Collective Statement

Introductory Paragraph, Mental Health Struggles

Our Social Media campaign hones in on the importance of raising awareness around mental health struggles and destigmatizing harmful stereotypes involving mental health. The goal of our campaign is to educate, ensure people struggling with mental health problems do not feel alone, and provide information on how to get help for someone who may be struggling. Especially in recent years there has been a significant increase in misinformation circulating online spaces and we are striving to clear up any unfair misconceptions about mental illness. "In the twenty-first century, the proliferation of social media has enabled the widespread study of and speculation about the impact of digital technologies on politics, activism, and social change" (Hashtag Activism xxvii), the online digital sphere is consequently one of the most important environments in which to discuss the importance of maintaining mental health. Mental illness has developed a negative stigma around it and we are here to combat unspoken societal pressures to not acknowledge mental health problems or downplay the severity of mental illness. We'd like to create a communal element to tackling mental health issues and reduce feelings of isolation when it comes to people handling mental illness. "To the weary and confused the hashtag provides a signpost to a specific island otherwise lost in a vast archipelago of possible destinations… Like any isolated island however, once people clamber ashore, a hashtag marks a place where members either build community or fight over scarce resources" (Losh 3). Strong communal ties are essential to any struggling individual and it's crucial in combating poor mental health. Normalizing getting help when people are struggling mentally or emotionally is a worthwhile objective as it would directly help society as a whole. It has the potential to save lives or at the very least improve the quality of life for many people.

Paragraph Introducing Campaign/Why It's Important

We are using Instagram as a platform for this campaign. We created an account to help educate the public on mental health. Using a platform like Instagram can help spread our message to more people. This is an important subject to discuss while utilizing social media considering how as years have gone by mental health and social media have become intrinsically linked. "Thoughts, locations, photos, identities, friendships, memories, politics, and almost everything else find their way into social media...Smartphones and their symbiotic social media give us a surfeit of options to tell the truth about who we are and what we are doing, and an audience for it all…" (Jurgenson 63). Through the posts, people can become more educated on mental health, and it can help break the stigma on certain mental illnesses. The stigma in the media has to be broken because it can be very harmful to people with those illnesses, so through the posts on Instagram we can try to change people's thoughts on certain mental illnesses. "...Positive comments that come from changing a profile picture can reinforce the behavior

depicted, whereas online trolling can make us question or want to change aspects of ourselves. The way we see ourselves is for—better or worse—bound up with how others see us" (Humphreys 84). This is exactly the atmosphere we are trying to utilize as a way to reach out to people in a space that is already having an impact on mental health.

Target Audience Paragraph

For this campaign, we are trying to reach out to people who can't seek help or do not want to seek help with their mental health. This can also be used to help educate those who don't know a lot about mental health, since there are a lot of different stereotypes. This can include parents, significant others, and siblings. The education people will receive can help people who are struggling to get help and those who are unaware that they are experiencing treatable mental health. This can include boys with anger issues who are told "it's just what growing up feels like" or young adults realising their memories of harsh childhood punishments and scoldings don't line up with the uneventful memories of their parents. In one example a child is actively told that a mental health issue is normal and in the other a young adult has their memories denied and is left struggling to find the balance between fact, fiction, and trauma. "This is why most heroin users struggle to stay clean… They return to the scene of the crime over and over again. They see friends who remind them of a time when they were addicts…" (Alter 60). Similarly to an addict's situation, someone struggling with mental health may be a victim to their environment and not realize what is happening to them. Though they may seem bland these are extremely common and often untreated mental health issues that are seen as normal because of their prevalence and perceived normality. Though this campaign may help those who have gone through severe trauma or have severe mental health issues the campaign is primarily focused at the "normal" person who may not realise their experience, while not unique, is not normal and that they are able to get help.

<div align="center">Citations:</div>

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Humphreys, Ashlee. *Social Media: Enduring Principles*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Losh, Elizabeth M. *Hashtag*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2020.