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The Psychology and Impact of Cheating

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The topic for our anthology is cheating. Cheating is something that everyone has experienced in some form in their lives, at every stage of life. The seeker opening their eyes too early in hide-and-seek or getting cut off in traffic because someone decided to merge late, among others, are experiences involving cheating. Cheating exists everywhere, in school, in business, in our relationships with other people, and even in our own heads. Most people have even cheated themselves at some point; skipping a workout or passing up a potentially lucrative opportunity. Now, with different online spaces making cheating even easier and anonymous, cheating is happening more than ever. The question is: why? Why do people cheat, even when there are systems of punishment in place? Are these systems of punishment enough to make people not cheat? Is it just too easy or beneficial for people to cheat? These questions, among others, are the ones we explore and provide answers to through our anthology. We came to this theme from thinking about different crimes and ways people commit crimes, which led us to the realization that all crimes involve cheating. Since cheating is so abundant in our current world, the exploration of the various shapes that cheating can take shines light on the reasons people cheat.

Cheating takes many different forms, and this anthology intends to cover it in both a literal sense, as well as in a more metaphorical way. We discuss how cheating can affect the victims and others involved. We will also discuss how the person behind the cheating is affected and try to analyze how they go about their crime. Hagar Ahmed will be writing about the impact of school spaces and their architectural design on cheating in educational institutions. Jackson Smith will be writing about how cheaters in competitive eSports cheat and what more can be done to stop them. As cheating is the conversation we are having, schools relate to it directly.

Michael Burrough will be writing on the topic of digital piracy. Barish Mertkolu will be writing about why people love villains in fiction but are repulsed by them in real life. Isaac Britland will be writing about scandals and cheating that occur through social media by celebrities through their own means or when involved with corporations.

To conclude, our anthology will discuss the nature of cheating as it relates to a variety of spaces in entertainment and media. Through our writing, we will explore the many ways that people cheat in several different fields of entertainment, what they gain from cheating, and why they are doing it. We will also discuss the psychology involved with cheating and the various ways cheaters will rationalize their actions as being a lesser crime. Finally, we will highlight the effects and aftermath of cheating in society, and how its popularization and normalization in media can increase the severity of the problem. In these papers, we hope to suggest ways that the problem of cheating can be combatted, counteracted, or solved.

From cells to classrooms: Rethinking school architecture to combat academic dishonesty

As cheating is the topic discussed, this paper aims to explore the relationship between school architecture and the development and limiting of unethical behaviors, arguing that rethinking the design of these educational spaces is indispensable in encouraging honesty and morality. Schools relate to the unethical act of cheating directly since all students have experienced it in one way or another during their studies. Spatial design through architectural theories has proven scientifically that it can affect human physiology and emotional behaviors. Therefore, the way schools are designed can contribute to or limit the act of cheating. Design experts are currently questioning the school layouts. They are describing them as having the same design essence as correctional architecture. As prisons are the major interest of correctional architecture, and having proved that surveillance and limitation as principal points in design strategies aren't the way to change the behavior of human beings, the design of these spaces is changing to limit unethical acts. This is why school architecture needs a change as well to accommodate a positive learning environment that simultaneously can limit unethical behaviors throughout the design of its space.

To solve a problem such as cheating in schools, the reasons for cheating have to be investigated first. Through surveys and interviews done by researchers, the main origin of cheating among students is the need to achieve higher grades. According to Davis "In a 2021 survey of college students by College Pulse, the single biggest reason given for cheating, endorsed by 72 percent of the respondents, was pressure to do well." The researchers asserted that the expectations teachers, parents and media communicate to students urge them to let go of their "limiting beliefs" that stand in their way to success (Davis). Surveys also show that teenagers acknowledge cheating as an unethical act "In a survey of more than 3,000 teens

conducted by my colleagues at the University of Virginia, the great majority (83 percent) indicated that to become "honest—someone who doesn't lie or cheat," was very important, if not essential to them." (Davis). Despite this 83 percent, a study published in 2010 found that 59 percent of 43,000 high school students admitted to cheating on a test. These numbers demonstrate that the need for moral education isn't the necessary course of action to limit cheating in schools, rather, new strategies and research are needed to diminish this untruthful behavior.

Studies concerned with cheating in schools primarily focus on the psychological and moral aspects of cheating. As discussed above, the majority of students are aware of the immorality of cheating but decide to cheat due to psychological reasons. This fact encouraged some researchers to investigate the environmental aspects of cheating, focusing on the school and classroom environments. As Isakov and Tripathy explain "Nearly all of the aforementioned studies fail to recognize the importance of the actual classroom in the dishonest experience." The studies executed showed that the different classroom settings have different levels of cheating (Isakov and Tripathy). They confirm that the architecture and spatial design of the physical environment affect human behavior and are capable of reducing unethical actions. Designers and architects are therefore investigating how to incorporate the limitation of unethical behavior in their designs, specifically in schools, as it represents a great challenge.

The great paradox in school design stems from the fact that the main goals of the school are learning and discipline. Schools must be open to encourage the learning and creativity of the youth, while also remaining in a framework of conformity that can be depicted as closed, to limit unethical acts and behaviors. Therefore, the need to maintain certain conformity and discipline empowered the design of closed surveilled schools that crushed individuality, creativity and limited knowledge (Piro 31).

Schools represent a huge architectural typology that has many contradictions. Its spatial design reflects its functionality. This functionality is shared with other institution's design even if they don't share by any means architectural similarities or programs. Such institutions are prisons and hospitals "Prison buildings share many similarities with hospitals. Both tend to be large in scale, densely occupied and are accessible every day, though with temporal and spatial restrictions imposed, to numerous visitors, both professional and ordinary members." (Jewkes 319) The influence prison architecture in particular has on school architecture is overly discussed in the architectural community. The functionality of surveillance in school design is what nourished its link with the prison architecture. As Piro cites Micheal Foucault "For Foucault, school may be a space deliberately designed for supervising, hierarchizing, and rewarding. Under the "scrupulously classificatory eyes of the master," students are placed in assigned spaces that they cannot leave except on the order of the school inspector (Foucault 1995, 147)." (13). This quote explains how school spaces have evolved side by side with prisons, to adopt a surveilling pattern, creating a regime of power in a space intended to be open.

The need for power in these distinct programs explains their architectural connectivity and at once raises a series of questions and interrogations. As Valencia states in his article "In the US, many of the same people who designed prisons also designed schools. What comes to mind when you see a long hall of closed doors, that you can't be in without permission, and a bell that tells you when to come in, when to leave, when class starts, when it ends? What does that look like to you?". Valencia elaborates in a series of questions the resemblance of school spaces to those of a prison, illustrating that the same architects who design these carceral layouts are also responsible for designing schools. The physical and cognitive implications this fact has on the learning environment of the students within the school structure are therefore important to note and examine.

To further understand how school architecture and prison architecture relate to each other, it is important to shed light on the impact of spatial design as an operation of power, control, and domination, how surveillance can be spatialized through architecture, and the impact this can have on behaviors. This is illustrated in the analysis of the historical panopticon design developed by the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Betham in the eighteenth century. The panopticon is a prison built radially so that one guard positioned in its center can view all prisoners (Piro 34). This design, derived from an architectural plan found in the Parisian military school, plays on the psychological aspect of the inmates, where they are unaware of whether they are being observed or not. This spatial arrangement controlled the behaviors of the prisoners at all times even when they weren't surveilled.

The impact correctional architecture has on human behaviors must be questioned on a bigger scale as the movement in correctional architecture not only impacts penal institutions such as prisons but more importantly the city itself with all its structures. The surveillance module on which today's prisons are built has proven to not fulfill its objectives nor reduce the risk of a crime or an unethical act. Therefore, new theories are being developed to change the way we build and design correctional facilities. The traditional prison and correctional facility layouts currently in use are shifting. These facilities are at present growing to be more open and orientated towards the reinsertion in the social fabric. Rather than being distanced from the city, urban planners and architects concerned with the design of these spaces are proposing to pull them inside the urban infrastructure.

Prisons are developing to no longer be inaccessible structures pushed away from the urban fabric. They are evolving into open infrastructure, which raises the question of security in the city, incorporating these structures within it. Their program is also being enlarged to be more in contact with the society and community. As Niedbala points out "An urban correctional

infrastructure would offer services to economically marginalized communities and also address the origins of crime as a pervasive social phenomenon originating in what social scientists had identified as the pathological environments of the inner city." (80)

The idea of the development of correctional facilities within the urban infrastructure promotes that at a given time the city may become a correctional infrastructure itself "These new correctional centers would serve as part of a comprehensive program for rebuilding the urban environment."(Niedbala 89) As explained, correctional methodologies are changing and encouraging openness towards the city, and the possibility of the city becoming itself a prison is currently questioned. As a result, Planners, architects and researchers are navigating the paradox of having open correctional spaces that promote cognitive well-being and development versus the need for a closed environment limiting crime and unethical behaviors through the reinforcement of security and safety, which can also apply to school design.

Architecture has long ago proven its impact on human behavior and how they perceive space. Humans identify their spaces to the point where these spaces they signifiers that relate to people's moral and social behaviors and ideas. As Kiderra quotes Professor Heyman "People's ideas about morality are deeply rooted in how they think about space. This is probably why there are so many spatial metaphors for morality such as 'cross the line' and 'keep on the straight and narrow." Professor Heyman explains how as humans we associate behaviors with the architecture of spaces to the point where our language can incorporate space terminology to indicate the morality of an act. Following the fact that architecture influences our behaviors, several experiments have incorporated the use of architectural elements to reduce academic cheating in young children.

Zhao et al conducted two experiments with children to investigate the effect of environmental nudges on academic cheating. The first experiment was conducted in 2020, it investigated the percentage of academic cheating in a school in China when a steel frame was used to separate the space between the student and the answer key to the test. The transparency of the frame was manipulated to show the difference the materiality can have on cheating reduction. As reported by Zhao et al "which posits that moral violations can be inhibited by the introduction of spatial boundaries, including ones that do not physically impede the act of transgressing. We found that both real and imagined barriers,..... These findings link spatial cognition to moral behavior and show that even seemingly unremarkable features of children's environments can nudge them to act honestly." These findings represent an important step in the incorporation of spatial analysis and architectural research into the topic of academic cheating.

The second experiment focused on smaller everyday objects that act as environmental nudges. The experiment consists of a math test within a limited time and without the physical presence of the teacher or the experimenter. The experiment was run four times using four different types of objects. The result of the experiment illustrated that even a small-scale physical change in the classroom setup can have a huge impact on limiting academic cheating. "The findings suggest that manipulating accessibility can be an effective strategy to nudge children away from academic cheating, which means that changes to the physical environment can systematically influence children's moral behavior." (Zhao et al 7).

Cheating is indeed a moral and psychological topic that is widely investigated and questioned. It represents a challenge and isn't limited to the academic aspect. Its influences are profoundly impactful on the level of society and are proven to alter one's perception and sense of right and wrong. The reduction of this unethical behavior in future generations is necessary today with the rise of new technologies that facilitate the process of cheating. Architectural and spatial

analysis, as well as design, play a crucial yet overlooked role in advancing today's understanding of human behaviors and the ways they can be manipulated. Research focusing on reducing academic cheating through school design is therefore a necessity. In conclusion, by reshaping school architecture following design strategies that facilitate openness and creativity, learning spaces will evolve into environments that inspire integrity, foster ethical behaviors and allow students to thrive academically and personally without the need for cheating.

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Cheating in eSports: Punishment and Regulation

Cheating is a plague on online video games. Players who cheat ruin the fun for everyone else involved. However, when players competing for cash prizes in front of thousands of spectators decide to cheat, the problem can worsen. Cheating in FPS (First Person Shooter) eSports takes many forms, and thus is a difficult problem that doesn't currently have an all-in-one solution. Additionally, because the field of eSports is only just recently gaining acceptance as a legitimate market, the organizations created to regulate it haven't quite figured out how everything should work.

Competitive eSports have seen a lot of growth in recent years, with millions of fans tuning in to watch teams compete (Irwin, 412). With growth comes larger prize pools for players to compete to win. For example, in both 2018 and 2019, Epic Games, creator of the FPS game Fortnite, had a prize pool of $100 million, awarding $1 million in prizes weekly for any players at home to win in the leadup to their world championships (Crook). With prize pools this big, there's a large incentive to win at all costs, which means that some players looking to get an advantage may resort to cheating. Cheating in eSports doesn't usually look anything like cheating in traditional sports, usually involving software that is hard to detect in most competitive settings.

In casual play, cheaters typically use widely available software as a means to cheat. Any players looking to cheat can generally find software with a Google search. In FPS Games, the primary goal is to eliminate the enemy team, and the cheats for these games can allow players to see enemy players through walls, aim at them automatically, or move faster than an opponent could feasibly react. In many cases, there is little to no monetary incentive for players to cheat in these settings. Some games, such as Counter Strike: Global Offensive, or CS:GO, occasionally

give in-game cosmetic items that hold some real monetary value as a reward for winning

matches. Other than cases like this, the only reason to cheat in these games is for fun. In addition

to this, there is hardly any risk to cheating in these games, as the worst punishment a cheater

could receive is an account ban (Gjonbalaj, 1). With most widely played FPS games being free-

to-play, getting around this punishment is as simple as creating a new account. On the eSports

side of things, the risk of cheating in this way is a lot higher, so some players have devised some

less blatant ways of cheating to avoid being caught in the act.

In professional eSports, players always have a lot more eyes on them, whether they're on

a stage or live streaming their gameplay over the internet. This means that obvious cheating like

the form mentioned above is a sure-fire way to get caught. Match fixing, and "throwing"

matches, or purposefully losing, is a tactic used by some to earn money by betting against

themselves, and then losing the match on purpose to get the payout from their bet. While this

isn't inherently cheating, it is certainly unsportsmanlike, "Based on Abad's (2010) view, playing

to one's fullest potentiation, in any circumstance, is a cornerstone of sportsmanship (Irwin 11)."

Cheating in this form is not so much cheating the sport as it is cheating spectators out of a good

match.

Another way of cheating is exploiting faults in the game, commonly known as bugs. In

2017, players in the eSports team "BIG" exploited a bug in CS:GO that allowed them to see

players on the enemy team without them knowing. This gave them an unfair advantage over the

opposing team and led to them winning the game. This was during a championship game live in

Krakow, Poland, in front of thousands of spectators, who had very divided opinions on the

fairness of a tactic like this. Ultimately, it was decided that the tactical use of an exploit like this

was fair game, "...BIG acted inside the rules by using it an took every legitimate opportunity they

found (Irwin 424)." Another example of this is in 2014 when eSports team "Fnatic" used an

overlooked invisible piece of map geometry that allowed the players to see and eliminate the enemy team without them being able to retaliate. This won them the match and qualified them for the semi-finals of the competition (Irwin 425). In contrast to the first example, Fnatic was found to have violated the rules of the competition for their use of this exploit and had to replay the match but opted to forfeit the win to the opposing team (Irwin 426). Examples like these show that a tactic can be viewed as cheating from one spectator's perspective, and perfectly fine from another's.

A third way that players can cheat is the use of macros or scripts, that allow them to make inputs into the game that, in some cases, wouldn't be humanly possible. In 2017, player "Shaiiko" was found to be using macros as well as a VPN in an ESL competition for the game Rainbow Six Siege (Bishop). ESL, or Electronic Sports League, which is an organization that hosts many competitions for a variety of eSport games, has its own anti-cheat software called MOSS. This software is what detected Shaiiko's apparent use of a macro during the match. Despite denying the accusation, Shaiiko was banned from all ESL tournaments for two years, as well as the team he played for, "beGenius", being banned from all future ESL tournaments (Bishop). Some spectators were upset about this, citing the fact that MOSS has been known to give false positives, meaning that its possible Shaiiko wasn't cheating at all. These discrepancies go to show that the solutions in place to combat cheating in eSports are not as airtight as they should be for the level of play that they intend to regulate.

A fourth, more traditional way of cheating that takes place in eSports is doping, called e-doping. This is when players take performance enhancing drugs to outperform opponents in competition. It's a tactic that's been used in traditional sports for decades, with athletes usually using some kind of steroid to increase their physical capabilities. When these athletes get caught, it can have devastating effects on their careers, like in the case of Marion Jones. She was an

Olympian, earning three gold medals in the 2000 Summer Games for track and field (ABC News). Seven years after her victories, she admitted to using steroids in the competition. This admission of guilt led to six months of jail time, two years of supervised release, and eight-hundred hours of community service (ABC News). In contrast, when eSports athletes admit to using performance enhancing drugs, the consequences are significantly less severe.

The drug of choice for eSports athletes is Adderall, a drug used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). This, among others like Modafinil, Donepezil, and Propranolol, allows players to stay calmer in the competition, and focus more on the game and calls from their teammates (Chanda, 967). This can give them a massive advantage over an opposing team, especially if all players on the same team are using the same drug. During an interview with eSports commentator Mohan Govindasamy, a player, who goes by "SEMPHIS", admitted that his entire team had been on Adderall during a recent ESL CS:GO competition, saying, "I don't even care. We were all on Adderall" (Maiberg). The players had been competing for $250,000 in prize money. For comparison, that amount is worth the equivalent of winning nearly seven gold medals in the Olympics, four more than Marion Jones ever won. After this shameless admission, the interviewer goes on to say, "Just throwing that out there for the fans, that's how you get good (Maiberg)." SEMPHIS played for the team Cloud9, which is one of the most recognizable names in the world of eSports today. In traditional sports, if an entire team was found to be using performance enhancers in a major competition, they may never be allowed to compete again. However, in the case of Cloud9, they have never been more successful than they are today. At the time, ESL had no rules in place against doping in competition, which caused the World Anti-Doping Agency to intervene, implementing guidelines for ESL to follow. However, like the current software anti-cheat, these policies have been less than effective in solving the problem.

In terms of anti-cheat, some game developers implement their own software for the games they create. For example, Valve, the creator of CS:GO, has Valve Anti Cheat, or VAC, installed along with the game when you download it. Other games, like Fortnite or Rainbow Six Siege, use third-party services like Battleye and Easy Anti-cheat (Gjonbalaj 3). These various software implementations each have their own tactics to find if a player is cheating or not. Monitoring a player's speed, location, and latency on the game's server is a simple way to weed out poorly made cheats. Some anti-cheat software encrypts the game's code and decrypts it when it needs to be read by a player's game client. This makes it a challenge for cheat developers to account for problems that may leave their program open for detection (Gjonbalaj 4). A part of VAC is a system called Overwatch, which comes into play when a player is reported in a match of CS:GO. Overwatch will send that match's recording to another player who will review the gameplay and judge if the reported player was cheating. A tactic like this can be very useful when done properly, but it can also introduce issues with players who don't know what to look for falsely flagging a player who may not be cheating (Gjonbalaj 4). A system like this may also get flooded with reports of players who weren't cheating and were reported because another player simply didn't like them. Other anti-cheats detect changes in the game's files when a player launches the game, and periodically as the game is being played. Some games go several steps further than this and look through files on the player's entire computer (Gjonbalaj 3,4).

Valorant, an FPS game that has become wildly popular in the realm of eSports since its release, uses a program called Vanguard. Vanguard employs kernel-level drivers, which run all the time, even when the game is closed. It detects any software running on the computer that could be used by cheat developers to cheat in the game and blocks it from running. This is an issue on many levels, but mainly because it leaves a Valorant player's computer vulnerable to tampering. If someone were to infiltrate Vanguard, they too would have access to all the files on

someone's computer (Wilde). Riot Games, the creator of Valorant, is very confident in their product, and has even offered $100,000 to anyone who finds a security vulnerability in the software, but they are not the only ones that use kernel level anti-cheat (Wilde). Both Battleye and Easy Anti-cheat, which were mentioned above, use kernel level drivers to detect cheating. These programs raise many questions about a player's privacy and security when playing games that use this kind of anti-cheat, causing some players to avoid games where this software is employed entirely (Wilde).

In professional eSports, because of the additional ways of cheating, there are regulatory agencies with rules on how the games should be played. Different organizations have different views on what rules should be in place, and thus have different punishments for players that break these rules. There is no one organization with a universal solution, like there is for sports like football, which has the National Football League. (Hwang, 1299). This could be attributed to the term eSports encompassing many different games at the same time, all with different ways of being played. As a result, the eSports community is fragmented, with some tournaments having rules that are designated by event organizers, while others are regulated by larger agencies. Additionally, because eSports aren't recognized as sports in some countries where they are popular, legal regulation becomes impossible. Some organizations were created to unite the eSports community to varying effects.

There are three main global organizations created to regulate eSports: World ESports Association (WESA), the Esports Integrity Commission (ESIC), and the Internation Esports Federation (IESF). WESA was created to regulate exclusively CS:GO, and therefore cannot apply their rules to any games. Despite having total focus on the game, not all CS:GO competitions are run through WESA and are therefore not subject to WESA's rules (Hwang, 1303). To add to this, WESA does not have any explicit rules against the use of doping or

software cheats in their competitions, other than saying that players cannot act, "in a manner contrary to sporting ethics. (Hwang 1300, 1301)". ESIC and IESF are both much more specific when it comes to cheating in their competitions and provide examples of what is and isn't allowed. However, these regulations' reach doesn't go further than their own competitions involving their own member teams (Hwang 1302). This means that tournaments outside of these organizations' scope are on their own when deciding on rules.

Another problem with these organizations is that they each punish cheating players differently. One organization may permanently ban a player from all future competitions for a rule that they break, while another may just prevent that player from competing for a few months. Additionally, a player banned from one organization's tournaments is not banned from competitions held by other organization. This lack of uniformity can lead to offenders jumping from one organization to another to evade a ban to continue competing (Hwang 1304). Even within individual organizations, there are inconsistencies in punishment of cheating players. Some players are banned for years for cheating while others are banned for just a few months (Hwang, 1304).

These inconsistencies in regulation cause a disconnect between eSports teams that play under different organizations, when they should be united in their sport. This issue could be solved if a single governing body could provide an industry standard for all tournament organizers to follow. This governing body could have different divisions for each game widely played as an eSport today, along with the capability to add additional games to its roster as the landscape changes. This would allow for less confusion among the rules of the competitions, as well as connecting all eSports players and teams, preventing cheaters from repeatedly cheating under disjointed organizations. Currently, this task is troublesome because eSports are not recognized as sports in some countries. As the eSports market grows, and governments realize

the wide appeal of the sport, this problem should solve itself. However, it will require a push from the current major organizations to make it happen.

ESports are widely enjoyed by spectators across the globe, and therefore should have a global standard for competitions, so that players that seek to cheat can't without facing consequences. The spectators are the reason that eSports can be played at the level they are today, and when a cheater cheats in competition, they cheat spectators out of their viewing experience. To continue the level of growth that eSports are seeing now, regulation must be standardized so cheaters are not allowed to ruin the fun of the competitions.

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The Complex Relationships that Influence Modern Piracy

     In the vast expanse of the digital, information can flow freely, and boundaries are not

truly clear. The phenomenon of modern piracy takes on many different faces, particularly in the

space of the entertainment industry. Piracy has gone so far beyond the old swashbuckling tales of

the past, taking on newer forms and presenting intricate problems for both creators and industries alike. Modern piracy in the entertainment industry is a phenomenon shaped by the challenges it brings to entertainment while also reflecting the consumer needs for innovation and regulation.

The first thing to understand is that in the modern world piracy has taken on an entirely new meaning to us. The 'Modern Pirates' as we know them are interested in collecting media and content rather than physical goods. Arvanatakis states that "Contemporary piracy is also associated with the file-sharer: generally a young white man hiding behind a computer screen somewhere in Europe or North America, downloading movies and music, or anonymously trolling online conversations. Contemporary Piracy is a system upheld by consumers with motives to acquire the media they desire rather than large coalitions like old times.

This Landscape of Consumers who Pirate is directly proportional to the development of the Internet. As the Internet transforms and becomes more advanced, more opportunities for pirates are created that allow them to carry on their theft. "Pirate electronic culture is part of an imminent techno-logical space…it presumes that classic distinctions between technology and culture, between humans and non- humans have ceased to hold in the contemporary city…old style humanist discourses between subject-object, nature-culture, etc. are rendered fuzzy in the contemporary (Ravi,4)". Primitive styles of communication would not allow pirates and consumers to converse, but new technological advancements make it more and more trivial.

Pirates themselves can sometimes create their own businesses with the products they steal. Not being satisfied from the initial theft a pirate will often rebrand and repurpose media to be resold entirely. "The pirates do not just deliver the latest blockbusters and blue movies. Some are ambitious enough to come up with their own boxed- sets…Often local graphic artists—using pictures they obtained from the Internet—design these covers and provide the blurb.

(Baumgärtel, vol 55,5). In some countries the act of media piracy gives Pirates opportunities to profit off work from creatives in the industry. The illegitimate commerce of piracy can be seen as a theft of profit form the creator not just media itself.

These Pirates can also take on more authorial roles in the current times. Some consumers who participate in piracy will often take existing projects and remix them with their skills or use them in other projects. Similarly, Arvanatakis writes "Non-commercial piracy such as bootlegging, particular file-sharing practices or transformative amateur media creation…are generally viewed in a positive light by many scholars who see this sort of copying as inherently 'creative'" (Arvanatakis,19). These Consumers do not follow the rules and are not just interested in the possession of the media; they will also use this media for themselves in their projects.

Additionally, piracy has taken on a form of globalization that allows pirates and consumers to commune at a high rate. Despite the illegality, piracy allows for the mass spread of media around the globe at high speeds with little to no pushback. Baumgärtel writes that "In Kano, the economic center of northern Nigeria, media piracy is part of the "organizational architecture" of globalization, providing the infrastructure that allows media goods to circulate" (Baumgärtel,183). Often piracy is viewed as a simple theft here, but globally it is an infrastructure where Pirates and consumers partake in a new kind of media distribution. This means that piracy can take on a global aesthetic in relation to the entertainment industry.

The aesthetic in question has the Pirates take on an archival role in regard to how media is processed. Pirates who participate will often employ the use of databases that allow consumers to have the media they take to be easily accessible. "It represents the potential of technologies of reproduction … the supple ability to store, reproduce, and retrieve data when shorn from the legal frameworks that limit their application" (Baumgärtel,183). Pirates exist outside the realm of

legality and create spaces for consumers to have stored and distributed at an unprecedented rate. So, on the stage of the internet, piracy takes on the guise Pirates will create mass databases at the convenience of the consumer.

Despite the illegality, piracy can give a creator's work massive success and awareness in a major way. When a work is illegally uploaded to a database it gives a work unlimited access online that can shoot it to stardom. According to Greenberg "If piracy was truly as dangerous as previously assumed, then why have some content producers spoken out about the advantages of illegal consuming...Vince Gilligan, even said, Illegal downloading has helped us, certainly, in terms of brand awareness (Greenberg, "The Economics of Video Piracy – PIT Journal."). On an online space piracy gives a creator's work of art the chance to be distributed at mass. Sometimes a Pirate can aid a creator in their creative career.

In a sense the availability of free content through piracy has changed revenues for creators working in the Entertainment industry. When it comes to marketability for a work market, prevalence for piracy can help a creator get interest in their work's official release. Greenberg reports that "The film industry can actually profit from piracy … researchers found, even by "the most conservative results," that approximately 9.3% of the increase in DVD sales over that period could be attributed to that market's prevalence for piracy" (Greenberg, "The Economics of Video Piracy – PIT Journal."). This is caused by the previously mentioned spread of awareness but also pirates are inclined to make a purchase when they feel connected to the creator's work. Weirdly Pirates can become official consumers in the entertainment industry, and financially support creatives.

Despite the benefits, there is no doubt that Pirates negatively impact creatives at work. It can be hard for individual creators to profit and establish themselves with pirates taking their

work and distributing it without permission. Many contemporary writers struggle to establish reputations in the first place, let alone profit from sales abroad …piracy of works from abroad discourages those who lived through the age of unchecked American piracy recognized it for what it was: a dead end (Raustiala, 2). Globally independent creatives have a tough time trying to spread theirs, but the spread of it illegally does not necessarily help them. Media theft creates a parasitic relationship where the pirate collects a creator's work and gives nothing back.

Delving into the mind of these pirates reveals that they are often motivated by a lack of consequence. With the vast openness of the internet, it has given criminals more freedom and less risk even if the web has become more strict since its creation. Brown from TechCentral writes "Music piracy is straightforward and the chances of being caught are slim…chances of being punished are even slimmer. They know a vast number of people engage in the activity and that encourages a belief that they will get away with it" (Brown, "What Makes People Pirate? - TechCentral"). Consequences can just oftentimes be non-existent, and many legal disputes related to piracy relate to works being pirated before release and not after, so the choice is clear. for them. Pirates are led in by minimal risk and high reward most often.

This is not to shift the blame solely on the pirates themselves as they are also motivated by the entertainment industry failing them as customers. While not the main cause, it cannot be ignored that piracy is the byproduct of consumers not having their needs met by the creators they enjoy. Brown writes that "Industry bodies must strive to meet the demands of consumers … If the pirate is a young man, then the industry needs to adapt to appeal to him if it wants to win his business...there is still a perception that it is over-priced "(. Brown, "What Makes People Pirate? - TechCentral"). Companies with creators that are less consumer friendly often motivate more consumers to commit piracy as that may be the only way to access the media they desire. When

consumers' trust and faith are hurt by creators in the industry they transform into pirates or turn to them for the media they want.

Innovation in Potential enforcement is there but many institutions have been slow and out of touch with creators in the industry. There seems to be a disconnect between local and state governments on the issue. There is a disconnect between local and state governments on the issue which is preventing them from taking action. "The gap between signing and implementing policies to satisfy legal interests is a yawning one for many countries; strong intentions at the top of government are still frustrated by uneven implementation at the local level" (Treverton,142). If the entire government can form a bond with creatives to counteract piracy the act would be the higher risk. Our Institutions must make the decision to deal with piracy if they truly are interested in stopping it.

Recently we have seen this taking place. Higher ups in the industry want to cut the bond between Pirates and consumers to stop these practices. Companies and the creatives themselves want to protect their content and facilitate more legitimate commerce with the consumers who have turned into pirates. Motion Picture Association chief executive Charles Rivkin …announced at CinemaCon that the trade group representing the major studios will work with members of Congress to enact legislation allowing companies across the media and entertainment industries to move for the blocking of access to websites that facilitate the sharing of pirated movies and TV shows (Cho,Hollywood Reporter). With the online spaces gone consumers would turn back to legitimate streaming services and place their faith back into the industry. Creators are actively trying to stop the pirate's connection with the consumer and repair their own.

The truth of the matter is that Piracy can be hard to dissect because of these connections and the Social Community around this theft. The desire for content has naturally pushed pirates to find people like them so they can congregate while others actively voice their disagreement with the practice. "The field of media piracy like any other is a contested site of knowledge production in which claims and counterclaims operate within a discursive battlefield" (Liang,3). This Community struggle on the topic can make it hard to push the topic forward and bring a change in the entertainment industry. This topic can be a very socially contentious one as the bond between pirates and consumers has gotten to the point that they deeply depend on each other.

It also does not help either that with the uncertainty of their favorite media being available Consumers are forced to look for alternatives. Simply put, the lack of something on an official platform creates the necessity of other venues. "Nothing is guaranteed to remain on streaming forever. You are paying for a convenient way to watch content, but it is not a replacement for buying a movie or TV show on home video" (Sarah,CNBC).: If consumers are turning back to older things like physical media what is stopping them from going to pirates as well. Lack of availability fuels this current scenario where the consumer is dependent on pirates.

Recently a link is being recognized between Piracy and other types of criminality. If these potential connections are made, then institutions will be able to deal with the problem more directly. Trevorton states that Governments... will make their own decisions about how much to spend in the fight against counterfeiting or piracy..the case for more is stronger the more clearly the link between counterfeiting and organized crime is understood' (Treverton,142). The link between piracy and counterfeiting is being recognized as governments are starting to allocate more resources for dealing with this. The recklessness of Piracy may soon fade as institutions around the globe may extend their involvement.

So far, copyright law and courts have been the greatest deterrent against the theft of media. Through the laws of copyright, many companies are able to take action against almost any use of their product, which goes far beyond the scope of privacy. Federal Courts have broad authority to enter appropriate orders to assist the copyright owners in remediating harm caused by a defendant's illegal conduct…effective remedies will be required, and the courts can provide them as appropriate in some cases. If violation of copyright is perceived, then a company takes that violation to Federal Court where a solution is much more likely. Simply put, the entertainment industry has the ability to use copyright law as protection from what they view as theft.

The Intricate relationship between pirates, creators, and consumers reflects the complex nature of media distribution today. Technology Advances but Executives can be stuck in their old ways when it comes to content which facilitates easy sharing. Piracy, creativity, and consumption become hard to define, and while some view this as to the stability of creators, others see it as cultural exchange. It is ultimately clear however that there are both challenges and new opportunities for everyone involved.

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Charismatic Malevolence: Why Movie Villains Captivate Audiences

In the grand universe of films, villains come across as some of the most powerful characters, at times overshadowing even the heroes they oppose. But what accounts for this widespread fascination? Central to this discussion is a thesis that our attraction to movie villains has to do with the fact that they represent forbidden traits and emotions. They provide us with a possibility to vicariously get some experience with a taboo that is not fully open to us in life. These characters also represent societal fears—acting as cultural mirrors, reflecting what the world is afraid of at any given period. This exploration will be undertaken with a view to unveiling the psychological allure of these villains, cultural underpinnings of their appeal, and complex interplay of character traits that make them reviled and revered.

The new fascination with dark fictional characters—morally ambiguous protagonists and downright evil villains of television and film—is thus a rather smart and fresh lens into cultural shifts and what psychological traits are accompanying changes in narrative consumption. The research of Jessica E. Black emphasizes the psychological shades which lead a person to get attached to such characters. According to Black, viewers who scored high in machiavellianism a trait characterized by manipulation and a focus on self-interest—were more predisposed to liking characters showing moral complexity or outright villainy. This connection is mediated further through the concept of imaginative resistance: some viewers are more able than others

to set aside or suspend their moral judgments to appreciate stories that involve morally dubious actions (Black). Black's studies reveal that viewers with high imaginative resistance are less likely to experience discomfort when engaging with immoral fictional narratives, thus allowing them to empathize or even root for characters that they might otherwise find repellant. This psychological disposition can significantly affect how audiences perceive characters such as Walter White from "Breaking Bad" or Tony Soprano from "The Sopranos," who engage in actions that starkly contrast with societal norms of morality (Black). Black's research was complemented by an investigation by Allison Eden, which looked at how different moral domains impact people's perceptions of who is a hero vs. who is the villain. Eden's study used Jonathan Haidt's moral foundations theory to ground an attempt to assess how differences may arise in perceptions involving violations across these domains, typically hero versus villain characters in narratives. Her findings indicated that villains are, in fact, much more associated with violations in the domains of care and loyalty, which is paramount in deciding for the audience who may be considered good or bad. In this way, it is the nuanced account of moral perception that can help explain why some viewers might find certain villains engaging; viewers might take those characters to be flouting norms of a less central nature to their moral picture of the world. "They may see these characters as violating norms that are less central to their personal moral compass." (Eden). Moreover, Eden underlines the role personality dimensions take in the perception of an audience through his speaker, comprising warmth and

competence. Villains who score high on competence and low on warmth may be of special

interest, as they violate viewers' lay expectations of moral behavior. The villains set up by the

viewers become a sort of complex puzzle, one that is disturbing and at the same time

fascinating. Siobhan Lyons provides a broader cultural and historical context for these psychic

dynamics, particularly in the area of television post-9/11. Lyons explains that this period

marked a break from the sharp moral binaries of past generations to a landscape in which

characters were morally ambiguous in ways that had significant moral ambiguity. What is at

play here is more than just an aesthetic shift, but an underlying social grappling with issues of

morality, identity, and justice. Figures such as Walter White, who progresses from a likable

character pushed into crime out of desperation and poor health to a figure that questions the

very core of morality and legality (Lyons). Lyons' analysis extends to the way audiences engage

with these characters. The anti-hero, once a peripheral figure, has moved to the center of many

narratives, reflecting perhaps a collective disillusionment with traditional moral authorities and a

fascination with the flawed human condition. This engagement is not passive; it involves a

dynamic negotiation where viewers must continually reassess their moral alignments and

emotional investments in characters who frequently operate outside conventional ethical

frameworks (Lyons). Taking the insights of Black, Eden, and Lyons together, it suggests a

knotty landscape in which individuals' psychological traits interlace with cultural narratives to

carve media consumption. All these also imply that what might be attractive in the dark

fictional character is either due to some kind of personal psychological makeup that inclines

particular viewers towards such characters and is alternatively appealing because of a cultural

moment that valorizes moral complexity and ambiguity. These are important insights into

media consumption in the modern era; they give new space to explore this sort of ambiguity

within popular culture when society is of such high complexity, and traditional moral

authorities are often portrayed as inadequate or tainted. Characters like Tony Soprano or Walter

White, characters who are really stand-ins or human conduits for these moral explorations, offer

a way for audience members to safely find their way through and negotiate those anxieties and

uncertainties about things like morality, authority, and identity in such a rapidly changing

world. Actually, the charisma of such a dark and, therefore, interesting exploration of characters

allows viewers to get, along with an aesthetic pleasure, an opportunity to purify and search for a

safe way of dealing with fears, desires, and moral uncertainties. In so doing, these anti-heroic

and villainous tales become much more than merely that which is present for a lighthearted

amusement; rather, they come to signify important aspects of how the modern culture of today

comes to terms with the delicate fabric of contemporary life. They do, in the way that they

reflect and help to form the contemporary, moral dialogues that are taking place today.

Exploring the psychological appeal of villains and anti-heroes in contemporary media

requires understanding the complex interplay between narrative elements and psychological

mechanisms that captivate audiences. Characters who exhibit morally ambiguous traits resonate

deeply with viewers because they offer a canvas onto which viewers can project their own

ethical dilemmas and dark impulses. The fascination with these characters can be partly

explained by Albert Bandura's theory of moral disengagement, which elucidates how

individuals dissociate from the moral ramifications of actions depicted in fiction. As Bandura

notes, mechanisms such as moral justification allow viewers to rationalize the behaviors of

characters if they believe these actions serve a greater good or are understandable given the

character's circumstances (Bandura 199). Identification with characters is another pivotal factor

in the audience's emotional engagement. According to Cohen, identification happens when

viewers see aspects of themselves in characters, even if these characters do not adhere to

societal norms of morality (Cohen 245). This process is not only about seeing oneself in the

character but also about exploring personal and societal "shadow selves," a concept introduced

by Carl Jung. Jung posited that confronting and integrating our darker parts is essential for

psychological maturity, a process facilitated by engaging with complex characters in safe,

fictional contexts (Jung). Narrative complexity further enhances the allure of such characters.

Shows like "The Sopranos" or "Breaking Bad" blur the lines between hero and villain,

presenting protagonists who navigate morally ambiguous paths that reflect real-world ethical

complexities (Zillmann 96). These narratives allow viewers to grapple with ethical dilemmas in

a way that resonates with their personal experiences of moral conflict, providing a richer, more

engaging viewing experience. This also becomes of great importance as regards the culture that

forms their background against the characters being illustrated. In a shifting society, where

morality is gray at best and trusted authorities are taken with more than just a grain of salt,

characters who buck that trend tend to be representatives of personal and social struggles

against antiquated frameworks. These anti-heroes and villains mostly reflect qualities that

resonate with modern audiences—qualities such as resilience in the wake of systematic

corruption or finding justice outside the legal box in the world of the virtual domain. These, to

some extent, reflect broader social trends towards questioning and sometimes even rejecting

traditional moral authorities. The appeal of these complex characters is also reflected in how

audiences use them to navigate their own ethical landscapes. For instance, viewers might find

themselves sympathizing with Walter White's initial motive to secure his family's financial

future, despite his later reprehensible actions. This sympathy is facilitated by the narrative

providing a moral justification that viewers can accept, making it easier for them to engage with

and root for the character despite his flaws (Bandura 200). Looking further into the appeal of

morally ambiguous characters, one finds that the appeal lays importantly in the fact that people

can explore their darker side consequence-free. In this sense, the present investigation was not

only psychologically safe but also satisfying in providing a nuanced understanding of the nature

of human beings. The psychological theory of catharsis suggests that engaging with such

characters in fiction may provide viewers a mechanism by which to experience and process

such negative emotions by proxy, without the ethics they would be forced to confront in real

life (Aristotle). Witnessing villainous acts with all moral dilemmas and emotional responses at safe distance allow people to safely confront the issues within a controlled environment.The character of the Joker portrayed in various media personifies this fact. The much-acclaimed complex portrayal of Joker, particularly in "The Dark Knight," is the very example of a character whose acts and behavior are morally detestable yet pervasively compelling in some other contexts. He is chaos and anarchy that lays challenges not only for Batman but for the common man's definition of standing for right and justice. His popularity underlines a theory that viewers are attracted to those characters who mirror and give expression to their repressed desires and fears. Essentially, the Joker serves as a black mirror, reflecting us back onto ourselves in a way most of us are mostly too petrified to do (Fingarette). It also includes the element of narrative complexity at the level of the spectator. Characters such as Tony Soprano or Walter White do not portray the figure of evil; they carry a lot of humanity in them that includes imperfection and multidimensional attributes. Their stories are weaved with personal, family, and social challenges many can identify with, turning their journey into something very interesting and their choices into most debated ones and those gaining most or a great deal of empathy (Grodal). Such characters break the traditional narrative arcs and carry an ambiguity that makes the viewer ask, "What really defines a hero or a villain?" In this complexity, our world reflects more and more. The anti-hero's journey within the backdrop of a television or film setting normally reflects a larger social dilemma, scratching the surface of current-day

morality, justice, and man's condition. This relevance to real-world issues drapes the stories with

far more intrigue and the characters with resounding connection. For example, the brilliant

framing of systemic corruption and individual failure in "Breaking Bad" exhorts viewers to

never question the character's choices but the social structures forming those choices (Vaage).

In other words, the obsession of mass media with characters who are morally ambiguous—

such as villains and antiheroes—shows a psychological dynamic in every person that is

crushingly deep. Characters such as these bring about our coming to grips with some ugly truths

regarding the nature of ourselves and our society. They question the bland dichotomy of good

versus evil, calling for us to interrogate the actions of these characters—yes, and also our

responses to them. Through their engagement with these complex figures, audiences navigate

their own moral landscapes, digging into hidden portions of their personality and into cultural

norms. Such engagement entertains and educates our complex humanity.

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Internet Influencer Scams in the Crypto Space and the Psychology Behind Them

In the modern era where the online world is becoming increasingly important with every coming year, digital tokens and social media content creators are more relevant than ever. Cryptocurrencies have been all the rage since the COVID-19 lockdown, and online influencers have noticed this and joined the hype train, trying to make as much profit as they can. It is not uncommon to hear about another crypto scam every month, often with a large internet personality endorsing it and receiving huge amounts of backlash. It can be important to be capable of identifying scams when they occur to avoid a devastating financial loss. These crypto scams can be easily defined and have proven to be the kryptonite of many people in the digital space.

Influencer crypto scams have become commonplace on the internet in the past few years, and there are multiple ways to define them. The simplest way to describe such an event is when a popular internet figure uses their platform to promote a fake or unprofitable currency for their own benefit (J. Kim and M. Kim 1-3). It can be disguised in several ways to prevent people from discovering them using an assortment of tricky methods. Tactics like fake giveaways, sponsorships, and even entire personalities have been used to trick fans in the past. Because of the monetary benefits and the grey area in the law about scams like this, it can be enticing to influencers to take part in the crime (Simpson 2048-2049). These scandals are occurring at a rapid pace in the modern digital era, and it is beginning to become a major problem.

One example of a popular social media figure promoting a crypto product is the recent case involving Logan Paul, a controversial figure in internet history. He used his platform's leverage to convince fans to invest in his brand-new crypto program, called 'CryptoZoo'. At a first glance, the product seems to be relatively normal by cryptocurrency standards, however once you take a closer look, there are several indicators of its falsehood. In this scam, the goal was to build a large-scale game, similar to a creature collecting game like Pokémon or other popular mobile

games that have appeared in the past, which Logan would speak about while the game was still in development, claiming that it was "probably even more relatable and universal than Pokemon" (Chow 1). As such, Paul capitalized on the popular trend and marketed CryptoZoo as a game where you buy eggs and hatch them (Findesian). He promised that "You could hatch and breed hybrid NFT animals that would gain in value over time (Chow 1)." It is likely that these animals were supposed to act as non-fungible tokens which could be bought or sold between players with an entire economy behind it.

On paper, this product sounds like a great idea, with a functional progression system and game design that has been extremely successful before. For instance, Pokémon, the game that CryptoZoo is modeled after, is the most profitable franchise of all time. There are also several mobile games with this type of gameplay loop, and with mobile games being the most profitable form of gaming in the industry, it seems like it would be successful. It would not take long before this dream would crumble though. The game's vision would never be realized and would never become the crypto empire that Paul was hoping to build.

There would be several investigations into CryptoZoo because of its suspicious appearance. Stephen Findesian, who goes by the name Cofeezilla online, published a series of video essays that went in depth on the subject. He would discover soon after CryptoZoo launched that the supposed game was taking money from investors and never paid them back, and that Paul had collaborated with some of the biggest names in the crypto scams business. They also refused to roll out refunds for the game despite being called out for their scheme (Findesian). Findesian's videos would bring "widespread negative attention to the product (Chow 1)" and the backlash would prove to be too much. Another investigation was launched and would result in a class action lawsuit against Paul. The attorney leading the lawsuit, Tom Kherker, "alleges that Paul committed fraud, express breach of contract and negligence among other claims, and seeks

damages for the some of the people who lost thousands on CryptoZoo (Chow 1).” The lawsuit would also mention that the people behind CryptoZoo actively decided to design an unfinished game to save money and avoid the long and arduous process. The product failed to deliver what was promised and some fans were outraged. (Findesian and Chow 1).

One of Paul's followers Tauk wanted to support the CryptoZoo product but would soon be disappointed. He chose to invest thousands of pounds into the game; however, he would lose almost all the money he spent. After his fans learned about the truth behind his scheme and garnered enough attention online, Tauk's and other fans experiences were used as evidence in Kherker's lawsuit. Paul attempted to reprimand the situation by claiming to be unaware of his collaborators' history in crypto scams and promised to make CryptoZoo better. His apology was mostly ignored, and it only got worse from there. The game would never finish development and refunds were not delivered to the investors. Moreover, his hand has been forced and it was announced that he would no longer be continuing with the CryptoZoo project. Paul's project left many demanding refunds that they will likely never receive, but CryptoZoo is not the only time a creator has used their platform to promote a product (Chow, 1).

The peculiar case of Claire "Lil Tay" Hope and her rise to stardom were shrouded in mystery until very recently. She rose to fame around 2017 seemingly out of nowhere as a kid with a big personality. Subsequently, she vanished completely from the internet for a few years before returning to social media with a plan. Initially, a GoFundMe was established after some family drama in 2021. After it was revealed that the fund was set up by her brother, people became suspicious of Hope's persona and the family surrounding her. It would only continue to worsen however, when in the Lil Tay death hoax, the goal was to fake her death to garner abnormal amounts of attention, before advertising a cryptocurrency made in her name. Because of the suspicion surrounding her character, the digital currency was blown off by a majority of the

internet. The deception is quite clever though, using unconventional methods to gain publicity for a product. According to Weiss from Business Insider, it has been revealed to be the work of a third party. Tay has since been confirmed to be alive and had nothing to do with any of the social media posts, but this is another example of using a platform to promote a fake product (Dickson and Weiss).

Influencer marketing has skyrocketed since 2016, so there must be several reasons why these scams have become so effective (Peng 445). Although they may seem obvious from retrospect or an outsider's perspective, there is a reason people fall for them and are incredibly effective on a specific clique of people. In a phenomenon known as a parasocial relationship, fans of a specific person can develop a one-sided relationship with them because of online interactions they have. The fans of this persona begin to trust the individual and form feelings for them despite never meeting them in real life, including feeling as if they are close friends with that person or attachment to them (J. Kim, M. Kim 1-3). These internet microcelebrities are only able to gain their fanbases through the content they create and the way they connect with an audience, building loyalties, and appearing more like a friend rather than someone at an unattainable status like an actor (Peng 749-750).

Some online influencers will use these parasocial interactions to their advantage and attempt to make any kind of profit off their own audience. Naturally, this includes utilizing fake products such as cryptocurrencies and poorly made merch. For example, in the Paul CryptoZoo case discussed earlier, the angry fan Tauk spoke about his mentality prior to purchasing the product, stating that "'Logan Paul is a trustworthy guy. He makes good content and kind of leads the space' . . .,"So I invested a lot more (Chow 1)." Moreover, entertainers occasionally endorse sponsors without conducting research on the sponsor because of the tempting monetary offer. Because consumers are more likely to buy items from someone they know, it is a highly

effective technique that some companies are trying to capitalize on. An interesting statistic relating to this is that younger people are more likely to listen to a recommendation from a Youtuber than a popular actor, especially if the Youtuber has a smaller fanbase (Peng 749-750).

There is one industry in the content creation genre where parasocial interactions are at an all-time high, streaming. Platforms like YouTube, Twitch, and Kick make it possible for dedicated viewers to watch their favorite social media personalities in real time. Whether they are watching real life events, reaction content, gaming, or even news coverage, fans can see content creators in an unfiltered environment with no editing. This makes the streamer seem more genuine and appear like a human. To put the icing on the cake, streaming sites generally have a chat function where the viewers can type to the streamer and interact with them, along with a donation system where the most involved patrons can support them. It only amplifies the connection between the streamer and their fans encouraging parasocial relationships to blossom. Because of people's inclination to help out those they know, you can imagine how popular merchandise and product advertisement would be in this kind of environment.

In one case like the ones previously discussed, internet superstar MrBeast was used as the face of a scandal. Popularized because of his willingness to freely giveaway hundreds of thousands of dollars to random people and to those in need, MrBeast advertising an iPhone giveaway seemed on brand with his normal actions. Turns out it was a fake giveaway, utilizing modern artificial intelligence to render a deepfake version of MrBeast. These types of deepfake videos have become wildly popular recently, with advances in artificial intelligence technology and their easy accessibility. It is unknown how effective this scam has been, however because of its accuracy to the real person and the public's trust in the MrBeast brand, it would not be farfetched to imagine that it fooled dozens of people. This is a perfect example of exploiting people's parasocial relationship with online influencers (Pringle 1).

While the success rate of influencers advertising their own products is remarkable, companies should think twice before sponsoring them. When a sponsored creator is involved in any negative press or controversies, it can bleed onto the company they are signed with. This occurrence is called a scandal spillover and can severely damage an establishment's reputation. Due to the tendency of the internet to remember specific occurrences and forget them less easily, something as simple as a spillover can stain a company's reputation for years. Also, because of the connections the internet offers, a scandal can become a major event worldwide (Kintu and Karim 667). Influencers need to be extremely wary of who they choose to sponsor them as well, because these spillovers can go both ways. If their image is projected onto a fishy corporation, they will appear to be untrustworthy as well (Simpson 2057-2058).

Influencer and crypto scams have become a normal sight in the online landscape, and they do not seem to be stopping anytime soon. They take advantage of the parasocial interactions fans have with their favorite creators and can be difficult to spot. It is important to be aware of these happenings because of the current state of the internet and the rampant increase in scams online. Learning to spot these scandals as they transpire will help keep savings safe and hopefully slow down the influencer scam epidemic.

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