should not be held to the same standards of traditional forms of political activism. Instead, we must work to reframe our understandings of what constitutes valuable political action in a post-modern society undergoing dramatic institutional destabilization and change.

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CATARACTS AS A CAUSE OF PREVENTABLE BLINDNESS

BY: ELIZABETH FULLER

In many developing or Third World countries, preventable blindness is prevalent and often caused by lack of treatment. The most common cause of preventable blindness is cataracts, especially when it is unable to be treated in a timely manner, if treated at all (Dawson & Schwab, 1981). It is estimated that 45 million people around the world are blind, 80 percent of which have preventable or treatable blindness, and nine out of ten occurrences being in less developed or third world countries (Pizzarello et al., 2004; Thylefors, 1998). This correlates to preventable or treatable blindness in that these countries have reduced access to care and prevention methods, resulting in higher percentages (Pizzarello et al., 2004). When adequate care can be provided, the number of people affected by preventable blindness drops, as evident by the statistic that by age 80, half of all Americans either have a cataract or have had cataract surgery. Because of this, in developed countries there are very few cases of preventable blindness ("Cataract," 2013; Pizzarello et al., 2004). Because eye diseases are more prevalent in the older population, it is predicted that this figure will rise to 76 million by 2020 as an effect of the projected doubling of the world's over 50 population (Pizzarello et al., 2004).

A cataract is a clouding of the lens over time, which affects acuity and vision, making it difficult to see ("Cataract," 2013). In a broad sense, a cataract can be generally defined as any opacity in the eye's crystalline lens, some of which are minor opacities, which are very common and cause little disruption in vision (Dawson & Schwab, 1981). A cataract forms when the lens, mainly consisting of water and protein, has a build-up of these proteins. This clumping of the proteins in the lens causes the opacity that disrupts vision ("Cataract," 2013). Cataracts become more problematic when they are larger and do not allow light to pass through the lens and reach the retina ("Cataract," 2013). They can either absorb light or deflect it upon entrance into the eye, causing either blindness or a distorted image (Dawson & Schwab, 1981). Other visual problems that cataracts can create are clouded vision, difficulty with scotopic vision, light sensitivity, glare, fading or yellowing of colors, and double vision (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2013). Although blindness occurring from untreated cataracts is preventable through surgery, there has been no substantial evidence for effective prevention of cataracts, as they are seen as a natural product of aging (Dawson & Schwab, 1981).

Though most cataracts are a product of aging, there are other types of cataracts that cause the same visual problems. Some cataracts, called congenital cataracts, are caused by genetics or during childhood development. These can be the result of a mother's prenatal infection, such as rubella, or certain conditions in the affected individual, such as myotonic dystrophy, galactosemia, or Lowe's syndrome ("Facts about cataract," 2009; Mayo Clinic Staff, 2013). Cataracts can by classified based on general causes, one being as a secondary cataract, which is formed after surgery for another eye problem, such as glaucoma. The risk of cataracts is also increased by other health problems, such as diabetes or steroid usage. Another type of cataract, called radiation cataracts may be formed after exposure to radiation. Additionally, traumatic cataracts can form after an eye injury, developing even years later, though these may be minor opacities which do not noticeably affect vision ("Cataract," 2013).

Cataracts are also classified by where they are affecting the lens and subsequently how they are affecting vision. A nuclear cataract will affect the center of the lens, causing nearsightedness. In certain cases, reading vision can be temporarily improved by nuclear cataracts, but when left untreated, the cataracts will become densely yellow and cloud the vision. Cortical cataracts form on the outer edges of the lens and are present as white, wedge-shaped streaks. As cortical cataracts progress, the opacities will slowly extend into the center of the lens, the general visual disruption of cortical cataracts being glare. Cataracts which affect the back of the lens are known as posterior subcapsular cataracts. These will interfere with reading vision, vision in bright light, and cause glare or halos in low light (Mayo Clinic Staff, 2013).

There are also several related causes of cataracts, which may indirectly cause an increased risk for opacities. Not only do diabetic individuals appear to be more prone, with a 5-10 fold excess of diabetics in cataract studies, they are also generally afflicted with opacities at earlier ages. A possible mechanism to explain this prevalence is the presence of excess sorbitol and fructose in the lens, accumulating and causing leakage due to over hydration, leading to cataract formation. Levels of radiation are also a factor in formation of cataracts. Exposure of lens proteins to UV radiation leads to formation of brown pigments from tryptophan, which can bind to lens proteins and lead to cataract formation. Exposure to ionizing x-rays and microwaves increases the probability of cataract formation through similar mechanisms (Dawson & Schwab, 1981). Corticosteroid and phenothiazine use, starvation and malnutrition, and alcohol and tobacco use are also contributing factors in cataract risk, but their significance and mechanisms are not well understood ("Facts about cataract," 2009; Dawson & Schwab, 1981).

Cataracts are said to lead to preventable blindness because modern medicine available in most developed countries can generally treat the affliction and cure the visual problems they cause (Pizzarello et al., 2004). In the early stages of a cataract, the symptoms can be treated with improved prescription eyeglasses, anti glare lenses, increased lighting, and magnifying glasses ("Facts about cataract," 2009; "Cataract," 2013). Occasionally a cataract will not cause the afflicted individual to have visual problems, and with regular check-ups and vision testing, surgery may not be needed at all. Generally when cataracts are neglected, especially for many years, as is the case in many developing countries without access to routine eye care, surgery is necessary to remove the cloudy lens and replace it with a clear, artificial, sight restoring one. The most common type of surgery is called phacoemulsification, in which a small incision is made on the side of the cornea and a probe is inserted into the eye. This probe emits ultrasound waves that break up the lens so it can be removed by suction. A less common type of surgery is called extracapsular surgery and involves making a long incision on the side of the cornea to remove the cloudy portion of the lens. The remainder of the lens is removed by suction and replaced by an artificial one, in both cases called an intraocular lens, or IOL ("Facts about cataract," 2009).

In well-developed countries multifocal IOLs can be used to address accommodation issues after surgery. In part, IOLs may potentially increase visual acuity and change the refractive state in order to allow for accommodation and eliminate myopia or hyperopia in a given individual. Monofocal IOLs may also be used, and although they do not have the benefits of increased visual acuity and accommodation of multifocal IOLs, there are fewer reported cases of photic phenomena, such as glare or visual halos appearing in vision, when using monofocal IOLs. They are also associated with higher contrast sensitivity than their multifocal counterparts (de Vries, Rudy, & Nuijts, 2013).

Even in cases of surgery, there are risks to consider when treating cataracts. Infectious postoperative endophthalmitis, or IPOE, resulting from cataract surgery was surveyed in nine developed European countries and found to be an uncommon, but a possible complication (Behndig et al., 2013). In addition to infection, there is a risk of bleeding during and after surgery, which can be exacerbated by certain medications. Though cataract surgery is considered to be one of the most common and safest surgical operations, about 10% of cases do not end with improved vision for the patient. After surgery it is still possible to experience double vision, high or low eye pressure, and loss of vision, though with prompt medical attention available, these afflictions can be treated. Another post-surgical complication is a blurring of the vision from after-cataract, which occurs when the IOL becomes cloudy after the eye tissue encloses around it ("Facts about cataract," 2009). In all cases the treatment of cataracts and related post-surgical complications can serve to decrease preventable blindness if adequate care and medical services are provided in developing countries (Pizzarello et al., 2004).

In underdeveloped countries there is an estimated 16-20 million cases of cataracts that are left without surgical treatment. In the USA and Europe there are approximately 5000 million and 3000 million yearly operations, respectively. India has approximately 2000 million, while Latin America has 500-1500 million and Africa, only 200 million (Thylefors, 1998). A particular population's rate of cataract surgery is dependent on availability of medical care, visual requirements of the population, and willingness to undergo surgery. There are very few records of data concerning cataract surgeries from developing countries, so exact rates are not clear, however estimations conclude that with preventable blindness being so prevalent in underdeveloped countries, and access to care so low, surgery rates appear to be much lower than in their developed counterparts (Dawson & Schwab, 1981).

In order to combat the prevalence of preventable blindness, a global initiative called VISION 2020 was proposed at the WHO World Health Assembly, which deliberates over issues in health policy (Pizzarello et al., 2004). The main goals of this initiative are "Implementation of national plans in all countries of the region, strengthening of pediatric eye care services in the region, [and] development of midlevel eye care personnel in all countries" (Pizzarello et al., 2004, p. 619). In addition to regional workshops meant to inform and introduce the importance of preventing treatable blindness, the initiative also includes institutions with pediatric eye care facilities. Additionally, training is provided by ophthalmic surgeons and anesthetists to increase access to care. The initiative also seeks to increase rates of surgery, in addition to bringing training and informative awareness to the target regions (Pizzarello et al., 2004).

Cataracts are a major source of preventable blindness, and are especially prevalent in developing countries where access to basic medical care and treatment is limited. As an opacity caused by a clumping of proteins in the lens, cataracts can cause visual problems, often leading to blindness if left untreated. A surgical removal of the lens and subsequent replacement with an IOL is generally used to treat problematic cataracts. If proper post-surgical care is available, most cases are resolved with increased visual acuity and restored vision. Developing countries which lack this basic care are prone to have many more cases of preventable blindness than developed countries, and the WHO World Health Assembly has developed a recent initiative to remedy this lack of care. Though considered a natural progression of aging, cataracts are treatable and any blindness occurring from them is generally preventable.

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SONGS OF FAITH AND DEVOTION: THE 1980'S, RELIGION AND DARK SALVATION IN GOTHIC SUBCULTURE

BY: LEIGH FRASER

The latter half of the Twentieth Century was a time of rapid transition ushered in by the Second World War and an increased emphasis on technology and globalization. The economic and social changes in postwar society created a greater rift between generations and offered new opportunities for individuals to define themselves - constructing their own unique identities contrary to tradition. This allowance to define oneself manifested through both secular and spiritual means. Breaking away from defined traditions of the past, the outside world growing ever smaller through new technologies further enabled a new era where external ideologies could mesh. In postwar Britain, several subcultural movements emerged that challenged the status quo of identity and representation - asserting their particular values through dress and artistic mediums of popular culture. In the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's, the emerging Goth scene incorporated many elements that had once been exclusive to worship and practice of organized religion.

Release the Bats

The tendency to gravitate towards various subcultural groups reflects modern engagement of religion through questing, finding coinciding belief systems to fit one's individual life experience. Emerging at time of economic downturn, Gothic culture engaged underlying dark sentiments felt by British society in the 1970's. Tapping in to this collective feeling of marginalization, as well as a sense of ostracism from conventional society, Goths congregated as a result of their misfit status to critique the failures of their surroundings. Goths borrowed well-recognized cultural elements and subverted influences of institutional cornerstones. Appropriated religious symbols and themes became a common staple of Gothic identity, retaliating against failures of mainline societal institutions through borrowed signifiers. Expressing their critical viewpoint as something understandable through cultural literacy, established religious narrative provided a foundation to voice a counterpoint to dominant ideology. In the modern era, religion is drawn upon frequently in the secular world of popular culture. The benefits once tied exclusively to religious traditions have broken free of concrete ties to doctrine and can be found in other life experiences. Subcultural engagement represents both the secular tendency to engage religion and the potential for participants to find their own sense of salvation through group membership, practices, and self-exploration of identity.

Into the Light:
Evangelism, Entertainment and a Quest for the Numinous

Religious practice has taken several radical new directions over the course of this past century. In the spirit of George Whitefield's marketplace sermons in the American Colonies, evangelical efforts to boost conversion and engagement via strategic use of entertainment have continued to shape experiences outside of traditional settings of religious practice. With this powerful meshing of religion and private life that Whitefield brought about by permeating an otherwise secular environment, religion and worshiping practices hastily broke free of institutional confines. Reaching people in a manner that more seamlessly fit with the demands and values of everyday life, church attendance was no longer a necessity to gain the benefits that a particular faith offered. "A passion-based ministry was able to compete with the growing range of goods and services in the public square…'mass marketing' constitutes the means whereby he attracted - and directed - his mass religious following" (Stout, 1991, xxi-xxii). A more personalized set of religious beliefs that mirrored life experience rather than adhered to strict doctrine appealed to a wider audience, blurring divisive lines between denominations.

Even further altering engagement with faith were evangelical entertainment personalities that emerged alongside new communication technologies in the 20th Century. The invention of the radio and television brought viewpoints otherwise unheard of in a domestic context into the personal lives of consumers. Evangelical entertainment icons followed in the footsteps of Whitefield, modeling their broadcasting approach to one that would favor public appeal, achieving greater success via modeling itself "more fully after nonreligious broadcasting" (Schultz, 2003, 172). Although this meant that they would have to sacrifice a strict focus on religion in favor of submitting to the competition of a consumer-driven culture, it allowed religious themes to fully permeate the mainstream. An additional shift in engagement of faith occurred in the postwar boom. Wade Clark Roof (1999) describes a shift towards a quest culture orientation as being perpetuated by the growing emphasis on consumption (49). The deconstruction of boundaries previously underwritten by religious and economic practice created a new marketplace for people to seek out and pursue different identities. "Middle-class college youth experimented with alternative ways of living, openly rejecting bourgeois family values… within a relatively short period of time, their values spread to other alienated constituencies…" (Roof, 1999, 52). Separation from the defined sets of values of older generations prompted exploration of other ideas. Abridged media presence of traditional viewpoints allowed for a more fluid alteration of beliefs that seekers identified with, allowing audiences to construct their own religious identity to suit their lives (Clark, 2003). Traditional themes and values from religion as accessed through entertainment media, are more open to take on different significance. Younger generations began to engage a combination-view of faith made up of separate relatable components.

Although traditional views of religion emphasize an interpretation of faith that is reliant on binding doctrines, texts and structure of worship, experiences of the divine can also be found in secular contexts. Daniel Stout (2011) argues that religious experience has always demanded the use of media to carry the message, but that the postmodern era is "a time when religion is no longer captured by stable and static definitions; religion or more broadly, the numinous, can be experienced any time any place through the use of the media" (11). Defining these experiences as being something beyond human - lending to feelings of the divine outside of the realm of ordinary life, these experiences are made up of a similar structure to traditional religion. Containing different levels of experience, the numinous taps in to an expanded consciousness or engagement of the world, the senses and a connection of shared experience with a community. This connection with others can reinforce beliefs or feelings of something higher than existence. Seeking the numinous offers of broad potential for transcendence, different to all people and free of the constraints of religious doctrine. Privatization enabled through advances in communication technology such as the radio and television has allowed a more diverse engagement with experience to occur (Stout, 2011, 11). Breaking away from institutional faith that is pre-established with existing perceptions of the divine, discovery of the numinous can be found in all contexts under a broader definition of religion. The media has given audiences a new way of searching for meaning, allowing greater access to material that can be deeply moving. Acting similarly to religious narratives, the ability of an audience to identify with or experience the numinous in art and popular culture has enabled a unique and unorthodox method of tapping into feelings of the divine.

The Dark Ages: Emergence of Goth amid a Congregation of Outsiders

Subcultures are reliant on the sense of belonging and community that people attach to a particular set of behaviors, images and practices. Much like the solidarity gained through following an organized religion, followers of a culture, or a scene, engage a connection to something greater than themselves through collective fixation on specific media, fashions, and ritualistic action. In the late 1970's and throughout the 1980's, the emerging Goth scene incorporated many elements that had once been exclusive to worship and practice of religion. Thatcherism ushered in an era of severe class inequality that marginalized working class Englanders already experiencing bleak results of the economic downturn of the 1970's. Gaining its roots through post-punk and becoming its own darker alternative, Gothic subculture originated as a backlash, countering the positivity of the peace and love generation and offering up a more bittersweet critique of the social environment that surrounded them. Religious symbols appeared in Gothic fashion in growing frequency as the culture gained momentum and spread. Crosses and symbols from Judeo-Christian, Pagan, Occult, and Egyptian traditions all became recognizable as being part of the look that differentiated Goths from outsiders. Beginning once as a fringe movement lashing against the status quo, a congregational orientation formed that claimed these symbols as their own and established a sense of deeper meaning.

It is difficult to place concrete significance on the appropriated religious symbols and themes within the modern, secular Gothic context because of the diversity and span of the subculture. Despite baring clear resemblance to their use in traditional practices of organized religions, the symbolic meaning of religious iconography as interpreted through at 20th Century Gothic lens blurred the lines between faith, subversion and identification. In studying the connection between media, religion and culture, the influence across these boundaries presents the potential to alter meaning. This phenomenon is evident in the early 20th Century movement of Evangelicals to employ entertainment media to encourage conversion of their audience (Schultze, 2003, 173). Fusion between faith and media strengthened the connection of these two threads. By placing faith at a position to be consumed by an audience, artistic disciplines gained greater freedom to market and reinterpret religious messages.

Lynn Schofield Clark (2003) writes that with the growing presence of religious and supernatural themes in popular culture, new generations of consumers hold the agency to engage particular elements of organized religion without being forced to ascribe to traditional doctrine. Blending together influence from numerous faiths to suit their individual needs, secular musicians can draw upon familiar symbolic or faith-based concepts as a means of expression - choosing concepts that resonate with them and ignoring others. A hybrid pursuit of faith is also evident in Wade Clark Roof's (1999) explanation of modern quest culture. His explanation of a "religious marketplace" allows people the ability to seek out, or quest for spiritual beliefs that are consistent with their own experience rather than confronting the dominant religion of their surroundings. The movement of a subculture bears similarity to organized faith yet lacks emphasis on doctrine, rather focusing on a shared sentiment of exclusion from the mainstream of society (Hebdige, 1979). Appropriation of these religious symbols reflects a questing in a global religious marketplace, where social outsiders - such as the Goths, are able to gravitate to narratives of salvation or critique cultural dissatisfaction through these means.

It is important to note that when looking at subcultures, attention must be drawn to their position as products of a larger normative culture (Hebdige, 1979, 4). Being a time of economic hardship and social unrest, 1970's England offered a likely environment for resistance to occur. "The rise of personalized religion is the result of many social, political, and economic factors, yet the media play an essential role" (Stout, 2012, 10). Searching for a modern connection with the divine, the media can offer an experience that mirrors religion itself. Just as organized religions in the past have collected around particular media objects, present media holds the same potential to generate higher experience. Subcultural fixation on music and fashion reflects religious emphasis on particular media that can involve ritual and congregational interaction with others who share similar beliefs. Where a large part of early Gothic culture centered on ritualistic engagement with the music scene and nightclubs, followers often mirrored artistic use of religious themes and symbols as a form of physical expression, visually representing their inclusion and differentiating themselves from normative society.

Lucretia, My Reflection: Art Imitating Life

Early Goth musicians often adopted a predominantly black wardrobe, adorning themselves in silver jewelry and incorporating religious symbols into their logos, artwork and stage performances. In the legacy of Evangelicalism, the initial inclusion of religious themes appealed to audiences through entertainment media. The engagement of widely recognized symbolic meanings that were interwoven into cultural understanding expressed the counter-narratives of Gothic artists. Packaging their disillusionment as art amid the frail institutional and social atmosphere, religious themes were called upon to convey meaning neatly beneath the guise of secular rock and roll. A culturally literate audience emerging from a predominately Anglican background in the United Kingdom had lost faith in the government to solve their problems, and could not find the answers that they sought in churches amid skyrocketing unemployment and crime (Herrick, K., Personal communication, March 30, 2014). Despite sharing a common distrust and experience in the failures of everyday life, social outsiders found themselves situated at the fringes of an unstable system. Discovering solidarity with other misfits, Goths came together over shared critique and a common representation of darkness that they felt in other aspects of their lives.

Religion is called upon in the lyrical content, performance, and artwork of many Goth bands. As the central focal point of Gothic culture, the musical icons themselves held a powerful position to set in motion this critical engagement of religious symbolism. Being an influential figure in the subcultural scene, Nick Cave's continual reference to religious themes in both his music and his imagery exemplifies a post-modern quest for identification that adopted dark elements from organized faiths. When asked in an interview, Cave responded that his relationship to organized religion fluctuated. He cited a similar ambivalence to a singular doctrine, responding instead that "the brutality of the Old Testament inspired me… I was influenced by looking at the Bible, and it suited me in my life vision at the time to see things in that way…" (Hattenstone, 2008). Examples of album artwork from Cave's first foray into the Goth music scene, The Birthday Party, which later went on to become The Bad Seeds, reflect this association (Figures 1-4). In his artistic expression, Cave also engaged feelings of martyrdom and humiliation through imagery of the Crucifixion in the promotional video to the song "Nick the Stripper" (Figure 5-6). Employed by several other Gothic icons, the highly recognizable image of the Crucifixion became embedded in otherwise secular artistic critiques. This sentiment of equating darkness in religious themes to the darkness felt in personal life represents a connection between the personal narrative approach that George Whitefield emphasized, fused with a modern loose-definition of faith in a quest for spirituality through collective engagement and expression.

Figure 1: (Left) [*The Birthday Party "The Bad Seed" EP*]. Released 1983. London: 4AD.

Figure 2: (Above, reading left to right) [*Religious symbols, the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ, Latin Cross, Sauwastika from Hindu and Buddhist traditions, and Algiz – the symbol of power from German mysticism*]. From: http://symboldictionary.net

Figure 3: (Right) [*The Birthday Party, "Mutiny" EP*]. Released 1983. London: 4AD.

Figure 4-5: (Below) [*Stills from the promotional video for "Nick the Stripper" by The Birthday Party*]. 1981. London: 4AD.

Floorshow: Life Imitating Art

Lindstrom (2008) notes that a duality between outsiders and followers of a particular faith follows a dichotomy of good versus evil that is also reflected in modern branding practices. The tendency for a group to establish solidarity through an 'us and them' narrative is foundational in grounding subcultural identity. Stemming from a common dominant group, subcultures branch off through "the construction of a style, in a gesture of defiance or contempt… it signals a Refusal" (Hebdige, 1979, 3). By decontextualizing symbols from established religious institutions, Goth performers established their own sense of congregational identity apart from the majority of society. Followers of the Goth scene adopted similar replications of these practices to signify their shared belief system. Occurring in the postwar era, the desire for identity is representative of a modern questing for self-discovery attached to growing emphasis on attainment of signifiers such as style and music.

What began as an artistic critique of mainline religious and social institutions transitioned into a structured practice in itself. Perhaps originally incorporating religious elements for shock appeal and critique, this inversion of beliefs established a new set of values. Although the appropriated symbols themselves did not have concrete meaning, the congregational experience that emerged as a result became a draw to pursue Goth culture. Tendency to express subversion via branding remained strong throughout the height of the movement, as Goth musicians incorporated symbols into their logos, altering them both physically and conceptually (Figure 10-14). Creating logos that juxtapose the sacred and the profane in similar ways to their live shows, appropriated religious symbols are given new meaning. These logos serve as

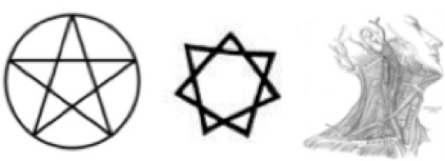

Figure 10. (Above, reading left to right) [*Pentagram often associated with Wicca and Satanism, Septagram associated with Kabbalah, Sketch from Grey's Anatomy*]. n.d. From: http://symboldictionary.net

Figure 11. (Top right) [*The Sisters of Mercy band logo incorporating a stylized diagram from Grey's Anatomy with a pentagram - example of secular artists using religious elements seamlessly to engage institutions, in this case medicine*]. 1980. Leeds: Merciful Release.

Figure 12. (Left) [*Cover of album "The Courtauld Talks" by Killing Joke*]. 1989. Chicago: Invisible Records.

signifiers both of the bands that they represent and as wearable branding for those immersed in the subculture. Drawing upon a religious parallel to otherworldly experience, symbols serving a unifying meaning created a higher sense of belonging that offered people a chance to tap into something outside of the individual. To be with like-minded people meant the opportunity to transcend feelings of isolation from dominant society (Personal communication, March 30, 2014). According to Daniel Stout (2011), experiences of the numinous can be fostered through congregation around media or through engaging in particular practices. Interpersonal connections and the arts can offer higher meaning and a sense of completeness that religion once dominated, changing the way that people foster spirituality. A large part of 1980's Gothic culture centered on involvement in the scene. By adopting the style and beliefs of the group, Goths formed a new sense of community. Replicated symbols in Gothic fashion solidified a sense of identity grounded in their collective critical standpoint, just as followers of traditional organized faiths use a set of symbols to represent their adherence to particular religious beliefs.

Dressed in Black Again, Goth Identity and Musical Salvation

The Goth scene of the 1980's is an example of secular media both embracing and becoming a religious experience. Met with trying times, people have historically turned towards religion for answers. Rapid changes in the way that people engage spirituality have occurred, making the pursuit of faith and higher experience something that is no longer confined to the traditional constraints of established doctrine. Now, religion has become somewhat amorphous - a quest for the numinous that is highly individualized and open to change. Although the Gothic subculture that originated out of a particularly dark moment in history was originally a trend to critique institutional shortcomings, it became very much a structure in itself. Driven by secular entertainment media and a seemingly superficial set of rituals that often involved dancing and looking the part, Goth became something much more than a backlash. Offering its followers a chance to separate themselves from the mainstream of society, declaring their difference and unrest promised a congregational sense of belonging that was otherwise elusive.

Remnants of Gothic subculture are still evident in contemporary music and fashion. Just as religious scriptures hold the power to resonate with the believer, the experience that one gains from music can be equally transcendental. Musical taste is something that has very much become interwoven with identity and self-expression. In the same vein as religious questing, a pursuit of music that resonates can be similarly pivotal to an individual's sense of connection with the world. When artistic expressions in music fit complex emotions of the listener, they experience solidarity through an artistic articulation of the otherwise unsaid. Music is a medium that holds a capability to express both harmony and discord, interpretively matching the complexities of the human condition. Gothic themes and influences are still alive in today's popular culture. Darkness and light are both common threads in the musical genre that remain constant, identifiable to feelings of unrest and marginalization that a listener may be drawn to. Through experiencing the numinous in the arts, music offers its own potential for salvation. Separating from the realm of traditional religious practice, religious themes in secular Gothic media engaged struggles evident in religious text and called upon them to cope with contemporary struggles under Thatcherism. Despite a considerable breakdown in the global Goth scene over the course of the past decade, a community lies in wait for those who quest for it. A small yet dedicated number of followers remain scattered throughout, and experiences that vaguely echo the height of the 1980's Batcave club can still be found. Perhaps subcultures are merely another example of the modern quest for identity, understanding, and divine experience, a method to find meaning in a complex and tumultuous world.

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MEMES

BY: JACQUELINE MUNDRY

What is a meme? What is it used for? What is the point? Memes have recently become more and more popular in the past few years. They never used to be anywhere on social media platforms but now I don not think I could go on Facebook or Twitter on any given day and not see multiple memes or gifs. It seems as if these little pictures are a way of communicating in the digital age.

A meme is defined as, an element of a culture of system of behavior that may be considered to be passed from one individual to another by nongenetic means, especially imitation. Memes are commonly used on Facebook and other social media platforms to make a joke or make a point about something that is relevant at the time of the memes' publication. Memes are an interesting form of communication because they have no authors. They are mostly a picture with a 'one liner' making some sort of point (the point of memes varies from meme to meme, most of them are comical). There are also some memes that are more common than others. Some of the most popular memes that I have seen are the Wonka meme, the most interesting man meme, the college student meme, and bad luck Brian meme. Many memes use the same picture but have a different quote on them, yet most of the time when the same picture is being used it is being used for the same kind of meme. For example, bad luck Brian normally starts with something positive which is followed by something negative that happened to Brian. The college student meme is normally accompanied by something that most college students can relate to.

Nathan Jurgenson wrote an article for The New Inquiry titled, Speaking in Memes, which in itself is an interesting concept. With the world we're living in today, it seems as though many people are having conversations in memes, acronyms, and other abbreviations. It's almost as if people don't speak in full sentences which can be due to Generation Like, because people want to fit in, and other reasons caused by the digital age. The more technology in our lives, the more there is going to be things of this sort happening and the more we are going to use memes to communicate with others. Jurgenson writes,

> An army is at the ready to spin off a gag at every turn, to propagate the joke to maximum scope; digital arpeggiations of candidate goofs and campaign blunders are transmitted from host to host through a mere caress of the touch-

sensitive screen (Jurgenson).
Implying that memes are in a sense similar to journalism in regards to the turn-around rate which is something that never ceases to amaze me. Things are turned around so quickly now-a-days because of the digital age and how easy it is to publish things once and have the entire world see it immediately after it is published. Meme creators can do it so quickly because the ability to do it is at their disposal. The people that create memes do it for fun, therefore, when they have something funny or relatable to say they can create it right away.

For those people that may be interested in making memes but are unsure how to begin the process, there are many sites out there that have templates of the common memes for fans to make their own version of their favorite meme. I actually spent some time trying to make different memes when researching memes on memegenerator.com. The homepage is top and trending memes then, when you hover the mouse over them there is an option underneath to customize that meme. Once clicking the customize button, it brings you another page that has the blank meme with two text boxes. You can add whichever text that you want to the top text and the bottom text.

I chose this meme because people usually think that communication is an easy major and that communication majors do not really have exams and that the major mostly requires written papers. Regardless, occasionally there are final exams for communication majors. This semester I unfortunately have a Saturday final which is why I chose to create this meme. I decided that because it was in a sense sarcastic, Bad Luck Brian is usually used as being a little bit sarcastic.

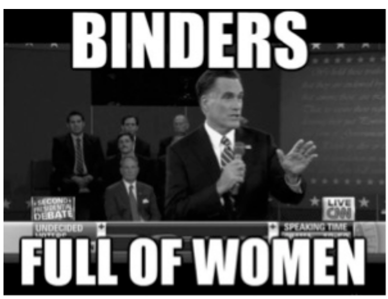
With things like meme generators, anyone can create a meme in 30 seconds. I'm not very good with technology or things of that sort, but it was really easy to do and took no time at all but it was interesting to look around the page and see the memes that have been created by other armatures. Because of how easy it is and that it does not take much time, there are so many memes out there. I have seen countless memes between all of the social media platforms. Some of the memes that I have seen have been 'one hit wonders' and I've only seen them once but there are some memes that I have seen over and over again because of their popularity or relevance in my life. Normally, the memes I see are related to being a college student because most of the people that are on my social media platforms are other college students. Sometimes, I see the same meme multiple times.

Another form of a meme is a gif. A gif is essentially a moving meme. It can be defined as a lossless format for image files that supports both animated and static images. Gifs are often used as examples of things. They are commonly seen in Buzzfeed articles, when articles are in a list format used as a way to prove a point of what is being said. Gifs can be used alongside memes as well. Both are trying to be funny in one way or another. Some are trying to educate people to believe what the creator of the meme wants them to believe as well. This can be used when trying to convince someone of something or sometimes people share memes to show their friends/family/followers what it is that they believe in and what their views are.

Jonathan Zittrain did a keynote speech on memes in society. This keynote was interesting because he was discussing the 'privilege denying dude' meme about halfway through his speech. I had never seen this meme before and I guess that is because the man in the picture refused to let it be published because he did not want to be known as 'privilege denying dude' for the rest of his life. He did not want to be sitting in an auditorium one day and have someone look over at him and know him from a meme.

As mentioned above, memes do not have authors. There are obviously people that create them but no credit is given for what they have created. Susan Blackmore is a professor of psychology at the University of Plymouth who has been studying memes for years. In 1999 she wrote a science book titled, The Meme Machine. Although she has been studying memes since the 90s, more recently she has begun studying, writing, and talking about what we consider to be a meme which are more specifically titled internet memes. She discusses in an interview on knowyourmeme.com that because there are no authors of memes, people have more "free will". People are more willing to write the things that they are afraid for the rest of the world to see if no one knows it is them that is saying it. Free will comes into effect especially in regards to the memes that are created after certain things happening in our world, more specifically, political memes.

"It's that success of memes in influencing the political narrative that has garnered so much attention this election cycle" (Jurgenson). The last presidential debate between President Obama and Governor Romney was the first presidential election where social media platforms were relevant to the campaigns of President Obama and Governor Romney. This was the first time that in a presidential race there was a focus on how well their social media was run. The two candidates were expected to be updating their Facebook pages, Twitters, Instagrams, LinkedIns, etc. Right around the 2012 election was when social media became a major news platform as well. Now it seems as if Twitter is flooding with journalists and news organizations and is the way I get my news most of the time. Not only was 2012 the first time social media was relevant to the election, but it was the first time we saw political memes.



The political memes seemed to come immediately after each of the three presidential debates. Today, over two years after the election, there are now constant political memes. There is a website called politicalmemes.com where it seems as if every day there is a new political meme based on what is happening in the political world. The most recent one is a meme regarding the "new CEO of Sony" with a picture of Kim Jong-un after the cyberattack that was made on the United States after word of The Interview being released in theatres. Regardless of what is happening in our country, someone is paying attention to it and creating memes from it.

In the 2012 election there were many memes created that could be seen as damaging from a campaign's point of view. The majority of the memes were created after the debates based on things that the candidates had said that they probably did not mean to say, but in the heat of the moment they said it anyway. One of the biggest and most popular examples was the “binders full of women” comment that Governor Romney said when being criticized for not having any women in his cabinet. Romney’s position on and relationship with women was, what could be seen as, the biggest problem for him during the election. He lacked the women vote because of some of his stances and because of comments that he had made, whether on purpose or in the heat of the moment like he did with the binders comment. “Campaigns can’t plan memes” states Jurgenson, which after some of the memes that were created after the debates the campaigns probably wish that they could plan them especially considering there was more than one instance where something that was said accidentally was turned into a meme that could have potentially damaged a campaign.

The meme that was created was in regards to a comment Governor Romney made during the second presidential debate because he was being criticized and he rebutted saying “I have binders full of women”. He meant to say he has binders full of qualified women’s resumes that he could hire right now. This not only is detrimental because he has women that are qualified to work for him but does not hire them, but he also was referring to women in a way that could have been seen differently by different people.

The binders full of women meme went viral overnight. There are countless articles that were written and parody accounts created on Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr, Redditt, etc. People took this to the next level, dressing up as “binders full of women” for Halloween with their friends and Retweeting, Reblogging, and liking all these accounts all over social media. Even CNN was writing about this topic with a big of comic relief saying things like, “sounds kind of kinky and certainly not something you want to be touting” (Cardona). CNN also was a beacon of truth about the ‘binders full of women’ comment as a whole. Saying, “First of all, it is not true. The "binder" of women's résumés was prepared before the election by the Massachusetts Government Appointments Project, a coalition of nonpartisan women's groups” (Cardona) this is essentially stating that Romney was lying to the nation when he said that he did not receive the ‘binder’ until after the election.

Knowyourmeme.com was a very helpful resource when writing this paper. This website references where the origin of the meme came from. For this particular meme, there is a YouTube video of the part of the debate where Governor Romney says the ‘binder full of women’ statement to show where it all originated. The next section then shifted to the online reaction of the meme. This section showed all the memes that came after the original meme. There were what seemed to be, endless amounts of follow up memes. Many of these memes are not just ‘binders full of women’ but saying things along the lines of ‘one does not simply put women in binders’ and many others. There emerged some other famous memes like the ‘internet husband’ which featured Barack and Michelle Obama with a ‘binders full of women’ reference. Following the online reaction of the meme was the media coverage of the subject. Although the meme was a big aspect of the coverage, the comment itself made national news. The media coverage included an interview with Veronica De Souza, who was the creator of the “Binders Full of Women” Tumblr. De Souza announced in the interview that the blog had reached 11,000 followers within the first 24 hours. De Souza was hoping that the blog would give her some publicity and job opportunities for her from having a successful blog and hopefully become a social media manager in the future.

After the original ‘binders full of women’ meme and all the others following it there then was a meme that was in a sense incriminating Governor Romney. This meme was stating Romney’s lies in a single meme. As mentioned, Romney lied about when he got the binders of women’s resumes. According to this meme, Romney not only lied about when he got the binders, but also how he got them. This meme reads ‘says he got ‘binders full of women’ lies about how he got the binder’. This falsified Romney’s campaign and could have caused uneducated voters to write him off completely. Although it is every American’s right to vote, it is unfortunate that sometimes people that are uneducated decide who to vote for because of things that they see on the internet. There were things that happened for and against each candidate in the 2012 election and the internet clearly showed each slip up.

On October 17, 2012, Tiffany Ricci, a union organizer for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, scheduled a small protest in front of the Ohio Republican party’s headquarters where she and four other people demonstrated against Romney’s comment while dressed in binder costumes (knowyourmeme.com). The reaction to this meme did not sit well with many women voters thus the protests that emerged. The photos from the protest were posted on multiple news sites as well as Tweeted from Rachel Maddow’s (of The Rachel Maddow Show on MSNBC).

Although it has been over two years since the ‘binders full of women’ incident, there are still things that have been coming from that. In July 2014 a women’s group from New York along with a number of other gender equality groups created a Kickstarter fundraiser called Bindercon. On September 22nd, 2014, a Twitter account for BinderCon was created. In less than a month, the account gained over 1,000 followers. This accidental comment that was made during the second presidential debate has continued to gain attention even years later.

All in all, memes can be used as a form of literacy and communication in the digital age that we are living in today. Political memes, are only going to become bigger and bigger with each passing election. They are going to say the hard things that no one wants to say out loud in a comical way and will again, document politician's slip ups as well as potentially sway people's voting. I am interested and excited to see what the 2016 presidential election brings to the world of memes and maybe this time there will be gifs made in regards to the political debates as well.

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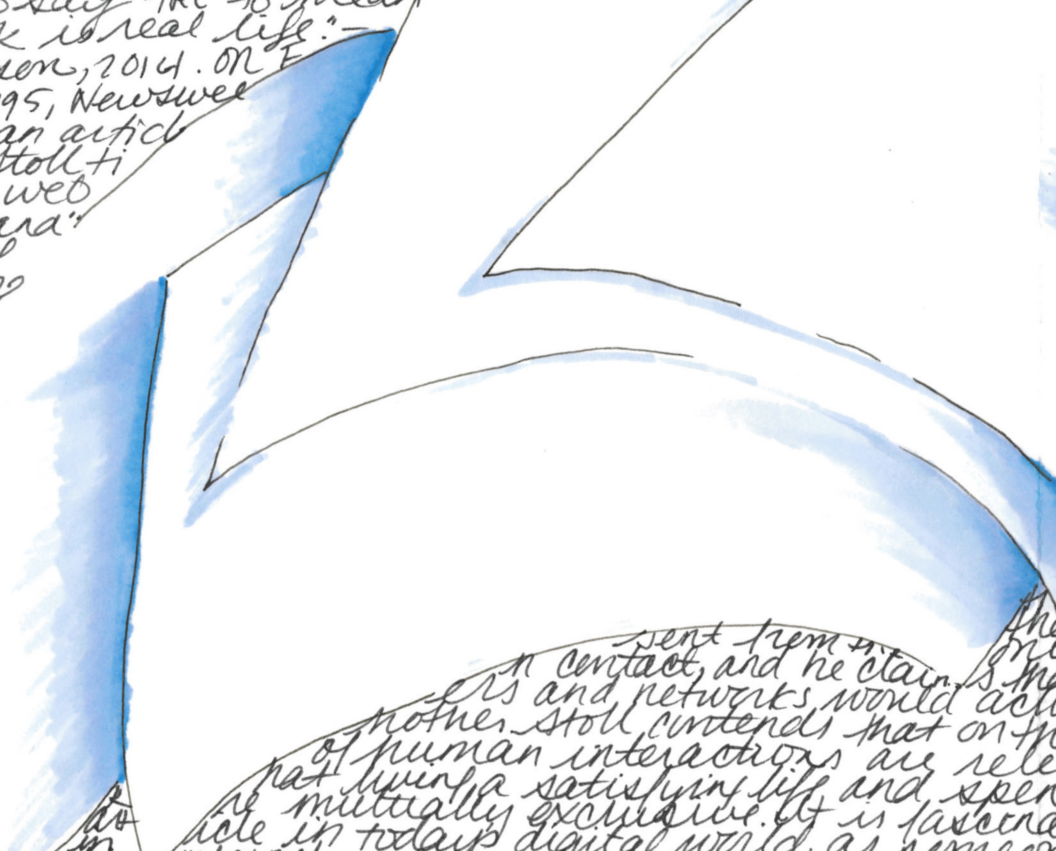

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and many other early digital naysayers wrong
ealed so many aspects of human life. Yet despi
l change, Stoll's outdated view that the real life
connected from the digital realm largely rem
many people embrace Stoll's notion; we hear
d veneration of time spent offline around dinner
asts, in advice columns and opinion pieces (ma
published and read via the Internet). This perspec
a strong online/offline dichotomy—that time sp
and that time spent online is something else,
than real, genuine, or authentic. Yet, as the onlin
ains a core tenet of public discourse, the conce
s digital world is increasingly challenged. Soci
an Jurgenson contends that the internet, followe
eb 2.0 platforms, has led to an ever deeper interw
virtual life, resulting in the online and offline
domains rather than distinctly separate sphe
contrast to scholars such as Sherry Turkle, Da
nas) and others who hold opposing positions on th
that technology is responsible for replacing what
t is unnatural or unreal. Jurgenson labels the
gnists; he explains, view the online and offline as
line is detrimental to any time spent offline. Jur