

Running Head: Minding the Gap

Minding the Gap: A Discourse Analysis on Corporate and Adolescent
Users on Snapchat

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Abstract

This MRP investigates popular discourses within commercial social media. Through examining Snapchat, this MRP suggests that there are two main influences that dictate the cultural language used within the Snapchat community – the adolescent user and the corporate user. By applying Gee’s Discourse Analysis Tools (Gee, 2014), this MRP seeks to understand how both users demonstrate their co-constructed cultural language proficiencies by constructing multimodal texts and provide discussion that explains for what purposes that language is used. This MRP has found that there are clear neoliberal influences that may shape adolescent identity formation. However, adolescents also demonstrate that they are just as influential towards the larger meaning making of cultural language within their community. Understanding the adolescent perspective is important, because they are the group who have grown up with social media. (Joosten, 2012) Therefore, the insights that they have may have are valuable when attempting to understand the impact that social media has on their process of meaning making. Juxtaposing both the adolescent and corporate user, this MRP intends to show effective uses of social media and how each user uses their competency to construct and re-construct meaning based on their goals. Providing this perspective will in turn allow educators to reflect upon their practice, and hopefully gain insights to using the innate abilities of adolescents, in addition to re-appropriating techniques currently used by neoliberal influences to conversely benefit adolescent learning.

Keywords: social media, adolescents, Snapchat, neoliberalism, language

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Chapter One: Introduction: Understanding Adolescent Social Media Use

Introduction

Social media has reinvented the process of information. As technology has developed, information has become widely accessible, raising the issue of how one processes that information. Instead of using social media to develop a wide range of sources in order to inform the average citizen and widen our communal understanding, social media has enabled citizens to become isolated (Kent, 2015), therefore limiting the range of information they consume. However, this is not the only narrative that is possible. Research has shown that interactions within social media platforms, however small or menial, have sometimes resulted in positive emotions and feelings of closer bonds (Bayer et al., 2016). This paradoxical juxtaposition between building stronger relationships and isolation caused by social media is one element of social media framing of information. This paper seeks to understand in full the different influences that have constructed modern social media.

Defining Terms

In this following section, I hope to explain the key terms from my perspective, and detail how I intend on using them. The importance of defining terms is of the highest necessity when applying them to a topic. Clearly understanding how the writer is using a specific, and oftentimes loaded, term shows where that writer is coming from, and creates an understanding between reader and writer. Therefore, the following terms are how I have perceived these terms determined by the various sources that I have come across.

Neoliberalism

The relationship between the emphasis on the individual actor, free enterprise and the system of competition (Ganti, 2014) define the concept of neoliberalism. The relationship between neoliberalism and adolescents, using Snapchat as a frame, is at times concerning because corporate entities are able to espouse neoliberal concepts such as individualism, competition and a free market of ideas within their products (Charteris, Gregory & Masters, 2018), which in turn have a direct impact in the formation of adolescents' identities (Walther et al., 2011). Neoliberalism is commonly associated with consumerism and the obtainment of capital. The research examining the space in between neoliberal influence on social media platforms and that social media may cause risk due to extended use (Griffiths & Kuss, 2017) is limited but can be a cause for concern. In addition, the fact that highly impressionable people are exposed to technology that has not been extensively understood regarding identity formation may result in negative outcomes, further raising the level of concern. Studies that have examined the formation of adolescent identity suggest that social media plays a large role within peer-cultures (Mascheroni, Vincent and Jiminez, 2015). Regardless, one of the main goals of education is for adolescents to create their own meaning and gain a better understanding about the world they inhabit, as my argument suggests. Dewey (1916) and other researchers (Brent, 2010) share this view, termed, "democratic education", is juxtaposed with the concept of a neoliberal-based of education steered by capitalist, market-driven intents. The aim of this study is not to demonize neoliberalism, but to understand specifically how neoliberal-driven social media networks (can) interact with education. Through the limitation of ideas, neoliberalism appropriates discourses traditionally used to encourage democratically free education and deviates those concepts for other uses (Sardoc, 2018). While the concern for neoliberal

influences appropriating democratic discourses may question how effective social media can be for promoting a democratic education, it is important to note that while neoliberal discourses have appropriated different concepts, it has also offered researchers an almost limitless amount of data to observe and to ask questions, supporting the purpose of this research.

However, core principles of neoliberalism are necessary to allow for greater economic growth. The factors that allow the ideology to thrive are also rooted within colonial notions of power and marginalization. When discussing the critical elements of language and power, Prodan (2013) asserts that “education indoctrinates students by intended placing to each of them on a predetermined social role and the exclusion of the curriculum of the current problems of society: relationships between races, violence, economic and political control” (p. 351). The emphasis that this paper places on language is two-fold; as a means to understand better its role in community building. Additionally, this paper aims to understand better those embedded biases that adolescents have to grapple with. The issue, as Prodan suggests, is that it deems knowledge common. The disregard and ignorance for particular facts are often set aside in favour for other widely taught information. Although schooling has the power to replicate a set goal and view on the world, problems arise when a dominant culture designs teaching curriculum. The representation of non-dominant cultures is an inevitable outcome of how power dynamics operate in a hegemonic system. However, just as social media has the potential to be framed under the ideologies of a dominant culture, it can also tell a limitless number of stories that provide everyone with the ability to create meaning (Wargo, 2015). The rapid communication of ideas, whether beneficial or otherwise, offers possibilities for learning how the world functions, as well as from each other and as a platform that emphasizes the global

connectivity brought forth by what social media can offer, Snapchat becomes a highly favourable platform to study.

The relationship between neoliberalism and education, in relation to social media, is that by not understanding the language and functions, corporate entities are further commodifying social media (Brabham, 2015) as a way for students to become better consumers and creators (Noor Al-Deen, 2016), rather than as tool for learning and understanding. This is clear when thinking about the macro level repercussions that neoliberalism is creating within the social spheres in education. Macdonald anticipates (Sardoč, 2018) the problem that “[a]s culture becomes increasingly commercialized, the only type of citizenship that adult society offers to children is that of consumerism” (2003, p. 146). Considering this paper’s original premises on social media as a communication tool with high effectiveness potential, and to foster community, Macdonald warns that the neoliberal monopoly within the cultural sphere of Western society is problematic. He also notes that within education “[y]oung people’s interaction with the curriculum is becoming like that of a consumer and a product” (Macdonald, 2003, p. 146). Further expanding this problem, Kotfila (2014) suggests that companies have tapped into the desire for short-term information and the ability to discard this information, introduces obscurity into a historically consistent concept of information. When examining these assertions at a macro level after secondary and post-secondary, education one must abide by the neoliberal discourse established by the dominant culture within a society. This pathway towards consumption, although cautionary, is only one path that social media can take. Research and analysis will provide a better understanding of how social media is currently being used and will forge a new pathway.

Ephemeral communication

One of the key considerations posed when defining neoliberalism's place in social media is the fact that users consume information for a limited time before discarding it. Within the literature on social media, the use of the term 'ephemeral communication' describes this phenomenon. Ephemeral, as used within the current body of research, is typically related to other forms of communication. Face-to-face conversations (Bayer et al., 2016) for instance, are ephemeral due to the lack of records regarding the content of those dialogues. Asynchronous communication has also been associated with this term when describing social media (Bell, 2019; Bayer et al., 2016) as individuals do not have to share the same physical space while communicating. This form of communication has also created avenues for adolescent Snapchat users to interact privately with others undetected by the panoptic gaze of individuals outside of their online community, such as parents or teachers (Charteris, Gregory & Masters, 2018; Utz et al., 2015). Adolescents in social media build another community using ephemeral communication. This raises questions regarding the formation in plain sight of exclusive cultures and like-minded communities within social media, completely oblivious to those who are not within those social spheres. This MRP intends to answer those questions using Bernstein et al.'s (2011) findings when observing the anonymous and, also ephemeral, social media website 4chan. The research team discovered that the "community has developed alternative credibility mechanisms — via language and images — that still function effectively" (Bernstein et al., 2011, p. 51). Users have created a community built on language practices that let each other know who part of the culture is and who is not, despite remaining anonymous, ephemeral, and without guidance. These intersections will allow for this MRP to further substantiate how Snapchat is

also able to accomplish these goals regarding belonging but will also provide a better understanding of the way adolescents process these ideas.

The use of James Paul Gee's Discourse analysis will be the framework to question how using language to better understand how social media frames information. The definition of Discourse analysis is "the study of language at use in the world, not just to say things, but also to do things" (Gee, 2014, p.1). Shifting the focus to language being an active entity (rather than a passive one) will frame this analysis. The analysis of adolescents is the main group in this MRP. This MRP will focus on how the adolescent community has interacted with social media because of their immersion with social media, which has led to a high proficiency level. (Joosten, 2012) Due to this context, adolescents are less inhibited by other factors that may have impacted their perceptions of social media. Since they have been born into a context where social media has become their norm, in addition to becoming adept users, they become an excellent population to study when examining the language used in social media in its most true form. Finally, this paper will focus on the social media platform Snapchat as an example of social media. Adolescents use it far more than other social networks. (Griffiths & Kuss, 2017) As noted by Smith (2019), over 203 million people use the platform daily. Grieve (2017) also suggests that "it may have the potential to act as a powerful communication tool" (p. 131). However, corporations are acutely aware of adolescent use of social media (Charteris, Gregory & Masters, 2018), therefore communication via social media must consider the neoliberal perspective. Applying Gee's Discourse analysis tools to virtual spaces, such as Snapchat, offers new ways of looking at how adolescents communicate and how corporations infiltrate these communicative spaces.

Gee's Discourse analysis encourages a query-based model in which the analyst derives answer from the data by asking questions about the text at hand (Gee, 2014). The responses to

the queries help the analyst construct a framework that highlights how different linguistic concepts relate to one another, while raising further questions throughout the process. The thought of this procedure as an internal journey, allowing educators to call upon their own experiences to guide their practice while challenging the social construct and understanding of knowledge. Similarly, Discourse analysis may encourage educators to have students call upon their own experience to navigate past and current experiences while using social networks (Patton & Prince, 2018). Social media is inextricably embedded within this fluid notion of understanding and communication, and by critically examining the language that is currently being used, these networking tools can be understood from a fundamental level.

Social networks, the internet, mobile devices, augmented reality, and immersive worlds have transformed how educators must think about education (Vanwynsberghe & Verdegem, 2013). Technology can allow for lenses to become created and refocused due to the benefits it offers. Therefore, the readjustment of those lenses by educators can shift how educators think about their practices with the influx of new ideas – focusing specifically in the realm of language for the purposes of this MRP. Preliminary research by Grieve (2017) regarding the characteristics of Snapchat users, advocates for a greater emphasis on communication and linguistics. Therefore, the aim of this MRP is to identify discursive constructs throughout social media communications through a language lens. By applying Gee's tools (2014), the use of this Discourse analysis framework to analyse Snapchat specifically attempts to understand how social networks are used in each tool. The tools that Gee shares are fitting for this purpose, as they push the analyst to “pay attention to the minutiae of the language in use while simultaneously tying these details to what the participants’ mean, intend, and seek to do and accomplish in the world by the way in which they have used language” (Jackson & Seiler,

2018). The focus on the use of language is what is especially significant, because this terming denotes that language represents an observable action, rather than an abstraction of meaning. Understanding how adolescents communicate with one another, and homing in on the language used, can allow for greater discoveries when considering the effectiveness of a social media user.

Social media relates to culture in an inextricable bond, one that has permeated the physical and virtual boundaries (boyd, 2007). However, it is important to note that, like in the physical world, dominant cultures also exist within the online realm, and can dictate the core values that culture members (or communities) typically follow. This can be harmful within the education context, because of the colonial ideologies deeply rooted within education systems that inherently traverse into social media (Schubert, 2018). By examining the language of social media, framing where each platform fits within the entertainment and efficacious spectrum (Kist, 2010) will be more accurate. Accomplishing this feat is complex because, inherently, culture is a subjective construct that represents a group or individual. However, as Gill suggests, “[a] paradoxical aspect of the current ‘critical’ writing on this topic is that [this tool] reduces culture to a mere epiphenomenon, rather than seeing it as a collection of practices that can and do have real, material effects” (2008). This paper will therefore use the premise that culture is indeed important. The application of Gee’s discourse tools while dissecting language use in social media cultures will allow for a better understanding of how language interacts with communication and the foments the creation of cultures. It is therefore imperative to understand that adolescent use of social media has a direct impact on our understanding of online networking tools because they are the progenitors of internet culture. As Kist suggests through the first chapter’s title in ‘The socially networked classroom’, “The Writing is on the Screen: Social Networking is Here to Stay” (2010, p. 1).

Research Problem Statement

A trend in the research within the topic, is to focus on the phenomenological moments that adolescents experience within social media and draw conclusions based on their experiences, and thereby helping researchers establish how these experiences fit within different themes (Bell, 2019). This MRP explore the lack of theoretical insights offered in the study of social media relating to both a neoliberal lens, as well as understanding how adolescents communicate with one another. As an extension of this framework, this paper's problem statement stems from multiple sources that suggest the need for: deeper theoretical insights (Brabham, 2015), a larger amount of perspectives that highlight the role of consumer socialisation in (Bell, 2019), as well as a call for understanding the "utility of Snapchat as a source of social capital" (Grieve, 2017, p. 136). Also, to further extend on the gaps that have been noted in current research, one smaller aim that this MRP seeks to better understand why Snapchat is an important communication network for adolescents to extend the current research on how social media is used to communicate with one another. To do so, it is important to analyse examples of this social media tool using theory to explain how it is practiced. (Farley-Ripple, 2018) While adolescents have an advantage as they were raised while these online resources were introduced and consolidated, research suggests that there is still a clear distinction between using social media and using it effectively (Noor Al-Deen, 2016). The main assumption when understanding social media, is that some research has suggested that current research has not fully understood (Grieve, 2017) the use of new methods of adolescent communication within the current digital revolution (Poore, 2013). This dynamic shift away from an industrial model of education into one that could embrace a globalized world, is one that needs to be carefully examined and understood in order to create new best practices. To successfully embrace the

innovation within communication, language and community it is important to define the language of the discussion that is occurring online.

In sum, these results sparked the two core questions that this paper aims to answer: (1) How do Snapchat users, both adolescents and corporations, rely on identities, popular discourses and the use of language to propagate culture to construct multimodal texts?; and (2) For what purpose are these multimodal texts communicated, comparing adolescent and corporate use?

Setting the Stage

The main issue education confronts is the clash between the world of the industrial era and the reality students face in the new digital era. While social media in general can be used as a tool to promote interaction between people (Brown, Krusteva & Ranieri, 2016), Snapchat in particular has shown the ability to “enhance ‘strong’ emotional ties with friends, partners and family” (Piwek & Joinson, 2016, p. 364). A thorough examination of this new digital era must be done to better conceptualize what it means to be an effective user of social media. Properly accounting for the transitions that take place within education benefits this transition. By understanding the different stages of transitions, and the key role dissonance plays when dealing with transitions (Bridges, 2003), we can better tackle the precarious understanding of social media. The purpose of this paper is to contribute to an understanding of the language adolescents use to communicate in Snapchat. Through understanding how communications functions, educators can better understand the importance of language within different forms. An examination of how adolescents view social media is necessary to properly assess the language used. The application of these insights can better understand social media and how it can benefit educative practices. In doing so, the practices that educators can develop from social media are

applicable to real-life problem solving. This would support John Dewey's unfulfilled legacy in which education is not preparation for life; education is life itself (1916, p. 239), thereby moving one step closer to attaining a more democratic state of education.

The following chapters will further discuss the relationships that language and social media have when applied to an adolescent population. In Chapter 2, I will discuss the current field of research that is examining adolescent social media use. In addition, I will be defining important cultural definitions as an introduction to the field that will offer a better foundational understanding. Following, I will be discussing Gee's Discourse analysis and how it will be used more in depth. Finally, I will offer some suggested themes and pose a direction that this MRP will seek to push forward to. In Chapter 3, I will be examining two sets of images taken from Snapchat's Discover tab and applying various Tools noted in Gee's process of Discourse analysis. Noting Chapter 2, in Chapter 3, the description of each tool, then describing each Figure, followed by the analysis, will allow this MRP to provide its observations on the topic. In Chapter 4, I will be taking the observations gained in Chapter 3 and discussing the relevant themes that have been brought up in Chapter 2. This chapter will seek to define and identify the discursive constructs throughout social media communications through a language lens and pose why those are important to understanding adolescents and education. In Chapter 5, I will be putting my concluding thoughts, limitations and suggestions for further research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review: Social Media and Snapchat in Education

Discourse Analysis and Social Media: Introduction

This study aims to provide a different perspective towards social media, focusing on how adolescents communicate with one another, and how they create meaning as a community. To accomplish this goal, this chapter will: (a) examine current literature on social media; (b) review several studies that use Gee's model of Discourse analysis; and, (c) describe and define the application of Discourse analysis. Discourse analysis investigates the choices that we (researchers, educators, discourse analysts, etc.) make when speak or write, as well as choices that we choose not to take, by focusing on the use of language (Gee, 2018). By applying this method of analysis on language and writing, this study will critically observe how current research is discussing Snapchat and will also examine the core building blocks of how language used. This is important due to the rapid evolution of social media, as well as the advancement in communication formats. Since communication is currently moving at an increasing rate—even within generations— (Kist, 2010), understanding the foundational nature of how Snapchat (and other social media) works, becomes increasingly imperative.

Chapter 2 will focus on providing the background information necessary to better understand the importance of applying the Discourse Tools to Snapchat. The first part would be assessing the current state of social media research done within the field of education. The main points to focus on are how are adolescents interacting with one another using social media, how researchers view social media as a possible educative tool, and the issues that arise when viewing the current state of social media within a neoliberal lens. Following, the final aspect touched on, relating to social media, is the concept of a meme and its use as a tool to communicate cultural

phenomena. Moving forward, this Chapter then seeks to explain what Gee's Discourse analysis entails and seeks to accomplish. Through explaining this process, with the assistance of noting other studies that have used discourse analysis, this section hopes to bring the reader to an understanding of what Discourse Analysis is, and why it is useful for understanding language.

The remainder of the chapter will be split into two parts examining the literature on social media, as well as discourse analysis respectively. As both are important aspects of this MRP, the inclusion within this chapter are necessary, however distinct enough to warrant their own sections. Part one will examine the literature on social media, establishing a basic understanding of where the current literature views social media, the cultural aspects of online culture, and how social media relates to the process of discourse analysis. The second part will be focusing on explaining Gee's application and definition of Discourse analysis, as it is imperative to understand how the tools that he defines have been used and how they will be used in Chapter 3.

Part 1: Social Media

The current research focuses on basic uses of social media including: digital literacy (Brown et al., 2016); basic understandings of the different mediums available (Poore, 2013); overview of key elements within the connectivity of social media (Joosten, 2012); or its uses as a preparatory tool for the market (Noor Al-Deen, 2016). This literature suggests that researchers are coming to terms with the concept of the incorporation of social media within education, but not as synonymous with education. As Noor Al-Deen (2016) notes, this is problematic because "some in academia are failing to note the difference between teaching social media and teaching the application of social media because digital natives already have the former skill set" (p. 57-58). However, a conflict arises when thinking about the concept of the digital native, as digital nativity should not be associated with chronological age (Bennett & Maton, 2010), but it should

rather regard adolescent proficiency with the continual use of these mediums (Charteris, Gregory & Masters, 2018). Another risk factor that this study will attempt to dissuade is suggesting that the removal from these adolescent communities is detrimental, as it allows adolescents an opportunity to form their identities (Walther et al., 2011). Fullan and Donnelly support this concept as they state that “the vast amount of digital energy will be devoted to trying to figure out how to access online student data, not trying to maximize deep learning” (2015, p. 16). Research should focus on observing the interactions of adolescents from a distance, as they shape their identities and rely on one another while discussing their personal growth, rather than necessarily becoming a part of these communities or using the data for accountability measures.

To better situate this study’s focus on Snapchat, it needs to be paired with current research done on social media. Though current research on Snapchat is limited (Grieve, 2017; Piwek & Joinson, 2016; Utz et al., 2015), this paper will demonstrate its strong educational benefits. By examining Snapchat, this paper will further the understanding on different forms of social media and how this specific platform is used, shedding light on its importance for comprehending adolescent communication and social media consumption. It is important to note that while this research suggests that adolescent use of Snapchat is rather important, it will also examine the day to day interactions within social media realms through Discourse Analysis (Brabham, 2015), as Snapchat is favoured by adolescents due to the day-to-day interactions (Bayer et al., 2016). This research aims to embrace mundane communications, as these are essential in the establishment of online cultures and allow for a personal understanding of the way adolescents think and feel within the present moment. A study conducted on social media use within a library reports that “[a] recent report from eMarketer reveals Snapchat to be the most popular social network among internet-using teens aged between twelve and seventeen, at

16.4 million users” (Alfonzo, 2019, p. 14). This further emphasizes the shift away from previously studied social media platforms, such as Facebook (Grieve, 2017) or Twitter (Noor Al-Deen, 2016) in this demographic group. This trend is not an anomaly and will increase as newer generations start to regularly use social media and navigate the advances in technology (Mascheroni, Vincent & Jiminez, 2015). To comprehend changes in the ever-evolving technological revolution, it is necessary to focus on one technology and ask questions regarding its operation. By applying Gee’s tools on adolescent culture found in Snapchat’s Discover tab, this research intends to gain a greater appreciation on the formation of this online community and how language plays a role in its development.

Literature review of social media

As previously mentioned, research on social media within academia is in its early stages. It is important to note that literature in the field is not hypothesizing about the future benefits of social media anymore. While Hales’ (2000) article discussed how technology *could* assist in gaining greater citizenship (p. 7), research now focuses on how practitioners *are* using technology, instead (Knudsen, 2018). Though a mastery of the tools needed is mandatory to fully understand social media, “it becomes important to develop an awareness regarding the importance and the consequences of creating and sharing content over the network, that is, regarding the development of digital literacies” (Brown et al., 2016, p. 145). Proficiency in these tools will also help to critically define the greater goal of social media. Developing literacy and citizenship, while building higher intellectual capacity, are the main goals that educators experimenting with social media should strive towards.

A portion of the literature in the field discusses how social media can further promote social justice and its use by critical pedagogues. The use of social media as a tool to increase engagement and interactions with others seems to have value. Current practitioners believe that social media could connect people together and allow for greater intellectual discovery and civic development. Tuzel and Hobbs (2017) note that social media has proven effective to combat and reduce prejudice, while promoting intercultural acceptance and tolerance. This finding indicates that social media has an even greater ability to connect people (Poore, 2013) not only within a physical classroom, but within a greater schema of a 'globalized classroom' or a global virtual community. The literature shows that connectivity is just the beginning, and those who can effectively utilize social media will help develop greater methods of communication. Furthermore, social media may bring out the most genuine features through our interactions, as one cannot fully experience the benefits of social media without interacting and adhering to the larger community in an authentic way (Joosten, 2012). Although brief, the exploration of authenticity with social media has shown promise, therefore this study aims to shed greater light on this topic by discussing culture, connectivity and social interactions using Discourse analysis. Under this method, reconceptualizing social media within a less binary focus may allow to discover that the gap between the artificiality of technology and the authenticity generated by the interactions that compose humanity, is an opportunity for further discovery. As social media becomes further entrenched within adolescent communications (and in turn, community building), future generations enjoy benefits.

Memes in online culture

In Shifman's article entitled, *An anatomy of a Youtube meme*, he describes memes as "ideas, symbols or practices formed in diverse incarnations, such as melodies, catch-phrases, clothing fashion or architectural styles. While some memes are global, others are more culture specific, shaping collective actions and mindsets." (Shifman, 2012, p. 189)

Computer freezes
Me: *opens task manager*
Computer unfreezes



Figure 6 – Example of a Meme

Classically constructed memes are built in the same way that most comedy is made set-up, then punch line. Heading, then sub-heading. The sharing of cultural experiences is what defines the humour within the meme. In this case, the creator of this meme is seeking to connect with others who share the same frustration that they do with an unresponsive computer. This experience within the heading is remixed with an applicable culturally relevant quote from the HBO series, *Game of Thrones*, expressing how the creator (and those who share it) felt about the unresponsive computer. The format turns a relatable situation into humour, which is the essence of the meme format and why the concept of a meme has thrived within internet culture – the connectivity and communicative essence directed by language. The purpose of this small preamble is to set up the expectation that the format of how users share experiences, through memes, has been localized within the Snapchat format in order to effectively share information using the language co-created by the users of the internet.

Snapchat and the scope of the discourse analysis

This paper aims to analyze Snapchat by engaging with social media as a globalized phenomenon, rather than focusing on person-to-person communications. Therefore, the Discourse analysis conducted will focus on the greater engagement tool of Snapchat: the Discover tab. As Snap Inc. defines, in this tab “you’ll find a growing list of recommended Stories from publishers and creators you don’t subscribe to yet, Sponsored Stories, and Stories from our community around the world” (Snap Inc., 2019). The platform draws on user’s data better curate what they can view, to best suit their interests. For the sake of this study, I am using my personal Snapchat account to view the Discover tab.¹ For the purposes of this Discourse

¹ I can attest to having used Snapchat to view a magic school bus-esque educational video on STD’s prior to embarking on this academic pursuit.

analysis, three articles —or ‘Snaps’— (pieces of media found on Snapchat) from the Discover tab will be used. Since content in Snapchat is ephemeral in nature² (Bartels, 2017), it is crucial to remark that the Snaps examined in this study are only relevant (and available) at the time of writing this paper. As Bernstein et al. (2011) suggest in their observations on ephemeral communication, these are advantageous because the community acts as a self-filtering device in which members need to remember core cultural components in order to repost or reframe those ideas to keep in within the collective consciousness. Contrary to research in other areas, which usually focuses on lasting pieces of research-based information to validate findings, this temporal limitation acts as a further impetus to examine information from their components rather than as an aggregate of meaning.

The strengths that social media platforms offer when analyzing language is the fact that they resemble the benefits of previous studies done on social media, as well as develop new ways of contextualizing language (Grace & Kemp, 2015). What remains true throughout social media platforms, is that they act as spaces that allow participants to foster community while using communication formats unprecedented up until the current era. The establishment within a short span of time is beneficial because it builds greater connection. (Kist, 2010) These virtual worlds allow participants to explore, engage, and discuss in real time with as many people that choose to contribute (Brown et al., 2016). The maximization of the level of participation with the newest and most popular platforms, allows the nurturing of a collective community vision (Charteris, Gregory & Masters 2018; O’Connor et al., 2015). These platforms maximize the use of language as the interaction of visual and textual communicative elements work together to convey meaning, as “one mode is not privileged over the other. This is not something that has

² Articles are automatically deleted shortly after viewing them.

been present before in popular social media technologies” (Bartels, 2017, p. 91). The fluid nature in social media platforms remains, as Snapchat captures the casual daily conversations (Alfonzo, 2019), but also has the ability to create a framework allowing for one larger narrative to form keeping the different, seemingly fragmented, pieces of the medium together. Observing the fluidity of these platforms through a linguistic lens, while also considering communicative effectiveness, is important because it demonstrates how versatile social media has become. Adolescents have identified that they use social media primarily for “distraction and procrastination; keeping in touch with friends; and seeing what people are up to” (Grieve, 2017, p. 131). This further demonstrates the untapped potential that social media offers for educational researchers, and the necessity to better understand the intricacies of social media. As shown by Grieve (2017), adolescents are primarily using social media purely for entertainment purposes, and while this is important for their social development, the incorporation of more effective uses of the medium may be brought into fruition.

Part 2: Discourse Analysis

Applying discourse analysis

There is a necessity for asking questions when the subject matter of a topic is within its early stages. In using Gee’s discourse tools, this research hopes to ask these questions to adopt an adolescent perspective and assist adolescents in understanding social media itself (Fiano, 2014). Therefore, it becomes important for educators to take a new perspective when it comes to new social media technologies. When discussing the current climate of social media in education, Fullan and Donnelly (2015) express that access to technology will not be the issue, but learning will be. However, this is true for most of technology. The main premise to consider, is that

current analysts in the field of Web-based teaching and learning are “neither neo-Luddites nor dystopians. Rather, they are concerned pedagogues who are asking critical questions about both the form and content of [the research field]” (Cole, 2000, p. xii). The objective when applying educator’s understanding of social media to research and the classroom becomes a task of seeking the questions that need to be asked rather than figuring out the method of application. Altogether, by using Gee’s Discourse analysis on adolescent interactions using Snapchat, this paper hopes to garner a better understanding of the landscape of adolescent social media use and identify any learning opportunities. It is important to note that social media resources are “places where people share; everybody and anybody can share anything anywhere anytime” (Joosten, 2012, p. 14). This suggests that everyone can effectively use social media and bridge the gap of understanding.

Gee’s discourse analysis defined

Discourse analysis is the process of critically examining the language used in a form of communication and understanding the biases that formed those thoughts, while stating what is not typically acknowledged. Gee’s work on Discourse analysis has led many researchers to better understand the formation of language and its implementation (Heil, 2015; Rogers, 2002; Shook, 2018); and has also instigated this study to better understand social media under a modern lens. The interesting connection between social media and Discourse analysis is the leading role that culture plays in defining the two. Gee suggests, as he examines culture, that the perspectives that guide human’s interpretation of the world is rooted within each person’s cultural and social backgrounds, forming the Discourses that dictate how we relate to any specific situation (2018). This rationale further substantiates how Gee’s tools (Fully defined in the following Chapter) can effectively dredge up social media’s deep roots within modern culture. Due to the rise of digital

communications in societies (Fullan and Donnelly, 2015), social media has become entrenched in cultures (Noor Al-Deen, 2016). As we unravel the relation between social media and culture, it becomes increasingly important to thoroughly understand the impact of social media in education.

Identity and identity shaping are not new concepts emerging from the rise of social media platforms. Adolescents have always grappled with identity formation, and social media becomes yet another space to do so. Jackson and Seiler (2018) note in their study on individuals with identity construction challenges, that “identification is a continual negotiation between individuals and social contexts” (p. 764). The self-reflective nature of this finding shows how Discourse analysis focuses on understanding the individual’s situated context, but within a constantly changing environment. The nature of Discourse analysis is like social media, since they both are extremely flexible in the understanding of communications. Instead of observing the meaning that each person gains, understanding meaning through each interaction, with both people cooperatively producing the product (Grieve, 2017). This cooperation between different individuals is especially important within a schooling context. As Varbelow (2012) notes, the necessity of a recursive process between students and teachers is necessary in order to truly have a rich curriculum that would offer “those who construct it, namely students and teachers together, the chance “to transform (it) and be transformed” (p. 93). Discourse analysis would assist towards being able to transform knowledge, and to therefore be transformed by it.

Chapter Three: Analytic Approach: Gee's Discourse Analysis as Investigative Tool

The following Chapter will provide the necessary insights that will allow Chapter 4 to further explain the identified discursive constructs throughout Snapchat communications examined through a language lens. First, this chapter will suggest the direction of how this chapter will examine social media, as well as posing a guiding lens supported by Foucault. Adolescents and corporations develop the figures posed, which allow for further discussion to be made in understanding the cultural makeup that has been generated by the formation of language. Second, this chapter will be explaining the necessity of using Gee's tools and defining them within an understandable lens. It will follow with defining Snapchat itself and the Discover tab that will be the focus of analysis. Further, this chapter will be talking in depth about the neoliberal impact on social media that was briefly mentioned in Chapter 2, and finally I will be framing the following observations as a step into the world that adolescents view their day to day communications by. The remainder of the chapter will be the description of each tool and figure, followed by the analysis that will support the findings noted in Chapter 4.

Community and Culture within an Online Forum

Snapchat varies itself from other social media platforms, because of the ephemeral qualities discussed in Chapter Two. Due to this, it offers a deeper opportunity to observe the ties between culture and communication, as conversations are happening within the present moment. This semi-private method of communicating has allowed adolescents to create a culture that reflects how users feel within the moment (Katz & Crocker, 2015). Though communications constantly refresh, this ephemeral networking tool still retains the idioms—namely the language—that defines the fostered community (Bernstein et al., 2011). This study will analyze both the individual 'Snaps' (a short segment, or individual frame of a video; image; audio clip;

etc.), as well as the collective ‘Stories’ (a collection of Snaps) available through the Discover tab. This analysis will shed light onto the effective communication strategies used by adolescents throughout Snapchat, providing a wealth of knowledge that can help advance overall communication within social media. What these adolescents and companies have discovered, will be instrumental in understanding the best uses of Snapchat and future social media technologies. By applying Gee’s discourse tools, this analysis seeks to discuss the different political and economic factors that are rooted within a commercially driven technology as encapsulated by neoliberal influences. A better understanding of these factors will in turn simplify the comprehension of future practices and resources.

As Foucault would note (1970), however, even if neoliberalism has appropriated specific discourses from democratic education, both still exist within their own ideologies. It is dependent on those researchers to both observe in what way those discourses have been appropriated, but more importantly to dig up those discourses and observe them from multiple forms of representation. In doing so, this process allows researchers to gain an understanding of the multiple ways to interpret discourses. One of the main considerations that Foucault can be applied within this context is understanding that a discourse is neither democratic nor neoliberal in isolation but becomes such when it is viewed by that lens. Foucault notes that man acts like a fulcrum, “the space occupied by analogies is really a space of radiation. Man is surrounded by it on every side; but, inversely, he transmits these resemblances back into the world from which he receives them”. (Foucault, 1970, p. 26) Establishing meaning both from the world that surrounds an individual, and when the individual puts those ideas back into the world allows the individual to gain greater objectivity when considering how information is transferred. Therefore, when examining adolescent communication in social media, it is necessary to observe what

adolescents extend towards the collective culture, but also the extension of what information to others into that same culture.

Gee Discourse Analysis Tools

Table 1 presents a breakdown of the different Discourse analysis tools applied throughout the analytical section. Providing a summary of each of these tools, along with their application within this study will enable the reader to understand how I am applying Gee’s tools; these tools will be useful for questioning the data. The importance of using these tools is that they deconstruct the assumption that has one particular meaning and offering a new perspective to view that information. To understand language itself, it is necessary to observe the construction of language and the ways it informs meaning. Often the obstruction of meaning accomplishes meaning making for what the author wants the reader to think, but these tools offer methods for the reader to create meaning for themselves.

Table 1	
Gee’s Discourse Analysis Tool Description and Application	
Tool	Summary
The Identities Building Tool	How the author is positioning themselves towards others, and how they are positioning others to respond based on the language used.
Making Strange Tool	What ideas would be strange to someone that has no cultural background to the reading? If they did not share these assumptions, what would need to be defined?
Figured Word Tool	What are the typical societal meanings behind words and how are they used to harken to a specific meaning?
Intonation Tool	What emphasis is given on a specific word or phrase. What emotional/other meaning can be suggested from using a specific word. What word is in the foreground versus what is in the background.

Table 1

The culture and culture loops created in Snapchat

Within this analysis, a dedication of considerable amount of time towards understanding how individuals present themselves and create their online identities will be of considerable focus. It is important to acknowledge this when discussing communication, since identity and community are reciprocal within social media. The dictation of culture by those who participate within a community creates a set of distinct yet flexible rules to abide by. As reported in Walther et al.'s (2011) research on identity in computer mediated communication, "'feedback loop' that occurs as the sender receives feedback on selective self-presentations, prompting subsequent identity presentations and the transformation of identity online" (p. 18) makes this platform more interesting than others. Snapchat's feedback loop has the potential for a long trail of subsequent responses, thus creating a collective identity (boyd, 2010) for those adolescents who choose to be a part of that community. As Snapchat focuses on fundamental human needs such as self-expression (Griffiths & Kuss, 2017), this may become an issue when corporate entities become involved and begin to dictate this process. Although boyd (2007) states that long-term effects of corporate participation in social networks are unknown, she still notes that the "broader concerns about the impact of consumer culture on young people's agency in online participation are completely applicable" (p. 14). While the discussion of potential neoliberal biases is not the focus of this MRP, it is inextricably connected with the subject and needs to be accounted for. Language is embedded within culture, and when examining social networks, that are created with neoliberal aims but offer the dominant adolescent methods of communication – it becomes a necessary intersection to understand. This study will discuss different communication methods users can apply within Snapchat to understand the platform's success. The different methods (or Snap stories) available, offers each adolescent an individually stylized communication outlet.

The application of Discourse analysis tools on Snap stories, will help “[denaturalize] language practices” (Rogers, 2002, p. 253), and find the power and ideologies behind those conversations that are occurring. These discussion of the findings in Chapter Four will support this MRP’s thesis of understanding how language is used within a virtual space. It is important to recognize how the creation of Snapchat stories demonstrate the values adolescents espouse that allow them to effectively communicate within social media. The understanding gained through this approach will allow the viewer of a Snap story to better conceptualize how communication works within this medium. The process of denaturalization—the process of breaking ideas apart and examining them within an objective perspective, while making the familiar strange (Rogers, 2002)—allows researchers to look at a piece of information more objectively. By understanding the rules of this form of communication and examining how adolescents use commercial social media, one can better understand how this group is using this as a tool for creating virtual communities. The application of Gee’s tools can help break apart, denaturalize and better understand language used within these Snap stories, since each tool has a specific function. Each tool’s function is defined by “a specific question to ask of data” (Gee, 2014, p. 2) in order for the analyst to better understand what is and is not written, contributing to a better understanding of the text examined.

Examination of the Discover Tab

Immediately apparent are the four quadrants present on the screen in each Snap story, which provide the viewer with the opportunity to decipher each portion’s language and visual components. The ‘Topic Flow or Topic Chaining Tool’, defined by how the information relates to one another in order to create clauses and subordinate clauses for the reader (Gee, 2014, p. 152), will question the reason why the components of traditional forms of hierarchical

communication are broken. Snapchat presents information in an interesting format, because it challenges traditional information models based on the physical layout. Information in a newspaper article follows a vertical hierarchy, where readers first encounter the headline followed by any sub-headings, providing a general understanding of the article's topic. Snapchat, contrarily, subverts these expectations. When examining the figures in Appendix A, there is no hierarchical or subordinate order to the physical placement of each Snap story. All information on screen is highly segmented, exclusively conveying precise information on each story while remaining unrelated to the other Snaps presented within the quadrants. This separation within the infinite number of stories, demonstrates how individual users situate themselves within the collective. While each story is independent, it still contributes to the overall culture formed within the Snapchat platform, further supporting the relation between the collective and the individual. Language is the key factor for an individual's inclusion within the community. When posing an idea to the larger collective, if accepted, that user becomes part of the culture. (Bernstein et al., 2011). This further suggests that Snapchat users prefer the submission of Snaps by other users and the ability to be accepted into the cultural community, while having the flexibility to manipulate this content to allow for their own creations (whether a meme, inside joke, or idea). This dichotomy between collective and individual identities cohabitating within the platform suggests that the binary between the self and other has crossed into the virtual realm.

Another key aspect to the Discover tab, is the language used to interact with the intended audience. Snapchat content creators use images and language that are culturally embedded and therefore, reciprocated every time they are used. In Figure 1 for example, the image entitled "Best Meme of 2019? :thinking emoji:" contains multiple layers of meaning, and can only be

fully understood if the viewer has the corresponding cultural knowledge. This reflects Gee's (2014) proposed term of 'knowledge building', as the story positions itself within the same cultural sphere as the reader, because both communicate at the same level of cultural knowledge. The 'Identities Building Tool' (Gee, 2014, p. 116) accurately encapsulates this aspect of culturally based communication, as Thrillist (the article's author) is placing itself as part of the adolescent cultural sphere. In this case, the author implicitly asks the collective if they have met the criterion for entry by posting a story, and the collective accepts because they relate to what the author has said, even though they are a corporation. The use of emoticons shows that the author is aware of internet speech patterns, but also aware of their usage to enhance interpersonal communication (Kaye et al., 2016). In this case, Thrillist both acts as an active participant within adolescent culture, as well as reciprocates specific designated cultural touch stones that are deemed significant. The limitation of option and possibilities that Thrillist controls allows them to designate their idea of significant. Additionally, the content creator also acts as a gatekeeper for those without the appropriate cultural knowledge, further disassociating those participants from that community. Modern forms of communication like Snapchat, function as a designator and reciprocator of knowledge. This is beneficial if the platform remains accessible but may turn dangerous if one platform becomes the sole knowledge base.

Understanding the Neoliberal Impact on Social Media

Defining the landscape of social media is the first important step working towards a greater understanding of how and why adolescents view social media applications, such as Snapchat, as accessible and popular forms of communication. Through defining and analyzing different figures taken from the Snapchat application, this chapter will aim to give the reader a basic understanding of the application and how it operates. Following the process of defining

what is happening within the application, this chapter then intends to use various discourse analysis tools offered by Gee to provide a more flushed out understanding of the figures defined for the reader to observe. In doing this, the intent will be to better communicate how adolescents use and create cultural language practices to convey meaning. Finally, this entire process then becomes abstracted by neoliberal influence, thus necessitating the need to understand how a corporation's goals are served by contorting the practices used by adolescents on social media. Observing how the natural process of adolescent social media use is imperative to understanding the process that neoliberal entities have taken to appropriate adolescent culture. However dismal, what observing this process offers researchers is a clear step-by-step guide on how another collective of humans have gone through to better understand the methods that adolescents use to communicate. This may prove to be valuable in future discussions on how technology has impacted adolescent communication.

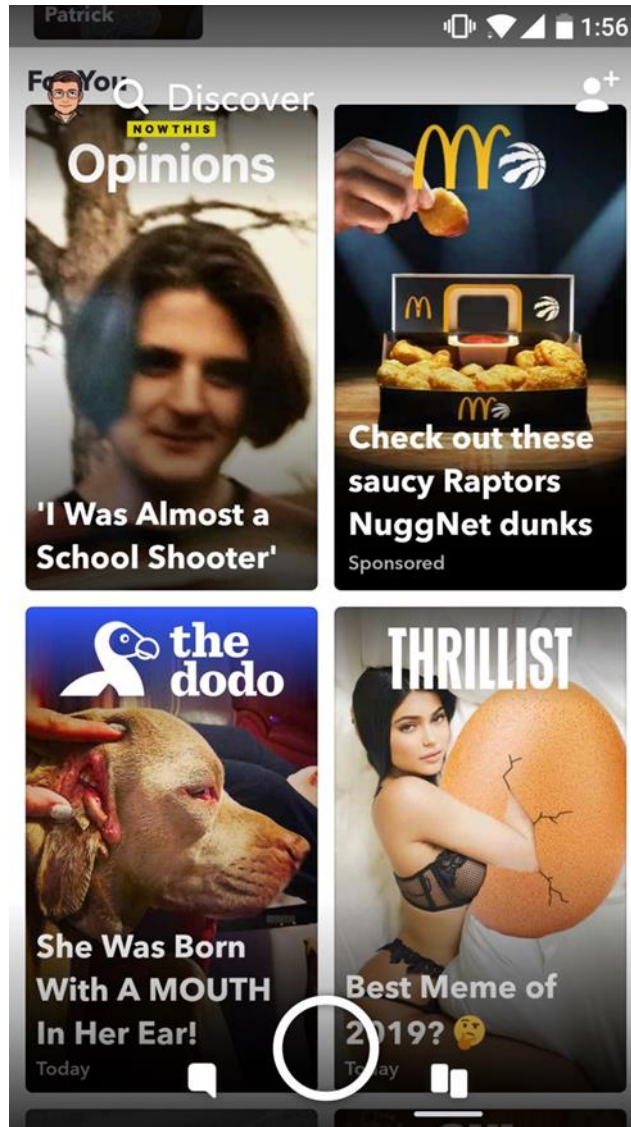


Figure 1. Screenshot of Screenshots from Snapchat Discover Tab

In this section, using Gee’s Identities Building Tool to closely examine Figure 1 will suggest the different audiences that corporations seek to advertise to. Gee’s Identities Building Tool asks, “how people enact different identities, how they portray other people’s identities, and how they position others to take up identities in response to them” (Gee, 2014, p. 116). In this example multiple intersections are immediately present. Taken in May 2019, the four-picture spread that was found through Snapchat’s Discover tab, the viewer sees four distinctly unique

images with captions. There is text (obscured in the figure) that says “For You” immediately preceding the almost endless stream of Snapchat stories to view. As noted previously, as the Snapchat user watches more of these stories, the stories become tailored (through the apps algorithm) to the user’s preferences, likes and choices of stories to view. The four sections, typically all contain the same method of delivery – the corporation provides the content, the heading informs the user of the content, a still frame is included within the story (or a static image), and the fourth, although not included within the *Nowthis* article, is the time stamp or other descriptor such as the “Sponsored” subheading in the bottom right of the McDonalds story. The stories are situated randomly but, are typically in chronological order across the application’s user interface, as the publishing of the stories that today would be closer to the top compared to the ones that were published yesterday or the day before. The exception to this rule is the Sponsored stories that are always located within the top right, in the first column, after the ‘For You’ heading.

Therefore, in this section I will be present and describe the images one by one and then apply Gee’s tools to allow a granular peek into how adolescents have viewed this image. Gee’s tools act as a method of crossing into the culture presented for those either unaware or uninitiated. Through this lens, I hope to give the reader an understanding of the world that adolescents interact with, and therefore how we can use that understanding to better understand that group as a collective. However, this is not to suggest that each adolescent will share the similar perspectives as one another but offering a snapshot into the world that is being offered to them.

Example One Analysis and Description using the Identity Building Tool

The representation of the corporations by the screenshots in Figure 1, *Nowthis*, *McDonalds* + *The Raptors Franchise*, *the dodo*, and, *THRILLIST* are all presenting themselves as everyday individual users, that adolescents may be able to connect with. *NowThis*, *the dodo*, and *THRILLIST* are all digital media subsidiaries that in-part comprise Group Nine Media, which is an American digital media holding company. The definition of *NowThis* is a progressive, social media-focused, youth-oriented news organization (Wikipedia Contributors, 2020). *the dodo* focuses on telling stories about animals with a focus on entertainment. *THRILLIST* covers food, drink, travel and entertainment. *McDonalds* is a global fast food company, and *The Raptors* is a Canadian professional basketball team based in Toronto. The final identity to note using Gee's Identity Building Tool is that, at creation of this advertisement, the Raptors were poised to compete within the finals of the National Basketball Association's (NBA) most anticipated sporting event.

In the same way that one adolescent Snapchat user can send a YouTube video, or meme to a personal (real life or virtual) friend – companies are framing themselves within the second person or third person perspective. Snapchat allows companies to covertly situate themselves within the second person with the heading above the stories, "For You". In this design, when Thrillist asks "Best Meme of 2019?: thinking emoji:" they are asking that question within the ethereal space of the Discover tab, but are implicitly asking "You", the user, that question. Applying Gee's Identity Building Tool, the detachment of the reader from what the writer is talking about removes a sense of familiarity due to writing in the third person. It makes sense for a corporation to write in the third person because they are detached from the human experience. However, in writing conventions two type of narration exist within the third person – limited and

omniscient. Limited refers to a “third person” who was not part of an event, or idea being explain but is relaying that information to another person. The limitations exist because not all the details are known or can be obscured due to the innate faults in how memories are not exact representations of reality, in addition to how information can be omitted in the process of communication. Omniscient refers to a perspective that is completely removed from the event or idea being expressed and acts as a God-like figure who can not be present, but still knows everything. Therefore, by applying Gee’s Identity Building Tool, what is intriguing about the Discover page is that companies are framing themselves from the limited perspective rather than the omniscient one. This framing/positioning suggests that the corporations want other users to view their identities as an abstracted human-like limited observer rather than an omniscient corporate entity.

Description of NowThis Snapchat quadrant

Using Gee’s identity building tool, what is immediately apparent is a grainy picture, reminiscent of 90’s analogue photography, of a man in front of a withered tree. The man’s face takes up the entire central space of the picture, as well as the quadrant itself. The editing done is unknown, but due to the quality of the picture *NowThis* has chosen to make the face of the man central to the user’s gaze. There seems to be a reflection on the man’s right tuft of hair resembling a white smart phone with a pink case outline. The man’s face was explicitly chosen to be displayed close. The man’s face has a neutral look, but the most striking feature is the dark and sullen eyes – almost indiscernible – in the direct center of the image. His hair looks kept but might not be particularly stylish within the era it was taken. The blurred and withering tree in the background has a few branches but has no forms of life on it. The sky seems bland and sullen in a grey/off-white tone.

On the top of the Snapchat story quadrant, there are two pieces of text with one on top of the other; NOWTHIS and Opinions. NowThis is a subsidiary of Group Nine Media, who is a subsidiary of Discovery, Inc. NowThis News promotes itself as “The latest news, investigative reports, interviews and original series from NowThis. NowThis is the #1 video news brand in social media today” (Group Nine Media Inc., 2019). *Opinions* is the title for the “docu-series” that this story is a part of. The final text at the bottom of the page reads “I Was Almost a School Shooter” in font as large as the Opinions sub-heading. The bottom text is a quote from an interview with the man in the image, and acts as the main indicator of what the Snap story will be about. In isolation, these three elements have individual meanings but as a collective, they convey the message that NowThis represents as their truth. The media corporation is publishing an opinion piece about a man who admits that he was almost a school shooter, and once you watch the Snap story, you will presumably know why. The information itself seems to read center (as the focus), and then top to bottom; the picture grabs the user’s attention, then the text fills in the gaps.

Analysis of NowThis Snapchat quadrant

The *NowThis* image evokes a sense of catharsis, in that as the viewer we are attempting to get a sense of relief from this article, almost vicariously through the man, to quell the school shooting phenomena that occurred within the first half of 2019 and resonated with many adolescents questioning their schooling environment. That emotional release, however, is then associated with the depiction of the ‘Almost School Shooter’ framed in the thumbnail for the story. A sullen white male that sits on the edge of society. The image is a suggestion of what a school shooter looks like, that *NowThis* is applying to the schemas of how adolescents think about how they identify the identity of what it means to be a school shooter. While the language

used in the article would suggest that this man did not go through the act, the Snap story still associates these characteristics of the ‘school shooter identity’ with the actual people who have committed the act. Regardless of if the Snapchat user clicks on the story, which associated identity has already been communicated because of the thumbnail image. This suggests the power that corporations have in both constructing and disseminating how identity forms.

The identities that come into play are: white men, anyone who identifies with being an outcast, all adolescents who go to school within the public system and those who are interested in the school shooting epidemic that students are experiencing. Suffice to say, most people who have participated in the public schooling system or have had feelings of isolation from the collective can relate to this Snapchat article. Framing the identity of what it means to be a school shooter is risky when thinking about how adolescents frame their own identities because it may affect how they perceive themselves or others based on the perception offered by *NowThis*. In the same way that the Scully Effect has been recognized (Harrison, 2015) to promote women going into STEM because of positive female representation in the media, similarly, the formation of identity for adolescents can also have negative consequences. When a primary source of news, by and for adolescents, suggests a particular image of what a (potential) school shooter looks like – those adolescents who may have those traits or feel similar emotions that is suggested by the article may start to associate themselves with that particular identity. Although making this assertion is far beyond the scope of this paper, what this paper does seek to suggest is that further research on identity formation in the media be pursued. However, while it cannot be said how impactful this suggestion of identity has been, what can be said is that this particular idea has been disseminated into the adolescent cultural arena and is up for interpretation for each individual user – regardless of if they interacted with the story or not.

Description of McDonalds/ NBA Snapchat quadrant

One of the sponsored Snapchat stories (as noted within the bottom left of the image) has the picture of a hand dunking a chicken nugget in a ketchup holder, which contains the rest of the chicken nuggets with three spotlights centering in on the meal – being physically located on a wooden floor. The box itself seems to be the cardboard container that the Chicken McNugget meal would be served in but is clearly remixed for this promotional purpose. The box has been folded and crafted into a basketball net, with the net acting as a holder for a sauce; in this picture it looks like a container of ketchup. On both sides of the ‘net’ it has two logos – the first, on the left, is the McDonalds Canada logo, specifically altered indicated by the red maple leaf in the middle of the ‘M’, and to the right a basketball with three tears symbolizing the Toronto Raptors (assumedly because the dinosaur tore through it). The Raptors is a Canadian basketball franchise that plays in the NBA. There is one final logo, on the outside of the box, which has remixed the two logos to symbolize the partnership between McDonalds and the Raptors with the ball bouncing, as depicted by the McDonalds yellow ‘M’. In the background, there are three flood lights centering in on the box, with the lighting creating a circle around the product emphasizing it as the center of attention. The light reveals, against the shadows, that the box is situated on top of a wooden floor. This floor seems to be, given the context, a basketball court given the thin planks and the glossy surface. The final element of this image is the hand of an Afro-American man holding a chicken nugget that has been dunked in the sauce.

Using the Identity Building Tool to further understand this image, the remixed logo is physically located as the main heading at the top of the image and is the larger image of what is printed on the box itself. There is a distinct lack of text or description of who this corporation(s) is, but the assumption is that this is done intentionally. Either because the Raptors and

McDonalds have enough cultural clout that they do not need to define who they are because the entire population that the advertisement is reaching already knows who they are, or stylistically writing both “McDonalds” and “The Raptors” seems to be too much text/ information to include within this Snapchat story image. The logo contains both the McDonalds yellow ‘M’ or, more colloquially, ‘The Golden Arch’ with an additional curve followed by a stylized basketball. This basketball is not the complete official logo of the Raptor’s franchise, but all that is missing is the “Toronto Raptors” lettering that encircles the ball. The basketball has three tears in it, as previously noted, to suggest that a raptor has torn through the ball. Both logos combined depict the scene of a ball that is bouncing, with the course of travel shown. On the bottom of the image, the sub-heading reads: “Check out these saucy Raptors NuggNet dunks”. The text is equally as large as the other sub-headings on the Discover tab, and is consistent with both the colour and font. The sub-heading acts as a suggestion for the viewer to observe the story that other Snapchat users posted Snaps of themselves dunking their nuggets in various ways. In addition, the ‘Raptors NuggNet dunks’ acts as a double meaning both for the physical act of dunking a chicken nugget in sauce, but also referring to the basketball term “dunking” being applied to this context – this will be further discussed later in this chapter. Capturing both identities using the Identity Build Tool, the full image seeks to get the viewer immediately interested in the product, then show how they can be a part of the communal meaning making that is occurring by sharing their own dunk – nugget meal not included.

Analysis of McDonalds/NBA Snapchat quadrant

In the McDonald’s/ NBA advertisement, the subheading takes a second person narrative perspective. The text directly asks the viewer “[You] Check out these saucy Raptors NuggNet dunks”. The tone that is used within the heading is using informal language, which is typically

associated with day-to-day interactions with friends. Compared to the formal language that one would typically expect from advertisements (Buy this product!) it shifts the expectations of how the user thinks about the information they are about to receive. The phrase “Check out these ... dunks” could easily refer to a conversation between two friends showing each other YouTube videos of sports highlights. In addition to using the second person, as discussed, the use of informal language using an application specifically designed to connect friends allows McDonalds to communicate their message familiarly – removed from the disembodied social construct of the term “corporation” and associated with the human experience. The familiar, yet direct, tone that the heading uses alters how Snapchat users identify with corporate entities. Using a familiar tone, the corporation uses language that users feel comfortable with, therefore, the relationship between corporation and consumer becomes altered. Corporations should be a detached figure from the human experience because as they become more associated with the human experience, the further consumers become emotionally attached. As a business becomes emotionally attached to an individual’s experience, so too does their identity become just as much attached. This is harmful because it allows the corporation to exploit the consumer more easily because of the emotional bond that has been formed.

The identities that come into play are: people who eat McDonalds; Basketball fans; Adolescents; People with a sense of humor and enjoy word play; Disillusioned absurdist commentators looking to take joy in the banality of a cardboard ketchup holder; and infinite other possibilities. A light-hearted message uses word play to attract the user towards the advertisement. Using ‘saucy’ to describe both the sauce used to dunk the chicken nuggets as well as to infer a cheeky quality of said dunks further validates the familiar tone using humor and wit. The ‘NuggNet’ is a similar play on the words ‘Net’, referring to the basketball variety, and the

McDonalds product ‘McNuggets’, most colloquially termed simply ‘Nuggets’. NuggNet is therefore a portmanteau between the two using language conventions to combine the culturally associated values of both the basketball net, and the Nugget. Using both culturally accepted slang terms, the “Nugget” and the “Net”, McDonalds and the NBA can combine the identities that are associated with each culturally relevant term into one. Thus, effectively reaching the largest audience possible of those who identify with the identities listed. The corporate user appropriates the way that two regular Snapchat users would interact. By using the second person, companies are able to “speak” directly to adolescents because they have taken the informal language conventions used by adolescents, constructed a socially relevant method to collectivize different identities, and have both understood and used the same language used in day-to-day interactions both in lexicon and tone. In this way, McDonalds is setting up the adolescent Snapchat user to identify both as a friend (“Check out ...!”) but also incorporating their own language (“Raptors NuggNet”) to set them up to identify as a consumer.

Description of the dodo Snapchat quadrant

The third image, situated in the bottom left, is a grotesque picture of a dog with what seems to be lips, gums, teeth and what appears to be a tongue on the right side of her head. Showing the only the head of the chocolate lab, with her body cropped off to the side demonstrates that the story wants to target the user’s attention to this particular image. The second mouth is located near the center of the image but is within clear view. As the dog sits patiently, there is two fingers with white nail polish that is spreading the mouth open so that the camera taking the picture has a clear image. The background of the picture is hard to discern other details of this scene. There seems to be a white machine in the bottom right, a pair of blue track pants that someone is wearing, and above that a red plush jacket with a purple pin. The

person taking the picture was largely uninterested in the background and wanted the primary focus to be on the dog.

The primary heading has both the company name, “the dodo” and a picture of a dodo representing the media companies’ logo. The top of the image is distorted by a blue gradient acting as a backdrop to the heading, in addition to further obscuring the background of the image taken. The subheading reads, “She Was Born With A MOUTH In Her Ear!” giving context to what is being shown in the image. The text emphasizes the mouth with fully capitalized lettering, in addition to adding the exclamation point to further promote the shock the viewer is feeling. The final piece of text is the “Today” subscript at the bottom right of the page, noting the recency of when this story was published in addition to situating this story within the ‘here and now’ reality of the viewer’s experience rather than a disembodied event that has occurred at some point. Using the Identity Building Tool, the totality of this quadrant is heavily focused on the image of a dog that has a physical abnormality, causing the viewer to want to view more.

Analysis of the dodo Snapchat quadrant

The dodo story evokes emotion, similarly to the *NowThis* article, but more from a grotesque lens. The graphic nature of the image urges the user to either scroll past it immediately or to click the article to feed their natural urge for curiosity. However, viewing the image itself will only be grotesque to those people who have the identities that would associate the irregular with the grotesque. Objectively, without a cultural lens, this image is a dog with a mouth next to its ear. Culturally however, people who identify as animal lovers, or have seen an animal before will be able to distinguish that this is not the normal features of a dog. Seeing what is not normal as closely related to undesirable suggests a cultural flaw within the Western identity. Therefore, when *the dodo* uses sensationalist headings and zooms into the irregularity, it reaffirms the

traditional notion of irregularity equating to undesirable. Stemming from traditional notions of how Western society's notions of beauty or aesthetics, viewing this image reaffirms what is desirable not only to humans but to animals. Placing Western culture and identity onto an entirely different species engrains typical beauty standards, and in turn anthropomorphizes these ideals onto animals. The Identity Building Tool allows us to not only question what identities exist within an image, but to also challenge those identities as either fact or a culturally constructed lens. By doing so, it opens greater observation towards the concept's society perceives to be inherently true.

Description of THRILLIST Snapchat quadrant

The final quadrant is an article by *THRILLIST*, with a poorly cropped image of Kylie Jenner in lingerie, laying on a bed with her hand inside of a 'cracked' egg. The fascinating part about this final image is that to the culture/community, in reference to the Identity Building Tool, whom are people that are engrossed in internet culture, that this image is directed to – this seemingly fractured mish-mash of obscurity makes complete and logical sense to those informed. Where to start. One of the most popular social media platforms, as previously noted, that adolescents use other than Snapchat is Instagram. Instagram allows people to follow one another to read what each user posts and this has given the opportunity for celebrities to reach wide range of people for endorsement purposes. Companies pay Instagram users to send affirming messages/pictures out to the celebrity's followers about their products (Martineu, 2019). These people have been termed 'influencers', whom Kylie is recognized as one of the most popular having one of the most sizable followings. The internet, being itself, sought to reach a goal – simply because it wanted to – to overtake Kylie's Instagram post of the birth of her daughter with a picture of an egg (measured by the amount of likes that one image has

garnered). Over 10 days, the account “@world_record_egg” was able to get their post liked by other Instagram users more than Kylie’s, which officially changed the title of “Most liked Instagram post” (an award that only exists in spirit) from Kylie’s post to a picture of an egg (Caldwell, 2019). The sum of this explanation is only to suggest that absurdist humor is one of the key selling points in current internet culture, poignantly in full view after applying the Identity Building Tool, and these “Memes” often find themselves fitting within this category. Getting back on track – the photoshopped Kylie head, which is placed on the lingerie model’s body is intermixed with her hand cracking the egg, due to the aforementioned feud.

The heading, *THRILLIST* is the media company that is publishing the article that is located dead center within the top of the image. The sub-heading, located at the bottom of the image asks the user “Best Meme of 2019?” with a thinking emoji (:thinking emoji:) that is specifically from the communication application Discord. Discord is a derivative of the communication application, Skype, which is self-professed as a “Free Voice and Text Chat for Gamers”, an assumed identity by those who play video games. The use of an emoji further emphasizes the mood/tone of the question – suggesting that the user view the following with a playful skepticism. Again, within the bottom left of the quadrant, the Snapchat story notes that this article was published “Today” noting this time the current nature of the information provided. What is unclear about the sub-heading is whether *THRILLIST* is asking the viewer if they think that this particular meme is the best one of 2019 or asking a more generalized question of what the user believes to be the best. Regardless, in the same fashion of the other three examples, if the user wants to engage or learn more they must interact with the story, but that information seems to be purposely hidden behind the image.

Analysis of THRILLIST Snapchat quadrant

The *THRILLIST* story has all the aspects that a corporation needs to incorporate to make a successful venture into the realm of social media. By including both the mainstream cultural icon, Kylie Jenner, and the counter-culture ‘inside joke’ of the egg – the corporation has the ability to reach a plethora of people who relate to these identities in order for them to watch their content. The language used in the sub-heading, specifically referring to Memes, and incorporating three extremely distinct cultural icons – Kylie, the egg, and the thinking emoji – *THRILLIST* has demonstrated a high degree of cultural awareness and has fully embedded themselves within adolescent culture. This becomes an issue when the corporation has free reign to seamlessly embed their own ideologies within adolescent culture. The objectification of women, setting harmful body standards, and the further celebration of celebrity culture could negatively impact adolescent self-image. Within the story itself, there are minor references to Kylie and the egg, let alone Kylie, bringing into question the use of a lingerie model (who has Kylie’s head photoshopped on) when presenting a slideshow of memes. Idealizing problematic discourses in one of the most popular social media applications raises concern in how the media can engage with persons under vulnerable status within society, namely adolescents. Additionally, the publishing of an article with these discourses included with the sole reason being to evoke an emotional response to increase engagement needs to be engaged critically to understand how it impacts adolescents.

The identities involved within this image are: people who like memes, people who are keeping up with one particular Kardashian, everyone who was a part of liking the picture of the egg on Instagram, as well as gamers who notice the use of the :thinking emoji: from Discord. Again, the identities involved within this picture would capture the attention of anyone who uses

the internet and is a part of its culture. The image is situating all sorts of identities to give their opinion to *THRILLIST* as the corporation is directly asking – like the McDonalds story – what each user believes the best meme of 2019 is. In doing so, they have piqued the interest of the noted identities, in addition to asking each user if they have the knowledge to determine the answer to the question posed. As memes have become cultural icons within adolescent culture, the engagement with this story is almost guaranteed. The corporation has then become one of the main sources of community defining what it means to be a part of the adolescent experience via transmission and communication of cultural knowledge.

Conclusion of Analysis Example Using the Identity Building Tool

What this analysis, using the Identities Building Tool, has shown is that these companies (under one corporation - Group Nine Media) are able to situate their own carefully constructed identity as a communal location of adolescent knowledge, effectively communicate and dictate the perceptions of other identities, as well as strongly suggest how adolescents should identify themselves. It is not within the scope of this MRP to confirm these assertions relating to adolescent identity. However, what information can be confirmed is observing what the corporation is actively accomplishing and what information they deem to be important. Through evoking emotional responses, these companies are potentially engaging adolescents and intensifying their use of social media platforms. In turn, furthering their relationships with those adolescents. As suggested in the discussion of the *NowThis* article, the issue is not necessarily that adolescents are actively engaging (by tapping and watching the story) with each individual article. Rather those problematic discourses have already been communicated because the impact generated from viewing the static image, representing the Snapchat story, has already been internalized by the adolescent user.

The identities posed are associated with an array of different emotional responses. The language used to express these identities have been adopted, understood, and appropriated to effectively engage with adolescents. In addition, the identities of these corporations have been further obscured by the use of the inherent aspects of the Snapchat platform, becoming more closely associated with an online cohort compared to the reality of a corporation that is able to advertise their products. The main takeaway from using this tool is the culture remixing that corporations can effectively accomplish and could influence aspects of what identity now means within adolescent culture. The requirement for further research to understand the impact, as well as the effects that this language appropriation has on the suggestion of adolescent identity formation.

Analysis using Making Strange Tool

The Making Strange Tool is defined as “What would someone find strange here if that person did not share the knowledge and assumptions and make the inferences that render the communication so natural and taken-for-granted by insiders” (Gee, 2014, p. 199). Inherently, the assumptions that can be said about communication through the use of this tool are that knowledge of a culture is necessary for effective communication, and once a specific language is adopted by a cultural group, it is often become too natural to be questioned. Therefore, when applying this Tool to Snapchat, those who have come from the outside are keenly aware of how the language operates because of listening to the speech patterns from the cultural group – namely adolescents. The outsiders, as posed in the previous discussion with Figure 1, being the neoliberal influenced corporations that now dominate the cultural realm (in the Discover tab).

Applying the Making Strange Tool to the 4 quadrants allows the reader to adopt the same method of understanding that many of these corporations assumedly made. To understand the

language necessary to communicate within the adolescent cultural sphere, corporations needed to break down the key elements of the pieces of information that is valued and get a sense of the knowledge and assumptions that exist. The first aspect, as noted, is the organization of information, namely in a meme format. Adolescent cultural meaning making intertwines itself in the organization of the heading, picture, sub-heading form of communication. Adopting this format and including the corporation name as the heading and the title sub-heading adopts traditional means of presenting information within a new medium. However, the main feature that must remain consistent and is the least adapted by corporations is the image aspect of the meme format. As the image itself typically holds the most information to communicate a message.

Analysis of NowThis Snapchat quadrant

The *NowThis* quadrant of Figure 1 depicts a man with the heading “I Was Almost a School Shooter”. The cultural concepts that someone would need to understand would center around the epidemic facing the 21st century, where a student intentionally brings a weapon to their school with the intent to indiscriminately harm those around them. The definition of the term “School Shooter” is a title given to someone who has either attempted or has carried out the action of bringing a gun to school and killing other students. This term acts as an act of disassociation, separating the (typically) adolescent student from the collective identity. This title creates an association between an amalgamation of individual events, and segments the individual causing the event to share a common identity with others. It is important to note that there are no explicit commonalities shared when defining the title of a ‘school shooter’, other than the fact that these individuals have committed a crime, but the internalization of this identity can prove to be problematic. However, this formed identity allows third party observers, such as

news outlets, to suggest that one ‘school shooter’ shares commonalities with another ‘school shooter’, both removing the individuality and circumstance of each person and associating an individual’s attributes towards the collective identity of what defines a ‘school shooter’. When shared on Snapchat, this allows adolescents to disassociate from the adolescent who committed that crime, in addition to creating a specific identity that any given adolescent can: 1. Identify others who may fit that suggested identity, and 2. Identify with the characteristics that have defined the suggested identity. In this way, *NowThis* can create a narrative that embeds itself within the adolescent cultural sphere. This paper is in no way able to ascertain if this “school shooter” identity would have been adopted within the cultural realm, uninhibited by corporate influences, but what this does accomplish, is continuing a specific narrative, and the creation of a specific identity. Through using the Making Strange Tool to take a step away from what we believe as concrete truths, what the narrative also suggests is that there is a redeeming quality for this identity – namely the “Almost” aspect of the quotation. If the individual never acts on those intentions, then this article suggests that acceptance back into the collective can occur.

Analysis of McDonalds/ NBA Snapchat quadrant

The *McDonalds/NBA* quadrant of Figure 1 shows a sponsored advertisement for the NBA and McDonalds promotion with the heading “Check out these saucy Raptors NuggNet dunks”. What would be strange to those who do not share the knowledge and assumptions needed to understand would be both the word play, as well as the amalgamation of brands. The headings refer to specific brands both in name and with symbol. In the main heading, one would need to know both the symbol for McDonalds, the fast food chain, and the Toronto Raptors, the Canadian basketball team. In addition to enough visual literacy to know where both logos appear, and the additional arc as a creative decision. One would also need to know the sheer

enormity of the McDonalds brand, and the connotation derived from the corporation associating itself with an NBA franchise. Finally, the final aspect relating to the amalgamated logos would be the knowledge that the NBA finals were occurring, and that (in this screenshot) McDonalds has the ability to side with one team in the finals (however it is not known if multiple ads were created, then posted depending on the geographical location of the Snapchat user) as well as a person would need to know how important the NBA finals are to basketball fans. To decipher both the meaning and importance of this main heading, a great deal of cultural awareness to understand both logos must be present.

The sub-heading also contains multiple layers of meaning that would be strange to someone who was not aware of both conventions of Snapchat stories, as well as the remix of words associated with the McDonalds brand and the NBA franchise. First, for those who are unaware of how typical Snapchat stories operate on the discover page, it would be unclear that when clicking on this story what would come next would be user generated videos of different nugget dunking techniques. The significance of the Snapchat operational knowledge is that to those uninitiated, the article seems to be another ad generated by McDonalds, but in reality McDonalds only needed to produce the singular image (and maybe film one example), but the majority of advertisement produced would be generated by other Snapchat users. In this way, McDonalds can use the userbase of Snapchat to advertise to multiple demographics that see themselves within the McDonalds ad/Snapchat story. The remix of words is also interesting because it combines two forms of culturally produced slang together to associate a dual meaning. The term “NuggNet” would be absolute gibberish to anyone who has never played or watched basketball, nor has ordered off a McDonalds menu. As mentioned previously, the Chicken McNugget and basketball net abbreviations (Nugget, and Net respectively) put together forms a

new interpretation of cultural meaning by both cultural groups. The unexpectedly highly specific level of knowledge necessary to decipher this mix of slang demonstrates the deeply embedded nature that basketball and McDonalds terminology has in the adolescent vocabulary. As the main purpose of advertisements is to bring potential consumers in, not ostracize them with words or phrases that would be foreign. Taking this risk of terminology proves the confidence that McDonalds and the NBA has in adolescents recognizing and instantaneous meaning making.

Analysis of the dodo Snapchat quadrant

The *dodo* quadrant depicts the image of a dog with an abnormal physical characteristic protruding from its head. This quadrant is the most fascinating when using the Making Strange Tool because it reverses typical assumptions made towards this image and questions inherently held beliefs. The heading, “She Was Born With A MOUTH In Her Ear!” emphasizes that there is something wrong about this image – that a mouth in an ear is irregular. Which, when thinking about it from a typical anatomical perspective, this is quite irregular. However, the implications that the article is trying to suggest, is that for someone who is unaware of traditional Western conceptions of beauty and aesthetics, identifying that they should be either alarmed, or disgusted would need to occur. The observation that there is a mouth in a dog’s ear, without bringing alarm, would have been indicated with regular grammatical conventions, but the article decided to capitalize “A MOUTH” in addition to adding an exclamation mark. Both, in modern literary style, indicates that this fact should surprise the reader. Suggesting that *the dodo* is intentionally establishing typical beauty conventions to this image. In addendum, this notion would also pose a question to each individual user – “when I face another physical irregularity, in what way would I react?”, to which *the dodo* would implicitly suggest in alarm or disgust. This concept would need to be explain in full for someone who is unaware of typical beauty standards. This

suggests that when publishing this article, *the dodo* would be aware of the traditional notions of beauty standards and has purposefully interrupted those standards. Thus, through using the Making Strange Tool to interrupt those standards, they conversely reinforce them within the subconscious of the individual. The overall message is clear – what is different should be looked at part of the ‘other’. Looking at what is unnatural, and what is “regular” should continue to be viewed as the status quo presents itself as the overall message.

Analysis of THRILLIST Snapchat quadrant

Examining the THRILLIST quadrant once more, the main aspect that would garner the greatest analytical weight would be the sub-heading “Best Meme of 2019? :thinking emoji:”. In Chapter 2, a meme is loosely defined as, “to share an idea, that usually is humorous in nature”, which can be again loosely suggested to communicate ideas to one another. What is fascinating, and slightly disturbing, about this sub-heading is that by introducing the concept of “best”, it immediately asserts that one meme can be better than another. Deconstructing this idea hierarchically placing one idea above or below another *Thrillist* is in turn suggesting that one communicated idea is better or worse than another. Ideas in and of themselves are non-hierarchical – they simply exist. When one person communicates with another person, they do not reflect after a conversation and hierarchically place each idea posed within a set of rankings. Thereby, using the Making Strange Tool to explain the concept of hierarchically rating memes (ideas) would need to be provided to someone who does not have the knowledge to make those assumptions suggested by *Thrillist*. Although meaningless, the ranking that *Thrillist* poses suggests that ideas posed is important than others. While this exists within more formalized settings, when arbitrarily done, this may lead to adolescents having an assumption that a hierarchy exists within their own circle of communication. Juxtaposing this organization of ideas

with a more collaborative one, within a non-hierarchical structure, the refining of ideas through this process develops new ideas. When a concept is immediately devalued, that idea is unable to grow into one that may have potential value for understanding. Therefore, the hierarchical structure imposed onto memes is strange because it does not allow for the generation of new ideas.

Analysis of Further Examples – Life Hacks using the Figured Word and Intonation Tools

In this section, using two more of Gee's tools to examine a set of Snaps from one Snapchat story will provide further validity to answering this MRP's research questions. The tools that will be used are Using the Figured Word Tool and the Intonation Tool will provide a linguistic analysis towards adolescent user Snapchat submissions. The Figured Word Tool seeks to examine the societal meaning behind words and how these words evoke a specific meaning (Gee, 2014, p. 177). Using the Intonation Tool can examine what emphasis is given on a specific word or phrase, in addition to what emotional or other meaning can be suggested from a specific word (Gee, 2014, p. 34). Using the Identities Tool in the previous analysis allowed this MRP to question in what ways corporations are interacting with adolescents and what adopted identities are present. It seems that corporations use language, in this case, to invoke a specific identity onto their users and adopt an observed identity for themselves. The analysis of adolescent generated content, through the Figured Word and Intonation Tools, seek to suggest a more authentic and genuine expression of identity. The lived experience of adolescents is what drives the culture that is created and understanding that authentic experience is the single most pertinent concept to be understood.

Applying a New Perspective

The importance of examining a new set of Figures is to represent an alternative perspective on how users interact with Snapchat. As the previous section of Discourse Analysis yielded the corporate user influence, it did not note how adolescents were using the platform. The Figures in the following section come from the Snap story titled “Life Hacks”, which is a collection of adolescent-generated Snaps that revolve around their interpretation on what a life hack is, and the application. Fully understanding Snapchat culture cannot be accomplished without this perspective because these are the users who reciprocate the cultural knowledge in its purest form, uninhibited by external influences. Therefore, the use of the following four Figures, demonstrate an example of the adolescent perspective within the Snapchat medium.

Description of the Figures Used

From Appendix A, the Figures that will be examined are Figures 2, 3, 4 and 5. The most immediate difference that can be noted is that the layout of the adolescent-user generated content differs from the corporate-user content. Comparing Figure 2 and Figure 1, respectively, the adolescent-user generated content shown in 2, has the same format that a regular Snap would have compared to the edited and formatted Snap posed in Figure 1. The translucent black bar with white text is the main feature that indicates that an adolescent-user created this Snap. Additionally, the countdown that notes how long the Snap will be available for viewing (indicated by the thin white rectangles on the top of the Snap) is absent from the corporate-user Snap. Otherwise, the format remains the same – each has the title of who is publishing the Snap in the top left of the image, followed by the relative publication time underneath. The image is in the background of the Snap, with the heading that describes the significance of the image within the foreground. While the heading is typically located at the bottom of the image, this is not

necessarily the rule as noted in Figure 5 – what is the most important thing to consider regarding the placement of the heading (as it can be placed anywhere on the screen) is putting it in neutral space that does not obscure the focus of the image that the heading is describing.

Figure 2 shows a screen shot of a Snapchat video showing a bathtub that is currently in use. The image depicts flowing water onto a blue luffa that is hanging from the faucet, creating bubbles with a hand that is partially visible yet obscured by the bubbles within the tub. The heading reads: “Life hack: put soap on your sponge to make the bubbles spread easier.”. The hand seems to be pushing the bubbles towards the tap, as to ensure that the video captures what the ‘hack’ intends to suggest. In addition, the hand seems to belong to a woman/girl (assuming typical traditional gender stereotypes) due to the red painted nails.



Figure 2

Figure 3 depicts a student filling up a water bottle. While the image does not accurately capture what the life hack poses, within the video itself it shows that the faucet is turned so that the stream of water can land into the water bottle and fill completely. The girl filling up the water

bottle is wearing a ring, as well as having nail polish on most of her fingers. If this Snap was taken at a school, as evidenced by the now outdated water fountain and the yellow/beige wall and floor tile on the bottom center of the image this demonstrates that the user is more than likely a high school student. The heading reads: “Water bottle life hack”. While the amount and quality of description of text differs from Figure 2, the components that are necessary, being the phrase ‘Life Hack’ and a basic description of the object related to the inclusion of the hack.



Figure 3

Figure 4 has an adolescent wrapping a pink hair Scrunchy around a faulty lock located in a washroom. The heading reads: “Life hack: if it doesn’t lock put a hair tie/ Scrunchy on it”. It can be assumed that the user posting this Snap is a girl due to the use of a hair product, in addition to the familiar use of interchanging terms hair tie/ Scrunchy – knowledge that would typically be privy to a traditionally female audience as well as persons who would have those items on hand. While it cannot be for certain that this was taken within a school, the adolescent user, the post being taken on a week day, in addition to that style of lock (and possibly the dysfunction of said lock) would seem to suggest this is as a logical assumption.



Figure 4

Figure 5 captures a girl with pink nail polish using a hair straightener to flatten out her Avengers: Infinity War shirt. The headings reads: “Life hack: Don’t have an Iron, use a straightener”. As mentioned previously, the heading has been put near the top of the image, as what the girl who posted this Snap wants the user to focus on, is the result of her using the straightener as an iron and having a non-wrinkled shirt. Placing the focus on the bottom of the

image, where the headings have typically been placed, the placement of the heading can easily be adjusted based on how the user wants to present the textual and visual information. The fact that the capitalization of the word Iron in the heading brings focus to the word, as that is the main word that is juxtaposed with the straightener as shown in the image.



Figure 5

The written word within each heading ranges in levels of literacy and formality. Some use punctuation, some use capitalization – however using capitalization to denote the object within the image in Fig. 4 and 5 – in all cases that contraction can be used, it is used, and basic

grammar usage is also displayed. Using the informal nature noted by contractions, suggests that those users who have posted these Snaps want to communicate using an informal method of educating others. The capitalization of Iron and Scrunchy is also significant because it does not adhere to typical grammatical rules. However, the application of a proper noun can be applied to explain these examples, as both the Iron and Scrunchy within the Snap are referring to that specific example. While still grammatically incorrect, it shows that these users are using grammatical concepts in other alternative ways to aid in meaning making.

Defining the figured word tool

The dissection of the term ‘Life Hack’ into three parts: the life aspect; the hack aspect; and the cultural implication that connects the two words offers multiple lenses of observation. Life Hack refers to the varied methods for subverting a specific limitation that exists within daily life, which would improve any given situation. Within social media and in this Snap story, “[d]ifferent iterations and interpretations (hacks) are encouraged” (Rowse & Shillitoe, 2019). The first thing to note about this Snap story, is that these “Life Hacks” flow like a stream of unconscious thought with no distinct narrative or rigid form. Each Snap flows to the next one without any discernable connection, other than the broad message of learning how to ‘hack one’s life’. The ‘Figured Word Tool’ seeks to examine the societal meaning behind words and how these words evoke a specific meaning (Gee, 2014, p. 177). The use of this tool is appropriate to question the single idea that connects all these Snaps together and what meaning it invokes. Within the following analysis, it is important to note that the examples that are present are assumedly gender based because they are all presented by girls. Although posing this observation shifts what examples and conclusions can be drawn, the greater meaning and significance still connects to one central cultural idea on what it means to be an adolescent and use social media.

The societal meaning behind the words used impacts adolescents regardless of gender, but the words and meaning made will differ.

Defining the intonation tool

To better understand the relation of power structures through the examination of these life hacks, it is important to consider the demographic that is using Snapchat, as well as their place within society. The ‘Intonation Tool’ (Gee, 2014, p. 34) can be used to question the meaning of these particular concepts. For instance, Figure 4 and Figure 5 begin with “if it doesn’t lock” and “[d]on’t have” respectively, suggesting an initial deficit. In both cases, the Snaps provide a specific solution to a unique problem. This deficit thinking (Dudley-Marling, 2015) relates to a lack of ownership within a capitalist market, further suggesting a link between adolescents and the push towards a consumer-dominated identity caused by neoliberal systems (Willett, 2008). Both present a negative premise, while raising an issue relating to a lack of wealth or power. Paradoxically however, the Snaps also show an inexpensive solution to the problem. By stating a problem and a solution in tandem, content creators create a positive experience for viewers, despite the flaws that exist within their environments, showing the emergence of a positive lens within social media, as suggested within the literature (Grieve, 2017). The interactions between adolescents as they form communities around shared experiences, allow for a common consciousness to materialize and evolved. This further contributes to a hopeful image despite the negative aspects of life, while focusing on what is available, rather than what is lacking. The creation of a support system that permeates physical boundaries into the virtual world is one of the most fascinating aspects of social media.

Through the communication of ideas, new innovations spread, and these considerations for further applications within different fields continue to spread and develop. The resiliency that

this life hack movement represents distinguishes itself from the previous example, as it demonstrates the benefits of user-generated content versus an amalgamation of user- and commercially generated stories. The interactions between users and the free-flowing nature of ideas shows how using social media as a tool for educators to proactively fight against the hyper-individualistic nature of neoliberalism contributes to creating a more equitable system of communication.

The anonymity that this medium brings, offers those who may not have the means, nor ability to communicate their ideas, a platform to do so. The concept of the life hack is situated in the social media sphere, and allows for anyone to anonymously pose an idea, while letting the reader determine if the information is valid for them. This interaction between the content creator and the viewer demonstrates the value of Snapchat as a vehicle for collaborative meaning-making (Mascheroni et al., 2015). It also suggests an alternate perspective on how people communicate with one another, in contrast with a unidirectional method of telling and re-telling information. Furthermore, disregarding information in traditional forms of communications, is more likely when it comes from an unknown author (or source). In Snapchat however, the decision that the viewer makes demonstrates the agency that they have when consuming different forms of media.

The phrase “life hack” brings legitimacy since it is rooted within the language formed by the culture it is situated in (Bernstein et al., 2011), as the viewer can choose whether or not they agree, but most importantly, they can also take a neutral position. This implies that certain phrases have become culturally legitimate within communications, allowing willing participants to be a part of the conversation. Freedom of speech, therefore, can be highlighted as a valuable quality for Snapchat users, but only effective if the content expressed will echo within others.

Being genuine through the content-creation process is important to consider, as calling out and rejecting unauthentic users is common decorum. (Bell, 2019). This story poses an interesting concept to ponder on when contemplating greater access for marginalized groups, while aiming to create a platform that focuses on the legitimacy of an idea, rather than who the identity of the author is.

Figured word example one

In Figure 2, the user has identified the problem of unequally spread bubbles while taking a bubble bath and has used a commonly found bathroom item to solve it. Using the Figured Word Tool, this Snap seeks to communicate instructions using the tools available to them. While the heading does not contain reference to taking a bath, or turning on the water, they list the important information, and let the viewer fill in the rest. By suggesting to “put soap on your sponge to make the bubbles spread easier”, the user is only communicating the step within the alteration of the instructions that is necessary. The typical meaning behind this phrase would be two-part in describing an action and a result. By adapting the typical notions of how soap and sponges’ function, the user combines the function of how each item would work individually, thus creating an entirely new function. This new action, therefore, creates a result that is equally novel, being spreading bubbles easier while taking a bath. The concept of putting soap on a sponge is not new but adding that phrase foregrounded to running water flowing through said sponge, this creates new meaning to this concept. The last word, ‘easier’ also brings to attention the intention of what the ‘life hack’ movement is about – namely finding specific mechanisms within daily life, no matter how menial, and seeking to improve them. ‘Easier’ in this case relates not necessarily to how difficult one task is compared to another, but as a display of efficiency.

Therefore, what this suggests about Figure 2, is that the adolescent who shared this Snap values efficiency and sharing that new idea with their peers. Finally, the purpose of the Snap relates to the object within the sentence, the bubbles, posing a final degree of held importance. The importance that the adolescent values relates to self-care and mental wellness (assumedly) because of typical notions of taking bubble baths to relax, take time for yourself and creating an environment that supports a positive mental state. Therefore, from this analysis we can assume that the values that this adolescent has espoused are resourcefulness, efficiency, the need to communicate new ideas, and supporting the practice of mental well-being.

Intonation example one

For those unaccustomed to filling up water bottles from an arcing styled fountain, although convenient for drinking directly, it poses a problem when filling up. Slightly tipping your water bottle horizontally allows you easier access, but inevitably starts to pour out the water when reaching a certain point. The life hack posed in Figure 3 suggests a systemic solution to the problem by twisting the faucet itself, allowing the water bottle to remain vertical and getting the most water possible. Although minimal, by using the Intonation Tool this Snap has more meaning that it would initially suggest. The Snap states simply “Water bottle life hack”, but this differs from the other figures selected reversing the placement of where ‘life hack’ is situated within the heading. In the previous examples, it typically states the life hack follows with a colon but with Figure 3 the concept of the life hack is categorized by the previous noun, being a water bottle. The life hack itself moves from the foreground to the background in this example due to the placement within the sentence. This may suggest that the use of a water bottle, for this user, supersedes the general categorization of the life hack movement and is suggesting that water bottles have their own categorization of life hacks. This may be a bit of a stretch, but what can be

said for certain, is that the use of a water bottle is important to this user evidenced by the creation of this life hack suggesting a more efficient use, as well as how the life hack was written.

The universality and relatability of this situation is apparent because of the lack of writing included within the heading. In Figure 2, directions are clearly set out but in 3 instructions are implied. The implication of meaning may suggest the familiarity that the user believes the rest of the Snapchat users have regarding the situation. Further promoting the claim that most users are adolescents, are familiar with filling water bottles at school, and only need to view the video to construct meaning. Therefore, this Figure suggests one incredibly important concept when thinking about how adolescents use social media to communicate – namely the ability to effectively communicate ideas/instructions with minimal information given. This is because the information that is present is so familiar of an experience, that adolescents can construct meaning and are able to recognize that this user understands an inherent part of adolescent culture.

Finally, the systematic solution that this life hack suggests is also apparent within the focus on the water bottle instead of the water fountain. Truly, what this life hack is suggesting is an alteration of the faucet, not the water bottle, but the user presents this as a water bottle life hack, nonetheless. What this may suggest is that adolescents are more inclined to focus on the result of something, rather than the problem itself. The positioning of the faucet was the problem in addition to the lack of mobility that the water bottle had under these circumstances, but the result allowed the water bottle to move freely and perform its designed purpose. Fixing the problem with the system, to create a new system that accommodates for what was previously hindered is the essence of what this Snap represents.

Intonation example two

Using the Intonation Tool, Figure 4 suggests that adolescents have been engrained into a deficit model of thinking, focusing on the problem to suggest a solution. The headings read: “Life hack: if it doesn’t lock put a hair tie/ Scrunchy on it”. Although the life hack movement is about fixing problems, each Snap has demonstrated that these fixes are different from the regular solution. The deficit model of thinking is present in Figure 4, through the “doesn’t lock” phrase. Comparatively, Figure 2 states to “put soap on your sponge to make the bubbles spread easier”, rather than ‘if the bubbles aren’t spreading, put soap on a sponge’. The main difference between the two headings is the factors that the adolescent user is in control of. A broken lock is a situation that the adolescent is not in control of, but with the sponge and bath/bubbles they are fully autonomous in that situation. Therefore, what the use of the “doesn’t lock” phrase suggests is that adolescents may default to a deficit model of thinking when a threat to their agency is present.

However, this act of putting a hair tie/ Scrunchy to solve the problem that this adolescent is facing is in and of itself an act of expressing their agency. Using what is available to them, rather than seeking assistance from a custodian or adult, suggests self-sufficiency. Agency, therefore, seems to be something that adolescents are acutely aware of, both in how it is taken away and the need to reclaim it. While this act, within a vacuum, notes a sense of positivist resiliency, I find it deeply concerning. What is concerning about this Snap is that adolescents have both rejected the systems that should have helped them (but haven’t) and are relying on self-preservation as a solution to everyday problems (because what happens if someone doesn’t have a hair tie/Scrunchy?).

The evidence is present when adolescents reject the systems that should have helped them as shown by the life hack movement itself. Adolescents are creating band-aid (or hair tie) fixes to problems that exist around them but feel unable to affect those issues on a systemic level. The hack posed in this Snap would not be published unless the adolescent saw this as a problem – not as a one-off event that would be fixed the next day. The trust that this adolescent displays towards the systems designed to solve this problem is not present and frames this life hack in a deficit mindset. While this may only be one example and cannot be conclusively used to suggest how an entire generation of people think, it does show that this mode of thought does exist and it captured enough interest to be published as well as viewed by an entire culture that is evidenced to share similar experiences.

Finally, the act of self-preservation is also apparent when analyzing this Snap because of the temporary nature of the solution posed. The entire phrase “if it doesn’t lock put a hair tie/Scrunchy on it” has an underlying assumption that whoever views this Snap has access to the resources needed to perform the hack. In addition, the hack is only accessible to individuals who have those resources but has no regard for those without. The adolescent user is implicitly complicit to those who are unable to use her hack evidenced by the temporary nature of the solution posed. However, the user is not explicit in her act of self-preservation, but what this demonstrates is that this type of thinking is inherent within her model of thought. Within adolescent culture, this finding may suggest that this act of self-preservation, the focus on the individual, is either inherent or learned from being a part of adolescent culture. If it is inherent, then why would she post this life hack Snap within the Discover tab, and not just to her immediate social circle? This would suggest that while she wants to share this solution with those around her, a community if you will, she is unable to pose an alternative, more inclusive

solution to the problem faced. Therefore, this act of self-preservation is not due to a lack of empathy for others, but conversely is imposed upon her resulting in an act of solidarity with those who she is able to impact.

Figured word example two.

The analysis of Figure 5, using the Figured Word Tool, diverges from the previous figures and seeks to demonstrate the ingenuity demonstrated by adolescent users on Snapchat. Figure 5's heading reads, "Life hack: Don't have an Iron, use a straightener". Immediately apparent, the two key points compared, iron and straightener, demonstrate the juxtaposition between two objects that are functionally the same. Broken into their core components, both a hair straightener and a traditional iron are pieces of metal that generate heat when pressed together/on a flat surface. The societal meaning behind a straightener being a beauty product designed for hair is the only difference between the two. From a subjective perspective, using a straightener seems to be an even more effective and efficient way to remove wrinkles in certain cases. Although not perfect in all cases, this adolescent was able to provide an alternative perspective on a seemingly "solved" problem. What is fascinating about this Snap is the willingness to seek innovation despite traditional solutions and the deconstruction of language to emphasize functionality.

Through the innovation of using a straightener in place of an iron, this demonstrates that adolescents view the space around them within a perspective that is unencumbered by what is necessarily correct, but what purpose does something serve. Thinking about what purpose something serves allows adolescents to solve problems that others who do not share this open perspective may have reached. Through attempting to find additional uses for things, this mode of thought is the essence of technological innovation. Therefore, this demonstration of innovative

thinking further promotes that adolescents view social media to communicate new ideas. The spread of ideas and emphasis on what adolescents' value is what makes social media such an effective tool.

The deconstruction of language shown by this Snap suggests that adolescents are more likely to use language that they are familiar with to communicate meaning. While an iron and a straightener provide the same functionality, by using those terms separately, this shows how language may provide different meaning to different people. By communicating this discovery in like terms, this user has created meaning for those who may have been unaware or have not thought about the similarities between the two objects. What this demonstrates is that adolescents understand how one another thinks, and the terms necessary to make those connections in meaning. Accepting and encouraging one another by meeting each other at their own level of understanding, generates further meaning making. Language becomes the way to connect to one another and social media acts as the vehicle to do so.

Conclusion of Analysis using the Figured Word and Intonation Tools

Questioning the user base using both the Figured Word Tool and the Intonation Tool shows that some adolescent users within Snapchat conceive ways to simplify daily life tasks. By sharing these solutions, they in turn assist those who find the information useful. Conversely, this concept invokes a preconception regarding the life hacks adolescents create and are usually deemed inefficient without trial. This subversion of societal expectations and norms assumed by adults, however menial, demonstrates tensions within typical power structures. By adding to this Snapchat story, individuals are seeking to share troubleshooting knowledge, while further connecting with others and form a sense of community (Figure 4 and Figure 5). Users need a

basic level of competence to interact with this story, allowing most adolescents to contribute to the community and create shared meaning easily and effectively.

The values posed through using Gee's tools demonstrate that adolescents share similar struggles, solutions, and means to communicate with one another using social media platforms. What Snapchat offers is a place for adolescents to generate that culture uninhibited by common requirements for mass communication. This offers a wealth of data that educators can use to better understand how adolescents view their worlds. The discussion of the estrangement of adolescents by neoliberal influences in the analysis within the following Chapter will provide further insights on the relationship between adolescent and corporate users. Additionally, by analyzing the lived experience of adolescents through Snapchat, this MRP will hope to shed light on the ways that adolescents communicate to better understand how practitioners and researchers can learn from them.

Conclusion of Chapter Three Findings

The application of Gee's Tools while examining different forms of Snapchat stories contradictorily suggest that identity both matters and does not matter. However, if the proper language is used when creating content, users will recognize the effort put into understanding the culture and accept you as part of the community. Though the topics discussed vary, this variance allows for important conversations to be co-created. The two themes noted—Connectivity and Competence—are present within these findings, and act as guidelines rather than requirements. By observing and discussing different aspects regarding adolescent use of Snapchat, this MRP was able to suggest validity within Snapchat for future research. The following Chapter will discuss the themes connected to the findings to unify various ideas posed within this MRP.

Additionally, it will establish the importance that language, community and communication have individually and collectively to further seek an understanding of adolescent use of Snapchat.

Chapter Four: Discussion of Themes

The observations made within the Discourse analysis done in Chapter 3 will allow Chapter 4 to provide further discussion how adolescents and corporate users use Snapchat differently. From both types of users, adolescent and corporate, there are clear intersections between identity formation, language used, and explain the formation of culture within a social media application. Typically, Snapchat allows its users to interact with each other privately, ensuring that communications are between senders and intended recipients only (Waddell, 2016). In addition to private conversations, Snapchat also allows users to publicly communicate with other users anonymously (Teo & Lee, 2016). However, as seen within Chapter 3, the interruption between the public and private realms of Snapchat demonstrate a cause for further discussion and analysis. Examining the public domain that Snapchat offers while dissecting both how Snapchat functions and how users interact, will allow for further extension of this MRP's findings. Examining the Discover tab, which contains branded entertainment content (Alfonzo, 2019) has offered different Snapchat stories that, while using Gee's Tools, have created opportunities for discussion.

This chapter will first present themes that will seek to answer the research questions posed in Chapter 1, being: how do Snapchat users, both adolescents and corporations, rely on identities, popular discourses and the use of language to propagate culture to construct multimodal texts and for what purpose are these multimodal texts communicated, comparing both adolescent and corporate use? The themes that will be discussed are: the prevalence of neoliberalism and the impact it has on language (as it is used in the social media form of Snapchat), how identity creation is accomplished by both adolescent and corporate users of

Snapchat, how language relates to competency of the user, and the benefits that using Snapchat as a tool for communication has to offer.

Introduction of Themes

The importance of language by individual users cultivates a community within online spaces (Bernstein et al., 2011), and within Chapter 3, this MRP has deconstructed these spaces using Gee's Tools to more clearly observe how the community creation process occurs and be able to further validate the importance of this seemingly unremarkable - yet once analyzed are rather fascinating - aspect of social media. (Brabham, 2015) One of the most interesting elements garnered from the process of Discourse analysis was being able to see the same process of identity making occurring within corporate and adolescent use, but being able to understand the stark contrast that separates these two kinds of use. Each user uses Snapchat as a means of communication, and by being able to create culture the medium becomes a product of a specific language used. The creation of a community, therefore, seems to hinge on how communication occurs and in turn the language used. Therefore, as noted previously, the themes that will be discussed are: the prevalence of neoliberalism and the impact it has on language, how identity creation is accomplished by both adolescent and corporate users of Snapchat, how language relates to competency, and the benefits that using Snapchat as a tool for communication has to offer. This critical examination of language, through the themes noted, will explain how adolescent and corporate users rely on identities formed through language and attempt to establish hypotheses for what purpose these texts are communicated. This, in turn, will hopefully illuminate pathways forward for future academic research on more modern forms of social media.

The first theme, being the prevalence of neoliberalism and the impact it has on language uses the two notions gained from the ephemeral communication system – anonymity and temporary texts – to frame themselves as familiar, in order to promote and plant their ideologies within the wider collective user base. This in part allows corporation to create the cultural language used within Snapchat, as well as invite adolescent users to adopt that language and the discourses that are associated with using that language. Placing this concept of ephemeral communications within the scope of this MRP, we can argue that it has provided both anonymity and the necessity to create a culture because of how communication functions within a temporary nature. These two concepts have proven to be invaluable for both adolescent users and corporate users, but clearly for differing purposes. The second theme examines how identity formation occurs by adolescent and corporate users using Snapchat. This theme seeks to answer the second part of the research question and offer reasons for explaining the purpose of why these users use Snapchat to construct identity. Previous research has noted that online networks provide a space for individual emergence, as users can build an identity and translate their skills and abilities to a virtual realm (Brown et al., 2016). The examination of the third theme, how language relates to competency, suggests the importance of language within an ephemeral social media application, and how users navigate this relationship. While Snapchat is not diametrically different from its predecessors, analysts must consider the aspects of social media that its users find valuable, namely how the use of ephemeral communication allows for the creation of alternate methods of credibility in online spaces. The fourth and final theme will discuss the benefits that Snapchat offers educators and the public based on the observations found in Chapter 3. This final theme is important because it demonstrates that while social media use may have its limitations, through

proper use it can allow society to function more positively and offering new ways to communicate and connect with one another.

The Impact Neoliberalism has on Language in Snapchat

Understanding how neoliberal influences have been able to appropriate language used by adolescents to create authentic representations of adolescent culture is one of the main concepts this MRP has observed. Language is the cornerstone of how adolescents can accomplish this and what this MRP suggests is that the appropriation by corporations has been enacted for their own purposes – remodeling Snapchat from a center of culture to a center of advertisement. It was necessary to discuss the neoliberal influences to be able to understand where the current landscape of social media has found itself in. The corporate influence is important; however, this chapter will also aim to further discuss the examination and discussion of how adolescents effectively use social media so that understanding the purpose of how all Snapchat users can be brought to fruition.

Corporations embed neoliberal language within social media applications because the people who are responsible for creating these advertisements have learned and deeply understood the language used within Snapchat. As suggested by the analysis from the Discourse analysis, corporate users have become competent to the degree where they can apply their knowledge, integrating their own ideologies within the formed culture. As evidenced in the McDonalds/ NBA analysis using the Making Strange Tool, the distortion of language allows for the perversion of values, attention and identity of adolescent culture, and thus shifting the community. Identity formation occurs primarily within the adolescent years, setting a foundation when entering adulthood (Ferrer-Wreder & Kroger, 2019) therefore, it is imperative to more

clearly understand the language being used on Snapchat, and how communal values and identities are shaped within social media platforms.

Additionally, the reframing of these stories, advertisements using familiar language, are also situated within a larger ecological system within a broader physical macro-space. As evidenced by the McDonalds/ NBA analysis using the Identity Building Tool, corporations are using cultural language conventions to frame themselves as familiar. In turn, placing the identity of “consumers” onto the adolescent user. Storing these Snapchat stories within the user’s personal device questions the boundaries that corporations can breach because these devices are typically kept with the user in their most intimate spaces. The smartphone acts as the central hub for social interaction and enables unprecedented levels of communication. There must be an examination between the spaces that we allow the use of smartphones and the information within that space because of what the observations made within the McDonalds/NBA quadrant. This intimate relationship evidenced by the physicality of delivering advertisements into the homes of adolescents shows that the relationship between corporations and adolescents must be put under further scrutiny.

Corporations use language within Snapchat to achieve a specific purpose and being able to use Snapchat as a source for understanding their target demographic, they are more easily able to create effective advertisements through the language gained. The adoption of language and discourses is evident when examining adolescent and corporate users comparing how both users use Snapchat. Within the NowThis Analysis using the Making Strange Tool, corporations are able to create identities by suggesting specific characteristics within a multimodal text, both textual and visual, to push adolescents who may associate with the less radical elements of an identity away from the collective – effectively othering themselves. In addition, it may also cause

those who do not associate with that identity to push away those who they perceive to have the corporate defined identity. Having ‘familiar’ voices that exist within your personal spaces suggest othering identities is harmful and creates rifts within the larger community. Comparing the examination of adolescent users with corporate users, the purpose of adolescent communications emphasizes a search for meaning making within the world around them. The Fig. 2 analysis using the Figured Word Tool, demonstrates how adolescents value efficiency and sharing new ideas with others. What adolescent users find valuable, they share with other users indiscriminately - highlighting the distinction between corporate and adolescent use. The evidence demonstrates that corporations frame the ‘other’ as harmful, where the adolescent user frames the other as someone to share information and new innovations with.

An analysis of language is necessary to understand what it means to effectively use social media. Regarding adolescents as effective users of social media both by academics, and by corporations demonstrates an observable truth. Through adapting how adolescents have developed their own culture through social media, corporations become adept users by following the structures and methods laid out by adolescents. However, acknowledging that by observing a single snapshot of adolescent use of Snapchat does not necessarily reflect an ‘inception of culture’, it does give a glimpse of what it may have been, as evidenced by the description of a meme in Chapter 2. The confirmation that the language practices that have created, and reciprocated, this culture can be reliable due to the previous discussion on ephemeral communication noted by Bernstein et al. (2011). If the culture that created these concepts use ephemeral communication to act as credibility mechanisms, a greater question would be: if these corporations were willingly welcomed into the community created by adolescents, then what does this suggest about modern corporation-adolescent relationships? While the answer to this

question is not within the scope of this MRP, hopefully the basic information needed to start an introduction to that discussion is present. The traits that adolescents who are effective social media users that will be discussed will hopefully allow this MRP to suggest what concepts adolescents value, how those values have been exploited by corporations, and most importantly how educators can reconceptualise how we communicate with adolescents using these findings.

The Process of Identity Formation through Snapchat

The process of identity formation, through Snapchat, is interesting because there are two opposing forces that offer suggestions to users, namely adolescent and corporate users. Demonstrated by adolescent users after interacting with a corporation designed meme, within the examination of different Snapchat stories, this MRP has shown evidence that certain identities are being framed by corporate users. Ultimately, it is the viewers that have the agency to choose which articles to interact with, thereby deciding what ideas/themes are important based on the popularity of any given article. These discourses, as Fiano suggests, are “the identities and activities that people build through their language, actions, values, and beliefs to get recognized as a particular social identity” (2014, p. 67). However, as posed within both the NowThis and the McDonalds/NBA analysis using the Identity Building Tool in Chapter 3, adolescents are unable to completely choose which stories they interact with. As explained when describing the format of a meme in Chapter 2, these still frames only need two (even one) line of text and a picture to suggest meaning. Without any further interaction, the establishment of meaning can be evidenced by Chapter 3 when observing this still frame Through this clever use of language, corporations can suggest their ideologies be adopted by adolescents instantaneously. Therefore, language is important to consider when thinking about identity formation because of how easy it

is to communicate ideas, as well as how easy it is to present a potentially harmful ideology as everyday fact.

In saying this, the aggregate of these concepts gives Snapchat and other social media platforms the ability to allow users to construct and co-construct their own social identities – both corporate and adolescent. Following the discussion on how corporate users dictate identity within the previous paragraph, adolescents are also able to do so with widely differing results. In the analysis of Figure 4, using the Figured Word Tool, I noted that the adolescent posting this snap seems to have acted out of self-preservation – thinking about the individual rather than the larger picture, a neoliberal perspective. However, noting that this snap was also an attempt to solve systemic issues, and the act of self-preservation was not out of choice but out of necessity. Supporting the fact that the adolescent user sought to share this solution to a systemic problem with as many others as possible who share her plight shows the true cause being the lack of resources for the maintenance of public-school facilities. The identity that she is attempting to share with her community is that of resourcefulness and compassion despite hardship. The language that she uses is rooted within an empathetic lens, clearly in contrast with corporate lenses such as those discussed in the dodo analysis using the Making Strange Tool, evidencing a lack of empathy towards another being – in an attempt to suggest that others react negatively when faced with something that is other than the perceived ‘normal’. The construction of social identities needs to be examined by further research both within a qualitative and quantitative perspective, as the co-formation of an identity (Grieve, 2017) within social media is a novel way to understand how an individual interacts with culture, and how external ideas can shape one’s self-image.

The impact of “feedback loop” (Walther et al., 2011, p. 18) in the formation of identity within social media demonstrates that language and community play important roles as adolescents begin to recognize the things they value. This concept relates to the social enhancement hypothesis posed by Zywicki and Danowski (2008), which suggests the necessity of understanding how users present themselves, and thereby create their social identity (Bell, 2019). To better present themselves, adolescents must develop a metacognitive awareness of the idioms accepted within a virtual community and navigate those cues until they become competent enough to fully participate, thus being able to influence the overall narrative. By adopting the language and learning the ‘rules’ within a community, the adolescent is then able to have a fluid understanding of their identity, rather than just replicating the communal one. This distinction, however, becomes obscured when the corporate influences have control over re-writing the dictionary within the community.

As shown in the Thrillist analysis using the Identity Building Tool, corporations are acutely aware of the language and cultural references within each sub-culture of the overall adolescent cultural bubble. Additionally, as shown in the Thrillist analysis using the Making Strange Tool, corporations can hierarchically place ideas as being important than another. Through understanding the lexicon, adapting it to push their ideologies, as well as controlling which ideas that are present deserve more or less attention, corporations, evidenced by Thrillist, are able to fully control and create the spaces that adolescents are forming identity. As posed by analysis done on Figure 5 using the Intonation Tool, language is what connects each person to one another. Using language to share ideas or limit them are important to consider when examining any medium of text. Comprehending how social networks (such as Snapchat) work, will allow

educators to become more proficient at understanding the communication occurring within the medium.

As seen through the use of the Identity Building tool anonymity creates agency and offers the ability to communicate freely since there are no immediate repercussions or dissenting opinions while voicing ideas. Anonymity, therefore, plays an important role when discussing competency within social media, as the platform allows users to decide what their cultural background is. When applied to social media, this concept can have an adverse affect. While it allows users to become familiar with the community and allows them to make mistakes but eventually learn and become a part of the community, it also allows invasive users to do so as well. Conversely, it also suggests that there are more nuances within each interaction when considering other people's cultural background and identities within physical spaces. The deciding factor for determining one's competency in a skill is solely based on the viewer's perspective of that information. The recognition of that skill without further question occurs if the culture accepts the content as a faithful representation.

The Connection between Language and Competency

The prioritization of competence is one of the themes in this study due to Gee's understanding of how to uncover meaning within communications between individuals. The use of language in order to suggest meaning is significant when applied to a social media context because of how culture intersects with language and acts as a means to say, "I belong within this culture because I recognize and understand the cultural implications of the language used". As Catherine Heil (2015) notes upon reviewing Gee's model, "[Gee] establishes that conversations are co-constructed, collaborative turntaking exchanges which convey meaning; he posits that humans have conversations with worlds whenever they act, as actions evoke responses" (p. 63).

From my understanding, it is implicit when Gee considers competence since his understanding assumes that when conversations occur, both parties understand one another as they use a similar cultural language. I would further suggest Gee's understanding to include 'meaningful conversations', as communications without context of everyone's perspective does not allow for effective understanding (Fiano, 2014). Therefore, it is imperative to consider competence when discussing the importance of understanding language in various contexts.

Social media allows like-minded people to gather and have meaningful conversations, while further enhancing the ways in which we communicate (Estevao, 2017). This enhanced level of communication is important to discuss, as examining how people understand one another may reveal further comprehension of who that person is, and what things they value. This becomes an issue when corporate ideology is involved because this ideology typically suggests one idea to be correct, namely the position that would gain the corporation more capital. The framing of the Western, patriarchal, lens shown in the dodo analysis accomplished using the Identity Building Tool is what should be deemed as the 'correct' lens to have. While having like-minded conversations does indeed generate meaningful conversations, having only that lens be present hinders our understanding of other cultures and ways of thought.

Secondly, it is important to examine users' competence levels in social media communications, as it reflects the core differences between every day and effective uses of social networks. While discussing personal experiences within education, Gillani (2000) focuses on the concept of information acquisition and the ability to effectively use that information to promote his ideas on adequate teach. This MRP has considered the effective use of information for better communication to define the concept of competency—to properly express a concept, an individual need to have a breadth of knowledge about the topic, to frame it for others. Within

social media, the individual needs to be able to gauge their own mastery of the knowledge, and to achieve this, one must know what qualifies someone within a social network.

Snapchat was conceived during a time of evolving communicative technologies; therefore, it should be reconsidered when new methods of communication are brought within the public sphere. Individuals must adopt new communication styles as novel technologies surface. This MRP echoes Fullan's and Donnelly's (2015) weary thoughts regarding the use of technologies, or communication applications, and the choice between being app-dependent or app-enabling—either making the user passively dependent on the app or allowing them to generate further learning. Using the Intonation Tool in Figure 5, adolescents show the willingness to seek innovation despite traditional solutions and the use language to emphasize how they perceive irregular instances of functionality within the world. Questioning the internal edifice that makes Snapchat an effective tool for adolescent communication occurs by understanding how that edifice functions. Achieving it in this case by understanding both Snapchat's logistical perspective, as well as the adolescents themselves will reveal further considerations when examining adolescent communication. While this paper does not explicitly ask adolescents about their usage (Mascheroni et al., 2015; Wargo, 2015), this MRP seeks to observe the biases that exist within the adolescent cultural community from a removed perspective, instead of interacting with and potentially altering that constructed culture.

The suggestion of language practices that are associated with competency are significant when attempting to understand the online practices of meaning making done by corporate and adolescent users. A user can start co-creating meaning when they become competent and comfortable using the language and have demonstrable ability that the community accepts. However, as pointed out, when there are corporate users who control this flow of meaning

making – limits to community building become present. In this way, the original process within social media was that the previously uninformed viewer, when attaining competency of the language used, now seems to have the competency to further share content, thus continuing the cycle and garnering more people (Bayer et al., 2016) while nurturing the community formed around that idea. As shown through these examples, this cycle is limited, and the scope of the language used is only able to be generated by the users who control the methods of communication.

When examining the process of fostering online communities by large groups of people, there is apparent a general sense of user anonymity, implicating that individual identity is important to a lesser extent. It is not as important to define who one person is, but rather how important their message is (Kent, 2013), and how competent they are at communicating their message (Bernstein et al., 2011). Ascertained by the analysis with Figure 5, using the Intonation Tool, placing the focus on the message and the communication competency, rather than the individual. The content in this example gains popularity based on how competent users are at conveying a message that fits both within the culturally co-constructed language, as well as the larger Snapchat community. Joosten further states that competency in social media is “not fully comprehensible until you become part of the community” (2012, p. 16). The recognition of competency is a major component that adolescents using the medium understand. However, it is important to highlight that community outsider can attain a basic level of competency by understanding how these platforms function and the language rules. The emphasis on language resembles Gee’s (2018) definition on social spaces, where language can be used “in order to assert what perspective you are coming from” (p. 77). While language denotes a cultural understanding and user identities are anonymous, the viewer can only judge the contributor by

the content shared. Conversely yet similarly, the use of an ephemeral communicative technology reintroduces the notion that an idea can be forgotten by society (Mayer-Schonberger, 2009), allowing for mistakes to reoccur. The reader is prone to accept new knowledge within their own world view, if a contributor has the level of competence required, as both users have acknowledged the other's use of language and share a similar cultural background.

Looking at how Adolescents use Snapchat seemingly has shown that the purposes they intend to accomplish once a level of competence is reached are the sharing of ideas, posing new answers to previously solved problems, and as shown in Figure 3, using the Intonation Tool, the search for systemic solutions using resources that are available to them. In contrast, when corporate users reach the same level of competency, they start to assimilate other users into the culture that they deem is correct – namely following a Western and Neoliberal lens. Using Gee's Tools to note how to use competence and for what purpose is competence attained demonstrates how each type of user views social media applications. This discussion on competence suggests that to attain competence, you need to first learn the language that the community uses, but once attainment of competence occurs, each respective user's ideology is reciprocated.

Benefits of Snapchat for Learning

While early studies on virtual learning (correctly) predicted the medium to change education itself, certain barriers to learning exist between physical and virtual spaces (Grubb & Hines, 2000). The persistence of these blocks remains present in more modern research, as viewing "Virtual Worlds" are still as inherently different and must be examined as such (Brown et al., 2016). While in certain regards these claims are true, the findings from this paper suggest that the physical and virtual spaces are not isolated monoliths, but rather, they are more similar than previously framed. Although the short gap between the physical and virtual spaces seems to

be generated by social media, like most suggestions in this chapter, they can both still be thought of as within their own individual spaces. The ability for individuals to connect and interact with others within a physical space by using cultural knowledge gained from interactions in virtual spaces, such as Snapchat shows an opportunity to form culture using this technology. By crossing the barrier between these two spaces, individuals can identify others who belong to the same cultural background, because they each can infer shared knowledge components gained via social media platforms. This paper suggests that adolescents are often more apt to use social media since they have the possibility of interacting anonymously as they learn the language rules, without caring about the repercussions of making mistakes, which is an asset of ephemeral social media (Bernstein et al., 2011). Adolescents usually choose an explicit identity once they feel competent within the medium, as evidenced within the analysis done with Fig 2 using the Figured Word Tool as a purveyor of helpful information, to show the acquisition of cultural knowledge and gain recognition for their contributions.

The final benefit that will be discussed is reclaiming power using social media, which for the purpose of this study is defined as increasing an individual's agency within systems that control one's opportunities. As noted in Chapter 1, neoliberalism is a major ideology that has permeated into education and social media. Discourse analysis allows the reader to question and discuss those institutions of power (Shook, 2018). When examining the different Snap stories, it became apparent that using social media as a tool to foster a community is apparent, although garnering a higher level of importance held on the collective narrative. This contrasts the original premise of a neoliberal mindset that focuses on the individual. By implementing of the 'Intonation Tool' (Gee, 2014, p. 34), the analysis focused on establishing how life hacks allow individuals to express their individual struggles, supported by the analysis done with Figure 5.

Sharing these problems and respective solutions helps create a larger collective consciousness that acts as both an identity forming device, as well as a coping strategy for those who can empathize with the content. This, in turn, allows for individual connections beyond the medium of a virtual platform, as if reclaiming power through solidarity. By creating a common consciousness, social media can oppose the hyper-individualistic nature of neoliberalism, while suggesting alternative thought processes regarding individual's identity and their role within the larger narrative.

The recognition of Snapchat as a tool for mass communication that could positively impact the greater public good (Schejter & Tirosh, 2015) shows that it is a valuable area to be understood by educators. Snapchat can further encourage the creation of a collective consciousness that nurtures, empathizes with and represents neglected voices, encapsulating the true potential within social media. Greater empathy within these platforms can change the view adolescents and other participants have of social media. While there is currently a specified lens within an expressly effective stance (Kist, 2010) as previously discussed, definitions are malleable and can change based on one defines a concept and if it is shown to have an effective use. In this model of thought, social media may have the opportunity to be more than just a recreational/leisure tool, but an effective tool to communicate, collaborate and empathize with a limitless amount of different voices and perspectives.

In conclusion, Chapter 4 has suggested that language is inextricably the most influential factor when considering adolescent identity formation, as demonstrated within Snapchat. The research questions posed, asking how language is used to construct identity, and for what purposes do adolescent and corporate users seek to understand how to use than language, have been found to be significant when applying Gee's Tools to the Snapchat Discovery page. The

discussion in Chapter 4 has suggested that both corporate and adolescent users use language to create identities, but while corporate users seek to implement their construct of identity onto adolescent users, what adolescent users attempt to accomplish is a co-creation of identity through sharing their ideas on what identity means to them. It is clear that the way educators look at social media needs to be reimagined, and the way that this may be accomplished is through understanding the way adolescents communicate with one another, then using that language in order to understand what their needs are, and how to best help them. Social media exists as an excellent tool to communicate with one another and share ideas. However, it is up to the individual to become a part of that community and let themselves learn from others. Through language we can construct a better system of identity formation and understand how exterior influences may attempt to use this for their own gain. Teaching ourselves, to be able to communicate with adolescents how to recognize those influences is imperative to taking the next step further with social media as an invaluable resource.

Chapter Five: Concluding Thoughts

Relevance of Research

This research seeks to fit within the current literature on social media and identify what the current trends in research are discussing, while acknowledging knowledge gaps for future research. Social media has significantly altered interactions between individuals, and thus reflects the way people learn. These technologies shift the learner and educator roles, as the educator is no longer the master of the medium, but the student holds the knowledge regarding effective and efficient communication within social networks (Noor Al-Deen, 2016). However, the removal of educators from the conversation is not the suggestion this MRP aims to pose. On the contrary, educators should rely on adolescents to further their understanding of social media communications. The scope of educational research on social media needs to move past “how-to guides” (Poore, 2013) and focus on the deeper theoretical insights (Brabham, 2015) of how adolescents apply highly effective communication strategies. This will allow further research to consider novel forms of communication similarly, rather than continuously waste research efforts when new social platform arise.

Limitations

The main limitation within this paper is its narrow focus, as the examination of only one social network is present but the emerging findings can be then extrapolated to other platforms. While Snapchat is one of the most popular forms of social media used by adolescents, this paper would benefit from including other social networks in the analysis to further validate themes, findings and suggestions for educators. Secondly, there is an inherent conflict with how a complex communication method that includes multimedia, images, audio and text, can be properly discussed within the textual format of an MRP. While this paper has attempted to

thoroughly describe the information to better understand the intricacies of social media, firsthand experience is necessary, as social media is a highly visceral experience. Only through quantitative or qualitative research (via questionnaires, Likert scales, or interviews), could this paper further substantiate the observations made regarding adolescent social media use. While these limitations primarily focus on increasing the credibility and validity of this paper's findings, they further prove a distinct research gap, and encourage further research on the topic to further the overall understanding of adolescent use of social networks. Understanding how to effectively communicate with students is the only course that can spring education forward as a profession.

Future Steps

Future research should focus on suggestions arising from the limitations observed to increase the validity and credibility of these findings, while ensuring that the conclusions presented mirror and support those within the field. Firstly, the themes noted need to be validated by examining other social media platforms and forms of communication in order to prove the value of communication and meaning within social media, while recognizing the core component that defines the functions and interactions between social media platforms. Secondly, conducting interviews with students and practitioners to support the view that communication interacts with language and identity formation within this paper needs to be done to validate this MRP's findings. As stated in Chapter 1, it is of key importance that the purpose of research is always rooted within practice and aims to understand the context within in the field of knowledge. Finally, the findings of this study need to be cross-examined with contemporary effective uses of social media to confirm the importance of language and identity formation.

The inextricable connection between communication and technology shows that adolescents are drawn to generate meaning – displaying an accelerated form of learning. In the discovery phase of this new form of technology, adolescents seek to make meaning, and in doing so must create new language practices to effectively communicate new encountered concepts. When creating this new language, a culture forms that only those who have taken part in that formation of culture understands. This is the area of technological understanding is by far the most fascinating observation this MRP has examined, and this adolescent-made culture depicts a picture of detached society from exterior corporate influence. Within the current iteration of social media, it is familiar to typical media outlets – as an extension of a neoliberal marketing practice. However, as demonstrated by this MRP, the original culture formed still exists despite the assimilation within the dominant culture.

Gee's Discourse analysis offers the reader tools to better observe what a piece of text accomplishes. Meaning is often implied, implicitly or explicitly, and by using Gee we can state that meaning and discuss the purpose of why the writing of that text occurs. This is an awkward way of thinking about communication because the standard when communicating should effectively communicate meaning without further analysis. As Gee suggests about his own work, "The issue with discourse analysis and context is that in order to gain more information or what is not said about a specific topic, we must widen the context, but when widening the context, it raises questions about why someone has framed a specific topic or idea that way." (Gee, 2018, p. 151) Gee raises an interesting question, why would someone frame an idea that is purposely different from what they mean? Relating to this MRP's context, why would corporations obscure their methods of advertisement from what their intent is? Do they think people would object if their meaning was objectively stated? I do not have the answers to these questions, but what can

be suggested from observing Snapchat, is that the method of communicating information, through a mix of textual and visual images, are able to influence how adolescents view their self-image, in addition to corporate influence being both aware and interacting with those adolescents. This area of research still has room to grow, and there are still key questions to be answered. Technology moves at a break-neck pace and varies between iterations, but as understood by using Gee's Tools, language is the common factor, and by understanding the language used, purpose can be observed.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1083-6101.2008.01429.x>.

Appendices

Appendix A

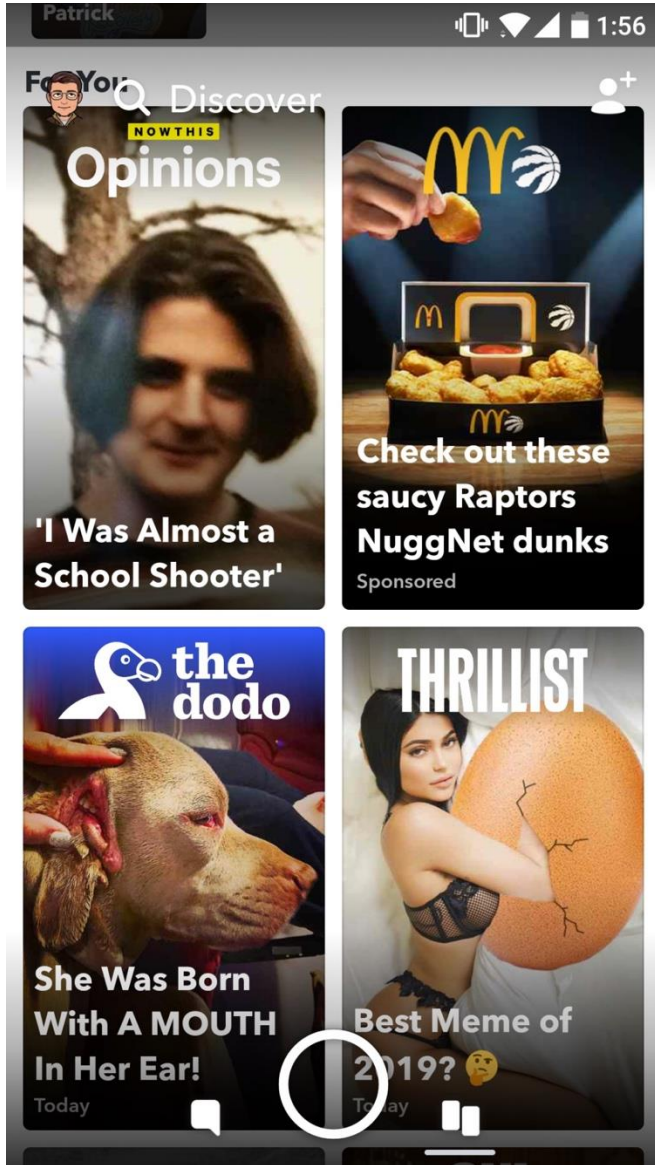


Figure 1

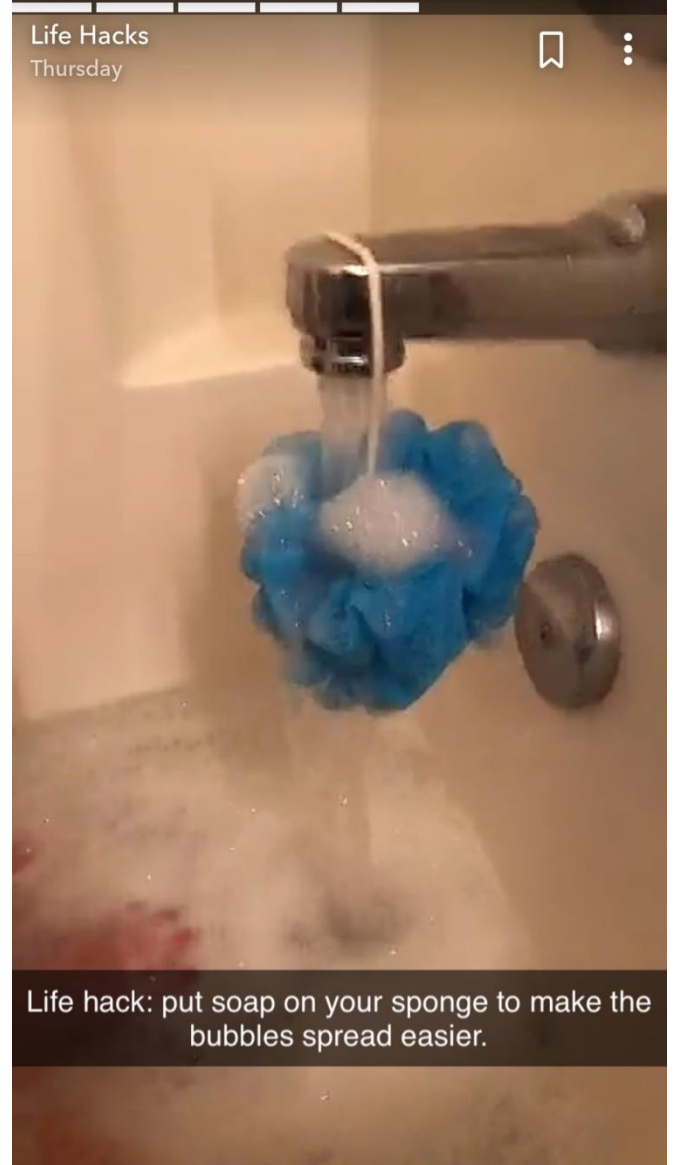


Figure 2

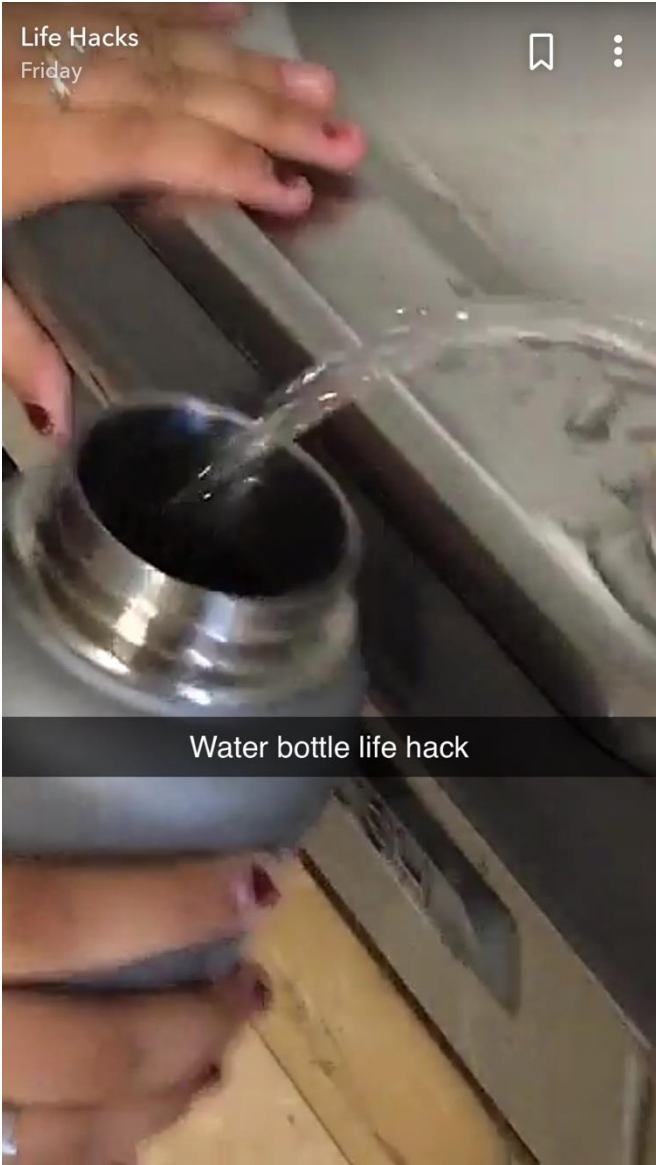


Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5

Computer freezes
Me: *opens task manager*
Computer unfreezes

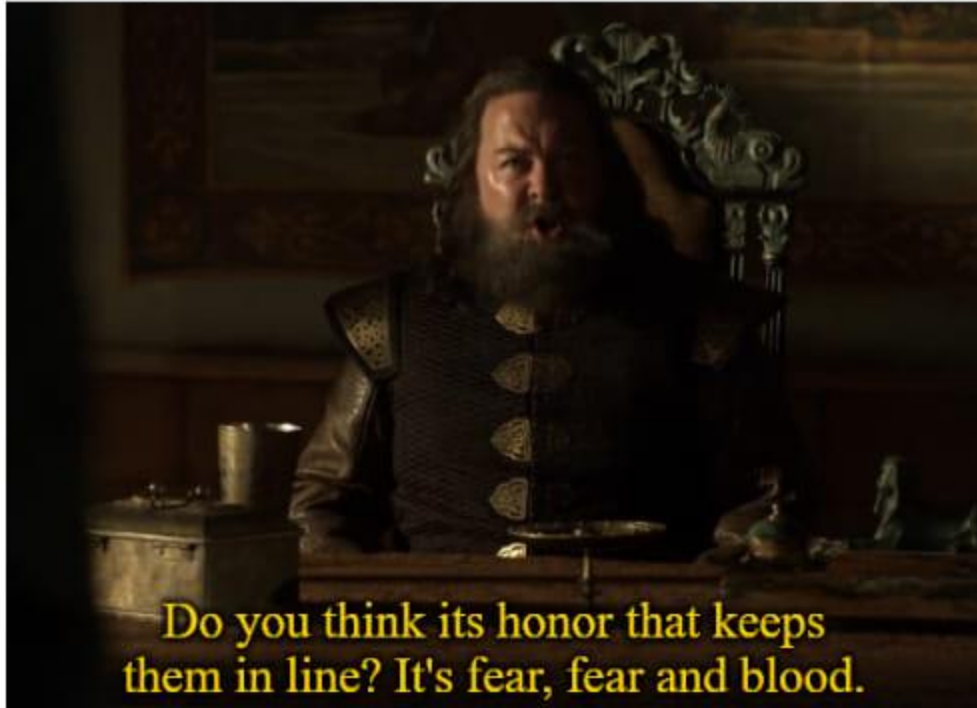


Figure 6