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Individualization and Collectivity in Networks of Discursive Cyberspace: A case study on reddit

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Vassar College

Individualization and Collectivity in Networks of Discursive Cyberspace:
A case study on reddit

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree
Bachelor of Arts in Sociology

by

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Individualization and Collectivity in Networks of Discursive Cyberspace: A case study on reddit

The diminishing of temporal and spatial boundaries in the contemporary age of connectivity has fully realized Beck, Giddens and Nash's "reflexive" modernity. This reflexive modernity refers to the diminishing control of traditional institutions on individual lives. In the shift towards loosely bounded networks as the operant mode of socialization, I propose that both collective and self identity become individualized choices. People are able to pick and choose the different aspects of their formative identity as well as the elective communities to share and consume those aspects. Using a convenience sample, I perform a case study on reddit.com to explore how biographical experience and individual performance are critical in navigating online networks and representing the self in discursive cyberspace. I approach identity through the lens of queer theory to develop a fluid understanding on identity formation and practice. I argue that the exchanges that take place in discursive cyberspace are not only meaningful in terms developing networks of alternative knowledges, affective support, and social capital, but are also foundational to reproducing reflexivity and its tendency towards individualization.

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This thesis references multiple threads and comments as well as pictures gathered from the website reddit.com. The following lists of roman numerals refer to the endnote used in the main text which references specific threads, pictures, or media provided in the Appendices.

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Introduction – Individualization and Networked Collectives

Technological innovation is redefining collectivity. In this thesis we will discuss about the social consequences and creative potentiality of widespread access to topically specific discursive spaces facilitated by the Internet. The data for this thesis will come from reddit.com, a site that is cutting-edge in terms of its model of representation, epistemological practice, and collective consensus. Before we go further on the matter of reddit, we must contextualize the phenomena of this website and communications advancements in general to the emergence of a second or “reflexive” modernity. This modernity has two main premises: the risk society thesis with the fundamental transformation of the social-political landscape to one of unpredictability, and the individualization thesis where the fabric of social relations has been altered to cater to individual choice and decision making (Beck, Giddens and Lash 1994).

Cyberspace is a site of reflexivity because it creates spaces for routinizing exchanges between individuals who are brought together through networks of electively built imagined communities. Reflexivity is critical here because it emphasizes the breakdown of traditional narratives and institutional control on lifestyle. Beck et al. (1994: 174) explain the meaning of reflexivity as a process of continued modernity by distinguishing it from reflection:

The classical premise of reflection theory can be simplified down to the initially stated thesis: the more societies are modernized, the more agents (subjects) acquire the ability to reflect on the social conditions of their existence and change them in that way. In contrast to that, the fundamental thesis of the reflexivity theory of modernity, crudely simplified, runs like this: the further the modernization of modern societies proceeds, the more the foundations of industrial society are dissolved, consumed, changed and threatened. The contrast lies in the fact that this can quite well take place without reflection, beyond knowledge and consciousness.

Where reflection allows for self-critique and analysis on one's lifestyle and conditions of existence, reflexivity refers to the emergence of unprecedented trajectories as possible life

choices following the breakdown of traditional filters and methods on discourse and socialization.

Ubiquitous access to the outside world from home or spaces of leisure renegotiates the traditional sense of collective identity; people are no longer bound to a singular group because discursive cyberspace allows people to connect, share and develop the many facets of their identity. These reflexive choices are examples of what Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 1-3) call “precarious freedoms” in the institutionalizing of individualization, meaning that the individual has increasing control and choice in crafting their own lifestyle because the previous authorities and models on individual decisions are becoming obsolete. Not only do individuals have more power over their own lives in their choices on what to engage with, there is also more pressure on the self to perform within these choices. Individualization does not necessarily endanger social cohesion, but rather transforms the meaning of the collective when networked models of socialization become the norm and allow individuals to enter and exit any number of elective communities they identify with.

Networked Individualism

Social bonds are changing. No longer are we wholly bound by the conventional “community.” Rainie and Wellman (2012) propose a theory of “networks” to help explain the social consequences of the phenomenal breakthroughs in globalized social communications technologies. Whereas the traditional conception of community requires the maintenance of rigid roles, a result of labor demands and the necessity of permanent membership for group survival, Rainie and Wellman (2012: 10-13) suggest that we now operate through a multitude of networks which are characterized by their constant flux, ease of entry, and ease of departure.

Due to the diminishing boundaries of time and space through the marvels of connectivity, people are less obligated to identify wholly with a specific group. This is exemplified through the high turnover rate of network participants and the perpetually shifting meanings of the networks itself; people don't have to align themselves nor their obligations with the goals of a rigid group, but rather can *pick and choose* their particular engagements, or non-engagements.

The break from rigid membership roles in the shift from groups/communities to networks can be understood through the fusing of the work and home, or the aligning of labor and pleasure, through the mechanisms of the new technologies of sociation. As Rainie and Wellman (2012:36) put it:

Relationships are purposefully segmented and managed in modern life because we have to be different people in different settings – it's no longer a specific role we fulfill but many different elements which are embodied in the multitude of situations and relationships we face in everyday life.

These technologies are not “isolating” systems but facilitate this new “networked individualism” model of socialization, where an individual’s personal network which consists of loose and fragmented connections becomes their primary source of support and information (Rainie and Wellman, 2012: 8). Although the negotiation of a matrix of diffuse networks have existed before the Internet, its prevalence as the “operating system” of connections marks the transition to “networked individualism” (Rainie and Wellman, 2012: 6). When the learning and sharing of lived experience becomes accessible to an infinitely diverse consumer base, people can make more significant connections out of their own volition. The current state of interactive communication technologies is able to facilitate meaningful exchanges and accelerates a foundational tendency in Durkheim’s interpretation of the first modernity for social relations to increasingly “depend on the sharing of ‘common, ideas, interests, sentiments

and occupations' rather than on the sharing of literal space" (as cited in Chayko, 2002:7). Chayko (2002:42) identifies these technological mediators "as 'bridges' between separated people facilitating joint mental orientation." Chayko (2002:53) suggests that there is a "resonance" when similarly oriented people connect and that this mutual like-mindedness may be conducive towards developing a sense of belonging or self-identity. Nevertheless, this work does not seek to over-interpret the novelty found on the content on the internet, because a lot of it is indeed novelty, but rather to emphasize how as the scope of how we are informed daily becomes extended to a constantly connected global scale, there are local repercussions in how we develop, represent and share our increasingly individualized worldviews.

Networks are significant not only because it allows like-minded strangers to come together, but also it allows for the dissemination of the diverse knowledges of an increasingly connected world of individuals. There is potential here for knowledge building, affective support and collective action. Each person's individualized matrix of networks allows for unique sharing and feedback experiences, a process that allows public access to the voice of the agent/subject. When the tools of production for recording and reporting everyday life of the local become ubiquitous, there are global consequences which undermine traditional structures and how they narrate life choices.

Ubiquitous Networks and Untethered Communications

The current pervasiveness of the "networked individualism" model of socialization comes from a convergence of communications technology and the personalization of media production. Beck, Giddens and Nash (1994) writes about reflexivity in the mid 1990s, a time period which is at the infancy of communications and personal media technologies. In the

contemporary 2014, there have been massive advancements in these technologies which come to realize the reflexivity of continued modernization. The accessibility of these technologies and the prevalence of loose network allegiances are phenomena which fall under Giddens' (1981:92-93) notion of "time-space distanciation" which suggests that connectivity in contemporary life is much more structured on absence rather than presence because of the condensing of both time and space.

This minimizing of temporal and spatial limitations is central toward the normalizing of network relationships. Rainie and Wellman (2012:31) identify the success of social networks as a result of historical shifts which have designated temporal spaces of personal autonomy such as the separation of work and home. In tandem with more access to transportation, i.e. personalized automobiles, and platforms of communication, relationships and identities can be facilitated and developed beyond traditional spheres because it allows us to "see" and thus "potentially feel connected to" more people and experiences (Chayko 2002: 8).

The data of this thesis is available only because of the unparalleled adoption of the Internet as a consumer technology. The Internet is the infrastructural backbone of many of the major developments in audio-visual technologies and their capacity as means of communication. Alongside the advent of the personal computer, the meaning of relationships and the boundaries between leisure and labor become blurred when the home as well as other spaces of everyday life becomes sites of connection (Rainie and Wellman, 2012: 61-64). Connecting and staying connected takes effort, but the Internet provides an imaginary cyberspace for interactive and stimulating platforms to develop those relationships.

We cannot escape this connectivity because the ubiquity of mobile phones allows people to be requested upon by any person or group from their individualized networks at any time of day (Rainie and Wellman, 2012: 81-83). We should pay particular attention towards the increasing adoption of smartphones because not only do these devices bring the Internet to one's pocket, it effectively untethers computing and worldwide connectivity because it changes the documenting and recording everyday life into an instantaneous feat. People are predisposed towards making connections and making connections is becoming easier to as we continue to modernize. What are the effects and implications of these connections and in what ways do they take form? Networking and social media is more than simply email. When consumers have access to produce and reproduce personalized media, there is massive potential for expressing creativity and sharing alternative knowledges. Constant connectivity is a reflexive process when knowledge consumption comes down to individualized preferences and collective participation within specialized networks necessitates individualized expertise.

The Case of reddit

For this paper I will be making an analysis primarily of the textual content I have witnessed on the website reddit.com. The data from this website will show the reflexive significance in the act of sharing biographical experience not only as an operating method of connection to fluid networks, but also as a claim to identity. The content that is posted on this website is by no means strictly textual; it can take the forms of videos, pictures, sounds, music, discussions and much more. There are many functions particular to reddit which makes it significant for analysis. It is essentially a user generated newsfeed. Users (denoted by u/) on reddit subscribe to discursively organized areas of interest called "subreddits" (denoted by r/)

which are spaces where people can discuss or post media of a particular subject or a topic. Users post submissions in these subreddits and the visibility of these submissions become filtered through the community of subscribers who vote either “up” or “down” a post. The submissions with the highest amount of points, or “karma”, from having an aggregate of more “upvotes” than “downvotes” will gain the most visibility by appearing on the “front page” where the feed will show the most visible submissions of the user’s personal compilation of subreddits. This website is an immediate and dynamic feed where content on the “front page” remain on there for no more than a few hours, a reflection of the constant flux of everyday life and the website itself as a living space. In each submission, there is a comment section that can potentially extend the conversation on the subject matter substantially because the comments are also communally filtered through its own voting system, and again those with the highest points gaining the highest visibility and marking the highest recognition.

People go on reddit for a variety of reasons but generally to consume information and to engage in discourse through the sharing of personal experience. Topics of conversation are highly variable; there is a tremendous amount of subreddits and many creative ways discussions unfold which engages anything trending from novelty to current events. The user base is semi-anonymous. For example, unlike other social media such as Facebook, submissions and comments are not necessarily tied to one’s identity and the user base of the subreddit are not made up from your friends, but rather other observers and participants of that subreddit. You can track user histories since their comments and submissions are time-stamped and archived, but users don’t necessarily have to post anything nor give any personal details away; some people just browse as “lurkers.” However, some users do reveal their identity out of their

own volition, but usually in the context as a claim to authority; the /r/IAMA (Ask Me Anything) subreddit has a figure of authority (e.g. celebrity, person of expertise, politician) answer questions posed by the community after being verified through proof (e.g. twitter post, uploaded photo evidence, verification sent to moderator). AMA format discussions take place in other subreddits as well such as the AMA done by Arnold Schwarzeneggerⁱ on exercise and health on r/fitness. Relevant questions and clever responses are usually noted with high reception which is exemplified through a large number of comment karma. On top of gaining high visibility from a large amount of votes, well received comments can also be “gilded”, meaning that another user spent money on “reddit gold” to permanently mark the response as exceptional in context to the thread. All submissions and comments are archived, but the original posters of the submissions or comments have the capacity to delete them or edit them with clear markers which indicate alterations from the original post. Users also have the ability to save links and comments as well as track all the upvotes and downvotes they have given in their account. There are moderators on each subreddit who mainly serve to regulate the usually minimalistic rules which are located on the side-bar of each subreddit and verify people for AMA question-response exchanges.

The samples I have chosen for this thesis are convenient and cherry-picked content, but I would contend that they are significant because their high visibility reflects a kind of collective consensus in the discursive subreddit they are posted in. Although I am omitting other content, the communal filter ensures minimal recognition of retrograde commentary outside of subreddits designated for the retrograde. I am not claiming that everything on this website is true, but I believe that there is a level of honesty when anonymity and minimal regulation

enables a potentially candid disclosure. People who fake stuff are interesting too, because it shows how representation can be manipulated through aesthetics and knowledge. The links I provide in this paper show the title of the post, particular comments, the timestamp that indicates when the post is created, the account name of the user who posted the content and the aggregate number of karma points the post and comments have received when I access it.

There is potential in these spaces as material spaces of learning, meaning and identity performance in the present day. The multi-trajectory nature of the submissions on reddit and the elective decision-making of the user on what to participate as well as not-participate in give salience to the “precarious freedoms” Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 1-3) describe. The space of reddit and the Internet more generally can be considered as a new foundation for reflexivity and its processes of dissolution in destabilizing the institutions of the previous industrial modernity.

Thesis Overview

This paper looks at how reflexivity in self-identity unfolds in a discursive cyberspace like reddit while taking into context the shifting meaning of collectivity when networked models of socialization become increasingly normalized. There are individualized pressures on not just the proliferation of choices of what knowledges to consume but also on how to perform these knowledges in a platform of discursive cyberspace amongst strangers who are bound together by their expertise over a subject matter. Previous models of rigid identity are not longer applicable; a fluid model should be adopted instead. Queer theory provides a framework for the multiple trajectories in the nondeterministic way that identity can unfold. These compounding facets of identity can now be further developed and shared like never before.

Identity is no longer bound by traditional frameworks; we find meaning in the networks we make and live in. The first chapter of this paper will discuss queer theory as a guide towards understanding this reflexive self by acknowledging alternative epistemological practices as a source of hybridization. Cyberspace is a site which can bridge the contradictions of reflexivity by breaking down traditional models of identity into post-traditional aesthetics which can be put on and taken off. The second chapter will delve into how performance and expertise are critical in navigating cyberspace; making connections and sustaining networks are heavily dependent on skill. The second chapter will primarily discuss the AMA (Ask Me Anything) feature on reddit as an exercise of embodied expertise and the creative ways knowledge can be shared and recognized. The second chapter will also discuss the failure of performing expertise as well as the potential dangers in the extremes of specialization and where representational expertise may be manipulated and fetishized. The third chapter engages the demands and returns of networked sociation; constant connectivity has huge individualizing pressures, but these pressures are not without reward because even networks of strangers can produce social change, provide informative support and bring physical returns such as organizing collective action, or transforming individual behavior.

The changing way we access information in the everyday transforms how we understand identity. What we choose to represent or share in a cyberspace like reddit connects us to a vast array of loosely bound networks which are markedly different than traditional communities. This thesis will show how these discursive networks are both a product and a process of reflexivity where the interactive platforms of shared cyberspace are highly individualizing by putting pressures on individual knowledge and performance. The collective

aspect of these networks do not necessarily lose value because of its flexible structure, but rather extends the question of who to turn to when seeking information or support to a larger global scale of strangers who are informed by their own unique lives. Biographical experience falls into the center of discourse in these reflexive spaces and carries weight as embodied knowledges.

Chapter 1: Queering Identity Formation and Claiming Space

Identity is complex and requires a nuanced understanding that accounts for the significance of the differential pluralisms and contradictions experienced through everyday life. Deleuze (as cited in Rodríguez, 2003: 22) directs us to a special type of root plant, the rhizome, as the guide to navigating readings on identity: “The rhizome is reducible neither to the one nor the multiple...it is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle [*milieu*] from which it grows and which it overspills.” This free-range directionality means that there are multiplicitous and a non-deterministic trajectories in identity and processes of identity formation, a necessary understanding to address the queer products of individualization in the shift towards post-traditionalism in continued modernization. There is an easing on traditional expectations and obligations of the self where one no longer has to conform to the projects of grand narratives; the authority of formulaic modernity embedded in previously traditional institutions like the nation-state, family, and religion are in dissolution (Giddens, 1994).

What exactly do I mean when I use the terms “queer”? I use the term queer in a broad sense, as a term that does not necessarily have to refer to sexuality but rather to the fluidity of identity and identity practices. Rodríguez (2003:24) presents an explanation for queerness:

This breaking down of categories, questioning definitions and giving them new meaning, moving through spaces of understanding and dissension, working through critical practice of “refusing explication” is precisely what queerness entails.

This unpredictability and queer spirit which manifest in identities presented on cyberspace are potentially critical sites of resistance and sources of empowerment where the agent can access the production of discourse through their own claim of biographical power.

The individualized choices in identity consumption and production are not insular processes where one can simply pick and choose forms of representation without consequences; rather the choices are reflexive and potentially tied to extensive social and affective economies of meaning. Performance is the key in understanding the materializing of discursive online spaces because the goals of visibility and recognition are what drive the communities to perform and claim space (Rivera-Servera, 2012). It is important to note that these online communities are composed of strangers and that in order to make a claim at a particular interest, performative and topical expertise is necessary for recognition as well as belonging, an example of an individualized pressure. Although the substance of internet phenomena often lies in the moment that it occurs, Cvetkovich (as cited in Rivera-Servera, 2012:107) turns us to the notion of an “archive of feelings” where cultural texts retain the emotional force of performance as “repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts, but in the practices that surround their production and reception.” Archives, documents and maps of past submissions and threads hold affective value as previous sites of shared sentiment, collective action, or meaningful discussion. Institutional individualization does not imply a wholly individual project; on the contrary, there is a collective side to it when people come together and bring to life meaningful discursive spaces based on their elective affinities. The multi-dimensionality of identity and identity building is what gives the space-claiming aspect of online performance so much weight because each of those

rhizomatic directions of identity are embedded in complex and responsive communities. Ultimately the significance of online space-claiming is about homebuilding, where the vagrant lifestyles of individualized curiosities, desires, and styles, whether continuous or contradictory, can find spaces and elective communities to manifest. Although the choices in developing fluid identities are increasingly individualized, the sensation of collectivity is still necessary because individuals need to find belonging in between these fragmented personal networks to serve as "homes" or bases of discourse.

In what ways do these lifestyles manifest? And what of the communities and relations that form from these amorphous directions? The place where we can locate these answers is through the experience of everyday life. A major component of reflexivity is the bridging of global consequences to localized decision-making and its converse. With the advent of internet spaces, the everyday life of others can become increasingly accessed. Global society for Giddens (1994: 107) is not a suggestion towards a world society; it is a proposition of "indefinite space." As a result, this potentiates any number of queer outcomes under the new project of choosing lifestyles and accumulating knowledges. When everyday interests and experience can be consumed, documented and globally critiqued in discursive spaces online, not only does the individual gain biographical power by accessing the constituent elements of their formative experience, there is a breakdown of the traditional limitations.

Post - Tradition

To understand post-traditional identities, we must first understand the processes of tradition. For Giddens (1994: 66) tradition is repetition. It is ritualized performance that is meant to replicate past experience and it presumes some sort of mythic truth that is beyond

rationality. Giddens (1994:64-67) likens tradition to addiction; it is a compulsive tendency which unconsciously seeks to recapitulate the past. This nostalgia derives from foundational memory which is a crucial aspect in formative identity. Giddens (1994: 81) calls tradition an “anchorage for that ‘basic trust’ so central to the continuity of identity.” It is essential to understand tradition as both an ideological and material form which is mutually constructive of one another.

In the current period of reflexive modernity, Giddens (1994) suggests that we live in a state of post-traditionalism where the authority of traditional institutions and narratives over life are deteriorating with the continued acceleration of modernization. As a result we experience more choice and agency in making life-decisions, but also more individualized pressure and risk. Technological modernization has reached a milestone when advancements have made available not just globalized communications, but also wonderful new media which have their unique affective potential as alternative and visceral languages. Globalization is central in the breakdown of traditionalism because Giddens (1994:96) suggests that there is a “restructuring of space” because of our potential for “action at distance.” This dissolving of both physical and mental distance through the sharing of media allows us to make penetrations into the everyday, a reflexive process which widens the perspective of those who are connected through by contextualizing the multiplicity of realities.

Family Structure

For example, let’s take into account the collapsing institution of the “monogamous nuclear-family” in western tradition. Nontraditional households are becoming commonplace, e.g. same-sex, multicultural, single-parent. This is rooted in historical shifts and fundamental

changes in the labor and social structure which have consequences on dictating family structure. Borscheid (as cited in Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 88) directs us to look at the pre-industrial family where agrarian communities have an “obligation of solidarity” in common goals and purposes of maintaining the farm; the family stay together because the survival of the community depends on it. In industrial society, we have a shift toward individually designed lives with the emergence of the logic of the welfare state where “the beginnings of social security thus guaranteed a minimum existence beyond the family” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 90). Although the women’s movement has yet abolish gender inequality, women have made a move “at least partly outside the family as a result of changes in education, occupation, family cycle, legal systems etc.” for a “life of their own” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 91).

Today non-normative households are increasingly more common because further modernization makes family structure and its role in the identity development a life choice rather than a necessity. This emphasis on structure however should not take away from the agent because individual decision-making is very much intertwined with the reflexivity of modernization when local choices have global consequences.

The following is the question and a few of the top comments (and a select follow-up comment) in a thread posted by u/TalmidimV on r/AskReddit which addresses a traditionally nonnormative household in a very unique wayⁱⁱ:

1853 points (5319|3465) - [SERIOUS] Fathers who stepped out on their wife/girlfriend, why did you do it?
 Submitted on Thu Sep 26 19:37:05 2013 UTC by TalmidimV

>>First I want to say that there's absolutely no judgement on my part, I'm honestly just curious. My father and I have a good relationship, so I couldn't imagine not having him in my life. Throughout my life I've had family members and friends whose fathers have left them. Again, I'm just curious as to why you left your family.

>>YouarenotLaBoeuf 2390 points (4727|2337)

I married my wife at seventeen. Thinking the child she was bearing was mine. I stayed around until twenty. I loved that baby more than anything else in the whole world, I was putty in her hands but I started to realize

that I was only still married to be around my daughter. My wife was insane, jealous beyond belief, abusive (mentally and physically, I have scars from punches) but I couldn't step away because I was so scared of losing the love of that sweet toddler.

Eventually the controlling and the abuse became more than I could take. I was drinking myself to death and depressed beyond belief. I filed for divorce but told her that she and my child could stay because I couldn't put them out like that.

She opted out and moved back with her parents, during the first court visit in our divorce a DNA test was ordered and it came back I wasn't the biological father but instead the man she was cheating on me with was. I didn't care. I loved that baby more than life itself. She was my daughter. I didn't care what a test said.

Now we just finally ended a battle a year later and the Texas court system had decided that since I am not a biological parent I don't deserve any rights and the only visits I get are three weekends a year. Four hours a weekend. I see the baby I love for 12 hours a year.

I spent three years of my life working ridiculous hours to provide for my bum ex wife and my child and in the end I walked away because I knew I had to make the choice to decide if I was going to pretend to be happy with someone who used me and didn't love me or try to make a real life.

>>vjosiah 3085 points (11087|8002)

I was a drug addict. I would constantly abuse in the house and even in front of my young daughter. I would shout and sometimes hit my wife, and sleep on the couch for days at a time. I was a mess. I eventually saw the pain I was causing my family, and left. I didn't want my daughter being raised in a household like that, and couldn't stand seeing my wife so upset, after all she did for me. I'm a few months clean now, and am starting to regain control of my life, and have reconnected with my 5 year old daughter and my wife, who couldn't be happier for me. Who knows, maybe there is a future for our little trio. I hope.

>>SniperOnTheHillside 2167 points (3810|1643)

This is the first story I've seen where the OP claims responsibility for his actions. Hope everything works out for you.

>>Raigeki_ 1954 points (3229|1275)

My Ex-Wife had us living with her whole family.
 I stopped going to school to work a 10\$ an hour job to help pay for things.
 Her family was abusive because I did not contribute enough in their eyes.
 Not abusive to me, abusive to my ex-wife. Behind my back.
 This lead to her hating me. I brought up the idea that her family was causing distress in our relationship but she wouldn't entertain the idea.
 She was so upset she suggested we get a divorce. I agreed. Turns out that was a test, which is messed up but I digress.
 So I had a choice of living in this town by myself no family or friends, or move back to my hometown 2k miles away. I had to ask myself what my daughter would think of it.
 Would she want me staying in a deadbeat job by myself just to see her, or further myself in life to be able to provide things for her later.
 It was a hard choice.

The question itself is fascinating because it queers the narrative on deadbeat fathers by addressing the leaving actor, or the agent who makes the apparent “choice” of rejecting the

traditional institution of monogamous parenthood. The replies are also very complex and further queer normative narratives of abandonment.

Although u/YouarenotLaBoeuf files for divorce after extensive mental and physical abuse by his ex-wife, he still offers to provide for them “because [he] couldn’t put them out like that.” And when the court proceedings and tests determine that the child he has been raising for three years turns out to not be his biological daughter, u/YouarenotLaBoeuf still regards the child as his own and fights in the Texas court system for over a year for custody. The court ultimately denies him custody and according to u/YouarenotLaBoeuf, “the only visits I get are three weekends a year. Four hours a weekend. I see the baby I love 12 hours a year.”

u/YouarenotLaBoeuf makes two decisions which are reflexive challenges to traditional family structure: the first is filing for divorce which affirms his dissatisfaction with the abuse he faces in the institution of marriage and the second is his fight for custody over his nonbiological child. His everyday experience with his daughter gives his claim on custody an affective legitimacy that goes beyond the logic of biology. Although the court upheld the normative convention of biological parenthood, we can empathize with /u/YouarenotLaBoeuf in this reflexive and discursive space over the pain of being unrecognized as a father.

For u/ Raigeki_, his departure from his family is rooted in the denial of his individual potential. The pressure of living and providing for his in-laws forces him to quit school and to take on a dead-end “10\$ an hour job to help pay for things.” His abusive in-laws sour his relationship with his ex-wife which eventually culminates in their divorce. The decision for u/Raigeki_ to leave his situation and his child comes from his recognition of not only the denial of his personal needs and aspirations, but also the denial of his ability to provide for his daughter.

According u/ Raigeki_, he sees leaving his daughter as the best decision for both of them: “I had to ask myself what my daughter would think of it. Would she want me staying in a deadbeat job by myself just to see her, or further myself in life to be able to provide things for her later. It was a hard choice.” Fatherhood for u/ Raigeki_ goes beyond maintaining the nuclear-family because he sees his parental-duty as a provider can best be fulfilled through his individualized choice of leaving and improving his own self-worth.

u/vjosiah has a very different reply where he admits to being a drug addict and a domestic abuser. The response of u/vjosiah is queer because he openly exposes his misgivings and delinquency in a performance that is more than an admission of guilt, but also a message of hope. u/vjosiah performs his comment in a way that suggests even those who commit abuse are not beyond redemption. He understands that he is a source of pain for his family and that his departure is for their own well-being. u/vjosiah queers his comment as a complex document of affect with an update of his current condition following his confessional: “I'm a few months clean now, and am starting to regain control of my life, and have reconnected with my 5 year old daughter and my wife, who couldn't be happier for me. Who knows, maybe there is a future for our little trio. I hope.” The comment of u/SniperOntheHillside recognizes this queerness and suggests u/vjosiah as someone admirable when he “claims responsibility for his actions.” There is a collective consensus which agrees with the comment by u/SniperOntheHillside because it is communally-voted to very high visibility. The discursive space of reddit can be understood as reflexive when queer discussions and outcomes are met with queer reception, i.e. a community praising a self-confessed former drug/domestic abuser for his change.

Post-tradition under reflexive modernity transforms tradition and its forms into a lifestyle choice; tradition as a form may be aesthetically present, but ideologically vacant. According Gluckman (as cited in Giddens 1994: 103), there is a departure from the ritualism of grand narratives and formulaic truths in tradition with a shift to ritualization which routinizes standard forms of interaction. Tradition acts as a foundation to engage these interactions, but is not deterministic in the places these trajectories end up. Giddens (1994: 96-97) directs us to the emergence of alternative lifestyles in the globalized sphere:

Hence post-traditional society is the first *global* society... Over the past few decades particularly influenced by the development of instantaneous global electronic communication, these circumstances have altered in a radical way. A world where no one is 'outside' is one where pre-existing traditions cannot avoid contact not only with others but also with many alternative ways of life.

Connectivity and relationships are increasingly bound through individualized life choices and there is a fundamental change in the fabric of our social relations and our familial ties from industrial modernity. Just look at the choices bicultural families have to make; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002:95) pose a series of questions that contemplate the future of bicultural children: "How are the children to be brought up: in your religion or mine, in your language or mine? What forenames will we choose, reflecting which of our origins?" This proliferation of life choices and increased individualized pressure on decision making for bicultural parents shows that there is a reflexivity occurring; when previous models of identity are obsolete, bicultural parents must create a new intercultural reality where it is necessary that "both partners confront their own origins, with sometimes paradoxical results" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002: 96).

The action of reflexivity lies in the exposure of these paradoxes and contradictions of identity. When the narratives of tradition become deconstructed, we are able to separate

ourselves and our unique experiences, interests, dislikes, etc. from rigid identity. Cyberspace can further queer our formative identities when our personal curiosities, interests and desires can be consumed, performed, appropriated and reciprocated instantaneously to a global audience, processes which delegitimize the systems of normative order through continuous sharing and exposure. Not only do we find more choices with the proliferation of various worldly knowledges in these discursive spaces, we are also less regulated on who to be, what to do and how to do it. The private sphere has become something new when people are increasingly brought together by their own individualized affinities and experiences; social bonds have to be made rather than inherited from the past. When tradition can be reduced to a cultural form, affective meaning can be found at the choices we make on what to perform, consume, or hybridize in everyday life.

Knowledge Production and Everyday Life

Well, how exactly can we interpret daily social life in reflexive modernity when the subjects it produces cannot be necessarily named? We must look at the discursive spaces where these individual lives are represented, replicated, reproduced and reported on. Giddens (1994:107) suggests the possibility of a “dialogic democracy” which locates biographical experience as the critical source in bridging affective personal life to a global order. I am not suggesting that people sit down and type out their whole life story to strangers, nor am I suggesting that everything you read on the internet is necessarily true, but rather that there are meaningful modes of representation and processes of interpretation in cyberspace with the symbolic interaction between strangers. Rivera-Servera (2012:135) looks at the dance floor in gay clubs as a site for “quotidian utopias” because physical bodies are able to claim power

through everyday choreographies in this particular space. These everyday performances are embodied when entering and claiming a space like the dance floor. It is important to understand cyberspace as spectacular where one can not only observe but also participate; there is constant presence in absent bodies which puts a pressure on performance to be genuine as well as strategic. Let's look at cyberspace as a site not only for representation but also the extension of daily life.

Cyberspace hosts new media which can overcome some limits of language with new forms of affective documentation and representation. The architecture of the internet is rhizomatic because there is no linear progression to guide users; users can construct their own avenues of engagement and are able to move through various links and spaces to have an active role in their own production of knowledge (Rodríguez, 2003:121). These spaces are reflexive because according to Rodríguez, (2003:121) "the unregulated nature of these sites dismantles authoritative versions of knowledge production, creating a multitude of problems and possibilities." We should look at processes of knowledge production as part of the everyday experience and as something that occurs in places beyond traditionally legitimated institutions like the university. Aesthetics play a significant role in self-representation where stylization can take on any number of queer forms from physical embodiment to the skillful use of language. Individualized knowledge production should be understood as a form of work, a spectacular performance that requires not only labor but also skill, knowledge and tact.

Three subreddits exemplify everyday knowledge production, its labor processes, and their rhizomatic trajectories in cyberspace: r/todayilearnedⁱⁱⁱ, r/LifeProTips^{iv}, and r/explainlikeimfive^v. The first two spaces involve the sharing of knowledge on a premise of

revealing something previously unknown, or something irregular. The third space makes a request from the individual to a globalized public for the sake of learning a specific knowledge.

Here are some examples of the posts and comments that play out in these spaces:

r/LifeProTips

2783 points (4163|1380) - LPT: When dividing up ground beef in Ziploc bags, flatten it out before freezing it. It'll (thaw faster when you need it^{vi}.

Submitted on Mon Sep 23 22:40:44 2013 UTC by Staplebattery

>>I buy ground beef/turkey in bulk and I divide it up into ziploc bags. I always flatten out the ground beef into a sheet within the ziploc bag so that it thaws faster when I need to cook it.

4108 points (8212|4104) –LPT Result: Someone here suggested taking a power strip while traveling. Now I am an airport hero^{vii}.

Submitted on Mon Apr 8 16:10:54 2013 UTC by longgoodknight

>> The results^{viii} and the Original Post^{ix}. The original post was specifically about power strips in hotel rooms, but as the power strip traveled in my carry on, I was able to make use of it at several airports. The only downside was when I left and four people had to try for the one outlet.

r/todayilearned

3031 (13114|10083) - TIL the US, working with Hanes and Levi's, pressured the Haitian government to block a minimum wage increase. Haitian workers are the lowest-paid in the western hemisphere^x.

Submitted on Wed Dec 4 16:40:13 2013 UTC by nichaliciaccio

2201 (16105|13904) – TIL Tupac Shakur's song "Changes" is on the Vatican Playlist^{xi}.

Submitted on Fri Nov 29 15:15:48 2013 UTC by Jack_Burton_Express

>> staciarin 2337 points (3768|1431)

TIL there's a vatican playlist

2492 (14451|11959) – TIL in Japan adult diaper sales are about to surpass baby diapers^{xii}.

Submitted on Tue Dec 3 14:27:08 2013 UTC by ukcup

r/explainlikeimfive

1599 (2968|1369) – ELI5: Why BBC has better content and seems more successful than PBS^{xiii}?

Submitted on Sat Nov 30 14:11:07 2013 UTC by Dr_Amkra

>> CommissarAJ 1455 points (1847|392)

One of the BBC's biggest advantages is that they have a much larger operating budget. In the UK, households have to pay for a television license, and a portion of this fee goes to the BBC. Having more money available means you can expand your influence, finance larger productions, and attract greater talent before on screen and behind the stage.

There are processes of reflexivity occurring when users have agency in not only choosing what knowledges and information they personally see fit to pass on, but also in the freedom of being able to request knowledge in a system that requires performance and mutual recognition.

These forms of knowledge production are rhizomatic and the scope of their content is limitless. Nevertheless, this multiplicity of outcomes should not take away from the specific efforts and expertise of individuals necessary in performance and knowledge in order to make a claim.

Claiming knowledge has profound power in the politics of identity and representation; the democratizing, regularizing and acceleration of these discursive spaces of knowledge production can be understood as nothing short of reflexive. When the systems of producing and transferring knowledge have become a life choice, identity further becomes queered and more contradictions emerge which can no longer be contained; the formulaic truths found in the grand narratives over life roles in industrial modernity are becoming obsolete with the continued exposure of the nontraditional models in discursive cyberspace.

The sharing of alternative epistemologies embodied through lived experience is a reflexive process. There is something valuable in play here when knowledge production become decentered from traditional institutions and instead comes directly from the quotidian life of the agent. Knowledge production has become something else when there are spectacular spaces which facilitate popular participation and sharing; people are becoming increasingly connected and the boundaries on identity and on ways of knowing are dissolving when these connections enable direct action into discourse and knowledge. The next chapter will discuss how personal performance and expertise is critical to making connections in networks.

Chapter 2: Navigating Expertise

Connecting to others is a performance. Recognition within anonymous networks of strangers depends on a skillful deployment of knowledge and ability. Since each subreddit is topically specific, users who post content or comment on threads in that discursive cyberspace must be relevant; again, content becomes visible on the subreddit when the network recognizes its significance, whether comedic, informative, or outright strange and votes it to the top. In this chapter I will discuss aspects of reddit which bring to light how successful submissions and threads require topical expertise and performative skill with a particular focus on AMA discussions and semi-famous users who are locally recognized. I will also discuss the failure of performance, particularly in the subreddits r/cringe and r/cringepics which document the exposure of spurious, ungenuine, and poorly performed submissions. These two subreddits show how surveilled cyberspace can be and how the inauthentic is just as easily recognized and regulated with shared ridicule. Finally, I will also discuss how specialization can manipulate representation and create artificial media meant solely for consumption.

The AMA Discussion

The AMA discussion is likely the most recognizable feature on reddit because of frequent participation from high profile persons such as celebrities, politicians, scientists and other specialists. This open forum question-answer exchange is very popular because it allows the public to have a live conversation with the person of interest; the person of interest's specialties and personalized knowledges carry clout because they are usually a figure of authority over a particular subject matter. The person performing an AMA can also employ reddit's own subculture by tapping into what is trending on the website strategically for

positive reception. In this paper I will analyze the AMAs of three persons, the renowned naturalist Sir David Attenborough^{xiv}, the Independent Senator from Vermont Bernie Sanders^{xv}, and a potato scientist^{xvi}.

The following are some excerpts taken from each of these persons AMA:

David Attenborough

7930 points (41738|33808) I am Sir David Attenborough, I'm on reddit, AMA.
Submitted on Wed Jan 8 20:48:23 2014 UTC by IamDavidAttenborough

>>GingerbreadHouses 1862 points (2369|507)

Hello, Sir David!

I remember feeling absolutely heartbroken watching the elephant calf die in Africa. What has been your most distressing/upsetting moment in your career?

>>IamDavidAttenborough 3053 (4296|1243)

Seeing chimpanzees kill monkeys, they do this to eat them. They chase them, set an ambush, catch them, and tear them apart.

>>twojaguars 2448 (3123|675)

First of all, I want to give you a sincere 'thank you' for showing me incredible scenes from the world I live in that I never would have seen otherwise.

Okay, here's my question: In all your time of shooting nature programs, what is the most *human* thing you have ever witnessed an animal do?

Thanks!

>> IamDavidAttenborough 4591(7757|3166)

A chimpanzee does in fact tell lies. If you can believe that. Also, when some Colobus monkeys find a very precious piece of food, it calls the alarm call that it would make if a snake were to arrive, and all the other monkeys run away and *it* gets the food.

>>hansjens47 1684 (2053|369)

Thanks for your amazing work all of the years. Your voice is synonymous with naturalism documentary. If you could deliver just one message to the generation that's currently growing up, anything at all, what would you focus on?

>> IamDavidAttenborough 3863 (5767|1904)

Cherish the natural world, because you're a part of it and you depend on it.

Bernie Sanders

2715 points (12947|10232) I am Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) -- AMA
Submitted on Mon Dec 16 20:44:48 2014 UTC by SenSanders

>>mattmccarty 1171 (1425|254)

As one of the few who did not vote for the Patriot Act, how do you feel about the recent public outcry over the NSA and spying from the Snowden leaks. Do you feel we could pass legislation to overturn some of the things in the Patriot Act?

>>SenSanders 2478 (3856|1378)

Not voting for the USA Patriot Act was one of the better votes that I've ever cast. In my view, the NSA is out of control and is very clearly acting in an unconstitutional manner. Terrorism remains a serious issue and we must do all that we can to protect the American people, but we don't have to do it through a massive invasion of privacy rights or undermining the constitutional rights of the American people. I am going to be working as hard as I can to pass the strongest legislation possible to end the abuses of the NSA and other intelligence agencies. If we are a "free country," then we cannot have the U.S. government, or for that matter the private sector, invading the privacy rights or our citizens.

>>FreeCollin 253 (303|50)

Do you see Obamacare as a "first step" or as a solution?

>>SenSanders 927 (1183|256)

The bottom line is that our current health care system is dysfunctional. We spend almost twice as much per person on health care as do the people of any other nation despite the fact that over 40 million Americans have no health insurance and many more are under insured. I voted for the Affordable Care Act because it will provide health insurance to millions more Americans and ends the obscenity of "pre-existing conditions among other attributes. I also managed to get into that bill \$11 billion to create hundreds of new community health centers throughout the country. Having said that, it is my strong view that the United States has to join the rest of the industrialized world and move toward a Medicare-for-all, single-payer system which guarantees health care as a right. I have introduced legislation to do just that.

Potato Scientist

2503 points (9835|7332) IamA potato scientist, AMA!

Submitted on Fri Feb 7 05:53:01 2014 UTC by amandeux

>>aurora69 322 (384|62)

Potatoes have played a huge role in human history. Where do you see potatoes in the future, socially and literally?

>>amandeux 421 (506|85)

As we face a growing population (a projected 9 billion by 2050), crops like potato will continue to be important in terms of food security because they are so calorie dense.

>> Dustin- 781 (932|151)

How did you even get into this field in the first place?

>>amandeux 790 (946|156)

I was studying plant nutrition and water quality and the potato producing areas in Florida have a lot of issues with nitrate in the groundwater.

>>thisbobstu 242 (288|46)

Does anyone really know the difference between sweet potatoes and yams?

>>amandeux 446 (507|61)

They're two different species!

The AMAs here exemplify how a network of strangers is able to have direct contact with experts who then share their personal and specialized knowledges from vocational and lived experience. David Attenborough's lifelong career as a naturalist and documentarian gives him enough insight to respond to a stranger's relevant question about animals displaying human behavior with a fascinating fact about Colobus monkeys. Both the question and answer are framed and performed in a way that is very well received due to the high number of points each response accumulates. It's remarkable how we can tap into the personal reality as well as the expertise of someone as renowned as Attenborough when technology opens a doorway to public inquiry. In this discursive cyberspace platform, people are able to pass on messages which carry personal meaning such as Attenborough's response to u/hansjens47 on telling the next generation to "cherish the natural world."

The AMA is a unique platform of discursive cyberspace because of how reflexive it is in decentering traditional methods of conversation. Take for example the AMA with Bernie Sanders, the Independent Senator from Vermont, and how an Internet question-response exchange completely breaks down the institution of formality; technology allows the Senator to have direct contact with his constituency, his critics and his fans who can ask questions about his political stances and policy choices in the past. This can reorganize conceptions over representation when public access to politics can become personalized. Such is the case with his answer to u/mattmccarty over his question about NSA violations of civil liberties; Senator Sanders believes that we should not undermine or abuse our privacy rights for a matter of state

security and this is the explanation he gives for abstaining from voting the Patriot Act. A discursive space like reddit which archives these responses can be used to hold politicians accountable for delivering on their promises and staying consistent to what they preach.

The third AMA is of somebody who is not famous, a self-identified potato scientist. Although her position is something more mundane compared to Sanders and Attenborough, her career still fascinates some people and her expertise as both a redditor and a potato scientist allows her to perform a well received answer that where she distinguishes yams and sweet potatoes as different species. This third AMA shows how human curiosity, individualized specialty and the modern platform of sharing have allowed an audience of strangers to not only learn but interact with a person who finds some meaning in her career. Even as a regular person, this potato scientist finds an audience to make contact with not only because of her individualized effort to share an aspect of her life, but the audience's individualized curiosities which come together as a network to bring this person into visibility.

Local Characters

The network of reddit is a host to some famous local characters as well. These characters include local experts such as scientists, artists, and even doctors who have made their account name known for their expertise. Other characters include novelty accounts which are accounts which have creative names and often post responses which reflect their name. In this paper I will talk about two characters, reddit's local biologist u/Unidan^{xvii} and the novelty artist u/Shitty_Watercolour.^{xviii} These two are consistently active users and are fairly well-recognized in the reddit network due to their contributions which display their specialties and expertise as redditors.

To contextualize the infamy and expertise of u/Unidan, I will discuss a particular post on r/ExplainlikeIAmA, a subreddit which is dedicated to having users perform an explanation while pretending to be someone else, usually for comical effect. In this post, u/DangerMacAwesome requests a performance from other users to mimic an increasingly drunk u/Unidan to explain some facts about a fascinating animal, and the actual u/Unidan responds and takes on this request by pretending to be himself:

u/Unidan

2188 (4127|1939) Explain what's cool about an animal of your choosing like you are an enthusiastic /u/unidan who is becoming increasingly drunk.^{xix}

Submitted Thu Feb 20 03:26:26 by DangerMacAwesome

>>Unidan 3954 (20410|16456)

Biologist here!

Camels seem pretty ordinary, but they're actually quite incredible! Camels have some of the best adaptations to desert life you could imagine. For instance, look at their mouths. They have leathery mouths with soft protrusions^{xx} which allow them to easily chew up desert vegetation which may be quite dry and prickly!

Their feet are another matter completely. The huge pads on their feet allow them to get better traction in the sand while other animals flounder about in the difficult terrain!

Nnow another thing they do is the drink water, right? Of course! A camel can't drink water for such a long time, it'll stound you! You could watcha cwatch a camel drink for an entire *hour* sometimes. Whats relly amazsing about them is that thtey're utilizing the specific heat of water to regulate* their body temperature and control against the flucations of temperature!

if youd ont' avhe water in teh camel then whats the point, i 'm just saying that if you were to have the camal and it s really thirsty then the flucations are going to be a lot bigger.

also the humps^{xxi} aren't water its just fat that gets metabolized but that gets water

i got spit at by a llama once i tried to give it an apple

In this specific performance by u/Unidan, not only does he provide his specialized knowledge as a biologist on camels which includes links to proof and pictures that verify facts on their leathery mouths and heat regulation, he also writes in a way that suggests he is getting progressively drunker to fulfill the request. Although the case of having a question on

r/ExplainlikeIAmA answered by the actual person that is prompted for pretending is unusual, u/Unidan still does a flawless and comedic job pretending to be a gradually more intoxicated version of himself which goes to show how that the name u/Unidan has authority in a discursive space like reddit and that identity effectively expressed through performance in cyberspace.

The second person I will be writing about is u/Shitty_Watercolour, an interesting character on reddit who comments on posts with relevant watercolor paintings. u/Shitty_Watercolour usually responds to a picture or a particular situation that another user posts or comments on by making his own quirky rendition in watercolor format. The following are some examples of his artwork and their contexts:

u/Shitty_WaterColour

7930 points (41738|33808) I am Sir David Attenborough, I'm on reddit, AMA.^{xxii}
Submitted on Wed Jan 8 20:48:23 2014 UTC by IamDavidAttenborough

>>Shitty_Watercolour 5344 (13907|8563)

Welcome to reddit, Sir David Attenborough!
<http://i.imgur.com/gPjQ22r.jpg>^{xxiii}

4872 points (60449|55577) My friend went diving in Australia and caught this priceless photo.^{xxiv}
Submitted on Fri Nov 15 15:53:18 2013 UTC by Sick_Nerd_Baller

>>Shitty_Watercolour 2397 (4165|1768)

<http://i.imgur.com/KymzSRq.jpg>^{xxv}

>>Sick_Nerd_Baller 948 (1185|237)

Wow awesome!
Given that it is his birthday today, this will be a great present! Thank you :)

2298 points (8065|5769) What is the craziest hazing/initiation-ritual into a club or organization that you've experienced first- or second-hand?^{xxvi}
Submitted on Sat Feb 15 14:44:42 2014 UTC by ImaginalComponent

>>Diredoe 2966 (6973|4007)

My first job was as a cashier in a small family-owned grocery store. Apparently, the stock boys had a tradition that went back years where they'd tell the new guy that one of his jobs is to shake up the Italian

dressing bottles every couple hours. It makes them look better, after all! The owners were in on it, so they'd give them shit for it.

>>radj06 1051 (1386|335)

My favorite was making the new guy mop up vegetable oil of the floor with cold water.

>>Potato_Tots 1057 (1408|351)

My boyfriend said at his job their favorite was making the new guy mop the freezer floor.

>>Shitty_Watercolour 2096 (3394|1298)

I painted the moment they found him
<http://i.imgur.com/kFmhJRG.jpg>^{xxvii}

All of these comments by u/Shitty_Watercolour are links to his paintings. His comment in David Attenborough's AMA links us to a watercolor painting of Sir David Attenborough who is surrounded by a plethora of happy animals, including an animated reddit alien icon with the text "Welcome to reddit" at the center. u/Sick_Nerd_Baller shares us photo of his friend making a cross-eyed look while scuba diving next to a massive Napoleon Wrasse, a fish with funny looking eyes. u/Shitty_Watercolour makes his own rendition of this photo in the form of a water color painting and shares it in the thread. The third u/Shitty_Watercolour painting is from a post that discusses initiation rituals and practical jokes towards new members of an organization or a job and after a chain of anecdotes which involve pranking stock boys and manual laborers, u/Shitty_Watercolour manifests u/Potato_Tots story from his imagination to a painting of frozen man being found with a mop in a freezer.

As a local character, u/Shitty_Watercolour has clout and a consistent audience to his artwork because the recognition of his name almost ensures that his relevant paintings become voted to high visibility. The novelty of u/Shitty_Watercolour's shows us the individualization of a platform like reddit where the person behind the account is able to do something creative and fun and perform that through an online persona that they wish to share with the world.

u/Shitty_Watercolour is not limited to posting only his paintings because he can be active in other spaces and through other methods on reddit as well, but the fact that he can claim a name for himself, draw inspiration from discursive cyberspace, and then share the products of his inspiration is quite amazing.

Poor Performances and the in Authentic

Not all performances are well received on reddit; there are some who fake authenticity of an anecdote or situation, and there are others who miss the mark with retrograde or nonsensical comments which have little relevance or context. This is not to say that there is not a space for the retrograde, because there are subreddits dedicated to humor based on bad taste as well, but to note how the voting filter suggests an emerging consensus in a subreddit when the like-minded people who are networked to a particular subreddit have the knowledge and expertise to challenge invalid claims. The open-ended nature of reditts voting filter shows it is responsive to different turns and avenues of discourse. In this section, I will be talking discussing two specific subreddits which are dedicated to highlighting these poor performances both on reddit and everyday life, r/ cringe and r/cringepics. These two subreddits contain a variety of content and host uncomfortably awkward pictures, videos and textual documents like screenshots of people making illegitimate claims on social media platforms like reddit and Facebook. These two spaces are interesting because they seem to be a celebration of the shared discomfort of something hard to watch. This is fascinating because discursive cyberspace even makes a place ridiculing mistakes but also concerning because tone of the comments often tread the fine line of bullying. Nevertheless, surveillance is evolving where gaffes and social missteps are becoming easily recorded.

r/cringepics

5160 (9087|3927) The most private thing you are willing to admit^{xxviii}
 Submitted on Sep 10 20:31:27 2013 UTC by theskabus

>>bornrevolution 1224 (1482|258)

I've always thought of myself as a sex crawl space

The preceding post links us to a screenshot of a picture of a man and his answer to the profile question “The most private thing you are willing to admit” on the online dating platform okcupid. His answer is “i am a sex attic.” The extreme awkwardness of his answer makes it a highly successful post in a cyberspace like r/cringe, a fascinating space to imagine because it is a space that allows for the collective glorifying and celebration of this man’s social misstep. The comment by u/bornrevolution which is indicated with high reception due to its four digit point count shows how there is space for creativity on such discursive platforms and a witty comment can be understood as a textual performance. One should also consider how a reaction of disgust like cringing can become rendered consumable.

r/cringe

The following is a post on r/cringe which links us to a video of conservative political pundit Ann Coulter making a fool of herself on the HBO talk show *Real Talk with Bill Maher*:

2701 (3984|1283) Political genius Ann Coulter thinks America bombed Egypt, finds out we didn't and tries to save herself. - [0:57]^{xxix}
 Submitted on Apr 22 19:43:45 2013 UTC by [deleted]^{xxx}

Coulter brings up the issue of “Libya and Egypt” on the talk show panel and tries to critique the Obama administration for “intervening” in these two countries for the sake of “regime change.” When the panel clarifies that Coulter means military intervention in Egypt when she says “dropping bombs” and “we were threatening that’s why Mubarak left”, they quickly confirm that the U.S. has not intervened in Egypt. This exposure of Coulter’s misinformation on U.S.

foreign policy in Egypt can be important because as a political pundit, Coulter is someone who is supposed to be an expert but is clearly not doing a very good job on it. Coulter's poor performance on television is documented and the recording of that particular moment challenges her by undermining the validity of her information but also showing that her knowledges are more inclined to pandering to rhetoric rather than engaging in actual debate. There have always been spaces to critique public figures e.g. newspaper editorials, but a cyberspace like reddit and other platforms of Internet commentary enable a particularly reflexive kind of critique that allows the public to say and read things that may be omitted by the traditional filters of the mainstream.

Extremes of Specialization

Specialized expertise can be manipulated for ends other than self-representation. We should not overlook platforms like reddit as a space without cause for concern because with new technologies, there are new risks. An area of concern I want to direct attention to is the extremes of specialization, particularly the sfwporn network^{xxxii} (safe for work) which is a collection of subreddits curated by u/kjoneslol. This collection exemplifies how any topical interest from nature to architecture can be fetishized for consumption. The term porn in this collection refers to how this network usually features pictures and content which are impossibly beautiful, incredibly iconic, or simply fantastical. The following are some examples:

r/historyporn

3559 points (10974 7415) U.S. chess prodigy, Bobby Fisher, playing 50 opponents simultaneously at his Hollywood hotel on 12 April 1964. He won 47, lost 1 and drew 2. [1025x736]^{xxxii}

Submitted on Wed Dec 11 15:25:51 2013 UTC by usernamemememe

r/earthporn

4068 points (10584|6516) Glow Worm Cave in Waitomo, New Zealand [671x473]^{xxxiii}

Submitted on May 8 16:15:15 2013 UTC by forevergone

r/quotesporn

4379 points (15391|11012) "Each Javelin round costs \$80000,..." [748x500]^{xxxiv}
 Submitted on Oct 2 00:25:06 2013 UTC by Silent3sniper

The first picture on r/historyporn is a black and white photograph of a young Bobby Fisher who is standing at the center of a room and is surrounded by tables full of chess boards and competitors waiting for Fisher to make his round to them. Every competitor but Fisher has a serious contemplative look on their face and is focusing intensely on their board. This picture is not a document of everyday life but rather is a document that romanticizes a particular moment in history and carries with it an iconographic weight.

The second picture on r/earthporn shows a majestic glow worm cave that is illuminated in the dark by beautiful blue phosphorous spots. The clean water that flows down this cave path and the starry look of the cave seems to suggest a natural purity. I'm not saying that a cave like this does not exist, but that it is presented in such a way that is totally designed for consumption, one must wonder on how a space like reddit can be coopted for marketing.

The third picture on r/quotesporn is a quote by Sebastian Junger that is superimposed on an image of a soldier firing a rocket-like weapon. The quote by Junger reads: "Each Javelin costs \$80000, and the idea that it's fired by a guy who doesn't make that in a year at a guy who doesn't make that in a lifetime is somehow so outrageous it almost makes the war seem winnable." This quote by Junger weighs heavily on the mind because it contextualizes the materiality of war and how excessive militancy often blinds practicality; when we spend more money on the weapons than we pay soldiers for the sake of ending lives that are already marginal, then it shows how inequality is not a priority in the military-industrial complex.

Although this quote is very insightful, it is presented in an artificial way meant as a substitute for critical knowledge on the mechanisms of military and politics.

Although the sfwporn network is quite amazing in the documentation of the ideal, we must recognize how this space can potentially distort reality by altering expectations and interpretation. What are the effects when a space is made for the consumption of the highest aesthetic form of a particular subject matter? And what ways are these manipulated for individual or corporate gain? And is that necessarily problematic? The contrived nature of this collection of subreddits is concerning because this can become a very emergent attitude in connection with the loss of traditional community when the intent of positive receptivity becomes a goal in these fragmented networks. The point is that although discursive cyberspace can bring in the perspective of the biographical everyday life, it can also present artificial documents which stray far from reality.

Nevertheless, is something of theoretical value here when reddit acts as a space for collecting reflexive discourse. A social consequence of reflexivity in these online cyberspaces is that it takes away from the traditional authority of mainstream information and discussion by providing alternatives sources which are upheld through individualized efforts of verification. The notion of the “mainstream” is changing when local sources of information, as well as sites of consumption can become directly accessible. The next chapter will engage some other social consequences of reflexive cyberspace, particularly how people can be influenced and mobilized through a connected bond in a space like reddit.

Chapter 3: Social Consequences and Collective Mobilization

Now that we have a grasp on what reddit is in the everyday, as a platform of sharing anything from sentiment to artwork, we have to ask about the physicality of such a space. What are the material effects and the physical returns of the influence of such a platform and in what ways can it mobilize this individualized collectivity or change individual behavior? In this chapter I will talk about how the reddit network can be a source of social capital, particularly in context to fundraising and charity. I will also discuss the influence this connecting has on self-transformation as a network like reddit not only provide sources of expertise, but also a matrix of affective support; I will be specifically focusing on the space r/progresspics, a subreddit dedicated towards fitness where the users post their “progress pictures” of their bodily transformation. This chapter answers directly to the question of “so, what?” By understanding the materiality and physical change that an anonymous network platform like reddit can produce, there is a reflexive challenge to reconceptualize collectivity by taking into consideration a new individualized mode of connecting.

Fundraising and Charity

Omari

The following thread links us to a picture of a Kenyan man, Omari, a worker at the Faraja Orphanage. In this picture Omari has a large gash on his face that is stitched up and u/TheLake who makes this post explains in the title that Omari is hacked in the face by a machete while protecting the orphanage from robbers:

5611 points (45299|39688) Meet Omari. Two days ago he returned from the hospital after being hacked in the face by a machete defending an orphanage of 35 children by himself. Think we could raise the \$2,000 needed for the remainder of the cement/barbed wire wall to keep both him and the children safe?^{xxxv}

Submitted on Fri Jan 27 00:33:56 2012 UTC by TheLake

>>TheLake 2087 (5136|3049)

As of now, the best way to donate is through www.longonoteducation.org. We will assume that any donation made between now and next week was meant for the **Faraja Orphanage** in Ngong, Kenya.^{xxxvi}

>>JanetBLV 1087 (1571|484)

OP, I worked in Faraja with Omari, Momma Mora and the wonderful children. I can confirm with photos of Omari, Momma Mora, and the children and I if you message me. Its a great surprise to find this on Reddit, I've recently spoken with Omari via facebook -- I would love to help you in any other way possible. We have a chain of previous Faraja volunteers -- perhaps you're there and we've never met? EDIT: OP, I can confirm to you here: Faraja/Omari^{xxxvii}

The comment by u/JanetBLV verifies Omari and the Faraja Orphanage's existence to give this post validity; u/JanetBLV confirms the truth of this post by linking her own picture with Omari from the past. In the comment u/TheLake makes in his own thread, he links us to a website that will accept donations for the Faraja Orphanage to meet the goal of \$2000. That comment also has numerous edits (I omitted them in the above text) which are generally status updates to reddit on the amount being raised hourly. The last edit on that comment, edit #12 reads: "Who am I kidding I couldn't sleep if I tried. We hit the \$50,000 mark! I know by now I sound like a broken record, but thank you Reddit, sincerely."^{xxxviii} In a matter of a couple of hours, reddit manages to raise much more than stated goal. The reddit network shares the story of Omari's bravery and the Faraja Orphanage's struggle and the users who are moved by it make an individualized choice of donating, a choice that has a collective consequence in making a massive difference for Omari and Faraja.

u/TheLake follows up on this story with two more posts. The first post is three weeks later and shows the completed wall which protects Faraja along with the children and Omari smiling in front of it:

5060 points (35409 | 30349) reddit, Look at the Wall YOU built in Kenya! Updated pic from Omari and the Faraja Children's Orphanage^{xxxix}

Submitted on Fri Feb 17 02:32:53 2012 UTC by TheLake

The capitalized “YOU” in u/TheLake’s post and the sharing of the newly built wall along with the people it protects indicates reddit as a material network, full of real people whose choices have real impact such as raising money for an underfunded orphanage in Kenya. The other is a status update one year later which tells us that the total amount made by the fundraiser at over \$80,000 and links us to a picture of a smiling Omari:

3012 points (17453 | 14441) Reddit, one year ago today you donated more than \$80,000 to Faraja Children’s Home after Omari took a machete to the face defending the orphanage from intruders. I figured you might like to know just how much of a difference you have made in the lives of the children he was protecting.^{xli}

Submitted on Sat Jan 26 18:59:21 2013 UTC by TheLake

In a comment in this one year update thread, u/TheLake shows reddit the total money raised for Faraja at \$80000 and what the orphanage has done with the money.^{xli} The following is an excerpt from this comment which lists how the funds have improved these children’s lives along with photographic proof that is linked to the text:

- Built the security wall (no attempts by thieves have been made since).
- Hired additional staff: a grounds man/watchman, and a chef.
- Purchased two milking cows to provide milk for the kids and generate additional income.
- Constructed a large dining room table, allowing the kids to eat together inside and off of the ground.
- Purchased bunk beds for all of the children; they don’t have to sleep on the ground anymore!
- Constructed a playground for the kids to play on, which they absolutely love.
- Introduced a new, well-balanced menu that includes fruits, vegetables, beef, and fish.
- Purchased two large water tanks that collect rainwater in an effort to reduce the monthly water bill.
- Had a huge Christmas celebration; each child received new shoes, clothes, a school backpack, school supplies, candy, and a water bottle.
- Purchased a washing machine which means the kids and staff no longer have to wash clothes by hand, saving them countless hours of work everyday.
- Field trips to Ngong Hills, the Monkey Park, Giraffe Center , and Elephant Orphanage .
- “Faraja Gives Back” community service projects.
- We are currently starting a Daycare Center that will generate income.
- Purchased hearing aids for one of the children, Nancy. This meant a lot to both Nancy and Momma Moraa; the hearing aids are a symbol of what they could never have imagined being able to afford one year ago, but now can.
- We have been able to send Momma Moraa back to school, to workshops, and to conferences to improve as a Director and make Faraja the best home possible.

This list along with the photographic evidence show how the money raised by reddit is translated into material objects which carry affective meaning. The returns of reddit's charity is materialized into more than just a wall because the money has made a huge difference for Faraja by guaranteeing security, improving health and conditions of living, and providing leisure and life experience for the underprivileged children. u/TheLake also names the lives reddit has impacted such as Nancy, whose hearing aids would not have been affordable a year earlier. Nancy is now able to hear, and the Faraja community is doing great due to the collective action mobilized by reddit.

Celebrities

Recently, reddit has been very popular with celebrities and persons of influence who usually try raise awareness for a particular charity they're supporting with AMA discussions. I will be focusing on a particular celebrity, the Rap Artist Snoop Lion, formerly known as Snoop Dogg, and the way he mobilizes reddit to garner support for his afterschool football program, the Snoop Youth Football League. The following is a post where Snoop asks reddit for love anecdotes in celebration of Valentine's Day because he will read the highest voted stories as part of his campaign to raise funds for his program:

2763 points (19830|17067) Hey This is Snoop and I wanna be real for a minute give my fam something special!!!^{xlii}
Submitted on Tue Feb 11 22:38:47 2014 UTC by Here_Comes_The_King

>>Waddup fam, I wanna to tell yall im sorry for not doin tha Xmas story vids, got wild on tour in Australia after tha holidays. reddit is my fam n dont want to let u down! since vday is comin up, i wanna show u some love n post a new vid. I wanna hear ur best love stories to ur loved ones or to ur love of tha trees! ill record of a vid of my favorite one n ill throw in somethin special! lets hear tha best one!

and you know i love these kids of tha SYFL, n i want to keep showin them support! help me help these kids by donatin to my campaign n 1 of u could be my intern for a day in LA!! <http://prizeo.com/snoop>

[Update] happy vday yall!! read my favorite story frm tha thread on this video, with a little surprise at tha end! thanx for all tha support of tha SYFL! <http://youtu.be/R-q4e4wBIRo>^{xliii}

>>OprahNoodlementra 3013 (6492|3474)

In college there was a party in my dorm and a girl, who I thought was out of my league, drunkenly fell asleep next to me in my bed. I woke up in a puddle of her urine. After we both broke into laughter we changed our clothes. Then we got pizza. Three weeks later we started dating. Since then we've both graduated and moved in together. It was love at first piss.

In his update, Snoop reads the words of u/OprahNoodlementra in a vocalized performance of this user's personal anecdote. u/OprahNoodlementra's story is unusual but that probably adds to its good reception because the oddity of the anecdote where u/OprahNoodlementra sums up the meeting of his significant other as "love at first piss" is comedic but also unique. The strangeness of u/OprahNoodlementra's story goes to show that this user has to have some writing expertise in order to perform this story in a solid text. This thread is not only an example of how crucial individualized performance is on a space like reddit, but also how personal sharing can be a strategy for popular support when we connect celebrities like Snoop to everyday people and have him read out loud funny stories for the purpose of raising funds for his charity.

r/RandomActsOfPizza

In dialogue with the notion of material mobilization, I will discuss r/RandomActsOfPizza a quirky subreddit that brings charity back to the everyday and steps away from the grandness of the previous two examples. This particular subreddit features the slogan "the power of kindness, one pizza at a time" because this space is dedicated to people making requests for pizzas. Whether the requesters are broke and cannot afford any food, or are simply craving pizza, this network materializes pizzas for people requesting them. Posters on this subreddit usually give a brief background on their situation, why they are requesting food and where in the U.S. they are located. If a redditor is moved by their story then he sends the requester a private message to work out the logistics of getting them a pizza. The following are two

examples of successful posts on r/RandomActsOfPizza where the requester ends up getting a pizza from another redditor:

44 points (53|9) My kids are tired of beans and rice.^{xliv}
 Submitted on Jan 5 22:47:50 2014 UTC by donovanm31

>>I would love to serve a hot pizza to my kids for dinner tonight. We are totally out of everything I mean everything until the 9th. Then foodstamps will be here. I live on disability so money's always tight. This would be so helpful. Thank you. We live in Willits CA Papa Murphys is the only major pizza chain.

>> LAnightowl 9 (9|0)

I just stumbled upon this subreddit and although I definitely missed the window for pizza for dinner tonight, how about tomorrow night? I would love to send you and your kids a pizza! Message me your address?

>> donovanm31 5 (5|0)

I will thank you so much.

22 points (39|12) [request] girlfriend spent last of her money to surprise me with visit at school across country. I'm poor too so she's had to eat Ramen all weekend, and I want to treat her to a nice dinner before she goes home tonight.^{xlv}

Submitted on Feb 9 23:35:35 2014 UTC by Letthisbethelastone

>>I really love her and I want to be able to surprise her with a nice last meal before she goes home. ill be sure to pay it forward when i land a job

>>Jedimastert 12 (12|0)

Hey bro, I feel you. PM me your email and preferred pizza joint so I can hook you up.

>>Letthisbethelastone 13 (13|0)

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

Both of these posts are tagged with “pizza received” to indicate that the user has their request fulfilled. What’s interesting is that both these posts have a very low number of karma points, yet they are still able to connect with an individual that empathizes with their story in the network of reddit who is willing to spend some money to buy them a pizza.

On April 19th 2013, the Boston Police Department shut down the city for a manhunt of the suspects behind the Boston Marathon bombing four days beforehand. A redditor makes a

request on r/RandomActsofPizza for users to send pizzas to the different police stations in Boston as an act of appreciation for the BPD's hard work:

1367 points (1996|629) Random Act of Pizza for the Boston PD, in recognition of their hard in work capturing the Boston Bomber^{xlvi}

Submitted Apr 20 00:59:27 2013 UTC by workman161

A moderator of this subreddit, u/menmybabies, makes a comment^{xlvii} in this thread that links each Boston police station's location, each station's contact information and pizza locations within the delivery area, a comment which shows considerable logistical expertise. Within a few hours, officers from the Boston Police Department post on r/Boston expressing their gratitude:

3279 points (13661|10382) Thank you for the pizzas REDDIT, from BPD.^{xlviii}

Submitted on Sat Apr 20 16:13:34 2013 UTC by BPD_MURICA

>>Your kind gesture of sending us pizza is greatly appreciated!
none of us really use reddit so hopefully this is posted in the right place.
Thank you again!!

>>BPD_MURICA 1326 (1644|318)
Thank you REDDIT!!!! From the BPD^{xlix}

The above comment made by u/BPD_MURICA in his own thread links us to a picture of an officer's uniform with the Boston city seal and a dominos pizza box with instructions that read "THANK YOU BOSTON PD! – REDDIT.COM BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT." u/BPD_MURICA posts two more pictures in the thread which shows the address of the police station on the pizza box and a police badge to verify they are actually the Boston police.

Networks have material potential when something like reddit is able to mobilize its connections to produce something like a wall for an underfunded Kenyan orphanage or pizzas for people who are hungry. We have to rethink collectivity not as decaying in the face of individualization, but as fundamentally changing. Networks are becoming the dominant mode of social bonds and as communication technology accelerates in modernization; not only can

we represent ourselves and interpret others better, we can also materially impact others' lives if enough collective consensus motivates individual action.

Changing Behavior: Self-transformation and r/progresspics

The subreddit r/progresspics is an interesting discursive space that exemplifies how affective support can become networked as well. The bodily transformations of people who post in this space is a physical embodiment of their lifestyle change and often this change inspires and is inspired by those who share this network. The following posts show how the people who post their transformations often include their workout programs and diet routines in a comment on their thread, but in a way that gives it a personal touch:

958 points (1147|189) M/23/5'10" [370lbs > 175lbs] 3 years and 200lbs gone!
Submitted on Sat Feb 15 20:39:42 2014 UTC by DTG09

>>Whocifer 6 (8|2)

Great job, buddy! That's an incredible loss. I'm intrigued by your cardio routine, how did you come up with it? I'm attempting to lose weight, lost about 40lbs so far (335 > 295) feels good to be below 300 but I'm still a long way out. Any tips for staying motivated?

>>DTG09 19 (22|3)

Thank you!

My cardio routine was something I kind of worked in to. At first I walked ALL the time, if that's all you can physically do then there's nothing wrong with it! Then I eventually started to walk 9 minutes and then sprint for 1 minute... 6 times equaling an hour. My body got accustomed to that so I started by adding 1 minute of jogging into those 9 minutes. Which left me with 4 minutes walking, 1 minute jogging, 4 minutes walking, last minute sprinting. It's what I've been doing the last year to year and a half, it continues to be a pain in the ass workout but it's enjoyable so I plan on keeping it this way for the foreseeable future.

Staying motivated? Measure your progress in all forms; weight, measurements, mirror, and exercise milestones. If you're putting in the work, there will always be something you can go to for motivation. Maybe you went a little harder on the treadmill last time around or you're noticing your face is getting thinner. Always search out your improvements and use them to keep you motivated. That's the key imo.

2502 points (3901|1399) F/18/5'2" [220lbs > 150lbs = 70lbs] 8 months ago I didn't want to start because it would take "too long". For the first time ever I love myself and what I'm becoming.ⁱⁱ

Submitted on Sat Feb 1 01:21:18 2014 UTC by Callmemaybelol

>>RachellsSoGreat 8 (12|4)

Wow! That's my exact starting weight and what I'm trying to get to. What did you do?

>>Callmemaybelol 28 (39|11)

I'd like to lose another 15lbs or so since I'm so short haha.

I know this is what everyone says, but I just counted my calories on Myfitnesspal and tried to exercise more often. I believe what made calorie counting work was that I could actually eat anything I wanted AS LONG AS I stayed within my goal. That way I wasn't burning myself out by cutting things I was so used to eating. Eventually I started leaning towards healthier choices, but I still had a couple cookies and ice cream here and there.

It might seem hard at first, but it's soooo worth it! Making small lifestyle changes make it that much more manageable and you're more likely to stick to those changes.

Good luck, you can do it!

1189 points (1416|227) M/23/5'11" [455lbs > 390lbs = 65lbs] ~ 10 Months - Finally starting to feel human (190 to go)ⁱⁱⁱ
Submitted on Tue Feb 4 16:26:18 2014 UTC by eyeohe

>>shortdork27 128 (142|14)

You're always human. Now you're just becoming a healthier human! Keep up the good work!

>>eyeohe 17(19|2)

I appreciate that, thank you.

>>monkeyboy351 12(18|6)

Very solid progress man!

I'm always curious to see how others are accomplishing their goals and how people are staying motivated - So how do you keep focused on your goals and stay motivated? (if you don't mind me asking)

>>eyeohe 8 (10|2)

Thank you! I cut off all sugar and caffeine and stopped going out to eat. During the summer I hiked around a local lake and rewarded myself with an evening of fishing. Right now I'm working out every day at the gym and playing basketball once a week with coworkers... although I'm not too good lol. Other than that I'm only eating when I'm hungry and I stop when I'm full. I recently started ketosis, so I'm looking forward to the results of that too. Also, metric tons of water.

The picture u/DTG09 posts show that his weight loss journey has brought him to be less than half his former self. Another user on r/progresspics, u/Whocifer, comments on his thread for advice and motivation and this allows u/DTG09 to share his personalized running program and his particular method of staying motivated which is to "measure your progress in all forms." u/RachelIsSoGreat is inspired by u/Callmemaybe and has a similar starting weight and goal, so she asks her for advice on how she did it. u/Callmemaybe responds by telling her how much of her weight loss is done through calorie counting and that food choice is not so much of an issue as long as she stays within her goals. Nevertheless, she explains how the process of making a

lifestyle change also helped her lean toward healthier choices. u/eyeohe is a man who lost a lot of weight but still has quite a long way to go before reaching his goal; he shares his story with u/monkeyboy351 on how he stays motivated which includes overhauling his diet, increasing his general physical activity, and drinking lots of water. The detail of each of these individuals' lifestyle change shows how personalized and informative this sharing experience is, not to mention the importance of personal expertise in understanding what works for their body, how to stay motivated and the importance of tracking progress.

A general trend in r/progresspics is that people post the duration of their transformation. Posting the time it takes to change oneself emphasizes a human element that suggests progress and better health as a lifestyle change. These posts are documents which act as self-reminders on how far one has gone and how the journey is never ending. When u/eyeohe says he is "finally starting to feel human" and u/Callmemaybelol says "for the first time ever I love myself and what I am becoming," their posts suggest that they have made progress in their emotional health as well. Not only does a space like r/progresspics provide affective emotional support and a site of motivation, it also informs others of practical applications that can be done to physically transform oneself. The physical change of those who post on r/progresspics is an example of the materiality that a discursive space like reddit can foster, because the posters' transformation are literal embodiments of how a network of support and expert information can inspire and develop personal change.

Conclusion

In this paper I have connected the reader to numerous textual performances which uses the very own words and pictures of people who tell stories about their own life. This is reflexive because the practice of sharing the everyday with strangers online is profoundly individualizing in terms of the pressures on performance and personal knowledge, in addition to considering the proliferation of choices on what information and knowledges to consume. These online discursive spaces network us to an emerging collective consensus over specific topics, especially when the design of reddit filters specialty so efficiently to enable the collective recognition of something worthwhile. Open dialogue with strangers changes what collectivity means because these strangers can not only materially mobilize but can also influence the individual's everyday life. Whether through altering epistemological practice by providing alternative sources of knowledge production, or inspiring affective support in the face of taking on a personal challenge, reddit is a highly interactive discursive space that helps us reconceptualize what personal resources mean and where to draw them.

As collectivity is becoming encompassed in the mechanisms of reflexive individualization with the proliferation of networked lifestyles and communications technologies, we must understand that social life is changing. This isn't just to say that previous collective institutions are losing their clout, but also that collective participation becomes a life choice. As connection becomes increasingly unbound and untethered, there are tremendous consequences on how individuals conceive identity as well as how they represent the different aspects of that identity. Identity is fluid and reflexive modernization is directing collectivity to fluid networks of relationships. The widespread consumer adoption of the Internet has heralded a reflexive

change in socialization that not only undermines the foundations of the previous modernity, but continually tends to individualize by making both self and collective identities a choice. Everything becomes more specialized because the pressure to perform in an online space which facilitates these collective networks is dependent on individualized knowledges, life experiences and expertise. A platform like reddit is cutting-edge because of its efficient organization in breaking up discourse into designated cyberspaces, but also due to its communal filter where visibility of knowledge is determined directly by the participants. A space like reddit should not be underestimated because it carries material consequences as a site of affective support, social capital, and alternative knowledges. A space like reddit is just the start to this new mode of collectivity because as technologies continue to modernize in a direction that tends to individualize, we have to make more choices that lets us not only pick and choose our personal identities but our collective allegiances as well.

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Endnotes: reddit links and notes

- i <http://redd.it/1brg0z>
- ii <http://redd.it/1n740x>
- iii <http://www.reddit.com/r/todayilearned/>
- iv <http://www.reddit.com/r/LifeProTips/>
- v <http://www.reddit.com/r/explainlikeimfive/>
- vi <http://redd.it/1mzoux>
- vii <http://redd.it/1bxaa5>
- viii <http://i.imgur.com/ZCQ9V32.jpg>
- ix <http://redd.it/1axu18>
- x <http://redd.it/1s35bo>
- xi <http://redd.it/1rpnt6>
- xii <http://redd.it/1rzs9v>
- xiii <http://redd.it/1rruvu>
- xiv <http://redd.it/1uqlmf>
- xv <http://redd.it/1t174t>
- xvi <http://redd.it/1x92zy>
- xvii <http://www.reddit.com/user/Unidan>
- xviii http://www.reddit.com/user/Shitty_Watercolour
- xix <http://redd.it/1yepde>
- xx <http://i.imgur.com/IJWzRoD.jpg>
- xxi http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/82/2011_Trampeltier_1528.JPG

xxii

http://www.reddit.com/r/IAmA/comments/1uqlmf/i_am_sir_david_attenborough_im_on_reddit_ama/cekp4xm?context=3

xxiii <http://i.imgur.com/gPjQ22r.jpg>

xxiv

www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/1qp3bu/my_friend_went_diving_in_australia_and_caught/cdf2fn?context=3

xxv <http://i.imgur.com/KymzSRq.jpg>

xxvi

http://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/1xze31/what_is_the_craziest_hazinginitiationritual_into/cfg66dn?context=3

xxvii <http://i.imgur.com/kFmhJRG.jpg>

xxviii <http://redd.it/19sl7v>

xxix <http://redd.it/1cvsysz>

xxx The person who submitted this link deleted his/her account but the submission remains permanently archived on r/cringe.

xxxii <http://www.reddit.com/user/kjoneslol/m/sfwpornnetwork>

xxxii <http://redd.it/1smz9v>

xxxiii <http://redd.it/1dxt17>

xxxiv <http://redd.it/1njt3p>

xxxv <http://redd.it/oye34>

xxxvi There are also edits to this comment by TheLake but I omitted them because they were mostly hourly updates on the total money raised. The last edit thanks reddit and states that they made over \$ 50,000 in a couple of days. The full text is in Appendix A.

xxxvii <http://i.imgur.com/LtDAO.jpg>

xxxviii

http://www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/oye34/meet_omari_two_days_ago_he_returned_from_the/c3l10gg

xxxix <http://redd.it/pta3n>

xl <http://redd.it/17brkd>

xli

http://www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/17brkd/reddit_one_year_ago_today_you_donated_more_than/c8418l0

xlii <http://redd.it/1xnjma>

xliii <http://youtu.be/R-q4e4wBIRo>

xliv <http://redd.it/1uhora>

xlv <http://redd.it/1xh0k1>

xlvi <http://redd.it/1cpoe1>

xlvii

http://www.reddit.com/r/RandomActsOfPizza/comments/1cpoe1/random_act_of_pizza_for_the_boston_pd_in/c9itywp

xlviii <http://redd.it/1cqw28>

xlix <http://i.imgur.com/H EhnrM.jpg>

I <http://redd.it/1y08qp>

II <http://redd.it/1wozbn>

III <http://redd.it/1wztwy>

APPENDIX A: Threads and Comments

ii: <http://redd.it/1n740x>

1853 points (5319|3465) - [SERIOUS] Fathers who stepped out on their wife/girlfriend, why did you do it?
Submitted on Thu Sep 26 19:37:05 2013 UTC by TalmidimV

>>First I want to say that there's absolutely no judgement on my part, I'm honestly just curious. My father and I have a good relationship, so I couldn't imagine not having him in my life. Throughout my life I've had family members and friends whose fathers have left them. Again, I'm just curious as to why you left your family.

>>YouarenotLaBoeuf 2390 points (4727|2337)

I married my wife at seventeen. Thinking the child she was bearing was mine. I stayed around until twenty. I loved that baby more than anything else in the whole world, I was putty in her hands but I started to realize that I was only still married to be around my daughter. My wife was insane, jealous beyond belief, abusive (mentally and physically, I have scars from punches) but I couldn't step away because I was so scared of losing the love of that sweet toddler.

Eventually the controlling and the abuse became more than I could take. I was drinking myself to death and depressed beyond belief. I filed for divorce but told her that she and my child could stay because I couldn't put them out like that.

She opted out and moved back with her parents, during the first court visit in our divorce a DNA test was ordered and it came back I wasn't the biological father but instead the man she was cheating on me with was. I didn't care. I loved that baby more than life itself. She was my daughter. I didn't care what a test said.

Now we just finally ended a battle a year later and the Texas court system had decided that since I am not a biological parent I don't deserve any rights and the only visits I get are three weekends a year. Four hours a weekend. I see the baby I love for 12 hours a year.

I spent three years of my life working ridiculous hours to provide for my bum ex wife and my child and in the end I walked away because I knew I had to make the choice to decide if I was going to pretend to be happy with someone who used me and didn't love me or try to make a real life.

>>vjosiah 3085 points (11087|8002)

I was a drug addict. I would constantly abuse in the house and even in front of my young daughter. I would shout and sometimes hit my wife, and sleep on the couch for days at a time. I was a mess. I eventually saw the pain I was causing my family, and left. I didn't want my daughter being raised in a household like that, and couldn't stand seeing my wife so upset, after all she did for me. I'm a few months clean now, and am starting to regain control of my life, and have reconnected with my 5 year old daughter and my wife, who couldn't be happier for me. Who knows, maybe there is a future for our little trio. I hope.

>>SniperOnTheHillside 2167 points (3810|1643)

This is the first story I've seen where the OP claims responsibility for his actions. Hope everything works out for you.

>>Raigeki_ 1954 points (3229|1275)

My Ex-Wife had us living with her whole family.
 I stopped going to school to work a 10\$ an hour job to help pay for things.
 Her family was abusive because I did not contribute enough in their eyes.
 Not abusive to me, abusive to my ex-wife. Behind my back.
 This lead to her hating me. I brought up the idea that her family was causing distress in our relationship but she wouldn't entertain the idea.
 She was so upset she suggested we get a divorce. I agreed. Turns out that was a test, which is messed up but I digress.
 So I had a choice of living in this town by myself no family or friends, or move back to my hometown 2k miles away. I had to ask myself what my daughter would think of it.
 Would she want me staying in a deadbeat job by myself just to see her, or further myself in life to be able to provide things for her later.
 It was a hard choice.

vi: <http://redd.it/1mzoux>

2783 points (4163|1380) - LPT: When dividing up ground beef in Ziploc bags, flatten it out before freezing it. It'll thaw faster when you need it.

Submitted on Mon Sep 23 22:40:44 2013 UTC by Staplebattery

>>I buy ground beef/turkey in bulk and I divide it up into ziploc bags. I always flatten out the ground beef into a sheet within the ziploc bag so that it thaws faster when I need to cook it.

vii: <http://redd.it/1bxaa5>

4108 points (8212|4104) –LPT Result: Someone here suggested taking a power strip while traveling. Now I am an airport hero.

Submitted on Mon Apr 8 16:10:54 2013 UTC by longgoodknight

>> The results and the Original Post. The original post was specifically about power strips in hotel rooms, but as the power strip traveled in my carry on, I was able to make use of it at several airports. The only downside was when I left and four people had to try for the one outlet.

x: <http://redd.it/1s35bo>

3031 (13114|10083) - TIL the US, working with Hanes and Levi's, pressured the Haitian government to block a minimum wage increase. Haitian workers are the lowest-paid in the western hemisphere.

Submitted on Wed Dec 4 16:40:13 2013 UTC by nichaliciaccio

xi: <http://redd.it/1rpnt6>

2201 (16105|13904) – TIL Tupac Shakur's song "Changes" is on the Vatican Playlist.

Submitted on Fri Nov 29 15:15:48 2013 UTC by Jack_Burton_Express

>> staciarin 2337 points (3768|1431)

TIL there's a vatican playlist

xii: <http://redd.it/1rzs9v>

2492 (14451|11959) – TIL in Japan adult diaper sales are about to surpass baby diapers.

Submitted on Tue Dec 3 14:27:08 2013 UTC by ukcup

xiii: <http://redd.it/1rruvu>

1599 (2968|1369) – ELI5: Why BBC has better content and seems more successful than PBS^{lii}?
 Submitted on Sat Nov 30 14:11:07 2013 UTC by Dr_Amkra

>> CommissarAJ 1455 points (1847|392)

One of the BBC's biggest advantages is that they have a much larger operating budget. In the UK, households have to pay for a television license, and a portion of this fee goes to the BBC. Having more money available means you can expand your influence, finance larger productions, and attract greater talent before on screen and behind the stage.

xiv: <http://redd.it/1uqlmf>

7930 points (41738|33808) I am Sir David Attenborough, I'm on reddit, AMA.
 Submitted on Wed Jan 8 20:48:23 2014 UTC by IamDavidAttenborough

>>GingerbreadHouses 1862 points (2369|507)

Hello, Sir David!
 I remember feeling absolutely heartbroken watching the elephant calf die in Africa. What has been your most distressing/upsetting moment in your career?

>>IamDavidAttenborough 3053 (4296|1243)

Seeing chimpanzees kill monkeys, they do this to eat them. They chase them, set an ambush, catch them, and tear them apart.

>>twojaguars 2448 (3123|675)

First of all, I want to give you a sincere 'thank you' for showing me incredible scenes from the world I live in that I never would have seen otherwise.

Okay, here's my question: In all your time of shooting nature programs, what is the most *human* thing you have ever witnessed an animal do?

Thanks!

>> IamDavidAttenborough 4591(7757|3166)

A chimpanzee does in fact tell lies. If you can believe that. Also, when some Colobus monkeys find a very precious piece of food, it calls the alarm call that it would make if a snake were to arrive, and all the other monkeys run away and *it* gets the food.

>>hansjens47 1684 (2053|369)

Thanks for your amazing work all of the years. Your voice is synonymous with naturalism documentary. If you could deliver just one message to the generation that's currently growing up, anything at all, what would you focus on?

>> IamDavidAttenborough 3863 (5767|1904)

Cherish the natural world, because you're a part of it and you depend on it.

xv: <http://redd.it/1t174t>

2715 points (12947|10232) I am Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) -- AMA
Submitted on Mon Dec 16 20:44:48 2014 UTC by SenSanders

>>mattmccarty 1171 (1425|254)

As one of the few who did not vote for the Patriot Act, how do you feel about the recent public outcry over the NSA and spying from the Snowden leaks. Do you feel we could pass legislation to overturn some of the things in the Patriot Act?

>>SenSanders 2478 (3856|1378)

Not voting for the USA Patriot Act was one of the better votes that I've ever cast. In my view, the NSA is out of control and is very clearly acting in an unconstitutional manner. Terrorism remains a serious issue and we must do all that we can to protect the American people, but we don't have to do it through a massive invasion of privacy rights or undermining the constitutional rights of the American people. I am going to be working as hard as I can to pass the strongest legislation possible to end the abuses of the NSA and other intelligence agencies. If we are a "free country," then we cannot have the U.S. government, or for that matter the private sector, invading the privacy rights or our citizens.

>>FreeCollin 253 (303|50)

Do you see Obamacare as a "first step" or as a solution?

>>SenSanders 927 (1183|256)

The bottom line is that our current health care system is dysfunctional. We spend almost twice as much per person on health care as do the people of any other nation despite the fact that over 40 million Americans have no health insurance and many more are under insured. I voted for the Affordable Care Act because it will provide health insurance to millions more Americans and ends the obscenity of "pre-existing conditions among other attributes. I also managed to get into that bill \$11 billion to create hundreds of new community health centers throughout the country. Having said that, it is my strong view that the United States has to join the rest of the industrialized world and move toward a Medicare-for-all, single-payer system which guarantees health care as a right. I have introduced legislation to do just that.

xvi: <http://redd.it/1x92zy>

2503 points (9835|7332) IamA potato scientist, AMA!
Submitted on Fri Feb 7 05:53:01 2014 UTC by amandeux

>>aurora69 322 (384|62)

Potatoes have played a huge role in human history. Where do you see potatoes in the future, socially and literally?

>>amandeux 421 (506|85)

As we face a growing population (a projected 9 billion by 2050), crops like potato will continue to be important in terms of food security because they are so calorie dense.

>> Dustin- 781 (932|151)

How did you even get into this field in the first place?

>>amandeux 790 (946|156)

I was studying plant nutrition and water quality and the potato producing areas in Florida have a lot of issues with nitrate in the groundwater.

>>thisbobstu 242 (288|46)

Does anyone really know the difference between sweet potatoes and yams?

>>amandeux 446 (507|61)

They're two different species!

xix: <http://redd.it/1yepde>

2188 (4127|1939) Explain what's cool about an animal of your choosing like you are an enthusiastic /u/unidan who is becoming increasingly drunk.

Submitted Thu Feb 20 03:26:26 by DangerMacAwesome

>>Unidan 3954 (20410|16456)

Biologist here!

Camels seem pretty ordinary, but they're actually quite incredible! Camels have some of the best adaptations to desert life you could imagine. For instance, look at their mouths. They have leathery mouths with soft protrusionsⁱⁱⁱ which allow them to easily chew up desert vegetation which may be quite dry and prickly!

Their feet are anothermatter completely. The huge pads on their fett allow them to get better traction in the sand while other animals flounder about in the difficult terrain!

Nnow another thing they do is the drink water, right? Of course! A camel can't drink water fors such a long time, it'll stound you! You could watchca cwatch a camel drink for an entire *hour* sometimes. Whats relly amazsing about them is that thtey're utilizing the specific heat of water to 8regulate* their body temperature and controle against the flucations of temperature!

if youd ont' avhe water in teh camel then whats the point, i 'm just saying that if you were to have the camal and it s really thirsty then the flucations are going to be a lot bigger.

also the humpsⁱⁱⁱ aren't water its just fat that gets metabolized but that gets water

i got spit at by a llama once i tried to give it an apple

xxvi:

http://www.reddit.com/r/AskReddit/comments/1xze31/what_is_the_craziest_hazinginitiationritual_into/cfg66dn?context=3

2298 points (8065|5769) What is the craziest hazing/initiation-ritual into a club or organization that you've experienced first- or second-hand?

Submitted on Sat Feb 15 14:44:42 2014 UTC by ImaginalComponent

>> Diredoe 2966 (6973|4007)

My first job was as a cashier in a small family-owned grocery store. Apparently, the stock boys had a tradition that went back years where they'd tell the new guy that one of his jobs is to shake up the Italian dressing bottles every couple hours. It makes them look better, after all! The owners were in on it, so they'd give them shit for it.

>>radj06 1051 (1386|335)

My favorite was making the new guy mop up vegetable oil of the floor with cold water.

>>Potato_Tots 1057 (1408|351)

My boyfriend said at his job their favorite was making the new guy mop the freezer floor.

>>Shitty_Watercolour 2096 (3394|1298)

I painted the moment they found him
<http://i.imgur.com/kFmhJRG.jpg>

*xxxv – xxxviii: <http://redd.it/oye34> (Includes extra edits in the comment by u/TheLake which I omitted in the main text of the thesis. The number citations links the reader to pictures u/TheLake attaches in his comments.)

5611 points (45299|39688) Meet Omari. Two days ago he returned from the hospital after being hacked in the face by a machete defending an orphanage of 35 children by himself. Think we could raise the \$2,000 needed for the remainder of the cement/barbed wire wall to keep both him and the children safe?

Submitted on Fri Jan 27 00:33:56 2012 UTC by TheLake

>>TheLake 2087 (5136|3049)

As of now, the best way to donate is through www.longonoteducation.org. We will assume that any donation made between now and next week was meant for the **Faraja Orphanage** in Ngong, Kenya.

Also, remember [her](#)[2] ? The construction date is scheduled for February 15th!

Edit: In the process of uploading more pictures of the orphanage, but my modem is being very slow. I would also like to add that this orphanage is unlike any I have seen before. The mother of Omari, the sole caretaker of the children (with the help of volunteers), has made multiple efforts to keep the orphanage sustainable. There are dozens of [chickens](#)[3] and a [small garden](#)[4] which helps feed the 35 children between the ages of 2 and 17. As you can imagine, these efforts are great but not enough to support 35 children everyday.

Edit 2: [The wooden fence](#)[5] next to the concrete section of the wall. The goal is to construct a wall the same height as the existing structure, with three feet of barbed wire (three coiled stacked on top of each other) on top.

Edit 3: Omari explained to me that many of the kids are very scared to re-enter the home; scared that the attackers are still inside "waiting with knives". So it was nice to see them [playing](#)[6] (and eating oranges) outside in the yard.

Edit 4: I figure the story is worth sharing: After two previous invasions during the week, Omari was relatively certain another would occur. He woke up to the sound of footsteps outside his door, he figured it was his mother taking a few of the boys outside to go to the bathroom. He quickly realized that the footsteps were heavy, and that of more than one person; he then saw a flashlight shine beneath the crack of his door.

Being the third time this happened that week, he had already stashed a hammer beside his bed. He grabbed it, and threw it at the first person who entered his room. He hit the person square in the head, and chased the rest out. The following night, the three thugs returned, presumably to avenge their friend. Omari put up a fight but was outnumbered. The last thing he remembers was being struck in the face by the machete. He has been in and out of the hospital since, yet remains positive and confident that the suspects will one day

see justice. Until then, I only hope that is courage and strength is felt by all of you. Speaking with him was a very humbling and special experience that I will never forget. I told him I would try my best to help, so this is my effort: Reddit, already donations are pouring in, and I can't thank you enough.

Edit 5: Another picture of a few kids [playing with one of their favorite toys](#)[7] . Reddit, twice now, you have nearly brought me to tears. I have never felt so encouraged in my life. Donations are coming in too fast to keep track, so I will update as soon as they seem to slow down. If the donations reach over \$2,000, the rest will go towards food and supplies for the children. I will ABSOLUTELY keep all of you updated with the progress.

Edit 6: Many people are asking for proof, the mods have contacted me and I'm working on it. It's 5:03am right now, I haven't slept all night (nor do I plan to), I've been messaging my friends on facebook left and right trying to get the word out, but I never, NEVER, could have imagined the night ending this way. In just a few short hours I will return to the orphanage with by far the BEST news I could ever tell anyone. There will be pictures!

Edit 7: I've sent the mod a picture of myself, reddit name, date, PSU id, and the expired Kenyan residency card I received in 2010 when I first studied abroad. I am literally waiting for the sun to come up so I can run to the orphanage and tell them the INCREDIBLE news. I will take a picture with everyone (Omari will absolutely be present) and return as soon as I can.

Edit 8: Over \$9,000 and I'm in a state of shock. I..... Just..... Thank you.

Edit 9: Over \$11,000. It's 6am. In 45 minutes I will RUN to the orphanage. I should be back with pictures in just a few hours. This is the best news I have ever had to privilege to tell anyone, and you are all to thank for it. Also, I am too overwhelmed at the moment, but I will do my best to reply to as many comments/messages/questions as I can.

Edit 10: \$44,000!!!!!! REDDIT!!!! I can hardly breathe. I refreshed the page at least twice to make sure it was real. I cannot believe this. I just came back from the orphanage..... Let's just say many tears were shed, and many hugs were shared. The children were all leaving to school as I arrived, but I will return around 6pm to take a group picture. I am about to upload the picture and video of Omari's thanks. He's been reading all of your comments, he said he'll read every one if it takes him all day. \$44,000. Reddit, thank you.

Edit 11: \$48,000! This is surreal. Thank you Weebly.com for the \$10,000 donation in addition to upgrading our website to Weebly Pro for two free years. Of course, thank you all so much. I must sleep for a bit, but I'll be back!

Edit 12: Who am I kidding I couldn't sleep if I tried. We hit the \$50,000 mark! I know by now I sound like a broken record, but thank you Reddit, sincerely.

>>JanetBLV 1087 (1571|484)

OP, I worked in Faraja with Omari, Momma Mora and the wonderful children. I can confirm with photos of Omari, Momma Mora, and the children and I if you message me. Its a great surprise to find this on Reddit, I've recently spoken with Omari via facebook -- I would love to help you in any other way possible. We have a chain of previous Faraja volunteers -- perhaps you're there and we've never met? EDIT: OP, I can confirm to you here: Faraja/Omari

*xl – xli: <http://redd.it/17brkd> (Includes the extended comment made by u/TheLake on the progress of Faraja. The hyperlinks are images u/TheLake attaches to his comment)

3012 points (17453|14441) Reddit, one year ago today you donated more than \$80,000 to Faraja Children's Home after Omari took a machete to the face defending the orphanage from intruders. I figured you might like to know just how much of a difference you have made in the lives of the children he was protecting.

Submitted on Sat Jan 26 18:59:21 2013 UTC by TheLake

>>TheLake 1700 (2239|539)

Original post

<http://redd.it/oye34>

Then you guys got crazy generous

<http://online.wsj.com/article/APfc09ba2f85504c659d170aefa26be232.html>

The wall

<http://redd.it/pta3n>

First of all, thank you again so much reddit! You literally saved Faraja Children's Home from closing down, as they were nearly to that point before you all jumped to the rescue.

Omari is doing great! Now that Momma Moraa and the kids aren't so dependent on him to provide for them, he has moved out and into his own home, but he always makes time to visit! He is currently working as a civil engineer in Nairobi designing and constructing roads. He has quite the scar where he was hit with the machete, but he wears it proudly, as he should. The look on his face when I told him his photo was imgur's #1 photo of 2012 was priceless; he still can't believe it was seen over 1.5 million times (take that Grumpy Cat)!

Here is the TL;DR version of the changes and improvements made at Faraja over the past year. If you are interested in a more detailed update of what's been going on, please check out our blog,

<http://www.longonoteducation.org/lei-blog.html>

- Built the security wall (no attempts by thieves have been made since).
- Hired additional staff: a grounds man/watchman, and a chef.
- Purchased two milking cows to provide milk for the kids and generate additional income.
- Constructed a large dining room table, allowing the kids to eat together inside and off of the ground.
- Purchased bunk beds for all of the children; they don't have to sleep on the ground anymore!
- Constructed a playground for the kids to play on, which they absolutely love.
- Introduced a new, well-balanced menu that includes fruits, vegetables, beef, and fish.
- Purchased two large water tanks that collect rainwater in an effort to reduce the monthly water bill.
- Had a huge Christmas celebration; each child received new shoes, clothes, a school backpack, school supplies, candy, and a water bottle.
- Purchased a washing machine which means the kids and staff no longer have to wash clothes by hand, saving them countless hours of work everyday.
- Field trips to Ngong Hills, the Monkey Park, Giraffe Center, and Elephant Orphanage.
- "Faraja Gives Back" community service projects.
- We are currently starting a Daycare Center that will generate income.
- Purchased hearing aids for one of the children, Nancy. This meant a lot to both Nancy and Momma Moraa; the hearing aids are a symbol of what they could never have imagined being able to afford one year ago, but now can.
- We have been able to send Momma Moraa back to school, to workshops, and to conferences to improve as a Director and make Faraja the best home possible.

As you can see a LOT has changed, and you are all to thank for it. Omari, Momma Moraa, and the kids cannot express in words just how grateful they are. When Moraa started Faraja eight years ago in the slum of Kibera, she couldn't even afford a mattress to sleep on, let alone actual beds for her children. You, reddit, have given Momma Moraa and her children the lives they once dreamed of. Thank you!

Edit: Some of you are mentioning happy faces ?

Edit 2: If anyone is interested in volunteering at Faraja please PM me or send an email to
longonoteducationinitiative@gmail.com

Edit 3: For those that are interested in volunteering, we very recently started a volunteer house which is located just down the road from Faraja. Volunteers have different reasons, different goals and different expectations when coming to Kenya to volunteer, so we hope to work with each individual in planning their trip; we will help organize travel/safari opportunities and facilitate any and all volunteer work according to what YOU want. That being said, please email us to start planning your trip :)!

Edit 4: If you would like to donate to Faraja Children's Home, you can do so here:
<http://www.longonoteducation.org/donate.html>

*xlii – xlivi: <http://redd.it/1xnjma> (Snoop reads u/OprahNoodlemenra's comment in a video update)

2763 points (19830|17067) Hey This is Snoop and I wanna be real for a minute give my fam something special!!!
 Submitted on Tue Feb 11 22:38:47 2014 UTC by Here_Comes_The_King

>>Waddup fam, I wanna to tell yall im sorry for not doin tha Xmas story vids, got wild on tour in Australia after tha holidays. reddit is my fam n dont want to let u down! since vday is comin up, i wanna show u some love n post a new vid. I wanna hear ur best love stories to ur loved ones or to ur love of tha trees! ill record of a vid of my favorite one n ill throw in somethin special! lets hear tha best one!

and you know i love these kids of tha SYFL, n i want to keep showin them support! help me help these kids by donatin to my campaign n 1 of u could be my intern for a day in LA!! <http://prizeo.com/snoop>

[Update] happy vday yall!! read my favorite story frm tha thread on this video, with a little surprise at tha end! thanx for all tha support of tha SYFL! <http://youtu.be/R-q4e4wBIRo>

>>OprahNoodlemenra 3013 (6492|3474)

In college there was a party in my dorm and a girl, who I thought was out of my league, drunkenly fell asleep next to me in my bed. I woke up in a puddle of her urine. After we both broke into laughter we changed our clothes. Then we got pizza. Three weeks later we started dating. Since then we've both graduated and moved in together. It was love at first piss.

xliv: <http://redd.it/1uhora>

44 points (53|9) My kids are tired of beans and rice.
 Submitted on Jan 5 22:47:50 2014 UTC by donovanm31

>>I would love to serve a hot pizza to my kids for dinner tonight. We are totally out of everything I mean everything until the 9th. Then foodstamps will be here. I live on disability so money's always tight. This would be so helpful. Thank you. We live in Willits CA Papa Murphys is the only major pizza chain.

>> LAnightowl 9 (9|0)

I just stumbled upon this subreddit and although I definitely missed the window for pizza for dinner tonight, how about tomorrow night? I would love to send you and your kids a pizza! Message me your address?

>> donovanm31 5 (5|0)

I will thank you so much.

xlv: <http://redd.it/1xh0k1>

22 points (39|12) [request] girlfriend spent last of her money to surprise me with visit at school across country. I'm poor too so she's had to eat Ramen all weekend, and I want to treat her to a nice dinner before she goes home tonight.ⁱⁱⁱ

Submitted on Feb 9 23:35:35 2014 UTC by Letthisbethelastone

>>I really love her and I want to be able to surprise her with a nice last meal before she goes home.
ill be sure to pay it forward when i land a job

>>Jedimastert 12 (12|0)

Hey bro, I feel you. PM me your email and preferred pizza joint so I can hook you up.

>>Letthisbethelastone 13 (13|0)

THANK YOU SO MUCH!

xlvi – xlvii: <http://redd.it/1cpoe1> (Includes the extended comment by u/menmybabies on providing the logistics on pizza delivery to the different precincts of the Boston Police Department)

1367 points (1996|629) Random Act of Pizza for the Boston PD, in recognition of their hard in work capturing the Boston Bomber

Submitted Apr 20 00:59:27 2013 UTC by workman161

>>menmybabies 233 (270|37)

Tomorrow may be better to send off pizzas. Everything was on lock-down until hours ago. Tonight is going to be hectic, everyone up in arms. Once things settle a little bit and pizza shops are open as usual tomorrow, this would be wonderful to do. I've gathered the information on the Boston Police Departments, including Waterford location. Included is the nearest delivery store from Dominos (I looked for Papa Johns and Pizza Hut but, they were hit or miss.) I also found links to other pizza locations in each area that delivers to the police departments. Some may or may not have online ordering but, Dominos definately does.

Boston has 9 police stations. Their locations are:

1. 650 Harrison Ave, Boston, MA (617) 343-4250 Dominos 1400 Tremont St Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120 (617) 541-3525 [Link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)
2. 40 New Sudbury St, Boston, MA (617) 343-4240 Dominos 64 Staniford Street Boston, MA 02114 (617) 248-0100 [Link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)
3. 3345 Washington St, Jamaica Plain, MA (617) 343-5630 Dominos 1400 Tremont St Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120 (617) 541-3525 This location isn't delivery but, they may deliver considering it is going to police dept [link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)
4. 1 Schroeder Plaza, Roxbury Crossing, MA (617) 343-4200 Dominos 1400 Tremont St Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120 (617) 541-3525 [link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)
5. 101 W Broadway, South Boston, MA (617) 343-4730 Dominos 163 Old Colony Ave South Boston, MA 02127 (617) 268-2900 [link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)
6. 2400 Washington St, Boston, MA (617) 343-4270 Dominos 1400 Tremont St Roxbury Crossing, MA 02120 (617) 541-3525 [link for other pizza locations in area:](#)
7. 55 Bunker Hill St, Charlestown, MA (617) 343-4888 Dominos 64 Staniford Street Boston, MA 02114 (617) 248-0100 [link for other pizza location in delivery area:](#)
8. 1165 Blue Hill Ave, Dorchester Ctr, MA (617) 343-4700 () Dominos 1672 Blue Hill Ave. Mattapan, MA 02126 (617) 298-0900 [link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)
9. 1249 Hyde Park Ave, Hyde Park, MA (617) 343-5600 Dominos 695 Truman Parkway Hyde Park, MA 02136 (617) 364-6550 [Link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)

Watertown, Boston is the location where the shoot-out occured killing one of the bombing suspects.
Their police department information is: Watertown Police Department- 552 Main Street Watertown, MA 02472 Ph: (617) 972-6500 Dominos 111 Arsenal Street Watertown, MA 02472 (617) 923-3030 [link for other pizza locations in delivery area:](#)

edit to add MIT police dept

MIT Police 301 Vassar Street, Building W89 Cambridge, Ma 02139 617.253.1212 Dominos in their delivery area: 1033 Massachusetts Ave Cambridge, MA 02318

[link of other pizza locations in their delivery area](#)

another edit to add State Police to this list. I will find locations for them and add them in shortly. Thanks elle for pointing them out

- MA State Police- Foxboro / 136 Washington St Foxboro, MA {{Papa Ginos is right down the street from them, their phone # is (508) 543-1516 or order online at papaginos.com}}
- MA State Police - Boston/ 250 Leverett Circle Boston MA Dominos is the only popping for their location. Dominos 64 Staniford St Boston, MA 02114 (617) 248-0100
- MA State Police- Weston/ 668 South Ave Weston, MA Dominos location: 868 Worcester St Wellesley, MA (781) 235-6800 again only Dominos popping for their delivery area.
- MA State Police- Revere/ 220 Revere Beach Blvd Revere, MA Dominos location: 570 Broadway Revere, MA (781) 289-1020 [link for other pizza shops delivering to their location](#)

I: <http://redd.it/1y08qp>

958 points (1147|189) M/23/5'10" [370lbs > 175lbs] 3 years and 200lbs gone!

Submitted on Sat Feb 15 20:39:42 2014 UTC by DTG09

>>Whocifer 6 (8|2)

Great job, buddy! That's an incredible loss. I'm intrigued by your cardio routine, how did you come up with it? I'm attempting to lose weight, lost about 40lbs so far (335 > 295) feels good to be below 300 but I'm still a long way out. Any tips for staying motivated?

>>DTG09 19 (22|3)

Thank you!

My cardio routine was something I kind of worked in to. At first I walked ALL the time, if that's all you can physically do then there's nothing wrong with it! Then I eventually started to walk 9 minutes and then sprint for 1 minute... 6 times equaling an hour. My body got accustomed to that so I started by adding 1 minute of jogging into those 9 minutes. Which left me with 4 minutes walking, 1 minute jogging, 4 minutes walking, last minute sprinting. It's what I've been doing the last year to year and a half, it continues to be a pain in the ass workout but it's enjoyable so I plan on keeping it this way for the foreseeable future.

Staying motivated? Measure your progress in all forms; weight, measurements, mirror, and exercise milestones. If you're putting in the work, there will always be something you can go to for motivation. Maybe you went a little harder on the treadmill last time around or you're noticing your face is getting thinner. Always search out your improvements and use them to keep you motivated. That's the key imo.

li: <http://redd.it/1wozbn>

2502 points (3901|1399) F/18/5'2" [220lbs > 150lbs = 70lbs] 8 months ago I didn't want to start because it would take "too long". For the first time ever I love myself and what I'm becoming.

Submitted on Sat Feb 1 01:21:18 2014 UTC by Callmemaybelol

>>RachellIsSoGreat 8 (12|4)

Wow! That's my exact starting weight and what I'm trying to get to. What did you do?

>>Callmemaybelol 28 (39|11)

I'd like to lose another 15lbs or so since I'm so short haha.

I know this is what everyone says, but I just counted my calories on Myfitnesspal and tried to exercise more often. I believe what made calorie counting work was that I could actually eat anything I wanted AS LONG AS I stayed within my goal. That way I wasn't burning myself out by cutting things I was so used to eating. Eventually I started leaning towards healthier choices, but I still had a couple cookies and ice cream here and there.

It might seem hard at first, but it's soooo worth it! Making small lifestyle changes make it that much more manageable and you're more likely to stick to those changes.

Good luck, you can do it!

lii: <http://redd.it/1wztwy>

1189 points (1416|227) M/23/5'11" [455lbs > 390lbs = 65lbs] ~ 10 Months - Finally starting to feel human (190 to go)
Submitted on Tue Feb 4 16:26:18 2014 UTC by eyeohe

>>shortdork27 128 (142|14)

You're always human. Now you're just becoming a healthier human! Keep up the good work!

>>eyeohe 17(19|2)

I appreciate that, thank you.

>>monkeyboy351 12(18|6)

Very solid progress man!

I'm always curious to see how others are accomplishing their goals and how people are staying motivated - So how do you keep focused on your goals and stay motivated? (if you don't mind me asking)

>>eyeohe 8 (10|2)

Thank you! I cut off all sugar and caffeine and stopped going out to eat. During the summer I hiked around a local lake and rewarded myself with an evening of fishing. Right now I'm working out every day at the gym and playing basketball once a week with coworkers... although I'm not too good lol. Other than that I'm only eating when I'm hungry and I stop when I'm full. I recently started ketosis, so I'm looking forward to the results of that too. Also, metric tons of water.

APPENDIX B: Pictures and Media:

viii: <http://i.imgur.com/ZCQ9V32.jpg>



xx: <http://i.imgur.com/lJWzRoD.jpg>



xxi: http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/82/2011_Trampeltier_1528.JPG



xxiii: <http://i.imgur.com/gPjQ22r.jpg>



xxiv:

www.reddit.com/r/pics/comments/1qp3bu/my_friend_went_diving_in_australia_and_caught/cdf2fnp?context=3



xxv: <http://i.imgur.com/KymzSRq.jpg>



xxvii: <http://i.imgur.com/kFmhJRG.jpg>



xxviii: <http://redd.it/19sl7v>



xxix: <http://redd.it/1cvsyz> (This links to a youtube video on Ann Coulter mistaking that U.S. bombed Egypt)

xxxx: <http://redd.it/oye34>



xxxvii: <http://i.imgur.com/LtDAO.jpg>



xxix: <http://redd.it/pta3n>

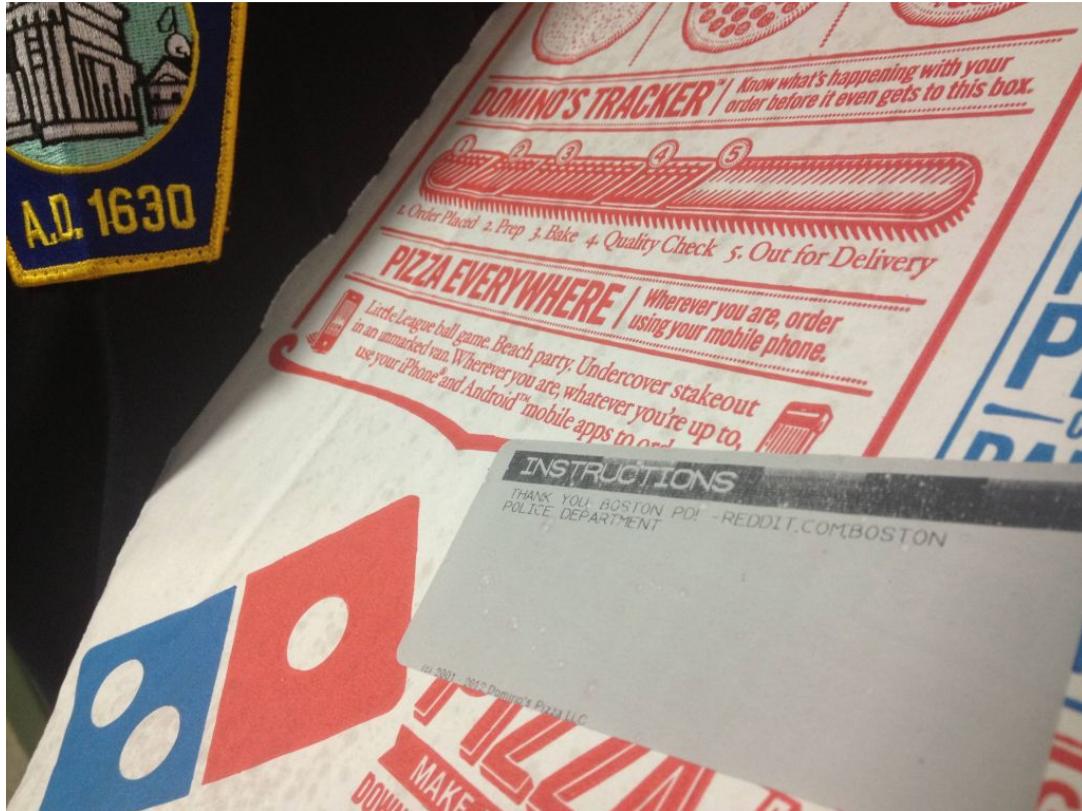


xl: <http://redd.it/17brkd>



xliii: <http://youtu.be/R-q4e4wBIRo> (This is a video of Snoop Lion reading the comedic story of how u/OprahNoodleMantra met his girlfriend)

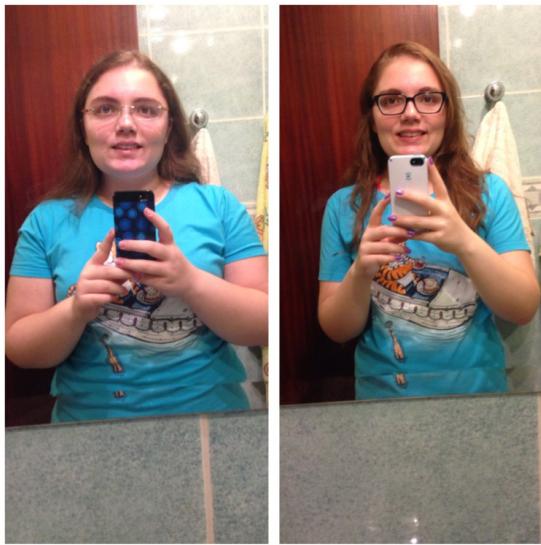
xlix: <http://i.imgur.com/HEhntrM.jpg>



l: <http://redd.it/1y08qp>



li: <http://redd.it/1wozbn>



lii: <http://redd.it/1wztwy>

