Center for Humane Technology | Your Undivided Attention Podcast
Episode 33: Mind the (Perception) Gap

Tristan Harris: Today, our guest is Dan Vallone, who's the national director of More in Common, a nonprofit organization that's been asking Democrats and Republicans an invaluable question, what do you think the other side thinks?

Dan Vallone: Democrats think that basically that one in three Republicans support reasonable gun control. It's closer to 65, 70%.

Tristan Harris: Dan has a lot of data like this.

Dan Vallone: Democrats thought that less than 50% of Republicans still consider racism a problem, it's closer to 75, 80%.

Tristan Harris: In technology, we often focus on misinformation or disinformation, or shared truth. But we don't even talk about our second order beliefs, not our beliefs about what's true, but our beliefs about what other people think is true. Do we have an accurate understanding of each other?

Dan Vallone: Less than 5% on either side felt that physical violence would be justified, yet each side felt about 50% of the other side would justify violence.

Tristan Harris: Throughout Dan's research, he finds that we overestimate just how many people hold the most extreme views. Because we're hit with the double whammy, the people with extreme views both participate more in social media, posting more, liking more, re-tweeting more, but they also, when they participate, they get more airtime, they get more reach, they get more surface area of the attention economy. And who's the sucker now? If we're all sitting there arguing with what we believe to be the majority view on the other side, when it might be a much smaller percentage of those who actually hold those beliefs.

Dan Vallone: Both sides are convinced that the majority of their political opponents are extremists in their own understanding, and yet that's just not true.

Aza Raskin: The reason why I'm so excited about this conversation is that it unpacks two simultaneous crises happening. There is the truth crisis that we don't know what is true and what isn't true on platforms, and there is a perception crisis that we're not even perceiving the other side correctly. We cannot possibly hope to heal, to come together, to find consensus if we cannot at least accurately see and hear those who disagree with us. And as a technologist, one of the most exciting parts, I think, of this interview is that while it is very hard to measure beliefs, are they true, are they not? It is very easy to measure beliefs about beliefs, whether we are seeing the other side accurately, and it just involves polls, surveys. And that gives an objective measure for how well we're fighting distortion.

Tristan Harris: I'm Tristan Harris.

Aza Raskin: I'm Aza Raskin.

Tristan Harris: And this is Your Undivided Attention.

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Tristan Harris: Dan, thank you so much for coming on the podcast.

Dan Vallone: Thank you. I'm really excited to be here and looking forward to talking with you.

Aza Raskin: I think it could be really helpful to walk through some of the most powerful examples of what the perception gaps are, which ones are the most harmful, and which one is the most interesting.

Dan Vallone: In the US, we produced a large report called Hidden Tribes: The Study of America's Polarized Landscape. We had built off of that with our next report, which you just referenced called Perception Gap, which we released in 2019. So in our report, we asked Democrats, Republicans, and independents, we asked them about their own views, and then we asked what they thought the other side believed so we could get reality and then we could get what Democrats think Republicans believe for example. We asked a number of issues. So immigration, gun reform, but we also asked about issues like the salience of racism in America today.

Dan Vallone: From that, the top line finding that is most important in our mind is that on both sides, Republicans and Democrats, basically 55% think that the other side holds extreme views. So outlier views on any number of issues, when in fact the actual number of people who hold what we might consider ideologically extreme views is more like one in three.

Dan Vallone: So basically both sides are convinced that the majority of their political opponents are extremists in their own understanding, and yet that's just not true. Subsequent studies by Pew and others have been affirmed that that reality is very, very true, and it animates a lot of toxicity in our politics. The other perception gap that we released just before the 2020 election, we did a similar study design. So we ask people the degree to which they felt certain actions could be justified in the event that they felt the election was being stolen.

Dan Vallone: We asked Democrats, we asked Republicans, we asked independents, and the actions were things like peaceful protests, confronting your political opponents online, confronting your political opponents in person. Then we included physical violence. Less than 5% on either side felt that physical violence would be justified. Yet each side felt about 50% of the other side would justify violence. So, clearly I don't want... January 6th was a tragic attack that underscored, this is the reality that we face. It is also true that we are dramatically exaggerated in the extent to which our political opponents are physical threats to our country. And that again is animating a lot of our politics.

Tristan Harris: You actually wrote really eloquently in your report, I'm just going to read here, "The larger a person's perception gap, the more negative their views are of the other side. People with large perception gaps are more likely to describe their opponents as hateful, ignorant, and bigoted. This points to a vicious cycle of polarization. The Americans who are most engaged in political issues and debates spend the most time reading, watching, and listening to media that portrays the other side as extreme further increasing their hostility, and distrust, and widening their perception gaps.

Tristan Harris: When Democrats and Republicans believe their opponents hold extreme views, they become more threatened by each other. They start seeing each other as enemies. They

start believing they need to win at all costs. They make excuses for their own side, cheating and breaking the rules to beat the other side. And as our public debates become more hateful, many in the exhausted majority tune out altogether. This is how countries fall into a deepening cycle of polarization and how democracies die." And I just think that was important to have people contextualize, what is the feedback loop that we're worried about here? Because it's not just, "Hey, there's this static snapshot," it's that it leads to these self-reinforcing feedback loops and we want to move from vicious downward spirals into virtuous upward spirals.

Dan Vallone: I appreciate that. It speaks to, and this is why we feel strongly, that drawing on what we know from psychology is incredibly helpful to navigate in a polarized landscape. This is looking at work by folks like Karen Stenner, who have been looking at authoritarian mindsets in that vicious cycle where we know that as an individual, a sense of threat goes up. We retrench in terms of identity towards the identities that we feel the strongest sense of safety from. So, we narrow our conception of 'us' or 'we', and at the same time, we start to increase the perceived threat we feel from anyone outside of those groups.

Dan Vallone: So that as we perceive our political opponents to be threatening, for example, I'm going to make my identity as a Republican or Democrat is going to become even more important to me, or it's my ideological identity maybe. So my identity as a conservative, or a liberal, or progressive, that's going to become more important to me over time, and it's going to cause me to see conservatives or progressives, or whoever the 'other' is as even more threatening.

Aza Raskin: We just had Shamil Idriss from Search for Common Ground on the podcast, and one of the points he made in their 20 plus years of bringing people together to have conversation across difficult divides, the precursor to being able to have those conversations and begin any kind of healing process is the belief that the person on the other side is coming from a good spot. To me, this is exceptionally hopeful because Facebook, Google, Twitter doesn't have a way of ascertaining the truth of belief, but there's actually a really easy way of measuring the truth of beliefs about beliefs, which is the 'perception gap', and whether that's getting worse or better, and whether we're creating this space in which we can have conversations, find common ground and then work together.

Dan Vallone: It's really true. And I think also just, we tend to narrow our conversation to only talk about voters, because that's who's most often pulled, et cetera. But again, the biggest voting group in America are non-voters or folks who don't vote regularly. So the work that we've done has always identified less regular voters as being much more anchored in more realistic understanding of other people. So it's folks that they know that they work with.

Dan Vallone: So, they might disagree. They might even dislike, but they tend to understand the other people as people. Again, we come at it with a better approach in terms of the intent. So right after the election, we went out and we did a poll asking about sentiment, trying to better understand how do Biden voters feel towards Trump voters, how do Trump voters feel towards Biden. For both groups, the number one sentiment most strongly felt or most commonly felt, I should say towards the other side was disgust.

	Not anger. Anger was number two. It was disgust, which is worse. Disgust is a more dehumanizing emotion.
Dan Vallone:	What was intriguing to us was at the same time, the number three most commonly felt sentiment was confusion. So it speaks to the extent to which we are misunderstanding the other side. At least we are increasingly recognizing that we don't understand them. We might not know that we were exaggerating their beliefs, but we're recognizing like, "I don't understand what's happening." And that itself could be an impetus to try and seek a greater clarity through conversation or other means where you can actually discover what people actually are feeling and what their true intentions are. Because I agree, it's really hard to measure intentions.
Tristan Harris:	That's really quite hopeful actually. It reminds me of in the film, The Social Dilemma when Justin Rosenstein, the co-inventor of the like button says, "And then you look over at the other side and you say to yourself, but I'm just so confused. How can they be so stupid? Aren't they seeing the same information that I'm seeing?" Then he says, "The answer is that's because they're not seeing the same information that I'm seeing." But the confusion makes way for, as you said, curiosity, to try to figure out like, "Okay, what is going on here?" Sometimes I look at what's going on as a national couples counseling exercise where we're in a very bad relationship, and we looked through the work of the Gottman's.
Tristan Harris:	They have this four horses of the apocalypse in broken relationships, and the four horses of the apocalypse are contempt, stonewalling, defensiveness, and criticism. I think we're knee deep in some of those attributes of these relationships. And I think we're going to have to pull from all sorts of disciplines to figure out what are the recovering modes from relationships that are in vicious spirals. And especially when you have these specific ones, what are the answers to some of those emotions?
Dan Vallone:	Absolutely. So there's a group out there called Braver Angels, which actually brings together explicitly red and blue groups, and their model is anchored in marriage counseling. So theirs is very interpersonal. But I also really liked how you framed it as curiosity because I do think that's one of the most exciting opportunities in the technology space is how can we figure out better ways to activate and then manifest people's curiosity? Because I feel like alongside of confusion and curiosity is motivated reasoning, which is, I think oftentimes what gets acted on when we engage in social media or when we engage online, we are discovering content that presents the other sides in ways that feeds this, whatever misperception I already hold.
Dan Vallone:	If there were ways that we could introduce the curiosity kinds of component, we might find ourselves needing each other in unexpected ways that allow for that kind of discovery process. Because at the end of the day, people have to persuade themselves, so that we can convey this information as much as possible. We can say, "Look, we're exaggerating our differences." A person actually has to have that process where they convince themselves that that's true and arrive at a different worldview through some process.
Tristan Harris:	I'm tempted to ground some more of this in some examples for listeners so that they have more examples of perception gaps. I think it was a Florida State University study that Republicans estimate that about a third of Democrats are LGBTQ. When in

reality, it's actually only 6%. And Democrats estimate that over a third of Republicans earn over $250,000 a year. Like they're these rich, wealthy Republicans, et cetera. And in reality, it's only 2%. But I was wondering if you could just give more examples. Be the optometrist here, and help us correct our lenses of each other.

Dan Vallone: Yeah, absolutely. There's two things I did just want to note that we also think about when we have these kinds of conversations. Whatever side we're on, we also misunderstand our own side. The New York Times did an analysis of our Hidden Tribes data, and what they found was basically that if you look online... So if you go on social media, the most progressive Democrats are overrepresented two to one, relative to the more moderate Democrat. More moderate Democrats are the majority of the democratic party by far. And yet they're much less likely to share content online, much less likely to post content or engage in it. They're also much more diverse, lower income, lower education level.

Dan Vallone: The same thing is true of Republicans. That's not a democratic phenomenon. It's a phenomenon of a polarized landscape. So we consistently exaggerate our own size and what the median position is. What that does in terms of our perceptions on the other side, is it forces us to see the other side as the most extreme version. So I think take the salience of racism. They ask people the extent to which they believe racism is still a problem in the US. And we asked, "Do you think the other side thinks that?"

Dan Vallone: Democrats thought that less than 50% of Republicans still considered racism a problem. Closer to 75, 80% Republicans still considered racism a problem in America. We asked about gun reform. Similarly, something like Democrats think that basically one in three Republicans support reasonable gun control. It's closer to 65, 70%. So on a lot of key issues, there actually is a lot more common ground than we conceive. The other thing that we found really interesting when we were running the perception gap study was education and media consumption don't help. In fact, they likely hurt.

Dan Vallone: So as we ran the regression for education levels, we found perception gap increases as you go from high school graduate to two-year college, to some college, to four-year graduate, to post-grad. So folks with a graduate degree had some of the highest perception gaps of anyone that we sampled.

Tristan Harris: Could you slow down to give more on this one? Because I think this is a critical fact. It's so counterintuitive, right? You would think that people with higher education with higher degrees would be better at like examining their own mind and saying, "Oh, I've got these biases that maybe they studied psychology and they will be less likely to fall into this outrage economy or something like that." But what I hear you saying the data reflects is that actually the more education... Was it also just... I think there's some ways that this falls differently on partisan sides, right, the Democrat side versus the Republican side with education?

Dan Vallone: Yep.

Aza Raskin: Yeah. It's fascinating seeing that Republicans are sort of flat. The more education does not affect your perception gap. If you're a Democrat, the more education, the more your perception gaps. So yeah. Please detangle.

Dan Vallone: Yeah, that's right. So we did this perception gap study and then we ran a series of regression analysis to try and understand like, "What are we finding as relevant factors to understand this?" So we looked at education and to your point, the Republicans in our sample, the magnitude of their perception gap, the degree to which Republicans exaggerate the views and attitudes of Democrats stays flat as you increase in education levels. So as you go from high school graduate up to post-grad degree. For Democrats, it increases almost in a linear fashion. The Democrats with the most accurate understanding of Republicans use attitudes are those who have a high school degree.

Dan Vallone: And those who have the largest perception gap are Democrats who have a postgraduate degree. What we also found strongly correlates with both perception gap, the size of perception gap and education level is social group homogeneity. So the degree to which your friends have similar ideological views increases almost in step function with education level among Democrats. So there is this particular phenomenon going on where the assumption is that education should instill in individuals the desire to be more rigorous in their views of the world and to discover reality as best they can, particularly in politics. And yet that doesn't seem to be happening. It seems that we are building social groups that are very reinforcing of our own worldview and allowing that to fuel what we think of as the other side.

Dan Vallone: There is an interesting finding for Republicans, which is media consumption. Republicans are more likely to have in their social group or interact with people who have a different ideological view. But what we found very predictive of Republican's perception gap is the degree to which they consume media.

Tristan Harris: Could you say more about that? Maybe talk a little bit about how the different media sources affect perception gaps.

Dan Vallone: Yeah. So, in general, if you ask the question, how often do you consume news? And that's a pretty standard polling question. People who are more active news consumers had higher perception gaps across the board, which just underscores the degree to which people are consuming media that reinforces their particular worldview. But when you look at crossposting of links, you can very clearly map out media ecosystems and what we consider conservative media. So Fox News as being the kind of hub, but by no means the entirety. So, this is things like One America News Network, Newsmax, Drudge Report, Wall Street Journal, Daily Wire, they're all reposting within each other's orbits, right?

Dan Vallone: So they're not drawing on links from like AP or Reuters or from CNN or NBC. Or they're drawing on them much less frequently, I should say. More liberal leaning media outlets tend to have greater diversity in terms of the links that they're crossposting and sharing. And so the media consumption is less strongly tied to perception gap magnitude, if you are consuming liberal media, basically.

Tristan Harris: It's interesting because I heard you say earlier that essentially the more educated you are in the Democrat side, the less likely you are to have relationships across different groups, but on the Republican side, they're more connected to people of different political persuasions, et cetera. But then an media ecosystem, this is different. So now on the Republican side, you have less cross-linking and on the Democrat side you have

more cross-linking. But when people say, "Yes, maybe it's more cross-linked, but the media in-general is so liberally bias," is that really a valid measure?

Dan Vallone: It's really interesting because you do find... Again, people who identify as Republican and conservative, even though we have geographically sorted ourselves, pretty tightly, there's still... A lot of the political tension is arising in areas where it's actually, there's still a lot of intermixing. People do engage with each other either it's work or that tends to be where you see flare ups in our politics is where there's still... Whether they're purple States or they're swing states, et cetera. But we did this study in December called the American Fabric: Identity and Belonging. As part of that research, we asked about the extent to which you feel like particular media sources have a bias towards people like you? What we found was that liberals feel as if conservative media has a bias towards them. Conservatives feel like liberal media has a bias towards them.

Dan Vallone: There is also a feeling among conservatives much more strongly felt than among liberals, that there is a bias amongst conservative media towards people like them. Only about 10% of liberals feels as though liberal media has a bias towards people like them. It's close to 40% among conservatives. There is the sense that the media itself is a defined set of institutions that has a bit of a bias towards folks who are conservative. The other theme that we're trying to better understand is are we seeing shifts towards even more tight identification with individual personalities? So it's actually less about the platform and more about the person.

Aza Raskin: I'm reminded also of Yochai Benkler's work, who is one of the co-directors for the Berkman Klein Center at Harvard, and he split the media ecosystem into two chunks. It's like the right and then the rest. And then the right that you sort of win points by agreeing with each other. If you step out of line, you win points by shooting somebody even down on your side. Like rhinos is a good example. And on the left, you win points when you can scoop someone and be like, "Ah, you didn't get your source right. You didn't get your fact right." And just thinking about your work in the perception gap of your side to your side, I hadn't been thinking about that, but that perception gap is like you have two camps and every time one person tries to walk from camp A to camp B, the degree to which you misperceive your own side's beliefs is the degree to which you're going to snipe down that person trying to walk across the other side.

Dan Vallone: Absolutely. And it speaks to that perception gap within people's sides. It's really relevant to recognize the degree to which people feel pressure to conform their beliefs and how that might inhibit people, as you said, from trying to reach out across the side or create in-group pressure to punish those who do.

Tristan Harris: We used to have this fairness doctrine that in television you would try to represent different sides of each issue, fairly. And it struck me that there's been this ongoing dialogue within the tech reform community about what would a fairness doctrine look like for social media? Then people would think, "Well, we would need to make sure that each of these individual voices or channels would be representing both sides." But it actually struck me that a network's fairness doctrine for social media would be like, "Wait a second. What is the democratic representation of all the voices?"

Tristan Harris: So right now we have an anti-Democratic. We have a very unfair representation where we're only hearing both from the most extreme voices because they share the most.

Then we also have the extra self-reinforcing feedback loops of they dominate all the airtime. So we have two layers of unfairness or anti-democratic representation. And it would be interesting to think about how we can use measures of perception gaps to try to create something like a more democratic view of ourselves.

Tristan Harris: I think what's interesting is that the tech companies are in an interesting position to do that measurement because they actually get the bird's eye view. I was reading through your work, and I think the study that you did had 8,000, 10,000 type participants, but I'd be really interested if you could run that with the entirety of a city, a town, a county, a nation. You would have the most accurate perception gaps on the national level. And of course, we would need to trust a Facebook or a Twitter to represent and to store that information because it's very sensitive information, but it would actually give us a shared object to point to.

Tristan Harris: Because imagine Twitter had a page called perception gaps and you just saw these little graphs or charts of where we were missing each other, and where we were missing our own side. Then we could actually share those and actually have conversations about... We actually agree on this, we agree on this. We could actually have conversations that the foundation of them would be where we agree, where we do have common ground, would be where we are actually misperceiving each other. And so we'd be able to point to shared objects, and that's a service that the platforms could almost be democratic fiduciaries to our countries to help provide that as a service.

Dan Vallone: So I love that, and I think it's so true. I think we've noticed a challenge that a lot of groups who are trying to think about how do you reduce polarization or get back to a healthy polarization away from affect to polarization, and there is this inclination to have a both sides approach, which makes intuitive sense to a lot of people. But then if the sample from what you're drawing your two sides is disproportionately consisting of folks with more extreme ideological views, you're going to misrepresent the entire picture.

Dan Vallone: Whereas if we could have this more platform approach where you actually did think about, "Well, wait a second. Who is sharing and who's active and not active? How do we elevate the perception gaps?" It's so much healthier. So much of a more accurate story that we can then build from.

Aza Raskin: Yeah. This area got me also really excited as I was starting to read through your work, because as I was saying before, it's very difficult to measure whether something is true or false, right? Almost all conversations around content moderation mis or disinformation, the conversation ends up being around, can we tell whether this thing is true or false? And if it's false, let's try to down-regulate it. What I love about the perception gap work is here's a way that we can measure tangibly that Facebook could do the polls or Twitter could do the polls consistently and understand, "Okay, we don't know whether the beliefs are true or false, but we know whether our beliefs about the other side's beliefs are true or false, and we can measure whether that's going up or down. And if it's going down, we're getting closer to be able to have actual real conversations."

Aza Raskin: An example from your work is the difference in the way that Republicans estimated Democrats believe that most police are bad people. This is like defund the police.

When the left hears it, they hear like refund communities take money away from the police. When the right hears it, they hear just get rid of the police. So it's interesting. Republicans estimate that only 48% of Democrats would disagree with most police are bad people, but that actual number from report is 85%. If there is that almost 40% perception gap, you can't sit down and have a conversation because you always think the other is coming from a bad faith.

Aza Raskin: So imagine if Congress legislated came up with some protection where every year Facebook or any of the social media platforms had to publish the perception gaps along these effective polarization metrics, most important metrics. So like, cool, you guys are going to be taxed or there's going to be liability for if people use their platform and the perception gap increases.

Aza Raskin: Now, imagine that those perception gaps as core metrics get pushed down, so they're sitting right alongside all of the engagement metrics that the project managers and people getting bonuses are measured on decreasing the perception gaps. So at the very least, these perception distortions go away. And that got me really excited because that's something we could do. That's something we'd start measuring right now.

Tristan Harris: They could do that right now. I also got excited about that. It's just like we could put a price on carbon. We could put a price on polarization. And it has a nice alliteration, so that'll hopefully stick.

Dan Vallone: Yeah, absolutely. Not only does it then engender healthy market forces among like platforms and other technologists who can build off of that and can construct interesting, better tools. Right? I think we also, like a lot of the field that we work with, we lack a lot of insight into like, "Well, let's take Facebook." It will be fascinating to be able to understand how perception gets manifested. If you could have better understand also like, are there Facebook groups that would seem to be doing a really interesting job of actually facilitating a reduced perception gap across some of these important fault lines? And if so, what are they doing? What's happening in those Facebook groups?

Dan Vallone: Because right now like you said, you introduce a topic like immigration or police. The conversations just seems to be immediately taken over in ways that are completely unhealthy to actually arriving at like a better discourse and a better understanding of each other. But if we could better understand what's happening in these groups and how does that map against perception gaps? All of a sudden the toolkit universe comes so much more robust and powerful.

Aza Raskin: Yeah. I mean, Facebook, Twitter, they're forcing these goggles, these glasses on to people. As we think we're becoming more informed, we're actually just becoming more distorted in our perceptions about the other people that are all American or all part of the same community. We can measure that distortion. That's what your work does, which means we can reduce it.

Tristan Harris: And you didn't find a causal link necessarily, but this very, very strong correlation that the more you're increasing consumption of media, the worse that perception gap gets. Well, that's obviously the thing we need to decouple. We need to have it go the other way, that ideally in some world, not that we want some, just like maximizing of

consumption of media, but the more you are on social media, the better your perceptions should be. And I think reading through your work, are you familiar with the Murray Gell-Mann effect?

Dan Vallone: No. I am not.

Tristan Harris: This just came to mind when going through it, because one of my favorite authors, Michael Crighton, growing up reading many of his fiction novels, he talked about the Murray Gell-Mann amnesia effect, and he describes it as follows, which is... And this has happened to anybody who's ever had a news articles that are written about them in a newspaper. You open a newspaper to an article and some subject you know well. In Murray's case, it was physics. In mine, Michael Crighton's, it was show business. You read the article and you see the journalist has absolutely no understanding of either the facts or the issues. Often the article was so wrong, it actually presents the story backward reversing cause and effect. I call these the "wet streets cause rain stories". The papers are full of them.

Tristan Harris: In any case ,you read with exasperation or amusement, the multiple errors in a story. And then you turn to the page, the national or international affairs section. And you read it as if the rest of the newspaper was somehow more accurate about Palestine than the baloney you just read. You turn the page and you forget what you know to be true, which is that there is this distortion. Having been the subject of various articles or news stories and seeing how often things are off by quite a long way, even when they're doing fact-checking. And it struck me, this is very interesting, because one of the problems with even being aware of perception gaps, even though it's incredibly helpful, is it's a very momentary experience.

Tristan Harris: Because if I open up Twitter right now, as we talk, I will be presented with things that will make me feel very depressed about the state of politics. Right? And even though you just inspired me by saying, "Hey, there's actually many more people who have more reasonable views than the extreme positions that are seen, it's very hard for me to hold onto that feeling, because I'm still trapped in a mind, meat suit body with emotions and cognitive biases that when I see those things, I will, again, have a kind of amnesia."

Tristan Harris: So this is almost like the perception gap amnesia effect that even though I'm aware of it, I will still fall into this trap. I just wanted to honor that and take that in for a second, because I think it's important. We realize how the limits of our perception, we really do need instrumentation. I want Twitter to actually be fixed. So it doesn't reify my amnesia, instead it corrects reality to actually show itself in a more accurate way.

Dan Vallone: Yeah, absolutely. It's hard to sustain a post-intervention understanding of the other side. And it gets even worse than our estimate because the current ways in which social media in particular, but media more generally tends to elevate the voices of folks who are more extreme in their views. It causes individuals who don't feel that represents their view to want to withdraw. Right? So we've asked consistently overtime like, "How exhausted are you from political division?"

Dan Vallone: The less extreme you are, the more exhausted you are. And the less likely you are to actually want to engage in, so there is this even worse effect in play that is causing

people who might otherwise nudge conversations in healthier directions to just say like, "I'm done. I don't want to participate because it depresses me. It makes me feel like I don't belong." And that's really concerning from a healthy democracy standpoint. It is addressable. That's the other thing is the platforms could make things differently in such that those individuals felt a greater inclination to not just participate, but actually feel their participation is rewarded by influencing the shape of discourse.

Tristan Harris: When you say that, it makes me wonder what would make them feel safe to share, because as you said, and as we know, the more extreme the views are of your side, the more likely you are worried that your own side will shoot you down for saying something more moderate in a context where everyone appears to be saying something extreme. I'm just thinking at a practical level, there we are with Facebook or Twitter, and we're making design decisions about how it works.

Tristan Harris: What would create the safety for someone to veer out and say, "Well, here's actually this more soft, reasonable position." And knowing the safety in numbers, this is why I thought even literally... I'm just literally spit-balling here, but having the graph or some shared object that is Twitter sharing here, here's literally the shape of how many people actually hold that moderate position.

Tristan Harris: So that they're essentially arming you with the rhetorical ammunition, not to use war metaphors, but the view they're providing and supporting and facilitating the moderate to go from being invisible to visceral. Let's say visceral. We have another statement with humane technology, which is that humane technology tends to make the invisible visceral. And I think that's what we need. We need to be able to see this invisible and also feel it viscerally that there actually is a more reasonable center, but we've all been wearing these confused glasses for so long that we have to snap out of that trance.

Dan Vallone: Yeah, absolutely. I think the visibility part... And this is again, like it's what we know from, even if you're offline, like what are their conditions in which an individual, it feels as if their voice matters in a group? It's representation, it's acknowledgement. It is identifying that there are others who feel a similar way. So if they could make that sentiment visible, it would go a long way towards addressing these concerns around like, "Well, I'm going to get punished or I'm actually alone in this opinion, when oh, wait, I can see actually in like oh no. I'm right there in the median or the average." So we give that confidence and sense of belonging, which I feel like is so lacking in a lot of these spaces right now.

Aza Raskin: Another thought that just hits is when I think about content and like trying to imagine what kind of content would drive up perception gap?" And then like, well, the first thing in my mind is things like clickbait. Any of the kinds of articles you say like, "This politician slams that politician or this politician admits finally to this kind of thing." All of that low quality content, I wonder if... You imagine being Facebook and doing large scale studies where you're tracking millions of newsfeed, all the content going through it. You're doing studies such that you can tell whether populations and individuals are moving up in the perception gap or down in these specific kinds of perception gaps, then correlating it to which kinds of content is creating perception gap.

Aza Raskin: And then over time penalizing these perception distortion pieces of media. My hunch is that a lot of the clickbait mis and disinformation would be correlated with this kind of

distorted worldview. And that gives a really interesting counter metric potentially for how to promote the content and the people that are helping each other see each other more clearly. Have you done any research like that?

Dan Vallone: A great question. So not on the scale or... I think what you described to me is so fascinating and the platforms should absolutely do that. I share your hypothesis around the clickbait. I also think that it's probably true that content, which again, reinforces a perception of one's own side in a way that isn't accurate would also be correlated pretty strongly with perception gaps, because it's that same thing like it's pulling you towards a more extreme conception of one side. So we haven't done that. What we have done is more... We've done smaller scale tests on, again, like more focus group kinds of activities.

Dan Vallone: And it's really... I mean, it's a difficult moment because not... So there's perception gaps, which is function polarization and all that. Again, the causality here, I think, is those multiple ways, but there is massive distrust in systems. Right? If you were to ask people, "Do you think the system is rigged against people like you?" You would get an 80% across the board. So we have asked them to-

Tristan Harris: We agree on that. We have common ground.

Dan Vallone: We agree on that.

Tristan Harris: The riggness of the system.

Dan Vallone: We have two across a party, two across a country.

Tristan Harris: It's like Bernie and Trump are basically operating with the same diagnosis like, "Yeah, the thing is rigged. It's not really working for people." But then there's very different directions about where people interpret those facts to meet and what would be necessary to fix it.

Dan Vallone: Absolutely. It makes things more challenging because people feel as if there's a system at work against them and that they're trying to be either played or persuaded. So a lot of the content tests that we found is like, "You got to get content moving that people can welcome because it doesn't challenge their worldview initially, but yet it doesn't provoke that sense of being played or manipulated." So it's very difficult to do. That's I think why some of these we'd be better at this if we could get access to data and insights and observe what's working, what isn't working.

Dan Vallone: We found success, I think, again, taking the conversations out of politics is always a better step, but not excluding politics. You need to situate an identity group, basically. The content and the tests that we've done, small scale, that had been most successful around the, "Can you cultivate an identity group where again you're bringing people together around?" We leveraged psychology finance and say, "Look, let's have a conversation around not something political, like climate change, but something like land and resource management, or recycling, even things that are very proximate that are like hands-on conversation."

Dan Vallone: And that you can actually start people to engage with each other. And they're not primed in their ideological, where system is rigged identities. They're primed as like, "Oh, "Hey, we're people who all like to recycle or like to do home improvement activities," that all of a sudden you just changed the entire nature of the conversation. And you can overtime introduce political conversations, but you've defined the parameters in a different intervention.

Aza Raskin: We were talking yesterday about rules of engagement. There are certain kinds of things you can say in a court. There are moves that are allowed and moves that are not allowed. And you can be like, "Objection, your honor."

Tristan Harris: Objection, your honor. Leading the witness.

Aza Raskin: So I thought, Tristan, you might want to introduce some of that idea, and I have a follow on once you go there.

Tristan Harris: Yeah. Well, this also made me curious then to ask you more for some examples of what that content looks like that tends to do this positive thing. Like you said if people don't feel played or persuaded, and maybe some examples that would be later helpful. And this idea, this comes from our mutual friend is in mind, Daniel Barcay who has really said that there's different kinds of conversational spaces in games with different results and different goals.

Tristan Harris: So for example, in science, there's a goal for truth seeking. We actually care about both figuring out what we currently believe to be true, that isn't true. We actually create a competition where you can win. You're with more prestige by disproving something. And you can win by actually showing that there's a current understanding that it's actually inadequate. There's even a better understanding or another theory that might be better, and you can win with that game. So science is that kind of game.

Tristan Harris: The courtroom is another kind of game where we're trying to figure out something. But because in each of these games, there's a lot of the line, we create rules, like what can and can't be said. And one of the problems that we always end up with in social media land is these endless debates about free speech versus censorship, which really are never going to lead anywhere.

Tristan Harris: I just want to be really clear because you just end up rehashing the last 300 years of debates about what speech can and can't be said. And everyone, it's just a matter of how many law books have you read to unmask all that. What's the most interesting about this proposal Aza, that you've made here, and these metrics that would be completely objective, right? Because it's not about, like you said, whether race is a problem or isn't a problem in the United States. I can't measure that if I'm Facebook. They can't hire content moderators to do that.

Tristan Harris: If they try to moderate it with content moderators, they ended up in this further accusation of, "Hey, your fact checkers are biased." What we're talking about here is actually finding more objective ways to measure our misperceptions. And the fact that when you think about the platforms which are currently doing this tuning. So they are, if you want to negatively or cynically described their behavior, you could say they're shadow banning people. And this just annoys a certain community of people because

they believe that these tech platforms are rigged against them, with intention that there's somehow this mustache twirling Dorsey with his big beard, twirling that big mustache around, trying to specifically suppress certain kinds of voices.

Tristan Harris: In my experience in understanding of the tech companies is not that at all, that there's this Frankenstein that they've created. They have basically no more accurate way of essentially tuning the dials except using these very abstract classifiers like, "Oh, you're using keywords like QAnon or whatever." And they start doing this dialing up and dialing down, and it makes a lot of people angry. So they don't have a good measure to do this shadow banning or this diminishment and up-regulation and downregulation in a way that we would call humane, fair or ethical that's not going to fall into this lens of they're persuading or they're playing some audience or another.

Tristan Harris: What we're talking about here is a classifier that could say, "Hey, given this Facebook group or given this newsfeed, with these kinds of stories for this population, imagine this town or this city or this state, we see that the perception gaps went down when they were shown this kind of content, and it went up when they were showing this content." And then the machine learning classifiers can actually learn patterns that figure that out in a "objective" way because it's through the inner subjective perception gap reduction.

Tristan Harris: And I know we're looping around this same point, but I'm almost like slamming my elbow into the arms of my friends at Twitter and Facebook and being like, "Guys, this is something you could really implement right now." And I think that they should hire More in Common and the rest of the Braver Angels and other folks in that community to start working on all these initiatives, because I think everyone really is struggling to figure out what will help here?

Tristan Harris: And I want to add one extra thing, because we mentioned this Murray Gell-Mann effect. The Murray Gell-Mann amnesia of the thing gets printed and has errors, and we forget that, in that case, newspapers have errors or noise, but it's all in unpredictable directions. So it's not like when these papers published something, they always get it wrong in the same way. Whereas in social media, it's very important. This is Aza's point, not mine when we talked yesterday, that social media is actually getting it wrong in very specific, predictable ways. It's always showing us this more extreme version of reality.

Tristan Harris: So there is something predictable we can say about the kind of optometrists shifts. So we have to go from wearing these outrage sighted glasses to bringing the focus into this constructive common ground.

Dan Vallone: Yeah, absolutely. I think that one of the elements of that kind of approach is also the cost is borne by all of us, but also the platforms. There's no doubt that as perception gaps increase, it fuels, again, then the algorithms operate with directional impact, but the costs towards the platforms are significant here. Then, like you said, they're both placed in untenable positions, but obviously it foments all kinds of challenges from a policy standpoint, from a competitive corporate standpoint.

Dan Vallone: So we're trying to build that and arrive at this objective approach to assessing impact of content along better perceptions would have massive, massive benefits. And I think also

reorient the conversation about tech more generally in a healthy direction. Again, like it wouldn't be less about whose side they're on and putting some numbers and data behind it.

Dan Vallone: So totally agree with that strongly. We are familiar with a lot of like tech startups that have, I think, great intentions to try and address perception gaps. But the scale is what matters here in a huge way. So they can't get that until you have millions and millions of users.

Tristan Harris: Right. Also, what I get excited about, and honestly it is really quite exciting, which is that you could do this at local levels. You could do it at community levels. You could do it at state levels. You could do it at a national level. You could also do it at the world level. You could talk some of your work, Dan in More in Common is actually about between different countries responses to COVID. And actually there is places where we actually want more collaboration on things like climate change. We want more collaboration on things like COVID.

Tristan Harris: If Facebook and Twitter could be the global fiduciaries for seeing global cooperation, and imagine something like a UN-like body with some kind of democratic representation from different countries, could name what is the agenda of topics that matters that we would want to minimize those perception gaps at that international level. And these companies would actually be willing in a position to minimize those perception gaps too. So again, they could become the global coordination infrastructure for creating common ground for enabling better discourse, for enabling less of the extremes and more of the moderates for reducing these norms that if you veer out of line from your own party, you get killed.

Tristan Harris: They really could be flipping the whole thing around. Not that I want to be techno utopian, but just it's such an exciting prospect that we already have the infrastructure. It's currently harming all of the things that we care about in terms of all these dimensions of politics. But here's a specific measure that they might do it. And I think specifically, I get excited about people think they can't agree and I'm in California right now. What are we going to do about the fires coming next year? What are we going to do about business recovery? If we could show there's much more agreement there too, that's also just incredibly exciting to see that fractally happening across all these different places.

Dan Vallone: Absolutely. And we've seen from partners that we work with. Now, I'm stepping back and talking about some of our global work, but there is this massive, I want to call it a sideline effect where because of the nature of social media in particular, a lot of institutional players are very hesitant to engage constructively in any number of issues. So conversations around refugees and migration, around climate change, around any number of issues, which we know in fact, there's a lot of appetite for greater coordination, collaboration, etc.

Dan Vallone: They're very hesitant because they don't feel as if their community, however they define it, is with them on that. And a lot of the work that we've done is we've used survey methodology, like, "Look, actually your own community feels pretty strongly. There's these tension points. Let's help you navigate these tension points." But then we've helped actors in the faith when you, for example, become much more active in

healthier narratives around refugees and migration in Europe, conversations around religious diversity in Europe. It opens up and really nudges this silent effect to be much less detrimental to the societal level cohesion.

Tristan Harris: What I hear you saying also there is just that this warping effect, these perception gaps effect, politicians who have to sell, it's like, "Why do all Politicians suck?" It's like, "Well, because they're all trapped in this position of having to cater to what they see as these extreme audiences. And they're getting confused. So the mind warp has a scrambled reality for all of us, not just the base, the citizens, the public, but actually also those who are supposed to respond to those needs. So we're getting warped at every level.

Aza Raskin: The pithy way of saying that is the map is not the territory, but our map terraforms that territory. What we believe the map says about the territories, how we go out and start to build and we shift the land then that becomes reality. So the extent to which we have these perception gaps is in part the extent to which we become more like what we think we see.

Tristan Harris: I wanted to add another few dimensions on how much Twitter and Facebook and Instagram are the opposite of this right now. I've been reflecting on this because I've given some talks at a couple of schools recently which I actually don't do that often. And one of the things that in high schools, teenagers are facing is these kinds of dramas snowballs. If you think about the moments of drama in our lives, and this is going to apply politically in just a second. If you're on a freeway and someone cuts you off, you get really upset with this person, right? But then there's a momentariness to that drama.

Tristan Harris: It's not like the rest of your day, you're just obsessed for the next two hours. Or we take that moment and we broadcast it to millions and millions of people. But these moments of drama with social media are made permanent because then it gets trapped in this object, which then gets broadcast to way more people. And then there's the Twitter "In Case You Missed It" in the last 48 hours, here's all the drama snowballs that would have just been momentary. Someone passed someone else in the car on a freeway, and now we actually like show all the times that everyone's getting passed to the freeway by all these horrible people all the time.

Tristan Harris: So when you just really like wrap your head around how opposite to this whole experience we're talking about right now is, we don't just have little moments of disagreement, but we actually are doing the opposite of inflating them, putting growth hormone in these moments of disgust, drama, contempt, anger, outrage.

Dan Vallone: Earlier to your point, you talked about the rules that we construct and there's different domains court versus we oftentimes think about stories that people are running and like who are the characters in the story? And in person, you have people that you might disagree with. You might even, in your story are like the bad guys, the antagonists, but you have protagonists with you and the antagonists don't dominate your lens online. It's just not true. You are continuously presented with folks that you are pushed to identify as the antagonist in your story, the story that you think is your arc of your narrative of life. And in that construct, you're continuously pushed into like a fight or flight, win or die dynamic, which sustains this negative cycle.

Aza Raskin: Let me see if I can lay out an idea. This is the first time I will be saying it out loud, so I reserve the right to retract. But we were thinking about what are the peacekeepers online. We were talking to Shamil Idriss and they have this incredible corps of people who are very good at being those intermediaries. The problem is of course the scale of all the conversations happening online. Those are in the billions. And then you take Metcalf's law on the number of interactions between them goes up as the square of the people that are involved, and it seems almost impossible.

Aza Raskin: So you're like, "Well, that's not a scalable solution." But I'm remembering something that the HuffPo did a long time ago. I know, Tristan, you and I have talked about this to scale up the norms of a community is that inside of any particular community, there were a set of moderators just doing their thing moderating. And then you as a user, if you were allowed to flag and do moderation, but it didn't have any real effect. You just sort of like indicating what you thought was the right thing to do.

Aza Raskin: And over time, if you were statistically aligned with the norms of the actual moderators, then you would be leveled up into level and moderate and you can start to have some powers. And then if you continue to do that over time, you'd be leveled up to a level two moderator. You would actually start be able to ban people and block conversations. What I liked about this is that it was a way of taking the norms of a small group of people and very quickly and transparently scaling it to a much bigger community. And if those moderators that have been leveled up started to abuse their powers, well, they fall statistically out of line and those powers get taken away.

Aza Raskin: So the thought in my mind was, "Oh, could we do that to create a peace corps where you have people that have gone through the training, done the work, are really good at going into high conflict conversations, into those drama balls, deescalating them, but not have it just be them, having it the per community, per norm, per country, per county, and then scaling those in their local domains in this kind of statistical manner.

Dan Vallone: Yeah. Search for Common Ground has, I think, done an incredible job. We do know a lot about how to moderate conflict scenarios based upon work in Columbia and other kinds of settings that have successfully to a certain degree, reduced perception gaps, reduced polarization and social hostility. I think a key finding from our research has consistently been people respond well when they see people like them elevated into both messengers and people of authority.

Dan Vallone: There's a very interesting dynamic where we accept and have a lot of confidence in for the most part, the concept of a jury, which is like people randomly selected from your peers, assign tremendous responsibility and responsible for adjudicating, like oftentimes very complex scenarios. There's something interesting about the model of where... Because you imagine, people also being almost like randomly selected for being responsible for the nature of a conversation on a social media chapter or group, and how that might affect their own psychology to go from, "Oh, I'm like a passive user." All of a sudden I have some sense of responsibility.

Dan Vallone: And if I want the platform conversation to better reflect the views of people like me, and I'm also working with some other moderator who might have a slightly different ideological view, that's the kind of intervention that we lack too much where people

will have any incentive to grapple with like how do we actually have a healthy dialogue where both you and me feel appropriately represented and reflect it?

Aza Raskin: Yeah. I can see how that's starting to make some of the ideas of inclusive stakeholding and skin-in-the-game with the ideas of deliberative democracy. So you have small groups of people that have invested stake in the outcomes of conversation, the community, getting involved and having real power to make those communities work.

Dan Vallone: Yeah. There's a really interesting dynamic where our teams, for example, in Germany, like there's a lot of private and a lot of public investment in that. And those kinds of exact interventions where for a variety of reasons, there's different kinds of governance structures. But the state, the German state is very invested in trying to figure out how do you cultivate healthier, more democratic conversations online and in community building online with a small, democratic orientation. I think we still are very much in the infancy of all of that work, but it's exciting to think that there are those kinds of interventions being tested.

Tristan Harris: So part of this what's happening is we have to figure out a way in which a digital, open society outcompetes digital authoritarian societies. Right now, it appears to be the case. And this is back to our podcast interview with Audrey Tang, the digital minister of Taiwan, with the exception of Taiwan, it feels like when a democracy goes online in sort of the social media version of that democracy, it devolves into chaos, extremism, and conflict. That's the current impact of that. Whereas when a digital authoritarian society goes online, it's like, how do you be like China without becoming China? We don't want to become China.

Tristan Harris: So what is a vision of a digital democratic society in which we have almost a hyper-finding of common ground, a hyper-finding of where we agree on what to do both locally and nationally and internationally, because one of things that struck me was if you had this map being presented to policymakers, so as part of this, you actually see where all these places that people agree in are actually the hidden concerns that are not well-represented. You have all sorts of ways of serving this kind of thing. But this really could be an infrastructure for listening for actually creating more of a listening society.

Tristan Harris: Again, you would have to trust that this is done in a democratic way, and I frankly think that you would need different people that were... Just to be really clear to our listeners, I don't think that Mark Zuckerberg or Chris Cox, or some of the leadership at Facebook or Jack Dorsey, should be the ones who are doing this, but they have created this infrastructure that maybe some other democratic body can sit on top and have access to those controls would have to be elected, would have to be trusted with that information, and it has to be used for good purpose. And that has to get worked out.

Tristan Harris: We're looking for a way in which when you consider the game theory of we have Western democracies, which are currently devolving into disagreement and chaos, and nothing ever gets done and the gears get locked. That's the current model. We have to find some model in which this is actually out-competing digital authoritarianism. It seems like we've danced around some of those areas, which is incredibly inspiring.

Tristan Harris: Looking at some of your other work as well where people look like they disagree and you have just these maps of actually... But they agree on this. One example from your democracyforpresident.com, I think was your other work before the election, when you ask people is voting by mail secure and 85% of Democrats say, "Yes, it is, and we should vote by mail." Totally 28% of Republicans believe that we should vote by mail. But you say 64% of people trust their postal workers and believe they're deserving praise for doing their job in a pandemic.

Tristan Harris: I feel like if we had this map that almost reroutes us like in HTTP, what is it? The 302 that you go to one website and it reroutes you to something else. It's like whenever we start veering towards one of these polarizing frames where it looks like we're about to just get into an argument, there could be a "Hey, by the way, here's how to navigate to some place where we actually agree."

Tristan Harris: I feel like social media that is enabling those forms of interaction that's like almost like a good non-violent communicator facilitator, a good couple's counselor, a good marriage counselor, they see where you're going with that thought, and you're about to say something that's really unproductive and they kind of reroute you and say, "Let's go over here now." That might sound authoritarian to some people, but I think it's much better than the kind of brainstem chaos that is dominating our politics today.

Dan Vallone: I absolutely agree. And I was also trying to think of the other key points on that. But I think that's really right. There's governing institutions that we need to think about how do you have credibility without confronting the exact same challenges that we are currently facing, which is like the mass levels of distrust. But those are surmountable. I think challenges in terms of, we can find credible people who have credibility and there's processes like elections and other... That people still have confidence that we could imagine being done here.

Dan Vallone: I think it is key that in thinking about a healthy democratic digital space, that it not be overly reliant on, like you said, hyper-fine tuning, but there are broad parameters that we can agree on like, look, exacerbating perception gap is an objectively measurable effect and we all can agree that it has costs. So we should seek to reduce the frequency or exposure of those kinds of content and increase the exposure of content or other media that seems to correlate or be associated with lower perception gaps.

Dan Vallone: There's an objectivity, and then I think it creates the market forces within these platforms and users, et cetera that just would be much healthier, and give us a lot more of a space to think about how to do things differently digital and online versus like, I totally agree, it's like there's chaos or there's China. And it's like that can't be the binary that we're confronted with like it just can't.

Tristan Harris: Exactly. Well, and as you said, it's a win-win for the companies, because right now the infinite content moderation whack-a-mole game, and is it disinformation to flag this, or this, or that is very different than reducing perception gaps, which is a totally uniform place to be. And they can do that objectively. They don't have to higher the content moderators that don't get the pressure from outside. It would just lead to a more coherent, more harmonious kind of popular view.

Aza Raskin: Imagine Twitter goes from the platform where everyone can speak with a megaphone and just blast out everyone else to, no, it's a platform where everyone can hear each other. Imagine the world when we actually hear each other, it reminds me of the Tim Wu line that when the first amendment was created, it was in an environment where speech was expensive. It's expensive to get your content out. Now, we're in a world where it speech is cheap. But hearing, listening is expensive. So to me, this switch to a set of metrics that are objective that led us hear, the other side is the antidote.

Dan Vallone: I love that. And earlier, I think you had asked, like what... You just asked like what kind of content we actually use? And one of the most effective content, and this is of course, like super intuitive, but it speaks to exactly what you said, it's authentic questions like asking people, and then listening to them is the thing that more than probably any other particular line of content deescalates and creates a space. It's authentic and it's a question, and it's actually seeking, not just like, what do you believe about this? But actually like, huh. Like why, or even like what in your life is like, what's going on? Tell me a story about it, the backdrop? That is actually what is very powerful and it'll open up conversations. But you can't scale that. But the solution set that you've just been talking about has the same effect. And it's such a powerful concept to think about. I hope that platforms take this seriously.

Tristan Harris: Overall in your work, I feel like that's the idea of a listening society is what you're talking about. The idea of hidden tribes in America that we don't just have the left and the right, we have these eight tribes, the progressive activists, the traditional liberals, the passive liberals, the politically disengaged, the moderates, the traditional conservatives and the devoted conservatives. Or excuse me, that's seven. Am I missing one?

Dan Vallone: Nope. Yeah, they're seven.

Tristan Harris: Seven hidden tribes, excuse me. But the idea that we're not listening deeply enough, we're hearing a scrambled message. We're hearing a noisy station, and this is like, how do we tune the dials so we can actually hear? Overall, that just leaves me feeling inspired about your work and hopefully a collaboration we can help you set up with the tech companies to implement some of this because I'm just literally chomping at the bit to say, "How can this at least be experimented with really, really soon?"

Dan Vallone: Absolutely. I totally agree. And people want that too. That's the other thing. Too often on elevators like people really want a listening society and we can approach it through any number of lenses, but that is what people want and would act on I think if we had some adjustments to some systems factors, which the platforms are uniquely positioned to do.

Tristan Harris: And so much of where our politics seem broken right now is in the feeling of people feeling like dignity is not... They're not seen. They're not listened to. There is no dignity for them. The society isn't paying attention to them. And I think the listening society is a really good way to put it. And it actually, again, references the work of the matter modernist movements in Hanzi Freinacht's book, The Listening Society, which is I want to still recommend to listeners.

Dan Vallone: Yeah. On that point of dignity, we'll be publishing some data soon on this point, but we asked folks about experiences of dignity at home, at work, in your neighborhood. And there were variations at home, work, neighborhood, primarily around race and economic status. Then we asked about dignity in terms of how people like you are represented or depicted in media and TV. Everybody dropped, everybody. Everybody feels it, and so that lack of feeling dignity and how we see each other and see ourselves presented is pervasive across the board, and it speaks to the fact that a listening society is so much healthier and so desired by people across the political spectrum.

Tristan Harris: I love that. Dan, I just think it's been such an awesome thing to have you on the podcast and the work you're doing, and so many others, Courageous Conversations, Braver Angels, everyone in this space is so critically important. I just hope that everyone takes what we've shared to heart.

Dan Vallone: I really appreciate that. And couldn't agree more and appreciate all the work that you all are doing to elevate these conversations, and looking forward to collaborating with the broad swath of folks who are trying to make that, make the change to how we see and how the mirrors operate in our society.

Tristan Harris: What can people do if they listen to this and they want to learn more?

Dan Vallone: They can visit our perception gap website, perceptiongap.us. And there, they can see the findings, they can download the report, and they can engage in this material with a greater depth and hopefully continue their involvement.

Tristan Harris: So we really care about these podcasts leading to real change, and we're trying something special. We'll be hosting conversations with podcast guests or their close allies. After most episodes, there'll be a chance to connect directly with the people you've heard here, the CHT team, and others around the world working to advance humane technology. You can find out more at humanetech.com/get-involved.

Aza Raskin: Your Undivided Attention is produced by the Center for Humane Technology. Our executive producer is Dan Kedmey and our associate producer is Natalie Jones. Noor Al-Samarrai helped with the fact-checking. Original music and sound designed by Ryan and Hays Holladay And a special thanks to the whole Center for Humane Technology team for making this podcast possible.

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