GUEST EDITORIAL

The Evolution of Social Media Networks: Revisiting And Extending Kane et al. (2014) 10 Years Later[1]

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When we published "What's Different About Social Media Networks? A Framework and Research Agenda" in the *MIS Quarterly* in 2014, the digital landscape was already undergoing a profound transformation. Social media platforms had rapidly evolved from niche novelties into powerful forces reshaping organizational life and individual interactions. At the time, much scholarship implicitly treated these emerging online networks as mere digital extensions of offline social structures. Our paper challenged this view, arguing that the unique technological affordances of these platforms necessitated a distinct theoretical lens. Our goal was to provide a conceptual toolkit for understanding how technology was fundamentally altering network dynamics and to outline a research agenda that explored these shifts.

Receiving the *MIS Quarterly* Davis-Dickson Impact Award 10 years later presents a welcome opportunity for reflection, prompting us to revisit our 2014 framework, critically assess its enduring relevance, and acknowledge its limitations following a decade of relentless technological and societal change. While the core distinctions highlighted in our original paper remain valuable, developments over the subsequent decade underscore areas where our initial framing requires significant extension. The rise of sophisticated AI-driven content curation and the evolution of the platform economy, synthetic media, and decentralized architectures demand an updated perspective, one that builds upon our original foundation.

At the time of our first paper, social media platforms focused more on the social and network aspects of user interactions. They were built around fostering *relational states,* which are enduring and defined connections, such as friendships or professional contacts (e.g., LinkedIn). Today's platforms have expanded significantly by facilitating *relational events.* These are discrete, often ephemeral or transactional interactions, such as consuming a piece of content, completing a transaction with a stranger, or viewing an advertisement. This shift has led to a greater emphasis on platforms' media and content sides. For many users, algorithms now largely dictate both "who" and "what" they encounter, making the platform less a "network" of self-chosen ties and more an engine for orchestrating *relational events,* such as content consumption or fleeting interactions, often with limited or no underlying direct social connection (e.g., TikTok). In essence, today's social media has become *the* media for many users.

Revisiting the Core Contribution: A Framework for Social Media Networks

The central contribution of our 2014 paper was a theoretical framework designed specifically to distinguish online social media networks from their traditional offline counterparts. We proposed a 2×2 organizing matrix involving two dimensions of explanation in our original framework. The first dimension concerns ***explanatory mechanisms*****:** *structure*, emphasizing patterns and positions within networks, and *content*, focusing on the resources exchanged. The second pertains to ***explanatory goals*****:** *social homogeneity*, which accounts for the emergence of similar behaviors among network members, and *performance variation*, which explains how network positions or access to resources lead to different outcomes for individual nodes. Within this structure, we identified four defining characteristics of social media networks that offered novel theoretical leverage points:

[1] This Guest Editorial is invited as part of the terms of the 2024 Davis-Dickson MISQ Impact Award. The award honors the paper published a decade earlier that the selection committee deems to have had: (1) the most significant and sustained scholarly impact, as shown by citations, by how it led to a change in thinking in the field, and by its prescience in identifying an important issue today, and (2) a real or potential impact beyond academia, especially through how it influences the way our field engages in an important real-world domain. As part of the award, the author is invited to write a reflective editorial on the topic.

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1. **Digital profiles:** Platforms enable users to construct and manage digital identities, often involving strategic self-presentation that differs from their offline identities. These profiles act as focal points for interaction and information.

2. **Relational ties:** Connections are explicitly articulated, digitally mediated, and often influenced by algorithms. Users employ platform tools to manage these ties, facilitating new forms of relationship building, maintenance, and influence.

3. **Search and privacy mechanisms:** Platforms integrate powerful search capabilities alongside user-controlled privacy settings, fundamentally altering the visibility, access, and control of information compared to offline networks.

4. **Network transparency:** The structure of connections and interaction histories is often made visible to users, enabling strategic navigation and leveraging network position in ways that were previously impractical.

The four core features remain critical lenses for analysis as research continues to validate the importance of digital identity construction (profiles), the nature of online connections (ties), the complexities of information access and control (search and privacy), and the strategic implications of network visibility (transparency).

However, how these features manifest and interact in today's environment has evolved significantly, particularly concerning how specific features have grown to dominate others, presenting both confirmations of and challenges to our original perspective. For instance, while *digital profiles* remain central, their function on many platforms is evolving from primarily representing a user's identity to serving as interfaces for interaction. Indeed, this evolution suggests that digital profiles are moving beyond static representations of identity. Instead, they are increasingly functioning as dynamic interfaces for interaction, akin to personal application programming interfaces (APIs) that define permissible modes of engagement. Early examples of this shift are visible on platforms like LinkedIn, where users can already specify how others may interact (e.g., by allowing or disallowing messages or connection requests). This points toward a future where profiles become more explicitly programmable, allowing users to set detailed conditions for various interactions, much like an API defines its callable functions and parameters. Similarly, the nature of *relational ties* has undergone a profound shift; for a significant portion of activity on contemporary platforms, there is less emphasis on maintaining persistent social graphs and more on algorithmically matched opportunities for specific, often transient, relational events. *Search and privacy mechanisms* now govern transactional data as much as relational data, and *network transparency* is frequently superseded by algorithmic opacity.

Critical Assessment: Identifying and Addressing Subsequent Developments

While we are pleased in retrospect with how well the original paper has fared in the context of changes in the social media landscape, the subsequent decade has revealed areas where the digital landscape has evolved in unexpected ways, necessitating an expansion of the original framework's scope. Today's social media networks are vastly more complex than those of 2014. To contextualize these evolving dynamics, it is helpful to briefly summarize the current digital platform categories (See Table 1). These categories are not mutually exclusive, as digital platforms often blend different categories dynamically over time as they compete. Algorithmic governance, the platform economy, synthetic media, regulatory pressures, and shifts toward private and decentralized spaces have created a new reality that demands updated theoretical lenses and research priorities. While we addressed these developments in our original paper, we did not emphasize them sufficiently to account for their role in current social media networks. This retrospective allows us to expand our thinking, address these key areas, and propose several directions for future research.

Algorithmic Curation

First, we significantly underestimated the primacy of algorithmic curation, specifically the speed and extent to which it would supplant explicit enduring, user-articulated social ties as the primary driver of content exposure and interaction on many major platforms (e.g., TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Autoplay). Our framework implicitly prioritized user-articulated ties, whereas the contemporary landscape is often dominated by platform-driven, personalized content streams that operate semi-independently of a user's declared network, challenging the explanatory power of traditional network structure. In essence, for many users, algorithms now largely dictate the "who" or "what" they encounter, making the platform less a "network" of self-chosen ties in the traditional sense and more an engine for orchestrating relational events. These include content consumption or fleeting interactions, often with limited or no underlying direct social connection. However, the relational events themselves occasionally lead to new, more enduring ties if users appreciate the content they see and want more of it.

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Table 1. Current Digital Platform Categories		
Communication platforms *(message-centric)*	Direct, private or semi-private conversations, often encrypted or ephemeral	WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Discord, Slack
Content discovery platforms *(algorithm-centric)*	Algorithmically curated content streams where user relationships are incidental	TikTok, Instagram Reels, YouTube Shorts
Discussion forums *(topic-centric)*	Topic-driven, often asynchronous group discourse with voting or reputation features	Reddit, Stack Overflow, Hacker News
Microblogging/broadcasting *(broadcast-centric)*	Public real-time sharing, news commentary, and parasocial interaction	Twitter/X, Mastodon, Bluesky, Threads
Relational matching platforms *(matchmaking-centric)*	Facilitating new social/relational connections (often romantic or ongoing social potential)	Tinder, Bumble, Hinge
Transactional marketplaces *(exchange-centric)*	Anonymous or semi-anonymous, one-off exchanges between buyers and sellers	Uber, Airbnb, Etsy, eBay
AI interaction platforms* *(assistance-centric)*	Human-agent interactions, synthetic dialogue that simulates relational interaction, often one-to-one	ChatGPT, Claude, Replika, Character.AI

Note: *AI interaction platforms are not social networks in the traditional sense, but they simulate relational behavior and raise critical questions for digital identity, companionship, and agency, thus warranting their inclusion as socially adjacent.

Sometimes, these non-network results are integrated into feeds alongside content explicitly chosen through traditional social ties. In other instances, the platform curates content independently of the user's declared network connections (e.g., the "for you" pages on TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and Twitter). This shift indicates a fundamental evolution from traditional social networks, characterized by user-defined relational ties, toward algorithmically driven "topic" or "interest" media, focused on micro-targeted content recommendations. The implications extend beyond content curation alone, reshaping the structural logic of these networks. As platforms prioritize algorithmic targeting over user-defined social ties, they effectively create "algorithmic networks," where visibility, interaction, and influence are determined by algorithms rather than explicit relational connections. Such algorithmic governance can have profound and unexpected societal consequences, exemplified by incidents like Facebook's role in the 2017 Myanmar genocide, where content promoting violence spread widely due to opaque algorithmic processes that even the platform's employees could not fully oversee or moderate (Mozur, 2018; Stecklow, 2018; United Nations Human Rights Council, 2018).

This shift from traditional to algorithmic networks necessitates the development of new theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Traditional social network analysis, based on explicit ties, needs significant adaptation or even replacement to account for the pervasive influence and profound impact of algorithmic curation. Key research questions in this critical area must include understanding how algorithms reshape fundamental network concepts such as centrality, brokerage, and tie strength, as well as developing robust new metrics to quantify and capture algorithmic influence. Researchers must also explore user perceptions and behaviors within environments shaped by algorithms. Additionally, it is crucial to investigate the impact of the interplay between explicit social ties and algorithm-driven recommendations on key societal outcomes, including polarization and the dissemination of information. For example, researchers should investigate whether measures of algorithmic amplification are more predictive of content diffusion than traditional network centrality. Thus, addressing these algorithmic dynamics challenges foundational assumptions within our original framework, shifting the analytical focus from user-centric relationships toward platform-centric algorithmic processes and their structural and behavioral impacts.

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Surveillance Capitalism

Second, we did not fully anticipate the extent of data commodification or the scale of surveillance capitalism, defined as the monetization of personal data through predictive analytics aimed at influencing behavior for profit (Zuboff, 2019). While we addressed search and privacy, the sheer scale of user data collection and monetization by many dominant platforms, along with the profound societal and ethical implications thereof (e.g., Cambridge Analytica, GDPR/CCPA), went beyond our initial conception. Our original framework for social media networks was partially based on the agency-structure dichotomy in sociology, which examines the extent to which human actions are determined by social structures and the extent to which individuals have the power to shape their destiny (Bourdieu, 1972/1977; Giddens, 1984). While we originally theorized a balance between agency and structure in social media networks, the pendulum has swung considerably toward structure. One of the explanatory goals within our original organizing matrix was understanding "social homogeneity," which refers to the fact that similar people connect. In today's environment, this academic focus has been overshadowed by platforms' active engineering of user experience through "behavioral targeting," often driven by algorithmic content curation and economic incentives, which may result in either homogeneity or diversity, depending on the platform's goals. These platforms conduct extensive A/B testing to identify the most effective ways to encourage users to demonstrate desired behaviors, leading some to question and challenge the behavioral manipulation enacted by these platforms (Goldfarb & Tucker, 2019).

While surveillance capitalism traditionally describes how platforms monetize user behavior, the evolution of social media has enabled a striking reversal: companies are now subject to unprecedented levels of public surveillance by consumers and stakeholders. Similar network transparency that allows firms to track users also enables users to scrutinize the political stances, ethical decisions, and social actions or inactions of the firms themselves. Through viral content, coordinated online activism, and platform affordances such as reviews and commentary, stakeholders can collectively "watch the watchers," holding corporations accountable in real time. This dynamic pressures companies to respond to social and political issues they might otherwise avoid, as silence or ambiguity is now legible and amplified across networks. In this way, surveillance capitalism has become a bidirectional phenomenon. While firms extract value from monitoring users, they are increasingly exposed to networked oversight by those same users, transforming transparency from a corporate asset into a public mechanism of accountability.

Future work must focus on integrating platform governance and economics. Indeed, a primary function of many contemporary platforms, underpinning their economic models, is the creation and governance of vast markets. These platforms act as intermediaries, efficiently matching buyers with sellers, not only for tangible goods or services (e.g., Uber, Airbnb, Etsy) but also for content, influence, and attention (e.g., YouTube, TikTok, Instagram). This market-making function often prioritizes transaction efficiency and scale over fostering deep social bonds. In these platform-mediated markets, prior relational ties between participants are usually minimal or nonexistent. Instead, trust and familiarity are often replaced by algorithmically driven reputation systems, ratings, and reviews, which are designed to facilitate interactions between strangers.

A central question moving forward is how specific platform business models (e.g., ad-driven vs. subscription-based), governance structures (centralized moderation vs. decentralized community management), and design choices (algorithmic transparency, privacy controls, user interface design) specifically interact with the four core features identified in our framework: digital profiles, relational ties, search/privacy mechanisms, and network transparency, to shape distinct patterns of network dynamics and user behavior. For example, understanding whether platforms that emphasize algorithmic transparency lead to more engaged or trustful user communities, and how strict privacy controls impact user willingness to share content, will be critical. Relevant questions will involve analyzing how platform decisions about data use (privacy) and search algorithms impact user experience and market outcomes, understanding how the "platformization" of infrastructure affects the evolution of social media networks built upon them, and exploring how digital profiles can be designed to mitigate surveillance or enhance user control. For example, researchers might ask to what extent the platform's data access policy shapes the emergence of distinct sub-networks. This direction expands the context around all four features, particularly *digital profiles* and *search/privacy*, linking them explicitly to platform strategy and economic incentives.

Hybrid Human-Bot Networks

Third, our framework was human-centric and did not emphasize the rise of non-human actors like bots, AI agents, and synthetic influencers and their significant impact on network dynamics and information integrity. These non-human actors can generate content, engage with users, and even simulate human behavior, often blurring the lines between authentic and artificial interactions. Their presence has been linked to the amplification of misinformation, manipulation of public opinion, and distortion of engagement metrics. For instance, social bots have been used to create the illusion of consensus, sway political discourse, and inflate the popularity of certain narratives or individuals (Salge et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Safadi et al., 2024).

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The emergence of synthetic influencers, AI-generated personas with lifelike appearances and behaviors, further complicates the digital ecosystem, challenging our notions of authenticity and trust, and raising critical questions about their origins and intentions. Researchers need to explore whether these influencers are created by governments aiming at misinformation or propaganda, organizations pursuing branding and user engagement, or individuals seeking amplified influence for personal social or economic objectives. The influence of AI extends to the very functions of social connection; for instance, AI is increasingly capable of fulfilling roles traditionally associated with social capital, such as providing advice or information, potentially shifting the primary purpose of human friendships more towards companionship.

Beyond information and interaction, an emerging frontier is the deployment of AI agents that can execute tasks in the real world, for example, moving from suggesting email wording to sending the communication or performing other actions. As AI agents transition from merely suggesting content to autonomously executing tasks and influencing real-world outcomes, critical questions of accountability emerge. For instance, when AI is used to draft a contract or make a significant decision that leads to a negative result, assigning responsibility to the user, the developer, or the deploying organization presents a complex challenge that existing legal and ethical frameworks are only beginning to address. These developments underscore the need to revisit and revise existing frameworks to account for the complex interplay between human and non-human actors in shaping online discourse and information flows.

Research needs to deepen our understanding of human-AI/bot interaction. How do non-human agents reshape social media networks? We must explore how users interact with and perceive bots or AI influencers (*digital profiles*) and how these agents alter information diffusion and network structure (*relational ties, network transparency*). The expanding capabilities of AI within networks also bring to the forefront critical ethical considerations regarding AI safety and alignment to ensure that these systems operate in ways that are beneficial and fair to humans.

Furthermore, the ethical implications of AI-generated content and interaction within these networks must be examined. For example, researchers can investigate whether network analysis can distinguish between human influence and bot influence in online discussions. Considerable research has explored issues of human-AI augmentation, but much of this research currently tends to proceed from a dyadic perspective, examining human-AI pairs. Yet we argue that a network approach is also necessary to investigate human-AI augmentation because it is likely that multiple humans will be interacting with various bots, creating network dynamics that may be fundamentally different from those of a dyadic interaction.

Decentralized Social Networking Platforms

Fourth, we did not emphasize the emergence and growing influence of decentralized social media platforms, such as Mastodon and Bluesky, which challenge traditional centralized network control and transparency models. These platforms are built on fundamentally different architectural principles, prioritizing user autonomy, data portability, and community. The rise of these decentralized platforms signifies a paradigm shift in social media, moving away from monolithic, provider-controlled networks toward more democratic and user-centric models. This evolution reflects a growing demand for transparency, privacy, and control in digital interactions, challenging the dominance of traditional social media giants and reshaping the online communication landscape. This trend is still in its early stages, and it is unclear whether these alternative forms of social media networks will rival centralized, for-profit platforms; however, they present some promise for an alternative future of social media networks compared to the dominant model today.

Decentralized social networks (DSNs) present a rich landscape for interdisciplinary research, offering novel opportunities to explore the dynamics of digital communication, community governance, and technological innovation. This structural shift invites investigation into how decentralized governance models affect user speech and behavior, content moderation, and the formation of online communities. Crucially, research should also explore how these decentralized networks intersect with broader political and geopolitical contexts. For instance, it should examine how users migrating from platforms like X (Twitter) to Bluesky make implicit political statements, or how regulatory frameworks like GDPR reflect region-specific values, influencing digital interactions and shaping global politics. Researchers can examine the efficacy of community-driven moderation practices and their impact on free speech and user engagement. The interoperability between platforms within the "Fediverse," a collection of federated social networks, raises questions about cross-platform identity management and content diffusion across diverse communities. An illustrative research question in this context could be: How does implementing decentralized identity protocols in DSNs influence user trust and participation compared to centralized social networks? Such inquiries can shed light on the implications of decentralized architectures for user autonomy, privacy, and the overall health of online ecosystems.

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Networking on the Dark Social Web

Finally, the increasing migration of user activity to dark social and ephemeral communication channels, such as WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, and Discord, has significantly challenged the applicability of traditional frameworks that rely on publicly visible profiles and connections. These platforms prioritize privacy and transient interactions, often employing end-to-end encryption and features like disappearing messages, which obscure user engagement from external observation. Moreover, the rise of these private communication channels reflects a broader user preference for more secure and intimate forms of interaction, which are less subject to the public scrutiny of traditional social media platforms. This trend highlights the need for frameworks that account for the decentralized and ephemeral nature of modern digital communication, recognizing that significant social dynamics now occur beyond the reach of conventional observation and analysis.

We must develop approaches for exploring dark social networks. What new theories and methods are needed for networks with different architectures and levels of visibility? Some research has already begun to explore this perspective (e.g., van Osch & Bulgurcu, 2020, but more is necessary given the proliferation of multiple platforms with different levels of visibility. A pertinent research question arises: How can researchers ethically and effectively study information dissemination and community dynamics within encrypted messaging platforms, striking a balance between the need for insight and respect for user privacy and consent? Addressing these methodological questions is crucial for capturing the nuances of communication in these increasingly prevalent digital spaces.

Additionally, understanding generational dynamics is essential, as younger users are consistently seeking platforms distinct from those frequented by older generations, much like teenagers historically avoided their parents' social spaces offline. This generational shift drives continuous platform evolution, compelling companies to identify, adapt to, or create the next "it" platform to effectively engage future consumers.

New Methods for Complex Networks

As our reflection highlights, contemporary social media networks have undergone significant evolution in terms of complexity, diversity, and dynamism over the past decade. These transformations, characterized by increased algorithmic curation, hybrid human-AI interactions, decentralized architectures, and private ephemeral channels, necessitate a corresponding evolution in research methodologies.

One key trend is the reduced emphasis on maintaining persistent social graphs and an increased focus on algorithmically matched opportunities for specific, often transient, relational events. Most of the methodological tools available in the network analysis toolkit are designed for ties that can be described as relational states, such as friends (Butts & Marcum, 2017). Relational states are continuously present and relatively persistent, meaning that many of them can be present simultaneously. This, in turn, makes structure and position possible. Ties that are relational events (such as responding to someone's post) are discrete and transitory. At any given moment, a network of relational events is likely to be largely empty. With the shift in online media away from duplicating in-person relational states toward enabling relational events, we need tools designed specifically for these kinds of ties. The objective of such tools is to model who did what to whom when. Fortunately, a few families of models have recently emerged, including the seminal relational events model by Butts (2008), and the more recent actor-oriented DYNAM models of Stadtfeld and Block (2017).

Advancing methodological approaches is paramount to adequately capturing emerging network dynamics and complexities. How can computational social science methods be refined to capture the dynamism, scale, and complexity of contemporary social media networks, while also addressing ethical considerations? We need to investigate how to combine large-scale data analysis with qualitative methods for nuanced understanding, develop techniques for auditing algorithms for fairness and bias, and establish best practices for ethical data collection in sensitive online environments. For example, researchers can ask how agent-based modeling can more accurately incorporate algorithmic feedback loops to simulate network evolution. Methodological innovation is essential for empirically investigating questions across all four features of the original framework in the current complex environment.

Previously, the scale of these networks limited the type of research methods to large-scale quantitative models. However, GenAI may allow for more qualitative analysis at scale than was previously feasible. For example, AI's advanced text analysis capabilities can be leveraged to investigate complex questions regarding the interplay between networks and culture, such as the nature of their interconnectedness and the potential directions of causality. Developing such methods presents a formidable challenge, requiring us to rethink the foundational assumptions of network analysis, given that some platforms deemphasize or obscure traditional network structures. Table 2 synthesizes the paper's proposed research directions into actionable themes, questions, and methods.

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Table 2. Summary of Key Themes, Research Questions, and Methods for the Next Generation of Social Media Network Research

Theme	Core questions researchers can ask	Useful methods / measures	Example contexts	Expected contribution
Algorithmic curation & "algorithmic networks"	When do algorithmic amplification and ranking out-predict classic centrality for diffusion? How do feeds blending networked + non-networked items reshape tie strength?	Audit studies, counterfactual exposure models, algorithm-aware diffusion metrics	"For You"/Reels/Shorts feeds	Reframed diffusion theory beyond explicit ties
Platform economics & governance (surveillance/data use)	How do privacy/search policies, data access, and business models (ads vs. subscription) change behavior, trust, and market outcomes?	Policy shocks (GDPR/CCPA) as natural experiments, platform governance coding, trust/engagement measures	Ad-driven vs. subscription communities	Integrates economics/governance with affordances
Hybrid human-bot networks	How do bots/AI agents alter information flow, norms, and accountability? Can we separate human vs. synthetic influence at scale?	Bot detection + network decomposition, influence partitioning, agent-based simulations	Social discussion, synthetic influencers	Valid measures for mixed human/agent ecosystems
Decentralized social networking	Do community-run moderation and portable identity increase participation, trust, and cross-community diffusion?	Governance typologies, interoperability mapping, migration studies	Mastodon/Bluesky + cross-server flows	Governance design principles for DSNs
Dark social & ephemeral messaging	How can we ethically study encrypted/ephemeral spaces and still understand dissemination and community dynamics?	Privacy-preserving telemetry, participant-aided ethnography, consent-based sampling	WhatsApp, Signal, Telegram, Discord	Methods for low-visibility networks
Relational events (vs. states)	What models best capture "who did what to whom, when" as platforms prioritize events over enduring ties?	Relational events models, DYNAM/actor-oriented event models, temporal point processes	Commenting/liking/transactions	Event-centric network methodology
Profiles as programmable interfaces	Do "profile-as-API" controls change who connects, how access is granted, and what gets exchanged?	Field experiments on interaction permissions, access-control logs, audit of interaction affordances	LinkedIn-style connection/DM gates	Theory linking identity, access, and outcomes

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Conclusion: A Renewed Call to Action

The past decade has reinforced the core premise of our 2014 paper: Social media networks are fundamentally distinct and warrant dedicated scholarly attention. However, the pace of change has exceeded our initial foresight in critical areas, particularly concerning the influence of algorithms, platform economics, and new architectures. The proposed framework remains a valuable starting point, but it needs to be extended and adapted to account for the contemporary digital landscape.

The MISQ Davis-Dickson Impact Award serves not just as recognition but as a catalyst for renewed inquiry. The challenges posed by today's social media landscape, from misinformation and polarization to privacy erosion and algorithmic bias, are profound and demand rigorous, theoretically grounded research from the IS community and beyond. We hope that this reflection encourages scholars to tackle these complex issues, building upon existing foundations while developing the next generation of theories to understand and shape our increasingly interconnected digital future. To guide this renewed inquiry, the central research question for the next decade needs to evolve. Instead of primarily asking: "How do digital platforms affect social networks?"—as was common—we might now more pertinently ask: "How do digital platforms facilitate interactions, often between strangers, and what are the broader social, economic, and ethical implications of these algorithmically mediated encounters?" By embracing these challenges, IS scholarship can move beyond merely analyzing digital networks to actively contributing to the design of more equitable, transparent, and human-centric online social environments.

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