

Call for Papers: TikTok and Social Movements Symposium (20 September 2021)

The recent growing popularity of TikTok has transformed the cultures and practices of social movements online worldwide. Despite several concerns towards the app, regarding weak security (Chae, 2020; Dziedzic, 2020), moral panics incited by malicious content on TikTok (Purwaningsih, 2018) and some countries' (temporary) ban on the platform (e.g. Indonesia, Pakistan, India), TikTok has rapidly grown as the "hottest app of 2020" in the world (Brigham, 2020). Its functionality (e.g. short-video, voiceover, meme template, background music, duet, hashtag) and unique genres (e.g. dance, comedy, social media challenge) have expanded existing social media cultures and enabled users to engage with other users, social issues, and even misinformation and online toxicity with ease and fun.

As part of such cultural moves, TikTok users establish their vernacular cultures and find their meaningful use of the platform by leading or participating in various types of movements for global awareness, social change, and civic politics. This includes Young TikTok users' climate activism (Hautea et al., 2021); Growing anti-racist movements, such as the continuation of "Black Lives Matter" on TikTok (Janfaza, 2020; Richardson, 2020); and emerging hashtag streams like #StopAsianHate in response to increasing violence against Asians in the pandemic (Hanson, 2021).

The affordances of TikTok provide room for creativity with music and filters powered by AI technologies, which facilitates the formulation of identity politics and cultures. Recent examples include Young Indian women's lip-syncing to Bollywood songs against the caste system (Subramanian, 2021); LGBTQI+ users' use of various filters to advocate for diversity (Simpson & Semaan, 2021); Young users' meme cultures (Zeng & Abidin, 2021) as consciousness building work (Anderson & Keehn, 2020; Literat & Kligler-Vilenchik, 2019); Older generations' collaboration with younger generations (Hood, 2020). However, social movements on TikTok are not always specifically targeted towards social justice, but may often also advocate for specific beliefs that mirror global politics, such as Anti-vaccine movements and distribution of misinformation (Basch et al., 2021); Far-right movements (Weimann & Masri, 2020).

Focusing on the newly emerging cultures on TikTok, scholars in Media Studies, Communication Studies, Sociology, and Anthropology also have begun to develop "TikTok Studies", looking for instance at emergent meme cultures on TikTok (Zeng & Abidin, 2021; Zeng et al., 2020; Zulli & Zulli, 2020), TikTokers as new types of internet celebrities (Abidin, 2021), users' music practices (Kaye et al., 2021), the emergence of new teenage pop culture (De Leyn et al., 2021), online learning on TikTok (Li et al., 2021; Literat, 2021), novel methodologies for TikTok (Schellewald, 2021), and the newly emerging geopolitics around the app (Gray, 2021).

In response to this expansion of scholarship on TikTok and alongside the TikTok Cultures Research Network's ethos to cultivate diversity and equity in academic

scholarship, we will be holding a one-day online Symposium (on Zoom) to showcase emergent research on the potentials, promises, pitfalls, and parameters of such social movements on TikTok. The Symposium seeks to provide a meaningful opportunity to reflect on the evolving cultures and practices around the civic and social movements on TikTok, wherein various actors on the platform across the globe advocate for social justice and specific values, develop grassroots networks and resources, and engage with others. We invite submissions on themes that include, but are not limited to:

- Politics, digital circulation, and/or economies of movements on TikTok
- Online activism, campaigns, and protest on TikTok
- Intersections of sexuality, gender, race, ethnicity, and more on TikTok
- Emerging TikTok practices and communities for advocacy
- Far-right, or alt-right movements on TikTok
- Roles and affordances of the platform technologies in mobilizing movements
- Surveillance of TikTok movements
- Consequences and pitfalls of TikTok movements

HDRs, ECRs (up to 5 years post-PhD + career interruptions), and scholars in/or from the Global South are strongly encouraged to apply. A selection of papers will also be considered for inclusion in a Special Issue tentatively entitled “TikTok and Social Movements” that will be published in a top-ranked peer-reviewed journal in the field of Media Studies, Internet Studies, and Communication Studies.

For consideration in this Symposium, please submit abstracts (up to 250 words) on previously unpublished papers and a short bio (up to 100 words) to TikTok Cultures Research Network (tiktokcultures@gmail.com).

Key Dates:

- 03 September 2021 – Abstracts and biographies due
- 08 September 2021 – Notifications of acceptance
- 20 September 2021 – TikTok and Social Movements Symposium, tentatively 1200–1600hrs, GMT+8

We look forward to receiving your submissions! Please contact TikTok Cultures Research Network (tiktokcultures@gmail.com) with any questions about this event.

This Symposium is the fourth event organized by the TikTok Cultures Research Network, an Asia Pacific-based Network dedicated to understanding and developing qualitative and cultural approaches to studying the impact of TikTok on society, founded by A/Prof Crystal Abidin and supported by a network of Founding Members in October 2020. This event is supported by the Centre for Culture and Technology, and financed by Strategic Investment funding from the Faculty of Humanities at Curtin University.