How to Be Insufferable on Facebook: Revealing Communities of Practice and Social Construction Through Social-Media Dynamics

William Schulte, Winthrop University, United States

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Abstract

Facebook is one of the most influential media dynamics in modern history and it is the most popular social media platform in the world. Several years ago, Wait but Why, a popular blog revealed a pattern of user behaviors that made a post insufferable. This textual analysis uses these core ideas to ascertain ways these distinctions are at work on the platform, and how Facebook builds communities of influence. Social constructionist theory informs this study. This review suggests that the rhetoric on Facebook evolves into more than a channel for information, it is a mediated social space where original information becomes negotiated social meaning for the users. Overall, this study finds that communities of individuals are significant in identity building as per the tenets of the communities of influence model.

Keywords: Communities, Influence, Facebook, Social Construction

Introduction

Facebook is one of the most influential media dynamics in modern history and it is the most popular social media platform in the world, with 2.96 billion active users. Ten years ago, Wait but Why, an online publication that highlights amusing observations, published a blog called "7 Ways to Be Insufferable on Facebook" (Urban, 2013). The author, Tim Urban, asserts that "A Facebook status is annoying if it primarily serves the author and does nothing positive for anyone reading it" (np). This is a deceptively simple idea but causes wide-ranging issues as social media users generally engage with the platform for a beneficial result. Building and sharing identity, professional or personal, is intended to be enriching but social missteps have profound consequences on one's personal brand.

The utility of social media is often questioned and concerns regarding online hubris are prominent. According to Purohit (2019), individuals falling prey to the negative effects of social media is an accepted fact in popular and recent public discussions. Further, many misuses of social media exist and Purohit asserts people unintentionally come across as trolls, even though they are somehow seeking to gain advantage over others. Poor decisions by individuals have adverse consequences and there are indeed keys to avoiding negative perception. Purohit further asserts success is all about confidence, and it is no surprise that many are out of touch with the way others perceive their posts or the general tone of their profile.

Evidence amassed over the years shows that these platforms are damaging in a myriad of different ways. Misinformation, body image issues, and projecting a false reality are paramount among the criticisms, but there is little exploration regarding smaller irritations that are just as damaging to individuals as their impact accumulates over time. Urban's blog highlights seven areas of hubris based on five areas of motivation that make readers disengage with a post. These five areas of motivation are deeply instilled in human nature including:

- Image Crafting: The author wants to affect the way people think of them.
- Narcissism: Only the author's thoughts, opinions, and life philosophies matter. The author and the author's life are interesting in and of themselves.
- Attention Craving: The author wants attention.
- Jealousy Inducing: The authors want to make people jealous of their lives.
- Loneliness: The author is feeling lonely and wants Facebook to make it better. (2013, np)

Based on these motivations, Urban identifies seven characteristics of "insufferablity" that find root in the cultural zeitgeist. This study looks for these moments to explore how prominent they are in the current landscape of social media. Moreover, it explores how these dynamics are constructing a negative reality in the eyes of others. Facebook posts were used in this model to explore these social media dynamics and explore social constructionist thought. The seven characteristics of hubris (found in the method section) noted by Urban are used to find themes that build impressions, and explore how dominant they are in the social media landscape. In contrast, Urban gives two other broad categories of posts that he calls "unannoying." These are used to help build themes for analysis as well.

Social constructionist theory as well as communities of practice are used as theoretical frameworks to observe these dynamics. Social constructionist theory, first explored by Berger and Luckman (1966), is used to illustrate ways individuals on social media may adjust to

influences and expectations. Social space and the behavior observed in this study may play a key role in indicting social media dynamics. According to Bourdieu (1984) social space in terms of peer networks is the social capital of an individual. As individuals engage and interact in various aspects of life they develop certain dispositions toward their identities and the ways they are expected to behave. Bourdieu further explains that these dispositions, combined with other complex social behaviors and expectations, will start to inform individuals of their place in a social order and they will begin to embody this expectation in their habitus, thus, constructing their reality. This discourse analysis is designed to indicate how prominent areas of hubris are among the sample group. This is done by exploring Facebook, as an interactive cultural landscape. The rhetoric from 24 undergraduate's Facebook pages, including comments is scrutinized herein for themes related to Urban's original article. Facebook, as an online social landscape, is used to explore in what ways subtle-negative or positive rhetoric finds its way into cultural zeitgeist. This study explores those conversations and looks at how they are address by others.

Literature Review

Theories of communities of practice and social construction as they apply to social interaction in a digital space guide this study. In terms of social constructionist thought, relationships are paramount to the value individuals place in themselves and how investment in those relations are returned in the form of self-awareness. Webb (2014) notes that the original goal of the web to harness collective intelligence, has been overshadowed by changing business models, the need for hits, and false engagement on social media. Knowledge of online digital communities like Facebook has grown from the field of community building, which traditionally explores public discourse, self-cultivation, and validation. The literature shows three important themes that arise from looking at social control and communities of influence; understanding the rules of a platform, the negotiated process of identity building, and truth and social action.

Understanding the Rules of the Platform

As individuals begin to realize the online world has different social norms than in the physical world their understanding starts to change for that particular marketplace of ideas. According to Lin (2005), this marketplace can be economic, political, or community based. A social landscape provides an individual with an understanding of individual demands and how they fit in an overall structure. Meeting those social demands provides the individual with satisfaction and a motivation separate from conventional norms of behavior. This structure creates unofficial rules that maintain the community. Boicu (2011) observes that the online community rules are expected to be the foundation on which a practicing community is built, but there are many interpretations of net etiquette. Chatting is perceived differently by some communicators: "They hesitate between defining it as a one-to-one interaction or as a permissive genre for quarrelling and deviation from the main topic. Concerning conformity with the main topic, it is the most infringed rule within the data and it often becomes an argument against inconvenient issues or persons" (p. 61). Boicu sees rules as a learned behavior but others find them more explicit when the groups goals are well-defined. According to Silva et al, (2009) cohesion in an online community surrounding a special topic or interest is brought about by explicit ground rules regarding membership, presence of moderators, availability of profile information, and net etiquette. Silva argues there are tacit warrants for discerning pertinent posts and the deployment of specific techniques of a discipline. The study further found that without the exercise of power through the disciplinary

techniques imposed by ongoing users and the "owner" of the original idea, the existence of the community is jeopardized.

This discourse leads to well defined roles in the community over time. This is consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1967) assertion that reality is constructed by social interactions to build meaning and this meaning depends on the way people interact with each other. This provides a symbolic reality for the social world. In the case of the individual, the alteration of the social world will lead to an altered reality.

The Negotiated Process of Identity Building

Berger and Luckman ((1967) further alludes to the idea that a person's identity is heavily influenced by continued interaction with others whereas their view of the world and their own identity is negotiated. This sounds like a negative dynamic, but Wenger (1998) asserts that positive "communities of practice" arise from these dynamics as well. The author explains that groups of people, who share a passion for a craft, skill, or profession learn how to perform more effectively if they interact regularly. Morrison (2014) confirms this assertion, contending that over time, bloggers develop discourses appropriate to the medium. This study of "mommy" bloggers looking at posting and commenting practices denotes use of the forum builds a community around the narration of unconventional opinions. The compositional practice of commenters minimizes conflict and prioritizes emotional support. Fox (2000) builds on this idea granting that participants in a communities of practice might be a community, but other actors in that network theory could comprise human and non-human actors, any of which could be "bad actors". Changes in the actions of non-human elements in the actor-network, as well as changes in human action, increase the sum of knowledge embodied in the network, but that is not always positive because the intention is nebulous.

Objective Truth and Social Action

This brings the review back to the individual and their ability to recognize the influences placed upon them in a digital community. It appears to depend on the understanding the individual actor brings to the table. According to Jorgensen and Phillips (2002), knowledge is not objective truth; rather it is a product of categorizing the world into products of discourse. Worldviews and identities can change over time. This premise privileges the anti-foundationalist view that knowledge is not grounded but is contingent on malleable social discourse. Discourse as a form of social action plays a part in producing the social world. The authors further assert that there are links between knowledge and social process, thus there are links between knowledge and social action. Webb (2014), as previously noted, asserts that the original goal of the internet, to harness collective intelligence, has been overshadowed by changing business models, the need for clicks, and false engagement on social media. Although original founders and participants in digital communities likely follow the rules, the need for expanding audience allows for others with less social investment in the communities to take part. This results in what Webb describes as a coarsening of discourse.

Beyond communities of content, excessively negative or extraneous comments are a concern for large media companies and individuals alike. The usefulness of online participation is also a multifaceted dynamic. According to Mitchelstein (2011) many bloggers welcome interactions with readers and appreciate their comments, but asserts also that newspaper moderators have a low opinion of the quality of user contributions. The authors findings suggest that online discussions were a phenomenon shaped by the motivations and practices

of participants and facilitators. These motivations and actions, when successful can grow as well. According to Fanselow (2007) place-based bloggers invest many hours cultivating content and discussion (usually for free) because they love their respective communities. Some local sites in Fanselow's study evolve into more traditional advertiser-supported news outlets. But few community bloggers were in it for the money. They value the civic function of supporting and informing their respective communities.

The literature shows communities that engage online are often able to determine optimum ways to communicate on a given platform through observation and interaction, this necessitates a negotiation of identity for a positive result. The literature is rich in the area of community building but is limited in explorations of self-cultivation, validation, and hubris. With this in mind, this study was guided by the following research questions.

RQ1: Are areas of hubris apparent in the sample discourse?
RQ2: How do specific areas of hubris manifest in the discourse?
RQ3: What motivations in the discourse reveal about social constructionist theory and communities of influence?
RQ4: What areas of usefulness or enjoyment, beyond the insufferable, are engaged on Facebook?

Methodology

The methodology used in this study employs textual analysis as explored by Crystal (1992), which allows discourse to be examined as an ongoing dialogue making up units of thought. Crystal references these exchanges as sermons, arguments, jokes, or narratives rather than social media posts specifically, but the threads and comments corresponding to the research questions share the same dynamics as other continuous dialogues. This method calls for the examination of entries by looking at structure, such as cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativeness, situationally, and intertextuality. This method of inquiry was found to be appropriate for the study as these structural elements create similar categorical themes such as those explored by Urban. To align with the goals of this study, Urban's themes are modified slightly and not reflected in this analysis exactly, but the intent remains intact. With this in mind, the themes of hubris explored herein include:

1) **The Brag**
    a. A post making life sound great, either in a macro or micro sense.
2) **The Literal Status Update (and The Cryptic Cliffhanger)**
    a. The exact thing going on at a given moment.
    b. A post that makes clear that something good or bad is happening in your life without disclosing any details.
3) **The Inexplicably-Public Private Message**
    a. **Description:** A public posting from one person to another that has no good reason to be public.
4) **The Out-of-Nowhere Oscar Acceptance Speech (and The Step Toward Enlightenment)**
    a. **Description:** An outpouring of love for no clear reason and aimed at no one in particular.
    b. **Description:** An unsolicited nugget of wisdom.
5) **The Incredibly Obvious Opinion**
    a. **Description:** When a big event happens, a post chiming in with the opinion we've heard 1,000 times.

Further, the following categories of posts are described as not containing hubris and are not insufferable, according to Urban. They are also used to create positive themes for categorization.

1) **Interesting/Informative**
   a. **Description:** An important, impactful, original item of information that has neutral bearing on social image.
2) **Funny/Amusing/Entertaining**
   a. **Description:** An effort to amuse an audience in an attempt to brighten their day.

Discourse analysis, as a qualitative method, is closely related to social constructionist theory as noted by Jorgensen and Phillips (2002). Both are central to the idea that, "our ways of talking do not neutrally reflect our world, identities and social relations, but rather play an active role in creating and changing them" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, 1). According to Burr (1995), discourse as a form of social action plays a part in producing the social world. If there are connections between knowledge and social process, there are connections between knowledge and social action. Discourse analysis can also give meaning to reality. According to Fairclough's (1995) work on critical discourse analysis, the method explains the blogosphere through the concept of intertextuality, or the ways in which individual texts draw on elements of other texts to create new discourse. It is this combination that causes meaning to change, and thus the social and cultural world.

This analysis seeks to explore meaning among Facebook posts, the posts are examined as conversations, including all of the comments included with each post. To further this goal, the study explores the Facebook profiles of 24 undergraduate students willing to share and print the first 25 original posts of Facebook Friends in their profiles. In all 600 Facebook posts were examined for this study. All posts were cultivated during the same week in conjunction with an assignment in a media law class exploring how people use social media. The participants were mostly junior mass communication majors at a small Southern university. All participants were informed how the assignment would be used beyond the classroom and given the opportunity to opt out of the exercise for an alternative assignment. All chose to participate, and were curious about what their Facebook profiles would reveal. Further, all participants were given anonymity. The collected artifacts included all comments assigned to the posts, as these conversations were sparked by the original post. To remain consistent with the goals set by the research questions, advertising, and shared items (often memes), and reposted material was not included with the first 25 posts unless they were expanded on significantly by the post-maker. "Likes" and other responses by the audience are considered as they indicate positive or negative affirmation of an individual post. The original post and comments were sorted and analyzed for similarities and deeper meaning related to the research questions.

Results

Overall, this review observes the users examined have not evolved far from the exercise in hubris and "insufferablity" Urban observed over a decade ago. However, other dynamics are at play, and some areas of unsavory behavior were rare among the sample group. There are also a strong contingent of users who engage the platform for storytelling and news. Figure 1 shows the Facebook posts as they matched themes found in the sample group. If a post had more than one theme it was placed in the area most dominant, subjectively chosen by this

researcher. Those instances tend to occur in the "Literal Status" and "Interesting / Informative" categories, but also a few shared characteristics with "Bragging" and the Literal Status.
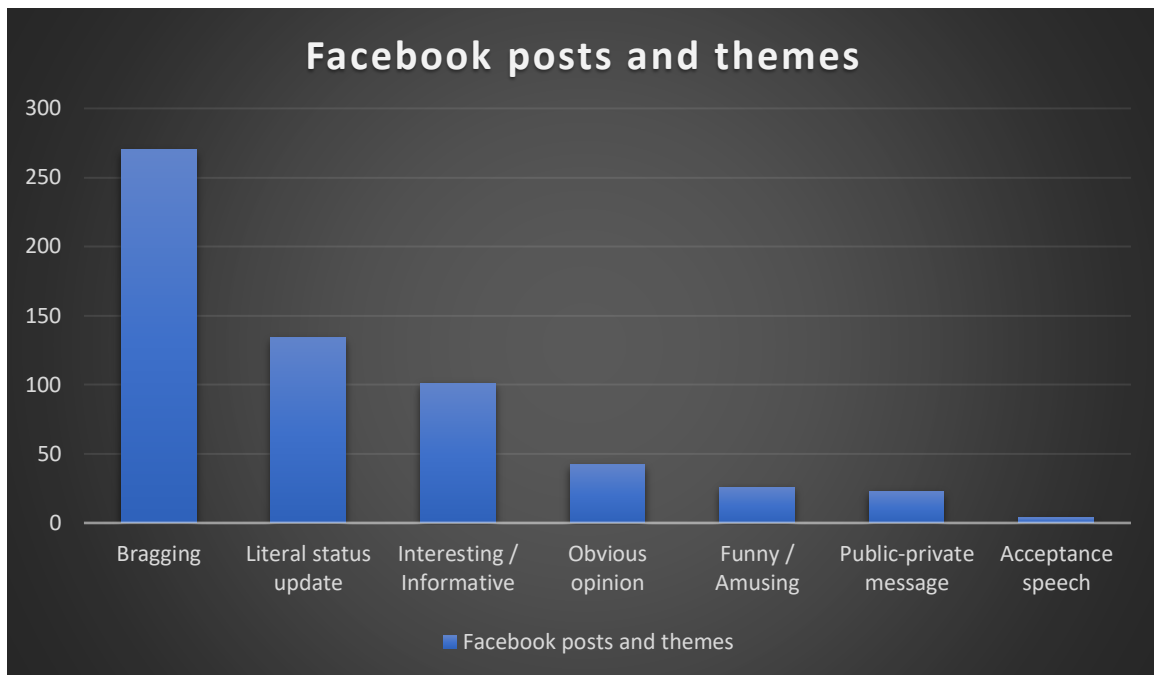

Figure 1.

Out the 600 posts, the most dominant theme was by far bragging; 270 out of 600 (or 9 out of every 20) posts fell into this category. The seven themes are presented below in descending order of occurrence.

Bragging takes many forms and that theme dominates the posts in this review. There are 270 posts that matched this description. In terms of discourse and feedback, an individual bragging is never called out for the activity, in fact all feedback was to praise or congratulate an individual for being lucky, talented, or having a gifted / attractive child. Bragging, in and of itself, does not fit neatly into one area. Urban observes this and subcategorizes bragging into several dynamics. Figure 2 describes this distribution as it subdivides in the following ways:

1) The "I'm Living Quite the Life" Brag: Description: A post making life sound great, either in a macro sense (got your dream job, got your degree, love your new apartment) or a micro sense (taking off on an amazing trip, huge weekend coming up, heading out on a fun night with friends, just had an amazing day).

2) The Undercover Brag: Like the blatant brags above except behind a frail disguise. This includes all humblebrags, indirect brags, brags disguised as a rant, etc.

3) The "I'm In a Great Relationship" Brag: Description: A public expression of your extremely positive feelings for your significant other, friend, or loved one, or an anecdote signifying the perfection of your relationship.
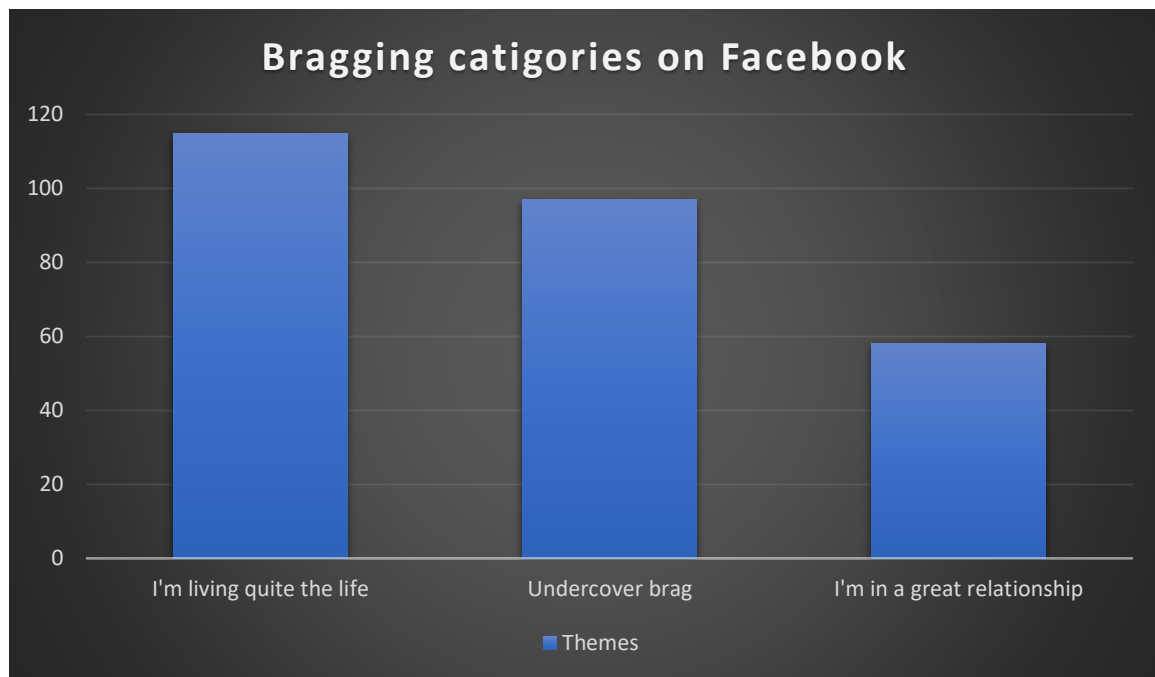
Figure 2.
Urban's descriptions of "bragging" is prevalent in the posts observed for this study. All posts that contained that attribute are readily categorizable into one of the categories noted here.

The bragging theme, "I'm living quite the life," aligned with 115 posts. The theme of an "Undercover brag" aligned with 97 posts, and the theme relating to "I'm in a great relationship," aligned with 58 posts. The posts where bragging occurs generally consists of those showing excitement for an award, event, or accomplishment. Comments include:

- "Proud beyond words- Brooke placed 3rd in the state qualifying her for Opens next week! Hard work and pure determination right there! Way to go Beast!"
- "City Champs! Great job boys and coaches. Such a fun season! And St. Simon came home with both trophies! Q had his highest scoring game with 23. So proud of this boy and how his skills have developed over the last 2 years. Great job Royals!"
- "Enjoying a Tybee Island stopover on our way to Florida."
- "My job must have a lot of faith in me, they keep giving an impossible work load. At least I get paid well." (… undercover brag)
- [Birthday wish] "… my beautiful sister, I couldn't do life without you. I know your day will be just as special as you are. you are my bestie boo, my twin, personal nail tech, and I would do anything for you." (… in a great relationship)

The literal status update themes include, thank-yous, and acknowledgments of a day of recognition (in this case World Book Day). Most are short. Earnest requests for help and advice are also present, but these are outliers in this area. Most literal status posts consist of pedestrian observations in the moment. Most are superficial, but a few others have deeper description, like posting a morning fitness routine. The "superficial" posts include requests not to be bothered before the poster has had their coffee (with a photo of their coffee), sitting down to a meal (a photo of the meal), a photo of a gas pump with the price and the words "thanks Biden", etc. Other examples are:

- "It's World Book Day. I'm reading, 'Beloved' by Toni Morison … Again."
- "Have some tea to warm your stomach." – photo of tea.
- "I found that my cooking is getting better and better." – Video of poster cooking.

Superficial posts were found in other categories as well, but 101 posts attempted to be interesting or informative. These, by-and-large, consisted of short narratives or anecdotes. It is perhaps debatable how interesting or informative these items are however they are in the category with this theme if the poster is attempting to engage with a general audience on a topic of general or universal interest. Here are some examples:

- "Over the weekend, I caught myself feeling down because I'm not where I wanted to be at this point. I was too busy focusing on where I am to be proud of how far I'd come. I forgot that I'm always a work in progress and that I can always push harder! Buckling down on my nutrition for the final phase." – with a gym photo
- "Bloodroot, twinleaf, trout lily, Jacob's ladder, nice cows and a jennet all by the road." – with photos of plants.
- "Just a reminder, No Bible study tonight. We will resume again next week. Be Blessed!!"
- "Had a need to deal with Geico insurance this week and so far, quite impressed. They don't mess around in taking care of things!"
- "Adam & Allie are trying to help their school raise money for a new playground! Right now, their entire elementary school shares one, so they have days where they don't get to use the playground during recess… so they're trying to build a second one, and we need your help!"

Urban defines the obvious opinion category as an attention seeking need to engage safely on Facebook, but this study finds political discourse, supported by their communities, passes without resistance, and does indeed gather support. Further, this category reveled a "feigned argument" dynamic whereas the individual posting gives the counter point to an ambiguous idea that may or may not be in their social habitus. This gains attention and promotes discourse. There are 43 posts that share this theme in the sample group. These individuals make comments on news items or rebroadcasts misinformation in their own words. In the examples below, no one argues that Dolly Parton is not a national treasure, we do deserve dogs, and Donald Trump's performance as president is missing context:

- "I don't care what anyone says, Dolly Parton is a national treasure. Can you imagine giving all your money away for charity and books."
- "We don't deserve dogs."
- "If Trump was so bad, why was unemployment so low, and the economy so good? Don't you like jobs and money?
- "Nashville gets excited about its sandstone replica of the Parthenon; but Columbus has a topiary replica of Seurat's "A Sunday Afternoon on the Ile de la Grande Jatte" and that is obviously the winner."

Humor, or attempts to engage in that way, only occur 26 times among the sample group. According to Urban, "Ideally, interesting statuses would be fascinating and original (or a link to something that is), and funny ones would be hilarious. But I'll happily take *mildly amusing*—at least we're still dealing with the good guys" (2013, np). The discourse of which can be described as mildly amusing or hilarious contained far fewer reactions than the those associated with hubris, but the reactions contained were positive, normally receiving the laughing emoji. Here are examples of such posts:

- "Trusted colleague: "Want to Slack huddle real quick?" Me: "I don't know what that means, but I'll try anything for you."
- Me: "That freeze took out all the early pawpaw blooms." Mom: "Well. Pawpaws need to learn."

- "For the first time ever … and even as I type this, I find myself shocked it hasn't happened before … but for the first time ever, I got beard shampoo up my nose and couldn't stop sneezing in the shower. New fear unlocked."
- "The pillows in my hotel room have these labels, which is cool, except the one labeled soft is actually the firmest, and as you see there is a mystery pillow on the far left. A night of intrigue has begun. – photos of pillows marked soft, firm, and unmarked."

Urban theorized that the public/private message is an attempt by the poster to be cool and make one's life appear vibrant and fun to show everyone what good friends you and the recipient are, and to make others jealous. The observations on this theme show more of a mindless disregard that one is in a public area or an attempt to only engage with a specific social / interest group in the public space. These posts are missing context, are private jokes, or only engage certain individuals of groups. There were 23 posts that shared this theme in the sample. Examples include:
- "I guess sun light is the best disinfectant." [this may have been a reference to the January 6 attack]
- "The Burleson boys are taking over Vegas."
- "Had a great time with my girls last night. Pizza, pizza!"
- "Sent you a message on messenger. Please read."

The acceptance speech was the least common theme observed in this study. There were only four found in the sample. According to Urban this is normally an outpouring of love for no clear reason and aimed at no one in particular. Examples included:
- "I'm thinking about this quote by Zora Neal Hurston: "(s)he didn't know (s)he was heaven and earth boiled down to a drop." I'm learning to internalize this thought as I go through life's journey. I hope you are, too."
- "Just in case you needed to know what Heaven on Earth really looks like. United more than divided. Don't let the world fool you. Blessed to have seen it and driven to see it more often."

The themes found on Facebook often corresponded to Urban's "7 ways to be Insufferable on Facebook," however the utility or benefits of such posts were not always clear. Although themes associated with hubris were common, and image crafting dominates the posts, there are many who use the platform of personal enjoyment and important community information. The engagement with social themes informs a narrative about communities of practice and social construction.

Discussion

For those who use social media many of the posts found above likely sound quite familiar. The timbre of word use and interactions are unusual in terms of daily interactions, but at the same time familiar in the context of the platform. (RQ1) The findings of this study suggest a significant relationship between individuals who use hubris to interface with general and specific public groups. In this case, individuals negotiated a changing cultural landscape and conform to norms that are long established in their online communities. That negotiated identity often serves to bolster image, alleviate isolation, and rationalize worldview. Further, it serves as a foil to challenging political and social positions as the changeover between the objective world and the digital world gives permission from the group to challenge facts the mainstream media sphere accepts. Facebook itself manifests as an enhanced reality resulting

in little understanding of an individual's user's life beyond their outward affect, real or performed. For good or ill, it is in this way Facebook creates communities that influence one another.

Community building can be seen in terms of social construction as individuals demonstrated their investment in themselves, their world views, and relationships. Facebook users add context to their communities, this is what Lin (2001) defines as a cultural market of ideas. Berger and Luckmann (1967) assert meanings are socially constructed by social interaction. This study supports this. Individuals learned how they fit in the overall structure of the changing platform as they negotiate rhetoric, receive feedback, and see the same dynamic in others. Meeting those social demands provide the individual with a sense of place among their digital communities experiencing the same or very similar outside influences.

Urban provides specific tools to observe hubris as a social media dynamic, but hubris goes beyond bragging. (RQ2) The posting dynamics of this study generally are associated with motivations like image crafting, narcissism, attention craving, and jealously inducing. These motivations often drown out more altruistic motivations like awareness, seeking help (for one self or others), humor and entertainment, or news. Image crafting isn't necessarily negative in certain contexts; many observed in this study where trying build a personal brand for professional reasons. (RQ3) Facebook users do show in this way they are aware of the power of the platform but not of the power the platform has on them. This modification of reality to fit needs and be accepted is consistent with Berger and Luckmann's (1967) observations regarding symbolic reality in the social world. For many Facebook users drafting a version of themselves and their worldview that optimizes the strengths of the digital community returns a gratifying image of the way they want things to be. The more of these positive interactions that were returned to the individual, the more posters wanted to engage with this marketplace of ideas. This is certainly consistent with Lin's (2005) observations regarding behaviors that move away from those which are considered conventional. The intentions of outside actors, as addressed by Fox (2000), to influence communities was not directly observed as an influential dynamic. The communities drawn together through common interests or views subtlety governed themselves, influencing behaviors and building knowledge within communities, themselves directly interacting with each other. There was little advertising snuck into responses to posts, but these were entirely ignored in the sample.

The effort to build a community of like-minded individuals happens organically over time. (RQ4) There is no evidence among the sample group that individual users of Facebook spend a significant amount of time diligently cultivating posts, doing research on an issue, or really care about accuracy at all. This supports Webb's (2014) assertion that collective intelligence is dominated by superficial engagements and pandering to the audience. The engagements were often terse and extraneous, but this sample did not expose course, excessively-negative content. This study suggests two themes in the messages. The first is that users place no premium on context, but the second is perhaps best characterized as a loyalty to the image. Considering some of the reporting on Facebook about the ways individuals negotiate and think about life, even when it is notable how outlandish some observations can be, many respondents maintained their decorum. Although the rhetoric was robust, it was also even handed. This is perhaps unexpected, but "fighting" was not observed, further demonstrating that communities find their own, or at least observers in this case, refrained from engaging. This is supportive of communities of practice theory as explored by Wenger (1998) as the collective participation of interested individuals cause the "product" to be a balanced manifestation, even when it has little utility. The rhetoric presented an uninhibited

marketplace of ideas where the actors supported and built on the ideas in the original post and other participants. Although the platform is provided, many of the relationships and meanings are only accessible from shared experiences outside the conversation. This is evidenced as users gave one another few answers in terms of usable actions in any area. At best, users enjoyed some satisfaction in articulating their frustrations with similar positions.

Facebook users gave remarkable context to the dynamic first explored by Urban as information flowed from posts and stories. It also resounds with the need for education in reflective-media literacy and criticism of uses. The rhetoric was not always gentle or detached but posts did inform dynamics of social constructionism.

Conclusion

This study suggests that the rhetoric on a social media, in this case Facebook, evolves into more than a distribution channel for information and many users are engaged in insufferable communication, as defined by Urban. The finding indicated by this study show that areas of hubris was often an overarching theme. However, post and response earnestly attempting to be informative or amusing where also observed among the sample groups. The discourse observed was a social space where original information evolved and was negotiated into social meaning for the users. Overall, this study also identified themes consistent with community building, expanding knowledge (or misinformation), and image building. The study demonstrated that although Facebook users were negotiating these changes in the media environment, they had little agency beyond the information itself as an empowering mechanism.

The study was limited in a variety of ways. Facebook represents only one facet of social media, the sample was taken only over a short period of time, and demographics of the group sampled consisted of mostly traditional college age students. The study did not account for other ways individuals engage on Facebook, like the sharing function, responses to adds, private messages, etc. The study privileged the idea of "insufferablity." Facebook was an open forum so it is impossible to determine for certain what motivations were involved in the rhetoric, although the anecdotal evidence indicates posters were earnest. An examination of rhetoric involving a more regulated audience and larger sample might have different findings. Further, no attempt was made to ascertain the potential effects of Facebook on the audience. Future research in the form of a formal content analysis is anticipated to explore how the dynamics explored in this study stand up in a quantitative exploration. The findings here – as qualitative – are not necessarily generalizable, but this is an important step in any theorizing about social construction or communities of influence through the lens of online communities.

Overall, the author argues this study helps inform the broader discussions on the potential impact of social construction on specific communities by using the lens of communities of influence to explore Facebook. In this case Facebook users are observed in an environment where many users were navigating identity.

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