

Implications of social networking media in late modernity assignment



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Identify and discuss the implications of social networking media for social interaction in late modernity.

Much has been written about the erosion of the influence of traditional agents of socialisation like family, schools, and communities. etc in the era of late modernity. Many a reason has been ascribed to this phenomenon, among others the view that traditional agencies do not fulfill the needs of the new generation of youths in this era.

Perhaps it is the degeneration of the values which used to hold these agencies, or perhaps it is the ability to replace these agencies, often viewed as archaic, with new influences. These traditional social structures and “ canonized cultural orientations” (Glastra et al, 2004) no longer provide the individual with a place and purpose in life (Strain, 2000). In contemporary society individuals need to be able to re-create themselves (Bagnall, 2001) in order to cope with change (Fryer, 1997) so as to arrive at a place where they either feel at home or accept that they are different (Bauman, 2004).

Since the advent of the Internet and the closing of world borders due to globalisation, any community in any part of the world is able to broadcast any form of message or ideas thus causing a fragmentation of societies everywhere (Putnam, 1995). However Anderson counters that access to different people and different cultures is “ not fragmenting.. more, reforming along different dimensions (Anderson: 2006, 191) Responding to this more and more individuals are drawn to utilize the Web as a primary tool of social interaction and discourse.

One such form of participation on the Internet is the online social networks, like, Friendster, MySpace, Bebo and lately, Facebook. These networks create an online community in which a person creates a profile and then connects to other users. The user generates this profile by offering up a range of personal information in a variety of media types, from a catalogue of favorite videos, to reading lists, hobbies, blogs, games, and favorite quotes. "...social sites are a way for people to interact as they never could before with such ease" (Wilson : 2000, 12).

These Social Networking Sites (SNS) allow people to interact and congregate amid a niche culture thus making its members more social, involved, and motivated to participate out of genuine interest (Anderson, 2006). As more networks obtain an on-line presence, the Internet links them and provides channels for them to promote and disseminate ideas, and interact with other networks (Rheingold: 2002, 59). This essay will examine the popular SNS and the trend of such popularity, and also discuss the effects such online networks have on social interaction in late modernity.

A few definitions of the key terms in this topic is logical before launching into a discussion of it. " Late modernity", is a result of contemporary societies being in constant continuous transitions, changes and developments. It is not a new stage of development nor can it be deemed postmodern because it is still modern but has not stopped developing (Beck: 1992, Giddens: 1991, Lash: 1990). This state of constant change and development has also been termed as liquid modernity (Bauman : 2000).

In the face of such liquid times, there is an accumulation of insecurity, fear, lack of trust and uncertainties which by and large affect the individual's socialisation process. Therefore the search for self becomes the personal goal in order to find a society founded on certainty, trust and recognition (Bauman: 2000, Beck: 2000). " Social Networking Media" is an online media that focuses on building communities of people who share interests and activities, or who are interested in exploring the interests and activities of others.

The main types of social networking services are those which contain directories of some categories, means to connect with friends and verification systems linked to trust. MySpace and Facebook are examples of sites which are being the most widely used worldwide. Networks, as opposed to Communities allow individuals to have unique relations and are developed on the basis of those relations. " Social Interactions" are acts, actions, or practices of two or more people mutually oriented towards each other, that is, any behavior that tries to affect or take account each other's subjective experiences or intentions.

This means that the parties to the social interaction must be aware of each other and have each other's self in mind (Weber, 1947). The object of this essay therefore is to ascertain how, if at all, SNS like Facebook and MySpace allow two or more people to have mutually oriented behaviour towards each other, beyond real boundaries, in these liquid contemporary times. Normally, the basis for social interaction in social networking sites is a personal profile, which often consists of a personal webpage on the networking site, which is a representation of the individual's personality and expression on the web.
<https://assignbuster.com/implications-of-social-networking-media-in-late-modernity-assignment/>

This differentiates SNS from online forums, communities and discussion groups where if an individual does not post, he is invisible. Socialization and social interaction begin when a personal page is connected to other personal pages of other individuals with shared interests or activities. Individual networks are very personal and therefore meets with the self personification criterion of socialisation in contemporary times where self identity is a central issue (Giddens, 1991: 208) Indeed, social interaction in this environment has been found to be the primary purpose of home computer use (Moore, 2000).

SNS enables constant communication on a ever-expanding circle of contacts. Members are able to send and receive mails, messages, photos, web logs, music, videos, pod casts while constantly constructing and reconstructing their personal profile, changing their moods, likes and dislikes, and blocking or limiting their personal page from being accessed, at their will. Creating, maintaining and managing the content and accessibility of one's personal webpage and profile also become an integral component of managing one's identity, lifestyle and relationships (Beck, 1992: 97).

Individuals become increasingly free from class and other structural positions and more reflexive (Giddens, 1991). SNSs create realms where new prospective dialogues among equals, different opportunities for socialization, expressive freedom behind the mask of an identity which could be fictitious or real as the individual prefers, and endless possibilities of being open to change without necessarily destabilizing oneself, and above all, allow relationships to develop without the inherent traditional pressures of society and norms, enhanced by communicative technologies.

<https://assignbuster.com/implications-of-social-networking-media-in-late-modernity-assignment/>

MySpace for example allowed the HTML code which members responded to by modifying the look and feel of their individual profiles so as to have “cooler” sites (Boyd, 2007). MySpace also encouraged independent (indie) bands to showcase their music online, thereby attracting music lovers and record labels. A symbiotic relationship between bands and fans were forged on the site, and this garnered more young people to participate therein (Boyd, 2007).

In addition to text, images, and videos being profiled, the social network site also enables comments from other members, and a public list of the people that one identifies as “Friends” within the network (Lenhart, 2007).

Friendster calls this application “testimonials” while Facebook terms it as “the wall”. These features encourage members to write messages, captions and tag lines on their friends’ profiles. Typically, SNSs need affirmation before linking people as friends, after which their relationship is displayed as a newsfeed on their respective profiles.

Research suggests that most SNSs primarily support pre-existing social relations as opposed to meeting new people, such as former class/school mates (Ellison, Steinfield, and Lampe: 2007) and this makes SNSs different from other community-based sites. Facebook users for example, “search” for people they know off line but have lost touch with, rather than seeking new friendships (Lenhart & Madden, 2007). This enables youths, for example, to socialize even when they are physically unable to meet (Boyd, 2008). This gives rise to another aspect of SNSs relationships.

Where identification of self is enriched by mediated form, the self becomes media reliant and is caught up in a sense of self within “imagined communities”(Anderson, 1983) that confuses the self that is represented in real, offline relations. In face-to-face relations, the body and the language it expresses conveys who we are to people we meet in general. Through observation, it is possible to predict others’ responses to who we are, and as we socialise further, we adapt these stances to “perform” accordingly and manage impressions so as to reflect our “idealised selves” (Goffman, 1997).

In mediated environment (SNSs) people “write themselves into being” (Sunden, 2003). While text, images, audio, and video allow for a virtual personality, there is more control in developing that personality through “self reflexivity” (Giddens). However what individuals choose to articulate in virtuality is a form of self-monitoring (Foucault). Identity of self in SNSs is therefore fluid and contingent to the particular situation, in MySpace for example, the imagined audience – friends and peers – who determine the “cool” factor of one’s profile page. The size and diversity of his imagined community depends on the individual, as young people views on audience are varied. MySpace has had difficulties in relation to the “non-security” of the site where profiles are accessible to anyone, with or without an account. This has given rise to cases of sexual predators and pedophiles prowling the site for possible victims. Facebook for example, allows users to set a limited access to profiles even among “friends”. Privacy policies on SNSs should allow members to determine whether and how information about them is revealed to others (Stein & Sinha, 2002: 414) rather than disclosure being limited (Livingstone, 2006).

The point is that teenagers in particular, need to disclose personal information in order to sustain intimacy with online friends since ‘ intimacy is the other face of privacy’ (Giddens, 1991: 94), but they ought to be allowed to control how disclosure is made. Generally, teens are not as particular to maintain privacy from strangers as they are to share private thoughts and confidences with selected friends, i. e. , they require “ zones of privacy” rather than a single line between full and limited disclosure. (Fahey, 1995: 688). Placing one’s identity on display, which is sometimes intimate information to a wide audience, can be risky.

Socialisation in late modernity is a balance between opportunities and risks. Selves are constituted through interaction with others and, for today’s teenagers; self-actualization is a continuous negotiation between opportunities (for identity, intimacy, sociability) and risks (regarding privacy, misunderstanding, abuse) afforded by internet-mediated communication. The reaffirmation of the self and the construction or search for an identity are at the basis of every educational process, whether real or virtual, for the young and for many behavioural orientations with regard to current technologies.

In cases of online personalities of our truer selves (Goffman, 1959) and that of the real selves, can also be risky to the individuals as experiences online do not constitute real life. The advent of technology, serious technology, can only attest to the growth of the realms and boundaries of Internet and cyberspace. While there are still many problems that the print media has highlighted on issues of security insofar as younger users are concerned, it has generally been acknowledged that the youth of today are savvy enough
<https://assignbuster.com/implications-of-social-networking-media-in-late-modernity-assignment/>

to protect their privacy by holding back on bio-facts or by limiting access to their full profile.

Compared to the “evil” of social networking, participation in social networking web sites do have a number of potential benefits for adolescents. For starters, online interaction is a venue within which to learn and refine the ability to exercise self-control, to relate to other viewpoints expressed by online mates, to engage in intercultural discourse with friends of different ethnicity and locality and to engage in critical thinking and decision-making (Berson, Berson, & Ferron, 2002).

It also enhances self-discovery and actualisation allowing for freedom to develop individualism of belief, character and personality without being bound by rigid social mores and norms (Calvert, 2002; Erikson, 1950; Turkle, 1995) SNSs provide a virtual place in which to “hang out,” thereby curbing the propensity of youths to be in places which could cause them irreparable damage. It also minimises expenditure, which hanging out at malls and arcades ultimately result in.

It gives youths a sense of familiarity and comfort to be able to reveal their true selves, engage in activities they enjoy without the hassle of getting parental permission to go out, the need to abide by curfews and the risk of unnecessary domestic disputes in cases where parental permission is not given. Finally, social networking sites serve as uncontrolled, unregulated, unconstrained public space in which adolescents can “see and be seen” in ways that support youth socialization and the assimilation of cultural knowledge (Boyd, 2006).

The writing on the wall is clear- Internet is here to stay and with it the various interactive social platforms along with their possible pitfalls. Google's plan to standardise SNSs and convert the Internet into a social platform. Its OpenSocial, is intended for use by the dozens of already popular social-networking websites such as MySpace, LinkedIn and Beebo. OpenSocial, allows developers of SNSs to use a common HTML language and JavaScript to take advantage of the user connections within all social networks, not just a single site, thus allowing the creation of a single application that can spread across all platforms seamlessly (Weaver & Morrisson, 2008). If most social-network sites adopt the OpenSocial standard, new ways of human interaction will proliferate as all SNSs will be connected and the Internet will truly mature in its transformation to a social platform. The Internet will become a hub of socialization, a social utility where users go to interact and connect with others across localities, regions and continents, beyond distances and time, allowing an order of socialization and culture which is unprecedented.

Social networking is the logical extension of our human tendencies toward togetherness, whether centered in our neighborhoods or across borders.

Reference: Anderson, B. (1983). *Imagined communities: Reconnections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso. Anderson, C. (2006).

The long tail. New York: Chris Anderson. Bagnall, R. (2001). *Locating lifelong learning and education in contemporary currents of thought and culture*. In: Aspin, D. ed. Part 1. Dordrecht; London: Kluwer. Bauman, Z. (1998). *Work, consumerism, new poor*. London: Open University Press. Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*.

Cambridge, UK: Polity Press. Beck, U. , Giddens, A. , & Lash, S. (1994). Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order. Blackwell. Beck, U. (1992) Risk Society. SAGE Publications. Beck, U. (2006). Cosmopolitan Vision. Cambridge: Polity. Beck, U, & Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2001). Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and Its Social and Political Consequences. Thousand Oaks, Calif. : Sage, 2001. Boyd, D. (2006). Friends, Friendsters, and Top 8: Writing Community into Being on Social Network Sites (http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue11_12/boyd/) 16th August 2008. Boyd, D. Ellison, N. (2007)??? ‘ Social Network Sites: Definition, History, and Scholarship’??? Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication. Boyd, D. (2007), ‘ Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life’, MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Learning: Youth, Identity, and Digital Media (ed. David Buckingham), Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Calvert, S. L. (2002). ‘ Identity Construction on the Internet’. In S. L. Calvert, A. B. Jordan, & R. R. Cocking (Eds.) Erikson, E. H. (1950). Childhood and society. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. Erikson, E. H. (1968). Identity: Youth and crisis. New York: W. W. Norton & Company. Fahey, T. (1995)??? Privacy and the Family??? Sociology29(4) : 687 -703. Fryer, R. H. (1997), ‘ Learning for the twenty-first century’. First report of the National Advisory Group for Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning. Giddens, A. (1991). The Consequences of Modernity. California: Stanford University Press. Glastra, F. J. , Hake, B. J. , and Schedler, P. E. (2004), ‘ Lifelong Learning as transitional learning’. Adult Education Quarterly. 54 (4), pp. 291-307. Goffman, E. (1997) The Goffman Reader. Lemert, C. and Branaman, A. (Eds.) Oxford, UK:

<https://assignbuster.com/implications-of-social-networking-media-in-late-modernity-assignment/>

Blackwell Publishing. Goffman, E. 1959) *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press. Lampe, C. , N. Ellison, and C. Steinfield. (2007), ' Face(book) in the crowd: Social searching versus social browsing'. Proceedings of the 20th Anniversary Conference on Computer Supported Cooperative Work, Banff, Alberta, Canada, 2007, pp. 167-170.

Lash, Scott. 1990. *The Sociology of Postmodernism*. Routledge.

Lenhart, Amanda. 2007. ' Social Networking Websites and Teens: An Overview'. PEW Internet and the American Life Project, January 7. Lenhart, A. & Madden, M. (2007)??? ' Social Networking Websites and Teens: an Overview', http://www.ewinternet.org/pdfs/PIP_SNS_Data_Memo_Jan_2007.pdf 16th August 208

Livingstone, S. (1998), ' Mediated Childhoods: A Comparative Approach to Young People and Changing Media Environment in Europe', *European Journal of Communication* 13(4): 435-456.

Livingstone, S. (2002), ' Young People and New Media: Childhood and the Changing Media Environment'. London : Sage Publications.

Livingstone, S. (2006) ' Children and Privacy Online: Experimenting with Boundaries Within and Beyond the Family', in R. Kraut, M. Brynin and S. Kiesler (eds) *Computers, Phones, and the Internet: Domesticating Information Technology*, pp. 28-144. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Livingstone, S. & Helsper, E. J. (2007). ' Taking Risks When Communicating on the Internet: The Role of Offline Social-psychological Factors in Young People. ' *The Vulnerability to Online Risks & Information, Communication and Society* 10 (5): 619 -644.

Putnam, R. (1995). ' Bowling alone: America, the declining social capital'. *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), pp. 65-78.

Putnam, R. (2000). ' Technology and mass media'. *Bowling Alone* New York: Simon & Schuster, pp. 216-483.

Putnam, R. , & Feldstein, L. (2003) *Craigslist. org. Better Together*, New York: Simon & <https://assignbuster.com/implications-of-social-networking-media-in-late-modernity-assignment/>

Schuster, pp. 25-303. Rheingold, H. (2002). *Smart mobs: The next social revolution*, New York: Perseus Books. Strain, M. (2000). ' Schools in a learning society: new purposes and modalities of learning in late modern society'. *Educational Management and Administration*. Vol. 28 (3), pp. 281-298. Turkle, S. (1995). *Life on the screen: Identity in the age of the Internet*. New York: Simon and Schuster. Weaver, A. C & Morrison, B. B (2008). *How Things Work: Social Networking*. University of Virginia, IEEE, Inc. February Ed. Wilson, K. (2008). ' In your Facebook'. *American Journalism Review*, 30 (1), 12-13.