Social Media

Friendship circles is considered a part of microstructure as they are formed during face to face interactions.1 Being a part of social groups influence the way we think, make judgements and act. Social media such as Facebook has inevitably reshape our lives by redefining the way we communicate, form friendships and connect.

Conflict theory can be used to explain how social media maintain social class and creates segregation. Social media reinforce social class through the usage of interest groups or spreading of information that makes people more aware of differences between different groups of people, example ethic, racial and religious groups. The influential power of corporate groups is also enforce through the wide usage of advertising videos or posts. Those who cannot keep up with the crowd due to the lack of literacy or relevant technological knowledge, such as the elderly, can be marginalised.

Using functionalism to explain social media, social media has aided socialisation by allowing us to be updated of the events that has happened to our friends and families, engage simultaneously with a larger group of people as well as keep us informed of national issues which help standardises our norms and practices. Social media also removes segregation by creating more opportunities for different group of people to discuss common neutral interests such as sports and music, regardless of race or religion.

Facebook has challenged the structure of community and friendship, which can lead to a social problem as the individuals becomes more withdrawn2, reducing social adhesion. Singapore youths are shown to prefer to interact with their friends online.3 The overreliance on social media for socialising can lead to a social problem as there is decreased in face to face interactions and communication between people4, leading to decrease in empathy for others.5 This can lead to misunderstandings and conflicts, which can threaten social stability. One such example is the sharing of racist jokes online, which can deepen racial prejudices. Fortunately, the Singapore government has sufficient power to play a key role in preventing the formation and worsening of both individual and institutional racism by prosecuting people who makes inappropriate racial and religious comments6 and treating everyone equally regardless of race or religion. 7

Social media can also introduce external global influences that leads to shifts in ideology and social norms.8 The traditions and assumed social norms of our society are challenged, disrupting social order especially when the society is not subjected to equal influences from social media due to differing levels of access. When the individual agrees with the foreign ideology, he or she may find difficulties exercising it due to current society’s practices or thoughts which conflicts it. However, this can be resolved through social media as the individual can use it to find people who shares the same values and form a group on their own, supporting formation of countercultures as they seek to replace current culture norms.

In conclusion, social media has become a part of our daily lives and changed our society.

(499 Words)

1. Robert J. Brym JL. *Sociology: Your Compass for a New World Third Edition*.

2. All the lonely Facebook friends: Study shows social media makes us MORE lonely and unhappy and LESS sociable | Mail Online. Available at: http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2419419/All-lonely-Facebook-friends-Study-shows-social-media-makes-MORE-lonely-unhappy-LESS-sociable.html. Accessed September 16, 2014.

3. S’pore youths spending more time online: study - Yahoo News Singapore. Available at: https://sg.news.yahoo.com/s-pore-youths-spending-more-time-online--study-100333925.html. Accessed September 9, 2014.

4. Hutchcraft T. Are you my “friend?” *The Socjournal*. 2011. Available at: http://www.sociology.org/featured/friend. Accessed September 9, 2014.

5. Buffardi LE, Campbell WK. Narcissism and social networking Web sites. *Pers Soc Psychol Bull*. 2008;34(10):1303-14. doi:10.1177/0146167208320061.

6. SIM undergrad under fire for telling racist jokes - Yahoo News Singapore. Available at: https://sg.news.yahoo.com/sim-undergrad-under-fire-for-telling-racist-jokes.html. Accessed September 16, 2014.

7. Singapore Statutes Online - CONST - Constitution of the Republic of Singapore. Available at: http://statutes.agc.gov.sg/aol/search/display/view.w3p;page=0;query=DocId:cf2412ff-fca5-4a64-a8ef-b95b8987728e Depth:0 Status:inforce;rec=0. Accessed September 18, 2014.

8. Tarman B, Yigit MF. The Impact of Social Media on Globalization, Democratization and Participative Citizenship. *JSSE - J Soc Sci Educ*. 2012;12(1). doi:10.2390/jsse-v12-i1-84.