

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY'S UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL

# THE OWL

A SPECIAL ISSUE



EVERYDAY LIFE  
IN A PANDEMIC



# THE OWL

THE FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY  
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH JOURNAL



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# FORWARD

## Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

The coronavirus outbreak challenged us in unprecedented ways. It uprooted our daily lives, transforming the ways we live, work, learn, and conduct research. Labs were closed, in-person human subjects research disbanded, data collection delayed, and many projects shelved. Despite these obstacles, FSU provided continued support for undergraduate research and enrichment through the numerous opportunities offered by the Center for Undergraduate Research and Academic Engagement and, with this support, many student researchers sought new and innovative ways to investigate their topics of interest.

While numerous hurdles limited the feasibility of certain research methods, the pandemic circumstances heightened the importance of research for not only identifying the most effective ways of treating and preventing the virus, but also understanding its sociopsychological effects. Indeed, the tumultuous change brought about by the coronavirus outbreak necessitated research to help us explain newfound developments in the way we think, feel, and act.

The authors of this special issue answered this call, displaying their critical thinking, innovation, and resilience in seeking to understand our everyday, carefully unpacking what happens when that everyday is challenged. I applaud their ingenuity and determination, which culminated in the insightful articles found inside this issue.



Although the year 2020 was largely defined by challenges, it was also defined by growth. This issue represents The Owl's first fall special issue in seven years, produced in an unprecedented collaboration with the undergraduate Honors Program. In the making of this issue, The Owl executive board refined our peer-review criteria, keeping with the standards of the scientific community, and launched our mentorship program, providing additional guidance for

student submitters. This is also the first issue to be published with an ISSN number, a statement to The Owl's increasing professionalism.

I would like to thank this year's team of Associate Editors Caitlin Blanchard, Jordan Block, Isha Chekuri, Ally Davis, Tyla Dolezel, Elena Gurau, Will Hill, Matthew Masa, Daniela Sarmiento, Vinnie Vassalotti and Caitlin Violette, and Project Coordinators Naomi Coté, Shrivathsan Margam, Carly Mayzum, and Hannah Smith, for working so hard to make these accomplishments possible.

I would also like to thank Dr. Azat Gundogan and Dr. Annette Schwabe of the Honors Program for helping to make this cross-departmental collaboration a huge success. As an Honors student, I am grateful for the opportunity that this collaboration afforded me to mentor my younger Honors peers and I am proud to showcase their outstanding and timely work in this journal.

In Vires, Artes, Mores,

*Trystan Loustau*

Trystan Loustau

Editor-in-Chief, The Owl

Assistant Director, SCURC



## Introduction to (a New) Everyday Life

The Owl's Special Issue on Everyday Life in a Pandemic contains five original, refereed research papers authored by Florida State University's Honors students who are members of the Honors Experience Program (HEP). The publication of this special issue is only an endpoint of a year-long endeavor. In this introduction, I would like to reflect on this journey with the mere hope that I can highlight what the FSU Honors Program's hardworking young scholars can accomplish when our program's new vision and structure meet student-run organizations such as The Owl itself. This account is critical as the issue took form under dire circumstances imposed upon by the global pandemic. I will first provide a 'chronological' backstory, including an honors course and a student workshop, which brought the Honors faculty, students, and The Owl together. Then, I will provide a framework on what is meant by everyday life in this Special Issue, followed by a brief introduction of each article.

### **It was all expected in the beginning...**

The story began with the HEP course IDH3401 *Everyday Life: Time/Space/Power I* offered in Spring 2020. Throughout the semester, I required students to show intense and unwavering engagement with everyday life literature. And so, they did. But things changed in March when the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated the FSU community to switch to distance learning.

The pandemic caused a precipitous interruption in students' quotidian rhythms and daily activities on campus, and the resultant quarantine immobilized them. Most left their dorms for their parents' houses, others stayed and continued going to work, but all lost their sense of familiarity. The mundane parameters of their lives disappeared at such an abrupt pace that they had no choice but to adapt. And they did. We replaced our corporal classroom interactions with 2D portraits on screen, our lively, in-class, multidirectional conversations with linear talking points to not interject each other's remarks during mono-directional Zoom conversations. Yet, these rhythm analysts, as I address them in an homage to French theorist Henri Lefebvre's methodology of observing human action in modern time and space, continued their diligent work. True, educators and their families have invested in them for years and trained them for hard work and resilience in the face of challenges. Yet, impressive is the fact that these young scholars thrived on the challenge—dare I say, thanks also to their newly-acquired perspective on modern everyday life? They used their research to reflect on the pandemic-imposed time-space compression, which characterized every single public and private activity, task, and duty performed in one spatial continuum between the physicality of their home and the virtual space of the internet. They conducted their research,

submitted their essays, shared their findings with their peers, and successfully finished the course. If the semester ended as ordinarily as it started, this might be the end of the story.

The virtual Everyday Life Publication Workshop came into the picture at the end of the semester. A group of students enthusiastically agreed on carrying the in-class conversation to an out-class setting with the ultimate goal of converting their research papers into publishable journal articles. Throughout summer 2020, we regularly met in two forms of sessions. First, logistical sessions hosted experts who made presentations on various aspects of writing and publishing journal articles. In adjacent practicums, attendees worked in pairs and exchanged feedback on each other's drafts. Second, in the post-workshop 'café sessions,' they checked in on each other to produce a sense of friendly accountability. The entire process required resilience, motivation, collegiality, and cooperation. Their positive attitude, empathy, and care toward each other culminated in this informative special issue you are reading now, the pinnacle of the whole process.

I would like to thank all the attendees, including those who could not submit their papers to this issue due to various conflicting commitments. I would also like to thank my Honors colleagues, Dr. Jessie Klein, and Dr. Michael D. Franklin. They kindly agreed to make presentations on various components of writing and publishing research articles. Also, Dr. Klein's one-on-one feedback sessions were of immense help to attendees. I should also acknowledge Christelle Bucag and Andre Merchan Revilla's assistance with the workshop organization. Both students did not hesitate to step in to assist me despite their busy schedules. Their meticulous work, harmony, and positive attitude—while working on their articles, taking summer courses, and working part-time—made the workshop not only a successful endeavor for all, including me but also an enjoyable occasion to socialize during the quarantine. My thanks also go to Trystan Loustau, the editor-in-chief of *The Owl*, who shared this project's vision and made an informative presentation on *The Owl*'s publication process. She provided her Honors fellows with a clear timeline for publication. Finally, I would like to thank the Honors Program Director, Dr. Annette Schwabe. She has supported and encouraged this and all co-curricular events and projects the Honors faculty has been devising since 2018.

What awaits readers in the following pages are reflections on various aspects of modern everyday life. But what do we mean by everyday life? The rest of my introduction will give the readers a general idea about everydayness as an object of inquiry and introduce the articles.

## **What is this issue about?**

Our daily routines, the places we inhabit and frequent every day, and all the actions we unconsciously repeat make the everydayness a realm of familiarity, ordinary, and immediacy. We experience it as a sanctuary or boredom, or both depending on the ebbs and flows of our lives. Thus, everydayness is not particularly surprising, nor does it appear to us as an exciting 'thing' to comprehend fully. Such a comprehension would reveal the highly regimented, rationally organized characteristics of everydayness, and its heterogeneity (whose everyday life?), on the other. Yet, within the cracks of the places, routines, and actions of everyday life are hidden mysteries, curious phenomena, and peculiar cases, as this issue will illustrate.

Two modes can tilt our senses and perceptions of everyday life, leading us to sense the existence of inconsistencies and irrationalities in everyday life. One is the scholastic mode through which one can acquire conceptual tools for seeing the "big picture," including its frame (e.g., the control and regulatory functions of the modern state and institutional power structures). The course mentioned above is designed to help students acquire such tools and utilize them in their own everyday life as college students.

The other mode emerges when exceptional, unexpected, or bizarre events severely disrupt the rhythms and routines. These moments and events create (temporary or permanent) fissures on the 'normally' invisible veil of the mundane and the ordinary through which we engage with time and space. Not only do we see through these fissures the inconsistencies and irrationalities and the value of the 'normal' goings of things, but we also have a glimpse of alternative ways of interacting with fellow humans and places and creating new routines. We experienced that "aha moment" when we immediately switched to distance learning in the middle of the Spring semester due to the global pandemic. The pandemic was fast, unexpected, and uncompromising. It still is.

Shaken by the abruptness of the change but still mesmerized by the relevancy of this real-life disruption and excited about their newfound conceptual tool kit, some students decided to analyze the 'new normal' imposed by the pandemic. For example, Alyssa Ackbar's article focuses on how COVID-19-induced policies of quarantining and social distancing have affected the everyday lives of American college students, including their daily rhythms, interactions, and spaces. Using surveys of primarily east coast college students, Ackbar concludes that by no means has the everyday halted; it has only been redefined for the time being, as many college students are trying to replicate the conventional, linear rhythms of college life. Similarly, Andre Merchan Revilla's article seeks answers to the question of agency under quarantine conditions. He focuses on

bodybuilders who usually have a regimented everyday life revolving around minute calculations of eating, exercise, and rest. He states that disruption of rhythmic cycles is detrimental to the metabolic, mental, and peptide regulation in bodybuilders' bodies and is a threat to their overall health and fitness as well as their industry and that of other sports.

The articles by Karly Keysor and Andrew Brasington supplement each other. They problematize the double-edged characteristics of social media as both just-in-time communication and interaction tools for individuals and inventions of IT companies that commodify user data. Brasington's study on the popular internet application TikTok shows how social media becomes invasive when users consume them during mundane activities such as eating meals, using the restroom, or attempting to sleep. Not only does this "performative consumption" damage daily rhythms, he argues, but it also functions within the neoliberal economy, creating novel ways of profit-making. In a similar vein, Keysor's article focuses on the effects of late-night media usage on college students' everyday life. Her research shows that 99% of college students have a cell phone in their bedroom within one hour of going to sleep and have more than one social medium platform. She argues that heavy reliance on late-night media can disrupt students' nightly rhythms.

I also consider the "everyday space" as a common theme of these articles. Authors do not treat physical places like the gym, home, or campus and the virtual space of the internet as passive, abstract backgrounds against which social phenomena occur. Instead, spaces and places are the social product of human creation, which, in turn, actively shape human action and interaction. Christelle Bucag's article is directly relevant to the social production of space, where she focuses on clinical settings' spatial design. Using ethnographic photography, Bucag demonstrates how hospital spaces function to create and preserve power asymmetry in patient-provider interactions in patient wards and waiting rooms.

I hope that the readers will enjoy these articles, which provide a different outlook on the 'thing' we call everyday life.

Dr. Azat Gundogan

Honors Program Faculty

Affiliate Faculty, Sociology

## **It's All About the Students! Transforming Honors Education Through an Evidence-Based, Innovative Academic Program**

This special edition of *The Owl* reflects the hard work and intellectual insights of students as well as faculty innovation in an interdisciplinary pilot program launched at Florida State University in the fall of 2018, the Honors Experience Program (HEP). The HEP is an interdisciplinary, inquiry-based, honors curriculum supported by a series of broad-ranging co-curricular and extra-curricular events and activities. These experiences solidify and extend students' learning beyond the classroom through active application of their academic work and provide numerous opportunities for HEP students to take on substantive leadership roles.

I thank Provost Sally McRorie, who provided funding to hire three new faculty to teach exclusively for the honors program, which provided a curricular “anchor” and spawned a culture of collaborative teaching, mentoring, and engagement. As an impetus for significant growth in the program, this funding allowed us to re-envision and expand the entire FSU Honors Program into the rich learning community it is now. Speaking of vision, the late Dean Karen Laughlin, who guided the Division of Undergraduate Studies for over fifteen years, was the catalyst and original inspiration for this noteworthy program revision. Starting in 2013, Dean Laughlin worked with the National Collegiate Honors Council, Honors Program Policy Committee, and FSU Honors Program staff to identify initial personnel and curricular needs to develop and deploy an academically challenging and shared set of learning experiences that also fostered a strong honors identity and community. Their initial goals were to develop a core honors curriculum through interrelated courses on enduring themes to be taught by innovative faculty with expertise in interdisciplinary teaching. Dean Laughlin created the bedrock of HEP through her passionate focus on student success and her intelligent, strategic approach in providing a vision for the program and the resources to support it. Dean Laughlin's legacy will live on through the students we serve and will continue to spark meaningful program developments in the years to come.

As the new director of honors in fall of 2018, I was thrilled to take on the call to envision and build a new comprehensive curriculum-based program that was specifically tailored to meet the needs of honors students: combining academic freedom to explore and synthesize new ideas across fields, shared course experiences designed to increase a sense of belonging that offer unique challenges to facilitate holistic student growth. This unique academically-focused honors program came to be the HEP. Working with the honors faculty

to develop unique courses that cohered around specific pedagogical themes – particularly on a short timeline – was an amazing and positive growth experience for all of us. We worked intensively and under conditions of great ambiguity to create a curriculum and co-curricular experiences that provided opportunities for honors students to translate their drive and thirst for learning into action. The implementation of the HEP curriculum and new student development model also generated changes in some other aspects of the program to create shared goals for the two programs including the need for a mission, vision, and values statement. As the key focus of any good honors program is to help honors students thrive holistically, I invited students to work alongside me, the honors staff, and faculty in a day-long inaugural strategic planning meeting. This dynamic process provided foundational goals for the program and helped us fine-tune the vision for the future. The inaugural strategic plan has also ignited innovative changes in all honors experiences, including the Freshman Honors Colloquium course.

That this comprehensive and unique honors curriculum exists today is testament to our student-focused collaboration and personifies the inspired and hard work of students in the program. As you will see, this edition of *The Owl* exemplifies the power of a curriculum program that provides additional intellectual opportunities outside of the classroom through which students can take their own learning to the next level and pave the way for future success. The beauty of this kind of student-faculty collaboration is that students develop academically while building community with other students and forming closer professional bonds with their faculty mentors.

Dr. Azat Gundogan's course IDH 3401 *Everyday Life: Time/Space/Power*, which served as the jumping off point for this issue's featured students, is one of dozens of HEP courses. In addition to teaching courses in this curriculum, Dr. Gundogan and the HEP faculty create and mentor student groups. The student articles in this issue of *The Owl* are the culmination of Dr. Gundogan's ability to elevate and inspire student learning and development within and outside of the classroom. His vision for this intensive co-curricular project, as well as his close and strategic mentorship of students, is matched only by the student authors' creativity, intellectual acumen, and initiative. It is doubly impressive that Dr. Gundogan and the student authors initiated and completed such an ambitious project in the midst of a global pandemic, which created significant and complex challenges to learning, personal well-being, and the ability to collaborate. In fact, as is evident from reading this special issue, Dr. Gundogan capitalized on the students' personal and everyday perceptions of the pandemic to help them integrate their unique life experiences into their

academic work—underscoring the value of intellectual development and skills for enhancing one’s everyday life as a person, community member, and citizen. Each and every student author stepped up to the occasion by writing engaging and creative pieces that are sure to resonate with readers who have also lived through these unprecedented and remarkable times. I applaud and thank Dr. Gundogan and the authors, including Alyssa Ackbar, Andrew Brasington, Christelle Bucag, Karly Keysor, and Andre Merchan Revilla for this significant accomplishment, especially during a period of such tumultuous change and challenge.

In addition, as Dr. Gundogan states in his narrative in this issue, many other honors faculty, staff, and students shared their expertise and time to help students acquire the requisite skills and resources for this transformative co-curricular research project. I sincerely thank them. Last, but not least, I want to express my deep appreciation to all of the HEP faculty, including Drs. Azat Gundogan, Christina Owens, Arianne Quinn, and Ross Moret for their stellar courses, skillful and devoted teaching and mentoring, and for developing and leading the many rich co-curricular experiences that elevate and enrich the student experience at FSU. This edition is emblematic of the outstanding work of these teaching scholars and provides a small but rich sample of what the honors program offers our students.

Dr. Annette Schwabe

Director of the FSU Honors Program

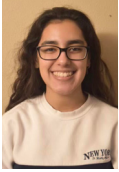
Associate Dean for Undergraduate Studies

# ARTICLES



# *HOW COVID-19 HAS ALTERED THE AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENT'S EVERYDAY LIFE*

Alyssa Ackbar



Alyssa Ackbar is a second-year Honors student at Florida State University. Originally from Tampa, she is majoring in International Affairs and has not yet declared a concentration. Coupled with her academic career, Alyssa is also a community organizer who works with March For Our Lives and the Brady Campaign to End Gun Violence.

## **Abstract**

The initial spread of COVID-19 in early 2020 led to the introduction of policies such as social distancing and quarantine. These policies affect the everyday lives of American college students, particularly their daily rhythms, interactions, and spaces. This article uses a survey conducted on American college students in March of 2020 to deconstruct the specific changes to their everyday lives. In quarantine, American college students saw a drastic shift from normal linear rhythms to cyclical rhythms. Due to the lack of social interaction, they also found new ways to communicate using technology, creating a temporary solution. Lastly, with no differentiation between the workspace and home space, American college students felt an increased need for productivity. The new policies of quarantining and social distancing altered the American college student's everyday life.

## COVID-19 HAS ALTERED THE STUDENT'S EVERYDAY

The everyday life of an individual consists of a complex mix of rhythms, interactions, and spaces. What happens when the traditional sense of everyday life is rapidly and drastically changed? In the past months, COVID-19 has shifted the everyday experience. The situation worsens daily and the need to quarantine and socially distance seems to have become the new norm. These changes have had an unprecedented impact on people's daily lives. However, no matter the situation, everyday lives are still governed by complex rhythms, interactions, and spaces. The introduction of new policies to help contain and prevent the spread of COVID-19 has only altered the balance of the everyday and how these complex rhythms, interactions, and spaces occur. The everyday is ambivalent; it is when and where individuals develop their capabilities and become integrated into our societies (Gardiner, 2000). But the everyday also presents itself as a contradiction. The everyday can be both ordinary and extraordinary, normal and abnormal, known and unknown (Gardiner, 2000). In order to better understand the inner workings of the chaotic everyday experience, philosopher Henri Lefebvre introduced the concept of rhythmanalysis. Rhythms help categorize the various mundane repetitions and patterns that are experienced daily. Many American college students undertake multiple obligations within their everyday life, including but not limited to academic activities, extracurricular activities, sports and physical exercise, leisurely activities, and work.

Interactions are also important in the everyday. Sociologist Erving Goffman (1978) emphasizes that social life is solely characterized by face-to-face interactions. Therefore, an individual's expressions, speech, body language, and identity are all continually impacted by interaction (Goffman, 1978). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused many states to order shelter-in-place policies, barring interaction with anyone outside of one's home and effectively ending most opportunities for face-to-face communication for many college students (Mervosh et al, 2020).

Finally, social spaces are another key component of everyday life, constructed through social interaction and understanding. Social spaces are hard to define because they are dynamic and vary greatly. However, each space is characterized by underlying rules and expectations, such as how a student is expected to focus and pay attention in a classroom.

By utilizing a qualitative survey to assess the rhythms, interactions, and spaces of American college students, this study aims to contextualize how COVID-19 and the introduction of the policies of quarantining and social distancing has altered the complex everyday lives of American college students.

## **Methods**

### *Participants*

The participants in the survey were 48 American college students aged 18 to 23. Participants were recruited from academic and extracurricular online discussion groups, where they were invited to complete a survey. A majority of participants attend Florida State University or another university in Florida. Four out of forty-eight participants were from outside the state of Florida.

### *Materials*

Participants were given a virtual survey conducted in March of 2020 via Google Forms. I set out to design an open-ended, qualitative survey that would holistically capture a glimpse of students' everyday lives. The daily lives of American college students usually feature activities such as going to class, meeting up with friends, studying, working out, eating, and more. To examine these behaviors, I asked participants three "yes" or "no" questions to assess changes in their social media and electronic device usage and changes in their productivity and motivation due to the quarantine. The remaining 9 questions were free-response and designed to qualitatively assess participants' daily schedules, in-person and virtual interactions, modes of interaction, negative feelings, separation of work and rest spaces, and belief in the effectiveness of the quarantine.

## **Results**

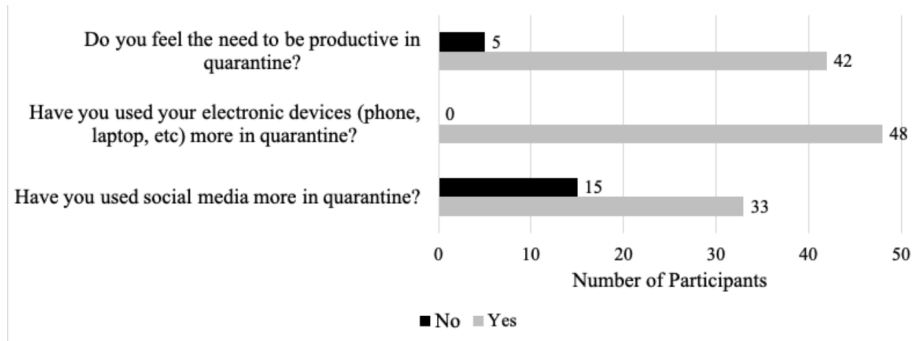
The results of the yes or no questions can be seen in Fig. 1. Most of the questions were free-response so I assessed how the majority of participants responded. For example, when participants were asked "Do you have any in person interactions in quarantine (with family, pets, etc)?" a majority of participants reported interactions mostly with immediate family and pets. The implications of these interactions are further discussed.

Participants reported increased social media and technology use following the outbreak, with about 88 percent of participants responding yes to the question "Have you used social media more in quarantine?" and all participants responding yes to the question "Have you used your electronic devices (phone, laptop, etc) more in quarantine?". Participants also reported maintaining their motivation, with 87.5 percent of participants feeling the need to be productive in quarantine. Most participants report having a daily schedule. This includes but is not limited to allotting portions of the day for schoolwork, exercising, and eating. One participant even explained how they "try to keep the same schedule [they] had on campus." Additionally, participants described their very limited in-person interactions, oftentimes with family members or pets and the occasional friend.

# COVID-19 HAS ALTERED THE STUDENT'S EVERYDAY

**Figure 1**

*Number of Participants Responding "Yes" or "No" to Each Item*



Virtual interactions were very common, with only one participant reporting a lack of technology-based communication. Most participants described a reliance on technology by using text and video conferencing applications.

Most participants also expressed feeling uncomfortable or sad during quarantine, attributing their feelings to missing certain aspects of their pre-COVID everyday lives. When describing quarantine, one participant stated that it is “draining and monotonous to be stuck at home.” Indeed, when asked what they miss from and what they took for granted before quarantine, participants described many mundane activities like seeing friends and going to common spaces. Additionally, because of quarantine, work space and relaxation/rest spaces are separate only for a small number of participants, with most participants utilizing one space for both work and relaxation. One participant detailed “I have a harder time staying productive since I associate that space with both work and relaxation.” Finally, on their attitudes toward the quarantine, most believe it is an effective way of combating COVID-19, although some critiqued the lack of enforcement of the quarantine policy.

## Discussion

### Rhythms

Henri Lefebvre (2013) identified two types of rhythms: cyclical and linear. Cyclical rhythms pertain to natural or cosmic time while linear rhythms relate to social practices and human imposition. These two types of repetitions work in conjunction with one another as the intersection of nature (the cyclical) and modernity (the linear) to create the everyday (Lefebvre, 2013). Results show that COVID-19 and the policies of social distancing and quarantine have prompted college students to increasingly embrace cyclical rhythms while experiencing the frustration of failing to emulate typical linear rhythms.

*Embracing Circular Rhythms*

When surveyed about their daily rhythms, American college students noticed a shift in this aspect of their everyday. In terms of the cyclical, when asked about their daily schedules, some participants in the research study reported that they were sleeping later than usual. The “usual” sleep schedule is defined as each participant’s pre-pandemic sleep schedule. In quarantine, college students are beginning to embrace the cyclical rhythms of their bodies by sleeping later than usual. There is little obligation to wake up early because classes are online rather than in-person: a linear rhythm that was previously imposed. Although some classes are still synchronous, online classes are unique in that students are able to attend from the comfort of their beds or right after waking up. Thus, the pre-pandemic linear rhythms that are associated with attending class are absent, allowing students to embrace cyclical sleeping habits. Those who reported sleeping later also mentioned that their eating schedules were shifted. When awake, an individual’s body follows a cyclical rhythm that dictates hunger and eating habits, which means sleep and eating are connected cyclical rhythms. Therefore, college students are beginning to embrace cyclical rhythms, specifically seen in sleeping and eating habits, due to a recent lack of intense linear rhythms that usually exist on campus.

*Evaluating Linear Rhythms*

Even though cyclical rhythms are beginning to replace linear ones, many participants have attempted to emulate their usual, intense linear rhythms by setting a general framework for their day. This usually means completing a list of tasks before the day’s end. In quarantine, college students may be forming these makeshift schedules at home in an effort to return to the regular linear rhythms of campus life. Many participants mentioned that, in quarantine, they are usually bored or uncomfortable on a daily basis. There are multiple potential sources of this discomfort. For one, this discomfort may be a result of the failed replication of the pre-pandemic linear rhythms. College students could be attempting to mirror their pre-pandemic everyday rhythms, but lack the means to do so in quarantine, resulting in negative emotions.

Another potential source of this discomfort could be the institutionalized pressure on students to be productive. Two-thirds of participants in the study felt the need to be productive within their new schedule. French philosopher Michael Foucault established the concept of discourse, an institutionalized way of thinking (Foucault, 2000). The need to be productive in daily life is a form of discourse imposed upon college students by modernity and capitalism (Foucault, 2000). This suggests that many linear rhythms that define the typical work day are imposed rather than of free will (Lefebvre, 2013). Along this line,

## COVID-19 HAS ALTERED THE STUDENT'S EVERYDAY

one participant stated that they did not “feel like [they were] being productive enough and could be doing more with [their] free time”. Productivity for a college student can look like many things, but is oftentimes defined by completing assignments or studying for a test. In fact, many participants reported being bored or uncomfortable because they had little to do and therefore could not be productive as modernity and capitalism expect them to be.

Altogether, the rhythms of college students in quarantine have shifted, but a new dynamic is beginning to form as they find a new balance between the cyclical and linear.

### **Interactions**

#### *Loss of In-Person Interactions Mitigated by Technology*

All participants in the survey study reported that most of their in-person interactions have been within their home with family members and pets. On exception is the occasional interaction with neighbors. The ill-effects of this lack of in-person interactions have been offset by the utilization of technology. All participants report using some form of technology to interact with family and friends outside of the home. For example, college students are texting and using conference calling software like Zoom, FaceTime, and Google Hangouts to maintain face-to-face interactions. A majority of participants are using social media more in quarantine and all have seen an increased reliance on technology in their daily lives. This innovation and access to technology has allowed college students to continue healthy social interaction amid the loss of true face-to-face interaction.

Despite these benefits, online alternatives do not completely negate the loss of face-to-face interaction for college students. Many in the study indicated that they missed much of the mundane interaction of everyday life, such as simply “seeing other people” and “talking to people face to face”. The lack of face-to-face interaction is another driving force in the perpetual boredom or discomfort previously discussed. Without true in-person interaction, college students are losing a vital part of their everyday life, one that often defines the everyday being of a student. The shift from face-to-face communication to solely technological communication is a temporary solution that is uncomfortable to some because it does not fully simulate the in-person experience.

### **Spaces**

#### *Blending of Work and Relaxation Spaces*

COVID-19 has trapped many American college students in their apartments, family homes, dorms, and other confined spaces. In this sense, there is no distinction between a workspace and a home space, causing for the social constructs of the two spaces to conflict. “Social” spaces are, in fact,

a direct consequence of the mode of production in creating “work” spaces (Elden, 2007). Therefore, modernity and capitalism have created a separation between the spaces of the workplace and the home. The difference between these two spaces allows an individual to internalize when and where they must be productive and when and where they are allowed to relax or pursue leisurely activities. The power of capitalism creates the discourse that, in the workplace, an individual must be productive (Elden, 2007). As mentioned before, two-thirds of participants reported that they felt the need to be productive even when they are stuck in their homes. Additionally, most participants stated that there is no distinction between the space in which they work at home and the space in which they relax at home. One participant even mentioned that they “have a harder time staying productive since [they] associate [their room] with both work and relaxation”. This is a clear indicator that the mindset of production in the workplace is seeping into the norms of the home space, creating a need to be productive at irregular times and places.

### *Blending of Public and Private Spaces*

COVID-19 has also interfered with the personal distinction of self between the public and private spaces. Oftentimes, there is a public self and a private self that an individual assumes based on where they are physically located. The home is often the space for the private self while the workspace is for the public self. Now, due to the shift toward virtual communication and learning, there is a greater need to present the public self at home, resulting in a clash between the private and public self. This alters the person’s sense of self due to the lack of spatial variety. Thus, the clashing of spaces in quarantine creates an odd mixture of norms that existed separately before the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Conclusion**

COVID-19 has put the lives of American college students on standstill, trapping most in their homes. Thus, all aspects of their everyday lives have drastically shifted. American college students are navigating this change in several ways, while also confirming the importance of rhythms, interactions, and spaces in the everyday. Their rhythms have shifted more towards the cyclical, even though many are trying to replicate the traditional linear rhythms of college life. Although face-to-face interaction is limited, American college students have found innovative ways to communicate to curb the lack of interaction, though it is a temporary fix. The variety of spaces in which college students exist have dwindled and most are confined to a dorm, family home, or apartment. This is leading to a redefinition of the differentiation of everyday spaces along with the expectations associated with those spaces. Overall, COVID-19 and the resulting safety policies such as quarantine and

## COVID-19 HAS ALTERED THE STUDENT'S EVERYDAY

social distancing have impacted the daily lives of American college students in unprecedented ways. However, the everyday by no means has been halted; rather, it has only been redefined for the time being. This shift will continue to occur as the COVID-19 pandemic and quarantine become the new norm.

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## ACKBAR



# *THE MASTERS OF SPATIAL MANIPULATION: A STUDY ON HOW SPATIAL COMPRESSION FROM COVID-19 AFFECTS BODYBUILDERS' DAILY RHYTHMS*

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## **Abstract**

Growing spatial compression ignited by the recent surge of COVID-19 throughout the world contributes to the stagnation of bodybuilders' daily rhythms. Spatial compression is a term bolstered by the recent conditions of COVID-19, which force one to compress all the aspects of their lives, such as their work, social, and fitness lives into one location, the home. Spatial compression arising from COVID-19 has ranged from citizens being confined to their homes, to individuals being stranded in a different country. Bodybuilders have highly regimented lives, living minute to minute, and calorie to calorie. Disturbing the metabolic, mental, and peptide regulation in their bodies poses a threat to their health, the fitness industry, and the sport as a whole. To assess the extent to which the quarantine imposed by the global pandemic affected bodybuilders, surveys were sent out to 15 participants with an optional interview, for which six participants opted in. The study's purpose was to pinpoint specific factors ailing bodybuilders' daily lives in the quarantine to understand better how events such as a pandemic can be mitigated to account for individuals in isolation. Results showed that spatial compression affected bodybuilders mentally through anguish suffered by the disruption of rhythmic cycles, as well as physically through exacerbating their progress. Information regarding this subject will help support the ever-increasing mental health outlook of the world in considering the effects of rapid isolation and social deprivation. This study examines individuals who have incredibly regimented natural cycles in order to determine the impact of spatial compression inflicted by COVID-19.

## THE MASTERS OF SPATIAL MANIPULATION

There is no quantifiable manner in which to describe living; it simply is. Whether it be the millions who commute to work, play sports, or spend their lives giving to others, living cannot be described verbally. One of the reasons that living is indescribable or unable to be adequately defined is due to the plethora of lives one could live. Living to one may be merely having an ordinary, in society's eyes, life, and contributing to the status quo. To others, it may be exploring the world in all its wonders and breaking from the ordinary. Regardless of the seemingly infinite amount of variances within the definition of living, one aspect that is germane to all is best said by Goffman in his *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Goffman states that the work occurring within life necessitates cooperation or at least tolerance of others to be successful (Goffman, 1959, p. 4-8). Although life is not solely work, all aspects of life require the cooperation of people. Cooperation and tolerance are seen throughout the world. Whether it be a team cooperating to win a championship or an employee tolerating his boss to attain a promotion, one can find cooperation or tolerance in almost every social setting.

### **Introduction to Abstract Time**

This cooperation circles a Lefebvrian idea that Kurt Meyer references in his book *Rhythms, Streets, Cities*, the concept of abstract time. Abstract time is a standardized notion of time created by nations in order to pace and regiment work. This notion is a false construct created by people decades ago, yet unlike other false constructs, it has embedded itself in the world as the driver of life (Meyer, 2008, p. 150). Abstract time is named so because it is a quantitative attempt at deriving numerical estimates of duration from an unquantifiable source, the universe. The reason for this was to regiment work by creating more structured schedules. These schedules would allow people more analysis into the work done, such as the hours worked or the delivery of something to someone else. Over the years, abstract time has evolved from using the sun to gauge estimated quarters of the day to microprocessors being able to estimate planck time, speed of light traveling through a vacuum.

Yet regardless of the modernization of the world over the past centuries, one thing remains constant; without abstract time guiding people through their days and supporting the successful cooperation of individuals to complete worldwide tasks, the world may cease to spin. This is mainly because abstract time plays such a pivotal role in regimenting, structuring, and describing people's lives. However, some individuals rely on abstract time more than others; some may say that they live by it. Individuals such as intra-day traders, athletes, even videographers, regularly rely on abstract time to gauge what they are currently doing to develop the perfect outcome. Without a timestamp that

can allow the above professions to gauge their work, such as the market price, workout duration, or shutter speed, many of the fields' peak achievements may not have ever occurred. Although overlooked, bodybuilders are one of the groups in society whose everyday lives are tied to abstract time, possibly even more so than most professions and lifestyles. Not one profession may rely on every second of time to achieve a goal besides the modern-day bodybuilder. When dealing with the perfection of the human physique, every minute must be categorized and regimented. Whether it comes to eating, training, or sleeping, the bodybuilder must adhere to Father Time's laws to succeed, or be discarded into the pile of bodybuilding failures. Besides the tumultuous schedule bodybuilders follow, most retain day-jobs to make ends meet when competition season is over. As one may assume, these day jobs tend to be personal training jobs in which they turn their passion for personal fitness into a vehicle to help others achieve their fitness goals. Bodybuilders are also overly dependent on spaces and places. Without a place to train, eat, or teach, their whole careers and aspirations vaporize into thin air.

### **COVID-19's Role in Spatial Manipulation**

As of December 2019, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), the infection caused by a novel respiratory virus, was first cited in Wuhan, China. This virus then developed and grew into a global pandemic, forcing countries to implement stay-at-home orders, leaving people quarantined at home. The precautions and actions taken surrounding the pandemic were due to the lack of knowledge surrounding the virus. Nobody knew how the virus could be transmitted, what symptoms could arise from it, or even what a plausible cure was (Sauer, 2020). The pandemic has stricken fear into humanity's hearts and shut down the world's public domain, seemingly resembling a dystopian movie. Highways lay bare with little to no cars, malls and campuses lay abandoned, even supermarkets have been gouged until all that remains are the metal shelves. However, for bodybuilders, it is not a movie; with the world grinding to a halt, they are witnessing their spaces, time, and capital vanish. Many people are making use of the quarantine and are benefitting from the spatial compression; bodybuilders, however, seemingly lose everything when their gyms and additional spaces are taken from them.

The loss of spaces is not merely detrimental to what one can accomplish within the space, but what space can help one accomplish for themselves. Although people may believe that the only purpose of a place is to provide an individual with the space to accomplish something, places can also provide additional subliminal and psychological influences that may affect the task's outcome. Stated by John McCarthy et al., simply the homes that people live

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in can already drastically affect their mental health and outlook on the world primarily through the orientation, location, and decorative styling of the home (McCarthy et al., 1985, 126). Through repetitive visits and endless hours spent at the same place, such as gyms, one can see how gyms become homes to bodybuilders. Therefore, if their gyms assert one form of “mentality” on them, then prolonged duration in the home may replace the accustomed gym mentality with a variant one. An example of this may be how a room, or how it is tailored, may affect one's mood. One may have entered the room to complete an assignment but may be affected in their goal of doing so by how the room subliminally impacts them.

### Methods

To accurately analyze the full extent of the toll that quarantined isolation has taken on the pioneers of peak physique, I have assembled a group of 15 bodybuilders ages 18-26. With this group of ten men and five women, I hope to demonstrate how the loss of space affects the progress and lives of these bodybuilders in the hopes of providing a valid assessment as to how spatial compression, manipulation, and mental health in isolation influence an individual whose life revolves around manipulating spaces and places into vehicles of muscular gain.

To gather data to determine the extent spatial compression dislocates the bodybuilder's regimented lifestyle, a survey was created and sent out to all the participants via google forms. The participants were asked five questions, with one additional question being sent out to participants who replied yes to one of the initial questions. The questions sought to gather information on their: purpose for working out, emotional state since quarantine began for them, training regime, realization of any positive occurrences since quarantine, and expansion of their fitness portfolio. The questions were tailored to analyze the lifestyle changes and alterations of the bodybuilders as well as accounting for their mental and emotional state. The purpose of doing this was to gain a full picture of all the possible manners in which the restrictions associated with the current state of the world can affect these individuals. The participants were selected through connections made within the fitness industry. Participants were messaged directly or emailed, explaining the purpose of the study and how the study was being conducted, and if they were qualified for the study. Using the word qualified within the message was used to categorize potential participants who did not experience enough spatial compression and those who did. In order to gain an unbiased and general scope of the fitness community, an equal number of bodybuilders were chosen from each group. Doing so, as well as making sure that almost no participant shared a gym, brand sponsorship,

or competition weight class, allowed for the analysis to encompass the fitness community as a whole, including pros with private gyms to novice bodybuilders with a standard gym membership. All participants were notified that upon accepting the proposition through the direct message, they would be sent a link to complete the survey, there were 15 surveyed individuals.

All data utilized throughout the experiment, not including the citations and statistics from other sources, were obtained through the sent out surveys. Additionally, participants were given the option to have a video call in which they could discuss any additional logistics or explain any unique situations that the quarantine has placed on them. Although not all participants were able, or accepted, the invitation to be interviewed, six were able to hold a video call to follow up on their survey. The follow up was used to gather personal stories, events, and advice related to the study at hand. Although participants selected to remain anonymous, all six agreed to have some of their statements quoted in the paper to bolster claims made from citations and data analyzed from the survey.

## Results

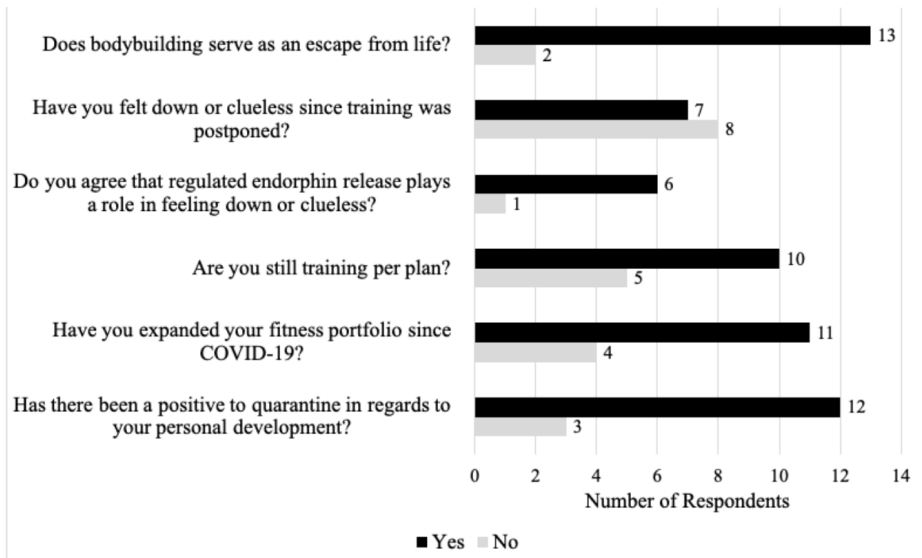
### *Survey Results*

Fig. 1 displays the proportion of bodybuilders who identified with each response. The total proportion of bodybuilders who identify physical activity as an escape from the everyday realities they encounter surmounted those who believed it to be a routine habit. Two individuals admitted that bodybuilding does not serve as an escape while 13 agreed with the question. The proportion of bodybuilders who experienced a negative change in their mental states in light of the virus were relatively equal to the proportion who had a neutral change in their mental state. Results show an almost even split in the participants' mental states, with eight constant in their mentality and seven experiencing a negative decline. Upon learning about the role of endorphins in the human body, participants predominantly agreed that they played a role in their mental health. Six out of the seven participants who experienced adverse mindsets agreed that endorphins may play a role in their frame of mind.

Individuals who continued to train in accordance with their workout plan constituted two thirds of the participant pool. Ten of the participants maintained their exact plan while the other five either did not continue or carried out a different plan. The bodybuilders were asked if they had taken any steps toward expanding their business or professional image during the quarantine period. Out of the 15 participants, 11 undertook new avenues to grow their entrepreneurial endeavors while four decided to follow their original business plan. Considering the mental aspect of bodybuilding, individuals were asked whether or not they

**Figure 1**

*Number of Bodybuilders Responding "Yes" or "No" to Each Item*



had seen positive or negative personal development in light of the pandemic. Twelve of the bodybuilders admitted to seeing positive personal growth while three saw a negative manner of growth.

## *Interview Results*

Participant one described that one of the main issues they faced due to the pandemic was the change in the dynamic of the space where they conducted their workout. Having a home gym with enough equipment to maintain a basic workout regime allowed the individual to continue with their plan at a lesser intensity due to the lack of equipment. However, one observation made was that the intensity declined further than anticipated due to the change in the “scenery” in which the workout was conducted. According to participant one, this change in scenery made them feel calmer as opposed to the energetic feeling they got when entering a gym.

Participant two used the personal interview to detail the extent of the loss their bodybuilding plan suffered. Their original plan was created to prepare for a bodybuilding competition in 24 weeks beginning in January. However, this plan requires calculating every action to the minute and meal by the macronutrient. Therefore, because participant two’s gym closed, they cannot meet and train with their coach, complete their cardio block, and get muscle scalping from their massage therapist.

Participant three had initially been a sole weightlifting bodybuilder.



However, upon realizing that their home equipment was not up to par with their usual gym equipment, they began to substitute body-weight exercises into their workout regime to make up for the other lost exercises. Participant three admitted to having held disdain for the style of body-weight workouts. Yet, after completing two cycles of their now edited regime, participant three describes that they have found a new appreciation for body-weight foundational exercises.

The exact details from participant four's interview cannot be stated in the research due to company policies and confidentiality. However, the main takeaway from the interview conducted with participant four was that bodybuilding companies' financial losses are water falling onto their sponsored clients or athletes' financial stability. Participant four presented a financial statement detailing the losses in each category of his multiple sources of income. Most fitness projections for media and competition remained rather level; however, the sponsorship and partner income section displayed significant losses that did not match the trend of the media and competition loss. Participant four's experience demonstrates one way that the domain of sponsorships and company partner deals has been influenced by the pandemic.

Participant five encountered both benefits and downsides to the pandemic. Similar to the other bodybuilders, losses were expected in areas of gym access and regime continuation. However, gains were seen in the amount of clientele they received and the intensity of the workout plan or class desired. Therefore, participant five has remained rather level mentally, accepting a lower quality workout in their residence while taking advantage of the increased clientele.

Although participant six currently has not lost anything in terms of their bodybuilding plans, they have analyzed how spatial manipulation on non-bodybuilding aspects of life have still indirectly affected it. Due to participant six having a fully furnished gym suited to their workout style and regular access to meals and muscle therapy, nothing had changed for them except the inability to live publicly. This reduction noted by participant six was detailed to have affected his natural bodily rhythms as being confined to his residence for almost 24 hours a day. Although admitting that there can be other limiting variables such as the mental state the times have put on individuals. Regardless of other plausible variables, participant six states on days where he went for a hike or to a lake, he felt more positive and had a better sleep score on his WHOOP® activity tracker. Participant six's WHOOP® tracker is mentioned to provide scientific proof regarding claims of better sleep. Per the WHOOP® website the purpose of the tracker is to track fatigue, sickness, and possible injury for any type of person (Whoop, 2020).

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This assessment would benefit bodybuilders mainly in understanding how to maneuver periods of isolation without regular physical engagement. Such benefits could not only be seen within the scope of COVID-19 but within individuals who may have developed a medical condition in which outdoor involvement may be prohibited or contact with other people, those visiting family for extended periods, and possibly even bodybuilders who undergo a substantial change in life where their ordinary routine is disrupted.

### **Discussion**

After reviewing the metrics from the data collected on the surveys, insight is provided into the mental significance of the physical portion of being a bodybuilder. As a bodybuilder, one needs to utilize their space, using both the physical world and their biological body wisely. A bodybuilder's diet must not be too heavy, greasy, or saturated with fats. Additionally, conducting an exercise in the gym requires the right space, form, and equipment augment ability. These two aspects of bodybuilding, eating and training, both present themselves as the vital staples of bodybuilding itself, showing that for at least 33% of the participants, the immediate disruption of those two cycles is enough to deter their training regime. Furthermore, results also provide insight into the connection between the physical and mental benefits of working out. Most participants' mental states displayed a decline in mental health when their consistent schedule of working out was interrupted. Overall, the surveys' results identify the areas in which bodybuilders face the most peril through the spatial compression that has arisen in light of the global pandemic.

The six individual interviews mirrored the survey results and produced additional insights that aid in addressing the issue of spatial compression. The information gained through interviewing participant six gives light into a driver of the negative effect of spatial compression being spatial familiarity. As other participants similarly detailed, their intensity was not at par with their average and was mostly attributed to the location change. Additionally, further insight was gained into how there can be other factors of the bodybuilder profession that could impair their daily lives, such as participant four's description of financial losses on both business and athletes' sides.

### **Spatial Compression as a dissent from natural rhythms**

The friction that has occurred due to the compression of one's everyday spaces into one location has not aided in bodybuilders transition into their state of isolation. For bodybuilders to achieve peak physique, they must follow a strict life plan. This life plan designates time for food, drink, and even sleep. Every aspect of the bodybuilder's daily life is micro-organized and categorized for the body to achieve isorhythm. This firm emphasis on the strict regimenting

of the bodybuilder's life is because within the planet that we inhabit; nature is both beautiful and intimidating. Intimidating, because nature is very variable, which means the weather, food we eat, and sunlight we get, among other things, is un-regimented. This will always be the inverse to societal life because it represents un-regimented life. Therefore, for the bodybuilder to ensure their peak performance, they first need to accept imperfection. Due to the variability in nature, not everything will be 100% accurate, which is why they place emphasis on what they can control, their bodies.

However, now that all the bodybuilder needs to focus on controlling is the body, this invites the capitalist killer known as oversaturation into the bodybuilding world. Due to the very textbook approach to bodybuilding, not much more is required to become one besides following a pre-planned routine and competing in competitions. Therefore, this leads to the bodybuilder scene being very oversaturated, making it even harder to become the best of the best because the competition pool grows more day by day. Currently, within the bodybuilding world, there are nine divisions of body types to which a person can enter, thousands of competitions ranging from local, international, and even online venues ("Bodybuilding Contest"). Modernization allows these athletes to profit off their physique, propelling the field into a state of exponential growth. Lefebvre best-stated isorhythm as being similar to the symphonic harmony produced by the brain within the body (Lefebvre, 2013, p. 16). Furthering this notation, Meyer referenced the pineal gland as the true conductor of this symphony. For the bodybuilders, the best relationship they need to form is with said gland (Meyer, 2008, p. 150). The gland itself is one of the pivotal physiological reasons bodybuilding and athletic competitions exist in the world. By activating muscles when called on as well as deactivating, decompressing, and compressing muscles, the pineal gland is entirely responsible for the one job a bodybuilder has, showing off their muscles. Therefore, if their pineal gland is not optimized to the bodybuilder's desired rhythms, their muscular gains will be significantly less than if they were optimized.

As Lefebvre stated, the body needs to work in complete unison to reach isorhythm. Jeremy Strong supplements this statement by presenting the importance of isorhythm within a bodybuilder. Strong states that the schedule bodybuilders are subject to is one that is carefully calculated to work seamlessly with the body, taking into account metabolism, genetics, and goals (Strong, 2003, p. 170). This strict plan is so essential and carefully calculated because the purpose and intent of bodybuilding are to perfect the human physique. Therefore, every calorie consumed, workout missed, or hour of sleep skimmed may, in turn, ruin the goal of achieving perfection, even if it may be by the fraction of a percentage. With bodybuilders unable to train, their whole life

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and dreams, projected onto a schedule, are seemingly useless. Male four from the group stated he panicked at realizing that the only component of the plan he could currently follow was the eight hours of sleep required by his plan (Male 1, personal interview, March 11, 2020). He did not feel like continuing because he would have to change food, water, and sleep consumption to prevent as much muscle loss as possible, all while being unable to work out or meet with his trainer. Strong also states that every bodybuilding plan has contingency plans, such as rainy days or natural disasters. These contingency workouts may be a half-hour high-intensity interval training session (HIIT), or calisthenics to improve natural muscle development with bodyweight (Schwarzenegger & Dobbins, 1999, p.136). However, nobody could have thought to make a contingency plan for an event that would offset months of training.

Loss of the gym, the cornerstone of the bodybuilder, and food due to supermarket shortages lead to builder's bodies experiencing constant arrhythmia as schedules that they followed for months on end begin to fall apart. When it comes to the human body, it adjusts to the workouts, food, and sleep quickly. The pineal gland learns to activate the muscles at adequate times for working out and decompress them when the body is at rest. Repeating these actions over months achieves what bodybuilders call a new natural cycle. As opposed to following old hunger, sleep, and muscle habits, the mind turns to linear rhythms, being the new schedule, and morphs it into a cyclical rhythm. Pioneered by the renowned Henri Lefebvre in his *Rhythmanalysis*, the cyclical rhythms are natural, bodily, and straightforward intervals of repetition, while the linear are alternating and human-made (Lefebvre, 2013, p. 14). Through rigorous training, bodybuilders' bodies begin to adapt to imposed rhythms and, in a way, alter natural bodily rhythms to comply with physical exertion, eating habits, and sleep patterns that are all part of a larger, structured plan. Five of the group members stated that they have strayed from their schedules entirely because not having the ability to work out made them feel like following the plan was useless and would not benefit them. The cause for straying from the plan was mainly the underlying logic that if they could not follow the plan to the exact letter, then they were already doing themselves and their trainers a disservice. Perfection is very prominent in bodybuilding and is perfectly demonstrated by the inability, mentally, for bodybuilders to continue their bodybuilding plans if they could not satisfy every component. With almost half the group self-hibernating during the quarantine season, one can see how the abrupt disruption of a strictly regimented cyclical rhythm can ignite a state of arrhythmia.

**The role of isolations in mental health through disruption of mental cycles**

The mass pandemic causing worldwide quarantine not only affects natural physical rhythms that bodybuilders are tasked with maintaining and developing but mental rhythms as well. Meyer builds upon Lefebvre's notion that in order to relax and rehabilitate the mind, it should be disorganized from its uniformity (Meyer, 2008, p. 147). For bodybuilders, the workout is that disorganization. Out of 15 surveyed bodybuilders, 13 stated their love for bodybuilding came from it being an escape from everyday life (Males 1, 3-14 and Females 1-3, 5, personal interview, March 11-13, 2020). Although not tied to bodybuilding itself, the disruption of the everyday is the very ingredient to producing a focused and determined body. Disorganizing the mind from time to time, to enjoy oneself, can allow the brain to break from its monotone cycles by completing a task widely variant to that of the common tasks of the day. However, as this task is chosen by the person, namely a hobby, it most commonly provides enjoyment, deterring depression, stress, and low mood symptoms (Jauwena & White, 2018). In turn, after the task the brain is more alert and refreshed. Benefits of uniformed disruption are furthered by the release of endorphins during physical strain. Endorphins are peptides that activate the body's opiate receptors, creating analgesic feelings within the mind (Deslanders, et al., 2009, p. 194). This chemical "high" that bodybuilders experience also creates a natural biomorphic clock, releasing amounts of endorphins at the set workout time to prompt muscle stability and growth before a workout.

Activated endorphin loss can result in a retraction of muscle growth, which can be detrimental to a bodybuilder's physique (Smith & Stewart, 2012, p. 36). As natural rhythms within the mind are continuously interrupted due to the demise of their old everyday life, their bodies, which create financial capital, suffer immensely. Of 15 participants, seven began to fall into a bout of depression or cluelessness. Explaining the science behind endorphin regulations and biomorphic time, six out of the seven participants agreed that perhaps their shift in emotion was due to the lack of physical activity their bodies had become so accustomed to (Males 1, 3-5 and Females 2-4, personal interview, March 11-13, 2020). Analyzing the implications of spatial compression, information is best discovered when seeking the absence of things within this unique situation. Because of this absence in space, specifically the gym, the mind lacks its usual dosage of endorphins. Loss of these endorphins can also lead to severe depression bouts, weakening the body and mind (Deslandes, et al., 2009, p. 192). This decline in physical and mental health makes it even harder for a dedicated bodybuilder to get back on their feet, watching months of dedication and endurance spiral down the drain.

### **The importance of spatial manipulation to building muscle**

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Regardless of the severity of all these situations, they are all united by one similarity: spatial compression. Spatial compression is a term bolstered by the recent conditions of COVID-19, which force one to compress all the aspects of their lives, such as their work, social, and fitness lives into one location, the home. Constraints placed on the world currently cause the above issues for bodybuilders because, like a plant, they need space to grow and develop. To rob them of this plot of land would be to leave them with nothing. Bodybuilders' lives revolve around standardized time and spatial manipulation to industrialize their everyday lives.

A fundamental example may be how some bodybuilders follow intermittent fasting, a process which starves the body so that the body burns stored fats and therefore decreases body fat. To follow the most popular style of intermittent fasting, “8-16,” one can only eat for eight consecutive hours in the day and must fast the other 16 by only drinking water (Stoppini, 2019). This is done so because it adheres to the gastro-cycles as well as fat storing and burning cycles (Patterson1, 2017, p.372). Therefore, if a bodybuilder were to have a meal on the ninth hour, all benefits derived by the routine for that day could be annulled to a large extent, possibly even throwing off their next day routine. By scheduling and training their body through interactions with both spaces and time, they maximize profit earned by showcasing their bodies at competitions, apparel shoots, and training sessions. The loss of space means that bodybuilders have lost the ability to manipulate claimed spaces, gyms, for muscular gain. Space, although vastly overlooked, is imperative to life as it provides the sandbox in which multiple mobile elements intersect in ambiguity.

The manipulation of spaces, following the perfection of the bodily routine, is the most important aspect of a bodybuilder's life and success in the bodybuilding field. This is due to the extreme detail that is put into the high-quality gym equipment used at the gyms they attend. The weights and machines there are crafted to maximize the efficiency and muscle gained from working out while minimizing soreness and injury risk. More than simply being very tailored to bodybuilders, they are tailored to be durable to extreme weight quantities. While many ordinary gym-goers may feel accomplished at squatting their own bodyweight, the bodybuilder may squat northwards of 300 pounds. At times, a standard machine may not even have the desired weight as most standard equipment limits the weight to around 200 to 250 pounds per machine on average. Therefore, the spaces that bodybuilders manipulate are not merely gyms - they are gyms made with them - their goals and their passions in mind. They give everything in the pursuit of perfection and are given a temple where they can discipline themselves and train without worrying about weight, injury, or machines being taken. Seeing the detail and care that go into some



of the high-end gyms to tailor their equipment to high-end bodybuilders, it can be detrimental for bodybuilders to lose the ability to manipulate said spaces as they all close in the wake of the pandemic.

To some, it may seem dramatic to state that the loss of space could ruin someone; however, this could not be closer to the truth for bodybuilders. Muscle dysmorphia is a psychological disorder caused by the inverse mental perceptions associated with anorexia (Yan, 2006). Believing oneself to be too small or out of shape with such disorder can eventually lead to the body suppressing muscle growth to adhere to the mind's disorder. Andrea Deslandes and others emphasize the severity of the relationship between mental health and physical activity, saying that a decaying mind in mental health standards can consequently cause up to a 45% retreat in muscle stimulation and expansion under hypertrophy (Deslandes, et al., 2009, p. 196). The remission that occurs due to this dysmorphia in the study was even found to be comparable to that of the remission that occurs within users of Sertraline, an antidepressant in a group of drugs, which was 47%. Of the ten participants still working out, seven report feeling smaller and weaker, even having completed the workouts (Males 1-7 and Female 3-5, personal interview, March 11-13, 2020). This results from homes not having the equipment that gyms do, leaving participants having to use resistance bands or towels to simulate muscle tension.

Although some gym equipment could be replicated in the home to an extent, these gyms designed for bodybuilders have machines that aim to work out very unknown or minor muscles in the hopes of bolstering the bodybuilders on their journey to making it in the industry. An example of a machine aiding a bodybuilder in working out an unknown muscle would be the cable machines, which have handles fastened to a weight by a strong titanium cable ("Benefits of Working with Cables," 2018). This allows bodybuilders to move weight in curved diagonal motions to expand the back muscles, giving them the classic bodybuilder attribute called "wings," connotated by how the back muscles protrude to the side, resembling wings when they are flexed. As for non-replaceable gym equipment, the loss of a gym partner can, at times, be even more devastating than the loss of the equipment itself. Having a gym partner can be beneficial to a bodybuilder. Both would be able to hold each other accountable for their regime as maintaining one is both emotionally and physically draining. More importantly, bodybuilder's partners aid their partner in finishing repetitions, getting a boost into their next set of an exercise, or assisting them in flexing the muscle to ensure vascularity is uniformly concentrated in the muscle of choice. A comparison to bodybuilders losing their gymnasiums and partners can be made to that of some marine life. Most marine life is not meant to be enclosed; doing so could stunt growth, ignite

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skin problems, and muscle numbing from lack of connection to their home environment in which they move as they please. The same notion goes for people whose daily lives encompass moving and manipulating spaces they reside in; it can be seen how physically dampening it could be for such an individual to have it all uprooted and taken away.

### **Power relations within the home**

The limitation of space into the home is partially to blame as well. Nick Prior defines museums as slowing down and showcasing modernity's progressiveness (Prior, 2011, pp. 201-204). In a sense, houses may be compared to museums as they slow down life and revitalize one with the progress they have made by serving as an abode for all the material and familial possessions they may have. Nevertheless, if museums, or houses in this instance, serve to slow down modernity, what does this do to abstract time? According to a research team at McGill, isolation in a familiar or emotionally significant place can lead to a distorted perception of time, anxiety, and possibly even hallucinations (Bhandari, 2020). Therefore, bodybuilders not only have to cope with the loss of space but also the hierarchy of power their current space has on them. Bodybuilders must learn to cope and adapt to their space in order to not fall victim to the adverse mental effects of the architecture that previously was a home, now meso-prison, isolating them and caging them from their desire.

Naturally, bodybuilders who frequent the gym develop a sort of blasé attitude towards the gym environment. Georg Simmel defined the blasé attitude as the overstimulation of nerves to the point where they cease to react at all (Simmel, 1950, p. 32). With the micro-ecosystem like nature of the gym having various events occurring such as workout classes, athletic events, and hundreds of people flowing from machine to machine, like waves rushing from shore to shore, it seems impossible for one not to be overstimulated. However, this overstimulation favors gym-goers. Being psychologically zoned out but subconsciously influenced to move by the moving masses, one is eased into working out (Strong, 2003, p. 167). In the home, the lack of noise and movement creates the absence of overstimulation, under-stimulation. Under-stimulation causes the same feelings as losing the space altogether, further stripping the bodybuilder of their chances at maintaining their physique.

### **Conclusion**

In the end, the pandemic and spatial compression affect people from all walks of life, not just bodybuilders. However, bodybuilders, through spatial compression, lack of manipulation, and isolation-induced mental health issues, are one of the groups that are affected whether or not they do get infected by the virus. The equivalent of the impact of quarantine on bodybuilders



would be comparable to if an employee were to have to redo the past years of his work, without pay. With the disruption of physical and mental rhythms, bodybuilders lose motivation and muscle they have worked for months to develop. The compression and friction experienced by limiting one's everyday life into a home, and the psychological illusions associated with isolation inhibit bodybuilders as the spaces they manipulate for profit seemingly vanish.

However, as with all life, there is always hope. The modernization and commodification of society led to the development of online conferencing, which bodybuilders are now starting to use to help others. As bodybuilders have seen competitions, apparel companies, and gyms all close, they have lost all avenues of revenue. However, the online coaching platform allows them to teach other calisthenics maneuvers to improve cardiovascular health during times of isolation. Although this may not give the bodybuilders their lost muscular gains back, it allows them to continue to push their passion and make up a lost profit. Ten out of 15 participants stated having begun online coaching classes. At the same time, another leads a cardio workout from his balcony with other members of his community (Males 1, 2-8 and Females 1-2, personal interview, March 11-13, 2020). Spatial compression has indeed mauled the lives and bodies of bodybuilders in various ways. However, bodybuilders' dedication and perseverance in the leadership of at-home exercise classes both aids the public in helping others to feel better and provides financial stability as well as the hope that maybe life can still grow in compressed spaces and places.

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## REVILLA



# *SOCIAL MEDIA INFLUENCES OUR ORGANIC RHYTHMS IN THE CONTEXT OF NEOLIBERAL CAPITALISM: AN EXPLORATION INTO PERFORMATIVE CONSUMPTION THROUGH TIKTOK*

Andrew Brasington



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## **Abstract**

The economic influence of neoliberal capitalism is constantly increasing, resulting in misunderstandings of how the ideology impacts people's daily lives. With the increasing popularity of social media, especially among the younger generations, it is now important to analyze how neoliberal capitalism is being translated into an online medium. This paper examines how social media usage in our society impacts the organic rhythms and health of the younger generations. Through the use of a survey, it was discovered that the respondents used social media, specifically TikTok, as a way to pass the time without caring about the media that they are consuming while they performed activities that are not typically focused on entertainment consumption: eating meals, using the restroom, and attempting to sleep. This phenomenon was thus termed “performative consumption”, a phrase that means performing consumption as a way to escape consuming. Performing consumption during such activities is paradoxical in nature and potentially damaging to people's daily rhythms. While this is an initial exploration into the phenomenon, the discovery that people are consuming to escape consumption is concerning and warrants further exploration on a greater scale.

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With the increasing use of social media in the context of society's underlying ideology of neoliberal capitalism, there is now new potential for mechanical rhythms to become superimposed over organic rhythms. The terms "organic rhythm" and "mechanical rhythm" here are being borrowed from Henri Lefebvre in his *Rhythmanalysis: Space, Time and Everyday Life*. An organic rhythm is one that is cyclical, repeating in some way over time, with an origin in the natural world (Lefebvre, 2013). The earth's orbit is an organic rhythm, as is the rhythm of our breathing. Mechanical rhythms are those that progress linearly, are built by humans and are the basis for capitalist production (Lefebvre, 2013). The nine-to-five workday and an assembly line are both examples of mechanical rhythms. Another way of describing this is organic rhythms are biological, and mechanical ones are created by the capitalist drive for production.

Both types of rhythms are experienced by humans in our daily lives and neither is inherently harmful. It is the imposition of mechanical rhythms over organic rhythms that can lead to mental health issues, physical injury, and more (Lefebvre, 2013; Simmel, 1950). This means that organic rhythms must be honored in full, without distraction, in order to prevent health complications (Lefebvre, 2013). An example of this imposition occurs when teachers prevent students from using the restroom. By forcing the student to adhere to a mechanical rhythm (school scheduling) the student is unable to honor their organic rhythm (hydration cycle). In this example, potential complications from this imposition could be decreased learning and attention due to distraction, and eventual pain and a decrease in proper bladder function. It is hypothesized that the same progression applies to social media usage, in other words, that being distracted by social media will prevent organic rhythms from taking place. The goal of this paper is to establish if social media usage is increasing to the point that it is occurring at the same time as the user's organic rhythms due to the influence of neoliberal capitalism.

### **A Social Climate Built Upon Neoliberal Capitalism**

Society today is still uncovering the effects of modernization that humans in previous time periods had not been exposed to as technology and ideology continue to grow. Many new stimuli are being experienced by people in post-modern countries, creating blasé attitudes and other coping mechanisms that are detrimental to mental health (Simmel, 1950). The blasé attitude is the habitation to being over-stimulated so that one is no longer affected by the intense stimuli of life, and this leads to serious health issues, such as depression, apathy, and suicidal thoughts (Simmel, 1950). Social pressures are being felt differently as well, as neoliberalism continues to influence our society, causing a dramatic increase in production, consumption, and waste (Monbiot, 2016). Neoliberalism is an ideology that values free-market forces and money more

than it does government (Monbiot, 2016). Capitalism at its core values production through the exploitation of workers (Labonté, 2020). When the tenants of neoliberalism and capitalism are combined, a society is created in which people are valued for their labor power and are expected to act in accordance with their class and money holdings (Labonté, 2020; Monbiot, 2016).

Workers are continuously exploited, and new ways to do so are being developed by their employers. For example, angled toilets are starting to be introduced in offices and staff bathrooms that cause stiffness and discomfort after a few minutes of sitting on them to force workers to return to production (Pinsker, 2019). This is damaging to the organic rhythm (food processing) as it punishes the worker for attempting to honor said organic rhythm and prevents total completion. All of this shows an increased burden upon people that are performing production to follow the linear, mechanical rhythms of their workplace and ignore the cyclic, organic rhythms of their bodies. As this ideology becomes further ingrained into humanity's psyche, it becomes more integrated into society outside the factories as well.

### **Younger Generations, Mental Health, and Social Media**

Another new development of society is that of social media. Platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok are providing a new way for massive amounts of information to be exchanged between massive amounts of people throughout our globalized society. Social media sites are especially pungent among younger generations, a phenomenon that adds to the need for their sociological analysis (Hawes et al., 2020). One of the main concerns that social media rises is that of its effect upon mental health. As symptoms of depression raise in younger generations, so do levels of social media use (Hawes et al., 2020). The proposed explanation for this is that as teenagers see their friends posting curated photos of themselves and their social outings, they begin to feel left out and experience higher levels of perceived isolation (Hawes et al., 2020). Younger generations in this society are feeling more isolated than generations before and are reporting greater mental health issues as well (Kumar & Prabha, 2019; Baltacı, 2019). Social media appears to be a solution to these ailments as it claims to bring people together, but in fact, it is the cause of such problems. Social media often becomes a tool for the indoctrination of young people into the ideologies that are harming society, causing these problems to develop further (Kumar & Prabha, 2019; Baltacı, 2019). This proselytization is problematic in itself, but the issues are compounded when it interferes with our organic rhythms as well. Data sourced from Sprout Source, a company that tracks how social media is used to help its customers receive more online traffic, reveal that social media sites are most used during lunchtime hours, and then evening times when most people are off work or school. This means

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people are using social media when they are not actively being forced to follow linear rhythms and instead have the option to honor their own organic rhythms.

### **TikTok**

In order to more specifically study how social media could be altering young generations' organic rhythms, TikTok was chosen to be analyzed for this purpose. This platform was a natural choice for this research because it has the potential to both be extremely addicting, as well as not. Features of TikTok that promote addiction are the funny videos that provide positive stimulation for a short amount of time and the infinite scrolling page that perpetrates the ease of access for finding more videos (Krumar & Prabha, 2019). This exposure of positive stimulation for a brief period of time is characteristic of and necessary for the development of addiction (Wise, 2020). However, ByteDance, the company that owns TikTok, has done some things to allow people to protect themselves from this plight. TikTok's settings have an obvious Digital Wellness section in which users find controls for limiting sensitive content and limiting overall use of the app through setting time restrictions (Safety Center - Resources, n.d.). ByteDance even went so far as to create a series of videos promoting the safe and healthy use of TikTok by teaming up with accredited TikTok creators (Perez, 2019). Regardless of their motivations, ByteDance has provided users with the ability to be safe and manage their use of the app responsibly, and has publicized this well so that users will be aware of it. This makes TikTok a good platform to study because intentional addiction caused by the company has been reduced further than on any other platform and will be less of a confounding variable.

### **Methods**

Having selected TikTok to be studied, a survey was now necessary to gather data about how people use TikTok. In order to target the younger population, the age restrictions for answering were set from eighteen to twenty-one. The survey, a self-select and self-report questionnaire, was constructed in Google Forms to ensure that respondents could access it easily online. While there are problems with self-selecting and self-reporting, this method was necessary because the pandemic caused by the novel coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 prevented distributing questionnaires and interviews due to health concerns. The questions were designed to explore the habits of when people used TikTok and used a filtered approach by asking general questions at the beginning and specific questions at the end. To ensure anonymity, respondents did not need to login to complete the survey, no demographic data were collected, and data was not collected on the type of content that people consumed. The questionnaire was distributed to Facebook groups containing college students at Florida State University and seventy-four complete responses were recorded and analyzed



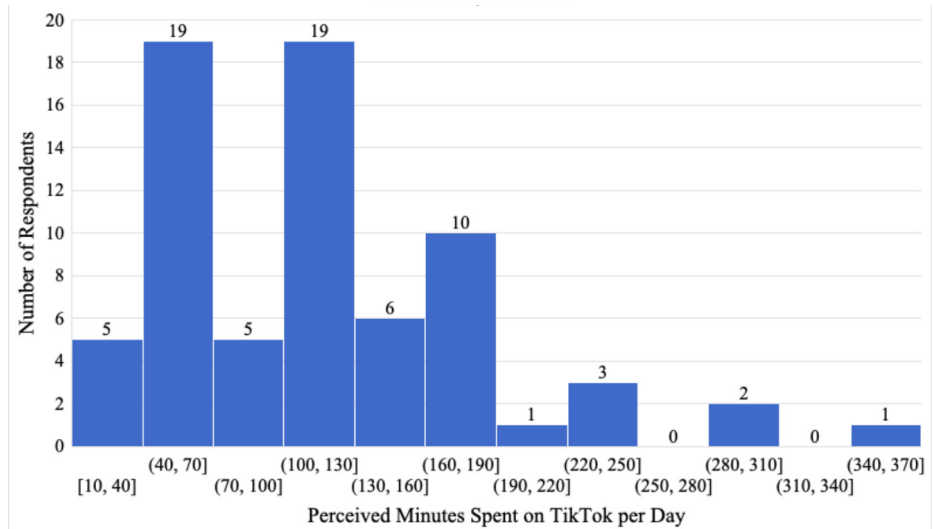
for this exploration. The questionnaire can be found in the Appendix.

### Results

The first important finding to report is that TikTok users had a poor grasp of how long they spend on the app. One question asked how long participants thought they were spending on the app in minutes ( $\bar{x} = 120$ ,  $s = 69$ ), and the following question asked them to record the amount of time they actually spent according to their phone that tracks this information ( $\bar{x} = 164$ ,  $s = 140$ ) (Figure 1; Figure 2).

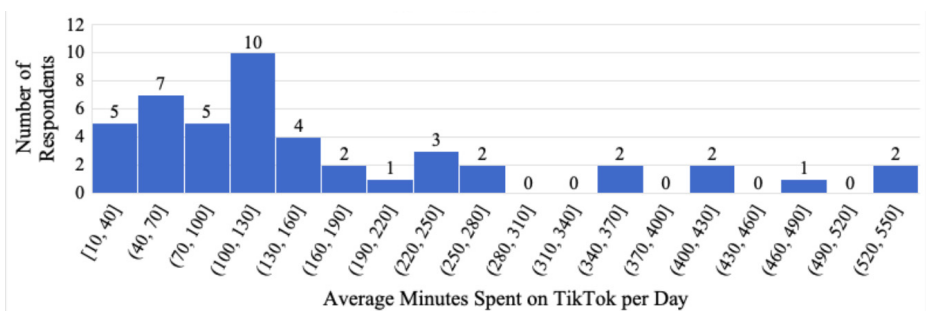
**Figure 1**

*Perceived Time (min) Spent on TikTok per Day*



**Figure 2**

*Actual Time (min) Spent on TikTok per Day.*



A two-sample test reveals that these two distributions are statistically different at a 95% confidence level. This means that people have a poor grasp of how long they are spending on the app and introduces a setting for disturbing organic rhythms; if one is unaware of the time that they are giving to something,

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that something has a greater ability to disturb the rest of that person's time. Aside from altering further schedules, this disturbance combined with the addictive nature of the app has the potential to lead to things such as further social isolation, resulting in greater reports of depression in the generations that use social media.

To demonstrate that organic rhythms are occurring with TikTok use, respondents were asked when they usually use TikTok. This major question was broken into a few more specific questions, one asking about parts of the day and one asking about different activities during the day. Based on the survey results, as the day passes more people use TikTok: only 31% of respondents use TikTok in the morning, but 87% use TikTok during the night. As for using TikTok concurrently while doing other things, 26% of respondents said they used TikTok during meals, 55% said they used TikTok in the bathroom, and 77% said they used TikTok in bed before going to sleep or after waking up. Each of the activities mentioned is an organic rhythm, so seeing TikTok usage occur at the same time is concerning.

The final two questions of the survey provide the most powerful evidence that TikTok is influencing our daily lives. The penultimate question asked why people used TikTok and allowed for a written response. Almost 75% of the responses indicated that they used the app purely for entertainment, and 69% stated that they used TikTok as a way to pass the time without needing to think. One person explains: "I watch [TikToks] because I can just turn my brain off and not think about anything. It's also better at recommending content for me that I like instead of having to search for stuff like [on] YouTube." The final question asks about this more specifically, asking if people scroll through TikTok without thinking about it, and 92% of respondents answered yes. Further confirming the conclusion that respondents use TikTok for entertainment instead of honoring their organic rhythms lies in analyzing this statistic. A chi-square test for independence between this and the data relating to where people use TikTok shows that there is a relationship between using TikTok mindlessly and using TikTok during meals, the bathroom, and in bed at a 95% confidence level. In other words, there is a statistically significant relationship between using TikTok mindlessly and using TikTok during times of organic rhythms.

### Discussion

The results from the survey show that respondents are using TikTok while they eat, use the restroom, and settle down for bed; the results show that the respondents are using TikTok while they honor their organic rhythms. The evidence begins with the discrepancy between how long people think they spend on the app and how long they actually do. This is partially because of how addicting TikTok is. TikTok is so good at this because of the artificial intelligence behind the algorithm that decides what content to show which person. TikTok has one of the most powerful algorithms for determining what

each person likes to see according to other studies, and in this study only 10% of respondents said they did not regularly see content that they enjoyed (see: Barrett, 2019; Krumar & Prabha, 2019). Because people are not aware of how long they are spending on the app, they are then placed into an environment where that app has been granted the power to influence how its users spend their time.

It should also be considered that the respondents stated that they were using TikTok most when they were doing other things like eating, using the restroom, and preparing for bed. This shows that people are using TikTok when they should be honoring their organic rhythms. Organic rhythms must be attended to with complete attention for them to be completed properly (Lefebvre, 2013). This finding is worrying because it suggests that there is a potential for TikTok users that display these usage patterns to develop health issues like social isolation and poor eating and sleeping patterns which can accumulate to depression. Combined with the evidence that TikTok users are not aware of the amount of time they're giving to the app, we can begin to see that TikTok is gaining control of how people honor their organic rhythms.

The final piece of evidence to consider is the fact that the respondents overwhelmingly stated that they were using TikTok as a means of passing the time and entertainment. This suggests that people are consuming media for pleasure when they should instead be honoring their organic rhythms. Consumption is a mechanical rhythm, and the direct imposition of mechanical rhythms over organic rhythms creates a conflict that will result in the organic rhythm being rejected (Lefebvre, 2013). This rejection of the organic, as stated before, has the potential to lead to many health problems (Lefebvre, 2013; Simmel, 1950). From this, we can determine that additional studies should be run to determine if the continual usage of TikTok while one performs organic rhythms will create poor health outcomes.

Since people mostly use TikTok for entertainment, are unaware of their usage, and use it when they aren't conforming to society's mechanical rhythms, the conclusion must be drawn that TikTok usage is occurring simultaneously with the organic rhythms of the people surveyed. This phenomenon needs to be expanded upon further because as society continues to operate under neoliberal capitalism, we see that consumption is the driving force behind us. The mindless consumption that is developing on social media is something that I am going to deem "performative consumption". Performative consumption is the act of consuming media or objects without thinking about doing so in order to relax; another way to describe this is consumption with a blasé attitude. This phenomenon is a much more insidious side effect of neoliberal capitalism because it works to reinforce the way things are and prevents further subversion. People have become so addicted to consuming that they use it as a way to relax, and this addiction presents itself as curable by way of highly consumable media.

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In desiring a break from working, people are, unconsciously if not otherwise, rejecting the mechanical rhythms enforced upon them (Lefebvre, 2013). Performative consumption inhibits true relaxation then because it prevents people from ceasing their consumption and doing things that will actually be relaxing, such as following their organic rhythms. This works to emphasize our society's reliance on consumption and shows further support for Simmel's theory that people are objects and subjects within communicative networks. People are being objectified as they produce content to be consumed, and they are being subjected to the one-sided terms and conditions imposed upon them by Bytedance and also by the control neoliberal capitalism has on them when they do performative consumption.

### Conclusion

Our organic rhythms are likely being intruded upon by performative consumption through the use of social media for relaxation. As this continues, people will become more entrenched in neoliberal capitalism and potentially find they are unable to honor their organic rhythms, leading to the health problems mentioned at the beginning of this paper. TikTok was chosen for this exploration into factors affecting organic rhythms, and it was shown that TikTok is being used while people attempt to honor their organic rhythms. More social media platforms should be analyzed to see if this phenomenon occurs on them too. The research of this paper shows that people are using TikTok when they are doing things like eating, resting, and using the bathroom, revealing that consumption has been so ingrained into people that they are unable to cease and now do performative consumption alongside their organic rhythms, potentially leading to health problems like greater levels of social isolation, depression, and the blasé attitude.

The development of these health problems can be shown in the following example: By using TikTok while winding down for bed, it is likely that one will have low quality sleep, less sleep overall, and become more addicted to TikTok as well because it has been shown that people aren't aware of how long they're spending on the app. This is because it has been shown that using social media before bed correlates with higher levels of anxiety, depression, and lower self-esteem in adolescents (Woods & Scott, 2016). Further studies should examine the outcomes of using TikTok and other social media sites alongside other types of organic rhythms, like eating and using the restroom.

There are a few limitations to this study, the foremost being the sampled population. The number of responses was good for the size of the study, but the overall group sampled was very specific and not far-reaching. Another limitation of this study would be how the respondents were selected. Due to the time period, randomly selecting large groups of students was not possible and self-response surveys are not as strong as surveys in which the participants are randomly selected. Additional studies should consider randomly selecting

individuals from larger populations within the younger generations to search for evidence that TikTok, or possibly other social media platforms as well, is causing a health problems due to its imposition on organic rhythms.

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# *THE EVERYDAYNESS OF LATE-NIGHT MEDIA USE: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY*

Karly Keysor



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## **Abstract**

The increasing prevalence of technology in society has been paralleled by the public's eagerness to become more immersed in media. It is evident that varying forms of media surround people at most times of the day. However, there has been little research about the usage of media in the evening, specifically late-night media usage. Through a quantitative study, this paper explores the effects late-night media usage has on college students' everyday lives. The results indicate 91% of the participants studied engaged in late-night media usage at least five nights a week. Furthermore, the results reveal that 99% of the college students studied have a cell phone in their bedroom within one hour of going to sleep and have more than one social media platform. There was a significant positive correlation between media features and addictive behavior in college students. However, the majority of the college students did not experience major disruptions in sleep quality or daytime functioning. This elicits the growing commonality of people engaging in late-night media and possible implications and reasons of this engagement. This study promotes further research focusing on late-night media usage in relation to the metropolis, power, space, and rhythms of daily life.

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In 2010, American adolescents ranging from ages 8-18 years spent an average of 7 ½ hours a day using media, and these numbers are continuing to climb (Rideout 2010). Media is a means of communication that is used to store information or data. For my study, I will define media as outlets and or sites from which people retain information. Examples include Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In this post-industrial society, new forms of media, such as social media outlets, have been created for people to indulge in. People are able to experience new and continuous stimuli through devices such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers. However, there has been little research on the role late-night media usage has in people's everyday lives. Late-night media usage (LNMU) can be defined as using media one hour before intended time to go to sleep (Appleton et al., 2019; Pieters et al., 2014). Analyzing the impact LMNU has on college students' everyday lives may help guide prevention efforts to curb media addiction. Through a quantitative study, I hypothesize that the majority of college students will partake in LNMU and will experience disruptions in sleep quality and daytime functioning. Regarding blasé attitudes and addictive features, I think the majority of the participants will state they utilize media as a pastime, and are satisfied with the addictive features in media.

### **Power Relations Between Media Platforms, the State, and the People**

As a product of capitalism, media emphasizes the state's power over people. Foucault (1982) defined power as a relationship between people, and their indirect modes of action imposed on each other. Freedom and power are considered mutually exclusive, meaning, one cannot occur without the presence of the other (Foucault 1982). Many media outlets have designed to keep people engaged and craving for more. One example of this is infinite scrolling. This feature continuously loads content as the user scrolls down the page (Loranger, 2014). A single continuous page keeps the mind engaged by endlessly introducing new stimuli. Therefore, the mind becomes overstimulated and passively retains all information. The feature of infinite scrolling makes media usage a time-consuming activity, developing an addictive behavior in people.

Moreover, the use of algorithms is another feature to keep people engrossed in media. Algorithms enable media sites to present the user with information catered to that user. They give content preeminence over others while simultaneously excluding certain information. (Cetina & Martínez, 2019). This feature can be exemplified in the "For you" page on TikTok, the home page on YouTube, and the "Suggested for You" section on Twitter. These sites analyze the user's profile and their past history of watched/liked posts.



Then, they present the user with new stimuli that aligns with the information collected about that user.

### **An Enhancement to the Metropolis**

LNMU has become more frequent among all ages. In a cross-sectional study, Pieters et al. (2014) analyzed the influence of media use in daytime functioning and sleep/wake patterns in 1,926 adolescents ranging in age from 13 to 20 years. Pieters et al. (2014) found 45% of adolescents watch television, 34% use the computer, 48% use their cell phone, 23% listen to music, and 13% play video games every night during the week in the hour before going to sleep. Likewise, in another study analyzing technology-use among Australian adults from age 18-90 years, 76% of the adults watch television, 66% are on the internet, and 49% are on social media three or more times per week in the hour before sleep (Appleton et al., 2019). Regardless of age, people consume evening media multiple times per week. These studies convey how LNMU is a recurring event in people's evening routine.

The increased commonality of people using media at night is in part due to the transformation of everyday life into the "metropolis (Simmel 1961)." Simmel (1961) refers to modern life as the "metropolis," where qualitative values become reduced to their quantitative aspects. For instance, the sound of crosswalks is meant to alert people that it's time to cross; however, in the "metropolis", the noise is rarely noticed. The rapidly changing environment overstimulates people's minds, so people tend to gloss over the subjective value of objects. By enhancing the blasé attitudes in people, late-night media use maintains the mechanics of modern life and society.

### **Invasion of Technology and Media in Sleep-Designated Spaces**

Regarding the usage of media during the night, endless media can lead to longer use times which creates disturbances in sleep-designated spaces. Late-night media usage is supported by the presence of technology in sleep-designated spaces. Studies have shown people generally have technology located in their bedrooms (Appleton et al., 2019; Jiwoo Lee et al., 2018; Pieters et al., 2014). Examining the effect of pre-sleep media on sleep patterns and daytime functioning, Pieters et. al (2014) found about 45% among the adolescents studied had a television, 53% had a computer, 86% had a cell phone, 70% had a mp3 player, and 30% had a video game console in their bedroom. Similarly, Jiwoo Lee et al. (2018) found 61% of children and 92% of parents had at least one media device located in their bedroom.

From these results of the presence of media in bedrooms, sleep-designated spaces are being conquered by technology. As a result, the bedroom is redefined as a space to continuously engage with others with no concrete end, potentially

disrupting a person's daily routines. According to Lefebvre (2016), "space is a social product" or a complex social construction (based on values, and the social production of meanings) which affects spatial practices and perceptions. The technology in people's bedrooms enables people to personalize time and space.

### **Disruption of Sleep Quality and Daytime Functioning**

Lefebvre (2017) explores the different dichotomies of rhythms composed in everyday life. This includes organic v. mechanical, continuous v. discontinuous, and cyclical v. linear rhythms (Lefebvre, 2017, p.8). In each contrasting pair, media can be categorized as one type of rhythm that intrudes upon the other type. Sleep is a biological activity that generally occurs at night; however, the constantly active media cycle impedes on the body's sleep patterns. Consequently, media creates discontinuities in the continuous routines during the day. The invasion of sleep cycles disorients the body, potentially causing daytime sleepiness or more frequent naps throughout the day. LNMU forces people's circadian rhythms to adapt to its linear rhythms. People's learned desire to use media in the evening interrupts their cyclical sleep pattern, resulting in bad sleep quality and shorter duration of sleep. Analyzing the impact of technology use before sleep on daytime function, Johansson et al. (2016) surveyed adolescents' sleep habits, use of technology in the hour before bedtime, and daytime sleepiness. The results revealed participants who reported having "inadequate" sleep had "shorter sleep duration, greater frequency of technology use before bedtime, feeling unrefreshed on waking, and greater daytime sleepiness" than those reporting "adequate" sleep (Johansson et al., 2016). Since people cannot get sufficient sleep, the body's need to sleep causes people to become weaker, producing daytime sleepiness and frequent naps throughout the day. In everyday life, the dichotomies of rhythms are present in a dialectical relationship. Each type of rhythm enforces the other by interfering with them. The disruption of sleep duration and quality by late-night media usage imposes bodily organic rhythms to compensate for the loss of sleep in the evening.

Previous studies have shown LNMU can cause disturbances in sleep, academic performance, and daytime functioning. The usage of media in the evening can alter people's sleep quality and or duration (Appleton et al., 2019; Johansson et al., 2016; Piero-Velert et al., 2014; Pieters et al., 2014). As a result, a person's academic performance and daytime functioning could be hindered as well. In a study examining screen media usage, sleep time, and academic performance, Peiro-Velert et al. (2014) found that adolescents with the highest academic performance were younger individuals who slept more and spent less

time using screen media in the evening. Peiro-Velert et al. (2014) concluded academic performance is inversely related to sedentary screen media usage. This shows that LNMU can negatively impact not only users' sleep, but their wakefulness during the day as well, potentially impacting their performance in school or on the job.

### **Methods**

I conducted a quantitative study on LNMU among college-aged students. Through a quantitative study, I created a survey through Qualtrics that focused on four different aspects on LNMU's influence on people's daily lives: blasé attitudes, addictive behaviors, sleep quality, and daytime functioning.

#### **Participants**

Participants were college students between the ages of 18-24 years. Due to accessibility limitations, I implemented nonprobability sampling to gather my sample size.

#### **Materials**

For my study, I conducted an online survey. The survey was created through Qualtrics and was composed of four different sections along with a consent agreement at the start of the survey. The first section inquired about the participant's age and academic classification to ensure the participant was between the ages of 18-24 years. The next section focused on the quantity and usage of social media platforms by the participant. To determine the quantity of social media platforms, the participant was asked to check off all the accounts s/he uses on a daily basis. For this study, I included six social media platforms: Twitter, Snapchat, TikTok, Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube. In regards to the usage of social media, the participant was given a matrix of eight statements where s/he were able to respond to the statement with one of five different scale points (See Appendix A for complete survey). Four statements related to common signs of addictive behavior and four statements related to the influence of features designed to keep people engaged in the social media platform longer. The following section asked about the participants' sleep experiences and the presence of technology in their bedroom. In this section, the participants were given a matrix of six statements relating to their sleep quality with five scale points. Also, the participants were asked to check off all devices s/he keeps in s/he bedroom within one hour of intended time to go to bed. Paralleling previous studies, I included five devices (phone, tablet/iPad, computer, video game system, television) along with an "Other" option where the participant can type any additional devices. The final section focused on the participant's LNMU. In this section, the participant was asked how frequent they participate in LNMU and if the participant's LNMU interrupts her/his

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daytime activities. If s/he answered yes, the participant was given the option to write a brief response describing an example of how LNMU interrupts her/his daytime activities. To ensure the participants clearly understand certain terms in context of this study, I defined any specific terms at the beginning of the section the terms were presented the participants (See bolded terms in Appendix). I maintained anonymity by not asking the participant's any identifiable questions besides their school year classification and age.

### **Procedure**

Participant recruitment was done by sharing the survey URL to my social media platforms (Instagram, Snapchat, and Facebook groups) during a 48-hour time period. To limit confounding variables, I typed identical scripts on my post including the URL on all media platforms that I shared. Interested participants were able to click on the link and begin immediately on any media device. Before starting on the first section of the survey, all participants were required to read a brief description of the study and click "I Agree" button. The brief description included the objective of the study, voluntary participation, the confidentiality of the study, and my contact information if participants had any questions throughout the survey. The online survey took no longer than ten minutes to finish.

After the 48-hour time block, I deactivated the survey. Once all collected, the data was examined and analyzed. The responses were coded through Qualtrics and exported into an excel spreadsheet. The responses were recorded in five sections: demographics, blasé attitudes, power relations, invasions of space, and disruption of rhythms. All responses that were fully incomplete were omitted, leaving 102 responses representing the sample size. However, partial responses were recorded if the response completed all questions necessary for a single section, resulting in different sample sizes for each section. For the matrixes, I created four composite scores to measure the satisfaction of addictive features, addictive behavior, sleep quality, and daytime functioning. Data analysis was then performed using descriptive statistics (count, percentage, and frequency) and bivariate correlations. Frequency distribution was recorded for each section.

### **Results**

Table 1 illustrates the demographic characteristics of the sample size. The majority of the participants were second-year students, with 9% being first-year students, 64% being second-year, 21% being third-year, 5% being fourth-year, and 2% being "Other." In regards to age, 10% of the participants were 18 years, 66% were 19 years, 18% were 20 years, 5% were 21 years, and 1% were 22 years.

**Table 1***Demographic Characteristics of Sample Size (N = 102)*

School-year		
First-year	9	9
Second-year	65	64
Third-year	21	21
Fourth-year	5	5
Other	2	2
Age		
18 years	10	10
19 years	65	66
20 years	18	18
21 years	5	5
22 years	1	1
23 years	0	0
24 years	0	0

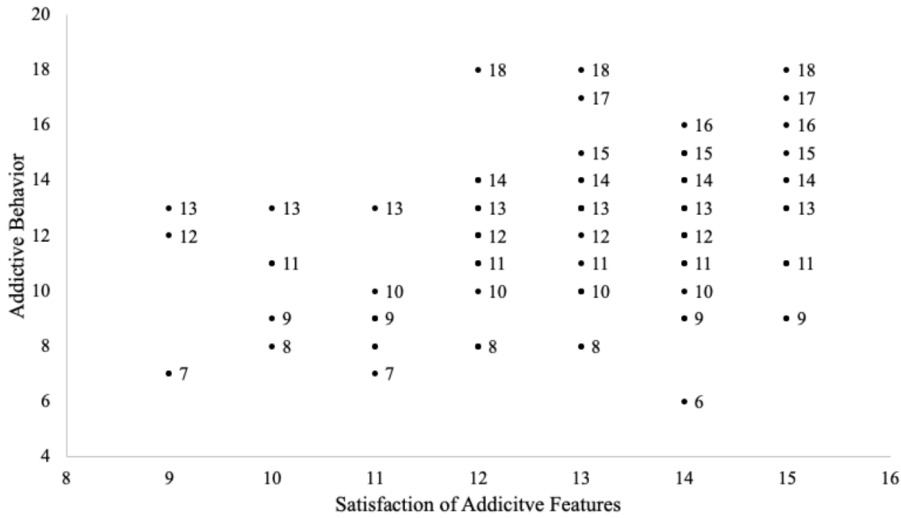
For the blasé attitude section I conducted descriptive statistics on the frequency of *LNMU*. 70% of all participants recorded participating in *LNMU* seven days a week for the past month as well as 69% of all participants selected “Strongly Disagree” or “Disagree” to the statement “I interact (like, comment, and or share) with every post/video that I receive when I am using social media.” All, except for one, of the 102 participants selected more than 1 social media platform that they use on a daily basis. According to the percentage of participants engaging in *LNMU* in the past month, 70% of the participants took a part in *LNMU* seven nights a week, 21% participate five to six nights of the week, 4% participate three to four nights a week, 3% participate one to two nights a week, and 1% participate zero nights a week. Of the participants that replied “Yes” to the question “Does late-night media usage interrupt your daytime activities?”, 39% of the participants used words such as “tired” and “groggy” when describing how late-night media usage interrupt their daytime

activities.

In the addictive features section, I calculated a Pearson product-moment correlation to examine the relation between the satisfaction of the addictive features implemented in social media outlets and media addiction. I found a slightly positive correlation between addictive features and media addiction,  $r(92) = .37, p < 0.001$ . Figure 1 illustrates the positive correlation between satisfaction level of media features and addictive behaviors.

**Figure 1**

*Correlation of Media Feature Satisfaction and Addictive Behaviors*



A Pearson product-moment correlation was calculated to examine the relation between sleep quality and LNMU. I found no correlation between sleep quality and LNMU,  $r(91) = -.07, p = .50$ . Concerning media devices in the bedroom space, 99% of the participants have a phone in the bedroom within 1 hour of going to sleep, 21% have a tablet/iPad, 23% have a TV, 4% have a video game system, and 67% have a computer in their bedroom.

In regards to daytime functioning, I calculated a Pearson product-moment correlation to examine the relation between daytime functioning and LNMU. I found no correlation between daytime functioning,  $r(91) = -.09, p = .39$ .

### Discussion

My study produced three notable findings. First, there was a unanimous amount of college students that participate in LNMU every night of the week. Second, media features of infinite scrolling and algorithms was associated with behaviors linked with addiction. Lastly, there were no significant correlations between sleep quality and LNMU and daytime functioning and LNMU.

Simmel (1961) describes a blasé person as someone who radiates an “evenly flat and gray tone” (p. 414). Blasé people can no longer differentiate objects or things by their intrinsic value, but rather their external values of money and time. Media has made this condition even more acute. With the majority of the sample size self-reporting they do not interact with every post, it suggests that media usage contributes to the blasé attitudes of people in the “metropolis.” A plethora of media outlets can be accessible in a single device, automating the ways in which people are stimulated. Media can thus be seen as an extension of the “metropolis,” giving people an endless stream of novelty and taxing the limits of their attention span. It strips away individualization and keeps people distracted. Social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram, give people a false sense of individualization by allowing them to create a profile of themselves. People can then recognize and create an identity amidst the chaos while simultaneously being blasé to the outside world. Media is not only a product, but an extension of the “metropolis.”

In regards to power relations, it can be seen that college students exhibit potential signs of addictive behavior towards social media use. This implies a positive influence media features have on usage times of people. The use of algorithms and infinite scrolling features makes media a conduit of influence, with the design of the media outlets inducing a certain response from the users. Media usage encourages the authoritative power of the state, and aids in maintaining the state’s power. This can be illustrative of Michel Foucault’s focus on power relations. Media is the mode of action that is indirectly imposed by the state to maintain power over the people. People have the choice to use media outlets, and creating digital profiles grants people autonomy; however, the use of algorithms limits the user’s choice over what they consume. The relationship between media outlets and the state becomes an indirect system in order to contain its hierarchical status over the people. Consequently, endless media, where feed continually updates with new content specially catered to the user, makes it very difficult for people to disengage with.

Paralleling Lefebvre’s concept of space as a social product, people are able to disengage from the physical sleep designated space, and enter a virtual social space. Of the 102 participants, 101 reported having a cellphone in their bedroom when they go to sleep. This digitalized media space establishes a labyrinth connecting individuals in an extensive, boundless communication web. Although no significant correlation was found between sleep quality and LNMU and daytime functioning and LNMU, the sleep-designated space transforms into a limitless social space for people to interact with others virtually which can then potentially result in disruptions in sleep quality and daytime functioning.



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No significant relationship was found between sleep quality and LNMU. Likewise, no significant correlation was found between daytime functioning and LNMU. This countered my initial hypothesis that the presence of media devices and LNMU would result in a negative effect on sleep quality and or daytime functioning. However, more extensive research can be done to examine LNMU, sleep quality, and daytime functioning.

Given the frequent use of media in the evening, it's important to explore the role media has in everyday life. LNMU has become not only an inclusion, but also a disruption in people's daily lives. The usage of media is the product of today's neoliberal society, and enhances the grip capitalism has over people in a capitalist state. Companies have designed media outlets to be addictive, making LNMU a prevalent activity. Late-night media usage invades private space and interrupts people's daily rhythms. While this approach considers the complex impact late-night media usage has in everyday life, this study had a few limitations. The study was based on subjective interpretations about the analysis between scholarly articles about late-night media use and theoretical concepts regarding everyday life. Furthermore, my study does not provide a concrete answer/solution to the different aspects of daily life late-night media usage inserts itself in. Rather, this study offers a new insight about the influence late-night media usage has in people's everyday lives. This study was meant to be a preliminary analysis about late-night media use in college students. Future research can be done focusing on preventive measures to curb late-night media addictions as well on focusing on demographic differences with LNMU (gender, age, school year). I hope this study will promote further research in the role late-night media usage has in everyday life.

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# *EXEMPLIFYING THE PANOPTICON: A CASE STUDY ON MODERN HOSPITAL ARCHITECTURE*

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## **Abstract**

Over the years, healthcare as an institution has increasingly become regulated to the point where surveillance has become the norm (Fraile et al., 2019). The naturalization of such guarded practices has produced asymmetrical power relations wherein providers subject their patients to what Michel Foucault refers to as the ‘medical gaze,’ reducing their individuality to a mere summation of illnesses (Foucault, 1980). These normalized mechanisms designed to check patient-provider interactions extend to both the users’ habits and spaces in such clinical settings. This study aims to show how the modern-day hospital ward exemplifies the concept of the Panopticon – an architectural configuration designed for surveillance and social management (Evans, 1971). This study will not delve into the ethics of asymmetrical power relations and ascribed subjectivities to both patients and providers, rather it will examine how the phenomenon of the Panopticon is (re)created in an everyday venue such as the hospital. In order to demonstrate the influencing effect of hospital architecture on its users, ethnographic photography was used in coding the different features of hospital spaces such as patient wards and waiting rooms. The results yielded by this study serves as preliminary insight on how the actions and (inter)actions of providers and patients in hospitals are affected by architecture. Understanding these implications can help in the continuous reform of healthcare as a patient-centered institution.

### **Foucauldian Analysis of the Panopticon**

The creation of the Panopticon represents a unique shift in which power is imbued and administered in citizens. According to social theorist Michel Foucault, monarchical institutions before held sovereign power which allowed them to command and suppress their constituents. Monarchs in their states rendered power through “arms, physical violence, material constraints” – all of which are expensive ways to keep their people in line and may also run the risk of mass revolt due to the harshness of such governing measures (Foucault, 1980 & 1977). However, Western states in the eighteenth century began to adopt a new way of governance: pastoral power, which is a derivative from the mode of leadership in Christian institutions (Foucault, 1982). Foucault described this reinvented, pastoral power as a “matrix for individualization” since states seek to govern their constituents not only as a collective but also as individuals as well. Pastoral state power is unique in comparison with sovereign power as it ‘softly’ governs people by catering to their individual needs, while the latter enforces harsh and absolute means to keep their subordinates in check (Foucault, 1982). States now conduct matters relating to health, well-being, security, and defense of their constituents, thereby establishing their influence and power on the governed in a humane yet pervasive manner. This ‘soft’ power mirrors the ways in which the Panopticon establishes social control through catering to the comforts of the surveilled and rehabilitating them, rather than establishing grand acts of punishment.

In the late eighteenth century, Jeremy Bentham designed the Panopticon, a model intended for institutional control. This novel development in architecture entails a cylindrical structure with a central watchtower surrounded by ‘well-serviced’ individual cells (Evans, 1971). This design allows for an easy and efficient way to exert power and establish social control – wherein the few surveils the many and vice versa, embedding into each other the possibility of ‘being caught.’ In addition, as the cells are well-equipped and neatly kept, the dwellers are less likely to revolt due to the comfort of their surroundings – thus, making such institutional power irresistible to the inhabitants. This new approach to oversee individuals is groundbreaking in that it mirrors the ‘soft’ pastoral state power from a macroscopic, societal scale to microscopic, institutional levels such as prisons – imbuing social control smoothly rather than by brute force in these microcosms. For example, rather than punishing and reprimanding those who have deviated from society’s by-laws through public spectacles, such as executions; modern penitentiary facilities, which adopted the design of the Panopticon, use this all-seeing ‘gaze’ to prompt criminals to act accordingly in the name of reform (Foucault, 1980; Evans 1971). As prisons now focus on rehabilitating criminals in private through intense overwatch

while ironically veiling them from the public, prisoners become objects of reform. Through the Panopticon's solution to surveillance, individuals are not only subjected to submission but also become mere subjects of it, chipping away their agency and their humanity.

Similar to the Panopticon's all-perceiving 'gaze,' nation-states began to adopt this mode of power to govern their subjects. In order to create and sustain its influence over the lives of many, state-established institutions needed to use Panopticon-like devices to maintain their watchful gaze over society. As such, reinvented state power is characterized as both totalizing and individualizing due to its all-perceiving nature (Foucault 1982). This power is totalizing in nature in that it oversees the common good of society and individualizing in that it subtly directs the individual to act in accordance with the 'set' norms. Such duality of state power makes it hard for constituents to resist since the state appears to not only tend to the collective's need but also heed to each individual's call. Hence, institutions keep their overarching colonization of everyday life due to the appealing nature of their dual power. Healthcare, as one of these institutions, makes use of this type of control.

### **Evolution of Hospital Architecture**

Throughout the years, the evolution of Western hospital architecture has led to the transformation of its function as well. In the eighteenth century, hospital architecture changed to accommodate "the process of specialization" rather than being "a receptacle of the poor," signaling a modification in the functionality of healthcare (Fraile et al., 2019). This shift in the focus of healthcare meant that specialists in the different disciplines of medicine (pertaining to the different body parts) see patients based on their illnesses and aim to restore individuals to good health. Healthcare, as a state-established institution, is now focused on surveilling the state of their patients – inquiring about their vital signs, symptoms, and ailments – for the sake of advancing public health. As increasing specialization and evidenced-based medicine took place, biomedical facts took precedence over rapport in patient-provider dialogue (Wolf et al., 2012). Placing the power of diagnosis in the hands of hospitals not only produced asymmetrical power relations between patients and providers (resulting in the disparity between non-experts and experts), but it also fostered the domineering control of healthcare (as an institution) on each individual's body.

From this shift in the functionality of hospitals and clinics, arises the increased investment of the state in "facts of existence related to bodies and populations" (Redfield, 2005). Foucault termed this ability of the government to subject its constituents based on their genotypical and phenotypical features as

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biopower. This new “power over life” not only disciplines each individual and their own body, but it also uses aggregated, biological demographics such as morbidity, mortality, and fertility to regulate society as a whole (Fuller, 2016). In this sense, this new biopower held by healthcare institutions over society is both totalizing and individualizing – characteristics that could be attributed to the nature of the Panopticon. Healthcare institutions employ this ‘all-seeing’ gaze in society by regulating the bodily rhythms of patients and policing providers to appropriately use their expertise to oversee the health of each individual. Understanding how this power is diffused in everyday life requires looking into the microcosms of healthcare. One such example – the modern-day hospital – is a facility viewed as the ‘normal’ place for treating illnesses and seeking medical advice. Hence, it is only imperative to problematize the agents (one of which is architecture) in hospitals which allow for the creation and diffusion of such power.

### Methods

This study was conducted in the M.T. Mustian Center at Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare (TMH). As a college volunteer, I was able to observe the actions and relations between patients and providers (nurses, physicians, and patient care technicians) during my 4-hour shift every Saturday from January to March of 2020. I worked in the Surgical Care Unit (SCU); a 72-bed capacity floor meant to prepare patients for their surgical procedures. Since this study was meant to explore architecture and its implications on patients and providers, I combined ethnography and photography (ethnographic photography) by immersing myself as an observer in the clinical unit and taking pictures of the nurses’ station, the patient rooms, and the waiting area in order to capture the components of these spaces. Ethnographic studies are commonly used in qualitative research to report observed experiences in a narrative (Marvasti, 2011). While there are debates that question the legitimacy of ethnography due to its subjective nature, this still remains an effective research technique in examining social interactions and relations on an individual and personal basis. Through ethnographic photography, I was able to analyze how the careful arrangement of these designed spaces molded the patients and providers’ spatiotemporal rhythms, ascribed subjectivities, and their asymmetrical power relations/interactions.

### Results

Working as a volunteer in the Surgical Care Unit (SCU) meant that I was only to observe nurses (RNs) in clinical and assist patient care assistants (PCAs) in non-clinical roles. In my time as a volunteer, I have observed that weekend (Saturday) shifts are not busy. Only two to three RNs work on the floor during

the day and one to two PCAs are present. Physicians, particularly surgeons and anesthetists, come in from time to time to check in on their patients who are preparing for surgeries. On average, only two to three patients are admitted to the SCU for pre-operative procedures. In the following pictures, I will be detailing how the users of these spaces make use of the architecture and technology in these two different places: the nurses' station and waiting area. I will be differentiating the users of these spaces between these two categories: providers, defined as those working at the hospital and includes RNs, PCAs, physicians, and office coordinators; and patients, defined as those seeking medical attention and care.

Fig. 1 captures a panoramic view of the nurses' station. The nurses' station acts as a vantage point in surveilling patients, providing an adequate view to patient rooms in its vicinity. There are four stationary desktops in the nurses' station. Additionally, there are two portable computers which otherwise known as 'workstations on wheels' (WOWs) parked near the two monitors which show patient information. These computers and monitors are used by providers to access patient information, look at treatment orders, and check the status of the unit as a whole. Two telephones and three to four beepers are placed on the desks in the nurses' station. These communication devices are used by providers to interact with their patients and with other nurses as well. Phones serve as the main line of contact between RNs and physicians or RNs and patients. It is notable many of these devices are placed in one area for accessibility.

Fig. 2 captures the view of patient rooms from the nurses' station. Here, the proximity of the patient rooms gives providers easy access when administering care to their patients. Two patient rooms flank each side of the nurses' station. Despite having glass doors, the patients' rooms have curtains behind them which allow patients to cover their space for privacy. During slow shifts such as weekends on Saturdays, rooms closest to the nurses' station are occupied first as they are the most accessible to providers.

Fig. 3 captures the view of and from the information desk in the waiting area. The desk provides receptionists a comprehensive view of the waiting area despite being positioned on the corner. Through this, they are able to surveil any passersby or loved ones interacting with this space. Monitors are placed in the desk for receptionists to access patient information when needed. Numerous chairs are placed for visitors and loved ones to sit by. The space is filled with multiple lights and is surrounded by glass windows which illuminate the area.

## Discussion

Space both dictates and is dictated by its function. As such, a particular



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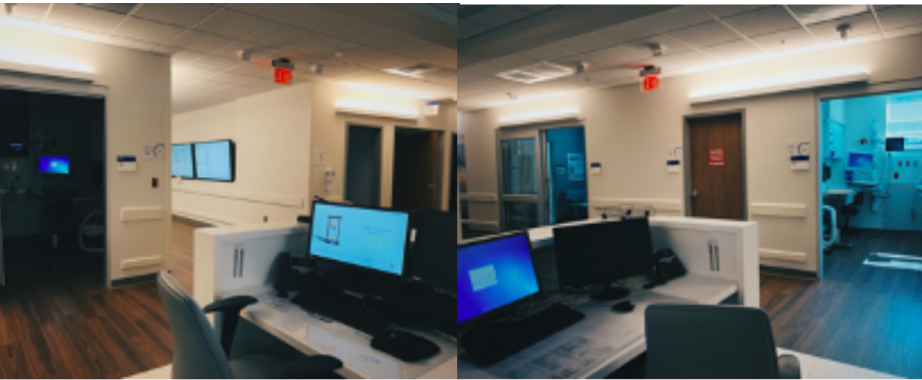
**Figure 1**

*Hospital Ward* - View of the nurses' station at the Surgical Care Unit (SCU) in Tallahassee Memorial Healthcare (TMH), 2020. © Bucag



**Figure 2**

*Hospital Ward* - View from the nurses' workstation (left and right) in the M.T. Mustian Center at TMH, 2020. © Bucag



**Figure 3**

*Waiting Area* - View of the information desk (left) and from the information desk (right) in the M.T. Mustian Center at TMH, 2020. © Bucag





space provides power to its users if that space's function is to diffuse power firsthand – proving that power can, indeed, be translated through space. Due to the power they hold, spaces do not remain neutral, but rather they are ordered. Designed spaces are said to be “formed in action” by “particular technologies of governance,” proving how spaces are organized not only based on the interactions they hold but also the effect of those spatial interactions (Simonsen et al., 2020).

In the hospital, this ordering of spaces is reflected by the hierarchical importance of the users' interactions in such spaces. Power is disproportionately placed at the hands of providers due to their expertise in the field; hence, the spatial practices of doctors, nurses, and patient care assistants are much more prioritized. Patients, on the other hand, are only given the opportunity to interact with hospital spaces under the discretion and guidance of providers, emphasizing the ordered nature of both patients' and providers' spatial interactions in the hospital. As increasing regulation and surveillance occur in healthcare, hospital architecture remains one of the ways in which this technique of power is enacted. Viewing the phenomenon of hospital surveillance through the lens of Foucault's biopolitics (*vis-à-vis* biopower), it is apparent how this mode of power not only alters subjectivities but power relations and spatiotemporal rhythms as well.

While architecture is stagnant in a sense as it is fixated on a certain location, this does not mean that it is static, nor does it lack agency, the ability to influence the action of its surroundings. Rather, architecture is interactive since designed buildings do not only follow its users but also shape the space's usage. Despite being seemingly immovable and permanent, buildings “remain open to interpretation and (re)construction,” proving how designed spaces in themselves are interactive and are therefore catalysts in (re)creating how the users make use of such areas (Martin et al., 2015). By ensuring that the design of a space simultaneously follows and creates its function, architects are able to mold and scrutinize the actions of the users of such areas – further underscoring the impact of such designed spaces.

### **Ascribed subjectivities**

The influencing effect of architecture is exemplified in modern-day hospital wards through the ascribed subjectivities and power relations engendered in these spaces. For example, it is common for units to have a central workstation (known as the nurses' station) wherein healthcare providers can see each of the patient rooms (Figure 1). Due to the central nature of this workspace, bedside providers are able to watch over their patients with relative ease, while providers with managerial positions are able to oversee their staff more clearly.

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Additionally, technological features such as beepers, pagers, and monitors enable providers to oversee both patients and other providers even if they are not within close proximity.

With the panoramic nature of most workstations, it is apparent how architectural design and devices available in most hospital wards translate the ‘all-seeing’ gaze of healthcare institutions on a microscopic scale. Internal-visual cues that suggest the surveilling nature of workspaces can ascribe subjectivities to its users. For example, providers are the only ones expected to inhabit the nurses’ station while patients are assumed to always be in their rooms unless they are with a nurse or a patient care assistant (Figure 2). Receptionists are assumed to be in the information desks to surveil visitors and patients who are checking in the hospital (Figure 3). The fact that spaces can create the identities of its users – who are the patients and who are the providers – and delineate between such users – à la experts (providers) and non-experts (patients) – reveals the vital role designed spaces play in the workplace.

### **Power relations**

Power relations between the different users stem as a result of the ascribed subjectivities promoted by the internal-visual cues in designed spaces. For example, the exclusivity of the nurses’ station to providers allow RNs, PCAs, and physicians to only use this space. The restrictive nature of this nurses’ station is unique in that it implies that users with expertise in the field of medicine and patients can use the area (Figure 1). On the other hand, providers can enter patient rooms from time to time to check on patients’ needs and vitals, proving that patient rooms are not as restrictive as the nurses’ station (Figure 2). In another example, receptionists at the waiting room are expected to stay at their desks during the entire shift since they are experts on patient check-in and verification, (Figure 3). The surveilling nature of the Panopticon is translated in hospital architecture as it promotes asymmetrical interactions between patients and providers, similar to the disparity of status and power of wardens and inmates. It is apparent how spaces promote relationships of power between the different types of users. The way designed, hospital areas dictate who gets to interact with what space gives power to those who can use it. The expert-nonexpert relationship hinted by designed spaces can engender an imbalance of power when providers and patients interact with each other. Asymmetrical relations between both is further emphasized as providers retain authority in administering patient care.

### **Spaciotemporal rhythms**

Consequently, such subjectivities and imbalance of power are reflected in

the differing spatiotemporal rhythms of both patients and providers. Patients, in their everyday rhythm at the hospital, are confined to their room – expected to never act out of the norm, to stay in bed, and to always call nurses or patient care assistants when they want to do something. On the other hand, providers, in their everyday rhythm at the hospital, are confined to their workstations and to each patient's room – predicted to always heed to each patient's need, to almost always know all of the diagnosis and appropriate treatment plans for each patient, and to always be correct in administering patient care. We can see how the spatiotemporal rhythms and social roles of both patients and providers are shaped by architecture, one of the agents responsible for this phenomenon. Such agents operate based on the idea of surveillance and control in the healthcare system, translating subjectivities and power relations into microcosms such as the hospital.

### **Likening to the Panopticon**

In comparing the surveilling nature of hospital architecture to the Panopticon, it is important to look at how such spaces ascribe subjectivities, promote asymmetrical power relations, and mold the spatiotemporal rhythms of its users. While some evidence points to hospital architecture mirroring aspects of the Panopticon and its implications on social interactions, it is important to note that this is not at all absolute. The difference between the functions of modern penitentiary facilities and hospitals, the purpose of medicine versus prison reform, the role of healthcare providers versus wardens amongst others play into the complexity of such comparison. It is important to note that this research is a preliminary one and little to no literature has been done in comparing these occurrences. Further research from other healthcare institutions to see if similar phenomena occur. If so, future research should explore ways to minimize the subjugating nature of hospital surveillance while still maintaining quality patient care and processes to promote more patient autonomy in treatment without interfering with the expertise of providers.

### **Conclusion**

Analyzing how hospital architecture exemplifies the Panopticon is important in understanding the effects of surveillance, a modern technique of power that is now pervasive in everyday life. Surveillance in the hospital is an essential aspect of patient care since observing and recording the physical and mental states of patients is vital in maintaining the good health of individuals. However, intense surveillance may impede on the privacy of patients and at times may seem intrusive. Understanding the implications of patient surveillance can help foster changes in patient care to make it less invasive, and more collaborative.

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In recent developments in healthcare systems, person-centered care (PCC) has been adopted to cater to each patient's need (Wolf et al., 2012). For example, clinical self-tracking (CST) and therapeutic hospital architecture can be adopted in an attempt to (re)establish a partnership between patients and providers. In CST, patients with type 1 diabetes are encouraged to have more agency in their management by actively participating in recording their glucose levels (Maine et al., 2017). In another example, implementation of therapeutic hospital architecture expands patient care intervention not only to diagnosis and administered treatment, but to their physical environment as well, emphasizing the importance of designed spaces and how these promote interaction between patients and providers (Fenko et al. 2014; Cotton et al. 1984).

These only prove that there are ways to minimize the alienation between patients and providers, and at times, between providers themselves. These changes can be adopted by altering providers' workflows or even the architecture of hospitals and clinics. While there are limitations to the level of autonomy patients can attain in their treatments, it is nonetheless important to promote continuous partnership between patients and providers in order to gap the bridge between such asymmetrical power relations. Through promoting intervention which centers on personal need of each patient, healthcare transforms into a venue of partnership rather than subjugation.

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