CS 6474/CS 4803 Social Computing:
Social Computing Theories: Social Capital and Social Influence

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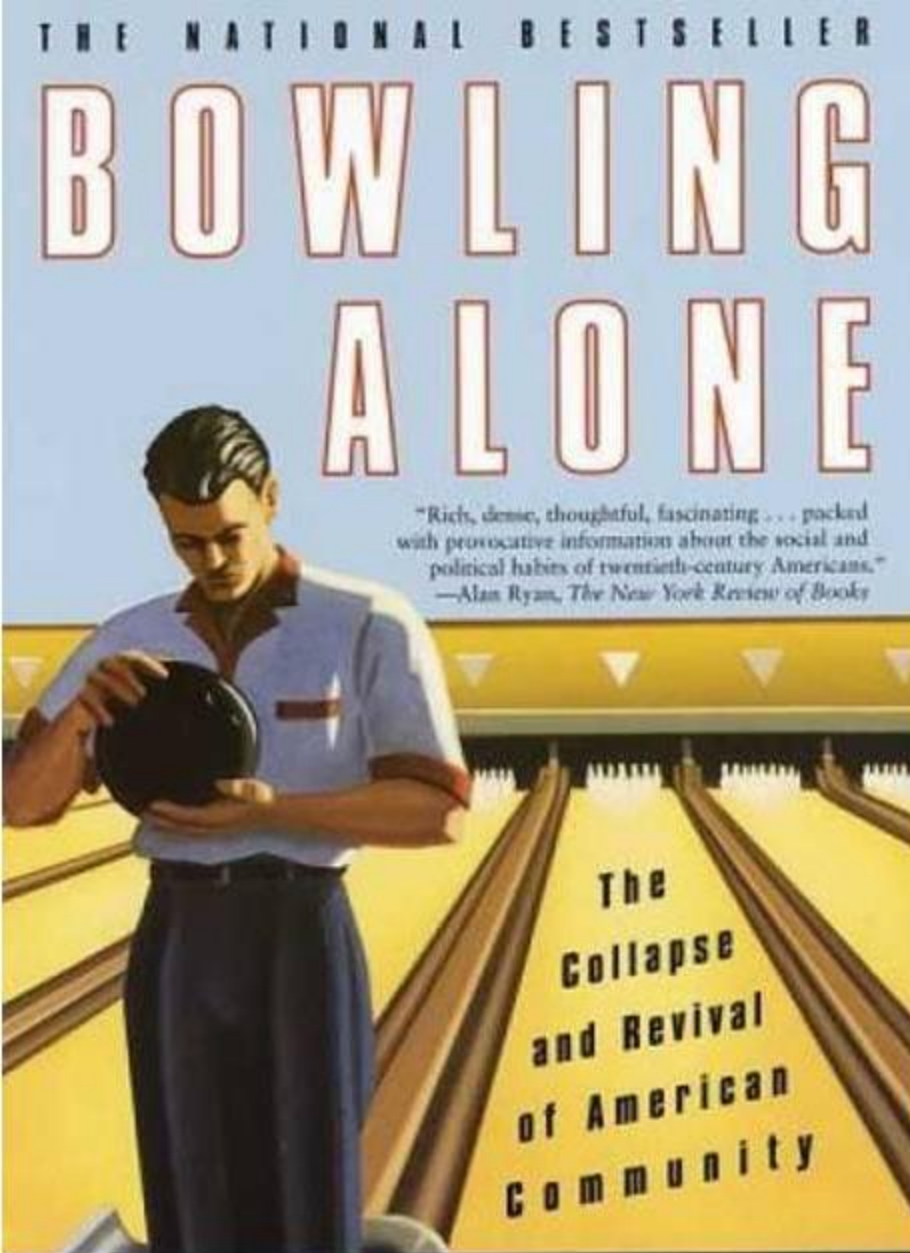
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Social capital broadly refers to the resources accumulated through the relationships among people (Coleman, 1988).

Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992) define social capital as "the sum of the resources, actual or virtual, that accrue to an individual or a group by virtue of possessing a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 14).

Social capital is defined as "social networks and the associated norms of reciprocity and trust that arise from those networks" (Putnam, 2000)

Social Capital Focuses on:

- *Who knows Whom*
- *The Character of these Networks*
- *The Strength of our Ties*
- *Levels of Trust*
- *Levels of Reciprocity*
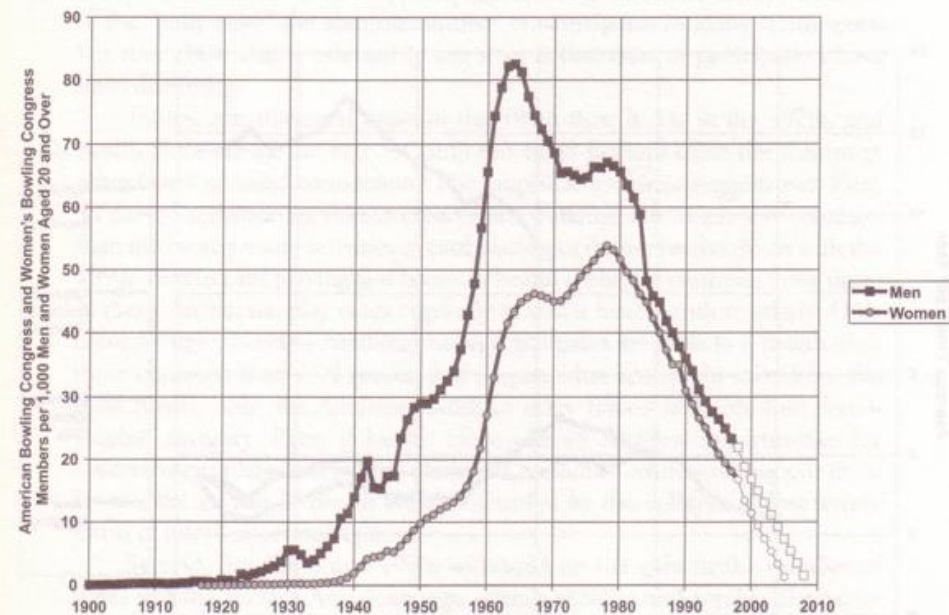
Rise and Decline of League Bowling

Figure 26: The Rise and Decline of League Bowling

Bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam)

1. Bonding (Putnam)

- Generated by strong ties. Considered essential in every society. Concerns over loss of bonding social capital prevalent in related scholarship (see also our earlier notes on communities)
- Bonging social capital is the *effect* of maintaining strong ties

2. Bridging (Putnam)

- Weak ties at play; 'bridges' more essential than other weak ties. Complementing or making up for loss of strong ties and increasing in importance in modern urban societies and CMC
- Bridging social capital is the *effect* of maintaining bridges

Putnam's book was controversial – he disregarded newer organizations and forms of social capital

Critics like sociologist Claude Fischer said that "Putnam neglects the emergence of new forms of supportive organizations on and off the Internet"

Why is it important or relevant to study social capital in this class?

The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online SNS

Dimensions of social capital

1. Bonding (Putnam)

▸ Generated by strong ties. Considered essential in every society. Concerns over loss of bonding social capital prevalent in related scholarship (see also our earlier notes on communities)

▸ Bonging social capital is the *effect* of maintaining strong ties

2. Bridging (Putnam)

▸ Weak ties at play; 'bridges' more essential than other weak ties. Complementing or making up for loss of strong ties and increasing in importance in modern urban societies and CMC

▸ Bridging social capital is the *effect* of maintaining bridges

Maintained (Ellison et al.)

▸ Social capital salvaged by CMC after physical disconnection from offline social network (implies some social capital lost by physical disconnection, e.g., move to another place for work or study)

H1: Intensity of Facebook use will be positively associated with individuals' perceived bridging social capital.

H2: Intensity of Facebook use will be positively associated with individuals' perceived bonding social capital.

H3a: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bridging social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's self esteem.
H3b: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bridging social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's satisfaction with life.

H4a: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bonding social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's self esteem.
H4b: The relationship between intensity of Facebook use and bonding social capital will vary depending on the degree of a person's satisfaction with life.

Thoughts and additional findings

▸ Main target audience for Facebook profile seem to be old friends and then current friends and acquaintances from immediate environment; but strongest results of study are with respect to the effects of weak ties (bridging social capital)

  ▸ Possible interpretation: users maintain FB pages for their friends and closer circle of acquaintances but FB is actually most helpful in the management of weak ties

▸ FB more valuable in bridging for users with low self-esteem and/or dissatisfaction with professional and/or social environment

  ▸ Possible interpretation: CMC helps users overcome social or psychological barriers to communication

Class Activity 1

Ellison et al. focus on the role of Facebook in bridging and bonding social capital. Do the findings extend to other platforms as well? Give examples of bonding/bridging social capital on a social media platform (Instagram), an online forum (Reddit), and an anonymous / ephemeral site (Snapchat).

Ellison et al. use college students as participants. How could this attribute have affected the findings? E.g., there's a strong case of college students wanting to maintain social capital with friends from high school. But how does this generalize to other populations or settings?

The Benefits of Facebook "Friends:" Social Capital and College Students' Use of Online Social Network Sites

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[4,15], which is based on self-reports of time online and ... er of friends, along with six attitude items like ... book has become part of my daily routine." One of the ... of this study is to determine how well people self-report ... values by comparing them with Facebook activity logs. ... ew exceptions [14], these kinds of studies have focused ... llege students, and so we also test whether previous ... gs generalize to older users and those outside the U.S.

Exploring opportunities to support mental health care using social media: A survey of social media users with mental illness

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Lisa A. Marsch[3,4] | Stephen J. Bartels[1,2,6]

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Aim: Social media h... for young people wh... who self-identified a... health and to identif... Methods: We asked... ness to participate i... pants' mental health... mental health progra...

Social Media as Social Transition Machinery

OLIVER L. HAIMSON, University of Michigan School of Information, USA

Social media, and people's online self-presentations and social networks, add complexity to people's experiences managing changing identities during life transitions. I use gender transition as a case study to understand how people experience liminality on social media. I qualitatively analyzed data from transition blogs on Tumblr (*n*=240), a social media blogging site on which people document their gender transitions, and in-depth interviews with transgender bloggers (*n*=20). I apply ethnographer van Gennep's liminality framework to a social media context and contribute a new understanding of liminality by arguing that reconstructing one's online identity during life transitions is a rite of passage. During life transitions, people present multiple identities simultaneously on different social media sites that together comprise what I call *social transition machinery*. Social transition machinery describes the ways that, for people facing life transitions, multiple social media sites and networks often remain separate, yet work together to facilitate life transitions.

Social Technologies for Digital Wellbeing among Marginalized Communities

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Online Social Support Alleviates Risk of Suicidal Ideation

Why does no one like me? (self.depression)

9 submitted 13 hours ago by [redacted]

> I feel invisible so often; like an extra in a movie, always on the sidelines. I don't have any genuine friends, just acquaintances. And not even just friends, I haven't had a genuine conversation with anyone of the opposite gender in years. The worst part is that I delude myself into thinking I have a chance with people who are out of my league. I just feel so alone.

5 **comments   share**

[–] **badasset312**   3 points 12 hours ago

This post very relatable to me as well. Feel better friend, I'm rooting for you.

permalink   embed

[–] **emb13**   4 points 12 hours ago

i am in a similar situation, i have 0 friends because of pretty awful social anxiety. i have no one to do things with, so i am completely depressed and bored with life right now. i'd like to think things will get better someday, but i've been saying that to myself for years. at least we're alone together ¯_(ツ)_/¯

permalink   embed

HOW FACEBOOK MAKES US UNHAPPY

By **Maria Konnikova**   September 10, 2013

Ellison et al. also found that Facebook usage was found to interact with measures of psychological well-being. How does it contrast with the perception of today that Facebook makes people depressed?

No one joins Facebook to be sad and lonely. But a new study from the University of Michigan psychologist Ethan Kross argues that that's exactly how it makes us feel. Over two weeks, Kross and his colleagues sent text messages to eighty-two Ann Arbor residents five times per day. The researchers wanted to know a few things: how their subjects felt overall, how worried and lonely they were, how much they had used Facebook, and how often they had had direct interaction with others since the previous text message. Kross found that the more people used Facebook in the time between the two texts, the less happy they felt—and the more their overall satisfaction declined from the beginning of the study until its end. The data, he argues, shows that Facebook was making them unhappy.

Research into the alienating nature of the Internet—and Facebook in particular—supports Kross's conclusion. In 1998, Robert Kraut, a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University, found that the more people used the Web, the lonelier and more depressed they felt. After people went online for the first time, their sense of happiness and social connectedness dropped, over one to two years, as a function of how often they used the Internet.

Lawmakers confront TikTok, Snapchat and YouTube about eating disorder content

Amanda Silberling @asilbwrites / 7:08 PM EDT • October 26, 2021

CNN BUSINESS

Markets Tech Media Success Perspectives Videos

Instagram promoted pages glorifying eating disorders to teen accounts

By Donie O'Sullivan, Clare Duffy and Sarah Jorgensen, CNN Business
Updated 7:28 PM EDT, Mon October 4, 2021

The New York Times

Parents Sue TikTok, Saying Children Died After Viewing 'Blackout Challenge'

The suit, involving girls ages 8 and 9, claims TikTok knew or should have known that its product was "addictive" and was directing children to dangerous content.

CULTURAL COMMENT

NETFLIX AND SUICIDE: THE DISTURBING EXAMPLE OF "13 REASONS WHY"

By Stephen Marche
May 6, 2019

Instagram, Snapchat, TikTok Cause Mental Health Problems in Teens, Lawsuits Claim

The plaintiffs take aim at social media platforms' product features, alleging that the companies amplify dangerous content that prioritizes engagement over safety.
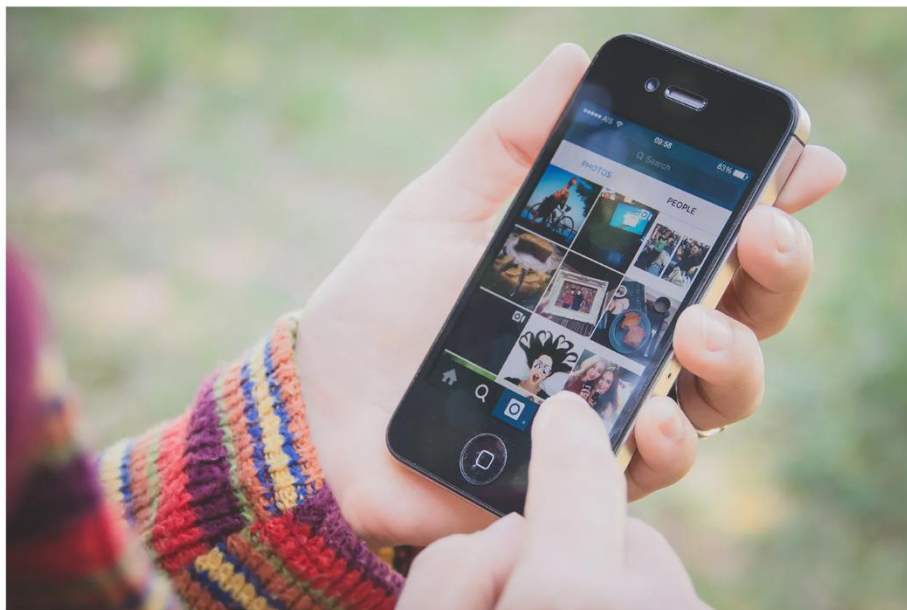
BY WINSTON CHO   AUGUST 18, 2022 3:18PM

EMILY REYNOLDS   BUSINESS   14.03.2016 04:04 PM

Instagram's pro-anorexia ban made the problem worse

Is it possible to reconcile these two sets of contrasting findings?

Does algorithmic design impact how people derive benefits from social capital? E.g., curation of items on the News Feed

Social influence – a critical construct of social networks

Why are certain things more contagious than others?
Why are certain things more popular or catchy?
How does the social network facilitate such contagion?

The
TIPPING
POINT

MALCOLM
GLADWELL

What is the Tipping Point?

That magic moment when an idea, trend or social behavior crosses, tips and spreads like wildfire.

Is she worth $10,000 per tweet? Kim Kardashian earns big money using her Twitter account to advertise to her 2million fans

f **Share**   🐦   📌   g+   ⌸

💬**17**

View comments

Some might question her apparent celebrity status, however Kim Kardashian certainly seems to have acquired some pulling power.

According to a report out this week, the U.S. socialite allegedly commands up to $10,000 (£6,300) for every tweet she posts on her Twitter account as part of her contract with in-stream advertising company Ad.ly.

Kim, 29, is the highest earner on the company's books and the most popular on their roster of celebrity tweeters.

Your Facebook Posts Will Probably Go Viral if You Follow These 5 Steps

FACEBOOK

Share 115   Tweet 32   Share 93

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Aaron Lee

Aaron Lee is the Founder of AskAaronLee.com & ShortofHeight.com, a fashion blog that shares style for short men. Follow him on Twitter at @askaaronlee

Do you want your Facebook posts to go viral?

Of course you do.

Who wouldn't want to dramatically increase the reach of their posts?!

QUIZ: Which of these Facebook photos went viral?

Everyone's an Influencer: Quantifying Influence on Twitter

02-01-08 | CHANGE AGENTS

Is the Tipping Point Toast?

Marketers spend a billion dollars a year targeting influentials. Duncan Watts says they're wasting their money.

BY CLIVE THOMPSON   LONG READ

Don't get Duncan Watts started on the Hush Puppies. "Oh, God," he groans when the subject comes up. "Not them." The Hush Puppies in question are the ones that kick off *The Tipping Point*, Malcolm Gladwell's best-seller about how trends work. As Gladwell tells it, the fuzzy footwear was a dying brand by late 1994–until a few New York hipsters brought it back from the brink. Other fashionistas followed suit, whereupon the cool kids copied them, the less-cool kids copied them, and so on, until, voilà! Within two years, sales of Hush Puppies had exploded by a stunning 5,000%, without a penny spent on advertising. All because, as Gladwell puts it, a tiny number of superinfluential types ("Twenty? Fifty? One hundred–at the most?") began wearing the shoes.

Summary

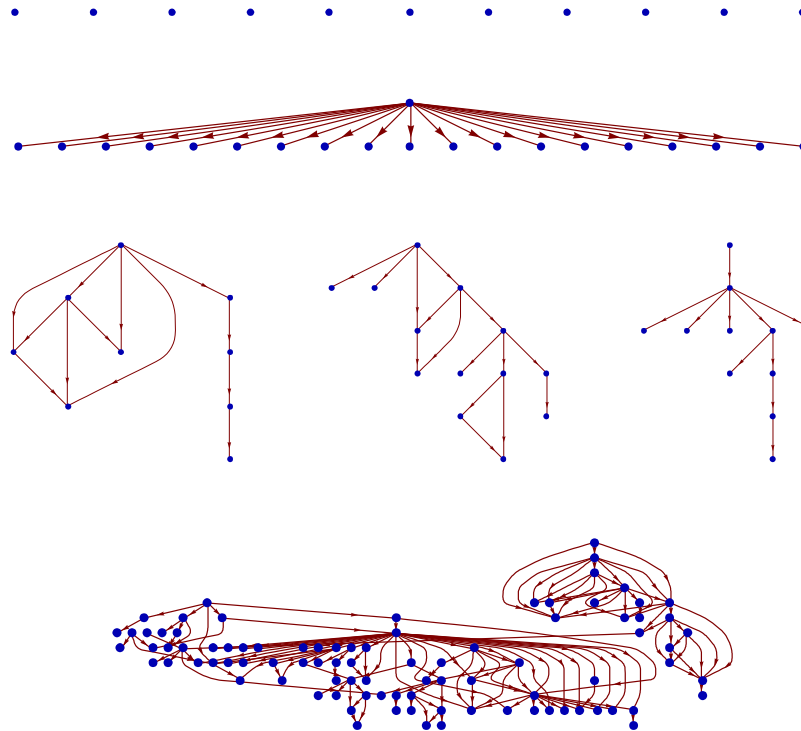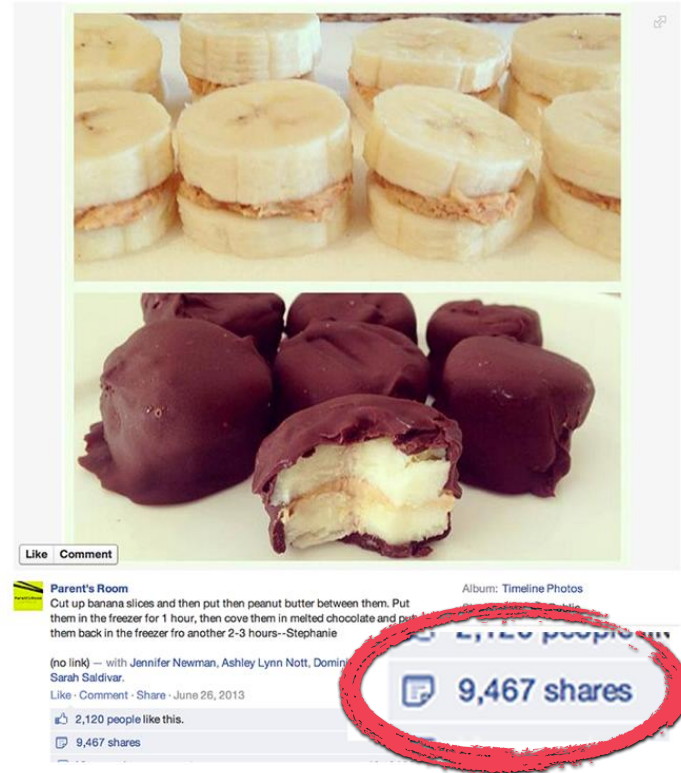- Diffusion of URLs on Twitter
  - Easy to be traced back to the originating user through the follower graph

Difficulty #1 Large cascades are rare

Difficulty #2 Same content, different popularity

What intuition may explain why large number of followers does not necessarily imply greater influence?

Team Matchmaking

Speed Dating Themes

T1 – Social Media and Mental Health / Well-Being
T2 – Generative AI, NLP, and Language-Centered Analysis
T3 – Online Harm, Moderation, and Platform Governance
T4 – Platform-Specific or Comparative Social Media Studies
T5 – Networks, Communities, and Social Structure
T6 – Exploratory / Open-Ended / Data-Driven