

## New Media, Social Change, and Human Development from Adolescence Through the Transition to Adulthood

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### Abstract

This chapter presents developmental mechanisms by which new media drive development toward increasing individualism. The authors establish basic principles regarding the impact of new media on relationship development (increasing orientation to peers, relationship breadth, and choice) and on identity development (increased capacities for control and emphasis on exploration, self-expression, and hybrid identities) and review sociological, communication, and psychological theories, including Greenfield's theory linking social and developmental change. This theory predicts that new media communication technologies will everywhere push development toward increasing individualism. Cultural nuances—history, philosophical traditions, and institutions established prior to the proliferation of communication technologies—may also influence how youth and families use new media. The authors propose that greater intergenerational tensions arise with rapid technological change. The chapter is a starting point for understanding how new media and cultural traditions interact with globalization and sociodemographic shifts to produce changes in human development.

**Key Words:** cultural change, new media, interactive media, communication technology, values, relationships, identity

### Allegory of the Cave, 2.0

In January 2012, in preparation for a research project on intergenerational value change, the first and third authors (Manago and Greenfield) visited with an Arab family in the village of Drijat in the Negev Desert of Israel. Just a short walk from the family's three-story home of marble floors and modern furnishings was a cave dwelling cut out of rocks, the home of their ancestors until just a generation ago. The three-room cave—one room used to store food, one room for the animals, and one where the family slept—represented a way of life in Drijat that had been passed down since biblical times by Falakhim Arab farmers living in the south of Mt. Hebron. At the time we visited the family in 2012, the father, Hadar (a pseudonym), had transformed the cave where he lived as a child into a tourist destination to

attract travelers visiting ancient historical sites in the region.

Hadar invited us to sit with him on hand-woven mats in the family room of his one-time subterranean home. His teenage son, Ahmad (a pseudonym), brought us a tray of traditional Arabic tea and tabun bread his mother had baked in a clay oven. Meanwhile, Hadar regaled us with tales about traditional customs and growing up in Drijat. He warned us with a wink that, when he was growing up, it was customary for visitors who had a serious matter to discuss to indicate their intentions to their host by drinking their tea in one swift swill. So we sipped our tea slowly as Hadar told us about how he was the first in his family to attend school, but then left school at age 16 to marry. He worked as a construction laborer in the nearby Israeli city of Arad to support his family, eventually acquiring

a lifestyle adapted to the postindustrial society springing up around the Negev. When the sun went down on the desert hills where his father and grandfather had farmed, Hadar led us to a very different kind of family room in his present-day home.

There, we met Hadar's other children and his mother who, in keeping with Arab hospitality, offered us more tea, fruit, and dates. As we sat on sofas trying to make conversation, a television placed prominently in the family room drew one's attention to its broadcast of an Arabic program featuring men adorned in turbans re-enacting nomadic life in the desert. Photos of actual desert-dwelling Arab men in turbans, Hadar's father and grandfather, hung on the wall just above the television set. Meanwhile, Hadar's children disappeared upstairs, except for Ahmad who had served us tea in the cave; he migrated over to the computer in the corner of the room. Eyes transfixed on the screen, he scrolled down his newsfeed on Facebook in Arabic, clicked and navigated through a series of different windows, and responded to flashing chat messages. With his launch into cyberspace, Ahmad joins the ranks of youth around the world ushering in new media to their communities. These young people are coming of age in the midst of profound changes in cultural practices of communication and are pioneering new channels through which humans experience themselves in relation to one another.

### Theoretical Approaches to New Media and Social Change

In this opening ethnographic description, we see rapidly shifting social milieus in the new millennium that encapsulate not only new media technologies, but also a host of interlacing sociodemographic changes. A theoretical framework that coheres the multitude of sociodemographic changes illustrated in this family portrait is Greenfield's (2009) theory of social change and human development. It spotlights the influence of sociodemographic change on culture and human development when communities shift from small, tight-knit, homogenous, rural, and subsistence agricultural ways of life to increasing involvement in large and heterogeneous postindustrial societies with advanced levels of formal education and more elaborate technology. Greenfield adopts the concepts *Gemeinschaft* (community) and *Gesellschaft* (society) from sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1887/1957) to describe the array of sociodemographic factors constituting social contexts of development. *Gemeinschaft* and

*Gesellschaft* represent prototypical social ecologies that anchor spectra of sociodemographic continua, such as economy, education, and technology. When communities move in either direction along any one of those continua, the sociodemographic changes transform daily socialization practices and the values and meanings embedded in those practices, as well as developmental outcomes.

Greenfield (2009) predicts that sociodemographic shifts in the direction of a *Gesellschaft* typology—for example, increases in wealth, formal education, technology, and cultural diversity—drive socialization and development toward increasing individualism and away from collectivism, which are also conceptualized as existing on continua. Individualism and collectivism describe “cultural syndromes” (Triandis, 1993) that manifest differently across the life span in the practices, values, and goals pertinent to particular developmental tasks. In the transition from childhood dependence to adult responsibilities, hallmarks of high levels of individualism under increasing *Gesellschaft* conditions include prioritizing personal choice over family obligation and independence over parental obedience (Greenfield, Keller, Fuligni, & Maynard, 2003). A high level of individualism is also epitomized in the emphasis on personal pleasure and personal responsibility over family continuation in sexual development and on personal fulfillment and gender equality over adherence to complementary and ascribed gender roles for the sake of group harmony (Manago, Greenfield, Kim, & Ward, 2014). Greenfield's (2009) theory hypothesizes that the proliferation of new media in the West and in other regions of the globe is an extension of *Gesellschaft* conditions that push socialization practices and values toward higher levels of individualism during development from childhood to adulthood.

Two other major theoretical approaches, one from the discipline of sociology and the other from communication studies, present complementary views on the implications of new media. Rainie and Wellman (2012) describe research that suggests the expansion of communication technologies gives rise to a new form of connectivity that they term *networked individualism*. In a society of networked individualism, the individual is at the center of his or her own personalized network, which is constructed based on shared interests, rather than on kinship or common physical locales. Rainie and Wellman argue that communication technologies endow individuals with powerful tools to traverse independently a variety of relationships in order

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to acquire social capital, including information, work collaborations, and social support (see also Wellman et al., 2003). Social networking sites, for example, enhance the ability of emerging adults who go away to college to integrate into new social milieus while remaining connected to old friends and acquaintances across long distances and to call on large networks of contacts for help and information (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2011). This theoretical approach encourages us to think about individualism not as a cultural syndrome of social isolation, but rather as one in which mobile individuals connect with others via networks rather than stable social groups.

Another theoretical approach, the *media practice model* (Steele & Brown, 1995), also highlights the agency of the individual with the increasing specialization of media. This model builds on *uses and gratifications theory* (Rubin, 1994) in the field of communication studies to focus specifically on the use of media in the process of identity development. Similar to uses and gratifications theory, which encourages explorations into the personal motivations, preferences, needs, and contextual demands that influence how people use and respond to media, the media practice model is used to understand how individuals select, interact, interpret, and apply media content to explore their distinct identity concerns. Brown (2000) argues that media have become both more diverse and more specialized: from limited numbers of television channels and outlets in the 1950s to a multiplicity of media content targeted to particular demographics, and now online forums that enable users to create their own media. These changes have given youth increasing opportunities to use media to explore their distinctiveness in their social worlds. Whereas the theoretical approach of Rainie and Wellman (2012) helps to identify changes in the composition of social networks at the level of society, Steele and Brown (1995) illuminate how individuals actively select and interpret media in their daily lives to understand who they are. These processes of identity exploration are important components of individualism under modern *Gesellschaft* conditions. Both theories are useful for exploring the developmental implications of new communication technologies because they provide details on facets of individualism that are particularly relevant to media. Greenfield's (2009) theory makes predictions that both networked individualism and identity exploration are made possible or enhanced as technology advances and becomes

more widespread in a *Gesellschaft* environment. Because the theory explores both these issues in the context of societal change and developmental change, thus subsuming these two other theoretical frameworks, we rely heavily on Greenfield's theory in this chapter.

As we review the literature on new media and developmental change, we focus on understanding how the increasing penetration of new media in daily life shapes the ability of the individual to meet his or her unique interests and concerns during preadolescence, adolescence, and emerging adulthood. New media are defined primarily by their interactivity and, it is important to note, are increasingly accessed on mobile devices. Because the transition from childhood to adulthood represents an important and sensitive period in the life span for both relationship and identity development (Erikson, 1968), we focus on how these specific developmental tasks are shaped by new media communication practices.

### **New Media: Definition and Proliferation Around the World**

"New" media are distinct from "old" media, which include books, magazines, television, and movies, in that they are more intensely interactive in ways previous media were not. This difference is readily apparent when comparing Internet and television use in the opening sketch. Consonant with the media-practice model (Steele & Brown, 1995), the Arab family we interviewed selected television programming that reflected their ethnic identity and that resonated with the family's (more traditional) experiences in the world. With new media, more idiosyncratic identity concerns are projected onto the screen. Ahmad was immersed in his online world, personally controlling his media experience by making his own choices and clicking on links that immediately satisfied his personal interests. He also used his computer as an entertainment portal to interact with peers on Facebook. Consequently, media socialization and peer socialization become more deeply entangled as youth co-construct their own media environments (Greenfield & Yan, 2006). As young people engage with online content produced or recycled by peers, they choose and interpret content that resonates with who they are and what they believe; and those selected encounters further shape their identity development.

The interactivity of new media has a number of paradigm-shifting implications for communication

(Lister, Dovery, Giddings, Grant, & Kelly, 2009). In contrast to old media, new media require users' creative participation; this requirement changes patterns of production. Media conglomerates control the creation and dissemination of information, art, and entertainment using old media; individuals are at the helm using new media, producing their own multimedia content online, expressing themselves on blogs or social networking sites, and directing their attention where and when they choose. All of these paradigm shifts in the new media age of communication highlight the prominence of individual agency and the expression of personal needs, desires, and preferences as users navigate and contribute to the real-time generation of flows of human expression in virtual space.

These virtual flows of human expression are widening to include a growing number of participants. The spread of new media is evidenced by the increasing rates of penetration of *information and communication technologies* (ICTs) in populations around the world. ICTs can be thought of as the infrastructure of new media. They include hardware such as computers and mobile devices, as well as Internet software such as email, instant messaging, blogs, forums, virtual gaming worlds, social networking sites, and other content-sharing websites. Table 32.1 lists Internet penetration rates in seven regions of the world and the change in those rates from 2000 to 2012. Taking the United States as an example, 36.6% of households in the country in 1997 had access to a computer and 18% had Internet access; by 2000, 51% of households had access to a computer and 41.5% had Internet access (Newburger, 2001). By 2012, the Internet penetration rate in the United States was estimated at 76.3% (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2012a). In Table 32.1, we see an unmistakable proliferation of ICTs and new media around the world, although a global digital divide is also clear; this divide also includes vast inequalities in broadband speed in poorer regions of the globe (International Telecommunications Union [ITU], 2013). Nonetheless, the region with the lowest Internet penetration, Africa, also had the steepest growth curve.

Another big wave of change is occurring with Internet-enabled mobile devices. Mobile broadband subscriptions have increased from 268 million worldwide in 2007 to 2.1 billion in 2013 (ITU, 2013). Table 32.2 lists broadband mobile device penetration in six different regions of the globe. The ITU estimates that, although broadband remains

**Table 32.1. Internet Penetration Around the World.**

World Region	Internet Penetration in 2012 (% of population using the Internet)	Growth 2000–2012 (%)
Africa	15.6	3,606.7
Asia	27.5	841.9
Middle East	40.2	2,639.9
Latin America/Caribbean	42.9	1,310.8
Europe	63.2	393.4
Oceania/Australia	67.6	218.7
North America	78.6	153.3
World Total	34.3	566.4

Data estimates from Miniwatts Marketing Group (2012b).

largely unaffordable in much of Africa (in stark contrast to Europe and North America), large jumps in mobile adoption will continue to occur in many economically developing nations because mobile broadband subscriptions are considerably cheaper than fixed broadband subscriptions. Interestingly, in the United States, smartphone adoption does not differ by income or education among those under age 30, but Latino, African-American, low-income, and non-college going users are most likely to report using their mobile devices as their main source of Internet access (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012). The growth of Internet-enabled mobile devices points to the potential for new media to

**Table 32.2. Mobile Broadband Subscriptions Around the World.**

World Region	Mobile Broadband Penetration (% of population with subscriptions)
Africa	11 (93 million subscriptions)
Arab States	19 (71 million subscriptions)
Asia-Pacific	22 (895 million subscriptions)
CIS (Former Soviet Republics)	46 (129 million subscriptions)
Americas	48 (460 million subscriptions)
Europe	68 (422 million subscriptions)

Data estimates from International Telecommunications Union (2013).

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become an incessant presence in our lives, permeating daily activities and allowing people to remain "connected" and transient at the same time.

How does this proliferation of communication via new media technologies shift cultural practices, norms, meanings, and values that shape development? We first must acknowledge that the spread of new media complicates already problematic conceptualizations of culture as something shared by a homogenous group of people living in a particular locale. New media accelerate forces of globalization in which information, ideas, and people traverse geographic space, physical communities, and national boundaries faster and more efficiently than ever before in human history. In fact, these circumstances are characteristic of *Gesellschaft* societies, which have smaller, relatively more *Gemeinschaft* communities nested within them. *Gesellschaft* societies influence one another through transportation systems and communication technologies (Greenfield, 2009). Old media, such as newspapers and television, initiated the transmission of ideas across physical communities, expanding people's provincial points of view to contexts outside their local experience (Lerner, 1958; Meyrowitz, 1985). New media, with their on-demand access to a perpetual flow of human expression, escalate the potential for exposure to new horizons and give youth more personal control in exploring them. We argue in this chapter that the interactivity afforded by new media, combined with access to people and information in diverse communities unrestricted by physical propinquity, undermines permanent, stable communities and interpersonal interdependence, while intensifying practices that nurture individual agency and values for personal fulfillment in goals for development.

### New Media as Instruments of Sociocultural Change in Youth Development

We are certainly not the first to observe that changes in communication technologies in the new millennium yield a heightened emphasis on the individual. As described earlier, *networked individualism* has been used in sociology to describe how ICTs facilitate the replacement of tight-knit and permanent face-to-face communities with personalized social networks centering on the individual (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). The worldwide spread of "electronic communication" is thought to promote individual agency because successful adaptation to the information age requires high levels of self-efficacy, self-regulation, and self-determination

(Bandura, 2002). Also, in informal education, children and teenagers engage in opportunities for self-directed learning as they pursue and develop their unique interests online (Ito, 2010).

However, unmitigated adoption of individualistic values, beliefs, and practices leading to individual empowerment is likely to be an overly simplified depiction of the developmental changes occurring with technological changes in society. According to the media practice model and uses and gratifications theory, the ways in which media are used and how they influence people depend on the motivations and values they bring to the encounter, as well as the environmental demands that surround particular media use. For example, an experiment in Ethiopia showed that 1 year after a random sample of seventh and eighth graders received a laptop, they had significantly higher levels of individualistic values and independent self-construals compared to those who received no laptop or a laptop that stopped functioning (Hansen, Postmes, van der Vinne, & Thiel, 2012). Yet the two groups did not differ in their level of collectivistic values, perhaps because Ethiopian adolescents used the laptops in ways that also resonated and reaffirmed their collectivistic values. In fact, researchers noted that those with laptops often shared their computers with other children who did not have laptops, potentially fostering cohesion and cooperation with others. Also, it is important to note that there may be some drawbacks to the increased emphasis on the individual, at least in highly individualistic Western cultures, in that new media such as social networking sites can foster a preoccupation with the self and non-clinical forms of narcissism (Malikhao & Servaes, 2011; Twenge, 2013).

Our aim in this chapter is to identify both new opportunities and new challenges for development with the expansion of new media and also to introduce a global perspective on the issue by incorporating studies, when possible, on new media from around the world. Although Greenfield's theory predicts that new media will shift development in a common direction around the world, there may also be cultural differences in how new media are integrated into social life depending on the historical time points at which communities have shifted toward *Gesellschaft* conditions. The introduction of new media into families such as Hadar's, where there has been a shift to *Gesellschaft* conditions in just one generation, will likely affect intergenerational relationships, and thus social development,

differently from the introduction of new media in, say, Western locales where families have lived under more *Gesellschaft* sociodemographic conditions for multiple generations.

The remainder of this chapter is divided into basic developmental tasks during the transition to adulthood. We first review how new media shift the ways youth orient to a relatively wider world of relationships outside the family in their journey to adulthood, and then we explore how new media influence the construction of a coherent sense of self. We suggest that new media create new tasks in development that include learning to form meaningful relationships of both depth and breadth within networks of social relations, rather than within stable communities. Youth must also learn to construct coherent identities and a positive sense of self-worth from exploration and self-expression in these expansive social networks.

### New Media and Relationship Development

How does the multiplication of technological tools that function to facilitate human connectivity foster independence in development? It is important to first establish that individualism in *Gesellschaft* societies does not equate to individual isolation or unmitigated autonomy. Humans are by nature social animals who live in some form of social organization requiring cooperation. *Collectivism* denotes a form of social organization in which individuals have an interdependent self-construal such that their well-being is inextricable from and overlapping with the well-being of the family or clan, and thus the group is emphasized over individual considerations (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Triandis, 1993). As individualism increases, individuals begin to have a more independent self-construal, such that well-being is understood to be a matter of personal responsibility, and thus the goals and interests of the individual become prioritized over those of the social group. In highly individualistic societies, individuals still forge interdependent relationships, but they do so under the assumptions that (1) their participation in those relationships is determined by personal choice; (2) their involvement hinges on whether the relationship meets personal needs, including the need for social connection; and (3) the terms of engagement are negotiated by separate and distinct individuals of equal status who have fewer restrictions when it comes to leaving and pursuing alternative relationships. This

description of individualism is also in line with the concept of networked individualism (Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

When sociodemographic factors such as communication technologies shift in a *Gesellschaft* direction, they facilitate this individualistic form of sociality. As we outline later, an important mechanism by which this shift occurs in human development can be described in terms of the way new media orient youth to peers. Unrelated peers offer symmetrical relational contexts that elicit individual negotiations and co-constructions of relationship terms, as opposed to relationships with kin that are determined by birth and subject to rules determined by parental authority (Youniss, 1980). Heightened access to peers and the ability to access social resources outside the family and physical community according to one's personal desires become a critical way in which new media may drive human development toward an individualistic approach to social relationships.

### New Media and Family Relationships

Although research in the early years of Internet adoption indicated that time spent online was detrimental to overall face-to-face social involvement (e.g., Kraut et al., 1998), evidence suggests that as the Internet and mobile devices have grown more embedded in the fabric of our lives, engagement with these technologies specifically decreases youth involvement with the family at home (Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). For example, a study with a nationally representative sample of teenagers in the United States found that the more they used the Internet for recreation and to communicate with peers, the less time they spent with parents (Lee, 2008). Research in various locales confirms findings in the United States that Internet use is associated with lower levels of closeness between children and their parents. Surveys with a national sample of teenagers in New Zealand (Richards, McGee, Williams, Welch, & Hancox, 2010); high school students in Ontario, Canada (Willoughby, 2008); a national sample of Jewish and Arab teenagers in Israel (Mesch, 2003); fourth and fifth graders in urban Korea (Lee & Chae, 2007); and teenagers in Beijing China (Lei & Wu, 2007) all showed correlations between time spent online and lower levels of perceived closeness to parents. An important caveat in the studies in Israel, China, and Korea, however, is that frequency of Internet use for educational purposes, as opposed to using the Internet for entertainment or

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to socialize with friends, was not associated with lower levels of parental closeness (Lee & Chae, 2007; Lei & Wu, 2007; Mesch, 2003).

We cannot infer causality from these studies, yet it is not hard to imagine from our opening anecdote that communication technologies offer adolescents more opportunities to meet their needs for social bonding and leisure outside family time at home. In fact, interviews with Norwegian teens suggest that increased orientation to peers via mobile devices comes at the expense of interactions with parents, thus undermining family rituals such as family get-togethers or meal times (Ling & Yttri, 2006). Moreover, data from a large online sample in North America showed that the more preteen girls reported interacting with friends online, the more they reported having friends their parents did not approve of (Pea et al., 2012); these findings suggest that new media can facilitate personal choice in peer relationships over adherence to parental wishes.

To be sure, it is not the case that technology has a direct causal effect on family relationships. According to uses and gratification theory, the impact of new media technology on social life depends on how people use it and the goals and values they bring to new media (see Bargh & McKenna, 2004). There are certainly ways new media could be mobilized to facilitate family cohesiveness. For example, interactive gaming with parents has been shown to be conducive to family bonding (Padilla-Walker, Coyne, & Fraser, 2012), social networking sites can help parents maintain connections with their children when they move away to college (Padilla-Walker, Nelson, Carroll, & Jensen, 2010), and new media such as email or Skype help international students and immigrant families stay in touch and maintain filial piety with families in their home countries (Kline & Liu, 2005).

Yet, in all these instances, there remains an overall direction of change in human development toward individualism with increases in new media. Even though new media *can* be utilized for family bonding, it is exceptionally more common to use *old* media with family members, such as watching television or movies together, than it is to do so via online gaming or any other form of new media, such as email or social networking sites (Padilla-Walker et al., 2012). Furthermore, maintaining technologically mediated social connections with children moving away to college or with family members immigrating to distant locales precisely

exemplifies the "looser" social connections that are facilitated by *Gesellschaft* technologies. The presence of communication technologies to stay in touch from a distance can even serve as a rationalization for physical separation, as one immigrant Chinese parent rationalized in separating from her child, "when [my baby and I] are separated we will continue to have contact on telephone and the Internet" (Bohr & Tse, 2009, p. 278). In this way, families may be more likely to see individual pursuits of opportunities in separate physical settings as an option for the future if they have new media technologies at their disposal. Certainly, new media can attenuate feelings of distance when families are separated. For example, among Chinese international students, open phone and email communication with family members were related to a greater sense of family cohesion, compared with students who did not have this communication (Kline & Liu, 2005). However, media users perceive emotional bonding to be inferior in technology-mediated communication compared to in-person communication (Sherman, Michikyan, & Greenfield, 2013). Moreover, physical separation socializes individualistic approaches to relationships (Keller, 2007).

Some argue that new media and mobile devices heighten parents' abilities to keep tabs on their adolescent children, stay abreast of their location, and monitor their social media activities. However, new media and mobile devices are actually sources of increased *negotiation* and sometimes conflict in parent-child relationships, rather than sources of authoritarian surveillance (Ling & Yttri, 2006; Mesch, 2012). A large-scale survey in the United States shows that parents who "friend" their adolescent on social networking sites have more conflicts with their child over social media use than those who do not (Lenhart et al., 2011). Negotiation and conflict are likely due to the increased agency new media technologies provide adolescents; this increased agency then shifts the power dynamics in family relationships away from parental obedience. For example, teens adept at navigating the expanding social media scene maintain profiles on multiple social media sites to interact with peers away from the potential surveillance of adults (Madden et al., 2013).

Mesch (2012) describes how Arab youth in Israel hide chat windows behind another parent-approved window when a parent approaches. With a variety of tools at their fingertips, adolescents can be quite skilled at hiding their new media activities from

parents (Rosen, 2007). This is especially likely to be the case when children are more technologically savvy than parents, a situation that can attenuate parental authority in families such as Hadar's who are experiencing abrupt intergenerational shifts in technology. Indeed, Mesch (2006) found higher levels of parent-child conflict among families in Israel when adolescents reported being the Internet expert in the family and when they reported more frequent Internet use.

### *New Media and Peer Relationships*

The evidence is quite clear that as new media spread, they become a conduit for youth to forge deeper ties with friends outside the family (Gross, 2004; Subrahmanyam & Greenfield, 2008). Research also confirms this trend around the world; for example, a longitudinal study in Singapore with a national sample of 13-year-olds showed that, over the course of a year, increases in Internet use stimulated socializing with friends (Lee & Kuo, 2006). In their review of the literature, Valkenburg and Peter (2011) conclude that new media nurture adolescents' orientation to peers because they give them the ability to circumnavigate restrictions such as lack of transportation or parental rules, so that they can maintain continuous engagement with friends whenever they desire.

Because new media communications are asynchronous and afford some level of audiovisual anonymity, they can embolden youth to disclose personal feelings or communicate concerns to their friends more easily than in face-to-face situations (Davis, 2012; Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Computer-mediated communication can thereby scaffold the development of social skills within symmetrical relationships. Evidence for this comes from a study in Bermuda, where adolescents described how using social networking sites made it easier for them to express themselves to their friends and thus fostered a heightened sense of peer belonging (Davis, 2012). Learning how to cooperatively construct interpersonal closeness and mutual understanding through self-expression within symmetrical relationships during adolescence will be necessary for coordinating chosen relationships in a new-media *Gesellschaft* environment.

Unfortunately, youth must also learn to negotiate negative peer experiences because a heightened orientation to peers also means vulnerability to *cyberbullying*, defined as "any behavior performed through electronic media that repeatedly communicates hostile or aggressive messages intended to

inflict harm or discomfort on others" where the identity of the bully may or may not be known (Tokunaga, 2010, p. 278). In Tokunaga's (2010) review of research, as many as 53% of adolescents in US studies report being a victim of cyberbullying, and they often hide bullying from parents.

The breadth of peer relationship experiences that new media facilitate further speaks to individualistic relationship development. The most visited website in the world after Google is Facebook (Alexa, 2012), used primarily by adolescents and emerging adults to keep in touch with close friends, as well as with larger spheres of friends of friends or peers known from school and social activities such as sports teams, clubs, summer camps, and travel abroad (Manago, Taylor, & Greenfield, 2012; Reich, Subrahmanyam, & Espinoza, 2012). In accord with a uses and gratification theoretical approach, there are likely to be cultural differences in the use of social networking sites to accumulate social connections; one study showed that female European-American Facebook users maintain larger online networks and were more likely to express themselves in more public, less intimate ways than were female Japanese Mixi users (Barker & Ota, 2011).

Notwithstanding cultural differences, social networking sites in general, whether it is Mixi in Japan or Orkut in Brazil, make it possible for users to conveniently establish a digital tie to larger numbers of friends than is possible in the offline world. Consequently, friendship in the age of new media connotes a more expansive, shallower, and more diverse understanding of the term compared to notions of friendship in a culture before new media (Amichai-Hamburger, Kingsbury, & Schneider, 2013). Moreover, inherent activities on any social networking site include creating a public profile and posting comments to the public "newsfeed," which means communicating with large numbers of people at once and also gathering information about people one might not know very well (Ellison et al., 2011). In fact, acculturating to Facebook involves increasing orientation to public communications: Burke, Marlow, and Lento (2009) used Facebook servers to collect data among an international sample of 140,000 new users and found that individuals began to share more publicly on status updates the more that people in their network did so.

Although some may interpret sociality on social networking sites as a superficial form of friendship, learning about, communicating with, and traversing through networks of individuals and groups is

advantageous still remaining; social media s of social rela and personal is amplified ( example, your large online n other resource tions to group but may not h munities, or b web of potenti Importantly, c building social users engage in (Burke, Marlo individualistic cations for ide we now turn.

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advantageous for pursuing personal interests while still remaining interpersonally connected. In fact, social media sustain "customized sociality," a form of social relatedness in which personal control and personal convenience in human connectivity is amplified (Manago & Vaughn, in press). For example, young people utilize social capital from large online networks to seek out information and other resources at their command, make connections to groups they have a personal interest in but may not have access to in their physical communities, or broadcast calls for social support to a web of potential participants (Ellison et al., 2011). Importantly, customizing one's social resources by building social capital via social media requires that users engage in some level of public self-expression (Burke, Marlowe, & Lento, 2010). This is a highly individualistic form of communication with implications for identity development, a topic to which we now turn.

### New Media and Identity Development

Broadcasting one's thoughts, feelings, opinions, and image to online audiences represents the next iteration of an individualistic style of communication in the digital age. Communication in individualistic cultures has been characterized as direct, open, and geared to self-expression, as opposed to the kind of communication exemplified in Hadar's description of traditional practices surrounding the drinking of tea—indirect, implicit, and geared toward mitigating group discord (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1986). As new media users attend to ongoing streams of 140-character Tweets, post their current mood on a Facebook status update, or comment on a YouTube video, the scale of human self-expression escalates. Communication practices that increasingly emphasize giving voice to personal feelings and thoughts signify heightened levels of personal exploration in the process of identity development. They also signify a shift away from forms of identity that are ascribed by birth, developed through participation in a kin group, and tied to the land in *Gemeinschaft* environments. Youth instead are using new media more agentically to construct their identities by contributing to and exploring multiple virtual landscapes of human expression online.

An important thread tying together aspects of exploration and self-expression in processes of identity development via new media is the magnification of individual control of outer

circumstances. Mastering the external, seeking to influence others, and evoking an outward effect through individual action and emotional expression are characteristic of individualism (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Weisz, Rothbaum, & Blackburn, 1984). In collectivistic cultures adapted to *Gemeinschaft* environments, an inwardly directed form of control that harmonizes, rather than influences the outer world, is more common. Technology essentially extends the scope of humans' capacity to devise more elaborate tools for harnessing resources and altering environments to meet personal needs and desires. Indeed, "change the world" is a ubiquitous phrase in Silicon Valley, the staging ground for new media (Packer, 2013). In the next two subsections, we describe how increased control of external circumstances afforded by new media technologies plays out in two important processes of identity development in individualistic *Gesellschaft* societies: exploration and self-expression.

### Control and Exploration

Old media, such as books, newspapers, and television, have long been part of the infrastructure in relatively more *Gesellschaft* environments conducive to identity exploration. Individual exploration of beliefs, values, interests, relationships, and adult roles during identity development is desirable when personal choice, freedom, fulfillment, and equality are valued; when multiple perspectives are available; and when flexibility in adult roles is feasible (Arnett, 2010; Phinney & Baldelomar, 2011). Old media instigated exposure to multiple perspectives and gave youth from different walks of life channels for imagining a variety of possibilities in adult roles. The advent of television provided various social groups with equal access to information and points of view, the rich and poor, children and adults, women and men, cultural insiders and outsiders, ethnic majority and minority members (Meyrowitz, 1985).

Television also helps to transform identity during the acculturation process; immigrants come to a different understanding of themselves in the world as they use media programming to gain insights into the values and conventions of their host society (e.g., Reece & Palmgreen, 2000). In these ways, old media began to break down cultural and social group boundaries and limitations; however, old media, along with the information, messages, and values they imparted, were still controlled by those with the means to produce and

distribute information and entertainment. New media democratize not just access, but also the production and distribution of human expression, thus dispersing control to individuals (Lister et al., 2009).

Under these circumstances, identity exploration becomes increasingly oriented to creative and collaborative co-constructions of meaning. Youth in the midst of identity exploration are exposed to the lives and perspectives of different social groups and, furthermore, have a hand in shaping what those lives look like. For example, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual (LGBT) youth in rural America connect with LGBT communities in Internet forums to learn about other LGBT individuals and also to contribute their own experiences in forum discussions, thus co-constructing definitions of sexually queer identities (Gray, 2009). Ito (2010) describes how one young Chinese-American man developed his unique niche interest in Japanese anime by posting to international anime news forums and creating his own anime music videos. Another study illustrated how ethnic minority adolescents create groups on Facebook to communicate with others interested in civic engagement around contemporary race relations (Tynes, Garcia, Giang, & Coleman, 2010). As they participate in online public discussions, they collaborate to define and broadcast the issues ethnic minorities face, thereby elaborating on their self-concepts as ethnic minorities on their own terms.

Social identities, such as ethnic identities, were formerly forged through shared experiences in physical space but are now constructed symbolically through mass media communications and, most recently, via online networking. Old media, illustrated by the Arabic television series in the opening sketch of Hadar's home, reflect national, ethnic, gender, and class issues that define the identities of its ethnic viewers (Mayer, 2003). These ethnic programs are resources used to elaborate on social identities in the absence of physical communities. Mexican-American girls and their relatives in Mexico, for example, can become part of an "interpretive community" in which bonds can be maintained at a physical distance through shared interest in and discussion of the latest drama on their favorite *telenovela* (Mayer, 2003).

New media, notably diasporic websites, give users the opportunity to do more than interpret mass-produced ethnic media programming together; they allow users to produce and share

their own information and content (Matsaganis, Katz, & Ball-Rokeach, 2010). Individuals themselves drive the discourse by exchanging messages and uploading photos. Also indicative of change toward increasing individual agency is the way that solidarity and intersubjectivity on these diasporic "cybervillages" do not derive from common kinship or shared geographical space, but from "networking" (e.g. Parham, 2004). That is, individuals use diaspora websites to *actively seek* others who share common interests, viewpoints, or ideologies stemming from similar cultural backgrounds. Through exploration and participation in these websites, the content of ethnic identities becomes more abstract, symbolic, and co-constructed.

Additionally, similar to the way LGBT youth in rural America may be empowered by new media to find similar others, children of immigrant families can use new media to connect to peers in countries of origin in ways that shape identity formation processes. This may be especially relevant to second- and third-generation adolescents who may have a weaker direct link to their countries of origin yet are struggling for self-definition in countries where they are still marked as "forever foreigners" by appearance (Zhou, 2004). Computer-mediated communication with peers in countries of origin can serve a symbolic function in constructing cultural identities and values. This possibility of cyberconnection with the ancestral country grants immigrant youth higher levels of control over their social settings and increases their range of identity choices.

Rich illustrations of how ethnic identities are symbolically constructed online come from youth themselves. Bae (2010) describes Korean-American teenager Eunbi's home page (*hompi*) on the Korean social networking site Cyworld. Eunbi's *hompi* includes photographs of herself using typical Korean feminine hand gestures that partially cover the face to make it appear smaller and that signal cuteness and coquettishness. In a follow-up interview, Eunbi states that she does not post these kinds of photos on the social networking site she uses with her American friends—there she prefers "a stylish, mature, and sophisticated look;" however, she posts the gesture photos on Cyworld to "act like a cute girl as I did in Korea in the past. So that I can still share with my friends in Korea. ... This gesture confirms that we are Korean girls. ... A lot of Korean models and actresses also pursue this goal in photos" (p. 101–102). Immigrant youth such as Eunbi are exploring and expressing their

bicultural social identity with iconic representations of ethnic symbols on the Internet.

When identity constraints of physical space are constructed through rural, transnational (Mittra, 2006), youth are not necessarily constrained by host or home country third identity thresholds between two physical spaces. They may be particularly resistant to traditional societal norms and limiting practices while online they challenge conventional practices. For example, so-called "fantastical, fabulous" youth use the Internet to "express themselves in their offline lives." Others maintain one on an ethnically specific page, post photos of friends, and on-line information applications culture shared by her. She is more modern of herself.

The development of digital identities speaks to individuals to connect, navigate and explore communities online. A new way to speak to the values can be practiced model of digital age, youth bring values rooted in self-expression and values and interests presents an opportunity to imagine

### Control and Identity

New media possibilities for the construction of their external manifestations also provide the external manifestation is to "write one's self" using new me-

bicultural social identities online by experimenting with iconic representations and also incorporating ethnic symbols curated from popular culture on the Internet.

When identity development is freed from the constraints of physical space and is instead constructed through explorations in cyberspace, bicultural, transnational, or hybrid identities emerge (Mitra, 2006). Users of diasporic websites are not necessarily creating identities that align with host or home country, but instead constructing a third identity that is forged in the virtual space between two physical places. Hybrid identities may be particularly relevant for young women in traditional societies who negotiate a more restrictive and limiting sense of self in their local context while online they exhibit a more expressive identity that challenges cultural restrictions (Mitra, 2004). For example, some Arab girls from Qatar create "fantastical, fabricated identities" on Facebook to "express their unspoken desires," unfulfilled in their offline lives (Leage & Chalmers, 2010). Others maintain two profiles, one on MySpace and one on an ethnic-specific site. On MySpace, one girl posts photos of herself going to concerts with friends, and on the ethnic-specific site, she posts information appropriate to the more traditional culture shared by friends on that site; for example she is more modest and refrains from posting photos of herself.

The development of hybrid or bifurcated identities speaks to how media provide the tools for individuals to control their self-expressions as they navigate and explore multiple and separate communities on- and offline. Hybrid identities also speak to the way in which cultural meanings and values can persist via new media; as the media practice model (Steele & Brown, 1995) would suggest, youth bring to media the values and motivations rooted in their ethnic identities. Online self-expression is an opportunity to elaborate one's values and interests in exploring the self, and it also presents an opportunity to reify the kind of person one might imagine oneself to be.

### **Control and Self-Expression**

New media technologies not only create new possibilities for individuals to control the conditions of their external social environments, but they also provide them with the wherewithal to control external manifestations of the self. To exist online is to "write oneself into being" (boyd, 2008). Youth using new media employ a heightened level of

control over self-expression because digitally mediated communication is asynchronous, allowing for pause, reflection, and editing; it offers choice in the richness of audiovisual cues that transmit information about one's identity (Do I want to upload a video of myself on YouTube, post a photo of myself on Facebook that hides my face, tweet to my friends, or blog anonymously?; see Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). Given these affordances, youth actively manipulate and control the identities they project to audiences on new media websites (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008). They craft their profiles for particular audiences, choose flattering pictures, and select clever comments. Control does not necessarily translate into false identities online, but rather, it is about increased capability to *manicure* a reflection of the self that one consciously desires to project. Moreover, increased control may intensify young people's capacity to imagine possible selves, reify those idealized selves into a digital format, and circulate them within online networks (Manago et al., 2008).

Circulation of manicured selves in social spaces is an important component to identity development via self-expression using new media. Online audiences contribute commentary to online performances that corroborate and add legitimacy to online identity claims (boyd & Heer, 2006). Also, the more frequently and elaborately facets of the self are shared with others, the more likely those qualities are internalized and integrated into one's self-concept (Baumeister, 1986). Thus, online public expressions are a way to seek feedback from an audience of sounding boards in the process of reifying a self one desires to be. One study with Dutch adolescents showed boosts in self-esteem with positive comments in response to online expressions in social networking sites (Valkenburg, Peter, & Schouten, 2006). Other studies have found that receiving attention for one's status updates is an important source of social support for college youth in the millennial generation (Deters & Mehl, 2012; Manago et al., 2012). Online feedback may be received even more intensely than offline feedback because of its digital resonance and replicability—that is, online commentaries have a permanence that offline utterances do not have, and they can be shared and distributed more widely (boyd, 2008).

This public nature of online self-expressions may intensify a self-consciousness regarding how one appears to others during identity

development. For example, emerging adults using Twitter showed elaborate and complex considerations of their online reputations, which included desires to project their everyday lived experience into cyberspace and be perceived as "authentic" (Marwick & boyd, 2010). They were also experiencing what the authors call "context collapse," the consolidation of all one's social connections into one amorphous audience of diverse values, opinions, and perspectives so that it is impossible to target one's communications to a particular listener. For this reason, the recipient of one's communications is an "imagined audience" making the interpersonal connection increasingly distant, abstract, present for personal gratification, and imagined for the purpose of one's own need to be heard.

Imagined audiences may explain why simply "writing oneself into being" online, even without the feedback, can lead to higher levels of self-esteem. A correlational study found that college students who report using Facebook to present themselves favorably (i.e., "I only show the happy side of me") feel better about themselves and their lives compared to those who do not present themselves favorably (Kim & Lee, 2011). Two experimental studies showed that college students assigned to a task in the presence of their Facebook profile (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011) or asked to write about their Facebook profile (Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, & Campbell, 2012) had higher levels of self-esteem after the manipulation compared to participants in control groups. The authors of these studies interpret their findings by suggesting that participants were likely experiencing a polished version of themselves occupying a virtual public social space.

Studies such as these have led some to speculate that new media have increased narcissism in the millennium generation in the United States (Malikhao & Servaes, 2011; Twenge, 2013). Indeed, there are correlations between narcissistic personality and Facebook use among college students in Western countries such as Canada (Mehdizadeh, 2010) and Australia (Ryan & Xenos, 2011), and it is most strongly associated with using Facebook to post status updates and pictures of oneself. One study with Chinese university students also found associations between narcissistic personality and the frequency with which users post status updates and upload attractive photos (Wang, Jackson, Zhang, & Su, 2012). Even among 10- to 12-year-olds, research in the United States

has found that fame is a salient value in their future goals and seems to be internalized from engagement with the popular culture associated with new media (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012).

Manago (2014) has proposed that increasing messages about fame and celebrity in popular media (Uhls & Greenfield, 2011), combined with new capabilities to manicure and broadcast the self to large online audiences, promotes a form of identity development that increasingly looks like a branding of the self, similar to a commercially advertised product. On the one hand, this could be positive for identity consolidation: enhanced capacities for personal exploration and commitment to public articulations of the self to (real or imagined) audiences could promote a coherent and stable sense of self. On the other hand, branding the self may be driving youth to increasingly value themselves based on external appearances. In fact, frequency of photo sharing on Facebook correlated with increased centrality of appearance and social approval in one's self-worth among a sample of North American college students (Stefanone, Lackaff, & Rosen, 2011). Privately based standards of self-worth, such as virtue and family, were negatively correlated with Facebook use.

Facebook use also provokes social comparison among young people such that people tend to feel worse about themselves the more they observe self-promotional content on Facebook (Haferkamp & Kramer, 2011). Among 15-year-old girls in Australia, Internet use is associated with appearance comparison and body dissatisfaction (Tiggemann & Miller, 2010). Studies on new media and preoccupation with external appearances in identity development have been mostly conducted among more individualistic samples in the West with longer histories of *Gesellschaft* conditions; however, they may be the "canaries in the coal mine," alerting us to the potential pitfalls of new media as they spread around the world. Future digital generations will face an important task in development to balance online expressions and branding of the self with close face-to-face relationships offline. Although it will be increasingly adaptive to move dexterously through various social communities and utilize online tools to manifest the type of person one would like to become, well-being may also depend on youth being engaged in committed, close relationships that are not contingent upon being an attractive persona in cyberspace.

## Conclusion

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## Conclusion

We have presented developmental mechanisms by which new media drive development toward increasing individualism. We established basic principles regarding their impact on relationship development (increasing orientation to peers, relationship breadth, and choice) and on identity development (increased capacities for control and emphasis on exploration, self-expression, and hybrid identities). Greenfield's (2009) theory related societal shifts to developmental shifts, predicting that new media will everywhere push development in the same direction. However, cultural nuances in the specifics are also likely—history, philosophical traditions, and institutions established during long periods of *Gemeinschaft* sociodemographic conditions may influence how youth and families use new media. We provided some examples of this phenomenon and highlighted the media practice model (Steele & Brown, 1995) perspective that suggests youth in various places around the world will engage with media differently depending on their own values and identity concerns; yet, interactive media always move them in directions posited by Greenfield's theory of social change and human development. We also showed evidence of universal tensions in intergenerational relationships that arise with a swifter pace of change toward *Gesellschaft* conditions. Our chapter is a starting point for understanding how new media and cultural traditions interact with globalization and sociodemographic change to produce changes in human development in coming generations of the new millennium.

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