



How Social Media Affordances Mediate the Digital Diaspora: Latinx Perspectives

Shannon M. Oltmann, University of Kentucky, USA
Fatima Espinoza-Vasquez, University of Kentucky, USA

Abstract

With the increasing prominence of online communications, scholars have begun to investigate the concept of the digital diaspora—the ways in which immigrants create and maintain connections with each other, their country of origin, and the receiving nation. We suggest that the affordances of social media platforms are instrumental in developing and strengthening the digital diaspora. In particular, the six affordances—confidentiality, connectivity, creativity, interactivity, spreadability, and visibility—contribute to the power of the digital diaspora. We contextualize this discussion by focusing on Latinx immigrants in the United States. Their experiences and perspectives illuminate how an affordances framework can explicate the formation of a digital diaspora.

Keywords: affordances; digital diaspora; immigrants; Latinx; social media

Publication Type: research article

Introduction

The Pew Research Center reports that, as of 2023, there are 62.5 million Latinx¹ individuals in the United States, comprising approximately 19% of the overall population. About one-third of Latinos in the U.S. are immigrants, while the majority were born in the U.S. (Moslimani & Noe-Bustamante, 2023). Immigrants to the United States often encounter numerous challenges, the main challenge being maintaining contact with family members and close friends left behind in their countries of origin.

During the early decades of the 21st century, the rise of social media has generated new avenues for establishing and maintaining distant relationships. However, these platforms have been criticized for hindering social cohesion and facilitating the spread of misinformation (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018; Iosifidis & Nicoli, 2020; Napoli, 2019). At the same time, many individuals and groups have found a new or renewed sense of community on social media (Khvorostianov et al., 2012). For example, geographically isolated Queer individuals have been able to connect with other members of the Queer community (Craig et al., 2021; Hanckel et al., 2019). Many individuals report that connecting with family is a significant factor in their use of social media (Schelenz, 2023; Whiting & Williams, 2013). Similarly, Russian-speaking immigrants in Finland maintained connections with their homeland via social media (Khvorostianov et al., 2012; Mallapragada, 2006; Mitra, 2001; Vorobeva et al., 2022). Some scholars have termed this convergence of immigration and internet-facilitated communication the “digital diaspora” (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010; Gittinger, 2015; Ponzanesi, 2020). As part of a digital diaspora,



immigrants can maintain a virtual foothold in both their country of origin and their new home (Alonso & Oiarzabal, 2010), in which “online interactions alter the contours of everyday activities, societal integration, identity formation, and emotional bonding as [immigrants] straddle home and host countries” (Lim et al., 2016, p. 2148). The current study builds on previous research by acknowledging that social media have become an integral part of the daily lives of many immigrants rather than being perceived as a newly adopted technology (Khvorostianov et al., 2012).

This project investigates how social media platforms mediate Latinx individuals’ sense of belonging to a digital diaspora through an affordance framework. Affordances are action-oriented or behavioral possibilities activated by individuals, as particularly applied to how we interact with technologies (Ronzhyn et al., 2023). In this study, adopting an affordances framework enables us to focus on how social media platforms are used to build and maintain a digital diaspora for our participants.

We directed our attention toward Latinx participants because of the size and diversity of this group in American society. The emphasis on Latinx immigrant people in our study is also grounded in recognizing the multifaceted and dynamic nature of digital diasporas. Waldinger (2007) reported that over two-thirds of Latinx immigrants in the United States maintain some form of engagement with their native countries (e.g., wiring funds or returning home to reunite with relatives). As a result, Latinx immigrants in the United States form an ideal explanatory case to consider the role of social media affordances in forming digital diasporas. As we understand them, digital diasporas transcend traditional boundaries across various platforms, spaces, and borders (Candidatu et al., 2019; Trauthig & Woolley, 2023).

Acknowledging this complexity, it becomes evident that the library and information science (LIS) field has often minoritized Latinx voices and perspectives within these diasporic spaces (Colón-Aguirre, 2022). Our approach advocates for a nuanced understanding that considers the fluid nature of diasporas, emphasizing the need to examine dynamics within the continuum of offline interactions and online affordances. The Latinx population serves as a crucial focal point in this pursuit due to its inherent heterogeneity and enduring connections to countries of origin (Waldinger, 2007). Including Latinx perspectives and experiences in LIS discourse contributes to a more nuanced comprehension of the intricate intersections of race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, age, and ability in information science (Coldiron & Capo, 2022).

The political history of Latin America is a complex tapestry marked by an intricate range of political systems, ideologies, and actions. Various factors, including colonialism, independence movements, socioeconomic inequalities, foreign interventions, and internal power struggles, have shaped the population’s American story; the United States bears responsibility for political instability and subsequent waves of migration (Gonzalez, 2022). The political circumstances in immigrants’ countries of origin helped shape their motivations for migrating to the United States through the last century. However, it is essential to acknowledge that immigration to the United States has been happening through border and treaty changes for centuries.

Many Latinx immigrants remain connected, in various ways, to their country of origin despite the economic and political strife they may have left behind. Vorobeva et al. (2022) confirm that “immigrants use digital communication means to reconnect and maintain their former sociocultural networks in the countries of origin and to adjust to the current place of living” (p.

131). Typical activities for many Latinx immigrants include sending funds to help pay family bills, traveling back and forth to reunite with relatives or to comply with visa requirements, consuming broadcast news from their country of origin, and frequently communicating with friends and family, via letters, telephone, email, and social media (Waldinger, 2007; 2015). With these activities in mind, in this research, we were guided by the following questions:

- How does social media mediate Latinx digital diasporas?
- Which affordances of social media platforms facilitate a sense of community within Latinx digital diasporas?

We proceed with a brief overview of the literature on digital diasporas and affordances. We discuss the methods used, followed by the findings. In our discussion, we articulate the ways in which social media affordances mediate the creation and maintenance of digital diasporas. This research illuminates the mechanisms by which digital diasporas flourish via social media.

Literature review

Here, we review the relevant literature on digital diasporas and affordances. Although few studies combine these areas, we believe that the affordances framework can facilitate a more thorough understanding of how social media platforms afford the construction and maintenance of digital diasporas.

Digital diasporas

International migration has increased substantially in the past five decades (United Nations, 2022). The United Nations' International Organization for Migration (IOM) estimates that there were 281 million international migrants in 2020 (United Nations, 2022). The Latin American/Caribbean region has the fastest-growing population of international migrants (Natarajan et al., 2022). According to the Pew Center's analysis of IOM data, the U.S. has the highest number of immigrants (Natarajan et al., 2022). Although many scholars have studied migration throughout the past several decades, this scholarship has become especially interdisciplinary with the rise of information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly the Internet and social media.

With the advent of the internet, the ubiquity of mobile phones, and the pervasiveness of social media, migrants have several ways to stay connected to their origin countries and cultures (Hiller & Franz, 2004; Mitra, 2001). Kang's (2011) study on Chinese migrants in London, for example, showed that migrants employ internet applications to replicate their cultural traditions through the consumption of visual and audio content, making the distinction between home and abroad blurry. Vicari (2015) found that at home and abroad, Cubans relied on blogs to develop and engage in political discourse. In another study, Benítez (2006) described the ways that new technologies (and accompanying digital divides) facilitated and complicated communication between Salvadoran migrants and those remaining in El Salvador.

Some scholars have referred to a "digital diaspora," meaning that "the [i]nternet is not a medium for one-way cultural imperialism, but also a facilitator of new flows, reinforcing senses of national and local identity and augmenting and giving a platform to global interactions and cosmopolitanism" (Ponzanesi, 2020, p. 982). Social media features like hashtags, captions, selfies, and trending topics, facilitate identity construction and affiliative practices among

geographically dispersed communities (diasporas) through identity-assuring self-representation and community building (Caidi et al., 2018). Alonso and Oiarzabal (2010) said that diasporans use ICTs primarily for two reasons: 1) to connect with their homelands and 2) to develop a collective sense of identity while away. Being part of a digital diaspora² means that one can communicate more readily across multiple modes, with more extensive access to friends and family members (Banerjee & German, 2010; Gittinger, 2015; Hiller & Franz, 2004). Digital technologies such as ICTs and social media allow diasporans to conduct transnational communication within the host nation and across borders.

Affordances

The affordances framework provides one way to understand the interactions between humans and technology. Based on ecological affordances (Gibson, 1979), affordances are understood as perceived action possibilities, that is, what can occur as humans use or manipulate technology. Gibson (1979) posits that “the affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill” (p. 127, emphasis in original). In the context of technology, Evans et al. (2017) defined affordance as a “ ‘multi-faceted relational structure’ (as cited in Faraj & Azad, 2012, p. 254) between an object/technology and the user that enables or constrains potential behavioral outcomes in a particular context” (p. 36). A classic example is stairs: while stairs generally afford climbing, not all stairs are climbable for all people. Some stairs may be too steep or have risers that are too tall for one person but not another, for instance. boyd (2010) usefully clarified that “affordances do not dictate participants’ behavior, but they do configure the environment in a way that shapes participants’ engagement” (p. 39).

However, Costa (2018) described affordances-in-practice, emphasizing the situated, contextual nature of affordances. Although some social media affordances have been described (at least implicitly) as universal, Costa (2018) demonstrated that different cultural approaches to social media perceive and activate affordances uniquely. Indeed, only some users perceive or utilize (or want to use) every affordance of a particular technology/platform (Abel et al., 2021; Bimber & Gil de Zúñiga, 2020; Costa, 2018; Freeman & Neff, 2021). Technologies typically have multiple affordances, which may have various outcomes (Faraj & Azad, 2012; Karahanna, 2018; Pearce & Malhotra, 2022). Here, we follow Ronzhyn et al. (2023), who define social media affordances as “the perceived actual or imagined properties of social media, emerging through the relation of technological, social, and contextual, that enable and constrain specific uses of the platforms” (p. 3178).

Previous research has explicated many social media affordances (boyd, 2014; Rice et al., 2017; Treem & Leonardi, 2013; Zheng & Yu, 2016); we discuss six of these here and illustrate them in Table 1. The first social media affordance we adopt is Confidentiality, which means that on some social media platforms, information is not widely circulated; it stays within a small circle of designated recipients. Confidentiality affordance is related to Karahanna et al.’s (2018) affordance of “communication,” which describes the ability to communicate with others via direct messages or chatting directly. Costa (2018) described how one user in her ethnographic fieldwork used social media “to conceal and display different aspects of himself to different audiences” (p. 3645). While “previous research has suggested that anonymity in online settings is likely to encourage verbal attacks and insults” (Maia & Rezende, 2016, p. 124, emphasis added), our focus here is not the anonymity of social media platforms, per se, but the platforms that afford private communication,³ such as WhatsApp and Snap (Schelenz, 2023; Trauthig & Woolley, 2023). With these social media platforms, one can communicate with friends and family

in a private, one-to-few manner. Social media are typically thought of as many-to-many broadcast media, but some platforms afford opportunities to speak directly to close contacts.

Table 1. Six affordances of social media

Affordance	Description	Platform(s) mentioned by study participants	Representative literature
Confidentiality	Information is restricted or not widely circulated; results in feelings of privacy	WhatsApp, Snap	Karahanna et al. (2018); Costa (2018); Maia & Rezende (2016)
Connectivity	Creates linkages between people (friends and family)	WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Snap, Twitter	Karahanna et al. (2018); Zheng & Yu (2016); Treem & Leonardi (2013); Meisner & Ledbetter (2022)
Creativity	People can express themselves innovatively	YouTube, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, Pinterest	Hall et al. (2021)
Interactivity/ Metavoicing	Can “react” or respond to posts, expanding the information available	Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter	Zheng & Yu (2016) ; Davis et al. (2009) ; Chen et al. (2016); Rathnayake & Winter (2018); Majchrzak et al. (2013)
Spreadability	Information spreads widely	Instagram, Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube, Twitter,	boyd (2014) ; Oltmann et al. (2020) ; Zheng & Yu (2016) ; Pearce (2015)
Visibility	Ability to see or locate information	YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter	Evans et al. (2017) ; Zeng & Yu (2016) ; Oltmann et al. (2020); Treem & Leonardi (2013); Waxa & Gwaka

(2021); Kim & Ellison (2021); Bullock et al. (2021)

A second affordance is connectivity, which affords links between people as they use various platforms. Called ‘relationship building’ by Karahanna et al. (2018), the connectivity affordance “enables users to form relationships with other users in a social media setting” (p. 744). These “established connections” (Treem & Leonardi, 2013) are central to the social aspect of social media. Whereas confidentiality concerns private messages and connections, connectivity focuses on public interactions, messages, and connections. In their examination of live streaming, Meisner & Ledbetter (2022) noted that facilitating connections between live streamers and their viewers was one of the primary affordances of platforms (even though the connections were somewhat contrived or illusionary, as may be true on other platforms).

Creativity is the affordance where people can creatively express themselves and reveal parts of their personality. Although a demonstrably common aspect of social media, relatively little research has examined creativity as an affordance of these platforms. Hall et al. (2021), in their analysis of digital entertainment games, positioned creativity as an outcome of various design affordances in games. However, we argue in this project that creativity is better seen as an input affordance (Abascal et al., 2015), which facilitates outcomes such as an Instagram post of an individual singing a song or a post of a small group dancing on a Facebook news feed.

Interactivity/metavoicing refers to the ability to react and respond to content across social media platforms. Rathnayake and Winter (2018) suggest that different platforms afford different levels and types of metavoicing. Indeed, Majchrzak et al. (2013) define metavoicing as:

engaging in the ongoing online knowledge conversation by reacting online to others’ presence, profiles, content, and activities. We refer to this affordance as metavoicing, rather than voicing, because the individual is not simply voicing his or her opinion, but adding metaknowledge to the content that is already online. Metavoicing can take many forms including retweeting, voting on posting, commenting on someone’s post, voting on the comment, ‘liking’ a profile, etc. (p. 41; emphasis in original)

Interacting with one another on social media is part of the inherent value of these platforms for many users. Thus, metavoicing builds more content, to which more people can then respond.

Oltmann et al. (2020) described how various features of Twitter (now X)—such as hashtags, the reply @ feature, and the inclusion of shortened URLs in tweets—enhanced the affordance of spreadability for users; their content was more likely to spread across Twitter when these features were utilized. Pearce (2015) explained spreadability as “the distribution of content affordably and efficiently” (p. 1168) to a wide range of readers and responders. Spreadability disperses information in ways not possible without social media. Although they used the term ‘distributed collaboration,’ Zheng and Yu (2016) discussed spreadability in relation to volunteers being recruited via social media to support the Free Lunch for Children (FL4C) program in China by arranging schedules, self-organizing in chat groups for knowledge sharing, strategizing best practices, and organizing fundraising.

Finally, visibility means that more people can see what others post. For example, Kim and Ellison (2021) noted that individuals on social media can see what other individuals are posting about political activities, and this increased visibility can lead to offline political action. They stated that “visibility affords social media users to make their once-invisible behaviors, knowledge, preferences, and network visible to other users including immediate audiences as well as third-party actors” (Kim & Ellison, 2021, p. 3). Specifically, previously invisible information can become visible to others (Waxa & Gwaka, 2021). Evans et al. (2017) explained that “visibility and searchability make possible actions related to the finding, confronting, viewing, and consuming content - when these affordances are not present content is either unavailable or obscured to the user” (p. 40).

Methods

To investigate the ways in which social media affordances enable the formation of a digital diaspora, two researchers conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews (Appendix A) with eight Latinx individuals in a southeastern metropolis during the summer and fall of 2022. Latinx participants were chosen because, as a group, they exhibit considerable heterogeneity in their backgrounds, cultures, reasons for immigration, and daily lives in the United States. Due to both this heterogeneity and many Latinx’s connections to their countries of origin, this population constitutes a useful explanatory case study to investigate ways in which social media affordances mediate the digital diaspora.

The research received our university’s Internal Review Board (IRB) approval. Participants were recruited through local nonprofit organizations, personal contacts, and snowball sampling; overall, it was a convenience sample. All participants were middle class, between the ages of 30 and 55 years old, and identified as Latino/a/x professionals working in the city (Table 2). While we did not ask about immigration or citizenship status, all participants indicated they had migrated to the U.S. five to seventeen years previously.

Interviews were conducted in person, via telephone, or via Zoom, at the participants’ choice. We conducted some interviews in English and some in Spanish, depending on the interviewer’s and participant’s fluency and comfort. Interviews lasted between 28 and 56 minutes; with participants’ permission, the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analyzed.

Table 2. Participant data.

Pseudonym	Profession	Immigrated from	Approximate time in the U.S.
Valentina	Artist	Venezuela	8 years
Valeria	Baker	Not available	7 years
Camila	Nonprofit worker	Colombia	17 years
Diego	Journalist	Guatemala	13 years
Daniela	Journalist	El Salvador	12 years
Luis	Librarian	Cuba	5 years
Elena	Librarian	Cuba	13 years
Gabriela	Photographer	Mexico	17 years

We gathered detailed accounts of participants' experiences as members of the Latinx community using social media. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, with pseudonyms assigned. We systematically categorized and analyzed our data by hand, without the use of specialized software or automated algorithms. Both researchers read through transcripts and assigned codes or labels to segments of text based on themes, concepts, or categories relevant to the research questions. We used a combination of deductive and inductive qualitative methods, iteratively refining our approach.

Initially, we used a hypothetico-deductive method, constructing a conceptual framework (Saldaña, 2016) based on Costa's (2018) "affordances-in-practice framework" to consider the specific, contextual nature of affordances for Latinx individuals. During the first coding round, alongside our hypothetico-deductive approach, we focused on our chosen six affordances of social media: confidentiality, connectivity, creativity, interactivity/metavoicing, spreadability, and visibility (Table 1).

We inductively identified significant emerging themes that revealed that participants use social media to connect with their homelands and build a collective identity abroad, facilitating easier, multimodal communication with a broad range of friends and family within the host nation and across borders. Consequently, we categorized these themes as "digital diaspora features." These digital diaspora features are: increased connectivity, fluid and transnational engagement, development of collective identity, multimodal communication, reinforcement of national and local identity, and complexities in communication.

In a second coding round, we applied our revised codebook to the dataset. We cross-referenced the diaspora features with the social media affordances to identify which features of diaspora creation were supported by social media affordances.

Addressing Researchers' Assumptions and Biases

One author of this study is a Latinx immigrant whose experiences as an immigrant facilitated trust and participation among both researchers and participants. Additionally, her insights helped in understanding the cultural nuances, norms, history, and values of the Latinx community. The other author is a white lesbian woman who is not an immigrant. Her knowledge of affordances was useful in applying the theoretical framework.

Being part of the community being studied does not automatically absolve the researcher from potential biases in the research process (Subedi & Rhee, 2008). As suggested by Subedi and Rhee, we actively listened and engaged in meaningful dialogue with participants. Moreover, we conducted self-reflection on our backgrounds and power dynamics to ensure culturally sensitive research practices. Furthermore, we implemented member checking by sharing our findings and interpretations with participants to ensure accuracy and invite feedback. These measures were taken as part of our commitment to being accountable to the communities with whom we collaborate (Patel, 2016).

Findings

Based on our interviews with the eight participants, we found that several social media affordances enable the formation of a digital diaspora. Although we did not ask participants directly about our six identified social media affordances (Table 1), they did emerge from the

data, being evident across multiple social media platforms and operationalized by multiple participants.

Confidentiality

It is critical to note that most social media platforms are not designed to enhance or promote confidentiality; rather, platforms such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram are explicitly designed to promote sharing personal information widely (as well as collecting vast amounts of data on their users). However, some social media platforms do focus on the appeal of confidential or quasi-confidential information and discussions; these include WhatsApp, Signal, and Telegram. Additionally, social media platforms like Instagram and Snapchat, afford users the ability to send private messages. Thus, some social media platforms do enhance confidentiality, while other platforms constrain or limit it.

Participants had mixed thoughts about the importance of confidentiality. For example, several noted that the ability to have private, encrypted conversations on some social media platforms was helpful; in some circumstances, confidentiality can serve to enhance the digital diaspora by providing safe, contained spaces to explore ideas and strengthen relationships. Valentina⁴ said, “I have noticed many [from] those countries always talking on WhatsApp because it is a place that feels safer to talk about the situation, what they are going through, without feeling monitored by the government.” This ability to have freer conversations on some platforms created closer connections between immigrants and those who remained in their countries of origin, especially when the home country had an authoritarian government. For instance, Luis said, “WhatsApp as a social network [and] as a communication component is somewhat underestimated. But lately, it has become very important... I use it a lot because it is one of the fundamental ways I have to communicate with my family” in Cuba.”

Daniela referred to the ability, on some platforms, to send private messages: “Many people wrote privately to me and told me they were tired...people tell me we are tired of hearing about vaccines, of fighting, of hearing about politics. We want something like show business because we want to relax.” Finally, Camila explained that she and her colleagues used Signal⁵ to communicate about immigration raids and similar concerns, saying, “Signal was for leaders so they could tell their people... the idea was not to use any mass media that was like social networks, but Signal is for people who know how to stay alert and who can share information” with others.”

Other participants noted that, for them, social media was not a space that increased or promoted privacy due to its open nature. Camila said, “I know that here, for example, when there are things that need to be discussed more privately, social media is not what they use.” She was thinking of platforms that lack encryption or confidentiality. In a similar vein, Gabriela said, “I don’t have anywhere to talk about” politics that felt secure and confidential.” Some participants took the lack of confidentiality and privacy at face value. For instance, Valeria said, “I use my real name on all of my social media accounts. I never felt like, ‘Oh, I need to hide myself’ or something...I feel okay with what I am posting and what I am saying.”

Connectivity

The affordance of connectivity is perhaps the quintessential element of social media platforms, as they are primarily created to connect people to one another. Camila said her use of social media, particularly WhatsApp, conveyed “the stuff of ordinary life, connecting with my mom.”

Many platforms, especially Facebook and Instagram, facilitate providing and sharing global and local information between users. This is a crucial feature of a digital diaspora. For example, Elena explained, “I can finally try to reach people that I haven’t seen in years. There are so many Cubans that are all around the world.” As a journalist, Daniela noted, “I recently realized that people want to be aware of their country of origin, but the city where they live is always important.” People wanted news from their home country, but they also sought quotidian information about events and activities like local festivals, road construction, and traffic updates.

The connectivity affordance of certain social media platforms is illustrated by the emphasis that these platforms have on daily life. Some of our participants continually checked certain platforms to stay informed and up to date. Valentia explained:

I know of at least one close community of Latinos, specifically, that is a meeting to talk about freedoms, talk about civil rights. Why WhatsApp? Because people are more likely to see it there. There is no way for you to look over it...If I get a message on WhatsApp, I always read it, because on WhatsApp I have my mom, my dad, everyone in Venezuela, my close family, so I always look at WhatsApp. Many people know that WhatsApp messages will always be read.

Creativity

The affordance of creativity means that users can express themselves creatively, including sharing songs, art, and other creative work. For example, Camila explained, “Instagram’s content is light, silly, funny things” that can help one relax and not focus on work. Valentina said, “I like Instagram because it’s perfect to post your photos, the artistic part, the video, and things like that [that] people respond to a lot.” She also used TikTok to post videos of her singing and to watch others sing, further reflecting:

I like it because there are many, many positive things and I like that people are making videos, singing, dancing, and families are coming together. I like it because it’s funny. The videos can be funny or they can have a short message. I think it is a good tool for people who develop their creativity, because not everyone is going to be a singer, or wants to be a singer like that. You don’t have to pursue a career in singing, because it’s a hard career and you have to do a lot of things. But [if] you want to express your creativity or share what you are doing, TikTok is a great space for that, and you never know how far it will go.

Gabriela, the photographer, said, “Pinterest is the best! Because with Pinterest, when I see and use it, my imagination soars...there I see all my ideas.” She also used Facebook and Instagram for her photography business, saying, “With Instagram, I’m kind of more careful of what I post. And Facebook, I tell you, is more familiar and work is very different. In terms of looking for work and

showing my work it's different." Thus, different platforms allowed her to tailor her message for various audiences and share her creative work more broadly.

Finally, Valeria explained that she used Instagram and YouTube to create and spread her podcast across multiple platforms; more broadly, she noted, "You can create new stuff or different stuff. You can like put together different ideas and maybe do something bigger...I feel that it's a good way to create something good."

Interactivity/Metavoicing

Valeria discussed her use of Instagram, saying, "We share, like, post for people or for gossip and whatever. It's like more interactive." Elena told a story about posting a pro-vegetarian image on social media, only to have a friend joke about eating animals, so she left an "angry face" emoji in response. Though simple, these sorts of interactions can build connections and allow people the ability to interact with one another. Similarly, Valentina described the benefits of using Instagram to interact with others: "You have feedback, whether as a singer, an event, or something. It works well for me because it is perfect to post your flyers or also to post your photos...people respond to a lot in that sense." Gabriela added, "On Facebook, it makes me very familiar. On Facebook, you can have more contact with the people you know."

Additionally, some participants talked about strategically using certain features of social media platforms to create more engagement. For example, Valeria posted on Instagram, 'If you want to get more engagement, so you need to write the things in a way, you need to add the hashtag or location, whatever.' Diego described differences between Instagram and Facebook, suggesting that, in the Latinx community, Facebook users are primarily women and those who didn't attend college, while Instagram users tended to be second-generation Latinx and younger people. Diego intimated that "the majority—at least of my audience—are mothers who have two or three kids. Very rarely does a father care about school or housework." Thus, he develops his journalism stories and social media posts to coincide with the interests of the likely users. Daniela explained, "Instagram is mostly images and videos with music. If you play the music of the moment, that's going to be a boom and it's going to have a lot of followers and the more views the better."

Spreadability

The affordance of spreadability describes how social media platforms enable the wide and efficient spread of information. For example, Daniela shared:

During the pandemic, everyone wanted to communicate through Facebook and all the platforms, and it was very important because they gave you so much information about the COVID vaccines [and] everything that was happening to people.

The participants emphasized the use of social media to share urgent information, such as information about vaccination programs, immigration raids, and traffic accidents. Valentina noted that, with social media, posts "are not just left on the internet. It's uniting with people."

Some participants explained that they used social media not just for personal reasons but also professionally. Camila said her nonprofit organization used Facebook, "to publicize the organization and what we were doing, to do fundraising and announcing how people could support" the organization." Daniela added that when she arrived in Louisville, she "realized that

many artists, many people, small business entrepreneurs, did not have a voice, did not have someone who could bring that they did to the whole world, to the entire Hispanic community.” That realization led her to create a Spanish-language online newspaper.

Visibility

Related to spreadability, the affordance of visibility refers to the ability to see and locate specific information. Gabriela said, “I upload something [to social media], and I know that people see it. And I can show what I have.” Luis explained that he supplemented the official information from Cuba to gain more accurate information:

So, what I do is [follow] some YouTubers, or influencers, to compensate, because the official information, well, it’s complicated. So, we must compensate, get our information from other sources.

Similarly, Daniela said, “Whenever I can, I put important information from Cuba, Mexico, and other countries because I know people are interested.” This was confirmed by Valentina, who suggested, “Imagine how it would feel to experience what people experience in these [Hispanic] countries, and the media there doesn’t show anything other than the country is perfect... Today, social networks have a lot of power.” Thus, information from other countries was more visible to a wider audience. This facilitated the development of digital diasporas, connecting Latinx to information from their countries of origin.

Conclusively, as Table 3 shows, the social media affordances operationalized in this study activated the development of collective identity and the reinforcement of national and local identity the most, with Interactivity/Metavoicing being the most employed affordance.

Table 3. Participant discussion of social media platforms and affordances

Affordance\ Digital Diaspora Feature	Increased Connectivity	Fluid & Trans-national Engagement	Development of Collective Identity	Multi-modal Communication	Reinforcement of National & Local Identity	Complexities in Communication
Confidentiality						x
Connectivity	x	x			x	
Creativity			x	x		
Interactivity/Metavoicing		x	x	x		x
Spreadability			x		x	
Visibility					x	

Discussion

Previously, scholars have analyzed the ways in which the internet facilitated the creation and maintenance of a digital diaspora (Aziz, 2022; Hiller & Franz, 2004; Khvorostianov et al., 2012; Mallapragada, 2006). Hiller and Franz (2004) identified four categories of computer usage and three stages of a migration cycle, showing how computer/internet usage enabled emigrated Newfoundlanders to feel connected to their homeland. Mallapragada (2006) expanded beyond simplistic understandings of diaspora, noting that the “Indian-American web” revealed a complex amalgamation of “ambivalence, hybridity, uneven power relations and strategic alliances as symptomatic of a community shaped by diverse histories of migration and different imaginings of *the* homeland” (p. 209, emphasis in original). Older Jewish immigrants utilized the internet and social media to cope with the challenges of immigration (Khvorostianov et al., 2012). Aziz (2022) noted that “digital media have transformed online mediations of diasporic communities and refugees for identity formation and belonging in transnational spaces” (p. 4).

Our study is unique in two ways: first, it explicitly uses an affordances framework to elucidate the mechanisms by which social media platforms mediate the formation and development of digital diaspora, particularly for Latinx immigrants. Through in-depth interviews with Latinx immigrants, we illuminated how social media platforms afford the formation of digital diasporas for our participants.

A digital diaspora is often defined through connections—to other immigrants, to the country of origin, and to the current country. Connectivity is a primary affordance of social media platforms. Digital diasporas leverage information and information communication technologies (ICTs), including the Internet, mobile phones, and social media, to maintain and strengthen connections with their countries of origin and cultures. In our study, participants utilized social media platforms to connect with other immigrants, with friends and family still in their country of origin, and with individuals around the world. This *fluid and transnational engagement* involved various forms of communication and interaction across borders, which included sending remittances, returning visits, cross-border communication, creating new posts and media, and consuming media from their home countries. This engagement is supported mainly by the affordances of *interactivity and metavoicing*, as they allow participants to engage with and create content, expanding the information available.

For digital diasporas to flourish, members need to develop a *collective identity*. Digital diasporas use ICTs to build a collective sense of identity while physically distant from their homelands (Aziz, 2022). This collective identity is facilitated through online *platforms' creativity, visibility, and spreadability* affordances, which help reinforce a sense of belonging and connection among diaspora members (Table 3). Overall, our findings demonstrate the empowerment users experience by expressing their *creativity* on social media platforms and leveraging these platforms to share their artistic endeavors. Our findings also show that people connect to relevant content and access alternative perspectives that might not be accessible through traditional media channels (especially those from authoritarian governments in their native countries). Social media platforms empower individuals and organizations to amplify their messages and contribute to developing digital communities.

Being part of a digital diaspora allows individuals to communicate more readily across *multiple modes*. This includes communication within the host nation and across borders, facilitated by various digital platforms and technologies. Participants discussed using textual communication

to *interact*, including direct audio speech, visual elements like images and videos, emojis, and specialized terminology of their field. Moreover, participants expressed themselves on social media, covering personal, creative, political, professional, and identity-related aspects of *creative expression*.

Our findings also show that social media affordances *reinforce national and local identities* among diaspora members, particularly when sharing information related to home countries (Table 3). Our participants indicated that platforms like Facebook and Instagram connect individuals within a digital diaspora and reinforce their national identity. Moreover, participants argue that visibility through social networks *connects* individuals to information from their countries of origin and supports their national identity.

The use of new information technologies introduces *complexities in communication*. Participants expressed mixed thoughts about the importance of *confidentiality* on social media. While some value having private, encrypted conversations, others noted that social media is not a space that increases or promotes confidentiality due to its open nature. This dichotomy indicates the complexity of how individuals perceive and experience confidentiality on social media. We also find evidence that individuals need to navigate and employ specific tactics to effectively *interact* and reach their audience on social media platforms, adding a layer of complexity to the communication process. They often tailor communication strategies to different audiences on distinct platforms. These varied responses highlight the complexity of individual attitudes toward confidentiality and identity disclosure on social media (Abel et al., 2021).

The second contribution of our study uncovered the significance of creativity as a social media affordance for Latinx immigrants as they forge new relationships and maintain homeland ties. Participants utilized various platforms to share their artistic endeavors with diverse and widespread audiences, gaining validation, support, and encouragement through these processes. Previous research has not demonstrated the power of creativity as an affordance of social media—activities such as singing, dancing, creating artwork, and sharing photography are powerful ways to connect with others. This affordance may be particularly meaningful for the digital diaspora.

Conclusion

The mechanisms or processes by which digital diasporas are developed have previously remained somewhat opaque. However, our research illuminates how digital diasporas can be created and maintained through the affordances of social media platforms (Aziz, 2022). Affordances such as confidentiality, connectivity, creativity, metavoicing, spreadability, and visibility enable immigrants to connect with one another, with people in their current country, with family and friends in their country of origin, and, in fact, with cultural kin worldwide. Aziz (2022) reported that social media platforms facilitated the development of diaspora identity construction among Rohingya immigrants in Australia. Similarly, we found that six affordances of social media mediated how Latinx immigrants their identities and connections to their countries of origin.

The affordance of creativity has been under-studied. Thus, our research here notably demonstrates the significance of creativity affordances to digital diaspora communities. Through this affordance, people shared artistic activities and gained support and encouragement, further building connections and strengthening ties to one another, to people in their country of origin, and to people in their new country.

While we recognize the affordances that mediate Latinx digital diasporas, we also acknowledge that the Latinx immigrant experience is highly diverse, with variations based on migratory status, educational attainment, gender, and additional intersecting identities (Colón-Aguirre, 2022). We also acknowledge that digital platforms, in addition to supporting, can also further marginalize immigrants (Bastick & Mallet-Garcia, 2022). Social media platforms can also replicate and even intensify social interactions that happen in the real world (Stevens et al., 2017), including stereotyping, racism, xenophobia, and discrimination. Moreover, these data-driven technologies can capture movement and replicate logics that facilitate racialized forms of economic exploitation (Barabas, 2023). Thus, while social media may mediate Latinx diasporas collectively, they may also further exacerbate Latinx people's precarity individually.

Future research can expand upon our work to further analyze how social media affordances help the Latinx digital diaspora to flourish. The theoretical framework of affordances helps explain the mechanisms by which digital diasporas grow and are maintained. Subsequent work could examine other cultures and immigrant communities, including perhaps studying ties between immigrant communities spread across multiple countries. Additionally, future work can continue to explicate how creativity affordance contributes to the digital diaspora and other community-building processes.

Another critical recommendation involves conducting more detailed examinations of the Latinx experience, considering nuanced variations associated with migratory status, educational attainment, gender, and intersecting identities. While our sample was too small to identify differences in responses based on native country, gender, age, or immigrants' time in the U.S., these nuances are important to study in future work. This approach is essential for a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of the Latinx diaspora (Colón-Aguirre, 2022). Additionally, research should delve into the dual functions of digital platforms, acknowledging both their affordances in supporting diasporas and their potential contributions to the marginalization of immigrants, as observed in the findings of Bastick and Mallet-Garcia (2022). This exploration should encompass the interplay between inherent precarities and the attitudes, utilization, and outcomes of social media affordances. Such endeavors will contribute to a more nuanced comprehension of the complex dynamics shaping the Latinx (and other migrant) experience in digital spaces.

Endnotes

¹ In this project, we use "Latinx" to refer to individuals with a cultural background from Mexico, Central America, and/or South America. Similarly, we use "Latin America" to denote this same region. We note that some individuals and communities use this label in divergent ways, so here we clarify our usage. See Hicks-Alcaraz (2022) for a needed, thoughtful complication of what "latinidad" might mean.

² It is important to remember that not all migrants have (equal) access to (all) information and communication technologies; some migrants are simply *not* part of the digital diaspora (see Banerjee & German, 2010; Benítez, 2006).

³ Of course, users' privacy on most social media platforms is debated, as most platforms collect and analyze vast amounts of data about their users. However, this perspective on privacy (or



lack thereof) is not what we mean by "confidentiality" in this context. Rather, confidentiality is about communicating with only a few other users in an ostensibly private/confidential manner."

⁴ All participants' names are pseudonyms.

⁵ Perhaps a little lesser known than traditional apps like Instagram and Snap, Signal is a free, open-source messaging app similar to WhatsApp. Launched in 2014, Signal was developed by the Signal Technology Foundation, a non-profit organization. For more information, visit <https://signal.org/>.

Acknowledgements

We thank our participants for their time and perspectives.

Appendix A

Interview Protocol

1. What are the social media applications you use regularly? (For example, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, WhatsApp, Pinterest, Snapchat, Tok-tok, Google Messenger)
2. Now we're going to discuss some of the platforms you mentioned.
3. Why do you use [platform]? What do you get out of it?
4. What do you like about [platform]?
5. Who do you like to connect with? What's valuable about these connections?
6. What particular features or aspects of [the platform] do you like or find useful? (For example, using your real name, liking posts, etc.)
7. Why are these features important to you?
[repeat these questions for different platforms, at least 2-3 platforms]
8. What role do those platforms play in your life?
9. Let's talk about the tradeoff between privacy and public forums like social media.
10. When you discuss something on social media, do you worry about your privacy? Why or why not?
11. Are there some things that you think should not be discussed publicly on social media? Like what?
12. What are some good things about connecting with people on social media?
13. What are some negative things about connecting with people on social media?
14. We have just a few more questions for you. How old are you?
15. Is there anything I haven't asked you about social media, that you want to tell me?
16. Do you have any additional thoughts or comments?

References

- Abascal, J., Barbosa, S., Fetter, M., Gross, T., Palanque, P., & Winckler, M. (2015). *Actuated shear: Enabling haptic feedback on rich touch interfaces*. [Conference paper]. Human-computer interaction - INTERACT 2015 (pp. 140-147). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-22723-8_11
- Abel, S., Machin, T., & Brownlow, C. (2021). Social media, rituals, and long-distance family relationship maintenance: A mixed-methods systematic review. *New Media & Society*, 23(3), 632-654. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820958717>
- Alonso, A., & Oiarzabal, P. J. (2010). *Diasporas in the new media age: Identity, politics and community*. University of Nevada Press.
- Aziz, A. (2022). Rohingya diaspora online: Mapping the spaces of visibility, resistance and transnational identity on social media. *New Media & Society*, 0(00), 21pp. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221132241>
- Banerjee, P., & German, M. (2010). Migration and transculturation in the digital age: A framework for studying the 'space between.' *Journal of International and Global Studies*, 2(1), Article 2, 22-35. <https://doi.org/10.62608/2158-0669.1034>
- Barabas, C. (2023). Care as (re)capture: Data colonialism and race during times of crisis. *New Media & Society*, 0(0), 20pp. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231165902>
- Bastick, Z., & Mallet-Garcia, M. (2022). Double lockdown: The effects of digital exclusion on undocumented immigrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. *New Media & Society*, 24(2), 365-383. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211063185>
- Benítez, J. L. (2006). Transnational dimensions of the digital divide among Salvadoran immigrants in the Washington DC metropolitan area. *Global Networks*, 6(2), 181-199. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1471-0374.2006.00140.x>
- Bimber, B., & Gil de Zúñiga, H. (2020). The unedited public sphere. *New Media & Society*, 22(4), 700-715. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444819893980>
- boyd, d. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A Networked self: Identity, community, and culture on social network sites* (pp. 39-58). Routledge.
- boyd, d. (2014). *It's complicated: The social lives of networked teens*. Yale University Press.
- Bradshaw, S., & Howard, P. N. (2018). The global organization of social media disinformation campaigns. *Journal of International Affairs*, 71(1.5), 23-32. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26508115>
- Bullock, K., Garland, J., & Coupar, F. (2021). Police-community engagement and the affordances and constraints of social media. *Policing & Society*, 31(4), 373-385. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10439463.2020.1831498>

- Caidi, N., Beazley, S., & Marquez, L. C. (2018). Holy selfies: Performing pilgrimage in the age of social media. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion*, 21(1/2), 8-31. <https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v2i1/2.32209>
- Candidatu, L., Leurs, K., & Ponzanesi, S. (2019). Digital diasporas: Beyond the buzzword: Toward a relational understanding of mobility and connectivity. In J. Retis, & R. Tsagarousianou, (Eds.), *The handbook of diasporas, media, and culture* (pp. 31-47). Wiley. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781119236771.ch3>
- Chen, Q., Xu, X., Cao, B. & Zhang, W. (2016, April). Social media policies as responses for social media affordances: The case of China. *Government Information Quarterly*, 33(2), 313-324. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2016.04.008>
- Coldiron, K. L., & Capo, Jr., J. (2022). Making Miami's history and present more accessible. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion*, 6(4), 84-98. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48720307>
- Colón-Aguirre, M. (2022). A refocusing on the study of the gatekeepers among linguistic minorities, the case of Spanish speakers in the United States: Implications for the study of information behavior. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion*, 6(3), 38-51. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48700867>
- Costa, E. (2018). Affordances-in-practice: An ethnographic critique of social media logic and context collapse. *New Media & Society*, 20(10), 3641-3656. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448187562>
- Craig, S. L., Eaton, A. D., McInroy, L. B., Leung, V. W. Y. & Krishnan, S. (2021, January-March). Can social media participation enhance LGBTQ+ youth well-being? Development of the social media benefits scale. *Social Media + Society*, 7(1), 1-13. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305121988931>
- Davis, A., Murphy, J., Owens, D., Khazanchi, D., & Zigurs, I. (2009). Avatars, people, and virtual worlds: Foundations for research in metaverses. *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 10(2), 91-117. <https://doi.org/10.17705/1jais.00183>
- Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2017, January). Explicating affordances: A conceptual framework for understanding affordances in communication research. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 22(1), 35-52. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12180>
- Faraj, S., & Azad, B. (2012). The materiality of technology: An affordance perspective. In P. M. Leonardi, B. A. Nardi, & J. Kallinikos, (Eds.), *Materiality and organizing: Social interaction in a technological world* (pp. 237-258). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199664054.003.0012>
- Freeman, J. L., & Neff, G. (2021). The challenge of repurposed technologies for youth: Understanding the unique affordances of digital self-tracking for adolescents. *New Media & Society*, 25(11), 3047-3064. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211040266>
- Gibson, J. J. (1979). *The ecological approach to visual perception*. Houghton Mifflin.

- Gittinger, J. L. (2015). Hindu diaspora as 'virtual community': Digital neighborhoods, electronic transnationalism. *Symposia*, 7, 1-16.
<https://symposia.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/symposia/article/view/22561/18994>
- Gonzalez, J. (2022). *Harvest of empire: A history of Latinos in America: Second revised and updated edition*. Penguin.
- Hall, J. A. (2018). When is social media use social interaction? Defining mediated social interaction. *New Media & Society*, 20(1), 162-179.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816660782>
- Hall, J., Stickler, U., Herodotou, C., & Iacovides, I. (2021). Using reflexive photography to investigate design affordances for creativity in digital entertainment games. *International Journal of Human-Computer Interaction*, 37(9), 867-883.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10447318.2020.1848162>
- Hanckel, B., Vivienne, S., Byron, P., Robards, B., & Churchill, B. (2019). 'That's not necessarily for them': LGBTIQ+ young people, social media platform affordances and identity curation. *Media, Culture & Society*, 41(8), 1261-1278. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0163443719846612>
- Hicks-Alcaraz, M. (2022). Piloting the counter-memorias digital testimonio project: Blackness in U.S. Latinx and Latin American racial politics. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, and Inclusion*, 6(4), 99-119. <https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v6i4.38784>
- Hiller, H. H., & Franz, T. M. (2004). New ties, old ties and lost ties: The use of the internet in diaspora. *New Media & Society*, 6(6), 731-752. <https://doi.org/10.1177/146144804044327>
- Iosifidis, P. & Nicoli, N. (2020). *Digital democracy, social media and disinformation*. Routledge.
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429318481>
- Kang, T. (2011). Homeland re-territorialized: Revisiting the role of geographical places in the formation of diasporic identity in the digital age. *Information, Communication & Society*, 12(3), 326-343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180802635448>
- Karahanna, E., Xu, S. X., Xu, Y., & Zhang, A. (2018). The needs-affordances-features perspective for the use of social media. *MIS Quarterly*, 42(3), 737-756.
<https://aisel.aisnet.org/misq/vol42/iss3/5/>
- Khvorostianov, N., Elias, N., & Nimrod, G. (2012). 'Without it I am nothing': The internet in the lives of older immigrants. *New Media & Society*, 14(4), 583-599.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444811421599>
- Kim, D. H., & Ellison, N. B. (2021). From observation on social media to offline political participation: The social media affordances approach. *New Media & Society*, 24(12), 2614-2634. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444821998346>
- Lim, S. S., Bork-Huffer, T., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2016). Mobility, migration and new media: Manoeuvring through physical, digital, and liminal spaces. *New Media & Society*, 18(10), 2147-2154. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444816655610>

- Maia, R. C. M., & Rezende, T. A. S. (2016). Respect and disrespect in deliberation across the networked media environment: Examining multiple paths of political talk. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 21(2), 121-139. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12155>
- Majchrzak, A., Faraj, S., Kane, G. C., & Azad, B. (2013, October). The contradictory influence of social media affordances on online communal knowledge sharing. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 19(1), 38-55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcc4.12030>
- Mallapragada, M. (2006). Home, homeland, homepage: Belonging and the Indian-American web. *New Media & Society*, 8(2), 207-227. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806061943>
- Meisner, C., & Ledbetter, A. M. (2022). Participatory branding on social media: The affordances of live streaming for creative labor. *New Media & Society*, 24(5), 1179-1195. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444820972392>
- Mitra, A. (2001). Marginal voices in cyberspace. *New Media & Society*, 3(1), 29-48. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444801003001003>
- Moslimani, M., & Noe-Bustamante, L. (2023, August 16). Facts on Latinos in the U.S. Pew Research. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/latinos-in-the-us-fact-sheet/>
- Napoli, P. M. (2019). *Social media and the public interest: Media regulation in the disinformation age* (1st ed.). Columbia University Press. <https://doi.org/10.7312/napo18454>
- Natarajan, A., Moslimani, M., & Lopez, M. H. (2022, December 16). Key facts about recent trends in global migration. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2022/12/16/key-facts-about-recent-trends-in-global-migration/>
- Oltmann, S. M., Cooper, T. B., & Proferes, N. (2020). How Twitter's affordances empower dissent and information dissemination: An exploratory study of the rogue and alt government agency Twitter accounts. *Government Information Quarterly*, 37(3), 101475, 10pp. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.giq.2020.101475>
- Patel, L. (2016). *Decolonizing educational research: From ownership to answerability*. Routledge.
- Pearce, K. E. (2015). Democratizing komproamat: The affordances of social media for state-sponsored harassment. *Information, Communication, & Society*, 18(10), 1158-1174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2015.1021705>
- Pearce, K. E. & Malhotra, P. (2022). Inaccuracies and *Izzat*: Channel affordances for the consideration of face in misinformation correction. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 27(2), 19pp. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmac004>
- Ponzanesi, S. (2020). Digital diasporas: Postcoloniality, media and effect. *Interventions*, 22(8), 977-993. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369801X.2020.1718537>

- Rathnayake, C., & Winter, J. S. (2018). Carrying forward the uses and gratifications 2.0 agenda: An affordance-driven measure of social media uses and gratifications. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 62(3), 371-389. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08838151.2018.1451861>
- Rice, R. E., Evans, S. K., Pearce, K. E., Sivunen, A., Vitak, J., & Treem, J. W. (2017, February). Organizational media affordances: Operationalization and associations with media use. *Journal of Communication*, 67(1), 106-130. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jcom.12273>
- Ronzhyn, A., Cardenal, A. S., & Rubio, A. B. (2023). Defining affordances in social media research: A literature review. *New Media & Society*, 25(11), 3165-3188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221135187>
- Saldanña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Schelenz, L. (2023). Technology, power, and social inclusion: Afghan refugee women's interaction with ICT in Germany. *The International Journal of Information, Diversity, & Inclusion*, 7(3/4), 31pp. <https://doi.org/10.33137/ijidi.v7i3/4.40292>
- Stevens, R., Gilliard-Matthews, S., Dunaev, J., Woods, M. K., & Brawner, B. M. (2017). The digital hood: Social media use among youth in disadvantaged neighborhoods. *New Media & Society*, 19(6), 950-967. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444815625941>
- Subedi, B., & Rhee, J. (2008). Negotiating collaboration across differences. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 14(6), 1070-1092. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800408318420>
- Trauthig, I. K., & Woolley, S. C. (2023). 'On WhatsApp I say what I want': Messaging apps, diaspora communities, and networked counterpublics in the United States. *New Media & Society*, 00(0), 18pp. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448231203695>
- Treem, J. W. & Leonardi, P. M. (2013). Social media use in organizations: Exploring the affordances of visibility, editability, persistence, and association. *Annals of the International Communication Association, Communication Yearbook*, 36(1), 143-189. <https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2013.11679130>
- United Nations International Organization for Migration (IOM). (2022). *World migration report 2022*. <https://worldmigrationreport.iom.int/wmr-2022-interactive/>
- Vicari, S. (2015). Exploring the Cuban blogosphere: Discourse networks and informal politics. *New Media & Society*, 17(9), 1492-1512. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444814529285>
- Vorobeva, E., Jauhiainen, J. S., & Tammaru, T. (2022). Language, networks, and virtual transnationalism: The case of Russian speakers from Estonia living in Finland. *International Migration*, 60, 129-147. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12969>
- Waldinger, R. (2007, October 25). Between here and there: How attached are Latino immigrants to their native country? Pew Hispanic Center, 23pp. <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2007/10/25/between-here-and-there-how-attached-are-latino-immigrants-to-their-native-country/>

-
- Waldinger, R. (2015). *The cross-border connection: Immigrants, emigrants, and their homelands*. Harvard University Press.
- Waxa, C., & Gwaka, L. T. (2021). Social media use for public engagement during the water crisis in Cape Town. *Information Polity*, 26(4), 441-458. <https://doi.org/10.3233/ip-200273>
- Whiting, A., & Williams, D. (2013). Why people use social media: A uses and gratifications approach. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 16(4), 362-369. <https://doi.org/10.1108/QMR-06-2013-0041>
- Zheng, Y., & Yu, A. (2016). Affordances of social media in collective action: The case of Free Lunch for Children in China. *Information Systems Journal*, 26(3), 289-313. <https://doi.org/10.1111/isj.12096>

Shannon M. Oltmann (shannon.oltmann@uky.edu) is an Associate Professor in the School of Information Science at the University of Kentucky. She obtained her Ph.D. from Indiana University. Her research interests include information ethics, censorship, intellectual freedom, public libraries, privacy, and qualitative research methods. Oltmann is the past editor of the *Journal of Intellectual Freedom and Privacy* and Associate Editor of *Library Quarterly*. She wrote the book *Practicing Intellectual Freedom in Libraries* and edited *The Fight Against Book Bans: Perspectives from the Field*. Oltmann's work has been funded by the American Library Association and the Institute of Museum & Library Services. She has presented her research at numerous academic and professional conferences and published widely.

Fatima Espinoza Vasquez (fatima.espinoza@uky.edu) is an Assistant Professor at the School of Information Science at the University of Kentucky. Her research focuses on how marginalized communities, activists, and political organizations use Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) to address inequities. Her work on Alternative Sociotechnical Infrastructures (ASIs) explains how underserved Latinx communities create information systems when local institutions fail to support their political and economic engagement. Her work also explores information inequity and how marginalized communities respond with defensive, proactive, and subversive information practices. This way, her research provides insights and solutions for complex issues affecting marginalized populations, especially during crises. Dr. Espinoza Vasquez adopts a transdisciplinary approach, collaborating with stakeholders and considering the broader social, technological, and environmental contexts.