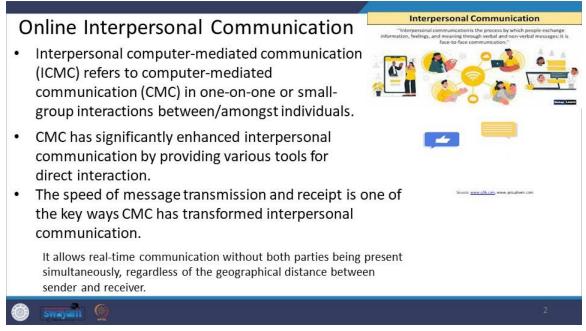
Online Communication in the Digital Age Prof. Rashmi Gaur Department of Humanities and Social Sciences Indian Institute of Technology Lecture – 05 Interpersonal Computer-Mediated Communication

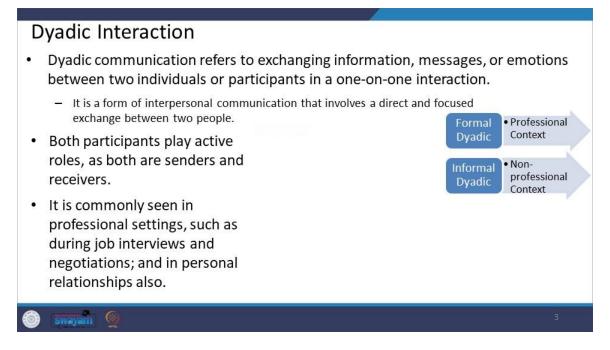
Good morning dear friends and welcome to this module. Today we shall look into the effects of digital means of communication on our interpersonal communication. Interacting with others in a one-on-one setting is a crucial aspect of human life, both face to face as well as digital. Contemporary social media platforms like Facebook, Local and Meetup etcetera are nowadays commonly associated with meetings as well as for interacting with others. However, the internet itself has a much longer history of facilitating and nurturing interpersonal relationships. WELL, the Whole Earth Electronic Link established in 1985 was one of the first online communities.

It still remains active today. Initially as we have discussed, there were concerns that computer mediated communication might limit social cues and thus hinder the formation of meaningful connections. However, over time it has become evident that numerous relationships are indeed formed and maintained in online communication. As a result, exploring the process through which these online relationships develop and with whom they are formed is essential.



Interpersonal computer-mediated communication or ICMC refers to computer-mediated communication in one-on-one or small group interactions amongst people. CMC has significantly enhanced interpersonal communication by providing various tools for direct interaction. The speed of message transmission and receipt is one of the key ways CMC has transformed interpersonal communication. It allows now real time communication without both parties being present simultaneously regardless of the geographical distance between the sender and the receiver. CMC has influenced the level of effort and intentionality behind our messages.

Ranging from purposeful and goal oriented interactions to more effortless and casual exchanges. Within human interactions, dyadic as well as fatigue interpersonal interactions are significantly needed to serve various purposes. Let us look further into it. Dyadic communication is sometimes equated with direct communication. However, it is not necessarily so. Directness or its absence in professional communication in dyadic or small group situations is always decided by perceptions about the outcome and the intention of the interactance.



Dyadic communication refers to exchanging information, messages or emotions between two individuals or participants in a one-to-one situation. It is a form of interpersonal communication that involves a direct and focused exchange between two people. And both participants play a highly active role as both are senders as well as receivers of the message. It is very often seen in professional settings such as during job interviews, negotiations and consultations as well as often in personal relationships.

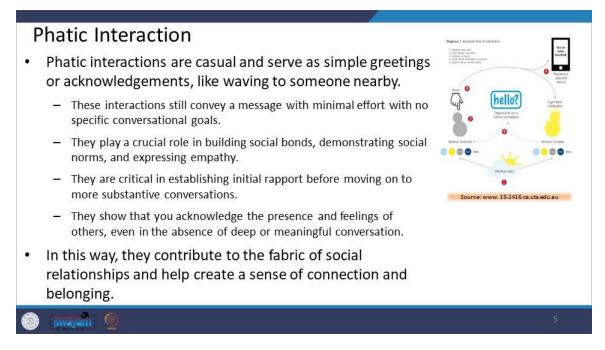
While dyadic communication has always been a fundamental aspect of human interaction with the rise of social media, messaging apps like email, video conferencing, etc. and other digital tools, individuals now have access to a wide array of communication channels for dyadic interactions. These platforms have transformed the way people engage in one-on-one communication.

 While some digital communication lacks paralinguistic cues (e.g., tone of voice, facial expressions), video conferencing and audio calls have introduced some level of paralinguistic 	٦
communication back into online interactions.	
 These mediums allow participants to hear each other's voices and, observe facial expressions and body language, which significantly enhance the richness of the interaction. 	
 Dyadic online communication may lead to a <u>disinhibition</u> <u>effect</u>, where individuals feel less restrained, leading to increased self-disclosure and emotional expression. 	s.com
 This phenomenon can deepen intimacy in dyadic interactions, but also raises concerns about privacy and online safety. 	
 Dyadic communication in the online age is often complemented by face-to-face interactions. 	
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Whereas some digital communication may lack paralinguistic cues, that is the tone of voice, the volume, facial expressions and micro expressions through our eyes, etc. Video conferencing and audio calls have introduced a good level of paralinguistic communication back into our online digital tools.

These mediums allow participants to hear each other's voices and observe facial expression and body language in real time. And it significantly enhances the richness of the interaction. Dyadic online communication may also lead to a disinhibition effect where individuals feel less restrained leading to increased self-disclosure and emotional expression. This phenomenon can deepen intimacy in dyadic interactions but also raises concerns about privacy as well as online safety. Dyadic communication in the online age is often complemented by face-to-face interactions through various digital mediums.

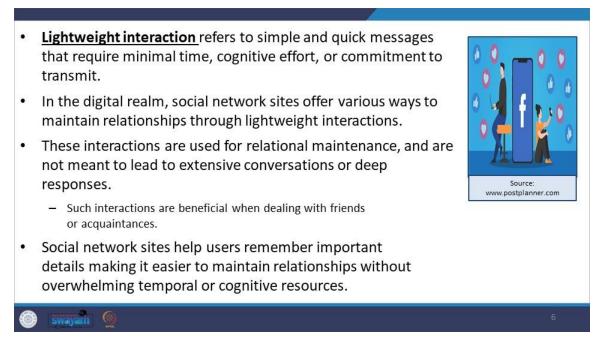
The online age poses challenges in terms of privacy and authenticity. It also has the latent possibilities of miscommunication, especially if we do not use the available range of paralinguistic cues. As technology continues to evolve, the nature of dyadic communication is likely to undergo further transformations, shaping the way people form and maintain relationships in the future.



Phatic interactions are casual and serve as simple greetings or acknowledgments like waving to someone nearby. These interactions still convey a message with minimal effort and with no specific conversational goal.

They play a crucial role in building social bonds, demonstrating social norms and expressing empathy. They are critical in establishing an initial rapport before moving on to more substantive conversations. They show that you acknowledge the presence and feelings of others even in the absence of any deep or meaningful conversation. In this way, we find that phatic interaction contributes to the fabric of social relationships and helps us in creating a sense of connection and belonging either in our offline behavior or in our online behavior using digital communication tools. Dyadic as well as direct interactions focus on conveying specific information or achieving a particular goal while phatic interactions aim to establish and maintain social connections and politeness.

Both types of communication are essential for effective human interactions and can complement each other in various social situations. Digital media and its variety offers several options in this context. A new term which has emerged in the context of digital communication recently is lightweight interaction.



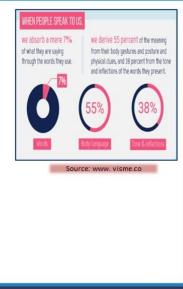
Lightweight interactions refer to simple and quick messages that require minimal time, minimum cognitive effort or commitment to transmit. In the digital realm, social networking sites offer various ways to maintain relationships through lightweight interactions.

These interactions are used for relational maintenance and are not meant to lead to extensive conversations or deep responses. However, such interactions are beneficial while we have to deal with friends or colleagues or acquaintances in the workplace. Social network sites help us in remembering important details making it easier to maintain relationships without overwhelming temporal or cognitive resources. Digital media platforms facilitate lightweight interactions through various means. Users can express their engagement with others content by liking their posts, reacting with emojis or leaving brief comments.

Additionally, sharing humorous or relatable memes, GIFs or internet jokes with friends or online groups also fosters a sense of comradery. Platforms like Instagram or Snapchat offer short-lived stories allowing users to share moments from their day or provide brief updates to their followers. Retweeting or sharing posts from others on social media is another way for users to show agreement, support or appreciation for the content they have come across. These lightweight interactions play a vital role in social bonding and staying connected in the digital realm.

Paralinguistics

- Paralinguistics in CMC refers to the non-verbal cues beyond the actual words spoken, such as tone of voice, speed of delivery, and pronunciation etc.
- These cues are instrumental in face-to-face interactions for conveying emotions, intentions, and subtleties that go beyond the literal meaning of words.
- While text-based communication dominates CMC, it cannot convey paralinguistic cues fully.
- Paralinguistics in CMC is a dynamic process influenced by the user experiences and the unique communication patterns developed between individuals or in online communities.

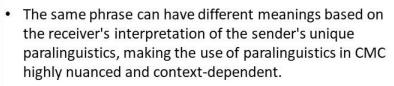


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Paralinguistics in CMC refer to the nonverbal cues beyond the actual words spoken such as tone of voice, speed of delivery and pronunciation, etc. In conventional face-to-face interactions, we have seen that these cues are instrumental in conveying our emotions, intentions and subtleties of messages to the other person beyond the literal interpretation of our words. While text-based communication dominates CMC, it cannot convey paralinguistic cues in the similar manner or perhaps as fully as it is done in face-to-face communication. Paralinguistics in CMC is a dynamic process influenced by the user's experience and the unique communication patterns developed between individuals or in online communities. Hashtags are a notable example of community specific paralinguistics in computer mediated communication. They serve as metadata tags to categorize and organize content around a particular topic or theme.

Hashtags in CMC serve various purposes like emphasizing emotions, sarcasm and humor, self-depreciation, social commentary, memes and inside jokes. They now convey additional meanings and emotions beyond the literal words used in the hashtag itself.

- As users become more familiar with each other's communication style, they co-create meanings and interpretations of paralinguistic cues.
- Social information processing theory explains how users become familiar with each other's communication styles and develop unique paralinguistic cues in their online interactions.



As users become more familiar with each other's communication style, they co-create meanings and interpretations of paralinguistic cues. Social information processing theory explains how users become familiar with each other's communication style and develop unique understanding of paralinguistic cues. The same phrase can have different meanings based on the receiver's interpretation of the sender's unique paralinguistics,

making the use of paralinguistics in CMC highly nuanced and context dependent.

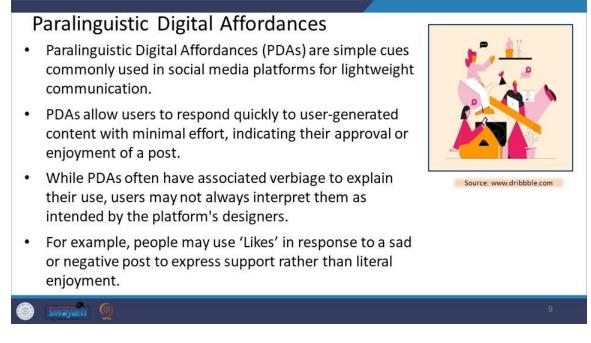
Paralinguistic cues in CMC create a more expressive communication experience. They allow individuals to convey emotions, attitudes and intentions in a manner which is similar to face to face interactions even in the absence of spoken words or vocal tones. As a result, understanding and effectively using these paralinguistic cues are vital for effective and nuanced communication in digital environments.

GAME

SOCIAL INFORMATION

PROCESSING THEORY

Leaders' Decision Making Lab



Paralinguistic digital affordances are simple cues commonly used in social media platforms for lightweight communication. Paralinguistic digital affordances or PDAs allow users to respond quickly to user generated content with minimal effort indicating their approval or enjoyment of a post.

While PDAs often have associated verbiage to explain their use, users may not always interpret them as intended by the designers of the platform itself. For example, people may use likes in response to a sad or a negative post to express their support rather than literal enjoyment or a genuine liking. Liking a post can serve as a phatic form of communication indicating that you like the post or you acknowledge having seen it. It can express affinity toward the poster, help you index or save content and even act as a form of public self-display.

•	Using characters to represent actions or movements, also known as text-based gestures such as hugs or waves, can add a personal touch to digital messages. - The use of onomatopoeic words (e.g., "buzz," "ping," or "ding") can mimic real-world sounds and						
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•		While not strictly paralinguistic in the traditional sense, voice and video messages allow users to convey tone, emotions, and personality through their voice and facial expressions.					
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	Simple facial emoticon displaying excitement	Simple full character emoticon displaying excitement	ASCII art of an excited Homer Simpson from The Simpsons®				
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Using characters to represent actions or movements also known as text based gestures such as hugs or waves can add a personal touch to digital messages. The use of onomatopoeic words like buzz or ping or ding can mimic real word sounds and add a playful or interactive element to communication. While not strictly paralinguistic in the traditional sense, voice and video messages allow users to convey tone, emotions and personality through their voice and facial expressions. In online communication, ellipses, emoticons, emojis, likes and other digital cues are also used to convey paralinguistic meanings and suggestions. However, interpreting these cues depends heavily on the context and the individual relationships involved. Much like interpreting nonverbal cues in face to face communications.

How these cues are used and understood online is influenced by prior interactions with each individual. Despite early skepticism about the transmission of nonverbal cues in CMC, users have adapted to the digital channels and effectively utilized cues to convey information, emotions and their sentimental nuances in their written communication.

Extractive	Uncertainty	Reduction	Strategies
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- The development of CMC tools has brought about a substantial shift in how we sustain our relationships, introducing the concept of <u>passive observation</u>.
- In offline, face-to-face interactions, we often employ passive uncertainty reduction strategies by discreetly observing the behavior and actions of our friends and family to understand them better.
 - This can include noticing their habits, preferences, and how they interact with others in various social settings.
- Similarly, we use extractive uncertainty reduction strategies in the online realm, which involve purposefully seeking information about others through digital traces and records of their online activities.

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The development of CMC tools has also brought about a substantial shift in how we sustain our relationships, introducing the concept of passive observation. In offline face to face interactions, we often employ passive uncertainty reduction strategies by discreetly observing the behavior and actions of our friends, colleagues and family to understand them better. This can include noticing their habits, preferences and how they interact with others in various social settings.

Source: www.uplabs.com

Similarly, we use extractive uncertainty reduction strategies in the online realm, which involve purposefully seeking information about others through digital traces and records of their online activities. Using social media to find partners has become increasingly popular in the digital age. Related platforms focus on serving particular groups of people such as those with shared hobbies or lifestyles. Niche dating sites allow individuals to find potential partners with whom they have a strong common interest or connection, making the dating experience more meaningful.



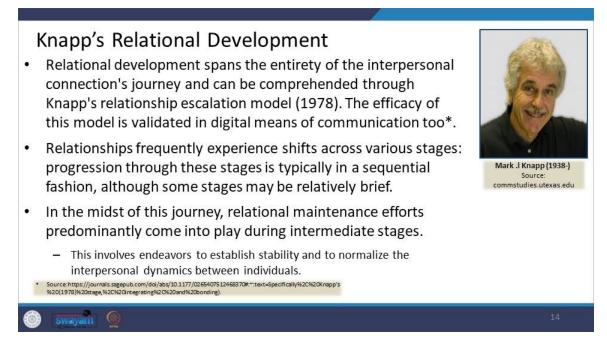
Active information seeking commonly known as extractive information seeking encompasses the deliberate exploration of online sources for data pertaining to a particular individual. This practice holds substantial sway over relationships, particularly during their initial phase. Through the collection of data from various online platforms like social media profiles, class discussion forums or tagged photographs on platforms like Facebook, individuals can promptly gain insight into others, establish a preliminary perception and shape their interactions accordingly. Extractive information seeking is also relevant in established relationships, as it may sometimes enhance confidence in these connections. Platforms like Letterbox for films allow users to create and share movie lists and reviews by browsing through someone's movie diary or favorite films. One can gain insights into their preferences and interests and this can lead to meaningful discussions. Such platforms serve as a means of entertainment and also as a gateway for users to understand each other's passions and hobbies.

- The process of extractive information seeking can be both intentional and unintentional.
- Intentional seeking happens when individuals actively look for specific information, while unintentional seeking occurs when information is encountered while browsing or interacting online without a specific search objective.
- While extractive information seeking can provide valuable insights and help people make informed decisions about personal relationships or professional connections, it is essential to respect others' privacy and boundaries.
 - Sometimes, unintentional information exposure can also lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations, making it essential to communicate openly.





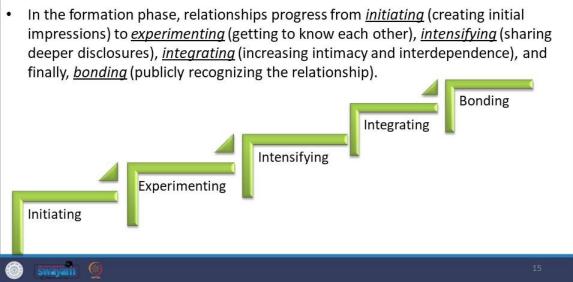
The process of extractive information seeking can be both intentional and unintentional. Intentional seeking happens when individuals actively look for specific information, while unintentional seeking occurs when information is encountered while browsing or interacting online without a specific search objective. While extractive information seeking can provide valuable insights and help us to make informed decisions about our relationships and professional connections, it is essential to respect the privacy and boundaries of other people also. Sometimes unintentional information exposure can also lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations making it essential to communicate openly. Extractive information if practiced ethically can facilitate and foster a deeper understanding in both new and existing relationships.



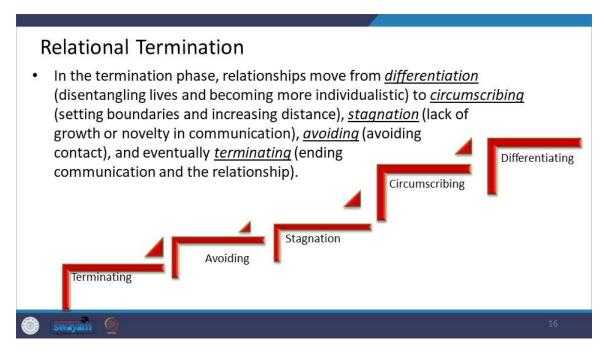
Relational development spans the entirety of the interpersonal connections journey and can be comprehended through the relationship escalation model which was proposed by Mark I. Knapp in 1978. The efficacy of this model is validated in digital means of communication too by later date researchers. Relationships frequently experience shifts across various stages.

Progression through these stages is typically in a sequential fashion although some stages may be relatively brief. In the midst of this journey relational maintenance efforts predominantly come into play during intermediate stages and this involves endeavors to establish stability and to normalize the interpersonal dynamics between individuals. Notably, the model maintains its descriptive relevance to relationships irrespective of the medium employed to cultivate or to conclude a relationship.

Relational Formation

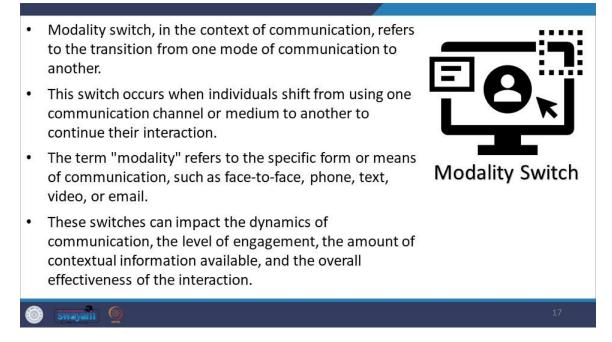


In the formation phase relationship progresses from initiating to experimenting to intensifying to integrating to the final bonding. Bonding suggests a public recognition of the relationship. The coming together phase is the initial stage of relational development where individuals start to build a connection. This phase is characterized by increasing emotional closeness and commitment as the individuals get to know each other better. It also sets the foundation for the relationship to progress further.

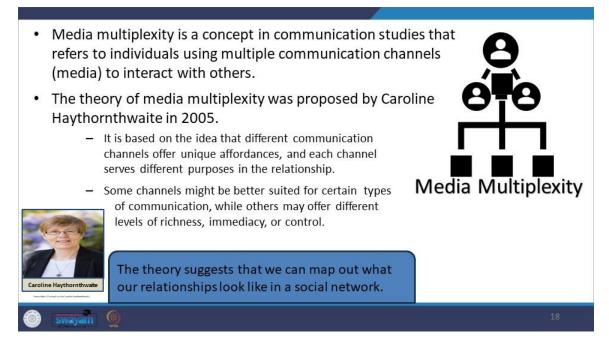


In the termination phase relationships move from differentiation to circumscribing to stagnation to avoiding and lastly to terminating which is ending communication as well

as the relationship. The coming apart phase is challenging and it often leads to the dissolution of the relationship. Similar to offline relationships having their own dynamics, online relationships also give rise to unique and dynamic phenomena for studies. The preferred medium or any changes in this choice as well as numbers in online relationships shape how people connect, interact and form meaningful connections in the digital realm. The balance and combination of these factors determine the complexity of online social interactions.



Modality switch in the context of communication refers to the transition from one mode of communication to the other. This switch occurs when individuals shift from using one communication channel or medium to another in order to continue or to reshape their interaction. The term modality refers to the specific form or means of communication such as face to face, phone, text, video, email, etcetera. These switches can impact the dynamics of communication, the level of engagement, the amount of contextual information available and the overall effectiveness of the interaction. For instance, during an online meeting, participants might decide to switch from text-based chat to voice or video conferencing to facilitate real-time discussion and to have an improved communication. However, it is also important to consider potential barriers and challenges related to modality switch such as technical issues, compatibility between different platforms and the need for agreement or coordination among participants. It similarly works of course in online private relationships.



Media multiplexity is another concept in communication studies which we must understand. The concept refers to individuals using multiple connection channels or media to interact with other people. The theory of media multiplexity was proposed by Caroline Hathorn-Witt in 2005. It is based on the idea that different communication channels offer unique affordances and each channel serves different purposes in the relationship. Some channels might be better suited for certain types of communication while others may offer different levels of richness in EGC or control.

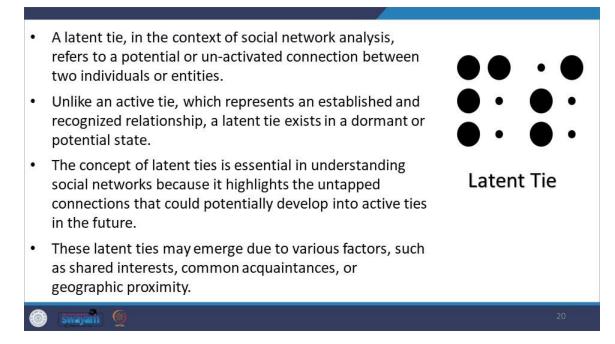
Hathorn-Witt's theory also suggests that we can map out what our relationships look like in a social network. This provides a theoretical rationale for why technology can strengthen relationships either at the workplace or amongst friends. It suggests that the more technological connections or multimodality an individual has with other partners, the stronger that relationship is. The term multiplexity comes from the idea of having multiple interconnected channels or layers of communication. The media multiplexity theory highlights the complexity of modern social online communication means emphasizing that individuals maintain social ties through a diverse range of communication platforms rather than solely relying on a single platform.

- Ambient awareness refers to being continuously and passively aware of people's ongoing activities, thoughts, and updates in one's social network, typically through social media and online platforms.
- Continuous exposure creates a sense of "ambient" or background awareness of what is happening in the lives of others, even without direct communication or specific intent to keep track of their activities.
- The concept of ambient awareness is closely tied to the nature of social media and can have both positive and negative effects.

Ambient Awareness

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In the context of digital and online communication, we must also be aware of the significance of ambient awareness. The idea of ambient awareness refers to being continuously and passively aware of people's ongoing activities, thoughts and updates in our social and professional networks, typically through social media and various online platforms. Continuous exposure creates a sense of ambient or background awareness of what is happening in the lives of others even without direct communication or any specific intent to keep track of their activities. The concept of ambient awareness is closely tied to the nature of social media and can have both positive and negative effects. On one hand, it can foster a sense of social connectedness, allowing individuals to feel more involved in the lives of their peers and reducing feelings of isolation. On the other hand, constant exposure to others lives and updates can lead to information overload and may also generate feelings of social comparison. Additionally, some may argue that ambient awareness can create a false sense of intimacy as it may not replace the depths of interpersonal relationships formed through meaningful and concentrated interactions.



A latent tie in the context of social network analysis refers to a potential or unactivated connection between two individuals or entities. Unlike an active tie, which represents an established and recognized relationship, a latent tie exists in a dormant or potential state. The concept of latent ties is essential in understanding social networks because it highlights the untapped connections that could potentially develop into active ties in the future. These latent ties may emerge due to various factors such as shared interest, common acquaintances or geographic proximity. The concept of latent ties highlights the idea that social connections are not always apparent or immediately visible. It emphasizes the potential for building new relationships and expanding social networks.

Conclusion

Computer-mediated communication (CMC) can create memorable interactions because it offers novel and unconventional ways to engage with others.
CMC can add a layer of creativity and personalization to digital interactions, making them more memorable compared to standard or routine communication.
However, while CMC allows for memorable interactions, it doesn't necessarily expand the number of meaningful relationships that individuals can maintain.
In essence, CMC facilitates a larger reach and assists us to find unique ways to interact with a more extensive circle of people, extending the possibilities of richer ties.

Computer mediated communication can create memorable interactions because it offers novel and unconventional ways to engage with others. CMC can add a layer of creativity and personalization to digital interactions, making them more memorable compared to standard or routine communication.

However, while CMC allows for memorable interactions, it does not necessarily expand the number of meaningful relationships that individuals can maintain. In essence, CMC facilitates a larger range and assists us to find unique ways to interact with a more extensive circle of people, extending the possibilities of richer ties. In the upcoming week, we will discuss intrapersonal communication and how its boundaries are becoming porous in the context of digital communication. We will also discuss the hyperpersonal model which bears relevance to both inter and intrapersonal communication. The concept of hyperpersonal communication describes the way in which online communication sometimes surpasses the level of affection and emotion of parallel faceto-face communication.

Therefore, it is more imperative and expedient in the context of digital communication along with an understanding of novel approaches to intrapersonal communication. Thank you.