Reflective Essay: ███████████████

1. Background

In fall 2011, I joined MSU's Department of Advertising and Public Relations immediately after receiving my doctoral degree from the University of Missouri's School of Journalism. Prior to graduate school, I co-founded a nonprofit organization aiming to empower Palestinian youth through psychosocial support and media production programs. These experiences have shaped my research program which investigates how digital and social media can be used persuasively to change users' attitudes and behaviors, primarily related to alcohol use, digital aggression, and online safety. More specifically, my research examines *why* and *how* people use social media, and unearths the positive and negative effects of digital and social media use.
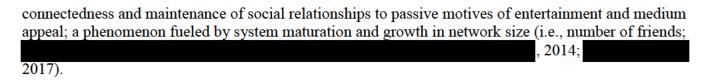
I have published 25 peer-reviewed articles (plus two others recently accepted) in leading journals, including *New Media & Society; Computers in Human Behavior; Aggressive Behaviors; Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking; New Media & Society; Media Psychology; Journal of Health Communication; Mass Communication and Society;* and *Journal of Interactive Advertising*. Two of my articles were named "Best Article" by the American Academy of Advertising (AAA) and the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (AEJMC). Additionally, I have published eight chapters in edited books and 18 conference proceedings, white papers, and invited articles. I have authored and co-authored 89 presentations for international and national conferences; eight of which received "Top Paper" or "Top Poster" awards. The American Academy of Advertising named me the inaugural recipient of the Mary Alice Shaver Promising Faculty award in 2014, I was named a recipient of MSU's 2018 Teacher-Scholar Award, my department nominated me for the University Mentor Faculty Award in Spring 2017, and I was recently nominated to the World Economic Forum's *Young Global Leaders*. I have also been active in seeking and acquiring funding for my research from federal agencies (e.g., National Science Foundation), industry partners, and internal mechanisms (e.g., Trifecta, Michigan Applied Public Policy Research). During my time at MSU, I have taught five undergraduate and six graduate courses. I have taken an active role in mentoring undergraduate and graduate students, both in and out of the classroom, where I served or am serving on 22 doctoral committees (seven as chair) and three master's theses (two as chair). I have also been an active member of our department, college, and university, and continue to serve the academic community. The following are reflections on my approach to research, teaching, and service.

2. Understanding Social Media Users

Similar to traditional media, social media serve a content provision function. However, social media's uniqueness lies in everyone's capability to produce and disseminate content, as well as partake and engage with content posted by others (e.g., friends, advertisers, politicians, and social activists). Social media afford users the capability to act both as broadcasters and consumers. This has tremendously changed the media game. The two-way stream of communication, molded across interpersonal and mass-personal modes of communication not only changed how we communicate as a society, but also the way we as researchers examine both media users and effects of their use. The focus is no longer confined to content or modality of presentation, but is now extended to the *interactive experience* with which users engage. To better understand these intricacies and complexities of the digital media era, my research has investigated both *why* and *how* people use social media using a two-pronged methodological approach. First, I have surveyed users from the United States and other countries (e.g., Taiwan, Kuwait, and Palestine) about their motivations and uses of Facebook and other social media platforms. I documented the changing salience of motivations predicting Facebook use from social

connectedness and maintenance of social relationships to passive motives of entertainment and medium appeal; a phenomenon fueled by system maturation and growth in network size (i.e., number of friends; ██, 2014; ███████████ 2017).

In the second approach, my collaborators and I have applied a novel methodology for studying Facebook use. Instead of asking participants to retrospectively recall their Facebook use, they used Facebook in an experimental lab while their psychophysiological responses were recorded. Participants in that study, published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking,* exhibited different cognitive and affective responses to goal-oriented activities of information searching (e.g., a friend's page) than information-browsing activities (e.g., newsfeed; ████████████████, 2010). The study's chief breakthrough is methodological. While media psychology and psychophysiology studies primarily use controlled experiments with fixed and carefully manipulated stimuli, in our study, we induced participants' usage patterns and associated cognitive and affective responses that are unique to them by examining their organic Facebook use experience. A follow-up study examined the cognitive and affective patterns preceding common online behaviors (e.g., likes, shares, and comments), where enacting behaviors, such as clicking on the 'like' button, emulated an automatic-orienting response to social media content ████████████████ in press).

3. The Persuasive Effects of Social Media

For many people, using social media has become habitual and ritualistic. On social media, people do not only passively view content; they have, at their disposal, means to actively and publicly engage with content. Users like, share, and comment on messages with a few simple, intuitive clicks. A major strand of my research at MSU investigates the persuasive effects of engaging with such online activities on users' attitudes and behaviors.

3.1. Viral Behaviors

In the social media era, persuasion scholars continue to investigate traditional outcomes such as attitude and behavior change. However, the pathways to persuasion have significantly changed due to innovations in content provision and user engagement via social media. In an edited book chapter (████████████████, 2017), my coauthors and I proposed revisions to leading persuasion models (e.g., Elaboration Likelihood Model, Theory of Reasoned Action/Planned Behavior, and the Social Norms Approach) to account for the role social media engagement and virality play in the persuasion process. Past research suggested that social media engagement is associated with "slacktivism;" in other words, as people express themselves online, they become less likely to enact offline behaviors. In contrast, much of my collaborative work has shown that wanting to like, share, and comment on a Facebook post – whether commercial or social advocacy in nature – positively and strongly predicted offline behavioral intentions (e.g., ████████████████████ 2015; ████████████ 2014 ████████████████████, 2015, *American Academy of Advertising "Best Article" award*).

My research showed that the simple, habitual, and nearly-automatic social media behaviors influence users' readiness to perform the advocated positive (e.g., standing up against bullies) or negative (e.g., engaging in excessive alcohol use) offline behaviors. I have therefore extended my research on social media and persuasion to investigate critical public health and social issues, which is summarized next.

3.2. Alcohol Use

Underage drinking and excessive alcohol use among college students is a public health concern with immediate, detrimental, and long-term individual, healthcare, social, and economic consequences. Alcohol use is part of the culture in the United States. From everyday events to 21st birthday and St. Patrick's Day celebrations, access to and overuse of alcohol are woven into the normative social structure. In addition to family and peer influence, media (including advertising) shape perceptions of alcohol use prevalence and acceptance. While these influences are often obvious in traditional media, they are vividly amplified on social media. As part of an MSU Trifecta pilot funding project ($10,000) for which I served as Principal Investigator, Drs. ████████████████, and I conducted a multi-method study to examine the prevalence of posting about alcohol on Twitter and the determinants of celebration drinking as a function of social norms and social media engagement. About a million tweets in a sample of 47.5 million included a reference to alcohol; most of them referenced intoxication. Surveys of MSU students and a national sample of U.S. youth (18-20 years old) found that those who post about celebration drinking reported that they drank more and overestimated descriptive drinking norms among peers, close friends, and acquaintances as compared with those who did not post about alcohol on social media ("Top Poster" award at *Kentucky Conference on Health Communication, 2016*).

Given social media's low cost, high effectiveness, and flexible regulatory environment, alcohol advertisers are increasingly investing in digital advertising. I have led a series of studies investigating the effects of alcohol advertising on college students and youth's alcohol consumption intentions and behaviors ████████., 2015; *AEJMC "Best Article" award*; covered by *Esquire* magazine; ██████ et al., 2016). In one study published in the *Journal of Interactive Advertising* and covered by *USA Today* and other media outlets, participants exposed to Facebook beer ads expressed greater intentions to consume alcohol and were more likely to select a bar than a coffee shop gift card as a study incentive than those exposed to water ads ████████████). In collaboration with Drs. ██ ████████████████████ and ████████████ I served as Principal Investigator on a Michigan Applied Public Policy Research grant project ($20,000), funded by the MSU Institute for Public Policy and Social Research, to investigate psychophysiological responses to alcohol YouTube ads. Underage youth (aged 18-20) exhibited greater cognitive resource allocation (indicative of attention) and higher intentions to consume alcohol upon exposure to ads featuring younger- versus older-looking models ("Top Poster" award at *D.C. Health Communication Conference, 2017*).

3.3. Online Safety

In addition to alcohol use, Internet users (both individuals and organizations) also face a variety of other risks, such as those from hackers and phishers, or other users bullying them online. A National Science Foundation-funded multi-method study (with Drs. ████████████████████████████; NSF 12-596, $664,395) aimed to examine the barriers and opportunities for online banking adoption among older adults as they relate to online safety risk perceptions (████████, et al., 2015; ████ et al., 2016; ██ et al., 2016; ████ et al., 2015). Despite feelings of fatalism to deal with online safety threats, our field study conducted in collaboration with the MSU Federal Credit Union showed that online educational interventions geared toward enhancing older adults' self-efficacy to cope with online threats increased their online banking adoption.

Much like threats to private and personal information, aggressive interactions are abundant on social media. While we stereotypically associate digital aggression with middle- and high-school age groups, the phenomenon does not vanish in college. I collaborated on a number of projects examining digital

aggression among college students – a group that is atypically studied in relation to this issue – both in terms of defining the problem and finding solutions. My research uncovered that one in five MSU students have experienced cyberbullying themselves and seven in 10 observed others being cyberbullied during college (███████ et al., 2013). Dr. ██████████ and I are broadening the emphasis of this research to different forms of digital aggression with use a twin study to unravel the genetic and environmental factors influencing digital aggression perpetration (to be resubmitted as an R-21 proposal to the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development). Our recent study showcased the distinctive nomological network associated with digital aggression perpetration, one that is markedly different from physical and verbal aggression, yet has commonalities with rule-breaking behaviors (published in *Aggressive Behavior*). Additionally, my research attempted to leverage the power of social media content's emotional appeals and sources to motivate users to take actions against digital aggression online and offline through civic and bystander actions (███████ et al., 2013; ██████ ██████████ & ██████████ 2015). Much of my work in this area is conducted in collaboration with community partners such as Defeat the Label in Detroit and the Girl Scouts Heart of Michigan.

4. Teaching

My teaching philosophy rests upon three pillars: (1) interactive, experiential, and service-based learning; (2) cultivating critical and creative thinking; and (3) empowering students to become stellar professionals and world citizens. At MSU, I have taught 11 undergraduate and graduate courses on a variety of topics, including conceptual or thematic (e.g., media psychology), research methodological (e.g., quantitative methods), and practically-oriented (e.g., integrated campaigns) courses.

In addition to developing courses that incorporate my research on digital and social media using interactive and experiential tools, I always look to engage students in solving real-world problems by championing service-based learning. For example, my students crafted an internal communication campaign for the Michigan Department of Technology, Management, and Budget as they migrated to cloud-based computing services. In multiple classes, students provided creative solutions to the MSU Office of Sustainability to promote sustainability among students, faculty, staff, and the larger-East Lansing community through social media campaigns and mobile applications. These efforts resulted in my being awarded the "Be Spartan Green Outstanding Faculty Award" in 2015.

Another area of significance in my teaching deals with ensuring students are receiving an education that helps them with their future careers. I frequently amend my lectures to ensure students are receiving the most up-to-date industry information. I also engage other researchers and industry professionals in discussions with my students. It is my philosophy that a multiplicity of voices enhances student learning. For example, I am teaching Issues in Contemporary Advertising (our department's speakers' series course), for which I am bringing 15 advertising, marketing, and public relations leaders each semester to interact with our students – many of whom are MSU alumni. To me, education is about providing knowledge to students through experiences and connections they can harness upon graduation.

My teaching consistently receives strong evaluations from students, across different class sizes and levels. Students usually comment on my high sense of organization, my ability to teach effectively and creatively, and most importantly, how I challenge them to learn and improve their skills and knowledge through translation of concepts and research to practical solutions. A graduate student commented, "Dr. ██████ is smart enough to let the students think their way through the learning process in an active way." An undergraduate student noted, "At no point in my time in the MAP [Media and Advertising

Psychology] Lab have I felt inconsequential; that work that Dr. ██████ has trusted me with feels important and directed."

My philosophy in mentoring students stems from following the Apprenticeship Model, in which I lead by example and take a hands-on and collaborative approach to developing ideas, designing studies and campaigns, and executing and evaluating them with students. I have been the chair of seven doctoral dissertations (two completed) and two master's theses (both completed). I have also served or am serving on 15 doctoral committees (five completed), three master's theses (one completed), and advised 16 master's students (two of whom are Master Card Foundation students). I have involved nine undergraduate students in research projects; two of whom as Honors' College professorial assistants. Frequently, I engage undergraduate and graduate students authoring both conference papers and journal articles (see list of papers noted with "*" in my CV).

5. Service
I take pride in being a Spartan and a member of our department, college, university, and the wider-scholarly community. At our department, I founded and co-direct the Media and Advertising Psychology (MAP) Lab, which enables researchers to study media using psychophysiological and eye-tracking measures. I have served on several ad-hoc and standing departmental committees, including the Department Advisory Committee, Graduate Studies Committee, the Doctoral Application Review Committee, the Undergraduate Curriculum Revision Committee, and seven faculty search committees. At the college level, I served on the College Advisory Council, where I participated in revising the college by-laws. I also served on the most recent Communications Arts and Sciences Dean Search Committee. At the university level, I am affiliated with the Cognitive Science Program, the Health and Risk Communication Research Center, and the Muslim Studies Program.

Engaging in service to the academic community is both a vehicle to broaden the impact of my research and amplify MSU's values nationally and globally. I serve on the *Journal of Advertising Education*'s editorial board, was Guest Co-Editor for a Special Issue of *Games and Culture*, and served as an ad-hoc associate editor for *Sage Open*. I reviewed for 28 journals (e.g., *Journal of Communication; Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication; Media Psychology; Journal of Advertising;* and *Computers in Human Behavior*) and multiple academic conferences (e.g., *International Communication Association; Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication;* and the *American Academy of Advertising*). I have co-organized two full-day pre-conferences at the *American Academy of Advertising* (2016 and 2018), was a program chair for *Meaningful Play*, and served on the Website Development Committee for the *Society for Psychophysiological Research.*

6. Summary
I am devoted to extending MSU's land-grant mission by addressing problems of social, health, and political importance. My research is providing the evidence for formulating social- and policy-relevant changes related to regulating alcohol advertising on social media and alleviating the prevalence of digital aggression. In the classroom, I engage my students in service-learning opportunities. I strive to represent the "Spartans Will" spirit at national and international venues by being ahead of the curve, with an eye toward solving the biggest problems posed in the online environments that define our era.