

## How has the Global Village Shaped the way that Online Activism is Carried Out?

Hello and welcome to another episode of the What in the World? podcast. I am your host Stephanie Liney and in today's episode, I am going to be discussing the communities that are created through Marshall McLuhan's theory of the global village and how social media has affected this as well as how it has changed and shaped the ways that activism is carried out.

In 1964 (Bellafricana, 2019), Marshall McLuhan introduced his theory of the global village. The global village is described as the world being seen as a community due to flows of information and technology. McLuhan introduced his theory of the global village after seeing how the world was becoming more connected as a result of advances in communication technology and that people no longer had to visit a place to have information about it. In McLuhan's book, *The Medium is the Message: An Inventory of Effects*, he stated that 'electric technology [...] is shaping and restructuring patterns of social interdependence and every aspect of our personal lives'. (McLuhan, 1966, p.8).

The process that has allowed the world to be seen and treated as a global village is globalisation which is the process by which countries are becoming more interdependent upon one another through the advances that have been made in technology. Globalisation has allowed people to connect and communicate with each other in different countries easily due to the internet and digital technologies. People are able to obtain information without having to go to a library to find it and instead can use their mobile phones or their computers to research it on the internet. Also,

people no longer have to wait to read the newspapers to know about events that are happening around the world as this information is shared and spread quickly through both social media platforms and on the internet.

The quote by Hamilton and Jenner 'the lines between foreign and domestic blur for new just as they blur for commerce, health, culture and the environment' (Hamilton & Jenner, 2004, p306) supports McLuhan's idea of the global village because news and information are able to be shared around the world in a short amount of time. This means that news about events that are happening in countries on the other side of the world is shared with international audiences through social networking sites and through news corporations within minutes of the event happening. An example of this is from the Black Lives Matter movements that happened during the summer of 2020. A video that was filmed on the 25th of May 2020 using a mobile phone camera in the city of Minneapolis in Minnesota in the United States of America by Darnella Frazier (Nevett, 2020) showed footage of white police officers murdering George Floyd. Within hours this video was seen by millions of people around the world through the news and through social media sites. This means that people were all consuming news on the same event shortly after the event occurred regardless of the international borders separating them. This was made possible due to there being a low time space convergence between locations as a result of globalisation. The time space convergence 'implies that two locations can be reached in a lesser amount of time, which is usually the outcome of innovations in transport and telecommunications' (The Geography of Transport Systems, 2021). These new and innovative technologies have made it so that information can be shared internationally almost instantaneously making the world feel like a small community.

After people started to see the video that showed the events of George Floyd's murder, they started to make posts showing their anger and sadness at what happened on their social media pages. By people sharing news, updates and content about what was happening, more people became aware of it and had the ability to find out more and further shared the information with their followers on social media, therefore, 'through [...] the internet, individuals and groups are now increasingly adept at accessing and interpreting information from a wide range of sources. (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011, p.25). As more people became aware of George Floyd's murder, many people came together as a community to show their support against the injustice that they had seen. Social media helps to raise a greater awareness towards issues that do not get as much coverage on traditional forms of media, such as television and newspapers. The official Black Lives Matter's Instagram page was posting content with information about previous injustices that had been happening to black people that had not been covered or talked about on news channels and had not got a lot of attention. As more people started to see this information, they shared it to their own social media accounts, where it would reach a wider audience. Many people would respond to these posts with comments that displayed their anger at the situation and would discuss with other social media users about what they could do to help the situation. This allowed people to create a community between them where they could share information and discuss it, even if they were living in different countries. As well as using social media to create content that raised awareness about the events that were happening, the Black Lives Matter Instagram was also used to organise protests in different countries around the world for people to attend. It would not have been possible for the Black Lives Matter

Organisation to arrange these protests on the global scale that they were carried out on if it was not for the communities of people that had come together after being made aware of what happened through posts shared on social media. 'Building relationships through [...] media has become common and many people find it more effective than face-to-face communication for developing relationships (Dunaetz et al., 2015, p. 3), as it is easier for people to find others with similar interests of their own and there is a wider network of people to connect with.

As well as in-person protest marches taking place in countries around the world, on Tuesday 2nd June 2020 the Blackout Tuesday protest took place on social media. Originally organised by Jamila Thomas and Brianna Agyemang but later promoted through larger companies within the music industry, Blackout Tuesday was originally started to promote black artists and to give them the praise that they deserve in the music industry (Cascarelli, 2020). This was done by artists posting a black square onto their Instagram feed with the hashtag #BlackoutTuesday in the caption. However, many people also started to post a black square on their Instagram feed to show their solidarity and support for the Black Lives Matter movement. Hashtags can be used by activists as a way to create communities online as posts are all organised under the hashtag it is given. This allows people to post and communicate with other people around the world about the same topic almost instantly. Hashtags can help to create a sense of community like the one that McLuhan described in his global village theory because people are able to meet and be connected through social media due to a shared interest without having the physical distance between them keeping them apart. As more people posted to the Blackout Tuesday hashtag it started to go trending on social media platforms, resulting in the hashtag becoming

visible to a wider audience. Hashtags help to raise awareness and create an activism community 'By linking together numerous individual voices without relying on organizations, hashtag activism enabled a more intersectional movement' (Clark, 2016, p.788-804). The Blackout Tuesday hashtag on Instagram now has over 20.8 million posts attached to it (Instagram, 2021). Blackout Tuesday was also a way for people to show their support for the Black Lives Matter movement without having to attend the marches that were organised around the world due to them staying at home because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The advances in technology and social media has allowed the world to become increasingly connected and be seen as a single community. As explained by O'Byrne and Hensby, 'Such is the power of media technologies that individuals across the world are now able to simultaneously experience events beyond the physical reach of the vast majority' (O'Byrne & Hensby, 2011, p.25), the physical distance between locations no longer matters as places are able to be connected through the internet. As more people around the world are being able to gain access to the internet and social networking sites, a greater number of people have accessibility to information about events happening in the world that they did not have before and through that are creating communities similar to the ones that McLuhan described in his theory of the global village. As a result of this, social media platforms have allowed more people to be able to get involved in protests that are taking place around the world. As more people become connected through social media, it will be an interesting trend to monitor to see if more activism happens through communities that are brought together through social media.

Stephanie Liney - 9424797

For more information on today's episode and to see the sources that were used in this podcast, look at the references that are listed in the transcript for this episode.

That is all we have time for in today's episode of What in the World?. Thank you for joining and listening today. I hope to have you back and joining us again for another episode next week. But for now, goodbye, thank you and stay safe.

## References

Bellafricana. (2019). *10 Reasons Why The World Is A Global Village*.

<https://bellafricana.com/world-global-village/>

Clark, R. (2016). "Hope in a hashtag": the discursive activism of #WhyIStayed.

*Feminist Media Studies*, 16(5), 788-804. 10.1080/14680777.2016.1138235

Coscarelli, J. (2020). *Blackout Tuesday: A Music Industry Protest Becomes a Social Media Moment*. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/02/arts/music/what-blackout-tuesday.html>

Dunaetz, D. R., Lisk, T. C., & Shin, M. (2015). Personality, Gender, and Age as Predictors of Media Richness Preference. *Advances in Multimedia*, 9, 3

Stephanie Liney - 9424797

Hamilton, J., & Jenner, E. (2004). Redefining Foreign Correspondence. *Journalism*, 5(3), 301-321. 10.1177/14648849040444938

Instagram. (2021). *Blackout Tuesday*.

<https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/blackouttuesday/>

McLuhan, M. (1967). *The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects*. Penguin Press

Nevett, J. (2020). *George Floyd: the personal cost of filming police brutality*. BBC.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-52942519>

O'Byrne, D., & Hensby, A. (2011). Globalization: The Global Village. *Theorizing Global Studies*, 1, 10-32.

The Geography of Transport Systems. (2021). Space-Time Convergence.

<https://transportgeography.org/contents/chapter1/what-is-transport-geography/space-time-convergence/>

Music: Royalty Free Music from Bensound. <https://www.bensound.com/royalty-free-music/track/energy>