


Introduction to the Special Issue of “TikTok and Social Movements”

Jin Lee  and Crystal Abidin 

Social Media + Society
January-March 2023: 1–8
© The Author(s) 2023
Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/20563051231157452
journals.sagepub.com/home/sms


Abstract

This Special Issue of “TikTok and Social Movements” emerges from an attempt to map out the landscape of social movements happening on TikTok, drawing from the online symposium “TikTok and Social Movements” hosted in September 2021 by the TikTok Cultures Research Network, a research portal for interdisciplinary scholarship on TikTok cultures. The recent growing popularity of TikTok has transformed the cultures and practices of social movements worldwide. Through the platform’s participatory affordances, many users find meaningful ways to engage with the platform and its cultures, by leading and participating in a variety of activist initiatives for global awareness, social change, and civic politics. Within this context, this introduction to the Special Issue titled “TikTok and Social Movements” begins by thinking about how social media pop cultures have served as a vehicle for mobilizing and engaging in social movements for social (in)justice and politics in the era of social media. By situating TikTok, a nascent platform and culture of short video, within the ongoing discussion of digitally mobilized movements and social justice, this introduction addresses several crucial points to consider when discussing TikTok cultures and social movements that are happening or interrupted on the platform. These points are interrogated with more details and cultural contexts in the five case studies and three expert commentaries in this Special Issue. Specifically, the collection of papers interrogate how TikTok’s interactive and creative affordances have augmented and altered our cultures, practices, politics, and power dynamics of engaging with publics for various beliefs and social agendas.

Keywords

TikTok, short video, social movements, social justice, social media

Introduction

The recent growing *popularity* of TikTok has transformed the cultures and practices of social movements worldwide. Despite several concerns regarding the app—mostly regarding its weak security (Chae, 2020; Dziedzic, 2020), moral panics incited by malicious content on TikTok (Purwaningsih, 2018), and a few countries’ (temporary) bans on the platform as a result (e.g., India in 2020 and the United States in 2022 for state devices; Zaveri, 2023)—TikTok has rapidly grown as the “hottest app of 2021” (Jackson, 2021) and remains as the “most-downloaded app of 2022” globally (Koetsier, 2023). Its interactive features (e.g., short video, voiceover, meme template, background music, duet, greenscreen) and popular genres (e.g., dance, comedy, challenges; see Vizcaíno-Verdú & Abidin, 2022, for “TikTok challenges”) have enriched social media cultures with creativity and helped users to engage with each other, with social issues, and even with contentious issues like misinformation and online toxicity with relative ease and casual fun.

Many TikTok users have established cultures of “vernacular creativity” (Burgess, 2006) wherein “ordinary” cultural participation and practices “emerge from highly particular and non-elite social contexts and communicative conventions” with digital technologies of storytelling (p. 206). Through the platform’s participatory affordances, many users have found meaningful ways to engage with the platform and its cultures, by leading and participating in a variety of activist initiatives for global awareness, social change, and civic politics. This includes Young TikTok users’ climate activism (Hautea et al., 2021); growing anti-racist movements, such as the continuation of “Black Lives Matter” on TikTok (Janfaza, 2020) and migrant workers’ call-outs of

Internet Studies, Curtin University, Australia

Corresponding Author:

Jin Lee, Internet Studies, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth, WA 6845, Australia.
Email: ljin8788@gmail.com



xenophobia in a host country (Kaur-Gill, 2022); and emerging hashtag streams like #StopAsianHate in response to increasing violence against Asians during the pandemic (Hanson, 2021); and #OkBoomer which details intergenerational tensions and connections within society at large (Zeng & Abidin, 2021). TikTok's creative affordances powered by artificial intelligence (AI) technologies also facilitate the formulation and development of identity politics and cultures on the platform. Recent examples include Indian children's creation of their vernacular digital cultures on TikTok against parenteral surveillance (Sarwatay et al., 2022); LGBTQI+ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer/questioning, and intersex) users' use of various filters to advocate for diversity (Simpson & Semaan, 2021); young users' meme cultures as consciousness building work (Anderson & Keehn, 2020; Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019; Zeng & Abidin, 2021); and older generations' collaborations with younger generations (Hood, 2020). Its unique audiovisual memetic cultures also provide a window for people in various fields to build their professional identity (Hartung et al., 2023) and to communicate their knowledge with others in more playful manners (Southerton, 2021; Zeng et al., 2020). However, social movements on TikTok are not always shaped for social justice actions, but may often also advocate for specific beliefs that mirror global politics, such as anti-vaccine movements, the distribution of misinformation (Basch et al., 2021; Southerton & Clark, 2022), and far-right movements (Weimann & Masri, 2020).

The Special Issue emerges from an attempt to map out the landscape of social movements happening on TikTok, drawing from the online symposium "TikTok and Social Movements" hosted in September 2021 by the TikTok Cultures Research Network (n.d.). By showcasing five case studies on TikTok and social movements across different cultures, politics, and languages, alongside three expert commentaries on TikTok methodologies and cultures, this Special Issue explores how TikTok as a nascent platform and culture has been a locus of contestation for social (in)justice and politics. Specifically, the collection of papers interrogate how TikTok's interactive and creative affordances have augmented and altered ways of mobilizing and engaging with publics for various beliefs through the vehicle of social media pop cultures.

Social Movements Through/in Social Media Pop Cultures

Various terminologies have been interchangeably used to describe collective and networked actions for beliefs or social change, including "activism" (Svirsky, 2010), "(civic) advocacy" (Reid, 2000), "grassroots" (Payne et al., 2011), and "political participation" (Conge, 1988). Among these terms, a "social movement" is an overarching concept that generally encapsulates two broad practices: First, the pragmatics and logistics of physical events in the public spaces

like protests; and second, the collective actions and outcomes of mobilizing the public in digital spaces, like social media posting, and the immaterial labors of support, like watching and consuming advocacy messages on social networks (Diani, 1992, 2000; Tufekci, 2014; Van Laer & Van Aelst, 2010). In other words, social movements are "online and offline networks of (in)formal relationships between individuals, groups, and/or organizations, who share mutual interest or collective identities and mobilize various types of resources (e.g. affect, attention, action, material capital) on the issues that they are advocating" (Abidin & Lee, 2022, p. 16).

With easy access to the internet and the popularization of social media, we have observed how ordinary internet users take up the online space to develop social movements as collective activism and protest, and as everyday politics and advocacy. This is well captured in the rise of numerous social movements across the globe since the early-2000s. Within the Asia Pacific region, where the efforts of the TikTok Cultures Research Network are concentrated, a few examples include the South Korean candlelight vigils for social justice that was initiated in the blogosphere in the 2000s (Kim & Kim, 2009), the Arab Spring movements on Twitter for democracy in the early-2010s (Bruns et al., 2014), the #MilkTeaAlliance hashtag activism promoting pro-democracy across Southeast Asia (K. Lee, 2021), and Chinese people's online protest against Xi's strict zero-Covid policy and surveillance on WeChat and Weibo (Gang, 2022).

Everyday politics at the micro level have also become common, as evidenced in the burgeoning "identity politics" trends in social media. It is popularly sighted that social media users showcase the uniqueness and individuality of their intersectional identities in their casual social media posts of their lives, experiences, and thoughts (e.g., Bhandari & Bimo, 2020; Dyer, 2017; Warfield et al., 2016). If identity is social performance (Goffman, 1959), ways to perform identity in social media pop cultures are contingent upon the norms, cultures, and designs of media platforms and communities (Dyer & Abidin, 2022). Thus, a myriad of movements and politics in social media are the processes and outcomes of negotiations between individual users; industries; media elements such as platform technologies; and environments such as algorithms, cultures, and economies.

These social movements quickly build up via the networked structure and culture of social media (Cammaerts, 2015; Diani, 2000; Papacharissi, 2015; see also boyd, 2010), fueled by various social actors. For example, influencers serve as "opinion leaders" of leading the flow of information (Martin & Sharma, 2022). Their roles as "nodes" at which individuals gather and build bonds on social media, and as "mediators" of values circulating through media contents (J. Lee & Abidin, 2022, p. 547), help social movement messages spread and (potential) participants get connected for collective action. Media users also spread the flows by consuming, sharing, and reproducing the original messages, often with

their edits and interpretations added. The connections between the users, including their (in)direct interactions, the intimacies, and other affective registers yielded, function as momentums of the movements by forming “affective publics” (Papacharissi, 2015). When feelings and affects are communicated, channeled, and shared through the interactive and networked affordances of social media, the “mediality” of social media platforms “invites affective gestures that provide the basis for how individuals connect and tune into the events in the making” (Papacharissi, 2015, p. 62). This helps the public “feel their way into what movement[s] mean” but in a connective way, which further ignites, powers, and disrupts social movements in various manners in social media (Papacharissi, 2015).

As such, digitally mobilized social movements often quickly scale up, spurring people’s attention and emotion instantly, mobilizing internal and external resources, and empowering participants and protestors of the movements (Mundt et al., 2018; Tufekci, 2014, 2017). Yet, these characteristics of social media pose some challenges and concerns as well. While engagements from the online grassroots can be effective at amplifying messages and soliciting prime attention, it can also lead to the emergence and popularization of “slacktivism,” wherein people take an illusionary sense of achievements and participation through simple clicks of the “like” and “share” buttons, not necessarily making concrete engagements with the messages and advocacies (Morozov, 2009). Also, hatred and violence are often sparked and circulate online through pop culture artifacts like memes, which can make social movements more contentious. When geographical conflicts like warfare or such discourses are brought into the social media space, media practices and contents can lead into a mass mobilization on social media, endorsing military propaganda, armed with xenophobia and nationalism (Kuntsman & Stein, 2015).

When social movements become easily accessible via the simple act of click, individuals operationalize the idea of social justice in various ways, reflecting their interests and beliefs. While social justice is commonly associated with fairness, equality, and democracy (Fraser, 1999; Sandel, 2011; Walzer, 2020), the ways people interpret the idea of social justice are quite varied, particularly in animating people’s attention in social media. At the same time, in the wake of cancel culture, the idea of social justice sometimes can become extreme (Lewis & Christin, 2022; Norris, 2023). For example, call-outs of people with alleged misdemeanors and mistakes can entail aggressive media practices like public-shaming, cyberbullying, and doxing (Bouvier & Machin, 2021; J. Lee & Abidin, 2021).

Taking into account such complex layers of social justice advocacy in social media pop cultures, we have elsewhere suggested our conceptualization of “social justice” as “the fairness and political/moral correctness of a society or a media environment in its divisions, redistributions, and awareness of rewards and burdens” (Abidin & Lee, 2022, p. 12). The

concepts of fairness and correctness are not indicative of the same idea, but rather, are differently operationalized in communities, dependent on community norms, values, and community discourse around how resources—both material and immaterial—*are or feel* “fairly” distributed. Ironically, for this reason, social media themselves serve as a site of competition for resources where social justice is newly configured, challenged, and advocated in relation to the media characteristics. Attention, visibility, and fame that function as new currencies in the social media environments are now understood as weapons to galvanize movements (Abidin, 2021; Milan, 2015; Tufekci, 2013). On TikTok, these multi-layered meanings and aspects of social movements appear in a more convoluted manner, arising from the unique platform culture of audiovisual meme virality (Kaye et al., 2022).

TikTok and Social Movements

TikTok’s unique tools for creativity, such as AI-powered filters, the voiceover function, and interactive features like duets, have reconfigured our ways to engage in, lead, and even disrupt social movements. While not necessarily placing the “social justice” messages upfront, users now convey their messages and beliefs of social (in)justice issues to videos of them singing, dancing, cooking, and performing skits (Abidin, 2021; Boffone, 2021; Kaur-Gill, 2022; Kaye et al., 2022). The participatory affordances of TikTok invite more users to perform and showcase their creativity in their participation in social movements, using TikTok’s various functions of content creation, sharing, and reproduction (e.g., Boffone, 2021; Hautea et al., 2021). This everyday use of TikTok becomes a powerful weapon for social advocacy and political messages, formidable enough to make a “real action” in the world through the platform’s networkedness. US President Trump’s campaign rally in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in November 2020 was significantly affected, with some events being canceled, after teenage TikTok users and K-pop stans fooled the Trump supporters by sharing the information about their prank of “no show” at the event (Lorenz et al., 2020). Through practices like hashtagging, commenting, sharing, and interactive creation of contents enabled by functions like duets, scattered voices become connected and forge what Bruns and Burgess (2011) call “ad hoc publics,” where a group of people are self-organized and develop topical discussions for certain goals on ad hoc basis.

Messages of social (in)justice on TikTok appear to circulate more popularly through TikTok memes—either as audio memes (Abidin & Kaye, 2021) or as aesthetic templates of videos as TikTok’s memes (Vizcaíno-Verdu & Abidin, 2022; Zulli & Zulli, 2020). The platform technologies of content creation and participation serve as what Brown et al. (2022) call “affective designs” modulating and amplifying affect among the public. As playful meme culture encourages mimicking through replicability and creativity (Shifman, 2013), TikTok’s meme templates lure users to remix and create memetic contents for

self-expression, but within the boundary of “circumscribed creativity” being guided by the platform features and politics (Kaye et al., 2021). This facilitates the gathering of ad hoc publics through the circulation of affects like humor (Sadler, 2022) or hate (Weimann & Masri, 2020) on the platform. Social movements emerging on TikTok mirror such unique characteristics, which introduces new ways of mobilizing and amplifying the movements with creative performance (Boffone, 2021).

When social movements become integral to our daily media use and practice as such, with a low participation threshold enabled by TikTok’s creative and participatory affordances, social movements are also adopted as a placeholder for virality, fame, and ultimately stardom on the platform. Joining the popular hashtags or video templates appears to be the easiest way to piggyback the viral trends (Abidin, 2021) or just to “game the system” on social media platforms for attention (Gillespie, 2014) and even negative publicity (Abidin, 2022), while not always necessarily engaging in meaningful ways with the original politic. Public shaming and calling out misdemeanors through duets and replies is also practiced as “a route to rise to internet celebrity” based on TikTok virality (Abidin, 2021, p. 84). This kind of “surface-level” activism is criticized for “jump[ing] on the ‘bandwagon’” (Brown et al., 2022, p. 12) as it decontextualizes the complicated layers around activism, depoliticizing the political messages, but feeds into the capitalist ideologies of what Hindman (2009) calls “online eyeball economy” (quoted in Sadler, 2022).

Against these convoluted aspects, how should we study TikTok and social movements? What insights and new knowledges can we draw from a myriad of social movements happening on TikTok, especially in the globally connected media landscape? How does TikTok (re)shape our ways of engaging with societies and doing social justice, particularly given the expansion of the short-video app ecology led by TikTok? Our Special Issue “TikTok and Social Movements” delves into these questions by interrogating five case studies and offering three approaches.

This Special Issue

“TikTok and Social Movements” is our third in the string of Special Issues on TikTok curated by the TikTok Cultures Research Network, which aims to map out the dynamically evolving cultures of and around the platform from different scholarly angles in relation to diverse regional and cultural contexts. In this collection, we focus on how TikTok users spread their advocacy and mobilize collective actions among the anonymous public on TikTok and how TikTok itself serves as a site of various movements.

We begin with Laura Cervi and Tom Divon’s article “Playful Activism: Memetic Performances of Palestinian Resistance in TikTok #Challenges,” which examines Palestinian TikTokers’ performed acts of resistance against Israel-Gaza violence, utilizing meme templates and challenges

on TikTok. By paying attention to how Palestinian TikTokers use TikTok’s creative affordances and formulate what they call “playful activism,” Cervi and Divon suggest that TikTok’s unique meme culture serves as a new locus where people are encouraged to “tackle ‘hard’ topics through the performance of playful communicative styles.” When affects on social issues are shared through audiovisual memes as such, activism becomes “more relatable, tangible, and accessible to broader audiences.”

When Cervi and Divon examine what elements mediate social movements on TikTok, Xinyu (Andy) Zhao and Crystal Abidin look at a style of social movements on TikTok. In their article, “The ‘Fox Eye’ Challenge Trend: Anti-Racism Work, Platform Affordances, and the Vernacular of Gesticular Activism on TikTok,” Zhao and Abidin study how Asian TikTok content creators utilize audiovisual narratives and components to call out racist undertones embedded in the trending the “Fox Eye” challenge, where celebrities and ordinary users showcase their aesthetically stylized makeup highlighting almond-shaped “fox eyes.” They introduce the theoretical concept, “gesticular activism,” that is “the dramatization of networked activism work that is contingent upon curating hyper-visible, at times even self-indulgent, performances to adapt to the algorithmic logics of platforms.” This notion of “gesticular activism” illustrates how (short) video platforms like TikTok help different actors creatively construct “various personalised audiovisual narratives” to enhance awareness of social issues and collectively challenge social injustice.

Jenny Jeehyun Lee and Jin Lee also examine anti-racist activism on TikTok, but with a focus on networked connections between TikTok users within the hashtag space. Their article “#StopAsianHate on TikTok: Asian/American Women’s Space-Making for Spearheading Counter-Narratives and Forming an Ad Hoc Asian Community” explains that Asian American female TikTokers’ participation of the popularly trending hashtag #StopAsianHate is a way to carve out the space for “ad hoc communities.” By creatively sharing their experiences and voices under the #StopAsianHate hashtag, Asian Americans creatively occupy the “community space” “with their presence and cultivation of solidarity on the platform” but on an “ad hoc basis.” Lee and Lee’s feminist geographic lens suggests social media hashtags as a space-making practice, which becomes more performative and connective, but also temporary at the same time, especially in the pandemic.

Aidan Moir’s article “The Use of TikTok for Political Campaigning in Canada: The Case of Jagmeet Singh” pays attention to the newly emerging culture of celebrity politicians on TikTok in relation to electoral politics. Through a case study of the Canadian politician Jagmeet Singh’s use of TikTok in his electoral campaigns, Moir shows that TikTok has become a new venue for “celebrity politicians” to develop their electoral campaigns and engage with their potential voters, especially responding to the emerging

importance of social media and political force of young generations. Moir explains that TikTok's creative affordance and issues of social justice are "strategically employed" by politicians for their "left-wing populism" branding. This illustrates how electoral politics are evolving, centering on the presentation and performance of authenticity, in the creative and participatory social media era.

Finally, we invite you to look at Douyin, the sister app of TikTok in China. The article "Short Video Activism *with* and *on* Douyin: An Innovative Repertoire of Contention for Chinese Consumers" authored by Zizheng Yu, Jiayi Hou, and Oscar Zhou maps out how consumer activism has evolved in the short-video platform environment. In their study on Chinese consumer protest against TikTok's sister app Douyin, Yu, Hou, and Zhou explain how Chinese consumers have taken up the new environment of short-video-based social media platforms, led by Douyin, as an "innovative repertoire of contention for Chinese consumers" for consumer rights. Their discussion on consumers' short-video tactics illustrates how consumer activism is popularly integrated within everyday use of short-video platforms, but is simultaneously moderated by the platform in relation to government policies and regulations around the newly emerging platform environment.

While many people conflate Douyin and TikTok, Kaye et al. (2021) argue that they are two separate apps, differently platformized "to survive in two opposing platform ecosystems in China and overseas" (p. 229). In developing and disrupting social movements, movements on Douyin are significantly influenced by the Chinese government's intervention in the app, user demographics, and platform ecosystems and features like e-commerce (e.g., Chen et al., 2021; Treré & Yu, 2021; Yu, 2021) unlike TikTok. However, there are some similarities between TikTok and Douyin, especially regarding how audiovisual elements are used in spreading and narrating messages of social justice and how memetic content creation forms a new way of shaping politics and developing and engaging in social movements, as illustrated in the five cases in our Special Issue. The continuities and discontinuities between social movements on TikTok and Douyin lead us to ponder how we can expand the current TikTok studies beyond just one particular platform and discuss short-video cultures at large. This discussion can begin by paying special attention to platform specificities and geo-location sensitivities between the two platforms, instead of mistakenly repeating the reductionist arguments of "TikTok and Douyin are the same" or "one is a different version of the other." The five articles of TikTok and Douyin cases in the Special Issue will be a starting point to initiate a conversation on this matter.

While their foci and topics are varied, the case studies in the Special Issue discuss TikTok's unique characteristics that enable the viral spread of audiovisual creative expression in the initiation, mobilization, development, and interruption of social movements. However, these characteristics also point to

another important aspect that should be taken into consideration: When social media users initiate and join social movements, how should researchers navigate the messiness, complexity, virality, and creativity of TikTok cultures? When the virality of contents and messages of social issues fades out, or when people decide to depart from the movements by deleting their contents, how should we approach such temporality and discuss its social values and limits, while also respecting participants' decisions to withdraw their participation?

For example, Lee and Lee intentionally omit the screenshots of their data to protect the original content creators' rights to be forgotten after the virality of the social movement. Yet, Zhao and Abidin's decision to include visual evidence of their data honors content creators' desires to increase their visibility and reputational value when participating in online social movements, and also preserves the complicated nuances of TikTok visual contents that are difficult to capture in text. Two other papers in this collection, each authored by Cervi and Divon, and by Yu et al., negotiate such ethical concerns and importance of visual elements in the social movements and include screenshots with identifiable data being omitted via image editing. These different decisions around whether to anonymize the data and how to present visual data are indicative of various approaches to handle TikTok data and interrogate social movements on the platform in relation to its creative and communicative affordances and the broader social media cultures.

The three commentaries in this collection may be useful here, providing valuable insight for scholars to consider in our study of TikTok and social movements. In their commentary "TikTok as a Key Platform for Youth Political Expression: Reflecting on the Opportunities and Stakes Involved," Ioana Literat and Neta Kligler-Vilenchik address the complicated aspects of TikTok and the platform cultures which can be a harbinger of "youth political lives and expression." For instance, they highlight TikTok's playful culture, where "serious" political and social issues are memetically visualized and consumed and, at the same time, where contents of misinformation and hate quickly and widely spread in the form of viral memes. This, again, points us to the importance of having a "balanced and constructive approach" in TikTok studies that "embrace[s] the messiness and complexity" of TikTok cultures and the platform itself.

Ariadna Matamoros-Fernández's "Taking Humor Seriously on TikTok" extends the discussion that Literat and Kligler-Vilenchik make, and posits that TikTok's humorous and playful culture is a double-edged sword. When social debates and political issues are all mixed up in the creation, consumption, and reproduction of memetic TikTok videos, violent and brutal undertones in the humorous memetic contents are trivialized and even normalized for "fun." Given that humor and playfulness are "central to TikTok cultures," it is crucial to "take humor seriously," discussing the harmful aspects, especially for online safety and well-being, but at the same time valuing political potential of resistance.

Stefanie Duguay's suggestion of queer methodologies in her commentary "TikTok's Queer Potential: Identity, Methods, Movements" can be a meaningful and practical way to investigate the complex aspects of TikTok cultures. While Duguay's focus is more on queer users' appropriation of creative functionalities and features that are newly introduced by TikTok, the queer methodologies that she suggests can be a practical method for the broader TikTok studies to interrogate such complexity and messiness by "embrac[ing] multiplicity, misalignments, and silences" in cultural phenomena.

The case studies and suggested approaches in this collection are not "absolute." Rather, the cultures and power dynamics of social movements on TikTok continue to evolve along with technological development and sociocultural changes. We offer our collection of studies and approaches as a springboard to diversify ways to engage with TikTok scholarship. We hope you enjoy the collection that aims to encapsulate some of the dynamic landscape of TikTok's social movement cultures.

Acknowledgements

This paper draws from Abidin's research on digital cultures in the Asia Pacific region between 2019 and 2022, during which several grants supported the fieldwork. In particular, Abidin would like to acknowledge the most recent funding from the Australian Research Council (DE190100789) for supporting research on Social Media Influencers as Conduits of Knowledge in Australia and Asia, as well as support from the TikTok Cultures Research Network. Lee also would like to acknowledge the research support package from MCASI and the Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests


The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This study was supported by Australian Research Council (DE190100789), Curtin University of Technology Research support, and by MCASI and Faculty of Humanities.

ORCID iD

Jin Lee  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5698-5561>

Crystal Abidin  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5346-6977>

References

- Abidin, C. (2021). Mapping Internet celebrity on TikTok: Exploring attention economies and visibility labours. *Cultural Science Journal*, 12(1), 77–103.
- Abidin, C. (2022). Grief hypejacking: Influencers, # Thoughts-AndPrayers, and the commodification of grief on Instagram. *The Information Society*, 38(3), 174–187.
- Abidin, C., & Kaye, D. B. V. (2021). Audio memes, earworms, and templatability: The "aural turn" of memes in TikTok. In C. Arkenbout, J. Wilson, & D. de Zeeuw (Eds.), *Critical meme reader: Global mutations of the viral image* (pp. 58–68). Institute of Network Cultures.
- Abidin, C., & Lee, J. (2022). *Social justice through social media pop cultures: Case studies and reading resources on influencers and TikTok*. TikTok Cultures Research Network (TCRN) & Social Media Pop Cultures Programme, Centre for Culture and Technology (CCAT), Curtin University. <https://tiktokcultures.com/socialjustice2022/>
- Anderson, M., & Keehn, G. (2020). "OK Boomer": Internet memes as consciousness building. *Radical Teacher*, 118. <https://doi.org/10.5195/rt.2020.746>
- Basch, C. H., Meleo-Erwin, Z., Fera, J., Jaime, C., & Basch, C. E. (2021). A global pandemic in the time of viral memes: COVID-19 vaccine misinformation and disinformation on TikTok. *Human Vaccines & Immunotherapeutics*, 17, 2373–2377.
- Bhandari, A., & Bimo, S. (2020, October). *TikTok and the algorithmized self: A new model of online interaction* [Paper presentation]. AoIR 2020: The 21th Annual Conference of the Association of Internet Researchers, Virtual Event: AoIR. <http://spir.aoir.org>
- Boffone, T. (2021). *Renegades: Digital dance cultures from Dubsplash to TikTok*. Oxford University Press.
- Bouvier, G., & Machin, D. (2021). What gets lost in Twitter "cancel culture" hashtags? Calling out racists reveals some limitations of social justice campaigns. *Discourse & Society*, 32(3), 307–327.
- boyd, d. (2010). Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In Z. Papacharissi (Ed.), *A networked self* (pp. 47–66). Routledge.
- Brown, Y., Pini, B., & Pavlidis, A. (2022). Affective design and memetic qualities: Generating affect and political engagement through bushfire TikToks. *Journal of Sociology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221110267>
- Bruns, A., & Burgess, J. (2011). The use of Twitter hashtags in the formation of ad hoc publics. In A. Bruns & P. De Wilde (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 6th European consortium for political research (ECPR) general conference 2011* (pp. 1–9). The European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR).
- Bruns, A., Highfield, T., & Burgess, J. (2014). The Arab Spring and its social media audiences: English and Arabic Twitter users and their networks. In M. McCaughey (Ed.), *Cyberactivism on the participatory web* (pp. 96–128). Routledge.
- Burgess, J. (2006). Hearing ordinary voices: Cultural studies, vernacular creativity and digital storytelling. *Continuum*, 20(2), 201–214. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10304310600641737>
- Cammaerts, B. (2015). Social media and activism. In P. H. Ang & R. Mansell (Eds.), *The international encyclopedia of digital communication and society* (pp. 1–8). John Wiley & Sons. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118767771.wbiedcs083>
- Chae, Y. (2020, July 15). TikTok fined in S. Korea over privacy issue. *Yonhap News*. <https://en.yna.co.kr/view/AEN20200715004600320>
- Chen, X., Valdovinos Kaye, D. B., & Zeng, J. (2021). # PositiveEnergy Douyin: Constructing "playful patriotism" in a Chinese short-video application. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 14(1), 97–117.
- Conge, P. J. (1988). The concept of political participation: Toward a definition. *Comparative Politics*, 20(2), 241–249.

- Diani, M. (1992). The concept of social movement. *The Sociological Review*, 40(1), 1–25. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954x.1992.tb02943.x>
- Diani, M. (2000). Social movement networks virtual and real. *Information, Communication & Society*, 3(3), 386–401. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691180051033333>
- Dyer, H. T. (2017, July). The presentation of selfie in everyday life: Considering the relationship between social media design and user in the online actions and interactions of young people. In *Proceedings of the 8th International Conference on Social Media & Society* (pp. 1–11). ACM, New York, NY, United States. <https://doi.org/10.1145/3097286.3097292>
- Dyer, H. T., & Abidin, C. (2022). Understanding identity and platform cultures. In W. Housley, A. Edwards, R. Beneito-Montagut, & R. Fitzgerald (Eds.), *The SAGE handbook of digital society* (pp. 170–187). SAGE.
- Dziedzic, S. (2020, August 2). Australian intelligence agencies investigate Chinese-owned TikTok over security concerns. *ABC News*. <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-08-02/tiktok-under-investigation-in-australia-over-privacy-concerns/12513466>
- Fraser, N. (1999). Social justice in the age of identity politics: Redistribution, recognition, and participation. In L. Ray & A. Sayer (Eds.), *Culture and economy after the cultural turn* (pp. 25–52). SAGE.
- Gang, C. (2022, December 4). China's protests are a warning to Xi Jinping from the youth. *Al Jazeera*. <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2022/12/4/chinas-protests-are-a-warning-to-xi-jinping-from-the-youth>
- Gillespie, T. (2014). The relevance of algorithms. In T. Gillespie, P. Boczkowski, & K. A. Foot (Eds.), *Media technologies: Essays on communication, materiality, and society* (pp. 167–194). MIT Press.
- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Anchor Books.
- Hanson, K. (2021, March 25). Asian American mom's heartfelt talk with her kids about anti-Asian violence goes viral. *Today*. <https://www.today.com/parents/tiktok-mom-goes-viral-discussing-anti-asian-violence-her-kids-t212758>
- Hartung, C., Ann Hendry, N., Albury, K., Johnston, S., & Welch, R. (2023). Teachers of TikTok: Glimpses and gestures in the performance of professional identity. *Media International Australia*, 186(1), 81–96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1329878X211068836>
- Hautea, S., Parks, P., Takahashi, B., & Zeng, J. (2021). Showing they care (or don't): Affective publics and ambivalent climate activism on TikTok. *Social Media + Society*, 7(2), 20563051211012344.
- Hindman, M. (2009). *The myth of digital democracy*. Princeton University Press.
- Hood, A. L. (2020, February 3). OK boomer—Middle-aged adults are gaining millions of followers on TikTok, proving the app isn't just for Gen Z. *Insider*. <https://www.insider.com/ok-boomer-adults-on-tiktok-app-vermin-supreme-gen-z-2020-2>
- Jackson, K. (2021, December 30). TikTok dominated 2021 as the year's hottest app. *CNET*. <https://www.cnet.com/tech/services-and-software/tiktok-2021-no-1-mobile-app-ranking-apptopia/>
- Janfaza, R. (2020, June 4). TikTok serves as hub for #blacklives-matter activism. *CNN*. <https://edition.cnn.com/2020/06/04/politics/tik-tok-black-lives-matter/index.html>
- Kaur-Gill, S. (2022). The cultural customization of TikTok: Subaltern migrant workers and their digital cultures. *Media International Australia*, 186(1), 29–47.
- Kaye, D. B. V., Chen, X., & Zeng, J. (2021). The co-evolution of two Chinese mobile short video apps: Parallel platformization of Douyin and TikTok. *Mobile Media & Communication*, 9(2), 229–253.
- Kaye, D. B. V., Zeng, J., & Wikstrom, P. (2022). *TikTok: Creativity and culture in short video*. Polity.
- Kim, Y. C., & Kim, J. W. (2009). South Korean democracy in the digital age: The candlelight protests and the Internet. *Korea Observer*, 40(1), 53–83. <https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/south-korean-democracy-digital-age-candlelight/docview/209355027/se-2>
- Koetsier, J. (2023, January 4). 10 most downloaded apps of 2022: Facebook down, Spotify up, TikTok stable, CapCut keeps growing. *Forbes*. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoetsier/2023/01/04/top-10-most-downloaded-apps-of-2022-facebook-down-spotify-up-tiktok-stable-capcut-keeps-growing/?sh=56c942721cc2>
- Kuntsman, A., & Stein, R. L. (2015). *Digital militarism*. Stanford University Press.
- Lee, J., & Abidin, C. (2021). Backdoor advertising scandals, Yingyeo culture, and cancel culture among YouTube Influencers in South Korea. *New Media & Society*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448211061829>
- Lee, J., & Abidin, C. (2022). Oegugin Influencers and pop nationalism through government campaigns: Regulating foreign-nationals in the South Korean YouTube ecology. *Policy & Internet*, 14(3), 541–557.
- Lee, K. (2021, April 1). *The #MilkTeaAlliance in Southeast Asia: Digital revolution and repression in Myanmar and Thailand*. Center for Strategic & International Studies. <https://www.csis.org/blogs/new-perspectives-asia/milkteaalliance-southeast-asia-digital-revolution-and-repression>
- Lewis, R., & Christin, A. (2022). Platform drama: “Cancel culture,” celebrity, and the struggle for accountability on YouTube. *New Media & Society*, 24(7), 1632–1656.
- Literat, I., & Kligler-Vilenchik, N. (2019). Youth collective political expression on social media: The role of affordances and memetic dimensions for voicing political views. *New Media & Society*, 21(9), 1988–2009.
- Lorenz, T., Browning, K., & Frenkel, S. (2020, June 21). TikTok teens and K-pop stans say they sank Trump rally. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/21/style/tiktok-trump-rally-tulsa.html>
- Martin, J. D., & Sharma, K. (2022). Getting news from social media influencers and from digital legacy news outlets and print legacy news outlets in seven countries: The “more-and-more” phenomenon and the new opinion leadership. *Newspaper Research Journal*, 43(3), 276–299.
- Milan, S. (2015). Mobilizing in times of social media. From a politics of identity to a politics of visibility. In L. Dencik & O. Leister (Eds.), *Critical perspectives on social media and protest* (pp. 53–71). Rowman & Littlefield.
- Morozov, E. (2009, May 19). The brave new world of slacktivism. *Foreign Policy*, 19(5). <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/05/19/the-brave-newworld-of-slacktivism/>
- Mundt, M., Ross, K., & Burnett, C. M. (2018). Scaling social movements through social media: The case of Black Lives

- Matter. *Social Media + Society*, 4(4), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305118807911>
- Norris, P. (2023). Cancel culture: Myth or reality? *Political Studies*, 71, 145–174. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00323217211037023>
- Papacharissi, Z. (2015). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Payne, G., Sevin, E., & Bruya, S. (2011). Grassroots 2.0: Public diplomacy in the digital age. *Comunicação Pública*, 6(10), 45–70.
- Purwaningsih, A. (2018, July 5). Indonesia blocks “pornographic” Tik Tok app. *DW*. <https://www.dw.com/en/indonesia-blocks-pornographic-tik-tok-app/a-44537230>
- Reid, E. J. (2000). Understanding the word “advocacy”: Context and use. *Structuring the Inquiry Into Advocacy*, 1, 1–7.
- Sadler, O. (2022). Defiant amplification or decontextualized commercialization? Protest music, TikTok, and social movements. *Social Media + Society*, 8(2), 20563051221094769. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20563051221094769>
- Sandel, M. J. (2011). Justice: What’s the right thing to do. *University Law Review*, 91(4), 1303–1310.
- Sarwatay, D., Lee, J., & Kaye, D. B. V. (2022). Exploring children’s TikTok cultures in India: Negotiating access, uses, and experiences under restrictive parental mediation. *Media International Australia*, 186(1), 48–65.
- Shifman, L. (2013). *Memes in digital culture*. MIT Press.
- Simpson, E., & Semaan, B. (2021). For you, or for “You”? Everyday LGBTQ+ encounters with TikTok. *Proceedings of the ACM on Human-Computer Interaction*, 4(CSCW3), 1–34.
- Southerton, C. (2021). Lip-syncing and saving lives: Healthcare workers on TikTok. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 3248–3268.
- Southerton, C., & Clark, M. (2022). OBGYNs of TikTok and the role of misinformation in diffractive knowledge production. *Journal of Sociology*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14407833221135209>
- Svirsky, M. (2010). Defining activism. *Deleuze Studies*, 4, 163–182. <https://doi.org/10.3366/E1750224110001182>
- TikTok Cultures Research Network. (n.d.). <https://tiktokcultures.com/>
- Treré, E., & Yu, Z. (2021). The evolution and power of online consumer activism: Illustrating the hybrid dynamics of “consumer video activism” in China through two case studies. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 65(5), 761–785.
- Tufekci, Z. (2013). “Not this one”: Social movements, the attention economy, and microcelebrity networked activism. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 57(7), 848–870. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0002764213479369>
- Tufekci, Z. (2014). The medium and the movement: Digital tools, social movement politics, and the end of the free rider problem. *Policy & Internet*, 6(2), 202–208. <https://doi.org/10.1002/1944-2866.POI362>
- Tufekci, Z. (2017). *Twitter and tear gas: The power and fragility of networked protest*. Yale University Press.
- Van Laer, J., & Van Aelst, P. (2010). Internet and social movement action repertoires: Opportunities and limitations. *Information, Communication & Society*, 13(8), 1146–1171. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13691181003628307>
- Vizcaino-Verdú, A., & Abidin, C. (2022). Music challenge memes on TikTok: Understanding in-group storytelling videos. *International Journal of Communication*, 16, 883–908.
- Walzer, M. (2020). A defense of pluralism and equality. In S. Seidman & J. C. Alexander (Eds.), *The new social theory reader* (2nd ed. pp. 112–122). Routledge.
- Warfield, K., Cambre, C., & Abidin, C. (2016). Introduction to the *Social Media + Society* special issue on selfies: Me-diated inter-faces. *Social Media + Society*, 2(2), 1–5.
- Weimann, G., & Masri, N. (2020). Research note: Spreading hate on TikTok. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1057610X.2020.1780027>
- Yu, Z. (2021). An empirical study of consumer video activism in China: Protesting against businesses with short videos. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, 14(3), 297–312.
- Zaveri, P. (2023, January 7). Why India banned TikTok—And what the US can learn from it, as pressure mounts for Biden to follow suit. *Business Insider*. <https://www.businessinsider.com/why-did-india-ban-tiktok-us-states-fcc-government-2023-1>
- Zeng, J., & Abidin, C. (2021). “#OkBoomer, time to meet the Zoomers”: Studying the memefication of intergenerational politics on TikTok. *Information, Communication & Society*, 24, 2459–2481.
- Zeng, J., Schäfer, M. S., & Allgaier, J. (2020). Reposting “till Albert Einstein is TikTok famous”: The memetic construction of science on TikTok. *International Journal of Communication*, 15, 3216–3247.
- Zulli, D., & Zulli, D. J. (2020). Extending the Internet meme: Conceptualizing technological mimesis and imitation publics on the TikTok platform. *New Media & Society*, 24(8), 1872–1890.

Author Biographies

Jin Lee studies meanings and practices of intimacies in social media pop cultures with a particular focus on the Asia Pacific region. She is Research Fellow of Internet Studies at Curtin University, Australia.

Crystal Abidin (PhD, University of Western Australia) is a Professor of Internet Studies at Curtin University. Her research interests include influencer cultures, social media pop cultures, and the digital Asia Pacific.