



2025

YOUTH, POLITICS & DIGITAL PLATFORMS



PRESENTED BY

Kate Dangar, David Farrugia, Luci Pangrazio & Robbie Fordyce

Acknowledgement of Country

Deakin University acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of all the unceded lands, skies and waterways on which Deakin students, staff and communities come together.

As we learn and teach through virtually and physically constructed places across time, we pay our deep respect to the Ancestors and Elders of Wadawurrung Country, Eastern Maar Country and Wurundjeri Country, where our physical campuses are located.

We also acknowledge the many First Nations from where students join us online and make vital contributions to our learning communities.

Acknowledgements

The team undertaking this research was comprised of Kate Dangar (The University of Manchester), Dr David Farrugia (Deakin University), Associate Professor Luci Pangrazio (Deakin University), and Dr Robbie Fordyce (Monash University).

The opinions in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of Deakin University. The authors are responsible for any omissions or errors.

Suggested citation

Dangar, K., Farrugia, D., Pangrazio, L., & Fordyce, R. (2025). Politics, Youth & Digital Platforms. Deakin University: Melbourne.

ISBN

978-0-7300-0265-9

Copyright Statement

© 2024 Kate Dangar, David Farrugia, Luci Pangrazio, Robbie Fordyce. This work is made available for research and non-commercial purposes only. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored, or transmitted in any form without prior written permission from the authors.

Publishing Statement

Published by Deakin University, Geelong, Australia.

About the authors

Kate Dangar (The University of Manchester)

Kate Dangar is a PhD student in Sociology at the University of Manchester. Her thesis investigates how egalitarian young adults reconcile gender inequality during heterosexual relationship formation. She is broadly interested in how gender shapes everyday life, especially within relationships, and sustains broader patterns of inequality. Prior to her doctoral studies, Kate was a Research Coordinator at the University of Melbourne, where she published peer-reviewed articles and reports on the intersection of gender, work, and caregiving.

Dr David Farrugia (Deakin University)

David Farrugia is an ARC Future Fellow and a specialist in the areas of youth, citizenship, labour and employment, and rural and regional youth. His research is interdisciplinary spanning the areas of sociology, education, politics and labour studies, exploring the role of youth identity in economic processes, and the position of young workers in contemporary public life.

Associate Professor Luci Pangrazio (Deakin University)

Luci Pangrazio is a Research Fellow in digital literacies at the Centre for Research in Educational Impact. Her work examines datafication, data literacies, and the gig economy, with broader interests in young people's digital worlds, platform studies, and digital labour. She is currently leading a DECRA project, *Toward Data Justice in Australian Schools* (2023–2026), and is a Chief Investigator with the Australian Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child.

Dr Robbie Fordyce (Monash University)

Robbie Fordyce is a Senior Lecturer in Media and Communication at Monash University, where he leads the Information Nations Research Group and co-convenes the Digital Cultures Research Group. Robbie is an Associate Investigator with the Australian Centre of Excellence for the Digital Child and an Affiliate of the Centre of Excellence for Automated Decision-Making and Society. His DECRA fellowship project (2025–2028) examines the impacts of AI on creative and intellectual work.

Table of Contents

- Acknowledgement of Country*..... 2
- Acknowledgements* 2
- Suggested citation* 2
- ISBN*..... 2
- Copyright Statement*..... 2
- Publishing Statement* 2
- About the authors* 3
- Scope and Limitations* 5
- Introduction*..... 6
- Section 1: Youth & Political Engagement.....7**
 - Historical & contemporary roles of youth in politics 8
 - Contemporary youth (Gen Z)..... 11
 - Enablers & constraints of youth political engagement 13
- Section 2: Digital Platforms & Politics 16**
 - The evolution of digital platforms 17
 - Politics and digital technologies..... 19
 - Digital publics & hybrid political spaces..... 20
 - Youth & digital platforms 22
- Section 3: Youth Digital Political Consumption 24**
 - Youth digital & social media usage 25
 - Consumption practices 25
 - Digital literacies 28
 - Government & platform regulation & censorship 31
 - Political extremism & moral panic..... 34
 - New political actors & influencers 37
- Section 4: Youth Digital Political Expression 39**
 - Economies of visibility 40
 - Political expression & identity online 40
 - Participatory digital cultures 42
 - Digital activism..... 44
 - Fear of expression 46
- Section 5: Recommendations 49**
 - References* 51

Scope and Limitations

This literature review primarily focuses on youth political engagement within Western liberal democratic contexts, specifically Australia, the United States, and the United Kingdom. These countries share broadly comparable political systems, media landscapes, and civic institutions, providing a coherent (though limited) basis for comparative analysis. However, this geographic and political focus does not capture the full diversity of global youth experiences, particularly those shaped by different regimes, colonial legacies, and non-Western cultural contexts.

The terms *youth* and *young people* are used throughout the literature, often interchangeably. Yet, these categories are far from homogenous. Political engagement is shaped by intersecting factors including race, gender, class, sexuality, ability, and young people's identities, as well as their relationships to political systems. These also vary significantly within and across national contexts. This review acknowledges that much of the existing scholarship tends to generalise youth experiences and often underrepresents the voices of marginalised communities. While efforts have been made to include diverse perspectives, the scope of this review and the limitations of the current literature mean that some complexities remain underexplored.

These limitations are noted throughout, and this review should be understood as an overview of dominant themes in the field rather than a comprehensive or universally representative account. Language, too, is constantly evolving. One term or category may not adequately reflect the diversity within LGBTQIA+ communities, marginalised or disadvantaged groups, or youth more broadly. The aim is to be as inclusive as possible within the constraints of conciseness and clarity.

Finally, the review acknowledges conceptual and terminological limitations in the literature around digital technologies. Terms such as *social media*, *digital media*, and *digital platforms* are often used interchangeably (both in this review and in the literature) despite their distinct meanings. This lack of definitional clarity reflects a broader gap in the field and signals the need for further inquiry into the specific technological spaces where youth political transformation and engagement occur.

Introduction

The relationship between youth, digital platforms, culture, and politics is an increasingly vital area of academic inquiry in an era of rapid technological transformation. Digital technologies, particularly social media and platform-based communication infrastructures, have become integral to how politics is mediated, expressed, and consumed. These platforms are not only sites for entertainment and social interaction but also spaces for the circulation of political information, ideological expression, identity formation, and even governance. Youth, as digital natives, are at the forefront of this shift. Born into a world saturated with digital media, their political knowledge, engagement, and identities are now deeply intertwined with online cultures and practices.

Young people today engage with politics in ways that challenge traditional paradigms. From digital activism and online campaigning to vlogging, digital storytelling, and micro-actions such as liking, sharing, or commenting, youth are participating in what scholars call a new “everyday politics.” These practices take place in networked and affective publics. These are digital spaces shaped by emotion, peer interaction, algorithmic visibility, and platform infrastructures. Importantly, youth political engagement online is not always deliberate or overt. It can also be passive, incidental, or culturally mediated through humour, memes, fandoms, and influencers. This complexity demands a rethinking of what counts as political action and who gets to be seen as politically engaged.

However, these new modes of political participation raise a number of concerns. Digital platforms can also be spaces which host concerning content including political extremism, online radicalisation, trolling, misinformation, and fake news. These phenomena can distort political discourse and contribute to mental health challenges, harassment, and polarisation, particularly for young users who are still forming their political identities and critical capacities. The design of platforms themselves which are engineered to capture attention and encourage virality, can exacerbate these issues, shaping the ways young people encounter, interpret, and respond to political content.

Underlying these dynamics are broader processes of digital socialisation – how youth learn norms, values, and practices of political life through mediated interactions. This includes their exposure to echo chambers, algorithmic curation, influencers, peer networks, and trends that affect how they see the world and their place within it. As such, digital literacy has become a crucial competency, not just in navigating misinformation but in making sense of increasingly complex and emotionally charged digital political environments.

Studying youth political engagement in the digital era therefore requires a multidisciplinary approach that brings together insights from media studies, political science, sociology, cultural studies, marketing and communications, and digital humanities. It demands attention to both the emancipatory and precarious dimensions of digital engagement, to questions of visibility, power, and participation, and to how cultural, economic, and technological forces shape what it means to be a politically engaged young person today. In this context, understanding youth not simply as users but as political actors, shaped by and shaping digital cultures, is essential for grasping the evolving nature of politics in the 21st century.

SECTION ONE

YOUTH & POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

Historical & contemporary roles of youth in politics

Throughout history, young people have played a critical role in both formal and informal politics (Pickard, 2019). However, their relationship to political institutions and participation in political spaces has been complex and often discussed in contradictory terms across academic literature (Farthing, 2010). Recognising the historical roles of young people as political actors reveals the complexities and contradictions of their engagement, as they have fluctuated between moments of influence and visibility to periods of marginalisation, tokenisation, and appropriation by institutional or state agendas (Yague & Berents, 2025). This complexity is further underscored by evolving definitions of youth, political participation, and citizenship, which reflect broader societal and political transformations and contestations over time (Collin & McCormack, 2019). Despite growing interest in youth engagement, there remains a lack of comprehensive understanding regarding the modes, motivations, and meanings of youth political participation, highlighting the need for youth-specific frameworks to capture the full spectrum of their political lives (Weiss, 2020).

The shifting political agency of youth (19th–21st Century)

Whether directly or indirectly, young people have always influenced political landscapes. Since the 19th century, understandings of youth as political citizens have changed significantly, influenced by evolving political priorities, economic conditions, and social norms. Beginning in the mid-19th century, young people in Western democracies became increasingly subject to governance through legislation around compulsory education, juvenile justice, and minimum working ages. These developments both recognised and regulated the status of youth as emerging citizens (Collin & McCormack, 2019). However, as a result, youths were often seen in society as “citizens-in-waiting” (Mulcahy & Healy, 2023) who were valued more for their future contributions than their current political agency (Cahill & Dadvand, 2018). By the early 20th century, the education of children became central to democratic state visions. Modernist thought placed youth at the heart of political debate as symbols of the future, fundamentally reshaping how citizenship and political participation were imagined (Pelevin et al., 2018). These shifts were amplified by new social and economic structures, which fundamentally altered public understandings of childhood and adolescence. However, with the rise of postmodernism and globalisation, the nation state’s capacity to dictate political life weakened as digital technologies began reshaping the conditions of political engagement (Pelevin et al., 2018).

In recent decades, governments have increasingly implemented policies aimed at fostering youth participation in civic and political life to support their individual development and enhance their role as future citizens (Brady, Chaskin, & McGregor, 2020). This includes efforts such as the Australian Governments Australia Youth Policy Framework (2021), which aimed to “support young people to have a greater say on the policies and programs that impact and are important to them” (Parliament of Australia, 2021). International efforts have also been launched in recent years, such as the United Nations (2018) ‘Youth2030 Strategy’, aimed at guiding the UN’s work with and for young people in the areas of peace and security, sustainable development, human rights and humanitarian action. At the same time, young people have come of age amid profound global transformations, including the intensification of the climate crisis, labour market transformations, rising cost of living crisis, viral pandemics (e.g., COVID-19) and the rapid spread of digital technologies. These factors have significantly shaped not only their everyday lives, but also their political expectations (Eranti & Luhtakallio, 2024; Pruitt, 2017). Consequently, young people’s heightened awareness of global injustices is accompanied by a growing sense of disillusionment, as many feel that the promises of stable futures and responsive governance have not been fulfilled (Eranti & Luhtakallio, 2024). These dynamics highlight the increasingly complex landscape that young people must navigate as political actors,

shaped by structural limitations, global interconnectivity, and a present defined equally by possibility and uncertainty (Pruitt, 2017; Collin & McCormack, 2019).

Definitions of youth

At present, there is no universally agreed-upon definition of what constitutes “youth” or who qualifies as a “young person”. The United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines youth as individuals aged 15 to 24 years (United Nations, n.d.). The terms “adolescents”, “teenagers”, “young adults”, and “young people”, are often used interchangeably to refer to youths (Pickard, 2019). In practice, however, the definition of youth is highly contextual as it is shaped by cultural norms, legal frameworks, and social expectations. In Australia, for instance, understandings and the use of the term youth is inconsistent across legal, economic, and social systems. A young person in Australia is allowed to leave formal schooling at 15, can be held criminally responsible from 10, work and pay taxes between 13-15 (depending on the state or territory), vote in state and federal elections from 18, and qualify for youth support payments at 22 (Collin & McCormack, 2019). These contradictions highlight that definitions and understandings of youth as a life stage are context-dependent, shaped by intersecting social, cultural, political, institutional, locational, governmental, and economic contexts (Wyn, 2015). As Collin and McCormack (2019) argue, youth is a fluid rather than fixed category, informed by how societies conceptualise citizenship, participation, and political agency.

Low levels of political representation

Despite the lack of a universal definition of youth, it is estimated that there are currently 1.2 billion young people aged 15 to 24 worldwide, comprising approximately 16% of the global population (United Nations, n.d.). Yet the presence of young people in formal political institutions remains disproportionately low. On average, only 2.8% of parliamentarians globally are aged 30 or under (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2025). This figure is even lower for young women, who make up just 1.1% of parliamentary representatives in this age group (Deželan et al., 2023). These figures highlight the broader political marginalisation of young people, who often face structural barriers to participate in formal politics, decision-making processes, and institutions.

Measures of political engagement

Youth political engagement is frequently assessed using traditional indicators of formal participation, such as voting rates, party affiliation, and involvement in institutional civil society organisations (Collin & McCormack, 2019; Deželan et al., 2023). These conventional frameworks define formal political behaviour, often described as institutional forms of participation, as the appropriate means of measuring youth political engagement (Ekman & Amnå, 2012). Using this measurement model, young people are consistently shown as having low trust in politicians and political institutions, weak ties to political parties, and declining rates of electoral participation. Together, these patterns contribute to a broader narrative that frames youth as politically apathetic and disengaged (Brooks & Hodgkinson, 2008; Martin, 2012; Hall & Pottinger, 2019; Saha, 2007). As young people’s political values have shifted, theorists such as Wilkinson and Mulgan (1995) identified the emergence of a “politically disconnected generation” increasingly disillusioned with traditional political structures and practices.

Consequently, youth political engagement is often discussed in public and academic discourse as a problem, with declining participation viewed as a civic failure rather than a response to deeper systemic issues (Hall & Pottinger, 2019; Saha, 2007). Fyfe and Wyn (2007) caution that focusing on generational change in political engagement, without considering broader structural and social transformations, creates a polarising and misleading image of youth. Hall and Pottinger (2019) similarly argue that evaluating youth

political participation through “narrow discussions” focused on formal indicators such as voting rates risks oversimplifying and misrepresenting young people’s political lives.

While it may appear that young people are disengaged from traditional forms of politics, this lack of participation does not necessarily indicate apathy (Manning, 2010). Instead, it often reflects a disillusionment with political institutions that are perceived as corrupt, self-serving, and disconnected from the everyday realities of youth (Haider & Sara, 2024). This perspective among youth populations has been shaped by factors such as economic precarity, intergenerational inequality, and a growing distrust in democratic institutions (Deželan et al., 2023; Lawless & Fox, 2015; Pruitt, 2017). Lawless and Fox (2015) contend that many young people now view politics as “pointless and unpleasant”. This sentiment is argued to be a rational response by youth towards political systems that have repeatedly excluded, disillusioned, and failed to serve their interests (Martin, 2012; Mycock & Tonge, 2014).

It has been suggested that youth political engagement and the role of young people in politics should be evaluated through their own perspectives and lived experiences (Pontes, Henn & Griffiths, 2018). Chrysochoou and Barrett (2017) argue that many young people may not identify as politically engaged because traditional political systems and practices often exclude their voices and concerns. Consequently, research indicates that despite a strong interest in social and political issues, young people frequently reject institutional forms of politics as they feel disconnected from these structures (Cammaerts et al., 2014). For example, young people aged 16-24 in the UK report that media coverage tends to disproportionately focus on youth crime and anti-social behaviour, neglecting the broader realities of their lives and their positive contributions to society (Henderson, 2014). Hall and Pottinger (2019) further argue that much of the existing research and discussion around youth political engagement is conducted from a top-down perspective rather than in collaboration with young people themselves. They suggest this approach overlooks how factors such as time, place, and personal context shape young people’s political actions.

New forms & measures of political participation

Conventional definitions of political participation are increasingly being questioned, prompting calls for new measures that more accurately capture the diverse ways young people engage in public life, such as cause-orientated actions (Collin & McCormack, 2019). Such actions include signing petitions, participating in demonstrations, supporting political consumerism (e.g., boycotts or “buycotts”), joining local or online issue-based groups, and engaging in social media activism (Deželan et al., 2023; Grasso & Giugni, 2022; Zhang 2022).

Instead of engaging in politics out of a sense of civic duty, many young people are driven by their passion for specific issues such as climate change, racial justice, and corruption, which they believe are neglected by current political systems (Collin & McCormack, 2019; Grasso & Giugni, 2022). This shift from institution-focused to issue-based participation reflects broader generational changes in how democracy is understood and practiced. Young people are more likely to engage in individualised, localised, and digital forms of collective action that transcend conventional political categories (Deželan et al., 2023). As the driving force behind major political movements such as the Arab Spring, the Hong Kong pro-democracy protests, and global online campaigns like #BlackLivesMatter and #MeToo (Hussain, 2024), global youth continue to challenge stereotypes that they are passive or disengaged from political life (Santoshkumar, 2024). Additionally, when faced with threats to their collective identity, young people have often used online platforms to amplify their voices within traditionally adult-dominated spaces. These platforms have made political discourse more accessible, participatory, and easily disseminated (Mei, 2021). Krawatzek (2022) similarly contends that youth political agency extends well beyond formal participation, encompassing

cultural resistance, protest movements, online activism, and student-led initiatives. Such actions challenge traditional definitions of political engagement and broadens our understanding of what it means to be political.

However, it is important to recognise that political engagement varies significantly amongst young people. Structural inequalities influence access to participatory networks and digital tools, meaning that not all youth have equal opportunities to engage in these newer forms of politics (Collin & McCormack, 2019; Krawatzek, 2022). Nevertheless, even under repressive conditions, youth populations have demonstrated remarkable capacity for independence and subversion. For instance, student movements have long been at the forefront of protest and dissent, often enduring despite attempts to suppress them (Krawatzek, 2022; Abrahams & Brooks 2018). Most recently, the 2024 quota reform protests in Bangladesh exemplified this enduring tradition of student activism when students from Dhaka University began a peaceful protest before being attacked by authorities (Ahmed & Ashraf, 2025). However, the protest ultimately resulted in the ousting of then-Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, as a direct result of the student-driven protest. Part of this was mobilised and facilitated through Facebook, “where protestors created pages and groups named Baishammo Virudhi Chhatra Andolan”(Anti-Discrimination Student Protest) to organise protest, rallies, share movement activities and circulate videos, photos and news related to the protest.” (Hushen, 2024).

Far from being politically disengaged, many young people are actively reshaping the way political participation is understood and defined. While they do not entirely reject politics, they are reimagining it by expanding the boundaries of where, how, and why political life takes place (Mira & Garcia, 2017; Raffini, 2024). Pruitt (2017) notes that young people often aspire to leadership and positive social change, even if they view formal political channels as less effective. This highlights the need to broaden concepts of political engagement to include the innovative, expressive, and often disruptive forms of participation that young people are already embracing.

Contemporary youth (Gen Z)

Characteristics, political attitudes & stereotypes

Today’s youth population is largely made up of Generation Z (Gen Z), typically defined as individuals born between 1997 and 2012, who range in age from approximately 13 to 28 years. Although this age range slightly exceeds the United Nations’ definition of youth, Gen Z makes up the majority of the current global youth population. Understanding this cohort is essential when examining youth political engagement, as generational groups respond differently to political issues and institutions based on the distinct social, political, and economic contexts in which they were raised (McDonald & Deckman, 2023).

Gen Z is often described as the most racially diverse and well-educated generation to date (Gonyea & Hudson, 2020) and is broadly characterised by progressive and left-leaning political attitudes (McDonald & Deckman, 2023). This generation has grown up in a time of significant social change, including progress in gender equality, LGBTQIA+ rights, climate activism, mental health awareness, and digital inclusion (Duffy et al., 2018). As a result, there is a growing focus amongst Gen Z on issues such as mental health, body positivity, gender fluidity, and racial justice (Battocchio et al., 2023). In turn, these social developments have informed their political preferences, with Gen Z more likely than previous generations to support candidates from marginalised backgrounds, including women and racial minorities (McDonald & Deckman, 2023). They also tend to embrace “lifestyle politics”, “identity politics”, and “rights-bearing citizenship” (Battocchio et al., 2023; Zhang, 2022). Notably, compared to previous generations, Gen Z women show higher levels of political engagement than their male peers (McDonald & Deckman, 2023).

Despite growing up in a time of expanding social awareness, Gen Z faces greater challenges in reaching traditional markers of adulthood (e.g., home ownership, career progression, and family formation) compared to previous generations (Weiss, 2020). These obstacles have been shaped by the instability of their formative years, including the climate crisis, rising political extremism, economic uncertainty, and deepening social inequalities (Hurrelmann & Albrecht, 2021). Harris (2016) similarly contends that “the contemporary conditions of economic rationalism, globalisation and individualisation” continue to influence youth political and citizenship practices. Major global events such as Brexit, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the election of Donald Trump in 2016 have further influenced their political outlook and engagement (National Centre for Social Research, 2024). In the UK, for example, Brexit sparked what was termed a “youth-quake”, referring to a surge in political interest, activism, and electoral participation among young people during the 2017 snap General Election (Pickard, 2019). As a result, Gen Z is frequently referred to using contradictory terms as “woke,” “illiberal,” or “snowflakes” (National Centre for Social Research, 2024). They are also associated with “political correctness”, a concept central to ongoing generational debates around socially acceptable speech, language, and behaviour (McBeth et al., 2023). Arguably what sets Gen Z apart the most from previous generations is their status as *digital natives*. This refers to individuals that have grown up entirely in the digital age and are technologically skilled or proficient. Pelevin et al. (2018) suggest that “the younger generation doesn’t just go online, but lives online”, which has significantly shaped their modes of political exposure and engagement.

Generational shifts

Over the next decade, Gen Z's political influence is expected to increase significantly. As the number of Baby Boomer (1946-1964) and Gen X (1965-1980) voters declines, Gen Z will comprise an increasingly significant portion of global electorates. For example, in the UK, it is projected that by 2030 to 2060, Gen Z will make up a quarter of all voters (National Centre for Social Research, 2024). This shift signals a potential generational tipping point in political power, as states transition from several decades of Baby Boomer dominance to a new era defined by younger, more liberal, and culturally progressive voters (Gonyea & Hudson, 2020). Although, as mentioned above, defining their participation simply through electoral participation does not fully reflect the civic nor political identities of youths. Rather, Gen Z's political identity is expressed through individuality, personalisation, and flexibility, which Battocchio et al. (2023) argue may take the form of acts that can be practiced on a daily lifestyle-basis (e.g., conscious consumer choices), or non-political community participation (e.g., volunteering).

While political behaviours are clearly observable among Gen Z, it is important to avoid overgeneralising the generation as a whole. This is especially relevant given that, although the entire cohort is navigating a rapidly shifting political landscape shaped by global instability and polarisation, many of the youngest members are not of legal voting age (those born 2008-2012) and thus fall outside conventional measures of political engagement. Importantly, internal divisions are emerging within Gen Z itself. For instance, younger men are increasingly distancing themselves from the liberal values commonly associated with their older peers, holding more traditional and conservative views (Muroi, 2025). This trend has been exhibited in Poland where men aged 18 to 21 supported the far-right Confederation party in 2022, compared to only about one in six women of the same age. Similarly, in Germany, young men under 30 are showing growing support for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) party, with stronger anti-immigration views than older generations (Chowdhury, 2024). This shift, reflected in the rise of anti-woke sentiment, is becoming more prominent across digital platforms and warrants closer examination as this group nears voting age and engages more actively in online political discourse (Chowdhury, 2025; Davis, 2025).

Enablers & constraints of youth political engagement

Political socialisation

Youth political engagement is often discussed in relation to the theory of *political socialisation*. This refers to the process through which individuals acquire political knowledge, develop political values, and learn civic behaviours (Jennings, 2001). Chrysochoou and Barrett (2017) suggest that political socialisation is shaped by individual values (micro), close social environments (meso), and large-scale societal structures (macro). This process is commonly understood through the lens of an individual's relationships and interactions with key social groups, including family, peers, schools, the media, and government institutions (Neundorf & Smets, 2015; Niemi & Sobieszek, 1977). Theorists have also argued that political socialisation can occur through exposure to popular culture, particularly through music (Barrett & Pachi 2019) and celebrity political endorsement (Um, 2017).

Political socialisation is traditionally concerned with how young people internalise political norms and learn the rules and acceptable behaviours of political participation (Sigel, 1965). In the 1950s and 1960s, scholars commonly viewed children and adolescents as "pre-adults" who were not yet full political actors, but individuals undergoing a critical developmental process in which they learned about authority, political institutions, and civic responsibility (Smith, Vromen, & Cook, 2012). This perspective assumed that political values would be passed down generations, primarily through families and schools, thereby ensuring political continuity and maintaining social order (Hyman, 1959; Merelman, 1986).

However, this assumption was challenged during periods of rapid social change. Historical events such as the introduction of conscription during the Vietnam War and the rise of youth-led countercultural and liberation movements in the 1960s (Bousalis, 2021) exposed the limitations of this early theorisation. During this time, political socialisation research shifted from focusing solely on the reproduction of political norms to explaining dissent and rebellion among youth. Researchers began to see young people as active agents capable of rejecting inherited values, often in response to perceived injustices or exclusions from the political process (Smith, Vromen, & Cook, 2012). The concept of *moral panic* (Cohen, 2011) emerged to describe how shifts in youth behaviour were often met with societal anxiety and portrayed as threats to political stability (Collin & McCormack, 2019).

More recent accounts of political socialisation stress the non-linear, context-specific, and evolving nature of youth political behaviour. Contemporary theorists argue that while early life experiences often form the foundation of political identity and development, these orientations are not necessarily fixed (Collin & McCormack, 2019). Some scholars propose *lifelong plasticity*, suggesting that political beliefs can evolve in response to new experiences and major life events (Neundorf & Smets, 2015). Others continue to emphasise the durability of early socialisation and its long-term influence on political engagement patterns. In turn, Blanc et al. (2013) argue that political learning now takes place within a far more fragmented, digital, and diverse social landscape than in the past, reshaping the agents and conditions under which political values are acquired. Snell (2010) similarly suggests that political socialisation can be assessed through either a behavioural or belief-based perspective. The behavioural perspective, links political engagement to social practices and relationships, such as family dynamics, peer connections, extracurriculars, and religious involvement. Whilst, the belief-based perspective, emphasises how personal values and worldviews, such as trust, hope, moral convictions, or feelings of cynicism, can shape a young person's interest in political participation. This gives greater agency to the individual by taking into account personal beliefs.

This theoretical background shows that political socialisation is not only a framework for understanding how political values are transmitted, but also how and why young people might come to reject, diverge, or dissent

from them (Smith, Vromen, & Cook, 2012). It highlights the importance of formative environments in shaping civic attitudes while recognising that youth agency, societal change, and context all mediate this process (Habashi & Habashi, 2017). Further research suggests that political socialisation can be understood as a *bidirectional process*, where political values and ideas are influenced both by parents *and* children. (Pedraza & Perry, 2020). This highlights the increasing influence young people are exerting in political discussions at both individual and community levels.

Intersectionality

Intersectionality is increasingly recognised as a critical framework for understanding not only youth political engagement but also disengagement. As the most diverse generation to date, Gen Z is navigating political participation through complex intersections of identity, including race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic status, and migration status (Gonyea & Hudson, 2020; Deželan et al., 2023). These intersecting identities not only influence how young people experience the political world but also shape their political priorities, values, and capacities for participation (Ballard, 2014; Santos, 2020). For instance, research shows that youth from historically marginalised backgrounds, including racial or ethnic minorities, low-income communities, and migrant populations, often face structural and contextual barriers to participation, including unequal access to civic education, discrimination, and underrepresentation (Ballard, 2014; Deželan et al., 2023). Ballard (2014) similarly highlights that a major barrier to youth political involvement is a lack of accessible and structured opportunities, particularly within schools and neighbourhoods. Without these entry points, young people can struggle to develop a sense of political orientation. Consequently, while some youths are disengaged due to a lack of interest or motivation, many face systemic barriers, such as limited time, resources, knowledge, or institutional support. This further hinders their ability to participate in political life even when they are interested. Through an intersectional lens, McCallister and Makkai (1992) suggest that resource theory can help explain differences in political participation across ethnic groups by linking them to disparities in access to socio-economic resources.

However, intersectional identities can also act as sources of political motivation and resistance. As Santos (2020) argues, marginalised youth are not passive recipients of oppression, but may engage in expressive forms of resistance as meaningful political acts, such as protest, advocacy, and grassroots organisation. Political participation can therefore serve as a form of liberation or empowerment, especially when youth engage with the very systems that have historically excluded them. Conner et al. (2023) introduce the concept of “intersectional politicisation” to describe how youth activists come to view issues such as climate change, gun violence, and racial injustice as fundamentally interconnected. Through activist groups and political communities, young people learn to apply intersectional frameworks to their experiences, which in turn encourages multi-issue engagement and fosters a critical political consciousness (Pinedo, Diemer & Frisby, 2024). This challenges traditional definitions of civic engagement that often fail to capture the diverse and issue-integrated ways young people act politically (Santos, 2020; Conner et al., 2023). Critically, Chrysochoou and Barrett (2017) recognise that youth political engagement is highly diverse and context-dependent, making it difficult to define through a single unified model. Engagement can be conventional or nonconventional, civic or political (with the former including community-level participation), and either self-organised or institutionally driven. What emerges from this research is that intersectionality is not just a demographic variable but a central framework for understanding the diverse and often unequal ways youth relate to political systems (García-Albacete et al., 2025). However, Harris & Johns (2020) poignantly recognise that as “cultural diversity, digital life, and mental health and wellbeing” are three interrelated megatrends predicted to significantly impact Australian youth in the coming years, current efforts to mediate online social cohesion and cyber-safety through an intersectional lens currently fails to address risk/protective factors for youth who identify as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD).

Recognising these complexities helps avoid deficit models of youth disengagement and instead positions young people, particularly those from marginalised communities, as political actors navigating both systemic constraints and opportunities for agency (Wright & McLeod, 2023).

SECTION TWO

DIGITAL PLATFORMS & POLITICS

The evolution of digital platforms

The digital age & technological revolution

We are currently living in what is widely referred to as the "Digital Age" or "Age of Information", a period defined by the rapid expansion and integration of digital technologies into nearly every aspect of life. This era is the product of the digital or technological revolution, which has unfolded in successive waves over several decades and continues to reshape society at an accelerating pace (Merritt, 2016). As digital technologies continue to advance, including mobile phones, the internet, and artificial intelligence, these devices and systems are redefining how people work, communicate, and access information (OECD, 2019). However, many theorists now argue that we have moved beyond the digital revolution. Blommaert (2020) asserts that we are living in a "post-digital era," where online and offline life are inseparable and increasingly intertwined. Floridi (2014) and others refer to this shift as 'the Fourth revolution' in reference to similar changes brought by the industrial revolution, with the commensurate changes to aspects of life beyond the direct site of transformation. Social, political, and cultural practices unfold across this combined digital and physical landscape, influencing how we interact, learn, build communities, and construct identities. Consequently, it is suggested that the digital revolution is no longer emerging but has already taken place and become a part of history. Nevertheless, these developments have significantly increased the volume and distribution of information globally, enhancing connectivity while simultaneously presenting new challenges and risks for society. According to Kranzberg's First Law of Technology, "technology is neither good nor bad; nor is it neutral", meaning that the impacts of technological change are deeply shaped by their social, cultural, and political contexts (Kranzberg, 1986). This perspective reminds us that while digital transformation offers enormous opportunities for improving society, it is also a complex landscape which requires careful governance to navigate its uneven effects.

Digital platforms

Digital platforms have become a dominant organisational aspect of the digital age, fundamentally reshaping how we work, socialise, produce, and interact across economic, social, and political domains (Asadullah et al., 2018; van der Aalst et al., 2019). In this context, José van Dijck et al. (2018) have advanced a theorisation of the platform society as a means of tracking these multifaceted interactions, seeing platforms as having major potential impacts on most aspects of human interaction. At their core, digital platforms are online systems that bring together different users, including individuals, businesses, and service providers, by enabling them to connect, interact, and exchange goods, services, information, and finances. Examples include ride-sharing services (e.g., Uber), marketplaces (e.g., Amazon, Steam), social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, Instagram), streaming services (e.g. Netflix, Spotify), as well as important but largely invisible digital infrastructures (e.g. Akami and Cloudflare) and industrial fabrication platforms (e.g. Foxconn, TSMC). These platforms have two main purposes, firstly they provide the tools and infrastructure that support interactions described above, and secondly, they act as networks or marketplaces where different groups can coordinate and create economic and social value. Asadullah et al. (2018) distinguish between these two views, with some researchers focusing on platforms as technological foundations upon which complementary innovations are built (Spagnoletti et al., 2015), and others defining them as multi-sided networks that facilitate exchanges between interdependent user groups (Koh & Fichman, 2014; Poell & Nieborg, 2022). This dual nature has made platforms uniquely positioned to leverage increased connectivity, enabling new forms of organisational coordination, interaction, and value creation (Gawer, 2022).

Technological advances, particularly the widespread adoption of mobile devices and the internet, have significantly extended platform reach and accelerated user engagement, modernising industries such as transportation, healthcare, finance, hospitality, and communication (Zutshi et al., 2019; Fu et al., 2021). The rise of social media is a clear example, with platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp experiencing exponential growth over the past decade, reflecting the expanding influence and prevalence of platform ecosystems (Teslenko et al., 2020). While these platforms may appear to exist solely "in the cloud", their impacts

extend far beyond the digital realm, increasingly shaping behaviour and outcomes physical day-to-day interactions (van der Aalst et al., 2019). As such, digital platforms are not only vehicles of innovation and connectivity, but also critical drivers of economic development and social transformation (Fu et al., 2021; Gawer, 2022).

Digital platforms are also commonly referred to as “Web 2.0”, a term that describes the second generation of the internet, marked by user-friendly, interactive platforms that allow people to create, share, and collaborate online. With Web 2.0, static webpages have been deprioritised, replaced by custom content that is automatically created on request by a user and shaped by a platform’s economic and technical operations. This shift led to the rise of social media, blogs, and media-sharing sites, enabling everyday users to generate content and stay socially connected (Wilson et al., 2011). Users became both producers and consumers of content, whose activity and data could be monetised, even without active participation (Bakardjieva & Gaden, 2012). These technologies have become embedded in everyday life, often in ways we can’t opt out of, influencing how we learn, shop, work, and connect (Yamin, 2019).

Platform capitalism & surveillance economy

Embedded within this landscape, platform capitalism refers to a new economic model in which digital platforms mediate and organise work, consumption, and social interaction. Informatively, one of the earliest references to an idea of ‘platform capitalism’ introduced the term in the pages of *Der Spiegel*, arguing that this was the real name for the sharing economy (Lobo, 2014). Accordingly, the use of the sharing economy term has disappeared alongside the faith in any sense generosity or collaboration that has come with the name, leading to a recognition of the capitalist imperatives driving the creation and management of these platforms. More recently, Nick Srnicek’s *Platform Capitalism* (2019) has become the primary reference for a critical theory of the idea, and his approach focuses on the combination of financial imperatives and technological capabilities that have shaped the kinds of platforms that have been created in the last fifteen years. Platforms are a product of specific corporate logics that are germane to the economic conditions in which they are created – primarily entrepreneurial tech development. Platform capitalism has emerged through advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs), shifts in consumption practices, and broader social, economic, and political transformations (Liang, et al., 2022). At its core, platform capitalism is when online platforms such as apps or websites serve as both the intermediary and the main business model driving how economic activity occurs in the digital world (Langley & Leyshon, 2017). In contrast to the models provided by Srnicek and others, some scholars see platform capitalism as simply one of many economic platform models with the system including interrelated but distinct facets such as the gig economy, the sharing economy, crowdsourcing, and the broader platform economy (Liang et al., 2022). These developments have enabled new forms of networked exchange across global, connected communities, where ideas, labour, and assets are circulated and capitalised through platform infrastructures (Langley & Leyshon, 2017).

Similarly, digital platforms have assisted in the creation of the surveillance economy. Driven by the proliferation of digital technologies, the surveillance economy is a system in which personal data is extracted, collected, and sold for profit, often by companies offering free online services (Clarke, 2019). This has created a complex landscape in which new media technologies such as the internet hold the promise of expanding the public sphere by lowering barriers to communication and enabling the formation of virtual communities (Howard, Carr & Milstein, 2002). However, these same technologies simultaneously function as powerful tools for surveillance, reshaping the public sphere into a space defined by pervasive monitoring and data extraction (Howard, Carr & Milstein, 2002). Zuboff (2022) characterises this phenomenon as “surveillance capitalism”, where a small number of dominant corporations (e.g., Google, Facebook, and Amazon) exercise control over digital information and commodify human behaviour through the large-scale, often secretive, collection and analysis of personal data. This system operates in tension with democratic institutions, exploiting the lack of regulation by liberal democracies and government to establish a coherent vision for digital governance since the creation of the

internet (Zuboff, 2022). Andrejevic (2019; 2020) presents further critiques of the logics of surveillance capitalism, seeing an impossible yet relentless drive for universal information capture, universal information processing, and a universal perspective that has led us to intense datafication of daily life. Thus, the surveillance economy not only challenges individual privacy but also poses profound questions about the future of democratic engagement and institutional power in the digital age.

Politics and digital technologies

How digital technologies are used in politics

Digital technologies have become central tools for political engagement, employed by a wide range of actors including politicians, governments, social movements, activists, and journalists (Santini & Carvalho, 2019). Santini and Carvalho (2019) highlight that in times of political turmoil, digital technologies have been embraced globally, transforming how politics is practised and how citizens interact with their governments. They have been employed by these diverse groups to foster citizen engagement, transparency, and political mobilisation. According to da Silva Neto and Chiarini (2021), non-institutional digital platforms have transformed political participation by accelerating communication flows to make the public sphere more accessible. It has also assisted in reducing organisation costs by enabling virtual self-organisation, creating direct links and strengthening connections between citizens and political organisations, gathering and disseminating large volumes of public data, and enabling professional intermediaries to bridge citizens and governments. Importantly, Kharel (2024) notes the transformative influence of social media platforms on political mobilisation globally. He argues that this phenomenon is underpinned by Social Movement Theory, which explains how collective action arises from social structures and interactions. Thus, social media platforms “act as catalysts for movements, facilitating communication, organisation, and information dissemination” (Kharel, 2024).

Postill (2020) further divides digital political engagement into four categories: (1) digital government, involving bureaucratic adaptation; (2) digital democracy, focusing on community building and deliberation; (3) digital campaigning, related to elections; and (4) digital mobilisation, encompassing social movements. These categories highlight how digital platforms enable new forms of mobilisation and participatory democracy that extend beyond traditional face-to-face methods. This transformation is often referred to as *technopolitics*, which Kurban, Peña-Lopez, and Haberer (2017) defined as the dynamic interaction between technology and politics. Echoing Kranzberg’s First Law of Technology, they argue that digital tools are not neutral but are shaped by competing interests and used to renegotiate power relations, governance, and political practices.

Expanding on Postill’s definition, digital democracy, or e-democracy, broadly refers to the use of digital technologies to support political participation, communication, and governance (Päivärinta & Sæbø, 2006; Congge et al., 2023). This includes activities such as online political debate, digital campaigning, e-government, and e-voting systems. The rapid expansion of information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, has increased access to political information and created new channels for civic expression and mobilisation (Congge et al., 2023). These platforms offer opportunities to engage groups often excluded from traditional political processes, including low-income and marginalised communities (Kneuer, 2016). However, digital democracy is neither inherently democratic nor universally accessible. As it operates within the surveillance economy, political engagement is often shaped by commercial interests, algorithmic bias, and data extraction. Collectively, these factors risk reinforcing existing inequalities and distorting democratic participation (Chen & Stilinic, 2020; Berg & Hofmann, 2021). Although digital platforms are often celebrated as tools which can revitalise civic engagement and bridge the gap between citizens and political institutions, they remain deeply

contested spaces. Their use is further shaped by underlying business models, limiting citizen control even as activists and social movements leverage these technologies to push for more inclusive, participatory forms of politics (Postill, 2020; Santini & Carvalho, 2019; Congge et al., 2023).

Platform politics

Platform politics refers to the complex ways in which digital platforms shape political discourse, visibility, and engagement, positioning themselves as powerful political actors in their own right. As users increasingly communicate and politically mobilise through these spaces, the conditions under which content becomes visible are governed by algorithmic and commercial logics (Freeman et al., 2022). Algorithms curate what users see by filtering, optimising, and personalising content to maximise engagement, often prioritising sensational or emotionally charged political material over more deliberative or nuanced discussion (Bucher, cited in Freeman et al., 2022). This process of algorithmic mediation is inherently political. It reflects and reinforces the ideological assumptions and cultural values embedded in platform design, which can reproduce systemic biases such as racism, sexism, and other structural inequalities (Krouglov, 2025; Noble, 2018). Far from being neutral infrastructures, platforms actively regulate communication by amplifying certain interactions while suppressing others, thus exerting significant influence over contemporary social and political life (Seemann, 2018).

The political influence of platforms also extends to their governance and ownership. These corporations have become deeply embedded in politics, culture, and labour. Their power and influence have come under increasing scrutiny following scandals like the Facebook–Cambridge Analytica data breach, in which data from approximately 87 million users’ Facebook profiles was harvested without consent and used to create psychographically targeted advertisements, allegedly aimed at influencing voting preferences during the 2016 U.S. presidential election (Gorwa, 2019; Hinds et al. 2020). This eroded public trust in social media companies and resulted in calls for tightening data privacy laws. Policy debates surrounding digital platforms are increasingly complex due to the fragmented distribution of responsibilities across governments, platforms, and users, raising fundamental questions about freedom of expression, political participation, and democratic accountability (Helberger et al., cited in Gorwa, 2019). In this context, platforms have emerged as influential actors in global governance, exerting considerable power through their content moderation practices. This includes determining what constitutes hate speech, fake news, and misinformation, de-platforming or banning users and groups, controlling data governance, and engaging in lobbying efforts (Helberger, 2020; Popiel & Sang, 2021). These actions not only shape the contours of public discourse but also redefine the boundaries of political legitimacy and authority in the digital age.

Digital publics & hybrid political spaces

Public sphere

Habermas’ (1989; 2020) concept of the *public sphere* refers to a space independent of the state and market, where citizens may come together to engage in rational-critical debate over matters of public concern. While originally grounded in the bourgeois institutions of Enlightenment Europe, scholars have since reinterpreted this model as a normative ideal rather than a strictly historical occurrence (Postill, 2020). In contemporary digital contexts, the rise of online platforms has prompted scholars to consider whether we are witnessing a “second structural transformation of the public sphere” (Schäfer, 2015). Digital spaces provide new arenas for public discussion that are open, networked, and potentially more accessible and participatory than the mass media-dominated model critiqued by Habermas (Kellner, 2014; Schäfer, 2015). Valtysson (2016) and Bessant (2014) note that digitising Habermas enables us to examine how online and offline spheres interact, with digital technologies offering opportunities for deliberation that are not bound by traditional party lines or institutional constraints. Yet, these platforms are also shaped by the same forces that once undermined

the original public sphere, including surveillance (Bessant, 2014; Kellner, 2014). Thus, while digital platforms may *potentially* serve as new public spheres, their democratic value is conditional and contested.

Networked publics

In contrast to Habermas' conception of the *public sphere* as a unified space for rational critical debate, later theorists proposed the concept of *networked publics*, referring to multiple, fragmented, and fluid digital spaces shaped by online interaction (Bruns, 2023). The concept of networked publics highlights the transformation of political and social engagement in the digital age, where communication technologies have reshaped how individuals participate, organise, and express themselves (Boyd, 2010). Varnelis (2012) describes networked publics as emerging through the prevalence of digital platforms and mobile technologies, which blurs the boundaries between physical and virtual space, enabling people to inhabit overlapping networks. These publics are no longer confined by geography or traditional institutions but instead are transnational, decentralised, and often self-organising in nature (Flyverbom, 2011). As Boyd (2008) aptly recognised, "an entire generation is quickly learning, networked publics have properties that are unlike anything previously experienced by everyday people in unmediated publics. Performances are *persistent*".

Queen et al. (2025) suggest that as "citizens leverage social media to strengthen their political engagement" Social Exchange Theory explains the significance of relationship networks within these platforms in fostering collective action and social trust amongst youth. Unlike traditional collective action, digital platforms enable *connective action* (Pond & Lewis, 2019; Bennett, 2012), in which individuals can mobilise around personalised expressions and easily transmissible content (e.g., hashtags, memes, or videos) rather than formal organisational affiliations or party lines. This has led to a more individualised and expressive form of participation (Theocharis, 2015; Bennett, 2012). In this context, everyday digital practices such as liking, sharing, and posting are now regarded as meaningful political acts (Theocharis, 2015; 2021). Online participation thus collapses the binary between political and non-political engagement, as lifestyle and identity-based actions become embedded within networked structures of political expression (Theocharis et al., 2021). In this way, networked publics do not merely replicate traditional publics online but instead represent a new paradigm of participatory culture in which people engage in politics on their own terms and across digital platforms.

Affective publics

Also emerging as a critique of Habermas' rational and unitary conception of the public sphere, the term *affective publics* was coined to explain the emotionally driven, fragmented, and fleeting nature of public formation in digital contexts. Coined by Papacharissi (2015), affective publics are characterised by their fragile, turbulent, and emotionally charged nature. These publics emerge through shared affect which emerge in response to events, crises, or calls for solidarity. Unlike networked publics, which emphasise connectivity and digital infrastructure (Boyd, 2011; van Dijck & Poell, 2015), affective publics stress the *performative and temporal dimensions* of public formation (Warner, 2002; Lünenborg & Raetzsch, 2018). They are situational and often arise rapidly through social media during moments of heightened emotion, such as protests, tragedies, or viral controversies where emotional expression becomes central to political communication (Ghosh, 2020). In this way, affective publics challenge normative assumptions about public discourse by highlighting how feelings rather than facts or logic can mobilise action, create temporary alliances, and shape political meaning in both online and offline spaces.

Power asymmetries

While digital technologies are often celebrated for enhancing democratic participation, research increasingly highlights how digital public spheres can reinforce and deepen existing power asymmetries. For instance, Fuchs (2022) critiques the assumption that digital user-generated content inherently fosters democratic participation. Instead, he argues that the digital public sphere has been "colonised and feudalised" by capitalist, state, and ideological forces, which in turn produces profound asymmetries. These include digital class relations, influencer capitalism, algorithmic governance, and surveillance, which collectively privilege corporate and state power while marginalising dissent and reinforcing inequality. Habermas himself remained sceptical of the democratic potential of the Internet, cautioning that it tends to fragment the public into isolated issue publics rather than fostering cohesive deliberation (Habermas, 2006). Ultimately, both accounts reveal that digital public spheres do not inherently democratise society but often mirror and magnify structural inequities.

Youth & digital platforms

Digital natives

Youths today are widely referred to as *Digital Natives*, a term used to describe the generations born and raised in the digital era who have been exposed to technology from an early age and immersed in a continuous flow of digital information (Dingli, Seychell, 2015). This label emphasises the transformative role new technologies have played in young people's communication, socialisation, and learning (Helsper & Eynon, 2010). Unlike *Digital Immigrants* who witnessed technological development and learnt technological skills later in life, digital natives have naturally incorporated digital technologies such as computers and the internet into their daily lives. This has created a distinct difference in how these two groups engage with technology (Autry & Berge, 2011). Gen Z, often referred to as the App Generation, is defined by their deep familiarity with digital platforms such as Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat. As a result, much of their social interaction now occurs through digital devices (particularly smartphones), reflecting their upbringing in a hyper-connected environment where internet and mobile access have been constant features of daily life (Bhalla, Tiwari & Chowdhary, 2021). Livingstone (2007) similarly argues that for youth, internet "is 'their' medium, they are the early adopters, the most media-savvy, the pioneers of the cyber-age, leading rather than being led by once, reversing the generation gap and gaining confidence and expertise as a result". This immersion in online spaces has also exposed them to normative pressures within digital communities, which shape the ways value, identity, and social capital are constructed (Chang & Chang, 2023). Moreover, rapid digital disruption fuelled by innovations in media, networks, and mobile technologies, has significantly influenced Gen Z's attitudes, behaviours, and expectations. Digital media now serves not only as a primary source of information but also as a central site for social interaction (Chang & Chang, 2023).

Youth digital soft power

Youths today, particularly Gen Z, are increasingly using digital platforms as a form of soft power to fundamentally transform traditional ideas of political influence. Originally theorised by Nye (2022), soft power refers to a nation's ability to shape international outcomes through attraction rather than coercion. In the digital age, social media platforms like such as Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and TikTok have revolutionised this dynamic by providing unprecedented direct access to global audiences, allowing young people and states alike to exert influence beyond traditional spheres (Pacific et al., 2025). While traditional soft power relied heavily on cultural exports, diplomacy, and media controlled by states, digital platforms create new, often borderless methods of interaction where social groups and institutions can engage in political discourse and shape agendas in real time (Popova et al., 2022). Gen Z's strategic dominance of virtual spaces means they act as key political actors in this evolving landscape by using digital networks to

mobilise support, disseminate ideas, and challenge established power structures (Roche & Szobonya, 2022). However, this digital form of soft power also introduces challenges, including privacy concerns, algorithmic biases, and the spread of disinformation, which complicate its use and impact (Pacific et al., 2025).

Youth political digital participation

Taken together, the concepts outlined above offer a new lens through which to understand both the role of digital platforms in contemporary politics and the ways young people engage with evolving political and technological landscapes. As Slavtcheva-Petkova (2023) notes, “This reconceptualisation is crucial in an era where traditional metrics of political engagement fail to capture the complexities of digital-era participation,” highlighting the limitations of conventional frameworks in accounting for the diverse forms of engagement emerging online, particularly among youth.

Understanding youth political participation in this context requires moving beyond narrow and traditional definitions and measurements. Instead, it involves recognising a spectrum of digitally mediated practices, from political consumption, such as following news sources, influencers, or campaign content, to political expression, including posting, sharing, or commenting on political issues (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2014). While these practices may appear distinct, they are deeply interconnected. Consumption frequently informs expression, while expression can, in turn, shape and deepen patterns of consumption (Lane et al., 2019). Together, they represent a fluid, everyday form of engagement that reflects how young people interpret, respond to, and participate in political life within digital environments (Slavtcheva-Petkova, 2023).

SECTION THREE

YOUTH DIGITAL POLITICAL CONSUMPTION

Youth digital & social media usage

Note: Digital and social media are referred to extensively in the following two sections and are central features of the digital platforms and technologies discussed in the sections above. Whilst they do not account for all digital platforms of technologies used by youth for digital political consumption and expression, they constitute the majority of academic discussion on this topic. This is noted as a limitation within this literature.

As of early 2024, global social media usage surpassed 5 billion active users, with the typical user spending over two hours per day on social media platforms and nearly seven hours online overall (We Are Social, 2024). The average person is reported to have 6.7 social media accounts (Aghababayan, 2023). This widespread digital engagement is particularly pronounced among youth populations.

In the United States, 97% of teens aged 13 to 17 report using the internet daily. YouTube is the most used platform (95%), followed by TikTok (67%), whilst around 60% of teens use both Instagram and Snapchat. A significant portion of teens engage with these platforms frequently, with 58% using TikTok, 51% using Snapchat, and 50% using Instagram daily. Demographic differences in platform preferences are notable amongst US teen populations. Girls and racially diverse teens are more likely to use TikTok, Instagram, and Snapchat, whilst boys tend to favour YouTube, Twitch, and Reddit (Pew Research Center, 2022). In Australia, similar trends are evident. Teenagers aged 12 to 17 reported spending an average of 14.4 hours online per week in 2021. They report spending their time online for the purposes of researching topics of interest (95%), watching videos (93%), chatting with friends (93%), and gaming (77%). The most used social media platforms include YouTube (72%), Instagram (57%), Facebook (52%), and Snapchat (45%), with TikTok use rising significantly in recent years since this report was published (eSafety Commission, 2021).

However, these metrics highlight the lack of a universal approach to measuring young people's online usage and consumption of social media. Both the Pew Research Center in the U.S. and the eSafety Commission in Australia selected 'teens' (those aged between 12/13 and 17) as their research demographic, thereby excluding older youth populations from their measurements. Additionally, while We Are Social and the Pew Research Center focus on social media usage specifically, the eSafety Commission takes a broader view of teenagers' digital lives, incorporating online behaviours and experiences. Furthermore, due to the slow pace of academic peer review and publication processes, research in this area often lags behind the rapid evolution of digital and social media trends, relying on outdated measures or data points such as those discussed above. (Elhajjar & Yacoub, 2024). While these sources offer valuable insights into general patterns, they may not accurately reflect of contemporary realities. Unsurprisingly, there is a noticeable shortage of reports that specifically measure young people's use of social media and digital platforms for political engagement. Although some data on this topic may appear in broader reports, it is rarely a primary focus of measurement.

Consumption practices

Active vs. passive

According to the Pew Research Centre, 18 to 29 year olds are the most active social media users (cited in Romero-Hall et al., 2020). However, distinguishing between active and passive social media use is crucial for understanding the effects of digital engagement on young people's wellbeing and social connection. Active social media use (ASMU) includes posting, liking, commenting, and messaging (Trifiro & Gerson, 2019; Godard & Holtzman, 2024). ASMU can elicit positive feedback and support from others, which may enhance wellbeing (Valkenburg et al., 2022). However, some studies also associate ASMU with increased symptoms of anxiety (Godard & Holtzman, 2024). Passive social media use (PSMU), on the other hand, involves scrolling through feeds, viewing posts, and monitoring others' lives without interacting. These

behaviours are often referred to as “lurking” or “consuming” (Trifiro & Gerson, 2019; Roberts & David, 2023). PSMU has been associated with weaker social connections, increased loneliness, and negative emotional states such as envy brought on by social comparison (Roberts & David, 2023; Valkenburg et al., 2022). While some passive users still report feelings of social support, the overall emotional impact tends to be more negative compared to active engagement (Godard & Holtzman, 2024). This is especially relevant given the nature of content on platforms like Instagram and TikTok, where users can scroll through up to 300 feet (91 metres) of content daily (Brady et al., 2020). Much of the content, consumed either actively or passively, is designed for rapid, attention-grabbing consumption in under 30 seconds. These patterns reflect a broader shift toward low-effort digital consumption that may prioritise entertainment and distraction over genuine social interaction (Kohler, 2023).

The attention economy

The attention economy refers to the competitive landscape in which digital media platforms compete for users’ limited attention and the finite cognitive resource that shapes how we receive, process, and act on information (Hendricks & Vestergaard, 2019). In this economy, attention is both the currency and the commodity in which users trade their time for entertainment or connection, while platforms monetise that attention through advertising (Castro & Pham, 2020). Social media platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are structured to maximise user engagement through short-form content that offers immediate gratification, capitalising on users’ cognitive biases like the fear of missing out, upward social comparison, and confirmation bias (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021; Marathe & Kanage, 2024). Research shows that increased consumption of such rapid, bite-sized content is correlated with a decreased ability to sustain attention and poorer academic performance, especially among adolescents and young adults (Asif & Kazi, 2024; Alaparathi, 2024).

Algorithms on platforms including YouTube and Facebook amplify these effects by personalising content and feeds to align with users’ past behaviours and beliefs, often reinforcing pre-existing biases and shielding them from dissenting views (Menczer & Hills, 2020). Unlike traditional broadcast media, where audiences in the same region receive uniform content, today’s digital platforms offer highly individualised media landscapes. Not only does this fuel information fragmentation, but it also results in social and psychological consequences such as anxiety, loneliness, and addiction (Castro & Pham, 2020; Webster & Andre, 2024). This emerging “digital attention crisis”, has drawn concern from researchers, governments, and public health organisations, as digital design appears to be reshaping cognition, behaviour, and social connection in profound and enduring ways (Pedersen et al., 2021; Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). Moreover, the attention economy poses a particular risk for young people, with social media platforms deliberately designed to be addictive (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). Excessive internet use has been recognised as a growing public health issue by the World Health Organization, prompting several governments, including China and South Korea, to classify internet addiction as a significant “public health hazard” (Bhargava & Velasquez, 2021). On the other hand, political actors ranging from politicians and activists to educators and even conspiracy theorists must now compete for the attention of young people on social media platforms if they want to engage them. This is challenging, as political content often contends with more entertaining and emotionally lighter content such as fashion, food, and celebrity trends (Möller et al., 2019). To better reach youth, some governments are adopting short-form content strategies, tailoring political messaging to platforms like TikTok and YouTube where young audiences prefer quick, easily consumable content (Grantham, 2024). For example, both the U.S. Democratic Party (Khomami & Bakare, 2024) and the Australian Labor Party (Oates & Chowdhury, 2025) incorporated trending audios and visual content via TikTok and Instagram into their respective election campaigns by referencing significant pop cultural moments such as Charli XCX’s *Brat* album. By aligning their messaging with the viral momentum of the album’s release, both parties produced

highly shareable videos and images aimed at engaging younger audiences. These efforts gained widespread traction online, largely due to their ironic and humorous tone, which demonstrated an ability to attune to youth digital cultures and effectively communicate in the language of the platform (Grantham, 2024). In doing so, they achieved virality not only through aesthetic relevance but by signalling their cultural awareness and responsiveness to the expectations of online youth political engagement (Canales & Evershed, 2025).



(Source: BBC 2024, <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cqqlgq7k374o>).

Liking, commenting & sharing political content

As mentioned above, young people engage with social media through a variety of practices such as liking, commenting, sharing, and lurking, all of which serve different social and expressive functions. “Liking” and “sharing” are often described as *nano-level participation* (Lonkila & Jokivuori, 2023), referring to fast, simple, and highly structured forms of engagement that fall between passive consumption and active engagement. Reactions such as likes or shares are embedded into the design of most platforms and serve as key tools for impression management, self-presentation, and social feedback (Rides, Pote, & Watling, 2024). Adolescents, in particular, are attuned to the emotional impact of these interactions. NHS Digital (2021) reported that 16.7% of 11 to 16 year olds believe that the number of reactions they receive affects their mood. Beyond emotional support, reactions may also facilitate social exclusion or cyberbullying, as adolescents can withhold likes or use negative comments to signal disapproval of content (Rides et al., 2024; Koutamanis, Vossen, & Valkenburg, 2015). While commenting and sharing offer more direct forms of interpersonal or public expression, lurking (or reading without posting) is often misunderstood as disengagement. However, recent work reframes lurking as a form of *online listening*, where individuals choose silence to evaluate others' voices and participate cognitively without posting (Romero-Hall et al., 2020; Adjin-Tettey & Garman, 2023).

These digital practices take on political significance when used to engage with civic content. Sharing, for example, can help determine what gains visibility in a digital public sphere, shaping what others see and discuss (Tenenboim, 2022). ‘Liking’ political content signals support and can help amplify certain views or actors. The more ‘likes’ a post receives not only indicates the popularity of the content, but also boosts public attention and news consumption as algorithms can push political content that has higher rates of engagement consumption (Tenenboim, 2022). Although online political participation is uneven, and is often driven by prior political interest (Keating & Melis, 2017), small acts such as liking or sharing can still

constitute civic expression (Weinstein, 2014). For some youth, especially during politically charged moments such as the first era of Trump administration (2017-2021), these platforms became spaces for digital self-expression and resistance, blending personal identity with civic duty (Penney, 2019). Popular culture also plays a key role in this process, as youth frequently engage politically by referencing music, memes, or celebrity content, using these shared resources to navigate political discussions and express collective political identity (Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2021; Inthorn, Street, & Scott, 2013). Thus, even the most mundane digital gestures including liking a post or lurking in a comment thread can carry political meaning.

Doom scrolling & mindless scrolling

Doomscrolling and mindless scrolling are closely linked but conceptually distinct behaviours increasingly prevalent among young social media users. Doomscrolling refers to the compulsive consumption of negative or distressing news online, particularly during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, with users continuing to scroll through digital media despite the mental distress it causes (Akat & Hamarta, 2025; Singh & Narula, 2024). This behaviour is driven by the human impulse to seek certainty in uncertain times, even when the content consumed heightens anxiety or stress. In contrast, mindless scrolling is more passive and devoid of specific informational goals. It is typically characterised by habitual, often unconscious interaction with content on platforms like Instagram Reels or YouTube Shorts (de Segovia Vicente et al., 2024; Devi, 2025). Unlike doomscrolling, which centres on the pursuit of information, mindless scrolling reflects a lack of intent and often results in guilt, goal conflict, and increased fear of missing out (FOMO), particularly among students who use social media as a core mode of communication and identity formation (Devi, 2025; Sinha et al., 2023).

While both behaviours have well-documented mental health consequences including anxiety, guilt, and reduced wellbeing, they also hold important political implications. Doomscrolling, for instance, often locks young users into cycles of crisis-oriented news consumption, potentially leading to burnout, desensitisation, or withdrawal from political engagement altogether (Mannell & Meese, 2022). During Australia's COVID-19 lockdowns, the Department of Health recommended reducing news consumption and doomscrolling to protect mental wellbeing, noting that "it's important to stay up-to-date with the facts, but constantly tuning in to news about COVID-19 can be overwhelming, confusing and increase anxiety" (cited in Mannell & Meese, 2022). In parallel, mindless scrolling facilitates constant exposure to algorithmically curated content, reinforcing platform capitalism's commercial logic by maximising screen time without critical engagement (de Segovia Vicente et al., 2024; Sinha et al., 2023). As youth increasingly navigate political issues online, these scrolling habits (whether driven by information-seeking or passive consumption) shape how political content is encountered, interpreted, and acted upon, raising urgent questions about digital agency, mental health, and the political consequences of platform design.

Digital literacies

In response to young people's evolving digital media consumption habits, government agencies, educators, and parents are increasingly advocating for enhanced digital literacy. This push aims to equip youth with the critical skills needed to interpret, evaluate, and question the content and information they encounter online. However, there are growing concerns that school curriculums are failing to provide or keep up with digital transformations and the impact this can have on political education. Hussain et al. (2023) importantly argue that as "young peoples' shift away from traditional electoral (big 'P') politics focused on wider socio-economic issues to an individualised (small 'p') politics focused on personal experiences poses serious curricular challenges – around content and modes of political education. Young people's unparalleled

access to online information and digital affordances creates further need to include digital and media education within the political education curriculum”. In Australia, this is further complicated by variations in state based education, which lacks standardisation on curriculum regarding both digital and political literacies.

Definitions

Digital literacy is a multifaceted and evolving concept that encompasses a range of skills, competencies, and cognitive processes required to navigate today’s complex digital environment (Tinmaz et al. (2022). Similar to many of concepts discussed above, there are several definitions and understandings of what constitutes digital literacy. Eshet-Alkalai’s (2012) *Digital Literacy Framework* defines digital literacy across six categories, including 1) photo-visual thinking (understanding and using visual information); 2) real-time thinking (simultaneously processing a variety of stimuli); 3) information thinking (evaluating and combining information from multiple digital sources); 4) branching thinking (navigating in non-linear hyper-media environments); 5) reproduction thinking (creating outcomes using technological tools by designing new content or remixing existing digital content); and 6) social-emotional thinking (understanding and applying cyberspace rules). Other definitions, such as Heitin’s (2016), cluster digital literacy into finding and consuming, creating, and communicating or sharing digital content. The European Union’s Digital Competence Framework similarly outlines five key areas of digital literacy including, 1) information and data literacy; 2) communication; 3) content creation; 4) safety; and 5) problem-solving. Notably, both Ng (2012) and van Laar et al. (2017) distinguish between technological, cognitive, and social digital skills. Beyond skills and competencies, digital literacy also involves digital thinking, which includes the capacity to critically assess information, identify misinformation, and remaining safe in online environments (Tinmaz et al., 2022). As Spires, Paul, and Kerkhoff (2018) explain, digital literacy entails a continuum of engagement from the consumption to production of digital content, requiring individuals to critically evaluate the credibility and reliability of information in order to interact with online resources accurately. They further argue that digital literacy and fluency is multimodal, as digital media can take many forms, including text, images, motion graphics, audio, and video.

Youth & digital literacies

As young people are increasingly engaging with politics through digital platforms, equipping them with digital literacies is essential for meaningful and informed participation in civic life. While youth are often perceived as “digital natives” as discussed above, research shows that this label obscures the need for critical support in developing the complex skills required to navigate political content online (Connolly & McGuinness, 2018). Rheingold (cited in Kahne & Bower, 2019) aptly recognises that “this population is both self-guided and in need of guidance... [as] there’s nothing innate about knowing how to apply their [digital skills to the processes of democracy”. Digital literacies must extend far beyond technical competence or functional media use. Rather, they must involve the ability to analyse, evaluate, create, and circulate information within a digital, global, and democratic society (Buckingham, 2015; Hobbs et al., 2013, as cited in Kahne & Bowyer, 2019). As digital platforms become central to civic engagement (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019), young people must be equipped to interpret political content, identify misinformation, and engage responsibly and ethically in online discourse (Polizzi, 2020). Booth et al. (2025) found that whilst Australian youth were provided with some digital and media literacy during the COVID-19 lockdown to navigate and identify online misinformation, it did not meet their specific needs nor enhance their capabilities to determine whether the information they encountered online was factual. Without these capacities, youth are more vulnerable to the spread of misinformation, echo chambers, and political extremism (Silverman, 2016; Pariser, 2011; Polizzi, 2020).

The rise of misinformation, disinformation, and fake news has intensified the need for such literacies. Scholars describe our current context as a “misinformation age” or “post-truth” era (Broda & Strömbäck, 2024), where false news travels six times faster than truth content (Aïmeur et al., 2023). Fake news, defined as verifiably false content presented in the guise of legitimate journalism, may take the form of manipulated images, propaganda, satire, or sensationalism (Adjin-Tettey, 2022). Whilst the term is now ubiquitous with President Trump, who often employs it in press conferences and X (formerly twitter) posts against journalists reporting on his party’s policies and decision-making (Ross & Rivers, 2018), the term has long been employed in politics. In 2016, Hillary Clinton stressed the real-world consequences of fake news dissemination, stating that there was an “epidemic of malicious fake news and false propaganda that flooded social media over the past year” throughout the US (cited in Wendling, 2018). Disinformation, in contrast, refers to deliberately crafted false narratives aimed at misleading audiences, often orchestrated by malicious actors and amplified by digital platforms (UNESCO in Adjin-Tettey, 2022). These dynamics not only mislead the public but also erode trust in journalism and democratic institutions (Pogue, 2017; Warwick & Lewis in Adjin-Tettey, 2022). Youth are particularly at risk of these practices, as social media now surpasses television and print media as their main source of news, including in countries such the U.S. and U.K. (Aïmeur et al., 2023). Yet many struggle to assess the credibility of content, especially when political falsehoods spread more widely than other types of misinformation and are difficult to identify (Vosoughi et al., 2018 in Aïmeur et al., 2023).

Schools and media literacy programs have been slow to meet this challenge. Much current digital literacy education focuses on operational or technical skills, neglecting the critical engagement required to understand media within cultural and political contexts (Buckingham, 2015). Furthermore, the top-down design of many media literacy campaigns, such as those initiated by platforms like TikTok who launched the #FactCheckYourFeed campaign, (TikTok, 2022; TikTok, CITE), have received criticism from youth who perceive them as inauthentic and hypocritical (Literat et al., 2021). This highlights the importance of involving young people in the design of such initiatives, ensuring they are relevant to youth’s aesthetic sensibilities, social norms, and digital cultures. Participatory design not only fosters engagement but also offers insight into how young people form political identities, negotiate information, and engage in civic life online (Connolly & McGuinness, 2018; Literat et al., 2021).

Digital engagement is not just about accessing political content but participating in a networked culture where politics unfold through peer-based, interactive, and often non-hierarchical activities. This is a practice some scholars refer to as participatory politics (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019). To realise this participatory potential, youth need critical digital literacies that help them understand how digital infrastructures mediate power and shape political narratives (Polizzi, 2020). This includes recognising how algorithms influence visibility, how platforms monetise attention, and how digital tools can both challenge and reinforce social inequalities. Crucially, adults (including educators, and parents) have a role to play by supporting critical inquiry, modelling responsible digital behaviour, and fostering environments where youth can reflect on and navigate digital civic life (Vélez et al., 2017). As civic life becomes increasingly digital, developing literacies that are both critical and participatory is vital to ensuring young people are not only informed, but empowered to act in democratic and equitable ways (Kahne & Bowyer, 2019; Polizzi, 2020).

Digital political socialisation

Building on the theory of political socialisation discussed in Section 1, *political socialisation* enabled through digital media refers to how individuals learn about politics, political issues, and processes through the diverse and fragmented online media environment (Galais, 2013). As digital access becomes ubiquitous and

mobile-first media consumption the norm, young people are exposed to political content in highly personalised and socially networked environments (Ohme & de Vreese, 2020). Unlike earlier eras where a handful of legacy media sources dominated political messaging, today's youth often receive their political information through social feeds, messaging apps, meme pages, and influencer-driven content, often without actively seeking it (Jakubowski, 2021; Ohme & de Vreese, 2020). These spaces are not only channels of information but also sites of civic experimentation and identity formation where peers, celebrities, and content creators operate as role models and opinion leaders, influencing how young people interpret, engage with, and participate in political life (Jakubowski, 2021; Yi & Nelson, 2024). Political content is increasingly encountered through memes, satirical videos, and short-form commentary that prioritise entertainment over deliberation, encouraging the formation of opinions rather than critical reflection (Jakubowski, 2021). As Lee, Shah, and McLeod (2013) show, these non-traditional, partisan, and often less journalistic online sources have a stronger influence on youth civic engagement than conventional media, facilitating expression, mobilisation, and community-building around shared political concerns. At the same time, algorithmic systems reinforce ideological homogeneity by exposing users to like-minded content, contributing to the formation of "echo chambers" and "filter bubbles" that entrench political views and limit exposure to alternative perspectives (Yi & Nelson, 2024). This dynamic not only complicates political identity formation but also raises urgent questions about media literacy. Young people may feel politically engaged while simultaneously lacking the tools to critically evaluate the sources and intentions behind the information they consume. As Ohme and de Vreese (2020) argue, social media platforms don't just mediate political information, they co-create political norms, behaviours, and networks of meaning.

Government & platform regulation & censorship

While digital and social media use remains widespread among youth globally, their engagement is shaped by differing levels of regulation, moderation, and censorship across platforms and regions. Whilst digital platform moderation practices and regulation policies implemented by governments and private organisations (including by human and algorithmic moderators or artificial intelligence technologies employed by these companies), are integral to ensuring that digital content is free from spam, hate speech, graphic violence, misinformation, anti-social behaviour and harmful content, it is argued that they can also be processes and policies of extensive and extreme forms of censorship (Langvardt, 2017). As such, Bromell (2022) argues that the first step to regulatory options to reduce harmful digital communication and content is to understand the nature of the internet, "as a global network of networks" which blurs of boundaries between public and private communications in a digital age. He further stresses that this creates challenges in moderating online content, as it is difficult to determine "who should be responsible for defining an effective and enforceable regulatory framework for content moderation" (Bromwell, 2022). Furthermore, government and organisational regulation policies aimed at youth populations warrant closer scrutiny, as youth-based moderation is often justified as a protective measure but can also be misappropriated by governments for political ends or implemented in ways that are ineffective, overly restrictive, or harmful to young people themselves.

Platform policies

Digital platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter) all employ content moderation policies, often outlined in their 'Community Standards' or terms of service agreements. These guidelines are enforced to screen, evaluate, categorise, approve, or remove user-generated content. While moderation is intended to minimise harm and promote positive online behaviour, it is often vague, inconsistently applied, and lacking in transparency. As Heins (2013) argues, despite social media companies' claims to uphold free speech, they routinely censor a wide range of constitutionally protected

speech. These moderation practices frequently reflect the commercial interests of the companies that enforce them. This raises the question, as Bromell (2022) puts it, of whether private corporations should have the power to define the boundaries of free speech online.

The scale and influence of these companies in shaping online discourse has led many to argue they function less like private businesses and more like global authorities and arbiters of what is allowed to be seen and said online. Facebook, in particular, is central to this debate. As Rosen (cited in Heins, 2013) notes, “Facebook wields more power [today] in determining who can speak... than any Supreme Court justice, any king, or any president”. Mark Zuckerberg, the CEO of Meta, has similarly remarked that, “In a lot of ways Facebook is more like a government than a traditional company... We have this large community of people, and more than other technology companies we’re really setting policies” (cited in Langvardt, 2017). With over two billion users governed by its community guidelines alone, Facebook exemplifies how digital platforms have assumed state-like roles in regulating global information flows without democratic oversight, transparency, or accountability.

This unchecked power has real-world consequences. Content moderation decisions have led to the silencing of marginalised communities and activists. Facebook and Instagram, for example, has suspended or censored Rohingya Muslim groups reporting on ethnic cleansing in Myanmar (Langvardt, 2017), and more recently, Palestinians and their supporter’s raising awareness of human rights abuses in Gaza (Human Rights Watch, 2021). As Langvardt (2017) contends, it is crucial that governments ensure digital platforms do not abuse these state-like powers. De Gregorio (2020) further argues that the liberal paradigm of free speech protection is no longer adequate in a digital environment where private companies actively organise the flow of information in service of profit-maximisation, rather than democratic values. Despite their central role in governing online speech, these platforms are not obligated to justify or explain their moderation decisions, leaving billions of users subject to vague terms and conditions enforced by powerful and unaccountable corporate actors.

Government regulations

Governments worldwide increasingly recognise social media platforms as vital spaces for public discourse, information dissemination, and civic engagement. Digital networks have expanded the “electronic agora” (Kperogi, 2022), placing previously marginalised citizens, including youth, at the centre of online communication. In 2017, the U.S. Supreme Court described the internet, and social media more specifically, as “the most important places... for the exchange of views” (cited in Langvardt, 2017). As these platforms’ reach and influence have increased since the early 2000s, concerns over their governance have intensified, resulting in diverse regulatory approaches shaped by national political systems, institutional cultures, and public attitudes toward speech and safety (Gorwa, 2024).

In liberal democracies, regulation typically seeks to balance transparency, user safety, and accountability with the protection of fundamental rights such as freedom of expression. For example, the European Union’s Digital Services Act (DSA, 2020–2021) requires platforms to design, report on, and audit their content moderation systems. Similarly, Germany’s Network Enforcement Act (NetzDG, 2017) mandates transparency and reporting on how platforms handle complaints about potentially illegal content produced within the country (Gorwa, 2024). Comparable policies have been introduced in the United Kingdom (Online Safety Act, 2023), France (Avia Law, 2020), Australia (Online Safety Act, 2021), and India (Information Technology Rules, 2021; Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023) (Malik et al., 2025).

However, the United States presents a distinctive case. Under Section 230 of the Communications Decency Act (1996), social media companies are largely protected from legal responsibility for content posted by users, resulting in a historically ‘hands-off’ governance model. Yet, political and social tensions, particularly regarding misinformation and perceived content bias since the 2016 election, have sparked intense debates over reform. Conservative actors accuse platforms of bias against right-wing views, while progressive groups call for stronger measures to combat harmful misinformation, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic and 2020 election. These conflicts highlight the challenge of balancing free expression traditions outlined in the First Amendment (De Gregorio, 2020) with addressing real-world harms facilitated by digital communication (Nunziato, 2023). The U.S. has also recently taken steps to ban platforms such as TikTok, citing national security and data privacy concerns (Al-Zaman & Noman, 2024).

Early optimism about social media as a democratising force through events such as the Arab Spring have rapidly diminished (Common, 2023), with many governments now viewing social media as a threat to state control. Thus, several governments have employed a variety of strategies to regulate or restrict content and digital media access. These range from outright platform bans to targeted content filtering, user penalisation, surveillance, data mining, and coordinated online harassment campaigns against dissenters (Common, 2023; Aghababayan, 2023). For instance, Saudi Arabia established The Internet Services Unit (ISU), to actively censor webpages deemed immoral or illicit. Through a network of proxy servers, the unit filters content to determine which websites should be banned or censored (Aljabre, 2013). The Saudi government has also been accused of using bots on X (formerly known as Twitter) to manipulate its citizens and promote pro-government rhetoric (Ritzen, 2019). Recent studies show political motives drive approximately 67% of censorship globally, with social concerns accounting for 23%, and security reasons for 10% (Al-Zaman & Noman, 2024). Of these motives, political censorship often targets electoral discourse, protest mobilisation, and critical voices; social censorship focuses on hate speech, misinformation, moral content, and cybercrime; security-related restrictions address data privacy and sensitive information control (Al-Zaman & Noman, 2024). Between 2006 and 2023, censorship occurred in 76 countries, with notable activity in the Global South. Countries including Turkey, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, and Pakistan frequently censor platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, which account for over 22% and 21% of restrictions respectively (Al-Zaman, 2024). Authoritarian regimes including China, Russia, and North Korea enforce some of the strictest internet controls, with China ranking worst for internet freedom for seven consecutive years (Al-Zaman, 2024; Bromell, 2022). Despite constitutional guarantees to information access in many countries, over half of global internet users experience some form of censorship (Al-Zaman & Noman, 2024). Governments increasingly control digital spaces by suspending internet access or blocking platforms, especially during politically sensitive moments such as elections or protests (Bromell, 2022; Al-Zaman, 2024).

This evolving landscape reflects a fundamental tension between individual agency and institutional power. While users generate and share content shaping societal norms, their autonomy is constrained by government policies and corporate regulation, illustrating the duality of structure in digital communication governance (Al-Zaman & Noman, 2024). This poses significant challenges for the future of internet freedom and democratic discourse (Al-Zaman, 2024; Common, 2023).

Youth-based regulation

Governments often justify the regulation, moderation, and even censorship of digital platforms by framing them as necessary measures to protect young people from mental health challenges, exposure to harmful content, or developmental risks. In this context, several countries have introduced or proposed age-based restrictions on social media access. For example, the Australian government recently announced plans to

implement a new policy under the *Online Safety Act (2021)* that would ban social media use for individuals under the age of 16. The change aims to enhance protections for young users, particularly against harmful social media content and features like constant notifications, which can disrupt sleep, increase stress, and affect attention levels (eSafety Commissioner, 2024). However, theorists such as Livingstone (2017) contend that such policies and initiatives should be framed using a rights-based approach to youth's digital media practices. This is to ensure governments strike a balance between the needs for online protection mechanisms with the capacity for young people to maximise the opportunities and benefits provided by connectivity.

Content moderation practices on platforms such as TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube are also framed as safeguarding minors from harmful or triggering content. For instance, the study conducted by Eltaher et al. (2025) evaluated the effectiveness of content moderation on YouTube in protecting young users. It found that accounts created by 13 year olds were more frequently and rapidly exposed to harmful content than accounts held by 18 year olds. 15% of recommended videos to 13 year old users were deemed harmful, compared to 8.17% for 18 year olds. Concerningly, this exposure occurred without users actively searching for such content, revealing significant flaws in algorithmic filtering systems designed to protect younger users. Moderation tools are also used to censor mental health-related content under the guise of preventing psychological harm (Zhang et al., 2024). However, such protective measures can have unintended consequences, including the suppression of positive mental health content, which can isolate youth who rely on online communities for support and belonging (Zhang et al., 2024), including LGBTQIA+ youth (Berger et al., 2021)

Despite these interventions, young people often demonstrate digital savviness that enable them to bypass restrictions. Studies have shown that adolescents use fake IDs, virtual private networks (VPNs), and other censorship circumvention technologies (CCTs) to gain access to restricted platforms or content (Blake et al., 2025; Dal & Nisbet, 2022). These tools are increasingly integrated into everyday digital practices, particularly among youth in both democratic and authoritarian contexts, suggesting that even the most stringent regulatory efforts are vulnerable to circumvention. However, states such as China and Russia continue to crackdown on the use of such practices (especially VPNs) in an effort to monitor, restrict or censoring the internet activities of their own and other state's citizens (Uthmani, 2017). Nevertheless, while youth are routinely positioned as vulnerable digital citizens in need of protection, they are also active, technologically literate agents capable of resisting or rerouting around regulatory policies and practices.

Political extremism & moral panic

Online radicalisation

Youth online radicalisation and extremism represent a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that spans political, religious, and violent dimensions, increasingly facilitated by social media and digital technologies. As discussed above, it is one of the motivators behind both government and private organisations introducing regulatory mechanisms. The digital environment provides extremist groups with unprecedented tools to disseminate ideologies rapidly and at low cost, targeting young people who are particularly vulnerable due to their developmental stage and search for identity, belonging, and purpose (Al Homran, Al-Swalha, & Al Aweemer, 2021; Gunton, 2022). The concept of "identity fusion," whereby personal identities are overshadowed by radicalised group identities, is particularly salient among young individuals, especially those who feel isolated (Alava et al., 2017). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and others serve as central sites for these processes by enabling extremist groups to reach larger audiences, normalise harmful narratives, and foster collective identities through emotional and relational bonds (Alava,

Frau-Meigs, & Hassan, 2017; Rea, 2022). These platforms not only enable the spread of extreme and radical content but also creates echo chambers where individuals mostly interact with like-minded peers, reinforcing their biases and potentially accelerate self-radicalisation (Bright, 2018; Gerald, 2023; Lane et al., 2021). Algorithms on platforms like Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram can amplify this effect by curating user experiences around similar political content, which extremist actors exploit to spread uncivil, hateful, and divisive rhetoric (Gerald, 2023).

Religious extremism

Extremist groups adeptly appeal to youths' desires for camaraderie, identity, and social belonging, whether in political radicalisation, religious extremism, or violent ideologies (Cherney et al., 2022; Apau, 2018). Digital extremists weaponise critical thinking and media literacy gaps by positioning themselves as purveyors of "truth" against allegedly biased mainstream media, a tactic encapsulated in the notion of "redpilling" that resonates across various extremist communities (Rea, 2022). Moreover, extremist propaganda often uses emotionally charged language and internet jargon (e.g., 'btw', 'lol') to engage younger audiences effectively (Fernandez, Gonzalez-Pardo, & Alani, 2019). Religious extremist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda have leveraged online platforms for recruitment and propaganda dissemination, with particular strategies targeting women and young recruits by exploiting anonymity and social media affordances unavailable offline (Gunton, 2022; Fernandez et al., 2019). Terrorist organisations have used chat rooms, videos, and social networking sites to radicalise youth, exploiting vulnerabilities such as identity conflicts, cultural dissonance, and social isolation (Apau, 2018; Gunton, 2022). The Internet facilitates the formation of extremist social bonds that transcend offline limitations, allowing clusters of youth, including friends and families, to radicalise collectively (Gunton, 2022). However, youth radicalisation is best understood as cyber-enabled rather than fully cyber-dependent, meaning social media complements rather than solely causes extremist attitudes (Cherney et al., 2022; Apau, 2018).

Right wing extremism & fascism

Youth exposure to online right wing extremism or far-right political radicalisation is a complex and escalating phenomenon shaped by the intersection of digital cultures, social media dynamics, and broader socio-political contexts. As digital natives, young people aged roughly 15 to 25 are especially vulnerable to far-right messaging, which is often disseminated through highly engaging online content such as memes, videos, and interactive multimedia formats (Nilan & Gentles, 2024; Wong, Frank, & Allsup, 2015). This age group is particularly significant since research shows they are more likely than older cohorts to initially support far-right ideologies, with notable drop-off beyond the age of 30 (Nilan & Gentles, 2024). The far-right capitalises on the appeal of "fresh encounters" with politics among youth by presenting radical ideas as exciting and transformative, leveraging digital platforms where young people already spend much of their time (Nilan & Gentles, 2024; Bayer & Bard, 2021). Charismatic, social media-savvy far-right influencers further amplify this effect by making radical ideologies appear relatable and attractive to younger audiences (Cheong, 2025). The online far-right also cultivates distinct youth subcultures characterised by music, style, rituals, and identity that foster belonging and intensify ideological commitment (Marwick et al., 2022). Platforms like TikTok have even been found to harbour real-world far-right groups actively recruiting and grooming youth online, despite increased efforts by mainstream companies to moderate extremist content (Marwick, Clancy, & Furl, 2022; Cheong, 2025).

The far-right's online messaging draws on white supremacy, anti-leftist rhetoric, misogyny, homophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-Semitism, often framing populist grievances around economic decline and socio-cultural loss, which resonate in times of political disillusionment (Nilan & Gentles, 2024). While far-right propaganda can be pervasive, its internalisation among youth varies. Many encounter such narratives

without deeply adopting them, and only a smaller proportion engage in extremist actions (Bayer & Bard, 2021). In fact, far-right attitudes among youth can shift with critical thinking and reflective debate (Bayer & Bard, 2021). However, the normalisation of hate speech and stereotypes which especially target minorities such as LGBTQIA+ individuals and migrants is widespread online, contributing to a hostile digital environment that youth frequently navigate (Bayer & Bard, 2021). The racialised nature of digital spaces further compounds this issue, as whiteness is often normalised as the default online identity, marginalising people of colour and reinforcing systemic digital racism (Frey et al., 2022). This environment subtly supports the spread of far-right and white supremacist ideas, not only through overt content but also via seemingly innocuous channels like video game forums and social media interactions (Frey et al., 2022).

Manosphere

Young men in particular are believed to be particularly susceptible to online extremism and radicalisation. In recent years, there have been reports that young men are increasingly engaging with content from the “manosphere” through social media platforms (Over et al., 2025). This refers to a digital network of blogs, forums, social media accounts, and websites, which advocate for misogynistic and anti-feminist ideologies often under the appearance of supporting men’s rights or offering self-help (Kyparissiadis & Skoulas, 2021; Barnes & Karim, 2025). Manosphere content collectively influences how young men perceive gender, masculinity, and broader societal norms. This can result in misogynistic radicalisation (Roberts & Westcott, 2024). Research indicates that adolescent boys spend substantial time online, with American boys aged 13 to 19 averaging up to 4.4 hours per day, while their Australian counterparts spend approximately 2 hours daily. The most visited platforms include YouTube, TikTok, and Reddit, which now serve as hubs for content creation and ideological dissemination rather than purely social interaction (Wilson, Fisher, & Seidler, 2024). Within highly connected digital ecosystem, young men are introduced to divergent masculinities and groups ranging from Men’s Rights Activists to Incels, all of which portray men as victims under a modern “gynocracy” and position feminism as the root of their oppression (Kyparissiadis & Skoulas, 2021). The anonymity of platforms like Reddit can foster emotional support and solidarity, but it also allows for the unchecked performance of hostile masculinities (Wilson et al., 2024; Ging, 2019). Influencers like Andrew Tate have become emblematic of this cultural shift, with a 2023 poll revealing that 80% of 16 to 17 year old British boys had consumed his content. Concerningly, this is greater than those who could name the British Prime Minister (Over et al., 2025). Another survey found that 56% of young fathers under 35 approved of Tate, highlighting the mainstream appeal of manosphere figures among young men (Over et al., 2025). As such, boys who already hold negative views of women or are grappling with social rejection may be especially vulnerable to the manosphere’s narratives, which provide them with simplistic explanations and scapegoats for their struggles (Wilson et al., 2024; Diepeveen, 2024). Despite these worrying trends, political institutions have largely failed to recognise the manosphere as a political or social threat, thereby allowing its influence on young men to grow unchecked (Barnes & Karim, 2025).

Digital moral panic

Concerns over youth exposure to these forms of online extremism and radicalisation have increasingly been framed through the lens of a *digital moral panic*, expanding of the theory discussed in Section 1. As digital platforms evolve and become more embedded in everyday life, they have emerged as powerful instruments for both the facilitation and amplification of social anxieties, particularly surrounding young people. Walsh (2020) notes that digital communications are often positioned as targets and facilitators of panic production. In this context, youth are ambivalently constructed as both threatened (i.e., vulnerable to predators, bullying, and radical content) and threatening (i.e., perpetrators of deviance such as doxxing) (Walsh, 2020; Springhall, 1998). Similarly, Lim (2013) highlights how incidents like teen suicides linked to sexting (defined as sharing sexually explicit media through text messages and other electronic platforms)

(Srivastava et al., 2023) and trends such as “Looksmaxxing” (linked to broader manosphere content which prompts disordered eating habits among teenage boys) (Held, 2023), have fuelled moral panics around mobile media usage. The moral anxieties that accompany each wave of technological innovation, labelled as ‘media’ or ‘techno-panics’ (Drotner, 1999; Marwick, 2008), reflects broader social fears about the erosion of control over youth amid rapid digital change (Walsh, 2020). In recent years, these fears have become entangled with rising concerns about young people’s mental health, with social media frequently blamed for increasing rates of anxiety, depression, poor self-esteem, and sleep disruption (Redman, 2021). This framing has prompted state-level responses, such as the establishment of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Social Media and Young People’s Mental Health in the UK, and calls from the Secretary of State for Health for official guidelines to help parents protect children from online harm (Redman, 2021).

New political actors & influencers

Social media influencers & political information online

Digital media has fundamentally reshaped political communication by enabling the rise of political influencers, who represent new political actors operating outside traditional institutions. Unlike established elites such as politicians, corporate leaders, and mainstream media (Makse & Zava, 2025), political influencers have emerged organically on platforms like TikTok and Instagram, bypassing conventional barriers to public discourse (Makse & Zava, 2025; Riedl, Lukito, & Woolley, 2023). These influencers build personal brands that blend authenticity, intimacy, and commercialism, which allows them to form parasocial relationships with followers and position themselves as trusted opinion leaders (Arnesson & Reinikainen, 2024; Riedl et al., 2021). They range from creators who focus exclusively on politics to lifestyle influencers who occasionally engage with political or social issues (Riedl, Lukito, & Woolley, 2023).

Among younger audiences, platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have become key sources of political news and engagement. In the United States, 32% of 18 to 29 year olds use TikTok for news (Alsharawy, Anstett, & Landgrave, 2025), while Instagram has been described as Generation Z’s “go-to source of political news” (Taylor, 2019). These platforms promote two-way communication and offer behind-the-scenes content, enhancing the sense of credibility and relatability between influencers and their audiences (Parmelee et al., 2023; Marquart, Ohme, & Möller, 2020). Political influencers are especially effective at making complex political issues more accessible and connecting them to young people’s everyday lives and identities, such as through topics like gender rights and environmental sustainability (Harff & Schmuck, 2025). In a comparative study of youth in Germany and Belgium, 59% were able to name a favourite political social media influencer, highlighting the role these figures play in shaping political attitudes (Harff & Schmuck, 2025). However, this shift also raises concerns. Political influencers can contribute to the spread of misinformation and radical ideologies, which undermines the quality and credibility of political discourse online (Palacios López, Bonete Vizcaíno, & Gelado Marcos, 2023; Goodwin et al., 2023). Research by Palacios et al. (2023) found that out of 40 influencers producing political content, only three refrained from sharing disinformation. While such content can evoke emotional responses and influence political opinions, especially among youth, its overall impact on long-term political attitudes remains uncertain (Alsharawy et al., 2025; Muth & Peter, 2023). Overall, political influencers represent a hybrid phenomenon that merges the personal, promotional, and political. They are transforming how political content is produced, consumed, and engaged with, particularly among younger demographics, through more informal and personalised forms of communication (Arnesson & Reinikainen, 2024; Edgerly et al., 2018; Marquart et al., 2020).

Alternative political news sites & actors

Digital media has become a crucial new arena for political news, signaling a shift away from the long-standing dominance of traditional news outlets. Social media platforms now offer alternative pathways for citizens to encounter and engage with political information (Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021). Digital technologies have significantly contributed to the rise of a 24-hour news cycle, reshaping the media landscape by enabling digital platforms and online political commentators to deliver live and in real-time updates (Bucy et al., 2014). Simultaneously, digital platforms have allowed journalists to engage directly with their audience through live chats and interactive features (Das & Upadhyay, 2024). In response, traditional media outlets have been forced to adapt to digital technologies in order to remain relevant and competitive (Al-Quran, 2022). At the same time, the decline of established news monopolies has empowered citizens to actively contribute political commentary and information themselves, diversifying the sources and voices shaping political discourse online (Bode, 2016). This transformation was especially evident during the 2025 Australian federal election, where platforms like TikTok, Instagram, and podcasts emerged as key venues for political communication, particularly among younger voters who now constitute nearly half of the electorate (Yajman, 2025). Influencers such as Hannah Ferguson ([Cheek Media](#)), Konrad Benjamin ([Punter's Politics](#)), and Abbie Chatfield ([It's A Lot Podcast](#)) have stepped into roles traditionally reserved for journalists, even gaining exclusive access to events like the federal budget lock-up, spaces which are typically restricted to professional media (Meade, 2025).

This shift has challenged the enduring influence of media conglomerates like Rupert Murdoch's News Corp. Despite its firm support for the Coalition and conservative values, News Corp's grip on the Australian media landscape has weakened as younger audiences increasingly turn to social and independent media for political content that is more engaging, accessible, and diverse (Hurcombe, 2025). Beyond individual influencers, emerging digital outlets such as The Daily Aus on Instagram have established themselves as credible news sources favored by Australian youth. The impact of these influencers and digital platforms is evident, with voter engagement among 18 to 34 year olds rising by nearly 10% in the 2025 election compared to 2022 (Hurcombe, 2025).

However, the rise of social media influencers in political news has sparked debate. Critics often dismiss many influencers as self-promoting and question their journalistic integrity, suggesting they may simply echo government messaging without sufficient critical scrutiny (Meade, 2025). Moreover, as social media content tends to prioritise entertainment and relational appeal over informational depth, there are concerns this trend may hinder young people's acquisition of comprehensive political knowledge (Park, 2019). While social media allows for incidental political news exposure, the extent of learning through the digital technologies varies significantly (Bode, 2016; Matthes et al., 2020). Political news on these platforms predominantly reaches those already politically motivated, with incidental exposure proving less effective in boosting political knowledge among less engaged users (Park, 2019; Shehata & Strömbäck, 2021).

SECTION FOUR

YOUTH DIGITAL POLITICAL EXPRESSION

Economies of visibility

The concept of *economies of visibility* is central to understanding how young people navigate political engagement in digital and public spheres, where visibility can serve both as a tool of empowerment and a source of vulnerability. Visibility can be necessary for political recognition and action, especially for marginalised groups whose voices are often excluded from mainstream media and political processes (Dergić et al., 2023; Jenkins et al., 2016). Digital platforms play a crucial role in facilitating this visibility, allowing youth to circulate counter-narratives, build solidarity networks, and challenge dominant media agendas (Pavan & Earl, 2025; Jenkins et al., 2016). However, visibility also carries risks, particularly for youth from marginalised backgrounds, who may become targets of media misrepresentation, disinformation, or backlash that strengthens regressive political movements (Dergić et al., 2023; Rosenfeldová & Vochocová, 2024). For instance, anti-gender campaigns across Europe and the U.S. have been in part credited by processes which have translated online visibility into regressive political change (Dergić et al., 2023).

In response, many young people engage in *strategic invisibility* or *digital infrapolitics*, choosing to limit their visibility or operate “under the radar” to avoid surveillance, discrimination, or state repression (Lee, 2024; Dergić et al., 2023). Examples of *digital infrapolitics* includes coded communication on social media (including attaching meaning to the use of certain emojis), organising political meme groups and anonymous humour-based pages on social media, and using pseudonyms, anonymous accounts or group accounts to participate in disguised resistance or hidden networks (Lee, 2024). This is especially salient for Muslim, transgender, or Indigenous youth, who often face amplified scrutiny even in democratic contexts such as Australia, Canada, and the U.S. (Lee, 2024). As such, visibility and invisibility are not simply oppositional. Rather, they are tactics that youth navigate fluidly depending on context, risk, and identity, revealing the complex terrain of political participation in the digital age.

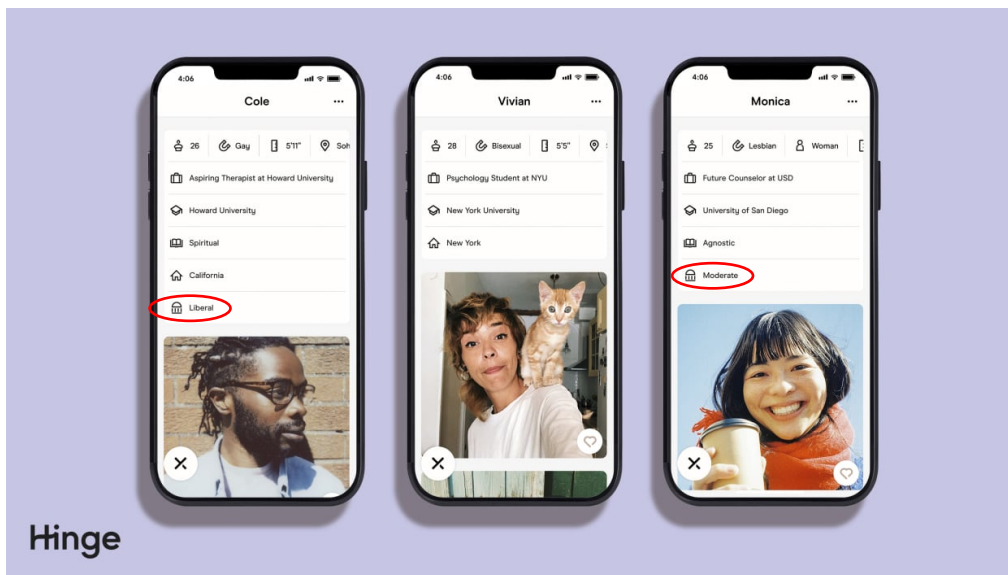
Economies of visibility continue to privilege certain identities in digital landscapes, particularly white, heterosexual, able-bodied individuals (Smrdeji & Pajnik, 2022), and tend to centre and amplify adult voices online, even in issues directly affecting youth. This takes away the political agency of youth, especially from minority and marginalised communities in digital spaces (Choroszewicz, 2024). A recent example can be seen in the media coverage of the Israeli navy’s seizure of the Freedom Flotilla, a ship carrying aid and activists attempting to reach Gaza amid the ongoing Palestine/Israel conflict. The incident gained widespread attention when it was revealed that Greta Thunberg was among those arrested. While her global profile as a youth activist helped amplify the cause, media coverage overwhelmingly focused on Thunberg, sidelining other activists aboard the ship. This sparked critique about how visibility is unevenly distributed, often reinforcing dominant social hierarchies even within activist and youth-led movements. (New York Times, 2025).

Political expression & identity online

Youth political identity formation

Young people’s political identities are constructed and expressed online through complex, relational processes that reflect their broader social networks and lived experiences (Pangrazio, 2019). As Tiidenberg et al. (2024) argue, young people’s use of social media for political purposes is co-developed by personal relationships, platform affordances, and the social norms that govern their daily lives, whether at home, school, or work. These identities are not formed in isolation but emerge through dynamic interactions with peers, audiences (both imagined and real), and the specific functions of the platforms they engage with (DeVito et al., 2018 cited in Tiidenberg et al., 2024). Political expression online is thus deeply personal and varied, as two young people might use the same platform for activism in entirely different ways depending

on their support networks, vulnerabilities, and sense of agency (Tiidenberg et al., 2024). Collin (2008) expands on this by showing that young people increasingly articulate *project-oriented* political identities online, which refers to identities that prioritise issue-based engagement over traditional party politics. These identities are self-reflexive and often grounded in everyday acts of participation, in which the internet serves as a space not only for learning and action but also for meaning making and authorship of the political. Bang (2004, cited in Collin, 2008) describes these young people as “expert citizens” and “everyday makers,” emphasising their shift toward decentralised, networked civic engagement. Even platforms not traditionally associated with politics, such as dating apps like Hinge, reveal how political identity informs youth self-presentation and relationship choices. Chan (2021) notes that many young users seek political homophily, explicitly stating their political views and seeking like-minded partners just as they do peers.



(Source: Mashable 2022, <https://mashable.com/article/hinge-fund-therapy>).

Collective identity & online digital communities

Political identity, however, is not formed in a vacuum. Whilst political identity may be individual to the person, it is also co-constructed through processes of socialisation. Online, this can occur through collective identity creation when likeminded individuals who share similar political beliefs connect through digital and social media platforms. These platforms function as participatory environments that enable users not only to share political content but also to form and sustain online political communities built on shared values and goals (Kharel, 2024). Through features like group formation, instant messaging, and interactive content sharing, young people are able to engage in meaningful political dialogue and action with peers, fostering a sense of belonging and collective purpose (Kharel, 2024). Importantly, even online communities that are not explicitly political, such as gaming or hobby forums, can act as gateways into political engagement. Bowyer and Kahne (2016) found that youth involved in such interest-driven communities are more likely to participate in political discussions over time. Similarly, Kahne, Lee, and Feezell (2013) argue that youth involved in online participatory cultures such as remixing music, producing videos, or organising interest-based groups, develop communication and digital skills that translate into civic skills. Moreover, interpersonal relationships within these communities, particularly when grounded in shared values and trust, can be powerful catalysts for political action. As Assan (2024) shows, youth activists often described educating others in their lives through conversation and content-sharing as a key part of their political work, highlighting how online relationships can spark solidarity and deepen collective political identity.

Expressive citizenship & political voice

Youth political expression online reflects a shift in how civic engagement is conceptualised, with *expressive citizenship* emerging as a central lens through which to understand young people’s digital participation. Expressive citizenship recognises that publicly voicing one’s views on current events, especially in creative and personal ways, is itself a form of political participation, particularly during times of social unrest (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2025). Young people’s political expression on platforms like Instagram and TikTok often blends personal experience, identity, and cultural references with calls for broader change. For example, this was seen during the Black Lives Matter protests where posts ranged from reflective acknowledgements of privilege to deeply personal narratives of racism (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2025). For many youths, particularly those from marginalised or low-SES backgrounds, political self-expression is more accessible online, as it becomes a way to engage politically when traditional avenues feel out of reach (Lane, 2020). These acts of expression whether in the form of memes, music remixes, or viral videos, allow youth to construct counter-narratives, build community, and influence discourse in ways that align with their lived experiences and digital literacies (Lane, 2020). However, this political visibility online is not without tension. While social media offers opportunities to “speak up” and shape public issues (James & Lee, 2017), it also presents challenges such as echo chambers, incivility, and the personal risks associated with having a politicised identity (James & Lee, 2017). Some youth strategically navigate these risks by differentiating civic expression based on platform or audience (Weinstein, 2014). Despite these complexities, individual political voice remains central to how many young people define civic action today, where activism is not just about action in the streets, but about speaking out and being seen in digital spaces.

Participatory digital cultures

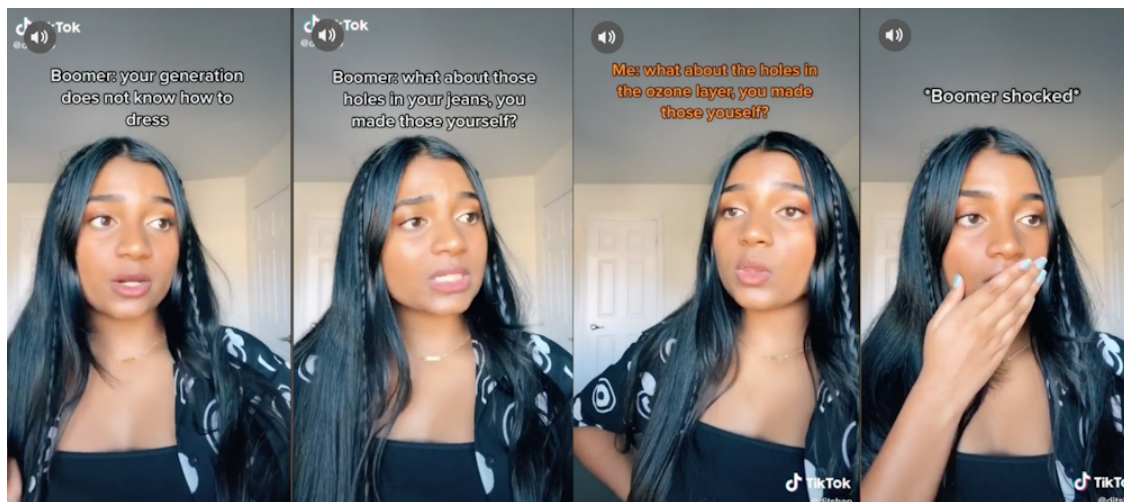
Content creation & production

Youth content creation in digital environments serves multiple functions, ranging from identity formation and social belonging to civic engagement and political activism. While motivations such as prestige, recognition, and creative experimentation often drive content production (Costa et al., 2025; Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2018), youth also use these platforms to engage in political discourse and action, particularly through sharing, commenting, and participating in online discussions (Costa et al., 2025). Digital spaces, including affinity networks and fandoms, provide peer-based communities where norms of expression are co-developed, giving youth the confidence and social validation to express political perspectives through creative forms such as videos, poetry, memes, and multimodal storytelling (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2018). These acts of distributed creativity allow young people to both experiment with authorship and contribute to broader conversations about social and political change. Participation is not only about producing media, but also about using media as a tool for societal engagement. Carpentier (2011) describes this process as the difference between participation in media and participation in society through media (cited in, Costa et al., 2025). For many, particularly those still developing political identities, this participation is shaped by a desire for community and influence, with youth often motivated to inform, be useful, and express alignment with political or social causes (López de Ayala López & Paniagua Santamaría, 2019). Despite occasional criticisms that youth content is poorly structured or targeted only toward peers and family, these digital productions still represent meaningful forms of civic and political engagement (Costa et al., 2025).

Memes & humour

Memes have become a defining feature of youth political expression online, offering a unique blend of humour, critique, and participation that reshapes conventional forms of civic engagement. Frequently created and shared by young citizens themselves, memes serve as accessible, low-barrier forms of “citizen-initiated” political commentary, particularly for those who might otherwise feel alienated from traditional

political discourse (Lilleker & Jackson, 2010). Their visual, humorous, creative, and often pop culture-infused nature makes them highly shareable, engaging youth who may be politically disengaged through “small acts” of incidental exposure or expressive participation (McLoughlin & Southern, 2021; Vromen et al., 2016). Youth often use memes to foster solidarity and build community within like-minded peer groups, gaining social validation while navigating political stress and cynicism (Penney, 2020; Janjua et al., 2025). These cultural artifacts enable complex political ideas to be conveyed with brevity and satire, making them ideal tools for critique, dissent, and identity formation (Janjua et al., 2025; Mihailidis, 2020; Burton, 2019). For instance, the #okboomer trend on TikTok is a form of digital satire and social commentary used by young content creators to critique the political and social decisions of older generations (particularly Baby Boomers) whose choices have contributed to issues such as the climate crisis, economic inequality, and housing affordability. It challenges the expectation that younger generations should unquestioningly respect or follow the opinions of those in power, highlighting a growing frustration with the long-term consequences of past policies on their future (The New Lorenz, 2019; Collett, 2019). However, this playfulness also complicates their political value. While some view political memes as a powerful coping mechanism or mode of subversive discourse (Burton, 2019; Huntington, 2013), others worry they trivialise serious issues or contribute to hyper-polarisation and desensitisation (Penney, 2020). Despite these tensions, memes remain a dominant and evolving form of “everyday maker” citizenship (Vromen et al., 2016; Ross & Rivers, 2017). Politicians have even been warned that if “critics of the President want to fight back effectively on the internet, they need to figure out how to harness the meme to communicate ideas and build community” (Grygiel, 2018). Through rapid dissemination, memes can quickly become catalysts for significant political debate online, making it one of the most popular, important, and recognisable genres of youth digital culture (Penney, 2020).



(Source: The Conversation 2021, <https://theconversation.com/ok-boomer-how-a-tiktok-meme-traces-the-rise-of-gen-z-political-consciousness-165811>).

Digital storytelling (vlogging, posting & stories)

Youth political expression online is increasingly shaped by the creative affordances of digital storytelling, where young people use various social media formats not just to share but to craft and curate their political identities and values (Chung & Macleroy, 2022). Platforms such as Instagram and TikTok offer diverse modalities for self-representation and storytelling. For instance, Instagram posts remain permanently on one’s profile and are open to public interaction, while stories and ‘close friends’ stories allow more selective, time-limited sharing (Kreling et al., 2022). Cultural practices such as the Instagram ‘photo dump’, often

curated to appear spontaneous and candid, exemplify a shift toward more organic modes of digital storytelling as identity expression (Madden, 2024). TikTok's content styles ranging from lip-syncing and skits to political commentary and educational content, also support rich and multimodal self-narration (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). These creative practices operate as “technologies of the self,” where political identity becomes part of how young people narrate their everyday lives online (Rubio-Hurtado et al., 2022). As Clark and Marchi (2018) argue, young users move from simply sharing stories to inserting themselves into ongoing activist narratives, and ultimately to creating new political stories that define their collective and civic identities. Vlogging, in particular, represents a powerful form of digital engagement through which young people develop public voices, create persuasive content, and challenge discourses of political apathy (Caron et al., 2019; Caron, 2017). Youth vlogs address social issues on a range of topics through formats such as satire, spoken word, interviews, and personal testimony, often blending rhetorical strategies with emotional appeal (Raby et al., 2018; Coker, 2024). These acts of digital self-expression foster civic cultures, even when shared within seemingly informal or entertainment-driven spaces. Despite the risks of online hostility, many young vloggers assert themselves as agentic political actors, positioning their digital storytelling not only as identity work but also as a legitimate mode of civic engagement and democratic participation (Raby et al., 2018; Clark & Marchi, 2018).

Digital activism

Youth political expression has increasingly taken root in digital spaces, where social media platforms provide tools for activism and collective mobilisation (Sampaio et al., CITE). Research has shown that young people who engage in digital activism are more likely to participate in offline political actions as well, suggesting that online activity fosters deeper civic engagement (Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). Hashtag activism has emerged as a powerful method for political expression, enabling users to support causes with minimal effort, such as liking, sharing, or retweeting content, which helps disseminate ideas rapidly and broadly (Goswami, 2018). The strategic use of hashtags has allowed movements like #BlackLivesMatter (2013), #MeToo (2017), and #NeverAgain (2018) to gain global visibility and political traction, illustrating the ability of digital networks to facilitate awareness and mobilisation on pressing social issues (Ta'amneh & Al-Ghazo, 2021). These hashtags serve not only as organisational tools but also as discursive spaces where young users can express solidarity, critique power structures, and forge collective identities (Goswami, 2018; Cortés-Ramos et al., 2021). Moreover, political hashtags have been adopted by journalists and news outlets to contextualise stories and engage audiences within existing discursive networks, further amplifying their influence in public debates (Rho & Mazmanian, 2020).

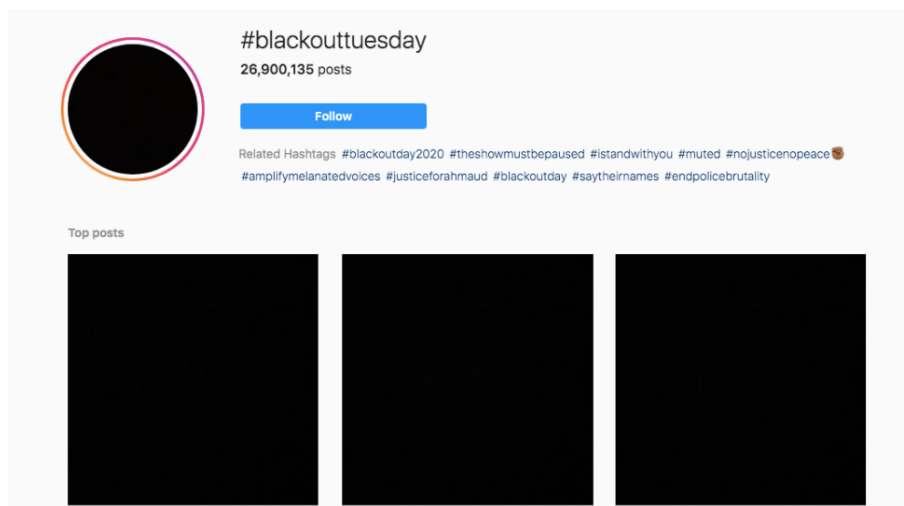
Slacktivism

Youth political expression through digital activism is frequently critiqued as a form of *slacktivism*. The term that combines “slack” and “activism” to denote low-effort, low-risk online actions like liking posts, sharing content, or changing profile pictures in support of a cause (Schuman, 2021; Glenn, 2015). Concerningly, this term is often used in discussions of youth political engagement on platforms like X (formerly Twitter) and Instagram. Critics argue that such actions provide individuals with a sense of moral satisfaction without contributing to tangible social or political change, sometimes described as “feel-good back patting” (Glenn, 2015; Knibbs, 2013). However, recent scholarship challenges this dismissive framing by highlighting the ways in which slacktivism can serve as a gateway to deeper engagement. For instance, Lee and Hsieh (2013, as cited in Schuman, 2021) found that individuals who engaged in slacktivist behaviours were more likely to take subsequent political action. Likewise, a study by Yessenbekova (2020) found that over 90% of young participants who publicly supported a campaign online were willing to engage in real-life actions such as volunteering or donating. Others emphasise the strategic value of slacktivism in raising awareness, reaching

global audiences, and mobilising support in cost-effective and environmentally sustainable ways (Schuman, 2021; Glenn, 2015). While concerns remain about digital activism lacking the disruptive impact of traditional protest (Cabrera, Matias, & Montoya, 2017), scholars including Piat (2019) argue that even small-scale online participation is a valid and legitimate form of civic engagement.

Virtue signalling

Youth political expression through digital activism has also been criticised as a form of *virtue signalling*. This is a more expansive form of online self-presentation, in which virtue signalling is often framed as a more intentional display of moral identity. Tosi and Warmke (cited in Levy, 2021) define virtue signalling as contributing to moral discourse with the aim of appearing “morally respectable,” with recognition and self-presentation as key motivations. This critique suggests that the performative aspects of digital activism may centre more on showcasing personal virtue than effecting meaningful change. For instance, Applebaum (2021) examines how practices like posting black squares for Blackout Tuesday during the Black Lives Matter protests became emblematic of white performative allyship, offering symbolic solidarity without accompanying action (Appiah, 2020). Similar concerns have emerged around the “All Eyes on Rafah” social media campaign, where viral sharing of AI-generated images has sparked debate about whether digital amplification aids awareness or simply signals moral alignment without deeper engagement (Maguire, 2024; University of Technology Sydney, 2024). Young people themselves express discomfort about this dynamic. Dean (2020) found that many youths feel awkward requesting donations online due to fears of “guilt-tripping” others or appearing as though they were “humblebragging.” In these cases, youth are aware that public expressions of virtue, especially in the context of political or humanitarian causes, can be interpreted as self-serving rather than sincere. Criticism of digital activism as being motivated by a desire for online validation and moral praise comes not only from politicians and journalists, but also from peers themselves. Many young people, especially teenagers, fear being labelled as “fake-woke”, or accused of performative politics (instances of shallow or self-serving support for social justice causes) (Thimsen, 2022). This result in young people avoiding or carefully moderating their political posts online to prevent judgment, confrontations, or accusations of insincerity (Kaskazi & Kitzie, 2023) which encourages political disengagement.



(Source: Los Angeles Daily News 2023, <https://www.dailynews.com/2020/06/02/blackout-tuesday-is-in-full-effect-but-what-does-it-mean/>).



(Source: ABC 2025, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-06-01/all-eyes-on-rafah-gaza-ai-image-social-media-slacktivism/103917648>).

Fear of expression

Due to increasing negative feedback, public scrutiny, and broader societal debates around youth political expression online, many young people now experience a growing fear of speaking out about politics on digital and social media platforms (Weeks et al., 2024). This fear stems from a range of concerns and social outcomes that have increased in recent years, including persecution by authorities, professional or academic repercussions, and damaged social relationships, as well as exposure to trolling, cancel culture, and the pressures of political correctness. Each of these contributes to growing concerns about the prevalence of cyber bullying online, particularly amongst adolescents (Singh, 2023). These dynamics have created an environment where self-censorship is common, and the risks of online expression often outweigh the perceived benefits (Bar-Tal, 2017).

Persecution

Many young people are increasingly fearful of expressing political views online due to the potential for persecution across personal, professional, and governmental spheres. Research shows that fears of social sanctions such as being unfriended, losing reputation, or facing ostracism within peer networks, play a significant role in young people's reluctance to speak out, particularly on platforms such as Facebook that mirror real-life relationships (Chan, 2021). With nearly half (46%) of U.S. teens aged 13 to 17 reporting that they have experiences bullying or harassment online (Vogel, 2022), and just over 1 in 5 (21%) of Australians aged 15 to 19 (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021), this is particularly concerning trend for youth wellbeing. This aligns with Noelle-Neumann's (1977) *spiral of silence theory*, which suggests individuals are less likely to express views they perceive as unpopular, especially when their standing in a friendship group is at stake, especially as most people are afraid of becoming isolated from their social environments (cited in Chan, 2021). Professionally, concerns about reputational damage or career repercussions also inhibit expression, even among those with strong political views (Weeks, Halversen, & Neubaum, 2024). For instance, the decision made by the ABC to sack radio host Antoinette Lattouf following a post she made on

social media about the Israel/Palestine conflict indicates to Australian youth that publicly sharing political views can have detrimental effects on your career (Turnbull, 2024). On a governmental level, youth in more restrictive or authoritarian contexts fear legal punishment or censorship for political speech, with freedom of expression varying widely across countries (Kligler-Vilenchik & Literat, 2024). Together, these personal, professional, and legal risks have created a climate where digital political expression is perceived as potentially dangerous, encouraging widespread self-censorship among youth.

Trolling

Trolling has become a central force shaping how young people experience and engage with political discourse online, contributing significantly to their fear of political expression. While trolling is often dismissed as fringe or juvenile behaviour, research shows it operates within organised social systems, often with shared norms and deliberate strategies aimed at silencing or intimidating others (Flores-Saviaga, Keegan, & Savage, 2018). Political trolling can lead to serious psychological consequences for its targets, including anxiety, fear, depression, and a sense of helplessness. For instance, in high-profile instances of online trolling such as #GamerGate, coordinated attacks drove women out of online spaces through doxxing (i.e., revealing identifying information about someone online) and violent threats (Aghazadeh et al., 2018). On platforms including TikTok, political trolling frequently takes on humorous or provocative tones, but this does not negate its disruptive impact (Fichman & Akter, 2025). Even when trolling is framed as entertainment, it still often involves inflammatory and offensive content designed to provoke or humiliate. This creates a climate in which young users, especially those aligned with minority or progressive views, fear becoming targets. Furthermore, youth are often unfairly blamed for the very behaviours they are most vulnerable to, with public discourse and media contributing to a “society fallacy” that assumes all trolling originates from “digital teens,” when in reality, such claims oversimplify and misplace the root of the issue (Bishop, 2014).

Cancel culture

Cancel culture has become another major factor contributing to young people's fear of political expression online, particularly due to its strong presence on social media and its emotional and social consequences. Originally associated with holding individuals accountable for harmful actions, as seen in the #MeToo movement, cancel culture has since evolved into a broader form of peer-driven exclusion targeting those whose views do not align with dominant social narratives (Nebojša, Ružica, & Zakira, 2023). Among youth, this often manifests as a form of social and emotional violence, often in the form of cyberbullying, including insults, threats, blackmail, and online ostracism, which can severely impact mental health (Jahanbin, n.d.). It can also affect identity formation, particularly during adolescence, when peer approval is especially significant (Pérez-Torres, 2024). Victims may experience depression, isolation, and a reluctance to participate in online discourse for fear of being targeted (Adeyemi, 2025). The process of “cancellation” also erodes the possibility of dialogue, encouraging conformity rather than open political discussion (Breakey, 2020). In a study of teenagers in Barcelona, male participants expressed fear about engaging in feminist and LGBTIQ+ discussions in peer-led digital media projects, concerned that voicing the “wrong” opinion would result in social backlash (Iñigo, Fernández, & Tomasena, 2024). This sense of hyper-surveillance and the risk of being misinterpreted or shunned discourages political engagement and reinforces a digital environment where silence often feels safer than expression.

Political correctness

Political correctness also plays a complex role in shaping young people's fear of political expression. While the term is often associated with youth culture, at times as a sign that younger generations are overly sensitive or “coddled” (McBeth, 2022), young people themselves navigate the nuances of political

correctness with considerable awareness. On one hand, political correctness can foster greater inclusivity by encouraging individuals to consider how their words and actions impact marginalised groups, helping to prevent the spread of harmful beliefs (Villarama et al., 2024). On the other hand, many youth regard political correctness as a form of social pressure that can feel like censorship, limiting their freedom to express dissenting or unpopular opinions for fear of being criticised or ridiculed (Aly & Simpson, 2019; Villarama et al., 2024). This tension is heightened by the intensified public scrutiny and rapid feedback cycles of social media, where debates over political correctness frequently amplify antagonisms and contribute to polarised discourse (Aly & Simpson, 2019).



SECTION FIVE

RECOMMENDATIONS

Throughout this literature review, several critical gaps and future directions for academic enquiry have been identified. Addressing these will strengthen the field's ability to capture the evolving nature of youth political engagement in digital contexts:

- Conduct more longitudinal studies to track how youth political engagement evolves over time, particularly in response to shifting platform dynamics and major global political events.
- Increase comparative research across national and cultural contexts, with particular attention to liberal democracies in states with comparable political norms and media environments to Australia.
- Recognise the impact of globalisation and the transnational nature of the internet, which allows youth to connect, learn, and mobilise across borders more than ever before.
- Examine how global content flows, political movements, and digital trends influence local forms of political engagement and identity formation among youth by using alternative measures of political participation.
- Develop consistent definitions for terms such as “youth” and “political participation” to improve clarity, comparability, and applicability of research across diverse settings.
- Differentiate overlapping digital concepts for terms such as ‘digital platforms’, ‘digital media’, and ‘social media’ to strengthen analytical precision and avoid theoretical ambiguity and empirical inconsistency.
- Prioritise research on emerging, platform-specific dynamics to better understand the affordances, cultures, and algorithms of short-form and video-based platforms such as TikTok, YouTube Shorts, and Instagram Reels, where youth are increasingly engaging politically. This will ensure research reflects contemporary digital environments rather than relying on outdated platform contexts such as Facebook.
- Explore how youth with diverse, intersectional identities engage politically online, with particular attention to the varied methods of digital participation they use to connect with their communities, express shared concerns, and build collective identity across platforms and contexts.
- Include youth voices in defining political participation and digital literacy, ensuring that young people are directly involved in shaping the frameworks, content, and delivery of civic engagement and media literacy initiatives that aim to support them.
- Incorporate real-time digital culture by integrating grey literature, social media posts, trending hashtags, and other dynamic digital data sources to capture the fast-evolving nature of youth online experiences beyond traditional academic research.
- Acknowledge that existing research often focuses on youth political consumption online while overlooking their patterns of digital expression, highlighting the need for deeper investigation into how consuming political content influences their overall political engagement.

References

- Adjin-Tettey, T., 2022. Combating fake news, disinformation, and misinformation: Experimental evidence for media literacy education. *Cogent arts & humanities*, 9(1), p.2037229.
- Adeyemi, V., 2025. The Psychological Impact of Cancel Culture: Anxiety, Social Isolation, and Self-Censorship. *Premier Journal of Psychology* 2025; 2:100005.
- Aghababayan, A., 2023. Government Blocking of Social Media Platforms as Expropriation of Contractual Rights. *ITA Rev.*, 5, p.15.
- Aghazadeh, S.A., Burns, A., Chu, J., Feigenblatt, H., Larabee, E., Maynard, L., Meyers, A.L., O'Brien, J.L. and Rufus, L., 2018. GamerGate: A case study in online harassment. *Online harassment*, pp.179-207.
- Aimeur, E., Amri, S. and Brassard, G., 2023. Fake news, disinformation and misinformation in social media: a review. *Social Network Analysis and Mining*, 13(1), p.30.
- Akat, M. and Hamarta, E., 2025. Doomscrolling and social media addiction in adolescents: a two-wave longitudinal study. *Journal of Addictive Diseases*, pp.1-9.
- Alaparthi, K., 2024. Technology and Digital Media's Impact on Attention Span in Teenagers and Young Adults. *Available at SSRN 4872178*.
- Alava, S., Frau-Meigs, D. and Hassan, G., 2017. *Youth and violent extremism on social media: mapping the research*. UNESCO publishing.
- al Homran, M., Al-Swalha, A. and AlAweemer, Y., 2021. Role of social media in spreading the culture of extremism. *Dirasat: Human and Social Sciences*, 48(3).
- AlJabre, A., 2013. Social networking, social movements, and Saudi Arabia: A review of literature. *ARNP Journal of Science and Technology*, 3(2), pp.161-168.
- Al-Quran, M.W.M., 2022. Traditional media versus social media: challenges and opportunities. *Technium: Romanian Journal of Applied Sciences and Technology*, 4(10), pp.145-160.
- Alsharawy, A., Anstett, R. and Landgrave, M., 2025. What Is the Effect of Political Influencers on TikTok? Early Results From a Field Experiment With Young Adults. *Political Studies Review*.
- Aly, W. and Simpson, R.M., 2019. Political correctness gone viral. In *Media ethics, free speech, and the requirements of democracy* (pp. 125-143). Routledge.
- Al-Zaman, M.S. and Shiblee Noman, M.M., 2024. Rise of Digital Authoritarianism? Exploring Global Motivations Behind Governmental Social Media Censorship. *Javnost-The Public*, 31(4), pp.529-544.
- Andrejevic, M. (2019). Automating surveillance. *Surveillance & Society*, 17(1-2), 7-13. <https://doi.org/10.24908/ss.v17i1/2.12930>
- Andrejevic, M. (2020). *Automated media*. Routledge.
- Anyaogu, Q., Waheed, M., Bidin, R. And Osman, M.N., 2025. Enhancing Youth Political Participation Through Social Media Exposure: An Exploration Of Social Exchange Theory. *Quantum Journal Of Social Sciences And Humanities*, 6(2), Pp.340-354.
- Apau, R., 2018. Youth and violent extremism online: countering terrorists exploitation and use of the Internet. *African Journal on Terrorism*, 7(1), pp.16-23.
- Applebaum, B., 2021. The non-performativity of white virtue-signaling: Insights for social justice pedagogy. *PHILOSOPHY*, 77(3), pp.42-58.
- Appiah, K.A., 2020. 'I've Protested for Racial Justice. Do I have to Post on Social Media?'. *The New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/30/magazine/ive-protested-for-racial-justice-do-i-have-to-post-on-social-media.html>.
- Arnesson, J. and Reinikainen, H., 2024. Influencer politics: An introduction. *Influencer Politics*, p.1.

- Asadullah, A., Faik, I. and Kankanhalli, A., 2018. Digital platforms: A review and future directions.
- Asif, M. and Kazi, S., 2024. Examining the influence of short videos on attention span and its relationship with academic performance. *International Journal of Science and Research*, 13(4), pp.1877-1883.
- Assan, T.T., 2024. 'Once you bond... you want to create social change': Interpersonal relationships in youth activism. *Children & Society*, 38(3), pp.789-803.
- Autry Jr, A.J. and Berge, Z., 2011. Digital natives and digital immigrants: getting to know each other. *Industrial and commercial training*, 43(7), pp.460-466.
- Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021. 'Bullying and negative online experiences', <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/children-youth/negative-online-experiences>.
- Bakardjieva, M. and Gaden, G., 2012. Web 2.0 technologies of the self. *Philosophy & technology*, 25, pp.399-413.
- Ballard, P.J., 2014. What motivates youth civic involvement?. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 29 (4), pp.439-463.
- Barnes, M.J. and Karim, S.M., 2025. The Manosphere and Politics. *Comparative Political Studies*.
- Bar-Tal, D., 2017. Self-censorship as a socio-political-psychological phenomenon: Conception and research. *Political Psychology*, 38, pp.37-65.
- Battocchio, A.F., Bode, L., Wells, C., Vraga, E., Thorson, K. and Edgerly, S., 2023. Gen Z's civic engagement: civic skills, political expression, and identity. In *Handbook of Digital Politics* (pp. 181-209). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Bayer, J., & Bard, P., 2021. Overcoming Youth Vulnerabilities To Far-Right Narratives. *Center for The Study of Democracy*, <https://csd.eu/fileadmin/user_upload/publications_library/files/2021_06/BRIEF_102_EN_WEB.pdf>.
- Bennett, W.L., 2012. The personalization of politics: Political identity, social media, and changing patterns of participation. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 644(1), pp.20-39.
- Berg, S. and Hofmann, J., 2021. Digital democracy. *Internet Policy Review*, 10(4), pp.1-23.
- Berger, M.N., Taba, M., Marino, J.L., Lim, M.S., Cooper, S.C., Lewis, L., Albury, K., Chung, K.S.K., Bateson, D. and Skinner, S.R., 2021. Corrigendum to: social media's role in support networks among LGBTQ adolescents: a qualitative study. *Sexual health*, 18(5), pp.444-444.
- Bessant, J., 2014. The political in the age of the digital: Propositions for empirical investigation. *Politics*, 34(1), pp.33-44.
- Bhalla, R., Tiwari, P. and Chowdhary, N., 2021. Digital natives leading the world: paragons and values of Generation Z. In *Generation Z marketing and management in tourism and hospitality: The future of the industry* (pp. 3-23). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Bhargava, V.R. and Velasquez, M., 2021. Ethics of the attention economy: The problem of social media addiction. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, 31(3), pp.321-359.
- Bishop, J., 2014. Digital Teens and the 'Antisocial Network': Prevalence of Troublesome Online Youth Groups and Internet trolling in Great Britain. *International Journal of E-Politics (IJEP)*, 5(3), pp.1-15.
- Blake, J.A., Sourander, A., Kato, A. and Scott, J.G., 2025. Will restricting the age of access to social media reduce mental illness in Australian youth?. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 59(3), pp.202-208.
- Blanc, A., Cavazza, N., Corbetta, P., Fournier, B., Galais, C., Garcia-Albacete, G., Haug, L., Paul, R., Quintelier, E., Schwarzer, S. and Tuorto, D., 2013. *Growing into politics: Contexts and timing of political socialisation*. Ecpr Press.
- Blommaert, J., 2020. Political discourse in post-digital societies. *Trabalhos em Linguística Aplicada*, 59(1), pp.390-403.
- Booth, E., Johns, A., Harris, A. and Caluya, G., 2025. 'It's not relevant because you already know all of it': how Australian diaspora youth navigate truth and misinformation online. *Media International Australia*, p.1329878X251330792.

- Bousalis, R. R. (2021). The counterculture generation: Idolized, appropriated, and misunderstood. *The Councilor: A National Journal of the Social Studies*, 82(2), 3.
- Boyd, D., 2008. Can social network sites enable political action. *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, 4(2), pp.241-244.
- Boyd, D., 2010. Social network sites as networked publics: Affordances, dynamics, and implications. In *A networked self* (pp. 47-66). Routledge.
- Bowyer, B. and Kahne, J., 2016. When young people get involved in online communities it leads them towards politics. *Monkey Cage, Washington Post*, 21.
- Boyd, D. and Marwick, A.E., 2011, September. Social privacy in networked publics: Teens' attitudes, practices, and strategies. In *A decade in internet time: Symposium on the dynamics of the internet and society*.
- Brady, W.J., Crockett, M.J. and Van Bavel, J.J., 2020. The MAD model of moral contagion: The role of motivation, attention, and design in the spread of moralized content online. *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 15(4), pp.978-1010.
- Breakey, H., 2020. 'Is cancel culture silencing open debate? There are risks to shutting down opinions we disagree with', *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/is-cancel-culture-silencing-open-debate-there-are-risks-to-shutting-down-opinions-we-disagree-with-142377>.
- Bright, J., 2018. Explaining the emergence of political fragmentation on social media: The role of ideology and extremism. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 23(1), pp.17-33.
- Bromell, D., 2022. Challenges in regulating online content. In *Regulating Free Speech in a Digital Age: Hate, Harm and the Limits of Censorship* (pp. 29-53). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Bucy, E.P., Gantz, W. and Wang, Z., 2014. Media technology and the 24-hour news cycle. In *Communication technology and social change* (pp. 143-163). Routledge.
- Buckingham, D., 2015. Defining digital literacy-What do young people need to know about digital media?. *Nordic journal of digital literacy*, 10(Jubileumsnummer), pp.21-35.
- Burton, J., 2019. Look at us, we have anxiety: Youth, memes, and the power of online cultural politics. *Journal of Childhood Studies*, pp.3-17.
- Bruns, A., 2023. From "the" public sphere to a network of publics: Towards an empirically founded model of contemporary public communication spaces. *Communication Theory*, 33(2-3), pp.70-81.
- Cabrera, N.L., Matias, C.E. and Montoya, R., 2017. Activism or slacktivism? The potential and pitfalls of social media in contemporary student activism. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, 10(4), p.400.
- Canales, S. B. and Evershed, N., 2025. 'Train takes, diss tracks and TikTok clips: politicians pull out the stops to win over gen Z voters', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2025/apr/18/train-takes-diss-tracks-and-tiktok-clips-politicians-pull-out-the-stops-to-win-over-gen-z-voters>.
- Caron, C., 2017. Speaking up about bullying on YouTube: Teenagers' vlogs as civic engagement. *Canadian Journal of Communication*, 42(4), pp.645-668.
- Caron, C., Raby, R., Mitchell, C., Thewissen-LeBlanc, S. and Prioletta, J., 2019. How are civic cultures achieved through youth social-change-oriented vlogging? A multimodal case study. *Convergence*, 25(4), pp.694-713.
- Castro, C. and Pham, A., 2020. Is the attention economy noxious?. *Philosophers*, 20(17).
- Cohen, S., 2011. *Folk devils and moral panics*. Routledge.
- Connolly, N. and McGuinness, C., 2018. Towards digital literacy for the active participation and engagement of young people in a digital world. *Young people in a digitalised world*, 4, p.77.
- Chang, C.W. and Chang, S.H., 2023. The impact of digital disruption: Influences of digital media and social networks on forming digital natives' attitude. *Sage Open*, 13(3), p.21582440231191741.

- Chan, L.S., 2021. Looking for politically like-minded partners: Self-presentation and partner-vetting strategies on dating apps. *Personal Relationships*, 28(3), pp.703-720.
- Chan, M., 2021. Reluctance to talk about politics in face-to-face and Facebook settings: Examining the impact of fear of isolation, willingness to self-censor, and peer network characteristics. In *Social Media News and Its Impact* (pp. 169-191). Routledge.
- Chen, P.J. and Stilinovic, M., 2020. New media and youth political engagement. *Journal of Applied Youth Studies*, 3(3), pp.241-254.
- Cheong, D.D., 2025. The Far-Right and Youth—Global Developments. In *Strategic Currents: “Triggered” and “Mobilised” Evolving Identities and Implications for National Cohesion and Security* (pp. 3-15).
- Cherney, A., Belton, E., Norham, S.A.B. and Milts, J., 2022. Understanding youth radicalisation: an analysis of Australian data. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 14(2), pp.97-119.
- Choroszewicz, M., 2024. Addressing youths’ digital agency with internet technologies: discourses and practices that produce inequalities. *Journal of Youth Studies*, pp.1-18.
- Chowdhury, I., 2024. ‘Australia’s young people are moving to the left – though young women are more progressive than men, reflecting a global trend’, *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/australias-young-people-are-moving-to-the-left-though-young-women-are-more-progressive-than-men-reflecting-a-global-trend-222288>.
- Chowdhury, I., 2025. ‘Young men are lurching right worldwide, but is Australia immune?’, *The Lowey Institute*, <https://www.loweyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/young-men-are-lurching-right-worldwide-australia-immune>.
- Chung, Y.C. and Macleroy, V., 2022. 12 How Weird is Weird? Young People, Activist Citizenship and Multivoiced Digital Stories. *Liberating Language Education*, 101, p.255.
- Clark, L.S. and Marchi, R., 2018. Storytelling the Self into Citizenship: How Social Media Practices Facilitate Adolescent and Emerging Adult Political Life. In *A networked self and birth, life, death* (pp. 69-88). Routledge.
- Clarke, R., 2019. Risks inherent in the digital surveillance economy: A research agenda. *Journal of information technology*, 34(1), pp.59-80.
- Coker, W., 2024. Vlogging truth to power: a study of the postcolonial rhetoric of disenfranchised Ghanaian migrants’ political vlogs. *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 41(4), pp.394-407.
- Collect, M., 2019. ‘How the phrase ‘OK boomer’ suddenly went all over the internet’, *ABC*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-11-07/how-the-phrase-ok-boomer-suddenly-went-all-over-the-internet/11680868>.
- Collin, P., 2008. The internet, youth participation policies, and the development of young people's political identities in Australia. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(5), pp.527-542.
- Congge, U., Guillamón, M.D., Nurmandi, A., Salahudin and Sihidi, I.T., 2023. Digital democracy: A systematic literature review. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 5, p.972802.
- Conner, J.O., Lotesta, J. and Stannard, R., 2023. Intersectional politicization: A facet of youth activists' sociopolitical development. *Journal of community psychology*, 51(3), pp.1345-1364.
- Cortés-Ramos, A., Torrecilla García, J.A., Landa-Blanco, M., Poleo Gutiérrez, F.J. and Castilla Mesa, M.T., 2021. Activism and social media: Youth participation and communication. *Sustainability*, 13(18), p.10485.
- Costa, C., Pereira, S., Brandão, D., Pinto, D. and Jardim, C., 2025. Children and youth participation in digital environment: a systematic literature review. *Perspectives on Design and Digital Communication V*, pp.61-90.
- da Silva Neto, V.J. and Chiarini, T., 2021. Technological progress and political systems: non-institutional digital platforms and political transformation. *Technology in Society*, 64, p.101460.
- Davis, M., 2025. ‘Are young men really becoming more conservative?’, *The University of Melbourne*, <https://pursuit.unimelb.edu.au/articles/are-young-men-really-becoming-more-conservative>.

- Dean, J., 2020. # humblebrags and the good giving self on social media. In *The Good Glow* (pp. 51-70). Policy Press.
- De Gregorio, G., 2020. Democratising online content moderation: A constitutional framework. *Computer Law & Security Review*, 36, p.105374.
- Dergić, V., Dähnke, I., Nartova, N., Shilova, A., Matos, R. and Carneiro, A., 2023. When visibility becomes political: visibility and stigmatisation of young people. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 26(3), pp.351-367.
- de Segovia Vicente, D., Van Gaeveren, K., Murphy, S.L. and Vanden Abeele, M.M., 2024. Does mindless scrolling hamper well-being? Combining ESM and log-data to examine the link between mindless scrolling, goal conflict, guilt, and daily well-being. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(1).
- Devi, S., 2025. Effect of Mindless Scrolling on Fear of Missing Out. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 16(1), pp.73-75.
- Dingli, A., Seychell, D., Dingli, A. and Seychell, D., 2015. Who are the digital natives?. *The new digital natives: Cutting the chord*, pp.9-22.
- Ederly, S., Vraga, E.K., Bode, L., Thorson, K. and Thorson, E., 2018. New media, new relationship to participation? A closer look at youth news repertoires and political participation. *Journalism & Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(1), pp.192-212.
- Elhajjar, S. and Yacoub, L., 2024. Social media research: We are publishing more but with weak influence. *Plos one*, 19(2), p.e0297241.
- Eltaher, F., Gajula, R.K., Miralles-Pechuán, L., Crotty, P., Martínez-Otero, J., Thorpe, C. and McKeever, S., 2025. Protecting Young Users on Social Media: Evaluating the Effectiveness of Content Moderation and Legal Safeguards on Video Sharing Platforms.
- eSafety Commissioner, 2021. 'The Digital Lives of Aussie Teens', <https://www.esafety.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-02/The%20digital%20lives%20of%20Aussie%20teens.pdf>.
- eSafety Commissioner, 2024. 'Social media age restrictions', <https://www.esafety.gov.au/about-us/industry-regulation/social-media-age-restrictions#:~:text=Part%204A%20of%20the%20Online,safer%20digital%20spaces%20for%20everyone>.
- Fernandez, M., Gonzalez-Pardo, A. and Alani, H., 2019. Radicalisation influence in social media. *Journal of Web Science*, 6.
- Fichman, P. and Akter, S., 2025. Political trolling on TikTok. *Telematics and Informatics*, 96, p.102226.
- Flores-Saviaga, C., Keegan, B. and Savage, S., 2018, June. Mobilizing the trump train: Understanding collective action in a political trolling community. In *Proceedings of the International AAAI Conference on Web and Social Media* (Vol. 12, No. 1).
- Floridi, L., 2014. *The Fourth Revolution: How the infosphere is reshaping human reality*. Oxford University Press.
- Flyverbom, M., 2011. *The power of networks: Organizing the global politics of the Internet*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Freeman, S., Hondroudakis, G., Kamal, M., & McKittrick, B., 2022. The Visual, the True, and the Political. *Journal of Media and Communication*, 9(1), pp. 4-8.
- Frey, W.R., Ward, L.M., Weiss, A. and Cogburn, C.D., 2022. Digital White racial socialization: Social media and the case of whiteness. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 32(3), pp.919-937.
- Fu, X., Avenyo, E. and Ghauri, P., 2021. Digital platforms and development: a survey of the literature. *Innovation and Development*, 11(2-3), pp.303-321.
- Fuchs, C., 2022. *Digital democracy and the digital public sphere: Media, communication and society volume six*. Routledge.
- Galais, C., 2013. The socialisation effects of digital media on personal autonomy values. S. Abendschön (red.). *Growing into Politics. Contexts and Timing of Political Socialisation*, pp.161-182.
- García-Albacete, G., Núñez, L., Sánchez, D., Abendschön, S. and Kleer, P., 2025. Beyond gender: Exploring the intersectional dynamics in political interest among youth. *Politics and Governance*, 13.

- Gawer, A., 2022. Digital platforms and ecosystems: remarks on the dominant organizational forms of the digital age. *Innovation*, 24(1), pp.110-124.
- Gerald, M. M. (2023). Social Media and Political Extremism. *IJRT Special Issue on Social Development*, 6.
- Ghosh, B., 2020. Big Bad Social Media: Distributed Affects and Popular Politics. *Culture Machine*, 19.
- Gil de Zúñiga, H., Molyneux, L. and Zheng, P., 2014. Social media, political expression, and political participation: Panel analysis of lagged and concurrent relationships. *Journal of communication*, 64(4), pp.612-634.
- Ging, D., 2019. Alphas, betas, and incels: Theorizing the masculinities of the manosphere. *Men and masculinities*, 22(4), pp.638-657.
- Godard, R. and Holtzman, S., 2024. Are active and passive social media use related to mental health, wellbeing, and social support outcomes? A meta-analysis of 141 studies. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(1).
- Goodwin, A., Joseff, K., Riedl, M.J., Lukito, J. and Woolley, S., 2023. Political relational influencers: The mobilization of social media influencers in the political arena. *International Journal of Communication*, 17, p.21.
- Gorwa, R., 2024. *The politics of platform regulation: How governments shape online content moderation* (p. 250). Oxford University Press.
- Goswami, M.P., 2018. Social media and hashtag activism. *Liberty dignity and change in journalism*, 2017.
- Glenn, C.L., 2015. Activism or "Slacktivism?": digital media and organizing for social change. *Communication Teacher*, 29(2), pp.81-85.
- Grantham, S., 2024. The rise of TikTok elections: the Australian Labor Party's use of TikTok in the 2022 federal election campaigning. *Communication Research and Practice*, 10(2), pp.181-199.
- Grygiel, J., 2018. "The Left Shouldn't be Too Proud to Meme." *The New York Times*, <<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/05/opinion/democrats-memes-social-media.html>>.
- Gunton, K., 2022. The impact of the internet and social media platforms on radicalisation to terrorism and violent extremism. In *Privacy, Security And Forensics in The Internet of Things (IoT)* (pp. 167-177). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Habashi, J. and Habashi, J., 2017. Reconceptualizing Youth Political Socialization: A Theoretical Framework. *Political Socialization of Youth: A Palestinian Case Study*, pp.17-35.
- Habermas, J., 2020. The public sphere: An encyclopedia article. In *Critical theory and society* (pp. 136-142). Routledge.
- Habermas, J. and Press, P., 1989. The public sphere: An inquiry into a category of Bourgeois society.
- Habermas, J., 2006. Political communication in media society: Does democracy still enjoy an epistemic dimension? The impact of normative theory on empirical research. *Communication theory*, 16(4), pp.411-426.
- Harff, D. and Schmuck, D., 2025. Who relies on social media influencers for political information? A cross-country study among youth. *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 30(3), pp.841-864.
- Harris, A., 2016. Young people, politics and citizenship. In *Routledge handbook of youth and young adulthood* (pp. 311-316). Routledge.
- Harris, A. and Johns, A., 2021. Youth, social cohesion and digital life: From risk and resilience to a global digital citizenship approach. *Journal of Sociology*, 57(2), pp.394-411.
- Heins, M., 2013. The brave new world of social media censorship. *Harv. L. Rev. F.*, 127, p.325.
- Heinze, A.S., 2025. Drivers of radicalisation? The development and role of the far-right youth organisation 'Young Alternative' in Germany. *International Political Science Review*, 46(1), pp.108-124.

- Helberger, N., 2020. The political power of platforms: How current attempts to regulate misinformation amplify opinion power. *Digital Journalism*, 8(6), pp.842-854.
- Held, S., 2023. incels://cheeks/jaws: On fragile masculinity, fatal body ideals, homophobic homoeroticism and National Socialist aesthetics revisited. *Fashion, Style & Popular Culture*, 10(1-2), pp.147-166.
- Helsper, E.J. and Eynon, R., 2010. Digital natives: where is the evidence?. *British educational research journal*, 36(3), pp.503-520.
- Hendricks, V.F. and Vestergaard, M., 2019. *Reality lost: Markets of attention, misinformation and manipulation*. Springer Nature.
- Hinds, J., Williams, E.J. and Joinson, A.N., 2020. "It wouldn't happen to me": Privacy concerns and perspectives following the Cambridge Analytica scandal. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 143, p.102498.
- Howard, P., Carr, J. and Milstein, T., 2002. Digital technology and the market for political surveillance. *Surveillance and Society*, 3(1).
- Human Rights Watch, 2021. 'Israel/ Palestine: Facebook Censors Discussion of Rights Issues', <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/10/08/israel/palestine-facebook-censors-discussion-rights-issues>.
- Hurcombe, E., 2025. 'In the age of the influencers, does the political backing of News Corp Matter anymore?', *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/in-the-age-of-the-influencer-does-the-political-backing-of-news-corp-matter-anymore-255876>.
- Hurrelmann, K. and Albrecht, E., 2021. *Gen Z: Between climate crisis and coronavirus pandemic*. Routledge.
- Hushen, M.D., 2024. Harnessing Facebook by Gen Z to Mobilize Masses and Transform Student Protest into Revolution: A Study on Quota Reform Movement 2024 in Bangladesh. *Journal of Public Administration, Public Affairs, and Management*, 22(2), pp.145-145.
- Hussain, S., Knijnik, J. and Balram, R., 2024. Curriculum wars and youth political education in the UK and Australia—a narrative review. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 44(2), pp.193-203.
- Hyman, H., 1959. *Political socialization*. Free Press.
- Iñigo, A., Fernández, L. and Tomasena, J.M., 2024. Disinterest, normalisation of gender violence and fear of being cancelled: Mediatized learning on antifeminist and anti-lgbtqi+ discourses among teenagers in Barcelona. *International Communication Gazette*, 86(5), pp.420-436.
- Inthorn, S., Street, J. and Scott, M., 2013. Popular culture as a resource for political engagement. *Cultural Sociology*, 7(3), pp.336-351.
- IPSOS, 2018. 'Beyond Binary: The Lives and Choices of Generation Z', https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/2018-08/ipsos_-_beyond_binary_-_the_lives_and_choices_of_gen_z.pdf.
- Jahanbin, N., n.d. *The Significance in Diminishing Shame Culture: An Analysis on Cancel Culture*.
- Jakubowski, J., 2021. Political socialization in meme times: Adolescents and the sources of knowledge concerning politics. *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 43(3), pp.254-274.
- James, C. and Lee, A., 2017. Speaking up online: Civic identity and expression in the digital age. In *Social movements and media* (pp. 119-146). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Janjua, S.A., Mukhtar, S. and Waheed, T., 2025. The Persuasive Power of Political Memes: A Coping Strategy for Mitigating the Political and Social Stress Among Youth. *ASSAJ*, 3(02), pp.1767-1791
- Jenkins, H., Shresthova, S., Gamber-Thompson, L., Kligler-Vilenchik, N. and Zimmerman, A., 2016. *By any media necessary: The new youth activism*. New York University Press.
- Kahne, J. and Bowyer, B., 2019. Can media literacy education increase digital engagement in politics?. *Learning, media and technology*, 44(2), pp.211-224.

- Kahne, J., Lee, N.J. and Feezell, J.T., 2013. The civic and political significance of online participatory cultures among youth transitioning to adulthood. *Journal of Information Technology & Politics*, 10(1), pp.1-20.
- Kaskazi, A. and Kitzie, V., 2023. Engagement at the margins: Investigating how marginalized teens use digital media for political participation. *New Media & Society*, 25(1), pp.72-94.
- Keating, A. and Melis, G., 2017. Social media and youth political engagement: Preaching to the converted or providing a new voice for youth?. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 19(4), pp.877-894.
- Kellner, D., 2014. Habermas, the public sphere, and democracy. In *Re-imagining public space: The Frankfurt school in the 21st century* (pp. 19-43). New York: Palgrave Macmillan US.
- Kharel, A.B., 2024. Cyber-Politics: Social Media's Influence on Political Mobilization. *Journal of Political Science*, pp.103-115.
- Khomami, N. and Bakare, L., 2024. 'Charli xcx: from slow burn pop star to 'brat' US election influencer', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/music/article/2024/jul/26/charli-xcx-from-slow-burn-popstar-to-brat-us-election-influencer>.
- Kligler-Vilenchik, N. and Literat, I., 2018. Distributed creativity as political expression: Youth responses to the 2016 US presidential election in online affinity networks. *Journal of Communication*, 68(1), pp.75-97.
- Kligler-Vilenchik, N. and Literat, I., 2024. *Not Your Parents' Politics: Understanding Young People's Political Expression on Social Media*. Oxford University Press.
- Kligler-Vilenchik, N. and Literat, I., 2025. Expressive citizenship: Youth, social media, and democracy. *Journal of Children and Media*, 19(1), pp.46-52.
- Kneuer, M., 2016. E-democracy: A new challenge for measuring democracy. *International Political Science Review*, 37(5), pp.666-678.
- Koh, T.K. and Fichman, M., 2014. Multihoming users' preferences for two-sided exchange networks. *Mis Quarterly*, 38(4), pp.977-996.
- Kohler, T.J., 2023. Caught In The Loop: The Effects of The Addictive Nature Of Short-form Videos On Users' Perceived Attention Span And Mood (Bachelor's thesis, University of Twente).
- Koutamanis, M., Vossen, H.G. and Valkenburg, P.M., 2015. Adolescents' comments in social media: Why do adolescents receive negative feedback and who is most at risk?. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 53, pp.486-494.
- Kperogi, F.A. ed., 2022. *Digital dissidence and social media censorship in Africa*. Taylor & Francis.
- Kranzberg, M., 1986. Technology and history: "Kranzberg's laws". *Technology and culture*, 27(3), pp.544-560.
- Kreling, R., Meier, A. and Reinecke, L., 2022. Feeling authentic on social media: Subjective authenticity across Instagram stories and posts. *Social Media+ Society*, 8(1), p.20563051221086235.
- Krouglov, A.Y., 2025. Alienation 2.0: the algorithmic commodification of agency in platform capitalism. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, pp.1-17.
- Kurban, C., Peña-López, I. and Haberer, M., 2017. What is technopolitics? A conceptual schema for understanding politics in the digital age. *IDP. Revista de Internet, Derecho y Política*, (24), pp.3-20.
- Kyparissiadis, G. and Skoulas, E., 2021. Manosphere and manconomy: Divergent masculinities in the digital space. *Ex-centric narratives: Journal of anglophone literature, culture and media*, (5), pp.199-217.
- Lane, D.S., 2020. In search of the expressive citizen: Citizenship norms and youth political expression on social media. *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 84(S1), pp.257-283.
- Lane, D.S., Lee, S.S., Liang, F., Kim, D.H., Shen, L., Weeks, B.E. and Kwak, N., 2019. Social media expression and the political self. *Journal of Communication*, 69(1), pp.49-72.

- Lane, J.E., McCaffree, K. and Shults, F.L., 2021. Is radicalization reinforced by social media censorship?.
- Langley, P. and Leyshon, A., 2017. Platform capitalism: The intermediation and capitalisation of digital economic circulation. *Finance and society*, 3(1), pp.11-31.
- Langvardt, K., 2017. Regulating online content moderation. *Geo. LJ*, 106, p.1353.
- Lee, A., 2024. Hybrid activism under the radar: Surveillance and resistance among marginalized youth activists in the United States and Canada. *New Media & Society*, 26(7), pp.3833-3853.
- Lee, N.J., Shah, D.V. and McLeod, J.M., 2013. Processes of political socialization: A communication mediation approach to youth civic engagement. *Communication Research*, 40(5), pp.669-697.
- Levy, N., 2021. Virtue signalling is virtuous. *Synthese*, 198(10), pp.9545-9562.
- Liang, Y., Aroles, J. and Brandl, B., 2022. Charting platform capitalism: Definitions, concepts and ideologies. *New Technology, Work and Employment*, 37(2), pp.308-327.
- Literat, I., Abdelbagi, A., Law, N.Y., Cheung, M.Y. and Tang, R., 2021. Research note: Likes, sarcasm and politics: Youth responses to a platform-initiated media literacy campaign on social media. *Harvard Kennedy School Misinformation Review*.
- Literat, I. and Kligler-Vilenchik, N., 2021. How popular culture prompts youth collective political expression and cross-cutting political talk on social media: A cross-platform analysis. *Social media+ society*, 7(2), p.20563051211008821.
- Lim, S.S., 2013. On mobile communication and youth "deviance": Beyond moral, media and mobile panics. *Mobile media & communication*, 1(1), pp.96-101.
- Livingstone, S., 2010. Interactivity and participation on the Internet. A critical appraisal of the online invitation to young people. *Young Citizens and New Media: Strategies for learning democratic engagement*, pp.103-124.
- Livingstone, S. and Third, A., 2017. Children and young people's rights in the digital age: An emerging agenda. *New media & society*, 19(5), pp.657-670.
- Lobo, S. (2014, September 3). Meinung: Sascha Lobo: Sharing Economy wie bei Uber ist Plattform-Kapitalismus. *Der Spiegel*.
<https://www.spiegel.de/netzwelt/netzpolitik/sascha-lobo-sharing-economy-wie-bei-uber-ist-plattform-kapitalismus-a-989584.html>
- Lonkila, M. and Jokivuori, P., 2023. Sharing and liking as youth nano-level participation. Finnish students' civic and political engagement in social media. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 26(6), pp.803-820.
- López de Ayala López, M. and Paniagua Santamaría, P., 2019. Motivations of youth audiences to content creation and dissemination on social network sites. *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico*, 25(2).
- Lorenz, T., 2019. "OK Boomer" Marks the End of Friendly Generational Relations', *The New York Times*,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/29/style/ok-boomer.html>.
- Lünenborg, M. and Raetzsch, C., 2017. From public sphere to performative publics: Developing media practice as an analytic model. *Media Practices, Social Movements, and Performativity*, pp.11-35.
- Madden, E. 2024. 'Dump, post, repeat: how Instagram became a social media junkyard', *The Guardian*,
<https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2024/oct/01/instagram-photo-dump>.
- Maguire, D., 2024. 'What is the 'All Eyes on Rafah' trend? Does it matter if it's an AI generated illustration and not a photo?', *ABC*,
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-05-31/all-eyes-on-rafah-social-media-campaign-gaza-war/103906190>.
- Malik, A.A., Maheshwari, C. and Aggarwal, A., 2025, June. A Global Comparative Study on Social Media Censorship: Regulating Digital Rights, Privacy and Surveillance. In *Proceedings of the National Seminar on Enhancing Privacy Protection in the Digital Age: Legal Challenges & Innovations (NSEPPDA 2025)* (Vol. 936, p. 56). Springer Nature.

- Makse, H.A. and Zava, M., 2025. Social Media Influencers and Politics. In *The Science of Influencers and Superspreaders: Using Networks and Artificial Intelligence to Understand Fake News, Pandemics, Markets, and the Brain* (pp. 145-240). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Mannell, K. and Meese, J., 2022. From doom-scrolling to news avoidance: limiting news as a wellbeing strategy during COVID lockdown. *Journalism Studies*, 23(3), pp.302-319.
- Marathe, A. and Kanage, M.R., 2024. Decrease In Attention Span Due To Short-Format Content on Social Media. *Multi-Disciplinary Journal*, 1(1), p.1.
- Marquart, F., Ohme, J. and Möller, J., 2020. Following politicians on social media: Effects for political information, peer communication, and youth engagement. *Media and Communication*, 8(2), pp.197-207.
- Marwick, A., Clancy, B. and Furl, K., 2022. Far-right online radicalization: A review of the literature. *The Bulletin of Technology & Public Life*.
- Matthes, J., Nanz, A., Stubenvoll, M. and Heiss, R., 2020. Processing news on social media. The political incidental news exposure model (PINE). *Journalism*, 21(8), pp.1031-1048.
- McAllister, I. and Makkai, T., 1992. Resource and social learning theories of political participation: Ethnic patterns in Australia. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique*, 25(2), pp.269-293.
- McBeth, M.K., 2022. Coddled or engaged? Teaching political tolerance to generation z students. *Journal of Political Science Education*, 18(4), pp.438-454.
- McBeth, M.K., Blakeman, J.W., Kearsley, L., Tyler, A. and Villanueva, E., 2023. Teaching Generation Z Students About Politics: Optimism or Pessimism?. *International Journal for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 17(1), p.5.
- McLoughlin, L. and Southern, R., 2021. By any memes necessary? Small political acts, incidental exposure and memes during the 2017 UK general election. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, 23(1), pp.60-84.
- Meade, A., 2025. 'A mug's game: Murdoch press's anti-Labor budget coverage foreshadows election attacks to come', *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/media/2025/mar/28/a-mugs-game-murdoch-presss-anti-labor-budget-coverage-foreshadows-election-attacks-to-come>.
- Menczer, F. and Hills, T., 2020. The attention economy. *Scientific American*, 323(6), pp.54-61.
- Merelman, R.M., 1986. Revitalizing political socialization. *Political psychology*, (4), pp.279-319.
- Merritt, B., 2016. The digital revolution. In *The Digital Revolution* (pp. 15-17). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Mihailidis, P., 2020. The civic potential of memes and hashtags in the lives of young people. *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education*, 41(5), pp.762-781.
- Möller, A.M., Kühne, R., Baumgartner, S.E. and Peter, J., 2019. Exploring user responses to entertainment and political videos: An automated content analysis of YouTube. *Social science computer review*, 37(4), pp.510-528.
- Muroi, M., 2025. 'Australian Gen Z men more conservative than forebears', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, <https://www.smh.com.au/politics/federal/australian-gen-z-men-more-conservative-than-their-gen-x-millennial-forebears-20250416-p5ls4t.html>.
- National Centre for Social Research, 2024. 'Society Watch 2024: Understanding the new generation of voters', <https://natcen.ac.uk/publications/society-watch-2024-understanding-new-generation-voters>.
- Nebojša, M., Ružica, S. and Zakira, M., 2023. Cancel Youth Culture And Resilience Through The Prism Of Social And Emotional Violence. *Journal of Entrepreneurship and Business Resilience*, 1(1), pp.29-37.
- Neundorf, A. and Smets, K., 2015. Political socialization and the making of citizens.
- NHS Digital. (2021). Mental Health of Children and Young People in England, 2021 https://files.digital.nhs.uk/97/B09EF8/mhcyp_202

- Niemi, R.G. and Sobieszek, B.I., 1977. Political socialization. *Annual review of sociology*, 3, pp.209-233.
- Nilan, P. and Gentles, T., 2024. Thinking sociologically about young people and the far-right. In *Research Handbook on the Sociology of Youth* (pp. 39-52). Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Noble, S.U., 2018. Algorithms of oppression: How search engines reinforce racism. In *Algorithms of oppression*. New York university press.
- Nunziato, D.C., 2023. The Old and the New Governors: Efforts to Regulate to Influence Platform Content Moderation. *First Amend. L. Rev.*, 22, p.348.
- Nye, J., 2017. Soft power: the origins and political progress of a concept. *Palgrave communications*, 3(1), pp.1-3.
- Oates, H. and Chowdhury, I., 2025, 'What did the parties say on TikTok in the election, and how? Here's the campaign broken down in 5 charts', *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/what-did-the-parties-say-on-tiktok-in-the-election-and-how-heres-the-campaign-broken-down-in-5-charts-254793>.
- Ohme, J. and de Vreese, C., 2020. Traditional and "new media" forms and political socialization. *The international encyclopedia of media psychology*, pp.1-9.
- Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2019. *How's Life in the Digital Age?: Opportunities and Risks of the Digital Transformation for People's Well-being*. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.
- Over, H., Bunce, C.J., Konu, D. and Zendle, D., 2025. What do we need to know about the manosphere and young people's mental health?. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*.
- Pacific et al. (2025). <https://saisreview.sais.jhu.edu/the-role-of-soft-power-in-the-digital-age/>
- Päivärinta, T. and Sæbø, Ø., 2006. Models of e-democracy. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, 17(1), p.37.
- Pangrazio, L., 2018. *Young people's literacies in the digital age: Continuities, conflicts and contradictions*. Routledge.
- Papacharissi, Z., 2015. *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford University Press.
- Park, C.S., 2019. Learning politics from social media: Interconnection of social media use for political news and political issue and process knowledge. *Communication studies*, 70(3), pp.253-276.
- Parliament of Australia, 2021. 'Australia's Youth Policy Framework', https://www.aph.gov.au/-/media/Estimates/eet/supp2122/tailed_docs/TabledDoc7_Australias_Youth_Policy_Framework.pdf.
- Parmelee, J.H., Perkins, S.C. and Beasley, B., 2023. Personalization of politicians on Instagram: what Generation Z wants to see in political posts. *Information, Communication & Society*, 26(9), pp.1773-1788.
- Pedersen, M.A., Albris, K. and Seaver, N., 2021. The political economy of attention. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 50(1), pp.309-325.
- Pedraza, F.I. and Perry, B.N., 2020. Validating a measure of perceived parent-child political socialization. *Political Research Quarterly*, 73(3), pp.623-637.
- Penney, J., 2019. It's my duty to be like 'this is wrong': Youth political social media practices in the Trump era. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 24(6), pp.319-334.
- Penney, J., 2020. 'It's so hard not to be funny in this situation': Memes and humor in US youth online political expression. *Television & New Media*, 21(8), pp.791-806.
- Pérez-Torres, V., 2024. Social media: a digital social mirror for identity development during adolescence. *Current Psychology*, 43(26), pp.22170-22180.

- Pew Research Center, 2022. 'Teens, Social Media and Technology 2022', <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/08/10/teens-social-media-and-technology-2022/>.
- Piat, C., 2019. Slacktivism: Not simply a means to an end, but a legitimate form of civic participation. *Canadian Journal of Family and Youth/Le Journal Canadien de Famille et de la Jeunesse*, 11(1), pp.162-179.
- Pickard, S., 2019. *Politics, protest and young people: Political participation and dissent in 21st century Britain* (Vol. 1). London: Palgrave Macmillan UK.
- Pinedo, Andres, Matthew A. Diemer, and Michael B. Frisby. "Critical consciousness and youth political activism." *Annual Review of Developmental Psychology* 6 (2024).
- Poell, T., Nieborg, D. B., & Duffy, B. E. (2022). *Platforms and cultural production*. Polity Press.
- Polizzi, G., 2020. Information literacy in the digital age: why critical digital literacy matters for. *Informed societies*, p.1.
- Pond, P. and Lewis, J., 2019. Riots and Twitter: connective politics, social media and framing discourses in the digital public sphere. *Information, Communication & Society*, 22(2), pp.213-231.
- Popiel, P. and Sang, Y., 2021. Platforms' governance: analyzing digital platforms' policy preferences. *Global Perspectives*, 2(1).
- Popova, A.L., Kanavtcev, M.V., Lukyanchikov, E.Y. and Averianova, V.F., 2022, February. The Role of Social Media in Implementing the Concept of "Soft Power". In *International Scientific and Practical Conference Strategy of Development of Regional Ecosystems "Education-Science-Industry"(ISPCR 2021)* (pp. 374-380). Atlantis Press.
- Postill, J., 2020. Digital politics and political engagement. In *Digital anthropology* (pp. 165-184). Routledge.
- Raby, R., Caron, C., Th wissen-LeBlanc, S., Prioletta, J. and Mitchell, C., 2018. Vlogging on YouTube: the online, political engagement of young Canadians advocating for social change. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 21(4), pp.495-512.
- Rea, S.C., 2022. Teaching and confronting digital extremism: contexts, challenges and opportunities. *Information and Learning Sciences*, 123(1/2), pp.7-25.
- Redman, P., 2021. Too much, too young? Social media, moral panics and young people's mental health.
- Rho, E.H.R. and Mazmanian, M., 2020, April. Political hashtags & the lost art of democratic discourse. In *Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems* (pp. 1-13).
- Rides, G., Pote, H. and Watling, D., 2024. Adolescents' perceptions of using likes, comments, and other reactions—A qualitative investigation. *British Journal of Developmental Psychology*.
- Riedl, M., Schwemmer, C., Ziewiecki, S. and Ross, L.M., 2021. The rise of political influencers—Perspectives on a trend towards meaningful content. *Frontiers in communication*, 6.
- Riedl, M.J., Lukito, J. and Woolley, S.C., 2023. Political influencers on social media: An introduction. *Social Media+ Society*, 9(2).
- Ritzen, Y., 2019. 'The Khashoggi affair: Twitter manipulation in the Gulf', *Aljazeera*, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/7/23/the-khashoggi-affair-twitter-manipulation-in-the-gulf>.
- Roberts, J.A. and David, M.E., 2023. On the outside looking in: Social media intensity, social connection, and user well-being: The moderating role of passive social media use. *Canadian Journal of Behavioural Science/Revue canadienne des sciences du comportement*, 55(3), p.240.
- Roberts, S. and Wescott, S., 2024. 'We research online 'misogynist radicalization'. Here's what parents of boys should know', *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/we-research-online-misogynist-radicalisation-heres-what-parents-of-boys-should-know-232901>.
- Roche, C.M. and Szobonya, P.E., 2022. Transformational soft power of generation Z: analysis of the geo-culturalization of the landscape. *JIL*, p.391.

- Romero-Hall, E., Petersen, E., Sindjic, R. and Li, L., 2020. Most versus least used social media: undergraduate students' preferences, participation, lurking, and motivational factors. *International Journal of Social Media and Interactive Learning Environments*, 6(3), pp.244-266.
- Rosenfeldová, J. and Vochocová, L., 2024. Visible Beyond Control? Fragmented Attention and Hypervisibility Trap in the Online Media Coverage of Politically Active Youth. *International Journal of Communication*, 18, p.20.
- Ross, A.S. and Rivers, D.J., 2018. Discursive deflection: Accusation of “fake news” and the spread of mis- and disinformation in the tweets of President Trump. *Social media+ society*, 4(2), p.2056305118776010.
- Rubio-Hurtado, M.J., Fuertes-Alpiste, M., Martínez-Olmo, F. and Quintana, J., 2022. Youths' posting practices on social media for digital storytelling. *Journal of new approaches in educational research*, 11(1), pp.97-113.
- Sampaio, I.S.V., Robinson, L., Moles, K. and Pangrazio, L., 2024. Introduction to Youth, digital media, and civic engagement.
- Santini, R.M. and Carvalho, H., 2019. The rise of participatory despotism: a systematic review of online platforms for political engagement. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, 17(4), pp.422-437.
- Santos, C.E., 2020. Themes in political development: Considering the potential of an intersectionality lens. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 71, p.101211.
- Schäfer, M.S., 2015. Digital public sphere. *The international encyclopedia of political communication*, 15, pp.1-7.
- Schuman, R.A.G.A., 2021. *The Influence of Different Social Media platform usage on Cyberactivism and Slacktivism* (Bachelor's thesis).
- Seemann, M., 2018. What Is Platform Politics? Foundations of a New Form of Political Power. *Zeitschrift für sozialistische Politik und Wirtschaft* (SPW), pp.44-49.
- Shehata, A. and Strömbäck, J., 2021. Learning political news from social media: Network media logic and current affairs news learning in a high-choice media environment. *Communication research*, 48(1), pp.125-147.
- Sigel, R., 1965. Assumptions about the learning of political values. *The annals of the American academy of political and social science*, 361(1), pp.1-9.
- Singh, M., 2023. Cyberbullying in the 21st Century: A Rising Threat to Youth in Digital Age. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(3), pp.3273-3279.
- Singh, P. and Narula, A., 2024. A Study on Doom Scrolling Behavior and Its Correlation with Personality types and Psychological Distress GenZ College Students. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Approaches in Psychology*, 2(12), pp.316-332.
- Sinha, S., Sharma, M.K., Tadpatrikar, A., Anand, N. and Kumar, R., 2023. Scrolling Mindlessly: emerging mental health implications of social networking sites. *Journal of Public Health and Primary Care*, 4(3), pp.179-181.
- Slavtcheva-Petkova, V., 2023. *Young People, Media and Politics in the Digital Age*. Routledge.
- Smelser, N.J. and Baltes, P.B., 2001. *Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. Pergamon.
- Smith, R., Vromen, A. and Cook, I. eds., 2012. *Contemporary politics in Australia: theories, practices and issues*. Cambridge University Press.
- Smrdelj, R. and Pajnik, M., 2022. Intersectional representation in online media discourse: reflecting anti-discrimination position in reporting on same-sex partnerships. *Gender, Technology and Development*, 26(3), pp.463-484.
- Snell, P., 2010. Emerging adult civic and political disengagement: A longitudinal analysis of lack of involvement with politics. *Journal of Adolescent Research*, 25(2), pp.258-287.
- Spagnoletti, P., Resca, A. and Lee, G., 2015. A design theory for digital platforms supporting online communities: a multiple case study. *Journal of Information technology*, 30(4), pp.364-380.

Srivastava, A., Rusow, J., Schrager, S.M., Stephenson, R. and Goldbach, J.T., 2023. Digital sexual violence and suicide risk in a national sample of sexual minority adolescents. *Journal of interpersonal violence*, 38(3-4), pp.4443-4458.

Srnicek, N. (2019). *Platform capitalism*. Polity.

Ta'amneh, I.M. and Al-Ghazo, A., 2021. The importance of using hashtags on raising awareness about social issues. *International Journal of Learning and Development*, 11(4), pp.10-24.

Taylor, K., 2019. "Instagram is Gen Z's go-to source of political news – And it's already having an impact on the 2020 election". *Business Insider*. <<https://www.businessinsider.com/gen-z-gets-its-political-news-from-instagram-accounts-2019-6>>.

Tenenboim, O., 2022. Comments, shares, or likes: What makes news posts engaging in different ways. *Social Media + Society*, 8(4).

Teslenko, I.B., Gubernatorov, A.M., Abdullaev, N.V., Alexandrova, I.A. and Kornilova, O.A., 2020. Digital platforms in the modern economy: The concept, features and development trends. In *Digital Economy: Complexity and Variety vs. Rationality 9* (pp. 652-661). Springer International Publishing.

The New York Times, 2025. 'Israel Deporting Greta Thunberg and Other Activists on Gaza Aid Boat', <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/10/world/middleeast/israel-greta-thunberg-deport-gaza-flotilla.html>.

Theocharis, Y., 2015. The conceptualization of digitally networked participation. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(2), p.2056305115610140.

Theocharis, Y., de Moor, J. and Van Deth, J.W., 2021. Digitally networked participation and lifestyle politics as new modes of political participation. *Policy & internet*, 13(1), pp.30-53.

Thimsen, A.F., 2022. What is performative activism?. *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 55(1), pp.83-89.

Tinmaz, H., Lee, Y.T., Fanea-Ivanovici, M. and Baber, H., 2022. A systematic review on digital literacy. *Smart Learning Environments*, 9(1), p.21.

Tiidenberg, K., Karatzogianni, A., Parsanoglou, D., Matthews, J., Lepik, K.S., Raig, M. and Suitslepp, M.L., 2024. Social media as a shaper, enabler, and hurdle in youth political participation. In *Understanding The Everyday Digital Lives of Children and Young People* (pp. 351-377). Cham: Springer International Publishing.

TikTok, 2024a. 'TikTok launches #FactCheckYourFeed to support media literacy', <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/en-gb/tiktok-launches-factcheckyourfeed-to-support-media-literacy>.

TikTok, 2024b. 'TikTok Digital Literacy Hub: A Guide to Online Safety', <https://newsroom.tiktok.com/fil-ph/tiktok-digital-literacy-hub-ph>.

Turnbull, T., 2024. 'Antoinette Lattouf: ABC presenter sacked over Gaza post ignites row in Australia', *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-australia-68064851>.

University of Technology Sydney, 2024. 'All eyes on Rafah: What can we make of this AI-generated anomaly?', <https://www.uts.edu.au/news/2024/05/all-eyes-rafah-what-can-we-make-ai-generated-anomaly>.

United Nations, 2018. 'About Youth2030, the UN Youth Strategy', <https://www.un.org/youthaffairs/en/youth2030/about>.

Um, N.H., 2017. Effectiveness of celebrity endorsement of a political candidate among young voters. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 45(9), pp.1425-1436.

Uthmani, O., 2017. 'Why you should care about China's VPN crackdown', *The Conversation*, <https://theconversation.com/why-you-should-care-about-chinas-vpn-crackdown-82222>.

Valkenburg, P.M., van Driel, I.I. and Beyens, I., 2022. The associations of active and passive social media use with well-being: A critical scoping review. *New media & society*, 24(2), pp.530-549.

Valtysson, B., 2016. Digitising Habermas: Digital public spheres and networked publics. In *Habermas and social research* (pp. 105-120). Routledge.

- van der Aalst, W., Hinz, O. and Weinhardt, C., 2019. Big digital platforms: growth, impact, and challenges. *Business & Information Systems Engineering*, 61, pp.645-648.
- van Dijck, J., Poell, T., & Waal, M. de. (2018). *The platform society*. Oxford University Press.
- van Dijck, J. and Poell, T., 2015. Social media and the transformation of public space. *Social Media+ Society*, 1(2), p.2056305115622482.
- Varnelis, K. ed., 2012. *Networked publics*. MIT Press.
- Vélez, A.P., Olivencia, J.J.L. and Zuazua, I.I., 2017. The role of adults in children digital literacy. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 237, pp.887-892.
- Villarama, J.A., Ortega, Z.A.T., Puerto, R.L.B., Fernandez, G.V., Mabalay, L.A.S. and Sugay, Q.R.G., 2024. Political and Social Viewpoints of High School Students: How do Social Media Influencers, Cancel Culture, and Political Correctness affect these?. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 2(8), pp.1-1.
- Vogel, E., 2022. 'Teens and Cyberbullying 2022', *Pew Research Center*, <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2022/12/15/teens-and-cyberbullying-2022/>.
- Walsh, J.P., 2020. Social media and moral panics: Assessing the effects of technological change on societal reaction. *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 23(6), pp.840-859.
- Warner, M., 2002. Publics and Counterpublics. *Public Culture*, 14, pp. 49–90.
- We Are Social, 2024. 'Digital 2024', <https://wearesocial.com/au/blog/2024/01/digital-2024/>.
- Wendling, M., 2018. 'The (almost) complete history of 'fake news'', *BBC*, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/blogs-trending-42724320>.
- Webster, R., Andre, J. and Le, K., Self-Awareness for Student Development in the AI driven Attention Economy.
- Weeks, B.E., Halversen, A. and Neubaum, G., 2024. Too scared to share? Fear of social sanctions for political expression on social media. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 29(1).
- Weinstein, E.C., 2014. The personal is political on social media: Online civic expression patterns and pathways among civically engaged youth. *International journal of communication*, 8, p.24.
- Wilson, D.W., Lin, X., Longstreet, P. and Sarker, S., 2011. Web 2.0: A definition, literature review, and directions for future research.
- Wilson, M.J., Fisher, K. and Seidler, Z., 2024. The Anti-social Network: The Role of the Social Media Manosphere in Young Men's Lives. In *Masculinities and Mental Health in Young Men: From Echo Chambers to Evidence* (pp. 187-228). Cham: Springer Nature Switzerland.
- Wong, M.A., Frank, R. and Allsup, R., 2015. The supremacy of online white supremacists—an analysis of online discussions by white supremacists. *Information & Communications Technology Law*, 24(1), pp.41-73.
- Wright, K. and McLeod, J., 2023. Activism, Rights and Hope: Young People and Their Advocates Mobilising for Social Change. In *Childhood, Youth and Activism: Demands for Rights and Justice from Young People and their Advocates* (pp. 1-18). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Yajman, V., 2025. 'Voters ignored the Murdoch media this election – but who is the new media leaving behind?', *Women's Agenda*, <https://womensagenda.com.au/latest/voters-ignored-the-murdoch-media-this-election-but-who-is-the-new-media-leaving-behind/>.
- Yamin, M., 2019. Information technologies of 21st century and their impact on the society. *International Journal of Information Technology*, 11(4), pp.759-766.
- Yessenbekova, U.M., 2020. Social media and slacktivism in young people's life. *Media Watch*, 11(3), pp.515-524.
- Yi, D. and Nelson, S., 2024. Rethinking Political Socialization in the Modern Era. *RANGE: Journal of Undergraduate Research* (2024).
- Zhang, W., 2022. Political disengagement among youth: A comparison between 2011 and 2020. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, p.809432.

Zhang, C.C., Zaleski, G., Kailley, J.N., Teng, K.A., English, M., Riminchan, A. and Robillard, J.M., 2024. Debate: Social media content moderation may do more harm than good for youth mental health. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health*, 29(1), pp.104-106.

Zuboff, S., 2022. Surveillance capitalism or democracy? The death match of institutional orders and the politics of knowledge in our information civilization. *Organization Theory*, 3(3), p.26317877221129290.

Zutshi, A., Nodehi, T., Grilo, A. and Rizvanović, B., 2019. The evolution of digital platforms. In *Advances in management research* (pp. 41-50). CRC Press.