**Action Research Project Title: The Necessity of New Critical Literacies: Reintegrating Communal Relationships**

**DSL 920 – Delivery and Evaluation Plan**

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The purpose of this action research project is to address the problem of disinformation and its divisive consequences on individuals within communities. Specifically, I endeavor to utilize a groupthink, critical literacy experiment in hopes of providing a missing critical literacy tool against the surge of information that the digital world has introduced into today’s society.

The problem is significant because disinformation within a local community can stimulate relational division between individuals, resulting in larger societal divisions and eventual unrest. Compounding the problem is the immediate, continual, and individually curated digital content, through the medium of social app-based platforms and 24-7 news outlets, in delivering a constant stream of information to each person all day long. Further compounding the problem, is that the individualized information feed to each person, often through a pocket device continually carried by the person, relies on that person’s previous interaction with content recently delivered, resulting in individual silos of information based on interest, bias, and viewing habits, as well as general demographic segmentation based on the individual’s viewing patterns, social status, age, and preferences and any other information scraped from an individual’s digital “footprint” from time spent online.

In short, the digital information flow rewards bias and promotes incremental moves towards next level extremity, providing further content flow that can enhance, motivate, or manipulate individual preferences. The result is that individuals within a local community can be unknowingly pulled further and further a part through the information that they have access to, all the while growing relationally divided based on the silo of access that their individual social and news feeds allow or disallow. This creates a scenario whereby a person becomes disconnected from the “other side” of the issues and is all too likely to see information that coordinates within an already held interest or viewpoint. The digital feed promotes a growing inaccessibility to critical information that would otherwise assist an individual to a more communally robust understanding of the various feelings, knowledge base, and current thinking surrounding a particular cultural movement.

I propose an intervention utilizing a small group of individuals from my local community of Columbia Tennessee. The purpose of the intervention is to reveal to participants the reality of their curated digital information silos, as well as utilize a facilitated small group discovery method to invert what George Orwell aptly coined as “groupthink” in his classic novel *1984*. In *1984* groupthink referred to a narrowed societal capacity to think and articulate thoughts, ideas, or truths outside of the agreed upon slogans and ideology of the whole of society. There were no ideas besides that of the Party. Ironically, the flow of digital media has produced an individualized, internalized groupthink within each individual, leaving many to assume that what they see, hear, and watch is the same information that others must also be interacting with.

In this intervention, a facilitated conversation will allow for each participant’s feed-based knowledge to be compared with others within the same community, thus allowing for enlightened discussion about differences, omissions, similarities, etc. The intention is to allow a group of individuals to think critically together (the new groupthink), drawing from the curated information from each participant’s silo, to bring a fuller sense of understanding and areas of agreement, which in turn, can prove effective in shrinking the gap of divisiveness.

Groupthink exercises are to be introduced to affect disinformation within a community by facilitating connection and cognition enhancement amongst participants, fostering points of agreement, isolating areas of disagreement, thus enhancing communal relationships.

The research-based intervention applied to address the problem in this action research is a facilitated group discussion utilizing one set of internet memes. The location of the intervention will be 710 N Main Street STE B Columbia TN 38401.

Participants will be encouraged to view a set of “pro and con” memes related to a recent cultural movement, one “for” (i.e. supportive of the movement), and one “against” (i.e. antagonistic of the movement) that is noted for societal division in recent years. Each participant will then take turns verbally reflecting on the following:

1. Internet memes are often intended to be both evocative (call forward feelings) and provocative (call forward reaction based on what the participant “knows”), therefore, using a *Think, Feel, Know* framework, answer the following:
   1. The “pro” meme makes me *feel*…
   2. The “con” meme makes me *feel*…
   3. The “pro” meme causes me to *think* about…
   4. The “con” meme causes me to *think* about…
   5. I *know* certain points of knowledge (i.e. “facts”) that the “pro” meme is utilizing in its images, slogans, and/or cultural references. These are…
   6. I *know* certain points of knowledge (i.e. “facts”) that the “con” meme is utilizing in its use of images, slogans, and/or cultural references. These are…
2. After each participant has vocalized their responses, the group participants will be encouraged to discuss any new ideas, revelations, viewpoints, or considerations of the cultural movement based on listening to the thoughts, feelings, and knowledge base from the collective group.

As the self-appointed ethnographer, my field notes will be observations related to body language, comfort of participants in sharing their feelings, thoughts, and knowledge, any shifts in atmosphere relative to tension or relaxation amongst individuals and within the group dynamic. Additionally, I will be interested to note the advancement of “aha” moments whereby a participant is able to interact with new ideas, perspectives, and viewpoints that he/she might otherwise not have been exposed. Lastly, I hope to observe a noticeable participant relatability one to another based on the time spent unpacking various facts, viewpoints, and feelings related to the cultural topic at hand. Points of agreement as well as disagreement will be observed in relation to the impact of communal relatability. In short, I will observe if relational division increases, decreases, or remains constant following the extended session of groupthink critical exercises.