Shitposting as public pedagogy

Peter J. Woods

Published online: 02 Nov 2023.

Submit your article to this journal

Article views: 632

View related articles

View Crossmark data

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

∂ OPEN ACCESS   Check for updates

Shitposting as public pedagogy

Peter J. Woods ⓘD

University of Nottingham, Nottingham, United Kingdom

ABSTRACT
In response to the growing ubiquity of social media, critical media literacy scholars have increasingly called for the examination of online practices and their embedded pedagogies and curricula. In response, I use this paper to reimagine shitposting, a discursive social media practice, as a form of public pedagogy aligned (at times) with critical media literacy education. I begin by engaging extant research to both define shitposting and position the practice beyond the neofascist ends of the alt-right movement that most scholars focus on. Examining this alignment through the lens of critical media literacy, I argue that shitposting exists as an online pedagogical technology that can potentially reorient the network of relationships within social media spheres and expand the possible range of identities for those involved. To illustrate this argument, I conclude with a close reading of posts from two Twitter accounts: dril, an anonymous user who has managed to inform political discourse through his shitposts, and the corporate account for the Sunny Delight Beverage Corporation. I describe how tweets from these accounts engage shitposts in divergent ways. In doing so, I contend that these tweets reveal shitposting's potential for contributing to the democratic aims of critical media literacy education, but the appropriation of that practice by large corporations and individuals imbued with political power jeopardize that already fraught potential.

Trying to define media literacy is an inherently complicated process because of a decidedly uncomplicated reason: As new technologies emerge, so do new literacy practices. According to Livingstone (2004), this means that scholars "must ask how literacy changes—and becomes plural—as the technology changes" (p. 9) when defining media literacy and, subsequently, proposing the curricula and pedagogies that comprise the forms of media literacy education that follow. Numerous scholars have proposed that the rise of social media as a nearly ubiquitous part of everyday life sounds an especially urgent call for critical media literacy scholars to expand the borders of critical media literacy education to address the unique challenges of this subset of technology (Butler, 2019; Gammon & White, 2011; Garcia et al., 2013; Karaduman, 2015; McArthur, 2016; Rodríguez-Hoyos et al., 2020). In particular, the use of social media to reinscribe oppression presents an immediate demand for critical

CONTACT Peter J. Woods ✉ peter.woods@nottingham.ac.uk

media literacy scholars to investigate how formal and informal educational praxes can critically engage with everyday violence produced through online spaces (Davies, 2014). Addressing this claim, Nagle (2018) has specifically identified an increased need for critical media literacy education when using Twitter (now called X, but referred to as Twitter throughout this paper) for educational ends: While Twitter provides an opportunity for the development of professional networks, the website also replicates forms of cyber-violence against women and people of color. But the literacies of Twitter and other social media sites remain plural, as shown by Baker-Bell et al. (2017) in their examination of the "pedagogies of healing" that emerge through Black youth's use of social media to produce counternarratives in response to anti-Blackness in media. As a whole, this body of literature amplifies the complicated reality of social media and highlights the importance of theorizing critical media literacy education practices that attend to this pervasive technology.

In response to this broad and open-ended challenge, I use this paper to further explore the critical media literacy praxes of social media, examining embedded discursive practices that individuals can use to challenge the dominant ideologies that define the social media milieu. To do so, I focus on one discursive technology in particular: shitposting, a specific kind of "meaningless" post (often in the form of a meme) that replicates the rhetorics of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook as a means to unsettle online discourses through lo-fi or unpolished media or texts. The image in Figure 1 from Twitter user da share z0ne (2023), for instance, provides an example of a shitpost because it mirrors the aesthetics associated with a particular brand of modern US machismo without providing any cohesive meaning within the text or between the words and visuals in the image. This shitpost then undermines the self-serious nature of the discourse that defines this particular kind of social media post. According to Mercer (2014), the term originates from a 2007 post on the Something Awful internet forum and slowly gained popularity within other forums
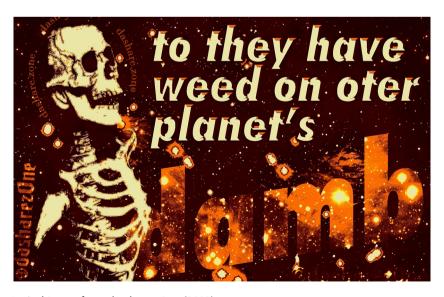

Figure 1. A shitpost from da share z0ne (2023)

such as Reddit. Shitposting then gained significant popularity around 2016 because of its use as a viral advertising tool by politicians (Griffin, 2016; Perano, 2022), revealing that the use of the practice has expanded across wide swaths of the internet. While public discussions of shitposting often mischaracterize the term as just non-sensical or low-quality online content (Manavis, 2019), the discursive nature and practice of unsettlement embodied by shitposting proves equally as important.

Drawing on Kellner and Share's (2005) core concepts of critical media literacy, I use this paper to explore the pedagogical potential of shitposting and its ability to engage critical learning praxes. To do so, I position shitposting as a technology within public pedagogy (Giroux, 2003, 2004) that can contribute to critical education praxes while also embodying problematic tendencies of online discourses. My analysis therefore invokes a series of unresolved complications, revealing how shitposting exists as a pedagogical act that creators on social can employ towards any number of ends. To achieve this goal, I begin by defining shitposting and aligning this definition with Davies's (2014) notion of turbulence. I then use this alignment to explore the aesthetic pedagogies (Woods, 2021) of shitposting-*via*-turbulence and draw comparisons to Burnett and Merchant's (2011) model of critical social media literacy, revealing how shitposting can enact a new relational politic. I then conclude the paper with a close read (Greenham, 2018) of two specific tweets: one from dril, an anonymous Twitter account commonly associated with the "Weird Twitter" genre (McDonough, 2017), and another from the corporate account of the Sunny Delight Beverage Company (better known as Sunny D). Through my examination of these two tweets, I reveal how shitposts as pedagogical technologies can both embody a critical approach to public pedagogy and reinscribe the oppressive aspects of social media as well, challenging previous theorizations of shitposting as inherently violent. This assertion also reinforces the plurality of media literacy and encourages educators (both formal and informal) to more fully engage the nuances of social media's literacy practices.

Defining Shitposting

While the body of literature exploring shitposting remains somewhat limited, the vast majority of this research has focused on the use of this rhetorical device by online neo-fascist movements like the alt-right (Aspray, 2019; Hodge & Hallgrimsdottir, 2020; Munn, 2019) and conservative movements in the lead up to various elections, especially the 2016 US election and the "Brexit" vote in the UK that same year (Dignam & Rohlinger, 2019; Griffin, 2016; Southern, 2022). Here, scholars have argued that conservative and neo-fascist social media users shitpost by making large amounts of nonsensical posts to fluster and confuse unsuspecting internet users towards nefarious ends (Biggs, 2016; Rauf, 2021). While it remains vitally important to continue critically examining the online discursive practices of these movements, the definition of shitposting proposed by these scholars does not represent how most online users engage the practice. Instead, most people do so for the (decidedly deadpan and overwhelmingly absurd) humor of shitposting (Cavanaugh, 2021; Hugar, 2017; Nordstrom, 2022). Recognizing this rhetorical practice outside of neo-fascist contexts creates space to consider other manifestations of shitposting while also presenting an opportunity to understand the elements of this practice that online fascist movements exploit.

In turn, I use this section to propose a definition of the term that applies to all uses of this social media practice. I also argue here that shitposting inherently produces pedagogical interactions through the circulation of this social media content. But because of the broadly accepted positioning of shitposting as inherently problematic, research has yet to explore the educative benefits of shitposts. Looking outside of research into shitposts, scholars have made an argument for the benefits of memes within learning processes (Dongqiang et al., 2020; Reddy et al., 2020; Tashpulatova et al., 2022; Vacca et al., 2022), thus providing a theoretical foundation to further examine the pedagogies of shitposting. According to Knobel (2006), a meme represents an easily replicable idea that can be modified and shared, one that primarily manifests within online contexts through reproducing and "riffing on" image or text templates that users circulate through social media. Importantly, memes hold an educative potential both in terms of representing an important aspect of digital literacy (i.e., recognizing and creating with the core ideas of the meme) and the learning that comes from the development and maintenance of affinity spaces (Knobel, 2006). Memes therefore provide a tool within public pedagogy, or the educative and political praxes that emerge from the production and circulation of media (Giroux, 2000, 2003). Making and distributing new media such as memes represents a form of public pedagogy because this process contributes to the development of identity and agency not only within the creator but within the audience through which it circulates (Mallos, 2020).

Building on this literature, I propose a definition of shitposting that embodies four distinct elements: a reliance on absurdity or "meaninglessness," the critique or disruption of online discourses, the employment of an "internet ugly" aesthetic, and the use of meta-languaging. I use the remainder of this section to not only conceptualize each of these four components within extant literature but locate these elements within both examples of shitposts in Figure 2. These examples also provide an opportunity to further contextualize shitposting in relation to memes, especially

Figure 2. Two examples of shitposts

since the image on the left comes from the combination of two popular examples of this broader category (Adam, 2021; Brandon, 2022). While not all individual shitposts exist as memes (the image on the right in Figure 2 does not seem to come from any other existing meme format), shitposting as a practice exists as a meme in itself: The production of "meaningless," lo-fi content that speaks to and unsettles online discourses represents a mimetic process. Shitposting also holds the same multimodal quality of memes, with shitposts existing as images, texts, videos, sound files, and other forms of media, thus alluding to a pedagogical potential embedded within shitposting. With this in mind, I now turn towards a deeper exploration of the four elements of the definition above and their manifestations within my examples. I also align this work with Kellner and Share's (2005) core concepts of critical media literacy to foreground the exploration of shitposting's pedagogical potential in the remainder of the article.

Component 1: Meaninglessness

First, the notion that a shitpost fundamentally represents a "useless, meaningless, or absurd post on a social media platform" (Hower, 2018) represents the foundational tenet of the practice (Blanco, 2021). This reliance on nonsensical communication has, in turn, inspired scholars to compare shitposting to Dadaism, a European art movement that emphatically rejected the logics of sense making within art (Nordstrom, 2022). In Figure 2, the image on the left exemplifies this notion of meaninglessness since the included text does not represent a coherent thought while the person in the foreground (Jon Arbuckle of the comic Garfield) has no relation to the image in the background (a sandwich from the restaurant Subway). The image on the right, while more cohesive, still relies on a sense of absurdity by creating a narrative of someone falling into a hedge in front of their mother without any further context. This sense of absurdity at first seems to undermine Kellner and Share's (2005) assertion that all media conveys the ideologies of its creators, this conceptualization of meaninglessness only refers to the content of the post when viewed on its own without considering the broader context. While the content of the image or post may not have an intrinsic meaning, shitposters often use the practice to mock or denigrate others (Ali, 2021), construct an image of authenticity (especially when employed by the social media accounts of large corporations) (Hower, 2018), and accrue cultural capital (McEwan, 2017). In this sense, the content of shitposts may be meaningless but the shitpost itself, through its circulation in online discourses and viewed through the lens of critical media literacy, is not.

Component 2: Discursive Unsettlement

The interaction between shitposts and the broader context leads to the second element of shitposting: The meaning of shitposts comes from, in a broad sense, unsettling online discourses (or, at least, the intent to create disruption). This production of meaning therefore aligns with Kellner and Share's (2005) claim that "media are organized to gain profit and/or power" (p. 376), here in the form of enacting influence

on discursive spaces. Returning to the deployment of shitposts by members of the alt-right, most scholarship conceptualizes this aspect of shitposting as "inundating targets with crude or inane content" (Aspray, 2019, p. 155), usually in the comments section on another post or on public social media pages (such as a Facebook group for a specific politician's election campaign). In doing so, extremist groups have used shitposting as a way to drown out posts from their political opponents and silence attempts to disseminate information by the user or group under attack (Hodge & Hallgrimsdottir, 2020; McEwan, 2017). Even beyond the deployment of large numbers of shitposts to derail online conversations, singular shitposts often exist as a collection of nonsensical or "ironic references designed to confound commentary or analysis" (Lokke, 2020, p. 127) that challenge discursive spaces on their own. I first encountered both images in Figure 2 while scrolling through Twitter. Placed in conversation with the usual content I see on that website (people voicing their opinions, posting about recent accomplishments, sharing other pieces of media they appreciated, etc.), both shitposts presented here forced me to do a double take. After a quick glance at both memes, I could have sworn I missed something or that I read them wrong, trying to understand what reference I had overlooked in subsequent readings. This reaction stems from the subtle challenge that shitposts present to social media discourses, one that relies on the interpersonal connections that form within what Zappavigna (2012) has defined as ambient affiliation. I tried to understand what the author was communicating to me and other readers, only to realize that there was nothing substantive to communicate through those words or images. Although users may still connect to each other through shitposting, it represents a form of communication separate from most approaches to social media.

Component 3: Internet Ugly Aesthetic

Third, as numerous authors have argued (McEwan, 2017; Mercer, 2014; Nordstrom, 2022), shitposts rely on what Douglas (2014) has defined as an "internet ugly" aesthetic. In his terms, an internet ugly aesthetic exists as "a celebration of the sloppy and the amateurish" through the creation of poorly constructed internet content, a practice that "include[s] freehand mouse drawing, digital puppetry, scanned drawings, poor grammar and spelling, human-made glitches, and rough photo manipulation" (Douglas, 2014, pp. 314–315). In the examples featured in Figure 2, an internet ugly aesthetic plays a prominent role. The use of black rectangles to block out the original text on the left, for instance, clearly communicates that the original image has been manipulated in part because the creator has not blocked out the entirety of the original text and the edges of some of the original letters and punctuation remain visible. Additionally, the low resolution of the image on the right combined with the crude manipulation of the text, with edges of certain letters being cut off through this process, ties this shitpost to an internet ugly aesthetic as well. But rather than just existing at the visual or grammatical level, an internet ugly aesthetic provides a critique of the overly streamlined information ecosystem of the internet, what Douglas (2014) has described as "an imposition of messy humanity upon an online world of smooth gradients, blemish correcting Photoshop, and AutoCorrect" (p. 314), thus

aligning with another core component of digital media literacy by creating a unique set of codes and conventions through an alternate semiotic form (Kellner & Share, 2005). In doing so, shitposting takes on the potential critique of an internet politic described by Sandlin and Milam (2008) in their examination of culture jamming. While these authors root their work in the overt political activism of new media groups Adbusters and Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop Shopping, shitposting's reliance on an internet ugly aesthetic still produces a community politic through a shared commitment to do-it-yourself and amateur creative production (McKelvey et al., 2023) in alignment with the parallel practice of culture jamming. Although the details of that politic remain far from defined (being embraced by both neo-fascist and radical leftist groups alike), a communal politic still forms.

Component 4: Meta-Languaging

Building on this notion of critique, the final element of shitposting remains far less prominent in the literature: a sense of meta-languaging. For Guarnieri (2017), "meta-language is, in fact, a very common aspect of shitposting, not only in content but in form. Often, it is used to either satirise or provide commentary on memes themselves, be it on specific templates or broader trends" (para. 6). By framing meta-languaging in this way, a common theme re-emerges: Guarnieri has positioned the meaning of these "meaninglessness" posts outside of their texts or images and instead has found that meaning (here referring to the commentary of the shitpost) in its relationship to the broader social media discourse that the shitpost aims to unsettle. The image on the left in Figure 2 provides a clear example of this meta-languaging. To construct this shitpost, the author combined two different memes: the text and image of Arbuckle holding the pan comes from the "Why do they call it oven?" meme (Adam, 2021) while the image of the sandwich in the background and the original, mostly blocked out text originated as part of the "My Brother in Christ" meme (Brandon, 2022). By superimposing the images, the creator alludes to the evolutionary process of co-creating memes through remixing, adjusting, and adding on to an original template in the form of an image (Sharbaugh & Nguyen, 2014). In the example explored here, that lineage from initial to current image becomes visible through its internet ugly aesthetic: While the integration of the text produces a new, readable statement, the disjointed juxtaposition of Arbuckle and the sandwich produces a throughline back to the original version of these memes despite their lack of meaning in the context of this iteration. In doing so, the shitpost provides a commentary on the evolution of memes themselves, or what Kellner and Share (2005) would describe as the construction of media, revealing how the meanings of highly iterated memes often retain only a structural or aesthetic connection to the original meme from which they mutated (Willmore & Hocking, 2017). In turn, the shitpost generates meaning through this meta-languaging process.

Taken together, I propose an expanded definition of shitposts: "meaningless" posts that replicate conventional forms of social media content to unsettle, comment on, and/or critique online discourses. By defining shitposting in this way, I expand beyond the primary focus on the use of shitposting by the alt-right and other neo-fascist/

neo-conservative movements and approach shitposts through a holistic lens. This proves vital in understanding how shitposts operate because, as McKelvey et al. (2023) have attested, shitposts can also represent "low-stakes, participatory jokes that keep the scene going, bringing disconnected people together" (p. 14) without intentionally introducing an element of critique at all, thus mirroring the role of memes in maintaining online communities (Knobel, 2006). Additionally, understanding shitposts at this foundational level reveals how this practice emerged as a crucial part of the alt-right's online presence. This occurs through online groups inscribing the meta-commentary of shitposting with a neo-fascist ideology that positions "the dull convention of the politically correct" (Tebaldi, 2021, p. 4) as the object of critique. But not all shitposts embody this neo-fascist aim. In this sense, shitposting exemplifies the plurality of online literacies described by Livingstone (2004) and exists as an adaptable tool that users employ in a variety of contexts, in multiple ways, and towards a number of different (and often conflicting) ends. Stated differently, the politics of shitposting remain in flux and rely on the context of the shitposts themselves. But what remains constant throughout is the application of and commentary on Kellner and Share's (2005) core components of critical media literacy. Shitposts overtly reveal the constructed nature of online content, apply an inherent and unique semiotics, unsettle the embedded values of media, and simultaneously challenge the use of media for the accrual of power while also applying this logic to shitposts themselves. To this end, the definition of shitposting I provide here positions this social media technology as a potential contributor to an informal educational praxis with an eye towards critical media literacy.

Shitposting as (Turbulent) Public Pedagogy

Beyond the orientation towards components of critical media literacy I present in my definition of shitposting, I also propose an alignment between this form of social media content creation and public pedagogy. For Giroux (2004), public pedagogy "concerns, in part, the diverse ways in which culture functions as a contested sphere over the production, distribution, and regulation of power, and how and where it operates both symbolically and institutionally as an educational, political, and economic force" (p. 62). In doing so, public pedagogy acts as a medium through which educational praxes extend into the sociopolitical struggles of broader cultural movements and vice versa, producing an intrinsically political understanding of both pedagogy and learning that lives both within and outside of the classroom (Giroux, 2003). As Mason (2016) has argued, conceiving of a public pedagogy in the contemporary moment emerges from critical media literacy itself, since "corporate-controlled media, from this perspective, have become a primary educational force in crafting and shaping cultural meaning" (p. 81). Public pedagogy then builds on the core tenant of critical media literacy advocated by numerous scholars: preparing learners of all ages to both recognize and counteract the exercise of power embedded in pieces of media (digital or otherwise) (Garcia et al., 2013, 2015; Ingerick, 2020; Mason, 2016). This process then involves an examination of the production and circulation of media alongside the critical analysis of specific media texts (Giroux, 2004; Kellner & Share,

2005). In positioning "the pedagogical [as] a defining principle of cultural politics" (p. 342), Giroux (2000) highlighted the shared aims of public pedagogy and critical media literacy, even when the frame produced through these notions differs in scope and educational context.

Since Giroux's foundational work, public pedagogy scholarship has expanded to include in-depth explorations of social media as a site of public pedagogy (Ingerick, 2020; Karsgaard, 2023). Through this body of work and other writings on public pedagogy, scholars have explicitly challenged the classroom logics described by Freire (1973) that position education as a transfer of information from one person to another and instead foregrounded Freire's understanding of learning through which all participants co-construct knowledge and meaning. For Grant (2021), this shifts the curriculum of public pedagogy to focus on the imagining of new futures beyond current modes of oppression rather than merely focusing on the machinations of those processes. Social media provides a means to achieve this end because of its ability to facilitate the creation of counterpublics, a discursive space that sits in opposition to recognized public spaces within which participants create counternarratives and oppositional identities. This occurs through the collective negotiation of meaning, politics, and identities that contribute to an emergent sociotechnical consciousness (Hill, 2018; Karsgaard, 2023; Tanksley, 2022). The production of public syllabi in the wake of various acts of racial violence using hashtags on Twitter represents one example of this, with participants creating collective reading lists that amplify the work of marginalized writers and critique the reinscription of a white, male norm (Clark, 2020; Snaza, 2019). Still, the shift away from classroom logics (i.e., defining education as a pedagogue teaching a student something they do not know) does not always result in a challenge to dominant narratives, as participants in public pedagogy projects such as public syllabi can unintentionally reproduce hegemonic norms if subjugated voices are not heard (Junaid & Kanjwal, 2022). Neo-fascist leaders and organizers have also appropriated this approach to public pedagogy for their own ends, employing agentic processes of knowledge construction in ways that reproduce misinformation under the guise of critical thinking (Burdick & Sandlin, 2021; Russo & Blikstein, 2023).

Introducing shitposting into this conversation, I argue that shitposts represent a potential technology for constructing a critical public pedagogy within the context of social media. Although public pedagogies do not intrinsically engage a critical praxis on the part of social media users (Tebaldi, 2021), the fact that shitposting inherently involves commenting on or unsettling online discourses reveals a potential for its use within critical manifestations of public pedagogies outside of the classroom. Through its use of meta-languaging and reliance on an internet ugly aesthetic, shitposting emerges from the techno-social medium of social media itself. Drawing on the notion of meta-languaging, shitposting replicates the rhetorical devices that define communication across social media networks and specifically allow these devices to act on those doing the communication by emptying out the "meaning" behind the content or its communicative utterances. The use of an internet ugly aesthetic also allows the technological aspects of social media, the internet, and computers to act on those within these contexts as well. Practices like extreme image compression, crude image manipulation, and uncorrected typos create opportunities for the system

to act on the relationship between the creator and the audience since all these practices, in theory, exist outside the agency of the creator (for example, when the creator of a shitpost compresses an image, the computer program doing that compression acts on that image beyond the control of the user and agentically alters the file). Understanding shitposting in this way amplifies Hower's (2018) framing of shitposting as a discursive practice, one that continually draws on and draws out the rhetorical and technological elements of communication within social media.

Positioning shitposting as a pedagogical technology, however, inherently involves a reimagining of pedagogy itself. In line with the work of Freire (1970, 1973) and Rancière (2010), pedagogy in this instance does not refer to the process of teaching others specific pieces of knowledge but instead involves the practice of co-constructing new knowledges, identities, and community formations. In turn, pedagogy shifts from a unidirectional understanding of teaching towards the act of creating the context and/or the impetus necessary to reimagine the self and social world. The notion of curriculum shifts within this understanding as well, aligning with both Rancière (2010) and recent scholarship into public pedagogy by centering the imagining of new worlds and the production of counterpublics as opposed to a discrete set of learning outcomes (Grant, 2021; Hill, 2018). Shitposting in particular produces what I describe as an aesthetic pedagogy (Woods, 2021) by creating an opening for individuals and communities to critically explore and reimagine their relationship to others and the surrounding milieu. This opening forms through an interaction with an aesthetic artifact like a social media post, producing a pedagogical moment in which the artifact acts on the system and creates a site of possibility in reimagining the relational networks that define communities and social spaces (Woods, 2021, 2022). Understood in this way, shitposting represents a pedagogical act because it produces what Davies (2014) has defined as educative turbulence. According to the author, "to evolve, a system has to experience turbulence, to get to the edge of chaos, before settling to a new fitness landscape" (Davies, 2014, p. 451). Within the context of social media, Davies has argued that turbulence plays a key role in the process of both learning and unlearning, creating a moment of possibility in which the rigidity of previous systems dissolves enough for a new kind of system to emerge through self-organizing. Shitposting embodies an aesthetic pedagogy precisely because it produces this turbulence through aesthetic encounters, unsettling the borders of discourse and thus providing a space to reimagine these interpersonal networks. The creation of this moment then represents the core of shitposting as a form of public pedagogy.

Because of shitposting's location within social media, this challenge to and potential reimaging of context aligns shitposting, in some cases, with Garcia et al.'s (2013) understanding of critical media literacy: to not only develop a critical understanding of how social media operates but to challenge that operation as well. To better understand how this kind of turbulence fits within critical media literacy, Burnett and Merchant's (2011) framework for critical analysis within social media provides a helpful model. Looking beyond a textual approach, the authors define social media literacies through three interconnected elements: practices ("'what we do' in and around new environments"), networks ("the mingling and inter-connections between individuals through a range of environments"), and identity ("who it is possible to be in these different contexts and how that manifests itself") (Burnett & Merchant, 2011, p. 51).

Beyond critical analysis of a text, a critical media literacy education related to social media then involves reimagining our identities within these networks, in relation to each other, and what types of practices these relations allow. Again centering the notion of critical literacy education as a process of challenging/reimagining broader social contexts, "the act of criticality [in this model of education] involves finding 'spaces' where meanings can be re-written, produced and constructed rather than merely asserted" (Burnett & Merchant, 2011, p. 44).

To this end, the aesthetic/public pedagogies of shitposting create an opportunity to "investigat[e] and challeng[e] positionality" (Burnett & Merchant, 2011, p. 47) within the social media landscape (as a medium for interpersonal communication and institutional media dissemination) in order to reorient the relationships within and to that milieu. Encountering and engaging the meta-languaging inherent to shitposting exposes the discursive practices that social media relies on, allowing users to both critically analyze social media as a medium and further challenge that system through the creation of their own shitposts (a process made possible through the embrace of an internet ugly aesthetic). Understood through Burnett and Merchant's (2011) model, the *practice* of shitposting can reorient the *network* of relationships within social media spheres and expand the possible range of *identities* for those involved. Thus, shitposting holds the potential to enact a form of public pedagogy aligned with the aims of critical media literacy education specifically because it generates turbulence in the context of social media.

Examining the Pedagogical Potential of Shitposting *In Situ*

While I contend that shitposting can engage creators and readers in critical analysis, the use of shitposting within the public pedagogies of online extremist groups illustrates that the politics of this tool itself remain far from established. This leaves shitposting open to a distorted reimagining of a critical public pedagogy, one where extremists and conspiracy theorists pervert the tools of open and distributed critique within social media to become technologies of violence and oppression (Burdick & Sandlin, 2021; Tebaldi, 2021). To further explore this divergent set of potential outcomes, I present an analysis of two specific text-based shitposts: one from consummate shitposter and Twitter icon dril and another from the corporate Twitter account for the Sunny Delight Beverage Company. Employing Greenham's (2018) formation of close reading, I attend to both the syntactic and contextual elements of these tweets to (a) determine whether they qualify as shitposts at all and (b) understand their pedagogical potential. Although this analysis remains somewhat speculative, this comparison illustrates how shitposts can contribute to a critical public pedagogy on social media while still acknowledging their potential in reinscribing oppressive elements of social media discourses.

Challenging Political Power with Corncobbing

Active since 2008, the anonymous account dril (also known as wint) has become one of the most prominent accounts associated with the "Weird Twitter" movement. Weird

Twitter has been described as "a loose group of Twitter users who write in a less accessible form, using sloppy punctuation/spelling/capitalization, poetic experimentation with sentence format, first-person throwaway characters, and other techniques little known to the vast majority of 'serious' Twitter users" (cited in Herrman & Notopoulos, 2013, para. 3). Building on this definition, Silverman (2015) has recognized the importance of meta-commentary within Weird Twitter as well, revealing how this niche subset of users constantly refer back to the medium as a way to generate comedic content. To this end, many of dril's tweets fit within the definition of shitposting presented here. Through a constant barrage of strange and nonsensical quips that almost always include numerous typos and strange punctuation choices, dril uses Twitter to satirize (and draw attention to) nearly every corner of social media by mimicking the entirety of the website's rhetorical landscape (Marshall, 2022). dril therefore touches on all four aspects of shitposting on a regular basis.

To more deeply explore the cultural impact and pedagogical potential of dril's online presence, I focus on the tweet seen in Figure 3 as an illustrative example of the user's usual content. Posted to Twitter on November 10th, 2011, the tweet reads "'im not owned! im not owned', i continue to insist as i slowly shrink and transform into a corn cob" (dril, 2011). While most scholars discussing shitposts usually frame the form within the context of visual imagery or picture files, I contend that dril's tweet fulfills all of the criteria of a shitpost. Focusing first on the text of the tweet itself, the example relies on a sense of absurdism produced through the image of someone turning into a corncob. Without any context, the idea of someone transforming into this vegetable makes absolutely no sense beyond producing a ridiculous visual. While some may argue that the choice of a corncob represents a piece of phallic imagery, dril fans and Twitter users generally argue otherwise (Kelly, 2021). Additionally, the tweet employs an internet ugly aesthetic through the use of typos and grammatical errors: The complete lack of capitalization, the inconsistent use of punctuation (including the misspelling of the contraction "I'm"), the extra space after the first punctuation mark, and the incorrect spelling of corncob collectively reproduce the textual aesthetic of someone publishing online content before proofreading their work. In turn, this tweet textually fulfills the intrinsic aspects of shitposting.

Beyond merely looking at the text, however, a shitpost also needs to interact with the milieu of social media through meta-languaging, unsettling online discourses through the introduction of turbulence. Turning towards the meta-elements of the tweet, the

Figure 3. A shitpost from Twitter user dril (2011)

text itself begins to make sense when read through the lens of online political discourses. More specifically, the repeated phrase "im [sic] not owned!" gestures towards a common practice within online political debates: refusing to back down (and doing so with bravado) after one has lost an argument (Tait, 2017). But in line with the practice of shitposting, this gesture represents the only "meaningful" content of the tweet. The fact that dril's post does not actually reference any specific debate (much less any specific debater), combined with the copious amount of typos and the over-the-top absurdity of the corncob imagery, focuses the audience's attention on the rhetorical act of refusing to admit that one has lost an argument. And while this intention may provide enough evidence of a small-scale disruption to one of the multiple publics Karsgaard (2023) has recognized within social media (i.e., a few readers may see this bravado in a new way and reorient themselves to this practice), the ongoing legacy of this tweet also continues to produce a regular challenge to the broader discursive and political landscape of Twitter as a whole. Since dril first posted the tweet in 2011, "corncobbing" has become a commonly used form of online shorthand for losing an argument with bravado that social media users often refer to when engaging with politicians through their social media accounts (Covucci, 2021; Kelly, 2021; Tait, 2017). Beyond merely being a descriptive term, users will often respond in droves to politicians engaging this debate tactic with references to the original tweets (both through written responses and images of corncobs). In doing so, social media users reverse the typical directionality of political messaging, thus engaging the turbulent and pedagogical nature of shitposting. Rather than solely receiving the messages of politicians, the greater population now has a tool that can challenge the posturing of public figures and produce a counternarrative through this public pedagogy. The original tweet and its subsequent aesthetic pedagogy then provides enough turbulence to produce a (admittedly small) shift in social media's online political discourse that has lasted for over a decade.

In considering the pedagogical potential of corncobbing, my analysis of dril's tweet maps on to Burnett and Merchant's (2011) framework for critical social media literacy: The *practice* of shitposting about corncobbing has continued to reconfigure the *network* of social media users, challenging the unidirectional nature of political messaging, and creating a broader range of *identities* that social media users can embody by providing an opportunity to actively engage in political discourses. Rather than merely embodying a passive audience member, corncobbing provides a tool for Twitter users who do not have the same kinds of access to power that politicians have to collectively respond to political discourse in ways that challenge and reorient that discourse. This action therefore embodies a core component of critical media literacy by imbuing the normally silenced public with a sense of agency (Kellner & Share, 2005). In turn, dril's tweet provides an illustration of shitposting as public pedagogy. In line with Giroux's (2004) formation of public pedagogy, corncobbing trades in the "production, distribution, and regulation of power" (p. 62) by challenging the assumption that only politicians or public figures can control political narratives. Moreover, this challenge specifically emerges from the process of revealing and unsettling the milieu of online discourses, a process that serves as the foundational curriculum behind the public pedagogy of shitposting. In turn, the corncobbing tweet explored in this section exemplifies the alignment between the aesthetic pedagogies of shitposting and the aims of critical media literacy education. In line with Garcia et al.'s (2013) assertion

that the heart of critical media literacy involves challenging oppressive institutions and regimes, dril's tweet not only reveals an element of contemporary political discourse but produces a tool for posing a discursive challenge to this institution that Twitter users regularly employ. Far beyond the use of shitposting for fascist aims by the alt right, dril provides a framework for engaging shitposting within a critical public pedagogy by providing a tool in challenging dominant voices within social media.

Yet the politics of shitposting remain undetermined. While dril's original tweet and the subsequent use of corncobbing as shorthand for brashly losing an argument have been employed by Twitter's progressive or left-leaning user base, neo-fascists and neo-conservative politicians regularly utilize this specific shitpost as well (Kelly, 2021). For example, Republican senator Mitch McConnell famously used the meme to mock Democratic representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez as she tried to discuss a vote on "the green new deal," a set of legislative measures that would address climate change (Covucci, 2021; Taylor, 2019). In doing so, McConnell exemplified how far-right groups construct an oppressive public pedagogy through the "use [of] transgressive, liberatory, postmodern language, to promote anti-modern, racist, conspiratorial ideas" in the form of shitposting (Tebaldi, 2021, p. 206). Rather than engage Ocasio-Cortez in an open debate about Congress's role in combatting climate change, McConnell used the shitpost to reorient the congresswoman's positioning within public discourse and undermine the relationship between Ocasio-Cortez and her Democratic followers through this meme. As Covucci (2021) has noted, the vote being discussed by Ocasio-Cortez in her original tweet "was widely viewed on the left as a political stunt—it wasn't an actual bill that received a hearing and was guaranteed to fail thanks to a Republican majority in the Senate" (para. 2). Although Ocasio-Cortez tried to discuss this point in earnest, asking why conservative politicians would force a public vote on climate change measures without debate, the Republican senator instead used the shitpost to bury this public conversation entirely and subsequently frame political legislation as a game to be won or lost (one that McConnell seems to think he won). In doing so, McConnell's use of the corncobbing meme exemplified Tebaldi's (2021) assertion that, in the hands of online conservative communities, the public pedagogies of social media (including the aesthetic pedagogies of shitposting) forward oppressive political ideologies.

The Pedagogical Failure of Corporate Shitposting

Beyond the political and social sphere within which this post from dril resides, corporate media has begun to embrace shitposting as a marketing tool within online advertising campaigns as well (Winkie, 2020). As Hower (2018) has argued, corporations use shitposting to build their brand, infusing their public image with a sense of authenticity or personalization in a medium that can often feel distant. Used in this way, shitposting engages the exact opposite practice of both public pedagogy (Giroux, 2000) and critical media literacy education (Mason, 2016): Rather than challenging or questioning the media landscape produced by corporate media, shitposting becomes just one other tool in the arsenal of advertising agents. Exploring how shitposts can reinforce this media landscape (while also holding the potential to challenge that landscape through other applications as well) then provides a means

towards critically understanding how shitposts circulate within online discourses and how they generate certain affects or relationships.

The tweet in Figure 4 from the Sunny Delight Corporation provides an example of a large business using shitposting to boost brand imagery and (implicitly) try to sell more products. Originally posted on February 3rd, 2019, the tweet simply reads "I can't do this anymore" (The Sunny Delight Corporation, 2019) and, like the other example used in this paper, ends without a period. Much like the post from dril, this tweet also fulfils the four foundational elements of a shitpost. Within the text itself, an explicit sense of meaninglessness exists. Specifically, the tweet lacks a reference: The post says "I can't do this anymore" but nowhere in the tweet (or in previous or subsequent posts) does the author actually define what "this" means. Instead, it merely serves as a vague reference to ending one of an infinite number of actions. And although it may align with punctuation conventions of Twitter and social media as a whole, the lack of a period at the end of the statement gestures towards the unpolished and rushed nature of shitposting. In this sense, the post represents a slightly more subtle example of shitposting, one that does not fully embrace the aesthetic extremity of Weird Twitter but still employs the foundational touchstones of the genre.

Read within a broader context, Sunny D's tweet also relies on meta-languaging and a process of unsettling online discourses. Much like dril revealing and satirizing Twitter's political rhetoric, the tweet from Sunny D references "vaguebooking." According to Berryman et al. (2018), "vaguebooking refers to social media posts that contain little actual and clear information, but are worded in such a way as to solicit attention and concern from readers (e.g. 'Sometimes I just feel like…I dunno, sigh…')" (p. 308) and often relates to a mental health issue on the part of the author. Although multiple interpretations of this tweet remain possible (due to the content-less nature of the text itself), the Sunny D post understood through the common social media trope of vaguebooking seems to allude to suicidal ideation ("this" being the act of living) or some other equally troubling issue. The contextual juxtaposition that emerges through meta-languaging (not to mention the ironic contrast of Sunny D's name and the dour nature of the post) then serves as the basis for the discursive disruption. As numerous scholars have shown, social media engenders its own mental health discourse, with individuals disclosing, discussing, and sharing about all sorts of mental health issues (Balani & De Choudhury, 2015; Makita et al., 2021; Pavlova & Berkers, 2020). Vaguebooking represents one of many rhetorical tools within that discourse. But by replicating an element of this discourse and attributing the tweet to a corporation instead of a specific individual, the Sunny D account creates a sense of

Figure 4. A shitpost from the Sunny Delight corporation's (2019) Twitter account

turbulence within this discourse and reorients the relationship between reader and author. Vaguebooking as an attention-seeking practice provides an avenue for those experiencing mental health issues to illicit help or concern from others to help manage these issues (Berryman et al., 2018). But by anonymizing the author through the use of a corporate account, the tweet effectively undermines this interpersonal aspect of vaguebooking. Instead, the reader engages in the discourse differently by interacting with the rhetorical tool and its creators in another way.

Although the tweet may qualify as a shitpost, the text fails to contribute to a critical formation of public pedagogy for multiple reasons. First, the tweet itself is a piece of corporate media. As public pedagogy scholars argue, cultural media products such as these tweets can reproduce dominant and oppressive ideologies in the absence of critical media literacy and the kinds of analysis it produces (Giroux, 2004; Mason, 2016; Monaghan et al., 2019). If a primary component of critical media literacy involves critiquing elements of the corporate media landscape, any tweet coming from a corporation intrinsically cannot fulfil this goal. Even if the shitpost is self-deprecating or critical of the company making the post, corporations use shitposts to infuse their brand with a sense of authenticity and reinscribe their positioning within extant power structures (Hower, 2018). Sunny D's tweet presents no exception, producing a public pedagogy aimed at reinforcing corporate influence (both in terms of this individual company and as a broader mode of social organization). Second, the tweet also goes against the core ideology of all critical praxes by causing further injury to the most vulnerable. Although the tweet may speak to the performative nature of vaguebooking, Sorto (2019) has argued that this tweet lacks the nuance necessary to accomplish this end and instead pokes fun at those managing mental health issues and further stigmatizes them. People in different contexts interpret media in different ways, and recognizing this contextuality represents a core component of critical media literacy (Kellner & Share, 2005). While using the open ended and broad strokes of shitposting may work for dril, this only happens because he chose those in power as the subject of his tweet. Sunny D, on the other hand, focuses on an already marginalized group and provides a means towards further stigmatization of those grappling with depression.

Sunny D's tweet therefore fails to critically attend to Burnett and Merchant's (2011) framework for social media literacy. In particular, the aesthetic pedagogy of this shitpost does not produce turbulence in such a way that individuals can rewrite, reimagine, or reframe the networks or identities that produce social media as a recognizable construct. Although the tweet may reorient the relationship between author and reader, that process merely reinforces a sense of brand identity and fails to engage a critical reimagining of the affects produced by social media as a whole. Instead, the tweet as a form of public pedagogy reinscribes extant power relations by further legitimizing the corporation and marginalizing those managing mental health issues.

Conclusion

Through this analysis, I propose that shitposting represents a situated and public pedagogy embedded in social media contexts that is, at times, aligned with the aims of critical media literacy education. Beyond the narrow framing of previous literature

that only considers the use of shitposting for social exclusion or as fascist propaganda, I argue for an encompassing approach to this discursive tool that embodies a poly-semic and open-ended cultural politic. In turn, this paper advocates by way of example for an approach to theorizing the public pedagogies of social media wherein scholars unearth and examine the pedagogical and curricular technologies embedded within online contexts. Developing a holistic and robust understanding of social media as a site of informal learning must involve understanding the pedagogies embedded within these contexts, both in terms of understanding the medium itself (*via* critical media literacy) and developing more intentionally critical education praxes.

As I argue here, shitposting represents one tool within this broader, holistic under-standing of public pedagogy, albeit one that often manifests unintentionally. By pro-ducing turbulence within social media, shitposting can contribute to the public pedagogies of social media that mirror the goals of critical media literacy education. However, a deployment or engagement with public pedagogy does not guarantee a critically oriented outcome. As Davies (2014) has argued, turbulence does not hold an intrinsic politic. Instead, the reimagining of social and relational networks that form through the deployment of the aesthetic pedagogies of shitposting can lead to any number of outcomes. As shown in the comparative analysis of dril and Sunny D's tweets (and even within the various deployments of corncobbing itself), shitposts exist across the spectrum of cultural politics and pedagogical outcomes. This mirrors contemporary research into public pedagogy which shows how the undermining of classroom logics within social media discourses can contribute to both the production of counterpublics (Grant, 2021; Hill, 2018) and the spread of dominant narratives and neo-fascist ideals (Burdick & Sandlin, 2021; Junaid & Kanjwal, 2022; Russo & Blikstein, 2023) through the same mechanisms. While shitposting, as a public pedagogy, holds the potential to instigate a critical praxis, a reading of individual shitposts within a critical media literacy framework can provide insight into how these posts circulate and whether they live up to that potential. This analysis therefore reinforces the need for a critical media literacy education that centers the discursive practices of social media *in situ*.

Furthermore, I contend that positioning shitposting as a uniform tool in terms of its politics within previous scholarship misrepresents the practice. Instead, shitposting can serve a multitude of pedagogical ends depending on how individuals and groups use shitposts. In doing so, this work sounds a call for scholars to continue investi-gating the pluralities and complexities of social media literacies, engaging and cri-tiquing the discursive tools embedded within social media itself. The analysis presented here shows that the circumstances under which shitposts circulate hold significant information when trying to understand the potential of these texts within a critical pedagogy. Expanding this assertion to consider other discursive technologies, it follows that both public pedagogy and critical media literacy research must continue to examine not only media itself but how pieces of media circulate, considering both who (or what) this media circulates between and where in that circulation people can begin to challenge the digital milieu.

Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

Notes on contributor

Dr. Peter J. Woods is currently an Assistant Professor in Learning Sciences at the University of Nottingham. He researches what and how people learn through creative production, with a particular interest in the role of cultural contexts and situated technologies in that process. Recent work has appeared in *Teachers College Record, Adult Education Quarterly,* and *Mind, Culture, and Activity.* He is also an avid shitposter.

ORCID

Peter J. Woods 🆔 http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3641-0848

References

Adam. (2021). *Why do they call it oven?* Know Your Meme. https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/why-do-they-call-it-oven

Ali, K. (2021). Zoom-ing in on white supremacy: Zoom-bombing anti-racism efforts. *M/C Journal*, *24*(3). https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2786

Aspray, B. (2019). On trolling as comedic method. *JCMS: Journal of Cinema and Media Studies*, *58*(3), 154–160. https://doi.org/10.1353/cj.2019.0030

Baker-Bell, A., Stanbrough, R. J., & Everett, S. (2017). The stories they tell: Mainstream media, pedagogies of healing, and critical media literacy. *English Education*, *49*(2), 130–152.

Balani, S., & De Choudhury, M. (2015). *Detecting and characterizing mental health related self-disclosure in social media.* Proceedings of the 33rd Annual ACM Conference Extended Abstracts on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1373–1378. https://doi.org/10.1145/2702613.2732733

Berryman, C., Ferguson, C. J., & Negy, C. (2018). Social media use and mental health among young adults. *The Psychiatric Quarterly*, *89*(2), 307–314. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11126-017-9535-6

Biggs, J. (2016, September 23). *Papa, what's a shitpost?* TechCrunch. https://social.techcrunch.com/2016/09/23/papa-whats-a-shitpost/

Blanco, S. A. U. (2021). *Shitposting and memeculture: An aesthetic politics of techno-coloniality?* (SSRN Scholarly Paper 3839267). Bolivarian University of Venezuela. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3839267

Brandon. (2022). *My brother in Christ.* Know Your Meme. https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/my-brother-in-christ

Burdick, J., & Sandlin, J. A. (2021). Into the UpsideDown: Conspiracy pedagogies, critique, and the apocalypse of exposure. *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, *6*, 9–23. https://doi.org/10.15209/jpp.1243

Burnett, C., & Merchant, G. (2011). Is there a space for critical literacy in the context of social media? *English Teaching: Practice and Critique*, *10*(1), 41–57.

Butler, A. T. (2019). *Educating media literacy.* Brill Sense.

Cavanaugh, D. A. (2021). "User not found": Shitposting and the labour of visibility on Instagram. *The iJournal: Student Journal of the Faculty of Information*, *7*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.33137/ijournal.v7i1.37895

Clark, M. D. (2020). Remaking the #syllabus: Crowdsourcing resistance praxis as critical public pedagogy. *Communication, Culture and Critique*, *13*(2), 222–241. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcaa017

Covucci, D. (2021, May 20). *Mitch McConnell uses a classic dril meme to attack Ocasio-Cortez.* The Daily Dot. https://www.dailydot.com/layer8/mitch-mcconnell-dril-ocasio-cortez-meme/

da share z0ne [@dasharez0ne]. (2023, July 9). *DAMB - DASHARE.ZONE ADMIN* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/dasharez0ne/status/1678067654265847809

Davies, L. (2014). Interrupting extremism by creating educative turbulence. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *44*(4), 450–468. https://doi.org/10.1111/curi.12061

Dignam, P. A., & Rohlinger, D. A. (2019). Misogynistic men online: How the red pill helped elect Trump. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, *44*(3), 589–612. https://doi.org/10.1086/701155

Dongqiang, X., De Serio, L., Malakhov, A., & Matys, O. (2020). Memes and education: Opportunities, approaches and perspectives. *Geopolitical, Social Security and Freedom Journal*, *3*(2), 14–25. https://doi.org/10.2478/gssfj-2020-0009

Douglas, N. (2014). It's supposed to look like shit: The internet ugly aesthetic. *Journal of Visual Culture*, *13*(3), 314–339. https://doi.org/10.1177/1470412914544516

dril [@dril]. (2011, November 10). *"im not owned! im not owned!!", i continue to insist as i slowly shrink and transform into a corn cob* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/dril/status/134787490526658561

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Herder and Herder.

Freire, P. (1973). *Education for critical consciousness*. Continuum.

Gammon, M. A., & White, J. (2011). (Social) media literacy: Challenges and opportunities for higher education. In C. Wankel (Ed.), *Educating educators with social media* (Vol. 1, pp. 329–345). Emerald Group Publishing Limited. https://doi.org/10.1108/S2044-9968(2011)0000001019

Garcia, A., Seglem, R., & Share, J. (2013). Transforming teaching and learning through critical media literacy pedagogy. *LEARNing Landscapes*, *6*(2), 109–124. https://doi.org/10.36510/learnland.v6i2.608

Garcia, A., Mirra, N., Morrell, E., Martinez, A., & Scorza, D. (2015). The Council of Youth Research: Critical literacy and civic agency in the digital age. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, *31*(2), 151–167. https://doi.org/10.1080/10573569.2014.962203

Giroux, H. A. (2000). Public pedagogy as cultural politics: Stuart Hall and the crisis of culture. *Cultural Studies*, *14*(2), 341–360. https://doi.org/10.1080/095023800334913

Giroux, H. A. (2003). Public pedagogy and the politics of resistance: Notes on a critical theory of educational struggle. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, *35*(1), 5–16. https://doi.org/10.1111/1469-5812.00002

Giroux, H. A. (2004). Cultural studies, public pedagogy, and the responsibility of intellectuals. *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*, *1*(1), 59–79. https://doi.org/10.1080/1479142042000180926

Grant, J. (2021). Liberating curriculum: A pedagogy of publicness that counters dominant culture. *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, *6*, 123–136. https://doi.org/10.15209/jpp.1251

Greenham, D. (2018). *Close reading: The basics*. Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203709979

Griffin, A. (2016, September 23). The bizarre online behaviour that could win Donald Trump the election. *The Independent*. https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/what-is-shitposting-donald-trump-us-election-2016-palmer-luckey-a7326111.html

de Guarnieri, J. M. (2017, September 24). Shitposting: An analysis of its practices and meanings. *Masters of Media*. http://mastersofmedia.hum.uva.nl/blog/2017/09/24/shitposting-an-analysis-of-its-practices-and-meanings/

Herrman, J., & Notopoulos, K. (2013, April 5). *Weird Twitter: The oral history*. BuzzFeed News. https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/jwherrman/weird-twitter-the-oral-history

Hill, M. L. (2018). "Thank you, Black Twitter": State violence, digital counterpublics, and pedagogies of resistance. *Urban Education*, *53*(2), 286–302. https://doi.org/10.1177/0042085917747124

Hodge, E., & Hallgrimsdottir, H. (2020). Networks of hate: The alt-right, "troll culture," and the cultural geography of social movement spaces online. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, *35*(4), 563–580. https://doi.org/10.1080/08865655.2019.1571935

Hower, K. (2018). The construction of authenticity in corporate social media. *Language@Internet*, *15*(3). https://www.languageatinternet.org/articles/2018/hower

Hugar, J. (2017, March 31). *How "Simpsons shitposting" brilliantly recontextualizes the show's best jokes*. Vulture. https://www.vulture.com/2017/03/how-simpsons-shitposting-brilliantly-recontextualizes-the-shows-best-jokes.html

Ingerick, P. A. (2020). *Adult learning and reflecting on political news: An examination of the public pedagogy of social media*. [Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University]. Electronic Theses and Dissertations for Graduate School. https://etda.libraries.psu.edu/catalog/17613pqi5010

Junaid, M., & Kanjwal, H. (2022). Contesting settler colonial logics in Kashmir as pedagogical praxis. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *52*(3), 373–384. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2022.2072666

Karaduman, S. (2015). The role of critical media literacy in further development of consciousness of citizenship. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *174*, 3039–3043. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.01.1095

Karsgaard, C. (2023). *Instagram as public pedagogy: Online activism and the Trans Mountain Pipeline*. Springer Nature.

Kellner, D., & Share, J. (2005). Toward critical media literacy: Core concepts, debates, organizations, and policy. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, *26*(3), 369–386. https://doi.org/10.1080/01596300500200169

Kelly, T. (2021, May 22). *Kamala Harris meme spurs Twitter fight*. The Daily Dot. https://www.dailydot.com/unclick/kamala-harris-corncob-meme/

Knobel, M. (2006). Memes and affinity spaces: Some implications for policy and digital divides in education. *E-Learning and Digital Media*, *3*(3), 411–427. https://doi.org/10.2304/elea.2006.3.3.411

Livingstone, S. (2004). Media literacy and the challenge of new information and communication technologies. *The Communication Review*, *7*(1), 3–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714420490280152

Lokke, G. (2020). Speak-trash: Irony for exterminators. *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art*, *42*(3), 125–131. https://doi.org/10.1162/pajj_r_00536

Makita, M., Mas-Bleda, A., Morris, S., & Thelwall, M. (2021). Mental health discourses on Twitter during mental health awareness week. *Issues in Mental Health Nursing*, *42*(5), 437–450. https://doi.org/10.1080/01612840.2020.1814914

Mallos, M. (2020). Exploring the identities of Greek migrant young adults through their new media use: Combining public pedagogy, participatory narrative inquiry, a/r/tography and heteroglossia. *Journal of Public Pedagogies*, *5*(5), 20–30. https://doi.org/10.15209/jpp.1211

Manavis, S. (2019, November 8). What is shitposting? And why does it matter that the BBC got it wrong? *New Statesman*. https://www.newstatesman.com/science-tech/2019/11/what-is-shitposting-bbc-laura-kuenssberg-wrong

Marshall, C. (2022, June 17). The cracked wisdom of dril. *The New Yorker*. https://www.newyorker.com/culture/rabbit-holes/the-cracked-wisdom-of-dril

Mason, L. (2016). McLuhan's challenge to critical media literacy: The city as classroom textbook. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *46*(1), 79–97. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2015.1113511

McArthur, S. A. (2016). Black girls and critical media literacy for social activism. *English Education*, *48*(4), 362–379.

McEwan, S. (2017). Nation of shitposters: Ironic engagement with the Facebook posts of Shannon Noll as reconfiguration of an Australian national identity. *PLATFORM: Journal of Media & Communication*, *8*(2), 19–39.

McDonough, A. (2017, May 11). *@dril: Weird Twitter's enigmatic icon*. Medium. https://medium.com/@amcdonough_43502/dril-weird-twitters-enigmatic-icon-85da8aff502

McKelvey, F., DeJong, S., & Frenzel, J. (2023). Memes, scenes and #ELXN2019s: How partisans make memes during elections. *New Media & Society*, *25*(7), 1626–1647. https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211020690

Mercer, A. (2014). *Shitposting*. Know Your Memes. https://knowyourmeme.com/memes/shitposting

Monaghan, L. F., Rich, E., & Bombak, A. E. (2019). Media, "fat panic" and public pedagogy: Mapping contested terrain. *Sociology Compass*, *13*(1), e12651. https://doi.org/10.1111/soc4.12651

Munn, L. (2019). Alt-right pipeline: Individual journeys to extremism online. *First Monday*, *24*(6). https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v24i6.10108

Nagle, J. (2018). Twitter, cyber-violence, and the need for a critical social media literacy in teacher education: A review of the literature. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *76*, 86–94. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.08.014

Nordstrom, G. S. (2022). Shitposts as a neo-Dadaist movement. *Mountaineer Undergraduate Research Review*, *7*(1), 7–12.

Pavlova, A., & Berkers, P. (2020). Mental health discourse and social media: Which mechanisms of cultural power drive discourse on Twitter. *Social Science & Medicine*, *263*. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113250

Perano, U. (2022, July 6). *Could John Fetterman shitpost his way to the Senate?* The Daily Beast. https://www.thedailybeast.com/could-john-fetterman-shitpost-his-way-to-the-senate

Rancière, J. (2010). On ignorant schoolmasters. In C. Bingham & G. Biesta, *Jacques Rancière: Education, truth, emancipation* (pp. 1–24). Bloomsbury Publishing PLC. http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/wisc/detail.action?docID=742303

Rauf, A. A. (2021). New moralities for new media? Assessing the role of social media in acts of terror and providing points of deliberation for business ethics. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *170*(2), 229–251. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-020-04635-w

Reddy, R., Singh, R., Kapoor, V., & Churi, P. P. (2020). Joy of learning through internet memes. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy*, *10*(5), 116–133. https://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v10i5.15211

Rodríguez-Hoyos, C., Fernández-Diaz, E., Salmón, I. H., & Salvador, A. C. (2020). Buying into participatory culture?: Critical media literacy and social media. In *Education for Democracy 2.0.* (pp. 138–157). Brill. https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004448490_009

Russo, R., & Blikstein, P. (2023). Just asking questions: Can a far-right president turn agentic knowledge construction into political manipulation? *Information and Learning Sciences*, *124*(7/8), 197–220. https://doi.org/10.1108/ILS-10-2022-0118

Sandlin, J. A., & Milam, J. L. (2008). "Mixing pop (culture) and politics": Cultural resistance, culture jamming, and anti-consumption activism as critical public pedagogy. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *38*(3), 323–350. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-873X.2008.00411.x

Sharbaugh, P. E., & Nguyen, D. (2014). Make lulz, not war: How online remix and meme culture are empowering civic engagement in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam. *Asiascape: Digital Asia*, *1*(3), 133–168. https://doi.org/10.1163/22142312-12340010

Silverman, J. (2015). *Terms of service: Social media and the price of constant connection*. Harper.

Snaza, N. (2019). Curriculum against the state: Sylvia Wynter, the human, and futures of curriculum studies. *Curriculum Inquiry*, *49*(1), 129–148. https://doi.org/10.1080/03626784.2018.1546540

Sorto, G. (2019, February 7). *Why are brands like Sunny D commodifying depression?* Daily Dot. https://www.dailydot.com/unclick/sunny-d-depression-tweet/

Southern, R. (2022). Memes; a new emerging logic: Evidence from the 2019 British general election. In D. Taras & R. Davis (Eds.), *Electoral campaigns, media, and the new world of digital politics* (pp. 200–220). University of Michigan Press.

Steere-Williams, J., Barr, J., Clark, C. D., & López, R. N. (2023). Remaking the #syllabus: Crowdsourcing resistance praxis as critical public pedagogy. *Journal of the History of Medicine and Allied Sciences*, *78*(1), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcaa017

The Sunny Delight Corporation [@sunnydelight]. (2019, February 3). *I can't do this anymore* [Tweet]. Twitter. https://twitter.com/sunnydelight/status/1092247574336163840

Tait, A. (2017, September 4). The internet dictionary: What does it mean to be corncobbed? *The New Statesman*. https://www.newstatesman.com/culture/observations/2017/09/internet-dictionary-what-does-it-mean-be-corncobbed

Tanksley, T. (2022). Race, education and #BlackLivesMatter: How online transformational resistance shapes the offline experiences of Black college-age women. *Urban Education*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1177/00420859221092970

Tashpulatova, M., Khalikova, L., Rakhmanova, Y., & Ataeva, G. (2022). Analysis of students' memes: An integrative review of the role of cultural, semiotic and community memory paratexts in multimodal education. *Multidisciplinary International Journal of Research Lines and Projects*, *13*, 27–34.

Taylor, C. (2019, March 27). McConnell just tried to dunk on Ocasio-Cortez over his Green New Deal vote and it failed in humiliating fashion. *Washington Press*. https://washingtonpress.

com/2019/03/26/mcconnell-just-tried-to-dunk-on-ocasio-cortez-over-his-green-new-deal-vote
-and-it-failed-in-humiliating-fashion/

Tebaldi, C. (2021). Speaking post-truth to power. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, *43*(3), 205–225. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2020.1729679

Vacca, R., DesPortes, K., Tes, M., Silander, M., Amato, A., Matuk, C., & Woods, P. J. (2022). What do you meme? Students communicating their experiences, intuitions, and biases surrounding data through memes. *Proceedings of the 21st Annual ACM Interaction Design and Children Conference*, 212–224. https://doi.org/10.1145/3501712.3529739

Willmore, J., & Hocking, D. (2017). Internet meme creativity as everyday conversation. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Pop Culture*, *2*(2), 140–166. https://doi.org/10.5325/jasiapacipopcult.2.2.0140

Winkie, L. (2020, November 11). Meet the professional memers. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/the-goods/21559364/meme-professional-brands-dunkin-bud-light-pluckers-fuckjerry-grapejuiceboys-social-media

Woods, P. J. (2021). The aesthetic pedagogies of DIY music. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, *43*(4), 338–357. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714413.2020.1830663

Woods, P. J. (2022). The collaborative pedagogies of solo improvisation: Learning through performance in noise music. *critical Studies in improvisation / Études critiques en improvisation*, *15*(1), 1–12. https://doi.org/10.21083/csieci.v15i1.6151

Zappavigna, M. (2012). *Discourse of Twitter and social media: How we use language to create affiliation on the web*. Continuum.