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FaceTime: Bridging Distance with Mobile Video Chat

Videos can be viewed in numerous ways--on computers, tablets, televisions, and phones. However, creating and watching video on a personal mobile phone can change the way in which a person experiences the video. It can be designed specifically for the mobile phone on which it is being watched, fitting the shape of the screen perfectly. It also allows for efficiency and practicality, especially if it is the only device available for viewing. Being able to make videos on our own phones has also allowed us to share personal experiences with others quickly. Aside from asynchronous videos, being able to call one another on our mobile devices through live videos such as FaceTime has done wonders for users, including myself. Consistent with Humphreys' observation that communicating through social networks allows people to build, strengthen, and maintain social connections (Humphreys, 2012), FaceTime allows me to work on building, strengthening, and maintaining my relationships with people in my life. FaceTime also changes the experience. Unlike FaceTime Audio or just speaking on the phone regularly, FaceTime puts a face to the name. Facial expressions, gestures, mannerisms, etc. can also be picked up. It is as close to a face-to-face conversation as one can get in a virtual setting.

For my final project, I kept the concept of my video the same but changed the narrative slightly when compared to the original mobile video created back in October. I continue to share how the ability to FaceTime on our mobile devices has helped me maintain relationships with people, in this case my grandparents, who I do not have the privilege to see daily. This time around, I worked on honing in on the emotional appeal

aspect of the video to enhance the narrative of how far back my memories and moments shared go with my grandparents. In order to improve this narrative, I gathered old video footage and old photos and stitched them together to create a storyline, really emphasizing everything we've done together in person over the years. Also, in my original mobile video, the second half was a storyline showing how I was going to surprise them in person. I had originally intended for these scenes to show viewers the comparison of online FaceTime relationships versus physically present ones. However, this time around for my final project I decided to scratch that half and instead really focus on the FaceTime platform as a whole. The focus was now on both the positives and negatives of FaceTime and overall showing how it has allowed me to maintain and grow my relationship with my grandparents..

To create the video, I stitch the home videos, old photographs, more recent videos, and screen recording of the FaceTime calls together. I then add a voice over throughout the video to narrate, which really clarifies the meaning of the videos, making it a more cohesive story. The artistic choice to add more screen recordings gives viewers glimpses of the relationship I have with my grandparents over FaceTime. In my final video project, I also add sound effects and animations to keep viewers engaged in the content. To make the video run smoothly overall, I include transition effects and a light music track for some background throughout the entire video .

My project shows how our mobile devices, more specifically FaceTime on our mobile devices, allow me to maintain my relationship with my grandparents. Despite minor setbacks like technical difficulties, camera angles showing everything but their face, and them sometimes not answering the call, it gives me the opportunity to

strengthen our connection in times where I can't be with them in person. Having conversations with them in real time video creates a more engaging social interaction than just a text. I can be anywhere and see their faces on my screen at any time I call so long as they are available to answer the phone. Audiences can engage with this video by watching it on any mobile device. After watching, it is my goal that they understand the way in which FaceTime has helped strengthen my relationship with my grandparents and how these virtual interactions on our mobile devices have changed the way we grow relationships as a whole. Everything about this video is mobile, from the content creation to the editing of the final cut. All videos were taken on my iPhone and then edited on iPhone with Adobe Rush.

I've enjoyed a close connection with my grandparents since birth and I have made many lasting memories. With the combination of COVID restrictions and going off to college in the last few years, I don't get to see them in person as much as I would like to. However, the use of FaceTime on our mobile devices goes a long way to help ease the physical distance between us. In Ling's paper, he mentions how phones have been structurally embedded in our daily lives. It gives us direct access as well as draws us towards our closest ties who, although they may be physically far from us, are available directly to us on the phone (Ling, 2014). I am able to call them at any given moment without need for prior coordination of our schedules. There is much more flexibility and frequency in my calls to my grandparents than there is when seeing them in person. As shown in the screen recording clips of my final mobile video project, I call my grandparents without prior notice. The reality is that coordinating and getting everything prepared would be much more time consuming and structured. Phones now structure

interactions as part of our social interactions (Ling, 2014). The only catch is that for these conversations to be had, it involves both sides to have their phone and respond (Ling, 2014). As I state in my video, it's not always smooth sailing with FaceTime, and sometimes even our close ones will let our phones ring until the call says "unavailable." We are in a day and age where there has been an increase in the expectation to have our mobile devices with us at all times (Ling, 2014).

Humphreys studies how we use geolocation social mobile media to manage our physical and emotional distance with others. She mentions the concept of inner space, the degree of social intimacy or social distance between people and outer space, the physical distance between people in physical spaces (Humphreys, 2012). She ultimately found that users of these apps engage in connecting which manages our inner space, coordinating which manages our outer space, and cataloguing which manages the information recorded (Humphreys, 2012). FaceTime is not a social networking platform the way Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, etc. is. However, it does connect people. Humphreys notes that there are numerous combinations that allow people to connect to one another. When applying it to how I use FaceTime myself, I found that it most aligns with the concept of "facilitating interactions among members of intimate social groups (intimate inner space) who are physically distant (disparate outer space)" (Humphreys, 2012, p.497). In other words, the relationship I have with my grandparents is a very close bond, thus they are part of my intimate inner space. We live an hour away from each other, thus, disparate outer space. FaceTime is giving me a connection to connect with the people I love who are not physically with me.

By contrast, social networking applications such as TikTok serve a more public purpose. Omar and Dequan studied why people choose the media that they do and focused on TikTok as the main platform. They found that it's not so much the personality traits that are linked to the behaviors of people on TikTok (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Instead it is the motivation-- people participate and post on TikTok for self expression, escapism, and social interaction (Omar & Dequan, 2020). FaceTime is clearly different from TikTok in that it's not a social networking app nor a place to post for the public to see but when making this project, I thought a lot about why I use FaceTime. It's an intimate space to hold genuine conversations. I can be my most authentic self and be fully present in the moment. The beauty of FaceTime is that it can serve many purposes, including escapism, self expression, and social interaction, albeit in a less public manner. I like to use FaceTime to make the time pass more quickly when doing mind-numbing tasks such as folding laundry, doing dishes, or walking on the treadmill.

In sum, mobile video provides an avenue for social interaction that is the next best thing to in person conversation. Although technology comes with technical issues at times, conversing with each other virtually on video in live time on our mobile devices allows us to build, strengthen, and maintain our relationships even when we are apart from each other. Video chat using mobile devices has changed the structure of our social norms. Because of FaceTime, I can now have a virtual face-to-face conversation with almost anyone, at any time and at any place.

References

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