

Recognizing a Shift Toward Continued Secondary Orality:
The iPhone's Contribution to the Development of Human Communication

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By

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Introduction

In a 1985 interview with *Playboy Magazine*, Apple Inc. C.E.O. Steve Jobs said, “We’ve never worried about numbers. In the marketplace, Apple is trying to focus the spotlight on products because products really make a difference. You can’t con people in this business. The products speak for themselves.” Fifteen years later, Jobs said in an interview with *Fortune Magazine* on the Mac’s latest operating system, “We made the buttons on the screen look so good, you’ll want to lick them” (Gilbert 1). Today, Apple dominates the technology scene, and Steve Jobs is remembered as one of the greatest innovative geniuses of all time. A remarkable 51% of people in the United States own at least one Apple product, and reports indicate the company earned a whopping \$76.2 billion in 2011 (La Monica 1). The tremendous popularity of Apple products certainly epitomizes mass consumption trends in America. Apple has effectively domesticated technology, and its devices continue to uphold omnipotence and an arguably cult-like appreciation. What is it, then, that makes the company so consistently successful?

The average U.S. teenager sends nearly 2,900 text messages each month, while 46% of teens admit to sending many of these messages while driving (Magid 1). Although these statistics are geared toward teens, it is no secret many people text message behind the wheel. There were a reported 16,141 deaths caused by texting while driving between 2002 and 2007 (“Researchers” 1), and the most shocking part is that people still let it happen. What has created such an incredible sense of urgency when it comes to engaging in new media messaging? Rapid advances in technology constantly expand methods of communication and encourage increased dependence on new media devices, like those popularized by Apple. As a result, the line between virtual and face-to-face communication continues to blur. Will this persist until physical

interaction comes secondary to the virtual? Or does it already? Are we living in an age of what cultural philosopher Walter Ong calls “secondary orality?”

According to Apple.com, the iPhone just received its ninth consecutive award for customer satisfaction by J.D. Power and Associates. In following the banner statement, “There’s iPhone. And then there’s everything else,” the site explains:

Apparently love can be measured. And it keeps adding up to iPhone. In nine straight studies by J.D. Power and Associates -- that’s every study since the first iPhone was introduced -- iPhone has been ranked “Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Consumer Smartphones.” iPhone ranked highest in the study, which reviewed the following categories: performance, physical design, features, and ease of operation. What makes an iPhone unlike anything else? Maybe it’s that it lets you do so many things. Or that it lets you do so many things so easily. Those are two reasons iPhone owners say they love their iPhone. But there are many others as well (“iPhone” 1).

Aside from the company’s apparent self-proclamation of elite excellence, there is certainly “proof in the pudding,” as the iPhone continues to be instrumental in the virtual revolution and has, in effect, paved the way for social, technological, and communicative standards. In this project, I will describe how changes in information communication technology, as spurred by the introduction and enduring popularity of the Apple iPhone, have influenced a continuation of secondary orality as a key method of human communication. Although the iPhone may be aesthetically appealing and may carry interesting theoretical implications about the future of communication, the end of this project will also explore the ethical consequences of working to meet extraordinary production demands.

Ong's "Orality"

In his most widely known work *Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word*, philosopher Walter Ong aligns decades of historical and cultural evidence to describe a shift from an oral-based consciousness to one dominated by writing and print. In his work, Ong defines the concept of "secondary orality," in which he suggests communication in Western society is dominated by written and electronic media. This allows for instantaneous feedback in communication, facilitates the development of a "cyber community," and encourages increased fluidity in information sharing. While Ong cites television and telephones as emerging modes of secondary orality, technology has made extraordinary progress since his work was published in 1982, and only continues to revolutionize the way we communicate. If only Ong had known how remarkably accurate his philosophy would prove to be.

Ong offers a detailed distinction between oral and literate cultures. Oral cultures, he explains, are those unfamiliar with writing, while literate cultures belong to a relatively recent development where a language has its own "literature." Furthermore, Ong describes the commonly misconceived relationship between primary orality and literacy, "The use of the term 'oral literature' is preposterous because it reveals our inability to represent to our own minds a heritage of verbally organized materials except as some variant of writing, even when they have nothing to do with writing at all" (Ong 11). Regardless of the apparent disjointedness between understandings of orality and literacy, Ong stresses the extraordinary importance and interdependency of both:

Oral cultures indeed produce powerful and beautiful verbal performances of high artistic and human worth, which are no longer even possible once writing has taken possession of the psyche. Nevertheless, without writing, human

consciousness cannot achieve its fuller potentials, cannot produce other beautiful and powerful creations. In this sense, orality needs to produce and is destined to produce writing. Literacy, as will be seen, is absolutely necessary for the development not only of science but also of history, philosophy, explicative understanding of literature and of any sort, and indeed for the explanation of language (including oral speech) itself (Ong 14-15).

While the emergence of secondary orality encourages increased dependence on technology to communicate, will there be an ultimate demise of spoken literacy? Will our seemingly disposable access to e-mail, text messaging, social media, and the like lead to a loss of face-to-face oral culture?

In his concluding remarks, titled “‘Media’ versus human communication,” Ong makes an interesting suggestion, as it can be notably contrasted with the more modern conceptualization of media and communication:

To speak, you have to address another or others. People in their right minds do not stray through the woods just talking at random to nobody. Even to talk to yourself you have to pretend that you are two people. The reason is that what I say depends on what reality or fancy I feel I am talking into, that is, on what possible responses I might anticipate...Human communication is never one-way. Always, it not only calls for response but is shaped in its very form and content by anticipated response (Ong 176).

Although accurate in his evaluation, Ong was clearly, though understandably, unaware of the social and technological changes that would eventually transpire and transform the way we think about communication. In that case, are we figuratively “straying through the woods” and talking

at random to nobody when we share our lives via social media sites or send text messages that we may or may not receive a response from? While our modern-day idea of what it means to be social largely requires the aid of social media, text messaging, e-mail, or the like, we are contributing to the continuation of secondary orality as a predominant method of communication.

History of the iPhone

I consider myself a heavy technology consumer. I have, and very regularly use, many of the market's latest gadgets: iPhone, Macbook, iPad, iPod, HDTV, you name it. It's safe to say I resemble what some would call a "tech fanatic." The gadget I'm most fixated on, however, is my mobile phone -- the ever-popular Apple iPhone. Although I am someone who avoids sending or reading text messages while driving, I certainly admit I feel a sense of urgency to respond as soon as possible when I receive any kind of message (whether it's a text, e-mail, phone call, Skype call, Facebook notification, or the like), and I can engage in all of these messaging behaviors just from my phone.

I bring this multifunctional gadget with me everywhere. When I forget it at home (which doesn't happen often because it's the first thing I double-check for before leaving), I truly feel like a part of me is cut off from the world. It feels almost freeing when I don't have my phone at hand, but only at the expense of worrying some "super important" phone call or message is being missed. The fact that many would admit they relate to this feeling shows technology, especially multimedia phones, has effectively become a symbolic extension of the self. Without our phones, we are virtually "nonexistent." One of the first things I do when I wake up in the morning, right after I turn off the alarm I set on my phone, is use it to check Facebook while I'm still laying in bed. I've noticed, which truly surprises me, that what I read on Facebook each morning affects

the mood I carry through the rest of the day. If someone leaves me a nice message, or I see something that makes me laugh, I leave bed with a notably positive outlook for the day. If, on the other hand, I see something that makes me upset, or my friends are saying negative things, I leave bed feeling like it's already a "bad day." Throughout the day, I constantly have to resist checking Facebook almost obsessively in between classes or even in class, for that matter.

As Steve Jobs noted during the keynote reveal of Apple's first-ever iPhone, "Every once in a while, a revolutionary product comes along that changes everything. Apple has been fortunate to introduce a few of these to the world" ("Introducing" 1). In 1984, Apple introduced Macintosh, which not only changed Apple, but changed the whole computer industry. When the first iPod came along in 2001, it "didn't just change the way we all listen to music, it changed the entire music industry" ("Introducing" 1). In his 2007 reveal of the first generation iPhone, Jobs emphasized to a roaring crowd of tech enthusiasts, "An iPod, a phone, and a breakthrough Internet communications device -- these are not three separate devices. This is one device, and we are calling it: iPhone" ("Introducing" 1). The device introduced a previously unimagined trifecta of mobile capabilities, "We want to make a leapfrog product that is *way* smarter than any mobile device that has ever been and is super easy to use. This is what iPhone is" ("Introducing" 1).

When Jobs claimed Apple was going to "reinvent the phone," he certainly had a good idea of what was to be made of the device's still unparalleled success. According to a commentary in *PC Magazine*, the first generation iPhone was "promptly dubbed the 'Jesus Phone' by a critical public that ~~erueified~~ worshipped it like a gift from God itself" (Hachman 1). In his 2007 keynote, Jobs repeatedly stressed Apple's use of "revolutionary technology."

Nearly ten years later and with the fifth generation iPhone leading the smartphone market, there is no doubt Apple knows what it means to be “revolutionary.”

The figure in Appendix A illustrates Apple’s success in numbers, including the nearly believable fact that one-third of all smartphone users in the United States owns an iPhone. As can be seen by the figure in Appendix B, the iPhone can be considered the catalyst that has fueled Apple’s exponential popularity and product sales. In the *PC Magazine* commentary, author Mark Hachman explains:

Over the years, the iPhone has slimmed down, added an additional color, an additional antenna, some additional carriers, a friendly yet somewhat cheeky personal assistant, and yes, a few additional customers as well. Since Apple announced the phone, “antennagate” and “You’re holding it wrong” have entered the tech lexicon, while an irascible Steve Jobs reluctantly announced the infamous bumper case promotion. Meanwhile, the iPad entered the market, dismissed by many as just a larger version of the iPhone. We know how that turned out (1).

While some question whether or not Apple will continue to thrive following the loss of its original visionary Steve Jobs, it is clear the company’s success will not be in jeopardy anytime soon. A *Time Magazine* article entitled “Steve Jobs The Businessman: Can Apple Thrive Without Him?” suggests, “Apple will remain a major player in the world of computing and electronics without Steve. The firm is simply too established, too much a part of a consumer’s life, to just wither away, even with the exit of a towering figure like Jobs” (Schuman 1).

Technology Is Communication

Author Jaron Lanier puts it best just with the title of his work *You Are Not a Gadget*, but further explains the dilemma we face with such a vast availability of mobile communication:

The [web 2.0] ideology promotes radical freedom on the surface of the web, but that freedom, ironically, is more for machines than people. Nevertheless, it is sometimes referred to as “open culture.” Anonymous blog comments, vapid video pranks, and lightweight mashups may seem trivial and harmless, but as a whole, this widespread practice of fragmentary, impersonal communication has demeaned interpersonal interaction. Communication is now often experienced as a superhuman phenomenon that towers above individuals. A new generation has come of age with a reduced expectation of what a person can be, and of who each person might become (Lanier 4).

Although it seems media communication comes supplementary to physical communication, it is increasingly becoming a replacement and undermining the nature of face-to-face interaction. In that case, perhaps Neil Postman was right when he argued that we live in an “age of entertainment,” while we’d rather browse Facebook, send text messages, or check the latest sports statistics than engage in face-to-face communication with those around us. Postman makes a good point when he says:

Our politics, religion, news, athletics, education and commerce have been transformed into congenial adjuncts of show business, largely without protest or even much popular notice. The result is that we are a people on the verge of amusing ourselves to death...When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is redefined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when

serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when, in short, a people become an audience, and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility (Postman 4).

Will our compulsive habits to constantly be connected with the virtual world lead to the death of meaningful interaction and, ultimately, a complete loss of “real” culture?

The obsession with mobile communication and technology is taking a toll on some of society’s most important institutions. Institutions of higher education, especially considering the average age of college students, are being particularly affected. Having the distraction of a laptop, smartphone, tablet, and/or the like in class is often lethal to the productive learning environment. A study conducted by students of Wilkes University found that the use of mobile devices is proliferating in college classrooms. The study focused on the use of mobile phones for the purpose of text messaging, and the results are telling:

It was found that 95% of students bring their phones to class every day, 92% use their phones to text message during class time, and 10% admit they have texted during an exam on at least one occasion...These activities include browsing the Internet, sending pictures, or accessing social networking sites (Bohlander and Tindell 1).

The incidence of social proof dictating the individual’s need to be engaged with new media technology at all times, even at the expense of education, relates to the theory of “technological determinism.” This theory holds that technology is a key determiner of social structure and cultural values (MacDougall 14). Mobile communication devices (like the iPhone, in particular) are instrumental in understanding this theory because the more they allow us to interact with others via text message, Internet, or the like, the more dependent we grow on such devices to do

so. Today, it is an unfortunate fact that someone who doesn't own a smartphone, or even a phone for that matter, is at risk of being at a major cultural and communicative disadvantage.

Ultimately, whether we like it or not, we are living in an age of technology fanaticism.

In an April 2013 *Time Magazine* commentary, "Is Texting Killing the English Language?," author and American linguist John McWhorter suggests text messaging is an emerging type of "spoken" language that is growing richer and more complex by the year. In fact, McWhorter argues texting can be considered a new, revolutionary kind of talking:

In the old days, we didn't much write like talking because there was no mechanism to reproduce the speed of conversation. But texting and instant messaging do -- and a revolution has begun... There is a virtual cult of concision and little interest in capitalization or punctuation. The argument that texting is "poor writing" is analogous, then, to one that the Rolling Stones is "bad music" because it doesn't use violas. Texting is developing its own kind of grammar and conventions (McWhorter 1).

He uses the expression "LOL" to highlight the idea that texting has developed its own kind of grammar. It is rare people are actually "laughing out loud" anymore when they write the expression. It has evolved into a much more subtle signal of basic empathy between conversation partners. Instead of carrying literal meaning, it is merely an attitude that helps establish a sense of equality in conversation. When Annabelle answers the simple question "What are you doing?" with "LOL at the library studying for two hours," she isn't actually laughing out loud. In that case, McWhorter argues, "LOL is grammar" (McWhorter 1). McWhorter concludes his piece with a tone of optimism (or perhaps more of concession than anything), as he suggests, "Civilization is fine. People banging away on their smartphones are fluently using a code

separate from the one they use in actual writing, and there is no evidence that texting is ruining composition skills. Texting, far from being a scourge, is a work in progress” (McWhorter 1).

In the March 2013 *New York Times* feature “The Child, the Tablet and the Developing Mind,” author Nick Bilton explores the role technology is playing in the future of a generation “raised on portable screens” (Bilton 1). Bilton begins with an anecdote detailing a dinner date with his sister and her young children who relentlessly bickered at the table. However, as soon as Bilton’s sister pulled two Apple iPads out of her purse and handed them over to her children, one 4-years-old and the other seven, it was like “pulling a rabbit out of a hat,” as they became suddenly and eerily quiet. Dr. Gary Small, director of the Longevity Center at UCLA and author of “iBrain: Surviving the Technological Alteration of the Modern Mind,” reports that the long-term neurological effects of such technologies is not yet known, but he suggests:

We do know that the brain is highly sensitive to stimuli, like iPads and smartphone screens, and if people spend too much time with one technology, and less time interacting with people like parents at the dinner table, that could hinder the development of certain communications skills (Bilton 1).

Bilton then goes on to ask, “So will a child who plays with crayons at dinner rather than a coloring application on an iPad be a more socialized person?” Bilton’s inquiry brings us back to the ultimate question of whether technology is enhancing face-to-face social exchange, or whether it is replacing it. A report published by the Millennium Cohort Study revealed that children who watch more than three hours of television each day are considerably more likely to have emotional and relationship problems than those who do not (Bilton 1). Watching his niece and nephew consumed by the shiny screens instead of engaging in conversation or simply being left to organic imagination (as he and his sister had as children) causes concern for Bilton. He

concludes his piece with a tone of concern, as he quotes MIT professor of technology and society Sherry Turkle:

Conversations with each other are the way children learn to have conversations with themselves, and learn how to be alone...Learning about solitude and being alone is the bedrock of early development, and you don't want your kids to miss out on that because you're pacifying them with a device. They need to be able to explore their imagination. To be able to gather themselves and know who they are. So someday they can form a relationship with another person without a panic of being alone. If you don't teach your children to be alone, they'll only know how to be lonely (Bilton 1).

While the technology industry skyrockets and becomes increasingly influential in both our consumption habits and our everyday lives, are Bilton's observations something we should be worried about? Is it even preventable? Technology and what it can do to make our lives easier is of the essence, and its progress shows no sign of slowing anytime soon.

Professor Turkle suggests we reevaluate our relationship with technology before it's too late. She warns that people are growing increasingly dependent on "robotic toys" for companionship and less so on other people. Innovations like Siri, the iPhone's digital assistant, encourage smartphone users to rely on robots in a whole new way. In the 2013 National Public Radio feature, "Are We Plugged-In, Connected, But Alone?," Turkle examines how our devices and online avatars are redefining human communication:

The idea of some kind of artificial companionship has already become the new normal...Kids play with robotic pets, become allies with computer game agents. But I think that this new normal comes with a price. For the idea of artificial

companionship to become our new normal, we have to change ourselves, and in the process we are remaking human values and human connection (“Are We” 1).

In interviews with people of all kinds, Turkle found that many often fantasize about robots compensating for unrealistic expectations that aren’t satisfied by other people, like being friends who always listen or never get angry. Turkle further explains this sense of apprehension among communicators when she suggests, “What are we talking about when we're talking about robots? We're talking about our fears of each other. Our disappointments with each other. Our lack of community. Our lack of time... We are now at what I call the robotic moment. Not because we have built robots worthy of our company, but because we are ready for theirs” (“Are We” 1). Robots are not yet sophisticated enough to satisfy our perfect illusions of companionship, but technology certainly doesn’t have a long way to go to until that happens. “Now is the time,” Turkle says, “to step back and reconsider how and when we want to let machines into our lives, and when we should turn them off” (“Are We” 1).

Furthermore, recent studies suggest 11% of all children in the United States have attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and diagnoses are on the rise. According to a March 2013 *New York Times* health article:

The figures showed that an estimated 6.4 million children ages 4 through 17 had received an A.D.H.D. diagnosis at some point in their lives, a 16 percent increase since 2007 and a 41 percent rise in the past decade. About two-thirds of those with a current diagnosis receive prescriptions for stimulants like Ritalin or Adderall, which can drastically improve the lives of those with A.D.H.D. but can also lead to addiction, anxiety and occasionally psychosis (Schwarz 1).

Why? While teachers largely continue to maintain classroom settings that reflect an “old school” use of chalkboards and hard copy books, students are inherently finding it harder to pay attention in class because they are so attuned to the constant multitasking they do at home with their various electronics, television, Internet, and the like. This certainly does not go to say technology is single-handedly causing attention deficit disorders among students, but it does offer a possible explanation for increased diagnoses and a reason to seriously evaluate technology’s effect on future generations.

Social Media as a Virtual Construction of Reality

I hate Facebook. In fact, I despise it. To me, it is a collection of irrelevant, trivial information, and I just wasted an hour of my time browsing it because I am hopelessly addicted. Now more than ever, Facebook plays a tremendous role in representing and maintaining human identity -- regardless of the too often overlooked fact that the information presented could be entirely fictional, for all we know. It blows my mind how necessary I’ve allowed Facebook to become in my own and others’ everyday life. I hesitate to admit it’s not uncommon for my conversations to include, “Hey, I saw on Facebook...” or “We have to make this Facebook official!” One of the first things I do in the morning is check Facebook. It’s difficult to get going without making sure I’m not missing any “urgent” notifications, which of course I never do. I’ve even noticed it has the power to influence my mood for the day. Reading negative posts always seems to set me off on the wrong foot, even if the information doesn’t directly affect me in any way. I’ve acknowledged these frustrating emotions so many times before, but I’ve never done anything about it -- until now.

As I’m making my way through senior year, prepping for graduation, scrambling to figure out what I’m going to do with my life and juggling everything else, I have found myself

exceptionally stressed out. During a car ride home from school about a month ago, a coincidentally relevant topic came up while listening to the John Tesh Radio Show. Tesh discussed a study that found the more time people spend on Facebook, the more likely they are to suffer from higher levels of depression and anxiety. This is due largely in part by the fact that Facebook users tend to post information about their accomplishments or positive things happening in their lives, leading the assumptive onlooker to believe he or she isn't doing too great and is therefore at risk of depression. In response to Tesh's report and in an effort to quell some of my own stress, I promptly decided to deactivate my Facebook account for at least two weeks. I knew this would be a very challenging task for me, but I wanted to determine if I could survive that long without feeding my seemingly helpless addiction and whether or not it would help my quickly worsening anxiety.

Nearly a month after this revelation, my Facebook account is once again in action. I did, however, surpass my original goal by going hands-off for over three weeks. The most important lesson I learned is that stepping away from social media chaos in a time of emotional limbo does, in fact, aid in lessening anxiety. An element of communication studies that helps explain the origin of such tendencies is Dependency Theory. Sandra Ball-Rokeach and Melvin DeFleur's Dependency Theory highlights "the interactions of social institutions and media systems with audiences to create needs, interests and motives...subsequently [leading] to various dependencies" (Littlejohn and Foss 353). The theory identifies an integral relationship among audiences, media and society as a whole. Understanding Dependency Theory and knowing it exists, for that matter, has helped me come to terms with communication technology's tremendous (although sometimes obnoxious) role in my social life. My personal dependency on

technology and, specifically, the value I've invested in social networking is a perfect example of this.

When I dropped off the edge of the Facebook world, I was immediately confronted by several concerned friends -- as if I had lost a limb or something much more realistically tragic than deactivating my Facebook account. One friend frantically sent a text message asking, "Why did you delete your Facebook!?" In response to my explaining it was temporarily on hiatus due to frustration, he quickly agreed, "Oh, I know how that goes." My favorite reaction came from my 60-year-old (and very arguably tech-challenged) aunt, who sent me an e-mail that read, "I tried to go to your Facebook page, but your name is not on my page of friends, nor Uncle Tim's, nor can I find it when I put your name in the search bar. Are you ok? Have you disabled your account?" Again, after explaining myself, she responded, "I totally understand; [Facebook] does get rather dramatic." Not only is it amusing both of the above friends acknowledged their own frustrations with Facebook, but they assumed the deletion of account meant something was terribly wrong with me, as if I had forgone an essential piece of my identity. Granted, I did deactivate my account in response to heightened anxiety, which is certainly acceptable to beg concern, but why can't I choose not to participate in social media without being so hotly interrogated?

The answer, I found, lies in Dependency Theory. As society places increased importance on social media in identity and relationship maintenance, I understand why my profile being activated or not reflects, for many, a turning on or off of social existence. According to the theory, people depend on media information to meet certain goals. In this case, those goals are my Facebook friends' constant need to be virtually connected to the universe. Through my learning experience, I've found a much lesser urge to be so "connected," as we have the

countless capacities to be today. In fact, I'd rather not be virtually connected to everyone, but rather focus on the closer, physical relationships most significant to me. Because, however, Dependency Theory emphasizes the public's need for social stability, I am more empathetic to these societal demands and don't so much curse Facebook for serving merely as an outlet for pointless drama. I acknowledge the fact that it can be a very useful communication tool and will probably remain difficult to eliminate until society fails to value it so highly for meeting social needs.

Ethic vs. Profit

With its ever-growing popularity, how does Apple keep up with such tremendous product and labor demands? While we identify the iPhone as an emblem of social exchange, and nearly every other smartphone user insists on having one, what type of virtual reality are we constructing? At what point is Apple willing to risk compromising its ethical standards, if at all? This is a common dilemma faced by many profitable institutions, and it is important to examine this often either/or decision between maximizing profit and maintaining ethical guidelines when real-life consequences are involved. Many have investigated this dilemma as it applies to Apple and have come up with a common, supposed discovery: laborers of Chinese manufacturing plants work long hours in harsh working environments to produce the company's highly demanded gadgets. In a 2004 interview with *Businessweek Magazine*, Steve Jobs said, "[Success] comes from saying no to 1,000 things to make sure we don't get on the wrong track or try to do too much" (Linzmayer 1). In that case, is the company now "trying to do too much?" Do Apple's overseas manufacturing facilities truly employ unethical labor practices, or is this response a result of uninformed speculation?

In a February 2012 article, CNN jumped on the accusation train with reports of militant-like working conditions for Apple's overseas laborers. The article details an account of a young Chinese woman who accepts a job at one of Apple's manufacturing plants because she is a poor college student and is promised "great benefits and little overtime" (Zhang 1). Much to the young woman's horror, she finds working conditions to be quite the opposite. Hong Kong-based labor rights groups describe Apple's manufacturing plants – Foxconn being the company's biggest partner -- as a "stringent military-like culture [based on] surveillance, obedience, and not challenging authority" (Zhang 1). The rights groups also claim a plant in Shenzhen had to install nets in response to an outbreak of worker suicides in 2010.

Upon the young college student's hiring, fellow plant employees warn her to turn back immediately, saying, "Why did you come to Foxconn? Don't ever think about it again and leave right now. [The company] uses women as men and men as machines" (Zhang 1). Foxconn responded to these statements, assuring it takes full responsibility for its employees and "[works] hard to give its 1.2 million employees in China a safe and positive working environment and compensation and benefits that are competitive with all industry peers in that location." Apple, finding itself under fire as a result of allegations against the manufacturing facility, released a statement in response to questioning by CNN:

We care about every worker in our worldwide supply chain. We insist that our suppliers provide safe working conditions, treat workers with dignity and respect, and use environmentally responsible manufacturing processes wherever Apple products are made. Our suppliers must live up to these requirements if they want to keep doing business with Apple (Zhang 1).

Apple officials also reported honors by the Fair Labor Association.

Despite poor reports, experts suggest Foxconn is the so-called lesser of evils when it comes to manufacturing plants in China. The company provides heating, air conditioning, and clean dormitories for its employees. These are amenities workers in many other plants unfortunately don't enjoy. A spokesperson for the China Labor Bulletin says, "[Apple] is making huge profits, but workers feel that they are not getting a fair share...just because [the company] is making a profit doesn't mean it is passing that onto Foxconn; the margins are slim." Regardless, the spokesperson adds, "It's also a challenge for Apple to find a manufacturer that delivers the quality and speed Foxconn can with its vast resources" (Zhang 1). In the end, CNN's article returns to the example of the young college student who, after working long hours at Foxconn, admits she can't wait to finish school so she will never have to return to the factory, "It's so boring, I can't bear it anymore. Everyday is like: I get off from work and I go to bed. I get up in the morning, and I go to work. It is my daily routine and I almost feel like an animal." When asked why the company uses humans instead of machines to do such demanding work, she responds, "Well, humans are cheaper" (Zhang 1).

Another media organization that covered this controversy is National Public Radio. Its standpoint on the issue, however, ended up being the subject of an embarrassing retraction after further investigation. NPR's original broadcast "Mr. Daisey and the Apple Factory" aired in January 2012 and details Mike Daisey's revealing visit to Foxconn. Daisey offers an explicit account of his time at the factory in a monologue called "The Agony and the Ecstasy of Steve Jobs." One of the first things he notices when he enters the factory is the workers' age. With the aid of Daisey's hired translator, a young girl tells Daisey she is 13 years old. "In a company obsessed with the details -- the aluminum milled just so, the glass fitted perfectly into the case," Daisey explains, "how could [Apple] let this happen?" The young girl explains that when factory

officials anticipate an inspection, they temporarily replace the young workers with adult workers, but return to business as usual as soon as the inspectors leave. In his monologue, Daisey asks questions, “Do you really think it's credible that Apple doesn't know about this? Or is it just doing what we're all doing? Does it just see what it wants to see?” (“Mr. Daisey” 1).

What also strikes Daisey is the sound of the factory, or lack of sound for that matter. There is very little tinkering of machines because anything that can be assembled by a human is. He finds the average workday lasts 12 hours and during busy seasons, often 16. Upon touring the on-site dormitories, Daisey reports the beds are so close together, one must “slide into it like a coffin.” He says there are cameras everywhere and sarcastically explains, “Why wouldn't there be? You know, when we dream of a future where the regulations are washed away, and the corporations are finally free to sail above us, you don't have to dream about some sci-fi dystopian *Blade Runner* 1984 bullshit. You can go to Shenzhen tomorrow” (“Mr. Daisey” 1).

Daisey then meets with a supposedly “undercover” Chinese labor union. He speaks with a former Foxconn employee who had mangled his hand in a metal press while working on enclosures for the MacBook and iPad. The man claims he was given no medical attention and was fired when, during self-recovery, officials noticed he was moving too slow. He tells Daisey he has since been hired at a woodworking plant where people are a lot nicer and the hours much more reasonable. Daisey pulls his own iPad from his bag and watches the man's eyes widen. Daisey explains:

One of the ultimate ironies of globalism -- at this point, there are no iPads in China. Even though every last one of them was made at factories in China, they've all been packaged up in perfectly minimalist Apple packaging and shipped across the sea so that we can all enjoy them. [The man] strokes the screen

with his ruined hand, and the icons slide back and forth. He says something to the translator. And the translator says, "He says it's a kind of magic" ("Mr. Daisey" 1).

Glass questions Daisey in an attempt to verify his claims, to which Daisey repeatedly responds, "I just know that I was there, I know that I saw it, and I know that I talked to [the workers]."

Glass reports the one source he found to back Daisey up is Apple itself. In 2010, auditors went into 127 unnamed manufacturing facilities around the world and found 91 underage workers. According to documents that can be found on Apple's own website, the company claims it has a very strict audit schedule. Keeping the names of the facilities secret, however, implies "Apple is basically saying, trust us. We're taking care of the problems." Glass responds, "But without supplier names, nobody can independently verify any of it" ("Mr. Daisey" 1).

In a March 2012 follow-up broadcast to "Mr. Daisey and the Apple Factory," NPR regretfully announced their retraction of the original story. Host Ira Glass explains that after further investigation, major portions of Daisey's report were found to be fabricated. After fact-checking, NPR found that what Daisey said about his trip to China was a combination of things that happened and things he had just heard about or researched. Daisey failed to give his translator's phone number to the radio journalists at the time of the original broadcast, which Glass recalls should have raised the first red flag. With the aid of Rob Schmitz, the China correspondent for the public radio program *Marketplace*, NPR finally gets in contact with Daisey's translator. The woman, Cathy Lee, admits some of the things Daisey says in his report are true, but most are terribly exaggerated or just plain made up. Among many other corrections Lee makes of Daisey's story, she says the girl who supposedly told Daisey she was 13 may have looked young, but probably wasn't. Schmitz says, "[Cathy would] be surprised [if the girl was

really 13] because, she says, in the 10 years she's visited factories in Shenzhen, she's hardly ever seen underage workers.” As for the man with the mangled hand who told Daisey his iPad is “just like magic,” Lee says Daisey’s claim is “like movie scenery” and not true (“Retraction” 1). Lee doesn’t remember the guy, but says he, along with many of the other union laborers, had never even worked at Foxconn. Lee says at the end of Schmitz’s interview, “[Daisey] is not a journalist. He is a writer. As a Chinese, I think it's better if he can tell American people the truth. I hope people know the real China. But he's a writer, and he exaggerates some things. I think it's not so good” (“Retraction” 1).

NPR’s Glass and Schmitz invite Daisey back to explain himself on the retraction episode. Amidst harsh questioning, Daisey tries to stand by his word, but with a noticeably uneasy tone and a lot of awkward silences. When asked if he thinks the truth matters, Daisey replies, “I think the truth always matters. I think the truth is tremendously important. I don't live in a subjective universe, where everything is up for grabs. I really do believe that stories should be subordinate to the truth.” After relentless prying by Glass and Schmitz, Daisey admits his story is “theatrical,” with which he follows:

[My story] is not up to the standards of journalism. And that's why it was completely wrong for me to have it on your show. And that's something I deeply regret. And I regret that the people who are listening, the audience of *This American Life*, who know that it is a journalistic enterprise -- if they feel misled or betrayed, I regret to them as well (“Retraction” 1).

NPR’s Glass ends the program explaining the concept of “news that’s fit to print” -- Mike Daisey’s news, of course, no longer cutting it.

Given NPR's research on Apple's overseas labor controversy, CNN's article becomes questionable. It's always difficult to determine which source of information is correct. It is, then, especially difficult to determine truth in journalism when competing news groups always want the hardest-hitting stories. Compared to NPR's report, however, the CNN article comes into question because it's simply stating the supposed "facts," while NPR reporters did their own research to try and determine the truth. CNN's approach to journalism is sensationalist in style, while NPR's is more investigative. With so much information available, it seems the absolute truth is almost impossible to find. In this case, NPR presents a much stronger argument than does CNN. Although NPR retracts its original broadcast, the fact that reporters brought the issue back for discussion shows the news group's dedication and determination to reach a valid conclusion. What makes NPR's argument particularly believable is its willingness to admit it was wrong in the first place. This could have been tremendously harmful to the news group because people rely on journalism to present the facts (although this clearly doesn't always happen), and it could have lost listener loyalty as a result of the blunder. The NPR reporters take Daisey's story and reanalyze it claim-by-claim to find much of what he says is pure fabrication. That being said, NPR deserves respect for its decision to revise an original story because it represents journalistic honesty and, above all, a hopeful future for Apple's ethical standards.

Conclusion

Ultimately, time will reveal how technology like the iPhone is changing human communication. It is designed with good intention to *supplement* our lives, but it tends to be used instead to *replace* essential behaviors like face-to-face exchange. Technology continues to present new and exciting ways to communicate; however, many choose to use it in place of physical interaction. Communication apprehension is something everyone, to some extent, will

experience, and technology like the Apple iPhone offers ample opportunity to communicate exclusively by electronic means. The ability to text message, make phone calls, send e-mails, and use social media all from one device is extraordinary, but it is also important to maintain balance among verbal, written, and physical interaction in order to preserve the dynamic nature of human communication. While our communication styles are now largely dominated by method that encourages the continuation of secondary orality, we must also work to preserve the value of a craft that is rapidly changing: good old-fashioned face-to-face communication.

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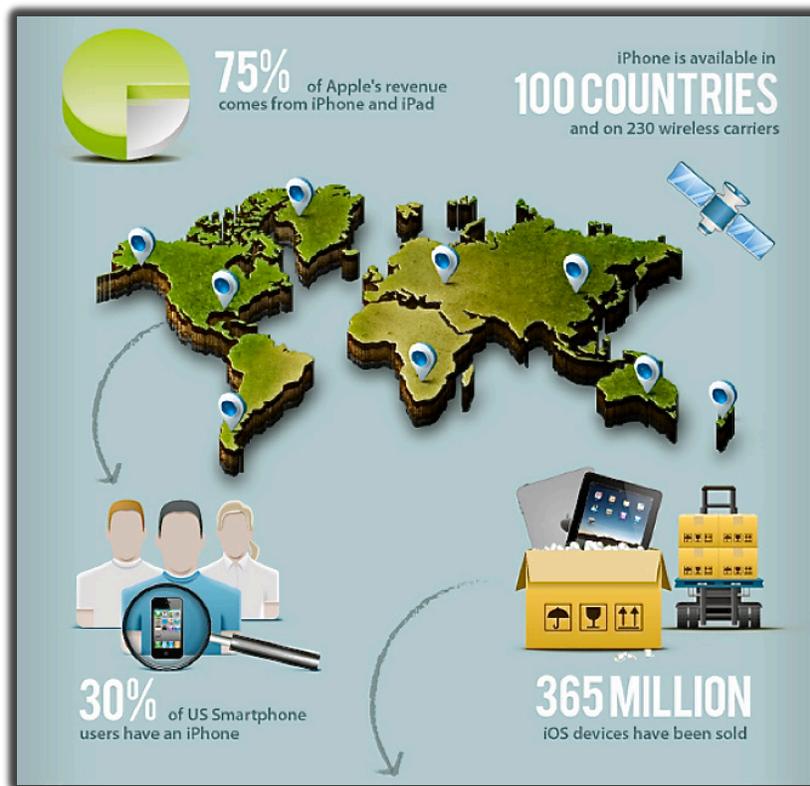
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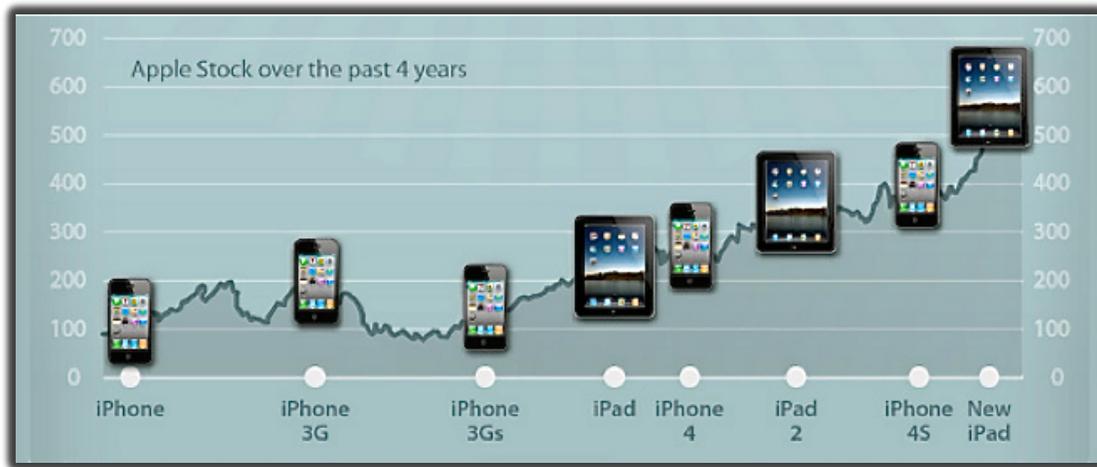
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Appendix A



Source: Sortable's "Apple by the Numbers"

Appendix B



Source: Sortable's "Apple by the Numbers"