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Published in:
International Journal of Communication

Publication date:
2020

Document version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

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Citation for published version (APA):
Pagh, J. (2020). Managing Context Collapses: The Internet as a Conditioning Technology in the Organization of Practices. *International Journal of Communication*, 14, 2810-2827.

Managing Context Collapses: The Internet as a Conditioning Technology in the Organization of Practices

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This study shows how people use the Internet in the structuring of daily life, based on qualitative data from 17 U.S. participants, collected through an interview-diary-interview method. I argue that the Internet has the capacity to collapse off-line contexts, essentially making it possible to perform several practices in previously unrelated settings. After introducing practice theory as a lens through which to understand everyday practices, I outline 4 different ways people value this capacity in relation to the organizing of their daily lives. I further discuss how these valuations are manifested differently in people's actual uses of the Internet, and conclude that the valuations and their manifestations bear witness to both wanted and unwanted off-line context collapses.

Keywords: everyday life, practice theory, media use, Internet, context collapse

The Internet has proven to be a pervasive technology in the conducting of everyday life. It permeates one's routine and complicated practices (Schatzki, 1996) involving interactions with friends and family, planning and carrying out everyday menial tasks, and staying updated on news about politics and celebrities. It has become an integral communication tool that is used, often in conjunction with other communication tools (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006), to effectively manage daily life.

In this article, I use practice theory (Schatzki, 1996) to examine the role of the Internet, as it is accessed through stationary and mobile media, in the organizing and performing of everyday practices. To do so, I take the individual as the unit of analysis (Marcus, 1995) and focus on the Internet as a communication technology that people use to organize and flexibly perform three sets of practices. The first set of practices, oriented toward making a living, pertains to a person's professional life: the practices people perform to ensure an income. For the majority of the participants, this entails carrying out specific occupational practices, but for the students in the study, it also includes schoolwork, as they complete those practices to earn a living in the future. Second is a set of practices associated with tending to private life, which entails nurturing one's local surroundings. This can be managing close ties (flat mates, friends, or family) as well as coordinating menial tasks such as cleaning and cooking. Third is a set of practices oriented

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Date submitted: 2019-03-26

¹ This study is part of the research project The Peoples' Internet, which is funded by The Carlsberg Foundation–Semper Ardens CF16-0001.

toward community engagements, which involves active engagement with, or interest in, real or imagined communities (Anderson, 1983), and which includes volunteering, political activism, and news.

The three sets of practices were demarcated by examining how participants in this study orient their daily practices and were chosen because all participants in the study engage in all three sets of practices. Hence, they provide a way to compare, across all participants, the role of the Internet in the conducting and organizing of daily life, even though the individual practices might not be the same. In all cases, I am interested in the communicative actions people perform as part of organizing these practices, understood broadly as the different communication types the Internet supports: one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many (Jensen & Helles, 2011) as well as communication to oneself—for instance, through self-tracking, alarms, or personal calendar entries. Therefore, though the Internet means different things to different people, I examine it broadly as a material technology that offers a myriad of communication possibilities that people incorporate in their daily lives in unique ways. What is important, then, is not how people define the Internet, but rather how they use the same technology differently to organize their constellation of practices.

Specifically, I examine the role of the Internet as a technology that can widen the spatial and temporal confines of when and where a practice can be performed. This perspective has been particularly prevalent in studies of work-life balance in the digital age (see, for instance, Kossek, 2016; Lee & Sirgy, 2019), where researchers have examined how the Internet affects people's lives by blurring the boundaries between work and home life. However, while the blurring of boundaries between work and home life is widespread in the sample, the binary pair does not sufficiently explain how the Internet affects people's ability to organize and perform their daily practices. That is, as the analysis will show, the Internet has the capacity to collapse contexts between a wide array of practices: This is, for instance, manifested in people being able to share work with colleagues while they are commuting or to look up recipes while they are at work. But the context collapses also occur between different work practices and between different home-life practices, making it possible to manage the calendar for one job while being on the clock for another (Jane), or to keep up with the news while hanging out with friends (Rae). While the term "context collapse" has primarily been used to describe how social media collapses audiences in online contexts (boyd, 2014; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Wesch, 2009), it is used here to describe physical, off-line context collapses that are facilitated by the Internet. That is, as it is used here, context collapses refer to the Internet's capacity to collapse off-line contexts by making it possible to perform practices in a wider array of spatial and temporal settings. This widening of the term reflects the general focus of this article on how the Internet is incorporated in daily practices, and illustrates the point that off-line and online environments cannot be understood separately (Simon & Ess, 2015): The conditions for daily life change as practices and social contexts move online, but daily life is also restructured by the way the Internet is situated and used in off-line settings. The capacity of the Internet to collapse the contexts in which people perform their practices can be valued positively, as offering a flexibility that allows for a more fluid organization of people's constellation of practices. It can also be valued negatively, where the encroaching of certain practices on previously unrelated contexts is experienced as a loss of control of the organizing of daily life. That is, as several practices can be performed in the same context, it becomes increasingly difficult for people to decide how to divide their time and attention among them. As the analysis will show, this negative valuation leads some people to implement strategies to manage and minimize context collapses. In that way, this study is

aligned with previous studies that argue that context collapses are not inherent features built into the infrastructure of social media platforms (Costa, 2018; Davis & Jurgenson, 2014), but extends the argument from social media to Internet use in general—that context collapses, as they occur both online and off-line, are a result of the unique ways in which people incorporate the Internet in their daily practices. Davis and Jurgenson (2014) argue that context collapses on social media platforms can occur both intentionally and unintentionally, whereas Costa (2018) shows how people in a Turkish village use social media in a way that evades context collapses. Both of these studies, then, illustrate how people are able to manage their practices differently to control how and when contexts clash. By widening the meaning of the term to include off-line context collapses as well, this study adds to these findings by showing that people value the Internet's capacity to collapse contexts differently depending on which practices it affects, and that the way they incorporate the Internet in their daily lives is to a large extent conditioned by these valuations. However, negative valuations do not necessarily lead people to alter their Internet use: Saying does not necessarily mean doing.

The article develops on the coupling of practice theory and media studies suggested by Nick Couldry (2004). It does so by adopting a non-media-centric approach to media studies (Hasebrink & Popp, 2006; Hepp, Berg, & Roitsch, 2014; Morley, 2009), effectively taking the individual as the unit of analysis. By doing so, it becomes possible to examine whether people experience the context collapses facilitated by the Internet as being a positive or problematic function, as it relates to the organization of their constellation of practices.

In this article, I first outline practice theory as a useful lens through which to understand the mundane activities of individuals. I argue that understanding how practices are organized, managed, and interlinked in a person's everyday life requires a holistic view of individuals. Second, I outline an approach that centers on the individual by combining recurrent interviews with communication diaries, thereby following people as they engage in communicative actions pertaining to the three sets of practices, and as they relate to various contexts (e.g., workplace or the home), media devices (e.g., smartphones or television), and different platforms (e.g., social media or text messages). Third, by analyzing the collected data gathered from 17 U.S. participants, I find that the valuations of the Internet's widening of the spatial and temporal confines within which a practice can be performed are markedly different. Further, I find that negative valuations lead some participants to implement strategies to manage and/or limit context collapses in some, or all of the three, sets of practices. Finally, I discuss how these findings add to the understanding of the relationship between people's doings and sayings in relation to communicative actions involving the Internet.

Theoretical Foundation

The term "practice theory" demarcates a body of literature that points to everyday practices as the site for uncovering symbolic structures (Reckwitz, 2002). The focus on practices in social theory has been present in the work of authors such as Bourdieu (1977), Foucault (1978), and Giddens (1984), but practice theory as a coherent field was first defined by Theodore Schatzki (1996). Although practice theory is not a homogenous approach (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005), the literature is united by the belief that social and

cultural structures should be examined by looking at practices, at what people do and say, to uncover how those structures are embedded in daily life.

Practice theory provides a vocabulary for examining the role of communication as actions in general, and communication actions involving the Internet specifically, in the way people manage daily life. First, practice theory offers a theoretical framework for understanding the structuring of discrete actions into meaningful patterns. That is, practices are understood as comprehensive clusters of actions that are oriented toward a shared purpose (Schatzki, 2002). In this study, practices that are oriented toward the same goal will be grouped into sets of practices, to create meaningful categories that can be compared across participants. To illustrate, Mariah's practice of cleaning an office can be compared with Angela's practice of delivering packages because they share a similar orientation—making a living. Focus will be placed on the discrete communicative actions that sometimes involve the Internet, and which people engage in, to organize and perform three sets of practices: making a living, tending to private life, and engaging with communities. Thus, the focus is not on Internet use as an independent practice, but rather as actions involving a technology that allows practices to be performed more fluidly in time and space, placing more responsibility on individuals to make sense of and manage those practices.

Second, practice theory offers a way to operationalize an analysis of the discrete actions in a person's life, by further distilling them into a nexus of doings and sayings (Schatzki, 1996). That is, it emphasizes the importance of considering both the specific bodily action and how it is performed (doings), and the way people make sense of, and talk about them (sayings). Breaking actions down into doings and sayings illuminates how doings that on the surface look very similar can mean very different things. Take the action of adding an entry to a work calendar. For some, this is done to simply structure work, to make sure you are at the right meetings at the right time. For others, however, keeping a work calendar is also a way to keep work and personal life separated. As Schatzki (1996) argues, doings and sayings are interlinked, as they are both expressions of (1) particular understandings of how a practice should be performed, (2) the social rules and principles that guide the performance of a practice, and (3) the objectives and desired ends that form the reasons for why certain practices are performed. Further, Warde (2005) shows that the importance and intensity of the three components that link doings and sayings vary, as people have different skill sets, backgrounds, and goals. In this article, I aim to further clarify this interlinking by examining the unique ways in which people's doings and sayings express these understandings, rules, and motivations.

Important work has been done within the field of practice theory to show how related practices influence and anchor each other by being connected in a hierarchy. Most notably, Swidler (2001) illustrated this point by showing how changes in the LGBT organizations in San Francisco led to changes in how gender and sexuality was expressed by its members. Though Swidler's work demonstrates how related practices influence each other, focusing on practices as the unit of analysis leaves the individual as a blind spot, casting that individual as simply an assemblage of isolated practices. Widening the focus from practices to the individual who performs them (Krajina, Moores, & Morley, 2014; Morley, 2009) emphasizes the fact that practices require resources such as time and energy, and must be managed and organized in specific ways. This, in turn, highlights that the manner in which a practice is performed and ascribed meaning is, among other things, conditioned by how that person organizes his or her unique constellation of practices.

Through the lens of practice theory, I will examine the relative importance of the Internet in the performing and organizing of practices, trying to answer the question: How are individuals' valuations of the Internet's role in the organizing of everyday practices manifested through their doings and sayings? Toward this end, a research approach is needed that is capable of capturing both the doings and sayings of people, as they occur, in whatever context they are performing their various practices in. The following section presents the empirical approach used for this study.

Capturing Doings and Sayings

A qualitative interview-diary-interview method was used to capture data on the everyday life and communicative habits of 17 participants from the U.S. Midwest. The data collection method was designed as part of a larger project, *The Peoples' Internet* (Jensen, n.d.), that combines qualitative, survey, and big data to map and compare uses of the Internet in five European countries, China, and the United States. In that project, the qualitative data was collected simultaneously, in the latter half of 2017, in China, Denmark, and the United States, using identical approaches in each country (Lai, Pagh, & Zeng, 2019). For the purposes of this article, only the United States qualitative data will be examined.

Regarding the coupling of this approach with practice theory, the data collection devices—the diary and the interviews—served to complement each other by focusing mainly on the doings (diary) and the sayings (interviews). Furthermore, the use of a diary method, as opposed to observational studies, for example, has the added benefit of being able to follow people (Marcus, 1995) as they move across contexts that would have otherwise been difficult to capture because of their private nature (Lindlof & Taylor, 2017). For example, the diary made it possible to capture smartphone use during a lunch between two brothers who had recently lost their mother and were discussing how to care for their elderly father (John), the uses of television as a background noise when trying to fall asleep at night (Donna), or how a smart watch can be used to circumvent workplace rules by making it possible to take personal calls undetected by supervisors (Javier).

The first interview served as an introduction that was used to build rapport—getting to know the participants, their daily routines, their media habits, and the network of people and institutions that they regularly communicated with. Following the opening interview, the participants were asked to complete a two-day communication diary. They were asked to keep the communication diary for only two days, one weekend day and one regular weekday (a few chose to only keep the diary for one day because of busy schedules), as the diaries were thorough and required much effort from the participants—for instance, remembering to note whenever they used media, which for some participants resulted in more than 50 entries a day. Consequently, although practices can vary throughout the week, asking for more diary days would likely have resulted in a lower quality of data, or in participants dropping out of the study. The diary combined structured and unstructured versions of the diary method by being structured by what participants were asked to report, but unstructured in the ways they could report (for an example of structured diaries, see Hargittai & Karr, 2009; for unstructured diaries, see Markham & Couldry, 2007). For what to report, participants were asked to note four things whenever they were using media: (1) what media they were using and whether they were alone or with other people; (2) when it was used and for how long; (3) what they were using the media for; and (4) who they were communicating with, if anyone. For how to report,

participants were asked to report their media uses throughout the day as they were happening, and they were free to report through any device and platform that was convenient for them. In this way, participants were less reliant on memory compared with other types of diary methods, such as reflective diaries (Markham & Couldry, 2007), and the diary was as organically incorporated into the already existing communication practices of the individual participant as possible, thereby minimizing its potential impact on participants' regular routines. Although this strategy helped improve data quality, issues of changed behaviors due to perceived social desirability, and of how to capture communication habits that were unnoticeable to individuals themselves, such as picking up the phone to check for notifications, were still relevant. However, the two interviews, besides providing important data in and of themselves, served as tools to mitigate these inaccuracies: The rapport built during the first interview helped lessen the participants' feelings of social desirability, and the second interview was used to discuss not only the entries in the diary but also the blank spaces in between entries.

The final step in the interview-diary-interview process was an elicitation interview that was anchored in the diary, meaning that while both interviews were semistructured (Edwards & Holland, 2013), the questions in the elicitation interview were adapted to the participant's communication diary, so that any questions that had arisen about the content of the diary were considered. During the elicitation interview, the participants were also asked questions about communication that did not involve media—that is, the face-to-face interactions they had during the day(s) that they were completing the diary.

For the sample, four participants were chosen by a principle of maximum variation as the starting nodes for networks of participants. Each of these nodes then referred the researcher to people in their network who they had frequent contact with, and who they thought were different from them in some way. By this approach, we strove for maximum possible variation for both between and within networks, with primary reference to the demographic variables: (1) age, (2) gender, (3) ethnicity, (4) educational level, (5) relationship and family status, and (6) place of residence. Achieving variation in the sample was important in this study, as it was needed to understand how different people value and use the Internet to organize their daily lives across different practices and demographic variables. The two sampling methods might be seen as contradictory. Network sampling implies a degree of homogeneity among people because they are connected in a social network, whereas maximum variation seeks to find people that are as different as possible. However, whereas network sampling places restrictions on the variation within a network, heterogeneity is achieved across networks. The sample networks are shown in Figure 1.

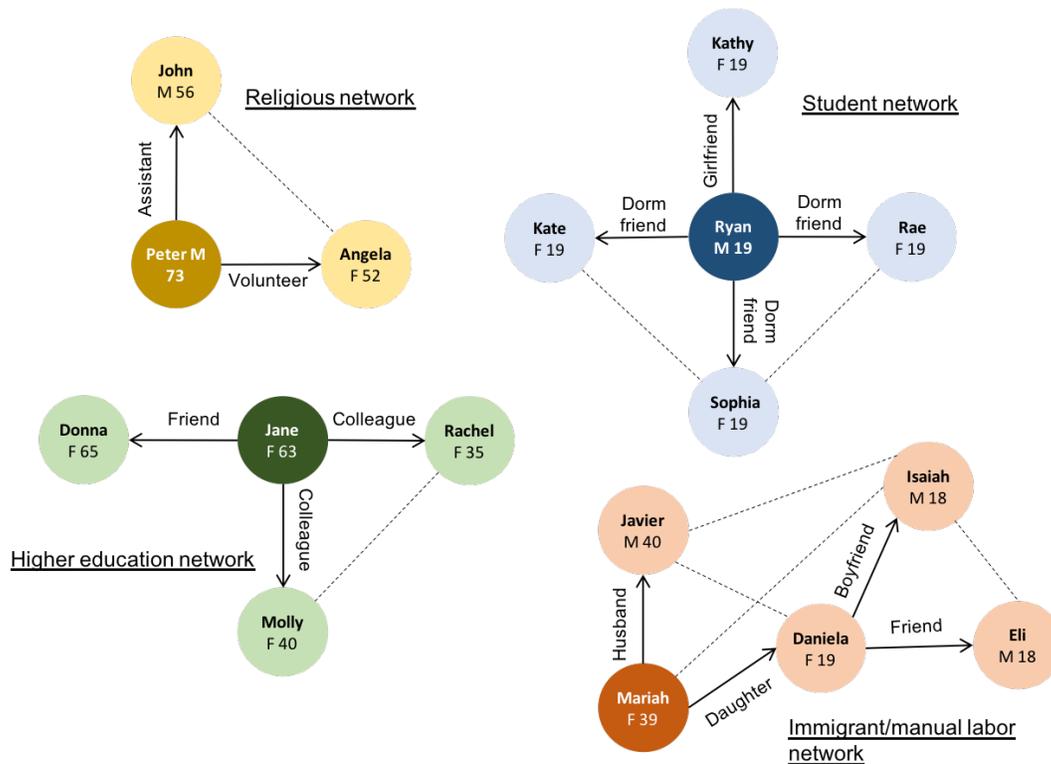


Figure 1. Sample networks: Solid lines indicate referrals by participants, and dotted lines indicate other social connections within the network.

Finally, the data were analyzed through an inductive, narrative analysis (Figgou & Pavlopoulos, 2015), where the stories people told about their lives and communication habits were analyzed together with their diary reports. The aim was to explore how people have different valuations of the Internet's capacity to allow practices to be performed in previously unrelated contexts, and how those sayings sometimes do, and sometimes do not, correspond with the same individuals' doings.

Organizing Practices

Five groups emerged from the data analysis based on the different ways people value the Internet's capacity to collapse the contexts in which their practices can be performed. These context collapses, again, should be understood as a widening of the spatial and temporal confines of when and where actions can be performed, and thus of how people are able to manage and organize their constellation of practices. For example, the Internet makes it possible to split actions related to the same practice into smaller segments throughout the day, interspersed between actions related to other practices.

The first group consists of people who experience the aforementioned context collapses as an altogether positive flexibility. It allows them to organize, with a sense of strengthened agency, their daily practices oriented toward making a living, tending to private life, and community engagements, by making it possible to perform them in a wider array of contexts—for instance, by answering work e-mails from home or from the train, by shopping while at work, or by engaging in political discussions online while waiting at the doctor’s office. The second and third group consist of people for whom the off-line context collapses facilitated by the Internet are valued as a positive and agency-enhancing flexibility within one of the three sets of practices, and problematic in the others. For people in the second group, the collapsing of contexts is valued as positive as it relates to making a living, where the Internet gives them more freedom to perform those practices in a wider set of contexts. As such, the Internet allows them more flexibility in how they can prioritize and allocate time and energy to work practices. In the third group, the positive valuations are associated with the flexibility offered by the Internet as it relates to their practices oriented toward tending to private life. The fourth group consists of people who find that the encroaching of certain practices on previously unrelated contexts is problematic across the three sets of practices, and the fifth group is composed of people who might use the Internet in many of their practices, but who do not experience any context collapses. This means that for people in the fifth group, the widening of the spatial and temporal confines the Internet can offer in where and when they can be performed is not central to the organizing of their daily lives.

It should be added that it would be logical to assume that more groups could be formed. For instance, people might have positive valuations of the Internet’s capacity to add flexibility to the organizing and performing of practices associated with community engagements, but would find it problematic in the other two, or, indeed, collapsing contexts might be valued positively in two sets of practices and negatively in the last. However, none of the participants in my study represented such configurations.

Within Groups 2–4, people’s “sayings” show that they value some context collapses as problematic, but those valuations are, to varying degrees, manifested differently in their “doings”: Some concede that these collapses, despite being problematic, add a flexibility that is necessary for their way of life, and consequently, they do not change their doings despite feeling a loss of agency in organizing their constellation of practices. Others employ strategies to manage and contain the context collapses in practices where it is experienced as problematic, effectively trying to align their actual doings with their negative valuations. The distinctions among groups are primarily based on people’s sayings—that is, on their valuations of the context collapses facilitated by the Internet. How participants are divided in the five groups have been summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. An Overview of How the Participants in the Study Are Split Between the Five Groups.

General positive valuations:	Jane, Ryan, Sophia, Daniella, Donna
Positive valuations in making a living:	Rachel, Kate
Positive valuations in tending to private life:	Molly, Kathy, Mariah
General negative valuations:	John, Angela, Rae, Javier
No Internet-facilitated context collapses:	Peter, Isaiah, Eli

Next, I will show how people in the first four groups differ in their sayings and doings by giving participant examples. Because the focus of the analysis is on how people value and manage the spatial and temporal widening offered by the Internet, of where and when practices can be performed, I will not provide examples from the fifth group.

General Positive Valuations

This first group consists of people who have positive valuations of the Internet as a technology that adds flexibility to the organizing and performing of their practices related to all three sets of practices. Sophia, a 19-year-old student, mentions that she has a chronic condition that requires her to spend a few hours at the hospital a couple of times a month. By bringing her laptop and smartphone, she uses that time to stay in touch with friends, do her schoolwork, read up on news, and chat with her mother.

Daniela, 19, works as a cleaner while preparing for college. Besides relying on the Internet to do her schoolwork from home, she explains that because her boyfriend is away at work when she is home, and her best friend lives hours away, she needs the Internet to stay in touch with them. Therefore, Daniela uses the Internet to stay social with the people that are important to her, at times and in contexts that would otherwise have been impossible.

Jane, 63, also places great import on the flexibility that she feels the Internet offers. Jane worked as a lawyer, but is now retired and spends much of her time volunteering and running a small real estate business. Her “malleable” life, as she describes it, is enabled by the way she uses the Internet to facilitate her seamless shifts from one practice to another, removing the temporal and spatial confines of several of her practices. For instance, her diary shows that within a brief time frame, she will shift from answering e-mails related to her volunteer work as a guide, to finding information online and setting up an international cell phone service with the proper provider, to writing e-mails related to her real estate business. In this way, from the comfort of her office chair, she is able to perform practices related to community engagements (checking the news and arranging volunteer work), tending to private life (contacting her social network and handling chores), and making a living (conducting work and other practices that provide an income). Jane explains:

I think it [the Internet] has enabled my life. . . . Because I think that the satisfaction I’ve been able to have by doing all my volunteer activities and being in various pro bono activities and things like that, it lets me have a very flexible lifestyle.

Jane’s friend Donna, 65 and a retired software engineer, also values the Internet’s facilitating of a flexible constellation of practices, despite having a generally cautious approach to the Internet: “I have a master’s degree in computer science, so I can conceive of ways to use data that would not be particularly friendly, shall we say.” This careful approach means that she does not use any social media, but she still uses the Internet in her practices to stay flexible—for instance, by using e-mail, at home or when she is out, to stay in touch with friends or get information on vacation homes, or by receiving continuous notifications on her phone from several news outlets.

Ryan, a 19-year-old student, ascribes the same positivity to the Internet as a technology that grants him greater agency in how he organizes and performs his constellation of practices. He describes how the Internet, specifically with the mobility of the smartphone, has helped him stay flexible:

I got an iPhone which helped me facilitate becoming much more social with my friends. . . .
Now, just communicating with so many people is so much easier. And I do a lot of reading news on my phone. Like, it's muscle memory by this point.

Ryan lives in a dorm and is in contact with friends regularly throughout the day through face-to-face interactions, and through a big Facebook Messenger group chat of more than 20 people. He very often shifts his attention between his practices oriented toward tending to private life and those oriented toward making a living. To Ryan, these frequent moves between practices are never seen as negative or problematic, and it is apparent that he embraces the flexibility he gets from using the Internet. He does not express annoyance or frustration with the many Messenger messages he receives at all hours of the day, and he has no problem replying to them, no matter what he is doing. Similarly, he has no problem with working on a group project through Google docs on a weekend night or with keeping up with the world around him, whether he is alone in his room, with friends, or working on a school project.

The examples show how the people in this group have general positive valuations of the Internet's capacity to collapse contexts. They use these context collapses as a flexibility to more freely choose what they want to do, when they want to do it: For example, Ryan does not have to limit his practices oriented toward tending to private life to the confines of the dorm, and Jane does not have to leave her office to perform practices oriented toward all three sets of practices.

Positive Valuations in Making a Living

Rachel is 35 and works as a lawyer. Her diary entries show how the Internet's capacity to collapse contexts is present in her doings related to all three sets of practices: She plans her commute from bed and answers e-mails after office hours; she interacts with friends on her social media accounts throughout her day, wherever she is; and uses both her phone and work computer to access news at home, during her commute, and while she is at work. However, in her sayings, it is apparent that the context collapses are only experienced as positive as they relate to making a living, whereas they make practices oriented toward tending to private life and community engagements feel like they are encroaching on other, previously unrelated contexts. For instance, she explains how being able to perform practices associated with tending to private life and community engagements first thing in the morning felt like she was wasting her day: "I kept getting up at the same time, but I was just sitting on my phone for an hour before the day even started. And I realized I really hated that."

Even though she values the context collapses negatively in some of her practices, they are normally present in all of them. However, every Sunday, she will leave her phone in the kitchen and not use it. By self-regulating her phone use on Sundays, she simultaneously makes herself unavailable to friends and less likely to be tempted by push notifications, while still being flexible in her work by checking e-mails and performing other work-related practices during that day.

Kate, a 19-year-old student, emphasizes keeping her practices related to school flexible. For example, when asked what the most important thing she uses the Internet for was, she promptly replied: "Google Drive," because it allows her to have papers and notes online, share them with other students, and work on them from anywhere. In other sets of practices, however, she feels that the context collapses add pressure on her to be constantly available to friends and to keep up with news. To manage this, Kate has different strategies at different times. To avoid having her community engagement practices intrude on her practices related to making a living, Kate will avoid engaging in those practices altogether when she is busy with work: "There are some political things [that concern me], but I've started to not think about them as much because they're just more stress on top of focusing on school, so I try to keep them away for certain times." When it comes to managing her practices oriented toward tending to private life, she will try to avoid context collapses there as well, but only at particular times:

The big group chat that I'm in, which is 20-plus people, can get a little annoying because there's always someone trying to talk and make plans. So, when I'm working . . . , after a while I just have to turn my notifications off and put my phone on "do not disturb."

In sum, Rachel and Kate exemplify three different strategies for managing the Internet's capacity to collapse contexts. Rachel's strategy is to avoid specific hardware (leaving her smartphone in one room an entire day), while Kate either avoids specific practices altogether (avoids news and volunteer and political activities), or manages specific software (hiding herself from social media, and removing notifications from incoming messages). Thus, both feel a need to manage and constrain context collapses in practices oriented toward tending to private life and community engagements to retain a sense of control over their full constellation of practices, but find different strategies for doing so.

Positive Valuations in Tending to Private Life

The third group embraces the Internet's capacity to collapse contexts as they relate to tending to private life, while feeling a need to implement strategies to manage, or remove entirely from, practices related to making a living and community engagements.

The above is true for Kathy, a 19-year-old student, who is in a long-distance relationship with Ryan from the first analytical group. Kathy frequently uses social media throughout the day, keeping up Snapchat streaks with almost 30 friends and staying in touch with Ryan with short messages at all hours. She is also busy with schoolwork, spending several hours every day accessing and doing homework assignments and completing group work. Kathy enjoys the context collapses as a way to be flexible in her practices oriented toward tending to private life—that is, in her contact and coordination with her social relations: "I'll have the laptop going and then like texting. . . . I'll have my laptop open with, like, my notes, and, like, 'Yeah, I'm doing homework.'" However, her valuations of the context collapses are more negative when they affect her practices oriented toward community engagements and making a living, and she implements strategies to contain collapses in both. Like Kate in the previous group, Kathy employs two strategies, one for each set of practices. Her strategy to contain Internet-facilitated context collapses in community engagements is (again, similar to Kate) that she chooses to avoid those practices altogether when she is busy. Her strategy to avoid context collapses in her practices oriented toward making a living is to assign specific hardware to

that set of practices. Kathy keeps work contained to her laptop, while using both her laptop and smartphone for social interactions. For instance, even though she uses e-mails and document-sharing sites in both her private life and in her schoolwork, she will access them only through her computer if they are related to making a living, whereas she will use both her phone and computer if they are related to tending to private life. In that way, she adds mobility and flexibility through her smartphone use in practices oriented toward tending to private life, while deliberately avoiding it in her practices oriented toward making a living.

Mariah, 39, a first-generation immigrant, house cleaner, and mother of three children, is not a frequent Internet user. She has a smartphone, but does not feel very attached to it:

I don't feel worried about my cellphone; I don't feel like I need my cellphone all the time. But the only one reason it is important for me to keep it close and ready is because my son has allergy problems, and sometimes they need to reach me easily and in a hurry.

As she mentions, the most important thing she uses the phone for is to be available if her son's school calls, as he suffers from severe allergies. However, she also uses her phone during work and during her commutes to send and receive small written or recorded voice messages on WhatsApp with her family and friends in the United States and in Mexico. Thus, Mariah uses the Internet to stay flexible in a lot of her practices oriented toward tending to private life. Her communication diary shows that on a weekday morning she will message several friends, as well as her daughter and husband on WhatsApp. While she is at work, she will stay in touch with her daughter and her son, and chat with her brother. Later in the evening, she will call her mother in Mexico, also on WhatsApp. However, she tries to limit the context collapses in her other practices—for instance, through strict rules about media use in the home, which she and her husband instated to avoid other practices intruding on their family time. As such, Mariah is very careful about when she uses her phone or the family computer to read e-mails from clients or to check whether she has been contacted by staff at the local radio station where she volunteers. In that way, and like Rachel, Mariah's strategy is based on avoiding the hardware that allows context collapses to occur, to limit the number of practices she is able to perform at any given time.

Molly, 40, a stay-at-home mother running an online law course at a local university, also exhibits a somewhat similar strategy. While she stays in touch with friends through social media and texts throughout the day, she limits the context collapses in making a living and community engagements to very specific times and hardware: Her work is done on her laptop only—everything from grading papers to answering student e-mails—and the laptop never leaves her office. Additionally, she has decided to listen to news only on the car radio, as she fears that her kids might see the graphic images that could pop up if she were to engage in those practices elsewhere. In that way, Molly's strategy of limiting context collapses in practices oriented toward making a living and community engagements is to continuously control and manage her use of hardware.

To sum up, Kathy, Mariah, and Molly all use strategies that gives them greater coherence between their valuations of the Internet's capacity to collapse the contexts in which practices can be performed, and how those valuations are manifested in their doings. While their strategies are expressed differently, they all target hardware as a way to control how and when they allow context collapses to occur. Only Kathy

implements different strategies in relation to her different sets of practices, as she completely avoids performing practices oriented toward community engagement when she is busy with other things.

General Negative Valuations

The fourth group of people have a negative valuation of the Internet's collapsing of contexts in relation to all three sets of practices. Javier, 40, is Mariah's husband and works at a factory. Like his wife, he follows the strict rules they have for media use in the home, but unlike her, he does not experience that he can use the Internet to gain flexibility in practices of tending to private life. Rather, he feels that context collapses challenge his ability to be attentive to whatever the context dictates he should be doing—like working when he is at the factory, or being present with his family when he is home. Therefore, Javier actively tries to manage and limit context collapses in all his practices, and only allows them when they involve his son, who suffers from severe allergies.

Angela is a 52-year-old first-generation Zimbabwean immigrant who works as a freelance Amazon delivery driver to have more time to do volunteer work. Although Angela has negative valuations concerning the widening of spatial and temporal confines, she actively seeks to make use of the Internet as a way to stay flexible in the organization and in performing her practices. Consequently, Angela displays a clear disjointedness between her sayings and her doings. Angela uses the Internet to work whenever she has time, to perform her community engagements by conducting conference calls, or answering e-mails from people at the food pantry where she volunteers, whenever or wherever she is. When asked what would happen if she lost connection to the Internet for a few days, she replies: "I wouldn't be doing anything except go 'oh my god oh my god!' I think that the difference for me, if the Internet went away, it would take my life with it."

Angela implements various strategies to manage the flexibility she gains from the context collapses facilitated by the Internet. However, her strategies are not aimed at limiting context collapses in any of her practices, but rather to try to feel in control of them by tying them to different hardware. Angela always carries three smartphones with her: One for her Amazon work, another for private use, and yet another for her volunteer work, each with different apps corresponding to its use. This division of both hardware and software among the three different sets of practices is a pronounced testament to Angela's need for a strong separation of practices. By dividing her practices between phones, she attempts to create a semblance of coherence by maintaining one constant "hardware context" for each of the three practices, despite being able to perform them flexibly, in a wide array of places.

Finally, John and Rae both have negative valuations of the context collapses facilitated by the Internet, but their valuations are not manifested in any strategies to manage or limit them. John, a 56-year-old painter, author, and church janitor, mentions that the context collapses facilitated by the Internet are problematic because they test his ability to stay focused. However, as he uses Google to do research for a book, and social media to sell his work, he does not feel like he can implement strategies that allow him to perform his practices in accordance with his sayings, as the organization of his constellation of practices is enabled by the flexibility offered by the context collapses.

Rae is a 19-year-old college student who lives in the same dorm as Ryan, Kate, and Sophia. Rae has reservations about the pervasiveness of the Internet, and she finds that the resulting fluid organization of practices has a negative effect on her ability to concentrate on whatever practice she is performing. As one example, Rae is in a relationship that for the first year and a half was long distance because her boyfriend's job in the navy. During the times when her boyfriend was stationed, his screen time was sporadic and unforeseeable. Hence, to stay in touch, Rae had to constantly walk around with her phone close and Facebook open on her laptop, checking for notifications to see whether he was online. If he was, she would drop everything to spend some rare time with him. Because of these external circumstances, she relied heavily on the flexibility of the Internet in organizing and performing her practices.

From Rae's sayings about this flexibility, it is clear that there is a lack of coherence between her implementation of the flexibility offered by the Internet and her valuations of it. She repeatedly described the role of the laptop and the phone in her life as necessary tools: "My laptop and I are very good friends because we have to be." And later: "I was granted a very spotty Messenger [contact with her boyfriend], but I will take what I can get. It's something we need to learn how to adapt to, and we are learning because we have to." However, Rae does not have a strategy to contain and control those context collapses. Instead, she reluctantly accepts the flexibility as necessary: Something she should adapt to, rather than trying to adapt it to her life.

In sum, people in this group all have negative valuations of the Internet that cut across their three sets of practices. Javier, however, is the only person of the four that actively tries to limit context collapses: Angela's strategy is to try and feel in control of context collapses by assigning a physical component—a phone—to each set of practices, and John and Rae have no limitation of managing strategies, and accept context collapses as a necessary part of their lives.

Concluding Remarks

The four groups presented above display different valuations of the Internet's capacity to collapse the contexts in which various practices can be performed. Further, they demonstrate how people with negative valuations of the context collapses may implement strategies to either manage or avoid them, including removing the use of hardware devices from specific practices, managing software settings, or avoiding sets of practices altogether.

By analyzing the relationship between the participants' doings and sayings, it becomes apparent that they implement these strategies as a measure to seize control of the organizing of daily life by producing coherence between their valuations of, and their actual conduct during, context collapses. However, people still display different levels of coherence or disjointedness between their sayings and their doings. The strategies, to some, allow them to manage, or completely eliminate, the collapsing contexts to the extent that their doings coincide with their sayings. Others leave room for context collapses despite their negative valuations, because they feel that they cannot complete their daily practices without them. By broadening the concept of context collapse—from the collapsing of social circles on social media platforms to the collapsing of physical contexts in which everyday practices can be performed—the analysis has shown how the coherence and disjointedness of doings and sayings

manifest themselves as wanted as well as unwanted physical context collapses (Davis & Jurgenson, 2014). Furthermore, by focusing on three sets of practices, the analysis has shown that while the context collapses occurring between work practices and private life practices are prominent (Kossek, 2016; Lee & Sirgy, 2019), they also take place within those categories themselves, as different work or private life practices collapse. The decision to focus on sets of practices was taken to compare various people with very different lives and demographic characteristics. However, to further examine how and where these off-line context collapses occur, future research could benefit from focusing more narrowly on practices taking place within one of the two categories—for instance, to examine how digital media collapses the contexts of the home, child rearing, personal interests, social life, and so forth.

Returning to the interlinking of doings and sayings, both are expressions of understandings of how to perform a practice, the social rules and norms that frame it, and the goals that make up the motivation for why it is performed (Schatzki, 1996). With varying intensity, these components inform how and why practices are carried out (Warde, 2005). The findings presented further elucidate the relationship between doings and sayings by illustrating that although they are interlinked, they do not always coincide. This indicates that the fluctuation among the three components of a practice can constitute problems for people as those practices enter daily life: A person can have certain articulated goals or social expectations they feel obligated to meet (for instance, getting work done or being available to friends), without having the capabilities to perform those practices in a manner that does not interfere with other practices in their daily life. The article thus contributes to existing practice theory literature by further clarifying the understanding of how doings and sayings interrelate in the constituting of both concrete actions and wider practices. The study further points to practice theory as a useful tool for understanding media use more generally, as it can illuminate how people's media preferences are related to their daily practices, and how they organize their constellation of practices in and through media.

These findings and contributions point toward further questions related to how media is incorporated in the organizing of daily life, and the issues people face when using digital media to meet expectations and goals, given the time and resources (material and knowledge) available to them. Digital media has the capacity to both add and subtract agency in people's organizing of everyday life, as it can facilitate both wanted and unwanted context collapses between a wide array of everyday practices. Examining these context collapses (how and why they occur as well as the media strategies people employ to take control of them) is important, as they are quintessential to understanding the experience of using digital media in everyday life.

Although this study provides new insights into the relationship between people's doings and sayings, as they relate to the Internet's capacity to collapse contexts, it does not thoroughly examine the underlying reasons for why some people are more disjointed in their sayings and doings than others. To further contribute to practice theory, future research should map those underlying reasons—for instance, by focusing on the socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural contexts that lead people to choose one strategy over another.

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