Alone Together in an Age of Social Distancing:
What Becomes of Humanity When Most of Life Transpires Online?

Lecture II:
What Digital Technology and Social Media Are Doing To Our Minds, Psychology and Relationship

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Fromm Institute for Lifelong Learning, USF
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Review and Preview

Review of Lecture I: The Co-evolution of the Human Condition and Technology
I. The Human Condition, Technology and The Angel of History
II. The Co-evolution of the Human Condition and Technology
III. Neil Postman: From Tool Using Culture to Technopoloy
IV. Stages in the Evolution of Communication Technology: From Language through Gutenberg to Digital Information Transmission and Social Media
V. The Explosion of Digital Communication Technology Use in the Last 10 Years and Week

Preview of Lecture II: What Digital Technology and Social Media Are Doing To Our Minds, Psychology and Relationship
I. Theoretic Background to Sherry Turkle’s Alone Together
II. What’s Driving Human Interaction On-Line: How Technology Conditions Its Use, Plus Social Factor and the Pandemic
III. New Technologies, New Subjectivities and Their Discontents
IV. The Transformation of Self and Society: Growing Up Tethered and the New Adolescence
Exponentially Accelerating Availability of Computational Power (Moore’s Law)
A Widely Wired World

(Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_Internet_usage)
Social Media and Digital Communication Technology Use: Before and After the Coronavirus Pandemic Doing to Our? An Overview in Data

Number of people using social media platforms, 2004 to 2018

Estimates correspond to monthly active users (MAUs). Facebook, for example, measures MAUs as users that have logged in during the past 30 days. See source for more details.

Source: Statista and TNW (2019)
Daily hours spent with digital media, United States, 2008 to 2018

Average hours per day spent engaging with digital media (e.g. digital images and videos, web pages, social media apps, etc.) The data for ‘other connected devices’ includes game consoles. Mobile includes smartphones & tablets. All data includes both home & work usage for people 18+.

Source: BOND Internet Trends (2019)
Technology adoption in US households, 1930 to 2019

Technology adoption rates, measured as the percentage of households in the United States using a particular technology.

Source: Comin and Hobijn (2004) and others
Note: See the sources tab for definitions of household adoption, or adoption rates, by technology type.
Use of social media platforms by age group in the US

The share of adults in the United States who say they ever use the following online platforms or social media apps in 2019. This is shown by age group.

This is a visualization from OurWorldinData.org, where you find data and research to make progress against the world’s largest problems.

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Teens' Social Media Usage Is Drastically Increasing

Percentage of 13- to 17-year-olds in the U.S. who check social media...

- **More than once a day**: 34% in 2012, 70% in 2018
- **Almost constantly**: 16% in 2012, 27% in 2018
- **Once a day**: 17% in 2012, 3% in 2018
- **Several times a week**: 14% in 2012, 4% in 2018
- **Once a week**: 7% in 2012, 1% in 2018
- **Less than weekly**: 10% in 2012, 3% in 2018
- **Don't use social media**: 17% in 2012, 19% in 2018

Based on surveys of 1,000+ U.S. teens (ages 13 to 17) conducted in 2012 and 2018

Source: Common Sense Media
With the rise of social distancing, we are seeking out new ways to connect, mostly through video chat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>App</th>
<th>Percent Change</th>
<th>Traffic (Daily Sessions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Google Duo (app)</td>
<td>+12.4%</td>
<td>4.8M - 5.0M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nextdoor.com (web)</td>
<td>+73.3%</td>
<td>1.8M - 5.0M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houseparty (app)</td>
<td>+79.4%</td>
<td>0.6M - 5.0M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Feb. 29
First U.S. Covid-19 death

Average daily traffic

Percent change is from the average on Jan. 21 to the average on March 24. App daily traffic is measured in “daily sessions.” - Sources: SimilarWeb, Apptopia
We have suddenly become reliant on services that allow us to work and learn from home

Daily app sessions for popular remote work apps

Feb. 29
First U.S. Covid-19 death

Zoom
Google Classroom
Microsoft Teams
VPN Super Unlimited Proxy
Hangouts Meet by Google

App popularity according to iOS App Store rankings on March 16-18. • Source: Apptopia
Introducing Sherry Turkle And the Evolution of Her Work
The Theoretic Background to Sherry Turkle’s *Together Alone*

A. The Concept of Intersubjectivity
B. The Embodiment of Intelligence and Emotion
C. Therapy and Role-Playing vs. I-Thou: Are they Different Kinds of Intersubjectivity?
D. Is Intersubjectivity Different in Kind From Sociable Robots’ Performances? The Importance of Alterity
E. Why Intersubjectivity is Diminished When Interaction Transitions from In Person to Mediated Forms
What’s Driving Human Interaction On-Line: How Technology Conditions Its Use, Plus Social Factor and the Pandemic

A. What Leads to Human Fatigue? Cultural vs. Social Explanations
B. Transformation of Work and Production-Reproduction Border (Nancy Fraser)
C. Increased Geographic Mobility
D. Civic Privatism
E. Intensification of Demands for Care
F. Failure of Just Distribution of Care
G. The Ease and Availability of Digital and Social Media Alternatives to Direct Human Interaction
H. The Pandemic
New Technologies, New Subjectivities And Their Discontents

A. New Experiences, New Etiquettes, Substitution and Loss
B. Simultaneity
C. Dislocation/Unworlding
D. Friending and Superficiality
E. The Decline of Conversation
F. Continuous Partial Attention
G. The Loss of Boundaries
H. The Imperative to Multitask
I. The Loss of Emotional Range and Intimacy
J. The Loss of Solitude
A. Critical Issues in the Development of Personality
   1. Differentiation
   2. Autonomy
   3. Identity
   4. Empathy
   5. Intimacy
B. Prerequisites for Development: Time and Space for Self-reflection and Self-Exploration—Moratorium and Privacy
C. Two Models of the Self: Bounded and Autonomous vs. Tethered and Collaborative
D. Self-exploration and Presentation Anxiety
And Nicholas Carr and the Evolution of his Work
What the Internet is Doing to Our Relationship to Knowledge—Especially to Reading

A. The Importance of the Process of Knowledge Acquisition
B. The Lost Arts of Conversation (Turkle) and Reading (Carr)
C. An Earlier Example: How Writing and Reading Change When the Mode of Engaging with the Book Changed From Reading Aloud to Reading in Private
D. Are We Witnessing A Transition Between Two Modes of Thinking: Linear vs. Networked
A Central Example: What Happens to Writing and Reading in the Digital Age

A. The Dialectic Between Silent Reading and Private Writing: How the Novel and the Essay Take Hold in the Age of the Attentive Reader—and the Affects this Has on Our Culture (Modernity II—Ulrich Beck)

B. The Shift to the Communal Screen: Writing for the Sake of Feeling or Belonging on a Medium that Permits Infinite Revision, Networked Reading as a Social Act Performed with Constantly Fractured Attention: Scuba Diving vs. Jet-Skiing

C. The Culture Constituting Power of Media of Communication: Is A Post-Modern Age Inevitable Once We Enter the Era of Digitally Mediated Communication?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attention Duration:</th>
<th>Control:</th>
<th>Self-Directed</th>
<th>Automatic, Reflexive or Distracted</th>
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</table>

Diagram 5: Evolution in the Nature of Attention with the Transformation of Media of Mass Communication (developing ideas from Tim Wu’s Attention Merchants)
1. Literary & Letter Writing Public
   a. Exemplary Media: Newspaper, Novel, Chamber Music
   b. Character of Public: Rational-Critical
   c. Space for Reception: deliberately constituted cultural public spheres & family as space of cultivation
   d. Temporality: Moderately Simultaneous but Still Individualized
   e. Nature and degree of Commercial Penetration: Very limited (cultural products distributed but not produced as commodities)
   f. Mode of Circulation: Mediumcast
2. Public of Age of Mechanical Reproduction
   a. Exemplary Media: Cinema & Non-Commercial Radio
   b. Character of Public: Awe & Collapse of Critical Distance
   c. Space for Reception: Mass Assembly (& home but still understood as non-commercial sanctuary)
   d. Temporality: Increasingly Simultaneous & Homogenized
   e. Nature and degree of Commercial Penetration: Limited (cultural products distributed but not produced as commodities—some sponsorship)
   f. Mode of Circulation: Broadcast
3. Public of Age of Mass Broadcast Media
   a. Exemplary Media: Commercial Radio & TV
   b. Character of Public: Mass Conformism
   c. Space for Reception: ‘flood-lit privacy’ of family home
   d. Temporality: Complete Simultaneity
   e. Nature and degree of Commercial Penetration: Full but undifferentiated
   f. Mode of Circulation: Broadcast
4. Public of Age of Digital Media
   a. Exemplary Medium: Digital Internet
   b. Character of Public: Fragmented and Distracted
   c. Space for Reception: Ubiquitous
   d. Temporality: constant connectivity
   e. Nature and degree of Commercial Penetration: Full and highly differentiated
   f. Mode of Circulation: Narrowcast + Broadcast