



# Mark Schneider, PhD

UX Research Portfolio





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**COMMUNITY  
CHANGE**



Columbia University

# I am a Mixed Method Researcher

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I am a Mixed Method Researcher focused on understanding political behavior, social media impacts on attitudes and behaviors, cross-cultural consumer insights; and risks and growth opportunities related to equity and the experience of under-represented groups.

My methodological approaches include:

- Surveys and survey experiments (perceptions/attitudes; vignette experiments; conjoints).
- Discussion guide design and in-depth interviews.
- Field Research (India, Sri Lanka)
- Content analysis
- Literature reviews and conceptual frameworks
- Experienced developing actionable research insights in ambiguous spaces

# I am a Research Advocate for Understanding and Protecting Under-Represented Groups

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- My research shaped 5 company policies and policy expansions
- My research revealed simple solutions to ambiguous problems viewed as intractable, and I used compelling, simple narratives to ensure that my research landed impact with stakeholders.
- I engaged a broad coalition of cross-functional partners (policy, legal, product, and research) to find practical solutions to protect users.
- Nearly all the research I did included global south countries and over-sampled under-represented groups to ensure the company understood challenges and solutions that benefited these groups.
- My research laid out a model for research on at-risk populations that served teams across the company.

# Stakeholders for My Research

## Policy

Produced actionable research insights to guide policy changes that improve safety and equity while protecting civic discourse.

## PMs

Delivered foundational knowledge to inform new product changes and improve the user experience globally.

## Design

Developed research insights to inform warning screens on problematic content and design principles to guide regulation compliance.

## Crisis

Delivered foundational insights to help make response to violent events and elections more efficient and expand understanding of risks.

## Research

Developed model research designs and conceptual frameworks that served as a model for products teams across the company.

## Engineering

Leveraged research to inform product solutions and changes to systems grounded in global empirical research.

# About me

When I'm not researching, I'm  
taking a walk



... Or taking a seat





# My Research





# Overview:

## Understanding User Behaviors and Perceptions

- Business Problem: How can we identify content users consider to be problematic in crisis settings?
  - Research: Identified content associated with offline harm through fieldwork, interviews, and surveys (Sri Lanka; India; U.S.).
  - Impact: Surfaced content risks to country policy and crisis response teams, which made a business case for expanding content policies to protect users from new types of problematic content at-scale.
- Business Problem: How can we identify online content risks across political and social crisis settings so Meta can respond proactively?
  - Research: Developed a framework for proactively responding to potential online risks across political and social conflict events.
  - Impact: My framework was foundational for ecosystems research on understanding online election and conflict risks and helped make a business case for a new product team.
- Business Problem: How can we understand and protect users from under-represented groups?
  - Research: Developed a global research agenda for measuring differences in perceptions related to problematic content experiences among under-represented groups (with a US application).
  - Impact: Advanced company equity measurement efforts and led to new survey research on vulnerable populations.

# Mixed method research resulted in a global Inflammatory Content policy to reduce problematic content

- Business Problem: Content that does not violate company policies may encourage harm against vulnerable populations. A new policy was needed to fill any potential gaps.
- Research Method:
  - To understand users' experiences with problematic content, I conducted qualitative research in Sri Lanka, India, and the United States.
  - I used surveys and survey experiments to evaluate the extent to which users perceived that this content was problematic.
- Impact: The Inflammatory Content Policy (based on my research-backed recommendations) was approved in January 2021. This policy was incorporated into a global policy ([Borderline Hostile Speech](#)).
  - The Inflammatory content policy was fully implemented in 100 countries by 2022—resulting in a reduction of views of problematic content in the tens of millions.
  - A similar approach was applied to inflammatory ads policy, which closely mirrored my research-backed recommendations for Inflammatory Content policy.

# Results from a Survey Experiment Demonstrated that Users Support Reducing Content Included in the Proposed Inflammatory Content Policy

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- Business Problem: What types of content do users consider to be more/less offensive (and support reducing on social media)?
- Research Method: Survey experiment fielded in the U.S. and India where respondents were shown posts that randomly varied inflammatory content (e.g., direct and implicit threats) and group targets (e.g., race, religion) of this content.
- Conclusion: A majority of respondents supported removing or reducing all types of inflammatory content included in the recommended (And ultimately launched) inflammatory policy.
- Impact: This project played a key role in the approval of a policy closely aligned with my recommendations for content policy.

# Research Using In-Depth Interviews Identified Content Risks Related to Anti-Muslim Content

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- Business Problem: What content do users feel is most harmful in a period of unrest?
- Research Method: 60 respondents in four Indian states (w/ oversampling of minority groups) were sampled for a large-scale remote in-depth interview project to understand users' social media experiences in a context of religious divisions.
  - Respondents were asked about their perceptions around misinformation and other content they found offensive in 60-90 minute interviews. Prior to interviews, respondents were asked to bring examples of content related to religion that they found upsetting in the last week.
- Impact: Results from this study and other related studies led to an escalation-only policy to reduce the spread of rumors that target minorities; inflammatory rumors were included in the Inflammatory Policy despite a robust debate.

# Mixed Method Research Improved Precision in a Global Labeling Program and Formed the Basis for a New Training Program

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Problem: A global content moderation program suffered from low accuracy in labeling and an inadequate vendor training program.

Research: I designed a 4-part series of analyses that identified common errors in labeling across different content problems to identify common errors and recommendation solutions to improve accuracy. Analysis was complemented by co-design workshops with content labelers from 8 languages.

Impact: The results of my analysis resulted in accepted recommended changes to reduce the complexity of the Inflammatory Content guidelines, translations of guidelines in new languages, and a training program for content labelers that I developed and led to reduce common labeling mistakes.

# Understanding Online Risks and Perceptions in Prioritized Countries



# My Work Created and Executed on a Research Agenda on Online Risks During Crises and Elections

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Understanding online risks across country contexts to facilitate a proactive mitigation strategy involved several steps I took as lead researcher.

1. Move from a reactive state to a proactive state by leveraging research on social conflicts (e.g., civil wars, ethnic riots, polarization elections, state repression) to develop a proactive framework on social media risks (Violence Taxonomy Framework).
2. Understand country risks and user experiences through qualitative and survey research in prioritized countries.
3. Develop a product strategy for implementing recommendations for a proactive strategy to reduce risks during crises and address enforcement gaps.



# A Foundational Framework Led to a Playbook and Research Agenda for Identifying and Proactively Responding to Content Risks Associated With Violence and Civic Harms

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Business Problem: How can we inform company response to violence risks by developing a simplified playbook that takes context, targets, and actors involved in the conflict into account.

Research Method: Drawing on a large review of literature on violence and political conflict, I developed a simplified taxonomy of online risks (violence, hate, misinformation) based on country context (e.g., authoritarian regime) event context (e.g., military coup, election), targets of threats (e.g., vulnerable groups), and actors/creators (e.g., state leaders).

The framework was used to develop a proactive crisis playbook that radically simplified risk assessment (in collaboration with Ops Teams) and to recommend system improvements.

Impact: This framework shaped a broad strategy to crisis response; created a template for ongoing work on understanding election and violence risk (including applications by expert consultants in Pakistan and Turkey); and provided the basis for the creation of a new product team focused on preventing targeted attacks on vulnerable individuals.

# Inflammatory Content: Surveys in high risk contexts

Business Problem: What types of content do social media users perceive to be associated with offline harm in moments of acute political or ethnic tensions (and what do they want FB to do about it)?

Research Method: Conducted online surveys on the user experience in the US, Sri Lanka, and other countries surrounding moments of tension. The survey included self-reported exposure to problematic content and open-ended questions to understand how users interpret content they perceive to be harmful.

Impact: Surveys revealed fears around benign content (news) as well as concerns about content that is not policy-violating. Results were leverage to guide other teams involved in responding to crisis events and contributed understanding on how to interpret core survey metrics on self-reported content harms.

# Equity Research on Differences in Experiences with Problematic Content Across Ethnic Groups

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# I developed a framework for measuring differences in perceptions about content experiences among dominant and under-represented groups

- I developed a framework that laid out a business case and tractable strategy for measuring differences in the user experience across gender, racial, and religious groups.
  - This included establishing differences in the user experience across these groups (primarily based on my work at the company), specific methodological trade-offs, and a framework for interpreting results.
- Impact: This proposal was adopted by the Meta equity team and led to a large-scale investment in research on understanding equity concerns in content exposure and enforcement in the US.
- Impact: The framework and my research on social groups provided a template for equity research across the company.

# Design Research on Regulation Compliance Messaging Across Regions

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I was the primary UX researcher on regulation compliance tasked with understanding user sentiment related to explanations for implementation of government content regulations and improving the compliance user experience.

# Co-Design: Toward Design Principles Prioritizing the User Experience

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Business Problem: How can we prioritize the user experience when complying with government regulations?

- Research Leadership: Developed and led a co-design workshop including content design, product design, and engineering staff with the goal of building consensus on core design principles related to compliance communication.
- Research: Developed and fielded a survey that measured how users respond to compliance language across a wide range of countries with different political characteristics.
- Impact: Design principles based on research on a were accepted by the company—including legal, design, and research teams.

# Measurement Strategy to Understand User Impacts of Government Regulation Compliance

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Business Problem: How can we measure the impact of government content regulation compliance on the user experience?

Research: Developed an experimental and sub-group analysis strategy to evaluate the impact of user-facing information on regulation compliance on users' perceptions and behaviors overall and among key sub-populations.

Impact: The research strategy shaped the scope of a new team focused on understanding sub-populations within countries on FB and Instagram.



# Internal Research Consulting on Survey Design and Trust and Safety Research

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- At Meta I served as an internal consultant on survey projects related to responsible AI, trust and safety experimental research on video and post content; and company policy related to social media strategies around political and social conflict.
- This included:
  - Designing novel projects on problematic video content using similar experimental designs to my previous work on posts.
  - Advising the responsible AI team on the design of multiple surveys related to perceived experiences with AI resulting in an overhaul of this survey.
  - Survey consulting on a project related to the experience of self-identified Muslims on Facebook.
  - Leading a project on biases in enforcement across racial majority zip codes with the equity team.
  - Serving as a trust and safety expert consultant with the equity team more broadly.

# Nonprofit and Academic Research

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Since leaving Meta, I have been a consultant on applied nonprofit research. This includes:

- Survey experiments evaluating the political impacts of environmental and infrastructure policies on voter engagement and participation (with Community Change).
- Experiments designed to increase turnout in local elections and primaries (with Community Change and other partners).
- Research on the impacts of social media content exposure on civic and social attitudes.

# Questions?

