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Handout II: INTERACTION TECHNOLOGIES-- BENEFITS AND SETBACKS FOR YOUTH

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

CMC refers to various means of communication between computer users who can exchange messages and data with one another through their connection to a network, such as the Internet. There are two main types of CMC: asynchronous communication and synchronous communication. **Asynchronous communication** involves the exchange of text-based messages, which does not involve any conversation. The best examples of this form of **CMC** are **email** and the **newsgroups** or **bulletin board systems** that operate on networks like **Usenet**. Asynchronous communication allows both one-to-one and many-to-many exchanges to take place; the main forms of **synchronous CMC** are Internet **Chat Rooms**. Synchronous CMC differs from newsgroups or email in that it is perhaps best described as offering what might be called a 'typed conversation'.

IDENTITY (in Cyberspace)

It is argued that new information and communication technologies have reshaped identity at the individual and collective level, namely, the ways that cyberspace has reshaped some aspects of gender, race and the issue of identity-play. In terms of the latter, the lack of face-to-face (**F2F**) contact in computer-mediated communication is considered as freeing us from the restrictions of our real-life identities and bodies : we can endlessly re-invent ourselves, present infinite different selves in different online environments, and experiment with who we are and who we want to be. For example, Charles Cheung discusses personal homepages, exploring the ways in which homepages are used as a reflection and extension of the self; he shows how the assemblage of visual and textual material, plus links to other sites, work to present the self to net-surfers in transformative ways (Charles Cheung, 'Identity Construction and Self-Presentation on Personal Homepages', 2004). However, this should not be taken as meaning that cyberspace completely liberates individuals from their real-life selves; racial stereotypes persist in cyberculture, and divisions are imported from the real to the virtual world. Not only women remain marginalized in cyberspace and in other spheres such as gaming, but also a resurgence of nationalist sentiment and xenophobia in online contexts has been felt.

I.   **Types of Interaction**

--Email

Already in the early 1990s people started to, on a widespread basis, use computers to support their everyday communication needs. The most common application for Internet communication around **1994-95 was email**, which is still the most widespread channel for Internet communication today.

--Chatting, messaging and other forms of communication

Besides email, it was quite common, and still is, to discuss issues and interact over the Internet via Newsgroups, various kinds of discussion forums, as postings on public virtual bulletin boards, or via different kinds of open chat rooms.

Starting in 1996, the **first instant messaging system called ICQ** ("I Seek You") was released. With this piece of software installed, people can send short messages to each other in a **peer-to-peer (P2P)** fashion. Unlike the email, the design of ICQ was centered around the buddy list, i.e., a dynamic contacts list that continuously and synchronously shows who is currently online. Focus shifted to maintaining social contacts and the person's social network.

One of the foremost things that people want to do with the technology today is **to communicate with one another. With the mobile phone network, people are also provided with mobile access to communication through different applications.**

+IM (*instant message)*, a type of communications service that enables you to create a kind of private chat room with another individual in order to communicate in real time over the Internet, analogous to a telephone conversation but using text-based, not voice-based, communication—yahoo messenger ; Windows Live Messenger (MSN) no longer in use, Skype, etc.

+SMS (Short Message Service) text messages are sent everyday worldwide,

+MMS: people also use the new format **MMS (Multimedia Messaging Service)** to send short texts, sound clips, and digital photos to each other: to send messages that include multimedia content to and from a mobile phone over a cellular network. Users and providers may refer to such a message as a **PXT, a picture message**, or a multimedia message.

+**P2P (peer-to-peer)** technology: With this software persons can communicate in with each other independent of any central administration of the system—Skype, Whatsapp, etc. **P2P** networks are free access networks requiring only client software that is obtainable online at no cost. The users act both as enablers of and participants in file sharing. **P2P networks** require a dedicated client application (such as **uTorrent** for **BitTorren**t or **eMule** for **eDonkey**). Its worldwide usage is still today estimated at **25% of all Internet traffic.**

Advantages: lower distribution costs; absence of any physical restriction to access.

Criticisms: every copy made is a lost sale (and thus must be forbidden) ; sharing copyrighted files with no authorization from the holder(s) threatens the economic sectors

+Chatting

Chats involve a synchronous computer-mediated communication forum in which individuals exchange typed comments with other participants (everyone else in the 'room'). Most chat rooms, are text-based 'rooms' or 'channels' run via **Internet Relay Chat** (**IRC**) software, meaning that participants can only communicate with one another using written language. In chat rooms, a user's identity is first established by announcing his/her sex, age, and location (gender, class, and geographical location). Information on sex, age, and location (ASL) is often decisive in triggering the interest of other chat users or starting individual relationships. Likewise, chat users may prefer certain virtual locations to others and, in fact, tend to become regulars of selected chat sites. Chatting has helped to create many online relationships, and some chat rooms can rightfully be called virtual communities. However, chat rooms are usually associated with banal chit-chat or sexually-oriented discussion, and are dominated by teenagers. There have also been concerns about these environments being used by paedophiles who are stalking children who go there.

+ Social Networking Sites (SNSs)

A social networking site is an online platform that allows users to create a public profile and interact with other users on the website. Most social network services are web-based and provide means for users to interact over the Internet, such as by e-mail, by instant messaging and through online forums (e.g., An **Internet forum**, or **message board**, is an online discussion site where people can hold conversations in the form of posted messages—longer than one-line texting in chat rooms). Other social network services include :

- **Socializing** : social network services used primarily for socializing with existing friends (e.g., Facebook)
- **Networking** : social network services used primarily for non-social interpersonal communication (e.g., LinkedIn, a career- and employment-oriented site)
- **Social navigation** : social network services used primarily for helping users to find specific information or resources (e.g., Goodreads for books)

Internet-based links or relationships are important to social capital as follows:

•   **Hashtags**: the importance of hashtags is that it gives people the chance to feel united and strong while talking about a specific topic.

•   **Social media platforms** are very important for building allegiances to several social movements: the Labour Movements, Women's Movements, Environmental Movements, Social Welfare Movements, Animal and Human Rights Movements, as well as more recent global justice movements.

•   **Social Networking Sites** increase the probabilty of collective action against social evils or any other cause.

+ BLOGGING:

Short for **web logging**, blogging is a form of personal web-based writing and publishing. Blogs are a form of personal homepage, used to record in a chronological, diary-like form day-to-day life experiences, reviews and personal opinions of the writer. While blogs can be

intensely personal, they are a new outlet for creative writing that is not constrained by the conventional world of writing and publishing. They also facilitate two-way communication, as bloggers interact with one another and their readers on a forum.

Blogosphere--all blogs, it is an expression used to describe the 'world of blogs'. **Blog storm--** the use of blogging to push an event or subject to mainstream news. **A blog storm** is when the **blogosphere** collectively writes thousands or more posts about a particular subject, topic or event, and as a result, the story is picked up by mainstream media and carried over to newspapers, television and radio.

II.   Benefits and Setbacks for Youth

Positive effects

-- The cyberworld should be viewed as a workable alternative to the unworkable sites of youth centres and to the absence of libraries, museums or other resource centres that could shield the youth from the risks of idleness and moral deviance. Similarly, the use of computer-mediated communication (CMC) provides disenfranchised communities of youth with a resistance space to deal with global exclusion and marginalization ; one way in which young people feel globally excluded is because of tough immigration policies which restrict their mobility worldwide. Such a feeling of confinement is, however, counterbalanced by the global outreach of cyberspace. It is this borderless dimension of CMC that is important, because it keeps one surfing in the hope of 'hunting' a foreign partner.

--The advent of user-generated content (**User-generated content** (**UGC**), alternatively known as **user-created content** (**UCC**), is any form of content created by users) marked a shift among media organizations from creating online content to providing facilities for amateurs to publish their own content. User-generated content has also been characterized as Citizen Media as opposed to the 'Packaged Goods Media' of the past century. Media can be either audience-generated feedback or news coverage. The former is a two-way process in contrast to the one-way distribution of the latter. People give their reviews and share stories in the form of user-generated and user-uploaded audio and user-generated video. Conversational or two-way media is a key characteristic of the Web which encourages the publishing of one's own content and commenting on that of other people.

The role of the passive audience therefore has shifted since the birth of New Media, and an ever-growing number of participatory users are taking advantage of **the interactive opportunities**, especially on the Internet to create independent content. Grassroots experimentation then generated an innovation in sounds, artists, techniques and associations with audiences which then are being used in mainstream media. The active, participatory and creative audience is prevailing today with relatively accessible media, tools and applications, and its culture is in turn affecting mass media corporations and global audiences.

Whereas during the 1970s and 1980s, traditional "gatekeepers" such as newspaper editors, publishers and news shows approved all content and information before it was aired or published, in the 1990s and 2000s, as media production through new technologies has become more accessible, user friendly and affordable to the general public, large numbers of individuals are able to post text, digital photos and digital videos online, with little or no "gatekeepers" or filters.

Hypertext

Hypertext is different from written text, because it is multi-linear and multi-sequential ; it does not follow any logical order or sequence. Hypertext links entries/pages back and forth to one another. The reader can skim through or hop around, choosing what information to read.

New outlets, research portals and social media sites all have hypertextual links sprinkled in their web pages (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram use **hashtags** to make links)

Use of hypertext/hypermedia in learning :

--It increases students'motivation.

--It offers flexible modes and tools of learning.

--It allows for the development of creative and critical thinking.

Negative effects

Reduced learning and research capabilities

Students have started relying more on the information accessible easily on these social networking sites and the web. This reduces their learning and research capabilities.

Multitasking

Students who get involved in activities on social media sites while studying result in reduction in their focus of attention. This causes reduction in their academic performance, and concentration to study well.

Reduction in real human contact

The more time the students spend on these social media sites, the less time they will spend socializing in person with others. This reduces their communication skills. They will not be able to communicate and socialize effectively in person with others. The employers are getting more and more unsatisfied with the communication skills of the fresh graduates due to this reason. The effective communication skills are key to success in the real world.

Reductive command over language use and creative writing skills

Students mostly use slang words or shortened forms of words on social networking sites. They start relying on the computer grammar and spelling check features. This reduces their command over the language and their creative writing skills.

Time wastage

Students, while searching and studying online, get attracted to using social media sites and sometimes they forget why they are using internet. This wastes their time and sometimes students are not able to deliver their work in the specified time frame.

Health

The overuse of these sites on a daily basis has many negative effects on the physical and mental health of students. The excessive use of these sites affect the mental as well as physical health. Students do not take their meals on time and take proper rest. They take excessive amount of coffee or tea to remain active and focused which effects negatively on their health.