EVERYDAY EXCLUSION FROM THE INFORMATION SOCIETY: DIGITAL INEQUALITIES, IDENTITY WORK, AND EMOTION MANAGEMENT

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This research examines everyday digital exclusion as it is experienced by socio-economically disadvantaged youth in an agricultural community in California. Based on in-depth interviews, the research sheds light on digital inequality as a daily phenomenon necessitating emotion management and identity work. The research makes a distinct contribution to the literature on sociologies of everyday life by forging links between the emergent field of digital inequality with the established literatures in Symbolic Interactionism and the related body of work on emotion work.

Regarding Symbolic Interactionism, the findings illuminate the daily hurdles disadvantaged youths experience in their digital engagements. Here the analysis takes a Symbolic Interactionist approach to explore digitally disadvantaged youths' identity work strategies. The analysis reveals how digitally disadvantaged youths occupy a liminal digital zone necessitating special kinds of identity performances unnecessary for their digitally advantaged peers (Goffman, 1959).

Concerning emotion management, the research draws its inspiration from Hochschild's concept of emotion management (1979). Attention is paid to emotional costs and emotion labour demanded by identity performances. The data reveal the quotidian costs of interactional strategies—particularly those necessary for digitally disadvantaged youths to maintain their digital engagements while struggling for access to basic resources.

The article closes with an examination of the implications of doing daily emotion management and identity work. Here the discussion illuminates the social isolation engendered by mundane digital inequalities. In making these linkages, the research reveals the pernicious nature of digital inequality as a form of quotidian social exclusion—a form of social division that is deeply felt by those experiencing it and yet remains largely invisible to the outside world. The study closes with a call for additional research on the sociology of everyday life that deepens our understanding of this understudied form of inequality.

Data and Methods
Drawn from a long-term, multi-method study from 2006 to 2013, the data in this article comes from one-on-one and small group interviews. Grounded in two years of ethnographic fieldwork and informal field interviews, the in-depth interview data comes from 503 respondents at two high schools: Rancho Benito High and Glen Prep. The interviews were conducted during the normal school day on the school grounds. At

Rancho Benito High, interviews were conducted with partner educators in the English Department because all students must take four years of English courses. All students enrolled in regular, college-prep, honours, and AP courses were invited to take part in the study. There was no selection process including or excluding some students from taking part in the interviews. At Glen Prep, interviews were conducted with a sample of students from regular, college-prep, honours, and AP courses. This comparative strategy ensures that variation is not due to the school setting.

Overview of Analysis

Understanding the daily hurdles disadvantaged youths experience in their digital engagements is key to understanding their identity work. For this reason, the analysis begins with a brief introduction to each group along with schedules of their daily rounds, connectivity opportunities, and opportunity costs. The examination then illuminates connections between access to resources and interactional strategies, as well as emotion management. The analysis closes with a comparison of the three groups across these areas.

		Carmen & Andy: Connectivity	Carmen & Andy: Costs	Vanessa & Ricardo: Connectivity	Vanessa & Ricardo: Costs	Marta & Jamie: Connectivity	Marta & Jamie: Costs
AM	6:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
AM		High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
AM	7:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
AM		High	Low	Low	High	Low	High
AM	8:00	High	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
AM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
AM	9:00	Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
AM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
AM	10:00	High	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
AM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
AM	11:00	Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
AM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM	12:00	High	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
PM		High	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
PM	1:00	Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM	2:00	Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM		High	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
PM	3:00	High	Low	Moderate	High	Moderate	High
PM		High	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM	4:00	High	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM	5:00	Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM		Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM	6:00	Moderate	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM		High	Low	Low	High	Low	High
PM	7:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM		High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM	8:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM		High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM	9:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM		High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM	10:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM		High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High
PM	11:00	High	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low	High

Digital Inequality as Everyday Exclusion
As the analysis shows, youths in Rancho Benito live both geographically and experientially far from the Los Angeles and San Francisco metropolitan areas. A far cry from Silicon Valley and Hollywood, this slice of small-town America is primarily populated by working people living in hard times. While their personal circumstances do

vary, two thirds of the young adults in the study feel the economic hard times that have gripped the community since the 2008 economic meltdown.

Unpacking their mundane tasks and daily rounds shows how everyday activities may have radically different meanings and consequences for those with unequal access to resources. The examination shows how daily digital engagements have radically different meanings for youths with different normative resources. As we have seen, connectivity costs demand radically different identity work and emotion management across the three groups. As the comparison of the exemplars shows, not all youths are highly connected like Carmen and Andy. Vanessa and Ricardo, and to a greater degree Marta and Ricky, stand in sharp contrast to the popular media narratives of digital natives and tech savvy youth, plugged into the network 24/7. Indeed, young people like Marta and Ricky are almost digitally excluded given their lack of any connectivity to the internet at home and the opportunity costs they must pay to procure access elsewhere. While nominally connected, they shoulder heavy burdens to obtain minimal access to the internet.

Their experiences are significant because they show that normative access to resources has strong implications for identity work and emotion management—two understudied by-products of socio-economic inequalities. More work is needed to uncover the costs paid by digitally disadvantaged individuals, particularly as they relate to identity construction. According to Harris (2000), SI gives us the theoretical tools to study equality and inequality as they are experienced by people living their everyday lives. As this article has shown, everyday social exclusion is most fully understood from the viewpoint of those who experience it. To better contribute to the literature on sociology of everyday life in the digital age, we must give voice to their struggles. To illuminate their quotidian struggles, we must reveal the meanings that digital engagements have for different social actors. In so doing our work can open a window onto the meanings mundane digital activities have for those with and without sufficient resources. For all of these reasons, more scholarship on digital inequality as sociology of everyday life is needed to understand the complex interactional processes at play in everyday digital communication. When studies of digital identity work target their attention on digitally advantaged segments of the population, it obscures the pernicious effects of digital inequality.

While the concepts of identity work and emotion management can be applied to much of the social world, they have particular power to uncover the everyday indignities and difficulties faced by the digitally disadvantaged. By taking the perspective of the digitally disadvantaged, we are forced re-examine our assumptions about the role of digital technologies in our daily rounds, as well as how the social world works for those grappling with this emergent form of inequality. Hearing respondents' voices allows us to momentarily silence our privileged conceptions of autonomy and personal agenda setting in the digital age. Instead we enter an everyday world in which autonomy is replaced by the need to constantly modify and adjust, as well as to expend emotional energy on impression management to keep up with the digitally advantaged. Uncovering members' meanings replaces the assumption of personal power with insight into the ways the digitally disadvantaged are saddled with the burden of constant dependence on the kindness of strangers.

References

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