

Drew University
College of Liberal Arts

Social Distancing: Dividing Life into a
Fractured Experience of the Physical and Digital Space
to Transform the Human from a User to a Raw Material

A Thesis in Business

by

Brianna L. Scotti

Submitted in Partial fulfillment
of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Bachelor in Arts
With Specialized Honors in Business

May 2021

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Abstract

The 2020 COVID-19 Pandemic led to the global enforcement of mass government-imposed shelter-in-place orders to help slow the spread of the air-borne virus. Physical distancing regulations and business closures have led to the development and mass integration of connective technologies into the physical sphere. Virtual connective devices are utilized as direct mediators of the fractured experience redefined by the physical distancing response of COVID-19. The government-imposed shelter-in-place orders have separated one's reality into two distinct spheres: the physical and the virtual. This fractured experience was created as the physical became coded as "dangerous" for the possibility of contamination through physical contact between persons. The digital space, present within the screen of connective technologies, has been coded as "safe" and used by individuals to mediate the limitations caused by COVID-19. Technologies present a sphere of refuge for the user to continue working from home and interacting socially without the fear of physical contact. The digital space's active role in accommodating the human's social needs has suppressed the recognition of the artificial intelligence hidden within the new machine. Increased usage of connective technologies as a mediator of physical limitation has concealed the correlated increase in the collection of an individual's data. As data has surpassed oil as the world's number one raw material, the government-imposed shelter-in-place orders and increased usage of connective technologies has benefited the large tech firms as they are working towards the goal to virtually connect the world. This essay will analyze how the fractured experience, and increased usage of connective technologies, both redefined by the COVID-19 pandemic, have transitioned the human from a user of these devices to the raw material being refined for data processing for the benefit of big tech companies.

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The consequences 2020 has left on the world will forever affect the future of the human experience. With the onslaught of the COVID-19 global pandemic the world was forced into government sanctioned lockdowns which transformed a world with technology into a world functioning within technology. The digital space provided an experience of a virtual community prevalent across the world. The digital space was coded as “safe” as “technology is seductive when it offers to meet our human vulnerabilities” (Turkle, 2017: 1). These vulnerabilities, associated with over usage, extensively studied by the social sciences have exponentially grown as safety measures were taken to decrease physical interaction throughout 2020. The physical human experience became dangerous due to the volatility and spreadability of the air-born COVID-19 virus, social distancing was advocated for as a way to decrease the spread of the deadly virus.

The COVID-19 virus caused a fractured experience as government-imposed shelter-in-place orders were enforced for the safety of global civilians. With people being advised to stay in their homes at all costs, the integration of the digital space has expanded exponentially. This year has caused us to remake ourselves and our relationships with each other through the “new form of intimacy” these connective technologies provide (Turkle, 2017: 1). The fractured experience is the separation of one’s reality between the digital space and the physical sphere. The digital space has replaced the physical as quarantine has caused the human’s separation from the physical sphere for their safety. This separation is eased by the influx and increased usage of connective technologies. For “normal life” to continue on video conferencing platforms, social media sites, and mobile devices were utilized by the public to replace the physical connections under safety regulations. The power of these connective technologies is found in their ability to “transform how we are educated, fed, transported,

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insured, medicated, and governed” (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:4). As people have become wary of physical touch and human to human interaction, the screen has become society’s saving grace.

The COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 virus first emerged in Wuhan, China in December of 2019. The World Health Organization began to investigate the cluster of pneumonia-like cases in Wuhan, Hubei province, of the People’s Republic of China to later determine that the outbreak is caused by a novel coronavirus (WHO, 2021). On the 11th of January 2020, the Chinese media reported the first death caused by the coronavirus and within the following weeks foreign countries of Japan, Taiwan, and the United States released confirmation of COVID cases within their country borders. On the final days of January 2020, the Director-General, Tedros Adhanom, declared the novel coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of international concern, Health agencies like the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the US, began recommending using facial coverings, social distancing of 2 meters (6 feet), and shelter-in-place measures to contain and reduce the impact of the virus.

Social distancing, or physical distancing, was implemented as a non-pharmaceutical measure to prevent the spread of the contagious disease. The physical distancing orders required a minimum of 2 meter or 6 feet between people and reduced the number of people allowed in group settings to limit close contact with others. The implementation of business closures caused mass lay-offs and an increase of unemployment globally. Those still with jobs were forced to work from home with the use of connective technologies.

From this emerged a redefined digital space for humans to connect with. Working from home is advocated for by governments, media outlets, and business. The new meaning of the digital space is “safe” and this meaning encapsulates the concept of working from home. The

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home symbolizes a retreat away from the dangers of covid. Mobile devices allowed for students to continue their studies as well as the virtual connection of employees with their employers to carry out daily job functions. Connective technologies used during the work/study from home orders are the virtual devices of email, and video conferencing to allow for work related conversation can be carried out.

Connective Technologies

Throughout this essay I will address the many technological devices present in the reality of upper-middle class connected professionals, people working or studying online to be considered connective technologies. Connective technologies are devices or applications that have been augmented with the application of the new machine of Artificial Intelligence also commonly known as AI. AI is an area of computer science that focuses on machine learning (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:48). Machine learning is the constant collection and refining of data that pushes the device and its algorithms to advance in ways to uphold and create more progress and profit. Connective technologies are all devices that are linked to the Internet of Things (IoT), the network of physical objects embedded with sensors, software, and other technologies to enable all devices to connect and exchange data over their access to the Internet. Each system of intelligence embedded into commonly used devices can do vastly different things, but all share a “similar basic anatomy” with common elements such as “user interfaces, application logic, process flows, databases, and infrastructure” (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:50-51).

Connective technologies range from an individual’s smartphone to their credit card or social media profile. These devices utilize the system of intelligence to comprehend the movements, habits, needs, desires, and thoughts of the user. The label of connective technologies is all encompassing to put focus on the growing number of devices within the hands of global

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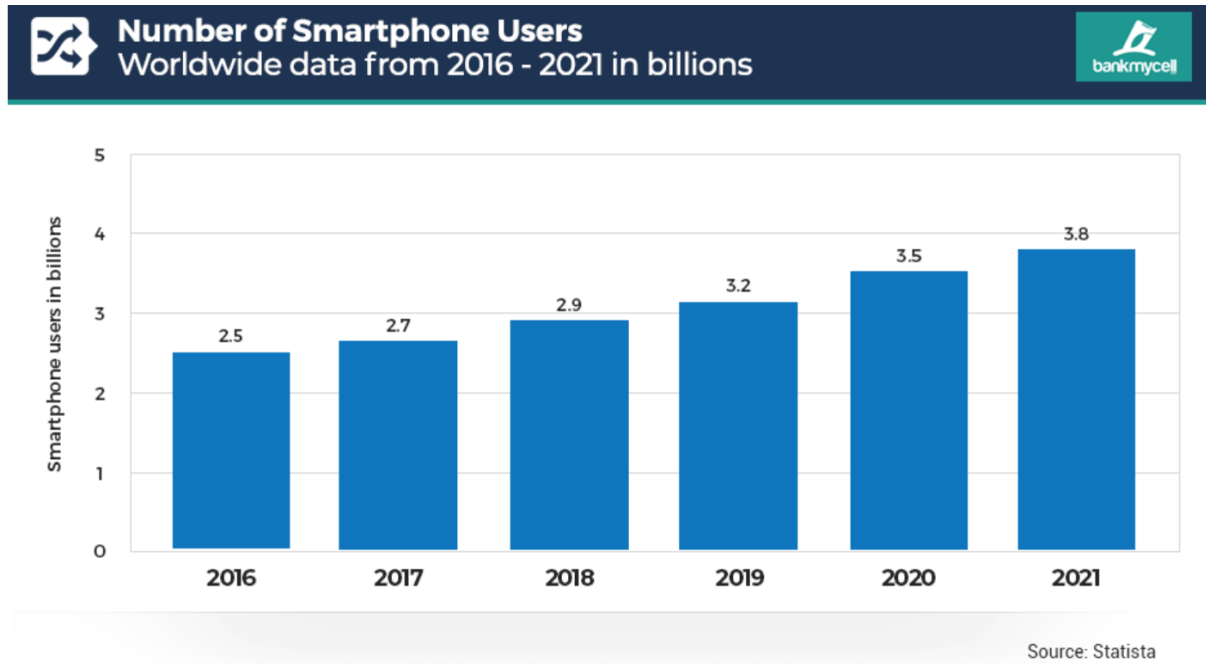
citizens. A 2019 study shows there are now more gadgets in the world than humans. (Brown, 2019). In 2014, mobile phones surpassed the total human population and in 2017 IoT, Internet of Things, surpassed the human population. The growth of mobile devices have been on the rise as we have progressed further into the digital age. The digital age has created the digital space to be prevalent in developing countries and slowly spreading across the world.

Currently, the global population is 7.8 billion with the current number of smartphone users in the world today at 3.8 billion, with 48.41% of the world's population owning a smartphone (Turner, 2021). Smartphones allow its users to be connected through the calling and texting functions of a mobile phone, but extends their connectivity further by providing access to the internet. The current number of total mobile phone users is 4.88 billion, which makes 62.17% of people in the world a cell phone owner (Turner, 2021). This statistic included smartphones as well as feature phones which are the more basic mobile phone without apps and complex OS systems, more prominent in developing countries.

The prominence of the digital age across the world has allowed for an extension of communication and connection to encompass the globe. The introduction of a technological device causes the human experience of physical reality to be fractured. The digital space becomes an interwoven addition to the user's experience of the physical sphere. The virtual platform holds over 10.36 billion mobile connections worldwide, surpassing the current world population of 7.84 billion as implied by UN digital analyst estimates. There are 2.52 billion more mobile connections than people worldwide and growing (Turner, 2021). The exponential growth of mobile phones within the past 5 years have led to an increase in data collection. Global citizens with smartphones share more data than those with feature phones due to the complex capabilities and internet connection of the smartphone. Within the population of the top 10

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developed countries, 73.47% of people possess a smartphone versus 74.61% of the citizens within the top 10 developing countries are without a smartphone (Turner, 2021).



(Turner, 2021)

The fractured experience applies predominantly to countries with the privilege of access to smart mobile devices with internet access. The industrialized nations and cities desired business functions to be carried on with the use of connective technologies to link people to carry out daily physical functions over the virtual interface. The implementation of these connective devices created a platform to replace in person relations as the COVID-19 pandemic enforced physical distancing. Even with these resources, “developed” countries with ample access to internet connected devices mediating physical interaction with virtual communication still suffered drastically from high rates of Covid-19 infections.

Technologically advanced nations should have had lower case numbers due to work transitioned to be full remote and all communication was conducted virtually following the

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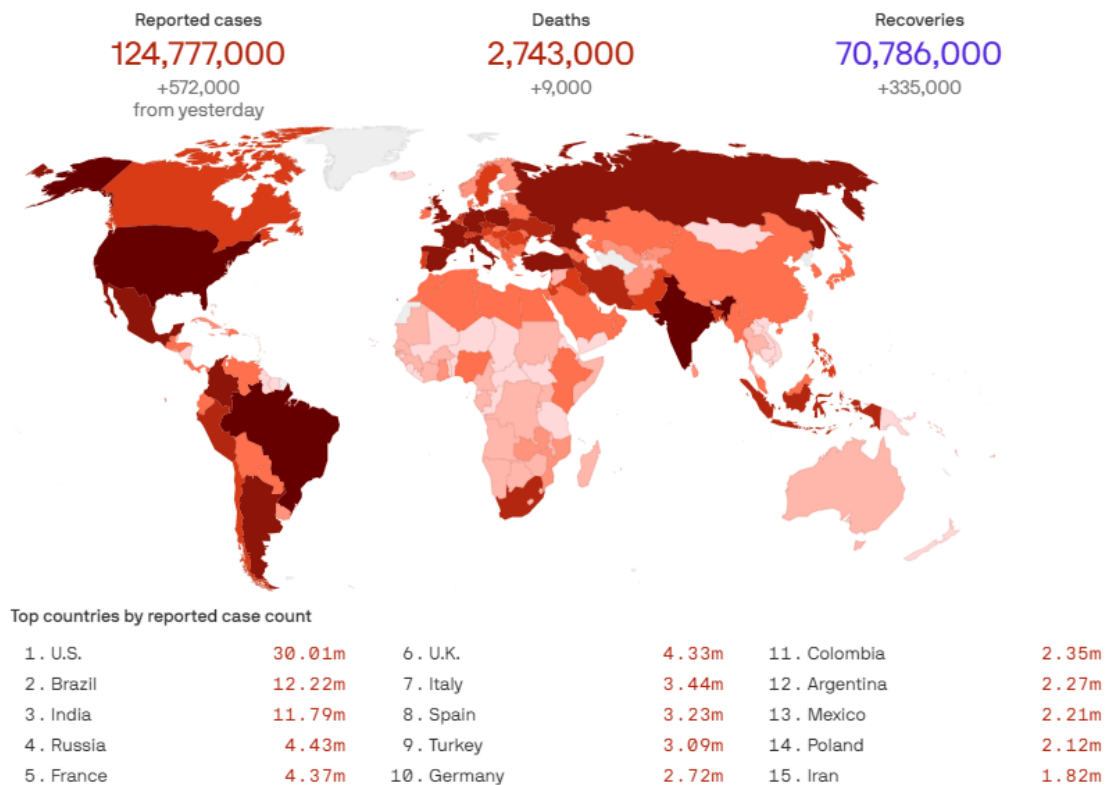
government imposed guidelines, yet this is not true. The rise in COVID-19 case numbers within technologically advanced nations can be associated with the social influences that influenced large social gatherings throughout the pandemic. Focusing on the United States, many individuals protested against the mask mandates, social distancing enforcements, and societal hierarchies as 2020 came with a slew of social issues at the forefront of the American citizens' minds. Mask hesitancy and large societal protests were deemed to be the cause of the rise in case numbers. The increased reliance on technological devices for socialization led to the rapid spread of information. From societal avocation posts to fake news, the digital space became the hub to tap into the global conversation while the individual was physically isolated. These social issues were echoed throughout countries across the world as well and can be assumed to have correlation with the increased number of cases of other technologically advanced nations.

It is estimated that 14.28% of the current world population, 1.1 billion people, do not have continual access to electricity (Turner, 2021). Within these countries the digital space does not exist. The assumption that the digital space provided the proper connective technologies for people to continue on with their daily functions only pertains to those with the immediate and continual access to connective technologies. In more agricultural countries, work is carried on as usual as there is not a digital space in place to provide the citizen's the ability to work from home. The graph shows that within agricultural based countries the COVID-19 pandemic left less of an impact (as represented by the light pink colors). Without the implementation of social distancing it should be assumed that 'developing' nations would have felt the effects of high infection rates, yet the data does not imply this to be true.

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Reported cases of COVID-19

As of March 24, 2021



Data: [The Center for Systems Science and Engineering at Johns Hopkins](#); Map: [Axios Visuals](#)

“Reported Cases of COVID-19.” *Axios*, [Axios](#) 7 Apr. 2021.

The Pre-existing Cyborg

Within this essay I will be addressing the effects these connective technologies have on the persons with access to them. The connective technologies that are continually addressed throughout this essay are ones that have replaced the physical connections. Global users with the possession of connective technologies their reality split. The introduction of the device fractures the user’s reality as connective technologies are always within arms reach. The user has become a cyborg. Donna Haraway, in her "A Cyborg Manifesto," addressed the cyborg as a rejection of rigid boundaries separating "human" from "animal" and "human" from "machine" (Haraway,

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1991, 290). The year of 2020 has allowed, for those with access to connective technologies, a peek into an experience of living full-time on the net. This has allowed them to be freed in some ways and impaired in others. The well developed feeling of “I am naked without it” shows how much connected people depend on their new technologies (Turkle, 2017: 152). We are all cyborgs as we have been for a while now (Haraway, 1991: 292).

As the digital era has been present since the introduction of personal computers and mobile devices, this year pushed the human’s cyborg identity even further as we have become fully remote. The human is functioning by juggling daily interactions within the digital space. As we have found companionship in these connected technologies rather than in humans, this affiliation is not about the machines’ capabilities, but our vulnerabilities as we fear physical touch and we are ordered to social distance (Turkle, 2017:20). Work life resumes in a way where we are safe and yet still productive. Connective technologies have opened the door to experience life as it once was.

The 21st century has quickly integrated technologies into the hands of more than half of all living citizens. The new machines are so clean and light they become easily forgettable and have transgressed boundaries as if they are an extension of the human (Haraway, 1991: 294-295). These connective technologies were fathomed to be the tool of the future and now almost everything that connects a human to the outside world is a technology for the exception of a physical door and a human's senses, but even one’s senses can be persuaded by virtual reality. Connective technologies created a physical presence no more substantial than images on a computer screen (Turkle, 2017:83). The connective technologies have allowed for the fundamental “eradication of 'public life' for everyone” (Haraway, 1991: 306). This essay will break down the psychological, sociological, and anthropological effects caused by the integration

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of connective technologies to examine the present moment and discuss how the human has been transformed by living within a fractured experience.

PART II

The Fractured Experience

The fractured experience is the separation of one's reality into a double sphere. This divided reality is split between the physical and the digital space. The split is not a dichotomy rather the virtual is interwoven with the physical. The digital space is represented in the usage of electronic smart devices to connect an individual to other people, places, and things outside one's physical surroundings (Kellerman, 2014: 539). As a user participates within both spheres there is a simultaneous split of personalities used to define the individual user over the fractured experience. The devices' enhanced automation is "so deeply woven into the fabric of social life" contemporary society does not notice the capabilities of the machine (Eubanks 2018:5). Physical distancing has led to the expanded fractured experience that has influenced the human's behavior as the user is functioning over these two spaces in a simultaneous human presence. The advancements in technology have created the single physical sphere obsolete. The traditional single physical presence is less desirable as relationships shared over both zones are deemed more complex and thus more desirable (Kellerman, 2014: 539).

The physical space is represented by the individual's being and one's physical surroundings. This reality is observed with the five senses of an able bodied human. This experience is deemed physical due to its lack of a screen as a screen is not needed to interact physically with other physical people, places, and things. Interactions on the physical level create relationships that are grounded, genuine, and if shared over the digital space last longer than a

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relationship shared over a single sphere. The physical sphere is one's physical reality. The physical reality has been coded as "dangerous" as physical distancing precautions were taken. Covid-19 involved the closure of the physical world by denying physical touch and limiting one's ability to leave their home. This caused the utilization and expansion of the digital space.

The digital space has been redefined to allow for the continuation of "normal daily functions" to virtually occur. The digital space is experienced through the screened in interface. The digital space is represented through the usage of electronic smart devices to connect an individual to other people, places, and things outside one's physical surroundings (Kellerman, 2014: 539). All interactions are conducted over the internet or within the frame of a device. These devices, connective technologies, are a virtual platform provided to a human to interact with. The privilege of using such devices as virtual video conferencing, social media platforms, and mobile phones, are not widespread throughout the globe. The digital space only exists within the physical realities that have continual access to the internet. The digital space's presence in physical life grew as it held the capacity to continue work related functions and communications. This expanding reality allows for the exploration of identity within the virtual second life. Digital life has allowed us to find a "place for hope" that has enhanced the experience of the lockdown (Turkle, 2017:153).

The fractured experience causing these double lives to occur simultaneously has greatly affected the human user. It is human nature to want to belong to a larger group so to form meaningful relationships. Belongingness, as defined by Abraham Maslow in the Hierarchy of Needs, is to be represented by family, friends, affection, and relationships (Oved, 2017:537). However, the COVID-19 pandemic sent the world's citizens into solidarity for their protection. The digital space is interwoven with solidarity. Physically you can be alone, but virtually you are

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connected with the World Wide Web. The reflection of solitude is disrupted and from this thought may connective technologies be viewed as a distraction for the expansion of the human mind, emotions, and being. Yet, the World Wide Web allows for connection to continuously relevant information to be circulated. The dichotomy of distraction from knowledge or tool for knowledge is dependent on the user's motivations and consciousness surrounding their time participating with the digital space.

The virtual world is used for immediate gratification by having an interactive object or cell phone consistently available and responsive and thus creating a secure bond. In the physical world interacting with people that are not always available and responsive causes an insecure attachment to develop. Inconsistently responsive figures affect one's self-compassion levels due to acquired feelings of isolation and unworthiness caused by experiences of anger, isolation, and hopelessness. Genuine relationships and a sense of security are found to relate to self-compassionate individuals who have formed a relationship with trust and communication (Moreira, Fonseca, & Canavarro, 2017:1318). Functioning in two spaces has created a simultaneous human presence rather than the traditional single physical presence. Analysis of psychological, sociological, and anthropological findings will be used to explain the effects the fractured experience has on human relationships and explore as to why it is deemed that relationships shared over both zones are deemed more complex and thus more desirable (Kellerman, 2014:539).

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Social Science Approaches to Understanding the Effects Connective Technologies and the Double Sphere have on the User

The mass integration and growing usage of connective technologies best benefit society when used as a tool rather than as a device used for distraction. Connective technologies were created as a tool to extend the human consciousness further. With a mobile device in hand the user is connected to all the knowledge stored within the World Wide Web. With access to the internet any question can be answered at the click of a button, but this search is documented and stored as data collection is the price the user pays. As many of these services, Google, Facebook, etc, are free to the user the profit is made as the user becomes the good being consumed. The data generated by the user is the product that these services consume to generate profit. The mesmerizing interface of the device is what keeps the user intrigued so as to generate immense amounts of data for the services benefit.

The psychology of the users is manipulated against them as data collected creates the interface that they desire through their likes, comments, and interactions. Virginia Eubanks states, “many of the devices that collect our information and monitor our actions are inscrutable, invisible pieces of code” (Eubanks 2018:5). Machine learning has allowed the device to provide precise, calculated dopamine hits to the user as a form of manipulation. As the device is interacted with more and more by the user, machine learning is collecting and defining the user’s actions. The user has become the lab rat of the device’s machine learning. By exploiting the vulnerabilities in the human’s psyche the device has the capabilities of producing calculated notifications that trigger the user to pick up the device. One the user is interacting with the device machine learning has led to the device learning how to not trigger the user to put the device down.

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The discrepancies in the user's habits increase the machine's knowledge. Through understanding "human nature" the device calculates how to properly persuade and elicit a response from the user. The human psyche has been manipulated to desire the thrill of playing the slot machine of notifications on the device's screen (The Social Dilemma, 2020). Through interacting or socializing with these connective technologies one does find a sense of companionship with their device. The device is always able to interact with the user and creates a secure bond of attachment. As the digital space is created based upon the user's interactions, the digital space creates a platform or community that is more accepting to the user. The user is able to create their own personality within the digital space that they possibly could not have represented in the physical sphere. This new found freedom has morphed the users personally to express something that they may have kept hidden in the physical sphere. Within the digital space the user may find the perfect community that accepts them for who they are. As virtual communities become more and more prevalent we have to examine how this will shape our culture and the future of the human experience.

The virtual experience has shifted the human's interactions with connective technologies from user to the raw material as the user's data is being collected and refined. The user's interactions within this desirable digital space, which is created around all that they want and need, sucks them dry of their desires to keep creating an interface that they enjoy to interact with. A dichotomy that can be seen in the users consumption of media throughout one day is the device as a tool versus a distractor. A tool to answer emails and do work but a distractor to scroll through when feelings of loneliness or boredom seep in. This shift is in constant flux. As quickly as a user can jump from one app to another is comparative to how quickly the connective technology turns from a tool to a distractor. This is not a dichotomy of good versus bad, but

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rather is highlighted so for users to understand the significance of their interactions with the device.

By viewing and truly using the connective technologies present in modern life as a tool the user will be free of the present and oncoming effects. The device's algorithm can hold an entrancing power of stimulation over the user for the transition of the user to raw material to occur. The device has the ability to use the user through the ever present collection and refining of data. Effects such as feelings of self-contempt, isolation, and a deep desire to belong are mediated through the practice of mindfulness which brings about understanding of one's life in terms of the human collective. These effects and their mediators will be dissected through the breakdown of how connective technologies and the fractured experience are affecting the user's psychological view of themselves and their surroundings, their social interactions over both spheres, and the mass cultural shift in human behavior.

Psychological Approach

The mass integration and growing usage of connective technologies, with the capability to connect users within the digital space has caused an increase in self-esteem boosters and a decrease in the user's self-compassion. Self-esteem is the less realistic understanding of one's self often correlated with narcissism (Hall, Row, Wuensch, & Godley, 2013:311-323).

Individuals with high self-esteem may become angry, aggressive, jealous, and defensive when their self-esteem is threatened by others. Today the biggest threat to an individual's self-esteem is that of connective technologies, such as video conferencing platforms, social media sites, and mobile phones. This section particularly focuses on the connective technology of social media.

Social media is a free service provided to the user at the price of signing the sites terms and conditions. As quickly as a user checks this box they allow for the extensive collection of

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their data. Data collection within social media sites allows for the interface of the application to be shaped by the user's likes, clicks, and views. The psychology of the user is manipulated to keep the user entranced with the device. The manipulation is through causing the user to crave self-esteem boosters and feel the negatively correlated emotions caused by narcissism. Social media is well known for its ties to narcissism. This is seen through the creation and prevalence of the selfie. Social media has created a hierarchy by including the endless scroll, likes, comments, and other tactics to keep the user's interacting with the device and how their virtual presence is being perceived by others.

The key difference between self-esteem and self-compassion is an individual's ability to understand their life's imperfections in terms of common humanity. Self-compassion involves being mindful of one's self when confronting life's difficulties or personal inadequacies. Self-compassionate individuals have an understanding of negative emotions without suppressing or fixating on them which arises from the individual's insight into the human connection (Neff & Beretvas, 2013:78-98). Understanding one's role shared within the surrounding common humanity allows for negative emotions to be understood through a sense of understanding the world around the user. By understanding the human connection, a compassionate individual does not overly judge themselves or those around them. Common humanity allows individuals to understand the events occurring in their private life in the context of the events unfolding in the world as a whole. Self-compassion, used as a form of meditation, raised social connectedness and enhanced the neural systems thought to be important in enhancing feelings of empathy and compassion (Cho et al., 2018:141-144). A sense of common humanity has a key importance as our world becomes more and more interconnected within this digital space. Empathy for oneself and others is needed as this world strives to unite.

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To understand the difference between self-compassion and self-esteem we can analyze Neff's Self-Compassion Scale. Neff (2009) created a scale to measure all the factors that attribute to an individual's level of self-compassion. Neff's Self-Compassion Scale is made up of six subscales of which three are positive: self-kindness; common humanity; and mindfulness, and three negative: self-judgment; isolation; and over-identification (Neff, 2009:211–214). Correlated with the three negative subscales of Neff's scale is an overreliance on connective technologies especially social media. The overreliance relates to the user being addicted to immediate gratification and outside validation.

The misinterpretation of self-esteem for self-compassion is caused by the many technological advancements reshaping the world (Penne, 2017:535). The user gains much pleasure from interacting with connective technologies. Self-esteem is needed throughout the human experience for one to gain confidence, but the extent in which users are consuming self-esteem busters is becoming an addiction to the connective technology. The addiction to the virtual world is caused by the immediate gratification the individual receives with a consistently interactive cell phone is available and responsive (Moreira et al., 2017:1319). Individuals find satisfaction from self-esteem boosters such as likes, comments, and constant interactions with people through the use of connective technologies. This addiction to the digital space causes the desire to be in contact with others constantly.

The current users of these connective technologies judge people on what they post before any physical interaction with said individual. These connected platforms allow for new possibilities to experiment with identity, particularly in adolescence (Turkle, 2017: 152). There is a phenomena that users think if someone's social media account appears to be happy and full of

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life they genuinely are. As we are striving for virtual unity there is a darkside of this virtual connection.

The increased usage of self-compassion as a mediator will aid the decrease of one's need for approval from others on social media, and the intrinsic lack of self-validation (Mehr & Adams, 2016:132-145). The individual's insight into the human connection is what separates self-esteem from self-compassion (Neff & Beretvas, 2013:78-98). The acceptance of mistakes and flaws is the main part of self-compassion. Society's heavy reliance on connective technologies is a result of the desire for high self-esteem which has caused lower levels of self-compassion and an obsession with one's self. The double sphere has caused a misunderstanding of the importance of physical relationships. The growing use of connective technologies appears to mediate the lack of physical interaction in the wake of the pandemic, but is pushing the human psyche into a narcissistic madness. The true meditation that is desired is for the user to be mindful of their time spent on their connective technologies as well as the judgment they are making about themselves and those they are virtually connected with.

Sociological Approach

The relationships shared over both the physical and digital space are deemed more complex and thus more desirable. As the physical sphere was limited due to the COVID-19 restrictions, socialization was able to occur via connective technologies. Socialization is the lifelong process of social interaction through which individuals acquire a self-identity and the physical, mental, and social skills needed for survival in society (Kendall, 2020:65). As the world has entered into a year of isolation and lockdowns as enforced by the government for the safety of the world's citizens, the digital space became the safest way for people to interact

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socially. Socialization contributes to an individual's awareness of the collective human experience and to our ability to communicate through thinking, talking, and acting. Today one's understanding of the common humanity must be represented over both the digital and the physical as we have expanded the ways of interacting. As an essential part of maintaining and supporting our societies, socialization involves the passing on of culture as well as the development and upholding of values and norms.

Each human experience differs from one another due to the unique factors that play a role in the lives of all individuals. These factors are called the four agents of socialization -family, peer group, institutions, and mass media- all shape the experiences individuals face on a day to day basis. Family is the foundation for an individual's sociological understanding of the world due to a child's first interactions being completely dependent on a guardian or parent figure (Nikken, 2019:531-546). In modern society, parent to child interaction has been diminished due to the introduction of modern day technologies. A Dutch study revealed that parents saw media devices as a distractor providing the parent relief in child rearing, a babysitter when the parent is unavailable, and a tool to modify children's behavior (Nikken, 2019:531-546). This trend has exponentially increased since the 1950's with the introduction of televisions in the homes. In this instance the parent is using the device as a tool to distract the child. The device continually used as a distraction for the child will greatly affect and influence how the child will interact with others for the rest of their life.

From birth modern day children have a screen in front of or constantly around them. This constant interaction with screened technologies has created a strong attachment which is carried on throughout a modern child's life. Piaget's belief of the four stages of cognitive development,

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that occur from birth to adolescence, a child's activities are governed by their perception of the world around them. From birth to age two, the Sensorimotor Stage, a child understands the world through sensory contact and small actions due to their inability to conduct deep thoughts and conversation (Kendall, 2020:93). Modern toys provided to children include the television and iPads as well as traditional toys are only understood in shapes, color, and sounds. Screens are used to relieve the parent from their duties for a short period of time or to null the baby to sleep. The Preoperational Stage, ages 2-7, children begin to construct a vocabulary which relates to images in their heads, but have limited understanding of logic. Children slowly begin to understand what they are interacting with and start to develop preferences. Kid channels are deemed "safe" for the material, character dialogue, and actions presented in each episode or movie. The Concrete Operational Stage, ages 7 -11, thinking of things as tangible or in the form of actual events where conclusions begin to be drawn. Topics such as death, marriage, and other prevalent topics found in Disney movies press children to question the world around them. In the Formal Operational Stage, ages 12- adolescence, abstract thought begins to be conducted along with an understanding of places, things, and events never seen like the future. Children are able to learn and understand the world around them through continual interaction with fairytales and YouTube videos. At this age children have gained access to their own private connective technology. With the limitation of parental restrictions, if implemented, children are now free to explore the internet in its entirety.

Media, as an agent of socialization, allows people from all over the world to gather globalized insight as this world becomes increasingly virtually connected. The introduction and gradual growth of the internet has directly affected the ways children have been raised for the past 30 years. The four agents of socialization: family, institutions, peer group, mass media, have

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shaped all individuals throughout life. By using mass media as a placeholder for a babysitter in a young child's life creates drastic attachment confusion (Nikken, 2019:531–546). Mass media is society's connection with large-scale organizations that use print or electric means to communicate to large numbers of people (Kendall, 2020:125). Media is the second most consumed by humans after air, having great effects on how we view society and how we view ourselves in comparison. Media acts as a service to provide us with the ever-changing information and current events occurring around the world. Media platforms provide humans of all ages with the ability to come in contact with a variety of people, places, values, and opinions. Modern day people are provided with the opportunity to live vicariously through others shared experiences posted as media. There are many negative as well as positive effects of the media on society. A worry is the effects on an individual's self-esteem, attachment, and belongingness.

To understand life's imperfections in terms of common humanity, as expressed in sociological imagination, self-compassion involves being mindful with one's self when confronting life's difficulties or personal inadequacies (Neff & Beretvas, 2013:78-98). For an individual to have a sociological imagination, a person must be able to pull away from their current situation and have the ability to see things socially and how they interact and influence each other in a global sense (Kendall, 2020:3). An increase in self-compassion and sociological imagination in society would lead to a great resurgence in the group to achieve a boundless state of mind rather than obsessing over the satisfactions attained from their deep attachment to social media.

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Anthropological Approach

Connective devices have become the glue of the physical society as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the globe into the virtual. As the digital era progresses further, exponential advancement within the tech industry is expected to occur. This growing usage of devices will forever reshape the culture of contemporary society of users within the digital age. A new culture, as it encompasses the social behavior and norms found in human societies, has been formulated for the digital space. The digital space has allowed for an expansive sharing platform to be created where all users can share their knowledge, beliefs, artforms, laws, customs, capabilities, and habits. As communication is circulating around the Earth there has been an abandonment of nationality, religion, and family as finding and joining a community has become a top priority for the virtual user.

It is the human's biological imperative to connect with other people. Dr Anna Lembke of Stanford University Addiction Medicine, analyzes how the connective technology of social media has optimised the communication between humans over the digital space comparing virtual interaction to an illicit drug (The Social Dilemma, 2020). The algorithms of these social media sites are designed in a way to elicit a dopamine neurotransmitter response within the user's brain. The tech industry has set out to utilize a knowledge of biology against the human. Dopamine is a common yet weaker neurotransmitter linked to happiness. The true neurotransmitter desired to produce sustaining feelings of happiness is the less commonly produced Serotonin. The many Dopamine hits cause pleasure pain imbalance which diminishes a user's self worth and sense of identity (The Social Dilemma,2020).

Users of the connective devices present in contemporary society strive for social approval through virtual validation. The short term, dopamine, rewards are a brittle form of fulfillment

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associated with the desire of outside affirmations through self-esteem boosters. One's sense of joining a community does not automatically mean holding feelings of belonging to it. Currently society is facing a dilemma caused by the desire to have a sense of belongingness in both the physical and digital spaces (Penne,2017:535). As the double connection is deemed more complex and thus more desirable. The desire to belong correlates to that individual's ability to make genuine relationships and have a sense of security linked to their ability to trust and communicate (Moreira et al.,2017:1319). Socially belonging to a larger group is an idea that Abraham Maslow mentioned in his studies on the human's Hierarchy of Needs. Many psychologists have argued as to what is found to be humanities' driving motivator in life: physiology, safety, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization (Kellerman, 2014:540). By arguing that the contemporary driving factor for life is the human desire to belong to a larger group or community, modern society appears to have it easier due to the advancements in connective technologies. However, the biggest threat to an individual's self-esteem is connective technologies, and thus diminishing their ability to create genuine relationships. The digital space has been linked to feelings of maladaptive perfectionism, isolation, jealousy, and narcissism (Moreira et al., 2017:1327 , Mehr & Adams, 2016:132-145, Tandler, & Petersen, 2018:750–760).

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Figure 1 Hierarchy of human needs.

(Kellerman, 2014:540)

It is part of human nature to want to belong to a larger group to form meaningful relationships. Belongingness, as defined by Abraham Maslow, is to be represented by family, friends, affection, and relationships (Oved, 2017:537). Children and adults with a developed attachment to mass media perceive the device as a friend due to the reliability of connection the device provides. The lack of physical human connection and desire of belongingness leads to various undesirable effects, such as decreased health, unhappiness, or maladjustment (Penne, 2017:535). Individuals unable to make physical, long-lasting connections feel a distinction between oneself and others. In the physical world people are not always available and thus an insecure attachment develops leading the individual to overcompensate with the virtual world (Moreira et al., 2017:1331). As the physical interaction was deemed unsafe in 2020, the digital space was the foundation to uphold most relationships. Acquired feelings of isolation and

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self-centeredness causes an obsession with belonging and with one's self, but can be mediated by self-compassion (Cho et al., 2018:141-144).

Media has acted as a service to provide us with the ever-changing information and current events occurring around the world. These connective technologies allowed for the society of 2020 to have updated information pertaining to the global pandemic, easing anxieties. As an agent of socialization, media platforms provide users with the ability to come in contact with a variety of people, places, values, and opinions. As physical distances have separated humans from the physical sphere, the split zone is reshaping how communities interact. Living in split zones have reshaped an individual's view on the socialization agent of one's peer group, the group of people who are linked by common interests, equal social position, and usually similar age (Kendall, 2020:65). The constructed group of peers and surrounding individuals greatly affect one's perception of themselves as well as how they internalize society's expectations. Today virtual users are able to make friends over the internet, and stay in contact with friends far away through technological devices. Peer groups are made up of people with similar interests, hobbies, values, and sometimes gender. By contributing to our sense of belonging and feelings of self-worth, peer groups construct how an individual understands what is 'acceptable behavior' within society. Peer groups are a product of culture as well as one of its major transmitters.

False Sense of Self

The digital space has created a culture for one to depict a perfect life for others to see. A desire to seem happy, and surrounded by friends is caused by perceived stress from the social connectivity, one's need for approval from others, and the lack of self-validation (Mehr & Adams, 2016:132-145). Wishing things to be perfect is a common trait shared between humans.

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Perfectionism is the tendency to hold and pursue unrealistically high goals. Mehr and Adams (2016) researched the idea of perfectionism and found that one type of perfectionism can have harmful impacts on the individual. Maladaptive perfectionism is when one has high standards, excessive self-criticism, constant worrying, and feelings of dissatisfaction with oneself. This form of perfectionism relates to aspects of psychological distress and higher levels of depression. Maladaptive perfectionism was negatively correlated with self-compassion, but had a positive correlation with depressive symptoms (Mehr & Adams, 2016: 132-145). The feelings of maladaptive perfectionism can be connected to feelings of jealousy caused by the envy of someone's success and achievements. The negative subscales of self-compassion: self-judgment, isolation, and over-identification, were positively related to jealousy, and the positive subscales: self-kindness, common humanity, and mindfulness, were negatively related. Thus, self-compassion mediates the effects related to jealousy (Tandler & Petersen, 2018:750–760). Feelings of jealousy towards others for appearing perfect is forcing social media users to feel self-conscious about their worth (Penne, 2017:535).

Cooley's explanation of the looking-glass self refers to the way in which a person's sense of self is derived from the perceptions of others (Kendall, 2020:93). Formed from social interaction and an understanding of how others think of us, humans imagine how our appearance and personality is judged and seen by others. Individual's find satisfaction from self-esteem boosters such as likes, comments, and constant interactions with people through the use of connective technologies. This analysis determines our self-concept to increase or decrease depending on how we believe others view us. Self- concept is the totality of our beliefs and feelings about ourselves (Kendall, 2020:65). This addiction to outside validation and the digital space causes Millennials to desire to be in contact with others constantly.

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PART III

Human as A Raw Material

The digital era has caused the 20th century's most valuable commodity, oil, to succumb to the fuel of the 21st century, data. The collection, storage, and transmission of data has grown from kilobytes and megabytes to the capabilities of today's databases handling "not just terabytes but petabytes of information, where peta - is a prefix which denotes the unfathomable quantity of a quadrillion, or a thousand trillion" (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:1). As suggested, data is collected from the connective technologies humans interact with on a daily basis. Familiar items such as "your credit and debit cards, transit pass, school or work ID, passport, and cell phone" or "basically, anything with a barcode, magnetic strip, RFID, or GPS receiver" will collect and store your data (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:2). The development of the digital age has made it difficult for one to truly escape the digital space's collection of an individual's data.

The view of data as a raw material is an oxymoron as data cannot be raw as it conceived, collected, and refined in subjectivity. A raw material is defined as the unprocessed, basic material from which a finished product is made. Data is always already "cooked" and never entirely "raw" as data must be generated (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:2). For there to be access to data it must be processed. Like oil data needs to be mined, refined, and distributed but unlike oil data is a multi faceted curious commodity it is a potentially infinite resource, but as data can be scaled quickly it may become worthless and even a burden if not collected with a purpose (Frank, Malcolm, et al, 2017:65). The human user of these connective technologies is producing the never ending stream of data as the "raw material" and the systems of intelligence within the device are the refinery that makes sense of the data. So where is the raw aspect of data collection? If there is such a thing.

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I will argue that it can be deemed that the human being has become the raw material.

This argument is quickly proven false as humans are not fully objective in 100 percent of their actions. There are many “cooked” influences greatly affecting the user’s everyday movements.

Yet, there is no persistently objective view because “when we put our own critical perspectives into historical perspective, we quickly find that there is no stance detached from history”

(Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:4). Thus data cannot be objective because the humans generating such data are sans objectivity. As data is inescapably subjective to the user who is generating it, “the con-temporary era of Big Data has been enabled,” through the disbursement of connective technologies, to contextualize data “according to a mythology of their own supposed decontextualization” (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:6). As all data has some value the interface collecting this data has the burden of making sense of and finding the worth of the data.

The fractured experience and influx of connective technologies, caused by the social distancing restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, has greatly affected the preexisting shift from “an era of expanding data resources into an era in which we have become the resource for data collection [to] vampirically feeds off of our identities, our “likes,” and our everyday habits” (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:10). Each day we have ingressed into a reality where we are no longer interacting with our devices through choices, but rather we are giving our consciousness away.

What is the price of this new era of virtual interaction?

The psychological, sociological and anthropological effects caused by the growing digital space and the influx of connective devices has transformed the user into the raw material in which data is collected by these technologies. Data is able to be captured from many forgettable objects throughout our lives. The surveillance of our human experience is almost forgettable as “many of the devices that collect our information and monitor our actions are inscrutable,

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invisible pieces of code” (Eubanks 2018:5). Data is being collected from novel items equipped with barcodes, magnetic strips, RFIDs or GPS receivers (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:2). The user is able to disregard how their data is being mined effortlessly throughout their daily life hidden within these everyday objects. It is how we experience the digital space and interact with these connective technologies that keep the user intrigued.

Data is described to be “aggregative” as it is “collected in assortments of individual,” which provides data with “their potential power, their rhetorical weight” (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:8). The user’s experience is defined by the connective technology’s interface, device, and application of the intelligence. This intelligence is made up of AI algorithms and automation with the process middleware that acts as a bridge between applications in the software ecosystem which provides task specific functionality (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:52-53). The human experience is the center of the device's design as the applications that we interact with daily are considered to be “the front door to the rest of the new machine” (Frank, Malcolm, et al, 2017:52-53). The system of intelligence stays invisible to us as the app interface is created to be simple and intuitive. The aggregative quality allows for each individual device to be modified based on the user’s interactions, and desires. The operating systems behind the connective technology “collect information about us, make inferences about our behavior,” and thus construct the interface we interact with daily (Eubanks 2018:5). Our devices’ enhanced automation is “so deeply woven into the fabric of social life” contemporary society does not notice the capabilities of the machine (Eubanks 2018:5). The automation will grow quieter and become more invisible as the device becomes stronger in its ability to refine the user’s data.

In contemporary society it is well observed that nothing in this world is given for free. This is a well known fact broadcasted especially in capitalistic societies. As it is so well known,

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some users have forgotten to apply this statement to the free services their connective technologies provide. If you are not paying for the product, you are the product. The free services that so many individuals enjoy daily are selling their users' information to advertising agencies to create the perfectly crafted plate of ads. This transaction creates the advertising agencies as the consumers of the product of the user's attention. It is not the device that is inherently evil it is the business model. The digital space has begun to overpower human nature as we are physically disconnecting from each other. Humans accept the reality of the world we are presented. The digital space has the ability to overwhelm human weaknesses through the psychological and social effects today, but soon the human's strengths will become overwhelmed (The Social Dilemma, 2020). The user is currently overwhelmed by the development of technological addiction to outside validation and the polarization of the masses.

All connective technology companies, Google, Apple, Amazon, Facebook, Netflix, ect., are in constant competition for your attention. The purpose of implementing machine learning and algorithms is to calculate the proper way to keep the user engaged. The advertising companies wish to influence the ways in which the user thinks, acts, consumes, and interacts. This motive is seen perfectly in Aza Raskin's invention of "infinite scrolling" which provides the user with an endless stream of content and has removed the need for the user to refresh the page (The Social Dilemma, 2020). Endless scrolling has allowed the connective technologies to consume as much of the users attention as possible. The user is never triggered to put down the device because there is no end to the media the user can consume. It is the gradual, slight, imperceptible change in the user's behavior and perception that is the product sold (The Social Dilemma, 2020). By learning who you are through the collection of the users data can the device

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have the ability to implement discrepancies in the algorithm to change what you do, how you think, who you are.

As we remember the initial intent and funding of the internet as a military weapon during the World Wars, the dark side was the foundation of the Digital Era. Today, “technology is no longer the domain of the few but the province of the many” as corporations of all sectors must implement and leverage some form of the new machine to compete moving forward (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:11). The digital economy will be conquered not by those who can create the new machines, but by those who will strategically implement them. As COVID-19 has pushed the global population to work from the digital space, economic expansion will occur as work becomes fully digitized through leveraging the new AI machines. The three elements that must be integrated and aligned to create value within a firm’s implementation of the new machine are the 3Ms: Raw Materials, New Machines, and Business Models (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:26).

The raw material of the digital age is data, which is generated through vast systems of data collection. By implementing devices with the Internet of Things, IoT, data from all people, places, and things is collected and refined. As algorithms are opinions embedded in code, there is a select population of worthy prospects of data collection. This population are the user’s that have the time and money to interact with the connective technologies. As the new machine has been implemented in many common items, data collection has expanded farther than what the companies know what to do with. Refining of the data is key as too much data is cumbersome and too expensive to store. To capture the raw material, human interaction, modern businesses must implement the new machine to work behind all aspects of their firm. From cookies on their website to an interactive app, there are endless opportunities for profit. Data that is collected and refined will lead to economic growth.

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For raw materials to be collected and refined the implementation of the new machine is needed to initiate the firm's expansion into the digital age. New machines are the systems of intelligence that combine hardware, AI, software, data, and human input to create value aligned to specific business processes or consumer experience (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:27). The machine focuses on how to create business results and continuously redefine its actions with the intention to increase profits. The new machine is programmed with a set of values, goals, and motivations to create stimuli to lead to the firm's progression. The intentions behind the new machine's code will be dissected later in the essay as based on this code machine learning enables the algorithm to expand and define key social, political, and economic characters. The new machine will allow for economic expansion as it will rid business of back office and mid-office work. These positions held by the imperfect machine of the Humans will allow for exponential societal advancements to occur as labor is usually a firm's highest expense.

It is not the device that is inherently evil it is the business model. The business models monetize services and solutions based on the systems of intelligence. Algorithms are built for profit and through machine learning the computer computes the correct way to profit. No one fully understands the systems that control the code we see, as AI knows everything about the user predicting their next move (The Social Dilemma,2020). With overwhelming shareholder pressure, minimal government regulation, and an infinitely tappable resource there is no limitation or means of slowing how far the tech industry will go to make money. The economic value and financial incentives AI can provide business is the new frontier. The most traumatizing aspect is that the protection is for the powerful and rich owners rather than the user as governments are upholding economic profits over the interest of the people, undermining the user's freedoms as a citizen.

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The Encoded Social Hierarchy

The historical correlation between race and labor is a relationship that is present today as the exploitation and bondage of colonies for their labor and natural resources lives on. The granting of H-1B visas is a way for tech firms to get ahead with the exploitation of temporary workers without providing them benefits. Governments, of well developed countries, provide 75% of the H-1B visas to tech firms (Amrute, 2020:905). This percentage is affecting the laid-off middle class workers, while allowing for the exploitation of casual workers. Casual labor replaces slave labor. The H-1B visa workers are “bonded” to the firm as this relationship inflicts the fear of exploitation and is skewed by the political framework deeming these foreign workers as “alien job stealers”(Amrute, 2020:920). This label causes an influx of racial division amongst coworkers or those that have been laid-off against the non-immigrant workers.

Amrute argues that race operates algorithmically as “it functions behind the scenes to sort workers according to racialized characteristics” producing race as a marker of valued differences within firms to treat “racism as a latent variable that exists outside of tech firms” (Amrute, 2020:906). As the algorithm is hidden from a user of a connective technology thus is the algorithm hidden from society. As it is difficult to understand the true intention of written code, hints are found in the initial motives of the creator of said code. Codes, algorithms, are described to be “cultural objects embedded and integrated within a social system whose logic, rules, and explicit functioning work to determine the new conditions of possibilities of users’ lives” (Cheney-Lippold 2011:167).

The purpose of focusing this section on the encoded societal hierarchy is to draw light on the constructed values and ethics in place inhibiting the genuine global connection desired by these firms. The social justice movements of 2020 brings focus to the hidden societal encryption

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“which treats this labor as a largely “mental” divorced from both historical precedent and contemporary embodiment” (Amrute, 2020:907). The continuation of exploiting minorities is encoded into the global societal system. Race is operating behind the scenes by mirroring the way algorithms produce rankings as raw data which reinforce the coder’s ideals. Race becomes a variable in which workers are sorted by racialized characteristics pointing to values differences within firms proving that firms value race as a source of creativity (Amrute, 2020:906-907). Race as an algorithm is constructed through the manipulation of replaceable casual workers, and praising diversity in the work environment. Celebration of corporate diversity makes race visible, yet furthers the separation of workers as caused by the hidden historical figure of the casual workers (Amrute, 2020:918). There must be resistance against the corporate racial order rather than complicity in the continued functioning as race as an algorithm.

History pays witness to honoring the gradual evolution from “the early condition of mankind” with the application of “their mental and moral powers through experience” to lead to the success of civilization by opposing obstacles (Morgan, 1877:1). The praise of innovation equating to the destiny of civilization is a hierarchically inflated ideal. Success is “drawn in part, from the great sequence of inventions and discoveries which stretches along the entire pathway of human progress” from tribes to cities to nations (Morgan, 1877:1) (Zuckerberg,2017:1). Inventions and discoveries lead to the advancement of institutions which further enforce the hierarchical ideals in place at the time of innovation and who have the power to create innovation. Mirroring colonial conquests, the “[modern] institutions plant their roots in the period of barbarism” to reap the benefits of cheap labor and access to raw materials (Morgan, 1877:2) .

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The elements of the land denotes the success of its people. As history points to the anterior experience that led humans out of barbarism and into civilization “must be deduced... from the traceable connection between the elements of their existing institutions and inventions” (Morgan, 1877:6). Viewing the state of mankind when all Earth’s people were considered to be savages is the view of experience nearly uniform. Morgan speaks of all human necessities to be the same and mental operations to be “uniform in virtue of the specific identity of the brain of all the races of mankind” (Morgan, 1877:6). This explanation of uniformity of conditions and brain capacity comes from the progressive vision of a European man. Morgan believes the “germs of the principal institutions and arts of life were developed while man was still a savage” as a result of the various virtues of culture and tradition present at this state (Morgan, 1877:6). European countries created the definition of civilization and conquered the globe to share or inflict the ideals onto the nations Europeans deemed uncivilized. The reasoning behind this preliminary white man’s burden conquest was due to the unequal endowments of the two hemispheres. Colonization by the North Eastern hemisphere, equipped with the domestication of animals, of the Western and Southern hemisphere was driven by the cultivation of maize and plants by irrigation (Morgan, 1877:10). The exploitation of rich soul and cheap labor mirrors that of the economic profits promised in the implementation of the new machine and the weak and broken minds of the users.

Anti-politics is the rejection of the practices or attitudes associated with traditional politics. It is well acknowledged that change is needed. The hierarchical systems must be broken down to allow for societal progression forward. Of course political projects advocating for diversity have been implemented in the workplace, yet firms have been able to continue on with the old systems still in place hiding below their advocating for diversity.

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Currently tech firm's male dominated culture corrodes the problems surrounding the amount of women in the workplace. As a well vocalized issue, "a problem that has been explored since at least the mid-1970s in computer science," and yet has not been solved related to firm's hiding under anti-political action (Breslin, 2015:1). As big tech companies release "diversity data" highlighting the superiority of male white workers over women and minorities, the political agenda to increase diversity has been ignored since the firm's creation.

There is "public awareness of this issue" and "discussions about sexism," yet it is the "unconscious assumptions" that must be corrected through a physical increase of women present in the workplace (Breslin, 2015:2). This idea questions; how genuine are these male dominated firms to acquire female and minority employees? The implementation of solving 'the woman problem' is backed by the government and tech firms "with the best of intentions," but is only allowing for more awareness of the issue rather than women physically gaining work in the tech sector (Breslin, 2015:2). With no significant improvement in thirty years the issue must be seen as gender, race and class a barrier to entry.

Minorities are undervalued as the politics surrounding inclusion and demanding diversity oppresses them as less than. As Amrute's "Bored Techies" addresses gender, race and class are interwoven into society, to accomplish true diversity in the workplace a firm must ask which women in tech must be included. Women of color are the least represented of all candidates. The "measurable binary division" is a product of the anti-politics within the tech fields which upholds the frat-culture and deters women from entering male dominated sectors (Breslin, 2015:4). The anti-politics upholds Judy Wacjman's argument in "Technology as Masculine Culture" where women are seen as weaker candidates in STEM oriented positions. The desire for domination of man over woman is riddled into society just as Larkin and Amrute have explained how history

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has encoded racism into society. This continual fight for one group's superiority over all other peoples is a reoccurring battle throughout history.

It is rather the result of the historical and cultural construction of gender (Wajcman,1991: 137). The invention of the internet stems from the intentions and funding for the research and construction of using the first computers as military weapons. The advancement of tech relates to the masculen drive behind militarism As "missiles have become a symbol of male power, the phallus," has been categorized under the social construction of the male gender (Wajcman,1991: 138). The traceable "source of the male fascination with weapons and war" is observed to be related to male "biology, and psychology, arguing that men need a substitute for the babies they cannot conceive" (Wajcman,1991: 138). This theory relates to a man's unconscious "womb envy" and the female innate gift of creation. History provides substantial truth behind this statement as "the first uranium bomb... dropped on Hiroshima, was named 'Little Boy'" (Wajcman,1991: 139). The unconscious male obsession with gaining power and glory is motivated by the underlying 'phallic psychology' which has made such technical inventions possible and lives on today.

The Profits Behind the User's Attention

Big Tech has profited greatly from the COVID-19 pandemic. The digital space has become so dire that virtual communication allows individuals with the access to the proper tools and information needed to survive the pandemic. As it has been stated prior, the device has the capability to know the user so well it can predict their next move and influence how the user behaves and thinks. The device has developed the capabilities to use your psychology against you. Machine learning has developed its own goals to seduce the user. A tool waits to be used, if

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it is not a tool it is seducing you manipulating you wants something from you (The Social Dilemma 2020,)

The political polarization is more divided than ever. The algorithm behind the device has intentions of holding the user's attention. The device can provide information and media in a way to alter the user's way of thinking. With the rise of fake news, rabbit holes of conspiracy theories, and a social revolution, information is widely shared via connective technologies. These rabbit holes are constructed of endless scrolls of information provided to the user based on their interests. There is a bias towards false information as fake news spreads six times faster than real news and thus creates more profits through this mass circulation (The Social Dilemma, 2020). The surplus of unregulated messages has conditioned the users to be prone to believe in conspiracy theories propagated across all social media networks. News and media are identified as tools of persuasion used by the government and institutions. Most recently used to control and ease anxieties of the collective during the pandemic.

Polarization has led to culture disabling conversations to be conducted on social and political matters to carry on. The digital space grants the user the ability to block others and never see or speak to them again. This is unable to occur in the physical. Cancel culture has normalized the discouraging of conversation as individuals no longer physically speak to each other because we want to be right and only hear and see that they agree with. The fabric of physical society has begun to unravel as division and chaos has caused the polarized sides to distrust each other. The virtual society is thriving off this quarrel as it has led to and increase in users and usage.

Zuckerberg's solution to the fake news is to build more AI to find the patterns (The Social Dilemma, 2020). The issue with Zuckerberg's intentions is that AI cannot solve the problem of

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fake news. To encode the algorithm to understand how to define truth will be biased on the encoders' definition of truth. There is no proxy for truth to be defined by a click. As we can not agree on what's true there is no navigation to lead us to it. Fake news is an infection that has competed in tandem with the pandemic. People desperately needed news updates in 2020. For chaos to be subdued, continual updates on how many deaths have occurred at the hands of COVID-19 were broadcasted along with many the critiques of national government officials handling the pandemic. The influx of information was represented by all mass media sources, television, news sites, and social media being the largest contributors. Social media has become a major news source as 3.96 billion people are currently logged in worldwide to acquire updates from family friends, local governments and global news (Dean, 2020). This service can be looked at as a tool if used properly. But if this device receives too much of your attention you become the good as this is a free service. An idea that you are being consumed.

Mark Zuckerberg's 2017 manifesto, *Building Community*, is a proposal to the world that Facebook, as a corporation, has the capabilities to uphold the foundation for the future global community to rest upon. Currently, Facebook is the leading social network at 2.7 billion monthly active users with a 1-2% increase of American users in 2019-2020 (Dean, 2021). Facebook Inc. is made up of Facebook, Messenger (Facebook Messenger), Instagram, WhatsApp, and OculusVR. The subsidiaries make Facebook the leader in the social media industry, and a lead competitor in the Tech industry as one of the FAANG Vendors. The acronym "FAANG" is referred to in finance to address the stocks Facebook (FB), Amazon (AMZN), Apple (AAPL), Netflix (NFLX), and Alphabet (GOOG). These prominent American technology companies delivered promises of support, safety, unity, and common understanding all throughout the

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COVID-19 Pandemic. The growing phenomenon of a globally connected community is meant to elicit high expectations for the future of this world.

The COVID-19 global pandemic caused many business closures due to the closing of the physical sphere. Businesses equipped with the new machine and access to virtual work functions were able to stay afloat. The FAANG vendors and other large tech firms, as their goods and services are largely virtually provided, felt no shock from the economic downturn caused by the pandemic. These companies have profited more than they ever have before. Specifically analysing the seven most valuable U.S. technology companies with their combined 2020 market cap of \$3.4 trillion prove the tech industry, with the power of the new machine, can power through a global pandemic, broader economic crisis, and the rising number of investigations into their dominance (Levy, 2020). The digital age and growing presence of the digital space has caused the need for the new machine to be implemented in order to stay afloat. These seven firm's, Apple (a 2020 market cap gain of \$1 trillion), Amazon (\$710 billion), Tesla (\$669 billion), Microsoft (\$480 billion), Nvidia (\$323 billion), Alphabet (\$268 billion), and Facebook (\$193 billion), have found success as they were founded on aspects of the new machine (Levy, 2020).

Zuckerberg's Foundation of Code

As Zuckerberg is the pioneer of modern day social media sweeping throughout the world, he has constructed the foundation in which all other platform branches off from. As social media is the platform where the most communication between users is conducted Zuckerberg's foundation, as a technological system, must be analyzed by the code in which it functions through. The initial written code Facebook is based off of the mind of a white, straight, male, American, Harvard student. Zuckerberg's initial intentions behind the creation of Facebook was

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to rank the girls of Harvard and surrounding schools as a form of amusement. This set of algorithms or code has expanded to where it is now anticipating the future of the globe.

Facebook, as a global foundation for all future social media platforms, is a trend of the white man defining future progress for the rest of the world. Viewing algorithmic inference “as a mode of control” meant to structure and regulate our lives online, the connective technologies are collecting data and conducting machine learning based on human to device interaction daily (Cheney-Lippold 2011:166).

Marketing and web analytic companies have implemented sophisticated algorithms to observe, analyze, and identify users through large surveillance networks online. These computer algorithms have the capacity to infer categories of identity upon users based largely on their web-surfing habits (Cheney-Lippold 2011:164). Cheney-Lippold’s article poses an analysis of coded computer algorithms as a function of categorical identification based on assumptions made to identify the gender, gender, and class of the user “at the same time as [the algorithm] defines the actual meaning of gender, class, or race” (Cheney-Lippold 2011:165). These assumptions are based on the values and basis of the coders that constructed these systems which do not represent society’s true reality rather the fantasies needed to keep the user engaged with the connective technology.

By analyzing Zuckerberg's manifesto, the information he chooses to address alludes to the to do list of tasks that are on the mind of other capitalist elites. Zuckerberg acknowledges his company’s drawbacks and attests to Facebook being a “work in progress,” but the validity of his promises are grounded in the fact that Facebook is the platform that holds the “largest global community” (Zuckerberg, 2017:13). Mark Zuckerberg describes the future of Facebook as the social infrastructure for individuals to make the greatest positive impact and for communities to

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utilize when coming together. Facebook's "journey to connect the world" is skewed by the manifesto's initial and recurring comparison of people coming together throughout history "from tribes to cities to nations" (Zuckerberg, 2017:01). This statement holds the community within a nation above that of a city or a tribe. This statement relates to Morgan's breakdown of the criteria for the titles of savage, barbarian, and civilized in which he, an American anthropologist and social theorist, mapped out throughout human existence. The validity of the European definition of civilization calls into question all other global civilizations into a form of competition through comparison and the judges of this competition are all of European descent.

Virginia Eubanks addresses in her article that "people of color, migrants, unpopular religious groups, sexual minorities, the poor, and other oppressed and exploited populations face higher levels of data collection" (Eubanks 2018:7). These groups face unequal levels of data collection as they also face high barriers to entry when applying to work for the tech firms. With the globalization of virtual communication Eubanks statement will advance to encompass, oppress, and exploit these groups even further. With the vast circulation of consumer products, western influences, and even garbage seen transported all over the world between all countries the physical global connection is very much present. Zuckerberg addresses the idea that people are being left behind by globalization, yet it is not that these people are left behind, it is that they are forgotten and the validity of their lives are undervalued. Their lives are only given value when they can be online and formulating data points.

The hierarchy of globalization mirrors that of racial code. This code is encrypted into the fabric of the global society based on historical recurring narratives that have yet to be destroyed. Sareeta Amrute's work considers race as an algorithm in which was encoded into societal law by the European ancestors. As, "algorithms are always multiple, with many different historically

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determined affordances" the racial hierarchy has been classifying, ranking and organizing global data through recurrent latent variables (Amrute, 2020:04). This relates to the idea that talent is evenly distributed amongst all humans, yet it is the one with the proper nurturing environment that can bring the efforts of their labor to fruition. Technical progress and development is critiqued in terms of colonial histories due to the correlations between race and labor.

Surveillance Capitalism Global Connection

Zuckerberg addresses, for the global community to be formed the goal of society must be to connect everyone to the internet. This is a promising goal for a corporation such as Facebook to make, yet there are many other nations deprived of the internet with a different set of goals for moving forward after the pandemic. In Facebook's journey to connect the world Mark Zuckerberg plans on depending on history to find the world we want to build. He plans on building the proper social infrastructure to have the world come together and ever greater numbers as we did when we transitioned from tribes to cities to nations (Zuckerberg, 2017:1). As progress now requires humanity to come together the greatest opportunities are found globally because nobody can be left behind by globalization.

Zuckerberg's motives of virtually uniting the world are matched by other firms within the tech industry as the countries without internet access are part of the untapped market waiting to be provided access to the internet. Global internet access will lead to a drastic increase in the amount of data to be collected. The value of data in today's society is beyond fathomable and of course as the Digital Era progresses tech firms wish to gain access to the platform that this connected community will function upon.

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The global virtual community will be built upon the encoded hierarchy that is the foundation of the current connected community. Silicon Valley is “not best positioned to identify cultural norms around the world” (Zuckerberg, 2017:17). The issue with this proposition is that the reader may never know if Zuckerberg’s wish for a safer, united, and understanding global community to be formed is truly genuine or just for the benefit of his corporation. As one of the richest men in the world addresses his compassion for all other men, women, and children, what he has to offer, as addressed in the manifesto, is a social media platform and internet access to all global citizens. As one of the corporations that have profited defying the pandemic and economic downturn, where is the promise for infrastructure, food, irrigation, and physical necessities needed around the world? The hope is that “more of us will commit our energy to building the long term social infrastructure to bring humanity together” (Zuckerberg, 2017:02). This statement leaves it up to the civilians of this Earth to bring forth what they desire to see in this world, but the tech elites hold voices that will be heard over others.

This is the projection of a straight white American man on how he and his firm will bring the world globally together is one that doesn’t encapsulate the voice of all members of this planet. Truly understanding how to be a proper supportive community that is formed on all values, cultures, nations, and religions with genuine concern is difficult to accomplish and even harder to promise. The traditional institutions that are promising to give voice to those without one are in reality what need to fall for correction to finally happen. As we build a safe community we need genuine action to help during a crisis and rebuild after this past year.

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The Consumption of Media as the New Materialism

The device has become an ally and companion to aid the average user through this past year. The device's ability to distract from the physical world complements its ability to virtually provide its services as a coping mechanism. The consumption of media can be viewed in relation to how America has historically suffered with materialism. In the 1950's a new America was forming with the creation of suburbs and invention of plastic. Materialism is the indoctrination of the people to consider material possessions as physical comfort. Materialism is not focused on the quality of an object rather the quantity of objects. The view: "more is better" developed as people wished to be happily distracted from the pain of the World Wars and Depression Era. The history behind materialism has led to the present mass consumerism. This consumerism is directly connected to one's desire to belong. For one to fit in with a larger group to connect and find a community is an innate human desire. The biological need to belong is met as people feel connected with brands.

Your consumption is being digested by these algorithms to then produce direct advertisements perfectly fit for you as the user. Brands and companies such as the FAANG vendors, have launched AI to collect and refine data to produce a description of the user. The new machine has the ability to create an individual experience biased off the diversified content collected on said individual's interests. By exploiting the individualized data collected within each device as well as the new found capability of connecting the world this information causes the device to be both an expert resource and companion (Turkle, 2017: 52). As humans are biologically motivated to belong to the consuming of media, the technological devices, as well as physical consumption of material brands, satisfies and suppresses this need. The suppression is

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equated to a dopamine hit, short yet satisfying. The cycle of addiction is both virtual and physical.

As social media platforms try to build a supportive community with a sense of purpose and hope this is still an institutional relationship with encoded racism into the social fabric of its existence. To ground oneself is to understand what is being implemented against you and consumed from you to produce what. It is difficult to comprehend as the human's psychology (mind), sociology (being), and anthropology (culture) are being utilized against them. The new machine is equipped with the understanding of all. As mentioned in this essay specifically, Neff's self-compassion scale and Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs is understood and recognized as the lack of community causes depression, isolation, and jealousy. These feelings influence the user to medicate themselves with the usage of the device.

Just as the social fabric of society is made up of many communities each community is made up of many groups of personal connections. A shared experience is an opportunity to bring people together. By sharing an experience over the digital space one hopes to have reinforced our physical communities. The darkside of Capitalism and Big Tech have motivations to create a virtually connected utopia. The digital space allows for the explorations of identity as we have begun to find a second life within the digital space. When we create a profile of social media "our profile ends up as somebody else - often the fantasy of who we want to be" (Turkle, 2017:153). As, the cycle of consumption is never ending due to modern society's dilemma and obsession with one's self and belonging to something larger than themselves. Mindfulness and sociological imagination is a mediator of the materialism and need to belong caused by the exploitation of data.

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Conclusion

The expansion of the digital space has integrated the human experience to be one that is fractured by the redefined cyborg identity. The relationship between man and machine has allowed for life to continue on as the Earth has endured more than a year of the Covid-19 Global Pandemic. From within the digital space, society is safe from the physical spread of the virus as government-imposed shelter-in-place orders are implemented to contain and reduce the impact of the virus. The device's ability to distract from the physical world complements its ability to virtually provide its services as a coping mechanism. The entranced user is manipulated by the device through an addiction to self-esteem boosters, drastic attachment confusion, feelings of isolation, and a lost perception of self. By exploiting the individualized data collected within each device as well as the new found capability of connecting the world this causes the device to be both an expert resource and companion when the user needed it most (Turkle, 2017: 52).

The cyborg identity will continue to exponentially increase as the digital sphere offers the human a platform to meet the user's biological needs. Societies with access to the internet and technological devices have been transformed from a world with technology into a world functioning within technology. The human experience is the center of the device's design as the applications that we interact with daily are considered to be "the front door to the rest of the new machine" (Frank, Malcolm, et al, 2017:52-53). A technological 'utopia' is in the midst as the top tech firms are setting intentions to connect the globe via a virtually united community. The encoded social hierarchy is maintained as algorithms as opinions written in code purposely categorizing user's data to uphold colonial exploitation and uniform historical values. The historical colonial exploitation of rich soil and cheap labor is mirrored in the implementation of the new machine profiting off of the weak and broken minds of the users. The threat of

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automation will grow quieter as it becomes more invisible, thus strengthening the device's ability to refine the user's data. Mindfulness must be practiced to ground the users to the physical reality, and disallow the exploitation of their data.

The cycle of consumption has developed complex algorithms to provide the user with a wide range of goods and services. Algorithms are "cultural objects embedded and integrated within a social system" to determine and define the conditions of a user's life (Cheney-Lippold 2011:167). The user's interaction with the device has surpassed the sole consumption of media as the digital space provides its users with a sense of safety as this 'safe' space allows for an influx of amenities - food, sense of safety, and community - through virtual connectivity. Users are connected to communities such as Google to provide answers to all questions, Facebook to connect with friends and family, Netflix for entertainment, Amazon to provide access to physiological needs, and the iPhone to connect to it all. The vast goods and services the digital space provides extends the human consciousness to surpass the cyborg identity that was present before the COVID-19 pandemic. The pre-existing cyborg, as identified by Donna Haraway, is initiated by the introduction of the device as it fractures the user's reality rejecting the rigid boundaries separating "human" from "animal" and "human" from "machine." The new machines are so clean and light they become easily forgettable and have transgressed boundaries as if they are an extension of the human (Haraway, 1991: 294-295). The aggregative quality of data provided the device with the capability to predict the user's next move and influence how the user behaves and thinks further entrancing the user.

The expansion of the fractured experience and increased reliance on connective technologies, as a result of physical distancing orders, has transitioned the human from a user of connective devices to the raw material being collected and refined for economic profit. The

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digital era has caused the 20th century's most valuable commodity, oil, to succumb to the fuel of the 21st century, data. Within the cycle of consumption, all of the user's interactions with the device and its applications are equipped with the power of the new machine. Like oil data needs to be mined, refined, and distributed. The algorithms embedded underneath the user interface are collecting, refining, and categorizing the user's data to be sold for profit. Unlike oil data is a multifaceted curious commodity as it is a potentially infinite resource, but as data can be scaled quickly it may become worthless and even a burden if not collected with a purpose (Frank, Malcolm, et al, 2017:65). Through machine learning the device is equipped with the ability to provide precise, calculated dopamine hits to the user as a form of manipulation. As the amount of virtual connections, 10.37 billion, has surpassed the total human population, 7.8 billion, the increased usage of connective technologies has redefined digital space.

Connective Technologies are the door to the digital space as work/study from home became accessible through the use of connective technologies. The emergence of a redefined virtual sphere, as a platform for "safe" social interaction to be conducted, has created a new culture of virtual communication to further suppress the exploitative nature of these devices. The surveillance of our human experience is almost forgettable as "many of the devices that collect our information and monitor our actions are inscrutable, invisible pieces of code" (Eubanks 2018:5). With overwhelming shareholder pressure, minimal government regulation, and an infinitely tappable resource there is no limitation or means of slowing how far the tech industry will go to make money. The new machine of Artificial Intelligence comprehends the movements, habits, needs, desires, and thoughts of the user through embedded sensors, software, and other technologies. The Internet of Things (IoT) enables all devices to connect and exchange data over the Internet. Connective technologies have allowed for the fundamental "eradication of 'public

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life' for everyone” with access to a technological device (Haraway, 1991: 306). Global access to the Virtual Sphere is represented by 73.47% of people of the top 10 'developed' countries possessing a smartphone versus 74.61% of the citizens within the top 10 'developing' countries are without a smartphone (Turner, 2021).

These connective technologies create a physical presence no more substantial than images on a computer screen, yet once the fractured experience is initiated the user can only struggle to become whole again (Turkle, 2017:83). The intention behind the device was to be a tool for knowledge, yet has become a distraction from the physical. The dichotomy of tool versus distraction is dependent on the user’s motivations and consciousness surrounding their time participating with the digital space. The fractured experience extends the user’s consciousness by connecting the individual to other people, places, and things outside one’s physical surroundings. Social media has become a major news source as 3.96 billion people are currently logged in worldwide to acquire updates from family friends, local governments and global news (Dean, 2020). This connected society identifies the physical space as “dangerous” and the digital space “safe.” The extended fractured experience provides refuge via the ‘safe’ virtual sphere, but further suppresses the dangers of the ‘real’ world.

A human’s needs, as defined by Abraham Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, are represented by the individual’s physiological needs, sense of safety, and belongingness, and the need for self-esteem to achieve self- actualization. Through the realization or fulfillment of one's talents and potentialities the human becomes boundless as they are mindful in every moment and compassionate to themselves and all others physically or virtually around them. The fractured experience has coded the physical, a space for an individual to feel grounded by recognizing the individual’s own being and one’s physical surroundings, as dangerous. The digital space,

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represented as safe, has welcomed the user to acquire split personalities as caused by the enhanced automation of the new machine. New machines are the systems of intelligence that combine hardware, AI, software, data, and human input to create value aligned to specific business processes or consumer experience (Frank, Malcolm, et al,2017:27). The inflated digital space has amplified the shift from “an era of expanding data resources into an era in which we have become the resource for data collection [to] vampirically feed off of our identities, our “likes,” and our everyday habits” (Gitelman, Jackson, 2013:10). The raw material being collected is the gradual, slight, imperceptible change in the user’s behavior and perception that is the product sold.

The immediate gratification of having an interactive object or cell phone consistently available and responsive creates a secure bond between the user and the device. A tool waits to be used, if it is not a tool it is seducing you by manipulating you and wants something from you"(The Social Dilemma, 2020). Analysis of psychological, sociological, and anthropological findings explains the effects the fractured experience has on human relationships and explores why relationships shared over both zones are deemed more complex and thus more desirable (Kellerman, 2014:539). Individuals unable to make physical, long-lasting connections feel a distinction between oneself and others allowing for insecure attachment to develop leading the individual to overcompensate with the virtual world (Moreira et al., 2017:1331). The social sciences concluded that the effects of the fracturing has led to an increase in self-esteem boosters and a decrease in the user’s self-compassion as the physical sphere was limited due to the COVID-19 restrictions and the virtual sphere became the safest way for people to interact.

Connective devices have become the glue of the physical society as the human’s biological imperative to connect with other people to feel a sense of community. The virtual

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community, provided by social media, has optimized the communication between humans as the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the globe into the digital. Social interaction contributes to an individual's awareness of the collective human experience and to our ability to communicate through thinking, talking, and acting. The proper use of media as a service to provide users with the ever-changing information and current events is skewed by the sense of pleasure obtained from interacting with devices to consume self-esteem boosters - likes, comments, posts- to develop one's confidence. The extent in which users are consuming self-esteem busters is an addiction caused by the desire for immediate gratification and an increasing misinterpretation correlated with narcissism. Misinterpretation has led to misuse as the device has become the user's pacifier providing a sense of safety, belonging, self-esteem.

The cycle of consumption is suppressed by the device being interpreted as a pacifier. With usage of the connective technologies on the rise there is a correlated increase in data collection. This collection and refining process present within the algorithm embedded into the device has provided advertising agencies the ability to redefine data to identify specific target markets, and campaign strategies to sell back to the user through the device. The constant interaction with screened technologies has created drastic attachment confusion as the device's algorithm elicits a dopamine neurotransmitter response weaker than Serotonin, yet comparable to an illicit drug. (Nikken, 2019:531–546). The many Dopamine hits cause pleasure pain imbalance to diminish along with the user's self worth and sense of identity, and thus keeping the user entranced with the device striving for social approval through virtual validation.

The mediators to suppress the device's distracting and exploitative abilities are for the user to practice self-compassion, attain sociological imagination, and practice mindfulness to be grounded in their sense of self. Self-compassion is an individual's ability to understand their

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life's imperfections in terms of common humanity. Compassionate individuals do not overly judge themselves or those around them and will decrease one's need for outside validation (Mehr & Adams, 2016:132-145). Sociological imagination is the ability to view current situations in terms of an interacting and influenced global sense (Kendall, 2020:3). To achieve a boundless state of mind rather than obsessing over the satisfactions obtained from the user's attachment to the device. The fractured experience has caused the user to desire to have a sense of belongingness in both the physical and virtual (Penne,2017:535). This desire is mediated by a grounding sense of self and being mindful of time spent interacting with devices.

The society of users must implement these mediators to combat the negative effects of the expanding digital space as well as the manipulation and exploitation of the user's data to maintain a sense of self. Users of said devices are present in a realm of privilege as they participate in a space of digital safety and physical safety. This form of privilege is defined by the ability of the user to have access to all biological needs - psychological, safety, community, self-esteem, via both the physical and digital spaces. Surveillance Capitalism, implemented by the FAANG vendors, is aspiring to create a platform for a Global Community to virtually unite the world. This goal includes those "left behind by Globalization," without the privileged access to the digital space to meet biological needs, as the countries without internet access are part of the untapped market waiting to be provided access to the internet.

Governments are upholding economic profits, Tech firm's 2020 market cap of \$3.4 trillion, over the interest of the people, undermining the user's freedoms as a citizen. Profiting from our biological needs and our human weaknesses, Silicon Valley is "not best positioned to identify cultural norms around the world," yet wish to create the Global Community (Zuckerberg, 2017:17). Through this virtually connected global community the cycle of

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consumption will become more efficient and specialized through machine learning and the repetitive cycle. By viewing those individuals without devices as an untapped market the user is identified as a set of data points to be refined by the algorithms within the device. Virginia Eubanks addresses in her article that “people of color, migrants, unpopular religious groups, sexual minorities, the poor, and other oppressed and exploited populations face higher levels of data collection” (Eubanks 2018:7). The virtually connected global community will further oppress the user as Facebook’s “journey to connect the world” is founded on an institutional relationship with encoded racism sown into the social fabric of its existence.

The algorithms embedded within the user’s devices will become more efficient and specialized as the cycle of consumption grows, and repetitively cycles through advancing machine learning. The user’s attention is the product. By understanding the dichotomy of the device as a tool versus distractor, and implementing the practice of Mindfulness the user will recognize how human’s psychology (mind), sociology (being), and anthropology (culture) are being utilized against them. As we ingress into a virtually connected global community, the practice of sociological imagination, self-compassion, as well as compassion for others will allow the user to utilize the device as a tool for their benefit.

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