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Is Mobile Communication the Next Step in the Evolution of Social Interaction?

Social interactions in society have changed a lot in the past 30 years. People used to talk to each other in the elevator. Nowadays people will immediately pull out their phone to avoid any social interaction at all. How often do we as a society do things like this with our phones to avoid social interaction? We can indirectly avoid social interactions just by sending a message to a friend. You could have just gone and saw that person and told them in person. I know phones are meant to make communicating easier, but do all messages have to be sent electronically, or are there some situations where it would be easier to simply physically talk to someone or show them the video, we wanted to send them? Though maybe, communicating electronically is the next step in the evolution of human communication. This interaction is what I based my mobile video around.

For the original mobile video project we were told to use our phones to film and edit our videos. At first I struggled with how I was going to get good shots and precise edits. Without a tripod for my phone, I had to get very creative with setting up my shots. I was using boxes, stools, and water jugs to prop up my phone in the perfect spots. I was still running into these same problems when making my final project mobile video, but this time I was more prepared and was able to adapt to using my phone much more. When it came time to edit my final project on my phone I had much more confidence than I did for the original mobile video project. I really enjoyed using rush the first time around editing the original mobile video I made. My background experience with

premiere pro helped me a lot and I will continue to use rush in tandem with premiere pro.

The concept of both my original and final project mobile video was to show how much our phones decrease our social interactions in ways we do not even realize. In my original mobile video I am on my laptop sending YouTube videos to my roommate who is also my brother, Dylan. After I send him a couple YouTube videos and texts along with them, I start scrolling TikTok. I then proceed to send Dylan a TikTok, even though he has yet to answer me after I sent him the YouTube videos. After I send Dylan the TikTok, he comes into my room and asks me why I have not just walked out of my room to show him the things I have been sending him. To this question I just let him walk away and then I just shrug it off and say I do not care. I should have just shown Dylan the things I was sending him, but instead my phone took that opportunity away from me. I wanted to make a video that demonstrated how easily phones make it to be less socially interactive, and I felt that I had done that with my original video. Though, after some feedback from Dr. Shaw and Professor Zaylea, I knew I could improve upon it.

When the final project was assigned, I knew I wanted to revise my mobile video project. I also knew I wanted to elaborate on the same idea my original video took on. Though this time, instead of sending messages to the next room over, I am literally right next to my roommate, Dylan, texting him throughout the whole video. I hide the fact that me and Dylan are in the same space by choosing my shots wisely. I am framed in the kitchen, whereas Dylan is seemingly in a completely different space, when in reality, the kitchen is connected to the living space he is in. Throughout the video, we are texting each other. After Dylan stops answering my texts, sometime goes by and I start spam

texting him to get his attention. He still does not answer me and then I look over to him and ask him why he is not answering, revealing to the audience that we have been right next to each other the entire time.

Creating mobile videos is a very fun thing for me to do. To know that I can record and edit a 3 minute video entirely on my phone and have it come out good makes me excited about mobile videos. What's unique about creating a mobile video is that you can do it on your own. You do not need an entire crew of people working, and you do not even need to have a budget. Viewing mobile media is also a unique experience. Everyone can view mobile videos on TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and many other platforms for free. Pretty much any other types of videos like movies and tv shows have to be paid for in some way. They are also less easily consumed. A movie theater can sell out seats, but a mobile video on TikTok has unlimited seats in the theater, and they are all good seats. I want audiences to engage with my video just like they would any other mobile video. I want them to share it with their friends through direct messages or texts. I want them to watch on their phone, get a quick laugh, interact with it and then go on with their day. That's the true beauty of mobile videos. There are so many of them, so after you're done watching mine, go watch another. There are so many great mobile videos that you cannot even keep up with them.

According to Rich Ling, phones have "allowed us the ability to stay in touch with our closest circle of friends and family"(Ling p. 35, 2014). This is very true, and even demonstrated in my mobile video. Though, do we necessarily want this? Has the phone's ability to keep us in touch made it so that we never actually keep in touch physically in person? In my video, Dylan and I are family and communicating using our

phones, but do we have to be? Maybe if we did not have phones always so at the ready, which I tried to convey by framing the phones in vocal points of the shot, then me and my brother Dylan would just talk to each other. Ling goes on to say "the most profound dimension of mobile communication is quite simply that it makes us continually available to each other" (Ling p. 33, 2014). My video also demonstrates this, but again it raises the same questions. In another reading by Andrea Ballatore and Simone Natale they argue "the death of old media should not be mourned as a loss of cultural values and sedimented social meanings, but should be embraced precisely as evidence of technological progress" (Ballatore and Natale p. 2385, 2015). From this quote, I gather that this way of communication could be the next step in the evolution of communication. Maybe we are not losing cultural values by using our phones to avoid social interaction, but cultural values are evolving social interaction to be more based on mobile communication. In the reading written by Lee Humphreys, the author backs this idea that mobile communication is the next step. Humphreys states "Much of public sociality through mobile social networks is about connecting with others" (Humphreys p. 502, 2012). It is clear that Dylan and I are communicating in my video, but we are not necessarily connecting. To connect would be to engage with one another on more levels then just letters on a screen. If Dylan and I were to actually connect in the video, it would require eye contact and emotion in the words you're saying. We do not connect in the video until the end when real words are spoken. The author goes on to say "Connecting here means the managing one's social distance with others" (Humphreys p. 502, 2012). This quote makes me go back on my statements above. Maybe Dylan and I are properly managing our social distance from one another. It is possible that the

social distance between others can be getting smaller, meaning you need to be physically closer to people to start a verbal interaction. Based on this information, we can entertain the idea that mobile communication is the next step in the evolution of social interaction.

Mobile videos are a great way to interact with people, but it is not the only way. Phones have been decreasing our amount of social interactions so much that we barely even notice. Though, as we discussed, maybe this is because mobile interaction is the main communication of our always evolving culture. This is what my mobile video is supposed to demonstrate. Although I portray it as a bad thing in my video, mobile communication can be the next step in the evolution of social interaction.

References

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