



CENTER FOR HOMELAND  
DEFENSE AND SECURITY  
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL



# HSx: CHANGING ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL



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# THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL

- At the very core of society is the individual.
  - Individuals make up society.
  - Individuals influence society.
  - We are all unique, come from different backgrounds, and bring with us a different set of circumstances that contribute to the collective society.
- Actions and events that occur on all levels (micro, meso, and macro) affect the individual in different ways based on social class, race and ethnicity, gender, and age.
  - New opportunities for development
  - Stressors
  - Risks
  - Social environments becoming more casual
- The way in which individuals interact with each other and society is changing rapidly which has serious implications for homeland security and emergency management.
  - Evolving **t**errorist **t**hreat – predatory practices aimed at troubled or naïve individuals
  - Lacking trust in the government – amateur vs. traditional news source
  - Difficulty communicating during disasters – technological dependence & accurate information

# THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL: OVERALL TRENDS

Americans are increasingly relating to one another in different ways, particularly through social media platforms and web-based mechanisms (i.e., chat applications).

Public trust in government institutions has decreased and is shifting towards personal social networks.

Amateurs are increasingly becoming trusted sources of information rather than subject-matter experts.

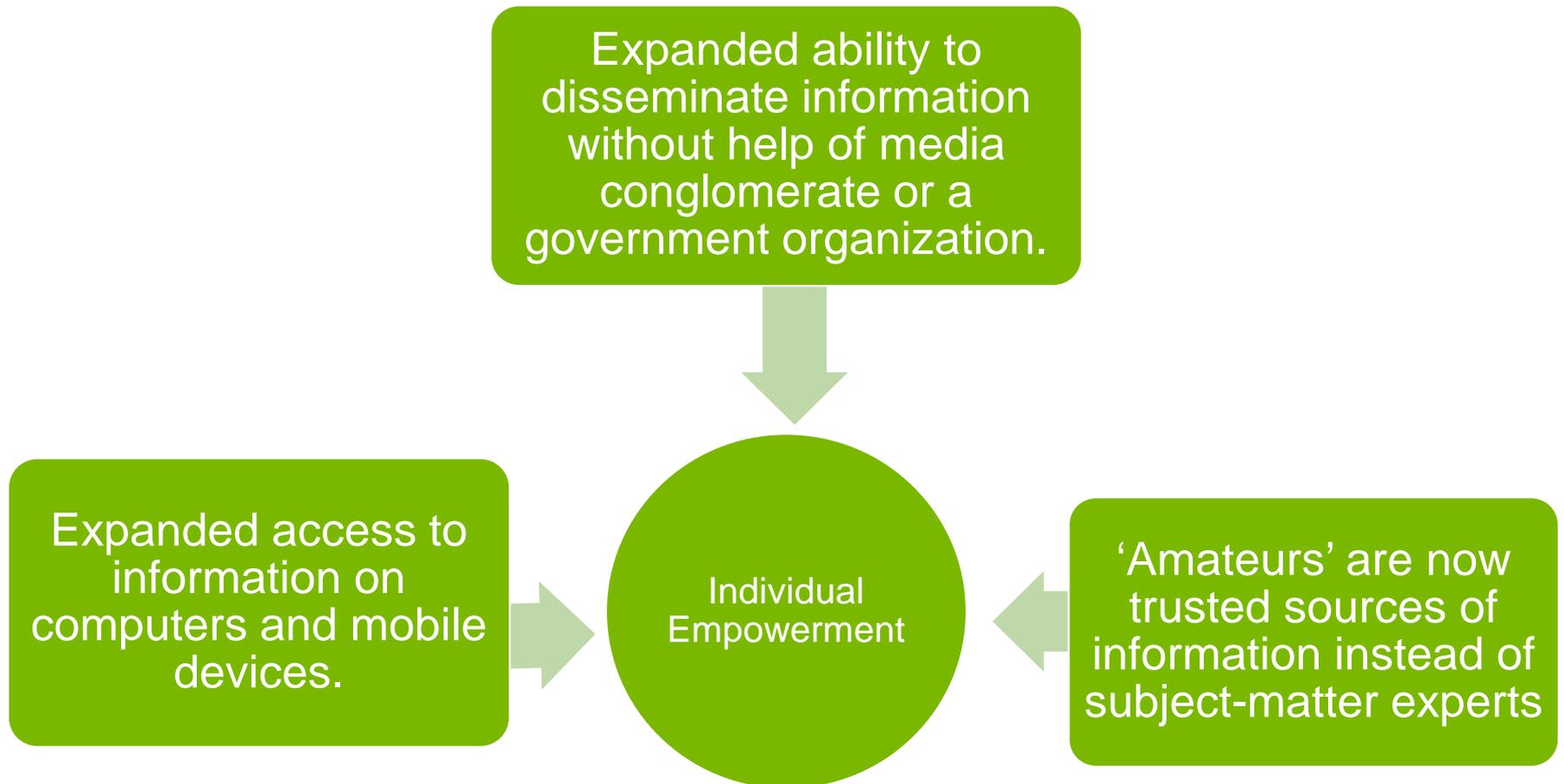
American society is becoming more mobile-physically and technologically.

# THE CHANGING ROLE OF THE INDIVIDUAL: KEY THEMES



# INCREASED EMPOWERMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

- Empowerment is the process in which individuals “assume control or mastery over their lives.” – Rappaport 1987



# INCREASED EMPOWERMENT OF THE INDIVIDUAL

- Expanded access to information on computers and mobile devices
  - Advances in network connectivity and content storage are increasing the shift away from desktop computers.
  - Less print and more web content
  - It is anticipated that soon, smartphones will be an individual's only computer.
- Expanded ability to disseminate information without help of media conglomerate or a government organization.
  - Blogging, DIY website, and podcast platforms allow for anyone to have voice on the internet.
  - Content shared on the internet can go 'viral'.
  - Inexpensive or free marketing courses and/or social media classes show individuals how to market themselves and create content that will be shared by followers.
- Amateurs' are now trusted sources of information instead of subject-matter experts.
  - An individual who has an active and strong online identity may be perceived as an expert in a subject area, when in fact, they are not.
  - Expanded ability to disseminate information through blogging, websites, podcasts, YouTube videos, etc.
  - Followers may disseminate information regardless of its truth or accuracy, and as content is shared it becomes increasingly popular and individuals are seen as experts.
  - Individuals may identify with feelings invoked by fake or alternate news.
  - Real experts may not have a strong online following or may not have a presence online.

# INTERNET, MOBILE AND SOCIAL MEDIA USERS



Credit: We Are Social / Hootsuite

# CHANGING DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY

## Americans are increasingly mobile

- Historically, individuals may have remained in the same geographic area for most of their lives.
- More recently, young individuals are more likely to change companies or move to different cities multiple times over their lifetimes.
- As people move around, individuals may leave behind family members or communities that are part of their ethnic and cultural identity and have to assimilate to a new community or culture.

## False sense of connection

- Interacting online can make it difficult for individuals to distinguish between meaningful and casual relationships.
- Individuals may think they are more important or more valued in online community relationships than in real life.
- While online interactions can be meaningful, focusing on casual 'virtual' relationships can cause meaningful 'real' individual and community relationships to deteriorate.

# CHANGING DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY (CONT.)

Virtual Communities represent shared experiences or similar interests and can act as a support group

- Clubs and social groups can now meet virtually and communicate online.
- Individuals can find a larger community group than what is in their physical metropolitan area.
- Social media accounts (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+), chat rooms, and blogs may focus on particular interests, passions, hobbies, cultures, etc. Individuals can communicate freely and may feel more connected within these virtual communities than their physical community, especially if venues to express their interests are not available in their local community.
- As individuals disperse across the globe, they may find ways to be connected to their cultural and ethnicity through online communities if venues are not available in their physical communities. Within these online communities, they find support for navigating new physical and cultural territories while connecting to inherent cultural values.
- Individual involvement in virtual communities has been linked to offline civic engagement – making individuals and organizations more active in their communities.

# COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES

Amateurs are increasingly becoming trusted sources of information rather than subject-matter experts

- Anyone with access to a computer, tablet, or smartphone can have a social media account or start a website.
- Government officials are not viewed as a trusted source of information as much as they were in the past.
  - Research has shown that individuals seek out confirmation of information received via officials (e.g., emergency management, government institutions) from non-officials before taking action.
- Amateur sources are in close proximity to events and often break news in fragmented bits of visual and verbal information.
- In many cases, traditional news sources do not have exclusive access and now typically verify, validate, and expand upon the story.
- Examples include the Haiti Earthquake, Arab Spring events, political and social protests

# COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES (CONT.)

## People are more selective in their interaction

- Individuals can choose which media sources and websites to access and who to follow on social media.
- There are many information sources, but individuals now have the opportunity to get their information from organizations who share their interests.
- For example, someone who identifies as a Democrat may only turn to left-leaning news sources, and vice versa for someone who identifies as a Republican.

## Non-traditional information outlets (e.g., social media, blogs, YouTube) are powerful information sharing sources

- Social media outlets promote sharing of information (whether reliable or unreliable) over traditional hierarchical information.
  - Something that has a lot of 'likes' might show up in your news feed regardless of accuracy.
- For example, fake news is thought to have influenced 2016 election results. Google and Facebook are now actively working to remove and/or block fake news sources from their sites.

# COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES (CONT.)

Social media outlets promote sharing of information (whether reliable or unreliable) over traditional hierarchical information.

- Something that has a lot of 'likes' might show up in a news feed regardless of accuracy
- There is the tendency for individuals to share biased news sources to their network through social media outlets like Facebook.

Mobile technology has influenced how individuals receive news sources and notifications

- Information is readily available at an individual's fingertips.
- There is a divide between "connected" and "non-connected" individuals in terms of their access to information and news resources.

Technological advances have increased Americans' expectations for data and the ability to contribute individual input

- There is now the expectation of having direct access to data.
- Individuals increasingly expect to be able to provide their input on any subject.

# COMMUNICATIONS CHALLENGES (CONT.)

Adoption of technology currently is not distributed evenly across demographics

- Elderly, minority, under-educated and low-income individuals, as well as those who live in rural areas, are less likely to use the internet.
- As internet access and mobile devices become more accessible and affordable, more people will have access to online information.

Future technological advances will further change the way individuals communicate

- As network connectivity grows and devices become more affordable, more individuals will have access to the internet and will be able to utilize the internet in all ways discussed above.
- New social media and communication platforms will present new challenges.

# IMPLICATIONS

## Political Implications

- There could be a growing increase in government distrust, which in turn could fuel political instability.
- Individuals can play an increasingly powerful role within governance. The ability to connect with others for lobbying, campaigning, etc. is increasingly eased with technological advances.

## Societal Implications

- Greater virtual connectivity can enable and accelerate the formation of online communities that can mobilize if there is a local element (e.g., cultural identity, common interests).
- There is a divide between individuals in terms of their access to information and news resources, which creates a new version of the “haves” and “have-nots.” This disenfranchisement could be preyed upon by destabilizing forces.

## Technological Implications

- Individuals can play a greater role in influencing society and government through technological advances.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY

## Evolving Terrorist Threat

- The internet, social media, and web-based communication applications can create social bonds and virtual communities that influence, recruit, and radicalize young individuals through the exploitation of economic, social, political and personal grievances aired online.
- Individuals may find validation in virtual communities that prey upon troubled and/or naive individuals, elevating interpersonal and intrapersonal empowerment.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY (CONT.)

## Lack of Trust in Government

- When individuals do not trust information coming from official sources, there is increased difficulty in implementing emergency management plans, evacuation orders, and individual resilience-planning.
- Social networks may influence individuals to ignore or downplay government initiatives for emergency preparedness or disaster warnings.
- There is likely to be an increase in dissemination of misinformation. While amateurs can often provide information to the public more quickly than traditional news outlets or government institutions, the information is often misinformed or unreliable.

# IMPLICATIONS FOR EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AND HOMELAND SECURITY (CONT.)

## Communication During Disasters

- Individuals are more physically mobile, which makes them less likely to know the area in which they live very well. They may rely on electronic devices and GPS to navigate, and these technologies may experience disruptions to service during emergencies.
- Individuals involved in a disaster and who have access to electronic or mobile devices can provide near real-time eyewitness accounts and locational information.
  - A lot of ‘noise’ can be generated during disaster events, and it is hard to weed out the relevant and reliable information.
  - Although the types and amounts of information distributed during a disaster may vary greatly between social media platforms and based on the user and the type of disaster, this information can help emergency managers prioritize rescue and clean-up efforts.

# CASE STUDY: THE HAITI EARTHQUAKE

## An example of individual social media contributions for emergency communication and aid initiatives

- Twitter and other social media played an important part in communication during the Haiti Earthquake.
- First-hand accounts of the damage were reported on social media.
- Mainstream media outlets pieced together bits of information from these firsthand accounts and began verifying data.
- Links were shared with direct access to donation or aid sites creating almost instant forms of aid revenue and needed materials.
- Ushahidi Haiti – an open-sourced platform integrates user-generated content into one place and includes a GPS point from where that content was generated. Ushahidi Haiti helped organizations including the U.S. military deliver emergency aid; however, only 202 of the 3,500 messages posted to the crisis map were verified as accurate.

# CASE STUDY: FINDING A SOLUTION IN NEW ORLEANS

## Innovative Use of Social Media in Emergency Management – Hurricane Isaac, 2011

- Local and state emergency preparedness offices provided information about their social media accounts and websites to local news outlets so that community members could get up-to-date information on closures, transit changes, flooding, damages, etc.
- The New Orleans mayor's Twitter account was used to respond directly to community members' Twitter messages and to correct misinformation.
- Community members posted eyewitness videos and photos of damages and reported utility outages, flooding locations, and road closures. FEMA and the City of New Orleans used this information to plan their response efforts.
- News outlets encouraged the public to send information on Twitter about damages using specific hashtags and then combined the messages for others to see. This was a coordinated and powerful method of distributing information throughout the community
- The City of New Orleans used its Twitter account, @NOLAready, to respond directly to inquiries from the public.

# FINDING A SOLUTION

Identify community organizations with which to engage and collaborate.

Identify opportunities to engage with amateurs for communication of reliable information.

Identify opportunities to engage the public in emergency management.

Identify new assumptions based on mobile work and living patterns.

Identify ways to build a trusting relationship with the public.

# RESOURCES

The following resources provide further information on this topic:

- FEMA, Strategic Foresight Initiative. Changing Role of the Individual Fact Sheet. (No Date). Available at: [https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/programs/oppa/changing\\_role\\_individual.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/programs/oppa/changing_role_individual.pdf).
- Kumar, S., Morstatter, F., Zafarani, R., and Liu, H. “Whom should I follow?: Identifying relevant users during crises”, In Proc. of the 24<sup>th</sup> ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media, Paris, France. May 1-3, 2013. Available at: <http://www.public.asu.edu/~huanliu/papers/ht2013.pdf> .
- Lee Raine et al. How the Public Perceives Community Information Systems. Pew Research Center’s Internet & American Life Project, March 1, 2011. Available at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/03/01/how-the-public-perceives-community-information-systems/>.
- Wukich, C., and Mergel, I. A. Closing the Citizen-Government communication gap: Content, audience, and network analysis of government tweets. Social Science Research Network Working Paper Series (Aug. 2014). Available at: [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2488681](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2488681).

Additional research materials and information sources regarding this topic can be found in the associated Literary & Scholastic Resource List.

# Literary and Scholastic Resources – Changing Role of the Individual

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**Date of information:** 27 March 2017

**Overview:** While not exhaustive, the following resources provide a roadmap to understanding the key trends and drivers that are shaping the way individuals interact with society. These resources provide a baseline of understanding, but as the strategic environment continues to evolve, new data will become available and resource lists will require updates.

**Module Resource Lists to Cross-Reference:** Increasing Ideological Polarization, Growth of the Global Middle Class, Role of Big Data

## Organizations:

- **Pew Research Center:** The Pew Research Center is nonpartisan organization that informs the public about issues, attitudes, and trends shaping America. The organization conducts public opinion polling, demographic research, content analysis and social-science research. Social Trends: <http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/>. Main splash page: <http://www.pewresearch.org/>.
- **International Sociological Association:** The International Sociological Association (ISA) is a non-profit institution dedicated to research in sociology and other social science fields. The ISA provides a variety of publications including journal articles, dissertation abstracts, research papers, videos and digital platforms relating to sociological research. Research committees within the organization specialize in a variety of topics including social transformation, social movements, and sociology of communication, knowledge and culture, which are relevant to understanding perceived and functional roles of the individual in society. Research Committee Page: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/en/research-networks/research-committees/>. Main splash page: <http://www.isa-sociology.org/en/>.

## Recent Publications and Journal Articles:

- **Media and Empowerment: The Information Society Special Issue:** This special issue of *The Information Society Journal* examines the issue of empowerment in new media, such as online platforms. The articles in this issue examine theories of empowerment, provide methodological frameworks for analysis, and discuss processes that shape individual and collective empowerment within online communities.
  - **Citation:** *The Information Society: Media and Empowerment* (2014) 30:3.  
<http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/utis20/30/3>.
- **Relation between Individual and Society:** This paper provides a philosophical review of the relationship between the individual and society with an emphasis on humans as social animals and the co-dependence of the individual and society.
  - **Citation:** Hossain, Anayet F.M. and Korban Ali, MD. “Relation between Individual and Society.” *Open Journal of Social Sciences* (2014) 2(8): 130-137.  
<http://www.scirp.org/journal/PaperInformation.aspx?PaperID=49227&#abstract>.
- **Effects of Social Change on Individual Development: The Role of Social and Personal Factors and the Timing of Events:** The focus of this chapter is how individuals deal with social change; how social change is perceived, experienced, and acted upon by an individual; and how these reactions affect human development in adolescence.
  - **Citation:** Trommsdorff, Gisela. “Effects of Social Change on Individual Development: The Role of Social and Personal Factors and the Timing of Events.” In *Negotiating Adolescence in Times of*

*Social Change*, Lisa J. Crockett and Rainer K. Silbereisen (eds). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2000), pages 55-68.

- The Social Side of the Internet: This publication from the Pew Research Center reviews how technology is affecting the way individuals relate to groups, how individuals stay informed of group activity, and how civic and social groups use technology to impact their communities.
  - *Citation*: Rainie, Lee, Kristen Purcell and Aaron Smith. *The Social Side of the Internet*. PEW Research Center, January 18, 2011. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/01/18/the-social-side-of-the-internet/>
- Recruitment and Radicalization of School-Aged Youth by International Terrorist Groups: This report examines how the internet can be used to create social bonds and virtual communities that influence, recruit, and radicalize young individuals through the exploitation of economic, social, political, and personal grievances aired online.
  - *Citation*: Bott, Catherine; W. James Castan, Rosemary Lark, and George Thompson. *Recruitment and Radicalization of School-Aged Youth by International Terrorist Groups*. Homeland Security Institute, prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Safe and Drug-Free Schools. Arlington, VA. HIS No. RP08-37-01. <http://cleanitproject.eu/files/95.211.138.23/wp-content/uploads/2012/07/2009-recruitment-and-radicalization.pdf>
- The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion of Power: This article discusses communications technology, the free flow of information, and challenges in the information revolution.
  - *Citation*: Schmidt, Eric and Jared Cohen. "The Digital Disruption: Connectivity and the Diffusion of Power." *Foreign Affairs* (2010) 89(6):75-85. [https://www.jstor.org/stable/20788718?seq=1#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/20788718?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents).
- Social Media and Social Movements: This article examines the role social media plays in social movements and political unrest.
  - *Citation*: Kidd, Dustin and Keith McIntosh. "Social Media and Social Movements." *Sociology Compass* (2016) 10(9):785-794. <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/soc4.12399/full>
- Fostering Empowerment in Online Support Groups: This article serves as a review of the purpose, science, and theory of online support groups and the personal empowerment they foster, as well as well as negative experiences of *engagement on the internet*.
  - *Citation*: Barak, A., M. Boniel-Nissim, and J. Suler. "Fostering empowerment in online support groups." *Computers in Human Behavior* (2008) 24:1867-83. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0747563208000198>.
- Online Interactions and Social Capital: Distinguishing between New and Existing Ties: This article examines the implications of new findings of a positive correlation between interpersonal interactions and social capital of online social interactions.
  - *Citation*: Best, Samuel J. and Brian S. Krueger. "Online Interactions and Social Capital: Distinguishing between New and Existing Ties." *Social Science Computer Review* (2006) 24(4):395-410. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0894439306286855>.
- Understanding the Sustainability of a Virtual Community: Model Development and Empirical Test: This research model combines key concepts from IS continuance model, social influence theory, the uses and gratifications paradigm, and relationship marketing to explain individual participation in virtual communities. This research has broader implications for understanding online individual and community empowerment as well as the way information is exchanged on the internet.
  - *Citation*: Cheung, C.M. K., and M.K. O. Lee. "Understanding the sustainability of a virtual community: Model development and empirical test." *Journal of Information Science* (2009) 35: 279-98. <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0165551508099088>.

- Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media: Originally intended for business development, this article reviews the various types and classes of social media. Understanding the concept of varying social media outlets is useful in understanding why individuals may be drawn to specific types of social media or virtual communities and how those outlets can be used for individual and community empowerment.
  - *Citation*: Kaplan, Andreas M. and Michael Haenlein. "Users of the World, Unite! The Challenges and Opportunities of Social Media." *Business Horizons* (2010) 53(1):59-68. <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0007681309001232>.
- Terms of Empowerment/Exemplars of Prevention: Toward a Theory for Community Psychology: This article serves as an introduction to empowerment theory.
  - *Citation*: Rappaport, Julian. Terms of Empowerment/Exemplars of Prevention: Toward a Theory for Community Psychology. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, (1987) 15(2):121-148.
- What to Expect When the Unexpected Happens: Social Media Communications Across Crises: This article discusses the role that social media, in particular Twitter, plays during a crisis or emergency situation. Their findings indicated that there were similarities in the types of information users sent out based on the type of event, its timeframe (sudden or progressive), and whether it was contained to a small area or diffused over a larger area. In terms of the relevance to emergency management, the proportion of tweets that are useful is much less than those that provide helpful information.
  - *Citation*: Olteanu, Alexandra, Sarah Vieweg, Carlos Castillo. *What to Expect When the Unexpected Happens: Social Media Communications Across Crises*. Paper presented at CSCW 2015. March 14-18, 2015, Vancouver, BC, Canada. [https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/203562/files/cscw2015\\_final.pdf](https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/203562/files/cscw2015_final.pdf)
- How the Public Perceives Community Information Systems: This report examines the key components of local information systems in three communities with advisory help from the Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project.
  - *Citation*: Lee Raine et al. *How the Public Perceives Community Information Systems*. Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project, March 1, 2011. <http://www.pewinternet.org/2011/03/01/how-the-public-perceives-community-information-systems/>.
- Whom Should I Follow? Identifying Relevant Users During Crises: Through an analysis of Twitter users and tweets disseminated during disaster events, the authors analyze and identify which types of users provide the most relevant and accurate information.
  - *Citation*: Kumar, S., Morstatter, F., Zafarani, R., and Liu, H. "Whom should I follow?: Identifying relevant users during crises." *In Proc. of the 24<sup>th</sup> ACM Conference on Hypertext and Social Media, Paris, France. May 1-3, 2013*. <http://www.public.asu.edu/~huanliu/papers/ht2013.pdf>
- Closing the Citizen-Government Communication Gap: Content, Audience, and Network Analysis of Government Tweets: This article examines to what extent state-level emergency management agencies employ social media to increase public participation and induce behavioral changes intended to reduce household and community risk.
  - *Citation*: Wukich, C., and Mergel, I. A. *Closing the Citizen-Government communication gap: Content, audience, and network analysis of government tweets*. Social Science Research Network Working Paper Series (Aug. 2014). [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=2488681](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=2488681).

#### Books:

- Bowling Alone: The author describes how Americans have become increasingly disconnected from family, friends, neighbors, and our democratic structures due to changes in work, family structure, age, suburban life, television, computers, women's roles and other factors and offers ways to reconnect.
  - *Citation*: Putnam, Robert D. *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*. (2000). Simon and Schuster: New York. Available for purchase on Amazon: [https://www.amazon.com/dp/0743203046/ref=rdr\\_ext\\_tmb](https://www.amazon.com/dp/0743203046/ref=rdr_ext_tmb).

- **Social Media Freaks: Digital Identity in the Network Society:** Focusing on issues of identity and inequality in race, class, gender, sexuality, and disability, this book presents social theory, explains the dynamics of social media, how to engage social media as a tool for social activism, and examines social media's value in societal change.

*Citation:* Kidd, Dustin. *Social Media Freaks: Digital Identity in the Network Society* (2017). Westview Press: Boulder, Colorado.

#### **Other Resources:**

- **Changing Role of the Individual:** Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Strategic Foresight Initiative (SFI) has developed a list of drivers that may affect emergency management efforts in the upcoming years. Among this list is the "Changing Role of the Individual." This fact sheet presents a review of preliminary research and provides a list of useful sources used to examine this topic.
  - *Citation:* FEMA, SFI. *Changing Role of the Individual Fact Sheet*. (No Date). [https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/programs/oppa/changing\\_role\\_individual.pdf](https://www.fema.gov/pdf/about/programs/oppa/changing_role_individual.pdf).
- **The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective:** This article asserts that, rather than being isolating and causing individuals to disengage from society, the internet provides a platform for building social relationships on the basis of shared interests and values. Social networking plays a role in connecting people virtually and then, in some cases, physically as well. It also mentions the role the internet plays in allowing messaging to go from group to group without government interference.
  - *Citation:* Castells, Manuel. "The Impact of the Internet on Society: A Global Perspective." *MIT Technology Review*. September 8, 2014. <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/530566/the-impact-of-the-internet-on-society-a-global-perspective/>.
- **SOC101 – Individual in Society:** This college-level introductory Sociology course reviews basic sociology concepts and theories (including individual and social realities) and discusses how technology and media influence contemporary society. Classes are available as far back as 2010.
  - *Citation:* SOC 101- Individual in Society. California State University- Dominguez Hills. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UD2h6GaRCNY&list=PLoRUr3uNjuhZjDwBrVi8vx3j-kk-yS0g2>.
- **Community Information Toolkit:** A set of tools from the Monitor Institute and Knight Foundation to help community development organizations collect and disseminate accurate and timely information. Available at: <http://infotoolkit.org>.