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SOCIAL MEDIA—A VEHICLE FOR SOCIAL CHANGE OR VIRTUE SIGNALING?

By Debayan Sen '23

Social media is generally about sharing moments and experiences in our lives with other people through platforms such as Facebook or Instagram. However, social media is also a space where awareness and discussion of social issues occur. Whether it be through the recirculation of stories on Instagram or the blow-up of a tweet on Twitter, social media ends up heavily influencing the day-to-day conversations many of us have. When the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum during the summer of 2020, we saw a massive increase in support on social media, whether it was spreading donation links through stories or advocating for defunding the police. Other examples include abortion, school shootings, and COVID-19, where we see social media as a platform to spread awareness and inspire change. However, while social media can spread awareness, there can be negative effects as well such as misinformation or people engaging in virtue signaling. With these effects in mind, is social media an effective medium to enact social change and spread awareness?



Social media can be linked to creating awareness for people to act. For example, in Bangladesh, a school was destroyed in a whirlwind, and an individual named Shawn Ahmed uploaded this event to YouTube. This led to increased awareness of the issue and caused people to donate money to rebuild the school. We also see action resulting from social media in social movements such as the Black Lives Matter movement. Many people recirculated posts in support of Black Lives Matter on social media

platforms and spread important information about how to contribute to the movement by informing when protests were occurring or spreading links about where to send donations to. This led to many donations to the movement and a more well-informed public about certain issues, forcing difficult discussions about racial equality in the United States. During the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media encouraged everyone to stay inside and to mask up, preventing thousands of deaths. Social media

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WILL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ROBOTICS REPLACE THE HUMAN WORKER?

By Hailey Jennato '24

Technology today is unrecognizable from even just a few years ago. Photo generators powered by artificial intelligence previously created incomprehensible, blurry, and inaccurate images. Now, Meta's Make-A-Video AI model can quickly turn a short description into a five-second video clip. Tesla's new humanoid robot Optimus can wave, walk, carry boxes, and complete other basic tasks, at an estimated price point of around \$20,000 (Rubenstein, 2022). The University of Tokyo recently created a robot that can peel a banana, an incredibly nuanced task that required over 13 hours of training (Hoover, 2022).

Besides these futuristic inventions that seem like something directly out of a sci-fi movie, there are many other types of automation and artificial intelligence we interact with daily. AI powers Google search, social media algorithms, GPS, Amazon product recommendations, and so much more. Many manufacturing and business processes are becoming

increasingly automated. But these engineering advances have left everyone wondering: will machines replace humans? Should we be worried about losing our jobs to a robot or software program that is much more productive, accurate, and less likely to call out sick?

The answer is complicated. When you look back throughout history, major periods of technological advancements (Enlightenment, Industrial Revolution, Dot-com Bubble) have certainly changed the labor market, but none have erased it entirely. We're facing a similar situation right now.

According to Elizabeth Crofoot, senior economist at Lightcast, "All these concerns about destroying jobs are likely going to ease, because we're going to continue to see all these labor shortages, at least through the end of the decade" (Crofoot qtd. in Hoover, 2022). Despite increases in automation and AI, labor shortages remain. Many employers are investing in robots

because *they can't hire enough people*. In September 2022, unemployment hit a 50-year low of 3.5% (Kelly, 2022). While job growth has started to slow because of the Fed's massive interest rate hikes, the September jobs report revealed a strong labor market with more than 10 million available jobs (Kelly, 2022).

While there are still many jobs available in the economy, the era of AI and automation will definitely change how people work. A 2013 Oxford University study estimated that 47% of jobs in the U.S. were at risk of automation between 2010 and 2030 (Brancaccio et al, 2022). The pandemic sped up the rate of automation as employees called out sick, worked from home, or quit their jobs entirely. Orders for workplace robots at U.S. companies were up 40% in Q1 of 2022 compared to the same time last year (Maher, 2022). However, the use of robotic technology is unevenly distributed across industries.

Standardized processes and tasks are easier to automate. For example, restaurants like White Castle use Flippy, [*\(Continued on page 6\)*](#)

HOW TO HEALTHILY COMMUNICATE IN A RELATIONSHIP: NO, NOT JUST A ROMANTIC ONE

By Gabe Holmes '26

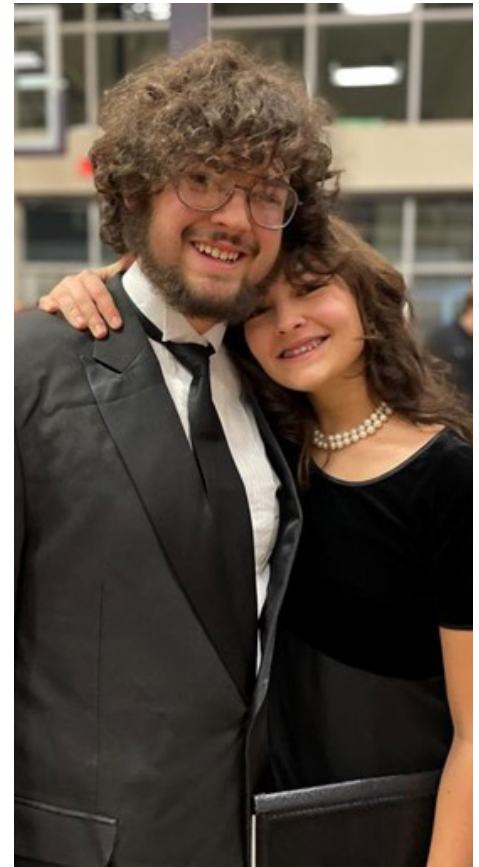
Communication is a fundamental way of life. From babies trying to babble that they want their bottle to pitching a complex business plan to a CEO, communication is crucial in getting what we mean across. Children will often get frustrated when adults don't take the time to understand what they're saying, just as how my girlfriend may grow annoyed if I'm not considering the meaning behind her words with an open mind. Miscommunication can lead to conflict in all relationships, at any age. Communication is especially crucial if two partners are committing to a long-distance relationship. Here are the lessons that I have developed throughout my long time on this Earth to avoid miscommunication (that was sarcastic).

To start, I feel it is deeply crucial that I provide a disclaimer. This is not an instruction manual, nor is it a guide to becoming the power couple, supreme BFFs, or best version of any relationship you might have. The tips for healthy communication that I will provide are not "one-size-fits-all" dogmatic advice. These are just a couple of lessons that I've learned from the romantic relationship that I have been involved in for two years. Now that the clarifications and metacommentary have been laid out in one fell swoop, let's move on to the good stuff.

The first lesson is: whenever you feel that you have been wronged by your partner, parent, or friend, express your feelings in a mindful and constructive manner. "Expressing your feelings" may sound tacky, but emotional vulnerability is important if you want

to have a meaningful relationship with someone. Rather than accuse or point fingers, start with the simple expression, "I would like to express some feelings." Whenever my girlfriend and I get into a disagreement that could be a recipe for disaster, we use these expressions to signal that we should have a constructive conversation, and they work extremely well. A conflict that could have turned into a screaming match, leading to resentment and ultimately remaining unfinished after one of us leaves in a fury, turns out to be a short five-minute conversation. Neither of us raises our voice, and the conflict is easily resolved. Now, I must urge that this is NOT easy. In fact, it's easier to scream because we take out our emotions on others, using people as emotional punching bags. However, these instincts can lead to us hurting our loved ones and ourselves. Some arguments can keep building until we say something that we cannot take back, even if we didn't mean it.

The second lesson is a formula, T to the power of four (T⁴), that my therapist taught me as a child when I had anger management issues. This formula is applicable anywhere, at any time. T⁴ stands for "Take Time To Think." We, as human beings, are very reactionary when we hear something that gets to our core and often make decisions that we end up regretting later. Before lashing out a cutting comment if someone comes at you with heat, think of the consequences of your actions. Conversations can escalate quickly into arguments, and



then arguments jump up to fights, and fights rarely resolve in a progressive manner whatsoever. I don't expect anyone to instantly adopt this formula, but if you accept and are mindful of it when needed, it can become a powerful tool that can be used to avoid catastrophe.

The third lesson is a concept that goes hand in hand with communication: compromise. There are instances when both partners may be partially wrong. Trying to weigh out who is more wrong on a scale will often lead to nowhere, or to more conflict. Admitting that you messed up is the first step into

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THE W SLANT

By Daniel Furze '26

How the W Hotel Redefined Luxury Hotels

Established in 1998, the W hotel quickly became the hottest hotel brand attracting a younger generation with its “chic” and modern design. Originating in New York City, the W has diversified into locations worldwide with more than 60 total properties today (Marriott International Annual Report, 2021). The W was originally formed with the idea of bringing nightlife to a hotel. Furthermore, the fast and vibrant lifestyle of New York City was married with a modern design to form a hotel that provides luxury services at every turn. The W was the first hotel to normalize and franchise the idea of boutique hotels. The original New York location was considered boutique because of its unique design and perspective (the “W slant” they now call it). After developing new properties, the W brought similar aspects of the New York hotel to match the culture of every location, including their Fort Lauderdale hotel with every room facing the ocean and carpets designed like waves. Still, the W kept its modern style and consistently delivered a boutique hotel experience.

Acquired by Marriott International in 2016, the W is one of seven luxury hotel brands within the Marriott company. Even so, the W is often considered the least luxurious brand out of all seven and some argue that it places below some of Marriott’s premium brands. This, however, is not a conclusion drawn from the experience of the W but more from the societal ideal of luxury.

Many argue that the best of Marriott’s luxury brands is either the St. Regis or the Ritz Carlton. This comes from an idea of presentation, rather than service. When stepping into a Ritz Carlton or St. Regis, the architecture and design is timeless. There are often fresh flowers in the lobby, marble ceilings, and staff dressed in professional attire. Guests are walking into a hotel that is undoubtedly luxurious.

The W, however, is not a brand that sells brightness and antique architecture. Still, it is just as luxurious as other brands. Instead, the W packages luxury in a different way. The customer is still, for the most part, receiving the same service and staying in beautiful accommodations. The W is a modern form of luxury; a form of luxury not often seen with traditional hotels such

as the Ritz Carlton, St. Regis, or JW Marriott. The luxury the W provides breaks traditional hotel norms with its sleek design and laid-back style. The idea of the W being “laid back” is seen by staff dressed in black slacks and a black t-shirt with a neon name tag, once again conforming to modern styles. This strays away from the traditional attire most hotels require of their staff.

In a way, the W brand has similarities with the clothing company, Abercrombie & Fitch. With the dimmed lighting and nightclub feel, at one point they were both the hottest brands in their industry (Ryan, 2022). Although Abercrombie may not be considered a luxury brand like the W, it is also targeted to a younger generation that has money to spend.

In recent years, the W, like Abercrombie, has attempted to “brighten” its brand. Creating W ESCAPES, the W has opened properties specifically designed for “detox, retox, repeat” (About, n.d.). Set in instagrammable destinations, W ESCAPES has everything a customer would need to do yoga on the beach and relax quietly at night. Keeping with the modern theme, the W simplifies its amenities with one-word titles and uses

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drives people to act through creating a more informed public about important issues.

On the flip side, using social media as a platform for social change can have negative effects. Many engage in what is known as virtue signaling, which is when an individual publicly announces their opinion to demonstrate their good character and moral position on a particular issue without actually taking any additional steps to back up their claims. Many individuals post on social media about issues that they inevitably end up forgetting about or take part in trends that are unhelpful. For example, in the summer of 2020, many social media users were recirculating black squares in support of Black Lives Matter. While this indicated massive support for the movement, after the fact, the campaign was critiqued as virtue signaling. People

would simply post a black square on social media without acting, such as donating to movements or educating themselves about racial inequality in the United States.

Another issue that comes with using social media to enact social change is the spread of misinformation. Many times, information is not fact checked; this issue emerges with topics such as vaccination and climate change where individuals use Facebook and Instagram to post misinformation about these topics, either purposefully or unknowingly. This misinformation is harmful because it leads people to believe wrongful information such as global warming being a hoax, masks being ineffective at preventing the spread of COVID-19, or the COVID-19 vaccine altering human DNA.

Should social media be used as a platform for social change? Social media is an important platform for spreading awareness and enabling change, but it should not be the telos for which we understand issues. Reposting another individual's story about an ongoing event may make us feel better but can limit our perspective on important issues. Personally, whenever I see certain trends floating around social media, I try my best to educate myself about the issue. What is this about? What are the details of the situation, and if possible, what can I do as an individual to influence this issue in a positive way? While we cannot understand every issue in-depth, this framework, when broadly applied, allows us to become better

HOW TO HEALTHILY COMMUNICATE IN A RELATIONSHIP: NO, NOT JUST A ROMANTIC ONE *(Continued from page 3)*

lowering the tension between you and your partner, and they will most likely admit their wrong as well. Any relationship requires commitment and effort, which includes being brave to say, "I messed up."

There is nothing shameful in admitting to the times that you're wrong. In fact,

it's an indicator of emotional maturity, which is hard to find yet very valuable for having meaningful relationships that last a lifetime.

I've applied these lessons through every conflict in my relationship. These are not the end-all-be-all, but they are very effective at cultivating healthy

communication. Of course, there are different factors and requirements for different types of relationships, but communication plays an essential role in them all. I must note that I am not a marriage counselor or relationship guru, but I do know the troughs and peaks that are the rollercoaster.

WILL ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ROBOTICS REPLACE THE HUMAN WORKER? *(Continued from page 2)*

a robotic arm, to run fry stations. Panda Express uses the Panda Auto Wok, a robotic arm that stirs dishes like chow mein, to get noodles to customers 25% faster (Hoover, 2022). However, robots and machines also have limitations, impacting the types of jobs they can do. Besides blurry footage, distorted animations, and low resolution, Make-A-Video can't produce clips over five seconds long (Vincent, 2022). The banana peeling robot only gets the task correct 57% of the time.

While we likely won't see widespread job loss, economist Michael Handel predicts that technology will "alter the mix of jobs and needed worker skills" (Brancaccio et al, 2022). Some industries will be more resilient to a robot takeover, while others, like healthcare, engineering, and science, will be augmented by robots. Assembly line workers across industries are at a higher risk of being displaced, but other fields have seen tremendous job growth. For example, machine operators, welders, technicians, data scientists and analysts, engineers, and computer scientists are in high demand (Holzer, 2022).

The rise of machines is likely to cause problems for specific groups – mainly unskilled, less educated, and low-income workers. As Siddhartha Srinivasa explained, "It is inevitable that robots will take people's jobs. There's no need to sugarcoat that" (Srinivasa qtd. in Maher, 2022). According to Harry J. Holzer, Nonresident Senior Fellow – Economic Studies at Georgetown University, workers that can complement automation and perform tasks that machines can't are the most job secure. Also, individuals with postsecondary credentials are usually better off. In contrast, workers that can be substituted with machines are more

likely to lose their jobs and face difficulty finding new ones (Holzer, 2022).

What can be done to prevent unskilled workers from unemployment? According to Chris Farrell, senior economics contributor for MarketPlace, "You can have some innovative, well-funded policy interventions like wage insurance and wage subsidies and investments in expanding apprenticeships and worker training programs. Actions like these will help workers share in the job-generating benefits of automation" (Farrell qtd. in Brancaccio et al, 2022). Holzer agrees, suggesting that policies like earned income tax credits, better childcare and paid leave, increased focus on 21st century skills, and improved access to job training can help displaced workers adapt to technological change (Holzer, 2022).

So, will machines and robots run the world anytime soon? The answer is no. Powerful robots are still incredibly expensive, and machines can't do everything (at least, not yet, and not anytime in the foreseeable future). However, as technology continuously improves, automation becomes cheaper, and AI learns to better replicate human behavior, unskilled and less educated workers must be upskilled and re-trained to stay competitive in the labor market.

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THE W SLANT *(Continued from page 4)*

the letter “W” as much as possible. With “Wet” for their pool, “Fit” for their gym, and “Whatever/Whenever” for their concierge service, the W has the same amenities as a luxury hotel packaged in a minimalist style (About, n.d.) With these new properties, the W has brightened its brand by raising the lights but keeping its “life with a W slant” (The Angle, n.d.).

When beginning to compare the W to other hotel brands, we quickly realize that the brand is incomparable. Focusing on brands within W’s parent company, the other six luxury brands provide a sense of luxury that is traditional and classic. Marriott International classifies the St. Regis, Ritz Carlton, and JW Marriott as “classic brands” and the W, Bulgari, EDITION, and Luxury Collection as “distinctive brands.” Marriott’s definition of “distinctive” brands is “memorable experiences with a unique perspective” (Marriott International 2016 Annual Report, 2016). The W captures this essence with its cutting-edge style and modern techniques. In fact, Marriott’s up and coming EDITION brand marries

the concept the W brings—modern design and sleek technology—with traditional Ritz Carlton/St. Regis values—fresh flowers,

professional staff, and brightness. The example of the EDITION proves the effect the W has had on newer brands when entering a new era of luxury.

The W’s uniqueness was its claim to fame, but its fusion of luxury and modernization created a brand that has spanned over twenty years and is only continuing to grow. Even if some still perceive the W as the “least luxurious” of the Marriott luxury brands, there is no doubt that the W fills a gap within the hotel industry by redefining luxury and making history as one of the first hotel chains to completely modernize and market towards a younger audience.

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