

TEXT 1

How people cash in on stupid Internet memes

- 1 IT'S BEEN TWO decades since I graduated from college, and I'm glad to be back, walking the halls of MIT. But I did not come to MIT this spring to further my education. I have come to meet the future, as embodied by the 850 or so cutting-edge types who have gathered here for two days. They are the stars of YouTube videos that went viral and others who've become online 'memes', which I'll explain in a moment. There are mover 'n shaker executives from Google, commerce seekers, advertisers and television producers all looking to cash in on the *memefication* of America, along with all the geeks and academics who celebrate and study this phenomenon.
- 2 We're here at MIT for the third biennial ROFL conference. For those sad few of you remaining who still prefer standard English to the web jargon that is fast supplanting it, ROFL means 'rolling on the floor laughing'. As its very name suggests, ROFLcon is not a conference that takes itself too seriously.
- 3 I have always detested the word 'meme'. The concept was originated by Richard Dawkins in his 1976 book, *The Selfish Gene*. Borrowing from the Greek word *mimema* (something imitated), Dawkins was on the hunt for a monosyllable that rhymed with 'gene'. Loosely speaking, it is 'an idea, behaviour, style, or usage that spreads from person to person within a culture'. Internet memes entail everything from video clips to photographs of cats to intentionally misspelled words to whatever people can think of that spreads rapidly, if 'thinking' isn't too strong a word.
- 4 One of the enjoyable aspects of attending ROFLcon is meeting the 'talent', the viral-video stars who populate the panels and man the bars at the after-parties; these curiosities who put the 'me' in meme. Most of them seem naïve and slightly disoriented, accidental tourists on the fame train who, for whatever reason, have gone from anonymous to universally known overnight.
- 5 There is a low buzz of excitement with all the virtual celebrities here, but not all of them are happy. It's the eternal complaint of hipster subcultures: 'It was great as long as it was just us, then they ruined it.' And they are definitely moving in: the Internet is losing its quirky individuality. The suits are moving in and taking over, creating companies that benefit from individuals' original content.
- 6 One guy who still puts a premium on the individual is Ben Lashes, the world's only meme manager. A former garage rocker himself who roots for underdogs, he says that everyone wants to make money from memes, and 'a lot of these guys don't know what to do'. That's where he comes in, by helping YouTube stars identify commercial opportunities such as licensing their footage for television and films.
- 7 Ben represents Charlie Schmidt, a former advertising designer and the originator of Keyboard Cat, which is a video of Charlie's cat playing keyboard in a blue T-shirt. Charlie shot the video in the mid-'80s. Uploaded to YouTube in 2007, it made him Internet-famous (YouTube views: 23,989,789 and counting) and it is now used in a series of television commercials.
- 8 I need to know: what does it mean that a grown man can earn a six-figure annual income making piano-playing-cat videos in America in the middle of the worst recession in decades? "It means that people are nuts," shrugs Charlie. "People are just nuts. They are."

[Adapted from: <<http://theweek.com>>]

TEXT 2A

Summer Camps Confront Challenge of Bullying

Specialists say that children can be especially prone to bullying at camp, as they try to establish their place in the social order of the new setting. Forming alliances and cliques that exclude one child is a typical ploy, an easy means of gaining power and status. "The first couple of days are times of high social complexity; it's when the kids are just getting to know one another," said Heather Kiley, director of Camp Merrowvista in Center Tuftonboro, N.H. "So it's then that a staff member's presence is very important. It allows kids to transition into the community. It creates a safe environment where kids can relax."

Certain rites of summer camp are being rethought. Pranks — even the tamer ones, such as filling shoes with shaving cream — are no longer allowed at some camps, or only with counsellor supervision, for fear that they will be aimed at the most vulnerable few.

Child psychologists say there is little question that stopping bullies is better than the laissez faire approach of 30 years ago, when children were largely left to sort out their own conflicts. Research has shown that repetitive taunts and put-downs can have long-term psychological effects.

[Source: <<http://www.boston.com> >]

TEXT 2B

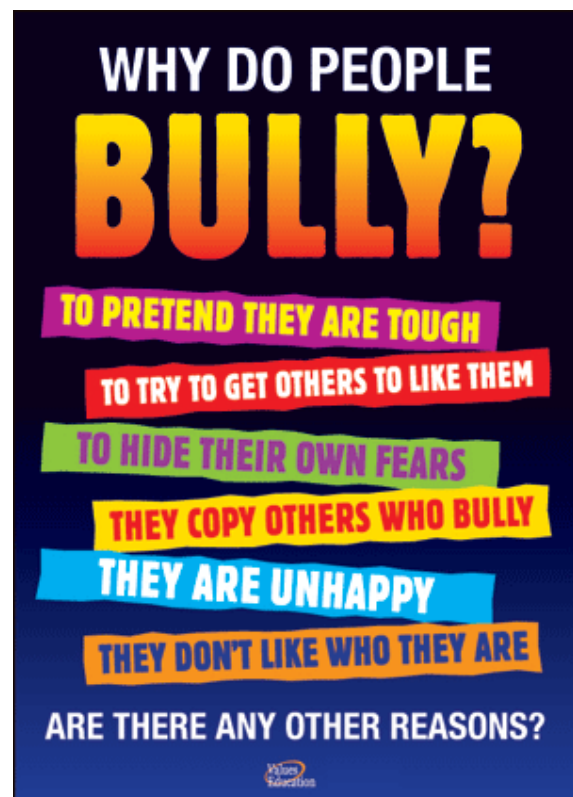
Extract from *When your kid is the bully*

Jen, who did not use her last name in a post on the Moms' site, remembers what it felt like to be a bully when she was a child. "It was a huge (and somewhat frightening) power trip to have everyone dislike someone at my say-so," she writes. "Everyone turned on [the victim] quickly, and my fear was that if I pulled the plug on this vendetta, would they turn on me, too?"

Peer pressure can also lead a child who is not a bully to start acting like one. "Nowadays, children who are popular and generally well liked are often actually encouraged or rewarded for being a little bit mean to their peers, for putting some kids down," she says. "That's the power imbalance."

[<<http://www.boston.com> >]

TEXT 2C



[<<http://joehol93.wordpress.com> />]

TEXT 3

Silicon Valley symbols mind over
flashy cars? Meh, their wealth into ventures. The cult by what entrepreneurs Flashy cars? Meh... their wealth into social causes and start-up ventures. The culture measures achievement by that build, not what they buy. You'd never know at the 30-year-old entrepreneur sold his internet start-up for \$170 million in 2008 or that he is now a top executive at Intuit Inc., the financial software company. With a few notable exceptions, Silicon Valley's risk-takers are rejecting luxury hotels, putting their money into start-up ventures.

They status emphasize material
stars are putting... and start-up... achievements... not what they buy... stars are putting... stars are rejecting... take their... of social...

The Ruthless Overlords of Silicon Valley Facebook. Google. Zynga. They think they're saints of American capitalism. But they're really the successors to the Big Money magnates of the Gilded Age.
Silicon Valley likes to think of itself as morally exceptional. When Google went public in 2004, the internet search company's wunderkind founders, Larry Page and Sergey Brin, penned a letter to prospective shareholders that has become the internet industry's version of the Magna Carta. In it, they pledged that Google was not a conventional company, but one focused on "making the world a better place." They manifesto followed a venerable tradition in Silicon Valley (meaning the swath of technology and...)

Or read Newsweek.

*Source: Newsweek April 24th, 2011.

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[Source: <<http://www.coloribus.com>>]

TEXT 4



A stylized illustration of a woman and a man sitting on a wooden bench in a park. The woman, on the left, has blonde hair, wears a white hat, a green vest, and an orange skirt. She is looking down at a smartphone. The man, on the right, has red hair, wears glasses, a blue and yellow striped shirt, and blue pants. He is holding a large newspaper open, with the words "LOCAL NEWS" visible on the top page. The background features a blue sky with a white cloud, two orange pine trees, and a green lawn. A QR code is located in the bottom left corner of the illustration.

SMART IS THE NEW SEXY.

It's hard to keep up with everything going on in the world today, including the part that's right around you. That's why people look to the newspaper, print or digital, to give them the community news and insights they can't find anywhere else. And besides, that gallery opening could be the icebreaker you've been looking for.

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TEXT 5



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