MISSED CONNECTIONS

3 Bandaids

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Human

Humans are inherently social creatures. Our primal urge to be around like minded members of our species has led to many technological advancements throughout time, from primitive smoke signals and cave drawings to advanced forms of digital social media. Historically, these innovations were grounded in a communal root, but more recently, the idea of an interconnected world has been achieved. The power to transcend distance has come with a price, namely the removal of oneself from their own community.

Connection

After all, why should we talk to our neighbor we have nothing in common with when we can talk to our close friends thousands of miles away? Through the experiments on display, we tested the validity of this statement. Is there any merit in talking to the stranger waiting at your bus station, or should you just continue texting your best friend you have known since early childhood? Is there really a lack of connection in the world, or must we now measure connection differently?

Initial

Originally we tackled the values of "human connection" the way most technophobic people would: by shunning modernity. It is easy to blame technology; after all, if you go to any public space nowadays, a majority of people are glued to their phones, unwilling to talk to each other. Instead of viewing these advancements as their own medium, we tried to force them into historical views of what socialization entails, which is rather unfair. Skipping past the numerous benefits of mass socialization, we tried to fabricate hindrances, which, in the end felt as it would seem: artificial.
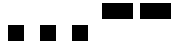
Thoughts

Once we realized we were making up more than what was there, we meditated on the frontier mass communication has enabled. Never before has it been easier to find those with similar interests as you, and keep up with friends you have already made. Technological achievements have given voices to the mute, turned introverts into digital extroverts, and has given everyone an equal voice. We realized that if we embrace the past twenty years of innovation, we could learn much more than if we pretended we were still living in the 1980s.

In accordance with our initial thought of technophobia, we wanted to see how open people would be in an anonymous setting through writing, since this is typically seen in an online environment. Unsurprisingly the only experiment with no technological involvement was our biggest failure, with a majority of people refusing to write down their thoughts on what human connection meant to them. This disaster springboarded our thought process to be inclusionary rather than exclusionary in terms of involvement of technology.

Our second test was a grand departure from our first. Where we shunned technology orignially, our new goal was to test people's openness in a digital form. This test far surpassed what our initial anolog form failed to do, and we receieved a multitude of deep responses to our questions. These grand results affirmed what we gathered from our first results: that we must not subjugate certain tools of interaction just because they do not seem real in a historical sense.

For our third test, we wanted to combine the use of digital communication with face to face communication. Through exploiting people's vulnerabilities through digital communication, we were able to gain insight into very personal matters of other's lives, but doing so in a face to face manner. A large majority of our intended participants were more than happy to share their photographs with us, even though many did not even know who we were.

We wanted to go back to our roots for our fourth test. Eye contact is one of those things that is immensiely powerful, but usually saved for those we hold close. Through getting strangers to lock eyes, we wanted to test alternative forms of communication, ones that did not rely on words or text, ones that you can even engage in whilst embracing technology's ability to bring one out of an environment. All the subjects reported some sort of power felt, a type that is not normally present when meeting someone for the first time.

For our final experiment, we wanted to instill the notion that everyone has some sort of story. Through the use of portaits and hand-written stories, we aimed to dissolve the borders between people and events. So much of our lives is spent idolizing over other's achievements, without realizing that all of our stories are equally impactful.

For a final look into the our original question, we wanted to comment on how first interactions can be wildly different in the physical and nonphysical realm. In this series, we have curated a selection of first messages sent via the dating application, Tinder. What constitutes as something worthy to say to someone in real life versus through a static avatar? Are these attempts at creating true human connection or is there a difference when it's an app?

Re: Flection

Ikya

There is a type of catharsis that only really happens when it's 3 a.m. and the lack of ventilation makes you hot, but you're too totally entranced in another human being to wipe the sweat off the tips of your baby hairs. I've always thought that the key to this sort of deep connection was the fact that I'm completely and totally plugged into concrete reality, instead of multi-tasking between my life and my phone. What really amazed me through this process is how truly fluid human connection can be—in a sense, connection has acknowledged the presence of a digital world and has found a way to integrate and amplify personhood through it.

Re: Flection

Tiffany

More than anything, I learned that connection starts with the proper state of mind. If you're not able to put yourself in a somewhat vulnerable place--whether it be holding eye contact for a prolonged amount of time, signing up for a dating app, or talking about a significant moment in your life-- you are inhibiting your prospects for experiencing empathy and intimacy and locking yourself up in a world where you are the only one present. Because the only way we can build communities and meaningful things is through human connection, we cant afford to close ourselves up.

Re: Flection

Cholthon

I learned more about the different ways we can connect with each other and the diversity of experiences that help identify and motivate each individual.

The project has brought great insight to multiple facets and aspects of human behavior. The projects that I most enjoyed were the ones where we truly engaged with other students e.g. last photo project and most memorable experience.

Re: Flection

Katie

Throughout the project, I've learned a lot about the different ways we all connect. Doing experiments and hearing strangers stories are what has made the biggest impact on me in realizing that spending just a few minutes talking to someone whom you don't know, can actually transform your worldview. As a group, we weren't sure where exactly this project was going to go but letting go is how we were able to come to our process of working and sharing with everyone at our opening.

Re: Flection

Bennett

Human Connection
What does it mean anyway?
Sent from my iPhone

Re: Flection

Viola

When we first started the class and the professor said we were going to complete a final project, I couldn't imagine how would we do that without any experience or knowledge. However, looking back at how we have come so far, I'm really thankful for what I have learned from the project as well as my fellow team mates. We started off with all the fancy ideas and concepts, but gradually learned to how to design and organize each of our small projects, and how to tailed them to our target participants' need. Also, more importantly, I learned that it is not the size of the event that matters, because what we want is for every single attendees of our event to have a memorable and valuable experience.