Transcript:

* Social media platforms have become a prevalent mode of communication and social exchange in today’s society. One platform that has been used for 10 years now is Pinterest. It is a platform wherein people can learn new ideas, explore photographs, and express creativity. The platform is available to both men and women of any age as you begin customizing your feed.
  + If you notice in the google images search of “Pinterest,” there is a vast amount of pink/red tones in the photographs and if there is a person in the frame it is almost always a woman, possibly tactics to appeal to women.
* Platforms like twitter and instagram are used to post and share photos with people and create your online persona that you want the world to see. Scrolling through my instagram feed, nearly every post is a celebrity selfie or photograph. And my twitter feed is primarily composed of funny posts, the news, or articles relevant to accounts I follow, such as UNC basketball.
* I have had a personal pinterest account for around 9 years now, so I have built several boards with posts I want to save, and my use over the years has developed my feed into posts that are relevant to what I have saved. I have an entire board for wedding dresses and engagement rings, so when I open to my home screen, many photos of that kind will appear. This is something many females partake in as is explained by the article “A Sight For Fresh Eyes” by Cindy Kay Tekobbe. It is argued that the platform is largely targeted towards females and provides a more friendly method of communication that allows ideas to transfer rather than something like Instagram which can often value perfection.
* Since it has become evident that what we post influences what appears on our feed, it can also be investigated whether our identity can impact our feed.
* I decided to collect data to evaluate how another person may receive recommendations on their feed based on their profile and immediate interests and how pinterest may utilize such information to guide what the individual sees. I have created another profile for a made up person who I have named Noah. Noah is a 38 year old man who lives in the United Kingdom. His personal interests include fitness, art, and nature, and some of the categories he would like to explore on his pinterest account include recipes, workouts, mens hairstyles, and tattoos.
* In comparison to my personal account, Noah’s feed includes darker colors and more photos with men in them, modeling hairstyles and fashion. My personal feed has many lighter colors and many photos that include women.
* As I began making searches on Noah’s account and creating boards that are relevant to his interests, his feed begins to develop to be more customized towards his interests and relevant to his liked posts. However, as soon as I created his account and chose his interests, even before creating boards and liking posts, his feed was already primarily composed of men or posts that are geared towards a male audience.
* To recognize whether identity impacts social media accounts and how our activity is digitally tracked, I used a data scraping tool that will analyze posts that appear for both mine and Noah’s accounts when searching the same word based on our different identities. I started with the color “green.” Noah’s data collection is made up of standard scenic or aesthetically pleasing photos. However, my collection has a few houses or furniture pieces and recipes, potentially appearing for my account since I am a female and these posts may be aimed towards homemakers.
* When searching the city of “Rome,” Noah’s account presented beautiful photos of landmarks and images that I expect would come to mind when thinking of the city.
  + My account does not present a great difference towards the male account as both data collections appear to have almost the exact same photos. The search did not have a noticeable disparity when searching for the city based on the identities of the account holders.
* The next search was the incredibly relevant term “homeschool.” On the account for a 38 year old man, many of the posts were actually “How to” posts hacks for how to teach children that seemed to be aimed towards parents. When making the same search on the account for a 19 year old female, I was presented with posts that were primarily about learning skills and how to manage time while learning, posts that can be useful for students. The difference in age may play a factor in the different results.
* Next I searched “family vacation.” Noah’s account displayed images containing families and children and posts about places to visit. I expected to see a substantial difference in the images for my account, however, families with children were still seen in a few of the results, with just a few extra posts about the best places to visit or cheap destinations. Age may be contributing to the difference in results again, however, the difference is not as large as I predicted.
* My last search to compare the data collection was the word “pants.” Noah’s account showed pants exclusively for males. When I made the same search for my account, I was presented entirely with pants for women, posts consisting of model images that could be for shopping. The difference in this search is the most evident as it appears to be completely dependent on the gender of the account owner. This search supports the idea that digital platforms utilize aspects of our identity to make their platforms appealing while also keeping track of data as the platform is used to display relevant content that is influenced by use and identity.
* A feature of the data scraping tool allows an analysis of images that were collected as search results of each profile, the components then forming word clouds. The word cloud for my account for the search “homeschool” presented pretty generic terms related to the topic like learning, kid, and math. The word cloud for Noah’s account provided many of the same generic terms, however, I randomly noticed the words “mummy” and “UK.” These terms that correlate with the location that Noah supposedly lives in indicate that his identity, including location, influenced the data scraping results.
* The overall results of comparing an older male account to a younger female account exemplify some pretty compelling support for the notion that our identities and browsing history and usage on a format leads to what we see as it produces results customized to the user. I was able to learn how easy Pinterest is to use for those who have limited digital literacy as I do and can tell based on search results that the platform is accessible to all types of people as it is based on the individual and their interests. The platform allows an exchange of knowledge and ideas in a creative, organized, user-friendly format that uses data collection to create a positive experience. Pinterest may have a higher rate of females using the platform, but it is welcome to everyone as it connects users through common interests.