

THESIS

ONLINE SPACES: TECHNOLOGICAL, INSTITUTIONAL, AND SOCIAL
PRACTICES THAT FOSTER CONNECTIONS THROUGH INSTAGRAM AND TWITCH

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ABSTRACT

ONLINE SPACES: TECHNOLOGICAL, INSTITUTIONAL, AND SOCIAL PRACTICES THAT FOSTER CONNECTIONS THROUGH INSTAGRAM AND TWITCH

We are living in an increasingly digital world.¹ In the past, critical scholars have focused on the inequality of access and unequal relationships between the elite, who controlled the media, and the masses, whose limited agency only allowed for alternate meanings of dominant discourse and media.² With the rise of social networking services (SNSs) and user-generated content (UGC), critical work has shifted from relationships between the elite and the masses to questions of infrastructure, online governance, technological affordances, and cultural values and practices instilled in computer mediated communication (CMC).³ This thesis focuses specifically on technological and institutional practices of Instagram and Twitch and the social practices of users in these online spaces, using two case studies to explore the production of connection-oriented spaces through Instagram Stories and Twitch streams, which I argue are phenomenologically live media texts.

In the following chapters, I answer two research questions. First, I explore the question, “Are Instagram Stories and Twitch streams fostering connections between users through institutional and technological practices of phenomenologically live texts?” and second, “If they

¹ “We” in this case refers to privileged individuals from successful post-industrial societies.

² Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 2002); Stuart Hall, “Encoding/Decoding,” in *Media and Cultural Studies: Keywords*, ed. Meenakshi Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 163–73.

³ Ganaele Langlois, “Participatory Culture and the New Governance of Communication: The Paradox of Participatory Media,” *Television & New Media* 14, no. 2 (March 2013): 91–105, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1527476411433519>.

are, how do users support and advance connections across individuals in dispersed geographies on Twitch streams and Instagram Stories?” As my analysis shows, Twitch streams and Instagram Stories are texts that present themselves as phenomenologically live—meaning that even if they are not *live*, they are meant to *feel* live to the viewers—due to the complex institutional and technological practices that often remain hidden to the user, as well as social practices of users. By looking specifically at the rhetoric of liveness, the public screen, the third place, embodiment, and platform affordances and governance, this thesis will uncover the modes of production and possibilities for connection in online, ephemeral spaces. Through a visual and textual analysis of phenomenologically live texts on Instagram and Twitch and a critical analysis of the temporal, social, technological, and institutional practices that engender the materialization and maintenance of these communities, this thesis seeks to understand how visual platforms structure particular experiences in online interactions, acting as informal public spaces that have the ability to foster connections between users.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iv
Chapter 1 – Branding communities in online spaces: Uncovering technological and institutional practices of Twitch and Instagram.....	1
Introduction.....	1
Embodiment and Temporality in Phenomenologically Live Environments.....	4
The Habitual Body and the Embodied Self	6
Twitch	16
“We saved you a seat in chat”.....	20
Instagram.....	23
Instagram: About Us	26
Behind the Screen: Community Guidelines, Content Creation, and Moderation.....	27
Conclusion	36
Chapter 2 – Shifting political expectations: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s creation of an enclaved public screen through Instagram Stories.....	39
Introduction.....	39
From Public Sphere to Public Screen: The Enclaved Public Screen	47
The Narrative Selfie: Creating Connections Through Stories	52
Amateur Vlogger or Inspiring Politician? Millennials decide.....	56
“This is a movement. This is not me.”	59
Congress Camp: Pulling Back the Curtain on Accessibility	64
Conclusion	68
Chapter 3 – Livestreaming on Twitch: Creating an ephemeral virtual third place with Linkus7	71
Introduction.....	71
Building Connections and Virtual Third Places	74
Critical Method	78
Norms and Governed Practices of Twitch Users.....	82
Emotes and Imitation	85
Conversations in Ephemeral Virtual Third Places.....	95
Temporal and Spatial Markers of an Ephemeral Virtual Third Place	101
Conclusion	106

Chapter 4 – Conclusion: Ephemeral media texts as a product <i>and</i> a process	108
Introduction.....	108
Downloading Twitch streams: Feasibility for researchers.....	113
A product <i>and</i> a process: Archiving ephemeral texts from broadcasts to livestreams	119
Digital Humanities: A path forward for ephemeral media research	122
Conclusion	125
BIBLIOGRAPHY	128

Chapter 1 – Branding communities in online spaces: Uncovering technological and institutional practices of Twitch and Instagram

“Liveness should be interpreted as a development within media history as a whole.... At the base, the need to connect oneself, with others, to the world's events, is central to the development of the modern nation.”

Jérôme Bourdon⁴

“Because of radio and of the apparatus for the production of community that it implied and facilitated, it was now possible for millions of people to be ‘present’ in the same space—seated across from Roosevelt in his living room.”

Allucquère Rosanne Stone⁵

Introduction

Contrary to what the tech industry wants you to believe, social media platforms do not create online communities—users do. Conditions in online spaces that foster connections between users are facilitated and moderated by institutions, but users—including viewers and content producers—in these online spaces build and create the spaces and social norms themselves. In the past, critical scholars have focused on the inequality of access and unequal relationships between the elite, who controlled the media, and the masses, whose limited agency only allowed for alternate meanings of dominant discourse and media.⁶ With the rise of social

⁴ Jérôme Bourdon, “Live Television Is Still Alive: On Television as an Unfulfilled Promise,” *Media, Culture & Society* 22, no. 5 (September 2000): 551–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/016344300022005001>.

⁵ Allucquère Rosanne Stone, “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?,” in *Cyberspace: First Steps*, ed. Michael Benedikt (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991), 84.

⁶ Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*; Hall, “Encoding/Decoding.”

networking services (SNSs) and user-generated content (UGC), critical work has shifted from relationships between the elite and the masses to questions of infrastructure, online governance, content creation, technological affordances, and cultural values and practices instilled in computer mediated communication (CMC).⁷ Focusing specifically on technological and institutional practices of Twitch and Instagram, this analysis explores the behind-the-screen production of community conditions in a user-generated space.⁸ I argue that Twitch and Instagram provide an online space for fostering connections through certain technological and institutional practices, such as synchronous chat and comments, timestamps or lack thereof, notifications from online users, monetization, platform policies, content moderation, and more, encouraging users to build and participate in a shared online space at a specific time.

In order to best understand how online connections are fostered, it is necessary to examine functions of the institutions that enable and govern social media platforms. While this chapter focuses on the technological and institutional practices of Twitch and Instagram, following chapters will recognize the importance of user-generated content (UGC) in building connections between users in online spaces. Without this user generated content, social media sites would not be able to function, as they operate on user-generated content; this free human labor is a very important aspect of community creation online. However, for the purposes of this chapter, I will be looking more specifically at the technological and institutional work to create conditions that help facilitate connections between users, using Twitch and Instagram as case studies. Both platforms work technologically but also “discursively to frame their services and

⁷ Langlois, “Participatory Culture and the New Governance of Communication.”

⁸ I use the term “community” to discuss the conditions produced by Twitch and Instagram because each site brands their platform as such through their “Community Guidelines” and other marketing references of their platforms as communities.

technologies,” and thus this chapter combines media theories and rhetorical analyses to uncover the branding power behind each platform’s technological and institutional practices.⁹

This thesis explores two case studies: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Instagram Stories and Linkus7’s Twitch streams. To provide context and theorize these case studies, Chapter 1 introduces Instagram and Twitch, detailing the technological and institutional practices that encourage connections between users. To investigate the connection-building aspect of these platforms, in Chapter 2 I pull from Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples’ notion of the public screen, analyzing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s rhetorical production of what I term an “enclaved public screen” through Instagram Stories.¹⁰ Building off of work on the public sphere and public screen, I coin the term “enclaved public screen” to describe the use of CMC to reach out and speak to counter-public enclaves through screens, using their own language, values, and norms to subvert the hegemonic discourse of the public sphere.¹¹ Following this, Chapter 3 builds off of Ray Oldenburg’s third place, analyzing Twitch streamer Linkus7’s streams for evidence of informal connections and creation of social norms, demonstrating the importance of online, informal public spaces in creating virtual third places. Finally, I finish with a methodological discussion in Chapter 4, detailing the difficulties I experienced in my research which are indicative of a larger problem for scholars analyzing and preserving ephemeral media texts.

In looking at the practices and guidelines of Twitch and Instagram and how they influence what both sites term “communities,” I explore theories of embodiment and temporality

⁹ T. L. Taylor, *Watch Me Play: Twitch and the Rise of Game Live Streaming*, Princeton Studies in Culture and Technology (Princeton ; Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2018), 217.

¹⁰ Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the ‘Violence’ of Seattle,” *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (June 1, 2002): 125–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07393180216559>.

¹¹ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry Into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (John Wiley & Sons, 1989); DeLuca and Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen.”

in phenomenologically live texts.¹² Specifically, I draw from Sekimo’s multimodal approach, Merleau-Ponty’s habitual body, and media theories on liveness and livestreaming. Then, I examine Twitch’s technological features of livestreaming and synchronous chat that allow users to interact in real-time, as well as Instagram’s Stories and Highlights features, which work to build online spaces for socialization and interaction surrounding a multitude of topics. Next, I analyze Twitch and Instagram’s “About” pages in an effort to understand how they market their platforms and how their language impacts users’ perceptions of each site as an online space.¹³ Following this, I look at Twitch and Instagram’s “Community Guidelines,” content creation, and content moderation practices to determine the behind-the-screen work to produce safe, online spaces on UGC platforms.¹⁴

Embodiment and Temporality in Phenomenologically Live Environments

Phenomenologically live texts and environments, such as Linkus7’s Twitch streams and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Instagram Stories, feel live to the viewer even if they are not technically live at that moment. To understand the creation and experience of phenomenologically live texts and environments, this chapter looks at the phenomenology of perception through the theoretical lens of embodiment and temporality. This theoretical approach utilizes Sekimoto’s “multimodal approach,” which foregrounds the interplay between embodiment, spatiality, temporality, and ideological structure in order to understand identity construction.¹⁵ Sekimoto uses these three modes of interaction—embodiment, spatiality, and temporality—to “explore the conditions of engagement between an individual and his/her social

¹² “Twitch.Tv - Community Guidelines,” Twitch.tv, accessed December 5, 2019, <https://www.twitch.tv/p/legal/community-guidelines/>.

¹³ “Twitch.Tv | About,” Twitch.tv, accessed December 5, 2019, <https://twitch.tv/p/about/about/>.

¹⁴ “Twitch.Tv - Community Guidelines.”

¹⁵ Sachi Sekimoto, “A Multimodal Approach to Identity: Theorizing the Self through Embodiment, Spatiality, and Temporality,” *Journal of International & Intercultural Communication* 5, no. 3 (August 2012): 226–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17513057.2012.689314>.

worlds.”¹⁶ The ways individuals use the technological features or affordances of platforms are “conditions of engagement” set institutionally and technologically by Twitch or Instagram and their users. The “social worlds” in which users interact and explore their conditions of engagement consist of streams from over 3.7 million monthly streamers and over 1.2 million average concurrent viewers on Twitch, and they consist of posts from over 1 billion monthly users and 500 million daily Stories users on Instagram.¹⁷

This chapter focuses specifically on embodiment and temporality from the multimodal approach. I choose to foreground these concepts rather than spatiality because embodiment and spatiality become somewhat intertwined in online spaces where the users are not physically present in one location. Rather, the embodiment and perceptions of the users, due to technological and temporal features, creates the feeling of a shared space. Additionally, by producing ephemeral texts and synchronous chat only available when the content producer is “live,” Twitch and Instagram are temporally distinguished from other platforms, emphasizing the importance of temporality in a theoretical and material approach. In the following sections, I describe the theoretical role of Twitch streams and Instagram Stories as phenomenologically live texts, focusing on how perception, action, and bodily interaction with digital texts constitute experiences for a user on Twitch or Instagram. Phenomenology illuminates the theoretical nature of user experience, including a user’s “...perception, imagination, thought, reasoning, desire, emotion, volition, and embodied action, as well as temporal awareness, awareness of self and personal identity, awareness of others, and practical and social activity.”¹⁸ In other words,

¹⁶ Sekimoto, 227.

¹⁷ “Twitch Statistics & Charts,” TwitchTracker, accessed September 9, 2019, <https://twitchtracker.com/statistics>; “Our Story,” *Instagram* (blog), November 29, 2016, <https://instagram-press.com/our-story/>.

¹⁸ David Woodruff Smith, “Phenomenology,” in *Encyclopedia of Cognitive Science* (American Cancer Society, 2006), 1, <https://doi.org/10.1002/0470018860.s00153>.

phenomenology looks at the lived experience of users, including their understanding and perception of what they are experiencing, habitual actions that become engrained in their minds and daily lives, the presence and impact of temporality and liveness, and the presence or maintenance of social connections. I use phenomenology and the multimodal approach not to investigate an individual user's experience, but rather as an analytical and theoretical lens to situate Twitch and Instagram within a line of critical inquiry on lived experiences of perceived liveness.

The Habitual Body and the Embodied Self

Humans perceive mediated communication as a shared space even when they are geographically dispersed.¹⁹ Rich Ling notes the shift from location of particular spaces to location of particular bodies, recognizing that the creation of mobile communication caused people to “call to individuals, not to locations.”²⁰ Through the phenomenon of mobile communication, we see researchers' attention shift from a specific location to the individual in their embodied space. As Farman notes, “embodiment is always a spatial practice,” but it does not need to be located in a physical space.²¹ Particularly in cases where individuals are geographically dispersed or able to move physically but remain in the same online space, an individual's situated sense of self is experienced through embodiment and the habitual body.²²

The habitual body is a phenomenological concept associated with repetitive actions and ways of being, meaning it looks at the daily practices and interactions people have with non-

¹⁹ Carolyn Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New: Thinking about Electric Communication in the Late Nineteenth Century* (Oxford University Press, 1988).

²⁰ Rich Ling, “New Tech, New Ties: How Mobile Communication Is Reshaping Social Cohesion,” *American Journal of Sociology - AMER J SOCIOL* 115 (January 1, 2009): 3.

²¹ Jason Farman, *Mobile Interface Theory: Embodied Space and Locative Media*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2013), 19, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203847664>.

²² Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception* (London ; New York: Routledge, 1962).

human materials that shape their actions in and perceptions of their day-to-day lives.²³ This concept focuses on the lived experience of being, including one's perception and integration of habitual actions into their minds and lives. For example, when building a cabinet, an individual uses their body to complete the hammering, kinesthetically aware of what they are doing.²⁴ In the moment, they may not be actively thinking about using the hammer to drive the nail into the wood or about their specific hammering style, as the action of hammering is engrained in their bodily memory, helping them complete the task as if the hammer were an extension of their body completing a familiar action like brushing your teeth or typing on a computer.²⁵ The habitual body comes into play when discussing Twitch than Instagram, addressing, "how habits function as a source of knowledge through incorporating objects into one's bodily space."²⁶ Merleau-Ponty uses the habitual body to discuss the relationship and habitual actual between a blind man and his cane, and a typist and their keys.²⁷ In essence, the habitual body emphasizes an individual's consistent interactions with non-human objects that construct their reality, honing in on the importance of materiality in media studies as individuals incorporate technology into their daily lives and practices.

Although they are both SNSs, Twitch and Instagram impact the habitual body in different ways due to developer decisions on accessibility and usage. Twitch began as a desktop site that users could only access on a computer browser; since its inception, however, Twitch has expanded its platform to desktop apps beginning in March, 2017, mobile apps in June, 2017, and TV apps in September, 2019.²⁸ Twitch users can participate in the chat feature on mobile or

²³ Merleau-Ponty, 144.

²⁴ Smith, "Phenomenology," 5.

²⁵ Smith, 5.

²⁶ Sekimoto, "A Multimodal Approach to Identity," 232.

²⁷ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 144.

²⁸ Regina Balana, "Official Twitch App Finally Debuts On Apple TV," Tech Times, October 8, 2019, <https://www.techtimes.com/articles/245623/20191008/official-twitch-app-finally-debuts-on-apple-tv.htm>; "New

desktop apps. Instagram users, on the other hand, cannot post photos or Stories from a desktop computer. They must use a device with the Instagram app, as Instagram, the second most downloaded iOS app in 2018, is designed as a mobile, rather than desktop, application.²⁹ The method of accessing each site is important when thinking about the habitual body, as the objects incorporated into one's bodily space differ based on the devices used.

The habitual body as a theoretical concept connects the physical engagement and embodiment of Twitch users on a desktop computer, which involves sitting in a desk chair, typing on a keyboard, talking into a microphone, and listening through headphones. Thus, habitual practices, or "knowledge in the hands," and identification take place through the habitual body and quotidian interactions with a desk chair, a screen, a keyboard, and a mouse.³⁰ Many users, when asked about the sociality of CMC, respond with typing gestures, moving their hands and "emphasizing the gestural quality and essential tactility of the virtual [world]."³¹ Thus, interactions in online spaces are shaped through the habitual body and the tactile nature of using technology. In order to watch a Twitch stream, one must open their web browser by clicking the icon located on their desktop, go to Twitch's home page by typing in the URL or clicking "Twitch" in their bookmarks bar, log into their account by recalling and typing their credentials, and then find the streamer they are interested in spending time with either by scrolling through the home or explore pages, or by searching a specific streamer's channel. Instagram users incorporate their mobile device into their habitual body through repeated use of clicking on the Instagram app, scrolling through their newsfeed with a finger on their touchscreen, and by

Twitch Mobile App Available Now," July 5, 2017, <https://blog.twitch.tv/en/2017/07/05/new-twitch-mobile-app-available-now-aa527264091b/>; "Introducing the Twitch Desktop App Beta," March 10, 2017, <https://blog.twitch.tv/en/2017/03/10/introducing-the-twitch-desktop-app-beta-d941a280433/>.

²⁹ "Get the Top Apps of 2018 : App Store Story," App Store, accessed January 8, 2020, <https://apps.apple.com/us/story/id1438574124>.

³⁰ Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, 144.

³¹ Stone, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?," 86.

physically holding their mobile phone. These daily practices, involving physical movements and objects, influence individuals to move and understand their bodies in certain ways. At the same time, embodiment is also influenced by an individual's cognitive and emotional perception of a shared or imagined space.

Social platforms online have created a multitude of new spaces for human activity and interaction through enabling synchronous communication and public, shared, online spaces. Before the inception of the internet and conceptions of “cyberspace,” temporally synchronous communication technologies like the telegraph caused theorization around bringing together humanity in a shared space, even if they were geographically dispersed.³² The telegraph “allowed messages to be separated from the physical movement of objects,” a trend that continued with technological advancements leading up to the internet.³³ In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, this newfound “virtual space” on the internet was described as an imagined space formed through a communal agreement between users.³⁴ This characterization of an imagined space began with the inception of radio; when listening to the radio, even if people were alone, they “were tied by the most gossamer connections to an imagined community of people.”³⁵ When listening to President Roosevelt's fireside chats, for example, listeners were in a sense in two places at once—physically, their body was at home, “but the delegate, the ‘I’ that belonged to the body, [was] in an imagined space with another person.”³⁶ This space, similar to

³² James W. Carey, “Technology and Ideology: The Case of the Telegraph,” *Prospects* 8 (October 1983): 303–25, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0361233300003793>; Marvin, *When Old Technologies Were New*.

³³ Carey, “Technology and Ideology,” 305.

³⁴ Stone, “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?,” 82.

³⁵ Susan J. Douglas, *Listening in: Radio and the American Imagination*, 1st University of Minnesota Press ed (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2004), 22.

³⁶ Stone, “Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?,” 84.

online spaces facilitated by Twitch and Instagram, was “enabled and constructed” through technology by bringing together geographically dispersed people.³⁷

While the technology enabled the space and connections between President Roosevelt and his constituents, President Roosevelt’s use of idioms of mass culture functioned to close the perceptual gap between himself and his audience on the other end of the radio.³⁸ By relating to President Roosevelt and imagining a communal space, listeners’ bodies were physically at home, listening to the live radio, while their embodied selves were in an imagined space with President Roosevelt. The shared space and embodied self that individuals experienced listening to the radio are emphasized in new media through spatial metaphors and skeuomorphs, relating technology and intangible digital practices to items and actions in the physical world.³⁹ Skeuomorphs demonstrate the integration of actions and labels from our physical lives into our understanding of technology, creating a conceptual bridge between abstract technological processes and more tangible concepts that are metaphorically re-used in digital spaces.⁴⁰ Thus, spatial metaphors and skeuomorphs work to encourage and support our imagination of shared spaces by assigning familiar terms and concepts to the technological practices that construct and maintain these spaces, similar to President Roosevelt’s use of idioms to connect himself with his geographically-dispersed audience. When considering technology’s impact on embodiment, in addition to the rhetorical tools of metaphors and skeuomorphs, both space and time play a large role in forming users’ perceptions and interactions online.

³⁷ Stone, 84.

³⁸ D. M. Ryfe, “Franklin Roosevelt and the Fireside Chats,” *Journal of Communication* 49, no. 4 (1999): 80–103, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1999.tb02818.x>.

³⁹ The physical world was pushed into the digital, creating digital technologies and artifacts that mirrored their physical counterparts, such as desktop icons like trash bins, folders, and envelopes.

⁴⁰ Stefan Larsson, “From Analogue to Digital: The Skeuomorphs and Metaphors We Use,” in *55th Nordic Work Environment Meeting (Nordiska Arbetsmiljömötet), 2011*, vol. 45 (Occupational and Environmental Medicine, Sahlgrenska Academy, University of ..., 2011), 54–54.

Temporality and Livestreaming

The term “streaming” or “livestreaming” represents a larger cultural phenomenon of “a form of social live broadcasting on Twitch,” as well as other platforms.⁴¹ Generally, livestreaming is a broadcasted video on website platforms that allow for synchronous video, chat, and other interactive features.⁴² This can include livestreaming videogames, IRL (in-real-life) adventures, cooking, painting, karaoke, political discussions, and more.⁴³ Although Twitch has popularized gameplay livestreaming in recent years, livestreaming is not restricted to videogames.⁴⁴ As T.L. Taylor notes, “[m]uch of everyday life is performative, and live streaming merely picks up on that theme and amplifies it for entertainment purposes.”⁴⁵ This is to say that livestreaming expands beyond games, into the realm of politics, cooking, art, and more for entertainment. The “Just Chatting” category on Twitch, streaming nongaming content and is labeled as “IRL,” which means “In Real Life,” grew thirty-six percent in 2019, which is four times Twitch’s overall growth in that period.⁴⁶ This demonstrates viewers’ desire for a variety of content, not always tethered to gameplay, presented with synchronous video and chat functions.

Aesthetically and functionally, digital media promote immediacy and interactivity.⁴⁷

Interactive aspects of livestreaming such as chat features are important in creating a community atmosphere, allowing viewers to converse with one another either about the livestream they are

⁴¹ Max Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming: Affordances of Game Streams,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 92 (March 1, 2019): 20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.10.012>.

⁴² Stuart Cunningham, David Craig, and Junyi Lv, “China’s Livestreaming Industry: Platforms, Politics, and Precarity,” *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 22, no. 6 (November 2019): 719–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1367877919834942>.

⁴³ Cunningham, Craig, and Lv.

⁴⁴ Benjamin Burroughs, “A Cultural Lineage of Streaming,” *Internet Histories* 0, no. 0 (February 23, 2019): 1–15, <https://doi.org/10.1080/24701475.2019.1576425>.

⁴⁵ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 87.

⁴⁶ Jeff Grub, “For Twitch, 2019 Is All about the Growth of ‘Just Chatting’ Streams,” *VentureBeat* (blog), October 14, 2019, <https://venturebeat.com/2019/10/14/twitch-just-chatting/>.

⁴⁷ Barrie Axford and Richard Huggins, “Towards a Political Sociology of the Internet and Local Governance,” *Telematics and Informatics*, The Internet and Local Governance: Issues for Democracy, 20, no. 3 (August 1, 2003): 185–92, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0736-5853\(03\)00013-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0736-5853(03)00013-3).

watching or about other parts of their lives.⁴⁸ As Bolter and Grusin note, from the early design of the world wide web to the present-day platforms and websites, “...interactivity increases the realism and effectiveness of a graphical user interface.”⁴⁹ This perceived realism mirrors conceptions of “being there,” effectively abandoning “the idea of neat dividing lines between perception, cognition, and action.”⁵⁰ In other words, when watching a Twitch stream, viewers perceive the combined stream and chat window to be something akin to a physical space, experiencing the stream perceptually as they feel it, cognitively as they think about it, and actively as they type in chat, scroll on the page, and help co-construct their own experience of the Twitch stream.⁵¹

Twitch streams are not always technically live, synced up exactly with every viewer, but they nevertheless present themselves as live through direct address, user feedback and reactions appearing onscreen, and interactions between viewers and the streamer. Instagram Stories function in similar ways. While the Stories could have been posted anytime within the last twenty-four hours, Stories’ location at the top of a user’s Instagram feed stresses their urgency and significance, while the lack of an exact timestamp stresses the ephemerality of Stories. When viewing other users’ Stories, a user only sees how long ago the story was shared through the designation “X hours” in the top left corner of the screen. By relating the Story’s timestamp to the present rather than having a static timestamp, Instagram encourages users to live in the present as their reference point. Furthermore, users can respond to Stories at any time and engage with the creator; these real-time interactions, paired with the direct address of front-facing

⁴⁸ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

⁴⁹ Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin, *Remediation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1999), 29.

⁵⁰ Andy Clark, *Being There: Putting Brain, Body, and World Together Again* (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1997), xiii.

⁵¹ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 251.

cameras, contribute to a sense of “liveness” of Stories.

Twitch streams and Instagram Stories have similar phenomenological aesthetics to broadcast television, as they habitually present seemingly live experiences. Ideologically, the “liveness” that we experience online is rooted in broadcast television, which has different aesthetics and a different impact on the viewer than film.⁵² Similarly, phenomenologically live texts in online spaces have different aesthetics and a different impact on the viewer than film. While film is seen as frame-by-frame recordings of the past, “the television frame (when live) is a reflection of the living, constantly changing present.”⁵³ These constant changes are present in both Twitch streams, which evolve as an individual is streaming, and Instagram Stories, as users can post multiple Stories allowing others to follow along daily with their lives as they happen. Just as live television is seen as a “reflection of the living,” so are Twitch streams and Instagram Stories.⁵⁴ Furthermore, Twitch and Instagram Stories are more than just a “reflection of the living,” as they offer the opportunity to interact with other users synchronously. Twitch Streams and Instagram Stories allow for interactions between users, content producers, and web interfaces, providing each user with a unique, lived experience, rather than reflecting one-way lived experiences like broadcast television.⁵⁵

We cannot equate “live” television with “real life,” as it ignores the technology and institutions creating and influencing our perspectives of the televised event.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, understanding the production of the “liveness” that viewers feel when watching broadcast

⁵² Jane Feuer, “The Concept of Live Television: Ontology as Ideology,” in *Regarding Television: Critical Approaches*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (University Publications of America, 1983), 12–22, https://docit.tips/download/jane-feuer-the-concept-of-live-television-ontology-as-ideology_pdf.

⁵³ Herbert Zettl, “The Rare Case of Television Aesthetics,” *Journal of the University Film Association* 30, no. 2 (1978): 5.

⁵⁴ Zettl, 5.

⁵⁵ Zettl, 5.

⁵⁶ Feuer, “Jane Feuer, The Concept of Live Television.”

television is imperative to understanding how that “liveness” is reproduced aesthetically, rhetorically, and technologically on Twitch and Instagram. Liveness is not just a technological phenomenon, but an ideological phenomenon that takes place within the minds of the viewers.⁵⁷ Television’s potential for “unmediated transmission” is rarely fully realized, but rather the aesthetics of live are realized and perceived as “real” because we, as audiences, are told that it is “live.”⁵⁸ By presenting the time of an event, the creation of the televised event, and the transmission to viewers as simultaneous, television as an institution exploits ideological connotations of live television in order to overcome the fragmentation of broadcasting “live” events.⁵⁹ For example, televised American football games are highly mediated, yet still perceived as “live.” The National Football League broadcasts games at their “start time” which is the same on television and in-person, and includes slow-motion replays, fragmented camera shots cutting from one angle to the next, and extrinsic photographs, videos, and commentary. Even with the highly mediated presentation of the game, the NFL markets games so that they are perceived as “live” by American audiences. Through these phenomenologically live texts, viewers overlook fragmentation and other mediated elements, as the “live” flow helps to “maintain an illusion of directness and presence.”⁶⁰

The illusion of directness and presence in livestreaming has adapted from television, now allowing for direct interaction and connectivity with others in online communities. The feeling of experiencing something “live” together connects viewers, creating a networked audience.⁶¹

While scholarship on the networked audience spans from the inception of radio and broadcast

⁵⁷ Bourdon, “Live Television Is Still Alive.”

⁵⁸ Feuer, “Jane Feuer, The Concept of Live Television,” 13–14.

⁵⁹ Feuer, 14.

⁶⁰ Feuer, 19.

⁶¹ Alice Emily Marwick, *Status Update: Celebrity, Publicity, and Branding in the Social Media Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013).

television to present CMC, this chapter offers a theoretical perspective on networked audiences on Instagram, a photo and video sharing platform, and on Twitch, an ephemeral and phenomenologically live platform for streaming UGC, beginning with conceptions of livestreaming.⁶² According to Marwick, “[l]ivestreaming is the ongoing sharing of personal information to a networked audience, the creation of a digital portrait of one’s actions and thoughts...Livestreaming is the ‘always-on’ aspect of social media, the constant pings and alerts that makes smartphones so hard to ignore.”⁶³ This “always-on” aspect of social media encourages users to remain in constant contact with other users, making each connection feel “live,” as if it is happening in real-time. Livestreaming pushes individuals to incorporate social media into their daily routines and lives, fostering a digital intimacy and habituality between social media users that regularly see one another’s content.⁶⁴ Tracing the roots of livestreaming on social media platforms to livestreaming gameplay on Twitch, T.L. Taylor underscores the importance of the visual aspect of livestreaming, as “spectating has its own set of pleasures and forms of affective experience.”⁶⁵ Whether waiting for your turn to play *Mario Kart* on N64, watching your friend play *Frogger* at the arcade, or following the culmination of an online battle game after your character has died, spectating has always played an important role in gaming.⁶⁶

While this chapter focuses specifically on Twitch and Instagram, it is important to note that ephemeral texts, such as livestreams and photos that are deleted after twenty-four hours, is part of a larger media shift in media production and distribution.⁶⁷ Video and livestreaming

⁶² Marwick, 213.

⁶³ Marwick, 208.

⁶⁴ Gina Masullo Chen, “Tweet This: A Uses and Gratifications Perspective on How Active Twitter Use Gratifies a Need to Connect with Others,” *Computers in Human Behavior*, Web 2.0 in Travel and Tourism: Empowering and Changing the Role of Travelers, 27, no. 2 (March 1, 2011): 755–62, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2010.10.023>.

⁶⁵ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 38.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

⁶⁷ Taylor.

affordances are increasingly integral parts of social media platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, Periscope, Snapchat, and Facebook.⁶⁸ These new forms of production and distribution of original content by individuals engage viewers through immersion, interaction, immediacy, and sociality.⁶⁹ Viewers are able to experience events remotely, interact and socialize with other viewers through the chat, and receive “live” or almost-immediate updates and feedback from the content producer. The perceived affordances of livestreaming platforms, branding and marketing practices by the ownership, and content moderation practices all contribute to the experience of individual viewers.

Twitch

Twitch’s precursor, Justin.tv, was founded in 2005 by Yale student Justin Kan.⁷⁰ Kan’s goal was to create a “Big Brother-style” site that would stream his life publicly to viewers online.⁷¹ Eventually, Justin.tv allowed users to stream their own video online.⁷² “Twitch” became a category on justin.tv that allowed users to stream themselves playing videogames.⁷³ By 2011, the “Twitch” category has gained such a massive following that Justin.tv creators released Twitch as a streaming website of its own—Justin.tv was shut down in February, 2014 to allow the company to solely focus on what they named “Twitch Interactive.”⁷⁴ Amazon purchased

⁶⁸ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming.”

⁶⁹ Oliver L. Haimson and John C. Tang, “What Makes Live Events Engaging on Facebook Live, Periscope, and Snapchat,” in *Proceedings of the 2017 CHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems - CHI '17* (the 2017 CHI Conference, Denver, Colorado, USA: ACM Press, 2017), 48–60, <https://doi.org/10.1145/3025453.3025642>.

⁷⁰ James Cook, “Twitch Founder: We Turned A ‘Terrible Idea’ Into A Billion-Dollar Company,” *Business Insider*, accessed October 27, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-story-of-video-game-streaming-site-twitch-2014-10>.

⁷¹ Cook.

⁷² Cook.

⁷³ Greg Kumparak, “Justin.Tv Shuts Down To Let The Company Focus On Twitch,” *TechCrunch* (blog), August 5, 2014, <http://social.techcrunch.com/2014/08/05/justin-tv-shuts-down-to-let-the-company-focus-on-twitch/>.

⁷⁴ Kumparak.

Twitch Interactive in 2014 for about one-billion USD.⁷⁵ While Twitch began as a videogame streaming site, it has since evolved to include cooking shows, live tours of cities around the world, art demonstrations, and more.⁷⁶ Twitch has become increasingly popular, surpassing some of the most-watched cable channels in the United States.⁷⁷ In 2018, 3.4 million individuals broadcasted on average per month on Twitch.tv—this is a seventy-percent increase from the 2017 average.⁷⁸ In 2019, at any given time there are an average of 1,282,000 viewers watching Twitch broadcasters’ streams.⁷⁹

To analyze the structure and user-generated content and activity on a SNS, I first look at the perceived affordances of the platform.⁸⁰ By focusing on “perceived affordances” of graphical, screen-based interfaces, media scholars analyze technologies’ varied designs that rely upon “what actions the user perceives to be possible [rather] than what is true.”⁸¹ These perceived affordances exemplify what Michel de Certeau would deem strategies, as they are pushed forward by the institution and platform itself to govern users’ actions on the platform.⁸² Different users have different perceptions of the affordances available depending on their technological literacy and social practices.⁸³ If you have a device that is able to record video and

⁷⁵ William Clyde Partin, “Watch Me Pay: Twitch and the Cultural Economy of Surveillance,” *Surveillance & Society* 17, no. 1/2 (March 31, 2019): 153–60, <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v17i1/2.13021>.

⁷⁶ “Twitch.Tv | Watch,” Twitch.tv, accessed October 27, 2019, <https://twitch.tv/p/about/watch/>.

⁷⁷ Ben Gilbert, “Amazon’s Streaming Service Twitch Is Pulling in as Many Viewers as CNN and MSNBC,” *Business Insider*, accessed October 6, 2019, <https://www.businessinsider.com/twitch-is-bigger-than-cnn-msnbc-2018-2>.

⁷⁸ “Twitch Statistics & Charts.”

⁷⁹ “Twitch Statistics & Charts.”

⁸⁰ The term affordance was initially coined by J.J. Gibson to describe what an environment offers an animal, more specifically what it provides or furnishes in terms of properties or substance, from James Jerome Gibson, *The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (Psychology Press, 1986).

⁸¹ Donald A Norman, “Affordance, Conventions, and Design,” 1999, 38–43.

⁸² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 2nd ed. (Berkeley, Calif.: Univ. of California Press, 2013).

⁸³ Carmen K.-M. Lee, “Affordances and Text-Making Practices in Online Instant Messaging,” *Written Communication* 24, no. 3 (July 1, 2007): 227, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088307303215>.

have a strong Internet connection, you can technically host a Twitch channel.⁸⁴ However, streaming often requires a deeper understanding of the features and mechanics of the platform. Twitch streamers utilize a wide variety of affordances and constraints, as Amazon provides streamers with tools and technology for streaming, but many streamers utilize additional outside tools and third-party programs to augment their streams with more personalized elements.⁸⁵ Twitch provides both simple mechanics for novice streamers, and more technical mechanics, tools, and monetization functions for advanced, larger streamers.⁸⁶ Various features impact the way the streamer and audience engage with each other.⁸⁷ There are a number of social features offered, such as the chat window, the ability to follow and receive live notifications on a streamer, the option to share a stream or streamer with others, and monetization and public celebration of subscriptions, donations, and more.⁸⁸

Twitch has always monetized viewers and generating revenue from streamers, beginning with ads and donations in 2012 and introducing Amazon-supported Bits in 2016.⁸⁹ Bits allow users to “cheer,” through which users create a chat message that uses Bits to show support for a streamer.⁹⁰ Users purchase Bits from Amazon to cheer on streamers, resulting in revenue for both the streamer and Amazon.⁹¹ Furthermore, Twitch privileges Amazon Prime members with one free subscription per month, which allows users to subscribe to a streamer—a feature that

⁸⁴ Tee Morris, *Twitch for Dummies* (Newark, UNITED STATES: John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2019), <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csu/detail.action?docID=5612894>.

⁸⁵ Sjöblom et al., “The Ingredients of Twitch Streaming.”

⁸⁶ Sjöblom et al.

⁸⁷ Enrico Gandolfi, “To Watch or to Play, It Is in the Game: The Game Culture on Twitch.Tv among Performers, Plays and Audiences,” *Journal of Gaming & Virtual Worlds* 8, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 63–82, https://doi.org/10.1386/jgvw.8.1.63_1.

⁸⁸ The public celebration aspect refers to the streamer acknowledging, verbally or visually, new subscriptions and donations while on stream. Some streamers play a specific noise or clip when they receive subscriptions or donations, and others let donors choose text or a clip to share on the stream, depending on the level of donation.

⁸⁹ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

⁹⁰ “Introducing Cheering: Celebrate, Together,” Twitch Blog, June 27, 2016, <https://blog.twitch.tv/en/2016/06/27/introducing-cheering-celebrate-together-da62af41fac6/>.

⁹¹ “Introducing Cheering.”

normally costs \$4.99—for free.⁹² By subscribing, users receive exclusive emotes (streamer-specific emoticons), can speak in subscriber-only chat, and more.⁹³ Additionally, subscribers and followers receive notifications when a streamer goes live, encouraging them to log on and follow along with the streamer in real-time whenever they are streaming. Thus, notifications push forth the importance of temporality in livestreaming, emphasizing that subscribers and followers should drop what they are doing and watch the streamer when they are online, building habits and connections between streamers and their viewers.

The economic and industrial impact of Twitch are critical issues within the realm of this new form of media production and broadcasting, which create inequalities and imbalances of power within these mediated industries. While streamers and content creators are now able to monetize their streams, Amazon, Facebook, and other “...media industries still remain in control of the symbolic economy, and...they still strive to operate this economy in the service of their own [commercial] interests.”⁹⁴ In this newer form of production and broadcasting, the creative energy and experimental nature of game live streaming contends with existing and intervening organizations, regulations, and laws.⁹⁵ Monetization of streaming created a space for content creators who transitioned their leisure activities into a professional career through platforms like Twitch and YouTube.⁹⁶ In addition to the technological design elements of the platform, Twitch utilizes spatial metaphors, highlights the “live” nature of the platform, and encourages

⁹² “How to Use Twitch Prime Subscriptions,” accessed February 6, 2020, https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/how-to-use-twitch-prime-subscriptions?language=en_US.

⁹³ “Twitch Subs,” Twitch, accessed February 6, 2020, <https://www.twitch.tv/subs>.

⁹⁴ Graeme Turner, *Ordinary People and the Media: The Demotic Turn* (Los Angeles: SAGE, 2010), 16, <http://public.eblib.com/choice/publicfullrecord.aspx?p=483413>.

⁹⁵ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

⁹⁶ Jin Kim, “The Institutionalization of YouTube: From User-Generated Content to Professionally Generated Content,” *Media, Culture & Society* 34, no. 1 (January 2012): 53–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443711427199>.

habitual interactions between users, proposing conditions of their own choosing and allowing users to enact them.⁹⁷

“We saved you a seat in chat”

Despite the lack of specific policies identified by the platform, Twitch’s “About” page is clear about the goal of the platform; they intend to create community-building conditions for individuals to interact on a daily basis.⁹⁸ Messages surrounding community-building and belonging via spatial metaphors, emphasis of the “live” aspect of streaming, and interpersonal connections persist in Twitch’s marketing and institutional practices. These practices include Twitch’s published platform policies, called the community guidelines, Twitch’s “About” page, the ability to create and screen your own content, and content moderation meant to create and reflect specific community values. Through a rhetorical analysis of the “About” page on Twitch, it is clear the platform’s branding is rhetorically centered on building community conditions for entertainment and synchronous interaction between users.

Upon loading the “About” page on Twitch, the words “[w]e saved you a seat in chat” fill the purple screen, which is Twitch’s branding color.⁹⁹ One might wonder, why does Twitch’s “About” page begin discussing the chat rather than watching or creating the streams their platform functions on? It lies in their targeted marketing messaging and their most populous group of users—viewers who may participate in chat. Twitch has more than 15 million active daily users who view streams and participate in chats, with 2.2-3.2 million monthly broadcasters; thus, their largest population of users are simply viewers who watch streams and participate in

⁹⁷ Nick Couldry and José van Dijck, “Researching Social Media as If the Social Mattered,” *Social Media + Society* 1, no. 2 (September 22, 2015): 2, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115604174>.

⁹⁸ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

⁹⁹ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

chats.¹⁰⁰ By speaking directly to “you,” the user, Twitch utilizes a personal narrative while also creating a singular audience of “you,” the users, reinforcing the community aspect of Twitch. Additionally, by using the spatial metaphor of “saving a seat,” Twitch emphasizes the embodiment and level of physical involvement in online spaces. “We saved you a seat in chat” implies that there is a space in chat you as a user are meant to occupy—while this might not be a physical seat, the metaphorical seat in chat helps an abstract thought become rooted in our everyday bodily experiences (e.g. sitting in a chair), helping the user picture themselves physically as having a seat in the chat, becoming a part of the Twitch community.

While Twitch promotes itself as an overall community, its popularity stems from the large variety of niche communities available to users.¹⁰¹ Scrolling down on the “About” page, a video shifts between individual streamers playing videogames, cooking, and woodworking accompanied by large text that says, “Twitch is where millions of people come together live every day to chat, interact, and make their own entertainment together.”¹⁰² First, Twitch highlights the “live” aspect of their platform, pushing people to synchronously interact and entertain one another on a daily basis. Additionally, the different activities in the videos show the wide array of communities that exist on Twitch, which they emphasize later on their “About” page. Furthermore, this self-description of the platform shows the order of importance of activities to Twitch as a brand: first, they focus on the chat function and getting viewers, then on interactions between viewers and streamers, and lastly on the content-creators, or streamers,

¹⁰⁰ “25 Useful Twitch Statistics for Influencer Marketing Managers [Infographic],” Influencer Marketing Hub, May 15, 2019, <https://influencemarketinghub.com/25-useful-twitch-statistics/>.

¹⁰¹ “Use Twitch to Create a Niche Community,” *Stream District* (blog), March 18, 2019, <https://streamdistrict.com/create-a-niche-community/>.

¹⁰² “Twitch.Tv | About.”

themselves. Twitch maintains itself as a platform to build niche communities based on your passions, first targeting viewers, then connections between users, and then content creators.

As one scrolls down further on the “About” page, Twitch introduces the variety of content available: Games, music, talk shows, sports, travel and outdoors, just chatting, food and drink, and special events.¹⁰³ In this section, the platform is showing off the large assortment of topics covered by Twitch streamers, stating, “[u]nabashed fans, welcome home. Watch what you love, connect with streamers, and chat with tons of communities.”¹⁰⁴ Stating “welcome home” strengthens the personal and spatial connections made by the earlier statement, “we saved you a seat,” as welcoming someone home insinuates that they belong and have ownership over a certain space.¹⁰⁵ By using the term “fans” and then mentioning connecting with streamers, it is clear this messaging is aimed at viewers, not streamers. Again, this demonstrates Twitch’s dedication to growing their audience and niche communities.

The multitude of communities is strengthened as you scroll down further into the “About” section, where they begin targeting content creators. From here, Twitch is speaking directly to potential streamers and content creators, encouraging them to “share [their] dream,” stating, “[y]our creative content thrives here. Bring your passions; we’ll help you build a community around them.”¹⁰⁶ By using “your” and “you” repeatedly, Twitch reinforces a direct connection between the user and the platform before that user has even entered a specific Twitch stream or “community.”¹⁰⁷ In this way, Twitch as a whole brands itself as a community built out of smaller communities. Another “community” on Twitch consists of developers. They

¹⁰³ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

¹⁰⁴ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

¹⁰⁵ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

¹⁰⁶ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

¹⁰⁷ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

encourage developer engagement next on the “About” page with the text, “[b]uild new stuff. Twitch is a developer’s dreamland. Countless communities need custom tools built just for them. Come be their hero.”¹⁰⁸ In this section, Twitch speaks directly to developers with the implied subject of “you,” and also strengthens the idea of community-building by referencing tools needed to build communities. Overall, Twitch effectively brands itself as a live community, emphasizing the niche aspect both of streams and users, ensuring everyone reading their “About” page that they have a place on Twitch and a “seat” in chat.

Instagram

Instagram launched its mobile photo sharing application on October 6, 2010.¹⁰⁹ Within the first year, the service grew to over fourteen-million users that posted over four-hundred-million photos and was named Apple’s 2011 App of the Year.¹¹⁰ Unlike Facebook and Twitter which have desktop accessibility, Instagram is a mobile-only app because according to co-founder Kevin Systrom, “Instagram, at its core, is about seeing and taking photos on-the-go.”¹¹¹ The mobility emphasized through Instagram reinforces authenticity and liveness in “producing photos on the go, in the real world, in realtime.”¹¹² In the following sections, I detail past research on Instagram, examine the platform’s affordances, and rhetorically analyze Instagram’s “About” page.

Many scholars have written about SNSs in general, but few have focused specifically on

¹⁰⁸ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

¹⁰⁹ “Instagram Launches,” *Instagram* (blog), October 6, 2010, <https://instagram-press.com/blog/2010/10/06/instagram-launches-2/>.

¹¹⁰ “We’re the 2011 App Store iPhone App of the Year!,” *Instagram* (blog), December 8, 2011, <https://instagram-press.com/blog/2011/12/08/were-the-2011-app-store-iphone-app-of-the-year/>.

¹¹¹ “Introducing Your Instagram Feed on the Web,” *Instagram* (blog), February 5, 2013, <https://instagram-press.com/blog/2013/02/05/introducing-your-instagram-feed-on-the-web/>.

¹¹² “Introducing Your Instagram Feed on the Web.”

Instagram.¹¹³ While Instagram is the most popular photo sharing application, it has not garnered nearly as much platform-specific research as Facebook, Twitter, and other SNSs.¹¹⁴ Lydia Manikonda et al. performed the first in-depth analysis of Instagram's user activity, demographics, structure, and user-generated content, finding that users generally post once per week and geo-tag their posts often.¹¹⁵ U.S. adults are turning to Instagram more and more as a SNS; Pew Research Center reported a seven-percent increase in self-reported use of Instagram from 2016 to 2018, with thirty-five percent of U.S. adults in 2018 disclosing that they use Instagram on a daily basis.¹¹⁶ Instagram is even more prevalent among adults ages 18-24, with seventy-one percent reporting using Instagram, compared to only forty-five percent of eighteen to twenty-four-year-olds using Twitter.¹¹⁷ Furthermore, the amount of teenagers using Facebook is rapidly declining. In 2014, Facebook users ages thirteen to nineteen plummeted from seventy-two percent to forty-five percent.¹¹⁸ David Ebersman, Facebook's chief financial officer, recognized that Facebook "...is not a cool hangout spot anymore," with teen user rates dropping by up to a million teens per year.¹¹⁹ As younger populations are consistently using Instagram

¹¹³ For general accounts on SNSs, see: Claus-Peter H. Ernst, "Introduction," in *Factors Driving Social Network Site Usage*, by Claus-Peter H. Ernst (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2015), 1–9, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-09918-3_1; danah m. boyd and Nicole B. Ellison, "Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship," *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 13, no. 1 (October 2007): 211, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2007.00393.x>; Claudia Wyrwoll, "Introduction," in *Social Media: Fundamentals, Models, and Ranking of User-Generated Content*, ed. Claudia Wyrwoll (Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden, 2014), 1–10, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-658-06984-1_1.

¹¹⁴ Lydia Manikonda, Yuheng Hu, and Subbarao Kambhampati, "Analyzing User Activities, Demographics, Social Network Structure and User-Generated Content on Instagram," *ArXiv:1410.8099 [Physics]*, October 29, 2014, <http://arxiv.org/abs/1410.8099>.

¹¹⁵ Manikonda, Hu, and Kambhampati.

¹¹⁶ "Social Media Use 2018: Demographics and Statistics | Pew Research Center," March 1, 2018, <http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/>.

¹¹⁷ "Social Platforms like Snapchat and Instagram Are Especially Popular among Those Ages 18 to 24 | Pew Research Center," accessed March 12, 2019, http://www.pewinternet.org/2018/03/01/social-media-use-in-2018/pi_2018-03-01_social-media_0-02/.

¹¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/caitlin.dewey>, "Teens Are Officially over Facebook," Washington Post, accessed March 12, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-intersect/wp/2014/10/08/teens-are-officially-over-facebook/>.

¹¹⁹ Ryan Bradley, "Understanding Facebook's Lost Generation of Teens," Fast Company, June 16, 2014, <https://www.fastcompany.com/3031259/these-kids-today>.

more than Facebook and Twitter, it is important for media and rhetorical scholars to invest time and energy into researching Instagram as a SNS.

Instagram allows users to manipulate photos or videos through filters and others in-app editing features, and then post instantly to multiple SNSs (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, Tumblr) in addition to the user's Instagram page.¹²⁰ Because of this affordance, many users initially post to Instagram and then share that post on other SNSs, expanding the reach and possible engagements for each post and amplifying their message through multiple public screens.¹²¹ Similar to Twitter, Instagram allows users to "follow" each other; this social connectivity is selective, as users do not have to follow all users that follow them.¹²² When a user goes "live," or posts a photo on Instagram, followers can receive notifications to tune in immediately.¹²³ A user's followers can then like, comment on, and share their posts, creating a social awareness stream that is constantly updated in real-time.¹²⁴ These social awareness streams (SAS) differ from other forms of communication due to three main affordances and aspects of the platform: "a) the public (or personal-public) nature of the communication and conversation; b) the brevity of posted content; and, c) a highly connected social space, where most of the information consumption is enabled and driven by articulated online contact networks."¹²⁵ The connectivity between followers and their following, specifically regarding

¹²⁰ Manikonda, Hu, and Kambhampati, "Analyzing User Activities, Demographics, Social Network Structure and User-Generated Content on Instagram."

¹²¹ Yini Zhang et al., "Attention and Amplification in the Hybrid Media System: The Composition and Activity of Donald Trump's Twitter Following during the 2016 Presidential Election," *New Media & Society* 20, no. 9 (September 1, 2018): 3161–82, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444817744390>.

¹²² Manikonda, Hu, and Kambhampati, "Analyzing User Activities, Demographics, Social Network Structure and User-Generated Content on Instagram."

¹²³ Users cannot receive notifications when other users post Stories, as I discuss in Chapter 2.

¹²⁴ Mor Naaman, Jeffrey Boase, and Chih-Hui Lai, "Is It Really about Me?: Message Content in Social Awareness Streams," in *Proceedings of the 2010 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work - CSCW '10* (the 2010 ACM conference, Savannah, Georgia, USA: ACM Press, 2010), 189, <https://doi.org/10.1145/1718918.1718953>.

¹²⁵ Naaman, Boase, and Lai.

SAS that are updating in real-time, results in collectives and relationships—perceived or real—between individuals online.¹²⁶ When politicians or other celebrities enter these SAS, especially via Instagram Stories and other ephemeral texts through which users must habitually log on to see, they join their followers’ personal feeds and daily lives, creating connections with individual followers based on similarities and interests, regardless of their level of interaction.¹²⁷

Instagram: About Us

For a SNS that prides itself on visuals and pleasing aesthetics, Instagram’s “About Us” page is underwhelming, to say the least.¹²⁸ The page is white with plain black text that reads “About Us” at the top and has a bio for the “Head of Instagram” and the “Founders” underneath.¹²⁹ Rather than highlighting the platform and features or speaking to the user, as Twitch does on their “About” page, Instagram uses the space to focus on the individuals who made the platform possible: Adam Mosseri, Kevin Systrom, and Mike Krieger.¹³⁰ The decision to highlight the individuals who created Instagram, rather than the platform itself, lends itself to Instagram’s authenticity angle. By pointing to specific people and their backstories, Instagram works to present itself as a “passion project” led by individuals who worked “to empower the community on Instagram to connect with their interests and passions.”¹³¹ The emphasis on empowerment, creativity, and passion creates a space for specific types of posts and users focused on building each other up and sharing their authentic selves with one another.

In terms of their rise in popularity and ownership, Twitch and Instagram are not all that

¹²⁶ Christopher Moore, Kim Barbour, and Katja Lee, “Five Dimensions of Online Persona,” *Persona Studies* 3, no. 1 (June 13, 2017): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.21153/ps2017vol3no1art658>.

¹²⁷ Kim Barbour, Katja Lee, and Christopher Moore, “Online Persona Research: An Instagram Case Study,” *Persona Studies* 3, no. 2 (December 13, 2017): 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.21153/ps2017vol3no2art710>.

¹²⁸ “About Us • Instagram,” accessed January 9, 2020, <https://www.instagram.com/about/us/>.

¹²⁹ “About Us • Instagram.”

¹³⁰ “Twitch.Tv | About”; “About Us • Instagram.”

¹³¹ “About Us • Instagram.”

different. Instagram, like Twitch, began as a smaller platform that grew in popularity until it was bought out by a larger corporation—just as Amazon owns Twitch, Facebook owns Instagram. Unlike Twitch, however, Instagram still works to maintain and market its home-grown roots by highlighting the founders, who left Instagram in 2018, as its driving force. Twitch’s “About” page uses flashy graphics and bright colors to explain what the platform is and how it is used, directly addressing users as “you.”¹³² This shows that Twitch is a space for entertainment that is actively working on pulling in new users. Instagram, on the other hand, uses the opportunity to introduce individuals and humanize the platform, making it feel like less of a large media corporation trying to artificially connect with “you” and more like what it truly began as—a passion project from the two founders. While Instagram and Twitch rhetorically present themselves differently on their “About” pages, their platform and institutional policies and practices, such as their “Community Guidelines,” are very similar.

Behind the Screen: Community Guidelines, Content Creation, and Moderation

Technologically and institutionally, both Twitch and Instagram work behind the scenes to put forward a smooth and phenomenologically live experience to their users. A macro consideration of governance of platform operations and branding allows for an analysis of the need for human and nonhuman moderators, in the form of volunteer mods, bots, and algorithms, as well as social forces in the chat acting as a self-policing community in real-time. Creating aesthetic and temporal conditions to foster connections requires a lot of behind-the-screen work on the part of the SNS, both in branding overall and in screening to remove unacceptable posts as they are shared. The majority of this work involves creating and implementing platform policies to designate what content is or is not allowed on the SNS. These policies are then enforced

¹³² “Twitch.Tv | About.”

through both free and paid labor, privileging certain content while removing other content based on “human and institutional decisions, including interpretations of the behavior of users.”¹³³ While the specific content moderation firms, algorithms, and strict guidelines are not public knowledge, with the available evidence, this section unpacks implications of the institutional and regulatory systems that exist to create ephemeral spaces and practices online.

Scant public evidence exists about the specific content moderation policies of Twitch and Instagram. To counter the opaque narrative of content moderation, Twitch and Instagram both published general platform policies, which they term “Community Guidelines.” While the guidelines are optimistically vague, they are important to note as they demonstrate how each platform is actively branding themselves as a safe and positive community. Twitch’s “Community Guidelines,” begin:

At Twitch, our mission is to provide the best shared social video experience created by our growing community where creators and communities can interact safely. To achieve this goal, we ask that all users participate in such a way that promotes a friendly, positive experience for our global community.¹³⁴

The two opening sentences of Twitch’s community guidelines make one thing abundantly clear: Twitch is determined to brand themselves as a friendly, positive community and experience for all users. The platform branding itself as a positive space for all users is echoed in the first lines of Instagram’s community guidelines, which read, “We want Instagram

¹³³ David Hesmondhalgh and Amanda D. Lotz, “Video Screen Interfaces as New Sites of Media Circulation Power,” *International Journal of Communication* 14, no. 0 (January 1, 2020): 402–3.

¹³⁴ “Twitch.Tv - Community Guidelines.”

to continue to be an authentic and safe place for inspiration and expression. Help us foster this community.”¹³⁵ While both SNSs offer clear descriptions of their desires to promote and foster a positive, safe community, one thing is not clear in their community guidelines: How they intend to achieve this utopian UGC platform. This section explores the general institutional practices of the tech industry’s commercial content moderation, and specifically how Twitch and Instagram work to uphold their brand standards by promoting UGC and subsequently restricting that content through algorithms and human content moderation, whose presence and explicit policies remain hidden to users.

When discussing livestreaming, UGC, and newer modes of production, it is necessary to understand that despite early conceptions of the internet as free and open, these opportunities are not equally distributed and available to all. As Tarleton Gillespie states, the “fantasy of a truly ‘open’ platform is powerful, resonating with deep, utopian notions of community and democracy—but it is just that, a fantasy. There is no platform that does not impose rules, to some degree.”¹³⁶ Utopian possibilities and conceptions of an open and free internet for all who want to livestream on Twitch or post on Instagram must be reconciled with reality, as “people have uneven access to the means of participation and...many are discouraged from even trying.”¹³⁷ Those who have the financial and infrastructural ability to generate their own content or view UGC of others are engaging in “forms of affective and performative labor on platforms that they recognize are never fully theirs to control.”¹³⁸ This affective and performative labor is constant and demanding, spanning across platforms and compelling consistent content creation and media

¹³⁵ “Community Guidelines | Instagram Help Center,” accessed January 8, 2020, <https://help.instagram.com/477434105621119>.

¹³⁶ Tarleton Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet: Platforms, Content Moderation, and the Hidden Decisions That Shape Social Media* (Yale University Press, 2018), 5.

¹³⁷ Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture*, Digital Media and Society Series (Cambridge ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2009), 124.

¹³⁸ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 259.

participation by streamers and other content producers in order to maintain and connect with their audience.¹³⁹ Through this shared space, audiences become more than just spectators; synchronous interactions on chat and other Twitch and Instagram features allow the spectator to become both the participant and a content creator in this ephemerally shared, online space.¹⁴⁰ The content produced, as well as the content in the chat (on Twitch) and comments (on Instagram), is monitored both by individual content creators to reflect their specific community's values and guidelines, and by Twitch and Instagram as institutions to maintain their stringent platform policies on language, hate speech, harassment, nudity, and more.¹⁴¹

To preserve coherency and homogeneity of the channel's culture and community, Twitch streamers utilize volunteer moderators, filtering and blocking software, and other mechanisms of self-regulation.¹⁴² Moderators, called Mods on Twitch, are often viewers that volunteer or are chosen by the streamer to ensure the chat reflects the standards and guidelines of the streamer, allowing them to remove chat posts and ban individuals from the chat feature at their own discretion.¹⁴³ Mods on Twitch are typically unpaid positions that longtime viewers take on to help support their favorite streamers. Mods can greatly influence the community tone and values by deleting specific chats, slowing down the rate at which viewers can post in chat, limiting chat features to subscribers only, and banning users from chat for any period of time.¹⁴⁴ Through these moderating features, Mods can make the platform seem less synchronous or "live" for

¹³⁹ Nancy K. Baym, *Playing to the Crowd: Musicians, Audiences, and the Intimate Work of Connection*, Postmillennial Pop (New York: New York University Press, 2018).

¹⁴⁰ Stone, "Will the Real Body Please Stand Up?"

¹⁴¹ "Twitch.Tv - Community Guidelines."

¹⁴² K. Barzilai-Nahon and S. Neumann, "Bounded in Cyberspace: An Empirical Model of Self-Regulation in Virtual Communities," in *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences*, 2005, 192b–192b, <https://doi.org/10.1109/HICSS.2005.124>.

¹⁴³ "Guide to Building a Moderation Team," accessed October 7, 2019, https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/guide-to-building-a-moderation-team?language=en_US.

¹⁴⁴ "Chat Commands," accessed October 7, 2019, <https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/chat-commands>.

some users, as they can slow down chat rates and limit the users who can post in chat, building a barrier between users and the phenomenological “liveness” of the chat function.

Streamers can also utilize AutoMod, an automated feature that relies on machine learning and language processing algorithms to shield their chat from potentially abusive or risky messages, sending them to be reviewed by Mods before appearing to other viewers in the chat.¹⁴⁵ By delaying certain messages, AutoMod and subsequent responses by Mods disrupt the phenomenologically live nature of Twitch chats in an effort to create a more safe and welcoming space. AutoMod can be set to different levels of aggressive moderation, filtering for messages surrounding four categories: identity, sexual language, aggressive speech, and profanity.¹⁴⁶ Twitch’s AutoMod and other algorithmic monitoring of content functions to remove videos first and ask questions later.¹⁴⁷ In addition to monitoring content to keep a space safe or free of outward harassment, platforms also moderate content to ensure all users are complying with the often vague or not publicly-released community guidelines and regulations.¹⁴⁸

In addition to removing offensive material, SNSs design and use algorithms that reflect the SNS’s norms and guidelines, encouraging certain user practices over others. Algorithms are “encoded procedures for transforming input data into a desired output, based on specific calculations.”¹⁴⁹ Whether on a search engine or a social networking site, algorithms function to select information that is most relevant to the user, helping users quickly navigate massive databases.¹⁵⁰ Instagram, like most other platforms, does not share explicit details of their

¹⁴⁵ “How to Use AutoMod,” accessed October 7, 2019, <https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/how-to-use-automod>.

¹⁴⁶ “How to Use AutoMod.”

¹⁴⁷ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

¹⁴⁸ Sarah T. Roberts, *Behind the Screen: Content Moderation in the Shadows of Social Media* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

¹⁴⁹ Tarleton Gillespie, “The Relevance of Algorithms,” in *Media Technologies*, ed. Tarleton Gillespie, Pablo J. Boczkowski, and Kirsten A. Foot (The MIT Press, 2014), 167, <https://doi.org/10.7551/mitpress/9780262525374.003.0009>.

¹⁵⁰ Gillespie, “The Relevance of Algorithms.”

algorithmic architecture.¹⁵¹ In 2018, however, Instagram product lead Julian Gutman hosted a group of reporters in Instagram’s San Francisco office to further explain the algorithm and dispel common myths.¹⁵² According to Gutman, the algorithm organizes a user’s feed, or the posts they see when they open the app, based on three main factors: Interest, recency, and relationship.¹⁵³ Interest relies on how much Instagram thinks you will like a post based on past likes, views, and interactions with similar posts.¹⁵⁴ Recency prioritizes newer posts over older ones, so if a user posts when other users are online and active, their post is more likely to be seen.¹⁵⁵ Finally, relationship determines how close you are to the user who posted the photo or video; if you frequently watch a user’s Stories, comment on or like their posts, or DM (direct message) that user, their posts are more likely to show up at the top of your feed on Instagram.¹⁵⁶ Through Gutman’s vague description of Instagram’s algorithm, users learn that the more you actively engage with other users, commenting, DMing, and liking their posts and Stories, the more likely your posts will show up in their feed. Thus, Instagram prioritizes relationships and engagement over artificial likes or inflation; automation services and bots that increase follower-count and likes are a thing of the past with Instagram’s new algorithm.¹⁵⁷ By privileging genuine and authentic engagement and interactions between users, Instagram’s algorithm gives more attention to users frequently reaching out and making connections with other users.

Platforms and corporations act as gatekeepers, moderating, privileging, and removing

¹⁵¹ Kelley Cotter, “Playing the Visibility Game: How Digital Influencers and Algorithms Negotiate Influence on Instagram,” *New Media & Society* 21, no. 4 (April 1, 2019): 895–913, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818815684>.

¹⁵² Josh Constine, “How Instagram’s Algorithm Works,” *TechCrunch* (blog), June 1, 2018, <http://social.techcrunch.com/2018/06/01/how-instagram-feed-works/>.

¹⁵³ Constine.

¹⁵⁴ Constine.

¹⁵⁵ Constine.

¹⁵⁶ Constine.

¹⁵⁷ Cotter, “Playing the Visibility Game”; Quentin Decaillet, “Mass Planner Shut Down by Instagram: The End of the Bot Era,” *Fstoppers*, May 13, 2017, <https://fstoppers.com/social-media/mass-planner-shut-down-instagram-end-bot-era-176654>.

certain content through complex political control, algorithms and invisible human labor.¹⁵⁸

Scholarly work surrounding communication technology and information revolutions and evolutions generally ignored related questions of labor practices and development until the twenty-first century.¹⁵⁹ Frequently, attention given to labor in the tech industry involved in the development of new communication technology focuses on the invention, innovation, and other “knowledge work,” disregarding lower-skilled work and laborers.¹⁶⁰ In recent years, scholars have picked up and focused on work outside of higher-class knowledge work, shifting research interest away from producers and onto the previously hidden work of content moderation.

Allowing live and real-time content on platforms requires constant supervision and moderation by the platforms in order to maintain a safe and welcoming experience for users. This means that at all times, content moderators, algorithms, and user reports function to maintain the desired atmosphere of the platform, working behind the screen constantly screening content in order to maintain the “liveness” of a platform with users posting updates and content in real-time. The implementation of platform governance and increased content moderation compels the work of human laborers to manage violent, hateful, and disturbing content.¹⁶¹ The invisible labor of content moderators only became known in the last ten years as journalists and scholars began to dig into the darker side of social media and user generated content.¹⁶² Large

¹⁵⁸ Horace M. Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch, “Television as a Cultural Forum: Implications for Research*,” *Quarterly Review of Film Studies* 8, no. 3 (June 1983): 45–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10509208309361170>; Roberts, *Behind the Screen*.

¹⁵⁹ Aad Blok and Gregory John Downey, eds., *Uncovering Labour in Information Revolutions, 1750-2000*, International Review of Social History 11 (Cambridge ; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

¹⁶⁰ Blok and Downey.

¹⁶¹ Sarah T. Roberts, “Commercial Content Moderation: Digital Laborers’ Dirty Work,” in *The Intersectional Internet*, ed. Safiya Umoja Noble and Brendesha M. Tynes (Peter Lang US, 2016), 147–59, <https://doi.org/10.3726/978-1-4539-1717-6>.

¹⁶² Roberts, *Behind the Screen*; Roberts, “Commercial Content Moderation: Digital Laborers’ Dirty Work”; Sarah Myers West, “Censored, Suspended, Shadowbanned: User Interpretations of Content Moderation on Social Media Platforms,” *New Media & Society* 20, no. 11 (November 2018): 4366–83, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444818773059>; Brad Stone, “Concern for Those Who Screen the Web for Barbarity,”

technology companies, journalists and scholars who spoke to commercial content moderators (CCMs) breaking their nondisclosure agreements discovered, are overworking, underpaying, and traumatizing countless workers.¹⁶³ In the eyes of U.S. law, content moderation is not a responsibility of social media platforms, as, “No provider or user of an interactive computer service shall be treated as the publisher or speaker of any information provided by another information content provider.”¹⁶⁴ The Communications Decency Act of 1996 also states that the same providers and users not punished for information published will also not be punished for removing what they thought was offensive, excessively violent, or “otherwise objectionable” content.¹⁶⁵ Due to the vague nature of the law, citizens push social media platforms to regulate the content on their sites, encouraging a corporate social responsibility. Content moderation, however, is not just a social responsibility of social media platforms, but a critical operation of social media platforms to maintain their brands.

To remain the safe, positive environments they publicly brand themselves as, Twitch and Instagram regulate content based on their public community guidelines and their more opaque content moderation practices. In order to maintain the façade of welcoming and agreeable environments, many platforms hide the work of CCMs, protecting their corporate or platform brand by solely showing positive and appropriate content to the public.¹⁶⁶ Social media sites that do not moderate their content develop a negative public perception that the company is hiding

The New York Times, July 18, 2010, sec. Technology,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/07/19/technology/19screen.html>.

¹⁶³ Stone, “Concern for Those Who Screen the Web for Barbarity.”

¹⁶⁴ “Protection for Private Blocking and Screening of Offensive Material,” § 230 47 § (2012),
<https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/47/230>.

¹⁶⁵ Protection for private blocking and screening of offensive material.

¹⁶⁶ Roberts, *Behind the Screen*.

behind a “shield for scoundrels.”¹⁶⁷ Some of these companies avoid regulation to lower operation costs, which can cause increased public scrutiny and dissatisfaction with the platform as ethical and responsible.¹⁶⁸ In order to establish themselves as a platform that is working hard to keep their users safe, for the first time, in November 2019, Facebook released metrics related to four policy areas on Instagram, which are “Child Nudity and Sexual Exploitation of Children,” “Regulated Goods: Drugs and Firearms,” “Suicide and Self-Injury,” and “Terrorist Propaganda.”¹⁶⁹ From July to September 2019, Instagram removed 753,700 posts classified as child nudity and exploitation, 58,600 posts classified as firearm violations, 845,400 posts that depicted suicide and self-injury, and 133,300 posts containing terrorist propaganda.¹⁷⁰ Of the removed posts that violated Instagram’s policies, ninety-one to ninety-five percent were found and flagged by Instagram’s content moderation team before they were reported by users; the notable exception was posts containing suicide and self-injury, which were reported by users over twenty-percent of the time before Instagram’s content moderation team removed the posts.¹⁷¹ This discrepancy demonstrates the difficulties of moderating a SNS in real-time. Moderators must respond quickly and make constant decisions on how to respond to a specific post or image.¹⁷² By responding quickly, newsfeeds, Stories, and other posts are able to

¹⁶⁷ David S. Ardia, “Free Speech Savior or Shield for Scoundrels: An Empirical Study of Intermediary Immunity under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act,” *Loyola of Los Angeles Law Review* 43, no. 2 (June 16, 2010): 380, <https://heinonline.org/HOL/Page?handle=hein.journals/lla43&id=381&div=&collection=>.

¹⁶⁸ Ardia, “Free Speech Savior or Shield for Scoundrels.”

¹⁶⁹ “Community Standards Enforcement,” accessed January 27, 2020,

https://transparency.facebook.com/community-standards-enforcement?utm_source=Triggermail&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Post%20Blast%20bii-digital-media:%20Facebook%20shares%20Instagram%20content%20moderation%20data%20for%20first%20time%207C%20Tencent%20to%20target%20international%20mobile%20games%20%7C%20Quibi%20taps%20into%20superhero%20craze&utm_term=BII%20List%20DMedia%20ALL#instagram-child-nudity-and-sexual-exploitation.

¹⁷⁰ “Community Standards Enforcement.”

¹⁷¹ “Community Standards Enforcement.”

¹⁷² Gillespie, *Custodians of the Internet*, 121.

continually update in seemingly real-time, keeping the phenomenologically live aspect of Twitch and Instagram alive, showing the ebbs and flows of users' daily lives.

Through their community guidelines and desire to keep each platform a positive, safe space for users, both Instagram and Twitch use multiple methods of content moderation from algorithms, to CCMs, to volunteers flagging inappropriate posts. Unfortunately, no system, especially when dealing with live texts, is one-hundred percent effective. There are many different forms of community management, yet destructive social engagement is still present on Twitch, Instagram, and other platforms, with actions such as distributed denial of service (DDOS) attacks, swatting, and outright harassment of users.¹⁷³ From dress code policies to hate speech regulation, the analysis of the technological and institutional practices of Twitch and Instagram as platforms demonstrates each platforms' desire to uphold their brand standards of creating an outwardly-facing safe, positive community, while inwardly following the tech industry's norm of exploiting content moderation workers.

Conclusion

When an individual watches Instagram Stories on their phone or a Twitch stream at a desktop computer regularly, they form habits with the technology they use. Their phone, computer screen, keyboard, or mouse all become incorporated as part of their habitual body, playing a role in constructing their reality. The physical and habitual body, paired with perceptions of videos and images on Twitch and Instagram as live, build an individual's understanding of and connection with phenomenologically live texts in online spaces. When these platforms brand themselves as community-building spaces through their technological affordances, ephemeral presence, community guidelines, algorithms, and moderation practices,

¹⁷³ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

an individual user's habitual body is welcomed into an engaging online space, allowing them to synchronously connect with other, geographically dispersed users.

Phenomenologically live online spaces provide users with the chance to feel a simulation of same-space synchronous connection with individuals who are geographically dispersed, creating a shared space, on either Twitch or Instagram, for a specific moment in time. Twitch and Instagram work hard behind the scenes to create positive community conditions. Through each platform's affordances, self-branding and marketing, community guidelines, promotion of user-generated content, and strict content moderation, Twitch and Instagram brand themselves as online spaces that provide a community-building atmosphere to all users. These spaces are governed and monitored according to each platform's community guidelines to ensure the content is appropriate and acceptable to their users. In turn, the users create the content itself, utilizing images and videos of themselves and creating their own social norms, understandings, and guidelines. In order to better understand how Twitch and Instagram provide online spaces that allows users to build and participate in specific communities on a daily basis, this thesis focuses specifically on technological and institutional practices on Twitch and Instagram, using two case studies to explore the production of community-oriented spaces through phenomenologically live texts and videos.

By examining certain technological, rhetorical, and institutional practices of Twitch and Instagram, this chapter demonstrates each platforms' behind the scenes efforts to brand themselves as safe, positive communities, building online spaces to foster connections between users through institutional and technological practices of phenomenologically live texts. In the following chapters, I explore my second research question, "how do users support and advance connections across individuals in dispersed geographies on Twitch streams and Instagram

Stories?” Chapter 2 analyzes Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s use of Instagram Stories as an enclaved public screen, pointing to Ocasio Cortez’s rhetoric and effective use of platform affordances in connecting her to individuals across the United States and around the world. Chapter 3 takes a more playful turn, looking at Linkus7’s Twitch streams and the informal, ephemeral, public space he creates when he streams. This virtual third place functions through Twitch’s affordances, the rhetoric of Linkus7 and the chat, the norms set by Linkus7 and his chat, and the temporal conditions that ephemerally connect individuals from around the world. Finally, Chapter 4 considers methodological challenges of researching and archiving ephemeral media, as well as the importance of doing so, pointing toward a future of archiving new media in an increasingly ephemeral world.

Chapter 2 – Shifting political expectations: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s creation of an enclaved public screen through Instagram Stories

Introduction

Social networking services (SNSs) have become an indispensable component of political communication.¹⁷⁴ To keep up with the new media trends, many politicians are shifting their attention away from traditional media and towards SNSs. Politicians around the globe, such as Singapore’s Member of Parliament Baey Yam Keng, New Zealand Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, and United States Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, are turning to Instagram to habitually engage with their constituents and followers.¹⁷⁵ Politicians use SNSs, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as “privately owned publicity channel[s].”¹⁷⁶ Due to the ease of accessibility of SNSs for both politicians and constituents, social media is an effective tool in political communication to reach out and engage with constituents that may not normally follow politics or be targeted by political campaigns. Additionally, studies show that exposure to a high-profile politician’s Twitter, as compared to a newspaper interview or other traditional media, positively impacts a citizen’s view on that politician.¹⁷⁷ Researchers Eun-Ju Lee and Soo Yun Shin found that even when “the messages were identical, exposure to the candidate’s Twitter page heightened the sense of direct conversation with [them] (i.e., social presence), which in turn

¹⁷⁴ Social Networking Services (SNSs) are “web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semipublic profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” from Boyd and Ellison, “Social Network Sites.”

¹⁷⁵ Tama Leaver, Tim Highfield, and Crystal Abidin, *Instagram: Visual Social Media Cultures*, Digital Media and Society Series (Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA, USA: Polity, 2020).

¹⁷⁶ Eun-Ju Lee and Soo Yun Shin, “When the Medium Is the Message: How Transportability Moderates the Effects of Politicians’ Twitter Communication,” *Communication Research* 41, no. 8 (December 2014): 1088–1110, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650212466407>.

¹⁷⁷ Lee and Shin.

induced more favorable impressions of and a stronger intention to vote for [them].”¹⁷⁸ The social presence SNSs afford can help individual politicians reach out to their constituents in a timely and seemingly more personal manner. The political strategy of fostering digital intimacy has become more commonplace around the world, and Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez consistently receives praise for her “unprecedented form of transparency” in offering followers an intimate look inside the government and her life.¹⁷⁹ This chapter seeks to understand this amplified social presence through Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez’s use of Instagram Stories as a phenomenologically live text, meaning it feels live to her viewers and followers, to communicate and connect with her followers.

By recognizing the shifting context for politicians on social media and the ability to relate to constituents through new media, this chapter analyzes how Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez creates a phenomenologically live text, utilizing narrative selfies on Instagram Stories and collapsing the gap between her public and private life, connecting with a diverse array of people through social media. Specifically, applying updated models of the public sphere, the analysis will contribute to understandings of the public screen and how Ocasio-Cortez uses Instagram Stories as an enclaved public screen, meaning she uses Instagram as a way to disseminate information, connect with, and reach out to a variety of counter-public enclaves frequently ignored by traditional media and politicians.

Methodologically, by rhetorically analyzing Ocasio-Cortez’s language, as well as her appearance and the location of her Stories, this chapter affirms that Instagram Stories are rhetorical objects, highlighting the importance of ephemerality on the construction of Stories and

¹⁷⁸ Lee and Shin.

¹⁷⁹ Eliza Relman, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Is Using Instagram Stories to Bring You behind the Curtain of the Washington, DC, Establishment,” *Business Insider*, November 15, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-instagram-stories-washington-dc-2018-11>.

connections between users. To ensure this analysis covers both the technological and social aspects of Ocasio-Cortez's Stories, I use a media analysis of the affordances and additional features she uses as well as a rhetorical analysis to analyze the language and visual scenery in the Stories themselves.

Before analyzing the current media landscape for politicians, it is necessary to map out the evolution of media usage by politicians. Then, recognizing theories on the public sphere and public screen, I propose a multiplicity of enclaved public screens to better understand the media landscape today.¹⁸⁰ With this in mind, I provide a background on the interplay between politicians and media, specifically discussing Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez in politics and on social media, followed by a textual and visual analysis of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's four pinned Instagram Stories as of June 2019. Through her frequent use of Instagram Stories, which offer users a synchronous experience of a perceived live connection, paired with the technological and institutional practices of the platform discussed in Chapter 1, this chapter argues that Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez utilizes Instagram Stories as an enclaved public screen to build connections with and between her geographically dispersed followers.

Shifting Expectations

Historically, politicians used traditional news media to present their professional persona and details of their public life with viewers.¹⁸¹ From the first Kennedy-Nixon debate in 1960, it has been clear that television images have significant effects on constituents.¹⁸² From this point forward, scholars recognized the significant role mass media, specifically visual and broadcast

¹⁸⁰ Monica Anderson and Jingjing Jiang, "Teens, Social Media & Technology 2018," n.d., 10.

¹⁸¹ Jonas Colliander et al., "The Social Media Balancing Act: Testing the Use of a Balanced Self-Presentation Strategy for Politicians Using Twitter," *Computers in Human Behavior* 74 (September 2017): 277–85, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.04.042>.

¹⁸² James N. Druckman, "The Power of Television Images: The First Kennedy-Nixon Debate Revisited," *The Journal of Politics* 65, no. 2 (May 1, 2003): 559–71, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2508.t01-1-00015>.

media, played in political campaigns.¹⁸³ Because television stresses visual channels of engagement, the perception of intimacy and human expression between candidates and viewers greatly increased with the introduction of televised debates.¹⁸⁴ As a result of televised debates, candidates' relational messages, including details of their private lives, enhanced their influence on viewers.¹⁸⁵ This collapse between public and private life of politicians was only furthered through the introduction of SNSs, which encourage users to habitually share private details of their lives with followers online.¹⁸⁶ This merging of public and private life mirrors early conceptions of television merging the private lives of viewers with the public sphere.¹⁸⁷

New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is pushing the collapse between public and private life even further, influencing the way politicians are expected to use social media.¹⁸⁸ Whether she is making mac 'n' cheese on her Instagram Story, live-streaming on Twitch discussing trans rights, or tweeting videos of herself dancing in the Halls of Congress, Ocasio-Cortez utilizes social media to reach people that typically may not be involved in and invited into political conversations. This includes young voters, uninterested voters, minorities, and the deaf and hard of hearing community.¹⁸⁹ Ocasio-Cortez utilizes Instagram Stories to reach a larger, more diverse audience while also incorporating aspects of both her public and private

¹⁸³ Russell Middleton, "National TV Debates and Presidential Voting Decisions," *The Public Opinion Quarterly* 26, no. 3 (1962): 426–29.

¹⁸⁴ Michael Pfau and Jong Geun Rang, "The Impact of Relational Messages on Candidate Influence in Televised Political Debates," *Communication Studies* 42, no. 2 (June 1, 1991): 114–28, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510979109368327>.

¹⁸⁵ Pfau and Rang.

¹⁸⁶ Colliander et al., "The Social Media Balancing Act."

¹⁸⁷ Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Reamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs*, Console-Ing Passions (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 33.

¹⁸⁸ Alex Seitz-Wald, "Democrats 'like' It: The Secret to Ocasio-Cortez's Social Media Success," *NBC News*, January 20, 2019, <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/democrats-it-secret-ocasio-cortez-s-social-media-success-n960561>; Stephanie Alice Baker and Chris Rojek, *Lifestyle Gurus: Constructing Authority and Influence Online* (Cambridge, UK : Medford: Polity Press, 2020), 65.

¹⁸⁹ "On The Sidelines Of Democracy: Exploring Why So Many Americans Don't Vote," NPR.org, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2018/09/10/645223716/on-the-sidelines-of-democracy-exploring-why-so-many-americans-dont-vote>.

life, humanizing herself as a politician and person in the process. In order to analyze the space created by Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories as phenomenologically live texts, I first examine the general shifts in political communication, specifically the trend of "de-professionalism" in SNS usage.¹⁹⁰

After the 2018 Congressional election, members of Congress recognized and emphasized the benefits of politicians fluently using SNSs, working to emulate Ocasio-Cortez by connecting directly with their constituents through SNSs on a more personal and direct level.¹⁹¹ Within her first two weeks in Congress, newly elected New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez showed fellow Democratic Congresspersons the importance of using social media in her Twitter boot camp.¹⁹² Some of her Twitter insights included lessons such as, "Social media is not just for young people," "Don't try to be anybody who you're not," and that "we [elected officials] don't want to separate ourselves" from the public on social media.¹⁹³ However, to understand the ways in which New York Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez uses social media, it is important to look at recent shifts in SNS usage by politicians.

Politicians using social media to reach out to and connect with followers often has a stronger impact on voters than more traditional media outlets, like newspapers.¹⁹⁴ Traditional media's "primary functions involve informing the readers of current issues and events of public

¹⁹⁰ Gunn Enli, "Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider: Exploring the Social Media Campaigns of Trump and Clinton in the 2016 US Presidential Election," *European Journal of Communication* 32, no. 1 (February 1, 2017): 50–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323116682802>.

¹⁹¹ Seitz-Wald, "Democrats 'like' It."

¹⁹² "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on Twitter: 'Class Was in Session This Morning! I Was Thrilled to Offer Some Insights on Twitter and Social Media to My. Colleagues This Morning. Now Majority @WhipClyburn Is Teaching Me What All the Bells Mean in the Capitol 🤔... <https://t.co/KGexkMCwL4>,'" accessed May 4, 2019, https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1085904629785858049?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctwterm%5E1085904629785858049&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Ftheweek.com%2Fspeedreads%2F818398%2Falexandria-ocasiocortez-led-twitter-bootcamp-house-democrats.

¹⁹³ A. B. C. News, "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Twitter Lesson for House Democrats," ABC News, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/alexandria-ocasio-cortezs-twitter-lesson-house-democrats/story?id=60443727>.

¹⁹⁴ Lee and Shin, "When the Medium Is the Message."

significance, [while] Twitter [and other SNSs are] generally regarded as a medium through which users can post and share their personal stories with those within their network.”¹⁹⁵ The 2016 U.S. presidential campaign between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton demonstrates the prevalence of politicians using social media to connect with constituents on a more personal, rather than solely political, level. Donald Trump’s Twitter usage during his 2016 presidential campaign, for example, allowed him to connect with a variety of voters, gain free media attention and airtime, and candidly express his views, showcasing the appeal of and potential benefits for politicians using SNSs. Trump is “unrivaled in his ability to forge bonds with a sizable segment of Americans,” and he connected with voters by expressing himself in a candid manner, often emphasized through his social media.¹⁹⁶ Through Twitter, Trump was able to reach the American people on what felt like a personal level, as he tweeted with seemingly no filter, as well as in the middle of the night, giving a sense of him on the other end of Twitter personally sending these tweets in real-time. Furthermore, Trump’s tweets are often reactionary, leading to inferences that they were not drafted and scheduled for later, but rather tweeted off-the-cuff and in-the-moment, which many see as “...signs of his just being himself...[and are] a sign of his authenticity as a person.”¹⁹⁷ This authenticity is strengthened through the use of social media as Twitter’s “simple and personal messages resonate in a way that more traditional means of communication — mail robocalls and yard signs — no longer can.”¹⁹⁸ The simple and personal nature of messages on SNSs enables politicians to present a more “authentic” self,

¹⁹⁵ Lee and Shin.

¹⁹⁶ Patrick Haberman, “95,000 Words, Many of Them Ominous, From Donald Trump’s Tongue - The New York Times,” December 6, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/us/politics/95000-words-many-of-them-ominous-from-donald-trumps-tongue.html>.

¹⁹⁷ Pablo J. Boczkowski and Zizi Papacharissi, eds., *Trump and the Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2018), 147.

¹⁹⁸ Matt Kapko, “Twitter’s Impact on 2016 Presidential Election Is Unmistakable | CIO,” accessed March 10, 2019, <https://www.cio.com/article/3137513/twitters-impact-on-2016-presidential-election-is-unmistakable.html>.

rather than a professionally-written speech or campaign advertisement, pointing towards de-professionalism on social media as a counter-trend in political communication.¹⁹⁹ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez champions this amateur approach both in her rhetoric and in her experience in politics. The general shift in expectations for politicians' use of SNSs, exemplified by Donald Trump's Twitter usage in the 2016 presidential election, created the space for Ocasio-Cortez's frequent use of Instagram Stories to communicate and connect with her followers.

From President Franklin D. Roosevelt's fireside chats to President Donald Trump's late-night tweeting sessions, politicians have frequently toyed with the interplay between elite and quotidian discourses through media. The social media campaigns of Trump and Clinton during the 2016 presidential election exemplify the desire for authenticity in SNS usage.²⁰⁰ In "Texts (and Tweets) from Hillary: Meta-Meming and Postfeminist Political Culture," Karrin Vasby Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler analyzed Hillary Clinton's induction to Twitter in 2013 by sharing a popular meme and hashtag, #textsfromhillary.²⁰¹ As Hillary poked fun at the meme's creators, she also contributed to the "amateur" discourse of memes on SNSs. She further distanced herself from other politicians utilizing SNSs through her Twitter bio, where she described herself as a "wife, mom, lawyer, women & kids advocate, FLOAR, FLOTUS, US Senator, SecState, author, dog owner, hair icon, pantsuit aficionado, glass ceiling cracker, TBD..."²⁰² By focusing on more than just her political position and poking fun at media representations of herself as a "hair icon" and "pantsuit aficionado," Clinton's Twitter bio "suggested someone more interested in building genuine relationships with her fans than in being

¹⁹⁹ Enli, "Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider."

²⁰⁰ Enli.

²⁰¹ Karrin Vasby Anderson and Kristina Horn Sheeler, "Texts (and Tweets) from Hillary: Meta-Meming and Postfeminist Political Culture," *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 44, no. 2 (June 1, 2014): 224–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/psq.12111>.

²⁰² Anderson and Sheeler.

‘on message’ in the traditional, political sense of the term.”²⁰³ Clinton continued this online persona throughout the 2016 presidential election and is still active on Twitter today. Her current Twitter bio has changed, but still shows her interest in remaining personable rather than “professional” in the traditional, political communication sense.²⁰⁴ This de-professionalism is mirrored in Ocasio-Cortez’s Twitter bio, which reads, “US Representative, NY-14 (BX & Queens). In a modern, moral, & wealthy society, no American should be too poor to live. *100% emoji* People-Funded, no lobbyist *money bag emoji*. She/her.”²⁰⁵ By using multiple emojis in her bio, Ocasio-Cortez presents a playful, de-professionalized side similar to Hillary Clinton, while still paying attention to the issues that matter most to her. She utilizes Instagram Stories in a similar fashion—while she is playful, laughing, and speaking off-the-cuff, Ocasio-Cortez still speaks about important social, economic, and political issues, intertwining the playful and the political through the collapse of her private and public life on Stories.

The clear separation between the public and private lives of politicians has been challenged by the norms of social media, which call for users to share personal details with their followers.²⁰⁶ Politicians’ usage of SNSs “highlights the ways that tidy formal definitions of public and private rarely capture the complexity of how people navigate relationships with others online.”²⁰⁷ In short, using social media as a politician allows you to “reach audience in ways that fe[el] more ‘natural,’” connecting with constituents and followers on their turf “rather than filtered to, or through, preexisting media structures.”²⁰⁸ In a longitudinal study on Twitter users’

²⁰³ Anderson and Sheeler.

²⁰⁴ Clinton’s current Twitter bio reads, “2016 Democratic Nominee, SecState, Senator, hair icon. Mom, Wife, Grandma x2, lawyer, advocate, fan of walks in the woods & standing up for our democracy.” @HillaryClinton. 2019. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/HillaryClinton> (accessed March 10, 2019).

²⁰⁵ “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (@AOC) / Twitter,” Twitter, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://twitter.com/aoc>.

²⁰⁶ Colliander et al., “The Social Media Balancing Act.”

²⁰⁷ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 104.

²⁰⁸ Taylor, 141.

perception of politicians who share details of their private lives in tandem with their professional, public lives, Jonas Colliander et al. found that politicians who balanced posts about their private and public lives “increased both [the Twitter user’s] interest in the politician’s party and intention to vote for that party, irrespective of a user’s political interest, social media usage intensity, or age, or the gender of either the user or the communicating politician.”²⁰⁹ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez shares personal details as well as political plans and motivations with her followers, collapsing the space between her public and private life, revealing both the joys and difficulties of being both a Congressperson and a young, working-class, female of color from the Bronx. Using the ideas of a multiplicity of public spheres, I update the public screen model to identify Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s audience and the way she communicates with constituents.

From Public Sphere to Public Screen: The Enclaved Public Screen

This thesis proposes an updated model of the public sphere and public screen in a more participatory and ephemeral media environment. The media ecology of film and television is controlled ideologically and financially by the dominant public sphere, making it difficult for marginalized publics and counter-public enclaves to share their views via the public screen. Applying DeLuca & Peebles’ theory of the “public screen,” I demonstrate how certain SNSs allow users to reach out to enclaves and marginalized spheres, both envisioning and creating their own counter-public enclave outside of the hegemonic discourses in the public sphere through alternative mediated processes—namely, the enclaved public screen.²¹⁰ Instagram Stories allow functionality as enclaved public screens that, when used to emphasize daily practices and commonalities between users, work to foster connections, both perceived and real,

²⁰⁹ Colliander et al., “The Social Media Balancing Act.”

²¹⁰ DeLuca and Peebles, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen.”

between users.²¹¹

While counter-publics are inherently oppositional to hegemonic discourse, they are not necessarily born as a space to withdraw from harsh public treatment.²¹² Instead, counter-publics can be used as enclave spaces that are a “necessary part of movement activity regardless of the level of oppression or crisis that groups face.”²¹³ Like Karma Chávez, I use the word “enclave” rather than “counter-public sphere” to emphasize the importance of coalition-building and creating a safe space for individuals to express their beliefs and identify with one another regardless of hegemonic discourse. The use of “enclave” emphasizes the connections between users rather than divisions between individual users and dominant ideologies at the time.

Enclaves are created to give individuals a safe space of belonging and self-expression, especially if their identities, anxieties, and hopes are not reflected in construction of hegemonic discourse. The construction of consent occurs through sufficient participation and representation from multiple identities within the public sphere, which allows the majority of people to recognize themselves within the hegemonic discourse.²¹⁴ Those who do not fit into the hegemonic discourse are either forced into silence or create and discover counter-publics whose discourses represent their interests, anxieties, and aspirations, resonating with their self-identities and feelings.²¹⁵ In these situations, individuals seek out media and communities with similar interests. The prevalence of personalized and niche content is apparent through the popularity of UGC sites and SNSs. For example, Amazon’s streaming service, Twitch, has a comparable

²¹¹ Chapter Two focuses more on the political counter-public sphere and enclaved public screen, while Chapter Three delves into Ray Oldenburg’s Third Places and their relation to more informal online spaces through the enclaved public screen.

²¹² Karma R. Chávez, “Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building,” *Communication Quarterly* 59, no. 1 (January 31, 2011): 1–18, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463373.2010.541333>.

²¹³ Chávez, 2.

²¹⁴ Jürgen Habermas, *Theory and Practice*. (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

²¹⁵ Fraser, 78.

number of average daily viewers to CNN, MSNBC, ESPN, and Fox News.²¹⁶ In other words, daily viewership numbers, which indicate individuals watching a variety of distinct and diverse Twitch streamers and content, representing a plethora of identities and political positions, put Twitch on par with the most-watched U.S. cable channels, which generally push the hegemonic discourse of the public sphere.²¹⁷ With this, I am not arguing that Twitch overall is a counter-public, but rather Twitch as a platform, like Instagram, provides a space to users that engenders possibilities of online connection for counter-publics or enclaves. This means that the platform provides the space for users to connect with one another, pushing affordances and guidelines that encourage user connections, but the connections and social aspects themselves are up to individual users, their perceptions of the online space and of other users, and their habitual actions.

Within both the dominant public sphere and counter-publics, opinion leaders utilize the rhetoric of unity to construct consent and a sense of belonging.²¹⁸ Frequently, silenced voices and identities often find counter-publics or enclaves that utilize the “I” to “we” tactic to create a unified community, thus creating a multiplicity of public spheres.²¹⁹ This is a tactic by counter-publics to use the generally hegemonic strategy of constructing consent in the public sphere for their own needs.²²⁰ The “I” to “we” tactic, commonly used to transmit a sense of belonging to constituents by politicians, shifts the paradigm of working alone and creates a sense of community and connections in discourse. Using “we” and “us” to create a community within the audience can act to artificially collectivize discourses, sometimes falsely attributing those beliefs

²¹⁶ Gilbert, “Amazon’s Streaming Service Twitch Is Pulling in as Many Viewers as CNN and MSNBC.”

²¹⁷ Gilbert.

²¹⁸ Jane Mansbridge, “Self-Interest in Political Life,” *Political Theory* 18, no. 1 (February 1, 1990): 132–53, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0090591790018001007>.

²¹⁹ Geoff Eley, *Nations, Publics, and Political Cultures: Placing Habermas in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Michigan, 1990).

²²⁰ Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

and values to all constituents, effectively covering oppositional voices and identities. At the same time, however, using “we” and “us” can work to bring individuals together in an enclave where their identities, anxieties, and hopes are represented.

When considering their ephemerality in tandem with the linguistic and visual rhetoric on display, Instagram Stories are inherently rhetorical texts that work to both form and reflect public opinion and connection. Habermas’s initial Public Sphere Model relied on orality and print as discourse and means of dissemination. DeLuca and Peebles proposed the term “public screens” to update the model, encapsulating the “new technologies [that] introduce new forms of social organization and new modes of perception” in the multiplicity of public spheres.²²¹ Public discourse that previously took place in Habermas’s idealized public sphere has moved toward DeLuca and Peebles’ notion of the public screen, as “the most important public discussions take place via ‘screens’—television, computer, and the front page of newspapers.”²²² As this piece was published in 2002, this thesis acts as an updated theorization of the public screen in a more participatory and ephemeral environment. Specifically, their idea of the public screen allows analysis of public spheres and political communication via SNSs. Rather than mitigating the importance of the public sphere, the public screen provides a mediated space through which discourse, social organization, and modes of perception originate. Living in an increasingly mediated society has changed modes of public perception, validating the concept of the public screen eclipsing the public sphere. Understanding the concept of the “public screen” is imperative to understanding how Ocasio-Cortez communicates with constituents on Instagram—by utilizing an enclaved public screen to reach out to and connect with her geographically dispersed followers.

²²¹ DeLuca and Peebles, 131.

²²² DeLuca and Peebles, 131.

Past accounts of the public screen have focused on the negative aspects, including the hegemonic domination of privatized media and for-profit communication systems.²²³ Unlike the idealized public sphere which is free of coercion and intimidation, the public screen is troubled as, “corporations...are now clearly the dominant political, social, economic, and environmental forces on the planet, eclipsing the nation-state.”²²⁴ While DeLuca and Peeples warn that the control corporations have over the public screen limits access to constituents, they conclude stating, “the public screen, though privately controlled, is public.”²²⁵ I home in on this point, centering my argument on the “public” aspect of the public screen, theorizing the multiplicity of public screens. SNSs create and promote the multiplicity of public screens, simply due to the sheer number of users. In 2017, seventy-one percent of internet users worldwide used social media.²²⁶ In the wake of the presidential election in 2016, over eighty-one percent of the United States population had at least one social media account.²²⁷ Through the prevalence of SNSs in society, the internet has become home to a multitude of communities and enclaves, hosted through enclaved public screens.²²⁸

Through platform affordances such as live broadcasting and synchronous chat features, Twitch, Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and other SNSs allow for use as a public screen theoretically similar to the public screen theorized by DeLuca and Peeples.²²⁹ While scholars warn of the dangers of new technology and the ability to control the public screen through

²²³ DeLuca and Peeples.

²²⁴ DeLuca and Peeples, 126.

²²⁵ DeLuca and Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen,” 147.

²²⁶ “Number of Social Media Users Worldwide 2010-2021,” Statista, accessed May 4, 2019, <https://www.statista.com/statistics/278414/number-of-worldwide-social-network-users/>.

²²⁷ “Number of Social Media Users Worldwide 2010-2021.”

²²⁸ Michael Salter, “Justice and Revenge in Online Counter-Publics: Emerging Responses to Sexual Violence in the Age of Social Media,” *Crime, Media, Culture* 9, no. 3 (December 1, 2013): 225–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1741659013493918>.

²²⁹ DeLuca and Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen.”

dramatic, violent, or surprising stories and fleeting moments rather than rational messages, I argue that these visual and emotional appeals help connect similar individuals in real-time that are geographically dispersed and may not otherwise meet.²³⁰ While Instagram as a platform encourages user connections through their community guidelines, algorithms, affordances, and branding practices, Instagram as a platform is not inherently an enclaved public screen. Rather, Instagram creates an online space that individuals can choose to utilize as an enclaved public screen, connecting with other like-minded users through the platform.

The Narrative Selfie: Creating Connections Through Stories

Connections between followers and Instagram accounts that they follow are often increased through the use of Instagram Stories, as users post Stories more frequently than regular posts on Instagram. Instagram launched the Stories feature, which allows users to post temporary photos and videos to their account, in 2016.²³¹ Over 500 million users post Stories every day, which are then automatically deleted twenty-four hours after they are posted.²³² The ephemeral nature of Stories helps users add more fun and relaxed posts daily, juxtaposed to the more curated feeds where users on average only post once per week.²³³ A co-founder of Instagram, Kevin Systrom, emphasized that the implementation of Stories “created a space where people are much more comfortable sharing, discussing, and playing with all the little moments of their everyday life,” stressing the habitual and consistent nature of posting and watching Stories on Instagram.²³⁴ By encouraging users to post more frequently through the creation of the Stories

²³⁰ DeLuca and Peebles.

²³¹ Devindra Hardawar, “Instagram’s ‘Stories’ Feature Looks a Lot like Snapchat’s,” Engadget, August 2, 2016, <https://www.engadget.com/2016/08/02/instagrams-stories-feature-looks-a-lot-like-snapchats/>.

²³² Edgar Alvarez, “Instagram Founders on Snapchat and Breaking up Facebook,” Engadget, March 11, 2019, <https://www.engadget.com/2019/03/11/kevin-systrom-mike-krieger-instagram-founders-snapchat-facebook/>.

²³³ Manikonda, Hu, and Kambhampati, “Analyzing User Activities, Demographics, Social Network Structure and User-Generated Content on Instagram.”

²³⁴ Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin, *Instagram*, 28.

feature, Instagram calls for users to log on more often to follow the daily narratives of other users. In habitually logging on to create and/or follow these narratives, Instagram users with large followings can create an enclaved public screen to build connections with their followers via Instagram Stories. The ephemeral nature of Stories pushes users to pay more attention to the Stories “as they know they’re unable to return to them [at a later date].”²³⁵ However, some argue that the ephemeral nature of Stories can be dulled from the integration of Stories Highlights, which allows users to gather and prominently display themed Stories on their profile.²³⁶

While allowing Stories to be “pinned” to a user’s profile keeps them from being erased after twenty-four hours, the ability to delete pinned Stories at any time, as well as the lack of specific timestamp on Stories Highlights, continues to position these Stories as ephemeral in nature, as they could disappear at any moment.²³⁷ The “Highlights” feature allows users to pin saved Stories to their Instagram profile, enabling followers to watch those Stories weeks after they were posted.²³⁸ In order to maintain some of the ephemerality and liveness of Stories, rather than including the date the Stories were posted, pinned Instagram Stories state how many weeks ago they were published, positioning time in the here-and-now by using the present as the reference point. With this feature, users do not know the exact date and time a pinned Story was published, but instead they know that it was about posted “X weeks ago,” causing users to temporally relate the Story they are watching to the present, presenting Instagram Stories—even pinned Stories—as phenomenologically live texts. Furthermore, Stories do not show up on a user’s feed in chronological order. Rather, they show up on the top of a user’s home page based

²³⁵ Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin, 26.

²³⁶ Leaver, Highfield, and Abidin, 28.

²³⁷ Hardawar, “Instagram’s ‘Stories’ Feature Looks a Lot like Snapchat’s.”

²³⁸ For this analysis, I am using four of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s “pinned” Stories. I archived each of these Stories and am willing to share them by request in the event that Ocasio-Cortez removes these pinned Stories.

on whose Stories they watch most frequently or which user posted most recently, shifting attention away from geographical difference, focusing instead on habitual and temporal connections between users.

In order to fully understand how Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez optimizes her use of Stories to connect to her followers, it is important to understand the impact narrative formats, selfies, and phenomenologically live texts have on users. Narrative or story-telling formats are the most basic form of human communication and can now be visually communicated through images and videos.²³⁹ According to Instagram influencers and individuals working on their personal brands online, individuals wanting to be popular on Instagram should use Stories to tell a narrative story, as making followers feel like they are on an adventure with you is extremely impactful.²⁴⁰ Studies show that images and videos that contain narrative messages on Instagram are far more popular and generate more user interest and engagement in social media audiences.²⁴¹ Narrative messages and Stories are about capturing the moment and sharing that experience with your followers. This aligns with the current understanding of selfies as documentation of a specific moment in time. Selfies are not meant to represent the subject “to the fullness of their character...most selfies are not meant to linger very long in memory; they are ephemeral by definition.”²⁴² Selfies are about capturing the nature of the moment, and thus work most

²³⁹ Roland Barthes, “Introduction to the Structural Analysis of the Narrative,” Monograph (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 1966), <http://epapers.bham.ac.uk/2961/>; Catherine Kohler Riessman, *Narrative Methods for the Human Sciences* (Thousand Oaks, Calif: SAGE, 2008), <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/narrative-methods-for-the-human-sciences/book226139>.

²⁴⁰ Alissa Fleck and 2018, “8 Influencers Share 8 Ways to Make Your Instagram Story More Engaging,” July 24, 2018, <https://www.adweek.com/digital/8-influencers-share-8-ways-to-make-your-instagram-story-more-engaging/>.

²⁴¹ Miles Romney and Rich G. Johnson, “Show Me a Story: Narrative, Image, and Audience Engagement on Sports Network Instagram Accounts,” *Information, Communication & Society*, June 19, 2018, 1–16, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2018.1486868>.

²⁴² Eugenie Shinkle, “The Curated Ego: What Makes a Good Selfie?,” *Eugenie Shinkle* (blog), January 16, 2014, <http://www.eugenieshinkle.com/portfolio-item/curated-ego-makes-good-selfie/>.

effectively in a narrative format.²⁴³

While the content of the message itself is important to look at, the features of Stories and live-streaming on Instagram greatly impact viewer engagement and connectivity to the poster. As Instagram Stories are such a recent addition to the platform, there is not much work published on the impact of Stories on social engagement.²⁴⁴ Because of this, I look to studies analyzing live-streaming on Twitch to understand how the ephemeral aspect of Stories works to socially engage users. Through an international, online, self-reporting survey of Twitch users (N=2,227), researchers found that users seek out live-streaming to experience social interaction, a sense of community, meet new people, be entertained, seek out information, and to make up for a lack of external support in real life.²⁴⁵ These motivations, specifically the sense of community and information seeking, lend themselves to user motivations of joining and communicating with a counter-public enclave, reinforcing the presence of enclaved public screens.

Instagram Stories muddle concepts of time and space, encouraging social engagements and creating counter-public enclaves between geographically-dispersed users due to a phenomenologically live connection on the platform. This analysis synthesizes and adds to work on the public screen and counter-public enclaves to provide insight into Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's frequent use of Instagram Stories, examining how Ocasio-Cortez, an individual user, utilizes Instagram's platform as an enclaved public screen. Specifically, with both visual and textual analyses, I evaluate four of Ocasio-Cortez's pinned Stories, "YOU CAN DO IT," "Pep Talk," "Congress Camp 1," and "Congress Camp 2," to explore how Ocasio-

²⁴³ Esther Addley, "Ellen's Oscars Selfie Most Retweeted Ever – and More of Us Are Taking Them," *The Guardian*, March 7, 2014, sec. Media, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2014/mar/07/oscars-selfie-most-retweeted-ever>.

²⁴⁴ Currently, the only academic work on Instagram Stories looks at the ephemerality of Stories. For reference, see: André Lemos, "Mais livre para publicar: Efemeridade da Imagem nos modos 'Galeria' e 'Stories' do Instagram," *Revista Mídia e Cotidiano* 12, no. 2 (August 31, 2018): 6–26, <https://doi.org/10.22409/ppgmc.v12i2.10035>.

²⁴⁵ Zorah Hilvert-Bruce et al., "Social Motivations of Live-Streaming Viewer Engagement on Twitch," *Computers in Human Behavior* 84 (July 1, 2018): 58–67, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2018.02.013>.

Cortez employs the narrative selfie and phenomenological liveness to bridge the gap between public and private, connecting with constituents through a SNS. In the wake of Trump and Clinton's de-professionalism on Twitter, Ocasio-Cortez fuels the radically shifting expectations for politicians on SNSs.²⁴⁶

Amateur Vlogger or Inspiring Politician? Millennials decide.

If you were to stumble across Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories without knowing anything about her, you may think she is an amateur vlogger or lifestyle guru looking to inspire others through sharing recipes, IKEA hacks, skin care routines, and political opinions.²⁴⁷ Frankly, you wouldn't necessarily be wrong. Ocasio-Cortez frequently posts unpolished Instagram Stories with her front-facing selfie camera, goofy face-filters, poorly-lit backgrounds, and un-made-up face, sharing emotionally charged stories, inspirational mantras, and her day-to-day activities. By posting personal videos of the Congresswoman cooking in her apartment or getting overly excited about an interview with the Wall Street Journal, Ocasio-Cortez bridges the gap between the public and her private life, letting her followers into her habitual activities, emotions, and political insights. She shares emotional stories of her father's passing and times she thought she and her family wouldn't make it, she takes her followers on journeys of what it's like to be a "freshman Congress person," and she gives her followers impromptu pep talks during her breaks.²⁴⁸ Through self-disclosure, Ocasio-Cortez "perform[s] authenticity...by taking the viewer 'backstage' to get a glimpse of [her] personal [life]."²⁴⁹ The genuine nature of Ocasio-Cortez's Stories and her ability to truly relate to younger generations through social media is

²⁴⁶ Enli, "Twitter as Arena for the Authentic Outsider."

²⁴⁷ Christina Cauterucci, "The Genius of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories," Slate Magazine, November 20, 2018, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2018/11/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-instagram-stories.html>.

²⁴⁸ In "Congress Camp 1" and "Congress Camp 2," Ocasio-Cortez regularly refers to herself as a "freshman Congress person," likening the experience to a college orientation.

²⁴⁹ Baker and Rojek, *Lifestyle Gurus*, 68.

refreshing after a campaign cycle in which politicians more out of touch with younger generations encouraged millennials to “Pokémon Go to the polls.”²⁵⁰

Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez is continually praised for her relatability and authenticity, which results from her own construction of herself on SNSs.²⁵¹ Authenticity, like phenomenological liveness, is not an empirically observable measure, but rather something that is first constructed through rhetoric and aesthetics and then felt by individuals. Authenticity is a “symbolic construct that...continues to have cultural value in how we understand our moral frameworks and ourselves.”²⁵² In general, people deem something “authentic” because it is not perceived as commercial, but rather an action done for the self, creativity, or spirituality.²⁵³ Reinforcing the belief that authentic moves are done for the self instead of calculated political or commercial reasons, after formally endorsing Senator Bernie Sanders as a 2020 Democratic candidate, Ocasio-Cortez said, “Some folks try to make these decisions by making political calculations and looking at political strategy.”²⁵⁴ Then, Ocasio-Cortez pushed the narrative of authenticity herself, stating that her decision to formally endorse was an “authentic decision to let people know how I feel.”²⁵⁵ The accessibility and familiarity of connecting with Ocasio-Cortez through SNSs makes her seem more honest to voters, according to a study on trusting politicians in the age of social media.²⁵⁶ The study also found that populist politicians, like

²⁵⁰ Cauterucci, “The Genius of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s Instagram Stories.”

²⁵¹ “Why Is Everyone So Obsessed With AOC? Let’s Analyze The Memes,” BuzzFeed News, accessed April 21, 2020, <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/lamvo/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-aoc-conservatives-liberals-meme>.

²⁵² Sarah Banet-Weiser, *AuthenticTM: The Politics of Ambivalence in a Brand Culture* (NYU Press, 2012), 5.

²⁵³ Banet-Weiser, 10.

²⁵⁴ Laura Litvan, “AOC Says Her Bernie Sanders Endorsement Was ‘Authentic Decision,’” *Bloomberg.Com*, October 19, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2019-10-19/sanders-rallies-with-ocasio-cortez-in-new-york-campaign-reset>.

²⁵⁵ Litvan.

²⁵⁶ Gunn Enli and Linda Therese Rosenberg, “Trust in the Age of Social Media: Populist Politicians Seem More Authentic,” *Social Media + Society* 4, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 2056305118764430, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118764430>.

Ocasio-Cortez, are evaluated as more authentic than traditional politicians, and female politicians are seen as more authentic than male politicians.²⁵⁷ While authenticity cannot be quantifiably measured, both research and popular press articles support the assertion that some people evaluate Ocasio-Cortez as authentic, believing that she says and does things based on her own identity, anxieties, and hopes, rather than as calculated political moves.²⁵⁸

With economic initiative proposals such as the Green New Deal, Medicare for all, and debt-free college, it is no surprise that Ocasio-Cortez has gained a large millennial following.²⁵⁹ Her ability to relate to younger generations is unparalleled by other politicians; at age 29, she is the youngest Congresswoman ever to be elected.²⁶⁰ Voters tend to evaluate politicians as more honest in the media formats they consume most often, and thus young people find Ocasio-Cortez more honest than politicians who solely reach out to constituents via mainstream media outlets.²⁶¹ That being said, it is Ocasio-Cortez's actions, not just age, that captivates younger generations. Ocasio-Cortez attracts younger generations because she reflects their anxieties, hopes, frustrations, and consistent connectedness through her personal use of social media, financial struggles, zeal for protecting the Earth for future generations, and more. By revealing her own anxieties and hopes throughout her Instagram Stories, Ocasio-Cortez facilitates and fosters an affective connection with her followers who relate to her authenticity and sincerity.²⁶² Through Instagram Stories, Ocasio-Cortez capitalizes on this connection, providing an enclaved public screen for younger generations, uninterested voters, and other counter-publics consistently

²⁵⁷ Enli and Rosenberg.

²⁵⁸ Enli and Rosenberg; "Why Is Everyone So Obsessed With AOC?"

²⁵⁹ Karl Smith, "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and the Revenge of the Millennials," January 18, 2019, <https://www.bloomberg.com/opinion/articles/2019-01-18/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-and-the-revenge-of-the-millennials>.

²⁶⁰ Abigail Hess, "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Could Become the Youngest Woman in Congress," November 6, 2018, <https://www.cnbc.com/2018/06/27/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-could-be-youngest-woman-elected-to-congress.html>.

²⁶¹ Enli and Rosenberg, "Trust in the Age of Social Media."

²⁶² Banet-Weiser, *AuthenticTM*, 37.

ignored in political and voting campaigns.²⁶³

“This is a movement. This is not me.”

Ocasio-Cortez’s first pinned Instagram Story, titled “YOU CAN DO IT,” focuses on encouraging her followers to take a small step towards their goals and “work with whatever you’ve got.”²⁶⁴ Recording the video with the selfie camera on her phone in her apartment in the Bronx, Ocasio-Cortez begins the Story using a sunglasses face filter, forcing her to nod her head up every second or two in order to change the filter to a different pair of eccentric sunglasses.²⁶⁵ Prior to Ocasio-Cortez, the only filters politicians used on SNSs were “geofilters,” which you add to an image or video after it is taken in order to denote the post’s location.²⁶⁶ Typically, face filters that add features to your images, such as placing sunglasses over your eyes or dog ears on your head, are seen as immature or unprofessional. By using a face filter while campaigning for a Congressional seat, Ocasio-Cortez quickly showed her followers that she was not like the majority of politicians solely concerned with staying “on message” politically, but instead thrived on social media by having fun and experimenting with the affordances of the platform, playfully connecting and communicating with her followers.²⁶⁷ The enjoyment and excitement with which Ocasio-Cortez approaches social media and the public screen helps her strongly relate to millennials and younger constituents.

By opening herself and her past up on Stories, Ocasio-Cortez exhibits vulnerability – and extreme strength – not often revealed by other politicians. She begins “YOU CAN DO IT” by

²⁶³ “On The Sidelines Of Democracy.”

²⁶⁴ “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018,” accessed March 13, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17909753179109848/>.

²⁶⁵ Josh Constine, “Instagram Launches Selfie Filters, Copying the Last Big Snapchat Feature,” *TechCrunch* (blog), May 16, 2017, <http://social.techcrunch.com/2017/05/16/instagram-face-filters/>.

²⁶⁶ Benjamin Barrett, “Where Does Snapchat Fit In 2018?,” May 31, 2018, <https://www.campaignsandelections.com/campaign-insider/where-does-snapchat-fit-in-2018>.

²⁶⁷ Anderson and Sheeler, “Texts (and Tweets) from Hillary.”

addressing her followers and sharing her excitement for the upcoming day, stating, “Hey guys, coming at ya [*sic*] this morning with a super fresh face cause we’ve got crazy news! The *Wall Street Journal* is coming to my apartment to take photos this morning.”²⁶⁸ While most politicians may post online about an upcoming interview, they often would not show the genuine eagerness and awe that Ocasio-Cortez shows by excitedly yelling and sticking out her tongue while she announced the Wall Street Journal’s visit to her apartment. As she posted this video “with a super fresh face,” wearing no makeup with her hair up in a messy bun, it feels as if she posted the video and shared the news with her followers as soon as she found out—even if this is not the case—making her followers feel like they are in-the-know and a part of her daily life. To be clear, in this case it is not important whether or not Ocasio-Cortez actually shared the news with followers as soon as she found out; what is important is the fact that the audience perceived that Ocasio-Cortez was sharing the news with them right away because her hair, makeup, and setting encouraged the audience to perceive her as authentic, as if she were calling and telling a friend her good news.

Ocasio-Cortez continually captures and shares her authentic reactions on Instagram Stories, from her excitement of the *Wall Street Journal* visit to her enthusiastic anticipation before her Congressional orientation in Washington D.C. By repeatedly sharing her reactions to different events on Instagram, Ocasio-Cortez’s Stories appear immediate rather than drafted and scheduled for specific times, emphasizing the phenomenological liveness that viewers feel watching her Stories. The perceived spontaneity of Ocasio-Cortez’s Stories is strengthened by the setting of her Stories. In Congress Camp 1 and Congress Camp 2, Ocasio-Cortez posts during breaks in the Congressional orientation, sitting outside of the United States Capitol, in the Halls

²⁶⁸ “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018.”

of Congress, or in her new office, lending to the idea that she is recording and posting Stories off-the-cuff as she only has a few minutes in-between orientation sessions to post. In this way, the setting contributes to the liveness of Stories, as Ocasio-Cortez's Stories appear as if they are happening unscripted in real-time.

While excitement and goofy filters help engage followers initially, in order to remain genuine and continually relate to viewers, Ocasio-Cortez understands that positive emotions are not the whole story. Ocasio-Cortez exposes herself during both "YOU CAN DO IT" and "Pep Talk," discussing the death of her father, growing up scrubbing toilets with her mother to make ends meet, and the reality of running for office as a woman of color. In "Pep Talk," she explains the difficulties of her intersectionality, stating, "...as a woman of color running, it feels like you kind of get it from all sides. Like, on one end you will never be good enough. You will never be experienced enough, knowledgeable enough, principled enough. And then from the other side, just, there's just a lot of people that don't want to see folks like us run and be a person in public. Which is why just accepting yourself is so radical."²⁶⁹ Through her openness and vulnerability, Ocasio-Cortez relates her life to that of her followers, pushing them with her own experiences and encouragement to keep trying in all aspects of their lives.

In "YOU CAN DO IT," Ocasio-Cortez tells her followers about the *Wall Street Journal* visit, and then then transitions to a more serious note, acknowledging the "craziness" of her situation. Here, she directly addresses her followers, saying, "whatever it is you want to do in life, you can move towards it. Like, you can. You can."²⁷⁰ By directly addressing viewers as "you," Ocasio-Cortez linguistically reaches out to individual viewers, making it seem like she is

²⁶⁹ "Pep Talk - @ocasio2018," accessed March 14, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17909753179109848/>.

²⁷⁰ "YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018."

talking specifically to that individual. This, paired with her use of the front-facing selfie camera and the emotion she emits speaking directly to the camera rather than reading off of a script or teleprompter, helps her address viewers on what feels like a personal level. By mimicking the look and feel of a direct address, Ocasio-Cortez creates a (perceived) moment between herself and the viewers, reinforcing the feeling of a live address and connection, even if the video is not technically live.

In “Pep Talk,” Ocasio-Cortez continues addressing her followers’ insecurities, encouraging them to accept themselves and not let their identities hold them back.²⁷¹ In reflecting on her own experiences running for office as a woman of color, she recognizes that “a lot of women, gender-expanding people, people of color, working class people, they don’t run for office because they don’t feel perfect enough and they don’t feel good enough.”²⁷² She then directly addresses viewers, saying,

...what I want to do today is tell you that you are good
enough to do anything that you want. You are experienced enough.
You are principled enough. You are loved. You are beautiful
enough. You are powerful enough to do anything you want. And
that even in your imperfections, you will grow and you don’t have
to wait to be perfect. You can do anything you need and you will
grow with your imperfections and you are good as you are right
now to start.²⁷³

Through addressing her audience as “you,” sharing her genuine emotions and

²⁷¹ “Pep Talk - @ocasio2018.”

²⁷² “Pep Talk - @ocasio2018.”

²⁷³ “Pep Talk - @ocasio2018.”

experiences, the front-facing selfie camera, and the off-script nature of her Stories, Ocasio-Cortez reaches out to and connects with individual audience members from a variety of marginalized populations in their comfort of their homes or workspaces, from the comfort of hers. Directly addressing her viewers as “you,” creates a singular audience, reinforcing the enclaved public screen Ocasio-Cortez utilizes on Instagram Stories to reach out to and bring together a variety of marginalized voters and individuals.

Growing up as a waitress and bartender, without a father, and without outside financial support, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez recognizes the importance of “work[ing] with what you’ve got,” acknowledging, “I didn’t have half a million dollars to tap from friends and family. So, I started aggressively building on social media.”²⁷⁴ In just seven months, she went from having 250 Twitter followers to over 11,000.²⁷⁵ From there, she admits that she first turned to Facebook and Twitter because she was confident in her ability to write. However, she then found that while Instagram is her smallest audience on social media, she loves using it because “It’s so positive here, really intimate.”²⁷⁶ The affordances of the platform, such as the Stories feature which allows for selfie videos with inherently less pressure because they are automatically erased after 24 hours, foster an intimacy that helps Ocasio-Cortez reveal aspects of her private life in order to bridge a gap and connect with her followers. At the end of this Story, Ocasio-Cortez speaks with onscreen text that reads: “I am NOT doing this by myself. Sometimes it feels that way, but NO ONE goes it alone.” While this text is onscreen, she creates connections and establishes a shared movement between herself and her viewers by stating, “So it’s happening. And this movement is happening. And I also think it’s important to note that I am not doing this by myself. I am doing

²⁷⁴ “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018.”

²⁷⁵ “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018.”

²⁷⁶ “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018.”

this with every single person who is supporting us and helping us and that's how we've gotten to this. This is a movement, this is not me."²⁷⁷

Congress Camp: Pulling Back the Curtain on Accessibility

By focusing on accessibility both of political and governmental information and of verbal messaging on Instagram Stories, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez reaches out to followers not frequently targeted by politicians in an informational and genuine manner.²⁷⁸ In Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's two most recent pinned Stories, titled "Congress Camp 1" and "Congress Camp 2," she takes her followers on the adventure of what it is like to be a newly elected member of Congress. In each of these Stories, Ocasio-Cortez focuses on accessibility to information by 1) sharing the orientation process for a newly elected Congressperson with the general public; and 2) using a third-party captioning software to make her Stories more accessible for people with hearing impairments. Her rhetoric and actions on accessibility stem outside of Instagram, as she highlighted the difficulties of paying for rent in Washington D.C. operating on three months without salary before becoming a member of Congress in an interview with the *New York Times*.²⁷⁹ Ocasio-Cortez widened the issue of financial accessibility even further, tweeting, "It is unjust for Congress to budget a living wage for ourselves, yet rely on unpaid interns & underpaid overworked staff just bc [sic] Republicans want to make a statement about 'fiscal responsibility.'"²⁸⁰ Ocasio-Cortez then pledged to pay her office interns, who historically work as

²⁷⁷ "YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018."

²⁷⁸ "On The Sidelines Of Democracy."

²⁷⁹ Azi Paybarah, "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Will Push Washington. Will Washington Push Back? - The New York Times," November 7, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/nyregion/ocasio-cortez-congress-washington.html>.

²⁸⁰ "Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez on Twitter: 'It Is Unjust for Congress to Budget a Living Wage for Ourselves, yet Rely on Unpaid Interns & Underpaid Overworked Staff Just Bc Republicans Want to Make a Statement about 'Fiscal Responsibility.' If That's the Case, They Can Cut down on Staff to Pay Them Well. Or Raise the MRA.,'" accessed March 14, 2019, https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1069655034093297665?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed%7Ctw

unpaid interns, \$15 per hour in order to make the opportunity more manageable for younger people, encouraging a more diverse staff.²⁸¹ By pulling back the curtain on the inner workings of Congress, captioning her Stories, and discussing how finances impact the accessibility of working and living in Washington D.C., Ocasio-Cortez reaches out to individuals that are typically ignored in the dominant public sphere through her enclaved public screen on Instagram Stories.

Through relatable and transparent posts, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez provides followers with “a humanizing approach to politics that makes DC more accessible.”²⁸² “Congress Camp 1” beings with Ocasio-Cortez staring into the camera – with the front-facing selfie camera, of course – saying, “So then the big question is, now what?” with the text “So you get elected to Congress...now what?” across the bottom of the screen.²⁸³ This Story, which is 9:37 minutes long, contains photos and videos from Ocasio-Cortez’s first week of Congressional orientation, which she playfully terms “Congress Camp.” In this Story, Ocasio-Cortez reveals the mystery that is becoming a Congressperson, equating her situation to a freshman orientation at college. From receiving orientation folders, to “class photos,” to being herded around on busses, Ocasio-Cortez showcases the mundane aspects of Congress Camp.²⁸⁴ At the same time, she reveals details on the processes of choosing an office, voting for House leadership, and the secret—not actually secret—tunnels between all government buildings.²⁸⁵ Throughout this Story, Ocasio-

erm%5E1069655034093297665&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.cnn.com%2F2018%2F12%2F07%2Fnext-congress-is-diverse-but-critics-demand-more-diversity-on-staff.html.

²⁸¹ Carmin Chappell, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Reveals Inner Workings of Congress,” December 11, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2018/12/11/alexandria-ocasio-cortez-reveals-inner-workings-of-congress.html>.

²⁸² Relman, “Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez Is Using Instagram Stories to Bring You behind the Curtain of the Washington, DC, Establishment.”

²⁸³ “Congress Camp 1 - @ocasio2018,” accessed March 14, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17909753179109848/>.

²⁸⁴ “Congress Camp 1 - @ocasio2018.”

²⁸⁵ “Congress Camp 1 - @ocasio2018.”

Cortez is sharing information with political outsiders and giving anecdotal evidence about her experience in “Congress Camp,” bringing her followers along for the ride that is Congressional orientation. While AOC did not necessarily post these videos and images exactly when they were taken due to meetings and spaces where phones were not allowed, the narrative format of following her through the week led to a feeling of liveness for viewers on the adventure of “Congress Camp” with her.

By bringing political outsiders into the process and providing followers with information on the ins and outs of Congress, Ocasio-Cortez is giving the public valuable insights and inclusion into the manner through which Congress operates, using Instagram Stories as an enclaved public screen. Throughout “Congress Camp 1” and “Congress Camp 2,” Ocasio-Cortez addresses her followers as “you” and “you guys,” upholding the engaging and connection-building aspect she fostered in her first two pinned Instagram Stories.²⁸⁶ This language—referring to followers as “you” and “you guys”—functions to rhetorically construct a singular audience, regardless of age, race, gender, political affiliation, or geographic location. For a moment in time, while individuals are watching Ocasio-Cortez’s Story, they are transformed rhetorically into an enclave communicating through a public screen. By disseminating this information through Instagram Stories, Ocasio-Cortez is capitalizing on visual and emotional appeals, following a narrative to humanize herself and show followers that she also experiences their anxieties and hopes, which are often inherently tied to her position as a young woman of color in Congress. By posting on a regular basis, Ocasio-Cortez habitually reaches out to a public typically ignored and under-addressed by other politicians, effectively utilizing Instagram as an

²⁸⁶ “Congress Camp 1 - @ocasio2018.” “Congress Camp 2 - @ocasio2018,” accessed March 14, 2019, <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/17909753179109848/>.

enclaved public screen that individuals watch, like, and comment on each day.²⁸⁷ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez uses Instagram as an enclaved public screen each time she posts a Story, reaching out to individuals across dispersed geographies and giving them a sense of belonging in the political sphere.

To reach out to more disenfranchised individuals on social media, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez increased accessibility to her Stories by using a third-party closed-captioning software, bringing in a counter-public consistently ignored by politics and social media platforms.²⁸⁸ The deaf and hard-of-hearing community is consistently left out of political discussions as “the political system...is structured to exclude deaf people.”²⁸⁹ On November 16, 2018, Ocasio-Cortez tweeted, “Advocates for the deaf community hit me up to connect me with tools (i.e. Clipomatic) to better serve all of us. Thanks to them, I now caption all my IG stories so our deaf brothers and sisters can follow along too.”²⁹⁰ Not only did Ocasio-Cortez begin captioning her videos to increase accessibility for a population typically ignored by the public sphere, but she also gave credit to advocates for the deaf community when Twitter users commended her for making her Stories more accessible.²⁹¹ By choosing to go through an outside captioning software, Clipomatic, Ocasio-Cortez is pushing against the limitations of Instagram as a

²⁸⁷ DeLuca and Peebles, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen.”

²⁸⁸ K. Crom Saunders, “A Double-Edged Sword: Social Media as a Tool of Online Disinhibition Regarding American Sign Language and Deaf Cultural Experience Marginalization, and as a Tool of Cultural and Linguistic Exposure,” *Social Media + Society* 2, no. 1 (January 1, 2016): 2056305115624529, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305115624529>.

²⁸⁹ Elizabeth Thomas, “D.C.’s Deaf Community Seeks a Seat at the Table in This Year’s Elections,” *Washington City Paper*, May 24, 2018, <https://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/news/article/21006453/dcs-deaf-community-seeks-a-seat-at-the-table-in-this-years-elections>.

²⁹⁰ Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, “Advocates for the Deaf Community Hit Me up to Connect Me with Tools (i.e. Clipomatic) to Better Serve All of Us. Thanks to Them, I Now Caption All My IG Stories so Our Deaf Brothers and Sisters Can Follow along Too.” <https://twitter.com/Thesillysully/status/1063478898095083520> ..., Tweet, @AOC (blog), November 16, 2018, <https://twitter.com/AOC/status/1063483819360178176>.

²⁹¹ When I say that the deaf community is typically ignored by the public sphere, I am speaking in regard to affordances of platforms limiting captioning abilities, as well as politicians and others posting audio material to SNSs without captions, inherently excluding the hard of hearing from the public sphere.

platform, as it is not easily accessible to certain populations, opening up to a counter-public of the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. By using Clipomatic, Ocasio-Cortez is able to both increase accessibility of her content to a variety of users and still post live or near-live videos, as the third-party software captions videos in real-time without extra work from Ocasio-Cortez. Including closed-captioning in her Stories effectively invites marginalized individuals into discussions and information dissemination through a public screen, connecting with individuals without ever having to meet face-to-face, instead communicating with them through an enclaved public screen.

Ocasio-Cortez demonstrates the ability to bring marginalized groups together via the public screen (e.g. Instagram Stories) in order to create an enclaved public screen through which she can continue her movement. As she said at the end of “YOU CAN DO IT,” “this movement is happening. And I also think it’s important to note that I am not doing this by myself. I am doing this with every single person who is supporting us and helping us and that’s how we’ve gotten to this. This is a movement. This is not me.”²⁹² By emphasizing the importance of it being a movement, rather than her acting as the sole contributor, Ocasio-Cortez encourages her followers through the enclaved public screen to work together, support each other, make connections with herself and other users, and continue fighting politically and socially for what they believe in.

Conclusion

Through her narrative structure, front-facing selfies, posting from the comfort of her apartment, sharing her authentic emotions and experiences, captioning her videos to increase accessibility, and consistently posting to become a habitual element of her followers’ daily lives,

²⁹² “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018.”

Ocasio-Cortez collapses the gap between her public and private life, connecting with constituents on a seemingly personal level. Traditional social media roles for politicians are challenged as Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez uses SNSs in a de-professionalized manner to reach out to marginalized publics, share her triumphs and vulnerabilities, and to encourage followers to continue fighting for what they believe in. By using Instagram Stories for political and community engagement, Ocasio-Cortez created an enclaved public screen through which she addresses followers from multiple marginalized communities who have come together in a movement—supporting the youngest elected Congresswoman, a twenty-nine-year-old woman of color from the Bronx.

The introduction of SNSs reinforced the importance of mediated communication, and in general, expectations of politicians' use of SNSs has shifted since their introduction. The importance of SNS usage by politicians in the United States in particular is exemplified by Donald Trump's Twitter habits, Hillary Clinton's playful references to memes, and Ocasio-Cortez's personal Instagram Stories. In 2019, social media users have seen multiple politicians adapt to Ocasio-Cortez's style of Instagram Stories in order to appear more personable and connect with constituents. Some, like Beto O'Rourke's trip to the dentist in early January, were well-received as he was seen as working to genuinely connect with his followers and discuss important issues.²⁹³ Others, such as Elizabeth Warren drinking a beer on New Year's Eve and answering questions on live on her Instagram Story did not receive as much praise, as people saw it as "inauthentic" and felt she was "trying too hard."²⁹⁴ With these examples in mind, future

²⁹³ Justin Wise, "O'Rourke Talks Border during Instagram Video at Dentist," The Hill, January 10, 2019, <https://thehill.com/blogs/blog-briefing-room/news/424743-orourke-talks-border-during-instagram-live-video-at-dentist>.

²⁹⁴ "Elizabeth Warren Slammed for Instagram Video in Which She Chugs a Beer," Daily Mail, January 2, 2019, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-6545969/Elizabeth-Warren-slammed-social-media-live-Instagram-video-chugs-beer.html>.

research should explore the different ways through which politicians attempt to connect with younger generations through social media, noting what seems to work and what does not. This chapter, detailing Ocasio-Cortez's use of Instagram Stories as a bridge between her public and private life, demonstrates how politicians can effectively use SNSs to connect with constituents. Through SNSs, politicians have the ability to reach out to a variety of individuals they may not normally have access to, utilizing an enclaved public screen to do so. Overall, when it comes to politicians using social media, it seems that followers are most concerned with transparency and authenticity when posting, preferring a millennial discussing her inability to pay rent in Washington D.C. rather than a sixty-nine-year-old trying to look cool by drinking a beer on Instagram. In a world where technology is constantly evolving and SNSs are more and more present in our daily lives, we must understand the impact of the public screen on constituting publics and bridging the gap between the public and private. The gap between public and private life is not just breached for celebrities and politicians, however. By involving themselves in discussions online, individuals can participate in public life from the privacy of their homes using their phones or computers. Chapter Three dives into the more participatory angle of phenomenologically live texts, using Twitch streamer Linkus7's streams as a case study to explore how time, space, rhetoric, and platform affordances impact users' connections with one another and with streamers on Twitch. Thus, the next chapter moves from the political side of building connections through enclave public screens to the more playful side.

Introduction

Linkus7 is a Swedish streamer on Twitch with approximately 58,000 followers.²⁹⁵

Linkus7 is a variety streamer known for being a talented speedrunner, specifically in *The Legend of Zelda* games. This means that he plays through games as quickly as possible, utilizing glitches in gameplay and efficient methods of completing tasks, often posting his videos and times in global leaderboards online.²⁹⁶ Broadcasters on Twitch are broadly divided into “variety streamers” and “esports players,” with the main difference between the two, other than level of game play, centering on performativity and audience engagement.²⁹⁷ Esports players often describe their viewers as an “audience” who simply watch them practice, while variety streamers preferred using terms like “community,” and “family,” as they feel more of a connection between themselves and their viewers.²⁹⁸ Viewers frequently seek out esports streamers in search of a specific game or type of game play, while variety streams attract viewers based on their entertaining persona. Thus, variety streamers engage more with the synchronous chat while livestreaming, fostering connections with their audience through game livestreaming.²⁹⁹ Esports players, on the other hand, focus more on improving their skills, recognizing that viewers are often watching for their gameplay rather than for the player themselves. Still, all streamers (esports and variety) “develop a public identity connected to play style, on-air personality,

²⁹⁵ “Twitch,” accessed October 6, 2019, <https://www.twitch.tv/linkus7>.

²⁹⁶ “Runs - Linkus7 - Speedrun.Com,” accessed April 1, 2020, <https://www.speedrun.com/user/Linkus7>.

²⁹⁷ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

²⁹⁸ Taylor, 90.

²⁹⁹ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*.

comedic repertoire,” and more.³⁰⁰ Through this identity and play style, Twitch streamers transform the gameplay, positioning themselves playing as the entertainment rather than the game they are playing functioning as the sole source of entertainment.³⁰¹

The strong connection between variety streamers and their audience led me to study Linkus7’s channel, a Swedish streamer that frequently streams himself playing a variety of games; in the last six months, he has played games such as *Super Mario Odyssey*, *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, *Super Mario Maker 2*, *Super Mario 64*, *Pokemon: Let's Go, Pikachu!/Eevee!* and more.³⁰² Linkus7 frequently speedruns games, which involves getting to the end of a game much quicker than normal gameplay, often skipping or missing parts of the story in story-based games in the interest of getting a better, quicker time. According to the official leaderboard, Linkus7 has completed and posted times for speedruns for a large number of games.³⁰³ Although many users follow Linkus7’s streams regardless of the game he is playing, speedrunning helps Linkus7 draw in a larger audience based on the game he is speedrunning at the time, creating an ephemeral third place with the potential for a slightly different audience each time he streams.

Linkus7 streams five days a week, providing his followers with a reliable online space, or an ephemeral virtual third place, as I argue, with an average of 516 viewers to interact with in the chat.³⁰⁴ The consistency of Linkus7’s streams and viewer numbers, as well as the fact that he is

³⁰⁰ Taylor, 81.

³⁰¹ Taylor, 81.

³⁰² “Twitch.”

³⁰³ Linkus7 has posted times on the global leaderboard for speedrunning the following games: *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, for which he is currently third in the world; *LEGO Star Wars: The Video Game*, 36th in the world; *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker HD*, first in the world; *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*, 29th in the world; *3D Zelda Relay*, third in the world; *The Legend of Zelda: Ocarina of Time*, 88th in the world; *A Hat in Time (Beta Build)*, 147th in the world; *The Legend of Zelda: Majora's Mask*, 93rd in the world; *Super Mario World*, 184th in the world; *Luigi's Mansion*, 7th in the world; and *Banjo-Kazooie*, 110th in the world.

³⁰⁴ “Linkus7 - Streamer Overview & Stats,” TwitchTracker, accessed November 5, 2019, <https://twitchtracker.com/linkus7>.

in the top 0.05% in popularity of Twitch streamers, make his stream a useful and reliable case study for looking at online spaces that work to foster an ephemeral virtual third place.³⁰⁵

After analyzing four of Linkus7's streams and open coding for common themes, I argue that Linkus7's Twitch channel functions as an ephemeral virtual third place through the chat, Linkus7's rhetoric, and the social norms that formally and informally arose in the chat. Utilizing theories on the third place and virtual third places, liveness, and embodied space in online environments, I analyzed four of Linkus7's streams for interactions between Linkus7 and the chat, interactions within the chat, regular and recurring viewers, the prevalence and perceived importance of badges, subscribers, moderators, and third-party extensions, and the presence and impact of technical issues. Through this analysis, I uncover how Linkus7 and his viewers produce and foster an ephemeral, virtual third place through their rhetoric, Twitch's perceived technological affordances, third-party technological extensions, and the ephemeral nature of livestreams.

This chapter begins with a literature review on interpersonal relationships and third places in the physical world, transitioning into relationships and virtual third places. I then discuss my methods and rationale for choosing Linkus7's streams as a case study, detailing challenges I encountered in preserving the ephemeral media texts. Following this, I begin my analysis, examining the presence and construction of social norms on Twitch through both formal and informal means. I then compare the themes and norms present on Linkus7's streams with qualities of third places, including analysis on real-time interactions in chat using Twitch emotes, imitation learning, constitutive rhetoric, conversations between users, and temporal and spatial markers to emphasize the liveness and vivacity of the shared space. Through this thematic

³⁰⁵ "Linkus7 - Streamer Overview & Stats."

analysis of Linkus7's Twitch streams against qualities of a third place, I verify the validity of specific users utilizing the platform to foster and maintain an ephemeral virtual third place.

Building Connections and Virtual Third Places

To understand how livestreaming platforms help foster friendships and virtual third places, it is necessary to first discuss research on these themes in the offline world. Physical and emotional benefits from interpersonal relationships led researchers to analyze when, how, and where these relationships are built. The focus of this project is on less-intimate interpersonal relationships, such as those formed within community spaces like enclaves and in third places.³⁰⁶ Through an overview of theories on broadcasting and the binding but geographically dispersed connections created through sharing a mediated experience live, this chapter highlights the relevance of community-building research in contemporary ephemeral online spaces, such as Instagram and Twitch.

Since the inception of the WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link), scholars have increasingly studied virtual communities.³⁰⁷ Much of this work surrounds more informal, online environments, which is the focus of this thesis. Online connections can help foster interpersonal relationships and increase social support, which are fundamental to an individual's well-being. Social support, defined as the actual or perceived amount of social resources available for comfort or aid, plays an important role in enhancing an individual's physical and psychological health.³⁰⁸ Social support and positive relationships can work to strengthen the immune system and release endorphins, protect against negative effects of stress on the body, and encourage

³⁰⁶ Chávez, "Counter-Public Enclaves and Understanding the Function of Rhetoric in Social Movement Coalition-Building"; Ray Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community* (New York, NY: Marlowe & Company, 1999).

³⁰⁷ Howard Rheingold, *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1993).

³⁰⁸ S. J. Lepore, "Social Support," in *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior (Second Edition)*, ed. V. S. Ramachandran (San Diego: Academic Press, 2012), 493–96, <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-375000-6.00336-0>.

healthy behaviors and a sense of self-efficacy.³⁰⁹ These social support systems can be made up of family members, friends, or other social connections. While research suggests that online connections do not fulfill the same role as offline, in-person relationships, interpersonal connections online are a beneficial source of social support.³¹⁰ Individuals who actively seek social support online are finding it and able to build themselves a support system with other online users, often preferring online interactions to offline social interactions.³¹¹ This support can be emotional, informational, or invitational, highlighting the range of connections individuals build online.³¹²

In looking for a more informal space in which people can get together outside of home and work, one may think of coffee shops, bars, bowling alleys, and more. Since the inception of text-based chatrooms through the creation and popularity of massively multiplayer online (MMO) games, however, individuals have flocked to online communities for social support, interaction, and entertainment.³¹³ Just as physical “places” such as bars, bowling alleys, and malls are governed and influenced to some extent by their architecture, so are online spaces. This

³⁰⁹ M. A. Rosenkranz et al., “Affective Style and in Vivo Immune Response: Neurobehavioral Mechanisms,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 100, no. 19 (September 16, 2003): 11148–52, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1534743100>; James R. Rodrigue and Tricia L. Park, “General and Illness-Specific Adjustment to Cancer: Relationship to Marital Status and Marital Quality,” *Journal of Psychosomatic Research* 40, no. 1 (January 1996): 29–36, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999\(95\)00540-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0022-3999(95)00540-4); Jake Harwood, *Understanding Communication and Aging*, 2nd ed. (San Diego, CA: Cognella, Inc., 2018).

³¹⁰ Michele L. Ybarra et al., “Online Social Support as a Buffer against Online and Offline Peer and Sexual Victimization among U.S. LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth,” *Child Abuse & Neglect* 39 (January 1, 2015): 123–36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.08.006>.

³¹¹ Matthew S. Eastin and Robert LaRose, “Alt.Support: Modeling Social Support Online,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 21, no. 6 (November 2005): 977–92, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2004.02.024>; Jae Eun Chung, “Social Interaction in Online Support Groups: Preference for Online Social Interaction over Offline Social Interaction,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 29, no. 4 (July 2013): 1408–14, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2013.01.019>.

³¹² Marilyn Evans, Lorie Donelle, and Laurie Hume-Loveland, “Social Support and Online Postpartum Depression Discussion Groups: A Content Analysis,” *Patient Education and Counseling* 87, no. 3 (June 2012): 405–10, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pec.2011.09.011>.

³¹³ Evans, Donelle, and Hume-Loveland; Dmitri Williams et al., “From Tree House to BarracksThe Social Life of Guilds in World of Warcraft,” *Games and Culture - Game Cult* 1 (October 1, 2006): 338–61, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1555412006292616>; Eastin and LaRose, “Alt.Support”; Ybarra et al., “Online Social Support as a Buffer against Online and Offline Peer and Sexual Victimization among U.S. LGBT and Non-LGBT Youth.”

thesis examined Twitch and Instagram's technological and institutional practices in Chapter 1. Chapter 2 focused on Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's use of Instagram to reach out to a variety of individuals, utilizing Instagram Stories as an enclaved public screen. While Twitch streams can also be theorized as enclaved public screens because they connect geographically dispersed users based on their common interests and more, Twitch's emphasis on playful interaction between users and the common communication between Linkus7 and his viewers ties it to more informal communication and socialization spaces, known as the third place. Ray Oldenburg's third place provides a theoretical background to understand Twitch channels as an online space in which individuals informally gather on a regular basis for a multitude of reasons.

With an understanding of Ray Oldenburg's third places, media scholars have theorized CMC as using and fostering virtual third places.³¹⁴ The third place denotes an informal, public gathering space away from home, the first place, and work, the second place.³¹⁵ Oldenburg outlines that third places are: 1) on neutral ground; 2) a leveler; 3) conversational; 4) accessible; 5) a home away from home with 'regulars'; and 6) playful.³¹⁶ Oldenburg believes that these are essential characteristics of third places, which he also calls "great good places," that foster communication and relationships in informal, public gathering places.³¹⁷ He maintains that these great good places must be physical spaces in urban areas, such as coffee houses, bookstores,

³¹⁴ Charles Soukup, "Computer-Mediated Communication as a Virtual Third Place: Building Oldenburg's Great Good Places on the World Wide Web," *New Media & Society* 8, no. 3 (June 1, 2006): 421–40, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806061953>; Nicolas Ducheneaut, Robert J. Moore, and Eric Nickell, "Virtual 'Third Places': A Case Study of Sociability in Massively Multiplayer Games," *Computer Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW)* 16, no. 1 (April 1, 2007): 129–66, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10606-007-9041-8>.

³¹⁵ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*.

³¹⁶ Oldenburg.

³¹⁷ Oldenburg.

bars, and hair salons.³¹⁸ Charles Soukup, however, argues that Oldenburg's "third places" can be used to examine computer-mediated communication (CMC), such as chatrooms.³¹⁹

The third place as a theoretical concept should not necessarily be tied to a physical place, but rather associated with a shared space, which can exist as a physical bar or an online chatroom.³²⁰ Generally, CMC contexts are similar to third places because they emphasize humor and play, they are on a neutral ground, and they serve as a home away from home for the regulars.³²¹ Still, Soukup cautions against taking up third places as a theoretical concept in media studies because CMC typically does not emphasize localized community, is not a social leveler, and is not accessible.³²² However, Soukup and others studied primarily text-based chatrooms and MUDs, which function differently than temporally ephemeral, often visual, texts in online spaces.³²³ Twitch is distinct from MUDs not only because it offers visually engaging material, but because of the temporal and embodied experiences of the users.³²⁴ Users' experiences of time on platforms are "structured and controlled by both the institutional arrangements they inhabit and the time of others."³²⁵ This means that one's conception of time passing and existing on Twitch is dependent not just on technological and institutional practices of Twitch, but also on the other users' experiences and expressions of temporality in chat and onstream.

In this chapter, I draw comparisons between third places and Linkus7's Twitch channel, demonstrating how visual and phenomenologically live online environments present media

³¹⁸ Oldenburg.

³¹⁹ Soukup, "Computer-Mediated Communication as a Virtual Third Place."

³²⁰ Lori Kendall, *Hanging out in the Virtual Pub: Masculinities and Relationships Online* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002).

³²¹ Douglas Schuler, *New Community Networks: Wired for Change* (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co, 1996).

³²² Soukup, "Computer-Mediated Communication as a Virtual Third Place."

³²³ Soukup; Kendall, *Hanging out in the Virtual Pub*.

³²⁴ By "visually engaging material," I am referring to videos, images, emotes, and other graphics, not to written text in the chat, though I understand that written text is perceived through sight as well.

³²⁵ Sarah Sharma, *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 8.

scholars with a different kind of CMC that mirror certain aspects of third spaces as informal hangout spaces at certain times. Taking into account prior theorizations of the “virtual third place,” this analysis draws on examples from Linkus7’s Twitch channel to demonstrate the applicability and issues of phenomenologically live platforms as ephemeral virtual third places.

Critical Method

As Chapter 1 uncovered, Twitch and Instagram create conditions to build connections and create a rhetorical community through their technological and institutional practices. Chapter 2 demonstrated the importance of individual users producing content, like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, utilizing the online space Instagram built to share Stories and foster online connections with others. Chapter 3 stresses the importance of UGC in filling and building connections between users in ephemeral, online spaces, specifically on Twitch.

This chapter explores social and temporal connections between Twitch users through a rhetorical discourse analysis of four livestreams from Linkus7, a variety videogame streamer that specializes in speedrunning on Twitch.³²⁶ As Linkus7 is a variety videogame streamer, he attracts viewers based on his personality and the norms in his chat, rather than solely by the games he plays. That being said, he specializes in speedrunning games from The Legend of Zelda series, which causes his channel to receive more widespread attention from the speedrunning community. Additionally, Linkus7 has about 58,000 followers, which puts him on par with larger streamers on Twitch, yet his channel is small enough that the community still forms norms, uses emotes in a colloquial way, and generally remain civil toward one another.³²⁷ Thus, analyzing his streams is a useful case study for exploring the temporal and social aspects

³²⁶ “Twitch users” refers both to Linkus7, the streamer in this case, and the other users both viewing and interacting with Linkus7’s stream through chat, donations, subs, view counts, and more.

³²⁷ “Twitch.”

of fostering connections in digital spaces. Using Sekimoto's multimodal approach discussed in Chapter 1, the chapter includes analysis of markers of temporality, spatiality, and embodiment present on Twitch.³²⁸ Like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories, this chapter provides a textual and visual analysis of Linkus7's content and rhetoric, as well as the content of his chat. Textually, I rhetorically analyze Linkus7's use of constitutive rhetoric to determine how he creates a binding audience and "Twitch community" through his language, and how individual members in the chat contribute to that "community" by echoing and reinforcing his constitutive rhetoric.³²⁹ Visually, I consider the presence and prevalence of the technological additions to his streams, such as emotes, badges in the chat, donation messages, and other third-party extensions, and how these visuals help construct a virtual third place.³³⁰ I then analyze the timing of his streams including frequency of messages in the chat, time of day, length, and the chat's synchronous reactions to his stream.³³¹ The chat consists of viewers—using screennames, like they would on Reddit or 4chan, rather than their real names, like they would on Facebook or LinkedIn—commenting on the video and holding conversations both with Linkus7 and with other viewers. In this analysis, I downloaded and then open coded four of Linkus7's Twitch streams for evidence of viewers interacting with one another in the chat, interactions between Linkus7 and the viewers, the presence of recurring viewers (regulars), and the frequency and importance of donations, subscriptions, and other Twitch affordances.

Downloading the four streams proved difficult, as I could not use the same archival methods that I used for Instagram Stories. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories ranged

³²⁸ Sekimoto, "A Multimodal Approach to Identity."

³²⁹ When discussing Twitch as a platform, I use the term "community" to reflect Twitch's own language and institutional branding of the platform.

³³⁰ "Twitch.Tv - Extensions," Twitch.tv, accessed October 27, 2019, <https://www.twitch.tv/p/extensions/>.

³³¹ Rather than referring to each individual user, I use the term "chat" to refer to the collective chat window, which contributes to the conversation, reacts to Linkus7, and augments the content of the stream synchronously through voting, donations, and suggestions.

from three to ten minutes and could be screen recorded quickly on my computer, including audio. The Twitch streams I analyzed were significantly longer; the shortest stream I analyzed was about six hours, and the longest was about nineteen hours. This, paired with the fact that I had to include clear visuals of the synchronous chat and video, made screen recording all but impossible for me, and I am not extremely technologically savvy. Luckily, I messaged the streamer, Linkus7, asking him for advice on saving and downloading his streams for research. He pointed me to an application to help download the streams and synchronous chat windows. However, by the time he responded to me with this solution, one of the videos I'd already analyzed, which was nineteen hours long, had already disappeared from Twitch.³³² Rather than ignore this data, I am including my data from that stream, as well as three others, to point out the difficulties of researching online, ephemeral media, which I discuss in more depth in Chapter 4.

I analyzed four of Linkus7's streams, selected on different days of the week from March to April 2020 in order to display a variety of streams and view counts. The streams ranged from 112 total viewers to 2,002 total viewers, yet all four streams resulted in similar themes as I open coded and analyzed their linguistic and visual rhetorics. The streams I analyzed, in order of oldest to newest, are titled: “!merch !botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY),”³³³ “Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (BlessRNG Bois),”³³⁴ “!pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!),”³³⁵ and “Last Day of Breath of The Wild 100% Practice/Learning.”³³⁶

³³² Linkus7, *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)* (Twitch), accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.twitch.tv/videos/524922281?filter=archives&sort=time>.

³³³ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

³³⁴ Linkus7, *Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (BlessRNG Bois)* (Twitch, 2020), <https://www.twitch.tv/videos/569834836?filter=all&sort=time>.

³³⁵ Linkus7, *!!Pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!)* (Twitch, 2020), <https://www.twitch.tv/videos/573657361?filter=all&sort=time>.

³³⁶ Linkus7, *Last Day of Breath of The Wild 100% Practice/Learning* (Twitch, 2020), <https://www.twitch.tv/videos/581573495>.

Throughout Linkus7's streams, I discovered and analyzed themes of constitutive rhetoric, small talk between viewers and between chat and Linkus7, the use and implication of emotes, imitation contributing to the understanding of social norms, encouragement toward Linkus7, teasing/trolling between viewers and Linkus7, evidence of return and recurring viewers, game-specific conversations, temporal markers, spatial metaphors, the impact of Mods, technological issues, and the prevalence and importance of donations, subs, and other third-party extensions on stream. As the researcher, I recorded, watched, and analyzed Linkus7's streams after they were live and archived, to ensure that my viewer count and/or presence did not impact the experience of the other viewers. I use the term "viewers" to represent the viewers and users on Twitch streams, linguistically demonstrating that they are both viewing the stream and actively participating in it as users, recognizing the difference between pre-digital viewers and spectators and users that are viewing and interacting with others in online spaces.³³⁷ Additionally, understanding Linkus7's audience as viewers contributes to Oldenburg's notion of the third place. Watching sports in a bar, which Oldenburg identifies as a third place, individuals are seen as more than spectators, as they are participating in the environment, actively reacting to and communicating with others. Similarly, when an individual signs into their Twitch account to watch Linkus7's streams, they enter "an environment in which [they are] participator rather than spectator," as they add to the viewer count and can post in the chat, contributing to the overall experience of the stream.³³⁸ That being said, this analysis is not meant to generalize a specific and singular viewer experience, but rather acknowledge and observe the stream as a whole, looking into the norms and practices of Linkus7 and the viewers on his stream.

³³⁷ Dan Harries, "Watching the Internet," in *The New Media Book*, ed. Dan Harries (London: British Film Institute, 2002), 171–82.

³³⁸ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 47.

Norms and Governed Practices of Twitch Users

Normative influences online are shown to be even stronger than those in offline, face to face communication.³³⁹ Using Jennifer Stromer-Galley and Rosa Mikeal Martey's definition of norms, in this thesis, "'norms' are meant to reference the explicit, and more commonly implicit, rules that govern interaction and behavior in social settings."³⁴⁰ These norms can be terms of use and service published by Twitch, rules (formally or informally) created by Linkus7 and enforced by his Mods, and live and habitual practices exemplified in the chat and exerted through social influence. This section looks at the latter, focusing on implicit understandings between Linkus7 and his chat, resulting in group norms and social practices that routinely take place in real-time.

Space's role in determining and producing social norms and behaviors "is based on pragmatic considerations."³⁴¹ For example, one would not plant an apple tree in their garage, nor would they park their car in an apple orchard. Our understandings of space, according to cultural geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, arise from our experiences and perceptions, as our body is a "'lived body' and space is humanly construed space."³⁴² Thus, our determinations of what is socially acceptable in a space is based on past experiences and conceptions of that space; our spatial knowledge tells us the proper uses of both a garage and an apple orchard. This theoretical understanding of pragmatic considerations governing space based on individual experiences helps understand how social norms and behaviors emerge in online spaces.

To better understand how viewers learn acceptable behavior and social norms in online spaces, I look to research on online learning and comprehension of spatial knowledge. As part of

³³⁹ Jennifer Stromer-Galley and Rosa Mikeal Martey, "Visual Spaces, Norm Governed Places: The Influence of Spatial Context Online," *New Media & Society* 11, no. 6 (September 2009): 1042, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444809336555>.

³⁴⁰ Stromer-Galley and Martey, 1044.

³⁴¹ Stromer-Galley and Martey, 1047.

³⁴² Yi-Fu Tuan, *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*, 7th ed. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2011), 35.

an ongoing study on informal learning, researchers looked at how children learn to use online chatrooms.³⁴³ The study found that “...young people learn how to make sense of the medium informally either through the peer culture or auto-didacticism,” meaning they either learn from their peers or are self-taught.³⁴⁴ For participants who had never used an online chatroom before, researchers found that the more they used the chatroom technology on their own, the more they explored and learned about the space and how to act within it, generating a spatial knowledge of the chatroom as an online space.³⁴⁵ This process of learning how to behave in and use a platform in real-time is present on Twitch as well, with users imitating and learning from their peers, or discovering on their own what not to say through deterrence by Mods.³⁴⁶

When discussing the social norms and behaviors on Linkus7’s channel, it is important to note that “[n]orms of appropriate behavior vary substantially across communities,” according to a study looking at chatroom behavior on Twitch.³⁴⁷ The variation of acceptable behavior across different channels in the same platform affirms that “small differences between these spaces can have substantial impact on behavior.”³⁴⁸ Thus, this analysis open-coded for themes present in Linkus7’s streams, paying particular attention to aspects commonly present in other Twitch streams, such as emotes, small talk, gentle ribbing of one another, subscribers and donations, and more. This method positions the analysis of Linkus7’s channel as a baseline for comparison of other Twitch channels and streamers in the future. This analysis is divided into categories that

³⁴³ Rebekah Willett and Julian Sefton-Green, “Living and Learning in Chatrooms (or Does Informal Learning Have Anything to Teach Us?),” *Education et Societies* 2 (2003): 1–18.

³⁴⁴ Willett and Sefton-Green, 1.

³⁴⁵ Willett and Sefton-Green, 5.

³⁴⁶ Joseph Seering, Robert Kraut, and Laura Dabbish, “Shaping Pro and Anti-Social Behavior on Twitch Through Moderation and Example-Setting,” in *Proceedings of the 2017 ACM Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work and Social Computing*, CSCW ’17 (Portland, Oregon, USA: Association for Computing Machinery, 2017), 111–125, <https://doi.org/10.1145/2998181.2998277>.

³⁴⁷ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, 111.

³⁴⁸ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, 111.

were most prominent in the streams analyzed: Emotes and imitation, constitutive rhetoric, conversations, and temporal and spatial markers. Together, these themes arose onstream and in chat, revealing a set of social and behavioral norms on Linkus7's streams that build connections between viewers based on their common attendance in a live, shared space.

This analysis focuses on the social content of Linkus7's chat. While this may include some gameplay advice and context, I focus on social interactions rather than task-oriented gameplay interactions, which occur less frequently and involve fewer viewers in conversation with one another. Much of the game-specific content in Linkus7's chat mirrors early CMC research, which found that in smaller groups, initial exchanges were mainly task-oriented, and later encounters show sociality and cooperation.³⁴⁹ Early CMC research analyzed text-based chatrooms; the analysis of Linkus7's chat and interactions between viewers utilizes CMC research findings from the late-twentieth and early twenty-first centuries because the conditions of Twitch's chat emulate and build off of those of early chat rooms, as they are synchronous, text-based, characterized by quick communication between users, and users are identified by screennames rather than their legal names and identities.³⁵⁰ Unlike early chatrooms, however, Twitch chats are synchronously attached to a Twitch stream, or video, and are restricted to the time the streamer—in this case, Linkus7—is streaming on Twitch. I refer to Linkus7's Twitch channel as an ephemeral online space, as it is only accessible while he is streaming, adding a temporal restriction to viewer attendance.

The synchronicity of the chat and video stream emphasizes the phenomenologically live nature of Twitch, while hiding the fact that Twitch streams and chats are heavily mediated forms

³⁴⁹ Joseph B. Walther, "Relational Aspects of Computer-Mediated Communication: Experimental Observations over Time," *Organization Science* 6, no. 2 (1995): 89.

³⁵⁰ Jennifer A. H. Becker and Glen H. Stamp, "Impression Management in Chat Rooms: A Grounded Theory Model," *Communication Studies* 56, no. 3 (January 1, 2005): 243–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510970500181264>.

of communication that are not technically live. Even though synchronicity is often associated with live, real-time interactions, "...the fact that an environment is synchronous does not mean that production and reception necessarily take place (quasi) simultaneously, in real time, as happens in face-to-face."³⁵¹ Because of this temporal disparity, just as Chapter 2 refers to Instagram Stories as phenomenologically live, I refer to Twitch streams and chats as "phenomenologically live" rather than "live," recognizing that they are not occurring simultaneously in real time. That being said, these environments feel real and live to users, as they are able to respond to one another and communicate with Linkus7, whom they see playing games and reacting to chat on their screens. Thus, while Linkus7's streams are not technically real-time, they are phenomenologically live, and viewers and Linkus7 treat them as such, communicating with each other in the ephemeral online space.

Emotes and Imitation

Common and collective viewer practices, such as the use of emotes and other internet lingo, display the social norms of Linkus7's streams and virtual third place. Social information in online spaces can be derived from "the physical properties of a space and the spatial knowledge that participants develop about them."³⁵² In other words, other than the technological and institutional factors discussed in chapter 1, we must look to viewer practices displaying spatial knowledge, and therefore informing the behavior and norms on Linkus7's channel. Spatial knowledge, in this case, refers to the understanding of norms, affordances, and practices that viewers gain from spending time in Linkus7's streams, which then inform viewers' subsequent behavior.³⁵³ One way users gain spatial knowledge of acceptable behavior in online settings is by

³⁵¹ Marie-Madeleine Kenning, "Differences That Make the Difference: A Study of Functionalities in Synchronous CMC," *ReCALL* 22, no. 1 (January 2010): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0958344009990164>.

³⁵² Stromer-Galley and Martey, "Visual Spaces, Norm Governed Places," 1046.

³⁵³ Stromer-Galley and Martey, 1046.

imitating the behavior of others.³⁵⁴ To fully understand conversations between chat and Linkus7, however, it is first necessary to understand the language and emoticons they frequently use, as well as the rate they are used, reflecting viewers' spatial knowledge of Linkus7's channel as popular emoticons differ greatly from channel to channel.³⁵⁵

Emotes, a term originally used in MMORPG's such as World of Warcraft, describe an action your virtual character can perform, such as dancing or cheering.³⁵⁶ Since their inception, emotes have transitioned to Twitch, allowing chat to react to a streamer in a visual way; rather than just typing, for example, "I'm excited," viewers can type "PogChamp" to communicate their excitement visually. "PogChamp," a Twitch TV emoticon, commonly called emotes, displays an excited or surprised face and is used when something good unexpectedly happens.³⁵⁷ "Pog" and "Poggers," textual abbreviations of "PogChamp," are used most frequently than "PogChamp" to show chat's excitement over something that happened on stream.³⁵⁸ Emotes provide users with the chance to communicate in chat with actions, highlighting the embodied nature of Twitch chats. While viewers in chat are not physically together, they can emulate physical actions to communicate with each other, highlighting the embodiment individual viewers can experience in Twitch chats. As Twitch's About page asserts that there is a "seat in chat" for each viewer, the feeling of embodiment and the physical inclusion in Twitch chats is

³⁵⁴ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, "Shaping Pro and Anti-Social Behavior on Twitch Through Moderation and Example-Setting," 111.

³⁵⁵ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, "Shaping Pro and Anti-Social Behavior on Twitch Through Moderation and Example-Setting."

³⁵⁶ "Urban Dictionary: Emote," Urban Dictionary, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Emote>.

³⁵⁷ "What Does Pog Mean?," Reddit, June 2019, https://www.reddit.com/r/Twitch/comments/bu09c0/what_does_pog_mean/.

³⁵⁸ "Urban Dictionary: Pog," Urban Dictionary, accessed April 3, 2020, <https://www.urbandictionary.com/define.php?term=Pog>.

extended through the actions in chat, called emotes, available to viewers to allow them to visually interact with one another.³⁵⁹

To capitalize on the popularity of emotes, Twitch encourages Twitch Partners and Affiliates—larger streamers who get revenue from streaming on Twitch—to create their own emotes for their channel.³⁶⁰ These “emotes” mirror the use of past emoticons in chat rooms and emojis in texting. However, emotes on Twitch are different than commonly used emoticons or emojis, as they are community-based, with relevant and appropriate emotes enabled by the streamer themselves. For example, Linkus7 adapted popular emotes such as “hype,” demonstrating excitement, and “F,” meaning something bad happened, to “linkusHype” and “linkusF.”³⁶¹ Rather than displaying the original emote’s image of a person being excited or sad, Linkus7’s emotes display a purple penguin in the person’s place, acting out each emote’s designated action. Based on his chat, who frequently pokes fun at him for drinking so much Starbucks, Linkus7 created an emote called “linkusSip,” which displays the purple penguin drinking from a coffee mug.³⁶² In the four streams analyzed, the most commonly used Twitch Partner emotes were “linkusComfy,” showing the penguin wrapped up in a blanket, “linkusBless,” showing the penguin dressed as an angel and praying, and “linkusPausa,” showing the videogame character Link sitting in water with the word “Pausa,” which means pause in Italian, over his head, pointing to a common glitch that Linkus7 utilizes in speedrunning *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, the game he plays most frequently. Linkus7’s personalized emotes establish the channel’s individuality, creating a common visual for viewers

³⁵⁹ “Twitch.Tv | About.”

³⁶⁰ “Subscriber Emoticon Guide for Partners and Affiliates,” Twitch.tv, accessed April 6, 2020, https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/subscriber-emoticon-guide?language=en_US.

³⁶¹ “Linkus7’s Emotes - 40 Emoticon Images,” Twitch Metrics, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://www.twitchmetrics.net/c/36066935-linkus7/emotes>.

³⁶² “Linkus7’s Emotes - 40 Emoticon Images.”

to ascribe to. Linkus7 even sells merchandise with his channel icon, a cartoon Link, and the purple penguin on them for viewers to support and promote his channel.³⁶³ While visual emotes add to the chat's pictorial content and appeal, the frequent use of the text "pog" demonstrates that emotes do not have to be visual icons in order to carry social weight and information.

Common emotes, used both textually and visually in chat, demonstrate acceptable or collective behavior in chat, pointing to individual viewers' spatial knowledge of Linkus7's streams and the social norms and practices of other viewers. These social practices are identifiable through imitation and repetition of specific emotes and messages in chat, such as "Pog" and "poggers." Additionally, Linkus7's users engage in spamming of "cospasta," which are—often meaningless or silly—chains of words, letters, and emotes that individual users copy and paste into the chat, filling the chat with the same words and emotes.³⁶⁴ The frequent presence of "cospasta" in Linkus7's chat points to the behavioral imitation present in viewers. This behavioral imitation suggests that Linkus7's viewers learn acceptable behavior and messages in the chat based on what is repeated, promoting viewer understanding of social norms.³⁶⁵ Repetition of a message in Linkus7's chat seems to occur, like in most Twitch streams, in three instances: 1) spamming the chat with often annoying messages or emotes, providing no actionable content; 2) asking Linkus7 questions; and 3) cheering or positive reactions, such as "Pog."³⁶⁶ Examples of each instance are detailed below to showcase the behavioral imitation of Linkus7's viewers in chat.

³⁶³ "Linkus7," Twitch, accessed April 20, 2020, <https://www.twitch.tv/linkus7>.

³⁶⁴ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, "Shaping Pro and Anti-Social Behavior on Twitch Through Moderation and Example-Setting," 114.

³⁶⁵ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, "Shaping Pro and Anti-Social Behavior on Twitch Through Moderation and Example-Setting."

³⁶⁶ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, 116.

In the first instance, spamming the chat, often a single user will begin sending a single message in the chat, which another user will copy and send, and then it snowballs into a number of users “spamming” the chat with that specific message or derivatives of that message. For example, after one viewer posted in chat about the “hype train conductor,” referencing a user that began an influx in donations to Linkus7, other users began posting, “HYPE TRAIN,” “Hype train conductor,” “Hype train conductor Pog,” “hype train conductor [sic],” and other variations of hype train for seven minutes.³⁶⁷ Other times, Linkus7 encourages spamming chat, saying things like, “type 1 in chat if you also love eating rock in the morning,” to which everyone in the chat typed “1” for the next 30 seconds often with over three users sending “1” in the chat per second.³⁶⁸ Obviously, none of the users eat rocks each morning and Linkus7 knows this—he was just testing the chat to see if they would participate in this imitative behavior and humor him by typing something essentially meaningless. And they always do.

Viewers also imitate question asking behaviors, repeating questions or asking new questions in groups. As soon as Linkus7 answers a question on stream, hoping that their question will be answered as well, viewers send Linkus7 their questions in chat, filling the chat with questions from a variety of viewers. For example, thirty-nine minutes into a stream, a user asked Linkus7, “Linkus have you bought the new animal crossing?”³⁶⁹ Linkus answered, “Yes I did buy the new Animal Crossing. I have not played it yet; I just own it. *laughs* I was thinking of maybe playing it today though.”³⁷⁰ Within five seconds of Linkus7 answering the question about *Animal Crossing*, a game released on the Nintendo Switch, a gaming console, four other viewers posted questions in chat for Linkus7 to answer ranging from *Animal Crossing* to

³⁶⁷ !!Pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!).

³⁶⁸ !!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY). ”.

³⁶⁹ !!Pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!).

³⁷⁰ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

questions about his thoughts on the Nintendo Switch system in general.³⁷¹ The questions from viewers continued for another thirty seconds, though Linkus7 did not answer any additional questions onstream. As he is used to this behavior, Linkus7 rarely answers more than one question in a row because if he does, his chat is instantly filled with a plethora of questions from viewers, all of which would take him hours to answer.

In addition to spamming and answer-seeking imitation, in the third instance of behavioral imitation, viewers also imitate positive messages in chat. Viewers imitate and spam messages in order to say hello and goodbye to each other, to react positively to a message shared in chat or onstream by Linkus7, or to cheer on Linkus7 in the game. For example, the textual emotes “Pog” and “Poggers” are commonly used on Linkus7’s channel when he does something good in the game. Often, once one viewer types “Pog” into the chat, other viewers will begin “spamming” the chat, typing “Pog,” “Poggers,” and other variations as quickly as possible in order to overwhelm the chat with excitement and celebration. To someone on the outside, new to Twitch or Linkus7’s channel, seeing “Pog,” “pog,” “poggers,” and “POG” repeatedly in the chat would seem like nonsense. To Linkus7’s viewers however, who have instituted the norm of cheering on and celebrating Linkus7 with frequent “pogs,” this behavior is expected and incited by the chat as encouragement and reassurance for Linkus7.

Without specific third-party extensions, emotes that are not approved or standardized by Twitch simply appear in the chat as text. The most commonly-used outside, textual emote on Linkus7’s channel is “MonkaS.” “MonkaS” was originally created as a third-party emote, displaying Pepe the Frog, 4chan’s popular icon that was famously embraced and used by white

³⁷¹ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

supremacists, causing the Anti-Defamation League to declare it a hate symbol in 2016.³⁷²

“MonkaS” shows Pepe the Frog sweating profusely, meant to denote anxiety or a high-stress situation. While the ADL declared Pepe the Frog a hate symbol, they also state, “[t]he mere fact of posting a Pepe meme does not mean that someone is racist or white supremacist. However, if the meme itself is racist or anti-Semitic in nature, or if it appears in a context containing bigoted or offensive language or symbols, then it may have been used for hateful purposes.”³⁷³ From watching Linkus7’s streams and the context surrounding “MonkaS” being posted in chat, I do not see racist or anti-Semitic comments, and thus do not believe that MonkaS is being used for hateful purposes in Linkus7’s chat. That being said, there is no hard evidence that MonkaS is not meant to reference or encourage white supremacists’ use of the symbol, and thus I cannot be sure of individual viewers’ intentions. Again, as this emote is not approved by Twitch, it will show up textually as “MonkaS” unless you have a third-party extension on Twitch that turns the text into the sweating Pepe icon. Nonetheless, it is still widely used on Twitch, and more specifically in Linkus7’s chat, during high-intensity moments or gameplay moments that are particularly anxiety-inducing.³⁷⁴ This emote in particular showcases viewers’ understandings of social norms; while a hate symbol would frequently be viewed negatively by others, viewers on Linkus7’s channel use it to communicate their anxiety surrounding gameplay, as they understand it as an acceptable and commonly-used emote rather than a hate symbol.

Overall, the frequent use of emotes such as “Pog,” “linkusComfy,” “linkusPausa,” “linkusBless,” and “MonkaS,” as well as the presence of cypasta chains, demonstrates the imitative learning behaviors of Linkus7’s chat. Users new to Linkus7’s chat are introduced to the

³⁷² “Pepe the Frog,” Anti-Defamation League, accessed April 6, 2020, <https://www.adl.org/education/references/hate-symbols/pepe-the-frog>.

³⁷³ “Pepe the Frog.”

³⁷⁴ *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*.

behaviors of chat “by observing others and engaging in them,” while “[e]xisting users may be reminded about particular behaviors or encouraged to engage in them when others do so.”³⁷⁵

While behavioral imitation occurs in all aspects of the chat, imitation and repetition is clearest in emotes and cospasta chains, pointing toward learned behaviors of social norms in chat based on content posted by other viewers.

Constitutive rhetoric: Uniting the “we” through communal gameplay

There is a positive correlation between the desire to affiliate oneself with a group and increased behavioral mimicry.³⁷⁶ Mimicry acts as a “social glue,” encouraging liking, affiliation, and empathy between interactants.³⁷⁷ The prosocial consequences of mimicry and imitation on Linkus7’s streams, therefore, theoretically lead to an increase in liking, empathy, and the desire for individuals to affiliate themselves with Linkus7 and other viewers in the chat.³⁷⁸ These bonds are further strengthened through Linkus7’s consistent use of constitutive rhetoric and perceived communal gameplay decisions, encouraging viewers to act as a collective with the same goal, completing games onstream with Linkus7. By asking viewers to post gameplay suggestions in chat and subsequently reading and following these tips, Linus—the individual behind Linkus7—uses constitutive rhetoric to create a united audience with whom he interacts, allowing himself and the audience to function as a cohesive decision-maker and gameplayer, Linkus7. These connections are cemented through constitutive rhetoric, communal gameplay, and temporal indications of time spent “together” onstream.

³⁷⁵ Seering, Kraut, and Dabbish, “Shaping Pro and Anti-Social Behavior on Twitch Through Moderation and Example-Setting,” 119.

³⁷⁶ Tanya L. Chartrand and Jessica L. Lakin, “The Antecedents and Consequences of Human Behavioral Mimicry,” *Annual Review of Psychology* 64, no. 1 (2013): 289, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-psych-113011-143754>.

³⁷⁷ Chartrand and Lakin, 293.

³⁷⁸ Chartrand and Lakin, 293.

Constitutive rhetoric, as we saw through Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez’s assertion, “[t]his is a movement, this is not me,” can be used to bring an audience together, united behind a specific cause or action.³⁷⁹ As one longtime Twitch streamer told videogame scholar T.L. Taylor in an interview, “Twitch allows [me] to say to [my] audience, ‘Welcome to my channel. Now you’re a part of the experience.’”³⁸⁰ This demonstrates the streamer bringing their audience together into a collective experience of streaming, involving the streamer, the chat, and the institutional and technological practices discussed in Chapter 1. Linkus7 also uses constitutive rhetoric to unite his audience, using terms like “we” and “our” to describe his gameplay and streams. Furthermore, Linkus7 unites his viewers more than rhetorically, pushing audience members to identify with one another and orient themselves toward a specific action by asking for advice on gameplay or encouraging chat to post specific emotes and words at certain moments throughout his streams.³⁸¹

Not only does Linkus7 unite his audience through his words, but he also does so through his actions, allowing the audience to enact material change on stream. When Linkus7 is struggling in gameplay, for example, users in chat give him suggestions and advice, changing the way he plays, and thereby changing the content onscreen. The ability to impact Linkus7’s gameplay emphasizes the perceived importance of each viewer, as Linkus7 acknowledges that they are members of the virtual third place by listening to their advice onstream and changing his gameplay. This demonstrates that viewers are an indispensable part of Linkus7’s gameplay, as he asks for and listens to advice, and viewers are able to, individually or collectively, change the space and content based on their contributions. Linguistically, by referring to his audience as

³⁷⁹ “YOU CAN DO IT - @ocasio2018.”

³⁸⁰ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 69.

³⁸¹ Maurice Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric: The Case of the Peuple Québécois,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 73, no. 2 (May 1987): 143, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00335638709383799>.

“we” when discussing what he has completed onstream and still needs to complete, Linkus7 shares the excitement of playing a story-based game online with hundreds of viewers, making them feel as if they are playing and performing onstream as well. To increase the interactivity between Linkus7 and the chat, he frequently asks for help and suggestions on what to do next, allowing chat to dictate the gameplay, assuring viewers that they belong in chat and are recognized and valued by Linkus7 himself.

After working on a specific speedrun all weekend in a Legend of Zelda game called Breath of the Wild, on the last day, Linkus7 began his stream by asking the chat for suggestions and guidance on where to go next and how to complete certain actions.³⁸² After chat had been giving him advice for a few minutes, one viewer commented, “this is strangely a lot like twitch plays,” as the whole chat was telling Linkus7 where to go and what to do in the game, essentially playing for him as a collective group through their messages in chat.³⁸³ By allowing the viewers to have a material impact on the gameplay, Linkus7 puts constitutive rhetoric to work, surpassing the realm of ideas into that of material practices.³⁸⁴ One hour into this stream, he emphasized the community-run nature of his gameplay, stating,

We still aiming for being done by the end of the day? Yes. I do not want to go offline without having 100% of Breadth of the Wild. We're gunna keep grinding today. We are gunna get it today. I guarantee you. It might take way too long, but we're gunna get it today. We're gunna get it. I believe. I hope you guys are ready for no sleep tonight.³⁸⁵

³⁸² *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

³⁸³ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

³⁸⁴ Charland, “Constitutive Rhetoric,” 143.

³⁸⁵ *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

By referring to himself and the viewers as “we,” Linkus7 promotes a connection between himself and the chat. Additionally, by stating, “I hope you guys are ready for no sleep tonight,” Linkus7 inserts all of his viewers into the gameplay process, assuming and ensuring they will watch the entire stream, staying with him until “the end of the day,” helping him make decisions until they complete the game together.³⁸⁶ Thus, in addition to saying “we” to refer to himself and the viewers to unite his channel, the temporal relationship of being involved with the stream in real-time also helps build a connection between Linkus7 and viewers. In addition to tying viewers into his gameplay, Linkus7 connects socially with the chat as often as possible, encouraging viewers to interact with each other as well. The connections between a viewer and Linkus7 or other viewers contribute to the conversational, playful, and home away from home aspects of Twitch as a virtual third place, as it includes viewers in gameplay and conversations, making them feel connected to himself and each other. This connection and perceived control over some gameplay and chat messages assures viewers that they are “a part of the group that *makes* the place,” actively contributing through chat messages and viewer counts to the overall production of Linkus7’s streams, asserting their presence and belonging in a virtual third place.³⁸⁷

Conversations in Ephemeral Virtual Third Places

Small talk can be found throughout Linkus7’s streams, emphasizing the informal, virtual third place-like atmosphere. Frequently, small talk is seen as neutral, non-task-oriented conversations about safe topics.³⁸⁸ Small talk can also be used for a variety of reasons, such as,

³⁸⁶ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

³⁸⁷ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 40.

³⁸⁸ Birgit Endrass, Matthias Rehm, and Elisabeth André, “Planning Small Talk Behavior with Cultural Influences for Multiagent Systems,” *Computer Speech & Language*, Language and speech issues in the engineering of companionable dialogue systems, 25, no. 2 (April 1, 2011): 161, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.csl.2010.04.001>.

“establishing social relations, getting acquainted with a conversation partner or avoiding undesirable silence.”³⁸⁹ In Linkus7’s streams, the four most common times for small talk are: 1) at the beginning of streams, including greetings such as, “Hey Linkus, hey chat! How are you doing today?” 2) when individuals enter the stream late, saying things such as, “Hi everyone, how is Linkus doing today? Did I miss anything?” 3) whenever a viewer announces they are leaving the stream, saying “Cya” to other viewers occasionally assuring them “i’ll [*sic*] be back later for sure, he’s gonna be live after allxD,” and 4) frequent discussions surrounding Linkus7’s gameplay decisions and abilities, grazing into his personal life, offering suggestions such as, “Ask your dad for future help, he knows a lot about this game right? @linkus7.”³⁹⁰ More often than not, these interactions, greetings, and questions are posed for the whole chat. In some cases, viewers offer suggestions to Linkus7 or respond to someone else’s question using “@” to tag a specific user, alerting that user that someone is speaking directly to them. Whether to a specific user or to the chat in general, viewers’ messages in chat reflect the conversational nature of third places, affirming the presence of Linkus7’s Twitch streams as a virtual third place.

The quality of interactions in a third place is different than those at home or work, as they are more focused on “making other peoples’ day,” than on task-orientation.³⁹¹ To convey the quality of conversation in the third place, Georg Simmel suggests that third places reflect “joy...the emotion evoked by well-being; vivacity...suggest[ing] that the tempo is lively; and relief [which] implies a release from duty or the breaking of monotony.”³⁹² Like Linkus7’s streams, third places remain upbeat because the individuals in attendance are there by choice—

³⁸⁹ Endrass, Rehm, and André, 161.

³⁹⁰ !!Merch !Botw100 | *Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*; !!Pgskip | *Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!)*.

³⁹¹ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 55.

³⁹² Oldenburg, 55.

they are free to leave (or click the “X” in the upper righthand of the screen) at any time. In Linkus7’s streams, joy is present throughout as viewers interact with one another, encouraging Linkus7 and each other, resulting in messages like, “This chat is so wholesome, I love it <3.”³⁹³ Although he can be competitive and hard on himself when speedrunning, Linkus7 is always careful to keep a playful and enjoyable atmosphere and attitude on stream. Five minutes into his first stream back since breaking the speedrunning world record for *The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, Linkus7 announced that he will be playing through the *Wind Waker* speedrun and working on certain parts he felt he could improve upon, but he will not get frustrated if he messes up.³⁹⁴ Instead, he said, he will celebrate trying his best by playing a different game if he and his chat do not enjoy *Wind Waker*.³⁹⁵ By adapting to his own needs and the needs of the chat in order to maintain a good attitude, Linkus7 promotes joy in his stream, reflecting the atmosphere of a third place.

Linkus7’s chat is frequently either encouraging him or poking fun at him. Both of these actions are often completed in groups, with multiple viewers in chat repeating messages quickly and often. The repetition occurs more frequently when emotes, such as “linkusBless” or “linkusHype” are involved. The encouragement or gentle ribbing is often jumpstarted by one viewer and continues to pick up tempo when the rest of chat gets excited about something. The fast-scrolling chat window is “akin to the cheering one would find in a sports stadium,” with users building off of each other’s energy and excitement in the chat.³⁹⁶ For example, when Linkus7 was close to breaking a world record in a speedrun, viewers posted fifty-seven times

³⁹³ !!Merch !Botw100 | *Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

³⁹⁴ !!Pgskip | *Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!)*.

³⁹⁵ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

³⁹⁶ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 42.

within less than five seconds, encouraging Linkus7 and celebrating with messages such as, “YES LINKUS,” “Pog,” “POGGERS,” “THAT’S MA BOY,” and “LETS GOOOOOOOO!”³⁹⁷

The “spamming” of chat is more popular and used by more viewers when it is encouraging or speaking positively to Linkus7, rather than when it is poking fun at him. To playfully poke fun at Linkus7, viewers posted “linkusUgly,” which is not a real emote, in the chat eight times in twenty seconds.³⁹⁸ While this caught on a bit, it did not catch on nearly as quickly or have as many viewers posting in chat as positive messages encouraging Linkus7 or as messages saying “bless you” or “linkusBless” whenever Linkus7 sneezes. When Linkus7 sneezes, the chat immediately jumps to respond, posting chat messages like “linkusBless,” “Gesundheit,” and “Bless thou,” which were posted in chat eight times in seven seconds after Linkus7 sneezed in one stream, and five times within three seconds on another stream.³⁹⁹ Most frequently, positive messages increase the tempo of chat messages to more than one message per second, while more negative chats making fun of Linkus7, such as saying “GOOD START OMEGLUL” after Linkus7 dies at the beginning of a stream, are less likely to elicit mass responses.⁴⁰⁰ Thus, similar to third places, Linkus7’s streams have a vivacity to them, increasing the tempo when positive things occur on stream or in the chat.

Amateurism, according to Oldenburg, is encouraged by third places, providing a joyous relief for participants.⁴⁰¹ Through the amateurish jokes such as “linkusUgly,” the spamming of chat with “POGGERS,” and the use of emotes rather than words, viewers embrace the amateur nature of Twitch acting as a release from the mundane nature of life and social norms.⁴⁰² Other

³⁹⁷ *Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (BlessRNG Bois).*

³⁹⁸ *!!Pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!).*

³⁹⁹ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.]; *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

⁴⁰⁰ *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

⁴⁰¹ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 56.

⁴⁰² Oldenburg, 56.

than these instances, relief, the last quality of a third place, is most obvious when viewers discuss their lives outside of Linkus7's streams. Nineteen minutes into Linkus7's stream "!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)," which was the third stream of the weekend working on the *Breath of The Wild* Speedrun, a user implied that the stream acted as a release for them, saying, "I've [sic] got a five and a half hour car ride ahead of me, lurking and packing. glad to catch the stream before I go."⁴⁰³ Stating that they were glad to catch the stream before they got in the car demonstrates that watching the stream and participating in chat acts as a relief from the rest of their day. The relief and enjoyment that viewers experience is further echoed when a subscriber message popped up forty-eight minutes into the stream, stating, "[username removed] subscribed at Tier 1. They've subscribed for 3 months! Having anniversary in Tokyo and being awake at a time were [sic] you stream o:."⁴⁰⁴ The user, whose username has been removed for anonymity, is clearly excited to be joining Linkus7's stream live, providing a break from their time in Tokyo. Linkus7 encourages this joy and shows his appreciation by reading the message on stream and thanking the user by (user)name for being a subscriber for three months.⁴⁰⁵

Through instances and common practices that elicit joy, vivacity, and relief, Linkus7's streams exemplify the qualities present in third places. As Oldenburg states, interactions in the third place work toward "making other peoples' day," which pushes each individual to make their own day in the process.⁴⁰⁶ Linkus7's streams, focused on playing videogames, elicit playful energy and communication between himself and his viewers. This playful energy increases acceptance into the virtual third place, Linkus7's channel, as "[t]he unmistakable mark of

⁴⁰³ !!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)".

⁴⁰⁴ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴⁰⁵ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴⁰⁶ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 55.

acceptance into the company of third place regulars is not that of being taken seriously, but that of being included in the play forms of their association.”⁴⁰⁷ After being part of this playful atmosphere, individuals are continually drawn back to Linkus7’s streams because “feeling of being ‘apart together’...retains its magic beyond the duration of the individual game.”⁴⁰⁸

Like regulars of third places, Linkus7’s viewers experience the “urge to return, recreate, and recapture the experience” of participating in Linkus7’s streams.⁴⁰⁹ In a weekend where Linkus7 streamed for three days in a row working on a speedrun, he took a nine-hour break between streams to eat and sleep. Upon logging onto Linkus7’s stream on the third day, a viewer commented, “has it already been 9 hours? *linkusBless*.” Linkus7 responded, laughing, “has it already been 9 hours? Do you really have to ask that, really? It has not been enough time away. What do you mean has it already? No, no. It's not a feeling of, oh wow, we're already back, it's a feeling of damnit, we're already back.”⁴¹⁰ This playful interaction between Linkus7 and a viewer highlights how much individuals enjoy watching and participating in Linkus7’s streams. While the viewer felt blessed (linkusBless) to be back watching Linkus7, ready to return, recreate, and recapture their previous experience as a Linkus7 viewer, Linkus7 joked that it hadn’t been enough time, as he had only been away from his computer for nine hours. After just nine hours of being away, after streaming eighteen plus hours a day for two days in a row, Linkus7’s viewers still missed him and were excited when he logged on for the third day in a row. Of all of the chats, this interaction displays the enjoyment Linkus7 brings to others through the virtual third place that are his streams. Unlike Oldenburg’s third places in which “one may go alone at almost any time of the day or evening with assurance that acquaintances will be there,”

⁴⁰⁷ Oldenburg, 38.

⁴⁰⁸ Oldenburg, 38.

⁴⁰⁹ Oldenburg, 38.

⁴¹⁰ *!!Merch !Botw100 | Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

however, Linkus7's virtual third place is only available when he is streaming and is thus more time-dependent than typical third places.⁴¹¹

Temporal and Spatial Markers of an Ephemeral Virtual Third Place

Deviations from the order and organization of home and work, as well as ease of physical access, make third places alluring.⁴¹² The ephemeral nature of Twitch streams as virtual third places contributes to its appeal as a third place, as streamers are not held to specific schedules by anyone other than themselves, and thus “[t]he timing is loose, days are missed, [and] some visits are brief.”⁴¹³ This leads to a fluidity and inconsistency in membership at any given time, as some viewers, or members of a third place, may only be available at certain times.⁴¹⁴ Despite the inconsistency of presence in third places, Oldenburg argues that third places must be accessible “during both the on and off hours of the day.”⁴¹⁵ On his channel, Linkus7 has a section titled “Schedule,” in which he states that he streams at least five times starting at around 6pm CET, or noon EST. Often, these streams last eight or more hours, sometimes up to twenty-four hours, and are thus available during both on and off hours of the day for first, second, and third shift workers, resembling the hour requirements of Oldenburg's third place.⁴¹⁶

Linkus7 lives in Sweden, thus his viewers are used to Linkus7 operating from that time zone (CET), whether they are in it themselves or not. On a stream toward the end of March, nineteen-minutes into the stream, Linkus7 said, “Also I haven't had my morning coffee yet so let's have it.”⁴¹⁷ Immediately, people in the chat responded, saying, “it is 1:31 where u r,” “‘morning’ coffee *PepeLaugh*,” “morning??” and “‘morning’ coffee,” showing their confusion

⁴¹¹ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 32.

⁴¹² Oldenburg, 33.

⁴¹³ Oldenburg, 32.

⁴¹⁴ Oldenburg, 33.

⁴¹⁵ Oldenburg, 32.

⁴¹⁶ “Linkus7.”

⁴¹⁷ *!!Pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!)*.

on the time of day for Linkus7.⁴¹⁸ One of Linkus7's Mods then responded in the chat, stating, "[d]ue to extreme travel restrictions, Linkus is currently in the U.S. of KKona until the bans are lifted. He is staying with Frozen [another streamer] in the Dallas, TX area."⁴¹⁹ For reference, KKona is an unofficial emote, used textually by viewers without the proper third-party extensions, to signify a "hillbilly."⁴²⁰ In this case, Linkus7's users were so used to his schedule and "regular" time of day in Sweden that as soon as he referenced a change in his daily routine and timing, as he was in a different time zone, they noticed. In addition to paying attention to Linkus7's spatial and temporal relations, viewers share information of their own spatial and temporal commitments and experiences in chat.

For Twitch viewers, there is a difference between watching and participating in a stream "live" and watching a recorded video after-the-fact. Toward the end of Linkus7's world record speedrun stream, Linkus7 said, "'Okay, okay. Let's go. That's it. World record. Let's go. Okay.'"⁴²¹ Less than a second later, viewers in the chat were sending messages asserting their presence, saying, "I WAS HERE!!!" and "WE WHERE [*sic*] HERE CHAT" in different variations for the remainder of the stream.⁴²² In the midst of these messages, regret-filled messages from viewers who had left temporarily were clear, with viewers stating, "I was a way [*sic*] for ONE minute. Nooooo."⁴²³ While this specific user could have gone back in the stream to view the content they had missed, that was not the point of their message; the regret and upset came from the fact that they were not actively present in the stream and chat when a specific thing occurred "live."

⁴¹⁸ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴¹⁹ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴²⁰ "What Does KKona Mean?," reddit, accessed April 6, 2020, https://www.reddit.com/r/Twitch/comments/3qygq3/what_does_kkona_mean/.

⁴²¹ *Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (BlessRNG Bois)*.

⁴²² [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴²³ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

While users understand they are not physically with Linkus7 and others in the chat, they have an abstract relationship with Linkus7 and the chat as they feel like they are together. As Neta Alexander points out, “[t]his abstraction is communicated to the Internet user by using myriad metaphors that draw on the predigital world.”⁴²⁴ Rather than saying, “I was online at the same time as other geographically dispersed users,” users say, “I was here,” abstracting and simplifying their relationship with Linkus7 to a spatial and temporal relationship. The simple assertion, “I was here,” demonstrates an undeniable reality for Twitch viewers on Linkus7’s stream: Viewers think of Linkus7’s streams as a place where they can be, temporally or spatially, and that their presence makes a difference and thus is worth asserting with comments in the chat. By asserting themselves into the online environment, viewers contribute to the “at-homeness” of third places.⁴²⁵ “At-homeness,” according to Oldenburg, “is exhibited in conversation, joking, teasing, horseplay, and other expressive behaviors.”⁴²⁶ These active expressions of personality and acceptable behavior on Linkus7’s stream are continually performed in chat by viewers and onstream by Linkus7 himself. As Oldenburg maintains, “[t]he more people visit a place, use it, and become, themselves, a part of it, the more it is theirs.”⁴²⁷ The more that viewers watch Linkus7’s streams and participate in chat, the more Linkus7’s channel becomes a home away from home for viewers, taking on the role of a third place.

Often, viewers compare viewing history with one another to show how dedicated and invested they are in Linkus7’s streams, asserting their belonging in the chat. After being asked how they were, one user responded, “dope, i [*sic*] have been here the whole time and feel

⁴²⁴ Neta Alexander, “Rage against the Machine: Buffering, Noise, and Perpetual Anxiety in the Age of Connected Viewing,” *Cinema Journal* 56, no. 2 (2017): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2017.0000>.

⁴²⁵ Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 41.

⁴²⁶ Oldenburg, 41.

⁴²⁷ Oldenburg, 41.

invested now hahaha.”⁴²⁸ Another user who has a “Founder” badge, meaning they have followed Linkus7’s channel since he first began streaming on Twitch, responded, “I’ve missed 0 hours and 0 mins.”⁴²⁹ For dedicated viewers, being there and being accounted for is extremely important. One viewer created a new account and felt the need to let others know their identity as a regular in Linkus7’s channel, stating, “Oh btw @linkus7 changed my Name , might remember me as Thasecondbeast721.”⁴³⁰ Another user followed this message by asserting their own presence, stating, “It has been over 2 years, cuz I first subbed during your fireblight fight, and I am over a 2 year sub,” to which Linkus7 responded onstream, “really, damn. I’m amazed you remember that.”⁴³¹ According to Oldenburg, “regulars” in third places are *very* regular, stopping in no less than twice a week.⁴³² This is apparent in Linkus7’s chat, as some viewers assert their presence by pointing out the limited number of streams they’ve missed; after Linkus7 got a world record speedrun in the prior stream, for example, a viewer posted, “are you serious the one day i dont watch he gets wr? linkus, i take this personally >:(.” By specifying that the stream they missed was the “one day” they didn’t watch, this viewer asserted themselves as a regular in this virtual third place.

Because of the desire of viewers to be recognized and accounted for in the virtual third place, technical issues with the stream cause frustration and anxiety, causing viewers to message chat about technical issues almost immediately. After trying to determine how many people were watching a stream, for example, one user said, “I don’t know if it’s on my end or if anyone else has seen it, but view count is broken,” and another user echoed the issue, stating,

⁴²⁸ !!Merch !Botw100 | *Breath of The Wild 100% Speedrun ALL WEEKEND! (FINAL DAY)*”.

⁴²⁹ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴³⁰ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴³¹ [CSL STYLE ERROR: reference with no printed form.].

⁴³² Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 177.

“there are only 707 people watching ww hd [Wind Waker HD] on twitch rn [right now] how do you have 719 viewers.”⁴³³ Buffering, which is a “delay in the transmission and/or reception between one packet and the next,” and other disruptions to viewing also cause complications and frustrations on stream.⁴³⁴ Viewers expect immediacy on Twitch and get frustrated or anxious when videos buffer or audio cuts out.⁴³⁵ Twitch regularly addresses these concerns on their Twitter account, tweeting, for example, “🔍 We're looking into issues with buffering and disconnects for broadcasts across the site. Thank you for the reports!”⁴³⁶ This message is meant to reduce anxieties around buffering, assuring users that the issue lies on Twitch’s end, not their own internet speed and connection. Buffering suspends time, breaking the phenomenological liveness of Twitch streams.⁴³⁷ Buffering thus wastes viewers’ time, disrupting the “immediacy, agency, and control in the age of ‘connected viewing.’”⁴³⁸ Viewers are accustomed to and increasingly expect immediacy on Twitch; while people could wait five or more seconds for a video to load in the early 2000s, “[w]e now practically insist that Web pages load in a quarter of a second...As of 2012, videos that didn’t load in two seconds had little hope of going viral.”⁴³⁹ When this immediacy is interrupted, the phenomenological liveness of the Twitch stream is also interrupted, rupturing the interactive presence of the virtual third place. Thus, Twitch works to

⁴³³ *!!Pgskip | Wind Waker HD 100% Speedruns (WE GOT 5:32:58 WR!)*.

⁴³⁴ Alexander, “Rage against the Machine,” 5.

⁴³⁵ Alexander, “Rage against the Machine.”

⁴³⁶ “Twitch Support on Twitter: ‘🔍 We’re Looking into Issues with Buffering and Disconnects for Broadcasts across the Site. Thank You for the Reports!’ / Twitter,” Twitter, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://twitter.com/twitchsupport/status/1133704695543934977>.

⁴³⁷ Alexander, “Rage against the Machine,” 2.

⁴³⁸ Alexander, 2.

⁴³⁹ Chelsea Wald, “Why Your Brain Hates Slowpokes,” *Nautilus*, March 5, 2015, <http://nautil.us/issue/22/slow/why-your-brain-hates-slowpokes>.

explain and eliminate buffering for both broadcasters and viewers by providing technological advice on broadcasting and streaming videos with minimal buffering.⁴⁴⁰

Conclusion

Overall, phenomenologically live texts have the potential to create connections between individuals, but it is important to consider the invisible technological and institutional practices in place that allow this type of communication to occur. Through constitutive rhetoric, channel-specific emotes, small talk, encouragement, playfulness, and temporal and spatial assertions, Linkus7's streams act as an ephemeral virtual third place. Linkus7's channel includes multiple aspects of third places, including conversational dialogue between Linkus7 and viewers, a home away from home with the presence of regulars and behavioral social norms, and a playful atmosphere that allows viewers to experience joy, vivacity, and relief.

The presence of third places attributes in an online space suggests that, as Howard Rheingold posed in 1993, "cyberspace is one of the informal public places where people can rebuild the aspects of community that were lost when the malt shop became a mall."⁴⁴¹ While Oldenburg asserts that we have lost at least half of the informal gathering spaces, or third places, since the 1950s, online platforms like Twitch now allow for the cultivation of an online space that users turn into and utilize as a virtual third place.⁴⁴² In fact, with virtual third places instead of physical bars, bowling alleys, and coffeehouses, people may be better suited to build lasting relationships and networks as they are "'free' to choose [their] friends on more rational and more personal bases than that of mere geographic proximity."⁴⁴³ Phenomenologically live texts on

⁴⁴⁰ "Guide to Broadcast Health and Using Twitch Inspector," Twitch, accessed April 28, 2020, <https://help.twitch.tv/s/article/guide-to-broadcast-health-and-using-twitch-inspector>.

⁴⁴¹ Rheingold, *The Virtual Community*, 26.

⁴⁴² Oldenburg, *The Great Good Place*, 284.

⁴⁴³ Oldenburg, 265.

platforms dedicated to cultivating communities, like Linkus7's streams on Twitch, reach out to the audience and encourage their participation in and creation of ephemeral virtual third places. Although Twitch streams do not have set hours and a solitary physical space like Oldenburg's "great good places" of the past, the connections and social norms constructed between viewers demonstrates the creation of an ephemeral virtual third place that provides informal yet cohesive connections between Twitch users from all over the world.

Introduction

This thesis focuses theoretically on perceptual links between temporality, spatiality, and embodiment in online spaces. Institutional and technological practices, such as branding campaigns, spatial metaphors, constitutive rhetoric, moderation policies and labor, and synchronous chat, encourage users to perceive Twitch and Instagram as community-based platforms. Users continually interact with technology in order to connect with other users, incorporating the technology they use into their habitual body. In turn, these users also gather spatial knowledge of acceptable and expected platform-specific practices through repeated use and imitation of regulars. This spatial knowledge extends the habitual body into more abstract, online spaces through the regulation of social norms, both formally and informally policing users' actions online, such as the affordances they utilize and the content they share. By focusing on theoretical perception, this thesis frames Instagram Stories and Twitch streams as phenomenologically live because although these ephemeral texts are highly mediated, they often feel live to the viewer, as if they were taking place in real-time.

Platforms are capable of technologically, institutionally, and rhetorically creating an online space for users to interact with one another. Establishing connections, social norms, and regular practices, however, is up to the individual users themselves. In particular, focusing on the habitual nature of producers and viewers of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories and Linkus7's Twitch streams, this thesis argues that users support and advance connections in online spaces in myriad ways. As Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories demonstrate, single producers can utilize a platform as an enclaved public screen, connecting with geographically

dispersed individuals in a one-to-many sense through a mediated screen. Through her rhetoric, perceived authenticity, front-facing selfies, closed-captioning, and consistency in posting, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez effectively uses Instagram Stories as an enclaved public screen, connecting the young politician to individuals around the United States and around the world to spread her message. Moving to a more playful, interactive case study, Linkus7's Twitch streams reveal the work individual viewers undertake to support and advance connections in online spaces, including using emotes, imitation, constitutive rhetoric, communal gameplay, conversations, and consistency in viewings Linkus7's streams in real-time. These actions and qualities align with Oldenburg's third place, exhibiting the presence of more informal public spaces online, which I refer to as ephemeral virtual third places. While these are different theoretical concepts, they both revolve around the importance of individual users—of Ocasio-Cortez on Instagram and of the individual members of chat on Twitch—to foster and maintain connections between geographically dispersed users in ephemeral, online spaces. While the platform provides the online space, the producer and users rhetorically and socially construct it into an online space that reflects their desires, anxieties, motivations, interests, and more.

This thesis contributes to literature in social engagement in online platforms by pulling back the curtain to help analyze how phenomenologically live online spaces are produced and maintained through a variety of social, technological, and institutional practices. While these ephemeral online spaces could have positive—or even negative—impacts on their users and viewers, understanding how they function behind-the-screen is paramount to considering the future of phenomenologically live texts. Researching hidden algorithms, moderation policies and laborers, monetization, and other technological and institutional practices uncovers the material, social, and economic reality through which platforms operate. Understanding who makes

platform decisions, how they are made, and whom they benefit assists researchers in understanding why certain practices remain prominent in the tech industry, shedding light on the creation and moderation of online spaces.⁴⁴⁴ Furthermore, it is important for researchers to consider the presumptive identities of the audience bodies of ephemeral media, looking into not just the demographics of the audience, but of what kinds of subject positions are being socially produced and targeted.

When creating content and posting UGC to reach out to others, individual content creators often have a specific audience in mind. While this audience is often not explicitly stated by the user, their rhetoric, tone, choice of content, and more act to socially produce the subject position of an audience member. While this thesis did not largely focus on the presumptive identities of the viewers on Instagram and Twitch, it is important to consider the constructed subject positions of an audience when looking at fostering online connections, as connections with certain bodies and identities may be prioritized over or more prevalent than others.

Through constitutive rhetoric, communication produces an audience by assigning and assuming subject positions of viewers. Both Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Linkus7 utilize their position as a content producer to constitute and speak to a particular type of audience member based on their identities, anxieties, aspirations, and more. In Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories, for example, she focuses on issues of marginality, voting, believing in yourself, and not letting others define your worth. Through these particular topics, Ocasio-Cortez invites audience member subject positions that are most prevalent among people of color, young adults, voters in the United States, and women. By discussing issues of marginality and her lived experiences as a young woman of color, Ocasio-Cortez reaches out to people sharing these

⁴⁴⁴ Roberts, *Behind the Screen*, 27.

identities—young adults, women, and people of color—to build connections with her and her political stance, while also appealing to their anxieties, such as student debt or climate change, and their aspirations, such as reaching their professional working goals. In Linkus7's Twitch streams, the content played and discussed positions his audience as viewers that enjoy videogames, seek self-improvement in game playing, and regularly poke fun at others or thrive in light-hearted discussions. While videogaming is often socially regarded as a masculine activity, the interactions in chat as well as with Linkus7 himself do not reflect an overtly masculine nature, and thus I believe he is targeting all genders in his gameplay and streaming as potential audience members. In both cases, the content producers—Ocasio-Cortez and Linkus7—socially produce subject positions similar to their own, reflecting at times their identities, interests, talents, anxieties, and aspirations. Through this social production of an audience, both Ocasio-Cortez and Linkus7 foster connections between themselves and their audience, utilizing their online spaces as an enclaved public screen and an ephemeral virtual third place, respectively.

Through the analysis of Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's Instagram Stories, this thesis proposes the enclaved public screen as a way of theorizing the multiplicity of public screens that allow geographically dispersed individuals to collaborate and communicate in real-time. This extends the notion of DeLuca and Peebles' public screen, recognizing that there are a variety of public screens at any given time.⁴⁴⁵ Rather than calling these screens hegemonic or counter-hegemonic, recognizing them as "enclaved" diminishes the focus on dominant discourse, instead evaluating each screen's discourse, production, and connections against itself. This is a purposeful move to ensure that enclaved public screens are researched and understood through

⁴⁴⁵ DeLuca and Peebles, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen."

their own technological, temporal, social, and institutional contexts and merits, rather than treating hegemonic discourse as the baseline to which all public screens and online spaces should be compared.

In addition to extending the public screen to understandings of the enclaved public screen, this thesis contributes to scholarship on virtual third places. By analyzing and uncovering similarities between Linkus7's Twitch streams and understandings of Oldenburg's third place, this thesis adds to theoretical work on the virtual third place, pushing scholars to consider the informal connections individuals make online every day. Specifically, ephemeral virtual third places focus on the temporal and constitutive aspects of third places, understanding how individual users are encouraged to habitually return to and participate in a third place in an online environment.

Finally, this thesis' methods demonstrate the difficulties of researching and archiving online texts, specifically ephemeral media, calling for a better disciplinary understanding and instruction of archiving ephemeral media. Shifts toward online broadcasting, such as livestreaming on Twitch, and ephemeral Social Networking Site (SNS) affordances such as Instagram Stories and twenty-four-hour Snapchats, are changing the way that media scholars interact with and store data. Rather than searching for data in the archives and making do with what was preserved, new media scholars are practicing their own archival methods, using primary and secondary sources such as the Wayback Machine, programs such as the *Computer Chronicles* and *Net Café*, and screen-recording livestreams as documentation.⁴⁴⁶ However, methodological issues researching and documenting ephemeral texts are not new; these difficulties can be traced back to archiving broadcast television, videogames, and other

⁴⁴⁶ Megan Sapnar Ankerson, *Dot-Com Design: The Rise of a Usable, Social, Commercial Web*, Critical Cultural Communication (New York: New York University Press, 2018), 20.

ephemeral or “live” media. As Paddy Scannell says, “It is a truism that histories are as good as the archives on which they depend.”⁴⁴⁷ In other words, without individual researchers archiving ephemeral texts in new media, this history would be lost.

Ultimately, I argue that scholars must work together in a collaborative ephemeral media database, theorized as a Digital Humanities (DH) project that allows for updates, additions, and technological changes. By relying on screenshots and screen recordings as an archival method, media scholars are placing value on the message over the medium, rather than recognizing that the both content and form are heavily intertwined in any medium.⁴⁴⁸ In order to understand our present moment of online archival methods in media studies, I first reflect on my own experience, then look to the work of scholars who studied broadcast television and video game history, examining archival methods and beliefs surrounding the context necessary to study a phenomenologically live text.

Downloading Twitch streams: Feasibility for researchers

Digital texts and materials posted online are ephemeral because they “...often disappear quickly, whether due to neglect, commercial appropriation, or active censorship.”⁴⁴⁹ On top of this, researchers often have no way of knowing exactly when a webpage or digital material disappeared, as they only know the time between when they last visited a webpage and it was up and running and when they revisited that same webpage and it was not available or certain content had been removed.⁴⁵⁰ Thus, researchers take it upon themselves to archive digital

⁴⁴⁷ Paddy Scannell, “History, Media and Communication,” in *A Handbook of Media and Communication Research: Qualitative and Quantitative Methodologies*, ed. Klaus Bruhn Jensen (New York, NY: Routledge, 2002), 201.

⁴⁴⁸ Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, 1st MIT Press ed (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1994).

⁴⁴⁹ “The Ephemeral Web (IDEP) | UCLA Library,” accessed May 4, 2020, <https://idep.library.ucla.edu/ephemeral-web>.

⁴⁵⁰ Mike Ashenfelder, “The Average Lifespan of a Webpage,” webpage, *The Signal* (blog), November 8, 2011, [//blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2011/11/the-average-lifespan-of-a-webpage/](http://blogs.loc.gov/thesignal/2011/11/the-average-lifespan-of-a-webpage/).

materials and webpages through screen recordings and saving texts and images to the best of their abilities. Archiving ephemeral web resources, however, “tend[s] to require specialized software tools and approaches to collect, preserve, and understand them.”⁴⁵¹ In other words, many researchers do not have the technical knowledge nor infrastructure in place to collect, preserve, and analyze digital texts and materials.⁴⁵²

My experience analyzing livestreams on Twitch and ephemeral Stories and Instagram required me, as the researcher, to be extremely technologically savvy and also have a lot of time, storage space, and large internet bandwidth on my side. I am sharing my personal experience not as an autoethnographic analysis, but rather to point out that my experience is indicative of a particular problem in media studies. First and foremost, ethically, internet research can be difficult to pursue because “no official guidance or ‘answers’ regarding internet research ethics have been adopted at any national or international level.”⁴⁵³ While AoIR ethics discussions imply that the internet research I completed on publicly-available information does not cause harm to participants and therefore does not need approval by the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I applied for and received an IRB Exemption just in case, to ensure that myself and my university were operating and researching ethically and responsibly.⁴⁵⁴ After completing this, I found the research and archiving process difficult to navigate on my own which led me to consider the ephemeral web’s archival and methodological issues. As a graduate student researcher, I discovered that I lacked certain resources that would have made archiving ephemeral media texts more feasible. While I specified that I am a graduate student researcher, I do not believe that

⁴⁵¹ “The Ephemeral Web (IDEP) | UCLA Library.”

⁴⁵² “The Ephemeral Web (IDEP) | UCLA Library.”

⁴⁵³ Annette Markham and Elizabeth Buchanan, “Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0),” n.d., 2.

⁴⁵⁴ Markham and Buchanan, “Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0).”

these resources would have been readily available to me as a faculty member either. The lack of resources, knowledge, and infrastructure to archive ephemeral texts persists throughout academia, resulting in amateur archives and scholars working together to build their own informal archives.⁴⁵⁵

First, I'll begin recounting my experience preserving Twitch streams, integrated with an analysis and explanation of the institutional and technological practices that made preserving streams more difficult. In order to preserve the Twitch streams I analyzed, I had to find a way to download, screen record, or otherwise capture both the stream and synchronous chat before the streams I analyzed were deleted. As an example of the time and internet bandwidth this requires, screen recording a nineteen-hour Twitch stream would have taken over nineteen hours, as I would have had to leave my computer plugged in, playing the stream full-volume, and leave it in a quiet room without background noise for nineteen hours in order to screen record a video with sound. Working in a shared office space, this was not possible at school; living with a dog and two roommates on a busy street, this was not possible at home. Thus, I had to find another way to record the stream to ensure I did not lose my data and that I had the original source in my possession for possible publications and questions from other researchers. Preserving the streams for research purposes proved much more difficult than I had imagined.

In addition to technological issues, I researched the legality—or lack thereof—of recording the Twitch streams, looking first to Twitch's terms of service.⁴⁵⁶ Twitch owns the

⁴⁵⁵ Adrienne Shaw, "What's next?: The LGBTQ Video Game Archive," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 34, no. 1 (January 1, 2017): 88–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/15295036.2016.1266683>; Diane Leenheer Zimmerman, "Can Our Culture Be Saved - The Future of Digital Archiving," *Minnesota Law Review* 91 (2007 2006): 989; Charles Tepperman, "The Amateur Movie Database: Archives, Publics, Digital Platforms," *The Moving Image* 17, no. 2 (2017): 106–10.

⁴⁵⁶ "Twitch.Tv - Terms of Service," Twitch.tv, accessed April 23, 2020, <https://www.twitch.tv/p/legal/terms-of-service/#8-user-content>.

license to any UGC that is submitted, transmitted, displayed, performed, posted, or stored using Twitch Services.⁴⁵⁷ This includes,

...an unrestricted, worldwide, irrevocable, fully sub-licenseable, nonexclusive, and royalty-free right to (a) use, reproduce, modify, adapt, publish, translate, create derivative works from, distribute, perform and display such User Content (including without limitation for promoting and redistributing part or all of the Twitch Services (and derivative works thereof)) in any form, format, media or media channels now known or later developed or discovered; and (b) use the name, identity, likeness and voice (or other biographical information) that you submit in connection with such User Content.⁴⁵⁸

In other words, Twitch has full ownership and control over any and all content that appears on Twitch, including but not limited to the content on stream and in chat. Many streamers disagree with these tactics and believe they should hold some rights over their streams, as “something *more* is created through their interaction with systems that in turn make it also *theirs*.”⁴⁵⁹ By interacting with these videogames, for example, streamers are doing “transformative work,” which emphasizes the performative aspect of gaming as the “game provides a field on and through which individual play unfolds.”⁴⁶⁰ Still, Twitch has rights to all UGC that touches the platform, making Twitch unwilling to openly share that content, as they are able to monetize it instead.

⁴⁵⁷ “Twitch.Tv - Terms of Service.”

⁴⁵⁸ “Twitch.Tv - Terms of Service.”

⁴⁵⁹ Taylor, *Watch Me Play*, 238.

⁴⁶⁰ Taylor, 244.

To maintain control and ownership over their platform's content, Twitch does not allow the public to download streams off of their site. Thus, per AoIR's guidelines that state, "[w]hereas there may be allowances for the scholarly use of copyrighted materials without permission, such as the U.S. doctrine of fair use, this is not a guarantee of protection against copyright infringement," copying or downloading Twitch streams could be considered illegal.⁴⁶¹ To address this, in their Terms of Service Twitch states, "Twitch uses reasonable security measures in order to attempt to protect User Content against unauthorized copying and distribution. However, Twitch does not guarantee that any unauthorized copying, use or distribution of User Content by third parties will not take place."⁴⁶² In other words, Twitch attempts to thwart any third-party applications that allow users to copy User Content on Twitch, but they recognize that they are not one-hundred-percent successful, and thus add the caveat that they are not responsible for any copied, used, or distributed content. Understanding that copying or downloading the streams was not guaranteed protection by the fair use doctrine, I still searched for applications that would allow me to download Twitch streams alongside the synchronous chat. However, despite Twitch's caveat, I was unable to find such an application on my own. Only after having a friend who had been subscribed to Linkus7's channel reach out to Linkus7 did I discover and download an application that allowed me to download the streams and synchronous chat window together as .mp4s. Linkus7 told my friend that some people use this program to download Twitch streams, though it is technically not legal, and thus I am not naming the program in this thesis. Still, as this way the only way I had discovered I could download the streams, I jumped on it so that I would not lose my data. However, I soon discovered, discovering and downloading this program was only the first hurdle.

⁴⁶¹ Markham and Buchanan, "Recommendations from the AoIR Ethics Working Committee (Version 2.0)," 10.

⁴⁶² "Twitch.Tv - Terms of Service."

To download a video, one's internet connection must be secure, fast, and allow large or unlimited amounts of data. Internet bandwidth is most simply measured in Mbps (megabits per second); more bandwidth, or Mbps, allows for quicker downloads of larger volumes of data, such as Twitch streams.⁴⁶³ When I first tried downloading a six-hour stream on this application in the middle of the day, my partner and our roommate were both kicked off of Zoom meetings for work, and the video download ultimately failed, as our internet connection could not handle that much data at once. The downloads are quite large; a four-hour recording of a Twitch stream in 1280x720 quality resulted in a seven-point-six Gigabyte file.⁴⁶⁴ To put that in perspective, the Twitch streamer playing the games, livestreaming themselves, and recording the video in a four-hour stream would only use about six Gigabytes of data.⁴⁶⁵ For further reference, most laptops have four-to-eight Gigabytes of memory pre-installed, meaning that downloading one four-hour stream would use up almost all of the pre-installed memory.⁴⁶⁶ I was unable to use my own laptop to download the application because it is not available for Macs and my computer did not have enough memory to download and store the four Twitch streams I analyzed. Thus, in order to download the Twitch streams, I had to use the application on my partner's laptop, which had ample storage space, in the middle of the night when nobody else was using the internet, as that was the only time our Wi-Fi would support that large of a download. Even then, downloading a six-hour video took about one hour, and I had over twenty more hours of Twitch streams to download and save. After downloading my first Twitch stream, I was unable to transfer the files

⁴⁶³ "The Difference Between Download And Upload Internet Speeds," *Allconnect* (blog), July 19, 2019, <https://www.allconnect.com/blog/difference-between-download-upload-internet-speeds>.

⁴⁶⁴ "Twitch Leecher: Download Twitch.Tv Streams - GHacks Tech News," accessed May 4, 2020, <https://www.ghacks.net/2016/10/02/twitch-leecher-download-twitch-tv-streams/>.

⁴⁶⁵ "How Much Internet Data Does Streaming on Twitch Use - Not a Lot," *StreamFar* (blog), November 22, 2018, <https://streamfar.com/2018/11/22/how-much-internet-data-does-streaming-on-twitch-use-not-a-lot/>.

⁴⁶⁶ "Laptop Buying Guide: How To Buy A Laptop - Best Buy," accessed May 4, 2020, <https://www.bestbuy.com/site/buying-guides/laptop-buying-guide/pcmcat310900050007.c?id=pcmcat310900050007>.

to my own computer. The files were too large to send via email, too large to share via Google Drive or Dropbox, and too large for the flash drives I owned at the time. Luckily, I was able to save the streams on my partner's computer, allowing me to re-watch and analyze the streams and synchronous chats after they were removed from Twitch. Downloading and preserving data requires the researcher to have certain resources and infrastructure in place, including stable internet with a high bandwidth, a computer with enough memory to download and save large quantities of data, the time and labor to complete downloads, and the technological expertise and tools necessary to fully capture and save the data in a meaningful manner.

A product *and* a process: Archiving ephemeral texts from broadcasts to livestreams

Archives provide a window into the past, preserving cultural evidence for years to come. However, "... capturing and preserving temporal, event-based, ephemeral, and intangible cultural heritage such as performances, oral traditions, social practices, and festive events presents an ongoing archival challenge."⁴⁶⁷ Archives are mainly based on Western conceptions about objects that are deemed "authentic" or "reliable" as records, often devaluing or ignoring "nontextual mechanisms for recording decisions, actions, relationships, or memory."⁴⁶⁸ In many cases, ephemera demands multiple records, textual and nontextual, to better capture the experience of being there; this could include factual records, such as the time, date, and attendance records of an event, linguistic records, such as transcripts and journal or diary entries, and more creative records, such as photos, videos, artwork, and interviews attempting to capture the aura and essence of an ephemeral communicative event.⁴⁶⁹ In order to obtain and document

⁴⁶⁷ Tonia Sutherland, "From (Archival) Page to (Virtual) Stage: The Virtual Vaudeville Prototype," *The American Archivist* 79, no. 2 (September 2016): 393, <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081-79.2.392>.

⁴⁶⁸ Jeannette A. Bastian, "The Records of Memory, the Archives of Identity: Celebrations, Texts and Archival Sensibilities," *Archival Science* 13, no. 2–3 (June 2013): 125, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-012-9184-3>.

⁴⁶⁹ Sutherland, "From (Archival) Page to (Virtual) Stage," 394–95.

records of ephemeral experiences, scholars must either be present during a temporal event or rely on information, emotions, actions, and reflections from those who were present.

The challenges facing media scholars today are not unlike those that scholars faced using broadcast television as a primary source.⁴⁷⁰ Television acts as “both our window onto the past and as an artifact of past events...a kind of social history,” and thus became the focus of numerous archival projects around the world.⁴⁷¹ In order to preserve broadcast television as it was broadcast, including commercials and anything that occurred “live,” it had to be recorded live by an individual or institution with the technological skills and tools to do so. As the Library of Congress’s Moving Image Research Center notes, the biggest obstacle to acquiring early televisual recordings was a technological one—most early television was live, and thus not archived unless someone made a kinescope recording of the images on screen.⁴⁷² A kinescope is a camera pointed at a tv screen, allowing the capture of broadcast television, advertisements, and any technological difficulties that occur during the broadcast. Although the images were often distorted and fuzzy, “kines [kinescope recordings] preserve not only the production, but also a spontaneity only found in the live productions of early television.”⁴⁷³ The kinescope recordings that resulted reflected what the audience saw on television, capturing the phenomenological liveness of the broadcasts by preserving the “live” and extemporaneous nature of early broadcast television.

When preserving ephemeral media, scholars must consider what aspects of the media should be documented and preserved in order to represent the ephemeral media text itself. As

⁴⁷⁰ Donald G. Godfrey, “Broadcast Archives for Historical Research: Revisiting the Historical Method,” *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media* 46, no. 3 (September 2002): 493, https://doi.org/10.1207/s15506878jobem4603_10.

⁴⁷¹ Michele Hilmes, ed., *The Television History Book* (London: British Film Institute, 2003), vii.

⁴⁷² “Television (Motion Picture and Television Reading Room, Library of Congress),” accessed April 10, 2020, <https://www.loc.gov/rr/mopic/tvcoll.html>.

⁴⁷³ “Television (Motion Picture and Television Reading Room, Library of Congress).”

Walter Benjamin argued, “[i]n even the most perfect reproduction, *one* thing is lacking: the here and now of the work of art—its unique existence at the place at which it is to be found.”⁴⁷⁴ While the physical structure of the work, processes of production, owner, and impact on the original audience are lost through reproducing a work of art, technological reproducibility allows for literature, photographs, films, and more to be reproduced and disseminated, “substitut[ing] a mass existence for a unique existence.”⁴⁷⁵ Broadcast television, on the other hand, requires more research into the production process, not just the final product, in order “to authenticate and contextualize” the broadcast.⁴⁷⁶ This is because unlike print literature and film which are produced to be widely disseminated and shared without changing the authenticity of the work of art, television broadcasts, a precursor of online livestreams, are live and thus require the context and unique production of the “here and now.”⁴⁷⁷

In thinking of broadcast archives, most people think of the television program, or product, itself is the most salient material trace of broadcast television. However, in order to adequately represent the “here and now” of broadcast television, researchers must look at the process of broadcasting, not just the final product. This includes but is not limited to interactions with the broadcast such as articles and public reception, advertisements before, during, and after the broadcast, ownership of the content produced, network and television regulations, and more. Most archives have the product (a recording of the broadcast itself), but that does not always hold the historical and scholarly weight media theories demand without additional information

⁴⁷⁴ Walter Benjamin and Michael W. Jennings, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version],” *Grey Room*, no. 39 (2010): 13.

⁴⁷⁵ Benjamin and Jennings, 14.

⁴⁷⁶ Godfrey, “Broadcast Archives for Historical Research,” 500.

⁴⁷⁷ Benjamin and Jennings, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version],” 13.

on the social, technological, and institutional practices involved in creating and broadcasting that particular recording.

Similarly, preserving ephemeral media texts requires contextual and processional information to wholly represent a product at a specific moment in time.⁴⁷⁸ When studying ephemeral, online spaces, researchers should utilize more than just a static view of a platform through a screenshot or screen recording. Screenshots and screen recordings only show what a webpage or post looked like, not how one could interact with it, the affordances, or the webpages and experiences one undergoes before and after they are on that specific web page. Simply screenshotting a website is not a good means of preservation, because “on the web, connectivity matters as much as content.”⁴⁷⁹ Thus, in order to adequately represent the “here and now” of Twitch livestreams and Instagram Stories, researchers must look at the process of broadcasting, not just the final product.⁴⁸⁰

Digital Humanities: A path forward for ephemeral media research

Moving forward, media and rhetoric scholars should pay increased attention to evidence from ephemeral media texts like Twitch streams and Instagram stories. Both Twitch and Instagram offer scholars insight into the habitual actions of users continuously connecting with others in online spaces. Increased CMC communication through ephemeral media allows media, rhetoric, and other scholars the chance to “study and theorize about social interaction in a whole new domain.”⁴⁸¹ In order to complete these studies, researchers need access to preserved

⁴⁷⁸ Benjamin and Jennings, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version]”; Godfrey, “Broadcast Archives for Historical Research.”

⁴⁷⁹ Steven M. Schneider and Kirsten A. Foot, “The Web as an Object of Study,” *New Media & Society* 6, no. 1 (February 1, 2004): 117, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444804039912>.

⁴⁸⁰ Benjamin and Jennings, “The Work of Art in the Age of Its Technological Reproducibility [First Version],” 13.

⁴⁸¹ Bradford W. Hesse, Carol M. Werner, and Irwin Altman, “Temporal Aspects of Computer-Mediated Communication,” *Computers in Human Behavior* 4, no. 2 (January 1, 1988): 162, [https://doi.org/10.1016/0747-5632\(88\)90023-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/0747-5632(88)90023-4).

ephemeral material. Thus, I suggest that researchers work together in collaborative online databases of ephemeral media texts and other applicable information and resources, allowing for flexibility of information on ever-changing conditions and understandings of ephemeral texts and online spaces.

The Amateur Movie Database (AMDB) is an online database of amateur film information compiled by about nineteen individuals as of May, 2020.⁴⁸² The database began as a DH project which, unlike an article or book, is intended to change over time with additions, new technologies, and new approaches.⁴⁸³ Currently, the AMDB has searching, browsing, filtering, analyzing, and mapping capabilities built into their interface.⁴⁸⁴ AMDB functions through three interconnected databases which focus on films, people (filmmakers and others involved), and movie clubs.⁴⁸⁵ The AMDB includes information on extant and lost films, attempting to compile a database of all amateur films, even if the film itself is not accessible.⁴⁸⁶ By doing this, the AMDB enhances discoverability of certain films and archival holdings; since the website's launch in March 2017, they have been contacted by multiple archives that have copies of films that were not currently available on the database, adding to the number of available films and records of archival holdings.⁴⁸⁷ This type of DH project allows for collaboration between scholars, institutions, and the public to employ networked communities that help add, refine, and build the AMDB. Similar DH projects may be a beneficial route for preserving and archiving Twitch streams and other ephemeral media texts, as they compel collaboration from individuals and institutions around the world that would benefit from the preservation of this media.

⁴⁸² "About | AMDB," accessed May 12, 2020, <https://www.amateurcinema.org/index.php/about/>.

⁴⁸³ Tepperman, "The Amateur Movie Database," 109.

⁴⁸⁴ Tepperman, 108.

⁴⁸⁵ Tepperman, 108.

⁴⁸⁶ Tepperman, "The Amateur Movie Database."

⁴⁸⁷ Tepperman, 109.

In a systematic attempt to access and log archives devoted to advertising and marketing ephemera in his own DH project, Fred Beard found that while many researchers argue that not many marketing archives are available, this is partially untrue.⁴⁸⁸ Beard found almost two-hundred archives, stating that “[a]n increase in research on advertising history may...help explain the large number of collections and archives now available.”⁴⁸⁹ My hope is that online ephemera may soon find itself in a similar situation, as individual researchers compile and share resources, building our ephemeral media archives and collections into what may become a robust ephemerally mediated history. We have rich broadcast and video game histories, but they are dependent upon the material available. While people believe that the “internet is forever,” that is not the case, and internet archives must be made a priority in order to fully represent, preserve, understand, and research broadcast and ephemeral media trends on Twitch, Instagram Stories, Facebook Live, Snapchat, and more. With this, I urge media scholars to begin and contribute to DH projects more frequently, building accessible databases for researchers and the public to utilize. In a world so reliant on ubiquitous technology, scholars should work on adapting and preserving the ephemeral media texts they are able to make records of, ultimately coming together to create a collaborative online database of ephemeral media texts from a variety of platforms.

By framing ephemeral media texts as a product and a process, this thesis legitimizes the use of both primary and secondary sources in order to fully document an ephemeral online experience. Our increasingly technological and information-focused world “presents unprecedented possibilities and problems for the production, storage, and use of knowledge,”

⁴⁸⁸ Fred Beard, “Archiving the Archives: The World’s Collections of Historical Advertisements and Marketing Ephemera,” *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 10, no. 1 (January 1, 2018): 86–106, <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-08-2017-0044>.

⁴⁸⁹ Beard, 104.

leading to possible omissions, erasures, technical dropouts, and simplifications of archival records and knowledge.⁴⁹⁰ Although I was unable to find records of every informative aspect in my own research, I lay out the desired information to research both Twitch and Instagram as a guide for future research on either platform. On Twitch, this includes but is not limited to interactions with the stream itself such as chat windows and viewer counts, advertisements before, during, and after the stream—including pop-up ads in online spaces, ads inserted throughout the stream by Twitch, and advertisements onstream by the users themselves—production and ownership of the content, platform regulations, Mods, and more. On Instagram, researchers must consider interactions between users in likes, comments, and direct messages, advertisements before, during, and after the Stories—including pop-up ads in online spaces, ads inserted between Stories by Instagram, and advertisements in Stories by the users themselves—production and ownership of the content, platform regulations, content moderation, and more. In preserving ephemeral media texts, researchers “recognize that there is no stable... text for which we might [analyze] content without leaving out important information,” affirming that our objects of study are both products and processes.⁴⁹¹

Conclusion

Ephemera is important cultural material and has to be archived on an ad-hoc basis. This overview of similarities between and difficulties of archiving different ephemeral media texts, such as television broadcasts and Twitch streams, acts as a discussion to push future researchers to deeply consider what texts they choose to preserve and which facets of those texts they are actually preserving through their methods. This thesis focused on the importance of online,

⁴⁹⁰ Rebecca Comay, Neil Cummings, and Ben Nicholson, *Lost in the Archives*, ed. Rebecca Comay, *Lost in the Archives* (Next Memory City, s.l.: Alphabet City, 2002), 2, <https://e-artexte.ca/id/eprint/19437/>.

⁴⁹¹ Shaw, “What’s next?,” 90.

ephemeral media connecting geographically dispersed individuals through an enclaved public screen or a virtual third place. In doing this research, I discovered the difficulties of preserving these ephemeral texts as a single researcher. Due to the lack of an institution working to archive these ephemeral texts, as the Library of Congress did for broadcast television, I will continue to look to more established researchers, such as Adrienne Shaw in video game studies, constructing and adding to their own publicly available archives.⁴⁹² Amateur archives collected and preserved by individual scholars and others interested in the topics at hand, may point toward a future of collective archiving processes of ephemeral media texts. Adrienne Shaw's LGBTQ video game archive consists of information from over twenty individuals and two sponsors, while also taking suggestions of games and topics from countless others who comment on the site.⁴⁹³ Similar DH projects could take on preserving ephemera from specific platforms, individuals, or other parameters set by individual researchers.

Moving forward, media and rhetoric scholars should pay increased attention to ephemeral media texts like Twitch and Instagram. These platforms offer scholars insight into the habitual actions of users continuously connecting with others in online spaces. Instagram, according to Facebook for Business, "...captures the immediacy of the moment, ignites creative expression and provides a connection to a likeminded community."⁴⁹⁴ The ability to instantly connect with others based on interests and identities, rather than just geographic proximity, enables individuals to grow their social circles, increasing computer-mediated communication. Increased CMC communication through enclaved public screens and virtual third places allows media and

⁴⁹² Adrienne Shaw, "LGBTQ Video Game Archive," LGBTQ Video Game Archive, accessed May 4, 2020, <https://lgbtqgamearchive.com/>.

⁴⁹³ "Who 'We' Are," *LGBTQ Video Game Archive* (blog), May 9, 2016, <https://lgbtqgamearchive.com/who-we-are/>.

⁴⁹⁴ "Growing Up in a Visual World," Facebook IQ, April 20, 2015, <https://www.facebook.com/business/news/insights/growing-up-in-a-visual-world>.

rhetoric scholars the chance to “study and theorize about social interaction in a whole new domain.”⁴⁹⁵ To best research and collect information from this domain, scholars must work together to archive and preserve ephemeral media texts, ensuring that connections in online spaces, no matter how political or playful, are given adequate value and attention in academia.

⁴⁹⁵ Hesse, Werner, and Altman, “Temporal Aspects of Computer-Mediated Communication,” 162.

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