Is social media eroding communities?

Kaitlyn King

Candidate 4185

Sarasota High School

US213

Word Count: 4999

Introduction

This question's key terms must be clearly defined before proceeding. The definition of social media used is, according to the Cambridge English Dictionary,

> websites and computer programs that allow people to communicate and share information on the internet using a computer or mobile phone (Definition of "social media" - English Dictionary, 2018).

This definition includes the various social media networks used globally. I will define community as "a unified body of individuals" (Community, 2019). This term is harder to define because the word 'community' originated in the late 14th century to denote a collection of people residing in the same place (Community (n.), 2019). This definition was limiting, as it fails to consider the methods which later humans employ to traverse geographical distances. It also does not employ the meaning of the Latin term from which 'community' originates, *communitatem*, meaning "a division of people" (Community (n.), 2019). "Eroding" will be defined as:

> to weaken or damage something by taking away parts of it gradually, or to become weaker in this way (Definition of "erode" – English Dictionary, 2018).

The definition of these terms is vital to explore the impact of social media on communities.

The choice to investigate religious, interest, and professional communities was determined because these are the communities in which most individuals take part. Because 84% of people identify as practicing a religion (The Changing Global Religious Landscape, 2017), the widespread nature of religious communities and their recruitment makes them a great candidate for online expansion. Interest communities, however, have always existed, but the modern age of fanaticism lives online. By exploring the places in which fanatic domains reside, I can determine if the connections formed on social media are truly "communities." Professional communities, uniquely, are necessary; we are required to participate in them to maintain our livelihood. These will be used to explore the impact of social media on the broader professional world.

I aim to discover not just whether communities are being eroded by social media, but whether the opposite is true. My initial question also considers that, if traditional communities are eroding, is it simply the result of a natural progression? I will take up the stance that social media does *not* erode communities due to the outreach it allows religious groups, the advent of new creative outlets to attract new users that are central to interest groups, and the ability of social media to connect those who practice in the same field. Conversely, the opposing viewpoint will examine the rise of spirituality as it coincides with the fall of organized religion, the

isolating nature of individualism in a vast community of interest, and the impact overuse of social media has on the rate of retainment within practice communities. The opposition will explore how communities both online and offline have diminished when introduced to social media, as well as expert testimony on the effect of broader connectivity on tight-knit circles. I personally feel that social media generally assists in the propagation of communities rather than eroding them.

<p align="center">Religious Communities</p>

The starting point for this discussion lies in religious communities, which are entrenched in tradition, making the transition between traditional media and social media difficult. Nonetheless, some religious authorities have found an audience in primarily online fields that have brought attention to both their physical and digital presence. One religious authority writes:

> Most Facebook users have the luxury of watching their favourite prophet on their smart phones. This further encourages the users to actually attend the services and be part of what is happening. The viewers who missed the daily services have an opportunity to watch them on Facebook… Users can also share videos with different people, including international viewers. Furthermore, users have an option to leave comments as to why they like or do not like a specific video (Kgatle, 2018).

Mookgo S. Kgatle is a senior lecturer at the University of South Africa on the subject of Christian Spirituality, has worked as a pastor since 2006, and has a Ph.D. in theology from the University of Pretoria (Mookgo S Kgatle, 2019). This suggests that the author has extensive knowledge of traditional Christian practices and can juxtapose them against modern developments. On the other hand, he has no background in social media, and much of his research focuses on biblical interpretation rather than the communities of churchgoers (Mookgo S Kgatle, 2019), implying that his academic expertise on religion in digital spaces is limited. Overall, due to his experience in practicing modern Christianity and his research experience in traditional Christianity, Dr. Kgatle is a prime resource on the changes religious communities undergo in the age of social media.

With the rise of social media networks like Facebook in places like South Africa, individuals can join in on church services that they cannot attend physically in a digital space, which provides more engagement in offline attendance. The availability of these networks allows individuals to interact with both the content and each other, which indicates that the social interaction involved in traditional communities is present in this remote communication, suggesting that social media outlets have allowed religious figures to reach isolated communities

in South Africa which otherwise would have limited exposure to such practices. The expansion of these services to international viewers also serves to extend the community beyond the borders of South Africa, thus enabling cultural and religious tradition to travel abroad, bringing with it not only exposure but also a greater spectrum of perspectives that an international following brings. By encouraging interaction through comments, online religious communities build a sense of unity, a facet that is essential to community structures. Because of the intensely personal nature of religious practice, the value of practicing conveniently and interacting with both the prophet and other parishioners cannot be overstated. Due to the widespread nature of religion in the modern world and the increasing use of social media websites to practice faith, the information provided by this source is indicative of potential for the formation of communities and the expansion, not the erosion, of existing ones.

Another instance of strengthening religious communities through social media is most notably seen in the growth of extremist groups as they transmit their message online. One example includes:

> These ideologically extremist organizations do not only exploit religious feelings to attract young Muslims [on social media] and call on them to participate in holy wars by misinterpreting Qur'anic verses and cutting them off their contexts to serve their bloody and political purposes, but they also describe the Islamic identity and cultural history in vague terms to alienate young people from their history (Matar, 2018).

Soad Matar is an Assistant Professor of Media Communication at the Al Ain University of Science and Technology, has a Ph.D. from Franch-Comte University, and has an extensive publication history on both the subject of terrorism and the Quran (Soad Matar Ph.D., 2019). This supports the notion that Dr. Matar has the relevant experience to evaluate the effect of social media on communities within the Muslim faith, particularly extremist communities. Despite this, Dr. Soad Matar is herself located in an area marked by Islamic extremism (Soad Matar, Ph.D., 2019), suggesting she has some risk related to these communities impacting her research. In diagnosing the impact of Matar's expertise versus her potential risks, her testimony is shown to be intrinsically valuable not just because of her academics but *for* her experience in the places most affected.

Muslim extremist organizations use of social media platforms to spread misinformation has allowed such organizations to attract a following. While extremist groups are a delicate subject, the devotion of their members does imply that they *are* communities. The use of social

media to manipulate allows these groups to grow due to the spread of extremist interpretations of the Quran, thus establishing an online following of individuals with similar beliefs. These organizations utilize alternate interpretations to join those who fall under the broader umbrella of "Muslim" to an overlapping, but not identical, radical religious community. By editing the history of Muslim communities, historical values of Islam are replaced with modern values that fit the dialogue of the organization, thus distancing individuals from the actual text while bringing them closer to the narrow community within the organization. While the use of social media fractures the wider Muslim community, it does not separate it from those partaking in extremist communities, which are strengthened by social media. Altogether, due to the intense unity of an extremist group's members and the clear impact of the internet on participation in these organization, it can be determined that the impact social media has on extremist religious communities has been formative rather than symptomatic of erosion.

In spite of the religious connections formed via social media that have led to the strengthening of those communities, some argue that social media is implicated in their erosion. Increased social media usage has been linked to decreased participation in organized religion, a major historical community structure. This is expressed in:

> 90% of the congregations Thumma studied used email in 2010, and 34% of the churches had both an Internet and Facebook presence… not only is religion increasingly in the media… but individuals more commonly use social media technologies to express their beliefs… the emergence of individuals who label themselves 'spiritual, but not religious' indicates a growing population of those who distance themselves from organized, mostly Western religious traditions and instead prioritize freedom to choose among a variety of religious traditions without affiliating with one tradition exclusively (McClure, 2017).

Paul K. McClure is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at the University of Lynchburg, has a Ph.D. in Sociology, and a Master's Degree in Theological Studies (Paul K. McClure, PhD, 2019). This exemplifies the expertise McClure offers in both societal pattern recognition and religious studies, both of which are significant in the discussion of online religion as a factor of community. Conversely, he only received his Ph.D. in 2018 and his publication history is limited (Paul K. McClure, PhD, 2019), suggesting he is relatively new to the subject. Nevertheless, due to his expertise in fields that are intrinsically linked to religion and community, McClure is a valuable resource.

While many congregations and individuals are using social media platforms, the free sharing of information has led to the rise of unaffiliated spirituality in those who would otherwise practice Western religions. This indicates a cultural shift as religion becomes less a matter of established communities and more a personal examination of one's relationship with one's deities. The rise of this individualized spirituality has resulted in an amalgamation of various religious values, suggesting that no two individuals of this unspecified faith share the same morals and traditions. The lack of this commonality assists in disestablishing existing community structures within a religion by eliminating a core facet of any community: unity. Thus, when evaluating the effect this evidence has on the argument, it is clear that due to the shifting from organized religion toward a more individualized spiritual experience, the established community structures of religious groups have begun to erode due to a lack of homogeneity.

Another example of the loss of traditional religious communities to social media is exemplified by the Pope:

> Today, consumerism determines what is important. Consuming relationships, consuming friendships, consuming religion… A consumption that does not create bonds. Consumption, which has little to do with human relationships. Social bonds are a mere means for satisfaction of my needs. The important thing is no longer our neighbor with his or her familiar face, story, and personality… at the root of so many contemporary situations is a kind of radical loneliness (Associated Press, 2015).

Pope Francis is the highest figure in Catholicism, was named Time Magazine's Person of the Year, and has been a priest since 1969 (Pope Francis, 2018). His experience in the field of Catholicism suggest he is knowledgeable about modern Christianity. On the other hand, he has no experience in social media communications and has limited experience that only applies to one of many global religions (Pope Francis, 2018), indicating he can only advise on Christianity, and within that, Catholicism. Despite this, when assessing the value of Pope Francis's expertise on social media and religion, such testimony is important due to his responsibility over all congregations of his creed, making him an expert on religious communities.

The Pope suggests that the propagation of social media in daily life has degraded relationships due to the selfishness and consumerist tendencies social media inspires. This coincides with the idea that the constant social media cycle results in individuals absorbing parts of a religious denomination, but never truly committing to the creed, as emphasized by the previous quote. By doing this, it is insinuated that the populace loses the social bonds and

community structures built within religious groups, because other people cease to be a matter of interest and become contributors to personal gain. With the constant cycle of consumption, the interactions that build relationships in offline community are absent, making it difficult for established communities to gain more members and deepen bonds between existing ones. When examining the impact of social media on religious communities, one can extrapolate that such communities are eroded by the extension of social media because a major religious figure has observed a decrease in social bonding and an increase in pure consumption.

Overall, due to the accessibility of information on spirituality on social media, it is clear that religious communities *are* eroding. The ease and speed of transferring information between individuals over social media displays the ability of the word of communities such as extremist organizations to spread without regulation and relatively free from opposition, which contrasts with the results that they would likely encounter in face-to-face interactions. By the anonymous and remote nature of the internet, controversial opinions can be transmitted more easily than through in-person interaction. Despite this, the wide-ranging impact of loosening spirituality due to the expansion of social media makes it clear that most typical religious communities are in fact eroding, as instances in which they are strengthened are isolated.

<div align="center">Interest Communities</div>

Interest communities have a history stemming back to the beginning of traditional media. This community structure is distinct because it is considered to be a choice; professions are necessary for modern life and most are raised with the religion they will carry on with for the rest of their lives. These communities have been shown to expand when transmitted online, as exemplified by:

> …when considering newer forms of fandom that exist in our current media landscape, there are certainly more creative avenues for fan interactions through social media… and opportunities for more diverse and repeated media exposure… Therefore, the search for meaning through entertainment could result in qualitatively different fan communities today based on advances in richer communication affordances and increased media offerings that did not exist for older fandoms… (Tsay-Vogel & Sanders, 2017).

Mina Tsay-Vogel has a Ph.D. in Mass Communications from Penn State University, is Co-Director of the Communication Research Center at Boston University, and has been published in several major publications, including New Media and Society and Psychology of Popular Media Culture (Mina Tsay-Vogel, 2019). This expertise in researching new-age media and popular culture suggests that her testimony is critical when considering the impact of social

media on fanatic domains and other interest groups. Contrarily, Tsay-Vogel has industry experience with paid writing and editing work for major media corporations such as The Walt Disney Company and Viacom (Mina Tsay-Vogel, 2019). These monetary gains from powerful media organizations gives a sense that her expertise has the potential to be compromised due to past financial gain. Overall, however, due to the length of time between her academic research and industrial employment, the overwhelming scope of her experience, and the nature of her research in relation to social media "fandoms," Tsay-Vogel is clearly a vital voice in the social media community argument.

The increasing availability of social media opens up new areas in which fan communities can interact and view media, which allows a deeper consideration of the content. The significance of this lies in the communities that spring up around these media products. Through the lens of greater prospects for communication that exist today, people can interact through creations. The creation of these products illuminates the interconnectedness of the community as they expand into avenues not yet considered by previous generations. The rise of social media illustrates the expansion of these communities, which have existed prior but did not incorporate as much of the general population as they do currently. This characterizes social media outlets as a factor in the creation and growth of broader fan communities. Overall, when ascertaining the impact of social media on the propagation of fan communities, one can determine that it is a positive factor in the growth of fanatic domain due to the increased number of creative outlets that can be used to connect people.

Another example of community evolving, not eroding, is introduced in:

In… the ACG [Animation, Comics, Games] realm, a shift occurred from resource-oriented consumption to relationship- or communal-oriented interaction and differentiation in terms of fan participation. The relationship between fan and fan object has been built relatively consistently, while the means of fan participation—engagement of prosumption [production by consumers], emotional engagement, and the embodiment of object relating in fandom—has followed a different path (Yiyi & Zhuoxiao, 2018).

Yin Yiyi is a Ph.D. Candidate at the School of Journalism and Communications at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, has published several articles on identity and media, and expresses a pronounced focus on fanatic studies (YIN, Yiyi, 2019). This suggests he is experienced in analyzing modern fandom. However, his degrees do not involve social media (YIN, Yiyi, 2019), implying he does not have significant relevant experience with online

communities. Despite this, due to his experience in modern media, he is an important voice in the argument.

Social media has allowed fan communities surrounding animation, comics, and games to focus on community products and interaction rather than merely the consumption of the original work, causing fan participation to increase. This signifies that, due to the interactive nature of social media, fans can build relationships by creating shareable content based off an existing work. While the relationship with the original work is stagnant, social media encourages community projects which fortify bonds that were previously only linked by a shared interest, indicating that the bonds of online interest communities span far beyond the confines of the work that originally connected them due to engagement with fellow fanatics. Increased emotional engagement presupposes that individuals are more committed to the community. Due to increasing unity within structured media projects, it is evident that social media reinforces interest communities, rather than erodes them.

Alternatively, while interest communities may grow in mere number, the quality of their discourse can suffer when introduced to social media. This is quantified by:

> As networks get larger in size they do not keep the same ratio of connectivity present in smaller communities: network density decreases over distance. Similarly, as a user adds more friends or gains more followers to their network, the network becomes less dense as those friends/followers are less likely to become friends with the existing followers… followers are unlikely to absorb or rehash information… as networks with ties formed beyond 500 km are less likely to be transitive and less likely to function as a cohesive community (Stephens & Poorthuis, 2015).

Monica Stephens is an Assistant Professor of Geography at the University of Buffalo, has a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona, and studies social media to map societal trends (Monica Stephens, 2018). This suggests that Stephens is experienced in social media and human geography, which are major factors in the maintenance of communities. However, most of her research revolves around misinformation online rather than communities and her degrees only involve geography, with no specialization in any social or technological field (Monica Stephens, 2018). This indicates that Stephens is far more specialized in traditional geographic communities than online communities. Altogether, when gauging the effectiveness of Monica Stephens as a source on the maintenance of communities, the value of her expertise paired with her chosen specialization in social media and geography make her a prime researcher in the topic area.

As social media allows communities to grow larger due to mere exposure, this quote establishes that these extensive communities do not allow the same amount of connectedness and closeness as a smaller community. This is directly linked to geographical distance of the members of a community. As such, this exemplifies the reach of social media, which extends far beyond that of typical gathering places in which communities may congregate, resulting in the devolution of communities as they grow larger and more expansive. This suggests that while communities become more expansive, the things that mark them as a community – interests, opinions, unity – grow more indistinct. Communities failing to pass on information, as observed in the study, implies they become insular as news of the community fails to garner any interest – not just from the broader public, but from those who have proclaimed an interest in the subject matter that initially brought the group together. Thus, as the values of a community become less important to the whole, a community begins to erode as social media allows it to grow larger and more extensive but not stronger.

Overall, while the perspective that the distance between interest communities on social media erodes them makes a valid observation, the impact of the increase connectivity and the ability to start immense community projects online has ultimately strengthened communities rather than eroded them.

Professional Communities

Unlike interest and religious communities, participation in professional or practice communities is considered necessary to survival. As such, considering these communities in their many forms is crucial. Some researchers have found a distinct positive correlation between internet-based communities and their overall health as an institution, as indicated by:

> They also extolled the benefits of their PLN [Professional Learning Network] experiences, saying, for example, that PLNs brought "dignity in the profession" through "the beauty of empowerment" in the "reciprocal neighborhood of learning" where teachers "are so much stronger as a woven rope pulling together, working together, rather than one single thread…" (Trust et al., 2016)

Torrey Trust is an Assistant Professor of education at the University of Massachusetts Amherst, has a Ph.D. in education, and focuses her research on the use of technology to support teachers (Torrey Trust, 2019). The combination of these facts indicates that Trust's expertise is relevant when discussing the education workforce's social media communities. On the other hand, her Bachelor's Degree focused on film and some of her research revolves around

curriculum rather than interaction (Torrey Trust, 2019), suggesting that her older work is at odds with the rest of her experience with online communities. Altogether, despite this discrepancy, Trust's demonstrated experience in teaching communities online and the relevance of her doctoral research makes her testimony worthwhile.

This quotation represents the feelings of teachers in an online professional community studied, which can be summarized thusly: teachers' feelings toward their profession increased in positivity when brought together by a tight-knit community of practice. This suggests that, while online communities do not supply in-person support, the positivity that accompanies such support is present in online communities, increasing overall job satisfaction. The comparison of the community to a rope and the individual to a thread puts into perspective the growth of a community, as a "unified body of individuals," in its purest sense. The word "neighborhood" as a descriptor of practice communities that have sprung up around teachers also serves to fulfill a neglected portion of the historical definition of community in new online spaces – geographical closeness. The ability of online communities to approximate the sense of nearness that was considered necessary by generations past without true proximity implies that such networks not only act as a community in the modern sense of the word, but metaphorically. Thus, due to the unity of the teachers within online professional communities, one can extrapolate from the source that contrary to the idea that social media is a dividing force in communities, connections are bolstered in a positive way through social media interaction.

A further example of workplace communities being strengthened by social media includes:

> While that [separating work and personal life] has worked for previous generations… it is much easier for people in today's workplace to connect with their social circles via social media, including coworkers. The findings… indicate job satisfaction is positively correlated with how intense an individual uses Facebook to connect with their co-workers… these workers already feel like having something… in common, therefore, they use Facebook to interact with each other with a greater degree of intensity (Hanna, Kee, & Robertson, 2017).

Brett Robertson is the lead graduate researcher of the UT Austin Department of Communication Studies, is pursuing a Ph.D. in Organizational Communication and Technology, and teaches Team-Based Communications (Robertson, 2019), indicating that he is knowledgeable on homogeneity in workplace communications. However, he has not yet earned his Ph.D. (Robertson, 2019), suggesting he is not the most experienced researcher on the subject.

Altogether, when considering the rank Robertson holds as a researcher in the topic area, his voice is key in examining social media's impact on the workplace.

Coworkers have begun to connect over social media, increasing happiness in one's career and expanding interactions between fellow professionals. The increase in job satisfaction that occurs due to social media indicates that social media usage is associated with positive feelings, therefore improving the overall mood and dynamic of the workplace, not just the broader online community. The increased interactions that occur over social media further emphasize the connectivity supplied by online outlets, allowing individuals to build a sense of unity not only within the firm, but in life in general. Commonality in coworkers is encouraged by social media, furthering the sense of similarity that separates narrow communities from the broader world. The choice to connect online illuminates the growing bonds between coworkers enabled by the ease of social media usage. Because unity is the defining characteristic of communities, one can discern that social media does not erode communities, but reinforces them instead.

Contrary to the notion established by this testimony, however, some experts take the opposing side of the issue; social media is shown to have contributed to a low rate of retention in professional communities. On example of this includes:

> Online channels enables reaching a larger audience… but the drop-out rate (a key dimension of the effectiveness of participation) is much higher. Some factors negatively affecting citizen loyalty are outside the control of the organizing entity (personal problems and, to a lesser extent, lack of time). Other factors (such as technical problems, the amount of time required and the difficulty to obtain the necessary data) may and should be mitigated by the organizing entity (Royo & Yetano, 2017).

Sonia Royo has published several articles on participation in online communities, is a professor at the University of Zaragoza, and is a visiting researcher at the University of Manchester (Sonia Royo Montañés, 2019), signifying that she is a respected researcher in the field of community interaction. Contrarily, she works in the Department of Accounting and Finance rather than communications or technology and much of her work centers around governmental interaction with individuals rather than person-to-person interaction (Sonia Royo Montañés, 2019), implying that her foremost expertise is not directly connected to the topic at hand. Despite this, Royo's displayed expertise and understanding of practice communities online and the respect she holds in the field indicate that her perspective is a necessary addition to any consideration of online communities.

In essence, online practice community platforms face a relatively high drop-out rate in comparison with offline communities, pushed by some institutional and some circumstantial reasoning. Due to the very nature of online communities as technology-based platforms, many individuals are forced to contribute either less than necessary to keep a community strong or not at all. Both circumstantial and institutional problems are rectified to some extent by the nature of offline communities. For example, making the commitment to be in an offline community requires the expense of resources (time, travel costs, etc.) that would likely drive away less involved individuals, whereas online communities require relatively little overhead. This, combined with the questionable consistency of online services, makes developing long-lasting connections between individuals in a burgeoning community difficult in online spaces. As such, when considering the impact of this source on the argument of whether social media is eroding communities, it becomes clear that due to the lack of unity and connectedness in online practice communities, social media serves to negatively impact communities.

Altogether, despite the drop-out levels of some professional social media communities, the testimony of the majority of online community members suggesting that social media is a unifying force clearly defines social media as a platform that supports communities, rather than erodes them.

Conclusion

When I first began researching the impact of social media on communities, I was certain that opinions that claimed that communities suffered under the rise of social media simply came from the mouths of naysayers who did not understand how the social media revolution was causing the definition of "community" to evolve. I believed most scientific opinions would agree that social media not only failed to erode communities, but also helped them to grow.

The beginnings to my research led me to the opposite conclusion; many scientists agreed that the mass market nature of social media caused communities to grow less connected even as they grew larger, suggesting that one facet of community was eroding: unity. However, this was not so simple, as many opinions suggested that the accessibility of social media allowed connections to form that were impossible before social networks, especially within professional and religious communities, where participation in binding activities is less variable than in interest communities.

The conclusion I have reached is that forms of community that are shrouded in tradition (i.e., religious communities) suffer under the rise of social media, likely because the static nature of such communities are a defining trait in their continued existence and due to increased exposure to a multitude of creeds. It is interesting that the very factor that has allowed religious communities to succeed in times past has resulted in their decline in the modern era. However, in more adaptive communities (i.e. communities of interest and practice), communities are strengthened by social media. In fact, the overall impact of an online presence on these communities is a positive one, encouraging positive emotions through a pronounced sense of unity gained via an increased ability to communicate. To put it simply, most communities are strengthened by social media, but communities that are defined by their stagnant nature erode rapidly.

References

[Associated Press]. (2015, September 27). *Pope Talks Social Media, Culture of Loneliness* [Video File]. Retrieved from https://youtu.be/hv3Ja8DTr7w

Community (n.). (2019). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from https://www.etymonline.com/word/community

Community. (2019). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/community

Definition of "erode" - English Dictionary. (2018). Retrieved December 3, 2018, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/erode

Definition of "social media" - English Dictionary. (2018). Retrieved December 3, 2018, from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/social-media

Hanna, B., Kee, K. F., & Robertson, B. W. (2017). Positive Impacts of Social Media at Work: Job Satisfaction, Job Calling, and Facebook Use among Co-Workers. SHS Web of Conferences, 33, 00012. doi:10.1051/shsconf/20173300012

Kgatle, M. S. (2018). Social media and religion: Missiological perspective on the link between Facebook and the emergence of prophetic churches in southern Africa. *Verbum Et Ecclesia,39*(1). doi:10.4102/ve.v39i1.1848

Matar, S. (2018). Polarization in the arab world of the youths through social media. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development,9*(10), 966. doi:10.5958/0976-5506.2018.01296.2

McClure, P. K. (2017). Tinkering with Technology and Religion in the Digital Age: The Effects of Internet Use on Religious Belief, Behavior, and Belonging. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion,56*(3), 481-497. doi:10.1111/jssr.12365

Mina Tsay-Vogel. (2019). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from http://www.bu.edu/com/profile/mina-tsay-vogel/

Monica Stephens. (2018, July 30). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from http://www.buffalo.edu/news/experts/monica-stephens-faculty-expert-social-phenomena-mapping.html

Mookgo S kgatle. (2019). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from https://unisa-za.academia.edu/mookgokgatle

Paul K. McClure, PhD. (2019). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from
https://www.lynchburg.edu/academics/majors-and-minors/sociology/faculty-and-staff/paul-k-mcclure/

Pope Francis. (2018, August 27). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from
https://www.biography.com/people/pope-francis-21152349

Robertson, B. (2019). CV. Retrieved January 3, 2019, from http://bwrobertson.com/cv/

Royo, S., & Yetano, A. (2017). How to Keep Citizens Engaged? Advantages and Disadvantages
of Online and Offline Citizen Participation. European Group for Public Administration.
Retrieved February 26, 2019.

Soad Matar, Ph.D. (2019). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from
https://communication.aau.ac.ae/en/communication-academic-staff/staff/soad-matar

Sonia Royo Montañés. Departamento De Contabilidad Y Finanzas. 2019. Accessed February 4,
2019. https://contabilidadyfinanzas.unizar.es/personal/sonia-royo-montanes.

Stephens, M., & Poorthuis, A. (2015). Follow thy neighbor: Connecting the social and the spatial
networks on Twitter. *Computers, Environment and Urban Systems,53*, 87-95.
doi:10.1016/j.compenvurbsys.2014.07.002

The Changing Global Religious Landscape. (2017, July 26). Retrieved January 11, 2019, from
http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/

Trust, T., Krutka, D. G., & Carpenter, J. P. (2016). "Together we are better": Professional
learning networks for teachers. Computers & Education, 15-34.

Tsay-Vogel, M., & Sanders, M. S. (2017). Fandom and the search for meaning: Examining
communal involvement with popular media beyond pleasure. *Psychology of Popular
Media Culture,6*(1), 32-47. doi:10.1037/ppm0000085

YIN, Yiyi. (2019). Retrieved February 1, 2019, from http://www.com.cuhk.edu.hk/en-GB/people/teaching-staff/10-people/1298-yin-yiyi

Yiyi, Y., & Zhuoxiao, X. (2018). The Bounded Embodiment of Fandom in China: Recovering
Shifting Media Experiences and Fan Participation Through an Oral History of
Animation-Comics-Games Lovers. International Journal of Communication. Retrieved
February 4, 2019.