

OUR CHANGING STORIES: THE EFFECTS OF TECHNOLOGY/SOCIAL MEDIA ON PERSONAL STORYTELLING

Literature Review

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What impact does our social media use have on our mental state?

INTRODUCTION

We attempt to examine the effects of storytelling in the modern world. Storytelling is an intrinsic part of human nature and part of every aspect of our lives. Our descriptions of past events, as well as what we are doing in our day-to-day lives, all fall under the heading of storytelling. We examine how changes in technology have affected our ability to tell stories as we encounter restrictions on length, content, etc.



DETAILS

Through a literature review and developing our own discussion board, we attempted to find if technology has inhibited individual's ability to tell stories to one another. As users of social media, we have been limited by character restrictions or formats. Facebook, Twitter, email, and text do not lend themselves to longer formats. These have changed how much we can communicate with one another. The stories have become fragments as we tell and are shown snippets of who people are.

LITERATURE REVIEW

We found mixed results in our literature review. Articles and papers have found both negative and positive aspects to sharing stories online.

Negative aspects include loneliness, depression, disconnectedness, etc. These negative aspects can be perpetuated by feeling that one has accomplished little in his/her own life in comparison with the accomplishments of others. Usually, when one posts online, one is posting about places they have been or fun things they have been doing. This can cause the viewer to feel as if their own life is boring or lacking in comparison.

Positive aspects include connectedness, the ability to create a positive self image, support, and so on. This can be fostered through sites that offer support systems or encouragement. For example, a site like PatientsLikeMe.com can offer a support system to those going through illness or their family members.

It seems that online storytelling is a paradox, able to cause disconnectedness but also be a solution to it. It all seems to come down to the individual and what they are going online to accomplish.

“What happens is of little significance compared with the stories we tell ourselves about what happens. Events matter little, only stories of events affect us.”

— [Rabih Alameddine](#)



LESSONS LEARNED & IMPACT

We have found results to be mixed. Although there are some negative experiences when people tell stories online, there have also been positive ones as well. We went into this project thinking that it would be mostly negative but sites that are specifically created to offer support can be quite helpful for individuals. The most impactful thing we have learned is that we still need to communicate. The drive to share our stories have not lessened. We still want to hear and be heard. However, we must still work at fostering meaningful interactions with one another. Technology has made this both easier and yet much more complicated, as well.

Our attempts at a discussion board that would foster rich storytelling experiences did not go as planned. Although we advertised our discussion boards via our social networks and to our UW classmates, we were unable to gain the participation we sought. Opportunities for further research and data analysis in this area still exist.



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What's Your Story?