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Laura Robinson

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The identity curation game: digital inequality, identity work, and emotion management

Laura Robinson

Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, USA

ABSTRACT

The research examines an understudied facet of digital inequality: how digital inequality impacts identity work and emotion management. The analysis reveals how unequal access to digital resources shapes how well youths are able to play what I call the *identity curation game*. Digital resources determine youths' ability to succeed in this game that is governed by three implicit rules: (1) constantly update or be sidelined, (2) engage in constant reciprocated identity-affirming interactions, and (3) maintain a strategy of vigilance to remove traces of failed identity performances. This article draws on Symbolic Interactionism and pays particular attention to Hochschild's theory of emotion management. Drawing on these frameworks, the findings reveal how under-resourced youths experience connectivity gaps that disrupt their ability to play the identity curation game, as well as the resulting emotional consequences. Under-resourced youths manage distinctive negative emotions arising from connectivity gaps that hinder their digital identity work, as well as engaging in distinct kinds of suppressive work to police their own emotions including longing, envy, shame, frustration, and stigmatization. In making these linkages, the research reveals the cascading effects of digital inequality among youths where constant connectivity is the sine qua non of social inclusion.

Overview

Based on in-depth interviews with youths in an agricultural community in California, the research sheds light on an understudied facet of digital inequality: how digital inequality impacts identity work and emotion management. The analysis reveals how unequal access to digital resources impacts how well youths are able to play what may be called 'the identity curation game'. This article reveals how this game is played very differently by youths with high, moderate, and low connectivity. The identity curation game has three implicit rules. Rule 1: Players must constantly update many times per day or find themselves sidelined. Rule 2: Players must engage in constant reciprocation of identity-affirming interactions to validate their own identity presentations and prompt validation from others. Rule 3: Players must maintain a strategy of vigilance to remove the traces of any failed identity performances to avoid negative emotions.

CONTACT Laura Robinson ✉ laura@laurarobinson.org
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The first group of players, youths with high connectivity, have all the gear needed to follow these rules at will. Because they can take the field at any moment, highly connected youths set the three rules and baseline expectations of idealized identity work. Constant connectivity allows them to make the strategic moves and countermoves needed to keep their winning edge. The second group, youths with moderate connectivity, do their best to play the identity curation game according to the three roles set by their more advantaged peers. However, they are hamstrung by sporadic access to digital resources. Being offline forces them to take involuntary time outs even if their highly resourced counterparts continue to play. By contrast, the third group, youths with low connectivity, are often excluded from the game altogether. Lacking any kind of regular or ongoing access to the digital world, they are forced to trail far behind their peers and glimpse the game from the sidelines.

To explore the consequences of the identity curation game as it is played by each of the three groups, this article brings to bear the lens of Symbolic Interactionism, in particular Hochschild's theory of emotion management (1979). The findings reveal how youths with low and moderate connectivity manage negative emotions arising from their forced exits from the identity curation game. To use Hochschild's terminology (1979), digital resource shortages induce 'suppressive work' necessary to self-police their emotions such as longing, shame, and stigmatization. Managing emotions and doing suppressive work make under-resourced youths pay even higher opportunity costs than their highly resourced counterparts. Yet these emotions and their management are unseen by others, forcing under-resourced youths to carry a double burden in digital silence.

Digital inequality

Scholars of digital inequality have explored the myriad ways that offline forms of inequality are reproduced in the digital realm both within and across countries (Chen & Wellman, 2004). Important connections have been made between digital inequalities and larger social inequalities including gender (Ono & Zavodny, 2007), economic status (Livingstone 2009), race and ethnicity (Mesch, 2016), age (Cotten, 2017; Quan-Haase, Mo, & Wellman, 2017), and educational attainment (Cotten et al., 2011; Witte & Mannon, 2010). Important work has also been done on how offline inequalities give rise to online inequalities that resurface in the physical world (van Deursen, Helsper, Eynon, & van Dijk, 2017).

Writ large, digital inequalities have been studied as a range of unequal engagements and practices on different levels: (1) first-order digital inequalities related to access to material resources and (2) second-order digital inequalities including skills, participation, and production gaps (Chen, 2015; Hargittai & Jennrich, 2016; Schradie, 2012). These studies show the inter-relationships between access to resources, socio-demographic factors, participation, and production that determine norms and dominant voices on the web. Linkages also exist between digital inequalities and life chances including wages (DiMaggio & Bonikowski, 2008), healthcare (Hale, 2013), and social support (Rainie & Wellman, 2012).

Thanks to these scholars, digital resources are recognized as necessary for improved life chances and well-being. Digital resources have even been framed as a public good (Smith, Rhea, & Meinrath, 2012). Nonetheless, in terms of emotional well-being, we know very little about the emotional consequences of digital exclusion in its various forms. The few studies to date address digital inequality and emotional burdens in terms of school

work (Ball, Huang, Rikard, & Cotten, 2017; Huang, Cotten, & Leith, 2017; Robinson, 2009). While valuable, more work is needed on digital inequality vis-à-vis emotions and emotional costs outside of the classroom.

This article begins to meet this need by revealing the compensatory identity work and emotion management necessary for under-resourced youths. Insufficient attention has been paid to the internet use (or non-use) of adolescents living in poverty or near poverty. According to data from the National Center for Children in Poverty (Jiang, Granja, & Koball, 2017), in the United States 39% of adolescents live in 'low income' families, which include 18% of adolescents living in 'poor' families subsisting on less than the federal poverty threshold. To put poverty into context with media use, according to Lenhart et al. (2015), 12% of teens report once-a-day internet use; 6% go online weekly; and 2% less often. In other words, 20% of youths have low to moderate connectivity. Regarding smartphones, in this same report, Lenhart et al. tell us that 30% of teens have only a 'basic phone' and 12% have no cell phone of any type. In sum, as many as 42% of teens do not have a personal smartphone.

Symbolic interactionism, identity work and emotion management

To examine the identity curation game, this article draws its inspiration from Symbolic Interactionism, especially identity work as conceived by Cooley, Mead, and Goffman. Cooley's concept of the looking-glass self-comprises a three-step process that includes: 'the imagination of our appearance to the other person, the imagination of his judgment of that appearance, and some sort of self-feeling, such as pride or mortification' (1992, p. 184). Mead formulates this same process with the 'I' and the 'me' as parts of the same self that is constantly in dialogue with itself (1934, p. 178). Like Goffman's iconic 'Preedy' in The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), individuals engage in facework to present particular selves for different audiences.

To examine these SI processes in digital venues, the research engages with the body of work on Symbolic Interactionism and digital identity work. Using an SI perspective allows us to understand the digitally constructed 'I', 'me', and 'generalized other' as the emergent product of digital interactions (Robinson, 2007). Digital presentation of self is carefully managed through identity curation, the processes of selective presentation of self in digital venues, particularly social networking sites (Hogan, 2010). According to Hogan, with each curating decision, social actors engage in identity work every time they select images or photos to share, craft text, and/or edit posts. Curation is then evaluated by others; when identity work is affirmed, it provides an 'ego-boost' (Ward, 2017). For this reason, as Davis argues, social actors strive to 'maintain authenticity' (2012) when they engage in both 'productive' and 'consumptive' curation (2017). According to Davis: 'Successful identity verification relies upon the (perceived) acceptance of the presented identity by others, and more directly, it relies upon identity-affirming interactions' (2014, p. 6). This research draws on Hogan's concept of 'identity curation' and Davis's concept of 'identity-affirming interactions'.

However, unlike previous work in which SI has largely been applied to identity work among highly connected populations, this article employs SI to explicitly compare identity and emotion work practiced by both highly connected and under-connected youths. To make these connections, this article also makes a novel contribution by drawing its

inspiration from Hochschild's now classic work on emotion management. The findings examine unequal digital identity work using the theories of 'emotion management' and 'suppressive work' pioneered by Hochschild (1979). According to Hochschild (1979), self-feelings may drive social actors to engage in emotion work including the suppression of emotions perceived as negative. Low and moderately connected youths experience involuntary connectivity gaps that disrupt their participation in the identity curation game. When they are sidelined from the game, they are unable to engage in constant and competitive identity curation. Identity curation deficiencies engender negative self-feelings that must be 'managed' or 'suppressed' (Hochschild, 1979).

Hochschild's seminal work builds on Goffman's work and also remedies its failure to theorize the social actor's will to monitor and manage emotions. In Hochschild's words: 'Goffman stresses the phenomena that call tacitly for will … but provides no theoretical account of will itself … In my view, we must reinstitute a self capable of experiencing emotion and of working on it in socially patterned ways' (1979, p. 557). Hochschild continues:

> If we are to investigate the ways people try to manage feeling, we shall have to posit an actor capable of feeling, capable of assessing when a feeling is 'inappropriate', and capable of trying to manage feeling. The problem is that the actor Goffman proposes does not seem to feel much … We are left knowing about 'suppressive work' as a final result, but knowing nothing of the process or techniques by which it is achieved … Goffman's actors actively manage outer impressions, but they do not actively manage inner feelings (1979, p. 557).

To fill the lacuna in Goffman's work, Hochschild proposes 'an emotion-management perspective as a lens through which to inspect the self, interaction, and structure' (1979, p. 551). Hochschild's emotion management perspective embeds emotions in interaction to argue that: 'The individual often works on inducing or inhibiting feelings so as to render them "appropriate" to a situation' (1979, p. 552). In sum, taking its cue from Hochschild's 'suppressive work' and 'feeling rules', this research reveals how low and moderately connected youths do 'emotion management' in response to the anxiety caused by the identity curation game. In these ways, the research draws on Hochschild's ground-breaking theory of emotion management (1979), which is grounded in theories of identity work from Symbolic Interactionism.

Case studies, data, and methods

This study is part of a multi-method, long-term study conducted from 2006 to 2013 in two public high schools, Rancho Benito High and Glen Prep. The schools are located in a Californian agricultural community populated by a thinner professional stratum, larger numbers of paraprofessional and blue collar workers, and a great number of families comprised of the working poor. For this reason, these fieldsites are revelatory cases that allow us to probe the consequences of ongoing endemic economic and digital inequalities.

Reflecting the local community, students taking part in the study from Rancho Benito High and Glen Prep are economically and ethnically diverse. Nonetheless, there are important differences between the schools' populations that provide an excellent opportunity to compare the daily experiences of more and less economically disadvantaged students. Rancho Benito High is a high-poverty or 'Title 1' school. Schools in California qualify for Title 1 status if at least one-third of students come from families with incomes falling below federal poverty measures that qualify them for 'free lunch'.

While the threshold for inclusion in Title 1 uses the 'one-third rule', well over half of Rancho Benito's students qualified for the free lunch program at the time of data collection. Latinos comprised over three-quarters of the student population followed by Whites, Asian Americans, and African Americans. While also a public school, Glen Prep's student population was more economically advantaged making it an important foil to Rancho Benito. At Glen Prep, Whites and Latinos respectively comprised over half and almost one-third of the student population. A smaller proporation of the student body was comprised of African Americans, Asian Americans, and Native Americans. Glen Prep did not qualify for Title 1 status as far fewer students qualified for free lunch.

The data in this article come from one-on-one and small group interviews grounded in two years of ethnographic fieldwork. The in-depth interview data come from 503 respondents at two high schools. The interviews were conducted during the normal school day on the school grounds. At Rancho Benito High, interviews were conducted in the English Department because all students must take four years of English courses. All students enrolled in regular, college-preparatory, honors, and AP courses were invited to take part in the study. There was no selection process including or excluding some students from taking part in the interviews. At Glen Prep, interviews were conducted with a sample of students from regular, college-prep, honors, and AP courses. This comparative strategy ensures that variation is not due to the school setting.

All students were asked to answer the same battery of interview questions. While students were not required to answer every question, each interviewee was given the opportunity to answer every question. Questions analyzed in this article covered the following topics: (1) normative access to and use of ICTS at home and in school, (2) communication practices, (3) daily rounds, (4) opportunities and costs, (5) familial resources, (6) time use and constraints, (7) priorities and decision-making practices, (8) interactions and interactional strategies, and (9) emotions.

Interviews were a good fit for the research's goal to uncover emotion management and identity work. In the analysis phase, the rich qualitative data provided an excellent foundation for 'discovery-oriented' analysis (Luker, 2008) rather than testing of hypotheses regarding cause–effect relationships among prespecified factors. When analyzing the data, I used a grounded approach appropriate to emergent conceptualizations and explanatory accounts, rather than the verification of a priori conceptualizations. By moving back and forth between the data and concepts, I generated analytic frames by relying more on induction from empirical data than on deduction from theoretical postulates.

In order to privilege members' meanings and the perspectives of digitally disadvantaged youths, the analysis employed an inductive approach. Through open coding of the data, I identified patterns inductively. This initial coding revealed potential linkages between access to communication resources and interactional strategies. Employing additional rounds of open coding allowed me to identify linkages between these themes and emotions. With these emergent analytic categories, I noted connections between communication resources and respondents' identity work strategies. I also identified the ways in which these identity work strategies articulated with emotional burdens and associated self-monitoring of emotions. I confirmed these patterns as I continued inductively coding the data.

Subsequently, I developed targeted coding categories with which I recoded the data presented here. This process generated the primary categories used in this analysis: (1) connectivity and daily rounds, (2) costs and opportunities of communication practices, (3)

interactional strategies, and (4) emotion management. After determining these categories, I used focused coding to confirm that the patterns were generalizable to the entire data set. In this iterative process, the analytic categories were grounded in the data and represent members' meanings, vocabularies, and concerns. This being said, while generalizable to the data set, the data presented in this paper do not supply a basis for generalizing to other populations. Rather, the data provide rich analytic description of an understudied population and understudied phenomena. Finally, please note that all names and places are pseudonyms to protect anonymity.

Analytic strategy: representative exemplars

The findings illustrate how the identity curation game is played with high, moderate, and low connectivity. Each section is comprised of two representative cases: one female and one male. Each pair of youths has been matched and systematically compared with other students along relevant axes. This matching strategy (Schulz, 2012) ensures that each group of exemplars represents the patterns characteristic of the subcategories to which they belong: youths with high, moderate, and low connectivity.

Table 1. Comparison of Connectivity & Costs

		Carmen & Andy: Connectivity	Vanessa & Ricardo: Connectivity	Marta & Ricky: Connectivity	Carmen & Andy: Costs	Vanessa & Ricardo: Costs	Marta & Ricky: Costs
AM	06:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
AM		High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
AM	07:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
AM		High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
AM	08:00	High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
AM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
AM	09:00	Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
AM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
AM	10:00	High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
AM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
AM	11:00	Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
AM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM	12:00	High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
PM		High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
PM	01:00	Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM	02:00	Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM		High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
PM	03:00	High	Low to Moderate	Low to Moderate	Low	Moderate to High	Moderate to High
PM		High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
PM	04:00	High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
PM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM	05:00	Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM		Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM	06:00	Moderate to High	Low	Low	Moderate to Low	High	High
PM		High	Low	Low	Low	High	High
PM	07:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM		High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM	08:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM		High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM	09:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM		High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM	10:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM		High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High
PM	11:00	High	Moderate	Low	Low	Moderate	High

In each section, the analysis begins with a brief introduction to each group's access to resources. Table 1 presents an overview of costs and connectivity for each of the three groups. In Table 1, we see that youths like Marta and Ricky have the lowest levels of connectivity and pay the highest costs. As youths with moderate connectivity, Vanessa and Ricardo pay more moderate costs and enjoy more moderate connectivity. Only highly connected youths such as Carmen and Andy always enjoy high connectivity without paying significant costs.

After reviewing normative connectivity for each group, representative exemplars from each of the three connectivity groups illustrate varying identity work and emotion management strategies employed using the digital resources at their disposal. As the data reveal, highly connected youths set the three central rules of the game: constant curation, reciprocity of identity-affirming interactions, and vigilance to efface failed identity performances. As the findings also make clear, connectivity impacts how well members of each group can follow the rules and thus their relative success playing the identity curation game.

High connectivity: Carmen and Andy

Highly connected youths account for one-third of the students in Rancho Benito compared to half of the students at Glen Prep. The most highly connected youths are exemplified by Carmen and Andy. Youths like Carmen and Andy have professional, college-educated parents working in the town's slim professional stratum as teachers, engineers, or high flyers in the area's big agriculture industry. While these youths do not take center stage in this study, they are important as communication trendsetters with whom less advantaged students interact. Highly resourced youths set baseline expectations for digital presentation of self for both themselves and for under-resourced youths.

Table 2 presents an overview of a typical day for Carmen and Andy. Reviewing their daily rounds shows how economic and digital advantage enhance one another on an everyday basis. For example, thanks to at least one family car at their disposal and very few familial or caregiving duties, Carmen and Andy enjoy plentiful leisure time during their after-school hours during which they may play the identity curation game. Throughout the entire day, they can communicate spontaneously, thanks to multiple personal digital devices with mobile connectivity. With the exception of educator intervention during class and parental intervention during the evening, highly connected youths have no or low opportunity costs to take advantage of 24/7 access to multiple personal digital devices—smartphones, computers, laptops, tablets, etc. In sum, the data in Table 2 show how Carmen and Andy's economic advantage translates into digital advantage and autonomous digital engagement facilitating unlimited identity curation.

High connectivity: identity work and emotion management

Thanks to plentiful digital resources, highly connected youths connect digitally at will and spend much of their leisure time playing the identity curation game on social media. Carmen and Andy religiously follow the first rule of the game: Players must constantly update many times per day or be considered irrelevant. Carmen describes her intensive identity curation:

Table 2. High connectivity: daily rounds of Carmen and Andy

		Carmen's Day	Andy's Day	Digital Device Constraints & Opportunities	Carmen & Andy: Connectivity	Carmen & Andy: Costs
AM	06:00	Sleeps	Sleeps	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
AM		Sleeps	Sleeps	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
AM	07:00	Gets Ready for School/Breakfast	Sleeps	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
AM		Gets Ready for School/Breakfast	Gets Ready for School/Breakfast	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
AM	08:00	Drives Car to School	Mom Drives Car to School	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
AM		Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
AM	09:00	Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
AM		Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
AM	10:00	Snack Break	Snack Break	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
AM		Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
AM	11:00	Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
AM		Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM	12:00	Lunch	Lunch	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Lunch	Lunch	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	01:00	Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM		Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM	02:00	Class	Class	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Educators	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM		Drives Car to Activities	Mom Drives Car Home	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	03:00	Afterschool Activity	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Afterschool Activity	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	04:00	Afterschool Activity	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Chores at Home	Dinner and Family Time	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Parents	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM	05:00	Chores at Home	Dinner and Family Time	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Parents	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM		Dinner and Family Time	Chores at Home	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Parents	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM	06:00	Dinner and Family Time	Chores at Home	Use of Digital Devices Moderated by Parents	Moderate to High	Moderate to Low
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	07:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	08:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	09:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	10:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low
PM	11:00	Sleeps	Study or Free Time	Personal Digital Devices (iPad/Laptop & iPhone/Smartphone)	High	Low

Yeah like all the time. I'm updating my Facebook all the time. You know with photos and fun stuff … what I'm up to … and making sure I know what's goin' on … it's really like a game—I mean maybe you don't have to win but you kinda want to.

Carmen and Andy's constant updating constitutes continuous identity performances aiming to maintain the 'me' in line with their desired presentation of self. At the same time, they are keenly aware of Rule 2 of the identity curation game: Players must engage in constant reciprocated identity-affirming interactions to validate their own identity presentations and prompt validation from others. Andy explains the quid pro quo: 'There's always stuff to share and you want to like people's stuff so that they'll like yours back … ' Valuing their audience's approval, Carmen and Andy engage in competitive curation to present idealized self-identities (Rule 1) and validate others' curation efforts with an eye to reciprocity (Rule 2).

Highly connected youths' constant curation of self and identity affirmations of others make them relevant participants in a social contract in which they approve others' content and receive approval in return. When these rules are followed successfully, identity performances succeed, and emotional validation is experienced. Andy explains his 'game on' strategy to win when playing the identity curation game:

Well like if you are doing something epic you totally put it up so that everyone sees it … you like want them to know. Dude what's the point if no one else knows about it? … if I don't post it, it like didn't happen … and that's no good 'cause with some people ya know it's like 'game on' …

Carmen describes jockeying with the imagined other and at the same time being driven to obtain the imagined other's approval so that she feels 'fab':

It's not like where do you wanna go today. It's more who do you wanna be today. So I'm kinda addicted to selfies—especially if I'm at some place cool or doing something, then I'm totally updating all the time … I want people to know … then they can tell me how fab I am—[laughs].

Ironically, the identity curation game turns competitors into teammates in that Andy and Carmen are driven by constant competition with their peers and yet want to be validated by those same peers in a digital mutual admiration society.

In addition to showcasing desirable identity performances that can make them feel like winners, Carmen and Andy also follow Rule 3: Players must maintain a strategy of vigilance to remove the traces of failed identity performances to avoid negative emotions. Andy describes his proactive competition to avoid 'loserville':

When something happens you totally update it [Facebook page] to let everyone know … it's kinda like #winning … but like the dark side happens too … so if you aren't there, you won't be in the know when stuff happens or you might not catch stuff that makes you look bad … dude like #loserville.

Carmen reveals that while following Rule 2 (reciprocated facework validation) produces positive emotions, following Rule 3 is equally necessary to avoid shame or embarrassment:

If you post something and like everyone likes it … you know you're kinda thinking 'score' … If I post something and no one likes it—that can be so embarrassing … I might take it down or bury it with new stuff. Doesn't everyone do that?

Significantly, these highly wired youths set identity performance rules for themselves and others. For Carmen: 'If it's there [on their Facebook page] I'm gonna assume that the person is ok with it … I mean if you aren't cool with it what's it doing there?' Andy also interprets curation as a form of facework: 'If I see something and it doesn't get deleted then it's like you're sayin' it'. Highly connected youths seem unable to imagine others not having the same resources they enjoy; as a result they assume that everyone is able to match their facework vigilance in the common pursuit of Rule 1, Rule 2, and Rule 3 of the identity curation game.

Moderate connectivity: Vanessa and Ricardo

By contrast, youths with moderate connectivity do not have the resources to compete with their more digitally resourced peers in the identity curation game. Moderately connected youths represent just over half of interviewees at Rancho Benito and just under half of those attending Glen Prep. While not inhabiting the most precarious end of the economic spectrum, their digital resources are far different than those of highly connected youths. While still benefitting from moderate access to digital resources, youths like Vanessa and Ricardo experience greater constraints on all life fronts. Vanessa and Ricardo represent moderately connected youths whose parents often hold skilled work requiring study past high school such as certification at a community college. Many of the youths with moderate connectivity come from families that live on a tight budget that makes it vital for all family members to contribute to the family as an economic unit. As Table 3 shows, Vanessa and Ricardo typically spend four hours in caregiving or paid labor on weekdays, which constrains their ability to follow all of the rules in the identity curation game.

In addition to temporal shortages, Vanessa and Ricardo lack both the constant connectivity and personal digital devices enjoyed by Carmen and Andy. Therefore to gain access to digital resources, Vanessa and Ricardo pay higher opportunity costs. Often unable to afford personal digital devices for one person's exclusive use, moderately connected families share communal digital devices as a familial unit. In some cases their families can be large, which eventuates in even greater device sharing. Outside of the home, lack of smartphones means being digitally disconnected while riding the school bus or taking public transportation. Equally challenging, at school they must request special permission from teachers to use the computer lab during class. Outside of class, they often rely on the school's computer lab but must pay opportunity costs such as forgoing activities such as eating or socializing or getting academic help from teachers. In sum, hour-for-hour they have less disposable time and face challenges including shared device time, lower quality connectivity, and more restricted ease of mobility. All of these impact their ability to successfully play the identity curation game.

Moderate connectivity: identity work and emotion management

Because highly connected youths set the normative assumptions about appropriate digital engagement, moderately connected youths share many of Carmen and Andy's normative assumptions about playing the identity curation game even though they cannot follow the rules without considerable cost. Succeeding at Rule 1 (constant curation) requires at-will

Table 3. Moderate connectivity: daily rounds of Vanessa and Ricardo

		Vanessa's Day	Ricardo's Day	Digital Device Constraints & Opportunities	Vanessa & Ricardo: Connectivity	Vanessa & Ricardo: Costs
AM	06:00	Sleeps	Sleeps	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
AM		Gets Ready for School	Sleeps	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
AM	07:00	Breakfast: Self & Siblings	Gets Ready for School/Breakfast	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
AM		Takes School Bus	Takes School Bus	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	08:00	Arrives on School Bus	Arrives on School Bus	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	09:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	10:00	Snack Break	Snack Break	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	11:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	12:00	Lunch	Lunch	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM		Lunch	Lunch	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM	01:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	02:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Takes School Bus	Takes Bus to Work	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM	03:00	Arrives Home on School Bus	Part-Time Job	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM		Chores at Home	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	04:00	Chores at Home	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Helps Siblings w/ Homework	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	05:00	Helps Siblings w/ Homework	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Makes Dinner for Family	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	06:00	Feeds Siblings Dinner	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Cleans Up Dinner	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	07:00	Study or Free Time	Takes Bus Home	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM		Study or Free Time	Dinner	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM	08:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM	09:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM	10:00	Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM		Study or Free Time	Sleeps	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate
PM	11:00	Sleeps	Sleeps	Shared Household Digital Device(s)	Moderate	Moderate

access to personal digital devices. However, Vanessa and Ricardo are forced to rely on communal resources at school and shared resources at home that are subject to familial triage. Vanessa explains how negotiating shared resources at home and temporal scarcities make it an uphill battle to regularly curate:

> I have to do my homework first to make sure I don't run out of time, so I never feel like I get to do everything I want to in like a peaceful way … can't see my friends' stuff and I never get time to put cool stuff up like some of my friends.

When Vanessa compares her curation to that of highly connected friends, she feels inadequate and angst ridden. When Ricardo can't keep up, it's 'game over':

> My dad uses our computer for work so I don't get much time for fun stuff during the day … I keep getting behind on it [social media] if I don't stay up late to use the computer when everyone else is done. But by then it's so late … so much happens but I miss it … dude it's like over before I even see it-so game over I'm out.

Resource shortages block both Vanessa and Ricardo from achieving optimal self-presentation (Rule 1) and benefitting from reciprocated identity-affirming interactions (Rule 2).

Further, when connectivity gaps hinder identity curation vigilance (Rule 3) it can lead to failed identity performances. Lacking constant connectivity, moderately connected youths cannot exercise the same vigilance with their social media profiles as highly connected youths. When connectivity gaps occur, they are unable to respond to failed identity performances quickly enough to avoid embarrassment and shame. Vanessa recounts feeling like a 'loser':

> It was so embarrassing when we broke up. I couldn't get on because my mom was on it [social media] and he [ex-boyfriend] had changed his profile to single but I hadn't so there were like all of these posts from my friends … it totally looked like I was hoping we would get back together and that was so like not the case … but I couldn't update so like lookin' like a loser …

Ricardo shares a similar 'frustrating' experience:

> A friend put up this wild photo but I didn't know 'cause my dad was on a big project … so I'm at school and my friends start asking me about it … at lunch I went to the lab but it blocked me so all day I'm just wondering what is on there … totally annoying …

Per Rule 3 of the identity curation game, vigilance is necessary to remove the traces of failed identity performances that can unleash self-feelings and emotions including humiliation and mortification as Vanessa explains:

> Like this one person … she is always saying something that embarrasses me or makes me look dumb 'cause I'm not on it right away … gotta comment back … super-fast so that people won't think that I'm a cow but I can't get on there and do it fast enough. It's like total disaster 'cause I don't have a good phone.

Here the data point to the connection between identity work and emotional management per Thoits's (1989, p. 332) insight that, 'Identity-enactments in turn should influence feelings. Successful identity performances generate positive affect … inadequate performances produce negative emotions …' Although Vanessa and Ricardo want to curate their identities in a manner similar to Carmen and Andy, their lack of resources makes it impossible. When connectivity gaps make them unable to play by the three cardinal

rules of the identity curation game–constant identity curation, reciprocity, and vigilance—negative emotions ensue that require emotion management.

Equally important, on top of managing negative emotions, under-connected youths also must engage in 'suppressive work' with regards to their resource shortages (Hochschild, 1979). Vanessa constantly suppresses negative emotions prompted by sharing digital resources with her family:

> I'll be uploading a photo or playing around … and my sister will just pester me. You know. 'What are you doing? I need the computer for my homework. Why are you so vain with your page' … seriously I just want some space to get my stuff the way I like it and she makes it so hard … but then I feel selfish. I hate that so it's better to just give her the computer so that she can do her work and I don't have to feel bad.

Compounding the negative emotions from not being able to curate at will, Vanessa must self-police her own feelings so that she does not 'feel bad' or 'selfish'. This suppressive work adds an additional layer of emotion work to under-resourced youths' identity curation. Ricardo also explains how he tries not to feel 'irritated':

> Yeah sometimes it just makes me a little jumpy. Like I'll get a text but I can't get online 'cause my dad's on the computer … just have to wait and wonder … but I don't want to get irritated 'cause it's for us that he's doing his job.

Not only must Ricardo manage his emotions, but he must also suppress feelings of frustration that he thinks are inappropriate when he should feel gratitude towards his father. In Hochschild's words, Ricardo 'works on inducing or inhibiting feelings so as to render them "appropriate" to a situation' (1979, p. 552). In sum, connectivity gaps cause inadequate performances such that emotion management becomes a necessary component of the identity curation game. Further, connectivity gaps compound the likelihood of failed identity performances that make under-connected youths invisible or irrelevant or defenseless targets. When under-connected youths cannot follow the rules dictating constant curation, reciprocity, and curating vigilance, they must manage negative emotions such as shame and embarrassment. Most important, their emotion management burdens are made even heavier by the suppressive work they do to inhibit feelings they frame as bad, selfish, or ungrateful.

Low connectivity: Marta and Ricky

While difficult, the hardships of youths with moderate connectivity pale in comparison to those lived by youths with low connectivity like Marta and Ricky. Youths without any home or personal digital devices comprise a sixth of interviewees at Rancho Benito and under five percent of Glen Prep. At both schools, the most disadvantaged youths in the study are from the working poor whose families are dependent on precarious work such as seasonal work in the fields that entails a plethora of additional hardships. Youths like Marta and Ricky inhabit a world in which long-term financial hardship and material deprivation are normative conditions. For many of these youths, housing and food are scarce resources. Some lack a permanent dwelling; for others, couch surfing or living in someone's garage are not distant unknowns. Rather, their lives are afflicted by constant economic uncertainty as to where they will reside, whether the water or power will be shut off, how they will get around town, and if they will have enough to eat. Within

this context, hardware and connectivity fees are real hardships—paying for data packages or owning a personal device is unthinkable.

Table 4 reveals that youths with low connectivity resemble those with moderate connectivity in two ways. First, both work jobs to keep their families afloat financially. Along with unpaid labor at home, these temporal constraints cut into time that might be spent online. Second, both must use school resources during the day and pay opportunity costs to do so. However, for youths with low connectivity, these opportunity costs are even more onerous as many rely on the free breakfast or free lunch programs for their meals. For youths who rely on the school for free lunch every day, using the computer lab can mean going hungry. This is a very real choice because their sole internet access is outside of the home, and most work part-time jobs that make it impossible to use the internet at third places like the public library. While some have pay-as-you-go phones for talk and text, many of these youths have never had the internet at home. The lucky ones have computers without internet access, but most do not have printers. Thus when it comes to printing their school assignments, with only a limited number of first-come, first-serve computers for student use in the labs, these young people face the choice between going without food or without access to a printer for homework. Put simply, these youths' access to digital and other resources is stretched unimaginably thin such that playing the identity curation game is all too often out of reach.

Low connectivity: identity work and emotion management

Neither Marta nor Ricky takes daily or even weekly connectivity for granted. Youths suffering from extreme resource shortages are continually dependent on institutional access and the kindness of others for even minimal connectivity. Ricky explains how he must continually modify and adjust his expectations due to ongoing resource shortages at home:

> I never really know when I can get online 'cause I have to use it at school … I don't have enough time at the computer lab to get my homework done so there isn't much time for fun stuff … my friend made me an account … but that was a long time ago … I don't really do that …

While Ricky was not even able to create his own social media account, Marta's Facebook profile is hopelessly out of date. Marta explains how resource shortages significantly curtail opportunities to curate her profile: 'Yeah I'm on Facebook but not very much … I wanna be but ya know it's hard with going to the lab and all so I don't really get to do it. Kinda sucks … ' Buffeted by chronic resource uncertainties and scarcities, youths with low connectivity simply cannot curate their identities competitively or even regularly. Their 'failure' to follow Rule 1's mandate to constantly curate results in feelings of longing to participate and social isolation from their peers who never 'see' them on social media.

Youths with low connectivity are digitally invisible. Even worse, no one else is digitally visible to them such that they are constantly behind the curve on social events, exchanges, and information circulated by their peers, particularly on social media. Digitally, these youths live in a relative interactional void when compared to their better-resourced peers. Ricky relates: 'I'm always missing out on stuff 'cause I'm not on email or the internet … I have to ask my friend Bobby what's goin on … if he doesn't tell me I just gotta wait to find out'. Marta is also dependent on others' good will: 'I have to ask my friend to tell me what's going on since she's on Facebook a lot more than me'. Relying on third parties leads

Table 4. Low connectivity: daily rounds of Marta and Ricky

		Marta's Day	Ricky's Day	Digital Device Constraints & Opportunities	Marta & Ricky: Connectivity	Marta & Ricky: Costs
AM	06:00	Sleeps	Studies at Home	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
AM		Gets Ready for School/Breakfast	Studies at Home	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	07:00	Takes School Bus	Gets Ready for School/Breakfast	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
AM		Arrives on School Bus	Takes School Bus	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	08:00	School Computer Lab	Arrives on School Bus	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	09:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	10:00	Snack Break	Snack Break	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM	11:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
AM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	12:00	Lunch	Lunch	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM		Lunch	Lunch	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM	01:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	02:00	Class	Class	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Takes Bus to Work	School Computer Lab	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM	03:00	Part-Time Job	School Computer Lab	To Use School Computer Lab Must Sacrifice Other Activity	Low to Moderate	Moderate to High
PM		Part-Time Job	Takes Bus to Work	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	04:00	Part-Time Job	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Part-Time Job	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	05:00	Dinner Break at Work	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Part-Time Job	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	06:00	Part-Time Job	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Part-Time Job	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	07:00	Takes Bus Home	Part-Time Job	No Personal Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Chores at Home	Part-Time Job	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	08:00	Helps Siblings w/ Homework	Takes Bus Home	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Study or Free Time	Dinner	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	09:00	Study or Free Time	Chores at Home	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Study or Free Time	Study or Free Time	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	10:00	Study or Free Time	Sleeps	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM		Study or Free Time	Sleeps	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High
PM	11:00	Sleeps	Sleeps	No Personal or Household Digital Devices	Low	High

to a profound sense of social isolation unthinkable to youths like Carmen and Andy. Speaking about her family's talk/text flip phone, Marta shares: 'I can't wait to get a good phone. Then I'll know what's going on'. For Ricky, 'I'm trying to save some money to maybe get a computer someday … so that I'll know what's up'. Unable to follow any of the three rules, youths with low connectivity are banished to the sidelines. They are exiled from giving or receiving identity-affirming interactions to and from their peers. Receiving little or no validation from digital others, they are excluded from social worlds in which constant connectivity is the currency of social inclusion.

Yet, despite these travails, they resist self-pity and do identity work expressing strength in the face of hardship. To do so, they do emotion work to keep desire—or even envy—at bay. Ricky suppresses his negative emotions with brutal pragmatism: 'It's ok; it's ok … I just gotta do it … don't have a choice … I can't worry about that kind of thing … it will be better when I have a real job … ' Marta suppresses desire with Spartan fortitude: 'Sucks. It's not easy—so what? Life is like that—you don't get everything you want'. Not only do they engage in extreme emotional management that suppresses negative emotions, but they enact feeling rules in which they force themselves to make a virtue of necessity in order to survive. Despite knowing her digital road is rockier than that of others, Marta chooses to count her blessings:

> I just tell myself that so maybe it's harder for me 'cause I can't check my email and I miss out on Facebook and so ok I'm not like totally on the internet but count your blessings and hope for something better.

Ricky acknowledges his longing but chooses not to complain; instead, he chooses to work harder:

> Of course I want it to be different but wishing won't make it come true so I'm going to work harder and get a good job. Until then, too bad. Complaining won't make it better and it won't change anything so I don't do it.

These youths with low connectivity provide vivid examples of the social actor's will to monitor and control emotions, what Hochschild calls: 'the phenomena that call tacitly for will … a self capable of experiencing emotion and of working on it in socially patterned ways'(1979, p. 557). Operating in information survival mode, Ricky and Marta are unable to play the identity curation game in any meaningful way. Digitally isolated, they choose to enact feeling rules in which hope for a better future suppresses feelings of longing that cannot be assuaged in the present.

Discussion and implications

Unlike many other studies of youths' digital engagements, this study explicitly targets and contrasts youths with varied access to resources vis-à-vis their digital identity work. The findings substantiate how unequal access to digital resources impacts how well youths are able to play the identity curation game by following three implicit rules. They show that normative access to resources has strong implications for emotion management— an understudied by-product of digital inequality. While theories of identity work and emotion management can be applied to much of the social world, they have particular power to uncover the everyday challenges faced by the digitally disadvantaged. In making

these linkages, the research reveals the cascading effects of digital inequality among youths where constant connectivity is the sine qua non of social inclusion.

As we have seen, youths with high connectivity constantly curate their identities by updating many times per day and successfully jockey with the imagined other (Rule 1). In this digital mutual admiration society, highly connected youths feel like winners when they engage in reciprocated identity-affirming interactions that both validate their own identity presentations and elicit validation from others (Rule 2). As a corollary, to obviate negative emotions, they maintain a strategy of vigilance to remove the traces of failed identity performances (Rule 3). Very rarely sidelined from the game themselves, many highly connected youths have difficulty imagining the connectivity gaps experienced by others. As a consequence, they impose their own expectations of identity work and the rules of the identity curation game on all youths regardless of resources.

By contrast, connectivity gaps impede moderately connected youths from fully playing by the three cardinal rules of the identity curation game. Resource shortages hinder their ability to achieve optimal self-presentation (Rule 1), engage in reciprocated identity-affirming interactions (Rule 2), and engage in constant identity curation vigilance (Rule 3). As a consequence, when identity performances fail, moderately connected youths experience negative self-feelings including shame that require emotion management. Further, moderately connected youths must do suppressive work to counter emotions such as longing or frustration that they frame as inappropriate emotions such as selfishness or ingratitude. These heavy but invisible burdens are among the costs these youths pay while doing their best to play the identity curation game with more limited resources.

Afflicted by even more constrained resources that put them on a permanent time out, youths with low connectivity are unable to follow any of the game's three rules. Already struggling to keep a fingernail's hold on primary goods including food and shelter, they can only glimpse the other players from the sidelines. They are digitally invisible and isolated, exiled from curating their identities or receiving identity-affirming interactions. Making virtues of necessity, they do stoic identity work in the face of hardship and emotion work to keep envy at bay. They also represent the digitally excluded that are largely forgotten in a society in which high connectivity is assumed to be normative. Their narratives are often silenced and overshadowed by assumptions regarding autonomy and personal agenda setting in an era of assumed connectivity.

Most important, when accepted at face value, deep suppressive work has an unintended consequence: the depth of the social exclusion resulting from low connectivity is obscured from view. The extreme emotion management practiced by youths without digital resources allows them to keep their heads above the water. But the stoic nature of their tremendous efforts, while laudable, can render their struggles invisible to others. Those with more plentiful resources may all too often accept at face value Ricky's assertation that 'it's ok'. When this occurs, those with resources often do not see the deeper truth also stated by Ricky: 'complaining won't make it better and it won't change anything' so he does not do it. Youths with low connectivity like Marta and Ricky choose not to complain but hope for a better future in which they move from the periphery to the center of the digital world.

The digital identity curation game presupposes, as one of its central preconditions, continuous and autonomous internet connectivity. And yet many youths, even in the United States, do not enjoy such connectivity. Such uneven connectivity raises the question of

how connectivity gaps and the complete lack of connectivity affect their ability to play this game and their experience of it. As the study shows, those digitally constrained youths who aspire to play the game well experience profound frustration resulting from their inability to conform to the game's implicit rules. These youths pay a price for their discontinuous connectivity, even as they strive to emulate the tactics and strategies of their continuously connected counterparts. This price is especially steep for under-resourced youths who must inhabit a social world which straddles the divide between the physical and the digital and where social life moves seamlessly between these two domains, thanks to a plethora of social media and communication platforms available to highly resourced youths' mobile devices (Lane, 2016). Under-resourced youths are not unlike the classic upward-oriented middle-classes who struggle to emulate the upper-middle classes without possessing the economic means to do so effectively. This position leads to negative emotions such as frustration, shame, and embarrassment, emotions which require management and suppressive work. The more that individuals are digitally excluded, the more they suffer the effects of the digital social invisibility revealed in this article. Future work should examine the feedback loop identified in this article. In this feedback loop, the more disadvantaged youths are marginalized and frozen out of the digital social interactions enjoyed by their more connected peers, the more these underconnected youths may resign themselves to digital social invisibility and adopt a much more fatalistic posture (TenHouten, 2016). This posture is structurally similar to the fatalism of working-class individuals who do not expect to climb higher in the class system and have accepted their place in it. This stance is accompanied by a particular set of negative emotions, which demand a highly demanding kind of emotion work. The distinctive experiences outlined in this study enrich our understanding of digital inequality's subjective dimension, which has largely been obscured from view due to the invisibility of digitally excluded populations.

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Laura Robinson is Associate Professor in the Department of Sociology at Santa Clara University. She earned her PhD from UCLA, where she held a Mellon Fellowship in Latin American Studies and received a Bourse d'Accueil at the École Normale Supérieure. In addition to holding a postdoctoral fellowship on a John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation funded project at the USC Annenberg Center, Robinson has served as Visiting Assistant Professor at Cornell University and Affiliated Faculty at the UC Berkeley Institute for the Study of Societal Issues. She is a series co-editor for Emerald Studies in Media and Communications and previously served as the Chair of CITAMS (formerly CITASA). Her research has earned awards from CITASA, AOIR, and NCA IICD. Robinson's current multi-year study examines digital and informational inequalities. Her

other publications explore interaction and identity work, as well as digital media in Brazil, France, and the U.S. Her website is www.laurarobinson.org.

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