The concept of the social information processing theory

Sociology, Social Networking

Online, I present myself less frequently and therefore have more opportunities to tailor my social media presence to represent a more idealistic vision of myself. West and Turner (2018) define three selves within the Social Information Processing (SIP) theory: actual, ideal, and ought. These specifically refer to online relationships but can be applied to in-person communication as well. In person, I am required to be more authentic as being fake requires additional effort and does not benefit me in the future. I can strive in day-to-day life to present an ideal version of myself, but there will always be room for criticism. Online, I am presented with two versions of myself: the ideal self, and the ought self. When I use media, I feel that I am required to post to update family members and to show the world that I exist. The ought self reflects what a person should be doing based on societal norms. Social Presence theory, an idea that influenced SIP theory, states that it " relates to the extent that individuals are aware of each other via various communication media".

Despite this theory being forty years old, society has created a norm that says that individuals are expected to post on social media and the Social Presence theory shows us that increased media presence leads to nicer and more meaningful online relationships. In person, I attempt to create a version of my ought self as I follow basic societal norms as presented based on gender, class, and location. I also have the ability to attempt to create my ideal self on media as I only post highlights from my life. I am able to choose which pictures I share, what I write, and what posts I engage with, helping me to present the best of the best. Most people seek to present their ideal self online by taking one hundred seemingly imperfect pictures just to upload

one " perfect" one. This presentation of self that breeds within social media taints interpersonal online relationships and is reflected in the Media Richness theory. This theory, presented by West and Turner (2018), states that " the medium [of online media] is too narrow to allow for relationship development."

SIP theory seeks to explain the exchanges between technology, relationships, and self-presentations and while SIP theory rejects Media Richness theory for not allowing for the intertwined nature of on and offline interactions. Regardless, Media Richness theory demonstrates the negatives of online relationships due to the ability to tailor a personality and only reflect an ideological view.

Tanupabrungsun, Hemsley, and Semaan (2018) write about the information processing of social media, taking the idea of SIP theory one step further. They talk in depth about the Occupy movement, a social movement that gained traction via social media and presented itself in real life for a time before dying off completely. Joseph Walther's theory of SIP recognizes that interpersonal relationships via media take longer to develop than face-to-face interaction. If we look, Tanupabrungsun, Hemsley, and Semaan (2018) write that the Occupy movement " created a small communication network of participants as indicated by either 1) interacting with an account @OccupyWallSt by @mentions or @replies; 2) using a hashtags #OccupyWallSt; or 3) simply including the term ' OccupyWallSt' in their tweets. Social media allowed this movement to grow quickly because people want to present their ideal and ought selves online, which includes joining

movements because as a younger generation on media, it is what society considers " right".

Overall, Tanupabrungsun, Hemsley, and Semaan (2018) found that " the core actors tend to have higher numbers of rich tweets, compared to their numbers of informative tweets". This means that the goal of the movement is to enlist people via emotions rather than facts because tapping into human emotion provides a more dramatic response, which in turn benefits the growth of the movement.