**Podcast Materials and Talking Points**

Red = Chris Blue = Stephen

[Intro music]

Hello everyone and welcome back to the *109 North Street Podcast*

As always, we’re your hosts –Stephen and Chris

Today, we’re going to talk about something that’s gained so much traction in the past 5 years or so. Something that has essentially turned into its own genre of communication: memes.

I think one of the reasons for memes’ widespread emergence is the fact that they are such an accurate representation of popular media and daily issues. Basically, any idea, phrase, pun, reference, or mockery can be found in a meme.

Q: Do you think memes could be considered the main source of cultural knowledge, when compared to other media sources available on the web?

[Answer/Discussion]

It’s interesting you say that. It seems like there’s memes for literally just about anything nowadays…

[Video Clip 1]

[Reaction]

There seems to be a vast range of different types of memes, but Philippe (2013) offers two categories in his research, “Important” and “Fluff.” In the “Important” category are politics, religion, and social and cultural values and beliefs. “Fluff” comprises viral videos, unimportant bits, and worthless blather—basically, all the stuff that is consumed by the billions. Most of the items that fall into “Fluff” would be categorized as pop culture, but in Philippe’s view, we as a people spend a lot of time focusing on these “Important” issues that divide us.

Q: Would you agree that memes that fall into the “Important” category – those such as politics/religion and social/cultural values – seem to be those of upmost interest to us? Why do you think this would be the case?

[Answer] (I would disagree…)

I came across a video that explains the current state and evolution of memes up until very recently and it’s evident that the most popular memes that are shared really have nothing to do with politics or religion.

[Video Clip 2]

[Reaction]

Sure, memes like those do exist, but to find memes related to those more specialized topics (such as politics or religion), one must be looking specifically for them. The memes that are most common and those that the majority of people focus on are moreover just silly and relatable to everyday antics.

[Reaction/Discussion]

On another topic, there’s a little bit of a concern for how all of this is having an impact on our brains. Susan Blackmore, in her published article “Memes Shape Brains Shape Memes” argues that memes might have killed us off because of the burden they put on brain size, development, and energy use. I came across a Ted Talk that speaks to this issue and brings to light the idea of instant gratification in our current society, which memes could be considered a primary source of.

[Video Clip 3]

So, it seems like the rise of the internet is slowly holding us back, but is it really fair to say that? This leads me to another question…

Q: Do memes really affect us negatively or are there positive aspects of memes that are often overlooked (such as creativity and critical thinking skills)?

[Answer/Reaction]

Q: Now, there is also no doubt that relatability dictates the replication and spread of a meme, but are there also boundaries that constrain the sharing of memes?

[Answer] (Reference how memes need to stay “fresh” in order to maintain popularity)

It’s funny you say that. I actually found a clip that compares memes to viruses in that memes must mutate or change in order to remain infectious or popular.

[Video Clip 4]

[Reaction]

Regardless of what we think about memes, they’re here, they’re incredibly relevant and it doesn’t look like they’re slowing down in any capacity.

Yeah, I think it’ll be really interesting to see just how far they evolve and what kind of variations of them we’ll see over the course of our lives. Thinking about memes from 10 or 15 years ago makes me think we’ve really only just begun to see what they’re really capable of.

I agree. Well guys that’ll just about do it for this episode of the 109 North Street Podcast.

Thanks for tuning in. As always, we’re your hosts – Stephen and Chris…

And we are out of here.

[Outro Music]

Video Clips:

(1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bJTSxRBbCQA> (6:07-6:37)

(2) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV9WEqLeBuo&t=514s> (8:57-9:25)

(3) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HXy4eUlkLQQ> (5:14-5:54)

(4) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HV9WEqLeBuo&t=514s> (7:35-8:10)