COMS 647
Communication Technology

Plan

- Proposals
- Review
- Identity & Community
- Preview

Proposals

COMS 647 – Communication Technology
Dr. David J. Gunkel
Research Project Proposal

The research project proposal is a written document comprised of four parts. Each part should be addressed separately, and all responses should be as complete and descriptive as possible.

1) Thesis - Provide an explicit statement of what your project hopes to prove, demonstrate, or argue. This statement should be short (3-5 sentences) and concise. It should express a contended issue that requires subsequent argumentation or proof.

2) Method - Indicate what approach or approaches you will employ to research and prove your thesis. Obviously the method used should be appropriate to the issues and questions articulated in the thesis statement. In stating your method, please describe what you will do, where you will do it, and how this activity will provide data for resolving the thesis.

3) Plan - Describe how you will go about proving the thesis. Indicate the procedure that will be used to argue your position. Indicate how many parts the project will have, what each part will accomplish, and the relationship between these different parts. You may provide this information in either outline or narrative form.

4) Resources - List the various resources that you will employ to address your thesis. These may be books, journal articles, magazines, web sites, films, television programs, performances, songs, etc. Use the APA bibliographic form for presenting this information.

The proposal must be word processed, double spaced, and printed on white paper. On the average, a well-devised proposal will run about three pages. Because the proposal is a working document, it will not be assigned a grade. However, the effectiveness of the proposal will be assessed and evaluated by using the following five point scale:

Proposals

- Thesis
  - **Declarative** – A concise statement of the objective/purpose of the research project.
  - **Argumentative** – Something that is contentious or debatable and not yet proven. Facts are not argumentative.
  - **Focused** – Narrowly construed and not too general or broad
  - **Provable** – Can be proven with currently available methods and resources by the project deadline.

Proposals

- Thesis - Focused

The Internet is not just a convenient means for communicating with each other. It will have a significant impact on our lives, changing our

The Internet is not just a convenient means for communicating with each other. It will have a significant impact on our lives. This paper will concentrate on one aspect of this alteration, looking at the way the Internet qualitatively improves interpersonal communication between parents and their adult children.

Proposals

- Thesis - Provable

Despite recent advances, the digital divide is not only persistent but is getting worse. This paper will look at the limited access to and use

Despite recent advances, the digital divide is not only persistent but is getting worse. This paper will look at the limited access to and use of the Internet in three communities in the Northern Illinois area, demonstrating that the digital divide is very much a reality for the people who live in this region.

Proposals

- Thesis - Provable

Online users can be whoever and whatever they want. In *Second Life*, for instance, users can select their gender, race, and physical features, creating a designer body that might be nothing like their real world self. I am going to examine the effect of this on race and race relations. In particular, I will argue that the ability to select one's race might lead to one race being privileged over all others and therefore instituting a form of prejudice and racial inequality.

Proposals

- Method
  - Method is a description of the tools/materials you will use to prove what is stated in the thesis
  - The method should be commensurate with the thesis; the tool should fit the specific task.

Thesis

Method

Proposals

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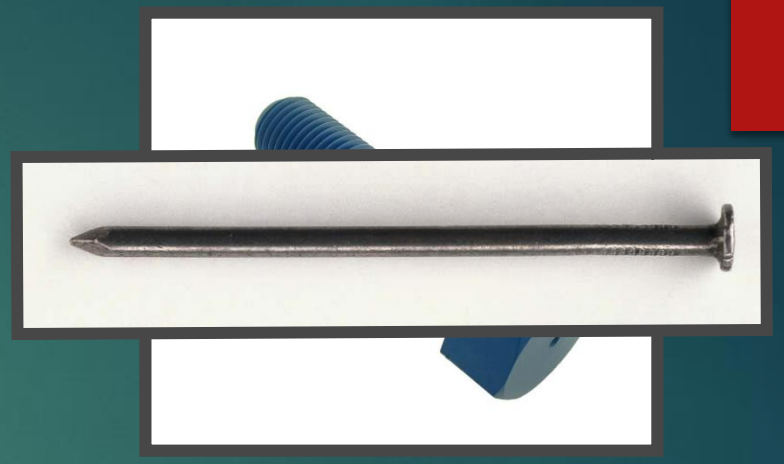

Thesis

Method

Proposals

- Method

Thesis: This research project will demonstrate how the Internet's history has an effect on its current structure, operations, and user expectations.

Method: Library research. Look at historical documents about the design and expectations of the early Internet. Identify three or four distinguishing characteristics. And trace how these different characteristics come to be expressed in Internet guidebooks, technical publications, and popular media.

Proposals

- Method

Thesis: The World Wide Web, which was invented by Tim Berners-Lee, provides readers and writers with an interactive, hypertextual environment that significantly transforms the way we create and access information.

Method: Library research. Look at theories of reading and writing in order to identify the assumed roles and function of the reader and writer. Correlate this information with technical explanations about the function and operation of hypertext, showing how hypertext undermines the basic assumptions we have about the traditional roles of reader and writer.

Proposals

- Method

Thesis: The Internet is not just a convenient means for communicating with each other. It will have a significant impact on our lives. This paper will concentrate on one aspect of this alteration, looking at the way the Internet qualitatively improves interpersonal communication between parents and their adult children.

Method: Focus Groups. I will identify and meet with 10 pairs of parents and their adult children. I will ask them to reflect on the nature of their relationship and whether email and SMS has had any noticeable affect on their interpersonal relationship. The questions will be the same for all participants and responses will be recorded on audio tape for transcription and analysis.

Proposals

- Method

Thesis: Despite recent advances, the digital divide is not only persistent but is getting worse. This paper will look at the limited access to and use of the Internet in three communities in the Northern Illinois area, demonstrating that the digital divide is very much a reality for the people who live in this region.

Method: Survey Research. I will survey residents of three rural communities in the Northern Illinois Region by making random phone calls. Participants will be asked to answer five questions concerning the current state of their Internet access and use. Information from the survey will be organized and statistically analyzed for common trends.

Proposals

- Method

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Method: Content Analysis. I will visit three different islands in *Second Life*. Over a 4 hour period (7:00-11:00pm), I will keep track of who comes and goes on the island and note the avatar's race as evidenced by appearance and official description. Avatars will be categorized as white, hispanic, black, asian, or other. Once this data has been collected, I will submit the numbers to statistical analysis and see whether one race predominates. This information will be used to draw conclusions and project future opportunities for study.

Proposals

- Questions
- Comments
- Concerns

Review

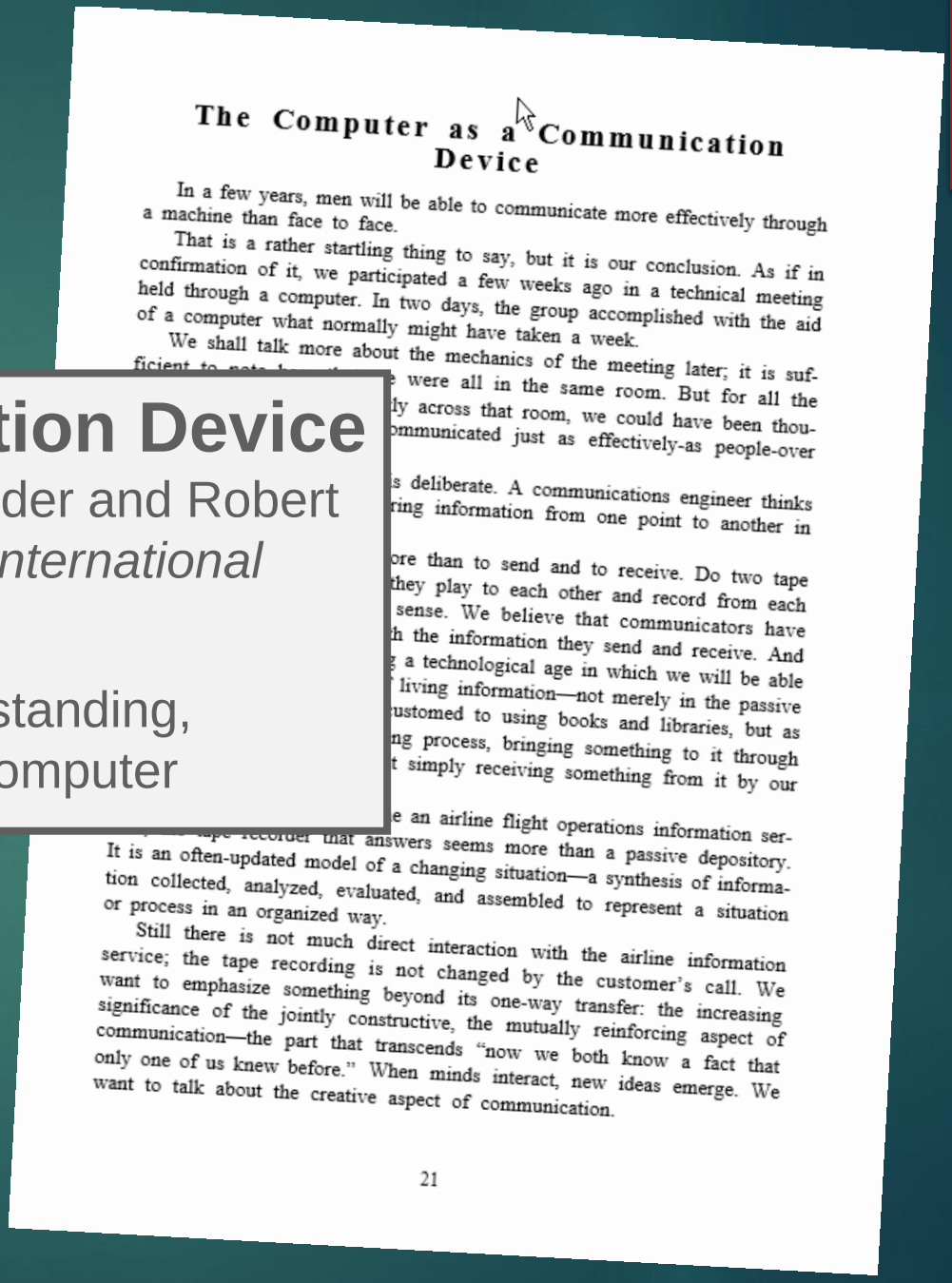
- CMC & Internet Studies
  - J.C.R. Licklider, The Computer as Communications Device
  - James Carey, A Cultural Approach to Communication
  - Sonia Livingston, Critical Debates in Internet Studies
  - Susan Herring, Slouching Toward the Ordinary

Review

Computer as Communication Device

Influential paper written by J.C.R. Licklider and Robert W. Taylor and published in the journal *International Science and Technology*, April 1968

Institutes a paradigm shift in the understanding, employment, and investigation of the computer



The Computer as a Communication Device

In a few years, men will be able to communicate more effectively through a machine than face to face.

That is a rather startling thing to say, but it is our conclusion. As if in confirmation of it, we participated a few weeks ago in a technical meeting held through a computer. In two days, the group accomplished with the aid of a computer what normally might have taken a week.

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...e an airline flight operations information ser... ...tape recorder that answers seems more than a passive depository. It is an often-updated model of a changing situation—a synthesis of information collected, analyzed, evaluated, and assembled to represent a situation or process in an organized way.

Still there is not much direct interaction with the airline information service; the tape recording is not changed by the customer's call. We want to emphasize something beyond its one-way transfer: the increasing significance of the jointly constructive, the mutually reinforcing aspect of communication—the part that transcends "now we both know a fact that only one of us knew before." When minds interact, new ideas emerge. We want to talk about the creative aspect of communication.

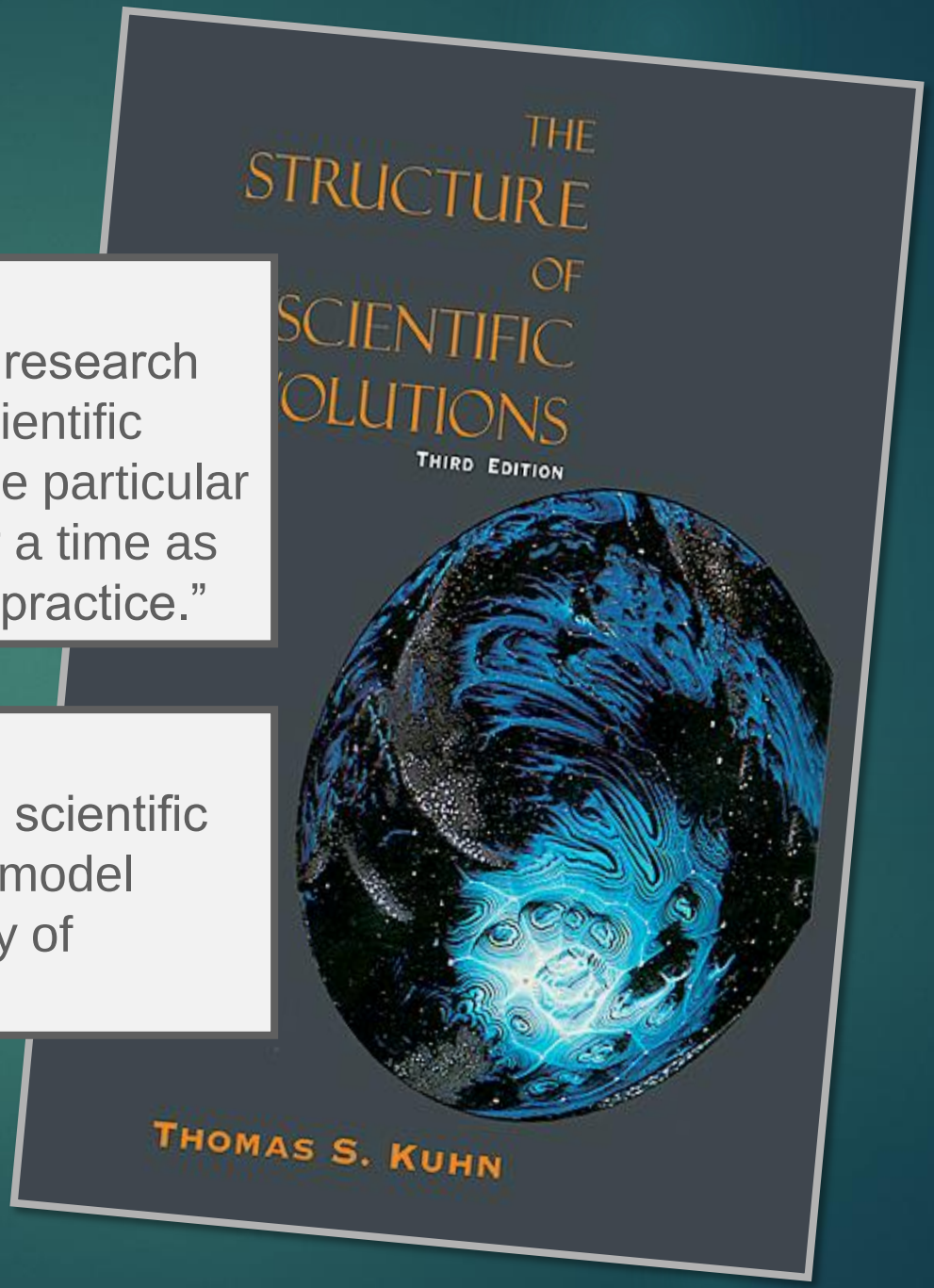
21

CMC & Internet Studies

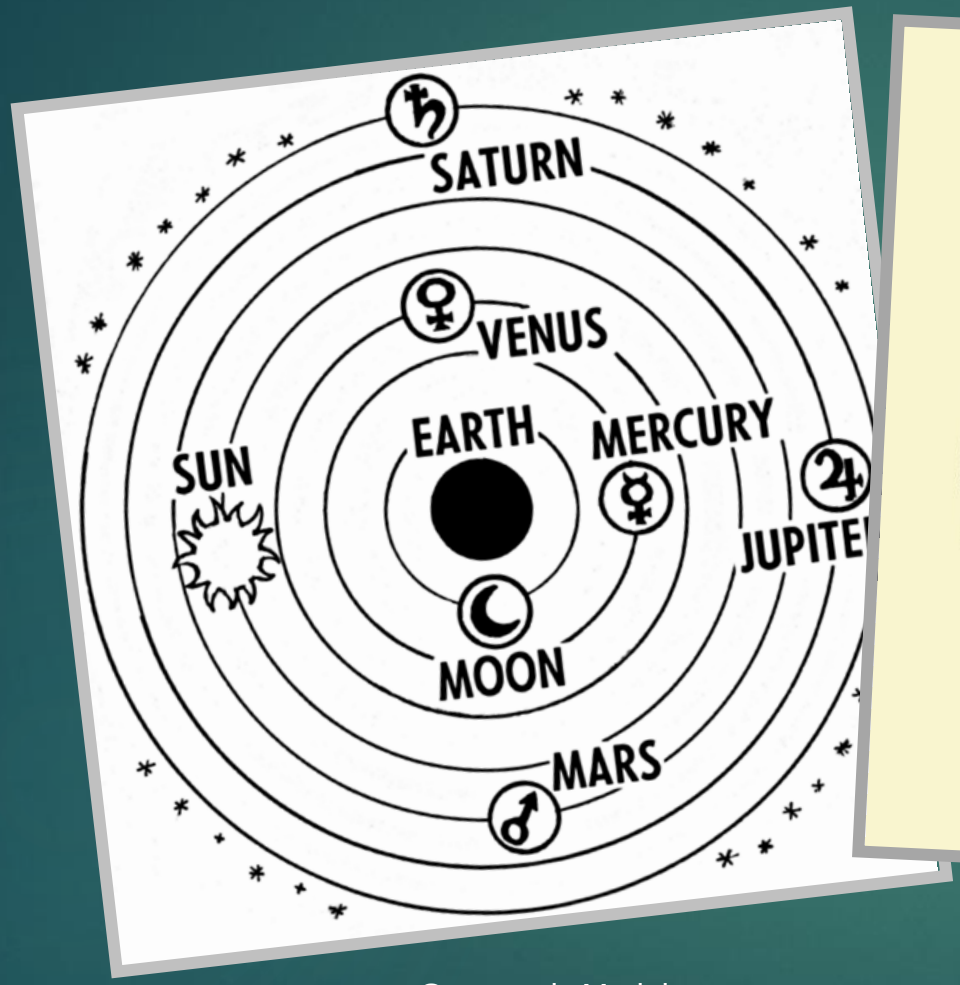
- Thesis = CMC is "Normal Science"
  - What is normal science?
  - Brief History of the normalization of CMC
  - Normal assumptions of CMC and how they shape communication research

Normal Science
"In this essay, 'normal science' means research firmly based upon one or more past scientific achievements, achievements that some particular scientific community acknowledges for a time as supplying the foundation for its further practice."

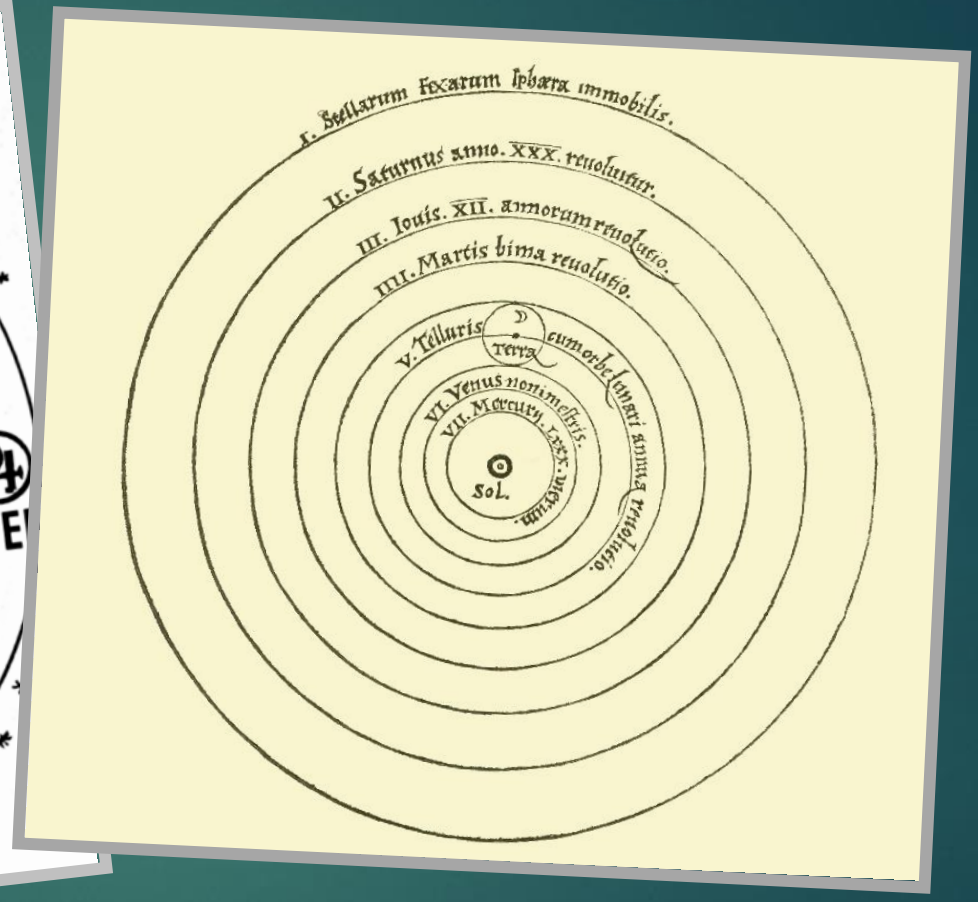
Paradigm
Paradigms are "universally recognized scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions to a community of practitioners."



Paradigm Shift
Scientific Revolution



Geocentric Model
Claudius Ptolemy - 120 AD



Heliocentric Model
Nicolaus Copernicus- 1543

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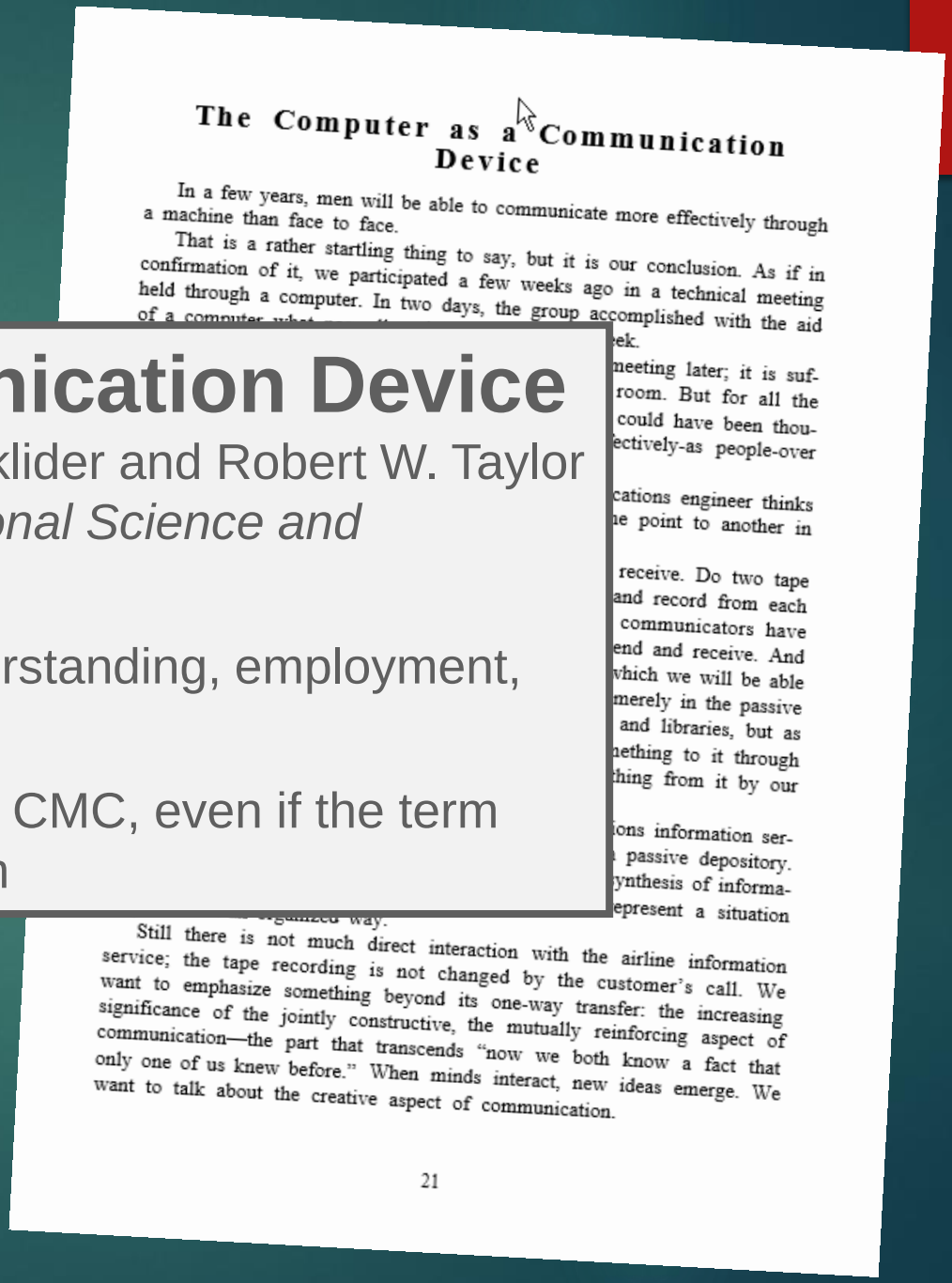
This document invents the concept of CMC, even if the term does not appear in this particular form



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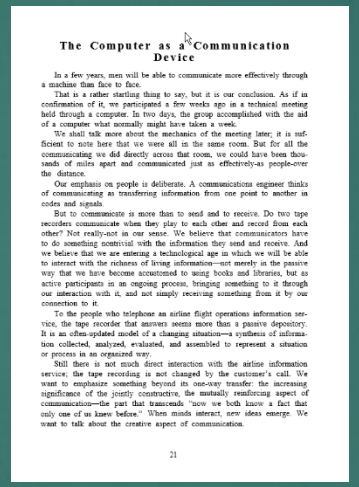
CMC = Shift in Paradigm

BLT

Computer = data processing or number crunching device

2nd Generation
Timeshared Mainframe



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We shall talk more about the mechanics of the meeting later; it is sufficient to note here that we were all in the same room. But for all the communicating we did directly across that room, we could have been thousands of miles apart and communicated just as effectively-as people-over the distance.

Our emphasis on people is deliberate. A communications engineer thinks of communicating as transferring information from one point to another in codes and signals.

But to communicate is more than to send and to receive. Do two tape recorders communicate when they play to each other and record from each other? Not really-not in our sense. We believe that communicators have to do something nontrivial with the information they send and receive. And we believe that we are entering a technological age in which we will be able to interact with the richness of living information—not merely in the passive way that we have become accustomed to using books and libraries, but as active participants in an ongoing process, bringing something to it through our interaction with it, and not simply receiving something from it by our connection to it.

To the people who telephone an airline flight operations information service, the tape recorder that answers seems more than a passive depository. It is an often-updated model of a changing situation—a synthesis of information collected, analyzed, evaluated, and assembled to represent a situation or process in an organized way.

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ALT

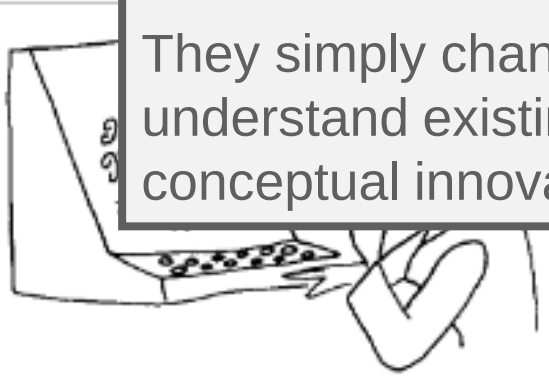
Computer = instrument of human communication

4th Generation
PC / Computer Networks

The Invention of CMC

Licklider and Taylor did not specify any new technology. They did not introduce a new device or system

They simply changed the way we look at and understand existing technology. This was a conceptual innovation.



A communication system should make a positive contribution to the discovery and arousal of interests.

How is this a paradigm shift?

For whom is it a paradigm shift?

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Normalization of CMC

Three Epochs of CMC Research

1st Generation CMC

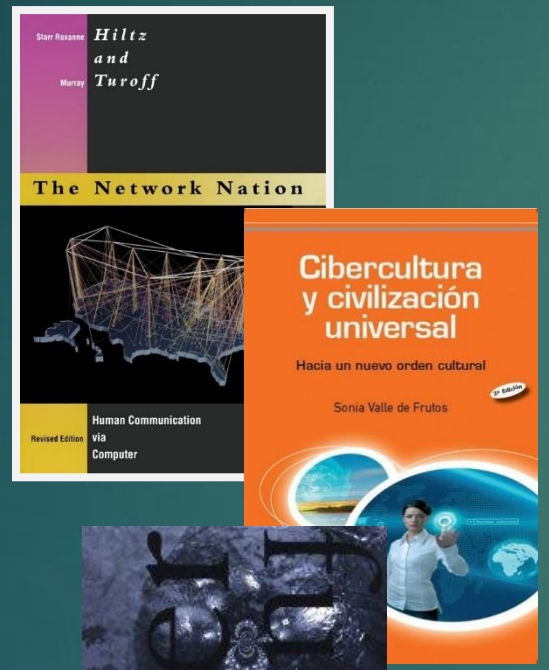
Punditry rides rampant, an optimistic celebration of the transformative potential of the internet… peppered with dystopian prognostications from the skeptics (Livingstone, p. 4)

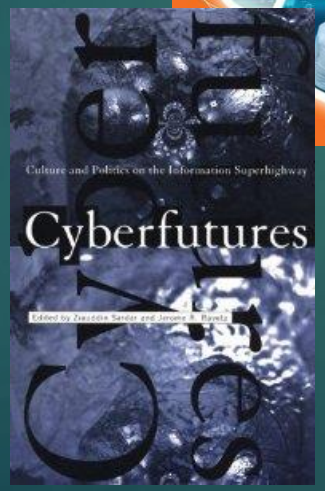
Mark Dery – Flame Wars (1994)

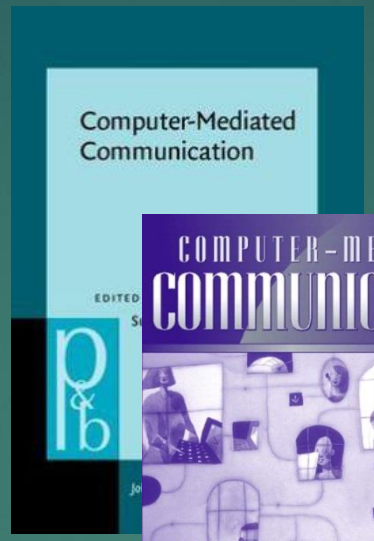
“The upside of incorporeal interaction: a technologically enabled, postmulticultural vision of identity disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions. Online users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants”

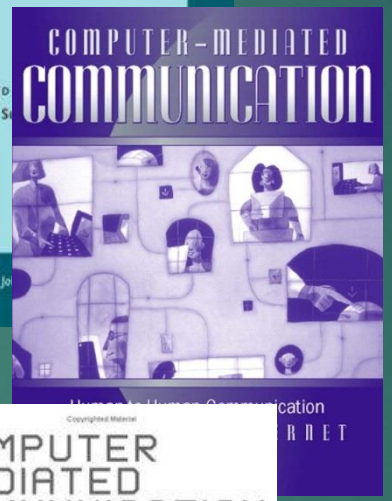
Normalization of CMC

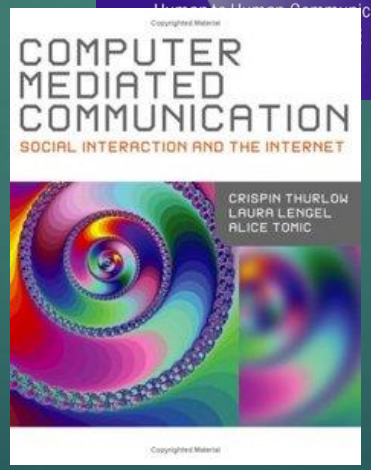
Three Epochs of CMC Research





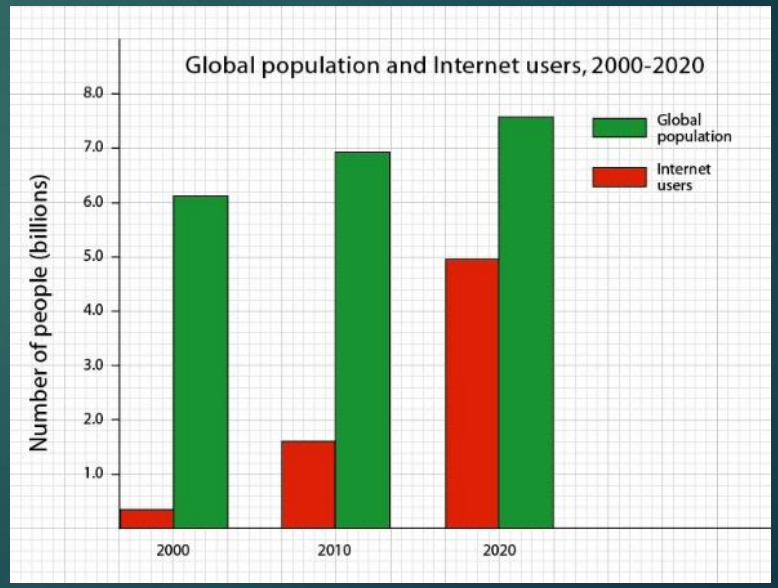






2nd Generation CMC

A more serious engagement with evidence, seeking to *document* users and uses of the Internet (Livingstone, p. 4)



Normalization of CMC

Three Epochs of CMC Research

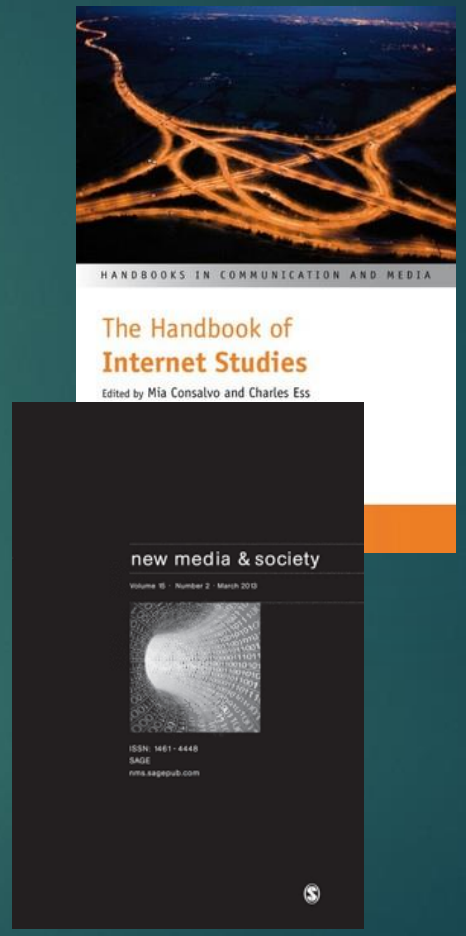
3rd Generation CMC

"Slouching towards the Ordinary" (Herring)

Current research studies the internet 'as it descends from the firmament and becomes embedded in everyday life.' (Livingstone, p. 4)

Susan Herring (2004)

"After barely more than 30 years of existence, CMC has become more of a practical necessity than an object of fascination and fetish"



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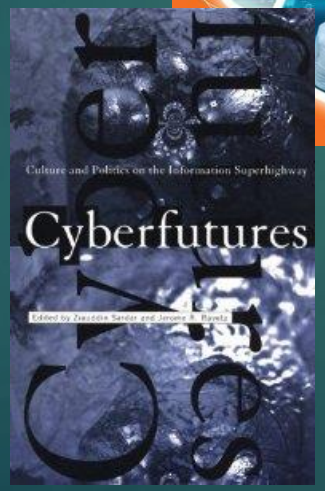
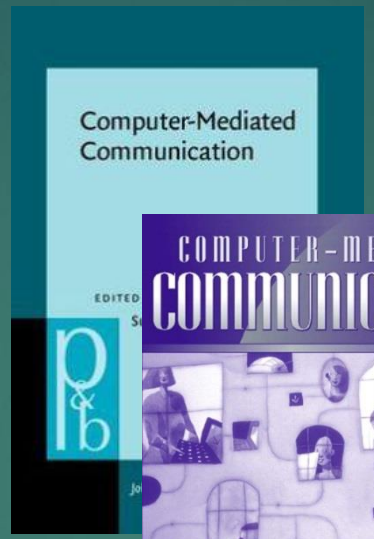
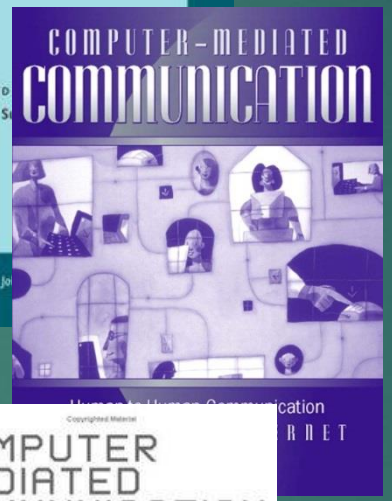
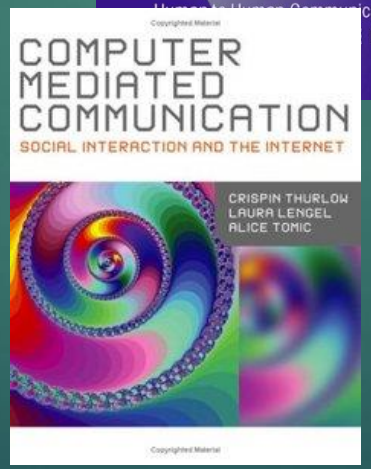
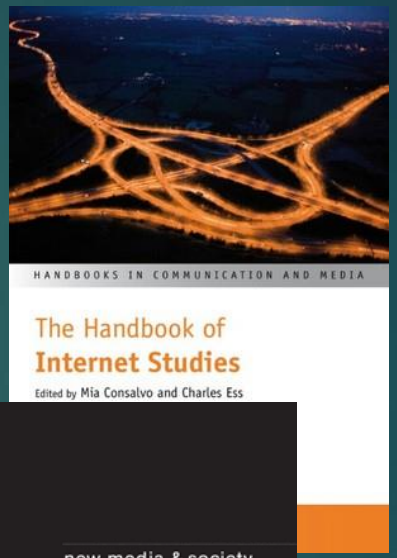
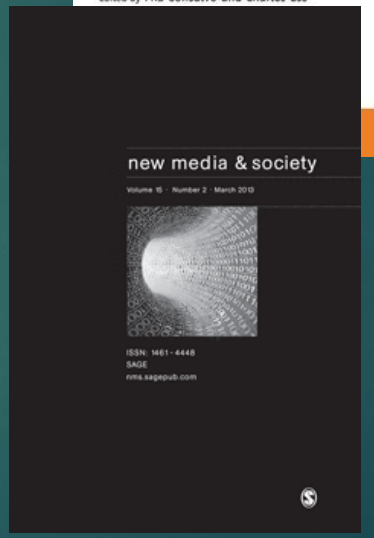








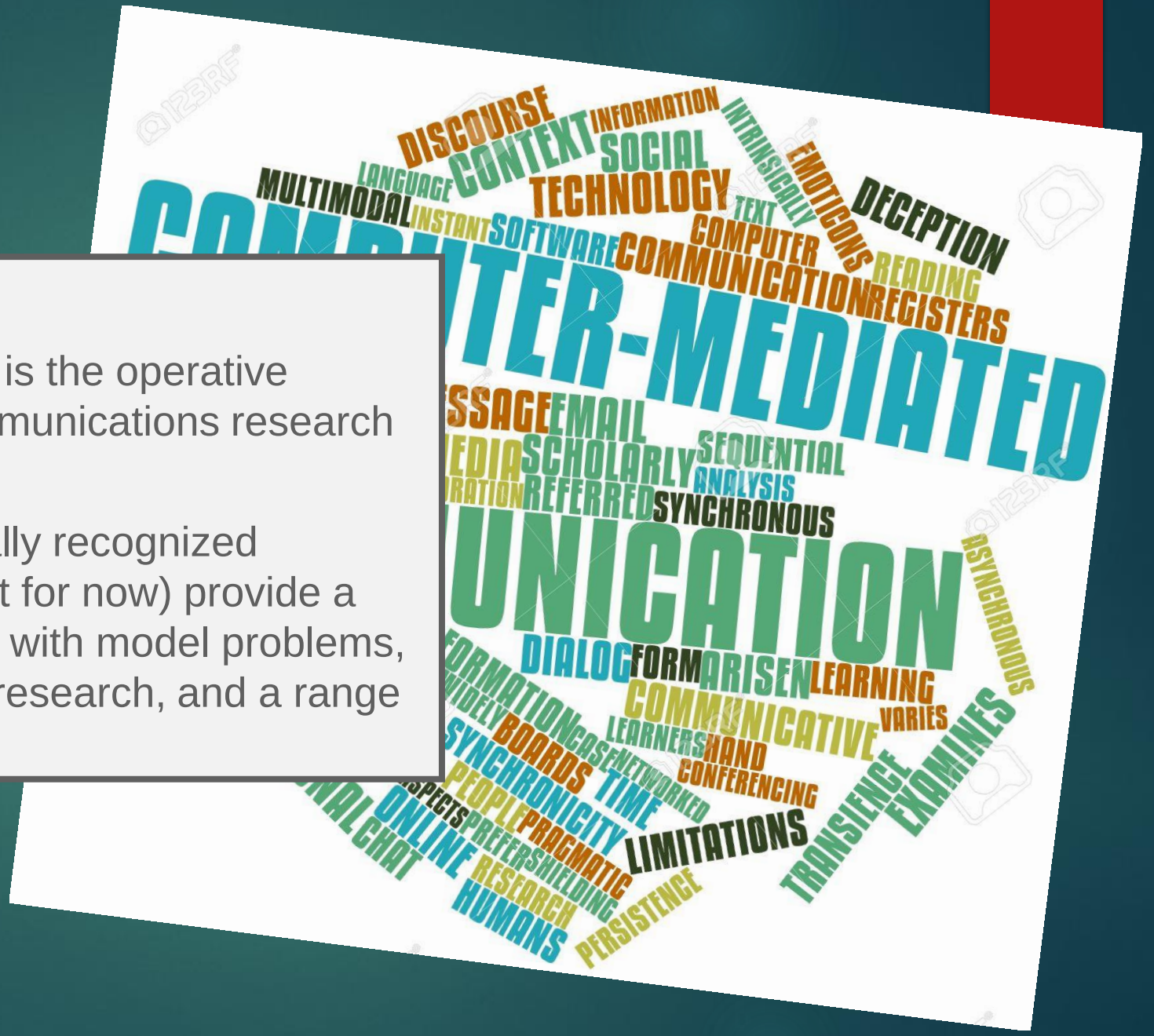




Result

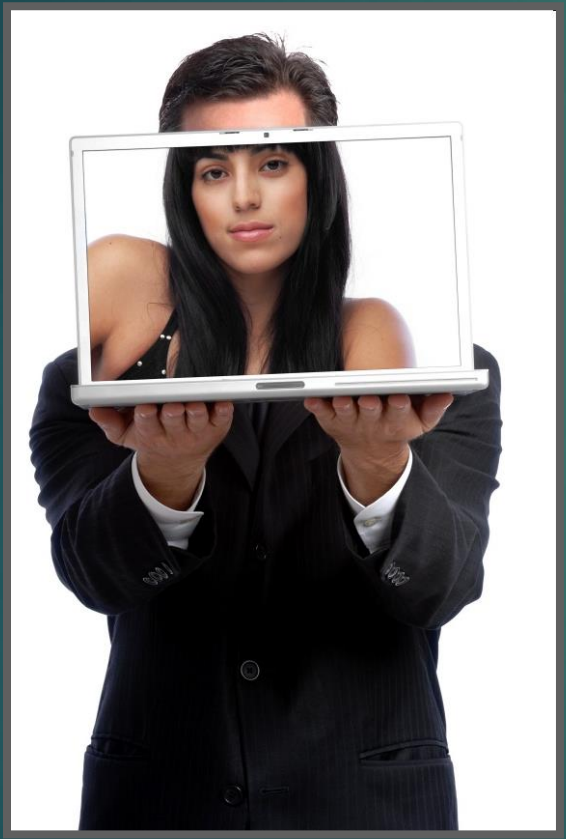
CMC = Normal Science; it is the operative paradigm for much of communications research at the turn of the century.

CMC is based on universally recognized achievements that (at least for now) provide a community of practitioners with model problems, recognizable methods for research, and a range of possible solutions.



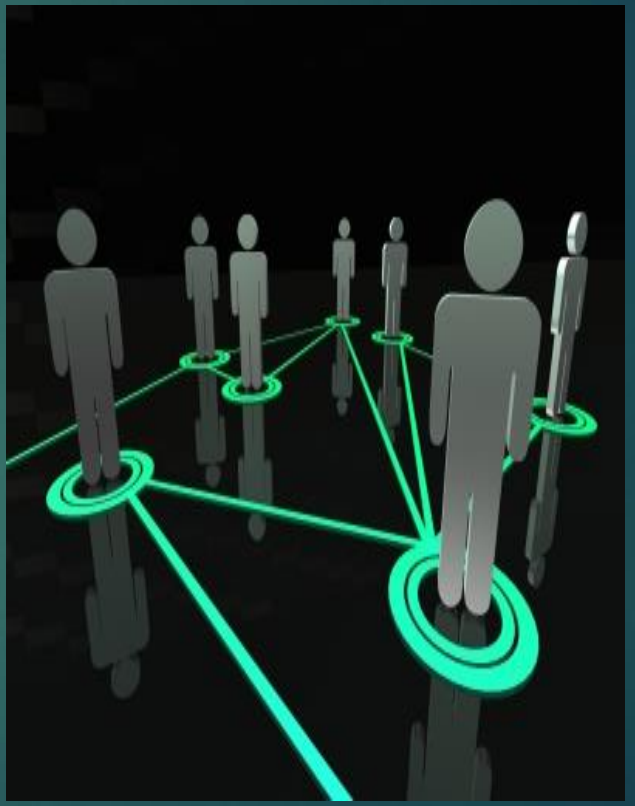
Standard CMC Research

Identity



Relationships

Community



Research Opportunities

Thinking Inside the Box – Adhere to the CMC paradigm; operate within the established field of normal science

Thinking Outside the Box – Challenge the basic assumptions of CMC in order to develop new perspectives and research opportunities

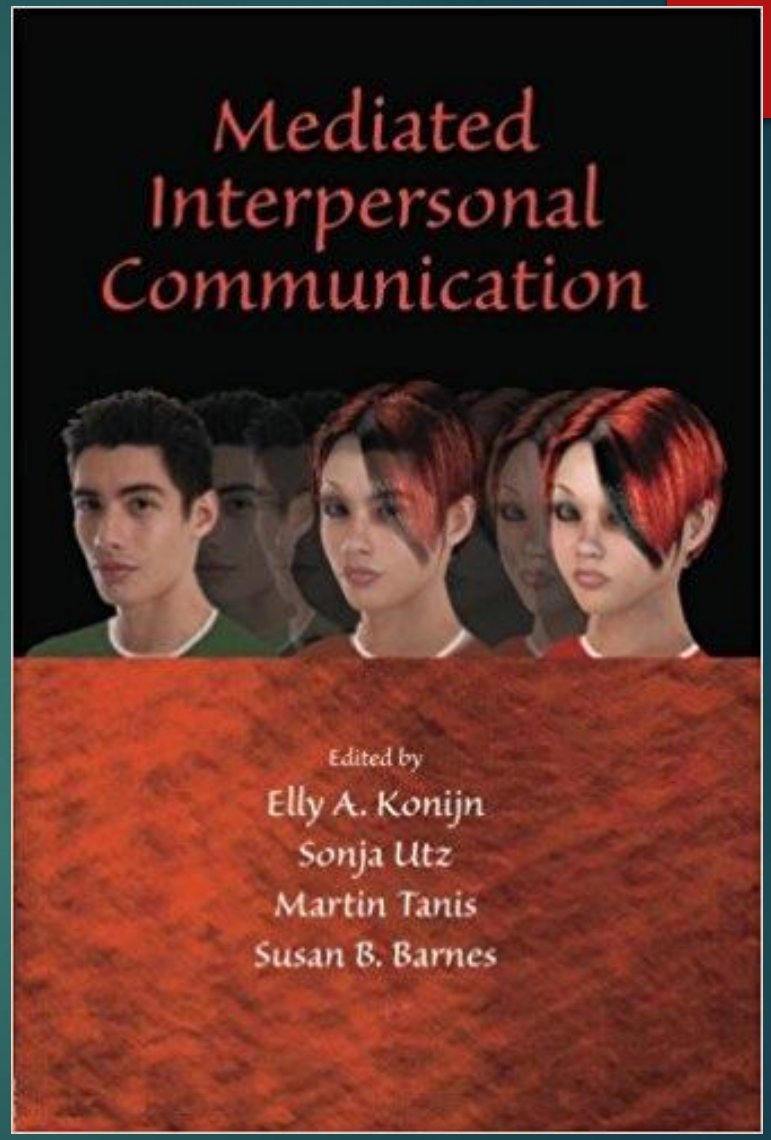
Assumptions

Whether we think inside or outside the CMC box, we need to know the standard operating assumptions of CMC, either to adhere to them or intentionally challenge them.

Standard Operating Assumptions

Question: Given what you have read so far, what do you think are the standard operating assumptions of CMC?

Note: Assumptions are often not articulated explicitly but are typically operative behind the scenes and only visible by reading “between the lines” of a texts.



Standard Operating Assumptions

1. Communication is a social good because it connects people together

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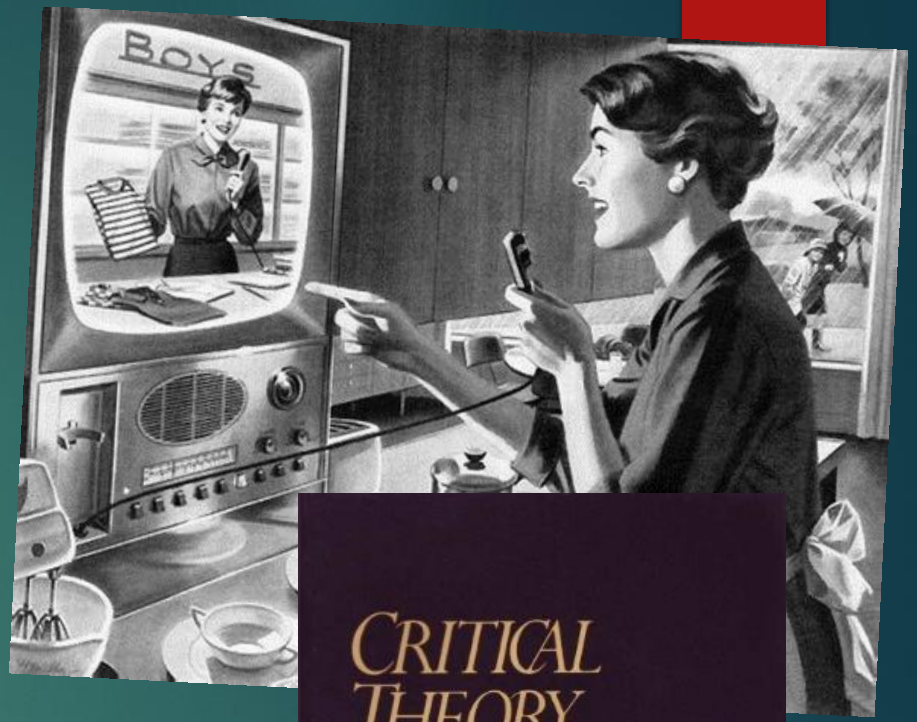
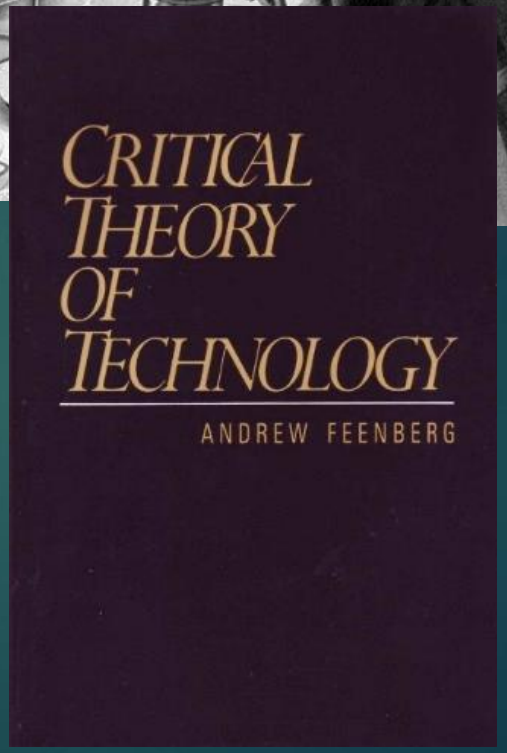
2. Instrumental Theory of Technology





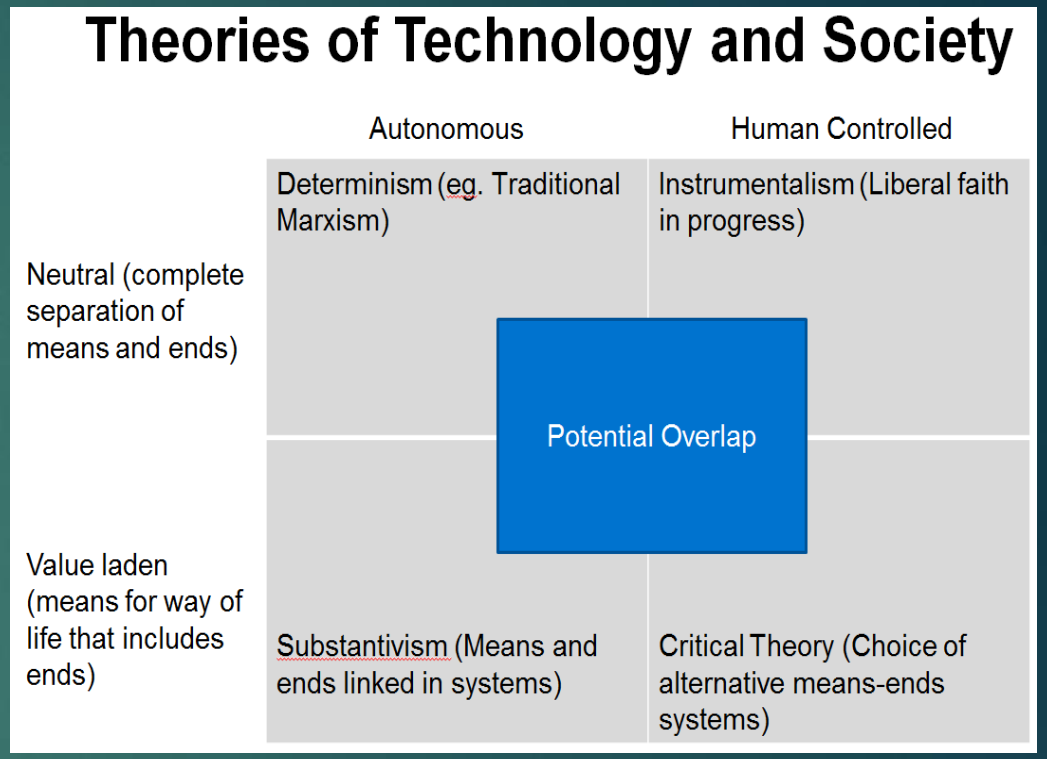
"The instrumentalist theory offers the most widely accepted view of technology. It is based on the common sense idea that technologies are 'tools' standing ready to serve the purposes of users. Technology is deemed 'neutral,' without valuative content of its own." - Feenberg 1991

Standard Operating Assumptions

1. Communication is a social good because it connects people together

2. Instrumental Theory of Technology

3. Technological Determinism vs. Social Shaping of Technology



"Eschewing simple determinisms then, internet studies should now critically develop both the soft-determinist claim that 'core economic, social, political, and cultural activities throughout the planet are being structured by and around the Internet' (Castells, 2002: 3), and the social shaping claim that 'people, institutions, companies, and society at large, transform technology, any technology, by appropriating it, by modifying it, by experimenting with it' (Castells, 2002: 4)."- Livingstone 2005

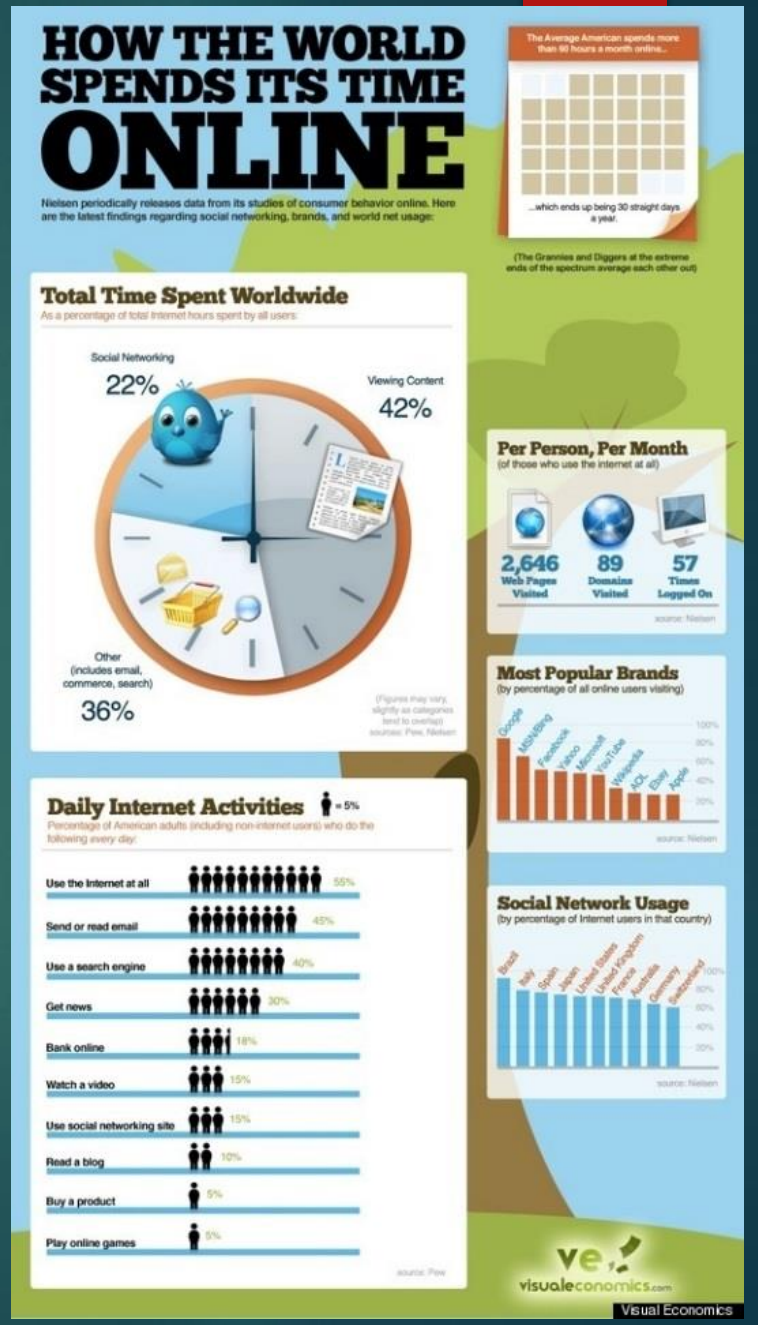
Standard Operating Assumptions

1. Communication is a social good because it connects people together

2. Instrumental Theory of Technology

3. Technological Determinism vs. Social Shaping of Technology

4. Empiricism – Social scientific research methods and approaches



Standard Operating Assumptions

1. Communication is a social good because it connects people together
2. Instrumental Theory of Technology
3. Technological Determinism vs. Social Shaping of Technology
4. Empiricism – Social scientific research methods and approaches

Options

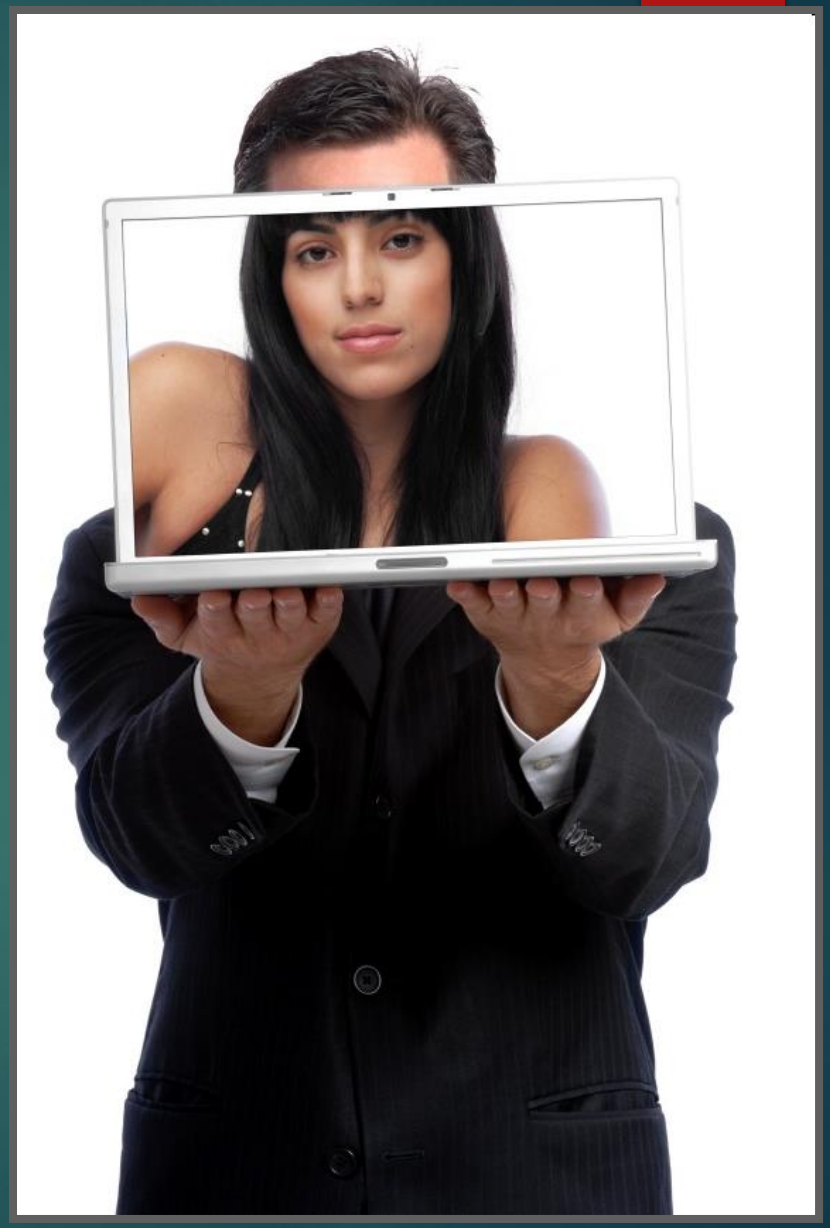
Accept and work within these assumptions; innovate within these constraints

Actively challenge these assumptions and work against or outside these constraints

What are the opportunities and challenges of pursuing these two options?

Today

- Identity & Community
  - *Gaming the System* - Intro, ch. 2 & 3
  - Dibbell - A Rape in Cyberspace



Preview

- Social Issues & Other Problems
  - Epstein - From Russia with Love
  - Turkle - Connected, but Alone? (video)
  - Gaming the System - ch. 4 & 5
  - Exercise #2 - Chatbot