**Event Report 2: Alleviating Design**

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LIS 4934: BSIS Senior Capstone

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March 10, 2024

**Introduction**

Digital technologies are effectively prioritizing keeping users engaged, contributing to users' difficulty in stepping away from past times of playing video games to viewing social media. The increased gratification and influence can reach invasiveness, becoming too immersed is a bigger risk with its widespread accessibility and potential to overwhelm and dominate our lives. It is important to cut back and enjoy technology in moderation. Leslie Coutterand and Max Vicideo advocate awareness of these digital technology addictions. They both give vulnerable and genuine presentations, making it easy to identify with their shared personal experience with technology addiction. Coutterand’s presentation *Social Media Addiction* and Viciedo’s *How to Get Rid of Your Technology Addiction* touched on the diverse addictions they fell into and how they stripped their ability to enjoy the real authentic joys in our reality. Along with sharing their journey to regain their control over their addiction, they raise awareness to fight against it and together provide a comprehensive view of solutions to recover and set healthy boundaries for our digital technology usage.

As an aspiring web developer focused on user-centered design, I am instilled with consideration for my users’s social contexts, goals, and tasks. I must transcend the focus of simply making the most effective user engagement for the capital stakeholder by providing users with solutions for their short-term goals and tasks but being mindful of the long-term goals and tasks I will be affecting too. This issue should not be solely a user’s fight. As a web developer, I want to be responsible with my contributions to technology. I will heed awareness and work towards alleviating the overwhelming use of technologies debilitating lives. As a front-end-focused web developer who will work on user interfaces and potentially take on responsibilities or collaborate with user interface design, I am aware of practices tunneling into effective user engagement. They turn a blind eye to the long-term impact the users can face. Learning about social media addiction will aid my understanding of user behavior patterns, and help my design decisions be mindful of potential addictive behaviors as I create intuitive and engaging designs.

**Social Media Addiction**

Leslie Coutterand is a director activist who has been a vulnerable victim of social media addiction, advocating for users to reclaim agency using social media as a tool as opposed to letting it be a dominant outlook and overbearing influence. As she underscores its pervasive influence and adverse long-term impacts, she shares her enlightenment on how platforms capitalize on weakness, and how the impacts affect more than ourselves.

As she recounts her personal experience with social media addiction, she emphasizes the long-term impacts and influenced outlook from her youth to young adulthood. She becomes vulnerable with the audience, recounting her childhood traumas that initially influenced her to transfix to media (Coutterand, 2018). She encountered a revelation in traditional media that could heal her childhood wounds. She made a positive correlation with people having more celebrity, beauty, and possessions came respect and success. She became greatly influenced to pursue a long-term goal, becoming an actress to copy the media’s imposed image of success. She discusses how the hyper-connectivity of media contributed to its pervasive influence. Its influence was catalyzed during her young adulthood when technological innovations allowed media to become pervasive with increased accessibility in smartphone devices.

Coutterand substantiates the adversities of digital media’s pervasive impact, emphasizing its massive outreach and influence. Being rewarded in her social media interactions she received gratification of dopamine released. They came at the expense of Instagram-worthy posts prioritizing staged moments. She encountered cognitive dissonance as she ignored her well-being, smiling in the perfectly staged Instagram selfie despite mourning a breakup or seductively smiling pictures at a pool when self-conscious, uncomfortable, and uncompensated. She was good at acting for social media, but she was not truly being herself. Not only was she influenced by social media, but she found responsibility in perpetuating a message that a distorted reality valuing a consumer society needed to be accepted, loved, and respected (Coutterand, 2018). Besides the consumer society straying people from an authentic lifestyle, she shares studies finding a quarter of teens are constantly, current conceptions of media leading to depression to addiction, and algorithms trapping our engagement can create echo chambers.

Finally, she encourages users to take action and accountability for a conscious use of social media utilizing it for good. She is conscientious as she targets everyone as agents to take action, helping ourselves to one another. For oneself, invest time in self-reflection and honing compassions outside of social media. She reasonably reiterates we shape each other's worlds with what we share to encourage her next solutions. Use social media interactions to like share, or post things that deserve the power. To be aware of how we are selecting long-term impacts for ourselves, society, and our planet. She encourages those who post to recognize they can reach a massive audience, and consider the messages they are putting out there.

**How to Get Rid of Your Technology Addiction**

Maxx Viciedo similarly explores the roles of technology in their practices and its impact on users' agency. He advocates for people to take action to regain control and agency. He underscores creating schedules, limiting their screen time, and developing self-discipline, which seem simple but have profound impacts.

Viciedo effectively consulted research and connected issues to portray impediments of addictive social media usage to his audience. He was enlightening as he touched on how the more addicted one is to video games makes one less focused and susceptible to slacking off (Dewar, 2009-2024; Viciedo, 2022). I found it sweet that he knows it is true because he can connect to it, and I found that same train of thought when he shared this research. He touched on his struggle to get good grades made him from his need to be on technology making him not engage in other outside curriculars. For me, it was a vicious cycle of guilt I could relate to, feeling strong guilt in my ability to stay focused on my assignments but spending hours on the time invested in my games or social media instead. I would end up punishing myself for staying in and refusing to enjoy activities outside of home and work since I needed to invest my remaining time to work, just to repeat the same issues.

Viciedo emphasizes the selfish practices behind addictive design span diverse digital media. He addresses Anothony Cuthbertson’s report on the support of hired psychologists to help programmers incorporate addictive elements for maximized engagement. His emphasis on intent encourages attentiveness to the priorities and goals of the platforms we are using. He consults a Forbes article to give insight into the grand revenue Fortnite generated, 200 million a month in 2019 (Viciedo, 2022). He discusses how social media has also been designed to make you rely on it with the support of Harvard University researcher Trevor Haynes that positive interactions in social media trigger large doses of dopamine, a chemical to makes us feel pleasure and gratification. (Haynes, 2018). I enjoyed his reflection on how this can deprive of our everyday tasks of reading and writing that cannot compete with the constant gratification (Viciedo, 2022).

Viciedo’s insightful solutions underscore the transformative power of seemingly simple strategies like creating a schedule. By advocating for structured time management and achievable goals, he taps into an overlooked practice for building good habits: small steps in consistent and intentional efforts, build to significant results. Emphasizing the importance of reclaiming control over technology use, Viciedo encourages individuals to prioritize tasks, allocate time wisely, and cultivate a healthy relationship with digital media. His approach not only fosters productivity and focus but also nurtures a sense of empowerment and fulfillment as individuals actively engage in meaningful activities beyond screens. Ultimately, embracing Viciedo’s strategies isn’t just about reducing screen time; it’s about reclaiming agency over one's time, goals, and overall well-being.

**Conclusion**

Leslie Coutterand and Max Vicideo delivered vulnerable yet powerful presentations shedding light on pervasive issues of technology. While exploring the conditioning of social media, they provide actionable strategies for users to become agents in their recovery to overcome them. Their candid narratives and practical solutions give users a chance to comfortably approach solutions to shift their relationships with digital media positively.

I am inspired to develop projects that keep these solutions in mind. I hope to develop or contribute to authentic platforms like BeReal. I know dark patterns like SnapChat’s streak element use time to get users anxiously attached (Ipen, 2019). Despite BeReal having a daily 2-minute window notification, it can be a step contributing to positive long-term impacts. It encourages users to take a picture of what they are currently up to and does not support editing or filters on its platform, encouraging authentic shots of users’ lives. It strays from securing engagement, lacking interactions like “likes” to give a small dopamine hit. It has a thoughtful design for users to enjoy a shift in social media contributing to authentic, healthy usage.

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