

Acknowledgments

There are few things more overwhelming than pausing to consider the many people and events that made the completion of a book possible, especially when that book, from seed of an idea to finished manuscript, took the better part of a decade.

All of the formal work for this manuscript occurred while I have been a part of the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Pennsylvania, first as a doctoral student and then as a fellow and affiliate at the Center on Digital Culture and Society. The support of ASC's faculty and staff has been instrumental to the book's journey, as well as mine. My PhD adviser Joseph Turow has been a dependable source of encouragement, thoughtful questions, and puns, fundamentally shaping my thinking along the way. Feedback from Barbie Zelizer and Victor Pickard gave me the perspective I needed to imagine what this book project could be. Guobin Yang and CDCS pulled me out of a postpartum pandemic fog and provided the financial and moral support to write this manuscript. I cannot thank them all enough.

Over the years I have been lucky to collaborate on other research projects with brilliant and kind people from whom I have learned so much. Brooke Duffy took a chance on me when I was a first-year student and she was a new professor. We were complete strangers—albeit strangers whose educational and professional trajectories had uncanny similarities—but immediately got to work. Without her tremendous generosity as a collaborator, mentor, and friend, I would not be where I am today. In separate projects, Caitlin Petre and Lee McGuigan widened my perspective in important ways—with the added bonus of having fun working together.

My deepest thanks to the bloggers, influencers, and content creators who shared your stories, goals, and challenges with me, and to the marketers, brand representatives, talent managers, trend forecasters, and other influencer industry professionals who offered your expertise, reflections, and questions. I am so grateful to each one of you for your time and your willingness to help analyze this world as you navigated it yourselves. Thanks especially to Sharon McMahon, Blair Eadie, Darby Cisneros, and the Museum of Ice Cream for allowing me to use your Instagram images in this book.

Meagan Levinson and the team at Princeton University Press have been enthusiastic, thoughtful, and supportive from our first email exchange, and I am so glad to have worked with them to bring this book to the world. I sincerely appreciate the anonymous reviewers who provided insightful and good-faith feedback on the proposal and first draft of the manuscript. Laura Portwood-Stacer provided vital advice about the publishing process and helped me get started on this path.

A wise person once said that behind every successful woman is a group text hyping her up, and I would like to confirm here that this is true—perhaps more than ever during a pandemic. The in-person and digital support of the Hive Mind—Elena Maris, Rosie Clark-Parsons, and my office mate of six years Samantha Oliver—has been essential in confronting the idiosyncrasies, struggles, and excitement of pursuing this work. I also rely on the support and laughs provided by the PSU Besties—Ashley, Christa, Elyse, Emily, Steph—and my oldest friend Amy. I am lucky to have friends who are truly the “realest.”

This book is ultimately for, and made possible by, my family. For my husband Henry, first and foremost, who has supported me unconditionally since we were teenagers and is the most involved and devoted father and partner one could ask for. For our sons, whose births brought highs and lows we did not know were possible and put everything in perspective. For my parents and in-laws, who have helped with childcare and provided moral support throughout. My mom, in particular, encouraged (some might say nagged) me to pursue graduate education when I wasn’t sure if it was time to make the leap, and has provided piles of relevant magazine and newspaper clippings over the years. For my

sisters, sisters-in-law, and brothers-in-law, whose support and pride I deeply appreciate. For all four of my grandparents, whose amazing and steadfast presence in my life has shaped it profoundly, and my great-grandparents, whose immense sacrifices and extremely limited access to, in some cases, even the most basic education, I carry with me always. For these reasons and many more, I hope to always be a steward of the wonderful opportunities I have.

The Influencer Industry

