Chapter 72

Micro to Macro Social Connectedness Through Mobile Phone Engagement

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ABSTRACT

The literature on social connectedness through mobile phone engagement reveals positive tacit opportunities. Mobile phone engagement hosts micro and macro opportunities to start and maintain a sense of social connectedness. Increasing a sense of social connectedness encourages healthier emotional wellbeing among people, reducing potential feelings of isolation and chances of faster recovery from illness. Mobile social media access, participation, and messaging, be it face-to-face, peer-to-peer, group, or virtual, through intentional and unintentional social connectedness, may aid the improvement and performance among workers, students, and campaigns. Mobile engagement also offers possible improvement in performance and enhanced perceptions of emotional wellbeing. Engagement through social media networks, mostly accessed via mobile, including mobile gaming, or health monitoring, commenting or posting photos or short texts, increases the production and value of successful maintenance of reciprocal interpersonal relationships.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter concentrates on the relationship between mobile phone use and social connectedness, emphasizing the various ways in which people use mobile communication as a means to cultivate and maintain social connectedness. The chapter explores the possible connection and relevance of social connectedness through mobile communication on a personal, group and macro level. Individuals are constantly shifting their roles and identities as they use their mobile phones; from personal to group, social to political, philanthropic, and civic participation as they traverse these different spaces. Included is a review of studies on how various mobile engagements, like mobile messaging, voice, video, social media and texting, is used by individuals. All of which has been repurposed within some formal and informal organizations for a variety of service objectives, including mobile learning with tacit or unintentional

social connectedness embedded. The nurturing of social connectedness through mobile engagement is essential in people's lives as it reveals their ongoing and affective exchanges and experiences with a single friend, family member(s), an event, cause, artifact or a group. The cultivation of social connectedness can be used as a proxy for socio-emotional goals that can feed strong perceptions or real associations for people of all ages. The conceivable positive influence of social connectedness through multimedia or textual mobile messaging could be used to create a sense of affiliation and has a perceived usefulness for personal, civic, as well as academic and work life engagement.

BACKGROUND

The advent in 2001 and maturation standard of Multimedia Messaging Services (MMS) in 2002, extended text messaging to include, photos, animations (gifs), audio and /or video clips (MMS London, 2016). WAP Mobile communication services like Mixit, WhatsApp, and Kakao, broke the mobile messaging hold from mobile service providers, offering agnostic, and globally free access to one's contacts and Social Media Network Services (SMNS) communities. With features that encompasses voice notes, synchronous voice and video calling, to time set message deletion as with Snap Chat, all of which presents the ability to communicate with others and can serve as a powerful means to foster a sense of connectedness. Lam, (2012), and Ling (2015) as well as Cumiskey & Ling (2015) offers examples of how the mobile phone hosts a way for improving team attitude, playful identity, and social cohesion. While other multimodal messages are sent during a live or televised event, cultivating co-presence (Cui, 2016; Schroeder, 2010). The agnostic mobile messaging services have become the communication method of choice for building, as well as maintaining social connectedness, but also aids how individuals and groups traverse the different spaces of their lives.

Various definitions are touted for the concept of social connectedness that range from defining it as a sense of belonging, affiliations or associations (Chayko, 2007; Flomenbaum, 2008; Visser, Dadlani, van Bel, and Yarosh, 2010). Wei and Lo (2006) cites Teixeira (1992) as defining social connectedness as maintaining "interpersonal, community, and general social ties" (p. 62). While the Jamieson report (2007) refers to social connectedness as how people come together, interact, and network, indicating electronic communication as an all-important factor in establishing and maintaining social connectedness. Berkman, Glass, Brissette, and Seeman (2000) stated that it is widely recognized that social relationships and affiliation have powerful effects on physical and mental health (p. 843), while Wyn & Cuervo et al., (2005) saw "the emerging technologies as enhancing social connectedness through the internet by means of web-blogs, social websites such as MySpace, and through mobile phone technologies via Short Message Systems (SMS)" (Martino, 2007, pp. 6-7). Chayko (2007) not only provides an overview of technologically generated communities, but also discusses the sociological implications of mobile technology as it pertains to a rise in personal availability and, more importantly, societal cohesion (p. 373).

Register and Herman views the concept of social connectedness as forming the basis for all human existence and similarly to the 2007 New Zealand report, indicates the phenomenon of connectedness that brings quality of life (Register & Herman, 2010, p.53). Whereas Lee, Draper and Lee sees social connectedness as "an attribute of the self that reflects cognitions of enduring interpersonal closeness with the social world" (2001). Other researchers asked, if social media or video calling is the new face-to-face (F2F) or if social connectedness can be derived from SMNS like Facebook or other online interactions and be linked to overall well-being (Grieve, Indian, Witteveen, Tolan, & Marrington, 2013; Lundy, &

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