

13

Technology and Media in Everyday Life

How much time each day do you think the average person spends watching television, listening to music, reading, playing video games, and using the Internet? If you base your answer on how much time you spend engaging in these activities, doubling that number will provide a more accurate answer.

The Middletown Media Studies discovered that people actually spend twice the amount of time using media than they believe. These studies also established that people do not use media in isolation but often use two or more media systems simultaneously, an activity referred to as **concurrent media use**. For example, you may be reading this book while listening to the radio or watching television. Including concurrent media use, the most media-active person observed in these studies spent more than 17 hours using media each day, and the least media-active person observed spent a bit more than 5 hours using media each day. The average amount of time spent using media daily was nearly 11 hours (Papper, Holmes, & Popovich, 2004).

Now consider how often people send text messages in a given day. Focusing only on teenagers, the median (half send more, and half send fewer) number of texts sent each day is 60, with 18% of teenagers sending over 200 text messages daily (Lenhart, 2012). Adults send fewer texts on average than teenagers (A. Smith, 2011). However, the frequency of adult texting is rising, and current teenagers will soon become adults and bring many of their texting habits with them.

While the sheer amount of time spent using technology and media is reason enough for their importance as an area of study, perhaps more significant is the impact of technology and media on relationships and the impact of relationships on the use of technology and media. Technology and media use at home frequently occurs in the presence of family members, close friends, and romantic partners, while technology and media use outside the home often occurs with those with whom you share more social relationships, such as classmates, coworkers, acquaintances, and even strangers.

The use of technology and media takes place in the context of relationships, and our knowledge of technology and media can be best developed through a relational perspective and by examining their use in everyday life. In what follows, we discuss how people tend to view technology and media. We then explore the relational uses of technology and media. Finally, we specifically examine the ways in which people construct identities and relate through two prominent technologies: cell phones and the Internet.

FOCUS QUESTIONS

- 1 How do people generally perceive technology and media?
- 2 What are the relational uses of technology and media?
- 3 How are cell phones used in the construction of identities?
- 4 How do cell phones influence relationships?
- 5 How are identities constructed online?
- 6 How does online communication influence relationships?

concurrent media use: use of two or more media systems simultaneously

By the way...



Early Technological Fear

Perhaps the earliest recorded instance of technological fear is attributed to Socrates. He was concerned that writing would

ruin people's memories. Ironically, his concerns are remembered because they were written down by Plato.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Why do you suppose people tend to view emerging technologies with such fear?
2. On the other hand, why do you suppose some people view emerging technologies as lifesavers?

Perceptions of Technology and Media

A person's perspective will influence how something is understood and how it is studied. Accordingly, your view of technology and media will influence how you comprehend and evaluate the information provided in this chapter. Within this initial section, we discuss how emerging technologies are traditionally viewed by people in general along with how relationships play a fundamental position in the ways in which technologies are used and understood. We will also address whether technology and media impact people, or whether it is the other way around.

Cave Drawings and Other Concerns

When a new technology is introduced in a society, it is generally framed both as something that will save the world and as something that is intrusive and threatening. It also tends to be evaluated according to standards and criteria associated with previously existing technology rather than being studied and evaluated according to its own unique standards and norms. More often than not, technological fears are more common than technological praises.

The emergence of any new communication technology has historically elicited choruses of concern and anxiety, surprisingly similar in nature. People tend to worry about the effects of emerging technologies on family, community, and, of course, children. While

no evidence exists, we imagine focus groups were developed by well-meaning cave people to examine the potentially negative impact of cave drawings on innocent and susceptible cave children.

Documented criticism of more recent technologies shows people expressed similar fears when radio began appearing in homes in the 1920s, and these fears were nearly identical to those expressed about television when it began appearing in homes during the 1950s. Comic books were going to turn children into criminals, and video games were going to rot their brains. The Internet was going to destroy society by isolating people. Many of these criticisms are still being expressed, even though most have been proven wrong. In some cases, such as with concerns that the Internet would lead to isolation, the exact opposite has actually taken place.

Every Technology Is Relational

Technologies do influence the world in which you live. Regardless of whether its influences are positive or negative, each technology changes how people communicate and interact. The one constant among all technologies, from cave drawings to the Internet to whatever technologies arise next, is that they are inherently relational in their understanding and use.

At the center of all criticism and even praise of technologies rest their influence and effect on social interaction and connections among people. This influence is probably why criticism and praise surrounding each emerging technology have sounded so similar; relationships among people have been the one constant throughout all human technological development. Adapted to accomplish and meet relational needs, all technologies have influenced how you interact and relate with others.

Impact of Technology

So, technologies do influence your world, and this influence is especially evident when it comes to relationships. However, a question arises as to whether technologies are impacting humans or humans are impacting technologies. If you ask us—and we are certainly glad that you did—the answer is both. There are three primary views associated with the impact of technology.

Technological Determinism

Technological determinism is the belief that technologies determine social structure, cultural values, and even how we think. People are essentially viewed as powerless against the force of technology. As you might gather, people viewing technologies as deterministic are the same people most likely to evaluate emerging technologies with fear and suspicion.

Somewhat related to technological determinism is the belief that people are powerless against media content. Taken to the extreme, whatever is shown on television, for instance, will have the intended impact of producers and impact everyone in the audience in the exact same manner. Of course, people are not passive consumers of media. Rather, they actively interpret and evaluate media in a variety of ways for a variety of reasons.

Social Construction of Technology

Social construction of technology is the belief that people determine the development of technology and ultimately determine social structure and cultural value. The social constructionist view of technology reminds us that there are many factors in the development and emergence of technologies beyond the technology itself (Bijker, Hughes, & Pinch, 1987). These factors include human innovation and creativity, economics, government regulation, and actual users of technology.

We can use radio as an extended example when looking at the ways in which these human factors influence the emergence of technologies in society. Radio was created through the innovation and creativity of Guglielmo Marconi. His work was based on the earlier electromagnetic work of Nikola Tesla. From an economic standpoint, although there are claims made from both WWJ in Detroit and KDKA in Pittsburgh as the first licensed station, it is important to note the owner of the latter. The owner was Westinghouse—a radio set manufacturer interested in selling more sets! From a governmental standpoint, the Radio Act of 1927 established more control over licensing. The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) was created in 1934 to ensure decency on the airwaves. Ultimately, actual users exert tremendous influence on the development of any technology, determining its use, development, and place within society. In the case of radio, users influenced such factors as where it would be used and thus be made available (home, automobile, and outdoors), along with what content would be offered by broadcasters in pursuit of larger audiences.



What social influence may be impacting the use of technology in this picture?

technological determinism: belief that technologies determine social structure, cultural values, and even how people think (compare with *social shaping of technology* and *social construction of technology*)

social construction of technology: belief that people determine the development of technology and ultimately determine social structure and cultural value (compare with *social shaping of technology* and *technological determinism*)



Do you think using the Internet as a family will become a shared media experience like watching television as a family?

Social Shaping of Technology

Social shaping of technology is the belief that both people and technologies exert influence on social structure and cultural values. Many factors determine the development and emergence of technologies, including characteristics of the technology itself (MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985). We can use a hammer as an example. People may ultimately determine what to do with a hammer. However, that hammer is better at accomplishing some things rather than others. Accordingly, the characteristics of a hammer will influence what people end up doing with it.

So, social shaping of technology views both humans and technology as responsible for what happens in the world. This perspective influenced research conducted by David (McMahan & Chesebro, 2003) concerning political structure and primary technologies of all of the world's nation-states. It was discovered that a nation-state's primary technology likely influences its political system and any political transformation that may take place.

Technologies do influence society and humans. At the same time, humans exert influence on technologies and society through such factors as innovation and creativity, economics, regulation, and the actual use of technology.

The Relational Uses of Technology and Media

Individuals do not use technology and media. Rather, *relators* use technology and media. It might sound like we are getting too technical or abstract. However, we make that distinction for a very specific reason. Your use of technology and media is always done in the context of relationships. Accordingly, that is the most accurate way to understand technology and media in everyday life. In this section, we talk about their various relational uses.

The Use of Technology and Media Is a Shared Relational Activity

People often use technology and media with others and for specific relational reasons. Most technologies—especially digital and electronic technologies—enable interaction to take place and quite frequently are the actual basis for interaction.

Even when people are not at the same location, a sense of connection also exists through shared experience with technology and media. In the case of television, sometimes millions of people are watching the same material as you, frequently at the exact same time. This sense of connection is being enhanced through the growing number of people making comments and chatting with others online while watching a television program (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012).

The use of technology and media as a shared relational activity enables people to accomplish certain relational needs. Table 13.1 presents four relational needs satisfied through the shared use of technology and media.

social shaping of technology: belief that both people and technologies exert influence on social structure and cultural values (compare with *social construction of technology* and *technological determinism*)

Table 13.1 Relational Needs and the Shared Use of Technology and Media

Promoting Interaction

Technology and media enable interactions to take place. Even in technology- and media-rich households with multiple television sets, computers, and other technology and media systems, families often use technology and consume media together, which provides an opportunity for interactions to occur. Gantz (2013), for example, found that television sports are often viewed with others, and watching sports is an activity that can maintain and enhance existing relationships.

Withdrawing From Interactions

Technology and media also allow people to withdraw from social interaction. Texting and accessing materials using cell phones and digital tablets allow people to disengage from others when desired. People sometimes even pretend to use their cell phones in order to avoid interactions (Baron & Campbell, 2012).

Differentiating Relationships

The shared use of technology and media has even been shown to distinguish particular relationships from others. Over 30 years ago, it was discovered that watching television was the most frequent activity shared by spouses (Argyle & Furnham, 1982). More recently, Padilla-Walker, Coyne, and Fraser (2012) found cell phones and watching television and movies to be among the most common media shared by families.

Enacting and Evaluating Roles

The shared use of technology and media also enables people to establish and enact specific relational roles, expectations, and boundaries (Lull, 1980). For instance, relational boundaries must be evaluated when parents and children “friend” one another on Facebook (Kanter, Afifi, & Robbins, 2012).

Technology and Media Inform People About Relationships

People base their understanding of relationships and their actions within relationships in part on media representations. Books, magazines, newspapers, the Internet, movies, songs, and television programs feature both fictional and real social and personal relationships. Of course, a variety of sources inform your understanding of relationships, and you can compare the information you gain from one source with the information you gain from other sources as you develop your own unique understanding of relationships.

Media Representations Inform About How Relationships Should Look

Media representations of relationships provide information about relational roles and demographic characteristics. Essentially, people can learn about what relationships look like and what to expect from them based on media depictions.

Relationships depicted on television and through other technologies are not always realistic, however. People have the ability to compare media depictions of relationships with relationships observed or enacted in their physical lives, but media representations of relationships may nevertheless create unrealistic expectations and beliefs about how relationships should look (e.g., Osborn, 2012).

Further, relationships depicted in media do not always look like those that audiences personally experience. Multiple races, religions, sexual orientations, socioeconomic categories, and relationship configurations are underrepresented in television and in all media (e.g., Dubrofsky, 2006). Even though media

Make your case



Positive and Negative Influences

There are positive and negative aspects to all three positions regarding the impact of technology. Make your case for and against each of them.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. After making your arguments, which position do you support the most, and why?
2. Which position do you support the least, and why?

ETHICAL ISSUE

Do you believe that producers of such media products as television programs have an ethical obligation to combat the underrepresentation of certain groups in media content?

portrayals of relationships are often less than realistic, people may tend to believe that those relationships are normal and that their relationships should be compared to those in media.

Media Representations Inform About How to Behave in Relationships

Media representations also inform people about behaviors and interactions within relationships. These depictions provide models of behavior that inform people about how to engage in relationships. This use of media encompasses the **socialization impact of media**.

Like relational roles and demographic characterizations, however, media portrayals of relationship interactions and behaviors may not always mirror those in people's lives. Family life on television, for instance, has historically and consistently been portrayed as quite positive (e.g., Bryant, Aust, Bryant, & Venugopalan, 2001). Actual family life is not always positive, and unrealistic media depictions may create unrealistic expectations about relationship behavior (e.g., Taylor, 2005).

ANALYZING EVERYDAY COMMUNICATION**Media Depictions of College**

READS COMMUNICATION IN EVERYDAY LIFE BY DUCK AND MCMAHAN



AVOIDS BECOMING THE NEXT COLLEGE FRESHMAN MEME

Before coming to college, most of what you knew about the experience probably came from media depictions. Naturally, some depictions of college life are more accurate than others.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What are the differences between what you now know about college and what you thought you knew based on media portrayals?
2. Have you had any difficulty managing expectations and realities?

Technology and Media Function as Alternatives to Personal Relationships

Technology and media provide many of the same uses and provide many of the same benefits as personal relationships. Needs and desires gained from personal relationships, such as companionship, information, support, control, intimacy, and entertainment, can be gained from media with the same level of satisfaction and fulfillment.

Notice that the header for this section of the chapter labels technology and media as *alternatives* to rather than *substitutions* or *compensations* for personal relationships. People do not necessarily turn to technology and media to compensate for a lack of companionship. Rather, technology and media use has actually been found to enrich already satisfied social and personal lives (Perse & Butler, 2005). Furthermore, words like *substitution* imply an inferior entity is filling in or taking the place of a superior reality. As we will discuss, technology, media, and personal relationships are equally functional and interchangeable alternatives.

Companionship and Relational Satisfaction From the Actual Use of Technology and Media

The relational and social satisfaction derived from technology and media comes in part from their actual use and position within the home. Some people may actually prefer the companionship provided by technology to that provided by those in their social network. Certainly, on some occasions people would rather search the Internet, listen to music, or watch a movie than be with other people.

The use of technology and media can actually provide the same amount of relational satisfaction, if not more, than engaging in a personal relationship. Cohen and Metzger (1998) previously observed that many motives for using technology and media

socialization impact of media: depictions of relationships in media provide models of behavior that inform people about how to engage in relationships

correspond with motives for engaging in personal relationships. These authors specifically compared social and relational needs surrounding feelings of security, such as intimacy, accessibility, control, and relaxation. In all instances but intimacy, media seem to have the advantage.

Byron Reeves and Clifford Nass (2002) have discovered that people actually interact with technology using the same basic patterns of interaction used with other humans. The **media equation** maintains that interactions with technology are the same as interactions with other people, and people use the same social rules and expectations when interacting with both. You interact with your computer and other technologies as if they are an actual person.

When they first hear about the media equation, many people deny that they treat technology similarly to people. Yet, why, just as some people seem more trustworthy than others, are some smart car technologies perceived to be more trustworthy than other smart car technologies (see Verberne, Ham, & Midden, 2012)? Perhaps the digital “voice” of some automobiles sounds more confident than that of other automobiles. Or have you ever pleaded with your computer to go faster when experiencing a slow connection or yelled at your computer when it crashed? It may not be so inconceivable that your interactions with technology mirror your interactions with other people, especially given the interactive nature of more recent technological innovations.

A number of studies have been conducted in support of the media equation. Table 13.2 provides three of Reeves and Nass’s (2002) initial findings.

Table 13.2 Media Equation Research Findings

Personality

When it comes to being dominant or submissive, people generally prefer to be around and interact with people who are similar to them rather than people who are different. It turns out people can not only perceive computers as having dominant or submissive personalities, through prompts and other means, but also prefer computers whose personality is similar to their own.

Flattery

People like other people who compliment them, and the same evaluative response holds true for computers. People, it was discovered, like computers who offer them praise more than computers that offer no evaluation.

Politeness

When someone asks for your feedback on a project he or she has completed or asks about his or her performance on a task, you generally provide him or her with a positive response. If someone else asked you about that person’s performance, your response would be more negative than if that person asked you directly. Not necessarily deceitful, you are just not being as negative as you could be because you do not want to hurt his or her feelings. The same patterns of interaction were found to take place with computers. When asked to evaluate a computer while using the same computer to type their responses, people responded much more positively than when typing their responses on a different computer.

Companionship and Relational Satisfaction From Parasocial Relationships

While technologies themselves can satisfy relational needs, many of these needs are met through relationships established with media characters and personalities, known as **parasocial relationships** (Horton & Wohl, 1956). Relationships people form with media characters and personalities have proved just as real and



By the way...

Love and Sex With Robots

People’s relationships with technology may become especially close in the relatively near future. David Levy (2007) convincingly argues in the book *Love and Sex With Robots* that by the year 2050 “robots will be hugely attractive to humans as companions because of their many talents, senses, and capabilities. They will have the capacity to fall in love with humans and to make themselves romantically attractive and sexually desirable to humans” (p. 22).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Do you believe that this will be the case in the year 2050?
2. Can you ever see yourself with a robot as a romantic partner?

media equation: people use the same social rules and expectations when interacting with technology as they do with other people

parasocial relationships: “relationships” established with media characters and personalities

meaningful as those within their physical social networks. People consider and treat media characters and personalities just like they do family and friends.

As with the media equation, when first learning about parasocial relationships, students often consider the concept a bit outrageous and often claim they do not form such relationships. They often associate these relationships with stalkers or those who are obsessed with particular characters or media personalities. However, these relationships are actually quite normal and extremely common. In fact, we are fairly confident that you have formed parasocial relationships with media characters and, at a minimum, thought of and talked about fictional characters as if they were actual people.

Parasocial relationships have consistently been found to parallel relationships in physical social networks. Table 13.3 lists some research findings throughout the years.

Table 13.3 Parasocial Relationships Research Findings

-
- Similar to other relationships, people are often attracted to media characters and personalities with whom they perceive a certain degree of similarity (Turner, 1993).
 - People use similar cognitive processes when developing parasocial relationships and other relationships (Perse & Rubin, 1989).
 - People follow the same attachment styles used in physical relationships in their other relationships (Cole & Leets, 1999).
 - Tweeting increasingly enables public figures to establish both parasocial and social relationships with followers (Frederick, Lim, Clavio, Pedersen, & Burch, 2012).
 - Parasocial and other relationships provide similar levels of satisfaction (Kanazawa, 2002).
 - As with face-to-face contact, parasocial contact has been shown to lower levels of prejudice (Schiappa, Gregg, & Hewes, 2005).
 - Parasocial relationships are measured using similar criteria to those used to evaluate other relationships (Koenig & Lessan, 1985).
 - Parasocial relationships impact the body images of both men and women (Young, Gabriel, & Hollar, 2013; Young, Gabriel, & Sechrist, 2012).
 - Parasocial relationships and relationships with people in physical social networks have been found to follow similar patterns of development, maintenance, and dissolution. When parasocial relationships end (e.g., when a television character “dies”), people experience this loss in much the same manner as they do losing a close friend (Cohen, 2003).
-

Technology and Media Are Used in Everyday Talk

Technology and media frequently provide the basis for conversation in social and personal relationships. Reports have indicated that anywhere from 10.5% to half of all conversations involve media content to some extent (Alberts, Yoshimura, Rabby, & Loschiavo, 2005; Allen, 1975, 1982; Greenberg, 1975). Even using a conservative estimate, these numbers position technology and media as among the most frequent topics—if not the most frequent topic—of conversation among people.

Technology and Media Provide a General Topic of Conversation

Technology and media have long been recognized as providing people with a general topic of conversation (Berelson, 1949; Boskoff, 1970; Compesi, 1983; E. Katz, Hass, & Gurevitch, 1973; Lazarsfeld, 1940; Mendelsohn, 1964; Scannell, 1989; D. Smith, 1975). Much like discussing the weather, they enable people to establish a shared topic of discussion that in many cases will not lead to a heated disagreement.

As a general topic of conversation, technology and media play a vital social and relational role. Yet, even when media simply appear to provide a topic of conversation, important social and relational work takes place, and other functions of technology and media talk discussed here are ultimately accomplished.

Talk About Technology and Media Impacts Their Value and Understanding

Talking about technology and media significantly affects such things as the meanings derived from them as well as emotional responses and attitudes. You may have previously discussed with others the value of certain types of technology and media. For instance, you and a friend may have discussed the release of a new cell phone or a great website that one of you had discovered. Although not always immediately recognized as doing so, such discussions have likely influenced your use and understanding of technology and media (see Parry, Kawakami, & Kishiya, 2012).

Talk about such media content as a song, a movie, or an online video often results in new understandings of those products. An example is discussing what you watched on television the previous evening with friends at work or school the next day. Such discussions of media products can clarify the meanings attached, alter convictions about their significance, and adjust levels of appreciation. Increasingly, such discussions are taking place through online discussions (Proulx & Shepatin, 2012).

Talk About Technology and Media Impacts Their Dissemination and Influence

Discussions of technology and media aid in the dissemination (spread) of their use and messages. The use of technology spreads through word of mouth among friends more than through any other means. When you learned of the most recent digital tablet, cell phone, gaming system, or other technological product, chances are that information came from someone you know and was more influential than an advertisement by the manufacturer (see Kawakami, Kishiya, & Parry, 2013).

Media content also spreads through interactions with others. Even when someone has not watched a program on television or visited a particular website, discussing it with others can still spread the information contained within the program or site. You may not have caught a recent video online, but when friends who have watched the video tell you about it, the content of that video has nevertheless been spread to you. Especially with online content and podcasts, these conversations may lead to personal viewing or covieing (Haridakis & Hanson, 2009). Media information is being spread, and relational connections are being enhanced at the same time.

The influence of media content may also be enhanced through their discussion with others (see Kam & Lee, 2012). Because of the issues of trust and concern inherent in close relationships, information gained from media but conveyed through a friend, a family member, or another close relationship may quite possibly be considered more significant and valid than information received directly from a media source. A magazine article about the dangers of texting while driving, for instance, may not convince you to stop this dangerous and completely stupid behavior. However, a friend may read this article and pass along the information to you. Since this information comes from someone with whom you share a close personal relationship, you may view it as more meaningful than if reading it in the magazine.

Talk About Technology and Media Promotes the Development of Media Literacy

Media literacy entails the learned ability to access, interpret, and evaluate media products. Discussion of media content impacts people's understanding and evaluation of this material, as well as their comprehension of its production and influence.

media literacy: the learned ability to access, interpret, and evaluate media products

Talking about media with those with whom you share close relationships significantly influences your actual use of media and your development of media literacy.

Communication regarding the use and interpretation of media often occurs among family members (see Davies & Gentile, 2012). Parents, for instance, influence children's television literacy both indirectly and directly (Austin, 1993). *Indirect influences* include children's modeling of viewing behaviors exhibited by their parents. *Direct influences* include rule making and actively mediating children's interpretations of television content through communication about observations on television.

Of course, the promotion of media literacy through discussions of media is not limited to those occurring among family members (Geiger, Bruning, & Harwood, 2001). Much of what people know about media literacy and their ability to critically evaluate media products has developed from interactions with friends, classmates, coworkers, romantic partners, and others with whom they share a relationship.

Talk About Technology and Media Influences Identification and Relationship Development

Talking about technology and media enables people to recognize and promote shared interests, understanding, and beliefs, while also serving to highlight differences among people. Perceptions of similarity and difference derived from conversations about technology and media can be fundamental in the evaluation of others and can play a strong role in the development of relationships.

A discussion with someone about movies you both have seen may promote feelings of similarity. These discussions are influential not only because they allow people to recognize shared media experiences but also because they allow people to recognize shared understanding of those experiences. At the same time, feelings of division or separation with someone can develop if there exists little or no overlap of technology and media experience. Likewise if there is not shared understanding of these experiences.

Of course, discussions of media content can uncover areas of similarity and difference beyond actual media use and evaluation. For example, discussing a blog entry can lead to the realization that you share certain political views with someone else. Talking with a romantic partner about a romantic relationship portrayed in a movie can provide a sense of how that person views relationships and whether or not you share such views. The topics included in media are essentially limitless, and so too are the areas of similarity and difference that can be explored through their discussion.

Talk About Technology and Media Enables Identity Construction

Technology and media that you use and enjoy are a significant part of who you are as an individual and play a major role in informing people of your identity. Discussions of technology and media allow people to enact identities related to technology use and media preferences, which are just as meaningful as other identities (McMahan, 2004). These discussions can provide a sense of voice and empowerment (Brown, 1994; Jewkes, 2002), while serving a vital role in the enactment of multiple types of identities, such as age and gender (Aasebo, 2005). Such discussions have also been found to enact professional and workplace identities (Stein, Galliers, & Markus, 2013).

Your **technology and media profile**, a compilation of your technology and media preferences and general use of technology and media, informs others about who you are as a person or at least the persona you are trying to project. David,

technology and media profile: a compilation of your technology and media preferences and general use of technology and media; informs others about who you are as a person or at least the persona you are trying to project

for instance, loves watching television. He has numerous favorite shows, with *The Andy Griffith Show* at the top of the list. He enjoys most music and especially likes blues, classic soul, alternative music from the 1980s and 1990s, and anything by Eric Clapton and Prince. Thanks to Steve's introduction, David also enjoys listening to the music of Ralph Vaughan Williams but does not care much for Symphony No. 7. His favorite

movie of all time, *The Blues Brothers*, is probably responsible for his initial interest in and enjoyment of blues and soul music. He rarely plays video games but tends to do well when he does play them. He never reads fiction (except for the Jack Reacher series by Lee Child, introduced to him by his friend, Julia) but is a voracious reader of history, newspapers, and academic literature. His Internet use is primarily dedicated to news sites along with watching television programs and listening to music. He prides himself on having had a Facebook account and a Twitter account before most people had even heard of the sites. Paradoxically, he rarely uses them.

What does David's technology media profile inform you about him? What does it tell you about who he is as a person, where and when he grew up, his past experiences, and his additional interests and preferences, along with the beliefs, attitudes, and values he might hold?



COMMUNICATION + YOU

Your Own Profile

Create your own technology and media profile, using the questions listed in Table 13.4 as a guide.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What do you think your technology and media profile would tell people about you?
2. Do you discuss aspects of your technology and media use and preferences with some people and not others? If so, why do you think this is the case?

Table 13.4 Creating Your Technology and Media Profile

1. Do you like watching television? If so, what are some of your favorite programs?
2. Do you like listening to music? If so, what are some of your favorite artists and songs?
3. Do you like watching movies? If so, what are some of your favorite movies?
4. Do you like to read? If so, what are some of your favorite books, newspapers, and magazines?
5. Do you like playing video games? If so, what are some of your favorite games?
6. Do you like using the Internet? If so, what are some of the sites you visit most often?
7. What television programs, music, movies, print material, video games, and Internet sites do you dislike?
8. Do you access television programs, music, movies, and books/newspapers/magazines through the Internet or your cell phone?
9. How often do you use e-mail? To whom are you most likely to send an e-mail message?
10. How often do you use your cell phone to call or text someone? To whom are you most likely to contact through voice or text?
11. Do you use a social networking site? If so, what are your primary reasons for using it, and how often do you use it?

Cell Phones: Constructing Identities and Relationships

Having discussed technology and media in general up to this point, we want to focus on two technologies that are extremely prevalent in society. We first examine

cell phones and then turn our attention to the Internet, especially social networking sites. Specifically, we will explore the use of cell phones and the Internet in the construction of identities and their use in the development and maintenance of relationships.

Constructing Identities Using Cell Phones

Cell phones do not merely connect you with other people or provide you with information, music, and video. Personal and relational identities are created and maintained through your use of them. We view cell phones, along with iPods, digital tablets, and other such devices, as **relational technologies** to emphasize the relational functions and implications of their use in society and within specific groups.

The Meaning of Relational Technology

Identities constructed through relational technologies are based in part on what it means for specific groups to use them. For instance, some groups view the cell phone less as a device to contact others and more as a means of displaying social status and membership (J. Katz, 2006; Suki, 2013). Perceiving and using technology in a manner consistent with these groups assists in establishing membership into these groups and developing particular identities.

Relational Technology and Generations

A major influence on people's perceptions and use of technology is the generation in which they were born. Looking specifically at such technologies as print and television, communication scholars Gary Gumpert and Robert Cathcart (1985) were the first to suggest that the traditional notion of separating generations according to time can be replaced by separating generations according to technology and media experience.

What separates generations is not just the chronological era in which they were born but also the technology that encompasses their world. **Technology and media generations** are differentiated by unique technology grammar and consciousness based on the technological and media environment in which they were born. Accordingly, members of different technology and media generations view the use of certain technology and media differently. For example, if you were born into a generation that does not know a time when cell phones were not used, you perceive their use differently than someone born prior to the introduction of cell phones, and vice versa.

Relational Technology and Social Networks

Your social network is an equally powerful force in guiding perceptions and use of technology. While generational influence is largely determined by the *availability* of technology, the influence of social networks on your use and perceptions of technology is determined by the *actual use and incorporation* of technology and the social meanings that subsequently develop.

Friends, family, classmates, coworkers, and others with whom you share a particular relationship direct and shape your assumptions about the value of technology and what its use represents both relationally and personally. Cell phone adoption is often shared among members of a social network. Likewise, your use of relational technologies and your attitude toward them are likely to mirror those of your friends and other members of your social network (see Archambault, 2013).

relational technologies: such technologies as cell phones, iPods, and PDAs whose use has relational functions and implications in society and within specific groups

technology and media generations: those differentiated by unique technology grammar and consciousness based on the technological and media environment in which they are born



Skills You Can Use: Medium and Appropriateness

The medium through which you contact someone can make a difference in his or her perception of your message. The purpose of your message and the technological preferences of the person you are contacting will determine the appropriateness of face-to-face, telephone, or online communication.



Technological Products and Service Providers

In addition to adoption and incorporation of relational technologies, identities are created through the use of specific products and services. Specific meanings are associated with the use of particular products and service providers within a social system.

Cell phones and other relational technologies are symbolically connected to certain lifestyles, activities, or media personalities. The use of these devices allows people to associate themselves with accompanying perspectives and attitudes. In fact, one study (Lobet-Maris, 2003) found that, when purchasing a cell phone, young people are influenced less by quality or available features and more by the images or personas associated with that particular phone. Through both consumer adoption and manufacturer advertising, phones and other relational technologies may be associated with hipsters, youth, elderly, or other groups.

The actual service provider may even be associated with particular groups or issues. Individuals in the study just mentioned linked cell phone networks with humanitarianism, professionalism, and family. Thus, the use of specific networks may enable people to feel associated with groups sharing certain values or orientations.

Ringtones

Ringtones and other notifications do not simply inform someone of an incoming call or message; they can be viewed as a method of identity construction (see Pflieger, Alt, & Schmidt, 2012). People frequently select favorite music or dialogue from television programs or movies. Using these media products as ringtones announces your media preferences to others and underscores their importance in your life. Other ringtones are humorous or simply unique in some way. Whichever the case, the selection of ringtones is meaningful and is based largely on how a person wants to be perceived by others.

Of course, some people tend to keep their cell phone set on silent or vibrate rather than an audible ringtone. This decision could be an indication that the person does not desire to draw attention to his or her use of the technology. It could also indicate that the person does not wish to be socially compelled to answer, which provides greater choice in social contexts. Once again, this selection is not just personal but also relational and is influenced by how a person wishes to be perceived by others.

Performance of Relational Technology

Finally, the use of relational technologies can be considered a performance through which identities are constructed. The proper use or performance of technology has

been established socially and will likely change over time. However, behaviors are judged according to present norms and prevailing expectations. Violating social standards associated with the use of technology often leads to negative responses and evaluations by others (Forma & Kaplowitz, 2012; Miller-Ott, Kelly, & Duran, 2012).

The appropriate use of technology is often determined by location and occasion. For instance, there are numerous locations and occasions where the use of technology may be deemed socially unacceptable. For instance, the use of relational technology is usually discouraged in the classroom. Your instructors may ban the use of cell phones in the classroom, but they are not the only ones who disapprove. Other students consider cell phones ringing or vibrating during class to be just as distracting and annoying as faculty do (Campbell, 2006).

Relating Through Cell Phones

Relationships and changes in technology can be seen as both relatively simple and more complex. In a very basic way, changes in technology simply allow people to achieve relatively stable relational goals in new ways. For instance, people exchange birthday greetings through sending e-cards rather than sending a traditional card through the postal service. From a more advanced view, technological transformations also change what can be accomplished, creating new relational goals and norms.

Cell phones are changing how people communicate and form relationships with others, as well as altering established relational goals and norms. In what follows, we examine the impact of cell phones on interactions among people.

Constant Connection and Availability

Cell phones position people as being constantly connected and constantly available to others. If you have your cell phone with you, you have your social network with you as well. The ability to make instant contact with another person regardless of geographic location creates a symbolic connection unlike that created by any previous communication technology.

This constant connection has led people to make contact with others more often than ever before. There are times when the content of these messages is less important than the actual contact itself. Such instances are similar to how seemingly mundane everyday talk keeps relationships going without necessarily adding much in terms of substance. Connecting with another person reestablishes the existence and importance of the relationship, confirming for both parties its existence and value in their lives.

New relational expectations have also developed as a result of this constant availability. For instance, when texting someone or calling a cell phone, there is an expectation of an immediate response. No response, or that a response does not occur in a timely manner, can constitute a violation in the relationship (Ling, 2004). Constant availability has also impacted how relationships develop, are maintained, and dissolve, especially among teenagers and younger adults (Bergdall et al., 2012).

Boundaries and Closeness

Cell phones have come to represent constant connection to those who possess your cell phone number, and how freely people give out that number varies. Giving or denying someone access to your cell phone number establishes both the *boundaries* and the *degree of closeness* desired and expected within the relationship. Limiting the availability of contact with a person establishes specific relational boundaries. How that person views

and evaluates such limits depends on your relationship. Refusing to provide a cell phone number to a friend may be viewed negatively; physicians not providing clients with their numbers may be viewed as legitimate (see Wong, Tan, & Drossman, 2010).

Providing another person with your cell phone number suggests a desire for connection with that individual and perhaps an indication of the type of relationship you wish to establish. For instance, making your number available to an acquaintance could imply a desire to develop a closer type of relationship. As above, the evaluation and the meaning of this action generally depend on your relationship with the other person.

Shared Experience

We can discuss shared experience derived from the use of cell phones in two ways. First, the actual use of cell phones constitutes shared technological experience, as was discussed earlier. More than simply transmitting information, the act of sending and receiving text messages both announces and establishes shared membership and acceptance into a group.

Cell phones also enable people to engage in shared experience even when physically separated. The immediate transmission of voice, picture, sound, and video provides people with the sense of experiencing an event or occasion together.

Social Coordination

One of the greatest relational consequences of the cell phone encompasses its use in coordinating physical encounters with others. Face-to-face interactions are frequently created and synchronized through the use of cell phones. Coordination of physical encounters can be accomplished through phone calls and text messages as well as through location-sharing applications (Patil, Norcie, Kapadia, & Lee, 2012).

Cell phones enable people to synchronize their activities to the point of microcoordination. Making plans to meet someone previously involved establishing a fixed time and physical location for the interaction to occur, but the massive adoption of cell phones has resulted in time and physical location for contact becoming increasingly fluid. **Microcoordination** refers to the unique management of social interaction made possible through cell phones. Rich Ling (2004) has observed three varieties of microcoordination: (1) midcourse adjustment, (2) iterative coordination, and (3) softening of schedules (see Table 13.5).

Constructing Identities and Maintaining Relationships Online

Having discussed the influence of cell phones on the construction of identities and on relationships, we now turn our attention to online communication. Internet use is transforming knowledge, realities, commerce, politics, education, and essentially all aspects of everyday life (see Chesebro, McMahan, & Russett, in press).

While there are a number of areas to investigate, we specifically examine the online construction of identities and maintenance of relationships. These are not only intriguing topics but also fundamental to many of the other changes taking place.



In what ways could the use of a cell phone create shared experiences?

ETHICAL ISSUE

Do you believe physicians have an ethical obligation to provide their cell phone number to their patients?

microcoordination: the unique management of social interaction made possible through cell phones

Table 13.5 Ling's (2004) Three Varieties of Microcoordination

Midcourse Adjustment	Involves changing plans once a person has already set out for the encounter—for example, contacting the other person to change locations or to request that he or she pick up someone else on the way.
Iterative Coordination	Involves the progressive refining of an encounter. Cell phones have made actually establishing location and time unnecessary. Instead, people increasingly plan to meet without specifying an exact time or location. For instance, friends may agree to meet sometime tomorrow. As a result of progressive calls or messages, they eventually “zoom in on each other” (p. 72).
Softening of Schedules	Involves adjusting a previously scheduled time. If you planned to meet a friend for coffee at 3:30 p.m. but a meeting with your advisor took longer than expected and you are running late, cell phones make it much easier to reach your friend and inform him or her of the delay.

SOURCE: Ling (2004).

Social Networking Sites and the Construction of Identities

Social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter are generally promoted for their social or relational benefits. However, they also happen to be locations where many of the transformations listed above are taking place.

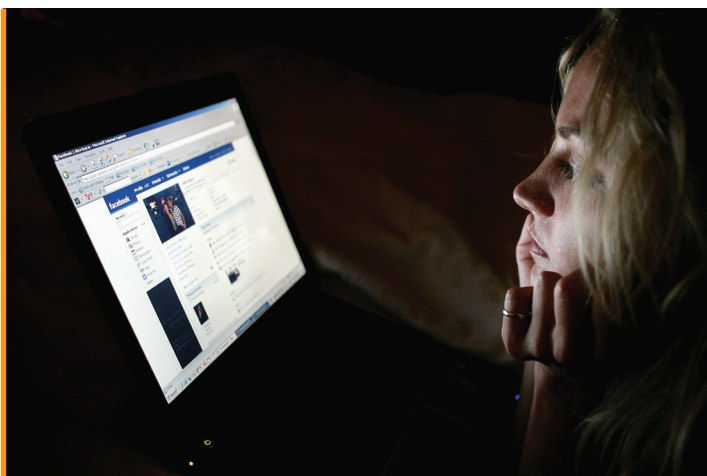
We examine the use of social networking sites in terms of relationships later in the chapter. Now, we want to explore an aspect of social networking sites that people may tend to overlook. They have become important tools in the construction of identities.

Friends

The list of connections on a person's social networking site profile is an important tool in the construction of identities. For instance, the number of friends listed on a social networking site can be used by others when making social judgments about the user (Tong, Van Der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008). People with a large number of friends are often perceived to be outgoing and socially connected. However, there is a point at which an excessive number of friends actually diminishes a person's appearance as socially connected (Zweir, Araujo, Boukes, & Willemsen, 2011). When someone lists 10,000 friends, others begin to wonder just how legitimate that list and those friendships actually are!

Appearance is another way in which friends impact the identity construction of users. It has been discovered that the physical attractiveness of friends influences perceptions of the user's physical and social attractiveness (Jaschinski & Kommers, 2012;

Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008). Essentially, people with good-looking friends are more likely to be perceived as good looking. People



What activities are related to identity construction on social networking sites like Facebook?

with not very attractive friends are more likely to be perceived as less attractive. Quick! Stop reading immediately and remove all the ugly people from your friends list! Make sure you come back when you are done, though. As always, we will be here waiting on you.

This next item does not require you to give immediate attention to your social networking site profile. However, you may want to examine the posts left by your friends, regardless of their level of physical attractiveness. In the same study mentioned above (Walther et al., 2008), it was discovered that socially complimentary or positive posts left by friends can improve perceptions of a user's social attractiveness and credibility.

There appears to be a gender difference when it comes to posts left by others, however. Female users were judged positively when friends left socially positive comments and were judged negatively when friends left socially negative comments. Male users, on the other hand, were actually judged positively when friends left comments about drinking, promiscuous behavior, and similar morally questionable behavior.

Photographs

The display of photographs on the pages of social networking site users is another tool in the construction of identities. One study (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009) discovered that the majority of users indicate that these photographs help them express who they are to other users. Furthermore, users tend to be very selective about the photographs that are posted online.

The selection of photographs is frequently based on which ones are the most physically flattering. Likewise, dissatisfaction with their personal appearance is the primary reason users give for “untagging” themselves in photographs of other users.

Another reason for untagging themselves in photographs is when they are shown engaging in morally questionable activities. Ironically, given the above discussion about friends' posts, male users are more likely than female users to cite being engaged in such activities as a reason for untagging themselves.

Media Preferences

As mentioned earlier in the chapter, technology and media preferences are frequently a basis for identity construction. In addition to their development through talk, technology and media identities are constructed through social networking sites.

Many social networking sites encourage users to list favorite media. Technology and media are also topics included in posts, and users have the opportunity to “like” certain technology or media products on Facebook. Of course, the corporations owning social media usually also sell other kinds of media that they encourage people to use in defining themselves on their profiles—such as music, movies, and books.

By the way...



The Future of Social Networking Sites

The number of adults in the United States using social networking sites reached 50% in 2011. When data were first gathered 6 years earlier, only 5% of adults in the United States reported using social networking sites. By the time adults finally reached 50%, teenagers in the United States were already at 76%. When the Internet-using population is specifically examined, the percentages of social networking site users increase to 65% of adults and 80% of teenagers (Lenhart et al., 2011; Madden & Zickuhr, 2011).

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What percentages of the population do you believe will be using social networking sites in 10 years?
2. What percentages of the population do you believe will be using social networking sites in 20 years?

Media preferences, in particular, have been found to be an even more important aspect of identity for social networking site users than such “classic identity markers” as gender, political view, hometown, relationship status, and other categories frequently listed on a user’s profile (Pempek et al., 2009).

Strategic

Identity construction on social networking sites tends to be quite strategic. Research indicates that users put thought into their comments and profiles (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). This is possible since, compared to face-to-face communication, online communication in general provides more time for people to develop their thoughts and actions.

As discussed above, people tend to carefully consider the photographs posted on their sites and consider whether or not to remain tagged in the photographs of others. Beyond photographs, all comments and activities on social networking sites can be used in the construction of identities and may be given a great deal of attention. It is not surprising to find that people believe they are better able to convey their identities online than off-line (Bargh, McKenna, & Fitzsimons, 2002).

Public Disclosure

The *good news* about social networking sites is that they provide an opportunity for a great deal of self-disclosure. The *bad news* about social networking sites is that they provide an opportunity for a great deal of self-disclosure. We do not care how much you restrict access to your profile or how many privacy measures you enact on these sites. Consider everything that you post online to be within the public domain. Your relatives, elementary school teachers, and future employers, along with such scandal and tabloid programs and sites as TMZ, will be able to see it all.

With that said, we are here to provide an education along with such helpful advice. So, we want to take a look at what this massive public disclosure actually means when it comes to identity construction.

For the study of communication, this public disclosure of information calls into question traditional beliefs about self-disclosure and relationship development (Altman & Taylor, 1973). These views maintained that self-disclosure takes place gradually, with information shared becoming more personal as relationships gain intimacy or closeness. When it comes to disclosure on social networking sites, the disclosure of personal information takes place immediately. Further, this information is provided to everyone, regardless of relational closeness.

For users of social networking sites, this public disclosure of information provides opportunities for public confirmation and comparison. Activities and thoughts publically shared through updates are confirmed by others and given social legitimacy (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkahn, 2008). This confirmation occurs off-line as well, but not publically and not by as many people.

Furthermore, the public disclosure of others enables comparison among users when evaluating themselves. Once again, of course, this behavior takes place off-line. There are a couple of important distinctions, though. First, public disclosure is being offered by many people, which provides more opportunities for comparison. Second, the information being shared tends to be strategic (as discussed above) and therefore more likely to be favorable and positive. Comparisons are being made to idealized

ETHICAL ISSUE

- Students have been suspended from some schools for content on social networking sites. Should schools be allowed to suspend students for this content? Would your assessment change depending on whether the content did or did not pertain to school-related issues, activities, or people?
- Employers have based hiring decisions on social networking site content. Do you believe these actions are justified? In what ways do employers using social networking sites for the evaluation of job candidates compare and contrast with school officials using these sites for student discipline?

core ties: people with whom you have a very close relationship and are in frequent contact; a person often discusses important matters in life with these people and often seeks their assistance in times of need (compare with *significant ties*)

images of others, which may lead to more negative evaluations of the self and to increasing pressure to enhance the image being portrayed on one's own profile.

Online Communication and Relationships

Having discussed the construction of identities online, we now turn our attention to online communication and relationships. Online communication enables people to maintain and enhance existing relationships, reinvigorate previous relationships, and create new relationships. In fact, increased use of the Internet actually leads to increased interaction with friends and family, not only online but also face-to-face and over the telephone (Jacobsen & Forste, 2011).

Fears that the Internet will decrease social interaction and diminish the quality of relationships appear unfounded. There are still people who champion face-to-face communication as the superior form of interaction (e.g., Turkle, 2012). However, these arguments tend to be based on opinion rather than based on unbiased evidence or actual studies.

Maintaining Relationships and Social Networks

Although online communication can lead to the creation of new relationships, it tends to be used more for the maintenance or continuation of existing relationships. This is especially true when it comes to social networking sites (Baym & Ledbetter, 2009; Ellison, Steinfeld, & Lampe, 2007; Kujath, 2011). The average Facebook user, for instance, has met 93% of his or her *friends* at least once. High school friends represent the largest category of Facebook friends, followed by extended family, coworkers, college friends, immediate family, people from volunteer groups, and neighbors (Hampton, Goulet, Rainie, & Purcell, 2011). As mentioned above, relational maintenance does not just occur online. Rather, online communication is associated with increased interactions using other forms of communication.

Online communication is also positively influencing social networks. Studying the impact of the Internet on social networks, Boase, Horrigan, Wellman, and Rainie (2006, p. 5) distinguished two types of connections in social networks: core ties and significant ties (see Table 13.6).

Internet users tend to have a greater number of significant ties than nonusers. Internet activity does not appear to increase the number of core ties. However, Internet use has been shown to increase the diversity of core ties. For instance, Internet users are more likely to have nonrelatives as members of their core network (Hampton, Sessions, Her, & Rainie, 2009).

Another consequence of online communication is the geographic diversity of social networks. Physical proximity still plays a large role in the development of social networks. However, online communication has resulted in more geographically dispersed networks (Boase et al., 2006). At the same time, Internet users are still just as likely as nonusers to visit with their neighbors (Hampton et al., 2009).



By the way...

Early and Developing Social Networking Sites

It can be argued that social networking sites began in the form of online communities. If this is the case, Well.com, launched in 1985, would be among the first. In their current form—in which people create a profile, compile a list of connections, and visit the profiles of other members—Classmates.com, launched in 1995, and SixDegrees.org, launched in 1997, were among the first social networking sites. There are now over 200 sites based throughout the world and dedicated to a variety of groups and interests.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. If you were to create a social networking site, on what group or interest would you focus?
2. What is the strangest social networking site you have ever come across or heard about?

significant ties: people who are more than mere acquaintances but with whom a strong connection does not exist; a person is not overly likely to talk with these people or seek help from these people, but they are still there when needed (compare with *core ties*)

Table 13.6 Core Ties and Significant Ties

Core ties include people with whom you have a very close relationship and are in frequent contact. You often discuss important matters in life with core ties, and you often seek their assistance in times of need.

Significant ties, though more than mere acquaintances, represent a somewhat weaker connection. You make less contact with significant ties and are less likely to talk with them about important issues in your life or to seek help from them, but they are still there for you when needed.

DISCIPLINARY DEBATE

The Value of Social Networking Sites



The relational benefits of social networking sites are overwhelming. However, there are a few scholars in the discipline who view social networking sites negatively. For these scholars, relationships maintained online are not as valuable or genuine as those maintained through face-to-face communication.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. What do you consider the strengths of this position?
2. What do you consider the weaknesses of this position?



In what ways does a webcam affect the potentially asynchronous nature of online communication?

synchronous communication: communication in which people interact in real time and can at once both send and receive messages (contrast with *asynchronous communication*)

Overall, social networking site users, in particular, also indicate feeling less isolated. They are also more likely to receive social support (Hampton, Goulet, Marlow, & Rainie, 2012; Hampton et al., 2011).

The increased likelihood of receiving support may not be based solely on Internet users being more helpful than nonusers. The greater number of significant ties and the overall diversity of an Internet user's social networks also increase the network resources. In other words, they increase the likelihood of finding someone who is willing to help. And, perhaps more importantly, they increase the likelihood of finding someone who possesses the ability to help.

Explaining the Benefits

From what we have just discussed, Internet use seems to greatly assist the maintenance of relationships and enhance social networks. However, we have not discussed why this may be true. Accordingly, we will examine the nature of both online communication and social networking sites as possible reasons why this is the case.

Characteristics of Online Communication. A characteristic of online communication is that it can be both synchronous and asynchronous. In **synchronous communication**—for example, an interaction through Skype—people interact essentially in real time and can send and receive messages at once. In **asynchronous communication**—for example, an interaction through e-mail—there is a delay between messages, and interactants must alternate between sending and receiving.

Both types of communication have advantages and disadvantages.

When it comes to maintaining relationships, the asynchronous nature of online communication makes it easier for people to interact. People do not have to coordinate their schedules in order to interact. Rather, interaction can take place whenever it is most convenient for those involved. The ease with which contact can be made online may very well increase the likelihood that contact will take place at all.

Asynchronous communication also provides time for people to be more thoughtful and strategic. This additional time can make the interactions more meaningful and more likely to convey what a person wants to share and get across.

Characteristics of Social Networking Sites. The characteristics of social networking sites also explain why Internet users are better able to maintain larger and more diverse social networks, why they feel less isolated, and why they are more likely to receive assistance when needed (see Chesebro, McMahan, & Russett, in press).

One characteristic responsible is the *list of connections* users compile on these sites. These lists help people keep track of their social networks and can serve to make these connections more real and available. In terms of maintenance, we talked about Sigman's (1991) relational continuity constructional units in Chapter 7. These lists can serve as introspective units, reinforcing the existence of a relationship when people are physically apart.

Participation is easy on social networking sites. For one thing, you may have a power user in your list of connections. Power users are a group of users who tend to be active when it comes to posting, making comments on other users' walls, making friendship requests, and engaging in other activities (Hampton et al. 2012). It does not take a great deal of effort to participate, regardless.

Another characteristic of these sites, which helps explain the above findings, is that they *normalize the sharing of the mundane*. We have maintained that it is not the discussion of deep subjects or the sharing of private information that is most responsible for the development of relationships. Rather, it is the more common discussions of everyday, seemingly mundane information that drive the development and maintenance of personal relationships.

Social networking sites often encourage users to post what they are doing at a given moment. Most people are not saving the world; they are throwing out moldy bread or scraping something off of their shoes. Tong and Walther (2011) have observed that these sites normalized the discussion of these unremarkable events.

In spite of the existence of and potential for negative experiences, participation in social networking sites tends to be quite *positive*. The vast majority of both teen and adult users believe that people are mostly kind on these sites. Twice as many teen users, specifically, report positive outcomes when using these sites as report negative outcomes (Lenhart et al., 2011). These positive experiences are liable to increase the likelihood that people will continue using these sites and gain relational satisfaction and comfort from doing so.

A final characteristic of social networking sites explaining their benefits is that *relating is the point*. These sites are constructed in ways that enable connection to take place. Intimacy, security, entertainment, knowledge, self-worth, and other needs generated from relationships are also provided through the use of these sites.

Further, people are able to learn more about relationships in general and their own relationships specifically through these sites. Relationships are played out through these sites, with some entirely documented through updates, photos, and other features. Relational knowledge can be developed through the use of these sites. Such knowledge may assist in the development and maintenance of relationships online as well as off-line.

By the way...



Emoticons

Although online communication is increasingly incorporating video and audio, it is still largely text based. Accordingly, another characteristic of online communication has been its lack of nonverbal cues to determine meaning.

Emoticons, text-based symbols used to express emotions online, help alleviate this problem. The first "smiley face" emoticon :) was used at 11:44 a.m. on September 19, 1982, by Scott E. Fahlman while contributing to an online bulletin board.

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Although helpful, can emoticons ever be overused?
2. As interacting online becomes increasingly video/audio based, how do you suppose that will impact the ways in which people assign meaning?

asynchronous communication:

communication in which there is a slight or prolonged delay between the message and the response; the interactants must alternate between sending and receiving messages (contrast with *synchronous communication*)

emoticons: text-based symbols used to express emotions online, often to alleviate problems associated with a lack of nonverbal cues

»»» Focus Questions Revisited

1 How do people generally perceive technology and media?

People frequently view technology and media with suspicion, especially initially. Ultimately, all technology and media have influenced relationships in some manner, which has made responses to technology and media historically quite similar. Technology and media are viewed by some people as controlling societal development and by other people as being merely tools without great influence.

2 What are the relational uses of technology and media?

The use of technology and media is a shared relational activity that enables people to come together, withdraw from relationships, and enact specific relational roles. Media content informs people about how relationships should look and how people should behave in relationships. Technology and media function as coequal alternatives to personal relationships. Technology and media are also used in everyday talk. Beyond providing a general topic of conversation, talk about technology and media impacts their interpretation and understanding. Talk about technology and media also impacts their dissemination and influence, promotes the development of media literacy, influences identification and relationship development, and enables identity construction.

3 How are cell phones used in the construction of identities?

Identities constructed through relational technologies are based in part on what it means for groups to use them, such as generations and social networks. Identities are

also created through the use of specific products and services, as well as through ringtones and the actual performance of cell phones.

4 How do cell phones influence relationships?

Cell phones have come to represent constant connection to those who possess your number. Giving someone your cell phone number or denying someone access to your number establishes both the boundaries and the degree of closeness desired and expected within your relationship with that person. A new relational expectation of constant availability has subsequently developed. Also, shared experience develops from the actual use of cell phones and from the immediate transmission of voice, picture, sound, and video. Finally, the use of cell phones makes possible the microcoordination of physical social interaction.

5 How are identities constructed online?

Examining social networking sites specifically, identities are constructed through lists of connections, photographs, media preferences, strategic work, and massive public disclosure.

6 How does online communication influence relationships?

Although online communication can lead to the creation of new relationships, it tends to be used more for the maintenance or continuation of existing relationships. Examining social networking sites specifically, benefits to relationships can be explained by the nature of online communication and the general characteristics of such sites.

»»» Key Concepts

asynchronous communication 283
 concurrent media use 263
 core ties 280
 emoticons 283
 media equation 269
 media literacy 271
 microcoordination 277
 parasocial relationships 269
 relational technologies 274

significant ties 281
 social construction of technology 265
 social shaping of technology 266
 socialization impact of media 268
 synchronous communication 282
 technological determinism 265
 technology and media generations 274
 technology and media profile 272

»»» Questions to Ask Your Friends

1. Ask your friends to estimate the amount of time they spend using media every day. How do their responses compare with the average daily media use revealed by the Middletown Media Studies? If there is a significant difference between your friends' estimations and the numbers discovered in the Middletown Media Studies, why do you think this discrepancy exists?
2. Ask a few of your friends separately to describe their technology and media profile, and then compare their responses. Do you notice any similarity among their responses? If so, why do you think this similarity exists? What impact would this similarity of technology and media uses and preferences have on the relationships among your friends?
3. If you have your own page on a social networking site, ask your friends to compare how you present yourself on this page to how you present yourself off-line. In what ways are they different and similar?

»»» Media Connections

1. Examine how characters on television programs use and perform relational technology. Do their use and performance of technology parallel those of your friends, family, coworkers, or classmates?
2. Describe how relationships are featured in the television, print, and Internet advertisements of cell phone companies.
3. Compare recent media depictions of relationships with media depictions of relationships from previous decades. What changes do you recognize?

»»» Student Study Site



Sharpen your skills with SAGE edge at edge.sagepub.com/duckciel2e

SAGE edge for students provides a personalized approach to help you accomplish your coursework goals in an easy-to-use learning environment.



Chapter Outline

Public Address and Relating to Audiences

Analyzing Audiences

Speeches to Convince and Speeches to

Actuate

Speeches to Convince

Speeches to Actuate

Sequential Persuasion

Foot in the Door

Door in the Face

Pregiving

Emotional Appeals

Fear: Buy This Book and No One Gets Hurt!

Guilt: Have You Ever Seen Two Grown Professors Cry?

Lost Emotions

Compliance Gaining

Relational Influence Goals

Secondary Goals of Compliance Gaining

Compliance Gaining Strategies

Focus Questions Revisited

Key Concepts

Questions to Ask Your Friends

Media Connections