
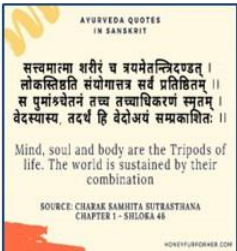


Online Communication in the Digital Age
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Lecture – 09
Embodiment and Digital Identity

Good morning dear friends and welcome to this module. In the previous module, we had discussed identity shifts in digital communication. Today we shall focus on the evolving and complex relationship between the human body and digital technologies from different critical perspectives. The concept of the seam bridges the realms of human body and digital technologies. Contemporary culture also impacts the shaping of identities in a digital environment.



René Descartes
1596-1650






MIND, SOUL AND BODY ARE THE TRIPPODS OF LIFE. THE WORLD IS SUSTAINED BY THEIR COMBINATION

SOURCE: CHARAK SAMHITA SUTRASTRANA
CHAPTER 1 - SHLOKA 48

www.yuborner.com

Human Body and Digital Technology

- The perception of the internet as a disembodied experience, where the mind is active online while the body is left behind, is rooted in the mind/body dualism proposed by René Descartes - the belief that the immaterial mind and the physical body are two entirely distinct entities made of contrasting substances, requiring isolated attention and even existing in different realms.
 - In many non-Western traditions, the concept of mind-body interconnectedness has long been endorsed in medical therapies. EG., Sushrut, a third century BC Hindu saint, and the father of Medical Sciences.
- A growing body of research in VR, AR and MXR (medical extended reality) has effectively challenged Cartesian notions, and has emphasized the interconnectedness.

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The perception of the internet as a disembodied experience where the mind is active while the body is left behind is rooted in this idea initially proposed by the French philosopher Rene Descartes about the mind and body dualism.

It was his belief that the immaterial mind and the physical body are two entirely distinct entities made of contrasting substances requiring isolated attention and even existing in different realms. However, we find that in many non-western traditions, the concept of the interconnectedness of the mind and body has long been endorsed not only in the area of philosophy, spiritual theories, but also in medical therapies. We can cite the example

of the famous third century BC Hindu saint, Sushrut, who is known as the father of medical sciences. A growing body of research today in the areas of virtual realities, artificial reality and MXR that is medical extended reality has effectively challenged the Cartesian notions and they have emphasized the interconnectedness of the mind and the body.

Western philosophical explorations of the body technology relationship mainly draw from the works of Heidegger and Foucault. Heidegger's perspective underscores technology's potential to objectify bodies often at the expense of acknowledging nature's mortal aspect and constraints. In contrast, Michel Foucault's work emphasizes the pivotal role of the body in the exercise of power and the formation of subjectivities. The discussion of philosophical perspectives on body technology relationship, particularly the insights of Heidegger and Foucault align with the concept of embodied digital identity as we can see in the following video on metaverse.



We see identity and expression as core components of the future metaverse because we will participate in the metaverse through an embodied digital identity.

It is a combination of identifying information that we are accustomed to today like profile information, your name, your demographic information and embodied expression through your avatar. This embodied identity is necessary to achieve the feeling of presence that the metaverse can provide. It will allow us to recognize and interact with each other and even do things together that we couldn't do in physical space. Just as the metaverse will open up experiences that might not be possible in the physical world, it will also allow you to share and express your identity in ways that you might not be able

to in real life. Obviously you can choose to create an avatar that looks just like you.

It can completely mirror your physical presence but you should also be able to choose to alter your identity and alter how you express yourself depending on the context and the people that you're with and this is something that the metaverse can make much more easy to do than you might be able to in physical space. No matter how you choose to represent yourself your identity in the metaverse should also be dynamic. Just as you may want to change how you represent yourself for different experiences in the real world, you'll probably want to do it to adjust your embodied identity for virtual space as well. And finally you should be able to bring your identity with you across the metaverse should you choose to do so. You should be able to bring across different experiences, different social spaces and show it to different people.

This decision should be yours to make and the people building the metaverse and identity system today should enable you and give you the tools you need to do so. So clearly one of meta's key focus areas for our effort to build the metaverse is around representation and expression through avatars. In the future we'll identify ourselves not only with our name or images of our faces or physical presence but also through these embodied avatars that we create and that can translate or simulate our physical movement into virtual space. Our avatars are meant to give us identity, expression and social presence and shared experiences within and eventually across these experiences. They're necessary to participate in immersive spaces not just something that's nice to add on like an avatar might be with your social presence today.

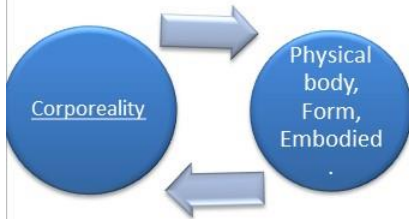
And that means that avatars should represent the diversity of the people who will be in the metaverse as a way to embody either their real or their chosen identity. So as we think about the identity structures that will be needed in a future metaverse we're approaching identity management and identity expression as distinct but interrelated components of your metaverse identity. The video emphasizes the vital role of digital identity and expression in the metaverse's embodiment context. It also underlines how individuals will craft avatars reflecting their physical presence or adapting them to context and preferences with the focus on the dynamic nature of embodied digital identity. It also highlights the need for personalized and context sensitive identity expression that can reveal sensitive information.

It also underscores the importance of managing and expressing identity within one's metaverse presence.

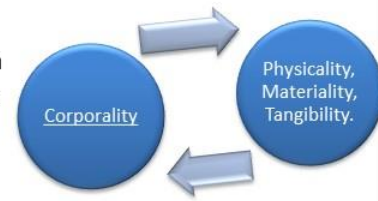
Defining the Body

- The "corporeal turn" in scholarship investigates how Western philosophy and culture traditionally separated the body from lived experience and thought.

- It argues that the body is not a mere biological machine, or a neutral, natural object separate from culture, language, and social discourse.



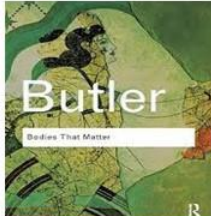
- Instead, the body is intricately intertwined with culture and cultural practices.
- The body is actively produced through cultural forces, formations, and discourses, which define it, present it as subjective, organize it, and create understandings of bounded, separate bodies.



The corporeal turn in scholarship investigates how western philosophy and culture traditionally separated the body from lived experience in thought. It argues that the body is not a mere biological machine or a neutral or natural object separated from culture language and social discourse. Rather the body is intricately intertwined with culture and cultural practices. The body is thus actively produced through cultural forces, formations and discourses which define it and present it as subjective, organize it and create understandings of bounded and separate bodies.

A linear perception of the body is constant and stable is an illusion dependent on repetitive performativity. The body is not inherently real and material but is produced through cultural and historical formations including mediated and digitally communicated discourses.

- Judith Butler's framework, as discussed in her work "Bodies that Matter," asserts that the body's materiality and the performativity of subjecthood are intertwined through the influence of "regulatory ideals," a concept derived from Michel Foucault.
 - Identity performativity is not a singular or voluntary act but a repetitive practice in which identity is constructed through discourse.
- Materialization of the body is a process, not merely a construction, and it extends beyond the idea that social forces shape the body and then wear that identity. Materialization involves the body's continual process of becoming intelligible, unified, and coherent through discourse and language.



The concept of matter is redefined to see it not as a natural given but as a process of materialization that stabilizes over time, giving rise to the boundaries, fixity, and surface we perceive as matter.

Source: www.educationalcentre.ai



All of us are familiar with the arguments of Judith Butler. She has asserted that the body's materiality and the performativity of subjecthood are intertwined through the influence of regulatory ideals, a concept which is derived from Michel Foucault. In our opinion, identity performativity is not a singular or a voluntary act but a repetitive practice in which identity is constructed through discourse.

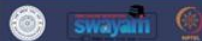
Materialization of the body thus is a process not merely a construction and it extends beyond the idea that social forces shape the body and then wield that identity. Materialization involves the body's continual process of becoming intelligible, unified and coherent through discourse and language. This perspective also prompts questions about how the body gains intelligibility in connection with objects, tools, communication methods and extensions across space and time. This brings us to the discussion of Turkle's views on a Second Self. It is an extension of the ideas we had discussed in the previous module about identity shifts in digital communication.

A Second Self*

- Sherry Turkle had called the computers a “second self” (1984).
- The earlier relationship of a person alone with a machine has changed now. We are learning to live in virtual worlds – and create an identity that fits both worlds. It changes the way we think and form our communities.
- Life on the screen dramatizes and concretizes a range of cultural trends forcing us to think of identity in flexible and multiple ways: projecting constructed personae into virtual space.
 - Utopian discourses in online communication, allow us to escape the physical constraints of the body, including those marked by race, age, gender, and bodily needs.



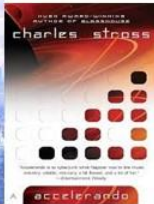
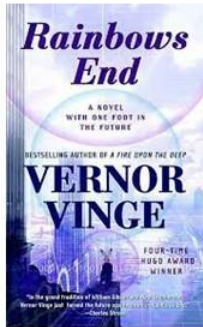
*Cyberspace and Identity, Sherry Turkle, Contemporary Sociology, Vol. No. 6 (Nov., 1999), pp. 643-648, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2655534>



Sherry Turkle had called the computers a second self in her 1984 work. However, the earlier relationship of a single person sitting against a machine alone has changed now. We are learning to live in virtual worlds and create an identity that fits both worlds, the virtual and the material and it changes the way we think and form our communities. Life on the screen dramatizes and concretizes a range of cultural trends forcing us to think of identity in flexible and multiple ways projecting constructed persona into virtual space. Utopia discourses in online communication allow us to escape the physical constraints of the body including those marked by race, age, gender, etcetera.

Turkle feels that technology does not just do things for us, it does things to us changing not just what we do but also fundamentally who we are. We literally write our online persona. Cyberspace opens the possibilities to play with identities but we should be aware of what we are behind the persona projected on the screen. So, we see that focus now is on self-presentation on a screen through versatile media in a fluid manner. It acknowledges that individuals in text-based chat rooms can adopt identities that differ from their physical selves.

- It acknowledges that individuals in text-based chatrooms can adopt identities that differ from their physical selves, allowing them to explore facets of themselves that they might never express in "real life." For example, Gender Play.
- Moreover, the concept extends to the idea of individuals potentially "losing" their physical bodies altogether and existing as imaginative uploads within an electronic network.
- In the 1990s and early 2000s, cyber fictional accounts explored the idea of subjectivity as post-corporeal, holding the potential to overcome bodily distinctions, such as those based on race and gender.



Source: [www. Amazon.in](http://www.amazon.in)

The idea that one can be a subject without a body is limited in its absurdity. Cyberspace may lack a physical presence, but it is still natural bodies that interact with digital technology.



Moreover, this concept extends to the idea of individuals potentially losing their physical bodies altogether and existing as imaginative uploads within an electronic network. In the 90s and early 2000s, cyberfictional accounts explored the idea of subjectivity as post-corporeal, holding the potential to overcome bodily distinctions such as those based on race and gender. However, the idea that one can be a subject without a body is rather limited in its absurdity. Cyberspace may lack a physical presence but it is still our natural bodies that interact with digital technology. Early utopian ideas of bodyless selves seem impractical in today's digital world but they still offer value.

Donna Haraway's concept of the cyborg combining human biology and machine technology challenges body subordinating dualisms and cultural reductions. Although the cyborg figure is not consistently radical and can uphold traditional power structures, it serves as a tool for critiquing culturally constructed body concepts. Thus, it contributes to the ongoing examination of how we perceive and interpret the body in everyday life. It is a lasting legacy from earlier discussions of bodies and digital communication in the cyberspace context.

Corporeality On Screen

- In the early days of the internet (Web 1.0), it was believed that online communication allowed for diverse and new identities. It lacked physical attributes, focusing on written text. However, as technology advanced, the representation of the body became substantial on the modern internet, with a heavy emphasis on visual self-presentation, such as selfies and profile photos.
 - Diversity in online representation remains problematic, as it tends to be dominated by a narrow set of representations, often favoring socially dominant groups and thus challenging the assumption of equal participation.



Source: www.pexels.com

- The self-management of conformity and uniqueness coexists in online environments, shaping the production and materialization of bodies and affecting self-esteem and resilience differentially.

In the early days of Web 1.0, it was believed that online communication allowed for diverse and new identities. Then it lacked physical attributes and focused on written text more. However, as technology has advanced, the representation of the body has also become substantial on the modern internet with a heavy emphasis on visual self-presentation such as selfies and profile photos. Diversity in online representation remains problematic as it tends to be dominated by a narrow set of representations often favoring socially dominant groups and thus challenging the assumption of equal participation. The self-management of conformity and uniqueness co-exist in online environments, shaping the production and materialization of bodies and affecting self-esteem and resilience differentially.

This is because a narrow set of representations often dominates online spaces. The socially dominant groups tend to lead in innovation while marginalized groups lag behind.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RnGINqSEzO8>

- Stereotypes oversimplify identity categories and are more prevalent in today's information-rich society due to their quick, easily digestible nature, and they circulate through images of bodies, shaping how identities are perceived and represented.
 - The habitual choices of clothing, ornamentation, prosthetic devices, and makeup, as noted by Grosz (1994), are as much part of the performativity of subjectivity as actions and behaviors tied to identity stereotypes.
- These elements, aligned with cultural stereotypes, contribute to the performative aspects of one's identity and are closely linked to contemporary notions of subjective stability.

So, stereotypes oversimplify identity categories and are more prevalent in today's information with society as they are quick and easily digestible in nature and they can be circulated through images of bodies shaping how identities are perceived and represented in a readily fashioned and packed manner. The habitual choices of clothing, ornamentation, prosthetic devices and makeup as noted by Grosz in his 1994 work are as much part of the performativity of subjectivity as actions and behaviors tied to identity stereotypes. These elements aligned with cultural stereotypes contribute to the performative aspects of one's identity and are closely linked to contemporary notions of subjective stability.

Stereotypes are not necessarily false or mere theatrical performances adopted by individuals, rather they showcase how people perceive and present themselves through their bodies, behaviors, emotions and social roles. These perceptions contribute to the formation and reinforcement of stereotypes in digital communication also.

- According to Butler (1993) and Lingis (1994), these stereotypes are implicated in the discursive and regimented materialization of the body and its associated capacities, skills, and inclinations.
- The transition from text-based digital representation to contemporary audiovisual media underscores the relationship between identity and stereotypical attributes.
- Stereotypes link the visual representation of bodies to their actions, encompassing movements, spatial dynamics, and gestures.
- This goes beyond bodies already shaped by social constructs; the very movements of the body establish it as a distinct identity.

Stereotypes exert cultural influence, compelling images, identities, and bodily formations to conform to specific, recognizable behaviors, conveying knowledge through visual cues and connotations.

Source: www.tpp2014.com



Alphonso Lingis



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This goes beyond bodies already shaped by social constructs, the very movements of the body establish it as a distinct identity. Assigning identities to bodies through stereotypes has the power to evoke both pain and gratification in individuals. The link between the imaged body and its movement, encompassing capacities, skills and inclinations can be experienced positively or negatively by a subject.

- Assigning identities to bodies through stereotypes has the power to evoke both pain and gratification in individuals.
- This link between the imaged body and its movement, encompassing capacities, skills, and inclinations, can be experienced positively or negatively by a subject.
 - The connection between the body's image and its movements extends to the influence of discourse, which, according to Foucault, exerts control over the body by regulating specific movements, gestures, and attitudes.
 - This process produces "docile" bodies that are not passive but submissive and obedient, illustrating the complex interplay between discourse and the body in shaping subjectivity.
- Stereotypes about corporeality are sometimes unconsciously adopted by individuals to make the performativity of identity categories intelligible and recognizable.

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Illustrating the complex interplay between discourse and the body in shaping subjectivity. Stereotypes about corporeality are sometimes unconsciously adopted by individuals to make the performativity of identity categories intelligible and recognizable. However, in the world of digital communication, diversity is indeed present and various bodies are represented online covering different races, sexes, abilities, classes, nationalities, religions and sexual orientations. Still, claims of diversity should be approached with caution. Highlighting instances of online discrimination is crucial to dispel the misconception that digital communication is free from various forms of discrimination based on different body attributes.

Digital Avatars and Gaming Bodies

- The concept of immersion in digital gaming often suggests that a gamer's identity extends into the virtual world beyond the screen, either by leaving the body behind or merging the corporeal self with the gaming avatar.
- In some cases, immersion leads to the player projecting themselves into the on-screen character, resulting in a fusion of consciousness.
- This account of gameplay highlights the performative nature of identity, influenced by on-screen interactions, but it still maintains the problematic real/virtual distinction.
 - An alternative perspective challenges these distinctions, viewing them as meaningless and emphasizing the unity of the digital and physical aspects of identity, thus avoiding a mind/body dualism.



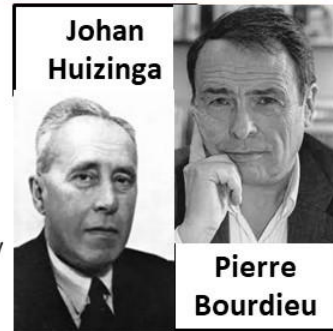
Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NwoQ41wes2c>



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While players do not completely disconnect from their physical bodies, there is a clear distinction in intent. For instance, everyday mundane tasks that most people would avoid or find physically demanding become exciting and interesting challenges in the gaming world. The gamer may engage in repetitive and boring actions such as carrying crates or searching for items which would be uninteresting in real life but become enjoyable within the context of the game.

- This does not imply a scenario where the physical body performs one identity while a separate online persona assumes another; akin to a split personality framework.
- Instead, it underscores that adopting game characters serves as avatars, and their corresponding actions can involve conscious choices and instinctive self-expression for moments of pleasure.
 - Individuals can form deep emotional connections to the avatars they control in video games whose actions and movements are actively linked to the player's body and are experienced as corporeal sensations.
- Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu's ideas, the body "believes" in what it enacts during gameplay, and the emotions and sensations felt in the game can be as real to the player as real-world experiences.
- Johan Huizinga's concept of play as a separate space with its own boundaries in contrast to everyday life is also relevant.



Source: www.en.wikipedia.or



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Individuals can also form deep emotional connections to the avatars they control in video games whose actions and movements are actively linked to the player's body and are experienced as corporeal sensations. We can draw on the ideas of Pierre Bordieu that the body believes in what it enacts during gameplay and the emotions and sensations felt in the game can be as real to the player as real world experiences. Johan Huizinga's concept of play as a separate space with its own boundaries in contrast to everyday life is also relevant. It suggests that in the era of digital games, the body is not isolated but consciously understands the narrative differences and emotional impact. Gamers are fully aware of the separation between the game and the reality.

Unlike hypnosis or immersion, individuals engage with games consciously and the game narrative does not completely absorb or alter their thinking.

Body–Technology Relationalities

- The design of digital technologies is consciously tailored to match the human body's sensory capabilities, including vision, hearing, limbs, and even occasionally feet.
- This design aims to establish a seamless and intentional connection between these devices and the body.
- Importantly, this approach is not about making technology appear foreign or unfamiliar but rather about forging a harmonious relationship between the human body and digital devices.
- Catherine Happer describes Google Glass as a device that mediates between the user and reality, raising concerns about the potential “cyborgization” of the body that becomes dependent on technology.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4EvNxWhs>



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Catherine Happer describes Google Glass as a device that mediates between the user and reality, raising concerns about the potential cyberization of the body that becomes dependent on technology. Unlike conventional devices like smartphones, Google Glass introduces a screen that intervenes between the eye and the surrounding space acting as a window rather than a traditional screen. This creates a sense of biomediation where technology influences how we perceive and interact with the world. This unique way of mediating vision and seeing has transformative effects on how we articulate ourselves and engage with our surroundings. It also highlights the altered connection between the eyesight and the objects in our environment due to the immediacy of the mediation.

The integration of digital technology and the human body into an assemblage can also lead to exclusion of the individual psyche.

- The integration of digital technology and the human body into an assemblage while highlighting that these connections are often based on established norms and standards of the human body, potentially leading to exclusions, particularly for individuals with disabilities.
- Devices cease to be perceived as mere tools that extend the body but become an integral part of the body's material assemblage.
- Essentially, they are intimately integrated with the body without necessarily merging or penetrating it.
 - The close bond between mobile phones and the human body emphasizes an intimate connection to a point where mobile phones are inseparable from the body, impacting one's sense of self.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2uHFiuzZaaIQ>



So, devices cease to be perceived as mere tools that extend the body, but they become an integral part of the body's material assemblage. Essentially, they are intimately integrated with the body without necessarily merging or penetrating it. The close bond between mobile phones and the human body emphasizes an intimate connection to a point where mobile phones are inseparable from the body impacting our sense of the self. One experiences a sensation of a phantom limb where the reluctance to part with a mobile phone is physically felt.

It is not just the mobile phone itself that becomes a part of one's corporeal subjectivity, but also it uses the associated practices and the connectivity with others. The absence of malfunction of the phone leads to a sense of disconnection and fragmentation of the body, similar to the anxiety of being lost in an unfamiliar place. The inability to connect with others through this technology creates a feeling of insecurity and further separation from one's own materiality.



Source: www.retailcustomerexperience.com

- The concept of a "seam" serves as the point of interaction between the corporeal subject and digital information, where digital data is understood as being located within a conceptualized space.
- This idea emerges because interactivity with text, images, games, and ideas requires viewing them as objects subject to manipulation.
- It highlights that individuals are positioned alongside this space at the seam, using tools to manipulate objects within it, much like how one uses tools to interact with physical objects without fully immersing themselves in the environment.
- This perspective makes the seam a crucial site for contemporary engagement with communication, culture, and selfhood, emphasizing its significance.



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It highlights that individuals are positioned alongside this space at the seam using tools to manipulate objects within it, much like how one uses tools to interact with physical objects without fully immersing themselves in the environment. This perspective makes the seam a crucial site for contemporary engagement with communication, culture and selfhood, emphasizing its significance. So, this seam represents the point at which the body engages with the screen and emphasizes the increasing closeness between the body and technology. This closeness is not about crossing into a fictional space, but is characterized by a desire to come close to the screen and imagine a merger with technology, such as becoming a cyborg. While some still perceive a duality of space, this perspective is less common in the context of everyday digital technology use.

The concept of immersion aligning with developments in video games implies that the importance of the physical body diminishes as one becomes deeply engaged in the imaginative world of digital experiences.

Co-Corporeality
Body-entity
interaction

- A more productive understanding of the relationship between the corporeal subject and digital activities is considering online activity as a separate space -- where the concept of a "seam" is present where the body interacts with communication technologies.
- As an illustration of corporeality within the concept of a "seam," the interaction of the body with communication technologies, as seen in the co-corporeality context through gaze and eye movement; presents a distinctive mode of communication.
- It serves to connect humans and non-human entities in the digital domain.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2l9wG8f0uA>

A more productive understanding of the relationship between the corporeal subject and digital activities is considering online activity as a separate space, where the concept of a seam is present where the body interacts with communication technologies. As an illustration of corporeality within the concept of a seam the interaction of the body with communication technologies as seen in the corporeality context through gaze and eye movement presents a distinctive mode of communication. It serves to connect humans and non-human entities in the digital domain. In the following video, the concept of corporeality illustrated by using an eye tracking device for non-verbal communication with bacteria and microbial communities reflects a shift in how we perceive the relationship between the corporeal body and digital experiences.



We want to actually create a proto-architectural space and installation where humans can experience living organisms which live in a completely different scale and where humans can actually also, visitors can interact with these very different organisms. The idea is to have an interface, a sort of helmet, and with our eye movements, these eye movements are translated through these technologies and through the interface into cues that can be perceived and sensed by this living material. The seam is rapidly changing as proposed by Eric Schmidt, executive chairman of Google. The internet is becoming ubiquitous blurring the line between the real space and the virtual space. The text uses metaphors like immersion in water or reading print to illustrate that our immersion in digital connectivity is so seamless that we might not consciously perceive the boundary between our physical and digital lives requiring critical thought to distinguish the two.

- Various body practices related to digital communication technologies are evolving as these technologies become more prevalent. New habits and practices emerge as devices proliferate, often reflecting cultural desires for physical interaction with digital spaces.
 - For instance, people have *normative codes* regarding how they touch desktop computer screens, leading to specific ways of engagement and even etiquette.
 - Actions like "*frappe*," where someone humorously alters another person's Facebook settings or profile when their laptop is momentarily left open and unlocked, can be seen as comical within a specific group setting.
- These evolving practices and habits form a distinct sign system language, shaping individuals' relationships with technology and embodying social habitus, in line with the theories of Norbert Elias.



Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5iQ05ar8Qo>



So, various bodily practices related to digital communication technologies are evolving. As these technologies become more and more prevalent and research gets intensified, new habits and practices emerge as devices proliferate often reflecting cultural desire for physical interaction with digital spaces. For instance, people have normative codes regarding how they touch desktop computer screens leading to specific ways of engagement and even etiquette. Actions like *frappe* where someone humorously alters another person's Facebook settings or profile when their laptop is momentarily left open or unlocked can be seen as comical within a specific group setting. These evolving practices and habits form a distinct sign system language shaping individuals relationship with technology and embodying social habitus in line with the theories of Norbert Elias.

Asserting that the language of bodily interaction exists with digital technologies does not imply a uniform and dominant set of rules. Instead, it encompasses a spectrum of norms that primarily govern relationships between individuals and their devices akin to the etiquettes of physical contact. In the context of shared technology seeking permission as in asking may I to use another person's desktop keyboard or mouse exemplifies the evolving cultural norms associated with tactile interaction.

The Body as a Project

- Digital technologies are increasingly employed to enhance individuals' pursuit of a culturally desirable "better" body marked by attributes like leanness, muscularity, and tone, while intertwining with broader cultural shifts involving dietary practices and the stigmatization of body fat.
- This perspective is distinct from the alternative concepts of the cyborg or the *seam*, focusing on the normative body and the ways in which individuals participate in self-disciplinary practices.
- It also connects to the pursuit of pleasure and consumption, asserting that contemporary bodies are instrumentalized for enhanced performance, labor capabilities, longevity, and increased pleasure through consumption and sex.



Source: www.summitortho.com



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Digital technologies are increasingly employed to enhance individuals' pursuit of a culturally desirable better body marked by attributes like leanness, muscularity and tone etc. while intertwining with broader cultural shifts involving dietary practices and stigmatization of body fat.

This perspective is distinct from the alternative concepts of the cyborg or the seam focusing on the normative body and the ways in which individuals participate in self-disciplinary practices. It also connects to the pursuit of pleasure and consumption asserting that contemporary bodies are instrumentalized for enhanced performance, labor capabilities, longevity and increased pleasure through consumption in sex. This reflects the cultural changes in how society views the body. Body is now treated as a docile entity that can be molded to fit specific ideals. The ideal body is pliable and subordinate to individual will.

This transformation towards a docile body is driven by self-regulation and self-management rather than external regulation or constraint. Such self-regulation resulted from cultural shifts and has been intensified by digital means of communication.

- The human body has shifted from institutional surveillance to a self-directed project, with digital communication tools facilitating individuals' access to information and tools for self-discipline and body management.
 - This perspective is not just about shaping the body as a passive object. Still, it entails active body materialization driven by the desire for pleasure, often framed as a contemporary subjective right.
 - It involves self-discipline and training to make the body available for greater pleasure, addressing the vulnerability inherent in all bodies.
- The compulsion to work on the body as a project is linked to averting risk and creating normative, docile, and compliant bodies in response to corporeal vulnerability and precarity.

Source: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-j1RdHmeftM>



The human body has shifted from institutional surveillance to a self-directed project with digital communication tools facilitating individual's access to information and tools for self-discipline and a better body management. This perspective is not just about shaping the body as a passive object, still it entails active body materialization driven by the desire for pleasure often framed as a contemporary subjective right. It involves self-discipline and training to make the body available for greater pleasure addressing the vulnerabilities inherent in all bodies.

This compulsion is also linked to averting risk and creating normative docile and compliant bodies in response to corporeal vulnerability and precarity. The compulsion to protect our corporeal selves and identities against precarity and vulnerability is not enforced. It is driven by a cultural desire for safety and protection using digital tools. This drive is not fear-based, it derives gratification creating a libidinal flow in the pursuit of a calculable gratification associated with a projected normativity. Such gratification is further embedded within market exchange discourse where working on the body as a project is seen as a productive endeavor promising rewards like longevity, enhanced sexuality, health and other culturally constructed benefits.

Consequently, the adoption of digital technology is endorsed as a necessary response to the question of how to embody a human body in contemporary society.

Conclusion

- The discussions in this module have delved into the intricate relationship between the human body and digital technologies.
- Their deep integration goes beyond the notions of a cyborg or a disembodied subject.
- The concept of the "seam" between physical and digital spaces has been crucial in understanding this relationship as it evolves and becomes increasingly seamless in the era of ubiquitous digital connectivity.
- This new reality challenges our traditional understanding of the body as it constantly adapts and interacts with technology.



Source: www.istockphoto.com



The discussion in this module has looked into the intricate relationship between the human body and digital technologies. Their deep integration goes beyond the notions of a cyborg or a disembodied subject. The concept of the seam between physical and digital spaces has been crucial in understanding this relationship as it evolves and becomes increasingly seamless in the era of ubiquitous digital connectivity. This new reality challenges our traditional understanding of the body as it constantly attempts and interacts with technology.

We have seen how digital technologies are used in contemporary culture to shape and better the body creating a normative ideal of the fit and aesthetically pleasing body while intertwining it with pleasure in consumption. In the next module, we shall continue our discussion on digital identity with shift towards professional identity management. Thank you.