

42?

SOCIAL MEDIA AS TOOLS: FOR **BETTER** OR **WORSE**

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[R]evolutions in Communication
Courses: Theory, Research,
Pedagogy, and Assessment

ABSTRACT

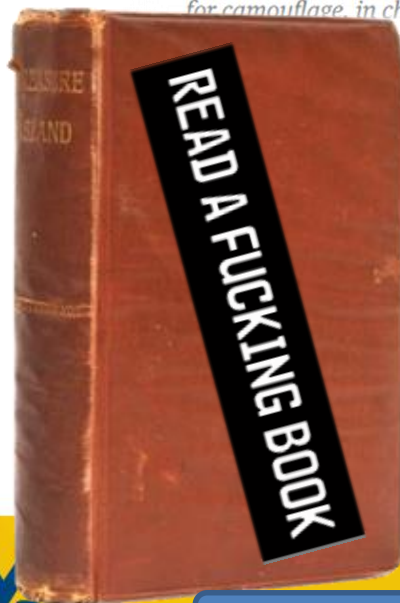
In parallel to the near-ubiquity of social and mobile media in the modern communication technology ecology, college courses focused on mass media and communication technology have adapted to include discussion of the role that these technologies play on human thoughts, feelings, and behaviors towards each other. However, the brunt of these discussion seem to frame CMC (computer-mediated communication) as a necessary evil – technologies not fully capable of authentic and meaningful human communication, but nonetheless increasing prevalent in society. Which such concerns might be warranted, educators are cautioned against adopting such **a myopic “loss frame”** approach in that it assumes that (a) CMC interactions are inherently inferior to FtF ones and (b) side-steps important research showing the relative benefits (and detriments) of CMC. In his presentation, Dr. Nick Bowman (West Virginia University) will discuss relevant theory and emerging research on both points, with an end goal of demonstrating the pedagogical utility of focusing on a functional (rather than normative) approach to discussing the interpersonal and social uses and effects of CMC.



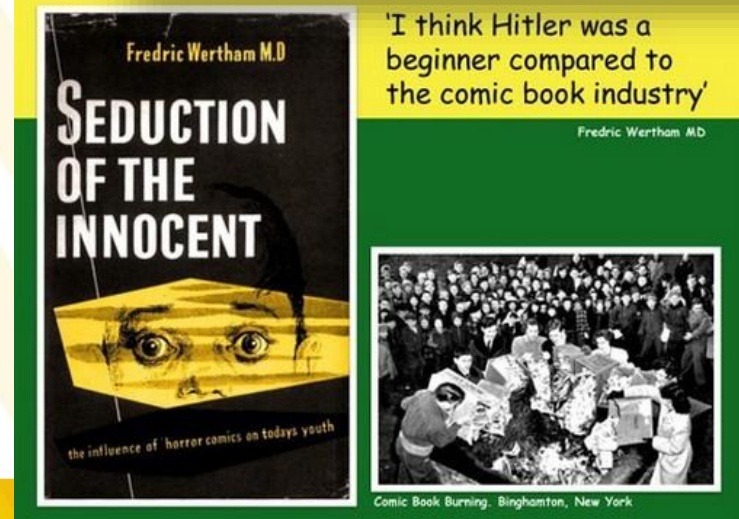


HISTORICAL MORAL PANICS

“Everywhere, at any hour of the day, people can be seen quite shamelessly poring over the checker-board diagrams, cudgelling their brains for a four-letter word meaning “molten rock” or a six-letter word meaning “idler,” or what not: in trains and trams, or omnibuses, in subways, in private offices and counting-rooms, in factories and homes, and even - although as yet rarely - with hymnals for camouflage, in church.



being used by society). Indeed, nearly 20 years after his original crusade against the morally corrosive content of comic books, Wertram himself wrote a volume “The World of Fanzines” that celebrated the creativity that comics books and science fiction novels can foster in children; Gonzalez tells the story of NASA director Charles Bolden nostalgically recalling the role that the space-traveling superhero Flash Gordon played in his eventual career as an astronaut.^{54,55}



Bowman (2016a)



WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION STUDIES

UPDATE 1: WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

- Computer
- Mediated
- Communication

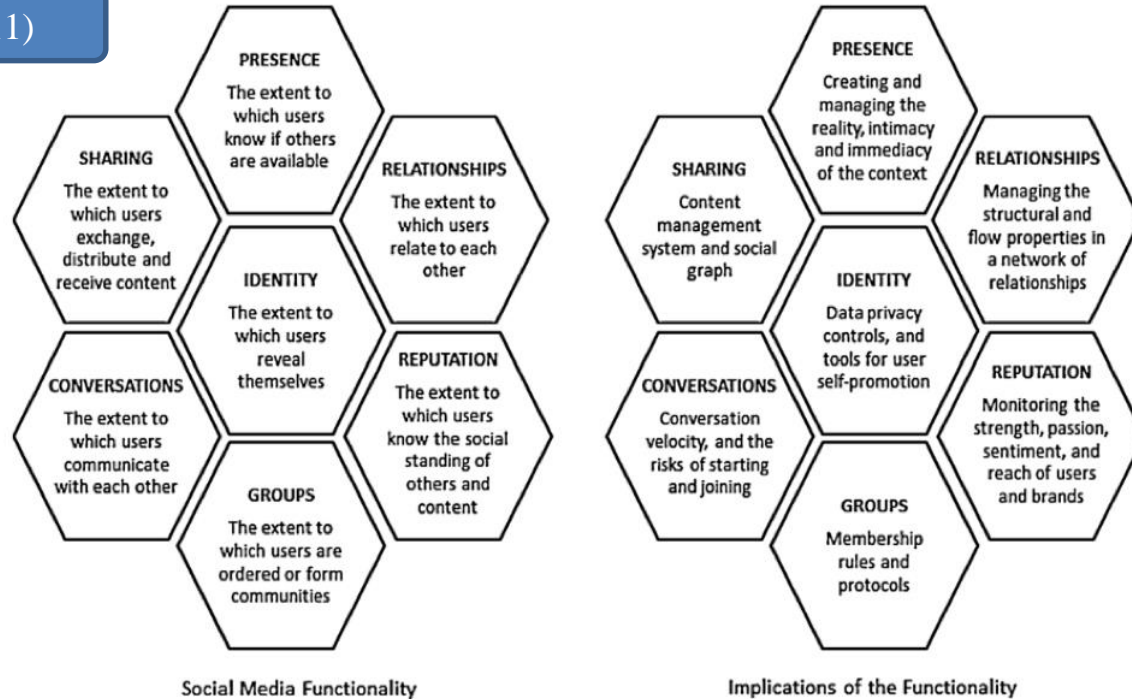


CMC research tends to focus on how channels mediate the human communication process.



UPDATE 1: WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

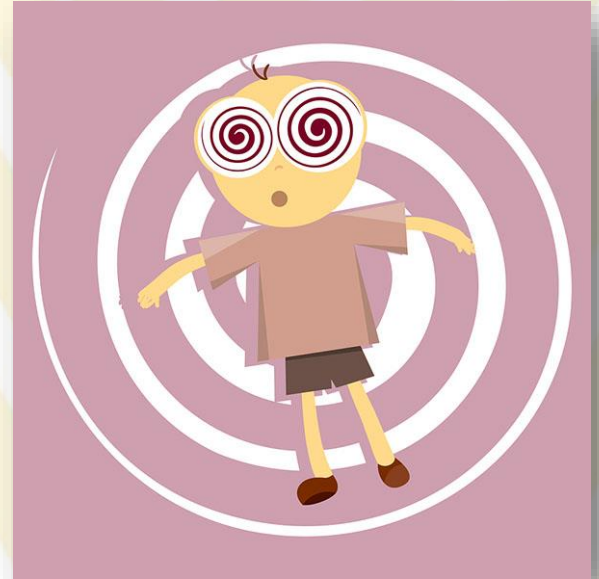
Keitzmann et al (2011)



UPDATE 1: WHAT IS SOCIAL MEDIA?

- It's **DEMANDING**, if nothing else.
 - Cognitively demanding
 - Behaviorally demanding
 - Affectively demanding
 - **Socially demanding?**

Bowman (2016b)



UPDATE 2: MASS/INTERPERSONAL

Mass COMM

- Large audience (> 50?)
- Anonymous source
- Complex + multiple goals
- **mediated**

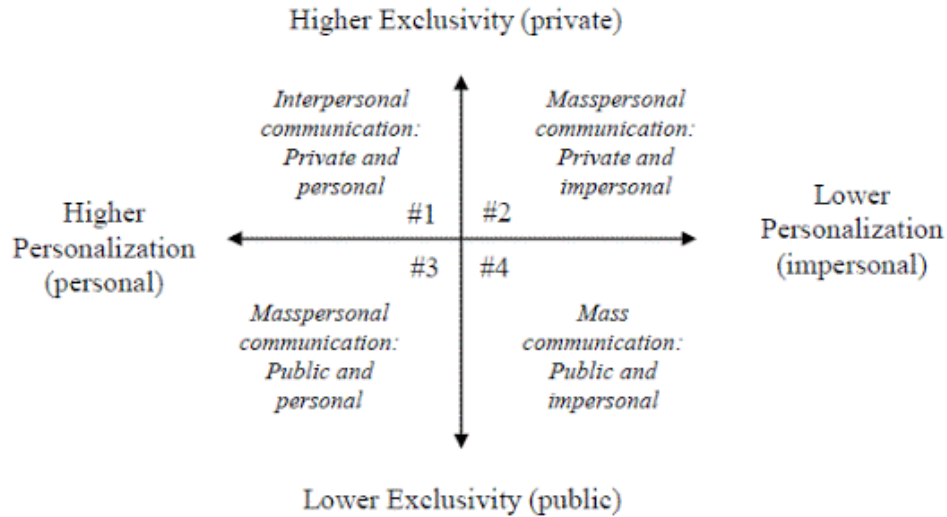
Interpersonal COMM

- Intimate audience
- Personal source
- Clear(?) goal
- **(usually) non-mediated**



UPDATE 2: MASS/INTERPERSONAL

We can delink “mass” and “personal” forms of communication, **and newer technologies this delinking more apparent.**

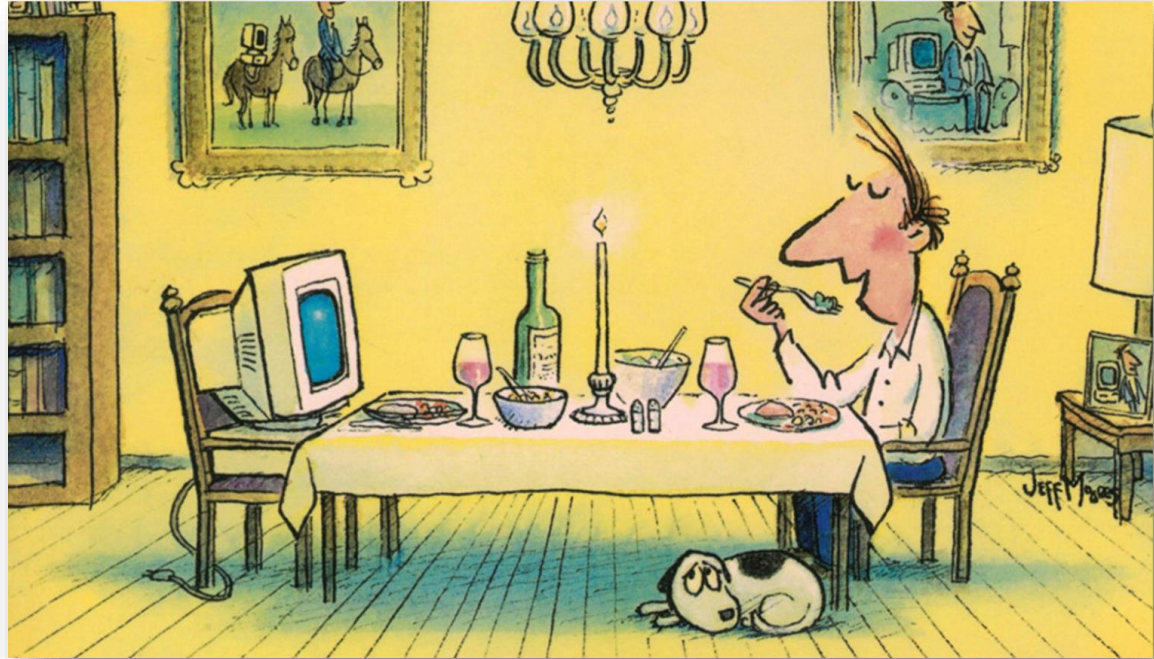


O’Sullivan (2005)



UPDATE 2: THE MEDIA EQUATION

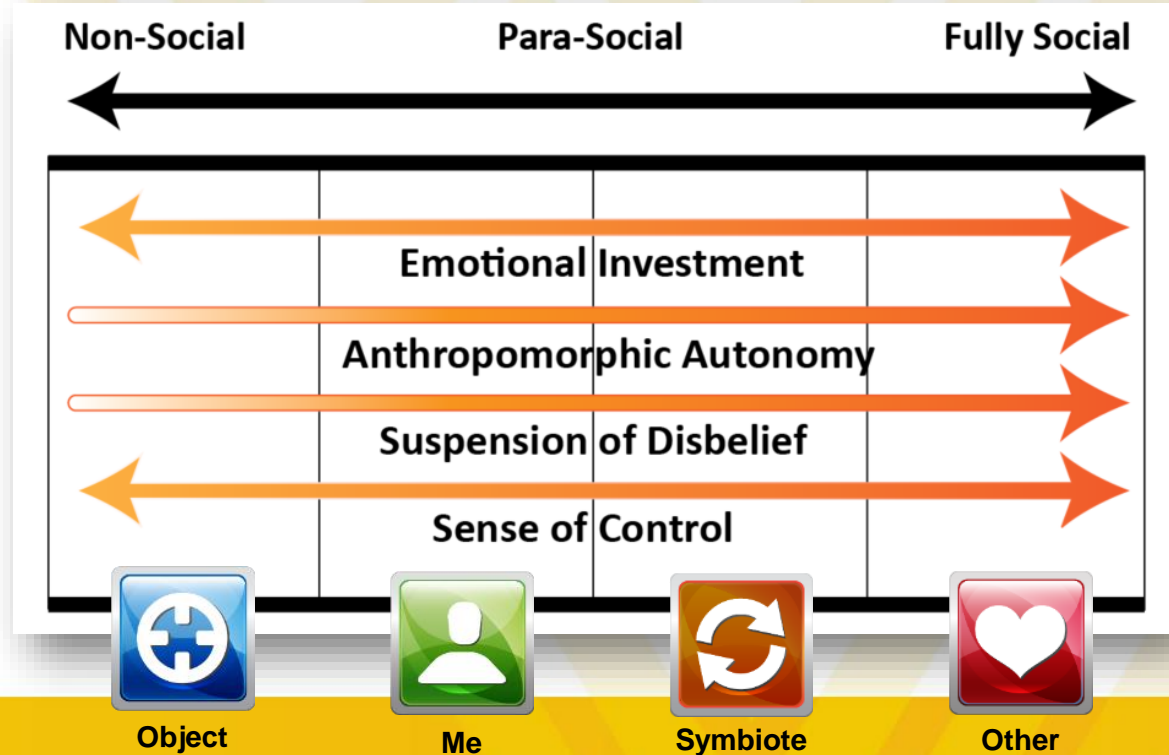
Users respond to technology
as if it were human
(Reeves & Nass, 1995)



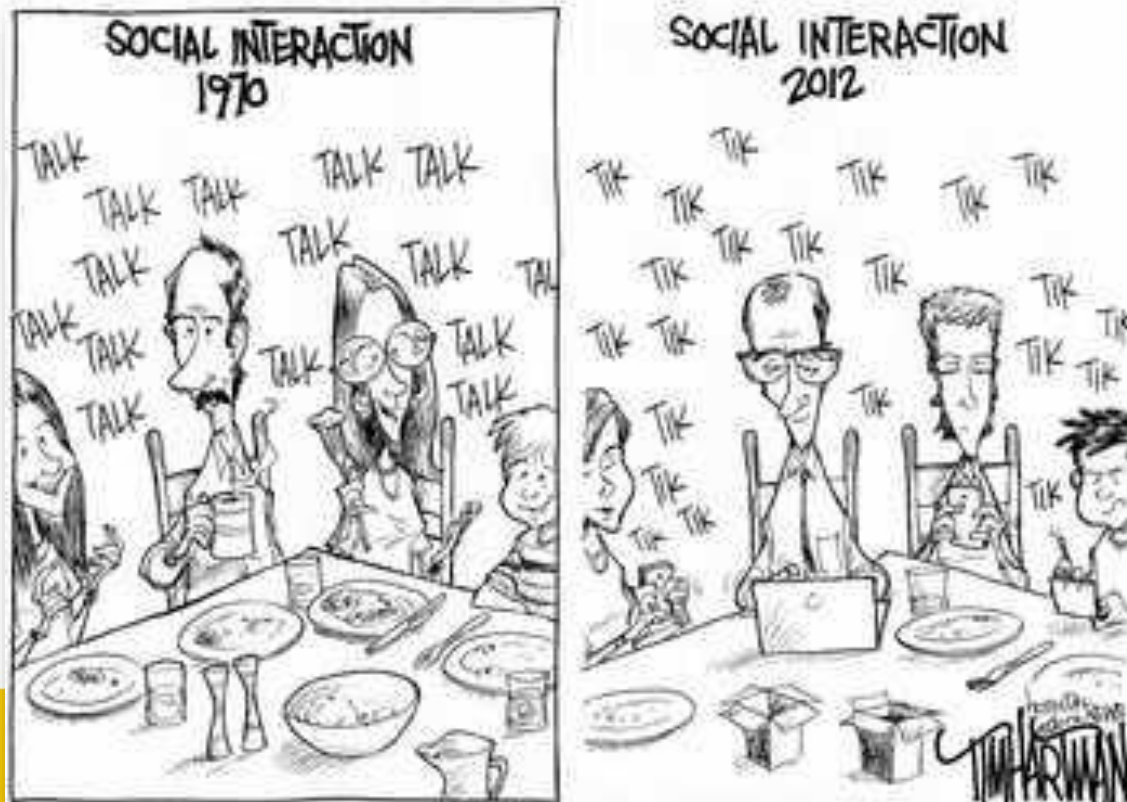
UPDATE 2: THE MEDIA EQUATION

...and it's true, in fact
there is ample
evidence that we can
develop **completely
social** experience
with technology!

Banks & Bowman (2015)



UPDATE 3: DISPLACING CONVOS



Technology has displaced authentic human-human interaction in favor of **constant mediation**



UPDATE 3: DISPLACING CONVOS



Technologies can also increase:

social presence

self presence

physical presence

Westerman & Skalski (2000)



UPDATE 3: DISPLACING CONVOS

- Students even use social media to foster and engage with online learning communities

Bowman & Ackaoglu (2015)

Table 1
Categories and frequencies of Facebook comments.

	Exam review	Administrative	Class-related links	Peer support	Humor	Affect instructor/class	Unrelated links	Instructor support	Random
# posts	201	119	61	17	16	15	13	8	27
Avg # comments per post	3.60	2.47	1.46	3.41	2.74	.292	.288	.375	1.64
# posts initiated by Instructor	64	60	39	0	3	1	5	8	13
Avg # of comments per post	3.66	1.22	.923	0	4.33	0	0	.375	2.92
# posts initiated by students	137	59	22	17	13	14	8	0	14
Avg # of comments per post	3.54	3.71	2.00	3.41	1.15	4.39	3.75	0	.357



UPDATE 3: DISPLACING CONVOS

Social media might even enable **communication that overcomes FtF constraints** .. But, is this always a good thing?



MODERN MORAL PANIC?

- Technology abstinence is growing practice

		Peers	Exp.	Media	Fam.	Edu
CMC	Good	4.22	4.04	3.56	2.51	2.45
	Bad	2.86	3.09	3.41	3.25	3.35
FtF	Good	4.02	4.38	2.64	4.48	4.28
	Bad	All low (1.75 – 2.87)				

Westerman, Bowman & Daniel (2015, NCA)



CONCLUSIONS

One final note for considering the future of CMC: not all goals that people have are things we would consider “good.” In fact, the same characteristics of CMC can be used for both good and bad purposes. For example, anonymity can be used as a great thing as it allows somebody to search for health information about something they might feel embarrassed about. However, anonymity is not so good as it is used by a group of people to cyber-bully someone, using their computer to mask their identity while intentionally hurting another person without consequence. In this way, it is important to understand that CMC channels themselves are not inherently good or bad, but they do facilitate in helping people to accomplish their goals, be they good or bad. **Technology allows people to be more human, yet it does not guarantee that people will be more humane.** Hopefully, after reading this book, you realize that because YOU are in charge of the Internet and the use of CMC technologies, you also realize that YOU are ultimately in charge of how good or bad the Internet becomes. We hope that you accept that responsibility and use that power wisely.





FOR MORE INFORMATION

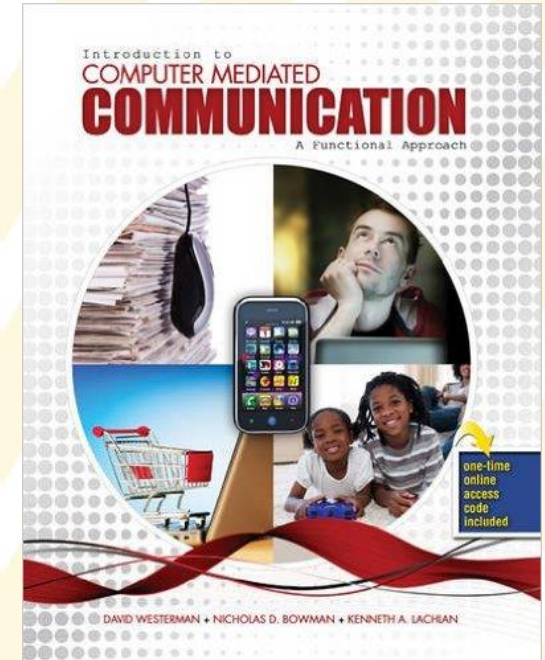


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Shameless plug: Many of these themes form the base of our newest textbook (Kendall-Hunt). Jes' Sayin' ...



SPECIAL THANKS

- Jaime Banks (WVU)
- Stephen Daniel (NDSU)
- Ken Lachlan (UCONN)
- David Westerman (NDSU)



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