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## Section Introduction: Virality & Belonging

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# VIRALITY & Belonging

The human experience is about exploring the world, cultivating new ideas, and forming relationships with others to share life's adventures. With the proliferation of products, ideas, and technology, we can often feel lost amidst the chaos. Hence, finding a place where we are comfortable, where we feel that we belong and matter, becomes crucial. The stories in this section grapple with the challenge of making sense of the world and our place in it. In a society that obsesses over our online presence, trying to fit in when the screens are turned off can feel impossible.

In "Virality and Consumption," Zach Barlow helps us make sense of our role in the virtual world. He places virality and consumption side by side and considers their differences, as well as their composition, to grasp what it truly means to "go viral."

Ashley Kasha's captivating and humorous "A String of Saliva: A series of poor choices resulting in mono, a trip to the hospital, and an attempt to determine how the hell this happened" tackles a different kind of virus, one that led her down a path of self-reflection.

From there, we turn to a story about gaming, compulsion, and identity. Robert Marcuson's "Rage Quit" captures the

uncanny way that video games connect and compel players through virtual worlds.

Rafy Evans looks at obsession in a different context. "Don't Forget Where You Belong" describes her deep connection to the boy band One Direction and how she found herself through the experience of following them. Evans shows us that the relationships we form in life are often sudden, unplanned, and networked across time and space.

In her depiction of her relationship to home and diaspora, Hasmik Djoulakian's "Moving Across Spaces" addresses the struggle of walking the line between multiple cultures. As an Armenian woman in the United States, she recounts specific moments from her childhood and describes how they connect, as she puts it, to "the spaces [her] body has occupied since then."

These authors show us the complexities of belonging and existing, whether on or off the screen. Our human experience is evolving, contingent, and sometimes viral. But we're not in it alone. These pieces remind us how we may be more connected than we think.

—Alice Chen, Sarah Crawford  
Anuradha Desai, and Rachel Young