June 2022

Algorithmic Manipulation: How Social Media is Shaping our Theology

Ethan Jago
Liberty University, ejago@liberty.edu

Recommended Citation

Algorithmic Manipulation: How Social Media is Shaping our Theology

Abstract

The average individual in Generation Z spends nine hours a day on social media and derives over 62% of the information retained from social applications such as YouTube and Instagram. Social media applications are designed to track and adapt a user's activity to custom-tailor their internet experience resulting in a controlled, one-sided view of the information flow custom-tailored to an individual's usage, which subtly changes the disposition concerning the interpretation of theological and biblical truths. The algorithm of social media responds adapts and directly impacts individuals in what they think, purchase, and places they visit. Social media is not neutral in its approach to sway opinion and to mislead Christian doctrine. The impact and misleading of influencers on social media platforms directly affect the cognitive functions of Christians regarding critical thinking for acceptance of the following, acceptance into the sub-culture of social media, driven by the need for uniqueness and individuality. The invasion and permeation of non-orthodox beliefs and heretical views of Christian theology spread from individual-to-individual leaving doubt regarding one's epistemology on Scriptural truth claims.

Keywords

social media, epistemic anxiety, virtue epistemology, internet of things, theological liberalism

Cover Page Footnote

pursuing doctor of ministry, estimated completion 2022.

Understanding the Algorithm

It is no surprise that the current climate within Western Christianity is polarizing itself toward theological liberalism in more significant proportions than in any other era. The development of the internet is continually being adapted, expanded, and tailored with the end-user in mind to provide more information the recipient desires and less of what they do not. While the development of the internet offers accessibility and freedom of personal expression on social media, the tightly knit interconnectivity comes at the cost of sacrificing solid theology. The Trojan Horse built into these social media platforms has become increasingly dialectic by providing the user with a one-sided alienated view of information and self-service.

Studying human behavior and the psychology behind why users see a specific ad, or why Instagram strategically feeds items from a post the user has clicked on, creates a manipulative strategy which reprograms the mind of the user. Behind the primary search behavior of a user, such as typing in a question into Google, is an additional subprocess that observes and predicts the mental process an individual takes in seeking out information or entertainment.[1] As an individual continues to utilize a social media platform such as Instagram, more information is derived from that individual's online habits which are then logged, filed, and applied to the user based on a mental model that has been created for that specific person.[2] For example: if one were to open up Instagram and type in a subject that has zero relevance to who they are as a person, the more time they spend looking at the photographs, reels, and exploring the feed within that subject, the algorithm will begin to slowly change based off of the frequency and duration of the time spent on the app.

The Social Internet of Things (SIoT) is a paradigm where social networks and IoT converge and network autonomously as the relationships between the user and the subject (the item being sought after) continue their virtual handshake.[3] Understanding the algorithm and the relationship between the user

---

[1] Salomé Cojean and Eric Jamet, "Facilitating Information-Seeking Activity in Instructional Videos: The Combined Effects of Micro- and Macroscaffolding," *Computers in Human Behavior* 74 (September 2017): pp. 294-302, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2017.04.052, 295.

[2] Ibid., 295.

[3] J Meghana, J. Hanumanthappa, and S.P. Shiva Prakash, "Performance Comparison of Machine Learning Algorithms for Data Aggregation in Social Internet of Things," *Global*

and the social object (Instagram) creates a network relationship to ease access for the user based on the profiling and internet activity.[4] Most individuals pay no attention to this as in many ways it has helped users seamlessly find the correct product, or even a new coffeeshop; however, there is a hazardous reality that becomes apparent outside of the material items as this algorithm begins to provides the user with more articles on a trial or test run.

In many ways, the IoT provides the user with what they desire; however, Instagram now dictates which content gets seen based on three factors:
1. Interest: Instagram predicts the likelihood that the user will enjoy a post or pique their interest about a particular topic based on past behavior and machine analysis of your internet history.
2. Recency: Real time posts and posts with high engagement are more likely to be seen as opposed to displaying posts in chronological order or by published timestamp.
3. Relationship: Social media bases relationships on whose profiles and pages the user visits more frequently. Feed ranking and ad displays affect your algorithm based on your friend's interests and interactions.[5]

The Problem

Research in the digital world provides interesting statistics between Generation Z and Millennials and their internet usage for information gathering. While social media markets itself as a tool for connection, it must be viewed as an information-gathering hub. Daily time spent online for both generations is staggering as 45% of Generation Z, and 24% of Millennials spend more than nine hours online.[6] Spending nine hours or more online a day creates a mine of data for IoT to derive user information and to dictate what the user interacts with daily. Over 62% of these generations derive their information from these social

---

Transitions Proceedings 2, no. 2 (November 2021): pp. 212-219, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gltp.2021.08.032, 212.

[4] Ibid., 212.

[5] Paige Cooper, "The 2021 Instagram Algorithm Breakdown: How to Get Your Content Seen," Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard, November 2, 2021, https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-algorithm/.

[6] Shaun Pichler, Chiranjeev Kohli, and Neil Granitz, "Ditto for Gen Z: A Framework for Leveraging the Uniqueness of the New Generation," *Business Horizons* 64, no. 5 (2021): pp. 599-610, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2021.02.021, 601.

platforms.[7] As the rise of Christian celebrity culture continues and more individuals attempt to create a platform for themselves to become influencers on social media, so does the increased amount of misinformation or poor theology saturate the social media realm.

The influencer is the bridge between social media use and the algorithm; one direct influence on theological liberalism stems from the constant and consistent use of social networks, derived from Instagram influencers. A study conducted in 2020 reveals that worldwide internet users spend over 145 minutes per day on social media apps alone.[8] The most substantial influencing application is Instagram, with over 2.7 billion active users.[9] Studies on Instagram use directly correlate with personality changes and the use of social media, specifically in the realm of extraversion and neuroticism.[10] The pattern of behaviors and the psychological effects contribute to the capitulation of young adult Christians changing their theological beliefs due to the exerting pressure from other users and influencers on social media. Psychologically, social media use directly affects the users' desire for uniqueness in an atmosphere in which one has the potential to interact with several million users within the network instantly. According to the Theory of Uniqueness, individuals need to differentiate themselves from others when they perceive themselves as highly similar.[11] Social media creates conditions that intensify this need at an exponential rate and is continually stimulated with different worldviews similar to their own or unique opposing worldviews in which the desire to stand out is vital to the social success of an individual online. The desire to be unique drives a change in a person's behavioral and cognitive functions who grows up in a Christian home and has a similar

[7] "Why Do Different Generations Use Social Media?" Marketing Charts, October 17, 2019, https://www.marketingcharts.com/digital/social-media-110652.

[8] Joseph Johnson, "Topic: Internet Usage Worldwide," Statista, accessed March 16, 2022, https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/.

[9] Ibid.

[10] Chiungjung Huang, "Social Network Site Use and Big Five Personality Traits: A Meta-Analysis," *Computers in Human Behavior* 97 (2019): pp. 280-290, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.03.009.

[11] C. R. Snyder and Howard L. Fromkin, "Abnormality as a Positive Characteristic: The Development and Validation of a Scale Measuring Need for Uniqueness.," *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 86, no. 5 (1977): pp. 518-527, https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843x.86.5.518.

upbringing within the Christian worldview. The individual is now directly in conflict with a decision to solidify one's belief system or the overwhelming desire for uniqueness to adopt additional values and incorporate them as their own. These momentary and macro portions of informational flow are consumed at an accelerated rate due to the attention span and the presentation of information through Instagram reels and stories. The subtle and small changes compound over time, swaying the rationale one has concerning core Christian doctrine and tenants of faith. Hudson and Fraley conducted a survey in 2015 in implementing non-clinical interventions delivered through smartphones to demonstrate the effectiveness of changing individuals' personality traits and beliefs towards a specific direction.[12]

Research studies in several scientific fields point to the rise of influencers swaying public opinion in social media. Freberg defines influencers as a new type of third-party endorser who shapes audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media.[13] Given the increasing hostility towards Christian beliefs as evidenced in the modern news media attacking the biblical stance against same sex marriage, sanctity of human life, and the exclusivity of the gospel the media shapes the minds away from these objective statements to that of subjectivity and relativism. According to author Glennon Doyle twenty-two percent of millennials do not identify with any specific religion, and have "found a different kind of clergy on Instagram through personal growth influencers."[14] The influencers are viewed as trusted individuals with large social media followings and attain an unearned credibility.[15] Influencer- Influencer empowerment and promotion within social media influencer circles, creating a cyclical system of promotion and market saturation in the digital world. Two

[12] William Fleeson and Eranda Jayawickreme, "Whole Trait Theory," *Journal of Research in Personality* 56 (2015): pp. 82-92, https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2014.10.009.

[13] Liselot Hudders, Steffi De Jans, and Marijke De Veirman, "The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers," *International Journal of Advertising* 40, no. 3 (October 28, 2020): pp. 327-375, https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925, 333.

[14] Leigh Stein, "The Empty Religions of Instagram," The New York Times (The New York Times, March 5, 2021), https://www.nytimes.com/2021/03/05/opinion/influencers-glennon-doyle-instagram.html.

[15] Liselot Hudders, Steffi De Jans, and Marijke De Veirman, "The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers," *International Journal of Advertising* 40, no. 3 (October 28, 2020): pp. 327-375, https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925, 334.

essential items, reach and impact, are critical for influencers which is gained through authenticity, perceived expertise, and the intimacy users experience by interacting with and engrossing the information one is presented with. [16] However, a vast majority of these influencers within the Christian world are not trained in philosophy or theology. Instead, they are regurgitating or creating philosophical systems from some other secondary or tertiary source. Yet, Christian creators are not critically thinking about *what* they are saying; they are more concerned about *how* they are saying it and the *positive responses* received from a post, reel, or carousel.

We can only go as far intellectually as we have put in the work. The mind reaches a cognitive limit based on the information we currently possess. As Immanuel Kant begins his book on *Critique of Pure Reason*, "That all our knowledge begins with experience."[17] There is knowledge in experience, yet experience should not drive our understanding and dictate our assumptions on items to be true or false based on our own opinion. Kant makes this distinction as he continues, "Though all our knowledge begins with experience, it by no means follows that all arises out of the experience."[18] Yet, many in their pursuit to get information out in the digital world do not weigh carefully and think through the truth claim, spiritual application, or philosophical assumption and compare it to Scripture or the primary sources dealing with the specific topic.

J.P. Moreland addressed the Evangelical Theological Society in 2020 (ETS) and stated, "Cultural authority to define a relevant range of reality, truth, and what it is rational to believe is deeded by people in that culture to those who have (or, at least, are taken to have) the relevant body of knowledge."[19] The authority that dictates the relevancy of a post comes from the algorithm, based on the desire of the individuals interacting with that post. The validity or substance of

---

[16] Hudders, De Jans, and De Veirman, "The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers,", 13475.

[17] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. J M.D. Meiklejohn (Newburyport, NY: Dover Publications, 2018), 1.

[18] Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1.

[19] J. P. Moreland, "How Christian Philosophers Can Serve Systematic Theologians and Biblical Scholars ," *JETS* 63, no. 2 (June 2020): pp. 297-306, https://doi.org/https://www.proquest.com/openview/50868c8404111367c27ec64ef0c26abb/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=47286, 298.

the information presented by the host is rarely considered in the algorithm, which creates a trend for the topic, which the end-user accepts to be the truth. As this continues to trend, the individual's critical thinking fades due to the desire for social acceptance, an unwillingness to engage or ask questions regarding the presented material, and symbiotically influences and sways the individual's mind over time. Marketing professor Jonah Berger at Wharton School at the University of Pennsylvania unpacks the process of social norm learning in his book *Invisible Influence: The Hidden Forces that Shape Behavior*. He identifies the sway a group has over the mind of an individual stating:

Where we grow up and the norms and practices of people around us shape everything from the language we use to the behaviors we engage in. Kids adopt their parents' religious beliefs, and college students adopt their roommates' study habits. Whether making simple decisions, like which brand to buy or more consequential ones, like which career path to pursue, we tend to do as others around us do. The tendency to imitate is so fundamental that even animals do it.[20]

The tendency to imitate others can lead Christians into a state of spiritual stagnation and intellectual decline. The connection between information-seeking behavior through an online medium is not the problem. The problem is the lack of intellectual development in researching and seeking sources of which information is attained and relying on personal preference to dictate truth. Analyzing and thinking critically about any given subject is critical to spiritual growth and grounding oneself in Christian doctrine and a biblical worldview. Influencers and prominent Christian figures consistently violate the science behind biblical exegesis and instead provide their epistemic justification on what they "feel" or "think" to be right without supporting their reasoning with Scriptural support resulting in Christians being tossed to and fro on different teachings and practices and accepting them as truth (Eph.4:14).

In education and learning, a topic or subject is introduced, and external evidence is provided for the learner to critically analyze and process the information to determine the statement's validity. Consider this analogy: When shopping on Amazon for a new coffee machine, you conduct a search and are provided with a list of relevant items matching the search criteria. You click on a coffee maker and then read the description the manufacturer offers, positively describing the product to persuade you to purchase the product. However, you do not merely take the manufacturer at their word. Why? Because you know they are trying to sell you something because they wish to make money. So, you look at the reviews (peer review) to see what the consumers (like yourself) are saying

---

[20] Jonah Berger, *Invisible Influence: The Hidden Forces That Shape Behavior* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017), 25.

about the product to see if it is worth your time and money. Now apply the same scenario to a video or a post in which an individual on Instagram is speaking in a way that is received as truth. Do you weigh their words with Scripture and what you know? Does one automatically accept their claims as truth or base truth on experience only?

This process describes what occurs and continually cycles throughout every minute one spends on social media. With the algorithm and the individuals one follows on Instagram, the informational net expands, providing several differing views on theology and Scripture. During informational presentation one must think critically about the proposition and compare it to Scripture similar to the Bereans in Acts 17:11, as the Bible is the absolute authoritative source of truth. When one does not analyze and assess truth claims, the mind is left in a neutral state. The neutral mental state creates doubt, and openness to accept what the influencer says instead of the meaning. Credibility of influencers should be based on their theology not their follower count.

Much of the Christian digital landscape in the theological realm is that of illiteracy, ambiguity, confusion, equivocation, and false teaching purported by "Starbucks Theologians." These individuals scratch the theological or philosophical surface by reading entry-level devotional style books, committing a few hours, days, or months and assume they understand the epistemology behind the topic. Often, the topic is Scripture, and individuals spend more time outside of the primary source and invest significant focus on others who write about the subject they purport to be experts on. Diligent study and focus on accurately understanding and processing theological doctrine is traded as they regurgitate information they have no personal understanding, and assume they are qualified to lead and train others into territories where they are utterly unfamiliar.

Recognizing the lack of understanding is critical for an individual to grow intellectually in their theological studies. The minute one assumes they are a credible source on any given theological topic, one must ask, "Am I a subject matter expert on this? If so, what do I believe makes me qualified to speak intelligibly on this subject?" The individual described is one who teaches others about Christian living, God, His attributes, interpreting Scripture, practical application, doctrine, apologetics, and theological motifs. Caution and discernment are vital when one posts or teaches in an area in the digital world for everyone to see. Approaching these fields pragmatically is dangerous as the influence leads other away from orthodoxy. Paul continually emphasizes this to Timothy in charging him to handle the Word (2 Tim. 2:15) and to be cautious to not seek one's interest but only in proclaiming Christ accurately (1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:15; 3:15; Phil. 2:20; 22).

Accuracy in handling Scripture is non-negotiable with Paul, as he describes those who preach Christ, yet the intentions and accuracy are not the same (Phil. 1:15; 17; 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 4:3-4; 2 Cor. 11:3-15; Rom. 16:17-19). The phenomenon of teachers seeking to promote self is not new occurrence, as this also occurs in the first century. The first century did not have social media. However, communal reading utilizes the same principles as social media. In his book *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus,* Dr. Brian Wright explains the importance of communal reading, its phenomena, and how it permeated a complex, multifaceted cultural field many people, including Christians, participated in.[21]

Changing the context from theology and apply it to a different professional field, such as dentistry, the picture becomes clear. Counsel is not received from an individual on dentistry or have a tooth removed from someone who has read a few books about being a dentist. The desire for successful tooth extraction is expected to be conducted by one who is committed to the study and practice of the art and science behind the mouth's anatomy, the formation of teeth, and the intricacies involved. The same logic may be applied to "holistic health experts" or "nutrition experts" regarding what to consume for optimal healthy living. Many of those in these industries saturate the digital world and create similar problems. Why, then, do Christians settle on purported experts with no academic credentials in the realm of theology, which affects our eternality and obedience to God's commands?

Epistemic Anxiety

As previously demonstrated, the increasing utilization of social media applications such as Instagram can cause personality changes over time. As the algorithm changes the content presented to the user, the user may experience extraversion and neuroticism which can influence the individual to deconstruct their religious beliefs leading to epistemic anxiety.[22] Anxiety is typically associated with a negative trait; however, recent research in the modern era

---

[21] Brian J Wright, *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window Into Early Christian Reading Practices* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2017), 208.

[22] Neuroticism is one of the big five personality traits and specifically deals with the temperament and moodiness of an individual. Individuals that are neurotic respond poorly to stress and interpret normal situations as extremely difficult and have a strong desire for immediate self-gratification leading to changes in decision making, and patterns of behavior. Whereas extroversion in individuals creates a strong desire and need to search for experiences, and social interactions gaining the feeling of accomplishment/ well-being from others.

suggests that epistemic anxiety plays an essential role in agency, virtue, and moral progress.[23] In virtue ethics, reason and emotions are integral in informational processes, establishing and solidifying values.[24] The values and beliefs of the individual are question as contemporary utilitarianism develops a systematic division between justification and deliberation in trusting authoritative sources of truth and Christian theology. Emotions in the individual and the desire for uniqueness is the primary force in establishing truth, disregarding facts, and a salient moral reason for beliefs and actions dictating the ideas.[25] The emotional religion Instagram infers is similar to the account in Judges seventeen as Micah creates his own religion with the help of a Levite from Bethlehem in Judah as the Levite's selfish desire for uniqueness leads them into idolatry and deceit.

  As the individual increases the amount of time on Instagram, the algorithm and SIoT work to provide a one-sided informational flow, leading to emotional reasoning of the individual as the source of truth. The user becomes increasingly self-aware and self-conscious of Christian values rejected by the culture, such as LGBTQ, Abortion, Same-Sex Marriage, and the gospel's exclusivity, which forms a level of epistemic anxiety. The anxiety is directed towards the values of the individual, causing fear of not fitting in or even appearing to stand out amongst the followers within the social media sphere. Instagram creates users continually becoming self-aware of their likes, desires, and entertainment. When a statement, comment, or message is explicitly directed towards the previously held value, well-being is confronted, and a choice presents itself. Capitulate to that of the majority, or stand firm with the seeming minority? In this dilemma, the individual will potentially find themselves in a form of anxiety questioning, identity, resentment, anxiety, or fear. These states all contribute to challenging the belief system of the individual's epistemology towards the Christian faith.

  The epistemic anxiety caused by social media affects generations of Christians and fuels the fire of doubt and tendency towards heretical doctrines and beliefs. The heretical doctrines are directly linked to the cognitive goals humanity seeks and strives after in virtue epistemology. The social media algorithm has become a source of discipleship of young men and women in tailoring the

---

[23] Michael Lacewing, "Emotional Self-Awareness and Ethical Deliberation," *Ratio* 18, no. 1 (2005): pp. 65-81, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9329.2005.00271.x, 66.

[24] Ibid., 66.

[25] Big five personality traits are openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, neuroticism.

information and frequency they are presented with. Then, the individual response assumes that what is being presented through teaching or what others are interacting with is accurate, factual, and coherent with core Christian tenants of faith. The virtue epistemology is birthed out of this assumption and acceptance of Christians leading towards virtue-responsiblism and virtue-reliabilism.[26] The primary difference between these two virtue categories is the responsibilist focuses virtue on motivation and affective components.[27] Applying this on the impact of social-media in Christian theology, the connection behind information-seeking behavior on the individual pursues after a personal or manufactures motivating quality behind the influencer or page follows. The marketing tactics and approaches of influencers are two-fold, 1) build a following, and 2) sway the opinion of those that are following the influencer. The influencers are trusted by those who follow and are easily motivated by what motivates the one they follow. The influencers directly impact the motivational factors of the responsibilist and directly impact the decision-making and epistemology of the follower. Furthermore, the uniqueness of the influencer to stand out amongst others is an additional motivational factor directly linked with the Theory of Uniqueness desire amongst the modern culture.

The virtue-reliabilist conceptualizes perceived intellectual vices with secularization and inundation of the cognitive functionality from a deeply held belief system such as Christianity to a hasty generalization, non-truth-conducive acceptance of non-factual information leading into a responsibilist carelessness of informational acceptance.[28] Combining the desire for uniqueness, the sway an influencer has, and the epistemic virtue of a responsibilist and reliabilist lead the user to doubt their theological position and to compromise their beliefs with hopes that "open-mindedness" provides them not to look offensive or dogmatic in beliefs. Finally, the intellectual virtues of these individuals change the cognitive ability rather than a character trait to process, dissect, and critically analyze the truth claim of the algorithmic manipulation on the individual.

In Sum

---

[26] Frank Cabrera, "Is Epistemic Anxiety an Intellectual Virtue?" *Synthese* 199, no. 5-6 (August 30, 2021): pp. 13471-13495, https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03383-2, 13474.

[27] Ibid., 13474.

[28] Hudders, De Jans, and De Veirman, "The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers,", 13475.

The increasing amount of religiously unaffiliated and the progressive trend of deconstructionism in the Evangelical world is driven by the effect of social media on the Christian individual. The impact and misleading of influencers on social media platforms directly affect the cognitive functions of Christians regarding critical thinking for acceptance of the following, acceptance into the sub-culture of social media, driven by the need for uniqueness and individuality. The invasion and permeation of non-orthodox beliefs and heretical views of Christian theology spread from individual-to-individual leaving doubt regarding one's epistemology on Scriptural truth claims.

The algorithm with artificial intelligence promotes a passive psychological secularization throughout the entire landscape of Christianity. If left unchecked and unchallenged, the advancements in technology will continually sway and mislead individuals away from sound biblical theology and push users to a progressive state of theological liberalism. Gender identity, racism, and doubting towards the reliability of Scripture are the by-products of the inundation influencers, and social media has over young and mature believers alike. Scholars, pastors, and leaders in ministry must bring awareness and highlight the increasing apostasy that actively attacks Christians from every walk of life. Psychologists, marketing professionals, and medical fields have focused on the effects of social media within the workforce. Christian scholars must recognize this growing problem, address this attack, and bring awareness to evangelicals around the globe. If this problem continues unchecked, the increasing number of apostates will continue to rise, leaving a small minority willing to stand on the authority of Scripture and Christian doctrine.

Bibliography

Berger, Jonah. *Invisible Influence: The Hidden Forces That Shape Behavior*. New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2017.

Cabrera, Frank. "Is Epistemic Anxiety an Intellectual Virtue?" *Synthese* 199, no. 5-6 (August 30, 2021): 13471–95. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-021-03383-2.

Cooper, Paige. "The 2021 Instagram Algorithm Breakdown: How to Get Your Content Seen." Social Media Marketing & Management Dashboard, November 2, 2021. https://blog.hootsuite.com/instagram-algorithm/.

Drążkowski, Dariusz, Sebastian Pietrzak, and Laura Mądry. "Temporary Change in Personality States Among Social Media Users: Effects of Instagram Use on Big Five Personality States and Consumers' Need for Uniqueness." *Current Issues in Personality Psychology* 10, no. 1 (2022): 32–38. https://doi.org/10.5114/cipp.2021.110938.

Earls , Aaron. "Most Teenagers Drop Out of Church When They Become Young Adults." Lifeway Research, August 11, 2021. https://research.lifeway.com/2019/01/15/most-teenagers-drop-out-of-church-as-young-adults/.

Fleeson, William, and Eranda Jayawickreme. "Whole Trait Theory." *Journal of Research in Personality* 56 (2015): 82–92. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2014.10.009.

Hammett, Edward H. *Reaching People under 30 While Keeping People over 60: Creating Community Ccross Generations: Creating Community Across Generations*. St. Louis, MO: Chalice Press, 2015.

Huang, Chiungjung. "Social Network Site Use and Big Five Personality Traits: A Meta-Analysis." *Computers in Human Behavior* 97 (2019): 280–90. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2019.03.009.

Hudders, Liselot, Steffi De Jans, and Marijke De Veirman. "The Commercialization of Social Media Stars: A Literature Review and Conceptual Framework on the Strategic Use of Social Media Influencers." *International Journal of Advertising* 40, no. 3 (October 28, 2020): 327–75. https://doi.org/10.1080/02650487.2020.1836925.

Idler, Ellen L. "Religion and Aging in the Global Context of Secularization: Patterns, Processes, Consequences." *Handbook of Aging and the Social Sciences*, November 2021, 255–68. https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-0-12-815970-5.00016-4.

Johnson, Joseph. "Topic: Internet Usage Worldwide." Statista. Accessed March 16, 2022. https://www.statista.com/topics/1145/internet-usage-worldwide/.

Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Translated by J M.D. Meiklejohn. Newburyport, NY: Dover Publications, 2018.

Lacewing, Michael. "Emotional Self-Awareness and Ethical
    Deliberation." *Ratio* 18, no. 1 (2005): 65–81. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-
    9329.2005.00271.x.

Meghana, J, J. Hanumanthappa, and S.P. Shiva Prakash. "Performance
    Comparison of Machine Learning Algorithms for Data Aggregation in
    Social Internet of Things." *Global Transitions Proceedings* 2, no. 2
    (November 2021): 212–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.gltp.2021.08.032.

Moreland , J P. "How Christian Philosophers Can Serve Systematic Theologians
    and Biblical Scholars ." *JETS* 63, no. 2 (June 2020): 297–306.
    https://doi.org/https://www.proquest.com/openview/50868c8404111367c27
    ec64ef0c26abb/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=47286.

Snow, Nancy E. *Virtue as Social Intelligence: An Empirically Grounded Theory*.
    New York, NY: Routledge, 2010.

Snyder, C. R., and Howard L. Fromkin. "Abnormality as a Positive
    Characteristic: The Development and Validation of a Scale Measuring Need
    for Uniqueness." *Journal of Abnormal Psychology* 86, no. 5 (1977): 518–
    27. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-843x.86.5.518.

The State of Theology, March 2020. https://thestateoftheology.com/.

Wright , Brian J. *Communal Reading in the Time of Jesus: A Window Into Early
    Christian Reading Practices*. Minneapolis , MN: Fortress Press, 2017.