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Implications of Shifts in Dominant Mediums on Media-Induced Feelings of Connectedness

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ABSTRACT

This essay focuses on what dominant mediums in a culture imply about feelings of connectedness with others. Drawing on Joshua Meyrowitz's book *No Sense of Place*, we argue that when dominant mediums shift in our cultures, how we consume media content—with and about others—also shifts. We focus on two factors related to connectedness: cognitive empathy and synchrony, and we outline how changing medium-related landscapes may affect each factor. Finally, we encourage scholars of positive media psychology to consider both media content and dominant mediums in future research on uplifting, self-transcendent experiences.

KEYWORDS

positive media psychology, medium theory, empathy, synchrony

It may seem odd to identify a scholarly work as a “hidden gem” when Google Scholar reports it as having over 8000 citations. Joshua Meyrowitz's *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behavior* was published in 1985. This work garnered countless positive reviews and was the recipient of the 2014 International Communication Association's Fellows Book Award and the 1986 National Association of Broadcaster's award for Best Book on Electronic Media. Why, then, might we focus on this particular work as a *hidden gem*? We selected this work as scholars of positive media psychology who believe that not only was Meyrowitz prophetic in his scholarship, but that he also paves new avenues for thinking about and researching how media function to affect our sense of connectedness with others. In this article, we first provide an overview of Meyrowitz's arguments. We then we apply this literature to two concepts related to connectedness: cognitive empathy and synchrony. We end by



discussing ways that our shifting dominant mediums may affect our sense of connectedness, both in terms of fragmentation but also in terms of heightening affiliation with broader and more geographically diverse groups.

A BRIEF SUMMARY OF MEYROWITZ'S NO SENSE OF PLACE

As a medium theorist, Meyrowitz provides a sweeping overview of how dominant forms of communication serve to shape and sustain social behavior, enabling individuals to convincingly perform social roles or, in contrast, undermining their performances to make them seem inauthentic, if not contemptible. Dominant mediums of communication also provide differential access to information, allowing some individuals the resources and abilities to engage with “more” information, while also preventing access among individuals who have fewer resources. As a result, Meyrowitz argues that dominant mediums not only shape social behavior in terms of the types of information that we communicate, but also in terms of the extent to which social groups share the same information.

In his work, Meyrowitz draws heavily on historians, sociologists, media scholars, and communication researchers to discuss our social lives. He starts by examining how communication likely functioned throughout history— from oral cultures to print-based cultures and then to a television-based culture. When communication took the form of oral exchanges only, people likely formed ties with others in their close communities. Unless a member of a community was able to travel far from home, societies based on oral-based communication likely had very little contact with, and hence knowledge about, other societies that were geographically distant. As print became the dominant medium, access to information and the spread of information also shifted. Written language requires specific

skills, namely literacy, to encode and decode. Consequently, members of a community who have not developed literacy skills (e.g., children) or have been prevented from developing literacy skills (e.g., enslaved people) have unequal access to information. At the same time, though, written communication can be preserved and can be transported more easily than oral communication, drawing people from other cultures together through shared information. As a result, print-based cultures were more likely to be hierarchical by allowing some members of the culture greater access to information, but at the same time, they were better able to communicate with other, distant cultures.

The advent of television ushered in a radical shift in access to information and, hence, social structure and social behaviors. First, the skills required to consume information from television are much less difficult than those for print. Television messages also differ from print in terms of the effort they require to utilize— Print messages are often objects (e.g., books, newspapers) that must be purchased, obtained, or physically transported, whereas television messages can be obtained through the push of a button. Finally, unlike print that is often targeted to specific audiences (e.g., children's books, gendered publications such as *Ladies Home Journal*), television is frequently designed to appeal to the largest audience possible. As a result, it is not unusual that otherwise diverse audiences (e.g., children and adults) consume the same media messages. Together, the ease of access to television coupled with the industry's efforts to attract all audiences serves to make access to information *explicit*. That is, the prevalence of and ease of access to information not only provides individuals with knowledge about the information transmitted, but it also provides individuals with knowledge about what other people know. As Meyrowitz described, even “taboo” topics that are presented on television can become fodder for public

discussion because of the awareness that other people are familiar with the same content as well: "... everyone knows that everyone knows, and everyone knows that everyone knows that everyone knows" (p. 92).

To summarize, *No Sense of Place* describes the importance of dominant mediums in shaping our social behaviors. As the medium evolves or changes, so do social behaviors and cultures. In the next section we turn to a discussion of our ongoing changes in the media landscape from television to digital-based cultures. Subsequently, we turn to the scholarship of positive media psychology, noting two specific concepts that may play particularly consequential roles in how this shift in dominant mediums affects feeling of connectedness with others.

SHIFTING MEDIUMS, SHIFTING AUDIENCE CONDITIONS

In the age of television—and particularly prior to cable and to recording devices—media consumption often involved not only consuming the same (or very similar) content, but also consuming it at the same time. In the U.S., many households would tune into Walter Cronkite delivering the news, children (and adults) would watch *The Wonderful World of Disney* on Sunday evenings, and large segments of the viewing public would eagerly await the latest episode of popular television programs such as *Gun Smoke* or *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*.

As a reflection of shared and simultaneous viewing, it is perhaps not surprising that in discussing various indicators of audience activity, Levy and Windahl (1985) describe how individuals can utilize media in their social interactions. For example, using media as a "coin of exchange" refers to pre-exposure conversations about upcoming media offerings (e.g., "Are you going to watch *NYPD Blue* tonight?"). We note, though, that this type of audience activity reflects

that individuals can assume common knowledge of media content and can therefore use that common knowledge as the basis for conversation. In contrast, today's media landscape is so vast and diverse that it is difficult, if not nonsensical, to have such conversations at present (e.g., "Are you going to watch that TikTok video tonight?").

Of course, we are not arguing that people no longer have any shared and simultaneous media experiences. For example, Dayan and Katz's (1992) work on "media events" highlights the importance of wide scale, preplanned, non-routine television coverage of major public events, including occasions such as royal weddings and the moon landing. In today's landscape, shared and simultaneous media consumption can often be observed for sporting events, live music, and during times of crisis (among others).

With these notable exceptions in mind, the vastly enlarged landscape of media content and delivery options mean that audiences now have the option of selecting content that appeals to their own particular interests and that can be consumed at any time that audiences find convenient. Social media and streaming services are perhaps most notable in this phenomenon, and particularly among younger viewers. For example, a recent U.S. national survey found that whereas 55% of older respondents (Generation X, Boomers, and Matures) reported watching TV shows or movies as their most enjoyed media entertainment activity, that number dropped to only 30% of younger respondents (Generation Z and Millennials) (Lebow, 2022). In contrast, 38% of younger respondents (compared to 12% of older respondents) preferred playing video games and watching user-generated content. Indeed, although traditional TV viewing has declined among all age groups in the U.S., Gen Z populations now consume more entertainment from social platforms than from television, with YouTube and TikTok the most popular. Of course, entertainment is far from being the only type of content undergoing substantial changes.



Newspapers, and local newspapers in particular, have suffered massive downturns (Masta & Worden, 2022), with a growing proportion of U.S. adults now reporting that they sometimes (29%) or often (56%) get their news from digital devices (Pew Research Center, 2023).

Before moving to our discussion of the implications of these wide-scale medium changes on feelings of connectedness, it is important to note that Meyrowitz also recognized that in digital-media landscapes, the boundaries that define “us” versus “them” have shifted (Meyrowitz, 1997). In particular, though we may now have more global access to the same information, within our own communities and homes, we now live in frequently disjointed informational spheres.

Even in our homes, experience is splintered: A son may walk around the house with a Walkman, a daughter’s eyes may dart between a parent’s face and a computer screen, and a spouse may leave an intimate embrace to find out what just came in over the home fax machine. More than ever before, therefore, the postmodern, electronic era is one in which everyone else, foreigner or family member, seems somewhat familiar-and somewhat strange. (p. 68)

In sum, Meyrowitz’s (1985) scholarship highlights the importance of mediums in shaping our social roles and the information that is shared among members of a culture. We are now in the midst of a digital culture that, unlike our previous television-based culture, involves limitless media choices and diminished shared consumption within our own communities. With this backdrop in mind, the next section provides a brief overview of research growing out of positive media psychology, including two concepts related to feelings of connectedness that may be particularly relevant to shifting dominant mediums.

POSITIVE MEDIA PSYCHOLOGY AND FEELINGS OF CONNECTEDNESS

Media effects research has historically often focused on potential harms of media exposure such as violence, health-related problems, and stereotyping. However, over the last decade we have seen more scholars recognizing the potential of media to provide users with meaningful, if not self-transcendent experiences that are associated with a host of prosocial outcomes (Raney et al., 2021).

A Brief Overview of Research in Positive Media Psychology

Most people can easily recall being moved by a film, inspired by a piece of music, or touched by an uplifting video featuring love and kindness. However, these types of responses were rarely studied by media effects scholars until relatively recently. Perhaps the general lack of early attention reflects that the concepts of being moved, inspired, or uplifted are somewhat fuzzy and difficult to quantify. Nevertheless, we believe that they are not only generally universal (see, Zickfeld et al., 2019 for example), but that they are particularly powerful in inducing positive outcomes.

Some of the early research in positive media psychology was in response to the seeming paradoxes implied by prevailing theorizing regarding entertainment enjoyment and media selection. For example, mood management theory (Zillmann, 2000; Zillmann & Bryant, 1985) suggested that hedonistic impulses to alleviate pain and to maximize pleasure predicted individuals’ media selection, even if not consciously recognized by the viewer. Likewise, early dispositional approaches to understanding the appeal of entertainment largely suggested that audience enjoyment was maximized when beloved protagonists prevailed against challenges and/or when evil antagonists were brought to

justice (Zillmann & Bryant, 1975, 1986).

Although these foundational theories of entertainment selection and enjoyment undoubtedly aptly apply to a wide swath of viewing experiences, scholars began to question what these theories imply about beloved films that feature the suffering of protagonists and that frequently elicit sadness (Oliver, 1993). Subsequently, researchers began to examine emotions other than sadness or enjoyment, instead considering audience responses such as “meaningful affect,” appreciation, or eudaimonic (rather than hedonic) gratifications (Oliver, 2008; Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Oliver & Raney, 2011).

In studying the emotional response that might best represent being moved by meaningful entertainment, many researchers turned to the concept of moral elevation (Haidt, 2003). Elevation is an example of a self-transcendent emotion that is elicited when witnessing others display exemplary actions of moral good such as kindness, compassion, or courage. It is typically associated with mixed affect, physiological responses such as tears or a lump in the throat, and importantly, with heightened motivations to be a better person or to live a more meaningful life (Algoe & Haidt, 2009). Further, as an example of a self-transcendent emotion, elevation involves a decreased emphasis on the self and an increased awareness of others and one’s compassionate connection with others (Stellar et al., 2017; Yaden et al., 2017). Consistent with this conceptualization, researchers have found evidence that viewing meaningful media evokes feelings of elevation, with elevation, in turn, associated with heightened altruism (Schnall et al., 2010) and charitability (Freeman et al., 2009), diminished stereotyping (Krämer et al., 2017), and increased feelings of connectedness with others (Janicke & Oliver, 2017; Oliver et al., 2015).

Two Concepts Related to Feelings of Connectedness

Before turning to the question of what shifting media landscapes may imply about feelings of connectedness, we first highlight two aspects of connection that we believe may be consequential: cognitive empathy and synchrony. Though these concepts have yet to be heavily studied within positive media psychology, their relationship with both human connection and with media consumption may make them particularly relevant.

Cognitive Empathy

The general concept of empathy is multidimensional, with broad definitions suggesting that it represents “...the reactions of one individual to the observed experiences of another” (Davis, 1983, p. 113) or that it means “to share and understand others’ internal states” (Zaki & Ochsner, 2016, p. 871). Although empathy is frequently referred to in affective terms, for our purposes we are particularly interested in cognitive empathy or what some scholars refer to as perspective taking.

The debate around whether empathy can best be characterized as a cognitive or affective experience has amassed considerable scholarly attention (Cuff et al., 2016). In this article, we assume that empathy likely involves both affective and cognitive processes (Davis, 2017), but our focus on the cognitive reflects our interest in how media provide one means by which individuals may be able to engage in accurate perspective taking. We are not suggesting that affective empathy is unimportant. Indeed, we believe that its frequent co-occurrence with affective empathy may illustrate that they represent multiple processes that can arise during the experience and outcomes of an empathic episode (e.g., Davis, 2017), that cognitive empathy may serve as a necessary condition for affective empathy to materialize (e.g.,

Staub, 1990), or even that cognitive empathy in the absence of affective empathy may be associated with unsavory personality traits (e.g., Machiavellianism, callousness, selfishness; see Smith, 2006). Rather, our focus on cognitive empathy is a function of how it represents accurately understanding another person. How might we know what another person is thinking or feeling? The potential number of variables that help us “know” another person is undoubtedly massive, including shared experiences, awareness of personal histories, or even similarities in tastes and preferences. However, given the centrality of media consumption in the lives of most people, we believe that if we consume the same media and are presented with similar, if not identical, information as those we interact with, we have at least some understanding of what is familiar to them.

Synchrony

Synchrony is the second concept that we believe may be important in our exploration of the implications of medium-related changes on feelings of connectedness. In general, the word *synchrony* is frequently used to refer to individuals in interpersonal interactions who engage in the same physical movements at the same time (see Bowsher-Murray et al., 2022 for example). These physical movements can include behaviors such as nodding, eye gaze, and gait while walking. Further, external factors such as cultural events, religious rituals, and sports (among many others) may also encourage synchrony via dance, singing, or reading aloud as a group. As McNeill (1995) described, “American football crowds, South African demonstrators, patriotic parades, and religious rituals of every description all draw on the emotional affect of rhythmic movements and gestures” (p. 5).

In addition to referring to interpersonal interactions, synchrony has also been used to refer to broader instances of shared experiences occurring simultaneously. For example, Paladino

et al. (2010) argued that sharing the same sensory experience (e.g., a brush lightly touching the face) constitutes synchrony, even though the experience itself is not initiated by either party in the interaction. Likewise, imagined synchrony (e.g., imagining walking with a crowd of people) has been shown to mirror the results of actual, interpersonal, behavioral synchrony (Atherton et al., 2019; Crossey et al., 2021), implying that the effects of synchrony may be more far-reaching than initially suggested.

Of particular importance to the present essay, a large literature has demonstrated a connection between synchrony and feelings of affiliation or connectedness (see Rennung & Göritz, 2016). This type of connection has been observed in a variety of contexts, including in musical contexts (Swarbrick et al., 2019), dancing (Tarr et al., 2016), and cultural and spiritual rituals (Fischer et al., 2013), among many others. Additionally, this body of literature includes many operationalizations of affiliation or connectedness, including greater mentalizing (Baimel et al., 2018; Basile et al., 2022), collective self-esteem (Włodarczyk et al., 2023), empathy (Levy & Feldman, 2019), and blurring of self-other boundaries (Paladino et al., 2010), among many additional prosocial outcomes (see Rennung & Göritz, 2016).

To summarize, a growing number of scholars are now exploring how uplifting or inspiring media may result in a variety of prosocial outcomes. Connection with others is one of the many outcomes studied. As it relates to dominant mediums, we highlight the importance of both cognitive empathy and synchrony.

IMPLICATIONS OF SHIFTING MEDIUMS ON FEELINGS OF CONNECTEDNESS

Within the area of positive media psychology, much of the research has been generally agnostic to the importance of mediums. Although

survey-based scholarship has found that people are frequently inspired by uplifting messages found throughout different mediums, including music, film, social media, and television (Raney et al., 2018), much of the research examining the prosocial outcomes of media messages is experimental. The importance of highlighting experimental approaches is twofold. First, most experimental research is focused on individuals rather than on groups, societies, or cultures. Second, experimental research in media psychology frequently explores audience responses to media messages while holding other, potentially confounding variables constant, including the medium through which the messages are delivered.

In contrast, Meyrowitz's work is not about particular messages per se, but rather about the mediums through which the messages are disseminated. Further, Meyrowitz's theorizing is not so much about individuals, but rather about social roles and social relationships. Rather than exploring how a given person responds to a media message, Meyrowitz asks us to take a broader view of the implications of mediums on social interactions reflected in group formation, social hierarchies, and transitions in social roles (e.g., children and adults).

At the risk of overstepping the assumptions and boundary conditions of either research tradition, we rather believe that positive media psychologists would benefit from considering the ramifications of both messages *and* mediums on both individual audiences *and* on social roles and cultures. Like Meyrowitz's observation that the shift from a television-based to a digital-based culture has disorientated and dislocated social roles that were often tied to locale, we, too, believe that this shift in mediums likely has both positive and potentially negative ramifications on feelings of connectedness—a focus of much research in positive media psychology. Below we focus first on the potential challenges that our shifting media landscape may present. We

then end by considering how our newly shaped and rapidly evolving mediums may afford novel opportunities for connectedness that were not previously possible.

Challenges

Perhaps the biggest challenge presented by the shift to digital mediums is that people are increasingly uncertain about others' media habits. When media outlets were limited, audience choices were limited to a handful of possible options. Consequently, it was relatively easy to accurately predict the messages (e.g., entertainment programs, news, etc.) that others were exposed to. In essence, as Meyrowitz argued, television allowed us to “know” what others know. Insofar as cognitive empathy rests on accurately understanding what other people know or believe, the shift from a television-based culture to a digital culture in which media offerings are seemingly endless implies that we have essentially lost one important clue as to what others know or believe. In a television-based culture, we might have rightly assumed that individuals in the U.S. were familiar with the hearings regarding Richard Nixon, as these hearings were difficult to avoid when consuming television at the time. In today's digital world, even knowing that another person consumes a heavy diet of media does not provide the same information regarding what other people may have seen, as the vast number of choices makes prediction difficult, if not impossible.

Of course, we are cognizant of the notable exceptions (e.g., sporting events) to this argument. We also acknowledge that some social groups are built upon shared media content. For example, fans of various musical artists have robust communities online and are therefore likely familiar with much of the same content (see the online community for Taylor Swift's fans at [Reddit.com](https://www.reddit.com/r/TaylorSwift/), <https://www.reddit.com/r/TaylorSwift/>; see the online community



for BTS's fans at X.com, https://twitter.com/BTS_ARMY). Although geographically dispersed, members of these fan-based groups form a community because, at least in part, of their shared media and, therefore, their shared understanding of what other members think about, believe, or enjoy.

One implication of the fragmentation of media diets in this digital age is that groups and shared understandings are now simply different, arising not necessarily among our local communities but rather out of our shared preferences, a point brought up by Meyrowitz (1997) in his discussion of a post-modern age of media. Although this change may not represent either an inherently good or bad thing, we note two ways that it may lead to challenges in feelings of connectedness with others. First, the formation of communities based on shared media preferences may result in echo chambers or filter bubbles that serve to support and enhance in-group homophilia and partisanship (Cinelli et al., 2021; Hobolt et al., 2023). Although the concept of echo chambers has been hotly debated (see Ross Arguedas et al., 2022 for example), a recent national U.S. survey showed that approximately 25% of Democrats and Republicans reported turning to like-minded partisan news, and among those who reported such selective exposure, levels of partisanship were more pronounced (Mitchell et al., 2021). The only news source that attracted both Democrats and Republicans was network television, with cable news, radio news, and newspapers showing much higher levels of partisan audiences.

Second, related to the challenge of echo chambers is what the audience assumes the out-group may be consuming (and therefore knowing). A long history of research on hostile media effects (Vallone et al., 1985) and third-person effects (Davison, 1983) has demonstrated that people are not only more likely to perceive media stories as opposed to their own deeply held opinions, but are also more likely to believe

that other people are more vulnerable to harmful effects of media than is the self. Couched in terms of diverse and vast media selections, what do these two concepts imply about what audiences assume that “the other” knows? One implication is that even when audiences cannot predict what other people consume (and therefore “know”) from their media diet, they may wrongly assume that others are consuming media that is at odds with their own beliefs (a hostile media effect) and are more affected by “out-group” messages (a third-person effect). As a result, because we cannot be certain of what others are consuming, there may be a tendency to assume the “worst”—a tendency that may lead to lower levels of cognitive empathy and, hence, connectedness.

We end this section by providing a media example illustrating the importance of both shared media and of synchronous exposure. On December 5, 2023, Norman Lear, a television producer and screenwriter, passed away. Lear was responsible for numerous television programs but was perhaps most famous for *All in the Family*—a program that aired in 1971 and that openly and frankly presented contentious social issues such as racism, war, sexism, and political disagreement. Unlike other programs at the time that typically avoided uncomfortable social issues, *All in the Family* openly addressed these issues, forcing the audience to grapple with contemporary political and cultural problems. In today's media landscape, one might predict that large swaths of the viewing public would turn away from such content and instead choose to consume something that would not create any sense of unease, yet at the time, *All in the Family* became the top-rated show for five years in a row (Brownstein, 2021). Rob Reiner, a primary character in the program, reflected on the importance of the viewing context:

The show aired in the era of appointment viewing, when there were only a handful of TV channels and households across the United States tuned in to the

same programs at the same time. The shifting habits of American viewers, who can much more easily silo themselves in echo chambers when it comes to viewing habits, has only contributed to the fracturing and divisions, Reiner said. Of about 200 million Americans in the 1970s, “we were seen by 40-45 million people every single week,” he said. “There was no TiVo. There was no DVR. If you wanted to watch it, you had to watch it when it was on. That meant that you had a shared experience with 40 million people in America.” (Salam, 2023)

Opportunities

Although our discussion thus far may imply that recent shifts in our dominant communication medium have only downsides in terms of connectedness, we also hope these shifts present new-found opportunities for connection. In this final section, we offer several possibilities for prosocial outcomes that may be related to our contemporary and shifting media landscape.

As mentioned previously and has been noted by Meyrowitz, our new media-related communities formed on the basis of shared interests may allow for greater *global* communities and, hence, shared recognition of our common humanity. This speculation is similar to Peter Singer’s (1981) argument that our circles of moral concern have broadened over time to include not only people outside our immediate surroundings, but to non-human animals, all living beings, and to the planet and universe itself (see Waytz et al., 2019, for a discussion of the importance of political ideology on moral circles).

What role might media play in broadening our moral concerns and feelings of connectedness? In many respects, at a global level, media imply that we now have the ability to “know what others know” (at least somewhat), thereby enhancing our ability to perspective take or experience cognitive empathy with groups that have, in our recent pasts, been strangers or even perceived threats. Additionally, recently media have

presented events and crises that were experienced throughout the world. In this sense, media may allow us to recognize that our affective response to world events are shared with others throughout the planet. Consistent with this argument, Newman (2023) speculated that over the last several years, levels of happiness (according to the World Happiness Report) that have remained rather stable reflect greater benevolence and kindness in response to global crises such as the COVID pandemic and police violence against people of color.

In addition to potentially increasing our ability to engage in cognitive empathy with a wider circle of diverse individuals, changes in media technologies may also provide additional opportunities for synchrony. First, though synchrony has typically been studied in face-to-face interpersonal contexts, researchers are increasingly studying how media stimuli can elicit the experience of synchrony (e.g., cortical activity during viewing a film, see Hasson et al., 2010). Of course, some types of media such as virtual reality (Tarr et al., 2018) or video conferencing (Nowak et al., 2017) afford approximations to interpersonal interaction, yet other scholars have suggested broadening the term synchrony to include interactions on social networks (e.g., social synchrony, De Choudhury et al., 2009).

In addition to synchronized behaviors between participants in a mediated context, media technologies also afford the opportunity to witness synchrony between others, often when the others may be geographically dispersed. For example, Playing for Change (<https://www.playingforchange.com/>) is an organization that orchestrates musical collaboration among artists from around the world who come together (digitally) to sing common songs, thereby inspiring and connecting not only the musicians themselves, but also the viewers who watch and listen to their songs. One of their first videos included musicians from such places as

the U.S., the Netherlands, France, Russia, the Congo, Venezuela, and South Africa in their respective countries, but collaborating by singing Ben E. King's song, "Stand by Me" (the video can be seen on YouTube at <https://youtu.be/Us-TVg40ExM?si=f-zSjbMHmKkSLvUE>). This video has garnered over 200 million views in the last 15 years, with users expressing how the collaboration heightens their feeling of connectedness with other (e.g., "There's just something so beautiful about the song and all the different people around the world coming together to make this," "So beautiful, transformational, tears running down my face. We are all intricately connected in this world."). Addition media projects that focus on synchronous behaviors from diverse groups include the 2010 movie *Life in a Day* (produced by Ridley Scott, directed by Kevin Macdonald) in which people throughout the world recorded themselves expressing what they love, hope, and fear on a specific date, July 24, 2010 (the trailer can be found on YouTube at https://youtu.be/bT_UmBHMYzg?si=_siPpVUacFfPrAXg). Similar to *Playing for Change*, users' posts reflect the feelings of connectedness that this film evokes (e.g., "Love this, hope that this helps people to see that we're really not all that different and that we all share the same fates and life on this planet," "This is something everyone needs to watch to have a better understanding of how small and connected we really are and to have compassion for humanity.").

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

To summarize, we believe that changes in our media landscape present both challenges and opportunities to use media to enhance our connectedness and shared humanity. We selected Meyrowitz's *No Sense of Place* as our *hidden gem*, not because it is hidden — indeed it has garnered much favorable attention and has spawned

countless numbers of essays and programs of research. However, within the subfield of positive media psychology, this book has not garnered the attention that we believe it deserves. By taking stock of how shifting mediums alter our social lives and our shared realities, we hope that this essay will entice additional scholars to consider not only how media messages can enhance our sense of connectedness, but also how changes in dominant mediums can dampen or enhance our compassionate love for others.

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