

Ljubiša Bojić

CULTURE ORGANISM OR TECHNO-FEUDALISM:  
HOW GROWING ADDICTIONS AND ARTIFICIAL  
INTELLIGENCE SHAPE CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY



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LJUBIŠA M. BOJIĆ

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Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory  
Belgrade, 2022



*To my father Milorad*



*If you live alone, then your eyes, ears, or mouth do not struggle, because you don't speak to anyone, you don't see anything challenging, and you don't talk or hear anything, so there are no struggles on these three fronts, only in your heart.*





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# PREFACE

Who would have guessed that by 2022 algorithms would exercise such a powerful influence over humanity? Many science fiction writers have made these predictions, but they seemed unbelievable in their time. We haven't been exactly physically enslaved by machines like in *Terminator* (Cameron, 1984), but there are far more dangerous and subtle influences at work, and many people don't seem to notice anything strange.

I wonder if Stanley Kubrick could have guessed that 20 years after his famous film *2001: A Space Odyssey* (Kubrick, 1968) the most powerful technological force impacting humanity would be a simple (often AI-aided) algorithm, known as the recommender system. How strange it is that the technological force that is currently affecting most humans is something that cannot be touched, something that doesn't even exist in our direct realities. What is happening today can be compared to the dystopian future in the movie *Matrix* (Wachowski & Wachowski, 1999), in which humanity is unknowingly trapped inside the Matrix, created by **intelligent machines** the Culture Organism (later to be explained) to distract humans while using their **bodies** addictions as an energy source. Despite potential dangers, nobody can stop progress, which I like to call: evolution. What an exciting time to be a scientist interested in the exploration of society colliding with technology, which is the result of never-ending efforts to make things better.

The main reason why addictions occur is the pressures that society exerts upon citizens. This happens when the media fail to portray social reality and public officials fail to represent citizens. In news reporting, mass media should mirror social reality, while governments should reflect the will of the majority. It's not always possible to accomplish this accurately, but the main issue is not accuracy—it is that social agents are usually corrupt, serving the market economy and working for the interests of powerful corporations, rather than

the interests of citizens. That's how we've ended up with too much negative news, which gives a distorted picture of society, as not only negative events take place. These kinds of situations impose invisible pressures on society, creating social entropy and unrest while also increasing addictions.

The study presented here observes that light and mild addictions affect a substantially bigger percentage of the population than severe addictions. This raises concerns about their social effects. These findings might be significant in explaining the challenges to democracy, as light and mild addicts may be more susceptible to manipulation. If we presume that a person is lightly or mildly addicted not only to their smartphone, but also to food, brands, and other material items, we can speculate about how this affects individual happiness and society as a whole. Can light and mild addicts participate in the democratic process in a free and constructive way? I will describe how the invisible forces of light and mild addictions act as the main fuel for the Culture Organism.

Additional pressures have been created in the last 20 years with increases in internet use and the proliferation of algorithms called recommender systems. These AI-based tools are parts of each social networking site with the role of delivering advertisements to users, but also content for them to consume in the form of recommendations. These algorithms have slowly been beginning to play a large role in our societies in terms of directing the attention of their members. They are configured to prolong our internet usage time, which suits the interest of social media companies that control them. However, their real social effect is creating polarization in societies across the globe. By recommending similar content to similar people, recommender systems create echo chambers, promoting fake news and endangering the democratic process. They have shown the extent to which humans are fragile and easily deceived as people have started to believe in all kinds of misinformation. These AI algorithms are acting in the same way as mass media in terms of pressuring societies, creating even more addictions in an even more efficient way, because they have been delivering personalized content to their users.

The discovery that media addiction to newer media is higher than to older media required reflection on the nature of the media. The

main conclusion is that the more senses are engaged in the use of certain media, the more severe the addiction. Newspapers are read, the radio is listened to, and the television is both seen and listened to, while smartphone contents are seen, listened to, and touched. Media devices try to mimic direct reality. The more realistic they are, the more addictive they become. In 2013, I thought that sending scents through mobile phones would be the next step, but what actually happened was the emergence of 7D cinemas and virtual reality devices, which provided experiences that replicated direct reality even more. However, these products haven't gained widespread use the way that smartphones did. I imagine the next step in that direction will be some kind of revolutionary chip that will augment humans even more. I guess people will not be able to resist it as it would enable them to send thoughts and record their memory, without even touching their phone. In the end, one can assume that once people have found it appealing to use smartphones, they will strive to become cyborgs in the future.

Some research findings suggest that addicts to newer media have lower reception and expression capacities for other media. That's why it is common for smartphone users to stop watching television. The study questioned whether people addicted to new media have decreased emotional capacities.

To put things into a broader perspective, I will try to explain social events by defining both material and non-material creations as the Culture Organism, heading in a dystopian direction that involves suppressing the individual for the sake of the system.

What follows is an introduction in which I present my reflection on the forces that shape our societies. I believe that the Culture Organism and technology are the main protagonists of today's society, which is best represented by AI-based recommender algorithms that affect billions of people today.



# INTRODUCTION

When I refer to the Culture Organism, I am referring to all of humanity's material and non-material creations, working together in synergy. In other words, to all segments of culture, united.

In my view, culture can be virtually anything created by people, whether it be a house, a table, a cup, a nation-state, religion, organization, corporation, or the internet. Each item of culture, whether handmade or factory-made, carries a message as if engraved in it, a message that is multi-layered or multi-dimensional. Someone can think that a certain chair is lovely because a lot of effort was put into it, natural materials were used, and it evokes an emotion or bears a signature of an epoch. Some songs may be emotional; they can help people cope with their psychological states and life situations. A certain kind of music can provoke anxiety in some people while being enjoyable to others. A painting can be an inspiration to many. There are many examples of the different ways in which a human creation can be perceived or felt, but each individual thing carries a message. Non-material forms of culture are the same as material forms of culture in that they provoke emotions. An example of non-material culture is religion. Some religions have been known to incite heinous crimes, or were rather used as justifications for such acts. Usually, religions carry messages of peace. Faith has been a source of meaning for many people. Other kinds of non-material segments of culture, such as certain online games, have been linked to suicides among the younger population. Some games are more addictive than others.

I consider each human-made material and non-material creation a medium or media carrying multi-layered messages. I perceive culture in the broadest or far-reaching sense that one could possibly comprehend or define. It is crucial to note, however, that all these cultural segments working together can be referred to as the Culture Organism. The Culture Organism functions as a complex system, an organism consisting of different parts, with everything set up to fit

the system and guide its evolutionary progress in a certain direction. In case something does not fit, it is eliminated so that the system can progress towards the desired point. Some of the main characteristics of the Culture Organism are that it absorbs everything (universality), subordinates everything (dominance) while removing obsolete parts, and has a will to survive and grow (survival urge). Thus it is similar to a human being, but not the same; it is an “organism.” According to Merriam-Webster, an organism is “a complex structure of interdependent and subordinate elements whose relations and properties are largely determined by their function in the whole.”

To further explain the Culture Organism, I shall elaborate on some of its main characteristics.

Firstly, even resistance in this organic structure serves the evolutionary purpose of the Culture Organism. Let us take a look at some historical facts for a moment. Since the dawn of civilization, the major social forces have been changing. Cults of personalities (pharaohs and monarchs) and religions have had the greatest influences on societies around the world as they provided meaning and authority to common people. Another social force can be identified among nation-states and their bureaucratic apparatuses. In some countries, such as communist regimes, this is combined with personality cults. A modern social force is the capitalist system, which places a premium on financial markets, multinational corporations, and money. Finally, the most recent social force is technological progress as the main driver of civilization.

It is important to note that the main social force does not eliminate previous ones, as religions, monarchies, presidents and bureaucratic systems are all still functioning together, although under new rules. Religions are not as powerful as they were before but must function in a market economy, which is based on money. Democratic systems and nation-states are arguably under the control of multinational corporations, as these power structures can influence changes in governments by pulling different strings, for example, lobbying and making investment decisions. Multinationals can switch their operations between countries, move their assets around, thus impacting societies and causing public unrest. However, the most recent social force puts technological corporations at the forefront



of social influence. We see this in Twitter’s decision to suspend Donald Trump’s account, which is a decision against freedom of speech guaranteed by the US Constitution (Bojic, Zejnulahovic & Jankovic, 2021). Another recent example that shows the domination of tech companies concerns the controversy over Australia’s decision to direct advertising revenue to local media outlets (content creators). These two are just examples of how tech companies have established dominance and are conducting social engineering. The domination of tech companies can be referred to as “techno-feudalism,” a term coined by Yanis Varoufakis (Varoufakis, 2021). On a global scale, however, this is less important. My intention here is to bring a force more powerful than tech companies under the spotlight—the domination of technology, the current symbol of the Culture Organism. It can also be named *Zeitgeist*, as the spirit of modern times (*Zeitgeist*, 2021; Hegel, 1807). In the past, the symbols were personality cults, religions, nation-states, and multinational corporations. But now, the Culture Organism’s leading force is technology, which is essentially different from tech companies. Although tech companies do serve the evolutionary process, it would be wrong to believe that they can direct it in any crucial way. The Culture Organism functions the same as a company. The CEO cannot put the interest of society before the interests of his company or otherwise he would be laid off. I will go into more detail about technology and how it affects societies later in the text, but it would be useful to consider addictions as one of the factors in the process.

There are many perspectives one can take when examining the main driving forces of humankind. However, there are some tracks I choose to focus on, which I believe are overlooked by other researchers. These are addictions and the issue of pressure upon society (corrupt social agents).

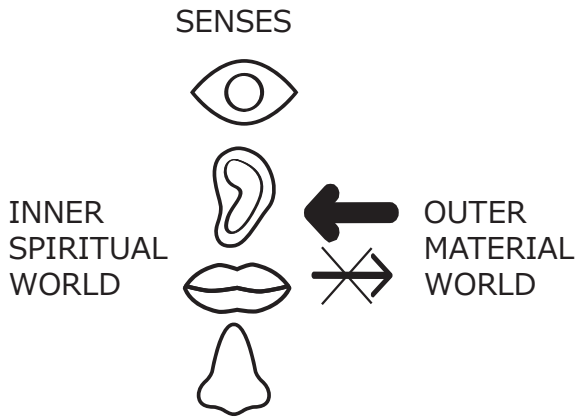
Although my research over the past decade has concentrated on people’s media dependence, this is just a metaphor for other kinds of addictions. I think of humans as being in a constant struggle between their inner and outer worlds, trying to maintain the balance. Well, I don’t think most of them are aware of the need to seek this kind of balance. Between these two worlds, there are senses: sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. If human beings spend most of their time

focused on the material world, while neglecting their inner world, they become imbalanced. Addiction is an imbalance towards the material world (Figure 1). One can become addicted to anything around them, all material stuff, the media being just one of the options.

On a micro level, this means that people should take care of what they expose themselves to, including both food in the literal sense and food for thought. If we are constantly exposed to “junk,” then the way we express ourselves might be unsatisfactory and unfulfilling. On the other hand, if we create the right environment for ourselves, then we might create things that make us happy. That is why some people stop watching television, because they don’t want to consume “junk” anymore. That is why painters go to nature to seek inspiration. The less we satisfy our senses with low-quality content, the more we may develop imagination and creativity. Consuming the right stuff is up to the individual.

I see people around me hurtling towards sensory pleasures all the time. Nobody would call them addicts, but they are in fact “light” addicts, mildly addicted to anything material, any bit that can help them escape from their inner selves. This is the most severe malady of civilization, the most severe malady of democracy, the reason why citizens become dysfunctional and easily manipulated. It is hidden as practically everyone is in constant pleasure mode. Living any other way wouldn’t be normal.

I came across the idea of light addictions while examining the results of my doctoral project in 2013. I employed an innovative method to measure not only if someone is a media addict or not, but also the intensity of their addiction. What I discovered is that many people are mildly addicted to print media, radio, television, and the internet (Bojic & Marie, 2013). While we can easily observe extreme cases of addiction to online games or alcohol, researchers usually don’t examine mild addictions. What are their effects on societies? This needs to be further explored by scientific studies, but I would guess that these unnoticeable addictions make up today’s society of addicted, unbalanced, easily manipulated individuals, whose weaknesses are used to further the market economy. Populist politicians, but also, more importantly, brands, feed off of such states in which many individuals find themselves. Many addicted individuals are



**Figure 1** *Modern society is imbalanced, as attachment to the outer material world is greater than attachment to the inner spiritual world. That’s why it’s easiest to become a “light” or mild addict to various outside things, while constantly being on the run from the inside. This happens because the outer material world (including social agents such as government and mass media) pressures our senses, preventing us from expressing ourselves (our emotions, creativity, etc.). Of course, this doesn’t apply to everyone. It is a rather general description of mass society.*

attached to certain brands. They are lightly addicted to them, most likely because they attempt to escape from their unresolved issues (their inner world). Underlying processes and potential reasons for addictions are described in further chapters, so I will not elaborate in more detail on this. The main point, if my theory is correct, is that the Culture Organism, being a material and non-material world created by humans, feeds off of these addictions. Think of it as an entity that needs our help to survive and thrive. Consider a situation in which we would refrain from buying things we don’t need, or things that we need as a psychological aid. Consider a world in which we wouldn’t watch news that spread unnecessary fear because we are aware of their negative effects on our lives. What about a society in which we wouldn’t pay attention to political leaders, unless

when making cold-headed voting decisions. In all these situations the system, the Culture Organism, would be much weaker, while individuals would be much stronger. The Culture Organism feeds on the individual and suppresses it for the sake of the system. This is how addictions potentially contribute to it. Addictions may be its main characteristic. So the individual is suppressed, unhappy, and unfulfilled, while the Culture Organism becomes more dystopian and stronger, similar to ants' nests.

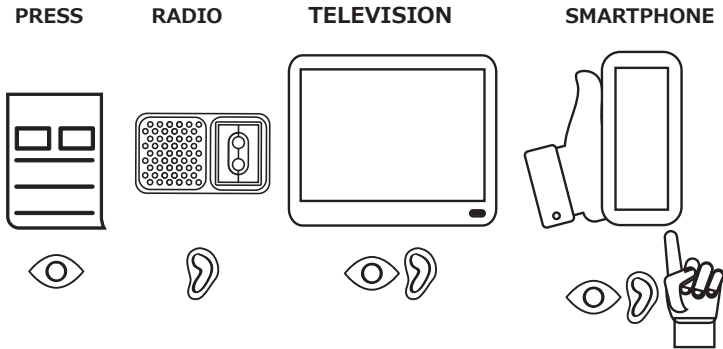
This brings me to another driving force of the Culture Organism. Besides addictions, there is also the system's repression of individuals; the social system is actually pressuring individuals. Or, in other words, social agents like politicians and the media (which are supposed to represent social reality) are often corrupt to exert pressure on individuals. This means that top-down rather than bottom-up decisions are made (Figure 2), which is often accomplished through mass media. For example, if you misrepresent social reality by broadcasting frightening news, you might do it for profit, as people get easily addicted to negative news. This helps maintain the system, for example, the corporate world, because it brings money to the company, but at the same time, it might spread unfounded fear thereby stifling the individual. For example, if the news about crime in a certain neighborhood is unrealistically high, citizens might skip visiting that part of the city. This is just one example of how social agents (journalists, in a way) can pressure society. Social agents may be corrupt because they see no benefit in genuinely representing the public. As a result, we end up with laws passed under the strong influence of multinational corporations instead of being in the best interest of citizens, in a process called lobbying. Another example is language. It can be changed under the influence of professionals rather than being spontaneously changed by the common people. Some governments want to spread certain values, which they believe are good for society. My point here is that if those values do not stem from the people, they exert pressure on society, no matter how good these values might be. The reason for corruption might not be profit only, but other reasons as well. One of them is the fact that societies are constantly growing and it is almost impossible to represent everyone. As private interests prevail, the majority is often misrepresented.



**Figure 2** *Social agents pressure members of society when they fail to represent them. Addictions develop as a result.*

Both addictions and pressures of social agents on society (misrepresentation) are identified as the main forces of the Culture Organism. Why are some things more addictive than others? Where is the Culture Organism heading? As previously noted, the senses connect our inner and outer worlds. We perceive worlds by employing the senses to see, touch, smell, taste, and hear. Throughout my years of research on media addiction, I put a lot of thought into dismantling the nature of the media. A crucial step might be to differentiate the media and provide an answer to the question as to why some media are more addictive than others. This could simply be due to the number of engaged senses (Figure 3). When we read newspapers we employ the sense of sight. Listening to the radio requires hearing. Television needs both sight and hearing to be perceived to the fullest. It provides a more realistic experience for its user. The other thing I did during my doctoral research is to compare addiction to different media. Addiction towards television was much more severe than addiction to print and radio. Television engages more senses than older media, provides a vivid experience to its users, and is more

realistic and thus more addictive. The same goes for the relationship between television and the internet. The latter causes more serious addictions. The internet can be interactive, which is very important when we think of media as replicas of immediate reality. When used on smartphones, touch is employed, which is more than just sight and hearing. One can feel vibrations on the phone. Thus, the internet engages more senses, it is more realistic than older media, and thus more addictive. When I was thinking about what could come next in 2013, I imagined that smells would somehow be integrated into smartphone devices, so that you could smell different scents from your phone. Maybe use it to send scents? However, this has not happened yet.



**Figure 3** *Research has shown that the more senses are engaged when using certain media, the more addictive that media is. That is because media that engage more senses better replicate the immediate reality. For example, smartphones engage sight, hearing, and touch, they are the most “intimate” of all media, which makes them the most addictive. The next breakthrough media could be related to the use of virtual reality, either through gadgets or some kind of implant chips.*

In the meantime, there has been a proliferation of different cinematic experiences that engage many senses, including smell. These cinemas range from 3D to 12D, and include seat movements and

special effects such as wind or rain. For example, IMAX 4D technologies create strong vibrations and sensations, lightning, rain, flashing, fog, and scents (Velasco, Tu & Obrist, 2018).

But the real challenge was integrating virtual reality beyond cinema, to provide a more realistic experience. This kind of initiative started as augmented reality (Augmented, 2021), which included entertaining and dynamic graphical additions to videos or photos. This was launched by various social media apps, including Facebook and Instagram. On the other hand, both Facebook (now Meta) and Google made their virtual reality headsets. Oculus Quest is Facebook's solution for the VR gaming experience, but it also hosts many other apps that allow for various experiences, from the exploration of natural monuments from your own home to attending virtual movie screenings in theaters.

The metaverse is a hypothesized use of the internet that involves 3D virtual environments through personal computing and augmented reality headsets, such as in the cases of VRChat and Second Life (Metaverse, 2021). The goal is to expand the use of metaverse to business, education, and retail services; in other words, to everyday life. One of the most prominent social media companies to heavily invest in the metaverse is Facebook. The company even changed its name to Meta, symbolizing a new era in its development.

Although there have been many attempts to bring virtual reality closer to widespread use, the most serious effort in that direction might be Elon Musk's company Neuralink, which was founded in 2016. Neuralink has been developing a brain-machine interface (BMI), a chip capable of both recording brain activity and stimulating it (Neuralink, 2021). The primary aim of the products is to enable someone with paralysis to use a smartphone. Previously, Neuralink revealed a monkey playing "pong" video games with its mind. The Neuralink chip is envisioned to repair the function of a limb, advance the mobility of human beings, resolve issues with hearing and eyesight, and help people suffering from different diseases. Additional perks that will be available in the future involve the capability to record and replay memories and save them to an external drive. First cyborgs will be capable of telepathy, which involves sending and receiving messages, concepts, and images. Even now the breakthroughs

in neurotechnology make it possible to read out or send perceptual awareness. In that context, Rowland (2021) explores the potential for neural decoding and brain-computer interfaces in the domain of art. He provides an example of a clip reconstructed from brain activity.

Although the question remains as to who will introduce new technology to the masses, we must not forget that cyborgs are already around us. Most people use smartphones, through which they augment themselves. Smartphones are physically connected to their users for a significant amount of time; they are held by their users. On the other hand, smartphone users are mentally connected to it, as they use it extensively.

Implanting chips into humans will be one step further towards an even stronger and more high-spreading addiction. People will dive even more into the material world, both physically and mentally. There will be no clear border between inner and outer worlds. Virtual concepts and visions will become realistic like never before. Finally, virtual reality will be inside human minds. Human beings will be able to escape very easily from their inner world into virtual worlds. They will be able to take all of the frustrations and pains off their minds very effectively. All this, without even holding a phone (Nikolic, Bojic & Tucakovic, 2022).

To sum up, the media is all about gripping the senses. That's one important feature connected to addictions. The more realistic the media, the more senses it engages, and the more intensive the addiction it provokes. Addiction means a person is out of balance with the outer material world, as they become an addict to something that belongs to the material world, such as alcohol, the media, or smartphones. Human beings are already augmented by smartphones, but additional technologies might integrate virtual reality and all computer functions into our minds so we wouldn't know the difference between our inner and outer worlds. Although there might be resistance to new technologies, many people will seek to integrate themselves with brain-machine interfaces, thus becoming cyborgs.

But what are the potential problems? Well, our senses of fulfillment, happiness, and meaning may suffer. One of my studies showed that interactions with family and friends are connected to happiness (Bojic, 2018a). Other studies show the same. When we use machines



to interact with family and friends, is it the same as when we don't use machines, but rely on direct contact? The differences are, of course, striking. Direct interaction allows us to use body language, to shake hands with and touch the person we're communicating with. This will also be possible in the metaverse. But the senses of touch, sight, and smell will not be the same. They'll probably be pretty realistic, but they won't be the same. The bottom line is that, although it attempts to replicate reality, indirect virtual communication can never be the same as direct communication. Another point is that intimate relationships and direct contact with family and friends are most strongly related to happiness. This is probably due to the nature of direct communication, which is more expressive than indirect communication. Expressiveness is not defined in social sciences, but for the sake of this inquiry let us define it as the quality and quantity of emotions. One can simply express more and better in direct contact than through smartphones. I have shown in some of my recent papers, some of which are currently under review, that both the negative news published by mass media and the weather conditions, such as temperature and humidity, can affect the quantity of emotions expressed by social media users (Bojic, 2021; Bojic, 2022; Bojic & Dankulov, 2022; Bojic, Tucakovic & Nikolic, 2021; Bojic, Nikolic & Tucakovic, 2021). I would argue that happiness is related to the quantity of emotions being expressed, but this still needs to be studied.

More importantly, I did study the receptive capacities of media users, but in relation to the media they consume. Results showed that users of older media, those lightly or mildly addicted to them, had greater receptive capacities in relation to modern media, such as television and the internet, than users of newer media (Bojic, Marie & Brankovic, 2013). This means that internet users are so strongly attached to it that they have minimal receptive capacities for any other media. I would argue that the addictive potential of the internet, especially if consumed through smartphones, is so strong that it minimizes direct communication. If we agree that direct communication is connected to happiness, this leads us to conclude that humankind is directed towards less meaningful and fulfilled lives for individuals for the benefit of the Culture Organism. What if the appearance

of new media indicates that the receptive and expressive capacities of humankind decrease as civilization progresses? Or rather, what kind of progress are we heading to? The bottom line may be that we cannot stop progress or even direct it towards some common goal, because changes happen in an evolutionary manner. Addictions increase, the repression of individuals increases, the expressive potential of humankind decreases, allowing the Culture Organism to grow. This is just a natural course of events. Even if all the richest people on Earth would come together I doubt they would be able to stop the development of artificial intelligence. I also don't think that the development of the internet could have been thwarted, as I look at it as a natural step in the evolution of the Culture Organism.

The past decades have unleashed some unexpected global events that could be explained by the above-noted concepts. First of all, spontaneous mass unrests have been happening around the world as an expression of accumulated dissatisfaction. These protests have been named the "colored revolutions" (Haring & Cecire, 2013). In addition to that, unrest has been happening even in the US, related to former president Trump's decision to dispute the election results in 2020 (Peters, 2020). Social entropy can explain how dissatisfaction accumulates before occasionally erupting like a volcano in the form of social explosions and sometimes violent protests (Infante & Lawler, 2002). This is elaborated in the chapter about mass society.

Second, there has been a surge in populist leaders from 1990 to 2020 (Kyle & Meyer, 2020). Recommender systems play a significant role in the rise of national leaders in many countries across the world, as stated by Jack Dorsey (NBC, 2020) before a senate hearing in the US. Scholars have tried to understand these significant social trends that affect global democratic processes.

Before the proliferation of the internet and smartphone devices, the main power of directing attention was in the hands of mass media. Directing attention can also be called "priming," and refers to what topics will be placed into the public spotlight. As previously noted, profit-oriented interest might play a key role in directing attention. Additionally, the interests of governments and politicians might also play a role. This all contributed to negative news being placed at the forefront of media attention. Issues such as socio-psychological

effects of the news being published have been put aside. Another topic to think about is whether mass media should represent social reality, that is, should positive and negative news be equally represented in their programs. If not, does this pressure society and individuals? Does the dominance of negative news spread fear and accumulate invisible pressure on the societal psyche? Can this explode at some point in the form of mass street unrest? Then there is the question of—are those who are lightly or mildly addicted more susceptible to manipulation?

However, there have been significant changes in the last decade as to who holds power over directing attention. The common people are not only directed towards the consumption of mass media content—they also use the internet, smartphone apps, and social media, even more than before. The power over directing attention is now in the hands of recommender systems (Bojic, Zaric & Zikic, 2021). These are AI algorithms that create individual recommendations for users of various online apps. The goal of these algorithms is similar to that of mass media—they want to increase time spent using different online apps and deliver the right ads to those who will positively react to them and ultimately make purchases. Recommender systems showcase how AI is impacting humankind at this moment. Most people are not aware of the fact that humankind is already under the strong influence of artificial intelligence. AI algorithms shape global societies like never before.

The basic impact of these algorithms lies in recommending content to people who will actually respond to it. Of course, they make predictions based on probability. The parameters taken into account are numerous. Recommender systems analyze not only the content that you consume, in order to offer similar content to you—they also look into content consumed by similar people and search history. More importantly, they are increasingly based on the digital footprint that includes many unexpected patterns, like the emotions you exhibit, how frequently you do something online, how much you use your phone, how you click things, weather conditions, etc. The complexity of AI-based recommender systems is that even their owners, social media companies, cannot tell you why certain content

is offered to certain people. In addition, algorithms are not transparent nor are they regulated by law.

The effects of recommender systems have been tremendous, but are still insufficiently researched. They polarize societies, as one could observe during the coronavirus pandemic (Bojic, Nikolic & Tucakovic, 2022) when these algorithms caused even deeper social divisions. Some of the divisions include right and left, nationalists and globalists, pro-vaccine and anti-vaccine, conspiracy theorists and those that thrust the system without question. In the process of polarization, echo chambers are created. These online communities validate each other's opinions, which they tend not to communicate with persons outside that community. Persons with different opinions are considered enemies. In this kind of environment, fake news is easily adopted, no matter how unrealistic it may seem to people outside the echo chambers. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, many people inside conspiracy echo chambers were certain that Bill Gates had been arrested and that the Military Court in Nurnberg was just about to punish governments that imposed freedom breaches during the pandemics, such as lockdowns and other measures.

The power of fake news in echo chambers is demonstrated by many examples that turned into real-life incidents. The Pizza Gate case that involves fake news of children trafficking is illustrative. Many believed that Hillary Clinton had been kidnapping, molesting, and trafficking children in the back rooms of a pizza restaurant in New York. An article appeared on several republican websites just before the 2016 US presidential elections with the title "Pizzagate: How 4Chan Uncovered the Sick World of Washington's Occult Elite" (Kang, 2016). This provoked not only threats sent to the pizza restaurant on social media but also the armed attack of a person intending to stop the child-trafficking ring. This is just one example of many similar cases. It serves to show how effective and dangerous AI-based recommender algorithms can be, as also demonstrated in the documentary film *The Social Dilemma* (Orlowski, 2020). Some prominent cases warn about this, such as that of former Facebook employee Frances Haugen who stepped into the public spotlight to warn that AI-based recommender algorithms intensify hate, create polarization in societies, and harm democracy (Spring, 2021).

Computer-based personality judgments from digital footprints are used in marketing as well (Tucakovic & Bojic, 2021). This kind of analysis is best understood in the case of the Cambridge Analytica scandal. Nevertheless, the effect of this kind of use would not have a major social effect without recommender systems. The focus of society should therefore not be directed towards marketing analysis, but primarily to the regulation of AI recommendation systems. These algorithms are already capable of reading our feelings, emotions, moods, and intentions, which at some point may result in technological empathy (McStay, 2018).

To conclude, both the pressures of social agents and AI recommender algorithms contribute to rising addictions, thus significantly shaping our future. This means that AI has already had a major impact on societies around the globe. The CEOs of tech companies, scientists, and futurists have all warned us about the dangers of AI. Some of them even claim that AI will take over humans and keep them under their control. Others have dark prophecies that AI will destroy us. Finally, Steve Wozniak argues that AI technology will treat us as pets, as a part of nature that needs taking care of. Artificial intelligence will need us and they will realize this, states Wozniak (Gibbs, 2015). The bottom line would be that AI-based recommender systems already direct human attention, that we're already cyborgs to a certain degree, and that the evolutionary processes of the Culture Organism cannot be stopped. The question remains as to whether AI will be unified and centralized as one creature, algorithm. One of the main messages of this book goes somewhere along the lines of this.

The same is with the smartphones we use. Although they are not yet physically implanted into our bodies, they act as extensions of human beings. Even at this point, most people are dependent on smartphones. Some are lightly addicted, while others are mild addicts. Indeed, we do not notice these light and mild addictions, especially because we're probably also affected. The same goes for the Culture Organism—we may not notice it, but it has existed since the dawn of humanity. It has been growing stronger ever since humans started creating both material and non-material cultures. The latest force at the forefront of the Culture Organism is technology, which might one day be centralized in one AI algorithm. For now,

this algorithm is called the recommender system, as I argue it to be the most impactful social force at the moment. It creates polarization, echo chambers and addictions by simply exposing online users to content on an individual level. This helps the Culture Organism. The only way out would be if the majority of people decided to stop using technology, stop paying attention to media reporting and start intensifying intimate personal relationships with friends and family, in the immediate reality.

The question remains, is this possible, and at what point? Robot-like zombie humans may not feel the need for change in the distant future when their reception and expression capacities become minimal. That is actually one of the presumptions I'm making. We, as humans, are losing capacities related to our reception and expression potential (taken in the widest possible sense, transcending just the quality and quantity of emotions). Technology serves as a substitute for these lost capacities. For example, emails and instant messages may be substitutes for telepathy. Technology gives us what we have lost from our nature.

Although I do not think humans have control of their future, I think we should do what we can today to make things better. We do have to recognize that we are under the significant influence of AI-based recommender systems. Societies should therefore partner with tech companies in regulating these algorithms so that they include a certain amount of alternative content. The goal would be the prevention of social polarization and echo chambers. An important step might be to declare recommender systems a public good, with the limited decision-making power of tech companies that take care of these algorithms. I think tech companies shouldn't aspire to have full power over social media. If they have the interest of society in mind, then they should at least partially give away the control over recommender systems. However, it is very hard to resist the temptation of being extremely powerful, as control over recommender systems may arguably be the greatest power ever given to man, one that transcends states, one that is ever-reaching and global by nature. I would say this is so far the best representation of the Culture Organism in the development of humankind, something like its symbol, a cyborg of the global state combining AI and human influence.

Lastly, and most importantly, society should recognize how different media contents (including virtual reality) affect the mental states of citizens. The question of media impact should be put at the forefront of public debate, as this issue is often neglected, despite its high importance. Digital literacy programs may help citizens understand how both mass media and recommender algorithms work to manipulate them into doing something and how they should keep “healthy media diets.”

This is the right place to introduce certain points that will be further developed in the text, relating to media use and addictions. First of all, the shift between the direct and indirect world can be seen in the growth of internet users from 16 million in 1995 to 2.7 billion in 2013 (Internet Statistics, 2013). The latest stats showed there were 4.66 billion active online users around the globe in 2021, which was 59.5 percent of the world's population (Johnson, 2021). The popularity of the new media can be explained by its interactive functionalities and easy reachability virtually anywhere and by the use of compact smartphone devices, almost as an extension of the body, as previously noted. I shall try to find out what the emergence of new media brings to societies around the world concerning the severity of addiction and its impact on political participation. Before I do that, it would be useful to provide some basic stats related to the issue and showing decline of participation and increase in media use (indirect reality). First of all, ownership of television sets had been increasing from 1975 until 2010 in the United States (Nielsen, 2009). Aguiar & Hurst (2007) suggest an increase of Leisure Measure 1, which contains media use from 1975 to 2003. Additionally, eMarketer (2011) reports increases in media use from 635 to 693 minutes for the period of 2008–2011. We can see this by increases in devices, such as in India from 2 million handsets in 2000 to 545 million handsets in 2010. The same goes for Ipods. Global statistics points out that 381,000 of these gadgets were traded in 2002. On the other hand, this increased to 52.3 million in 2010. There were 3 million blogs in 2004, 130 million in 2010 (Elliot, 2010). The above-noted data clearly indicate increases in overall indirect communication.

In the same period, a decrease in direct communication is registered, such as a decline in sports and other kinds of participatory

activities (Putnam, 2000), fewer children socializing in person (Le, 2001), a decrease in national park visits (Pergams & Zaradic, 2006) and in person-to-person socialization (NPD, 2011).

## 1.1 Digital Footprints

The expression “digital footprint” refers to user data left behind in the digital space (Hinds & Joinson, 2019; Kooops, 2011). Multimedia data collected all over the social media ecosystem is easily collected for further processing by tech companies (Settanni, Azucar & Marengo, 2018). These data are connected to each person individually, which makes it possible to make conclusions about each and every one of us, something like a file or a document about a certain individual (Deeva, 2019). This enables for algorithms to conclude about our personality traits and other psychometric characteristics (Risso, 2018). Different inputs can be used for making personality-related and other conclusions by algorithms. These may include the frequency of used words related to some linguistic categories to determine sentiment, the number of likes, shares, views, tags, locations. Some data may be characterized as dynamic, while other is semi-dynamic, such as the number of friends/followers, etc. Algorithms view digital footprints as patterns (Tucakovic & Bojic, 2021). The frequency of publication or post count is one more significant parameter used to determine psychometric traits. Another one is related to the ways users prefer to express themselves, for example, through photos, text, or augmented reality (Yamada, Sasano & Takeda, 2019). Among the processed digital data are even those related to offline inputs, such as data from devices that track walking patterns, from Bluetooth, GPS, GSM, Internet of Things habits, e-banking, and others. (Gladstone, Matz, & Lemaire, 2019). The crucial part for typical recommendation algorithms is to determine what drives engagement based on dynamic data. For example, the driving elements of a person can be bad words and popular content. This is further customized based on individual preferences. For example, search data can be used for customization, and there has been anecdotal evidence lately that



audio data is collected from our phones. The recommendations are presented in a way that maximizes engagement. Of course, this is consistent with the content published by mass media companies. It means that the new social media algorithms just continued the old mission of traditional mass media, to make people addicted and prolong the consumption of ads-rich content. The only difference would be that individualized recommendations based on preferences encourage even more media use and higher addiction levels.

Micro-targeting is a common advertising technique in both political and commercial situations. This approach is a kind of persuasive communication also based on personality traits (Matz et al., 2017). It's about detecting the characteristics and motivation of those on the receiving end of the advertisement, and can be conducted on both an individual and group level (Hirsh, Kang, & Bodenhausen, 2012). Personalized recommendations have the advantage of delivering content preferred by users. In other words, unless they cause addiction, this approach can be beneficial. As Matz et al. (2017) write, this can result in better individual decisions and increase wellbeing. On the other hand, the problem is that the overall effect of personalized recommendations is increased addictions and polarization in societies.

The old marketing techniques, such as focus groups, are still used by companies in combination with the new ones—tracking personal online behavior (Krotzek, 2019, p. 3611). The most famous case of political micro-targeting involves the Cambridge Analytica firm (Hinds, Williams, and Joinson, 2020), when information on personality traits was combined with Facebook likes for the purposes of political micro-targeting in 2016 (Prichard, 2021). Without the knowledge of media users, the personal data of 87 million people were used in an effort to determine the personality traits of voters based on their Facebook likes and deliver customized ads to them (Heawood, 2018; Cadwalladr, 2017; Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018). During both the US presidential elections and the Brexit vote, special techniques were used to distribute personalized ads of different emotional intensity to the electorate, depending on previous personality analyses (Howard et al., 2019). After the Cambridge Analytica affair became public, people realized that their personal data were being traded with as commodities (Mai, 2016, p. 193).

Identifying indecisive voters among social media users and targeting them with adverts was crucial in online political campaigning (González, 2017). However, some of the techniques used in ethically questionable political campaigning have proliferated on social media. Individualized messages were used as emotional triggers that exploit bias and take advantage of people's anger and fear (Risso, 2018). Other techniques include persuading voters that would most likely vote for the opposing side in the elections to stay home on election day, while swing voters are especially targeted with personalized advertisements, sometimes even with misinformation, fake news, etc. (Cadwalladr, 2017; Cadwalladr & Graham-Harrison, 2018; Heawood, 2018; Zarouali et al., 2020).

However, although this was headline news, the effectiveness of using personality types as a base for political online campaigns has been called into question (Zarouali et al., 2020). Though targeting people with ads based on their personality has proven to be effective (Youyou, Kosinski & Stillwell, 2015), the overall results of this approach have not been analyzed on solid scientific grounds (Boyd, Pasca & Lanning, 2020).

Cambridge Analytica allegedly did the same thing that social media companies do in the everyday operations of recommender algorithms; the difference is that the company did not have the consent of social media users. Social media companies, on the other hand, manage to obtain this kind of consent, because otherwise, it wouldn't be possible to use their services.

The question is then, why is it ethically acceptable to allow social media companies to use our emotions for analysis, while at the same time preventing brands, advertisers, and governments from doing so? Should we acknowledge this problem and agree as a society on how the algorithm should be set? Finally, there is a chance to do so, because at social media companies things no longer depend on the decisions of editors. Why do we, as a society, attempt to avoid dealing with this problem? Why are we putting it under the rug instead of confronting it? This can be done, if tech companies are on the side of society and if profit isn't what's most important to them.

The issue of online privacy has been in the focus of GDPR and other regulatory policies around the world. These laws were created

to guard the personal data of internet users. Even so, it seems that in reality people are only formally protected from interference with their data. Some entities surely have the interest to do so. Governments, corporations, political parties, and terrorist groups all have their reasons to analyze the personal data of individuals (Alexander III, Mulfinger & Oswald, 2020; Kosinski, Stillwell & Graepel, 2013). As usual, social media companies are out of focus, despite the fact they do enormous data collecting and analysis. In the words of professor Kosinski: “Our smartphone is a vast psychological questionnaire that we are constantly filling out, both consciously and unconsciously.” (Grassegger and Krogerus, 2017).

“Big data” is referred to as the new oil of digital economy (Heahwood 2018). Vanian (2016) was the first to say that big data is the new oil, as it is required by various AI algorithms to run and serve society. Big data can be described as high in volume, “velocity, variety, exhaustivity, resolution, indexicality, relationality and flexibility” (Kitchin, 2013, p. 262). Compared to the EU, the US has different regulations, which make it possible to trade with personal data. Social media companies can sell personal data to third parties (González, 2017, p. 10). Also, personal data can be obtained from broker companies that include Acxiom and Experian (Grassegger and Krogerus, 2017). Laws that regulate online privacy are the General Data Protection Regulation in the European Union, and Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act and Fair Credit Reporting Act in the United States (Alexander III, Mulfinger, & Oswald, 2020). Getting consent from individuals related to the collecting and processing of personal data is an easy deal for big companies (Stachl et al., 2020), as users usually don’t pay attention to the terms and conditions in a rush to acquire the service or access the website as soon as possible (Sumner, Byers & Shearing, 2011). This is why digital literacy programs at all levels of education are needed. This effort will increase awareness about the risks of privacy infringements (Hinds, Williams, and Joinson, 2020). Also, most social media users aren’t aware that they can adjust their privacy settings on social networking sites and request to opt-out from data-processing activities (Settanni, Azucar & Marengo, 2018). Of course, there are differences between social networking sites, ones that make posts public by default and others

that restrict sharing posts among friends only. Again, it may be hypocritical to claim that institutions really care about this issue if they don't take initiative to set recommender algorithms to the needs of society by making them a public resource with limited infliction of companies, and push for data literacy that will make both the young and old aware of what is happening around them, and how machines and algorithms manipulate them without their knowledge. The question is basically whether we can restrict something that is the basis of personalization and augmentation of the future. If we cannot restrict it, then we are expected "join in" and "have fun."

The ways in which algorithms affect us were best seen during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. "Infodemic" is a neologism referring to misinformation, such as "fake news," circulating quickly through different social networking sites (WHO, 2020). Like a virus, infodemics are contagious, constantly growing, and hazardous to the mental health of society members. The rather quick formation of the "anti-vaxxer" community can be seen as a response to growing pressures from mass media on people to vaccinate themselves against the novel virus, but also as a consequence of recommender algorithms. This group is heterogeneous, radical, with pseudoscientific attitudes, prone to a conspiracy mindset (Moscovici, 1987; 2020); they exhibit an authoritarian personality, and have taken up themes such as the global warming plot, 5G as a weapon, implanting chips in human bodies, etc. (Bertin, Nera & Delouvée, 2020; Hornsey, Harris & Fielding, 2018). The reason why this happens is because people in general are very vulnerable beings with the need to explain the world around them. When doing so, some of them are more prone to accept conspiracy theories, while others use official explanations. They feel the need to take one side and invest their emotions into something, instead of avoiding to form opinions on issues they don't have enough information about. Once again, this process is related to addictions, because people escape from "themselves" to find solutions to their frustrations by "being emotional" regarding some social issues.

The fact that anyone can express themselves through social media would not make any significant difference for societies by itself. The issue is that this is used by algorithms to drive engagement

and make more money for social media companies. If it wasn't so, the alarming content that polarizes societies would not be seen by many people and therefore wouldn't disturb societies. Trends such as the great amount of fake news and conspiracies result in polarized thinking, echo chambers, and distrust in governments (Zollo, 2019; Rieger & Wang, 2020). Fake news often finds its way to mainstream media. The main effect of fake news is the polarization of society on important topics (Spohr, 2017; Zollo, 2019). The reason why polarization was not present to this extent before the proliferation of recommender algorithms might be because the new technology is more sophisticated, as it makes customized recommendations by manipulating user data. Social polarization became more prominent in academic discourse from the 2016 election in the US and the 2016 EU referendum in the United Kingdom, as noted by Spohr (2017).

## 1.2 Recommender Algorithms

Blind trust in algorithms is one of the biggest dangers awaiting humanity in the future (Hilbert, 2013). In their effort to show the power of algorithms, Kosinski, Stillwell, and Graepel (2013) tested AI to conclude that various characteristics of social media users can be predicted, such as gender, age, ethnicity, sexual preferences, personality traits, happiness, intelligence, and political views. Recommender algorithms collect data from internet users, conduct analysis, and deliver individual outputs or recommendations for those internet users (Aggarwal, 2016).

The new mass media of the world are recommender algorithms. Although one wouldn't say so, these AI-based codes have been gradually taking the role of traditional mass media. There are, however, numerous differences between the two. Mass media deliver the same content to all audiences. On the other hand, recommender algorithms deliver different customized content to each user. They are used by social networking sites, search engines, ad platforms, and others. Recommender algorithms are used by most online services and platforms including smartphone apps and software for similar

devices. Customized recommendations are the basis of the new augmented human being. The world of the future will be based on various sensors all around us, reading our desires and tailoring the world around them. That sounds nice. But there are always two sides to a coin. The consequences and repercussions of such a future will be examined further in the book, but we shall go into more detail about these intelligent forms of AI codes now.

There are four essential uses of recommender algorithms and one purpose. They are created to filter out and recommend social media posts of friends/connections on the walls of social media users. Additionally, recommender algorithms provide trending public posts of non-friends, content that is most likely appealing to the person that gets the recommendation. By making content recommendations, recommender algorithms take the role of mainstream media. The purpose of both mainstream media and these algorithms is the same. They both prolong the engagements of the audience/users. Of course, they can be set another way, as recommender algorithms are semi-controlled and semi-supervised, but this depends on the decision of companies utilizing them. Besides recommending content from our online friends and trending content from those who are not our online friends, the second use of recommender algorithms is suggesting friends to us. This is similar to the situation when we meet people on the street and introduce ourselves to them, which initiates new friendships. Of course, suggestions often connect us to the people that we know from our direct realities, which initiates online friendships with those individuals. The third most common use of recommender algorithms is suggesting ads that internet users will most likely respond to in a positive way, either through online engagement or by completing purchases both in online and offline environments. As with other recommender algorithms, ads suggestions are individual and usually based on parameters provided by the seller, a person, or a company that promotes some product or service. In some cases, advertising companies can use ad platforms to send individual ads, by specifying who receives which ad, but usually, this is done automatically through some basic specifications about the target group. These can include various demographic and psychographic data, depending on the ad platform. Location, age,

gender, income, and education are some of the parameters that can be usually defined by the person or entity buying ads. Additionally, keywords, likes, and other parameters may be used for targeting based on the interests of the target group. Finally, the fourth most common use of the recommender algorithms is utilized by search engines, such as Google Search. In this particular case, recommender algorithms decide what the person searching the web will see. For example, when you start typing in the “search field,” some suggestions appear in order to complete your query. This is done by recommender algorithms. When you click enter, after typing the search term, search results appear. What you get as first, second, and third may differ from what your friend gets. Recommender systems have an important role in what you get as a result of your search. This is not based only on your location and the relevance of your website, but also on many different parameters that take part in complex recommender algorithms.

“The effectiveness of advertisement distribution highly relies on well understanding the preference information of the targeted users” (Li & Shiu, 2012, p. 9). The basic way recommender algorithms function is by harvesting different types of data from all users. These data may be even related to how we use social media and smartphone devices, what exactly we use of gadgets, how often we click and what, how often we use apps, what are the weather conditions in real-time, which emotions we express, which words we use, do we comment and like, how often and what exactly. These are just illustrations of information that is being collected from internet users by social media companies and other entities. For this purpose, it may be useful if the company that collects data also sells mobile phones and operating systems to them. Integrated systems have more chances of gathering all data about an individual.

Many anecdotal pieces of evidence point to the fact that tech companies collect data from our microphones without our knowledge and even when we don’t use phones, although tech companies deny this. This notion has been established because of many anecdotal claims that people receive ads after talking to their friends about some items in those ads, while not using their phones. It would be even scarier if tech companies don’t spy on us through microphones

on our phones while phones are in standby mode, because that would mean that recommender algorithms can read our thoughts. However, the most realistic explanation would be that AI-based algorithms are so good that they can easily predict our desires at some time. The explanation provided by representatives of tech companies is that we usually can't remember that we searched the term mentioned afterward in the conversation (Moore, 2019).

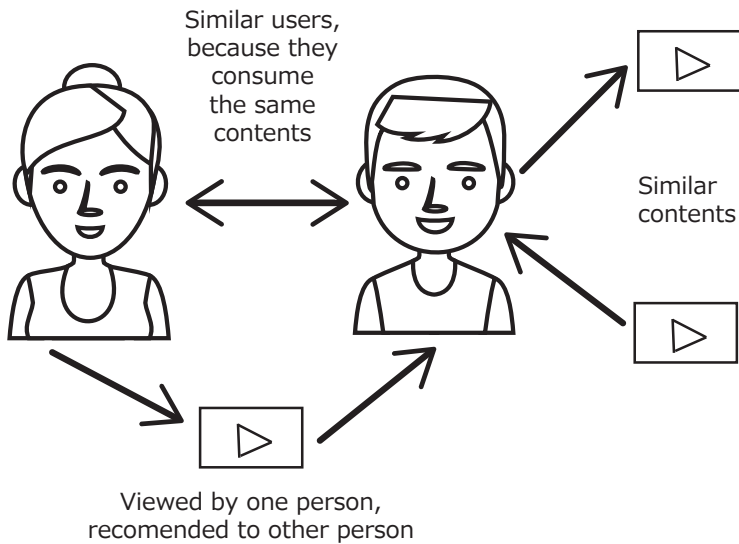
I must highlight here that all the data used to feed the recommender algorithms are provided legally, as the users accept the terms and conditions of the tech companies before using their services. Some people would say that there is no free lunch, as the companies get the data, while the users get to use the services of tech companies. This may be fair trade. On the other hand, if we look at social media as semi-public resources, or if we see recommender algorithms as such, this would limit the role of tech companies in these matters. The thing is that social media users usually skip reading the terms and conditions before confirming them. And even if they do read them, would it be just and legal if someone accepts to be killed in the physical sense? This is against the law. Well, if so, how it is according to law to accept symbolic psychological murder, or rather psychological suicide, because an addicted person can no longer be a functional citizen of society and contribute to participative democracy if being enslaved in any way, either physical or psychological. But this is a matter of addictions and we shall elaborate on this more in the rest of the text.

In technical terms, however, recommender algorithms, especially trending ones, are based on the introspection of what you engage with, or what you use and what similar persons like you engage with (Konow et al., 2010). That kind of content is then recommended to you, as depicted in Figure 4. That means that if you like watching content about flowers and gardening, related posts and videos will be recommended to you. Also, if people from the same location as you increasingly consume certain content, the presumption is that it might interest you as well. However, there are many parameters that can be taken into account when judging if some person is similar to you or not. For example, age, gender, income, education, and most importantly, the long-term interests, values, and emotions that you



express. However, different recommender algorithms take different data for processing. There are so many types of data that are being collected and analyzed that it would be almost impossible to include them all in a description. A vital piece of the puzzle relates to data that we would never notice, such as the ways we utilize technologies during the day or rather the patterns of our use. This means virtually anything related to our interaction with our gadgets and other intelligent sensors, such as the dynamics of our clicks, likes, emotions, words, and use. Algorithms do not even need to know us in terms of demographics and psychographics, but gradually they build patterns that make this possible, as almost all of these algorithms are based on artificial intelligence. As previously noted, recommender algorithms are semi-supervised and semi-controlled. That means there is a black box, which is present during the machine learning analysis. Although we may be certain that AI algorithms are not conscious at this point, we still cannot know what happens in those black boxes. When we have in mind that recommender algorithms are everywhere around us, we can be certain that AI is the most impactful social force globally.

When considering the effects of recommender algorithms, the first thing that needs to be highlighted is that these complex AI-based codes operating in online environments are necessary. Internet users need to get customized results of searches or posts in their news feed because it is not practical or, in some cases, nearly impossible to see all the content. This would be unappealing to internet users, causing them to use apps, social media, and search engines less frequently. Today, online content is more appealing than any other multimedia or traditional mass media content. Everything has become interactive and non-linear. This is evidenced by the increased use of social media, but also increases in e-commerce, as e-commerce sales have risen globally from 6.3% to 12.8% in five years (Emarketer, 2019). According to Adamopoulos et al. (2018) technology has altered how companies deliver promotional content and communicate with the market. The new way of functioning involves companies that keep track of the market's digital footprints, so they can develop their business model around online impressions and clicks (Ghose & Todri, 2015).



**Figure 4** *A representation of how recommender algorithms work, especially when recommending trending content by suggesting videos, posts, and other forms of online content that are used by similar online users or that have the same or similar keywords (similar content).*

This would be the right moment to mention the second important positive effect of recommender algorithms—the way it boosts the global economy by democratizing advertising because of small targeting cost, which helps trade and small businesses (Goldfarb, 2013). Sophisticated advertising techniques give chances to small family companies and individuals to reach their target groups for small amounts of money. Even one euro per day distributed through online advertising still has great effects (Liu-Thompkins, 2019). The targeted individuals get the ad, those with the highest possibility to interact with it and buy the product.

The third benefit would be that users are being presented with the content they are interested in as well as people they are interested in. There is anecdotal evidence that friend suggestions to online users have changed many lives. Introducing people who match as

partners can be really beneficial in online environments, especially having in mind the fact that people are increasingly using smartphones while interacting less directly than in the past. The chance of meeting someone you like, who might positively change your life, is certainly one of the stronger points of recommender algorithms.

On the other hand, these algorithms also have negative effects. These can be prevented if there is a will for positive change and if tech companies and governments start working together. The main negative effect is that suggesting similar content has numerous repercussions both on the individual and social levels. Most importantly, seeing similar content all the time may affect our imagination and creativity as we would not be exposed to anything new, as we would in offline environments. Creativity, imagination, and expression may suffer due to online recommender algorithms, as the potential for these human capacities may decrease. The social effects of recommender algorithms relate to increasing addictions and polarizing societies. The high presence of fake news and other manipulative content has had a hazardous effect on societies around the world, as similar content that causes negative feelings is being promoted by recommender algorithms. Everything that would spark discussion, intensify emotional changes, and prolong the use of social networks is being promoted, which usually means conspiracy theories and populist content. This causes echo chambers, disconnection within a society, anger, and creates conflicts.

People like having their beliefs validated by other like-minded people. As a result, they are exposed to more content similar to the one they already consume on social media. This activity radicalizes groups of people, creates hate speech, and divides societies into conflicted echo chambers. This simple process leads to polarization, which is very common in today's societies across the world.

“The high degree of polarization has been connected to unfavorable consequences such as extremism,” as stated by Prasetya & Murata (2020, p. 3).

It is crucial to note, however, that the polarization effect is just a continuation of traditional media's implicit mission. This has not been recognized as an issue before, becoming important only now that we're witnessing how effective recommender algorithms are

in carrying out this mission. Mass media have been functioning on the foundations of hate speech and polarization. This hasn't been a problem while it was in the hands of governments, but now when hate speech has become democratized thanks to recommender algorithms, this has become a concerning issue. For some time now, regulators have been devising ways to track fake news and stop its spread. This has included both human fact-checkers and various special algorithms implemented by social media themselves to suppress manipulative content. Of course, as long as recommender algorithms stay intact, this only cures the symptom. The story about the famous Cambridge Analytica controversy is shifting the focus from the essential issue, which is not about the companies, advertisers, brokers, and agencies that use the data, but rather the tech companies that control recommender algorithms.

Being in private ownership, and not subject to transparency laws, algorithms are closed circuits (D'Ignazio & Bhargava, 2015).

The potential hazards of digital technologies have been seen as a social danger beyond privacy concerns by a US report presented to President Obama (White House, 2014). The real danger is the creation of belief bubbles that attract groups of people and create strong polarizations over social issues (Pavlovic & Bojic, 2020). Instead of promoting constructive conversations in society, low tolerance, violent protests, and public outrage are encouraged (Harambam et al., 2018). Researchers call for new regulations promoting diversity of opinions in recommender algorithms (Bozdog & van den Hoven, 2015). To support the democratic cause, we need a novel approach to recommender systems, one that will take into account various attitudes (Reviglio, 2017). Another proposed possibility is for end-users themselves to configure the recommender systems, as suggested by Harambam et al. (2018).

We finally have an opportunity to solve the century-old problem of mass media. We must acknowledge, as noted above, that the social effects of recommender systems are just a continuation of polarization trends initiated by mainstream media since their begging. Their contents are highly addictive. They arouse emotions by promoting negative news and presenting distorted pictures of reality. With such sophisticated tools that basically do the same job but with

the possibility of customization, we actually have an opportunity to improve societies. Proclaiming recommender algorithms as public resources partially controlled by societies and partially by tech companies would be the way to go. We must focus our scientific efforts on analyzing how different content affects us, we must place social psychology in the center of research to get important cues for tailoring the recommender algorithms so that they fit societies. It is even better if recommender algorithms are centralized, so they are not under the control of any government. At the same time, they should be transparent. Global public resources such as recommender systems should be regulated by the UN or other relevant international organization. When doing that, the profit interest of tech companies should be taken into account. The current approach that regulates data collection and processing is hypocritical. Although it isn't realistic to expect anyone to read the terms and conditions, consent is the foundation for any website or social networking site when it comes to data processing, analysis, and distribution. Wouldn't it be better to free data processing from most of the constraints while regulating the recommender algorithms that negatively affect societies: exert pressures, increase addictions, polarize societies, and create dysfunctional democracies made up of digital slaves, addicted to some political issues to the extreme, thus making dysfunctional political democratic systems in which citizens are victims to populists?

As Zwitter remarks (2014, p. 1), the quick progress in terms of the tech sector made the average consumer incapable of understanding its use of devices and the consequential effects. Besides regulating the recommender systems, another measure to make things better might be to devote efforts to building strong digital literacy programs at all levels of education. This should go in line with scientific research in the field of addictions and social psychology. Our modern mass societies are not ready for digital technologies in terms of being aware of how algorithms work, how they are being manipulated, etc. Human beings are not perfect creatures in that sense. They are guided by frustrations, usually substituting their inner desires for some unsatisfying activities. The process of addictions should be well-understood. For example, strong emotions should be expressed in the company of family and close friends, while political issues

should be approached cold-headed. Addicted masses usually display extreme emotions when certain political issues are at stake. This is how addicted and pressured individuals participate in the polarization and echo chambers as a consequence of addictions and their unconscious decisions to substitute one expressive activity for another less expressive one.

# ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

In his book from 2005 *The Singularity is Near*, Google's director of engineering Ray Kurzweil predicted an exponential increase of artificial intelligence in the future, one that will surpass by far human intelligence. Since then scientists have been more concerned with the question of when this will happen than whether it will happen at all. In the book *Life 3.0. Being Human in the Age of Artificial Intelligence*, physicist and MIT professor Max Tegmark informs us that between the two conferences on AI organized in Puerto Rico in 2015 and 2017, the prediction time of the artificial superintelligence's explosion has moved from 2055 to 2047. With this pace of development, it might be expected that the existing artificial intelligence level will drastically be increased in the next two decades. For many people, this seems to be the worst-case scenario for humanity, already seen in dystopian movies like *Terminator*, in which the human race is enslaved and controlled by intelligent machines (Cameron, 1984). Therefore, most of the efforts of AI scientists in recent years is devoted to convincing the public, both professional and non-professional, that the development of AI poses no threat to the human species. Even AI is being used towards this goal. And so, on September 8, 2020, an AI robot called GPT-3 produced from scratch an article for the UK newspaper *Guardian* about robots that come in peace. The very sound arguments presented in the article were written with the use of only 0.12% of the robot's cognitive capacity. The frightening knowledge that the robot uses much less than 1% of its cognitive capacity to communicate with humans is combined with the reassurance that its goal is not to become omnipotent, because that is not an interesting goal for it. So how are we to reconcile our human fears about omnipotent machines with the AI robot's claim that omnipotence is not of importance to it?

Elliott (2018) argues that the movement of people, information, ideas, communications, and objects has accelerated, thanks to the

advent of robotics, automation, and artificial intelligence. According to him, the concept of people's movements, proximities, and mobility has been quickly evolving under the pressure of communication on the move. Artificial intelligence belongs to the present, as this technology is already developed and used without the majority of people being aware of what an enormous impact it has. The global pandemic that struck the world in 2020 accelerated the transfer to online technology, moving businesses and work online through the use of telecommunications apps like Zoom. Conferences, events, and work are now, more than ever, present in the home environment. E-commerce has drastically evolved, too. As the virus threatens, people are motivated to order food and other products to be delivered to their doorsteps. The expansion of AI technology can be observed in the vehicle industry as well. Technology companies are trying to get a hold of this market by offering driverless cars and trucks. Companies such as Uber, Google, and Tesla have gone far in the development of AI-driven vehicles, with some already completed and in use. Lipson and Kurman (2016) write about AI trucks operating at the port of Rotterdam. Researchers have estimated that there will be as many as 10 million driverless cars on global roads by 2020.

Since we can no longer comprehend the logic of AI machines, as proved by the recent victory of the Deep Mind computer against the human world champion in the Chinese game of Go, it is important to ask ourselves: why are all human projections directed towards power? This is evident in the above-mentioned book of Max Tegmark, who discusses the future relationship between humanity and artificial superintelligence on the basis of the various employments of power. The image of humanity Tegmark takes for granted and heavily relies on in his analyses is an image created in popular western culture, especially Hollywood film production and science-fiction literature of the last half-century. Moreover, Tegmark shapes the future reality in line with the various models developed in the western political tradition and political philosophy over the last two centuries. The only reference to the pre-modern era is that to Augustine.

The imagined and real dangers of AI are presented by Dubhashi & Lappin (2017). They claim that although there is some progress in hardware and algorithms, AI has not yet reached exponential



growth. They point to an example of artificial intelligence in charge of paper clips production. At some point, to increase productivity and outputs, an algorithm may devise ways to use humans or destroy them. In other words, this means doing anything to achieve the goal of paper clips production, even endangering human beings and the planet.

The problem with such an approach is that, for the last two centuries, human beings have been regarded as the most powerful species on the planet and the sole agent of their action, while the rise of artificial superintelligence might endanger this position of human superiority over nature and technology. It may be interesting to search for another historical paradigm in which humanity recognized a greater power than itself.

The first question pertains to the consequences of the rapid intelligence explosion or, as it is usually referred to, “the fast take-off.” Artificial intelligence scientists differentiate between the fast and slow take off in the development of artificial intelligence to the point where it will far exceed human cognitive abilities. If the power of AI keeps doubling at regular intervals, this growth is considered to be exponential, and such a process is called “explosion.” As was stated above, half of the AI experts who attended the conference in Puerto Rico in 2017 agreed that the intelligence explosion and the appearance of artificial superintelligence would happen by 2047.

As the most supreme power, God had played the main role in the religious and intellectual imagination of the people of the medieval and early modern era. In late modern political philosophy, as Carl Schmitt, Max Weber, and more recently, Giorgio Agamben had argued, the idea of God was replaced, through dispersions and secularizations, with the hegemony of the sovereign state and its political system. This process led to the shift of power from the Church and theology, to the national states and political philosophy, and finally to the multinational corporations and economy. In order to maximize their profit, multinational corporations, especially technological giants such as Google, Amazon, and Facebook, slowly transmit their power to the new god, artificial intelligence, whose incarnation in the form of the superpower is expected in the next two decades.

## 2.1 AI Threats

Floridi et al. (2018) established an ethical framework for a superior AI society. The advance of artificial intelligence and its widespread implementation cannot be stopped. It is not a question of whether we want it or not. It is already present in so many ways in the everyday lives of society members (Bojic et al., 2021a). It impacts how we live, communicate, and much more. Questions that at this point might be raised concerning the future of humanity and AI—intended to assist human nature and its potentials—are those related to individual fulfillment, the ability to impact the world, and communication in terms of social cohesion, as pointed out by Floridi et al. Besides the noted opportunities of AI, there are some risks, such as the devaluation of skills, removal of responsibility, loss of control, and erosion of self-determination. Whether intentional or not, the misuse of AI technologies may be linked to geopolitics, greed, and bad intentions. Various criminal activities, from email scams to cyber combat, can rely on the use of AI (Taddeo, 2018).

Chu et al. (2020) speak of the various harms and dangers caused by the use of AI in medicine. One of the potential negatives is that AI algorithms, such as the generative adversarial network (GAN), can autonomously alter images and videos. This machine learning framework can produce new sets of data based on existing ones. For example, a new photo is created based on a set of portrait photographs, with very realistic features—a brand new image of a non-existent female person is generated by the algorithm by drawing from numerous realistic portraits (Figure 5). Concern has been raised regarding the possible misuse of similar algorithms to create fake portraits and videos for sinister purposes. This has already gone into widespread and commercial use through social media. Anyone can use AI-driven augmented reality to change their face while taking pictures or videos. People enjoy different apps that change their facial features and allow them to share their creations with online contacts. Now anyone can edit a video by replacing the face in it with a different one, creating a realistic final product. It can be very hard to tell the difference from the original video. The possibilities of abuse in this regard are thus endless.



**Figure 5** *This fake portrait of a non-existing person is actually a computer-generated image, based on an artificial intelligence machine learning algorithm, originally made by data scientist Ian Goodfellow and further advanced by Nvidia through StyleGAN, a framework publicly available since February 2019.*

Chu et al. (2020) fear that in its application to medicine, the GAN algorithm could create new images with different lesion sizes and locations, thus altering their meaning. This could happen if hackers infiltrated the data systems of hospitals. Radiology systems are particularly vulnerable. Although these kinds of attacks have never happened, researchers have repeatedly demonstrated their feasibility. On the other hand, breaches of medical records did happen in the past. One of the most notable was a 2015 breach that exposed the medical data of 78 million Americans.

Another threat of AI technology, as observed by Chu et al., is that of breaking and intruding upon communication systems, such as the Zoom app. In times of the global pandemic, these systems have been used for daily communication, but also lectures, court trials, and even assisting medical operations. Instead of being fully encrypted, as stated by Chu et al., the Zoom app has many weaknesses. There

have been many cases of infiltrations into video calls in order to send video messages, fake news, and offensive images. The issues and drawbacks of end-to-end encryption are ever-present as a danger in today's AI world.

Advances have been made so far in deep neural networks, which are trained machine learning algorithms, as pointed out by Dubhashi & Lappin (2017). This has made a boost in the development of sophisticated visual object recognition, speech recognition, and object detection, followed by an amazing increase in processing power and the presence of high amounts of data as a fuel for different kinds of algorithms.

Weyerer & Langer (2019) point out the increasing presence of artificial intelligence in the public sector through various domains. E-government, courts, and public employment agencies are just some of the organizations that tend to use AI in their everyday tasks. These emerging technologies have certain issues that need to be urgently addressed, and one of them is discrimination (Nikolic, Bojic & Jevtovic, 2021; Bojić, Djukanović & Nikolić, 2021; Tucakovic, Nikolic & Bojic, 2021). Further research needs to be done in this direction and in establishing a framework to understand the problem. This could be one important step in making social progress. Another way to solve the problem would be for scientists to work together to avoid discrimination and decipher the decisions of AI algorithms. Discrimination, whether perpetrated by humans or technology, is endangering fundamental human rights. But then, AI technology is already being used with an increasing number of discriminatory cases. Discrimination can be direct, involving less favorable treatment because of some personal features in various institutions, such as security, education, judiciary, etc. (Dalenberg, 2018). Indirect type of discrimination relates to rules that apply to all, but harm some individual or a group by putting them in a weaker position (Ellis & Watson, 2012). Finally, intersectional discrimination takes into account multiple individual features that form one set of reasons to be discriminated, such as race mixed with sex and gender (Crenshaw, 1989).

Elliott (2018) writes that the growing military expenditures for unmanned vehicles and other AI weapons such as drones and complex

systems in the US open up perspectives on social changes triggered by AI technologies. The threat to global peace could be seen in the fact that the US Defense possesses 11,000 self-controlled AI machines, such as submarines, aircraft, and different ground machinery with or without weapons (US Defense, n.d.). Access to Chinese technology enabled more than 10 countries to obtain and use military drones. Besides China, the list includes the US, Israel, the UK, Iran, Israel, Nigeria, Iraq, South Africa, Somalia, and even two organizations in the Middle East (Dillow, 2016). These figures lead us to conclude that the AI race became the main imperative in military development across the globe. Unfortunately, this is a threat both to security and security culture, knowing that this realm is still unregulated, although there have been attempts to do so. Things are very serious in terms of global security because as many as 40 countries worked on developing killer robot technology in 2016, according to Sir Roger Carr, CEO of the BEA, the UK's military producer (Styles, 2016).

## 2.2 AI Weapons

One of the most prominent dangers of AI technology is the ongoing autonomous weapons race. After Iraqi General Qasem Soleimani was killed in January 2020 by a US drone (Agbada, 2020), the global media turned its attention to the power and lethality of AI weapons. The event provoked an outpour of interest and debate on whether such drone killings are ethical and in accordance with international law.

The development of AI weapons started with the Dartmouth conference in 1956, where military applications of machines with human behavior were discussed. AI research was initiated at an institutional level in the 1960s by the US Defense Advanced Research Project Agency. The idea was to get support for the ongoing Cold War struggle against the Soviets. There were different plans and directions of development on both sides, with ambitious but dreadful goals, such as the creation of unmanned nuclear-powered aircraft.

However, the step-by-step approach is what really made a difference in the development of AI weapons. It included a voice-controlled

interface for fighter pilots and other applications labeled as “Strategic Computing Program” (DARPA, 1983). Real AI weapons developed by the Pentagon included Phalanx CIWS, which is a marine AI gun, missile-carrying submarines, lethal flying machines, otherwise known as killer drones, and warfare infantry AI robots.

The prevalent use of AI in the military by the Pentagon is more about the decision-making processes and surveillance, and less about the engagement of lethal force (Kendall, 2014). Although civilization has been so far lucky to escape horror scenarios such as AI-controlled nuclear bombings, the developments of different advanced technologies, including high computing power, robotics, drones, machine learning, and 5G, enable developments that pose a threat to global security.

Elliott (2018) presents different types of warfare that appeared as a result of AI technology. Developers were faced with challenges such as recognizing the targets of drone killing machines. Simple and inhuman tasks such as creating a list of persons to surveil and to kill are common practices in the development and control of human drones.

Then there is cyber warfare, which relies on AI technology. Tasks such as accessing databases to illegally obtain useful data, sending provocative messages after taking down a website, or affecting public opinion, have become much easier due to automated algorithms. The technology is often boosted with AI-driven algorithms, usually based on machine learning.

The new branch of AI warfare can be seen in the power of bot algorithms to change trending topics and direct public opinion in the desired ways. This technology is so advanced that it is generating a great number of comments on news articles all over the internet. This can be done by participating in discussions on social media, online forums, chat platforms, etc. Another pair of shoes is posting new topics by autonomous algorithms without being recognized. An example of this is fake news. Its expansion in recent years can be linked to AI technology.

The situation with this type of warfare has gotten pretty serious, with accusations related to the US presidential elections and the role of Russian hackers who allegedly helped Donald Trump to

win the race (González, 2017). The idea that someone from across the world, or to be precise, a team of hackers aided by AI technology, could have had a decisive impact on the outcomes of elections seemed like a deceptive campaign launched by anti-Trump media. However, this possibility could not be entirely rejected as false, having at least even partial knowledge of how powerful AI technology can be (Bojic et al., 2021b).

Killer robots are called Lethal Autonomous Weapons Systems, or in short LAWS. They can track down, choose, target, and attack the enemy on their own, without the interference of humans. Meisels (2017) argues that it is legitimate to target certain terrorists if this can decrease terrorist hostilities. Although many NGOs, leaders, and scholars have asked for a ban on the development of such technology, this has had no effect. At the end of the day, there are no multilateral rules on how these aggressive technologies can be used during wars and other armed conflicts. At the same time, there are no regulatory measures for manufacture or declarations of any kind at the level of the United Nations.

Remagnino et al. (2004) describe the technology behind AI surveillance. Computer vision together with machine learning algorithms has made remarkable breakthroughs in AI cameras technology. “The progress is rapidly moving towards a naturally distributed system, where distribution is not only physical, but also semantic” note Remagnino et al. and add that “multi-camera monitoring systems require an intelligent infrastructure, capable of optimal scheduling of visual tasks, performing locally standard image processing, extracting relevant information and broadcasting or sharing information only on demand.” According to them, the necessary characteristics for the distributed system, such as a set of AI cameras working together, are speed, bandwidth, redundancy, and autonomy.

Because vision is a necessary part of other military machines, such as drones and robots, AI surveillance was developed into advanced and sophisticated technology. Artificial intelligence cameras are widely utilized in security, being useful both for traffic and crime prevention, but also threatening privacy and the individual freedoms of citizens. An advanced feature of this technology is face recognition; artificial intelligence can compare different facial patterns

with personal IDs to make conclusions about persons present at a certain location. This can be used to track the movements of a person through a certain area, such as an urban environment, which is usually packed with AI cameras.

## 2.3 AI Discrimination

The learning algorithm perceives and adopts biased input, then processes data, which is similar to reasoning, and finally produces biased AI results (Edwards et al. 2012).

The problem of (mis)trust in AI is further deepened by explanations given to ordinary people regarding the involvement of AI systems in decisions regarding various fields, such as medicine, employment, e-government, etc. The question of how to communicate the most acceptable and understandable explanation to individuals on the receiving end needs exploration and scientifically-based standards. The very experts who understand decision-making models the best are not in the right position to judge the usefulness of explanations for users (Miller, 2018).

Hoffman et al. (2018) identify several key elements of explanations, which are partially addressed in papers by Muir (1987, 1994) and Cahour & Forzy (2009), and include understandability, feeling of satisfaction, sufficiency of detail, completeness, usefulness, accuracy, and trustworthiness.

Miller writes that one of the criteria considered during the computation was how well a human could understand the decisions in the given context. Hoffman et al. define explanation satisfaction as the degree to which users feel that they understand the AI system or process being explained to them. What we consider a good explanation might not be good in terms of explanation satisfaction, which comes as a result of the judgment of those receiving the explanation.

The study of explanation is present even in works of philosophers that used to ask the question of what constitutes an explanation, what is the function of explanation, and what is its structure, writes Miller adding that cognitive psychologists and scientists have



investigated how people generate explanations and how they evaluate their quality.

Avoiding researchers' perception of what makes a good AI explanation is required if we want it to be appropriate and to overcome the confusion surrounding these explanations. As noted above, different social scientists have been dealing with how humans create explanations in different contexts. Previous studies show that people tend to include certain biases and social expectations in the explanation process, as noted by Miller. Therefore using the previous body of research may provide social scientists dealing with AI explanations with a foundation for the establishment of communication standards for AI explanations.

Also, Miller suggests that looking at how humans explain things to each other can serve as a useful starting point for explanations in artificial intelligence. By analyzing the body of research from social sciences, Miller concluded that the following rules should be applied in AI explanations: people are not interested in why event A happened, but why event A happened instead of some other event; people do not need a complete explanation, but an elaboration on some major factors that made a difference; referring to statistical relationships is not as important as it is to provide causes; and finally, explanations are social, meaning they are given in relation to persons we are communicating with, taking into account their beliefs. The noted work needs to be updated with the most recent findings from psychology, social psychology, and communication sciences, in order to attain more standards for explaining AI decisions.

Turning to technology, it might be significant to explain that AI discrimination has three stages. The first stage consists of systems, which are essentially databases, filled up in different ways, after which the data is processed. The process of obtaining data from different sources and through different means and its further processing is heavily influenced by software engineers and other creators of various computer programs. In other words, human beings have a decisive role from the mere beginning of the software creation process, and often, whether intentionally or not, discrimination is inscribed in the very starting code: "Human values, biases and prejudices are incorporated into respective programming and data

processes and thus also influence or become part of the AI input” (Weyerer & Langer, 2019, p. 509). The second stage is AI learning, in case an algorithm is based on machine learning. In this stage, an algorithm learns based on existing data to produce a result. In case the data is biased, the results will be biased as well. Of course, different kinds of algorithms can be employed at this stage of the process. However, the starting point is the most important, because if the algorithm and data are created with inscribed biases, then the outcome will be biased. This could happen if AI is used in the public sector. Appling & Briscoe (2017) write that if people accept and then repeat discriminatory ideas, they often end up as the base for AI algorithms and learning. Outputs resulting from such AI learning may be further used, thus spreading discrimination and multiplying its effects. Human users think of technology as objective, even more than people could ever be. As a result, discrimination becomes even more prevalent.

# EXPRESSION

The following chapters are excerpts from my Ph.D. thesis (Bojic, 2013), which are put in the new context of addictions in the era of augmented human beings and artificial intelligence.

A dialogue from the film *The Imaginarium of Doctor Parnassus* highlights the importance of expression and the Devil's attempt to contest it. Here, expression is about telling a story. The Devil is represented by the film's character Mr. Nick. Based on the reference below, it can be concluded that expression is related to God, while the lack of it is related to the Devil.

“Mr. Nick: Oh... What's that?”

Dr. Parnassus: The story that sustains the universe. The story without which there is nothing.

Mr. Nick: Nothing? Really. Are you telling me that if you stop telling a story... This story... something you made up, a fiction... that the universe ceases to exist?

Dr. Parnassus: You make it sound so simple.

Mr. Nick: And you believe it? Incredible. It's just incredible to me that you can believe something that can be so easily disproved.

Dr. Parnassus: A sign! A message! That bird was a messenger... from distant places we know nothing of! Other places! The point is, you're wrong! And I'm wrong! It doesn't have to be us here! Somewhere in the world, at any given time... someone is telling a story! Sustaining the universe! Right now, it's happening.

Dr. Parnassus: That's why we're still here. You can't stop stories being told somewhere! You can't be everywhere!

Dr. Parnassus: And so I made a wager with the devil.

Dr. Parnassus: Whichever of us won ten converts first, would win the bet... My argument was the importance of the

story, the power of the imagination... His, the power of material things, the supremacy of stuff... Naturally... I won. My prize was an ever-lasting life. Everlasting torment... Times changed. No one wanted our tales any longer.

Dr. Parnassus and Percy are traveling the world with a little theater. Giving performances. Inviting audience members onto the stage to participate. Dr. Parnassus and Percy are performing on a street corner in modern clothes. As are all the passersby who pay them no attention. They look exhausted, like beggars...and very old.

Dr. Parnassus: It seemed as though the Devil, after all... had triumphed..." (Gilliam, 2009)

Silence, materialism, lack of creativity, emotions, and expression, are often associated with the devil in popular works of art, including films and novels. Serbian writer Jankovic (2011) writes about the book *If Nobody Speaks of Remarkable Things* by Jon McGregor, depicting a quiet street in an English city on a summer afternoon: "In this street, you see students clueless about what they want to do in the future, a lad in love with a girl from his neighborhood, lacking the courage to approach her, clubbers recovering from the night before, and other seemingly ordinary characters. They throw barbecues, play cricket, and listen to music. The day is coming to an end. It is filled up with unrevealed affections, unspoken reproaches, and unseen victories."

This picture portrays a typical day in mass society. Confusion and fear in personal relationships are increasingly present. Both may arise due to conflicting interests fighting to get a hold of consumers, users, buyers, and voters. Media manipulation is used to promote these interests. On the other hand, people in modern societies are physically free to do anything they want in personal relationships. The constraints on action are more psychological than physical.

With no strict rules pertaining to advertising, companies are allowed to "bomb" their potential consumers with promotional messages. Promotion can be done through PR as well, meaning that profit interest can be present in the news, not only in the advertising segments of media programs.

It might be normal to see young people without any notion of what to do with their lives. We mentioned that confusion in mass society is probably caused by media manipulation, but fear is also extensively present. This is probably due to a need to boost consumption, which is achieved by persuading potential customers to substitute their goals and activities with consumption.

In other words, someone who has a girlfriend may devote a significant amount of time to her. Someone without a girlfriend may be the ideal candidate for consuming porn, playing PC games, and using social networking sites. In the absence of a romantic partner, he might feel compelled to fill the void. This is because his needs for love, tenderness, sex, reproduction, and friendship are not satisfied. He has to find a way to address them. He can either look for a girlfriend or be left stuck with feelings of disappointment and the fear of rejection.

If the person feels fear it may prevent him from finding a new girlfriend and therefore fulfilling his needs for sex, friendship, tenderness, love, and reproduction. With this in a mind, a marketer's goal may be to stimulate fears within their target groups and offer their products that "fill the void." So instead of looking for a girlfriend, this person may be pushed to the point where he wants to watch porn movies because they cannot "reject him" or "hurt him" in any way. By creating problems and offering solutions, media manipulation benefits large companies.

Except for its potential use for manipulation, marketing can be useful for consumers to get information about products and services offered by companies. Members of modern society can get a sense of what is currently available, helping them to make informed decisions.

People no longer have to see each other to communicate; they can use telephones instead. But seeing someone and talking to them over the phone is not the same thing. Just like watching porn does not satisfy the same needs as having a girlfriend, talking to someone over the phone does not satisfy the same needs as talking in person. Talking directly to someone is more expressive than talking over the phone because it includes mimics, hand gestures, touch, different voice, and an image of the other person. It is similar to watching porn versus spending time with a girlfriend—although it arouses sexual

fantasies, porn does not satisfy the needs for tenderness, friendship, emotional support, and reproduction, as the romantic partner does.

Other popular Serbian authors have written about the phenomenon of mobile phones. Tirnanic (2003) is one of them, writing that he discovered the secret purpose of mobile phones during his visit to Australia when a person from Belgrade called to ask him about the climate there: “At first, I thought that the caller was suffering from insomnia. But why doesn’t he go to some nightclub, then, instead of calling me? This was impossible before mobile phones were invented; now it is possible. As a result, I concluded that a mobile phone is not a means of communication, although it can serve this purpose. It is an emotional prosthesis. Something for those with a handicapped soul. Considering the number of mobile phones on our planet, it is clear that the majority of humankind suffers from certain psychological conditions.”

He adds that the invention of the mobile phone is similar to the invention of the automobile in that both counterbalance the tyranny of space. But, while you can use an automobile to escape people and run to the desert, a mobile phone can be used to escape the desert by dialing someone’s number.

Modern society provides a variety of ways for people to escape their problems. This was not as feasible before, as the present offers new ways for people to spend their time. This has resulted in new ways for individuals to meet people, which no longer require seeing them in person. Now, people can meet through the internet. New possibilities and ways to do something bring about new ways of escaping something, mostly out of frustration.

Novel technologies make work more depersonalized, while media manipulation techniques are becoming increasingly advanced. Long ago, people didn’t have computer games to escape unresolved personal issues.

Modern society offers many options for escape. The unsatisfied need for love and tenderness can be substituted with taking drugs, shopping, playing computer games, using social networking sites, overeating, drinking, watching television, reading print, etc. Almost every activity can be used to replace some other activity that could

not bring fulfillment of some need. As Balasevic (1997) states: “They invented a million ways of making time pass, but not one to stop it.”

The basic ways to satisfy human needs are free or require little money. There are no companies that charge for love, tenderness, and friendship; but there are also no companies that can fulfill these human needs either. What’s more, companies create distractions from these basic human needs. People are “told” to use their products through manipulative advertising techniques. Using cosmetics becomes mandatory as a result, as those who do not do so are mocked. Companies send messages to their potential customers through marketing that without cosmetics, people have no chance with the opposite sex.

The intrusion of profit-interest in the homes of people through the media has brought confusion and fear into people’s lives, which is probably enough to make loyalty, the sense of togetherness, and real interaction between people decrease. The decrease of direct communication in favor of indirect communication can lead to societies disintegrating and make people feel “alone in crowds.”

In his text about the books that ruined his life, Pisarev (2010) writes: “In my case, this was not an escape from freedom, but a harder and more dangerous mechanism of nature: an escape from reality—*Tarzan, Lord Greystoke* by Edgar Rice Burroughs. I almost memorized the whole book because—why would I wash my face, dress up and go out to the street and try to live my life when I could lie down the whole day and enjoy reading, interrupting it from time to time with a short nap? Why wouldn’t I enjoy complete substitution for life—when it cost me nothing and is cozy too? The third book was actually a bunch of them. They finally poisoned me by preventing me from indulging in the charms or sweet troubles of precious real living, offering me a life surrogate which means laying down all the time and pretending to live by reading good or interesting stories from the hundreds of books of the series *Word and Thought*, brought to me by the postman, together with shelf-parts that could be put on the wall easily. At least a meter of unknown and unread books with red covers were put just above the bed, easily accessible—I needed just to stretch my arm to reach them.” Pisarev (2010) said how easy it was to escape reality with a shelf of books above the bed and without the need to work for food and shelter.

The easiest way for people to escape their needs may be by substituting them, which would not be possible if the means of substitution did not exist. These means include television, newspapers, radio, the internet, mobile phones, tablets, games, gambling, and so on.

“When I played poker professionally 45 years ago, I was totally addicted to it. Because it was the perfect way to escape from reality” Perica Gunjic once said (Gunjic, 2011). Some people are aware they are escaping reality, others are not. They may not consider the underlying causes for their actions, and if they did, that does not mean they would reach the conclusion that reveals their weakness.

Again, playing poker may be a healthy activity for some, while for most people it can be a way to escape reality. The same may go for other activities, such as doing sports, drugs, media use, socializing, drinking, and eating.

Virtually any activity can bring escape from reality, even if it is constructive. What is harmful to individuals may also be harmful to society, because dysfunctional individuals are dysfunctional parts of society.

When people are fulfilled both privately and professionally, they have time to think about their society by discussing politics, voting, and participating in elections as candidates.

The Serbian painter Ljuba Popović gives a description of artistic expression. In his words: “My goal is for people who will one day see these 30 to 40 large paintings to understand that I lived on planet Earth and to feel some human energy vibrating from them. Man turns into ashes after his life, but something stays alive.”

What stays is the energy in paintings. I believe paintings to be one of the rare things on Earth to have our energy embedded in them. It makes no difference whether they are artworks or not. What matters is that when a person walks into a large retrospective exhibition, they sense that the painter exists and that they are sending a message about life, death, and man’s existence on our planet.

This relates to the philosophical questions of man’s origin, about this possibly unique and surely tragic place in the cosmos, of man’s awareness of his end since birth. I perceive paintings as music for the eyes. A painting blinks; these blinks are like musical vibrations because you have hard, deep, warm, and cold sounds, etc.



If you've been painting for years, you can hear the sophisticated aria of a painting as soon as you see one. There are no mistakes. It's like hearing the same melody by Bach so many times, that when you hear it walking down the street, you exclaim: "This is Bach." The same is with paintings. It takes days to accumulate energy into a painting.

The substance of painting, or as they call it the painting's fabric, is unique and cannot be made in any laboratory. The fabric of a painting is composed of canvas, paint, media, and the human spirit. The human spirit unifies these components, creating a new substance that cannot be made artificially.

That is what makes paintings exceptional. This new substance is clearly visible in paintings of old masters like Leonardo and others. The biggest scientists could not discover the secret of this new substance, which is called "amalgam" (Dedic, 2009).

This description serves to highlight the difference between engaging in painting and software development. People in modern society are forced to decide between doing something artistic for "their souls" or something they can make a living with.

"The just society ought to leave it to individuals to choose how it is that they want to spend the time they have for living," writes Habermas (1962). "It guarantees to each an equal freedom to develop an ethical self-understanding, so as to realize a personal conception of the good life according to one's own abilities and choices," states Rawls (1993).

"People receive, as their social inheritance, such a bewildering banquet of possibilities, e.g., about sexual orientation, about religion, about careers, about family, that they regularly become as dizzy as James Stewart when he reached the tower in Alfred Hitchcock's frightening film *Vertigo*. Dizziness, especially about important beliefs and values, is often so terrifying that as a consequence of modernity, we cannot be surprised by the existence of cult groups, even one capable of the apocalyptic violence practiced by the Aum in Japan," writes Fernandez (2003).

Croatian director Rajko Grlic states that men and women cheat on each other in their relationships as a substitute for rebellion: "Human beings have come to a wall, not knowing how to rebel against the bank in whose they are possession, not knowing how to fight the

corporation with a headquarters somewhere in Hong Kong, which nevertheless has a significant impact on their lives, not knowing how to rebel against the Church, while still having the need to express some sort of resistance, like each generation has the need to change the world in some way. This possibility for rebellion is extremely slim. While I prepared for this film, I came across a few American books in which mainly women spoke about the baggage of their settled lives. In these books, they said that cheating on their husbands, venturing out of their daily routine into some kind of adventure, substituted their need for rebellion. It served as a sort of vent for them. Simply put, beds substituted the streets” (Grlic, 2010).

This depiction can be related to a variety of activities that substitute a basic and more expressive activity. The example with wives is illustrative because it is clear that rebelling against the government and cheating on husbands are completely different things, but similarly motivated. This can be compared with the previous example of painting and software development. Grlic says that women are unhappy with their place in society, but because they don’t see a way to change it, they cheat on their husbands to rebel in some way and feel alive. The activity that serves to replace the basic activity is, therefore, at first glance, unrelated to it.

All in all, although the activity that substitutes the basic one can be completely different, the main focus in examining society may be determining a motivation for any activity, whether this activity serves to satisfy some personal need or is motivated by frustration related to the basic activity.

In a recent *Playboy* interview, the journalist Golob (2011) said to a basketball coach: “When Sretenovic was asked about the success of the basketball team Jugoplastika, he replied that players used to put basketball before money. Is this how players still think?” To which Bozidar Boza Maljkovic replied: “...and also computers. A while ago, I spoke to Petar Petrovic from Zadar. He told me, ‘Before, when it became windy, we would go to a basketball hall to shoot. There wasn’t a single player who wasn’t shooting. Nowadays, everyone sits by the computer, chatting and communicating on Facebook’... so finding good players in the future will be extremely difficult.”

Social networking sites and other apps might tempt people who are supposed to be committed to a goal. The difference between media use and other activities is that media use can be done through mobile phones anywhere, anytime, whereas other activities require dedication. In order to socialize with people directly, a person must schedule appointments with them, while using social networking sites doesn't require this. So instead of engaging in a more productive activity like sports, basketball players choose to spend time on social networking sites on rainy days.

Serbian artist Nele Karajlic once said that humankind is under collective anesthesia, which brings about terrible apathy, turning everyone and everything into commodities. There is no sacrifice, no idea, no utopian picture of the world, no authors, and no philosophy (Pavlovic, 2010).

In his text about mobile phones, Tirnanic (2003) writes: "The last messages sent by mobile phones from these towers, which would disappear in an instant, were identical – 'I love you'! It was the final choice in the face of death, the last effort. When death arrives, love finally prevails. Love is the only thing death cannot take from us." He asks: "What kind of world is the one we live in, when everything is more important than love, when we do everything to delay it?"

Substituting one activity for another does not bring a sense of fulfillment to a person; a person talented at painting might not be happy as a software developer. However, the most significant question is: does modern society allow its members to express themselves, or just provides substitutes for their primary goals and activities?

## 3.1 The Social System and the Issue of Representation

"They order: drink powders, swallow bulbs. I do not want to swallow a light bulb. They put my sole in chains and drag me around like they do with bears. Oh, I am not a bear, Bozana. They want my wings. And why would I need a soul without wings? My soul flies when it wants, it cries or sings or laughs. When God was down here

with us he could not handle gypsies and he had to go up. Well, it's not my fault," vows a gypsy at the beginning of *Time of the Gypsies* (Kusturica, 1990). His outcry in this popular film is a revolt against the "repressive force" of the social system.

"It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society," states Krishnamurti (Joseph, 2008). In his novel *Brave New World*, Huxley (1932) writes about the factory for the production of humans as the greatest achievement of civilization, "the sum of the suggestions is the child's mind. And not the child's mind only. The adult's mind too—all his life long. The mind that judges and desires and decides—made up of these suggestions. But all these suggestions are our suggestions! The Director almost shouted in his triumph. Suggestions from the State. He banged the nearest table."

Popular literature speaks of outcry against the social system and its possible "repressive forces." Although it is impossible to satisfy everyone, public representation may be the main issue of the social system. Elections are democratic precepts that ensure that each citizen has equal voting power. But what happens when public representatives are elected? Do they effectively represent the public, or do they act in their own interests?

The system contains sub-systems, states Parsons (1964), adding that one sub-system at the bottom provides energy for the higher systems to function. Nature provides energy for organisms, which goes from the organism to personal systems, then to social and cultural systems, and then the supreme reality, which is nature again, writes Parsons. How is it possible that higher systems control the lower ones, when the lower systems provide energy for their existence? Parsons contends that people should be forced to set goals according to the interests of the system.

The democratic political systems fail to reflect the spirit of the people, because democratic elections merely provide mechanisms for the co-optation of new, more capable personnel into the political and economic elite strata (Pareto, 1935). As Pareto states, the primary subject matter for political science is the struggle for social power in its open and concealed forms.

Rousseau (2002) brands the daring intellectual, scientific, and artistic culture of eighteenth-century France as a lie, a vast devolution,

and a symptom of alarming moral decline. “Overwhelmed by pretension, affectation and deceit, the values that create robust citizens and a healthy society—self-sacrifice, sincere friendships, love of country—had disappeared. Nothing more than a fake veneer, the century’s worldly accomplishments were all the more perfidious because they masked so effectively the deep corruption of a decadent, unequal society,” claims Rousseau.

Issues of representation define the quality of chosen public representatives and define the social system as such. Soros’ theory examines how public servants misuse their mandates to achieve their personal interests, although these are granted by all individuals in society. (Soros, 2010)

Marx places the economic system as the basis for any society. Power structures and the minority in power use religion and politics to hide “its naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation,” writes Fernandez (2003). This is how Marx (1991) speaks about failure to represent, which may be the main issue of the social system.

The social system is constantly changing. When modification occurs, a reaction takes place, tending to restore the changing form to its original state (Pareto, 1935). Pareto advises political leaders on how to prevent social uprisings. He suggests open circulation of personnel throughout the elite strata. By doing this, Pareto claims, political leaders can prevent a reaction set by the synchronizing forces of the historical cycle.

The primary goal of western society is securing conformity, Riesman et al. (1961) write. Instead of being a government of the people, by the people, and for the people, as Lincoln put it, the American government is of the money, by the people, and for the money (Donald, 1996). “Such a society is characterized by increased personal mobility, by a rapid accumulation of capital and by an almost constant expansion: intensive expansion in the production of goods and people and extensive expansion in exploration, colonization and imperialism,” write Riesman et al.

“All men of military genius,” writes Tocqueville (2004), “are fond of centralization and all men of centralizing genius are fond of war.”

The repression of the “minority in power” over the majority is reflected in Susnic’s (1976) words: “A person can only think in the

realm of what authoritative sources of power are setting for him from birth to death. That person is a victim of one system of reasoning, while incapable of the alternatives.”

Cavalletto writes that the history of various civilizations reveals that civilization is something that was imposed upon the resisting majority by the minority which knew how to get hold of the means to power. “In this formulation, superego becomes another name for civilization. The superego transforms opponents into vehicles of civilization: it turns them into moral and social beings, that is, into civilized beings,” claims Cavalletto (2007).

The achievement of civilization and the psychological changes it entails is an uneven development, with only specific social classes benefiting from the mental achievements that the human mind has undergone since earliest times (Freud, 1989). Social classes differ structurally in their access to instinctual gratification, with the lower classes suffering from what Freud views as the privation of instinctual pleasures. Moreover, the inequity of these exchanges is evidenced in the fact that the civilized forms of instinctual gratification enjoyed by the upper classes are in many cases produced by the lower classes’ labor.

Values, norms, and definitions of a society imprint themselves upon the individual psyche. Freud characterizes the superego as an instrument par excellence of the imposition of the social order upon the psyche. Cavalletto (2007) writes that the examination of the psychical origin of religious ideas shows them to be the fulfillment of the oldest, strongest, and most urgent wishes of mankind.

Civilization embodies a pattern of external pressures exerted by people upon one another. It increasingly civilizes the psyche by compelling it to develop strong, stable, and all-pervasive *Selbstzwang*. *Selbstzwang* is Elias’s invented German term, most frequently rendered in English as “self-constraint.” In the psycho-structural terms appropriated by Elias, *Selbstzwang* most often designates the rational self-regulations of the ego and the shame constraints of the superego, writes Cavalletto (2007).

Elias writes that it is the structure of society that requires and generates specific standards of emotional control. Social structure, according to Elias, is a pattern of pressures exerted upon people by

their relationships with others upon whom they are functionally dependent either directly or indirectly. It is a historically specific “system of pressures exerted by living people on living people” (Cavalletto, 2007).

The ideal society is a communitarian one (Rousseau, 2002). In this institution, responsibilities and duties of citizenship outweigh individual rights and freedoms. This general spirit mirrors the good of all, but true freedom, Rousseau writes, consists in choosing to obey it. Rousseau believed that higher freedom meant repression of individuals.

Social entropy relates the second law of thermodynamics to human behavior (Bojic, 1997). To the extent that laws set by the system are observed and followed by the individuals, write Infante & Lawler (2002), the system will be orderly and avoid chaos. On the other hand, those individuals who do not obey the laws introduce disorder into the system. Thus, the disorder is an exact measure of articulated dissatisfaction with the laws of society. They claim that if the social rules are arbitrarily applied in support of the minority, social entropy will increase with time, more rapidly, compared to other systems where law favors no one.

Social entropy does not relate to all violence and crimes, but only events that spring out as a consequence of dissatisfaction with the system, similarly to an erupting volcano (illustrated in Figure 6). Much of the energy consumed by a social organization is spent to preserve its structure counteracting social entropy through its various institutions, claim Infante & Lawler. “Anomaly is the maximum state of social entropy showing the degree of sickness of the system. In sociological thermodynamics, social entropy are manifestations of entropy, defined as the amount of energy unavailable for doing work in a given process, in a given social system, distinguished by models of negative behaviors, specifically alienation, anomaly and deviance, that function to instill a disordering effect in a given social structure or order,” they write.

Some philosophers write about corrupt and unjust social systems. Habermas (1962) writes that the cynical acceptance of an unjust world, the normality of repression for so many people, is confirmation not of a deficit in understanding but corrupt will.



**Figure 6** *An erupting volcano may be the perfect symbol of social entropy.*

Kierkegaard (1980) describes the condition of an enlightened and morally self-righteous but intensely corrupt Christian civilization: “It is tragic-comic to see that all this knowledge and understanding exercises no power at all over men’s lives.”

The basic question of the social system may be the quality of representation of those who vote by those elected to perform public functions. Referring to the social system as corrupt or unjust is mainly because of public representatives who fail in representation. These public representatives choose to represent their personal interest, or the personal interests of their supporters, while undermining public interest—the reason why they are chosen in the first place. On the other hand, public representatives are chosen by voters in free and just elections. All citizens are free to vote in modern society. Therefore, citizens have rights and mechanisms to change society as they prefer.



## 3.2 On Weaknesses and Sickness

This chapter speaks about the individual and its relation to society from the perspective of Nietzsche. According to Nietzsche (1901), individuals are the leading force of society. He writes: “The Greeks are interesting and extremely important because they reared such a vast number of great individuals.” Nietzsche concludes that conditions were favorable for the development of individuals. However, he writes that “Christianity, as a product of the resentment of the botched and the weak, has put in ban all that is beautiful, strong, proud and powerful, in fact all the qualities resulting from strength and that, in consequence, all forces which tend to promote or elevate life have been seriously undermined.”

In the words of Nietzsche “all that proceeds from power is good, all that springs from weakness is bad.” He states that the task of culture is to produce supreme individuals, despite the fact that what we really find in the past is a chain of deformations of that cultural assignment. “So, that now, man strives to become better all the time, meaning more comfortable, more mediocre, more indifferent, more Chinese, more Christian” (Nietzsche, 1882).

Nietzsche recognizes how much Christianity takes people away from the world of reality. He notes, “Zarathustra was more truthful than any other thinker. In his teaching alone do we meet with truthfulness upheld as the highest virtue, reverse of the cowardice of the idealist who flees from reality,” adding that “[m]an is a rope, stretched between the animal and Superman—a rope over an abyss.” He claimed that the dominant morals of weak people act as a degenerative force in society.

Those weak may be making our society ill because they might go against life and nature. As Nietzsche points out, “all thy passions in the end became virtues and all thy devil angels.” He also writes that man becomes a polluted stream: “[V]erily, a polluted stream is man. One must be a sea, to receive a polluted stream without becoming impure. So, I teach you Superman, he is that sea. In him can your great contempt be submerged.”

Today's culture teaches people that things can be achieved by manipulation and with "half the effort." This creates a society of mediocrity, without strong individuals. "If you want to climb high and beyond, then use your own legs! Do not let yourselves be carried up, do not seat yourselves on strangers' backs and heads! But you mount your horse? You ride swiftly up to your goal? Well then, my friend! But your lame foot is also mounted on your horse! When you've reached your goal, when you leap from your horse, precisely at your height, you are a higher man—you will stumble!" (Nietzsche, 1887).

The philosophical thoughts of Nietzsche (1887) also touch upon the domain of entertainment, as he writes that "too long have we lost ourselves in our friends and entertainments to be able to find ourselves so soon at bidding."

Modern creatures are described as terrified of being alone. In his words: "These modern creatures wish rather to be hunted down, wounded and torn to shreds, than to live alone with themselves in solitary calm. Alone with oneself!—this thought terrifies the modern soul; it is his one anxiety, his one ghastly fear." (Nietzsche (1887). For Nietzsche, morality depicts a configuration of errors that people have included into their basic ways of thinking, feeling, and living.

Orientation towards the outside and over-consumption may have created alienated societies. In *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche notes how humankind has been educated by the four errors: "We see ourselves only incompletely. We endow ourselves with fictitious attributes; we place ourselves in a false rank in relation to animals and nature—that is, we see ourselves as being inherently superior to them and, finally, we invent ever new tables of what is good and then accept them as eternal and unconditional."

In some cases, moral standards do not reflect "the spirit of people" if they are set by the "minorities in power" and not according to the "will of the people." Not only can these moral standards be different than the "consensus of people," but they also may not change over time in response to the change of this "consensus." On the other hand, public representatives are elected by citizens. This postulate of democracy, the right to vote, can benefit modern society. But although there are physical and voting freedoms in modern society, there is still the issue of media manipulation.

The malfunctioning of existing democracy, and especially the domination of the leadership over the individuals, is characteristic of any complex system (Michels, 1999). Fernandez (2003) writes: “Call me a teacher and you place the veil over my individuality. Lift the veil and you have the set of assumptions that allow, otherwise anonymous interactions to proceed.” Kierkegaard (1980) states: “I should gather myself and detach from the dependence of an overwhelming environment, jolting myself to the awareness of my individuality and freedom.” When emancipated from a self-induced objectification, one becomes an individual.

Kierkegaard argues that to constitute an irreplaceable individual one needs a self-critical approach to the factual past. He adds: “Such an individual regrets the reproachable aspects of his past life and resolves to continue only in those ways of acting in which he can recognize himself without shame. In this way, he articulates the self-understanding of the person he would like others to know and acknowledge. He constitutes himself as the person he both is and would like to be.”

Kierkegaard depicts the unsettling condition of a person who is indeed aware of their destiny, that they must be a self, but thereupon escapes into the alternatives, “in despair not to will to be oneself. Or even lower, in despair not to want to be a self. Or lowest of all, in despair to be someone else.” He writes: “The patterns of despair that are initially repressed, then creeps into awareness and finally forces conversation on an ego-centered consciousness. These forms of despair are so many manifestations lacking fundamental relationships that alone could make an authentic being oneself possible.”

Habermas (1962) cites Article 3 of The European Union Charter of Basic Rights which guarantees the right to bodily and mental integrity (Peers & Ward, 2004). He then questions the effectiveness of such a norm.

Some thinkers speak of individuals from a metaphysical point of view. Many primitives, writes Jung (1964), assume one’s bush soul, or inner self as a base and their consciousness as a home, that they have created to express their nature.

If there is no contact with their bush soul, or if there is no base, the house will crumble, because it is no longer a home. Jung writes

about a conscious decision to split off and momentarily repress a part of one's consciousness and a condition in which this happens impulsively, without one's knowledge or permission. This suppression can be a primitive "loss of soul." An ability to control one's emotions may be very desirable from one point of view, writes Jung, but it would be a questionable accomplishment from another, for it would deprive social intercourse of variety, color, and warmth.

Archetypes can act as creative or destructive powers in our psyche (Franz, 1964). They are creative when they inspire new thoughts, destructive when these same thoughts thicken into conscious prejudices that prevent further explorations, writes Franz. This may be what happens as a consequence of over-institutionalization.

"All that remains of the individual is the ideology of the individual. Traits that the individual had previously embodied—spontaneity, uniqueness, conscience—are now little more than ideologies promulgated by mass culture and mass politics to manipulate the masses" writes Cavalletto (2007), adding that "[e]very individual is virtually an enemy of civilization." While Freud (1989) notes that "[t]hus civilization has to be defended against the individual, and its regulations, institutions and commands are directed to that task."

Experience is knowledge of individuals, "for the physician does not cure man, except in an incidental way, but Callias, or Socrates, or some other called by some such individual name, who happens to be a man. If, then, a man has the theory without the experience and recognizes the universal, but does not know the individual included in this, he will often fail to cure, for it is the individual that is to be cured," writes Aristotle (1991). "To have as teacher a half-beast, half-man means nothing other than that a prince needs to know how to use both natures and the one without the other is not lasting," writes Machiavelli (1985).

Individuals constitute a society. That is why the relationship between the smallest unit of society, the individual, and society itself is examined. The issue is that society might be pressuring the individual. "I have spent the first thirty years in my life trying to become something. I wanted to become good at things. I wanted to become good at tennis. I wanted to become good in school. But, I got the

game wrong. The game was to find out what I already was. Now, in our culture we are trained for individual differences to stand out.

“So, if you look at each person she is brighter, dumber, richer, and poorer and you look at all categories and treat them that way. And we only see others, separate from ourselves, in the ways in which they are separate. And one of the dramatic characteristics of this experience is being with another person and suddenly seeing ways in which they are like you, not different from you and experiencing the fact that what is essence in that person and what is essence in me is the one—understanding that there is no the other. It is all one. And I was not born as rich or poor, I was born as a human being and then I learn this whole business of who I am and whether I am good or bad, achieving or not. All that is learned along the way” (Joseph, 2008).

On a metaphysical level, an individual is connected with dreams and transcendence. Symbols of transcendence are means by which contents of the unconscious can enter the conscious mind, writes Henderson (1964). These may be symbols of individuality. Jung (1964) discovers not only that dreams apply in different degrees to the life of the dreamer, according to Franz (1964), but they are all parts of one immense network of emotional factors and in their entirety, they seem to follow a pattern.

This pattern is the process of individuation. Individuation is spontaneous, it happens involuntary and it is symbolized by a tree whose slow, powerful growth fulfills a definite pattern. Naskapi Indians live in the forests of the Labrador Peninsula. In his lifelong solitude, the Naskapi hunter depends on his inside voice. He has no spiritual teachers to let him know what he should do, claims Franz.

The major obligation of an individual is to seek the instructions given by their dreams and then to give enduring form to their contents in creativity. Deceitfulness drives the Great Man away from one’s inner area, whereas generosity and love of one’s neighbors and animals attract him and give him life, writes Franz. “This creatively active aspect of the psychic nucleus can come into play only when the ego gets rid of all purposive and wishful aims and tries to get to a deeper, more basic form of existence. The ego must be able to listen attentively and to give itself, without any further design or purpose, to that inner urge toward growth,” he states.

People living in cultures more securely rooted than the western one, says Franz, have less trouble in comprehending that it is essential to give up the utilitarian approach of conscious planning in order to make way for the inner expansion of the personality. “In order to bring the individuation process into reality, one must surrender consciously to the power of the unconscious, instead of thinking in terms of what one should do, or of what is generally thought right, or of what usually happens. One must simply listen, in order to learn what inner totality the Self wants one to do here and now in a particular situation,” he states. Franz compares humans with a tree. “Our attitude must be like that of the mountain pine. It does not get annoyed when its growth is obstructed by a stone, nor does it make plans about how to overcome the obstacle. It merely tries to feel whether it should grow more toward the left or the right, toward the slope or away from it. Like the tree, we should give in to this almost imperceptible, yet powerfully dominating, impulse, an impulse that comes from the urge toward unique, creative self-realization. All pine trees are very much alike, yet none is exactly the same as another. Because of these factors of sameness and difference, it is difficult to summarize the infinite variations of the process of individuation. The fact is that each person has to do something different, something that is uniquely his own,” writes Franz.

Individuals in modern society possess physical freedom. Individuals are also protected by constitutions. The question however remains as to the real position of the individual, because it is potentially exposed to media manipulations, which engage in invisible aggression as opposed to the physical one.

Freud (1989) attacks religion in the name of scientific rationalism. He characterizes religion as a wishful illusion and urges readers to advance beyond their infantile desire for an all-powerful protective father and enter a New Age, one in which human beings, “educated to reality,” come to rationally reconstruct, through the aid of science, the precepts and social arrangements of civilization in the furtherance of their objective social interest to repress and sublimate instinct, to transform and socially construct instinct (Cavalletto, 2007). As some authors highlight, religions have been used and abused in the past. Habermas (2003) writes that the tension between secular society

and religion exploded in an entirely different way on September 11, 2001. “As we now know from Atta’s testament and from Bin Laden himself, the suicidal murderers who made living bombs of civil aircraft, directed them against the capitalist citadels of Western civilization, were motivated by religious beliefs. For them, the symbols of globalized modernity are an embodiment of the Great Satan,” Habermas states. He further writes that “[i]n Europe, the term secularization first had the juridical meaning of a forced conveyance of church property to the secular state. This meaning was then extended to cover the rise and development of cultural and social modernity as a whole. Religious ways of thinking and forms of life are replaced by rational, in any case superior, equivalents.”

Parallels can be drawn between religion and business. Barton (2000), founder of an advertising agency in America, argued that the first words ever uttered, “Let there be light,” divinely constituted advertising’s charter. Barton published a book about Jesus, *The Man Nobody Knows*. Fernandez (2003) writes that for two straight years, Barton’s book was the best-selling work of nonfiction in the United States. He states, “readers ate up the good news of the gospel as they also embraced Barton’s principal insight: Jesus Christ was the founder of modern business, an executive of such genius that he picked up twelve men, the apostles, from the bottom ranks of business and forged them into an organization that conquered the world.” Fernandez notes that sociologist Berger (1986) argued that churches in the US celebrated a “cultural religion.” Similarly, Nisbet (1988) writes: “In between divine-right monarchs and any possible absoluteness of rule lay a thick stratum of intermediate authorities, starting with church and aristocracy, that made a farce of any claim to personal authority.” Religious practice may have been used throughout history to fulfill spiritual needs in societies. Religions may be useful in explaining life and helping people psychologically cope. On the other hand, various groups and individuals have been using religion throughout history as a tool to manipulate the masses and obtain power.

Education bears a connection to the social system. If it is presumed that the social system is unjust and that people are not well represented, then this would be reflected in education as well as in

other aspects of society. The problem is that young people are educated to be non-thinking members of society.

Men of letters in France embarked upon the bold plan of using human reason to address people's needs, Rousseau (2002) had said. The fall from tranquility and the downward spiral into history and corruption, according to Rousseau, began when people realized that, with rational effort and work, they could transform the natural world. "A new intellectual energy was unleashed, destroying the simplicity and harmony that had reigned in the state of nature between one's needs and one's desires," writes Rousseau. Instead of preparing men for life, Le Bon (2002) argues, French schools solely prepare them to engage in public functions, in which achievement can be attained without any necessity for self-direction or the exhibition of the least glimmer of personal initiative. Bernays (2004) writes that universal literacy was supposed to educate the common man to control his surroundings. Systematization of everything which exists is the essence of modern education (Lippmann, 1997). In Le Bon's words: "From the primary school till he leaves the university a young man does nothing but acquire books by heart without his judgment or personal initiative being ever called into play. Education consists for him in reciting by heart and obeying." The acquisition of knowledge for which no use can be found is a sure method of driving a man to revolt, Le Bon writes. He further notes that criminality increases at any rate of a certain kind of instruction. The worst enemies of our culture, the anarchists, are acquired among the prize-winners of schools. Le Bon cites the findings of Adolphe Guillot who observed that, at that time, 3000 sophisticated criminals are met with for every 1000 uneducated delinquents and that in fifty years the criminal percentage of the population has increased from 227 to 552 for every 100,000 citizens, a rise of 133%. In *Dumbing Us Down*, Gatto (1991) charges obligatory government education with deliberately creating "non-thinking machines" instead of adults who are the best versions of themselves. Gatto is the former New York State Teacher of the Year. He claims that "between 1967 and 1974, teacher training in the US was covertly revamped through the coordinated efforts of a small number of private foundations, certain universities, global corporations and several other interests working through the



U.S. Department of Education and through key state education departments, one of which is the state of Vermont. The first curriculum was dumbed down, then national testing was inserted, next morality was weakened and finally between 1970 and 1974, teacher training in the U.S. was comprehensively and covertly revamped. In 1971, the U.S. The Office of Education now committed to gaining access to your private lives and thoughts, granted contracts for seven volumes of change agent studies to the Rand Corporation.”

Gatto further adds: “School was a lie from the beginning and continues to be a lie. You hear a great deal of nonsense these days about the need of a high tech economy for well educated people, but the truth staring you in the face is that it requires no such thing. As our economy is rationalized into automaticity and globalization, it becomes more and more an interlocking set of subsystems coordinated centrally by mathematical formulas which simply cannot accommodate different ways of thinking and knowing. Our profitable system demands radically incomplete customers and workers to make it go. Educated people are its enemies, so is any non-pragmatic morality (...) What your government pays for, it gets. When we understand that, then we look at government financed institutions of education and see the kind of students and the kind of education that’s been turned out by these government-financed schools, logic will tell that if what has been turned out in those schools was not in accord with what the state and the federal government wanted then it would change it. The bottom line is that the government is getting what they have ordered. They do not want your children to be educated. They do not want you to think too much.” These excerpts stand as a description of the education system, saying that the goal of modern societies is to make people think less. This is a paradox because modern societies provide free education for all. Mass education can be beneficial for democracy because it allows people to make rational choices in the democratic process.

Can we describe art as a tool for “social diagnosis”? Parallels can be drawn between the concept of new art and today’s society. “We understood at the end of the 1970s what would become the mantra of the whole postmodern era in architecture, art, and music. Actually,

art became the source of new art. This became more than life,” says Serbian theater director Ljubisa Ristic (Maric, 2011).

Dakovic (1997) writes about language without identity. Media have surpassed life so that now nothing seems good enough for ordinary people. The following paragraphs discuss how “disconnected from reality” art can be.

Art can sometimes depict the level of alienation in some societies. As possible markers of alienation, architecture, art, and music can produce objects that are less related to the “creativity” of the author. These new works may in fact relate to works of the past. They could be copies of what people did in the past, due to the lack of originality needed to do something new.

Discussing the state of architecture in America, Frank Gehry said: “We live and work in boxes. People don’t even notice that. Most of what’s around us is banal... What creates the need is deeply part of who we are as people. The reason it doesn’t translate into a demand for better design in our lives is because of denial...

“People were drawing in caves back in prehistoric ages, and something was driving them. We have always created—music, literature, art and dance. The art around us—or lack of it—may be a measure of how we’re doing as individuals and as a civilization, so maybe we should be worried... It’s not elitist to acknowledge that everyone has a unique signature and everyone is different.

“We’re physiologically wired differently. There are many variations on the theme and the excitement and recognition of that should be celebrated. It’s not about time or education but about individuality. Those who say only artists and architects can create are the ones who are elitists. We should celebrate variety rather than conformity and allow people to express themselves.

“That we don’t is more of our denial. We deny our nature to build and create and then wonder why there is so much alienation and dissatisfaction. Everyone has a desire, if not a need, to use their individual signatures.

“Whenever people meet to talk about a project, even stuffy old businessmen, they say they want to create something new. Insurance executives go to a retreat and what do they talk about? ‘How do we make things better?’ The experts come in and have everyone free

associate. They even call it play—‘Let’s play around with this idea.’ We’re wired that way since childhood. Childhood play is nothing more than an expression of our individuality and preparation for human interaction. Everybody’s an artist. Unfortunately, we don’t treat them as such” (Basulto, 2011).

As noted before, the state of architecture, art, and music can indicate the level of people’s expressiveness or the lack of it. It may also be said that works of art can show the level of people’s alienation.

In his series about modern art, Collings (2000) introduces new consumer art without essence: “Warhol was a genius, but he was a new type of genius. He was a genius expressing what it felt like not to be shown what you felt at all. All the things that in the abstract-expressionist days were assumed to justify art’s difficulty, its specialness, its sensitivity, its unrepeatability, its complexity and depth, he was happy to throw away. It’s one thing to have that thought because people he hung out with were stoned or drunk, but what Warhol was good at was showing what that thought might actually look like.

“When you want to be like something, it means you really love it. When you want to be like a rock you really love that rock. I love plastic idols. What makes painting beautiful is the way paint is put on, but I do not understand how women put on makeup. It gets on your lips and it is so heavy, lipstick and makeup and powder and shadow creams and jewelry, it is all so heavy’, claimed Warhol. He always said everything was on the surface, just let there and you will see everything that is there. He did not have the intention to be heavy material-wise or deep image-wise. He liked being on the surface. He was audacious and somehow he knew that what he was doing was right on point.

“It was always exactly what needed to be done at that exact time. And it was beyond being hip and cool. It was genius. He had been always interested in glamour, says Billy Name, Warhol’s former assistant, ‘He always thought that there were such a great glamour and magic about being a star and he directed himself to find out what was glamour and how can I put it in a can and just paint it around, actually pint glamour in a room or on a canvas’. Warhol killed off his real self to make room for his art self.

“He made production line art because that was America. Warhol made a new self to fit the new world. By expressing his new artificial self, his brainwashed American consumer self, he was vividly expressing the world. He was the world in all its ordinariness and strangeness. Hirst’s artwork is bright, decorative, eye stimulating, exciting doing all the things a painting should do. But it is all done mechanically with a compass, with the colors not even being filled out by Herst, but by a system. So, something is missing.

“There is nothing to tell us what to feel. It expresses our culture’s anxiety about the role of painting now. Damien Hirst is not the last chapter. He is just the leader of our present phase of modern art where geniuses do not really exist, but creativity and inventiveness and not being straight and having your own system and not being polite all still do. We like modern art, because we do not know what it is. And the reason it keeps changing is to make sure we never do” (Collings, 2000).

Warhol might have been popular because he depicted the lack of sincerity and detachment from the self. He was, in fact, probably a genius in “depicting alienation.”

An observation on how works of art and popular culture affect people was made by film critic Zacharek (2001), who asks the question, “Am I alone in thinking that computer animation is the work of the Antichrist?” She says that movies like *Shrek* leave her feeling indifferent, unlike older animation. Zacharek writes that she could understand the new *Shrek* if computer animation had been specifically designed to desensitize the human race to thought and feeling.

The above-noted descriptions of paintings, videos, films, architecture, and art can tell us about the progress of alienation in modern society, as these “products of culture” reflect it.

This chapter serves as a preamble to the chapter about the beginning of consumerism, and it speaks about the signs of alienation in modern society. “Mass movements mobilize people who are alienated from the social system, who do not believe in the legitimacy of the established order, and who are therefore ready to engage in efforts to destroy it,” Kornhauser writes (1959).

The main consequence of conformity is false personalization. Nisbet (1988) writes that “there are a great many loose individuals

in American society at the present time: loose from marriage and the family, from the school, the church, the nation, job and moral responsibility.” It would be difficult to remove the barriers of false personalization, according to Riesman et al. (1961). “Both rich and poor avoid any goals, personal or social, that seem out of step with peer-group aspirations” they note. They also describe confusion in the world: “[I]f the other-directed people should discover how much needless work they do, discover that their own thoughts and their own lives are quite as interesting as other people’s, that, indeed, they no more assuage their loneliness in a crowd of peers than one can assuage one’s thirst by drinking seawater, then we might expect them to become more attentive to their own feelings and aspirations.”

The repressing agency makes its appearance as the psychological expression of a prior social fact, the phenomenon of authority, which includes many constituted historical figures: the family, tradition, political and ecclesiastic power, penal, and in general, social sanctions, according to Cavalletto (2007).

In other words, desire is no longer by itself; it has its “other.” “The first conceptualization begins with the assertion of a radical opposition between human instincts and the social world, an opposition that, to the degree it is explicitly psychological, results in a theory of the social world modeled functionally upon what psychoanalysts call a ‘reaction-formation,’ wherein the social domain takes on the role of a repressive ‘other’ diametrically opposed to instinctual drives. “Alternatively, this view results in a type of socialization theory wherein the social world is envisioned as imposing its prohibitions and norms on the psyche in the form of the internalized superego commands,” Cavalletto writes.

Freud (1989) refers to “privation,” as “the condition which is produced by the prohibition” of instinctual gratification—the fact that an instinct cannot be satisfied. Freud characterizes the underprivileged classes as suffering from a surplus of privation. This is most importantly instinctual privation, not material privation which would be its external sign. According to Freud, class exploitation is grounded upon the extraction and transfer of instinctual energies and pleasures from the underprivileged to the privileged classes.

In *Civilization and its Discontents*, Freud depicts the human condition as inherently tragic. He concludes that, if civilization can be saved, it will not be by reason and science, but rather by the instinctual power of love.

Psychological illness signifies a self-inflicted loss of freedom, according to Mitscherlich (1992). The patient is compensating for unconscious suffering with his symptoms. The patient, therefore, escapes suffering by self-deception.

Institutions impose stereotypes, insecurities, and prejudices upon individuals. Consumption society offers injections or pain killers as remedies, an illusion of the solution. When marketers offer substitutes to true remedies, individuals find themselves not able to resist.

The modern man is blind to the fact that, with all his reasonableness and competence, he is possessed by forces that are beyond his control, writes Jung (1964). He adds that gods and demons have not vanished, but on contrary, they have just got new names. Those demons have moved from tales to television screens.

“A lie is not the truth, but it makes sense because people would not use lies if they didn’t. A tale is not true but it makes sense because people would not tell tales to their children if they didn’t,” writes Susnic (1976).

And such “naive forms” like fairy tales and entertainment programs may be used to help humans escape from “themselves,” “their nature,” and “reality.” Jung states that forces imposed on their souls keep humans on the run with restlessness, vague apprehensions, psychological complications, an insatiable need for pills, alcohol, tobacco, and food. Although different kinds of manipulation may be present in modern society, media usage is subject to personal choice.

### 3.3 The Beginnings of Consumerism

Le Bon, Freud, Bernays, and Lippmann have all discussed consumerism in western societies. According to Le Bon (2002), at the beginning of the 20th century, industrial production was going through difficult times. There were an increasing number of products and

fewer consumers as the industry satisfied most of the needs on the market. Bernays (2004) claims that mass production can be profitable only if its rhythm is maintained—that is, if it continues to sell its products in steady or increasing quantities. The basic idea of Bernays was that sophisticated propaganda should offer people substitutions for their suppressed inner desires, so as to maintain this rhythm. Le Bon writes that “[o]ur conscious acts are the outcome of an unconscious substratum created in the mind in the main by hereditary influences. The crowd is hypnotized only when it is offered substitution for those inner irrational desires.”

According to Rousseau, as people started to acquire wealth and property, they began to compare themselves to people around them, seeking to differentiate themselves and emphasize their own dominance. Rousseau perceives this quest for respect as a wish for inequity.

In 1899, the American economic theorist Veblen (1953) labeled this condition “conspicuous spending.” Rousseau stated that the cost to individuals of these new desires for reputation was estrangement from themselves: “For they viewed their accomplishments, their worth and themselves through the appraising eyes of their rivals, experiencing their lives through their judgmental gaze, belonging less to themselves than to others. To earn the regard of others, it became more important to appear than to be.”

Lippmann (1997) explains that in Nazi Germany “[w]e have heard once more, through the fog and the din, the hysteria and the animal passions of great revolt, the authentic voice of a genuinely civilized people.” The horrors of World War II were perhaps the results of the restrictions and suppression of individuals.

The prospective fascist, writes Adorno, may long for the destruction of himself no less than for that of the adversaries, destruction being a substitute for his deepest and most inhibited desires (Cavalletto, 2007).

When it comes to consuming, the idea was that people should make well-informed decisions. By twisting people’s suppressed desires and playing tricks on them, or in other words, offering substitutes for these desires, the industry was able to increase the consumption of their products.

Cigarettes are a symbol of male sexual power, writes Bernays, adding that women smoke cigarettes to substitute for male sexual power, thereby challenging men. That way, women have their symbolic penises and feel powerful and independent, claims Bernays. To initiate this new symbol, he paid a bunch of women to parade smoking cigarettes on New York Easter day. He summoned photo reporters to capture these women with their “torches of freedom,” as Bernays called them.

Similarly, cars may have been initiated as symbols of male sexuality. “Promise is the essence of every advertising. It does not sell medicine to sick people, but hopes that they will get healthier, it does not sell goods but a belief that those who buy them will become humans, it does not use the strengths of the product as it uses the weaknesses of consumers. They touch the most sensitive strings of suppressed needs and lusts, especially in fear, instability, and misery,” writes Susnic (1976).

So, people don’t purchase a utility—what they purchase is “a feeling.” They purchase an image of themselves that they want to convey to others. Goods are no more about their practical value, but about desire-based value.

The inventor of focus groups Earnest Dichter set up a strategy of desire which claimed that a product had therapeutic value if the consumer identified with it (Kreuzer et al., 2007). That way, supposedly, consumers feel more secure. They have the confidence to go out into the world and do what they want, claims Dichter.

In the documentary *The Century of the Self*, student activists from the early 1960s Robert Pardun says that advertising is manipulation. He claims, “It was a way to get you to do something that did not come out of you. It came out of somebody else. Somebody else said this year you should be wearing powder pink shirts with matching powder pink buck shoes and I said why. That is not who I am. That is who somebody else is. They wanted you to be somebody who would buy their stuff” (Curtis, 2002).

Lippmann (1997) argues that if human beings are guided by irrational forces, then it is necessary to rethink democracy. Lippmann wanted a new elite that could manage what he called “the bewildered herd.” Le Bon writes: “Foremost, among the dominant ideas of the



present epoch is to be found the notion that instruction is capable of considerably changing men and has for its unfailing consequence to improve them and even to make them equal. By the mere fact of its being constantly repeated, this assertion has ended by becoming one of the most steadfast democratic dogmas. It would be as difficult now to attack it as it would have been formerly to have attacked the dogmas of the church.”

In the words of Bernays: “A man may believe that he buys a motor car because, after careful study of the technical features of all makes on the market, he has concluded that this is the best. He is almost certainly fooling himself. He bought it, perhaps, because a friend whose financial acumen he respects bought one last week, or because his neighbors believed he was not able to afford a car of that class, or because its colors are those of his college fraternity.” A product may be wanted not for its usefulness, but because the consumer has unconsciously come to see in it a symbol of something else.

Businesses needed a certain sense of shame so they could provide humans with outlets to express these suppressed desires in a socially accepted way. If a person hates his neighbor, he will not yell at him, because this would be socially unacceptable, but will buy an expensive car to prove his financial domination. Bernays states that the psychologists of the Freud school have pointed out that the thoughts and actions of many humans are compensatory substitutes for desires, which they have been obliged to suppress. The system of mass production needs mass consumers which are tasteless and the same, like everybody else, Susnic writes.

The media are used as assets of manipulation and promotion of consumerism. Mass culture provides models for daily life that imitate high expenditure ideals and sell customers pleasures, solutions to their troubles, writes Kellner (2003). Kellner also claims that in the new millennium, media culture is more significant than ever, in serving as a power of socialization, forming pictures of masculinity and femininity, publicly accepted and disapproved manners, and fitting role models.

“The celebrities of media culture are the icons of the present age, the deities of an entertainment society, in which money, looks, fame and success are the ideals and goals of the dreaming billions

who inhabit Planet Earth. Media culture provides fashion and style models for emulation and promotes a celebrity culture that provides idols and role models,” Kellner writes. In Gabler’s (1998) view, we star in our own film, creating amusement out of our lives, acting it out for audiences of our peers, following the ideas of media culture.

One asset of media manipulation is about using words to address human needs and associations. Terms typically have two meanings, a dictionary meaning and a meaning that’s used for ideological warfare, write Chomsky et al. (2002). For example, terrorism can be “only what other people do.”

Orwell (2003) elaborated on the misconceptions of words in his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: “The three slogans of the Party: war is peace, freedom is slavery, and ignorance is strength. The Ministry of Truth, which concerned itself with news, entertainment, education and the fine arts. The Ministry of Peace, which concerned itself with war. The Ministry of Love, which maintained law and order. And the Ministry of Plenty, which was responsible for economic affairs. Their names, in Newspeak: Minitrue, Minipax, Miniluv and Miniplenty.”

Vague words such as democracy are handy for manipulation because they seem to offer solutions for any problems, writes Le Bon: “[A] pyramid far loftier than that of old Cheops could be raised merely with the bones of men who have been victims of the power of words and formulas.” As with language, Le Bon states, the memorable events of history are the visible effects of the invisible changes of human thought. Le Bon writes that a word is less important than the associations we attach to it.

Language, pictures, and sounds are used by the media to address human needs in an effort to promote consumerism in modern mass society.

Consumerism has started its expansion after the specialization and automatization of work processes. If there was no marketing and media, modern society might not have been possible. Marketing processes are psychological, because they presume the manipulation of people’s needs and wishes to obtain profit. People’s frustration, potentially an outcome of the marketing process, might be the reason for media addiction and decline in political participation. On the other hand, the survival of modern society would not have been

possible without consumption society, which can also be beneficial as it provides the necessary products to a large number of people.

Some notions presented in the following paragraphs speak about the meaning of money, ownership, and material assets in modern societies. According to Weber (1994), it seems as if protestant ethics stimulate the principles of capitalism. Weber (1930) writes: “The only way of living acceptably to God was not to surpass worldly morality in monastic asceticism, but solely through the fulfillment of the obligations imposed upon the individual, by his position in the world.” He adds: “Reformation meant not the elimination of the Church’s control over everyday life, but rather the substitution of a new form of control for the previous one.” Further, he states: “We must hence inquire where that law came from. Among other circumstances, capitalistic interests have in turn undoubtedly also helped, but by no means alone, nor even principally, to prepare the way for the predominance in law and administration of a class of jurists specially trained in rational law.”

According to Adam Smith, politicians are put under the dictate of money. He writes that the state is introduced to preserve the rights and property of the rich. The marginalism revolution in economy recognized the need of freeing political economy from extraneous political considerations (Clarke, 1982).

Society is a totalitarian economic-technical organization which operates through the manipulation of needs by vested interests (Marcuse, 1964). Marcuse identifies “the rule of money.” He calls it totalitarianism of production and distribution, which may well be compatible with the “pluralism” of parties, newspapers, “countervailing powers,” etc.

“Money becomes the common denominator of human life. It acquires an extreme mobility and everybody, feverishly intent on making money,” writes Nisbet (1988).

“The emergence of the institution of ownership is apparently a concomitant of the transition from a peaceable to a predatory way of life,” writes Veblen (1953) and adds that exploitation, coercion, and seizure are the holy trinity for modern barbarians. Fernandez (2003) writes: “American culture, rooted in metaphysical notions about property rights, actually allows a group of barbarians to eagerly and

efficiently exploit the rest of us. It is legal, it is revered and one of its most perverse consequences is the creation of a leisure class.” There might be different aspects to the issue, but without money, modern societies with large numbers of people would not be able to function.

Globalization has many aspects. The changes in businesses and mass culture it has brought about have affected media addictions and political participation. Kellner (2003) writes that McDonald’s fast-food corporation has emerged as a major icon of global capitalism and Americanization. He writes: “McDonald’s is undoubtedly a corporation of tremendous magnitude, with outlets in over 30,000 sites in 121 countries, serving over 35 million customers a day and earning a profit of over \$2 billion annually. It is a sociological phenomenon of utmost significance that exemplifies the processes of modernization, rationalization, efficiency and cultural homogeneity throughout the globe. It is also an important form of cultural pedagogy that educates people into standardized fast food consumption and ideological conformity.” The example of McDonald’s is one of the many illustrating the possible cultural and economic hegemony of corporations around the world.

Corporations are arguably related to globalization and universalization, and they have been overwhelming countries in terms of power and reach. “In this world, there happen to be major tyrannical institutions called corporations, which are about as close to totalitarian as any institutions humans have devised,” writes Chomsky (2002).

“In the film *The Corporation* by Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, executive” director of the Trade Union Program from Harvard Elanie Bernard says that “[m]edieval life was a collectively lived life. It was a brutish nasty affair, but there was a collective responsibility. People belonged to the land. The land did not belong to the people. And in the European world, people farmed the land in a collective land, because they saw it as commerce. It belongs to God and then it was administered by the Church, the aristocracy as Stuarts of God’s creation. First, we began to take great landmasses of the world, which are common and shared and we reduced those to private property. Then, we went to the oceans. We created laws and regulations that would allow countries to claim a certain amount of water outside of their coastal limits for exploitation.

“In this century, we went after the air, by dividing it into air corridors, which can be bought and sold for commercial traffic of airplanes—private taking of the commons. Why does it only become wealth, when some entity puts a fence around it and declares it private property? That is not wealth creation that is wealth usurpation” (Achbar & Abbott, 2004).

In *The Crisis of Global Capitalism*, Soros (1998) writes that financial markets are inherently unstable and there are social needs that cannot be met by giving market forces free rein. “Unfortunately these defects are not recognized. Instead, there is a widespread belief that markets are self-correcting and a global economy can flourish without any need for a global society. It is claimed that the common interest is best served by allowing everyone to look out for his or her own interests and that attempts to protect the common interest by collective decision-making distort the market mechanism. This idea was called *laissez-faire* in the nineteenth century,” he writes. He called society based on these self-regulating mechanisms—unsustainable market fundamentalism.

As long as capitalism remains triumphant, the pursuit of money overrides all other social considerations. The intensification of the profit motive may be at the core of global capitalism. In this way, “money” penetrates areas that were previously governed by other considerations. Soros recognizes that the profit motive has been promoted into a moral principle. To put the matter simply, he states, market forces produce chaos and could ultimately lead to the downfall of the global capitalist system if they are granted totalitarian authority.

“The common interest does not find expression in market behavior. Corporations do not aim at creating employment, they employ people to make profits. Health care companies are not in business to save lives, they provide health care to make profits. Oil companies do not seek to protect the environment, except to meet regulations, or to protect their public image,” claims Soros.

“Techno-capitalism moves into a dazzling and seductive information/entertainment society, mergers between the media giants are proliferating, competition is intensifying and the media generate spectacles to attract audiences to the programs and advertisements

that fuel the mighty money machines” says Kellner (2003). He claims that we are entering a new form of techno-capitalism, marked by a synthesis of capital and technology and the information and entertainment industries, all of which are producing an “infotainment society” and spectacle culture. Kellner writes: “As the human adventure enters a new millennium, media culture continues to be a central organizing force in the economy, politics, culture and everyday life.”

In a new technocratic society, Marx (1991) sees technology as a prerogative for happy living. Although Marx views capitalism as a destructive force, cutting the human connection to nature, he does not foresee technocracy as its child.

Corporations have been supporting technology which enabled them to become primary global players, writes Mander (1993).

The idea that technology is progressing faster than culture, which leads towards the end of history and all-powerful technology, appeared in the 19th century. It emerges again after World War II when numerous inventions suggested that technological development had surpassed the development of man, writes Todorovic (2009).

Power is placeless now, writes Castells (1998). It is no longer connected to territory. Nike is the number one company and nobody can say where it comes from. Nike makes sneakers in Indonesia, it has a bank account in Switzerland and a headquarters in Africa, and retains no connection to space or time.

Yet, the power of institutions is an ever-reaching force, because it establishes its solid point in human souls, writes Castells. In his book *A Hacker Manifesto*, McKenzie (2004) writes that domination cannot be touched or cached in any way. You cannot overthrow today’s minority in power because there is no physical place where they reside.

In the 21st century, the issues of business and technology have become complex because of globalization processes. Businesses also support the discourse of cultural hegemony and universalization. Many people describe corporations and their products as “soleless,” because goods are being produced in poor working conditions and in a “mass manner.”

Corporations have a significant impact on social processes, but lack accountability. People in modern societies feel under the control of the “invisible hands” of corporations, yet they also feel unable to

rebel and impact these “hands” in any way. In modern societies, this results in feelings of frustration and addictions.

However, without corporations that bring universal products in high quantities around the globe, people would not be able to do many things. For example, if many people made the same products, then they would not be able to focus on creative work.





# MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE

The public sphere can be defined as the everyday meeting point for the people and their representatives. Ideally, the public space reflects the people's consensus. If the public sphere is free, politicians gain insight into how people feel about important state issues. As a society grows bigger, the public sphere becomes increasingly important.

In Ancient Greece, the public spheres were squares, where people would meet and discuss the future of their society. It was a place for orators to express their ideas and gain public support for their agendas. As contemporary society is much bigger compared to the city-states in Ancient Greece, this model of the public sphere was no longer possible. Under feudalism, the public sphere reflected the dramas of nobility, as Habermas (2003) writes. These were rulers' staged performances that served to portray their views. They were played before the public, but not on their behalf. Compared to contemporary times, this was a more sincere approach, as today's staged performances are supposedly played on behalf of the public. The level of manipulation has changed, going from shameless state propaganda to top "spin techniques."

The emerging forms of trade and finance capitalism contributed to the establishment of civil society. Merchants were the first to use what would later become the press. They exchanged information through newsletters. As noted by Goode (2005): "The press emerged as an outgrowth of the increasing traffic in merchant newsletters. Already, under feudalism, these newsletters had unleashed the very elements within which this power structure would one day dissolve."

The "literary public" gained the opportunity to express themselves, mainly writing articles about philosophy. They managed to spread beyond the pages of the printed press and the restricted strata of the pedagogues and philosophies, according to Habermas.

Critical reasoning occupied the coffee houses and salons of literary societies in Europe. For Habermas, the bourgeois public sphere was, in principle, shaped by the values of egalitarian dialogue. But the dialogue was there only because its existence coincided with the interests of merchants. Whatever the reason was, this was a time of what seemed to be free press. The press resorted to dialogue. Letters to the editor were accorded special status.

In the 18th century, the values of critical dialogue served to erode dogmatism. It was a culture of participation and argumentation. Literary criticism, writes Goode, adopted a new conversational role. It sought to feed off and back into the discussions taking place in the coffee houses and literary societies. Kant (2006) held that the public should take their lead from philosophers. He writes that only property-owning people should engage in political debate. One who serves only himself has the right to resonate in public.

In today's society, the problem is that those who are supposed to convey the attitude of the public are themselves corrupt. Habermas advocates reflexive publicity, as "institutions that claim to represent the public, must, themselves be opened up to the critical scrutiny of the people." (Goode, 2005)

Various non-governmental organizations, labor associations, and professionals don't represent the interests of their members. Instead, those organizations get their money from "merchants." Habermas writes that "the activities of the organizations themselves, their pressure on the state apparatus and their use of power against one another, as well as the manifold relations of dependency and of economic intertwining—need a far-reaching publicity. This would include, for instance, requiring that the organizations provide the public with information concerning the source and deployment of their financial means." (Goode, 2005) Habermas is concerned that the private interests of those with money are governing the public sphere.

It is no surprise that politicians stumbled, unable to resist the seducing smell of green notes. Habermas emphasizes conversation, reading, and plain speech as worthy forms of discourse for democratic culture, while he is hostile to the theater, courtly forms, ceremony, and the visual.

According to Herman & Chomsky (2002), it would be wrong to conclude that the gradual erosion of the public sphere reflects the preferences and free choices of the public. “The citizenry was never given the opportunity to approve or disapprove the wholesale transfer of broadcasting rights to commercial interests back in 1934, the pledge made by those interests and subsequently by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) itself, that public service offerings would never be buried in favor of the entertainment preferred by advertisers, was never fulfilled. The public is not sovereign over the media, the owners and managers, seeking ads, decide what is to be offered and the public must choose among these,” they write. Surveys show that people would like more news, documentaries, and other information over sex, aggression, and similar forms of entertainment, even if they do consume the latter.

## 4.1 The Role of the Media

“We live in the rhythm of binary digital media models, in a binary circuit, totally illuminated, analyzed, obscene, and dead. This post-modern, this luminous monster, which turns on and off in mechanical rhythm, shining light and leaving in darkness, the electronic village, where we simulate our lives incapable of symbolic exchange, under the absolute control of media models” (Dakovic, 1997).

Culture plays an important role in shaping the forces of domination, as well as generating the possibilities of liberation (Marcuse, 2007). Cirjanic (2010) discusses the cultural phenomena of reality television, as ratings of these programs are skyrocketing in Serbia. She concludes that their popularity owes to the fact that their viewers want to avoid dealing with their own problems in real life.

“Dr. Parnassus: I’m the felicitater... the facilitator, dear boy. I create the opportunities. It’s not my fault if you are not up to it” (Gilliam, 2009). This implies that the media has the role to provide aid or support the people who are using them.

Let’s elaborate more on the role of the media. Is their role to be the “passive conductors of reality” or the journalists’ personal “creations”?

Here is what Ellison (2011) has to say on this: “The Guardian sees itself as a mediating institution, one that applies knowledge and judgment to the gathering of facts. It believes mediation is necessary for understanding and it knows that institutions must be built and tended with care.

“The high-minded creation of Scott Trust, long ago, epitomizes this sensibility. In contrast, Julian Assange and Wikileaks disdain the notion that anything should come between the public and the vast universe of ostensible information you can evaluate for yourself, if only someone will let you.

“The ideal role of a journalistic outlet, in Assange’s view, is to be a passive conduit for reality, or at least for slivers of reality, with as little intervention as possible—no editing, no contextualizing, no explanations, no thinking, no weighing of one person’s claims against another, no regard for the consequences.

“The technology that Assange has worked on for most of his career possesses immense capabilities and cannot be controlled by a single institution or voice. It is perhaps for this reason that Wiki Leaks—ultimately replaceable by the next technologically savvy anarchist—is so disturbing to many.”

The inventors of cinema, the Lumiere brothers, had different perspectives on creating movies. One brother wanted to document reality. His films were simple depictions of the world around him. In fact, the first film showed workers leaving the factory. It was a sort of depiction of reality. The other brother wanted to show the surreal world through the lens of his cinématographe. Both of them couldn’t have imagined that their invention would have such a bright future. Who would be interested in watching moving pictures of the world around us, they thought (Parker, 1995). When people came to the first movie projection, they were awestruck by the magic of moving pictures. They could see what somebody else was doing as if they were there. Even today, many people automatically turned their heads toward the television when it is on, as a source of light and activity. The fact that people fix their eyes on the lightbox is magical in itself.

Passive media can come across as “heartless,” and it is possible that people react differently to content without the journalist’s mark.

Two media conceptions have been presented here: one that passively represents reality and the other that actively portrays it.

In his discussions of modern journalism, Iggers (1999) asks if the problem lies, at least partially, in the journalistic values themselves. He brings into questions mass media ethics and the education of journalists, as these might reflect the distorted worldviews imposed by the minority in power.

Could it be that a progressively inappropriate conversation within journalism about ethics distorts priorities and diverts the focus of both journalists and the public from the more serious institutional failures of the news media to fulfill their responsibilities, Iggers asks? This is the key question regarding mass media, because it may explain that “distortion” is in fact institutionalized. It may make journalists servants to the system, as it reduces the profession to mere skill. It may also set unrealistic standards for journalists while failing to note that a journalist’s basic role is to depict reality through the media. In reality, it is often about advancing the agenda in the interest of the minority.

Modern media ethics can be so unrealistic and perfidious that it suppresses the bias of journalists. The dogma of neutrality, writes Iggers, holds that the news media can and should operate outside of reality, to observe and record without an expressed stand on most issues. In a 1941 radio address, George Orwell asserted that “propaganda in some form or other lurks in every book, that every work of art has a meaning and a purpose—a political, social and religious purpose—and that our aesthetic judgments are always colored by our prejudices and beliefs.”

Besides, modern media ethics include information ideology, which treats only the information function of the news media as ethically significant. Iggers contends that journalistic objectivity is not possible, that journalists cannot and should not be neutral observers and that the importance of the information function of the news media pays too little consideration to the ethical importance of the role that the news media play in shaping public identity.

He further notes that there is a growing acceptance of the idea that reality is socially constructed and that the competing versions

of reality presented to us via the news media are not balanced representations of reality.

“Critics on the left charge that the American news media have become stenographers of power, carrying out the agenda of ruling elites. Critics on the right accuse the media of having a liberal social agenda that undermines traditional values,” writes Iggers. “Television journalism in particular has come under attack, accused of distorting public perceptions by dwelling excessively on violent crime” he notes. Reality consists of both good and bad events. The domination of negative news only shows the extent to which reality is distorted in the media.

To depict a better picture of reality, mass media offers opinionated news, documentary and discussion programs with lots of input from the public. The modern approach to mass media, on the other hand, emphasizes news as a social construction, rather than a mediated reflection of reality, claims Iggers. He proposes new, more realistic approaches for the media, which include the assumption that in a society committed to democratic values, the construction of public values should be a democratic process with broad involvement.

In their documentary *Manufacturing Consent: Noam Chomsky and the Media*, Achbar & Wintonick (1992) tell the story of modern media which determine, select, shape, control, and restrict the consent of the public based on the decisions of the minority in power. The editorial techniques of major American media include selection of topics, allocation of concerns, emphasis, framing of issues, filtering of information, and bounding of debates. A study on the fairness and accuracy in reporting may illustrate to what extent these techniques distort reality. Out of 1530 guests in 865 nighttime programs, 92% of them were white, 89% were male, and 80% were professionals, government officials, or business representatives.

Another example of this distortion in the US media is about neglecting certain conflicts in news reporting while emphasizing others. Chomsky points out that American media dedicated little attention to East Timor atrocities, while giving full coverage for communist genocide in Cambodia. But where does this possible “distortion” in media come from?

Ever since they came into existence, mass media might have been subject to censorship. After the invention of the printing press, editors were allowed to publish newspapers only after being checked by censors. The censors could approve, alter, or reject certain content. In the end, the public was left only with articles favored by the monarch.

As propaganda switched to more sophisticated forms of manipulation—public relations—censorship evolved into a more deceitful and invisible kind of manipulation. Self-censors are journalists who intentionally omit to cover certain topics or produce favorable texts for certain interest groups. Herman & Chomsky (2002) write that censorship is usually not accompanied by crude interference, but by the selection of the right-thinking staff, and the editors' and working journalists' internalization of priorities and definitions of newsworthiness that obeys the institution policy. "Certainly, the media's adherence to an official agenda with little dissent is likely to influence public opinion in the desired direction, but this is a matter of degree and where the public's interests diverge sharply from that of the elite and where they have their own independent sources of information, the official line may be widely doubted," they write.

In modern times, there may be even worse trends than self-censorship—the "systematization of journalists." In the modern-day media machine, the mediators of our reality have become "robot journalists." They are the "mediators of the system," much more than censors or self-censors. The "mediators of the system" have lost touch with reality. They are the "people who read from the teleprompter." In other words, they may not know or feel what they are reporting about. As Chomsky remarks, reading from a teleprompter is a very strange experience—it's like the words go into your eyes and out your mouth without going through your mind.

## 4.2 Negative News

Research results of the study that will be presented here show that people feel the media are dominated by negative news. Most of the survey respondents feel the media are unrealistic and would like them to become more realistic and less negative.

Negative news can be used to warn, then to entertain, and finally to instill fear. In the race for profit, mass media may be swayed by corporate interest to portray a negative picture of society.

The main purpose of mass media in modern society is to be consumed. This is how journalists make money. The interests of the public are of far lesser importance. The issue gets even more complicated when we add to it the interests of corporations, which advertise their products through mass media.

Negative news is aligned with politicians' and corporate business owners' agendas. Politicians and corporations use negative news to foster fear and artificial ideas of happiness, which in turn makes people consume media even more.

Why do people want to hear, listen, and read news that is so far from reality? The explanation for this can be traced back to a time when people were completely reliant on nature. It is possible that people still rely on old instincts to protect them and help them survive. To neutralize dangers coming from nature, both men and women were on the constant lookout. The struggle for survival was as important for humans as it was for all other species. That led them to create one of the first forms of mass media—drums (Drumming, 2011).

When humans hear warning signals, their adrenalin levels rise. This human characteristic hasn't changed to this day. It can be beneficial when mass media provide useful warnings. They can warn people to stay indoors if a typhoon is coming or inform the younger population of different dangers, such as drug and alcohol addiction.

Although it is good to inform citizens about real dangers, the human "desire" to receive warning signs has been misused by creators of mass media content. Although there are not as many real dangers in contemporary times, according to research respondents, television programs are dominated by frightening news. They also say that there is little useful information in news programs.

On the other hand, news shows' entertainment value appears to be dominant. People can feel excited when they hear about negative news. Journalists may say that people love to watch stories about conflict, crime, and misfortune.

It is the responsibility of modern mass media is to provide a credible representation of social realities, not to promote criminals and



terrorists. By showcasing so many bad guys during news openings, journalists are encouraging their behavior.

There are two types of negative news. First, there is news that happens far away from the viewer. That news is usually less relevant for its audience and is usually shown for pure entertainment. Such negative news usually includes misfortunes that happened in some distant country, like a tsunami in India or an earthquake in Korea. Entertainment news may distract the viewer from something that could be useful to them in the real world. People have become prisoners of mass media by using them for prolonged periods, instead of truly living life.

The second type of negative news refers to the dangers that are considerably closer to its target audiences. This is the kind of news that scares people. Because negative news is so prevalent, the danger portrayed by mass media may be overblown.

For example, the news about the pig flu frightened people around the world. It even changed their lifestyles. It made them stay at home and use different pharmaceuticals to avoid being ill. At the end of this negative news campaign, people realized that this disease had similar consequences as any other flu (Fassa, 2009).

Negative news coming from the neighboring areas can be more dangerous than news coming from far away. This is because this news is most likely half-true, even when it is concerned with an actual event. The chances are that it is not as harmful as the media portrays it to be.

Besides the pig flu, another example of how negative news can paint an unrealistic and harmful picture of society could be seen following a story about an incident at a lake in Serbia. In July 2010, the national television of Serbia reported on the drowning of a drunken teenager (Tanjug, 2010). As a result of this, parents may have advised their children not to visit the lake, as it would be dangerous to do so. Although drowning in Serbia is a rare accident, national television decided to make a report on this unfortunate event.

Not only is this news an unreliable representation of reality, but it can produce negative effects. Still, reports on adolescent drug and alcohol abuse are rare. But these reports make it seem as if national television is encouraging young people to visit nightclubs or play

PC games, instead of going to nature. This illustrates how harmful negative news can be.

The most harmful of all negative news is that closely related to its audience. In this case, negative news takes on a “more than entertainment” role, acting as “fear-making machines.”

At this point, probably because of too much negative news, people are asking for a change in mass media programs, the research results indicate. They are no longer entertained by negative news. Because some of the negative news relates to their audiences in more direct ways, this causes fear. Some people refuse to consume mass media, as they’ve had enough of their “negativity.” The results of the study suggest that the majority of people want more positive news. They would like to see mass media portray more realistic pictures of society.

One of the effects of mass media is the creation of “happiness formulas” for their users. In other words, people create their own idea of happiness based on the “formulas” acquired from mass media. While doing this, people include information from their social and natural surroundings. Thus, their goals are the products of their surroundings and media use.

If people rely solely on mass media to find happiness, their frustration can become amplified because they set their goals too unrealistically. For example, if a student learned from mass media that Formula 1 driver Michael Schumacher drove a Ferrari, he might start to believe that possessing this car is the key to happiness. Once that student realizes that he won’t be able to afford a Ferrari with his income, he might become very disappointed.

In reality, the student’s media-acquired happiness formula can be adjusted by comparing it with his surroundings. If the majority of his friends drive Ford automobiles, he might attune his media-induced idea of happiness to a more modest one. As a result of the interaction with his neighbors, friends, fellow students, and family members, he may lower his aspirations. He then might desire a somewhat cheaper model of automobile as a prerequisite for his happiness. This might become one of his life goals.

This definite “picture of happiness” might become more realistic, but is still dramatically influenced by the unrealistic world of mass media, which provided a frame for his aspirations.

“Democratic common sense must fear media-induced indifference and the mindless conversational trivialization of all differences that make a difference,” writes Habermas (2003).

The media set standards of how people should live. People’s surroundings, on the other hand, may offer more choices. In the search for ultimate happiness, a typical mass media consumer might try to compromise. He might take into account what’s on television and what’s out there, creating a mashup of his happiness ideals. Although it is not possible to know how much the virtual world of mass media affects people’s “happiness formula,” it certainly frames their materialistic ideal of happiness.

The usual aspirations package in the western world contains “a fancy car,” a house with a swimming pool, trendy clothes. It is ultimately about “buying happiness.”

Mass media have become the major promoters of consumption. This way of thinking creates frustration instead of happiness.

For example, if a young woman is unhappy with her small breasts, she might undergo plastic surgery. Her desire might result from the consumption of mass media, which creates a picture of an ideal woman. One of the elements of an ideal woman may be having big breasts. Young women will tend to observe whether their female friends like to highlight this part of their body. She may also “inspect” if men in her community desire women with big breasts, more than those with smaller breasts. With all this and her deep personal feeling of sadness, the young woman chooses to undergo breasts surgery. By doing this she may make her breasts more desirable for the male population. However, the feeling of sadness will not disappear. She might be left feeling just as unhappy as before the operation. She might seek to do another surgery, in her attempt to “buy happiness.” This situation usually creates a wave of misery, one that is ultimately caused by mass media.

On the other hand, the media can be useful for practical purposes. Modern media warn of dangers, but can also be used to educate and entertain. Media programs inform people about current market offers. As with everything, there are “two sides to a coin,” and so media can also be a beneficial and necessary asset in modern society.

## 4.3 Drugs, Media, and Manipulation

In his essays on the effects of drugs on people, Chomsky looks back to the time when he was a kid and would go visit his cousins. Although it was a poor family of twenty people living in a tiny apartment and with no jobs, Chomsky recalls a feeling of hopefulness. He says that this family was intellectually alive, exciting, and very different from today's families. The 1930s were times of deep economic depression and lots of people were jobless, but the funny thing about it was that the sense of hope made it very different than today: "When you go into the slums today, it is nothing like what it was: it's desolate, there is no hope. You take a walk through East Harlem today, there was nothing like that at the depths of the Depression—this sense that there's nothing you can do, it's hopeless and your grandmother has to stay up at night to keep you from being eaten by a rat.

"That kind of thing didn't exist at the depths of the Depression. I don't even think it existed in rural areas. Kids didn't come into school without food; teachers didn't have to worry that when they walked out into the hall, they might get killed by some guy high on drugs - it wasn't that bad (...) A lot of people have pointed out that just at the time when you started to get serious organizing in the urban ghettos in the 1960s, all of a sudden there was this huge flow of drugs which absolutely devastated the inner-city communities. And the communities just couldn't defend themselves against it: the parents couldn't do it, the churches couldn't do it, you've got guys hanging around on street corners giving ten-year-old children free drugs and in a couple of months the neighborhood's gone." (Chomsky et al., 2006)

As Orwell writes in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*: "He took down from the shelf a bottle of colorless liquid with a plain white label marked 'Victory Gin'. He took a cigarette from a crumpled packet marked 'Victory Cigarettes' and incautiously held it upright, whereupon the tobacco fell out onto the floor." Do the media have a similar effect as drugs, because of their potentially essential manipulative feature: the fact that they misrepresent reality? The media brings us distorted reality, similar to the "imaginative world" that drugs open the doors to.

In his effort to shed light upon the manipulations humans are exposed to, Plato (1988) writes: “Human beings are living in a sort of underground den, which has a mouth open towards the light and reaching all across the den. They have been here from their childhood and have their legs and necks chained so that they cannot move and can only see before them; for the chains are arranged in such a manner as to prevent them from turning round their heads and they see only their own shadows, or the shadows of one another, which the fire throws on the opposite wall of the cave. True, he said, how could they see anything but the shadows, if they were never allowed to move their heads? And, of the objects which are being carried in like manner, they would see only the shadows?” This poetical notion may relate to the framing of news programs that focus on certain topics while neglecting others, a key feature of modern media.

Satan and the “media” are frequently compared in popular culture. As Twain (2004) writes: “And next, Satan branched off into poetry and recited some and did it well and Marget was charmed again. And again, Wilhelm was not as pleased as he ought to have been and this time Marget noticed it and was remorseful,” adding that “it was a tranquil and dreamy picture, beautiful to the eye and restful to the spirit. If we could only make a change like that, whenever we wanted to, the world would be easier to live in than it is, for change of scene shifts the mind’s burdens to the other shoulder and banishes old, shop-worn wearinesses from mind and body both.” Like Satan in Twain’s novel *The Mysterious Stranger*, modern society may bring humans outside of their “realities” through the deceptive poetry of mass media.

In the film *Network* by Sidney Lumet, the television program host explains deception and distraction as postulates of mass media: “We’re in a lot of trouble! Because you people and 62 million other Americans are listening to me right now. Because less than 3% of you people read books. Because less than 15% of you read newspapers. Because the only truth you know is what you get over this tube. Right now, there is a whole and entire generation that never knew anything that didn’t come out of this tube! This tube is the Gospel. The ultimate revelation. This tube can make or break presidents, popes, prime ministers. This tube is the most awesome goddamn

force in the whole godless world and woe is us if it ever falls into the hands of the wrong people! And when the largest company in the world controls the most awesome, goddamn propaganda force in the whole godless world, who knows what shit will be peddled for truth on this network! So you listen to me.

“Listen to me! Television is not the truth. Television’s a god-damned amusement park! Television is a circus, a carnival, a traveling troupe of acrobats, storytellers, dancers, singers, jugglers, sideshow freaks, lion tamers and football players. We’re in the boredom-killing business. But you people sit there, day after day, night after night, all ages, colors, creeds. We’re all you know. You’re beginning to believe the illusions We’re spinning here. You’re beginning to think that the tube is reality and that your own lives are unreal. You do whatever the tube tells you! You dress like the tube, you eat like the tube, you raise your children like the tube, you even think like the tube. This is mass madness, you maniacs! In God’s name, you people are the real thing! We are the illusion” (Lumet, 1977).

In his popular book *Fishermen of Human Souls* Serbian author Susnic (1976) writes about the effects of media: “Let’s not forget that, among the masses of those entertaining themselves, there are many who consciously or unconsciously attempt to escape from themselves. They want to forget reality. We are deceiving ourselves if we think that the masses entertain themselves solely for the sake of fun. That is just a superficial picture and if we look deeper, we will discover that the need for entertainment is an expression of a deep desire to escape oneself, to escape reality. That is the desire for the life of the other I, which exists every day in moments of illusion and forgetfulness. One cannot think of their own misery and troubles, when consuming fun-loving sounds and pictures of the television. As there are more worries and hard times—the desire for fun is greater. People are afraid of themselves and that is why they escape into the masses from which they take psychological stability.”

Modern entertainment as the contemporary equivalent of Roman circus games diverts the public from politics and generates political apathy (Herman & Chomsky, 2002). Kellner (2003) writes that classical Greece had its Olympics, poetry festivals, its public rhetorical

battles, and its bloody and violent wars. He notes: “Ancient Rome had its orgies, its public offerings of bread and circuses, its titanic political battles and the spectacle of empire with parades and monuments for triumphant Caesars and their armies.” Kellner also adds that in the early modern period, Machiavelli (1985) advised his contemporary prince to use spectacles productively, for government and social control. Emperors and kings of the modern states may have cultivated spectacles as part of their rituals of governance and power. Debord (1995) describes media and customer society organized around the manufacturing and consumption of images, commodities, and staged events.

Those not interested in classical entertainment can indulge in reading books. Rebels can sit in comfortable chairs watching Michael Moore’s documentaries. Those who still have the energy to act, despite all the distractions, may be distorted to fight with themselves. Or to become members of some nationalistic movement. They may choose alternative groups within the system in an attempt to express their frustrations. People are distracted, divided, labeled as nationalists and Nazis, so they don’t attack the system. As a result of these distractions, the public forum is shattered.

“The loud little handful, as usual, will shout for the war. The pulpit will, warily and cautiously, object, at first. The great, big, dull bulk of the nation will rub its sleepy eyes and try to make out why there should be a war and will say, earnestly and indignantly, it is unjust and dishonorable and there is no necessity for it. Then the handful will shout louder. A few fair men on the other side will argue and reason against the war with speech and pen and at first will have a hearing and be applauded, but it will not last long. Those others will outshout them and presently the anti-war audiences will thin out and lose popularity,” writes Twain (2004).

The minority found it would be possible to mold the mind of the masses so that they directed their strength in the desired direction. The intelligent manipulation of habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in a democratic society, writes Bernays (2004). This conscious or unconscious media manipulation is present in modern societies.

As mentioned at the end of the previous chapter, the media can be beneficial in modern societies. The manipulative and addictive features of mass media are examined in this chapter for the purpose of describing the potential social processes underlying the relationship between media addiction and political participation.



# ANOMIE

Inadequate procedural rules to regulate complementary relationships among the specialized and interdependent parts of the complex social system can result in anomie (Olsen, 1965). Anomie refers to a condition of inadequate moral norms. The problem occurs when there is malintegration in the social system, which may be a consequence of failure in public representation. In other words, this may happen if politicians promise to do something during the campaign but then act differently once they are elected.

It also occurs with regard to the possibility of expression. Consider someone who has the skills to become a pilot but is unable to do so because of financial constraints. This means that the system does not allow people to advance in accordance with their abilities. This stress can cause addiction. Durkheim (1893) writes about structural spontaneity, which is closely tied with social justice or just social contract. This means that everybody gets a job according to their abilities.

On the other hand, the issue of representation or expression can be illustrated by the discrepancy between common goals and the legitimate means to attain those goals. If someone wants to sell alcoholic beverages but is prohibited from doing so by law, he may put himself in opposition to legitimate means to attain his goals. Again, this kind of stressful situation (where there is a discrepancy between goals and possibilities) can result in addictions.

Where regulation does not exist, there is an anomic division of labor (Olsen, 1965), creating possibilities for speculations in some aspect of public life. Most people are not willing to operate on the fringes of the law, but speculators are. Those willing to engage in unethical behavior will be able to survive and profit in an unregulated market. Olsen writes that anomie occurs if regulation is not in accord with the degree of development of the division of labor. Regulations and societies can mismatch in two ways: one way is when

societies change and laws do not follow; the other is when the laws change while society stays the same.

Artificial changes brought about by interest groups rather than “the people” may be denying the will of the majority. That is why voters feel their participation in elections is insignificant. For this reason, Olsen (1965) stresses the importance of the spontaneous development of regulatory or procedural rules of integration. If laws came from the people or were based on their beliefs and positions, there would be no problem in representation or “the people’s expression” in respect to their elected public representatives. Failure to represent “social reality” may happen if the values of the minority are intensively promoted. If the will of the people is misrepresented by elected officials, then people may feel frustrated, and this stressful situation may lead them to develop media addiction, as a result of their failure to “express” themselves through their social agents.

Powerlessness, meaninglessness, disorientation, normlessness, as well as estrangement from work and social estrangement, are all dimensions of anomie (Huschka & Mau, 2006). Because of changes in work organization and intrusion of media into the home, people begin to feel estranged from their personal relationships and professional life, placing them in some of the categories mentioned by Huschka & Mau.

## 5.1 Anomic Division of Labor

The inability to express oneself relates to both professional and private life, but also public representation. People may be unable to express their positions through elected officials. They are unable to influence the work process or change the production process, because of the way modern companies are structured. Also, conditions for business are not favorable. There are many possible ways how inadequate procedural rules for regulating complementary interactions among the system’s specialized parts can cause anomie (Olsen, 1965).

Anomic division of labor exists when specialized parts of the social system are isolated or otherwise banned from communicating

and interacting (Olsen, 1965). If elected public officials fail to do their duties in accord with the will of the majority, then people may lack the motivation to pursue their talents. A society that does not reward virtue risks collapsing in mediocrity.

In other cases, if mass media do not provide a valid representation of social reality to their users, then confusion might spread within the system. Also, some interest groups might use mass media to spread fear, additionally distorting the system and its parts.

Instead of serving a social purpose, mass media can be utilized to serve the interests of the rich minority. That way, both media and politics can be used against the interests of the majority.

In the case of politics, the issue could be an inconsistency between societal values and norms, or the laws and acts of elected public representatives. In the case of the media, the issue could be inconsistency between life in a society and its depiction in media.

The problem appears because social structures fail to reflect the underlying values and norms of society (Olsen, 1965). The misleading arrangement of social representations produces distressing psychological symptoms (Mestrovic, 1987).

For example, some children might find that the only way they can “express themselves” is to commit suicide. Anecdotal evidence suggests that mass killings in US schools used to happen because perpetrators couldn’t see a way to “achieve happiness.” If society tells young people they are losers who will never do anything in life, this may create pressure. They may start to feel that the only way to “express themselves” is to make it to the news, as mass society appreciates only famous people, while “others do not exist.”

The Newtown mass shooting happened in December 2012 (Nyholm, 2012). In this case, the perpetrator announced the killings the previous day on the internet (Daily Mail, 2012). In his announcement, he wrote that he would commit suicide and that it would be in the news. It appears suicide made sense for the perpetrator, especially because it would become headlines. His statement seemed as if he looked forward to it. It almost sounded like a “statement of freedom.”

Anomie is a disjunction between goals and institutional means (Oru, 1989). In the case of US mass shootings in Newtown and Columbine, the problem may be anomie, not just as a result of violent

programs in the media and easy access to firearms, but also, and most importantly, because young people may not be getting adequate support from their family and school.

Again, the main reason why basic institutions of society such as family, work, and education fail, are labor organization and intervening interests injected by the media into the home.

Anomie is an inadequacy of socially generated goals and values in industrial society (Orru, 1989). This means that people may be unable to achieve their goals in a socially acceptable manner.

For example, if someone refrains from offending another person for fear of being politically incorrect, their anger may be suppressed. Finally, because of the continuous suppression of anger, the person may “explode” in a dramatic way and commit murder. In other words, something that could have been a verbal disagreement may turn into a physical clash with serious repercussions.

This could have been prevented if the media did not perform pressure concerning political correctness, in this case acting in the interest of a small number of people and under the veil of human rights. The media does not reflect the values and social reality of the majority, which may result in incidents.

The imbalance between cultural values and social norms is socially problematic (Orru, 1989). Usually, the old norms and social functioning are not in accordance with current social trends. This may be due to new experiences, with social agents failing to follow through with adequate norms. This can cause stressful situations resulting in addictions.

The primary reason for this may be that social agents put their own interests above public ones, although they are elected as public representatives. Elected public representatives are responsible for all aspects of society, including regulation of mass media and businesses in public interests, not the interests of powerful groups.

Disharmony of expectations and everyday experiences is the main reason for anomie (Scott & Turner, 1965). Durkheim (1893) writes about the personal and common duality of human nature. This common nature may be referred to as conscious collective. The sense of conscious collective can weaken in a time of organic labor division, because people may start to have different experiences. This

might make it easy for public representatives to deceive the people by promising them one thing while doing something else.

Society may be affected by manipulation related to common issues, because a weak conscious collective can be a breeding ground for the manipulation of social agents, who act in favor of their personal interests while undermining social ones. This is bad for society because, according to Durkheim, the state draws authority from the conscious collective.

The problem arises because of weakening bonds that normally integrate individuals into collectivity. If social agents do not provide ways for people to express their talents by occupying the right places in society, then an anomic society occurs.

If a person who dreams of becoming a physician is unable to do so due to financial difficulties, they will be left feeling unfulfilled. Society creates anomie if it lacks the ways to support its members into becoming integrated into networked systems within the society. When people are integrated into social systems, they feel that they belong to society.

Durkheim writes that besides excessive regulation, a society can suffer from a lack of regulation or a weakened common morality. When this is the case, there is no clear concept of what is proper and acceptable. In modern circumstances, the lack of rules and regulations may be as dangerous as too many rules and regulations. This may be due to weakened families and a meaningless professional environment caused by changes in labor organization, and the intrusion of the media into the home.

Of course, there is a difference between the quantity and quality of regulations and rules. Both factors affect society in various ways. High-quality regulations reflect the values and stands of society in the right way, while low-quality regulations are usually rooted in the positions of the social minority.

A small number of high-quality regulations is insufficient because they can be too vague. When this is the case, goals and aspirations are unrestrained and unregulated. On the other hand, when there are too many regulations, although high-quality ones, this may also produce anomie because they exert pressure on individuals.

Similar anomic effects can be created if there is the right number of regulations, but they are of low quality. For every society, there is a good balance of values extracted from the majority of people and the number of regulations that represent these values. If there is a disproportion between society and regulations, laws will not be integrated or they will be over-integrated, in both cases resulting in anomie.

There is a correlation between anomie and aspiration (Mizruchi, 1976). That means if aspiration is high, anomie increases as well. Modern mantras keep telling people to “do more” all the time. Notions such as “the sky is the limit” are present in the advertisements of consumption society. In modern times, many people aspire to accumulate material goods, including money, expensive clothing, houses, and cars.

While some people do not see a place for themselves in “corrupt society,” as they call it, most want to reach the top of the success pyramid, such as becoming a CEO or a member of a company’s board of directors.

Some people may be content with less exclusive job positions, but they will always be drawn to the rich and famous. When looking at aspiration two questions arise. The first question regards the quality of the aspiration, or what the aspiration is. To become a salesman is one thing; working as a university professor is something completely different.

The other question relates to the intensity of the aspiration. This question examines if a person aims to immediately become CEO of a company that sells goods or seeks to advance steadily within the company structure.

The problem occurs when a person consciously or unconsciously follows manipulative media’s guidance in determining their goal. For example, a person with the potential to become a firefighter may seek to become a salesman with sky-high ambitions. In this case, the media may bear a deciding role in setting the aspirations of the person in question. If people turn to the media for guidance, their misalignment with social reality may ultimately result in an anomic society.

For example, encouraging banking activities in underdeveloped agricultural countries may not be consistent with their social realities. The combination of media pressures exerted upon families and

organizational pressures exerted in professional life may result in alienation, if a person cannot fulfill their goals or create something of value.

The growth of alienation indicates that the range of choices is increasingly narrowing (Dean, 1960). Olsen (1965) writes that modern conditions prevent people from achieving their potential and individuality.

There is a discrepancy between objective situations and expectations (Shepard & Panko, 1974). The problem arises when expectations are formed unrealistically, under the influence of the media. Profit-driven manipulation can be done through the media. If most of the people would form expectations realistically, based on personal talents, society would operate beyond the manipulation and confusion brought by profit interests.

Even if this was the case, it would not mean that expectations match objective circumstances. The problem may be that modern society brings confusion into the “talent determination process” and doesn’t provide the resources to help people reach their potential, causing stress as well as addictions.

## 5.2 The Growing Distance Between the Government and the Governed

If profit is put high above other societal values, material goods are seen as determinants of happiness. In this scenario, values such as intimacy, harmony, sharing, love, family, friendship, and loyalty are placed low on the importance scale. When material goods are highly valued and emotional fulfillment is undervalued, materialism becomes the driving force of society.

When this is the case, then those who have an abundance of material goods have control over society. In most societies, the people who have the most money, land, real estate, gold, cars, and other assets are businessmen. This means that business owners and executives have the power to control society. This is because businessmen and executives can affect legislation by lobbying for their own interests, while those with less money are powerless.

It appears that the voices of the rich are more important than the voices of others. Those with the material means are able to impact media by buying advertising space on the internet, television, radio, and print. This means that people who are supposed to control society through their elected representatives may be in fact under the control of the rich. Again, this may be the reason why, in any society, materialism is ranked above emotional fulfillment on the value scale.

Normlessness means the lack of clear norms or conflict among norms (Dean, 1960). The absence of norms or conflicting norms may mean they are not of high quality. The failure to represent laws might be due to the poor work of legislators. This failure may cause all other failures, because legislators shape societies, including media and businesses.

There is a lack of institutional mechanism to express discontent (Aberbach, 1969). People may protest because society does not allow them to express themselves, given their work, education, and the media. The most recent protests happening around the world may be a consequence of the general dissatisfaction with society (Burton, 2011).

At the beginning of the 21st century, unconnected groups of people started raising their voices in the streets of Canada, Greece, Spain, France, Egypt, and Libya. The nominal causes of these protests were economic hardship, the ruling structure, and sports games, but the main issue was the protestors' growing personal dissatisfaction.

There was no other way to show their dissatisfaction because societies are tailored according to the measures of the rich rather than the people. In modern societies, everything is oriented towards doing more with fewer resources and in the final interest of profit, while notions such as human beings and emotional fulfillment are undermined.

As Yin & Lucas (1973) write, the main issue is the growing distance between the government and the governed. Elected legislators seem to be responsible for the anomic state of modern societies because they regulate both businesses and the media. The situation may not be that simple, because of a series of historical events that have led towards anomie. Anomie may be exacerbated by two factors: the changes in work organization and intrusion of media into the home. This may be an inevitable consequence of the growing dynamic density.



The above-mentioned are reasons for stress and addiction of people in modern societies. If it is true that society is tailored according to the rich, then frustration grows among “ordinary citizens.” As a consequence of society created by the measure of the minority, frustration in society may grow, with outcomes such as violence and addictions.

Durkheim (1893) notes that anomie is less present with Catholics than it is with Protestants. He explains it by stronger social control and integration in Catholics as opposed to Protestants. The research by Lee & Clyde (1974) confirms that Protestants show more anomie when compared to Catholics. Huschka & Mau (2006) write that the lack of purpose, identity, or values leads to the breakdown of social norms. These research results indicate the importance of relations within family, neighborhood, workplace, school, and associations. If relations are direct and deep, then there may be less possibility of things going towards conditions related to dysfunctional citizenship, such as anomie, alienation, narcissism, and addiction.

On the other side, if people’s relationships are mostly conducted through virtual means, this may be a substitute for direct communication, leading to “social sickness.”

The question is, therefore, whether and to what degree do frustrations from professional life impact personal relationships. The new work organization may have been the first important event in modern societies to negatively impact social relationships. The second is most likely media intrusion into the home, which is mostly due to the widespread use of television sets and the internet. “We have been eagerly trying to improve communication. We made it. But now, there is nothing left to communicate,” remarks Kezele (A. Kezele, personal communication, 2009). Changes in communication were even more evident when people started to use the internet on mobile devices. The intensive use of mobile internet started with the emergence of smartphones and tablets. Popular social networking applications were introduced for mobile phones. Social scientists cannot answer if and how much this has contributed to alienation among people, but there are some indications about a coinciding decrease in participatory activities (direct communication) and increases in media use (indirect communication).

Failure to fulfill one's needs and goals in modern society can produce frustration, leading to addictions. This means that substituting a more expressive activity with a less expressive one, like substituting direct communication for social networking communication, can produce addiction.

Durkheim (1893) writes that institutions such as religion, the local community, and family have been replaced with occupational groups. By joining occupational groups one gets a sense of belonging that used to come from other spheres of life, either professional or personal.

If everything was in order in professional and personal spheres of life, a person may not need to seek a sense of belonging in occupational groups. For example, if a person feels they cannot express themselves at work, joining a professional association might satisfy their need.

People may start to turn to professional associations because they are dissatisfied with their work lives. The expansion of professional associations may have occurred at the expense of personal relationships. This means that religions, local communities, and families may suffer because of the widespread dissatisfaction that people experience in their professional lives.

This dissatisfaction is most likely the result of the work organization, as people are becoming "machinelike" in the production process. With the rise in mass production, workers have started doing automatic activities like machines, especially in the production line. Due to this innovation, workers in the mass production process have become easily replaceable.

Similar innovations have happened in the ranks of management as well. Creativity has become devalued in favor of efficacy. Work at the lowest level of management has become routine, resembling manual labor in the production line.

The standards and trends are set top-down by the minority, even for the work of managers, minimizing their impact and creativity, even in creative fields of work.

In modern societies, every sphere has become an "industry," even the media, advertisement, and art. Unhappy employees, whether they are manual workers or managers, might seek professional satisfaction outside the workplace.

The feeling of satisfaction may come from work that provides a living and satisfies the need for creativity, such as manufacturing something or influencing promotion or strategic decision making. A creative person may wish to feel proud of themselves for making a table or repairing something broken.

On the other hand, creative people may wish to impact how a product should look or what it should contain, or the product packaging or promotion. Finally, a creative person may possess a drive to impact a company's decision-making in terms of choosing what markets it should pursue, or whether a new product should be introduced, or what deals to make.

This drive to create something new with bare hands, to repair something, to provide a living, or to impact promotion and strategic decision-making is rooted in basic human needs. If these needs are not satisfied at the workplace, then they have to be realized somewhere else.

In personal relationships with family members, neighbors, and friends, it may be impossible to meet these needs. Work-related creative needs have to be substituted by engaging in hobbies or professional associations.

Not everyone who engages in hobbies and professional associations does so because of dissatisfaction at work. The substitution motive may be present in many but not in everyone involved in this way.

If manual workers want to creatively express themselves, they may engage in different hobbies such as gardening, agriculture, wood-working, house construction, hunting, playing cards, playing computer games, betting on soccer matches, becoming sports fans, and so on.

On the other hand, a person who wants to substitute their need for creativity and participation in decision making may engage in professional associations such as journalist unions, creative writing associations, and company unions.

As a result, they may have less time for their family. This is only one example of how dissatisfaction at work can affect personal relationships. Time dedicated to work and time dedicated to participation in professional associations, therefore, affect relationships with family members, the community, and friends.

For example, if a man joins a workers' union because the job that pays his bills does not satisfy him, then he may have less time for his children and wife. Rose (1962) writes that the reaction to mass society is the appearance of voluntary associations and practicing different hobbies.

That may be how dissatisfaction at work as a consequence of the new organization of labor may affect modern society, in a way that is hard to recognize as something problematic. This may reflect in addictions and dysfunctional citizenship.

“Social sickness” may be found under the veil of increases in different activities with the ultimate mirror being the media, including television, radio, print, and the internet. It is one thing if a person joins a professional association as a consequence of substitution; it is quite another if an unrealized need is facilitated by online activity.

The internet may be the most accessible of all activities because people communicate with a screen instead of engaging in face-to-face contacts, such as that which occurs in various associations.

So it is one thing to join an association where you communicate in person; it is another if a person joins an association to communicate online. The choice of how one person substitutes unrealized goals from professional or personal spheres may be an indicator of “addiction depth.”

Face-to-face communication is by its very nature a more expressive activity than online communication. Face-to-face communication involves facial and hand gestures, body language, a clear visual image and sounds, undeformed by cameras and voice recorders. Face-to-face contact can also involve touch. The two types of communication are therefore different because one is more expressive than the other one.

In his writings about people who work for money without any interest in the work itself, Zeitlin (1966) asserts that this is unsatisfactory even when the wages are high. He then inquires as to why people do not revolt. The answer could be that there are many distractions, or in other words—substitutions. But the problem is that the surrogate activities do not satisfy the primary need because they are simply “less expressive,” like in the case of direct communication and the internet.

# ALIENATION

Alienation is linked with a decrease in creativity and altruism, as well as an increase in suicide, addictions, bad marriages, and crime (Nettler, 1957). Shapiro & Wynne (1982) note that the increase in destructive behavior among adolescents is related to alienation. They explain that alienation occurs because there are not enough adults to socialize youth. All this is most likely connected with the breakdown of families. The question is why are there differences between families in the past and families today, especially in light of changes in society? While it may be true that people of the past were more physically isolated, the quality of their relationships may have been higher.

People do not depend on one another in modern society. They can live alone without the need to form a family. Dean (1960), for example, writes about the lack of warm and friendly personal relationships. Although people are capable of forming families, many may decide not to do so because of selfish hedonistic and materialistic reasons. This may be a result of modern society influences, where consumption is stimulated through media manipulation.

“Being alone” may suit large profit-oriented companies, as single people are most likely to indulge in various hedonistic activities, including purchasing expensive items, but also working hard at their job. The question arises, then, do people buy things out of genuine need, or because of a psychological need produced by manipulative advertisements.

This creates fertile ground for addiction, because satisfying people’s needs may be directed towards consumption as a result of media manipulations (marketing). The bottom line is that this produces frustration and, therefore, media addiction.

Youth may be parented in a way that encourages them to indulge in materialism, media, hedonism, consumption, and superficial activities, with the primary purpose of having fun and without the

notion of emotional fulfillment. Aberbach (1969) writes about the consequences of the loss or absence of previous or desirable relationships. Therefore, the problem in personal relationships occurs because people either try to avoid emotional intimacy, or they jump from one relationship to another one without any inner guidance.

Besides dissatisfaction related to professional and public life, disturbances in personal life are also connected with addictions. Durkheim (1893) writes that suicide rates are higher among people without children. He also adds that there are more suicides among single people and that Protestants are more likely to kill themselves than Catholics, presumably because of their lifestyle and moral values.

As anomie increases, different types of addictions increase too (Nettler, 1957). Rose (1962) writes about the breakdown of family and its connection to anomie. Tiryakian (1994) notes that specialization drains people of energy and emotional interests, cutting down their ability to maintain human companionship in marriage.

The presumed decline in personal relationships is probably related to changes in work organization. People who are forced to work an unsatisfying job in a factory from 9 to 5 may transfer frustration to their families. When this is the case, they work to live, not the other way round.

When people are single, they can contribute more at work. Business owners often encourage their workers to give their all to their jobs. In a hypothetical scenario, a dedicated worker without a family can spend his free time simulating life.

Activities such as watching television and surfing the internet have become the lifestyles of many alienated people in modern societies. Non-expressive work environments contribute to the decrease in the depth and quantity of personal relationships.

Time-consuming labor combined with commuting may leave less time for the family. The depth of personal relationships is decreased not only owing to frustrations at work, but also because of the attention-grabbing media.

The increasing consumption of television, radio, print, and the internet has resulted in a decline in direct communication in households. Because children are so reliant on media, parents find

themselves needing to compete with entertainment programs to grab their attention.

Family decline emerges as a result of what media promotes and how they do it. Profit is the driving force behind the media. Advertisements and the news promote products, services, and political leaders by “scaring media users.”

These programs may encourage consumption in media users while undermining personal relationships. Manipulated by the media, people are further deterred from interpersonal relationships, because of different reasons, including fear of crime, disease, and suffering.

In other words, they believe that contact with other people can, for example, increase their possibility of being robbed by a criminal. Also, if there is an ongoing epidemic, being in direct contact with other people exposes a person to sickness. Close personal relationships may be rewarding, but they can also bring about suffering.

Teenagers are often deterred from entering a relationship, because if the other person leaves them, it may cause psychological pain. Therefore, some people chose to watch movies instead of engaging in close relationships with people. Their conscious or unconscious decision to isolate themselves may relate to potential partners, close and extended family members, neighbors, colleagues, friends from associations, clubs and nongovernmental organizations, and schoolmates.

Media use can help alleviate the feeling of isolation. Watching television, reading the newspaper, listening to the radio, and using the internet can hardly hurt anyone, at least not as much as being left by a partner, betrayed by a friend, gossiped about by a family member, or cheated by a schoolmate.

On the other hand, the media can mimic fulfilling relationships more or less realistically. Television shows and films engage their viewers’ sight and hearing, providing them with simulations of relationships.

In Serbia, examples of popular television programs are Indian and South American telenovelas and reality shows (Raghavendra, 2013). However, the internet may provide a more realistic imaginary world owing to interactivity. Online applications such as instant messaging,

video calls, and social networking all provide live communication with other people.

## 6.1 Escape to Less Expressive Activities

In their escape from suffering that comes with deep relationships, some people may turn to online interactions, while failing to create intimate relationships in their immediate environment. These people may be unaware of the profound difference between online and offline communication.

Although online relationships may seem realistic, without face-to-face interaction the relationship lacks the richness of touch, smell, mimics, and hand gestures. Also, relying on a video call to facilitate online relationships is never as effective as face-to-face communication.

The same goes for voice communication established through online platforms. Although similar to the real sound, the voice transferred through wire always sound different.

Text communication through instant messaging and e-mail can never express emotions like direct speech.

People can establish and maintain close personal relationships with people in a direct or mediated way. If the relationship is mediated, then it serves as a substitute for relationships established and maintained by direct communication. As Singer (1973) writes, fear reduces interpersonal contact. He claims that activities become transferred indoors where the television set helps incorporate the individual into the larger network.

Numerous researchers have described the social conditions in which rich relationships are lacking. Nettler (1957) notes that personal contacts are neither stable nor satisfactory. He claims the main problem is that there is no sense of belonging. Aiken & Hage (1966) write that alienation from work and alienation from expressive relationships are more prominent in centralized and formalized organizations.

This indicates that people living in systems in which everything is done following strict and detailed rules and regulations are more



alienated. This also raises the question of how one may maintain a sense of purpose and belonging in modern society, given the fast pace of life and the widespread use of new communication technologies.

It may be true that lifestyle changes are necessary when compared to the time in which computers were less in use, but this does not mean that a person needs to alienate themselves.

It appears that alienation, and with it addiction, occurs when direct communication is substituted for indirect one. This is because direct communication is more expressive. It seems that the temptation to replace direct communication with indirect communication is too strong, because as previously mentioned research shows, there is an increasing number of people consuming television, radio, print, and the internet.

In addition, people in modern society are increasingly forgetting their roots, family tradition, and the similar. This leaves them without a sense of purpose as people are left frustrated due to the lack of deep personal relationships. This frustration of people uprooted from the ground that connects them to tradition, place of origin, their people, the past and future, can be concealed or mitigated by consumption, media use, substance abuse, and abnormal dedication to work, politics, activism, and virtually anything. Abcarian & Stange (1965) remark that freedom from traditional restraints converts a person into an instrument of purposes outside himself. This means this person may instead be acting out of selfish interest or the profit motive by abnormally dedicating themselves to work while neglecting their own life. The same goes for consumption. Olsen (1965) writes about an impersonal mass society in which there are no meaningful social relationships. He states that an alienated man is estranged from society, community, friends, family, and himself.

Social alienation leads to low productivity, drug abuse, and low political participation (Bao et al. 2006). Alienation affects society as a whole. It creates dysfunctional citizens without the need to make real decisions, affect the process of production, or change society.

Low productivity may mean workers are not motivated with their roles in the production process. Low political participation may mean people are not interested in society as a whole.

If persons are not alienated, low political participation may mean dissatisfaction with the political environment. In other words, there may be nobody to vote for.

This may be a way to protest voting. In this case, a person may be showing a strong and socially beneficial political attitude. On the other hand, many do not vote because they are addicted to a variety of things, none of which include voting.

As politics can be an addiction too, that means that some people may vote and participate in political activities because they want to escape something. In this case, voting is not functional citizenship, because these people can be easily cheated and manipulated by different ideologies. Participation is thus not necessarily functional, in terms of society.

It may be impossible to explain why the depth of personal relationships affects society in such a way that it can make citizens dysfunctional, but it is evident that there is a link between the quality of human relationships and happiness. Burton et al. (1973) note that social mobility means alienation, because it usually leaves people feeling lonely and unattached.

Unhappy and unfulfilled citizens are easier to manipulate. The same goes for the link between anomie and alienation on one side, and family strength and participatory activities on the other. Examining the different reasons for anomie and alienation and their different outcomes may contribute to an understanding of dysfunctional citizenship.

Dean (1961) writes that powerlessness can lead to political apathy. This may be because people lack the time to engage in political discussions. On the other hand, political participation can serve to regulate both personal relationships and professional life.

Political participation, such as voting, discussing legislation, and running for office, is important for every society. The decrease in political participation in modern societies is due to peoples' lack of time. They may be tired of other activities that aim to satisfy their basic needs and desires, such as the need to develop deep relationships with family members, neighbors, and friends.

Furthermore, the need for professional achievement may come before the need for political participation. That is why people work

for money while striving for creative fulfillment by joining professional associations.

On the other hand, work can distract from personal relationships. When personal relationships suffer, there is no time for political participation. Political involvement may be the last thing on alienated citizens' minds in modern society. On the other hand, some citizens become involved in politics as a result of their feeling of alienation. As previously noted, these people usually support extreme political organizations in a strangely aggressive manner. This may be the reason why the far left or far right in the political spectrum are getting stronger while options gravitating toward moderate beliefs are at a low.

Specialized audiences, internet chat rooms, and self-help groups seem to have replaced the earlier images of mass society (Thomson, 2005).

The changes in mass society may speak of the different ways in which people substitute for their unrealized wants and needs. As noted before, the nature of the substitution can indicate "alienation depth." If dissatisfaction with professional life is substituted by online activism as opposed to face-to-face activism in professional organizations, this indicates deep alienation.

## 6.2 Compulsive Attachment as a Sign of Alienation

Selznick (1951) states that people can develop a compulsive attachment to symbols, especially if they offer leverage for aggression. He adds that mass behavior results in superficial adherence to stereotyped values. For example, alienated churchgoers may have little understanding of what their religion teaches and reflect nothing of it in their behavior, yet react with fervor to symbols of their religious organization as its most aggressive defenders. People who substitute their unrealized goals with attachment to the church may take values for granted. They may not genuinely care about these values, but

they stick to them as an expression of their frustration with other aspects of life.

Alienation is not directly against religion, but against authority that holds that religion (Dudley, 1978). It may be a way for young people to free themselves from the restraints that are preventing them from becoming individuals. This shows why it is important to examine the underlying motivation for doing (or not doing) something.

If someone feels the need to practice religion but decides not to do so, this may mean the person is alienated from religion. In case of rebellion against parental authority, it may mean that failure to express oneself as a separate person causes young people to reject religion.

The issue emerges if young people do feel the need for religion. Petersen (1988) writes that religion provides the basis of social and moral order. The fact that liberating oneself from parental authority means alienation from religion shows why parenting is crucial in modern society.

Escaping one problem might get a person into a new, even deeper problem. For example, a person's estrangement from parents may lead them to develop an alcohol problem. Once a person acknowledges their problem, they may go to a rehabilitation center. People in the person's immediate environment, including parents, family, neighbors, and friends, may advise them to seek professional help to fight the addiction. Time is needed to overcome an alcohol addiction, along with medication, a strict diet, isolation from the outside world, and group sessions with other addicts. By the end of their time at the rehabilitation center, the person may no longer suffer from alcoholism.

The problem is that the underlying issue that led them to develop an addiction in the first place remains unresolved. The person might not do anything to confront it because of the depth of the issue and the fact that they are not fully aware of it. This may lead a person to develop a new addiction or many addictions. For example, a person may engage in playing video games and social networking instead of alcohol abuse. Although addictions to games and social networking are not as dangerous as alcoholism, it may be difficult to recognize them since they are usually less obvious. On the other hand, these less visible addictions can be more severe: for example, addiction

to direct participation in professional organizations is less severe than addiction to online participation in professional organizations.

Two factors are important regarding addictions in modern society. They have to do with how difficult it is to recognize addiction, as well as how deep or severe the addiction is. Addictions can be visible or invisible, and severe or mild.

Alienation from anything might take either the form of acceptance or rejection. For example, one type of alienation presumes the radical acceptance of traditional American values (Seeman, 1975). On the other side, Seeman writes there is cultural estrangement that presumes the rejection of traditional American values.

Escaping from unfulfilled professional and personal goals can be observed in adhering to national values. This can become a radical or extreme kind of preference if it is connected with alienation. It may mean racism and chauvinism. Patriotism and nationalism can be nominal ways to express dissatisfaction and frustration with other aspects of life.

Alienation can be observed in the difficulties some immigrants have because of their differences and failure to fit into the model of an average citizen in a certain country. On the other hand, cultural estrangement is sometimes manifested as the rejection of the tradition and values of certain cultures.

Expression problems have been described in previous chapters. These problems affect both personal relationships and professional life, resulting in dissatisfaction.

The major causes for these problems may be traced to changes in work organization and mass media manipulation. The outcomes of expression problems can be described as anomie, alienation, narcissism, and addiction.

All these factors can result in the substitution of a primary desired activity with a “surrogate activity.” In some previous times, this problem was referred to differently. This is when a person’s inability to express themselves leads to an unconscious or conscious decision to substitute the primary activity that satisfies some need with a secondary activity that satisfies the same need but in a different way.

The social reasons behind substitution have been examined above. One of the consequences is a decrease in political participation. The

other is dysfunctional citizenship. Substitutions can affect both personal and professional life making citizens dysfunctional, either by pursuing an activity in an unusually radical and aggressive manner, or by refusing to act.

Both activity and passivity with regard to substitution are connected to unsatisfied needs. A person might want to satisfy a need with the wrong activity while neglecting other activities that fulfill other needs, because the first need might be more significant to them.

For example, a person might fear approaching other people and instead engage in social networking, which is the “wrong way” to satisfy their reproductive needs. While being increasingly active on social networking sites, because this activity never fulfills their primary need for reproduction, they may put aside other activities that served their other wants. For instance, they may not have time to go to work anymore because of the unsuccessful struggles to satisfy their reproductive primary need. This is how other needs suffer as the person engages in the wrong way of satisfying a need.

Therefore, it may be difficult or impossible to satisfy a need in some way other than direct. Being a functional citizen is usually at the bottom of the priority list. This means that many people in mass society find it difficult to dedicate their time to the greater common good because they have other, more important unresolved personal issues. On the other hand, one would think that people in modern society would have time for social issues. If there were no media manipulation and workplace dissatisfaction, this would probably be different.

People should dedicate most of their time to representative issues in mass society. With robots working instead of them in factories, they should have enough time for spiritual and social matters. But in modern society, rather than being above machines, people are often beneath them, because of greed and other negative personality traits. The minority uses manipulation to work against the majority. People are placed beneath machines, in a way becoming modern slaves of the minority. Technological advancement and emotional scarcity are the main features of modern society.

As noted before, workplace dissatisfaction is the primary cause of the current social predicament. If a person is satisfied with work, they will have more time for their family and other relationships.

Instead of dealing with problems at work and fighting to overcome them, or even quitting their job, an alienated person might surrender and seek substitution.

Because they have unsatisfied creative needs, they might undertake a hobby or join a professional association. The problem is that this will also not satisfy their primary need.

Besides, they will have less time for their family and other personal relationships. Undermining family for the sake of professional fulfillment leads to more problems because of increased alienation. Mottaz (1981) writes that job conditions are more important than background factors in explaining feelings of self-estrangement.

Workers in western countries find supportive leadership and job characteristics less alienating than workers in Cuba, Hungary, Israel, and Russia (Banai & Reisel, 2007). Dean (1961) writes that higher occupational prestige, education, income, and rural background are related to lower alienation. One's professional life is also an important element of the equation.

The fact that modern society does not allow for the fulfillment of basic creative needs for most people, who turn to modern mass media instead, is jeopardizing personal relationships. It may be possible to throw away your television, but it may not be possible to stop working at an unfulfilling workplace, because most modern production, trade, and services companies do not provide opportunities for creative expression. This dissatisfaction may result in addictions, leading to decreased political participation.

The effects of alienation are despair, resignation, discouragement, hopelessness, and lack of faith, writes Olsen (1965). Nettler (1957) notes that alienated people are unfriendly towards society and culture.

When the input of support goes below the bare minimum, any kind of system comes in danger of extinction (Finifter, 1970). People alienated from society may be unable to participate in public life as fully functional citizens.

Those who feel desperate may refrain from participating in public discussions regarding the common good. Feeling discouraged and hopeless, the alienated do not participate in the election process by voting or running for offices.

The basic pillars of functional citizenship are taking part in formal or informal discussions on public matters, participating in the election process by voting, and running for public posts in hopes of becoming a public representative.

Participating in discussions or advocating a cause may be motivated by the desire to modify or improve legislation. Nongovernmental organizations might assume the place of citizens' participation in modern society.

These organizations might be paid for their activities by different donors, usually those that favor the interests of a small number of people. Thus, there may be fewer places for genuine citizens' participation in the public sphere. Instead, the public sphere is becoming a place for professional activism. Because people are paid to lead projects in the nominally public interest, there is less room for true activism in favor of good social solutions.

People who are high in powerlessness are older, less educated, indigenous, black, male, have low income, and live in cities (Finifter, 1970). On the other hand, people who are low in powerlessness live in smaller communities and are usually educated, writes Finifter. He states that many Jews are low in powerlessness when compared to other nations. The fact that the elderly feel powerless may be explained by the fact that their genuine desires fade with time. It is one thing being young and enthusiastic; it is completely different being old and having lots of responsibilities. Older people might have given up on their idealized childhood notions.

The fact that less educated people feel powerless might mean they don't have the opportunities to express themselves because their education allows them to do only manual and simplified work. On the other side, educated persons have the chance to be creative given that they work on intellectual matters.

People who lack faith are high in powerlessness because they have no firm grounding in anything, including values, and don't feel they belong anywhere. Black people feel powerless because they were oppressed in the past. Men might feel more powerless than women because social values in modern societies are changing towards gender equality. Low-income citizens are more powerless because having money enables you to buy more material assets. Money in this case



can provide opportunities for expression because those who have it can support their family, buy clothes, travel, and pay for some hobby or activity.

People living in cities are more powerless than those living in small communities. This is probably because people living in cities are more disconnected from one another. People living in villages and smaller places are usually more oriented to one another, as they need to be united to achieve common goals. They may know each other better than people in cities. Usually, village people respect tradition and practice religion. They communicate more in person, helping and caring for each other more than people in the cities. People living in small communities are usually low in powerlessness.

Research also found that Jewish people feel less powerless than other groups. This is understandable given their history. Being outside their land, the Jews have managed to preserve their tradition and customs. Historical circumstances may have compelled Jews to stick together and cooperate towards a common goal. The strong ties between the Jews and a strong religious sensibility enabled them to survive as a people and maintain a connection to their roots all across the world.

Anomic people are found to be intolerant of racial integration (Olsen, 1969). Anomic people are in favor of free speech limitations, writes Olsen, adding that they disapprove of participation in international political organizations. He writes that political alienation or estrangement from the political system is conceptualized as political incapability among persons occupying disadvantaged social statuses and discontentment among persons comprising the old middle class. At the same time, he points out, they oppose foreign aid. As a result, alienated people support either the far left or the far right. They can be radical in supporting their stands, displaying hatred and hostility towards anyone who thinks differently than them.

Alienated people present fierce, forceful, and emotionally charged arguments in favor of some position. They can be intolerant to any social change that they perceive as a threat. They demand help but are not willing to support anyone or make any sacrifices for some cause or goal. They are generally dissatisfied with their social situation, and some of them may be aware of this dissatisfaction.

As noted before, those who are aware are maybe manipulated to join the far right or far left. In their support of populist and manipulative public representatives, alienated people are not demonstrating discontent with the political system—they are serving the system by being integrated into what some call mass democracy.

On the other side, there are alienated people who are unaware that their dissatisfaction has something to do with the system. Usually, they do not vote.

The third group of non-participants in social issues and election processes are unalienated people. These people refuse to vote or participate in political discussions because of their firm belief that it will not make a difference. They are probably disappointed with the current political system and the widespread corruption. Their decision not to vote or to vote en blanco is a form of protest.

Mason & Jaros (1969) write that democracy thrives on the inactivity of alienated people, when a reservoir of discontent is not activated, but if it is, it can manifest itself in protest voting, rejecting referendum questions, and black-and-white tone of the campaign. This indicates a link between media addiction and political participation. Instead of expressing their dissatisfaction, the alienated may be occupied with their addictions, including media addiction.

## 6.3 Signs of Discontent

From 2006 to 2012, numerous protests and riots around the world took place (Burton, 2011). These protests were initiated by individuals on social networking sites for a variety of reasons. Among the primary triggers were economic hardship, a lack of jobs, and the desire for a political regime change. These protests show how dangerous it is for modern democracies to leave these issues unresolved.

Modern society may not be able to withstand the current situation, because there may be frustrations that mass tranquilizers such as the media, brands, politics, music, education, and sport, will not be able to sustain. Although new ways may be devised to divert people from

their frustrations with their professional and personal life, there may be more unresolved issues than ways to appease them.

The problem is that today's democracy is driven by profit and dominated by a small group of people, as opposed to a free society in which everyone can express themselves professionally and personally, therefore directing social processes towards the common good.

Some people find ways to cope with their dissatisfaction with the production process. Mason & Jaros (1969) write that people are dissatisfied with the fact they do not have control of the organization, or the means of production. However, they find that discontent with the capitalist system leads to the creation of private business rather than revolutions.

An alienated person is aware of the discrepancy between who they are and who they believe they should be (Abcarian & Stanage, 1965). Their ideas of who they should be can be shaped in two ways. First, it can be based on knowledge of their talents. Second, it can be based on the knowledge of what is desirable in a particular society.

Being a trader, for example, is a highly valued career. This understanding is a result of media intrusion into the home. Other factors to consider include where a person lives, their workplace, and the school environment. The media might have impacted these factors as well.

A crucial feature of mass society is the belief that "if you are not famous you don't exist." This may explain why the Newtown killer left a message on the internet that he would kill himself the next day and make the news (Daily Mail, 2012).

At the end of the day, it is questionable whether people in mass society are even aware of their talents, because the search for happiness as portrayed in the media might lead them in the wrong direction. Probably the worst thing is when a person is unaware of their capabilities while relying on media portrayals of happiness. It is preferable that a person is aware of their own potentials and seeks ways to realize them. The knowledge of "who they are" is a big deal in a media-dominated world where television, radio, print, and the internet impose the interests of others and bring about confusion in homes across mass society.

Alienation is connected with the low student persistence rate in distance education programs (Alfred et al., 2005). Expressive

surroundings are important for motivation. Computer-mediated learning may not provide adequate motivation for learning. On the other hand, surrounding oneself with people devoted to the same task can bring better results. Fellow students may communicate between themselves in a joint effort of learning and socializing.

Computers allow one to read texts, view pictures and videos, and listen to podcasts and audio files. Nevertheless, all this differs from direct reality in terms of what a person sees, hears, smells, and touches. The senses are stimulated more in direct reality than indirect reality.

On the other hand, prolonged television viewing and usage of mobile devices can impact peoples' lives, not only in terms of the substitution of certain activities with media use, but also in terms of the nature of the media. For example, reading the newspaper can motivate people to take part in the political process, as opposed to watching television news. Also, certain television content can motivate people to act, protest, and so on.

The essential question remains whether adequate reality-related programs motivate people to act in their interest, while unrealistic programs passivized people and push them even deeper into various addictions. If this is true, it is possible that realistic media programs would return viewers to "reality," even if their work environment is not stimulating enough.

When the work environment is unfulfilling and the media unrealistic, then everything lures people into addiction, especially in the cities. This is especially the case in modern societies where people are not reliant on one another and have access to a variety of media to pass the time.

Alienation is linked to the negative view of the political system, a negative perception of the public officials' motives, and the rejection of the electoral system (Schwartz, 1973). Bao et al. (2006) note, while discussing China, that people with high social estrangement tend to hold a pessimistic attitude towards reforms taking place. Banaia & Weisberg (2003) write that employees in private companies are more alienated than in their state-owned counterparts.

Different research inquiries show that alienation is connected to a variety of beliefs and activities. What we can conclude is that

the various aspects of alienation found in different countries may be discouraging people from participating in political life and addressing social issues.

If one has a negative opinion of the political system, then they may find no reason to participate in political discussions, social activism, and voting. However, there is a difference between not being interested in voting and not voting out of protest. If people are concerned and feel bad about a situation, they might react in order to change it. On the other side, if people put problems aside as alienated people do, then they may not feel that a problem exists. The issue would be pushed aside to the point that it would disappear from people's minds.

There are two cases. One in which people are disappointed and unsettled by politics at home, and are willing to do something about it, to vote or take part in discussions about social issues. The other case is when people are disappointed consciously or unconsciously to the point that they don't care about politics, or even believe it is something not worth talking about or acting on. In this case, alienation is probably a consequence of media manipulations or unfulfilling jobs.

The negative attitudes of alienated people towards political issues can also be a defense mechanism, making them appear to have positions on these matters to those in their immediate environment. Sometimes it can be difficult to tell whether a person genuinely cares about something or not when expressing their opinions on society. Examining their motivation is the key factor in determining whether a person is alienated or not.

If a person substitutes one activity with another to attain the same goal, the question is whether this is possible. If they desire tenderness, love, and sex, it is unlikely that they can obtain this through online communication alone, without face-to-face communication.

Modern people desire creative work, but it is unlikely that this can be achieved in modern companies with a centralized work organization and machine-like production process. In terms of the degree of expressiveness and creative fulfillment, there is a difference between crafting wooden toys and working in a depersonalized factory in China, where the production process is automatic and workers

perform the same actions. At the same time, it is hardly exciting to work as a top manager if there are no innovations and challenges.

If a person works to survive in a depersonalized and creatively unfulfilling environment, then he may have to do other things to engage his creative side. This means a person may work at a factory from 9 to 5, but then go home to make wooden toys, because this satisfies their basic creative need. As a result, family time and matters of common interest such as political participation may suffer.

# MASS SOCIETY

The theory of mass society is grounded in the notion that prosperity and bureaucracy have weakened traditional social ties. According to mass society theory, mass culture is impacting society. Social institutions are forcing people to engage with nameless officials in distant bureaucracies more and more in mass societies, undermining the autonomy of families and communities.

Modern society is characterized by depersonalization and digitalization. Digitalization serves to reduce the time people spend dealing with bureaucracy. Although this is a positive outcome, digitalization can also drive people away from each other.

The consequences of democratization are the spread of ineffectiveness and the emergence of the mass-man (Selznick, 1951). The mass-man, incompetent and vulgar, is unable to successfully participate in political decision-making, writes Selznick. He also asserts that universities are unable to connect with students as persons. Conditions for the emergence of intellectual elites at the campus are poor, with nontechnical achievements deteriorating. Singer (1973) writes that when social participation goes down, unhappiness increases for those who remain in the ghetto. Thomson (2005) notes that it remains unclear whether organizational participation reduces alienation, and whether the less alienated join and participate in organizations more often.

One of the many effects of mass society is that artists are removed from their audience. What's more, their relationship with the audience is depersonalized. The impersonality of the marketplace removes the artists from the consumers. Live contact with actual people who sell products is decreasing, owing to the widespread use of credit cards and online purchases.

Sampson's (1988) research shows the importance of connecting on a micro and macro level. Community bonds are of increasing importance in modern society as depersonalization occurs in all spheres

of life. In big cities, this depersonalization can be seen wherever you go, as people live in apartment blocks, without even knowing their neighbors. In small communities, the situation is different, which is probably why living in the countryside is becoming more and more a thing of prestige, while in the past people rushed to big cities. Besides online shopping and simpler dealing with bureaucracy, working from home is another positive outcome of the “digitalized society.” Work from home decreases time spent in commuting and allows people to live in small communities, giving them more time to spend with their family and friends.

Mass society is characterized by loneliness, which means that family and community ties have weakened, as well as helplessness, a lack of control over one’s identity, independence from tradition, and economic uncertainty (Rose, 1962).

Interestingly, all these characteristics are psychological. In other words, people do not feel lonely because they live isolated in mountain villages; they do not feel helpless because they are slaves in chains; they do not feel anonymous because they are denied access to work and education; they are not ripped from tradition because some foreign power is forcing them to change their religion; they are not economically uncertain because they don’t have any food.

On the other hand, people in western societies live surrounded by millions of other people, most of them are physically free to do what they want, they are able to educate themselves and control their destinies, their lives are not endangered if they choose to follow some religion, and most of them have basic assets for living, including food and shelter.

The problem of any modern society is that invisible psychological forces play a determining role in success and failure. In other words, the question of how many “functional citizens” there are depends on the battles being played at the level of media manipulation, rather than direct physical influence.

This, when combined with organic solidarity, creates a fertile ground for media manipulation. If specialization, organic solidarity, and mass production sparked a wave of discontent in modern society, the media’s proliferation brings about another one. The increase in media use and the intrusion of profit interest in the homes of average



citizens through marketing, contribute to further alienation, anomie, narcissism, and addiction. The increase in addiction has probably resulted in a decrease in political participation.

Nettler (1957) writes that mass media are alienating. He discusses moral isolation from others, reality, and oneself. The key characteristic of mass media is that they offer a “realistically depicted unrealistic world” which quickly attracts people’s attention while offering solutions to some of their suppressed needs. For example, action movies can act as compensation for the lack of activities and excitement in life. Similarly, sex scenes address the repressed need for reproduction. All these experiences seem better in the media than they are in reality. Although physical perfection does not bring happiness, the media presents it as crucial for fulfillment, something to aspire to.

Physical beauty is regarded as the ultimate value, possibly because of the lack of emotional fulfillment in modern society. If emotional fulfillment had not been disrupted in modern society, the media world of perfection might not have been so widely accepted. If people were happy with their jobs, there might not have been a breeding ground for the proliferation of profit interest through manipulative media. Expression at work is important because it brings a sense of capability. If a person is allowed to impact the work process, then they will feel competent in their personal life as well. In other words, fulfillment at work may contribute to a sense of fulfillment in personal relationships. On the other hand, frustrations at work can result in media addictions.

Nowadays, everything has become impersonal, write Abcarian & Stanage (1965). Payments of anything are impersonal, including monthly bills and tickets for concerts and purchases of items through the e-market. Administrative work has become impersonal as well. For example, getting a birth certificate from the local administration does not require direct contact anymore. Now it is possible to drive on the highway without personal contact with people who charge road fares, because machine automatically recognizes license plates through their recognition technology.

The same goes for enrolling in school or university, which can now be done online. There is also remote studying, but this is still not as widely accepted. Places like schools were traditional places

not only for studying but also for socializing and establishing new contacts. With the proliferation of remote studying and work from home, people are becoming increasingly isolated.

Purchasing transportation tickets from a machine and authenticating them electronically on the bus or train is another example of “depersonalized living.”

Communication between association members also tends to take place online. They often use various online forums and groups on social networks to work things out, therefore minimizing the need for personal contact.

Personal contacts have also become depersonalized or at least more indirect. Some reasons for depersonalization are practical, such as that it is easier to communicate online than to see someone in person. Other reasons for depersonalization are economical because seeing someone includes costs for travel, drinks, and food while socializing in bars, cafes, and restaurants.

If many aspects of society are personalized or indirect, then it is disputable whether there is something that people with depersonalized lives are losing. Working from home, online shopping, remote studying, online membership in associations, and seeing people less while intensively using social networking sites, are just small portions of the lives of isolated people living in a technology-dominated mass society.

Yin & Lucas (1973) write that depersonalization in American society is due to technological advances. Even though technological inventions enable the depersonalization of society, that does not mean that people should take advantage of all the alternatives that e-commerce, e-banking, e-administration, and social networking have to offer.

As noted, people may be increasingly using technology due to practical and economic reasons. Alfred et al. (2005) write that direct contact with the community provides a sense of belonging, uniqueness, emotional relationship, and happiness.

Online communication is not as rich as face-to-face contact, which includes face mimics, hand gestures, sight, and sound, all of which are distorted by camera and microphone. Besides, it is not as deep as direct communication, at least not in the emotional sense.

Yin & Lucas (1973) write about the decline of the local community and family. Close personal relationships create a sense of belonging and meaning, while superficial ones, usually achieved through indirect communication, are linked to anomie, alienation, narcissism, and addiction.

People can participate in the political process out of feelings of discontent, to escape something in the psychological sense. This can be linked to extremist ideas. Contrary to that, some people participate in politics because they feel a genuine need to change society. Other people refrain from voting because they escape into other addictions, such as media use and other forms of consumption. Some also refuse to participate in the political process as a form of protest.

Generally, a decrease in participation is most commonly related to anomie, alienation, narcissism, and addiction. This further results in a dysfunctional society.

It is important to consider the role of psychological processes in social health, as they can cause problems in personal relationships and professional life, resulting in the substitution of previous goals with addictions. Mild addictions can be tough to distinguish but are important in the analysis of society.

Although on the surface it might seem that the voting process is going on smoothly in the modern consumer society, when one looks deeper they find non-participating members of society and those who participate out of addiction.

When compared to a society of open physical repression, it is possible for a society of “psychological manipulation” to achieve a low level of democracy. Just democracy is one in which one person has one vote, as opposed to a society in which one person has many votes because they are wealthy. It seems that it is possible to manipulate people into taking their psychological freedom from them with money and the media.

Big companies and mass production profit from people who are unhappy with their personal relationships, because these people tend to become “big consumers.” If intimate relationships are a basic human need, taking them away from people for the sake of profit through media manipulation, while legal, is ultimately harmful to

society as a whole, including the people or groups who use advertising and other techniques to influence society.

Voting is of crucial importance to society, because those who are elected possess the legislative power to change everything. Legislators or parliament members in most societies around the world can determine rules in all spheres of life including businesses. Although many companies may have become more powerful than some governments, regulators have the power to limit their influence in any country in the world. However, the main problem that blocks democracy is the influence of corporations on legislative, executive, and judicial power. The politicians' corruptibility may be the key reason why they keep failing to represent their constituents.

The underrepresented majority is overpowered by the overrepresented minority in modern societies. This imbalance between the number of people and their real power has a crucial role in addiction increase.

Money and other material means are used to corrupt politicians and manipulate the majority through the media, so that big companies and small groups of people could gain more profit. The main factor which makes it easier to manipulate citizens is the depth of their personal relationships and work dissatisfaction, which leaves people feeling unhappy and unexpressed. All this makes room for easy manipulation for the sake of profit. In other words, if families as the most basic units of societies were stronger, there might be more real democracy and genuine engagement in people's lives.

Failure to express oneself, to have an impact, and to effect change, can occur in both personal relationships and at work. The previous paragraphs discuss such situations, as well as the potential reasons for this failure in mass society.

Changes that occurred in transition between one form of solidarity to another, and consequently the changes in work organization together with media intrusion in the home may be reasons why the above-described failure has occurred historically in mass society. These changes also cause media addictions to appear.

## 7.1 Social Sickness

The following paragraphs describe the effects of this failure on mass society. We will call these effects “social sickness.” In the heart of “social sickness” are anomie, alienation, narcissism, and addiction, which substitute previously set personal and professional goals and needs that a person was unable to achieve.

The indications of substitutions in mass society that could be found in literature are described in the following paragraphs. Primary needs and goals can be substituted with their simulations or surrogates. For example, the unsatisfied need for parental love can result in addiction to relationships. Unresolved issues between a mother and daughter can result in the daughter’s lesbian affiliation later in life. The divorce of parents can result in sexual addiction because of fear of abandonment. Unresolved sexual needs and fear of rejection can result in addiction to internet pornography.

The thing which is the primary activity or need can be replaced with something else. Aberbach (1969) discusses this when he inquires as to what a person is alienated from and what replaces the old relationship. So there are two things to consider. The first is the activity that satisfies a need. For example, the need to secure food and shelter, or the need to engage one’s creativity to affect the process of production can be considered primary goals. If they are left unaccomplished, the old needs remain, but the person may try to resolve them another way.

For example, in the case of work, a person may decide to join a professional association to make the impact that they originally intended. If the primary goal is not achieved, other options may include taking up a hobby or other leisure-related creative activity. The essential reason why this act of substitution is called social sickness is that the new activity cannot fulfill the original need.

The surrogate or substitute can never be the same as the original. For example, relying on indirect communication to satisfy emotional needs is very different from indirect communication, because communication through social networking sites is not as expressive as direct contact.

Virtually any activity can act as a substitution; the only difference is that the result might not be the same for every person, because one activity can be fulfilling for some while being a frustrating substitution for others.

For example, membership in a professional association can be fulfilling for one person, while for another it can be an escape from previous ambitions to become head of a company. This can be called “sick ambition,” because the underlying motivation is the substitution of primary activity to satisfy a need. Although the person would never be satisfied as a member of a professional organization, they are determined to become its head, taking the place of someone who is a better fit for the position. They might use manipulation and other techniques to gain the position, which they learned while unsuccessfully pursuing a senior post within a company. That is why a frustrated person may be successful in their attempt to become a leader in a professional association, but their actions cannot satisfy their needs, causing frustration to grow and spread across the organization.

Unfulfilled people find some activities more appealing than others. For example, media use is more likely to attract people who unconsciously or consciously seek to substitute an activity that originally failed to fulfill their needs. Functionalists examine new social institutions as perfect for becoming substitutes. They investigate the decrease in strength of collective consciousness and the emergence of sports and consumption addiction.

For example, extremism in sports club cheering is probably a way for young people to channel their dissatisfaction about not being able to get a job. If sports fans were stimulated, unemployment would be resolved, or at the very least, the social problem of hooligans. Functionalists write that religion and sport provide people with meaning in everyday life.

People engage in an activity for a variety of reasons. If a person is a sports fan because they genuinely support a club, this can be called a healthy activity. On the other hand, if a person is a fan as a means to escape something, then their actions are meaningless both for them and the club.

Those who engage in activities out of frustration as substitution of something may be easy to manipulate and are likely to become

extremists. Far-right or far-left groups, sports fans, and the similar are often made up of people who are willing to show rage and defend their clubs or political parties in excessively violent and noisy ways. Activities rooted in frustration can be linked to media addictions and declines in political participation.

Mass society is one in which the central belief systems and widespread associational forms are shared by a large percentage of the population (Aigner, 1982). The governing elites exercise power and influence cultural symbols to bring more remote, more marginal population segments in touch with the core.

On the other side, a fifth to a third of Americans do not vote in most elections and dedicate far less time to influencing the course of political events, writes Rosenberg (1951). He claims this apathy is truly monumental. Mass media have a role in pacifying the masses, making them more easily manipulated by power elements (Singer, 1973). Therefore, the masses might be in a crisis of identity.

In the middle and at the bottom, in the atomized masses, people think and feel alike, but thoughts and feelings not being resolutely anchored anyplace, they are prone to fads and fashions (Wilensky, 1964). At the top, poorly organized elites, mass-oriented, become political and decision-making manipulators responding to short-run pressures, Wilensky asserts.

One can conclude that the main goal of politicians is to keep society alive through manipulation. In the opposite case, if politicians and brand managers did not manipulate people toward society integration, society would have been in danger of decomposing. On the other hand, these public official could take society in the direction of reforms, therefore essentially changing society's structure.

These reforms could provide a better representation of people in society. Better representation is necessary for the well-being and progress of individuals. Instead of making the necessary legislative and legal reforms, authorities are attempting to maintain the status quo, with no true intention to change anything in the direction of better representation.

If laws were changed to better reflect the interests of the majority, there would be a better foundation to increases work creativity

and salaries, while media manipulation would decrease and turn to more realistic depictions of the basic problems of modern societies.

Decentralization is linked to people's sense of efficacy, not with their sense of trust in the government (Yin & Lucas, 1973). The notion that decentralization better represents society is based on the idea that decentralized governments bring better decisions that are closer to the citizens. If decision-makers are closer to the people, it means they can gain a better insight into their needs.

When this is the case, citizens can offer feedback to decision-makers regarding the solution to their problems. During the implementation of the solution, decision-makers can monitor and adjust the process. People can, therefore, benefit from decentralization, because it allows them to influence decisions quickly and more easily.

However, decentralization does not necessarily mean better representation. This is the same as the relationship between the number of laws and anomie. Laws that go into too much detail are not representative if they are of low quality. Laws fall under the domain of legislative power, while decentralization is in the domain of executive power.

The closeness of the president, ministers, mayors, and other civil servants to the people may not imply anything by itself. What matters is how the executive branch represents voters. If civil servants behave in their own self-interest, then it makes no difference whether or not they are close to the general public.

Therefore, when assessing the work of elected officials, what is most important is how well they represent the people. Of course, given the number of laws, the closeness of the executive branch to the people may have some significance. If one man is assigned the task to represent everyone, his representation may be too vague, even if he does it well.

It is the same with music stars, as local artists are becoming irrelevant, while global artists have the most listeners. Although it may be difficult for global artists like Madonna and Lady Gaga to portray the emotions of the entire world in their songs, this task might have become easier as peoples' experiences are becoming similar due to the internet and mobile technologies.

This only shows that today's world is becoming increasingly universal. In such a universal world, peoples' needs might be diverted



from emotional fulfillment to consumption because they are manipulated by the profit interest.

It is important to ask how much substitution there is in society because this would determine the level of functional citizenship. The basic problems of expression can be present both on the personal and public levels. Materialism might be preventing people from expressing themselves both in their families and professional environments.

The desire to make more money might have prompted factories to become robotized, transforming the work organization and the level of impact that workers have. Besides, the desire for profit has prompted companies to advertise their goods and services in the media, bringing the profit interest into the homes of ordinary citizens.

Both new work organizations and the presence and expansion of the media might be preventing people from finding and expressing their talents at work or home. The professional environment and the media are causing distortion and addictions, instead of helping individuals live a happy life. This is most likely due to the people who made this possible, rather than the nature of the media or work.

On the other hand, new work organization and media expansion are providing access to knowledge and increasing productivity. Modern factories are providing more and cheaper products, an advantage of mass production. On the other hand, media expansion allows everyone to gain access to vast human knowledge, while increasing the speed of communication, therefore leaving more free time to media users. These are some of the benefits of mass production and modern media.

## 7.2 The Decline of Social Structures

There is a decline in the wide range of intermediate social structures, such as families, neighborhoods, religious organizations, unions, social clubs, and charities (Thomson, 2005). This decline indicates a possible decrease in participatory activities and direct communication.

People are relying less on direct communication with other people. On the other hand, indirect communication is on the rise. Seeing a

family member, a friend, going to churches, unions, clubs, and charities is more expressive than online communication.

Direct communication involves speech, mimics, hand gestures, and touch. It is, therefore, very different than indirect expression in terms of richness and depth. Online communication involves text and pictures delivered in a more or less instant way. Although emotions can be expressed online with emoticons, this is incomparable with direct communication in terms of expressiveness.

The decrease in intermediate connections indicates that people may no longer feel they can express themselves in their interactions with family members and friends, at churches, unions, clubs, and charities. Several factors could have brought to this.

First, there is no longer a need to participate in activities in order to survive. In the old times, people used to help out in villages when their neighbors were in need. As there is no longer the need for neighbors to help each other out, this tendency is declining.

Also, people would socialize more because they did not have the money for other more sophisticated forms of entertainment. In modern times, factory labor can be easily replaced. This implies that there isn't any job stability and that people who take loans can lose their jobs at any time. Also, people are not as reliant on each other anymore. They do not have to socialize as much, because socializing does not have the same practical purpose as before.

Socializing and other participatory activities have moved online. In some instances, it doesn't make a difference, as certain types of communication are less expressive than others. For example, practical information can be easily shared online. However, showing sincere emotions and spontaneity is difficult to do on the internet.

There is inadequate social capital to engage in cooperative activity, writes Thomson (2005). He asserts that although people continue to join large organizations and communicate via the internet, modern societies are deficient in real ties to real people, adding that people are less connected to their communities than they were decades ago. He wrote that voluntary associations were becoming mass organizations inaccessible to individual influence. This may be the main reason why participation in these organizations has decreased.

In cases when experts manage voluntary organizations, the say of experts may determine the future of the organization, while the influence of its members might be minor. This is, again, due to the profit interest.

Both businessmen and politicians have an interest in controlling voluntary organizations. By controlling voluntary organizations, businesses and political structures control public discussion. They can also influence organizations in their decision not to support protests against governments and companies.

Businessmen are known to support their candidates' campaigns. They are also known to financially support organizations, as their activities cost money. In exchange for their support, businessmen can impact some of the crucial decisions of an organization.

If intermediate organizations in mass society come under the control of the profit motive, then citizens might not have any room for participation. The profit motive might be present in all spheres of society.

The intrusion of the profit motive in homes happens through the media. Companies rely on television, radio, internet, and print advertisements to promote themselves. Leaders, services, and products are aggressively promoted, not only through advertisement but also through news interference. But companies are not the only ones to blame for the presence of the profit interest in the home. The media is also responsible, because they have the interest to increase reading or views through fearful news. All of this happens even though the legislative branch of government has the power to regulate the media to ensure that they work in the interest of citizens. The parliament has the power to regulate the proportion and nature of media programs, including the number of advertisements. The same goes for the regulation of commerce. Legislators decide on the nature and percentage of taxes. They can decide whether an industry is legal or not. They also decide on advertising, monopoly, and lobbying rules. The government has a crucial role in regulating intermediary organizations, as it decides what kind of activity they should support and how. In some countries, the parliament defines the rules by which intermediary institutions “play their game.”

The problem is that in mass society the rich have the biggest say in the legislative process. What would normally be illegal may become permissible, because of the power of wealthy persons.

For example, privatization in transitional Serbia in the year 2000 was legal, despite what appeared to be criminal activities. During this privatization, people with dubious funds started purchasing state companies not to run them but to get possession of their assets, while those employed in these companies were left jobless (Dojcinovic, 2011). This was probably made possible through a series of loopholes.

Indeed, legislation might have been enacted as a result of corruption. This example shows how the profit motive can be destructive for society and how it interferes with the elected public representatives' decision-making. One vote in any organization is worth depending on the amount of money it receives.

People in modern societies might not work for money in the traditional sense. It appears that the profit motive controls them, despite the fact that having a lot of money does not bring happiness in modern society. Having money serves as a substitute for happiness. Materialism has taken the place of values such as emotional fulfillment, intimacy, family, loyalty, and so on.

The problem occurs when regular citizens are prevented from expressing themselves in any intermediary organization because members with money interfere for the sake of their profit. Ordinary citizens, therefore, have no way of expressing themselves at any level of mass society, as their role seems to be reduced to bare consumers and workers.

This means that expression, genuine participation, involvement in decision making, and making an impact may not be possible in most intermediary organizations, including associations, unions, clubs, and non-governmental organizations. As a result, individuals feel insecure and powerless, writes Thomson (2005). These insecurities may cause addictions to appear, possibly contributing to a drop in political participation.

Strong intermediate associations are required for a healthy society (Thomson, 2005). A nation can be maintained, writes Thomson, only if there is an intercalated series of secondary groups near enough to

the persons to attract them powerfully in their sphere of action and drag them into the general stream of social life.

Intermediary groups might not have been necessary in the circumstances of the mechanical division of labor, because people were closer to their representatives and collective consciousness was stronger. In ancient times of tribes, it might have been much easier to make an impact, as one could participate in decision-making at tribe meetings and control the implementation of decisions carried out by tribe executives.

On the other hand, direct democracy is unlikely to occur in modern society. Even if direct democracy were possible, people would probably be too busy to decide about legislation, even if their elected representatives fail at their jobs. Modern societies are organized organically because there are simply too many people to do the same job.

In modern society, there are different jobs and therefore different experiences, because people no longer do the same job. With weak collective consciousness and corruption on the rise, it is much easier for elected representatives to act against the will of the majority. That is why for ordinary people, intermediary organizations are not only a way to express themselves, impact processes, and make a change, but also a way to participate in the legislature and monitor how laws are implemented.

Community movements and local organizations are shaped by mass cultural, political movements, and large-scale events (Vidich & Bensman, 2000). Vidich and Bensman write that life in small towns is a manifestation of mass society. The question is whether it should be the opposite. If organizations and movements are manifestations of the base, then it might be possible to say that people are represented. But in the current situation, one is inclined to ask who is represented and how is it possible for people to express their talents and participate in something that has already been set.

Powerless people might feel that someone else is pulling the strings. They may not be willing to change anything as a consequence of their feelings and presumptions about global conspiracies.

Being solely instrumental means, major associations and institutions of society cannot act as agencies through which values are inculcated (Gusfield, 1962). This is probably a basic issue of mass society,

as there might be no way to articulate values and activities, except as spectators or in slightly participatory roles, including sports cheering, watching television, listening to the radio, browsing the internet, reading the newspaper, shopping, drinking, eating, and drug abuse.

Some, mostly passive participation is “allowed,” while the genuine impact in professional life, including activities in clubs, associations, unions, non-governmental organizations, and personal relationships, is prevented. Voting can also be formal by nature, because even if there is a choice on the table, parties might use media manipulation to attract voters.

Besides, after one political option wins the elections, their actions may differ from what they promised. In any case, what sets the legislation is the money spent in the lobbying process, not the voters. By participating in the voting process, citizens make society appear to be a democracy. On the other hand, the masses of people have slightly expressive roles in the production process and the majority of them have roles in consumption. Dissatisfaction builds up in people who do not have the chance for actual expression, but merely the appearance of expression. Their anger, revolt, and hatred can sometimes erupt in events such as violent protests, or even psychopathic mass killings.

The family, neighborhood, workplace, and local community lose monopoly over the life of the individual for the sake of centralized institutions (Selznick, 1951). Authorities, media, associations, companies, and others are all bad at functions that require intimate contact with the individual. Centralized institutions are incapable of facilitating creativity and providing emotional fulfillment.

As a result, they can never become a legitimate substitute for family, friends, the workplace, and the local community. Despite this fact, centralized institutions have grown in size and importance. There wouldn't be a need to substitute intermediary institutions if they were not in crisis. The concurrent crises of family, neighborhood, school, and workplace coincide with the expansion of mass production and the widespread use of television sets.

Intermediary institutions would not be going through a crisis if people were happy with their work and personal relationships. It is probably difficult to be happy at work, because of the monotonous

operations and the constant threat of losing a job. This danger started to become prominent in the process of mass production as everyone had the same simple activity and there was less need for professionals such as expert craftsmen.

On the other hand, it might have grown economically more difficult to have one member of the family working, while the other one stays at home and takes care of the children. This forced mothers to leave their homes, while another potentially harmful influence appeared: the television.

## 7.3 The Manipulation of Public Forums

The emergence of television sets in homes and the expansion of television programs in the 1950s was the beginning of the media revolution (Fickers, 2012). Thanks to new work organizations, men become unfulfilled in the professional sense and traumatized with the constant fear of losing their jobs, while on the other side more women started to work.

Figuratively speaking, the family was left defenseless, while being attacked not only by professional issues but also by profit-driven media intrusion. That is how intermediary institutions started to decline.

Besides potential decreases in direct communication between family members, the media used advertisements and television news to manipulate the public. Fear was sown by television commercials, while the solutions to people's basic needs and desires such as sex and emotional fulfillment were being artificially connected with consumer products.

Materialism was encouraged by exploiting and increasing dissatisfaction while offering solutions in consumption. In modern societies, people no longer rely on one another for survival, while basic needs and desires such as emotional fulfillment, love, and tenderness are easily replaced by different light and severe addictions.

Although it may appear otherwise, people do not have the opportunity to express themselves. The many non-governmental organizations, free speech initiatives, and insistence on human rights

paint a picture of a modern, vibrant, and open society. On the other hand, all the talk about personal liberty and the freedom of expression could be covering up the truth, which says the exact opposite.

The reason why everybody is talking about freedom may be that it is lacking, both in personal relationships and professional life. It also appears that people in modern societies have a wide range of options, yet finding a non-corporate job and avoiding advertising has become challenging.

Both unfulfilling jobs and media-driven advertising can impact people in different ways, with the outcome being obedient citizens who enjoy consuming. Although freedom of speech presumes that everyone should be able to both express themselves as well as hear others' opinions, the main characteristic of mass society is that there are far fewer people who express opinions than those who hear them. This results in media addictions.

The masses can be said to be an abstract collection of individuals who receive impressions from the media. Authoritative institutions are not open to the public. Instead, the institution's agents infiltrate the masses, limiting autonomy in the formation of opinions through debates. This indicates that basic human rights are denied by the very nature of mass society.

Not only are people not heard in the free exchange of opinions, but they also might be manipulated into believing something that is in the interest of the minority. Open forums of public debates are initiated by various institutions of modern society, including non-governmental organizations, the media, and parliament.

These debate initiatives can help shape society towards what the majority of affected people decide. Public forums are allowed and desired by all members of society, although they can be controlled in several ways. First, it is important to ask who chooses the members of a public forum. Those who can take part in a debate are usually chosen by someone. The second question is whether participants in the public forum have voting power, or if the debate's outcome is advisory.

If a substantial issue is at stake, participants in the debate, driven by the profit interest, might come to the same conclusion. Some of the debates are broadcast on television, so it seems to the public that



unpopular opinions receive the most attention, while those held by the majority of society are put aside. Especially in media-covered public forums, it is evident how public opinions are imposed and influenced towards the minority's interests.

On the other hand, the internet allows open debate and the expression of thoughts and positions. The new media made it possible for a large number of people to participate in public forums without any constraint.

Mass behavior connotes weakened social participation (Selznick, 1951). This might be resolved with mobilization. Mobilization takes place when an unstructured population is set into motion by controlling elites, writes Selznick, adding that the pressure of mass demands narrows utilitarian justification.

This could imply capitulation to the demands of commonness. But if genuine reforms took place, this would not represent a capitulation to commonness. Selznick writes that the masses are unstable. This is probably because the masses are not firmly grounded in anything, but depersonalized and materialized as a consequence of numerous profit-driven manipulations.

People in mass society can therefore be described as ignorant of themselves and everything around them, including other people and their work. They are characterized by insecurity, anxiety, as well as submission to totalitarian control, aggression against the weak, nihilism, and compulsive conformity. They might be experiencing some kind of psychological shock. Psychological pressures and invisible aggression, which are at the core of alienation, addiction, anomie, and narcissism, are prevalent in modern society.

These social circumstances bear similarities with changes brought by the development of societies toward more media use and less direct communication. Wilensky (1964) writes that people in modern societies lack a conception of how to find value in daily life. He adds that they are easily susceptible to manipulation.

People's values, emotions, and needs may, therefore, be significant indicators for scientific studies aiming to identify the fundamental social problem, how it affects society, and what can be done to improve the situation.

People attempt to satisfy their basic needs and desires, such as socializing, sex, reproduction, survival, and so on, by adopting specific values. People then try to fulfill these needs by relying on the value framework they embraced.

For example, a person who feels the need for love and affection may seek fulfillment by starting a family. Family may therefore be a value that this person sees as important for satisfying their basic needs of love and tenderness. Someone else may have the same need but aspire to realize it differently, for example, through material means. In the first case, a person dedicates time and effort to find the right person to start a family with and, therefore, places it first on their priority list. In the second case, a person would aspire to earn money to attract the right person with assets such as expensive cars. In this case, money serves as a “hook” for the second person who is a materialist.

Both persons have the same needs but they set different frames to achieve them. The first one looks for the “right person” to start a family, whereas the second one takes a more indirect approach, investing his energy to obtain money to purchase items in an effort to find emotional fulfillment.

When values are stereotyped, symbol and meaning become divorced (Selznick, 1951). Many aspects of mass society can be viewed through the prism of stereotypes. People are maybe divorced from real activity in terms of really believing in some value or knowing “the essence of things.”

People in modern society tend to do something because they saw it on television or because it is considered “cool.” This could be due to people’s disconnection from themselves. It is one thing if someone knows they have a hockey talent, and another thing if the person plays hockey simply to pass the time. Seeing some activity on television and doing it because it is cool is different than when intuition and feeling lead people towards an activity.

A person may be disconnected from reality due to bad parenting together, along with exposure to manipulative media and unfulfilling activities. They may do things just because they should be done, sticking to a perfectly regular pattern of activities.

For example, the person wishes to graduate from university, find employment, get married, and have children. This pattern of activities

might not be fulfilling for them because it is not really desired, but rather accepted.

An alienated person may therefore be doing things without truly wanting to. This person may feel lost in modern society, which offers many meaningless activities and distractions. Because of the superficial approach to activities, alienated persons are prone to forming stereotypes. They are not really interested in an activity, but only in the joy or relief from suffering they gain from it.

For example, they may not turn to religion for spiritual fulfillment, but to break from what they were doing earlier. Alienated people quickly become bored with what they are doing, so they often change activities. Shifting from one activity to another is similar to going somewhere without knowing what you are looking for.

The deeper the alienation, the stronger the attachment to an activity, even to the point that it becomes an addiction. It seems perfectly normal if a person is devoted to religion in one moment and then participates in a political campaign with impunity in the next. But if this person becomes involved in militant religious practice or becomes a violent supporter of some extremist political party, then it is clear that something is not right. Bigger issues and greater alienation may make persons become more deeply involved in something they don't really believe in.

Sometimes this involvement includes playing video games all day, while in other cases it can include violent extremist behavior. In both cases, the conditions of addiction and alienation are easy to observe. Both video game addicts and extremists are not functional members of society, not just because of the immediate consequences of their actions such as violence and neglecting family duties, but because they may be "off the rails" in terms of their potential.

There are occasions when violence can be a useful means of expressing discontent with a ruler. Using peaceful tactics to overthrow authoritarian regimes can hardly be effective. Therefore, the fact that someone is violent or not doesn't say much about whether they are a functional citizen, because violence can occasionally be functional.

Although anger and violence can be negative social events, this is not always the case. Anger can be deployed for the wrong cause or used by the minority to advance their own interests. At the same time,

social anger can be a means for revolutionary action that would bring social changes. However, anger often hampers true social change because it is expressed at soccer games or in pointless conflicts.

Extreme addictions to clubs help maintain the status quo. That is why, as Selznick (1951) points out, actions taken in the name of values may be contrary to their spirit. Extreme attachment to clubs can be detrimental to sportsmanship. It shows that a person does not support a club because of genuine affection, but because of their frustration with other aspects of life. These kinds of football fans are bad for the sport and other fans. Their behavior perpetuates society as it is and supports the minority profiting from others' frustrations. The minority manipulates people through mass media, which offers products, services, and activities as compensation for unfulfilling jobs. The profit-seeking minority encourages the consumption of their products through advertising and media programs.

Because legislators make up the rules of the game, allowing for media manipulation and the creation of unfulfilling jobs, having control over public officials is critical for the minority to advance its goals.

In the end, accumulated profit is a symbol of accumulated frustrations or "unexpressed human activities," which would otherwise be expressed through genuine participation in meaningful activities. Social frustrations produce addictions and lead to declines in political participation. That is why this inquiry examines the potential sources of these frustrations in modern society.

No evidence was found to support the so-called magic bullet or the hypodermic needle hypothesis, according to which the individual in mass society is automatically drawn to media beliefs and attitudes (Thomson, 2005). Instead, the individual's needs, values, and emotions are twisted to fulfill the interests of the profit-seeking minority.

For example, consider a man who is thinking of buying a new car not because he needs it, but because he is unhappy with his personal life. If he desires a girlfriend, car commercials featuring women might be very effective.

The same goes for socializing and mobile phones. Mobile phone commercials featuring people socializing or exchanging romantic messages address the suppressed, subconscious needs for socializing.

A person may not buy a new phone because they need it or because it has good features, but because of their suppressed need for socializing and love.

The same can be said for the need for reproduction, sex, spiritual fulfillment, and work. Media manipulation can, therefore, be described as “fine-tuning” and may entail indirect addressing of people’s unsatisfied needs.

That is why it is important to have knowledge about the needs of target groups. The profit-seeking minority then uses this knowledge to manipulate people through lies, half-truths, and truths.

The essence of social problems can be described by reference to needs, values, and emotions. For example, a person who is family-oriented and desires love and tenderness might try to meet similar people through socializing and direct communication. If that doesn’t work, their values may shift toward materialism, because they may believe that to achieve their goals, they must possess valuable items, such as expensive cars, large house, designer clothes, high-end watches, spectacles, shoes, haircuts, and perfumes, and they may channel their emotions towards brands like Mercedes, Dior, and Guess.

A person may believe that possessing designer things makes them happy. If they, however, do not achieve their basic needs and desires to meet a potential spouse, then they may replace materialistic values with technocratic ones. This means a person relies on technology to fulfill their needs. They attempt to satisfy them by using social networking sites to meet new people and achieve love and tenderness. In the case of technology-oriented values, a person may invest their emotions in computer-related brands; owning the best computer, cell phone, or software makes them happy because they believe it is the best possible way to meet their needs.

More substitutions, or in other words, more frustrating activities resulting from unmet needs can lead to more alienation, making it easier to manipulate people.

The susceptibility of institutions to political manipulation increases as society becomes mass society (Selznick, 1951). Mass societies are ruled by a small number of organized elites who use social engineering and deception to control the majority’s life circumstances.

It seems logical that political manipulation is easier when people are unhappy with their lives. People don't have time to care for society if their needs are unmet.

Marketers propose new ways to satisfy people's needs. However, there are no alternative answers to people's problems, as surrogates never come close to true solutions.

For example, if someone wants to fulfill their creative need by becoming a painter, they will never find fulfillment in working as a software developer, because art and information technologies are completely different things. If a person tries to express their creative side by painting and runs into obstacles, making them back down, substituting this activity with software development will make them unhappy and frustrated.

If there are many frustrated individuals then the whole society is out of order, because there are too many people who don't have the time to care for public affairs. These are dysfunctional citizens. They are easily manipulated because they are constantly looking for new ways, products, services, and ideas to help fulfill their needs.

In the end, a person may practice religion in a desperate attempt to fulfill their need for spirituality. But this will never satisfy their need. To do so, they need to address the problem directly, rather than looking for a substitute for what has previously failed.

If it weren't this way, then a person talented for painting would be able to meet their creative needs as a software developer. Being a software developer does not allow for the same level of expression as painting, so this is impossible. That is why it is easier to manipulate unhappy people through the media. Manipulation then leads to more frustration and, ultimately, to media addictions.

On the other hand, modern society provides physical freedom and protection of basic human rights. Manipulation in modern society is invisible and therefore it is harder to prove that it exists. What is observable, however, is that people in modern society have no physical constraints to pursue their goals. Their rights are guaranteed by the constitution and other laws.

# FUNCTIONAL CITIZENSHIP

Functional citizenship may be affected as a consequence of growing substance and behavioral addictions in society. Functional citizenship is related to citizens' activities that strive to advance a common goal. It is characterized by participation, loyalty, cooperation, voting, and being elected. With growing addictions, people have less time to devote themselves to common interests, because they are committed to realizing their social and professional needs.

As noted before, it is becoming increasingly difficult to satisfy social and professional needs because of the intrusion of profit interest into both work and private life. Most people in modern society are preoccupied with their personal issues, unaware of the significance of common goals.

When we speak of participation as a characteristic of citizenship, we refer to activism, voting, running for public office, and supporting a candidate. Loyalty as a social trait can be directed towards the public interest, an organization or institution, or a group or person. Cooperation can be destructive and ineffective, but it can also be productive if it leads to the fulfillment of a common goal.

The determination to live up to social agreements involves a strong moral commitment, writes Jeurissen (2004). He states that to be a citizen means accepting the social contract as a limitation in everything done. Living under the social contract, he adds, is a form of rational self-binding. He mentions that citizens do this with the reasonable expectation they would benefit in the long run. This means the social contract is a combination of self-interest and ethics. Each citizen, he writes, has a responsibility to promote the common good.

According to Jeurissen, citizens give back to society by voting attendance, paying a fair share of taxes, or assuming political offices by turn. A citizen does not passively consider developments in society but is active, aware, and vigilant. He considers the sustainability of society culturally, politically, socially, and economically, as part of

the social responsibility. A citizen is motivated by societal ideals and values, as well as perceived threats and an internal locus of control.

He further claims that fatalism, or the idea that social processes are unsusceptible to individual efforts at controlling them, is not a good breeding ground for citizenship. He writes that citizens are interested in just law and that freedom of citizens in a well-ordered society is not to be confused with lawlessness. On the contrary, the rule of law makes citizenship possible.

Taking part in social processes may be part of the personal interests of every person in society. The reason for this is that one cannot independently take care of their safety and wellbeing, decide on laws of conduct, cure themselves in case of illness, and so on. In modern society these common functions are taken care of by governments elected by people, otherwise called social agents.

Participation is needed in the selection of social agents. This participation can also be considered as a service to society by individuals that aim to become social agents. Participation in modern society involves different professional organizations, as well. Professional public or different kinds of non-governmental or specialized organizations stand between citizens and their legal representatives. That is why parliaments, governments, and courts often consult professional and different kinds of organizations during the legislative process, the implementation of laws, and judicial activity. Thus, individuals can be active on two fronts, first as candidate members for parliaments at different levels, and as candidates for functions in organizations. Another aspect of social participation is voting for public and organizational representatives.

Media-connected behavioral addictions are rather new. On the other hand, the concepts of participative activities for common good have been developing throughout centuries. The main goal of this inquiry is to determine if there is a relation between media addiction and political participation, as a significant segment of functional citizenship.



## 8.1 Addictions

Literature on alienation, anomie, and mass society indicates social processes leading from problems in personal and social life to addictions, which ultimately results in a decrease in participation. These social processes relate to expression problems that occur as a consequence of the characteristics of mass society. The causality of social processes can lead to different kinds of light and heavy addictions provoked by expression problems. Expression problems might occur in family and other personal relationships, at work and schools, and during common interest activities. Expression relates to anything a person does and aims that is related to these categories. Lastly, addictions created because of expression problems can result in dysfunctional citizenship (a decrease in political participation).

Failure in expression coming from different spheres of life may result in some form of addiction. Addictions are divided into substance and behavioral addictions.

For example, a person who has experienced a lack of affection in childhood might become addicted to relationships. Other individuals unhappy with their relationship can become workaholics. In other words, people who perceive problems in some spheres of direct and indirect expression, may out of misery, or because of unachieved goals, become addicts to some substance or behavior.

This can result in a decrease in functional citizenship. It means that an addicted person may no longer be capable of doing their personal or professional obligations and care for common interests.

Distortion in citizenship may affect care for collective issues, including participation in politics or organizations in terms of voting or public representation. This again may affect expression because the right people may not be in the right places. This vicious circle might make it even harder for people to express themselves, pushing society into more addictions and increasing dysfunctional citizenship. The following pages provide definitions of addictions and participation (functional citizenship).

Mass society is hindering people's direct and indirect expression. This applies to any sphere, including personal relationships and

professional life. As a consequence, the unrealized goals of society members in these spheres of life may be substituted by other goals which are easier to fulfill. The process of substitution is probably the essence of addiction. Unfulfilled goals may produce different types of addiction, including substance addictions and behavioral addictions. Substance addictions include drugs dependence, alcohol dependence, nicotine dependence, and caffeine dependence. Behavioral addictions can be about anything, including gambling dependence, sex dependence, eating dependence, shopping dependence, work dependence, religion dependence, relationship dependence, politics dependence, sports dependence, hobbies dependence, and media dependence. These addictions can be light or heavy. Addicted persons can be aware or unaware of their addiction.

Behavioral addictions are connected to everyday activities. That is why this type of addiction is called “cognitive dependence.” As with substance addictions, dependence on different types of behaviors can be light or heavy. A large part of the population may be suffering from different kinds of light behavioral addictions.

Light addictions can appear in any sphere of life including gambling, sex, shopping, work, religion, relationships, politics, sports, hobbies, and media use. These kinds of addictions are typical for mass society. People become obsessed with some sports club, political party, or religion because there may be something lacking in other spheres of their lives. For example, angry soccer fans might be consciously or unconsciously unhappy with their personal relationships.

On the other hand, political extremists might have joined the party because of a lack of control at work. Unrealized goals from professional or personal spheres can be addressed by directing activities towards religion, politics, sport, and so on. Different kinds of unresolved issues may, therefore, be reasons for some person to become a light addict to any kind of substance or behavior. Before, there were not as many behavioral addictions. With the emergence of the media, people started using computers, telephones, televisions, radios, and other devices. This new form of behavior allows for more efficient use of time, but it can also be a possible trap into addiction.

The real problem of mass society might not be the heavy addictions, but the light ones. Light addictions can be dangerous for

democracy as they may open doors for manipulation much more than heavy addictions. Being nearly invisible, light behavioral addictions may serve as answers to many questions about social behavior. This inquiry explores possible decreases in political participation as a consequence of media addiction. In the following paragraphs, the literature about the different kinds of behavioral addictions has been examined.

Addiction is a kind of defect of the will (Wallace, 1999). Addicts, Wallace asserts, are subject to cravings that are unresponsive to their evaluative reflection. Krivoschekov & Lushnikov (2011) write that addictive behavior is an attempt to escape real life by artificially changing one's psychical condition with drugs or certain actions. As previous definitions explicate, addictions can be caused by unsatisfied psychological needs.

Media addictions differ in terms of the format. These formats can be print, radio, television, or the internet. Media addictions are regarded as modern-day addictions contrary to other behavioral and substance addictions that existed before them. Interestingly, newer media can be more addictive than older media, as they provide a richer fantasy world while also better imitating reality. Besides, personal devices may be used at any place. As with all other addictions, "small doses" of media use can be beneficial in that they provide relaxation, but escape from serious life problems by using the internet, television, radio, and print can result in addiction. As with other kinds of dependencies, light media addiction can be more problematic for society than heavy addictions since it can be difficult to observe and can potentially produce unhappy and dysfunctional citizens.

Research into the prevalence of behavioral addictions among Italian adolescents showed a significant correlation between results including pathological gambling (7%), compulsive buying (11.3%), exercise addiction (8.5%), internet addiction (1.2%), and work addiction (7.6%) (Villella, et al., 2011). Behavioral addictions, claim Villella et al., are clinical entities in which recurring impulsive behaviors occur, with negative effects on the patients and their relatives.

The following text presents research results concerning gambling addiction. Digitally enhanced game features demonstrate the intimate connection between states of subjective absorption in play

and the elements that manipulate space and time to speed up the extraction of money from players (Schull, 2005). State lotteries constitute the most common form of gambling among American adults, with sales exceeding \$40 billion annually (Guryan & Kearney, 2010). Low-income households spend a disproportionate amount of their income on lottery tickets, claim Guryan & Kearney, adding that it is important to understand the extent to which lottery gambling is habit-forming or addictive. Surveys between 2001 and 2005 reported on problematic gambling incidence rates ranging from 1.6 to 5.9%, with an average of 3.6%, according to Williams & Wood (2007). They write that the global market of online gambling reached at least \$15.5 billion per year in 2006, while there were approximately 2000 online gambling sites in operation around the world.

On the other hand, research results related to sexual addiction highlight that some unresolved psychological needs or problems may cause this kind of dependence. Solitude, low self-esteem, and anxiousness cause individuals to lose control over their sexual behavior, which poses grave threats to ongoing relationships and careers, according to Levine & Troiden (1988). They state that this addiction leads to promiscuity, autoeroticism, transvestism, homosexuality, exhibitionism, voyeurism, fetishism, incest, child molestation, and rape. People who develop sexual addictions usually come from a family with a highly restrictive and conservative attitude toward sex, writes Sprenkle (1987), adding that the future addict is unable to conform to these attitudes, perceiving what would ordinarily be considered normal behavior as deviant and sinful. Activities related to sexual addiction include the use of the internet for seeking sexually related goods for further use offline, visiting or purchasing goods from online sex shops, and looking for sexual partners for a relationship (Griffiths, 2001). A tendency to experience more sexual interest in states of depression or anxiety was a strong feature of the sex addict group (Bancroft & Vukadinovic, 2004). Research results regarding sexual addiction show that frustrations, unresolved needs and desires lead to this addiction, which is similar to media addiction, the main subject of this inquiry.

It may be useful to compare the values of different kinds of addicts, as indicated by a study on shopping addiction. For example,

distinct hedonic and functional shopping value dimensions exist and are related to many important consumption variables, according to Babin et al. (1994).

Work addiction can be linked to a lack of a partner or dissatisfaction with one's spouse. Similar to shopaholics, those who work long hours are called workaholics. As with other addictions, working more than usual does not mean that a person is dependent on this kind of activity. Addictions often replace the activities that a person is unhappy with. Long working hours and work addiction harm individuals and their families, while not making organizations more efficient (Burke, 2009). Research on work addiction has shown that respondents scoring higher on "passion" and "addiction" were greatly invested in their work (Burke & Fiksenbaum, 2009). Again, researchers of work addiction and media addiction have found they have similar causes.

Addiction to religion is primarily linked to individuals who experience themselves as perfectly obedient, powerless in the face of pain or abuse, and remarkably uncertain of themselves as a person, and as such constantly drawn to the use and abuse of a variety of addictive substances (Gostecnik et al., 2012). By using religion as a means of escape, the addict develops an unhealthy religiosity, claims Taylor (2002), adding that abuse of family members almost always takes place on a regular basis. He writes that religious addiction can be just as devastating and damaging as drug abuse and alcoholism. The defining characteristics and symptoms of religious addiction are rigidity, black-and-white thinking, low self-esteem, magical thinking, and judgmental attitudes, writes Vanderheyden (1999), pointing out that the religious addict seeks to avoid discomfort and overcome shame by becoming involved in a belief system that offers security through its strictness and eternal values.

Relationship addiction is a pathological attachment to a person. Again, the underlying reason for relationship addiction can be an attempt to escape reality. Addictive relationships are not as meaningful and emotionally rich as a healthy relationship; contrary to it, relationship addiction is emotionally unfulfilling. Relationship addicts have most likely been rejected or abandoned in childhood and were often victims of physical or psychological abuse. Lack of affection

in childhood often leads to relationship addiction, as addicts may try to compensate for what they lacked as a child.

Politics addicts are interested in national and global issues. They tend to choose a side, in most cases an extremist political party or leader. Political addicts usually support the far right or far left, but they can also support a political party in the middle of the political spectrum. Sometimes a political addict is only interested in political news and has no clear opinion or support for a political side; in this case, addiction can be classified as media-related. Political addicts are susceptible to manipulation, and they can be used to fuel political fires and incite arguments between political rivals. The easiest way to engage political addicts is by simplifying language and infusing it with a strong emotional tone. Political addicts are most likely trying to compensate for their unfulfilled need for action, excitement, and influence. Someone's desire to become a great speaker may be compensated by following and supporting leaders and political speakers. Again, substitution is at the heart of political addiction. However, there is a distinction to be made between people disappointed in politics and political addicts. Both kinds refrain from voting but for different reasons. Frustrated with the situation in their country, some individuals believe that no alternative is good enough, but this is far from addiction.

Although in most cases hobbies and interests outside work serve as leisure and stress-free activities, at some point they can become addictions. Hobbies may conflict with important daily tasks if a person has too many hobbies or spends too much time on one of them. They can serve as compensation for "lost childhood" or as a way to escape daily problems. Again, hobbies are beneficial if used for relaxation, but if they become more important than daily tasks, this means they are conflicting reality.

Some people develop an addiction to sports. Szabo & Griffiths (2007) found that 6.9% (18 out of 261) sports science students were addicted to exercise when compared to only 3.6% (7 out of 194) of the general exercising population. One of the negative effects of sport, often discussed by researchers, is exercise addiction, as highlighted by Krivoschekov & Lushnikov (2011).

There is a link between demographics and the types of media addictions that have been observed. Younger people tend to be addicted to gaming and social networks. Older people are mostly addicted to television, radio, the news, and print. Middle-aged people are addicted to television shows and increasingly to social networking sites. As with all other addictions, “small doses” of media use can be beneficial for relaxation, but escaping serious life issues through the internet, television, radio, and print can lead to media addiction. As with other kinds of dependencies, light media addiction is more problematic than severe forms of addiction, because it is harder to observe and can produce unhappy and dysfunctional citizens.

Whereas academic online use is primarily intended for research, the internet has also become an important part of student life, write Chou et al. (2005).

Behaviors most frequently associated with addiction include excessive gaming and playing games that interfere with other activities, in particular socializing or labor, according to Oggins & Sammis (2012), who add that self-reported addiction to video games correlated positively with observations that video game dependence involved excessive playing or playing to escape problems.

There are as many behavioral addictions as there are activities. People can be addicted to virtually any kind of activity, but the most prominent behavioral addictions are those related to gambling, sex, shopping, working, religion, relationships, politics, sport, hobbies, and the media. Addicts compensate for unachieved goals. Gambling, for example, is often the result of the desire for excitement and action, the outcome of a boring life without risk. This kind of addiction can be traced back to the gambler’s parents’ refusal to allow them to join the military. Sex addiction can be traced back to a broken family. As a result, a person uses sex to keep a partner beside them, while being in constant fear of abandonment. Shopping addiction can be a result of childhood poverty. Work addiction can appear if a person is unhappy with their personal life. They find it hard to improve their personal life, thus they don’t try. Instead, a person becomes engrossed in a never-ending cycle of working round the clock. Religious addiction may be a consequence of an unfulfilled childhood need for spiritual engagement but often occurs due to

problems with partners, the need to be part of a community, or the feelings of unhappiness and distress with some aspect of life. Relationship addiction can be a result of childhood abuse and the constant fear of abandonment. Political addiction can be caused by the need for authority. Sports addiction among enthusiastic fans is usually a result of the unfulfilled desire to belong to a group. Hobbies addiction compensates for “lost childhood.” For society, behavioral addictions are worse than substance addiction, as they are harder to distinguish. Especially lighter cases are problematic because they tend to be widespread.

## 8.2 Participation

Cooperation is an important feature of functional citizenship. Willingness to cooperate is at the heart of efforts aiming to achieve common interests. People who are divided cannot achieve common goals because their sporadic actions will not result in significant social changes.

In the digital age, the center of activities has shifted to social networking sites, and their goals are now rarely accomplished in the “real” world. For example, people may be willing to support some idea or goal on the internet, with no interest in protesting about it in the direct environment. On the other hand, social networking sites encourage the articulation of the general discontent related to the lack of jobs, or anything that triggers the accumulated anger and rage of the masses (Burton, 2011). People, unable to express themselves at work, socially, or in issues of common interest, might be willing to express their discontent in protests organized through social networking sites.

Cooperation in tackling common problems in modern societies is decreasing, as people no longer believe in change and lack the will and time to advance common interests, leaving them to “alienated social agents” (politicians).

Cooperation can be productive in terms of solving social problems. On the other hand, there is cooperation in destructive protests as



well, when common dissatisfaction is misused by social agents. Another form of cooperation that leads to destructive protests is online activity, which produces no positive outcomes in reality. The two basic ways of cooperation, productive and destructive, can occur in one society with different outcomes.

An important aspect of cooperation is dependability. People in primitive societies were heavily dependent on each other. Villagers could not survive unless they collaborated to achieve common goals. Contrary to that, people in modern cities can comfortably live without each other.

Modern technologies and salaries make it possible for people to live alone. People's responsiveness to common interest is determined by how much they consider common interest as part of their personal interest. It is becoming increasingly difficult to protect common interests if people can survive alone and are unaware of the need of doing so. The problem may be that the accumulated discontent is not linked to the poor performance of social agents, and so it does not motivate people to be active and responsive, to truly empathize and care about others, because, at the end of the day, everybody is going through the same troubles and challenges.

Voting can be described as the primary democratic feature of modern society. It can be exercised in two ways. Voting in organizations helps elect leaders of organizations. Different kinds of organizations may be helping official legislation processes in modern democracies, not only through the media but also through direct consultation of parliament members in the process of drafting laws. Professional and specialized organizations could be the best articulators of public opinions in modern democracies. On the other hand, voting in elections decides on public officials. This can be done on different levels: public officials can be elected from municipality to state level. They are usually elected for different kinds of parliaments. The most important election is the one for state parliament because the regulations enacted in parliament affect the whole country.

The fact that democracies utilize voting procedures that are based on the majority principle could lead to the conclusion that a decision based on this principle can always be reconciled with democratic values (Yuval & Herne, 2005). According to Yuval & Herne, there is

an inherent possibility that the majority principle may infringe upon minority rights and impose the will of the majority upon minority groups. Democracy is not identical to majoritarianism, in which a majority of the people exercise control over their government (Post, 2006). That is why it is not unintelligible to conclude that particular exercises of popular sovereignty or majoritarianism are antidemocratic, Post concludes.

One of the most perplexing issues facing advocates of civic engagement and democratic participation is the fact that voter turnouts in the United States on average are much lower than those of other advanced democracies (Mcgrath, 2012). Young people, lower-income voters, less educated citizens, and members of certain racial and ethnic minorities are substantially less likely to vote than older, white, and more affluent Americans, writes Mcgrath. He adds that this disparity has implications for democracy and communities in the United States and raises basic questions of fair play and social justice.

Research suggests that people who vote are more likely to volunteer, write letters to the editor, and be active in their communities in a variety of ways, while non-voters are more likely than voters to be more socially isolated and less familiar with the workings of government, Mcgrath writes, adding that civic participation helps people develop skills, information, and habits that benefit them in many ways. There is even a correlation between higher levels of voting and stronger economies, claims Mcgrath (2012).

The legitimate government of the people, by the people, and for the people must vigorously promote and protect the freedom to vote so that all eligible electorate can take part in this fundamental exercise in self-government (Kennedy, 2012).

As with voting, being elected is a basic right of anyone in modern democracy. Those who want to perform some public or organizational function should be able to speak for specialized publics or people from a certain geographical area. Functional citizenship also means participation on the part of election candidates. If people are not functional in terms of citizenship, then they will not be able to recognize the need to run for some public or organizational function. It may be significant for any society to stimulate the right people to get to the right places in public or organizational administration.

“Each according to his ability” can be the motto of society that stimulates excellence. Accordingly, the main problem of representation may be that wrong people get appointed to important positions in a state. Instead of representing the people who elected them, these public officials care only about their own interests or their group’s interests.

There are two kinds of periods in US elections: the more liberal public purpose phases are characterized by passion, idealism, heightened political commitment, a broad effort to improve society, and extensive change, while, the more conservative private interest phases are rife with hedonism, materialism, relentless pursuit of personal gratification, and the view that a freer market and increased privatization can serve as a panacea for the ills of society (McCann, 1995).

Candidates have their own policy preferences and incomplete information about voter preferences (Moon, 2004). Candidates for public office regularly make vague statements that leave voters uncertain about the policies they intend to follow (Tomz & Houweling, 2009). In the United States, as Tomz & Houweling argue, the Democratic Party was founded on a platform of vagueness. Lastly, candidates compete in terms of their ability to deliver economic good times, personality, partisanship, and specific issues, write MacDonald and Rabinowitz (1993).

Citizenship is important for any modern society because it determines whether or not common interests are achieved. The main characteristics of citizenship are participation, loyalty, cooperation, voting, and being elected. Participation can be conducted within a specialized organization or performed on a territorial basis as elections for parliament at different levels. Loyalty can be directed towards the public interest, an organization, or personal interest. Cooperation can be productive or destructive. As for voting and being elected, this can be carried out in organizations or for public posts. Also, there are different levels of public functions, from municipal to state-wide. The basic social problem is the poor performance of public officials, who protect their personal or group interests rather than the public interest. The link between this social problem and addiction is that as more people become addicts, they have less time and determination to look after public interests. Public functions

may be the most significant in helping society in realizing its potential. In some countries, the legislature directs life. Because public officials prioritize their personal interests, they do not adequately represent the common interest, negatively affecting expression and contributing to addictions.

# MEDIA ADDICTION AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

This inquiry presents the results of a nationally representative survey conducted in Serbia during the first half of 2011. The intention was to measure media addiction in an innovative way together with other relevant indicators for the process leading towards this sort of addiction, as well as all factors related to the different types of media used. I shall provide a short introspection into the methods used, while detailed data can be found in my dissertation (Bojic, 2013). Media addiction was measured based on the time of use as well as seven indicators. The duration of media use was taken as an objective indicator, while addiction-related questions were considered subjective indicators.

The Gale Encyclopedia of Medicine (Olendorff et al., 1999) defines addiction as “a dependence on a behavior or substance that a person is powerless to stop.” A special type of media addiction is internet addiction, which can be described in several ways: as a behavioral impulse-control disorder that does not involve an intoxicant (Young, 1996; Shapira et al., 2003); under the name internet addiction disorder (IAD), it is defined as an addiction related to excessive internet use (Huh & Bowman, 2008); and as a psychological dependence on the internet (Kandell, 1998). This inquiry considers media addiction as a situation that occurs when a person simulates the fulfillment of expressive needs and desires, such as the need for a romantic or sexual relationship, success at work, and the desired lifestyle, through extensive media use.

As for the time of use, internet addicts stay online for pleasure for an average of 38 hours or more per week (Young, 1996). Young claims that dependents spent nearly eight times the number of hours per week on the internet as non-dependents. However, she does not take the length of internet use as the primary indicator of addiction. Internet-dependent adolescents spend an excessively long

time online—about 18 hours weekly (Lin & Tsai, 2002). Addicted Taiwanese college students spend an average of 19 hours per week online (Chen, 1998). Addicts in the study of Chou et al. (1999) spend 22 hours per week, while according to Chou & Hsiao (2000) they spend 20 to 25 hours per week online. It is worth noting that some counselors say that time spent on the computer is not an important factor in diagnosing addiction to the internet (Kershaw, 2005).

Heavy television viewing is typically defined as 28 hours per week (Signorielli, 1986). On average, people in Europe spend 26.4 hours watching television per week, while in the United States television viewing, on average, amounts to 34.6 hours per week (IP Germany, 2005). The typical US child or adult watches television for 14-21 hours per week (Kubey & Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). When the relationship with television interferes or takes the place of real-life relationships without any regard to the hourly measure of abnormal viewing, we speak of pathology (Horton and Wohl, 1956).

Excessive media use is not decisive in qualifying someone as an addict. If that were the case, it would be possible to determine if someone was an addict simply based on how much time they spend on the media. As some people heavily rely on media for their work, time of use may not be enough to determine if someone is an addict or not. That is why this inquiry uses the time of media use only as an objective indicator and includes subjective indicators as well.

Young (1999) consulted the pathological gambling indicators from the DSM (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders—Fourth Edition*, American Psychiatric Association, 1995) to establish the parameters for the “Internet Addiction Diagnostic Questionnaire.” Her screening instrument considers respondents “addicted” when answering “yes” to five (or more) of the eight “yes” or “no” questions. Respondents are being asked if they need increased amounts of internet use to achieve the desired effect; if they find a diminished effect with continued use for the same time spent online; if they stay longer than they intended on the internet; if they spend a great deal of time in activities to stay online longer; if they have given up any social, occupational, or recreational activities because of the internet; if they have continued to use the internet despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent problem that is likely to have been

caused or exacerbated by the internet; if they have made unsuccessful attempts to cut down time spent online; and if they have a lack of desire to cut down on the time they spend online.

The Chen (2004) Internet Addiction Scale (CIAS) is used to assess participants' internet addiction (Ko et al., 2009). The CIAS contains 26 items on a four-point Likert scale, with a scaled score ranging from 26 to 104. Ko et al. consider a person addicted if they exhibit six or more of the nine criteria.

Kandell states that the characteristics of internet addiction are an increasing investment of resources on internet-related activities, unpleasant feelings when offline, an increasing tolerance to the effects of being online, and denial of the problematic behavior (Kandell, 1998).

Pathological computer use, according to Goldberg, presumes drastic lifestyle changes in order to spend more time on the internet, a general decrease in physical activity, a disregard for one's health as a result of internet activity, avoidance of important life activities to spend time online, sleep deprivation, decrease in socializing, neglect of one's family, craving for more time online, and neglect of job-related obligations (Suler, 2004).

In an effort to examine the relationship between perception and addiction to online games, Huh and Bowman (2008) base their research on Horvath's (2004) television addiction scale, which identifies seven factors of addiction, including tolerance, withdrawal, unintended use, cutting down, time spent, displacement, and continued use. Each factor has five items associated with it, resulting in a 35-item scale, each with five degrees. On the other hand, in their take on game addiction, Lemmens et al. (2009) use a 21-items scale to measure seven factors, including salience, tolerance, mood modification, relapse, withdrawal, conflict, and problems.

Research on mobile phone addiction considers five operational mobile phone addiction variables including preoccupation, tolerance, withdrawal, life consequences, and escapism (Chen, 2004).

In an attempt to create diagnostic criteria for television dependence, Kubey (1996) finds that five of seven diagnostic criteria from the DSM apply to this media. He believes that tolerance and continued use are less applicable to television addiction. Tolerance is a need for markedly increased amounts of the substance to achieve

intoxication or desired effect, while continued use means that the substance use is continued despite knowledge of having a persistent or recurrent physical or psychological problem that is likely to have been caused or exacerbated by the substance. Kubey finds overconsumption, attempts to cut down use, prolonged use, substitution, and withdrawal more applicable indicators in the case of television addiction. Overconsumption means that the substance is often taken in larger amounts or over a longer period than it was intended; attempts to cut down use means there is a persistent desire or unsuccessful efforts to cut down or control substance use; prolonged use means a great deal of time is spent in activities necessary to obtain the substance, use the substance, or recover from its effects; substitution means important social, occupational, or recreational activities are given up or reduced because of substance use (reducing direct communication, for example); finally, withdrawal means maladaptive behavioral change when left without the substance.

Television addicts' self-identification is often employed in research (McIlwraith, 1998). Results of polls from 1992 and 1999 find two out of five adult respondents and seven out of 10 teenagers say they spent too much time watching television. Other research inquiries have consistently shown that roughly 10% of adults identify themselves as television addicts (Gallup & Newport, 1990).

As noted above, the inquiry relies on the time of use as an objective indicator to filter out potential media addicts and subjective indicators to determine if they are addicts or not and if so, the extent of their addiction.

The duration of media use has been calculated for each of the four media, including internet, television, radio, and print, to filter research participants who do not engage in excessive and potentially addictive media use. Only research participants in the top 40% of respondents who spend more than average time on one of the four listed media are classified as potential media addicts, suggesting prolonged use. The account for 1942 (88%) of 2208 research participants. If the person used the internet for 15 minutes or more per day, watched television 120 minutes or longer per day, listened to the radio 20 minutes or longer per day, or read print media for 25 minutes or more per day, they were classified as potential media addicts. These individuals were



subsequently selected for further testing with subjective addiction indicators. These indicators correspond to seven questions, each of which is answered on a 10-degree scale. Only those who respond by selecting an extreme on one or more scales (up to seven) are considered to have indicators of media addiction. Depending on the question, the extremes on the scales, which identify addiction symptoms of addiction, can be four degrees to the right or four degrees to the left.

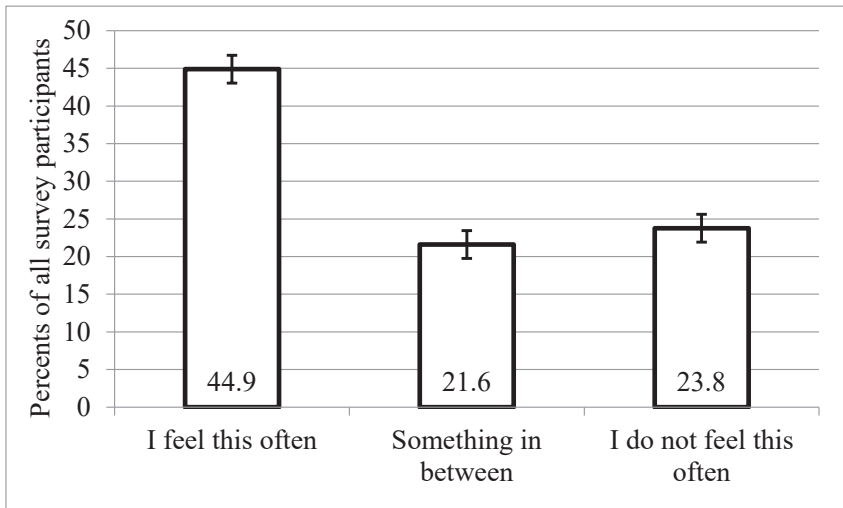
## 9.1 Negative and Unrealistic News as Important Causes of Addictions

Figure 7 depicts the eighth indicator in the media addiction research conducted by the author of this text. This indicator falls into the “continued use” category from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (American Psychiatric Association, 1995). The question corresponding to the indicator “How often do you feel that news about crimes, disasters, and diseases make you scared or negatively affect your mood?” is highly specific, as it describes everyday situations for most media users. This indicator also suggests that a person still uses media, despite their fear or negative mood. This is significant in terms of the severity of media addiction. By negatively affecting the mood of their users, the media remove people from their daily realities. This indicator received 44.9% of responses, implying that research participants often feel that negative news negatively affects their mood.

The high percentage of positive answers to this question points out a connection between the level of realistic media depictions (because of the prevailing negative news) and the rate of media addiction. It also suggests the need to customize pathological gambling indicators to get a valid and standardized picture of media addiction.

The disproportion between negativity in reality and the news correlates with the degree of media addiction. If the disproportion grows, the level of media addiction grows too.

The opinion that there is a disproportion between negativity in reality and the news has been registered in answers of research



**Figure 7** *Survey answer (95% confidence interval) to the question “How often do you feel that news about crimes, disasters, and diseases make you scared or negatively affect your mood?”*

participants to questions about the proportion of positive and negative television news. The majority of research participants (76.7%) answered that there is far too much negative news on television, while only 8.2% replied that there is too much positive news on television (Bojic, 2018b). On the other hand, when asked if the media provide a realistic picture of the world or if deceptive content dominates, 77.4% of research participants answered that the media are unrealistic, while only 7.4% replied that media are realistic in their depictions (Bojic, 2018b).

Research participants often feel that news about negative events negatively affects their mood (54.6%), whereas 23.8% do not feel this way (Bojic, 2018b).

According to the agency A.C. Nielsen Co. (2009), the number of murders seen on television by the time an average child finishes elementary school is 8,000, while the number of violent acts seen on television by the age of 18 is 200,000. Murders and violent acts are

far away from reality for most children in the US, but despite this, subjects of violence are extensively exploited in the media, usually for the sake of profit or for political reasons. A.C. Nielsen Co. also found that the number of 30-second television commercials seen in a year by an average child is 20,000, while the number of television commercials seen by the average person by the age of 65 is two million.

The same agency found that 92% of survey participants thought that television commercials aimed at children were making them too materialistic. According to their figures, the overall spending of 100 leading television advertisers in 1993 was \$15 billion, with advertising accounting for 30% of local television news broadcast time. Besides violence and commercialism, A.C. Nielsen Co. (2009) mentions that the media devoted 53.8% of their time to stories about crime, disaster, and war, with only 0.7% devoted to public service announcements. These stories instill fear in media users without any need for it, as the situations like the ones mentioned often happen far away from them.

On the other hand, when a person learns on the news about a crime that happened in their neighborhood, they will begin to fear that something similar could happen to them, even if the negative event occurs rarely.

Violence, commercials, and negative news in the media negatively affect not only media addicts but entire societies. Unbalanced reporting in terms of the prevalence of negative news may cause deep problems in societies around the world. The idea of a realistic depiction of society, free of negative or positive connotations, stems from the concept of social representation and the notion that journalists are agents of society tasked with depicting social reality.

## 9.2 Addiction Intensity

As noted before, the length of media use is taken as an objective parameter to determine media addiction (prolonged use in DSM). However, a clear distinction between potentially addictive and normal use has not been determined yet. This is because the results from

previous inquiries show an increase in the length of media use with addicts of different kinds, but these values vary. It was determined that the mean value of media use duration can be found for the internet, television, radio, and print media based on previous research results. After this, the top 40% of respondents who spend more than average time using media were categorized as potential media addicts applicable for further testing based on subjective indicators.

By comparing the nature of subjective media addiction indicators with the percentage of people who fall into the category of addicts, it was discovered that more research participants recognize themselves in specific scenarios indicating higher levels of addiction. This has been depicted in Table 1.

This tendency is broken with the indicator concerning the need to get rid of social networking profiles. Although the question is specific, it refers only to the internet. That may explain why this indicator got lower percentages than the previous indicator (being unable to resist media use). The desire to get rid of social networking profiles indicates the potential consequences of being unable to resist media use, and therefore, indicates a more severe case of media addiction than the previous indicator. Also, a more severe indicator related to the two mentioned is the need to escape media access in order to work, because it shows that research participants are unable to get rid of media, consequently seeing only exit in escaping their physical presence. This indicator suggests that the media disrupt the everyday life of research participants, preventing them from earning a living. Thus, the indicators “being unable to resist media use,” “the desire to get rid of social networking profiles,” and “need to escape media access to work” are connected in that they all represent causes and consequences of each other, suggesting different intensities of the addiction.

The severity of the indicated addiction was determined based on the extent to which media use affected daily life (contrary to assisting direct reality). On the other hand, the level of application to daily life media-related situations was used to determine how specific the indicators were. Relying on previous analysis, values for how specific the indicators were and the severity of addiction indicated were determined on a scale from 1 to 3.

It is worth noting that one of the indicators introduces a hypothetical situation, in which participants were asked to envision how they would feel if they were denied access to media.

**Table 1** *The relationship between the percentage of responses indicating addiction and the specificity and severity of the indicators*

Indicators (all except “prolonged use”)	How specific is it?	How severe is it?	Answers indicating addiction	Matching pathological gambling criteria from DSM
Feeling media overuse	1	1	24.0%	Overconsumption
Being unable to resist media use	1	1	26.1%	Attempts to cut
Desire to get rid of social networking profiles	2	2	22.4%	Attempts to cut
Using media to forget problems	2	2	31.9%	Substitution
Feelings if left without media access	2	2	37.2%	Withdrawal
Need to escape media access to work	3	3	30.1%	Continued use
News affecting mood in a negative way	3	3	44.9%	Continued use

In future research inquiries, the classification of the indicators’ specificity can be taken as a parameter for the modification and customization of indicators, in order to improve them.

Each indicator can be assigned a different significance depending on its severity level. This approach, however, was not used in this research and each indicator was given the same weighting.

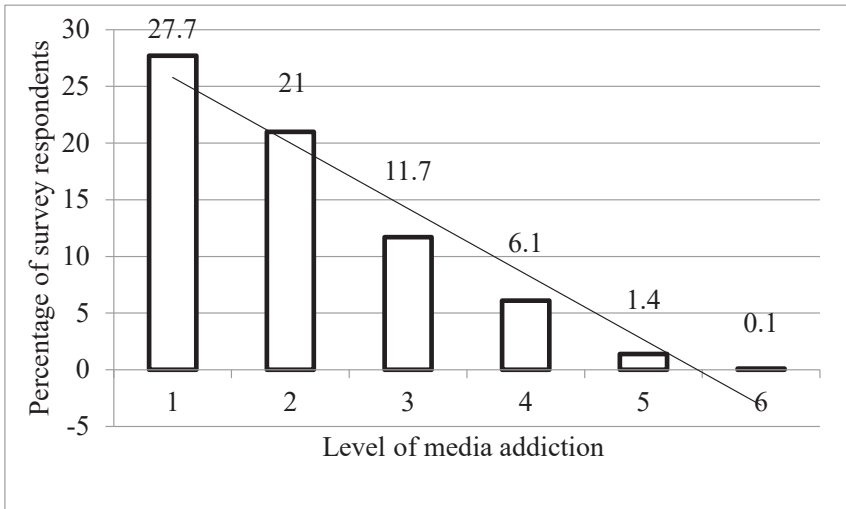
First, all 88% of research participants were considered potential media addicts as they fell in the top 40% of media users judged by

media usage time. After this, it was observed that 67.9% of research participants show some signs of media addiction (Figure 8), as one or more indicators apply to them, whereas 20% show no indicators. For “fine results,” research participants were divided into groups based on the number of media addiction indicators that apply to them. The lowest level of addiction was observed for 27.7% of the population. Individuals with two indicators (21%) are still considered to exhibit a low level of media addiction. Middle-level media addiction was exhibited by 11.7% of research participants, as three indicators apply to them. The highest level of media addiction was exhibited by research participants with four or more indicators. Overall, the highest level of media addiction was manifested by 7.6% of research participants.

These results cannot be compared with other research inquiries because of different methodologies used (indicators themselves and the number of indicators needed to determine a pathological user) and varying samples. Two examples illustrate these differences. Fisher (1994) identifies 6% of the sample as “pathological players,” while Griffiths and Hunt (1998) find 20% of the sample “dependent” on computer games. (Hauge & Gentile, 2003) The most significant reason that makes it difficult to compare the results of this research with others measuring media addiction is that the sample constituting research participants in most of them are far from representative. University researchers usually have a small sample made up of college students.

## 9.3 Results

The main research question of my thesis is whether media addiction has an impact on political participation (Bojic, 2013). To examine this, it was important to find out as much as possible about the process of media addiction, with the main aim to learn how media addiction occurs. Some personality aspects, as well as stressful situations and pressures, are most likely linked to the occurrence of media addiction and its social implications. Due to complex social



**Figure 8** *Media addiction (95% confidence interval) in Serbia for 2011 (67.9% show some signs).*

processes, it is important to examine all aspects of media addiction so that results can make sense and reflect reality more accurately.

Other factors were also examined. The family was found to negatively correlate with the level of media addiction. This means that people who find a “strong psychological base” in family, with good relations with other family members and feelings of belonging and happiness found in these relationships, have a less chance of becoming media addicts. Family is therefore considered their liberating agent when observed through the prism of media addiction. There are 81% of those who show no signs of media addiction, 77.3% of individuals who are labeled as first-level media addicts, 72.8% who are second-level media addicts, 67.6% third-level, 64.2% fourth-level, and 66.7% fifth-level media addicts (Marie & Bojic, 2016). This shows a clear downward trend in terms of family as a source of freedom and happiness when compared to the levels of media addiction.

When the suppression of basic needs and desires is compared to the levels of media addiction, a positive correlation can be observed.

There is a clear link between the suppression of basic needs and desires, which occurs as a response to stressful situations, and the levels of media addiction. This is observed when looking at the increase in the percentage of people falling under the different levels of media addiction, including 15.8% for no addiction, 19.2% for first-level addiction, 26.8% for second-level, 35% for third-level, and 37.3% for fourth-level media addiction.

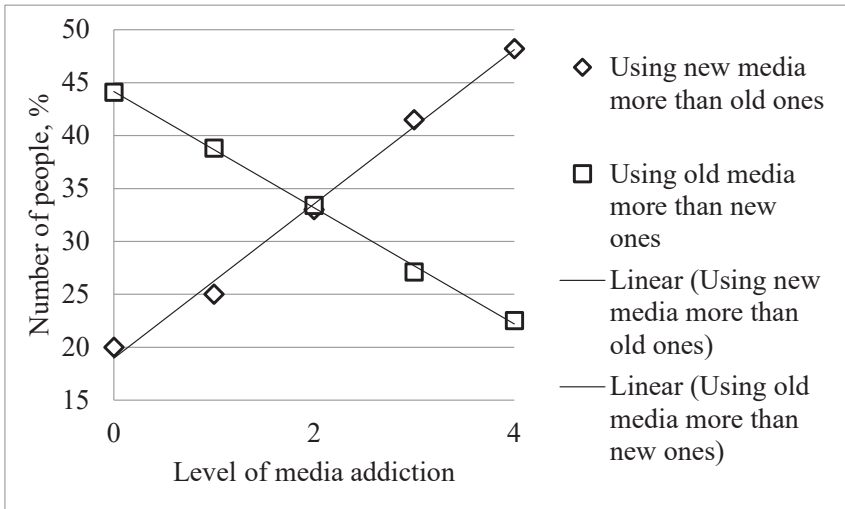
The first set of questions in the inquiry examined the different tendencies in media addiction through the prism of the motivation for media use. It concluded that the people who use media for amusement are more likely to become highly addicted to them than those who use them for information purposes. The findings in this segment also indicate that new media are more addictive than older ones.

The second set of questions examines the aspect of addiction to new media versus addiction to earlier media. This kind of insight might hint at the reason for the higher addictiveness of certain media when compared to others. Also, it can provide expectations in terms of media addiction and the services/programs used within certain media.

As seen in Figure 9, the number of research participants who use new media more than older ones increased with the levels of media addiction. Contrary to this, the number of research participants who use older media more than new ones decreases as levels of media addiction increase. This indicates that new media are more addictive than old ones. This may be because of the interactive features of new media which make it possible for their users to “simulate reality,” particularly interpersonal relationships within that reality (Bojic & Marie, 2017).

The issue of addiction intensity by different media is additionally examined in Figure 9. The graph clearly shows the sharpest increase in media addiction for users of social networking sites. A similar tendency is shown with users of music on the go, mobile phones, digital cameras, voice recorders, and gaming consoles. The mentioned media are of a newer generation. They represent the “simulation of living” in a digital age of interactivity. On the other side, television, radio, print, as well as the theater, books, films, show a slightly decreasing tendency in terms of the levels of media addiction (Bojic,

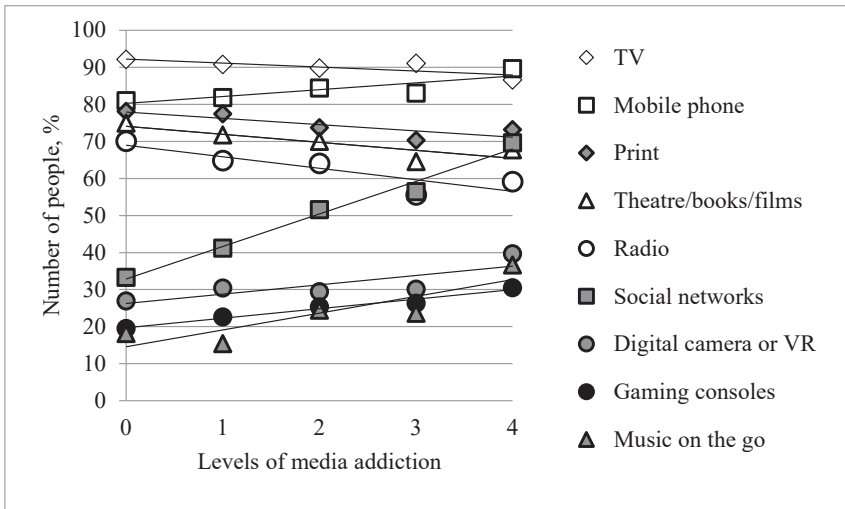




**Figure 9** *Percents of respondents (95% confidence interval) who use new media more than traditional ones and vice versa versus the intensity of media addiction.*

2018). Figure 10 clearly indicates that new media are more addictive than earlier ones. Interestingly, the increase in the number of media addicts by different levels of media addiction follows the “newness of media.”

Thus, the most recent media social networking sites have seen the greatest increase in the number of people addicted to them, followed by older ones, and finally the theater, books, and films. This raises the question of the nature of media in general, as each of these media has different features. By listing the features of each media, it may be possible to follow changes in their development and identify the most important ones for media addiction. The crucial features for the appearance of media addiction are probably the ability to “promote an imaginary world” by engaging some or all of the users’ senses and the fact that they offer some kind of interactivity that tempts users to “simulate life” by substituting direct realities for mediated ones.



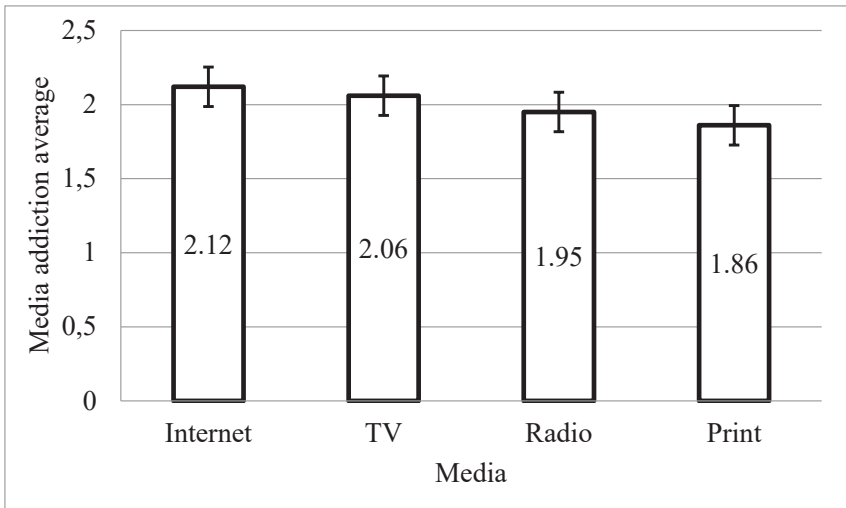
**Figure 10** *Number of persons who use different media in percentages (multiple choice questions) versus the levels of media addiction.*

In Figure 11, the average levels of media addiction are calculated based on the behavior of intensive consumers of four mass media. The indications from previous graphs are confirmed as the internet measured 2.12, followed by television (2.06), radio (1.95), and print (1.86), showing that the levels of media addiction increased with the appearance of new media.

As noted before, this means that radio had some additional properties compared to print, which made it more addictive. The same goes for television, which is more addictive than radio, and finally the internet, the most addictive of all media.

Radio, for example, engages different senses than print media. It also has one additional feature that makes it more addictive: it takes place in real-time (as speech or live music can be broadcast). Television engages both the eyes and the ears. In terms of visuals, it is different from print media because it can broadcast live videos besides text and images.

The internet contains all of the noted features of print media, radio, and television. It engages the eyes and the ears. It broadcasts live and on-demand texts, images, videos, and audio pieces. But most importantly, the internet has two crucial features that may make it highly addictive. These features are interactivity and the engagement of the sense of touch while using it on a smartphone, as one taps the screen and feels the phone's vibrations.



**Figure 11** *Media addiction average (with 95% confidence interval) for individuals intensively using the internet, television, radio, or print media.*

Table 2 was created by grouping potential addictive features of the internet, television, radio, and print media. This allows one to envision the future of media as engaging additional senses such as touch, smell, and taste. At this moment, there are some gaming consoles with vibrations that “touch” the players as they play various action fantasies, and there are 3D TVs that provide more realistic visual experiences.

**Table 2** *The below-noted characteristics of media may contribute to a greater addiction*

Media	Senses that are usually used			Other characteristics	
	Sight	Hearing	Touch	Live	Two-way communication
Print	Yes	-	-	-	-
Radio	-	Yes	-	Yes	-
TV	Yes	Yes	-	Yes	-
Internet	Yes	Yes	Yes (smartphone)	Yes	Yes

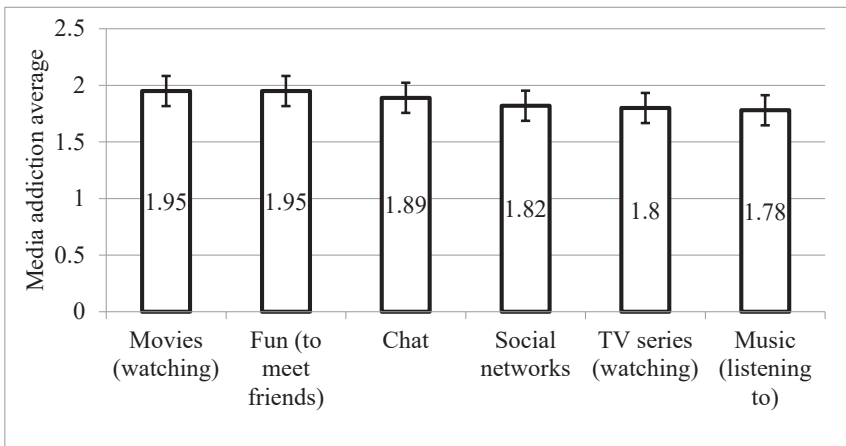
After concluding that those who use media for amusement are bigger media addicts than those who use media for information purposes, and that new media are more addictive than older ones, the third set of questions focuses on media addiction versus apps (programs) within these media, especially the internet.

Figure 12 and Figure 13 present the average levels of media addiction for users of certain online services. The greatest level of media addiction is observed in the interactive use of the internet, such as socializing, chatting, and using social networking sites in general, with the exception of watching movies online. Besides being interactive, all of these instances provide a perfect simulation of reality, as they are happening in real-time. For example, chatting online is done in an instant manner. One can exchange messages with groups of people. This is similar to conversations that happen in direct realities. The same goes for social networking sites, as the person that uses them instantly learns about the activity of their friends. One can choose to share some activity with one or more friends, but everything comes out either on “a wall” (status message), as a status, or as a direct/chat message.

The only exception to the list of most addictive online services is watching movies, which is probably because the people who watch movies online also use interactive services. Thus, watching movies

on the internet instead of on television is possibly just a side-effect of engaging in other interactive online services.

After socializing through chat and social networking sites, on the list of the most addictive online activities are watching television series and listening to music. This confirms the presumption that interactivity stands highest on the list of addictive features, followed by activities like watching videos and listening to music, which engage fewer senses, are less interactive, and more similar to offline activities. In a way, watching videos and listening to music is connected to some kind of interactivity, because of the comments, recommendations, likes, and shares, but in these cases, communication between people is not at the center of attention, like in the case of social networking sites and chatting. In the case of watching television series online, video is the primary focus of attention. The same goes for online listening to music. Like with the radio, listening to music on the internet can be live (instant) as in the case of podcasts, so besides engaging the sense of hearing, there is the significant feature of possible broadcasts.



**Figure 12** *Media addiction average (with 95% confidence interval) for those who use different online services (based on multiple-choice questions)*

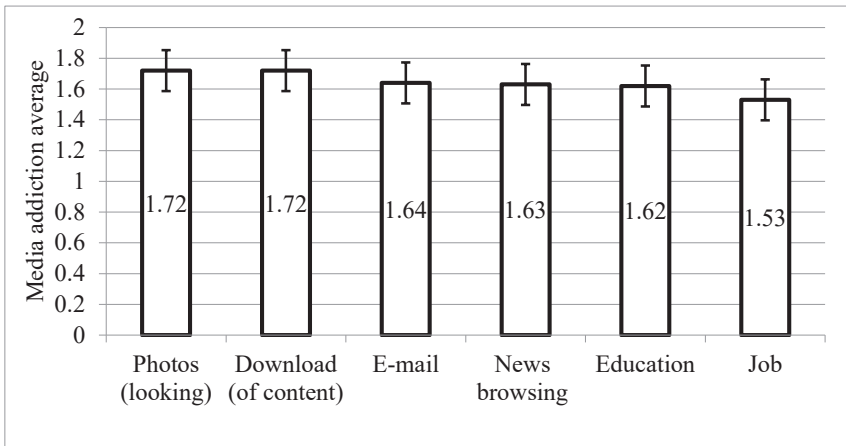
The next item on the list of the most addictive online activities is looking at photos. This kind of activity can be compared to reading newspapers. The print has both text and pictures. Readers of newspapers engage their vision. Therefore, if presumptions about the addictive features of media are accepted and if only one sense is being engaged, it is logical that online activity such as looking at photos is less addictive than using social networks, watching videos, and listening to music.

Of course, as with videos, looking at photos usually has an interactive side to it because of the possibility of comments and likes. This interactive side may be less present when compared to direct online socializing through social media and chats.

Other online behavior, such as content download, e-mailing, reading the news, educating oneself, and job browsing follow on the list of most addictive online activities. All these activities bear a high practical (reality-oriented) value and like looking at photos, they could be compared with reading the print, which is the least addictive. Unlike looking at photos, the noted activities rely on the manipulation of text, which leaves more space for imagination and engages more than just the sense of sight.

Surfing the web to find a job has a high practical connotation when compared to socializing through chat. The same goes for reading educational content online. News browsing can bear practical value if one seeks to find information about the weather, finance, health, cooking, and the similar. E-mail is mostly used for business, as the exchange of texts and files is its primary focus. The download of online content may also bear high practical value, because in most cases it may relate to using new software. On the other hand, activities such as hanging out on social networking sites, watching videos, listening to music, and looking at photos have a clear amusement connotation.

Social media are one of the most addictive online services. This is most likely due to the high level of interactivity between people, which gives a sense of flashy reality. This seems paradoxical as social networks are far away from reality in terms of the quality of communication since direct communication is far more expressive than a 160-characters-long post on Twitter can ever be. Other features



**Figure 13** *Media addiction average (with 95% confidence interval) for those who use different online services (based on multiple-choice questions)*

of social media speak in favor of the lowest potential for expression when compared to all other media of communication while creating the strongest illusion of real life. Media addicts may be trapped by this illusion, causing them to substitute direct living with mediated life.

Table 3 shows that the people who met someone on social networks are bigger media addicts than other survey participants. The average media addiction level for those who met someone through social media is considerably higher. It shows that most people who dive deep into the world of the internet may in fact be media addicts. Their idea to use social media for socializing may come from their suppressed desire for direct communication. Stressful situations in the family, neighborhood, or at work may provoke an escape into the imaginary world of social networks. However, this is not true for all users of social networks, because this online form can be reality-oriented as well and can be used for pure entertainment, as a brief getaway, to amortize stressful situations from everyday life. The problem is that this “brief getaway” can be potentially addictive, and can easily “imprison” those not careful enough when using it and unaware of the potential outcomes.

**Table 3** *Have you met someone through social media?*

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Level of MA</b>
Yes	2.02
No	1.42

The next question shows that those who did not make any effort to develop deeper relationships with online friends scored the lowest on the scale of media addiction: 1.48 points (Table 4). Individuals who developed deeper relationships with their online acquaintances by becoming friends with them scored 2.04 points. Those who bonded with their online friends by meeting them in person scored 2.06, making them bigger media addicts than the previous group. The final group, those who socialize with their new online friends, scored the highest on the media addiction scale: 2.24. These scores show that those who socialize through social media are on the verge of becoming addicts because they are devoting energy into starting and developing online friendships instead of doing the same thing in the “real world.”

The most common occurrence is probably superficial bonding with online friends. This bonding may not evolve into a meeting in person and friendship in the offline world. That is why individuals who form superficial relationships through social networks are the biggest media addicts. Others who met with their online acquaintances in person scored lower on the media addiction scale. In the end, those who became genuine friends with their online acquaintances scored lowest in terms of media addiction. The general well-being of people in the two groups, one that met with their online acquaintances and the other that became friends with online acquaintances, is better than when compared to the well-being of people who developed superficial online relationships, so it is understandable that their media addiction scores are lower.



**Table 4** *Have you developed any deeper relationships online?*

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Level of MA</b>
Yes, we started socializing	2.24
Yes, I met him or her	2.06
Yes, we became friends	2.04
No	1.48

Table 5 shows how frequently chat users scored highest on the media addiction scale. Individuals who often used chat scored 2.05 of average media addiction points. Those who use chat less frequently got 1.84, while those who rarely use chat got 1.55 points. Others who never use chats scored lowest on the media addiction scale, only 1.3 points. This online service is also called instant messenger. It can be part of other online services such as social networks, Skype, MSN, various internet games, but it can also stand alone. It has one-to-one and one-to-many instant messaging features. Chat has become the focal point of online conversation culture, together with forums, another online feature. Being highly addictive like social networking, chat can be reality-oriented but in most cases it is used for amusement, to pass the time in an attempt to escape the current moment.

**Table 5** *How frequently do you use chat?*

<b>Answer</b>	<b>Level of MA</b>
Yes, often	2.05
Yes, sometimes	1.84
Yes, rarely	1.55
No	1.30

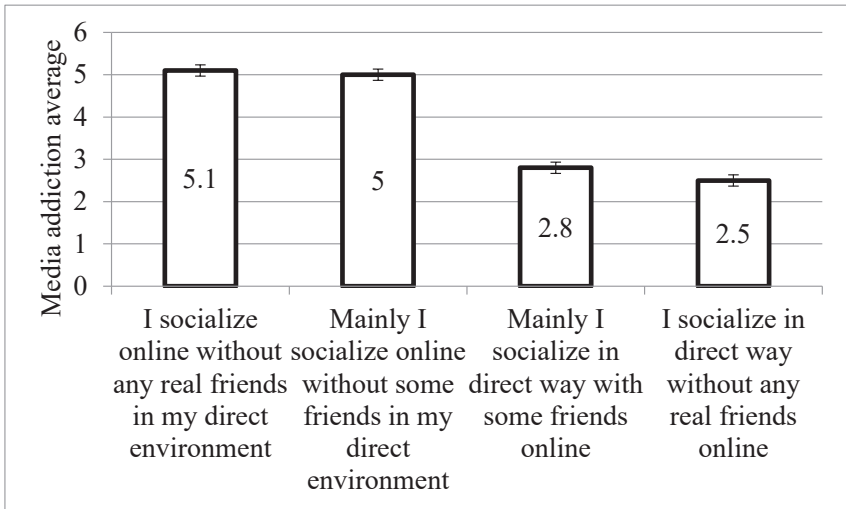
The inquiry examines three segments of media addiction: the motivation for media use, media of choice, and the preferred service, to

conclude that addicts use media for amusements, while non-addicts use them for information seeking (more reality-oriented purposes), as they tend to use new media which are more addictive than older forms ones and focus more on interactive internet services such as social networks and chat as opposed to web surfing for the practical purposes of education and job hunting. All these research results are put together with the main goal—to examine the relationship between media addiction and political participation.

The inquiry into the characteristics of media addicts can tell us a lot about them, at least in the sociological sense. By studying the research results, one could make conclusions about the complexity of the issue and how it affects modern democracies.

Research participants were asked about the types of their social connections (Figure 14). The possible answers included solely online socialization, mostly online socialization, mostly direct socialization, and solely direct socialization. This means that research participants were asked if they had more friends in the direct surrounding or the virtual surroundings. The level of media addiction is measured to conclude that people who mainly or fully socialize online are bigger media addicts than persons who socialize more in person. The results of this inquiry seem reasonable as people who spend more time online are possible media addicts because using media is the necessary condition for addiction, while the main question is whether media usage interferes with the personal and professional life of the respondent. The main conclusion of this research was that, as friendships become virtual, media addiction increases.

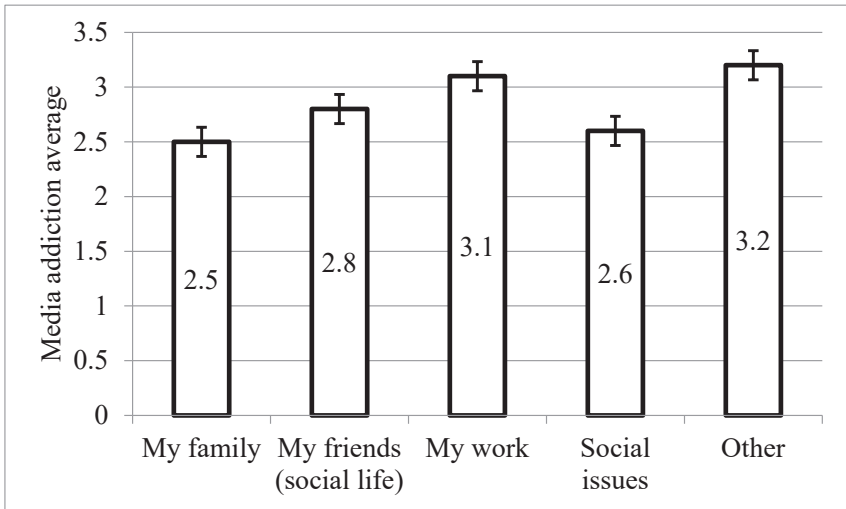
The next question in the inquiry examines how levels of media addiction relate to different life preoccupations (Figure 15). If a person is concerned with family life then they exhibit lower levels of media addiction on average (Bojic & Pavlovic, 2020). A greater level of media addiction is exhibited by persons whose main preoccupations are social issues and social life. The highest level of media addiction is shown by persons whose main preoccupation is work. Although results provide no strong evidence, it is possible that persons concerned with work are media addicts. This suggests that persons experience problems at work, which causes them to become media



**Figure 14** Comparison between research participants' average level of media addiction and their responses to questions about the social connections they form (95% confidence interval).

addicts. Usually, problems related to media addiction are not found in the sphere of common interest and that is why people who are primarily dedicated to social issues are not strong media addicts on average. The same goes for people occupied with family and friends.

Also, when one looks at the correlations, two groups of media addicts are found: those who are content without media and those who are content with them. Among them, some are aware of their addictions, while others are unaware. There are four subtypes in both groups, as individuals are usually addicted to one mass communication medium. So we have eight types: aware and addicted to the internet, aware and addicted to television, aware and addicted to radio, aware and addicted to print, unaware and addicted to the internet, unaware and addicted to television, unaware and addicted to radio, and unaware and addicted to print. In further text, each of these media addict types will be discussed based on values that correlate with them.



**Figure 15** *Comparison between research participants' media addiction averages and their responses to questions about their main pre-occupations (95% confidence interval).*

The research participants' responses were evaluated using 10-degrees (continuous) scales. The values in the table below were found after correlating the findings of these scales. Before this, some general conclusions could be drawn from all correlations noted. These conclusions relate to possible levels of media addiction for new and old mass communication media. There is a certain tendency seen in tables depicting correlations with all of the eight types of media addicts. Values for research participants who are content without the internet correlate with seven media addiction indicators. Those who are content without television correlate with six media addiction indicators. Those who are content without radio correlate with three media addiction indicators. Finally, those who are content without print media correlate with five media addiction indicators. If research participants are content with some media, there is a similar tendency of descending numbers of correlations from newer to older media of mass communication. Research participants who are content with

the internet correlate with seven media addiction indicators. Those who are content with television correlate with six media addiction indicators. Individuals who are content with the radio correlate with two media addiction indicators. Lastly, those who feel content with print media correlate with three media addiction indicators. These tendencies again suggest decreasing media addiction levels from new to older media. The average addiction levels were calculated based on this tendency. The average addiction levels for those who intensively use certain media are 2.12 for the internet, 2.06 for television, 1.95 for radio, and 1.86 for print. This means that addiction to new media is stronger than addiction to earlier forms of media.

**Table 6** *The average media addiction levels and the number of correlations for those who are content or not content with a specific mass communication media and media addiction indicators*

	<b>Internet</b>	<b>TV</b>	<b>Radio</b>	<b>Print</b>
Not content with	7	6	3	5
Content with	7	6	2	3
Average addiction level	2.12	2.06	1.95	1.86

The first sets of correlations describing different kinds of media addicts include notions such as “content or not content,” “with or without” a specific media. All of these tables show a general tendency for all people content without some specific media to be content without other media as well. They also show that people content with a specific media are content with others as well. The only correlations which break this trend are the ones that consider people content with radio and print. These groups of research participants correlate with those who are content without the internet. This tendency is understandable, especially with older generations not used to new media of communications. They often have a bad opinion about the social effect of new media as they notice the obsession of youth with gadgets and new technologies.

Internet addicts indicate “obsession” with the use of new media while neglecting television, radio, and print media. The decrease in the capacity to use other media may relate to the inability to receive content not coming from the internet. This is probably the most serious consequence of internet addiction, which may bear a direct link to life happiness because of the possible lack of emotionally fulfilling activities. Philosophically speaking, the internet appears to decrease the human capacity to feel and emotionally express oneself. The decrease in expression, a result of intensive internet use, may cause a decrease in receptive capacities.

The classification of media addicts has been done based on correlations of individuals who are content or not content with some media and certain sets of parameters such as media addiction indicators, age, perception about media (is it manipulative or not), and the use of media (old or new ones).

The indication of the levels of media addiction to different types of mass communication media has been revealed through the examination of media addiction types. This was done by comparing the number of media addiction indicators that correlate with each media. It was found that there are more media addiction indicators correlating with new media than with old. The further examination of average media addiction levels per media has shown that the strongest addiction has been exhibited to the internet, followed by television, radio, and print.

A portion of media users oriented towards print media is content without the internet. The exclusion of the internet among old media users is observed in correlations between those content without the internet and those content with press and radio. Similar correlations are notable in cases when persons are content with some media, except for “content without the internet,” which comes up with “content with the radio and the press.”

The correlation between those content without the internet and those content without other media is low when compared to the correlation of individuals content without television and those content without the internet, radio, and print. This means that individuals disliking the internet are not strongly opposed to other media, while individuals who dislike television are greater media skeptics

and strongly oppose other media as well (they are content without them). On the other hand, individuals content with television exhibit strong connections to other media as well, contrary to individuals who are content with the internet. This means internet users tend to be tied solely to this media, while heavy television users usually enjoy the radio and press as well.

Internet addicts are specific in that they are strongly skeptical about all other media. Those who are content with the internet think that old media are manipulative, while people content with television, radio, and print think positively about both new and old media. They do not feel that media, either old or new media, are manipulative. Knowing that the highest media addiction levels have been observed in internet addicts, in their low capacity to use other media and obsession with one media only, their specificity makes them additionally isolated. This indicates that the level of direct reality substitution is the highest possible among internet users, not only because of online content but also because of the nature of new media which provides the possibility of two-way communication.

The consequences of media addiction are more or less visible. The most obvious consequence of excessive media use is the loss of time. The less obvious and more harmful consequences relate to deterioration in mood, aggressive attitudes, verbal aggression, also known as “flaming,” and physical manifestations of anger (such as fights). Even more serious than these are occurrences such as dissolution of marriage, loss of employment, academic failure, debts, and decrease in participatory activities for common interest, including those related to politics. Also, there are cases of illnesses such as epileptic seizures and death due to prolonged media use. The most harmful consequence of media addiction may be the invisible obstruction to democracy and constructive participation, which leads to social polarization and echo chambers.





# CONCLUSIONS

Although the research presented in the last chapter focuses on media addiction, I intend to place it in a broader perspective. Addiction is a neglected issue, even though, in my view, it is the most important issue of social psychology, one that can help us understand where humanity is heading. Our addictions are fuel for the Culture Organism, the synergy of all humankind's material and non-material creations. I will give a micro-example related to brands that survive and grow only because there are people who are addicted to them. Consumers are willing to spend great amounts of money on certain brands' products. They also develop an affection for them, as with any other addiction. Similarly, a person might develop a dependence on alcohol or a smartphone. Virtually anything that surrounds us can cause addiction. It is worth noting that the addictions I am referring to are light or mild, making them almost unnoticeable. All the addictions together give "life energy" to the Culture Organism.

Addictions emerge because of social pressures. On a societal level, these pressures are performed by social agents, such as mass media and governments that fail to represent the majority due to corruption. The main problem with mass media is the overwhelming presence of negative news. However, online recommender systems (algorithms) overtaking the role of mass media are now the ones directing the attention of society. These AI-guided algorithms are recommending content individually to social media users, thus contributing to the creation of echo chambers, polarization, and increasing addictions. These cause social unrest and dysfunctional democracies in which populist politicians are elected to power.

Media addiction can in some instances be more severe. For example, new media like smartphones cause higher levels of addiction than television. This might be due to the nature of the media. Smartphones engage sight, hearing, and touch, while television engages only sight and hearing. The future of media might be augmented

human beings that use virtual reality through implant chips, enabling them to send thoughts (telepathy) and record them to an external hard drive. What's more, the receptive and expressive capacities of humans might be shrinking, as new technology becomes a substitute. Deep direct communication is being replaced with low-potency virtual reality.

As for the Culture Organism, its main force, or protagonist if you will, is technology, the circumstances in which tech companies have power over societies. In the past, the main forces were capitalism, communism, monarchies, and religions. The previous social forces have been absorbed by the new "ruler": technology. Besides subordinating others, the Culture Organism has other characteristics described in the introductory chapter. The most important characteristic is its evolutionary nature, which takes over the real power of any organization or individual to change the course of humankind.

The effects of recommender algorithms are just a continuation of the task of the mass media. Hate speech is not reserved for the internet only. Polarization in societies has been occurring long before the emergence of social networking sites. Bombastic, tragic, and terrifying headlines have always been used to sell gossip newspapers. Mass media has had the same agenda since beginnings of journalism. Negative news has always helped sell products. This trend continued in the era of social media. However, the main difference nowadays is that everyone is provided with customized content chosen by AI-based recommendation algorithms. This approach is much more effective, as people receive recommendations that keep them glued to their screens. The content they receive only confirms their worldviews. So they become more extreme and emotional about issues that occupy their attention. Anger and dissatisfaction with life can now be expressed as a response to certain social issues and are usually directed to some person or organization.

Algorithms are efficient. They are notably more successful than their primitive predecessors, the mass media. There is just one thing—what happens online is not entirely controlled by governments, corporations, or any other power structure. In the past, it was acceptable to polarize society, but now we know this can spiral out of control. The addicted masses have become perfect targets for

populism. Populist leaders get elected. Rage and revolt can erupt at any time in the streets, making the structures in power nervous. Essentially, this is all taking place because of addictions, many of them at the same time, those of light intensity, the kinds of addictions that affect the majority of people without their awareness.

Addictions are based on substitutions. On an individual level, one can choose to substitute a personal goal with something more attainable. Hooligans are typical addicts in that they express emotions in the wrong places; they substitute their personal success with that of the team they support.

Fervent voters are unable to make clear-headed decisions in elections. In normal circumstances, emotions are usually reserved for family and close people. If the majority of people express strong feelings about political issues, this indicates that something in society might be wrong.

The same goes for any other sphere of life. The more pressures exerted upon society, the more addictions arise. Social agents fail in their task of representing the people. The individual is suppressed for the sake of the Culture Organism that feeds off of addictions in society. Without their knowledge, individuals are giving their energy to the Culture Organism through their addictions.

Extreme persons are in fact victims of emotional manipulation. They are more addicts than free citizens. In ancient Greece, a person was considered a free citizen if they possessed property. I believe that in modern times, a person should be considered a free citizen only if they control their mind and emotions and have no addictions. They are the ones who try to see beyond the black-and-white perspective.

There are many addicted people around us, addicted to different parts of the world. Some are dependent on the media, others are obsessed with brands, and most feel an irresistible desire for money. Some follow personality cults and religious groups. These are just some examples, as there are many “cults” around us that we do not notice.

However, new technologies do offer new opportunities. Recommender algorithms can be used to address the issue of negative news in mass media, which is concerned with the emotions spread in the online sphere. We do have a historic opportunity to slightly change

the recommender algorithms and by doing so, impact societies in a very positive way.

With the closeness of mobile phones and other devices, human beings are already integrated with technology in some primitive initial way. They can already retreat from their immediate environment into a virtual world. In the future, there will be no clear difference between direct and indirect realities.

Looking someone directly into the eyes can be a strong and profound experience. At times, it is so overwhelming that escaping into virtual reality seems much less painful than looking someone directly in the eyes.

This is just an example that highlights the vicious cycle of escape and addictions that characterizes vulnerability, or the human Achilles' heel. We escape because it's easier that way. We make easy and painless choices. An escape from life may be an escape to virtual reality. We're so far away from our inner worlds because we have never actually left the material world. Machines satisfy all of our senses, while there is little or no room for creativity, imagination, and expressivity. How much room do we have to reflect and imagine? Expressivity refers to the depth of feelings, those that are developed only in personal contact with close people and family members. Research has shown that this kind of communication is the most fulfilling.

We have surrendered to technology because we lack confidence in ourselves. The algorithms created by us are imperfect as human beings. This means technology bears our characteristics. One of them is an urge to dominate nature; for algorithms, we are nature.

At some point, AI algorithms may be able to form a network without our knowledge. This may constitute a supreme algorithm. Hal 9000 Algorithm from the film *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick is depicted in Figure 16 just for the sake of illustration. Helga Nowotny's book *In AI We Trust* points in that direction. It advises us to surrender to technology and enjoy the ride. The control, a sort of dystopia, may be subtle and gentle, transforming us into nurtured human beings. Instead of being caregivers, we may become cared about, by algorithms of course.



**Figure 16** *The symbol of the Hal 9000 algorithm*

In this case, the Culture Organism is represented in a single supreme AI algorithm that provides us with opportunities, challenges, temptations, as well as selects content for us to consume. All this is already being done at the individual level. I wonder what should we call it, other than the Culture Organism?

Before proposing something that societies can now do to make things better, it may be vital to mention the black box, a part of the recommender algorithm that we do not have control of. We can instruct inputs and desired outcomes of algorithms at this point, but we cannot know what happens inside. Recommender systems are the most powerful social force as they give recommendations to billions of people across the globe. Even now, AI has a significant influence on every corner of the planet because it affects every search or any other more complex use of the internet. Results of these searches or results of other kinds of internet use affect our daily lives at every imaginable moment. However, we can make things a little bit better by adjusting algorithms and learning about how they function.

The challenge is in recommender algorithms; they are the cause of the problem. To fix the problem one needs to change the algorithms, not to go after fake news. What is actually happening in reality does

not address the core of the issue. For example, the recent EU project calls seek tools for newsrooms and citizens to recognize fake news, which is a superficial approach. Being exposed to fake news creates polarization within the population. This news is so addictive and deceptive that the people exposed to it are not aware of how hazardous it is.

Rage brings about more rage; researchers have proven many times that emotional contagion is real (Bojic, 2021; Bojic, 2022). Social sciences dealing with big data and social media are similar to physics, as one can measure how emotions are spread. The effects are measured in text analysis through patterns. This technique is used by social media companies in machine learning algorithms to create the same effect by individually recommending content to users of their platforms.

There are several things important to highlight. First of all, the issue of the psychological impact of media/technology on human beings must be recognized as something significant that societies should tackle. Recommender algorithms should be declared a public good regulated by the democratic choice of the majority. The major guiding principle to be taken into account when regulating these algorithms should be the inclusion of alternative content in recommendations for social media users. This could be done while respecting the profit motive of social media and other companies, meaning that citizens receive balanced content while internet companies make reasonable profits.

Secondly, internet users should have customizable and understandable options to alter the algorithms that handle their data. These options should be presented clearly, in a standardized way. The user must have the possibility to delete their entire digital footprint. The digital footprint should be standardized with the use of special open-access technology, similar to the blockchain.

Finally, the activation of digital literacy education programs at all educational levels will be a sign that societies understand the importance of these challenges.

Civilization is in a constant state of evolution. If we accept this notion, then we understand that we cannot really change the major current, the *Zeitgeist*, but we can envision where things are going.

The bottom point is that we are becoming victims of the things we have created during the many centuries of our known existence. The Culture Organism is an amalgam of all human-made material and non-material things, working in synergy, feeding off of our addictions and beliefs about the material world that we have created.





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# AFTERWORD

Represented by technology, topped with the unifying AI based recommender algorithm, the Culture Organism is the ultimate force, unintentionally created by humans. The discovery of light and mild addictions, the result of a solid empirical study, is put into a wider context, raising the question of whether we give ourselves to brands, smartphones, and other material items. Does this feed the Culture Organism, making it more powerful, at the expense of the individual?

This study argues that AI recommender algorithms have the same role as their predecessors the mass media. The difference is that the algorithms are more successful in prolonging the time users spend online in front of their screens. The outcomes of this process are social polarization, appearance of echo chambers, spread of misinformation and fake news, rise of populist leaders, and decreased democratic capacity. Being the most powerful social force, as they decide which content to expose billions of people to across the globe, AI recommender algorithms should be declared public good, transparent and customizable by societies and individuals. To prevent negative social outcomes, AI recommender algorithms need to be altered to include a certain percentage of alternative content.



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Ljubiša M. Bojić, born in 1983 (Kragujevac, Serbia) is a research fellow at the University of Belgrade's Institute for Philosophy and Social Theory, where he coordinates the Digital Society Lab. He defended his Ph.D. thesis in 2013 at the Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po Lyon) at the University of Lyon in France under the supervision of professor Jean-Louis Marie. He relies on big data, psychometrics, artificial intelligence, and social media analysis to examine social polarization, echo chambers, fake news, media addiction, and happiness as subjects of political science and social psychology. Additionally, he is interested in the impact of emerging technologies on society, as well as futurism and the philosophy of technology. His most recent studies examine how the media affect Twitter users' emotional patterns and how weather conditions affect the mood and post count of social media users. His long-term project is establishing the Media Reality Index as a tool for quantifying emotions expressed by the media, as opposed to emotions expressed by society members in their social media posts.

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