Social Hyper-Connection & Cultural Transformation

Lessons from the Digital Natives

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Definition: Grounded Theory

> "Clearly, a grounded theory that is faithful to the everyday realities of the substantive area is one that has been carefully induced from the data." ~Glaser & Strauss, 1967
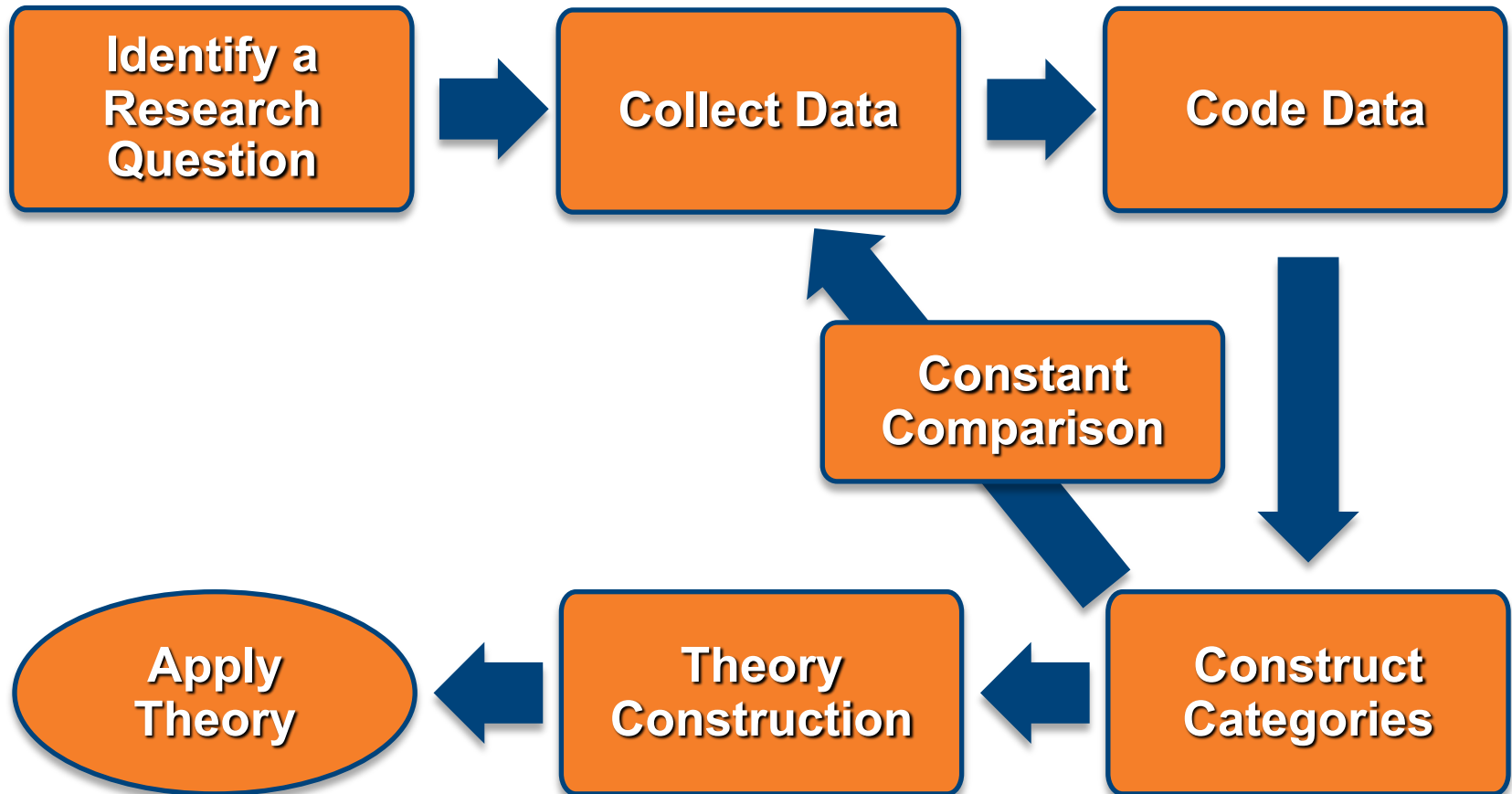
Grounded Theory:
A systematic research methodology that involves the construction of theory through the analysis of data

- Methodology that reverses the flow of the traditional scientific method

- Begins with data and ends with theory

- Does not seek statistical "truth," but the development of categories and concepts

Process of Grounded Theory

Internet Usage in 2017
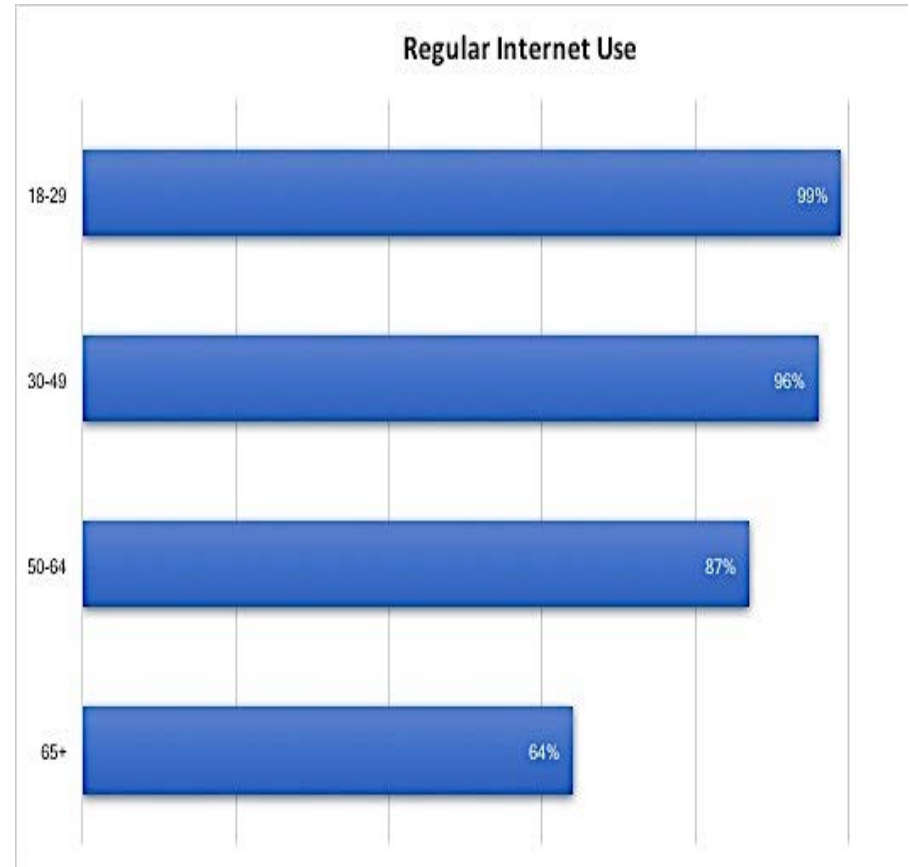
Current Global Population

- 7.4 Billion

Global Internet Use

- 50% or 3.6 Billion People

- Facebook has 1.3 Billion daily users

North American Internet Use

- 90% or 508 Million People

- 86% of adults age 18-29 are on Facebook

US Internet Use Patterns by Age

Regular Internet Use

Age	Percent
18-29	99%
30-49	96%
50-64	87%
65+	64%

Courtesy of Pewinternet.org and Internet World Stats
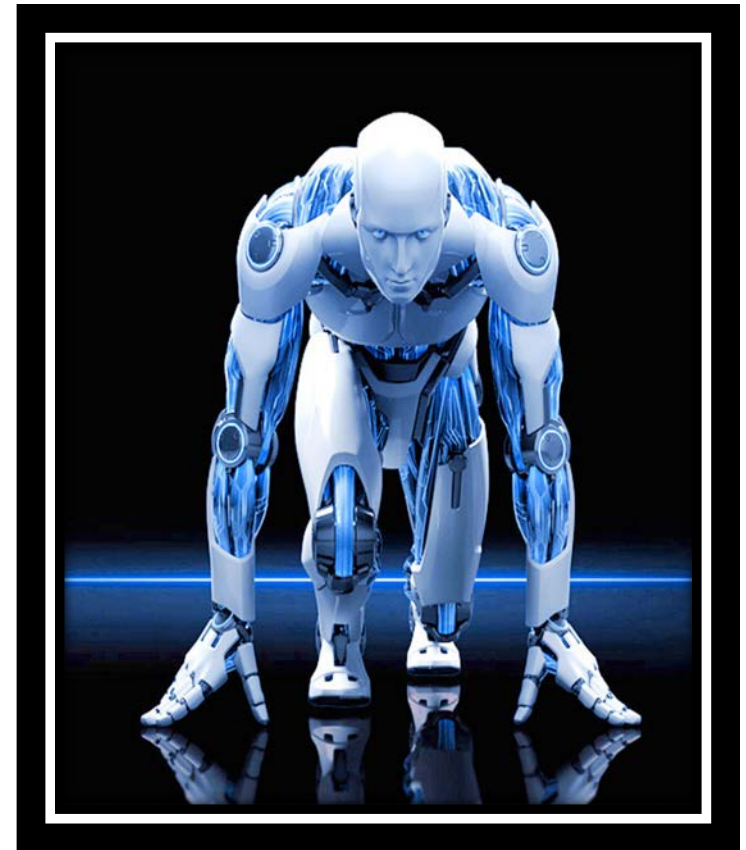
Definition: Digital Natives

Digital Natives:
The first generations (Millennials & Post-Millennials) who have grown up entirely in a techno-mediated, Internet connected social world.

- **Millennials**
  - Born between 1982-2002
  - 81 Million People in the U.S.
  - Consider technology the most defining characteristic of their generation

- **Post-Millennials**
  - Born after 2002

Prensky, Marc (2001). "Digital Natives, Digital Immigrants". *On the Horizon* 9 (5): 1–6.

Understanding the Digital Native

◆ The World Wide Web began in 1991. How many of you were born before "The Web"?

◆ How many of you have your smartphone, tablet or laptop with you right now? How many of you have all of the above?

◆ How would you feel if I took it away and would not return it until tomorrow? What if I never gave it back?

Research Project Overview

Primary Research Question

- How has the rise of the Internet and social media reshaped the establishment and maintenance of interpersonal relationships among digital natives?

Research Project

- Multi-site study of undergraduate college students
  - Large urban private research university in NY
  - Small rural public career-focused liberal arts college in WV

- Qualitative Methodologies

- 60+ In-depth Interviews

- Online Content Analysis

- Involves Student Researchers

Understanding Coding

Open Coding:

Identify a useful concept from the data and creating an "anchor" or marker to identify it

◆ Examples of codes used for this project

- o Communication
- o Relationships
- o Information
- o Connections
- o Gender Difference
- o Class Difference
- o Social Media
- o Texting

Data Coding Activity

"I can keep a conversation going, for two days straight, texting with one person, and so that'll be back and forth, constantly, all day. And we don't really talk about anything important, it is just kind of…I don't know…being there. And if you are dating someone, you normally keep in contact over the phone. Texting is literally like talking with someone, so they'll text throughout the day." ~Julie

◆ In your group, lets identify the codes that might apply to this data

◆ Let's Analyze:
  ○ What kind of relationship exists between frequent communication and being connected for Julie?
                                    For you?

Data Coding Activity

> Without my phone I would not have a social life because my phone is my outlet and source into my social world! I wouldn't be able to survive without my phone because I wouldn't be able to speak to my parents and I also wouldn't be able to speak to most of my friends plus then I'd have nothing to entertain me during class. ~Matt

◆ In your group, lets identify the codes that might apply to this data

◆ Let's Analyze:
   o How important is a smartphone to the social world of college students?

Gender and Technology Use

◆ What is the most important thing you use this technology for?
◆ How important is this technology to your daily life?

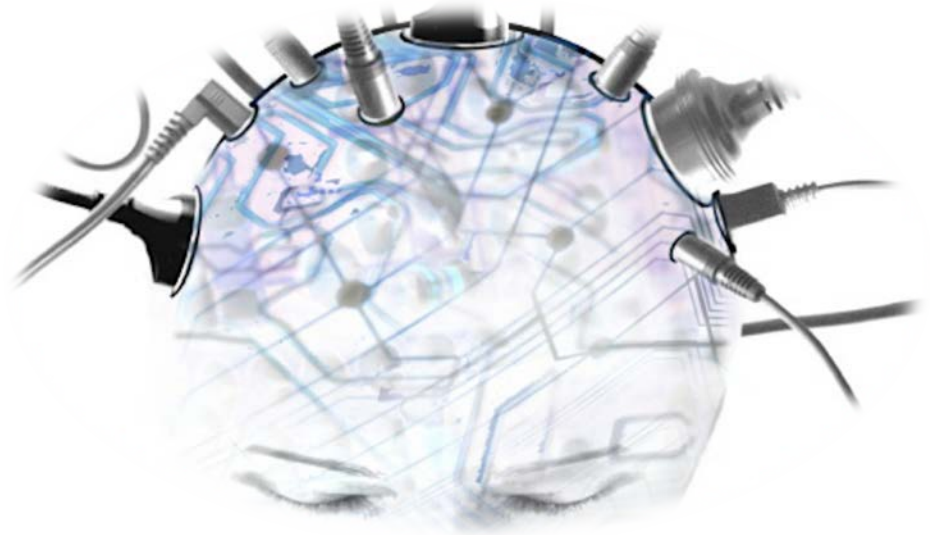| Group	Response Categories			
	Social Media	Importance	Texting	Importance
Women	Staying in touch with friends and family (Relationships)	Very High	Talking with friends and families (Communication)	Very High
Men	Getting access to information and networks (Communication)	High	Daily social organization (Communication)	Very High
Women	Managing on-campus social networks (Connection)	Very High	Talking with friends and family (Communication)	High
Men	News and information access (Communication)	High	Daily social organization (Communication)	High

Class and Technology Use

◆ What is the most important thing you use this technology for?
◆ How important is this technology to your daily life?

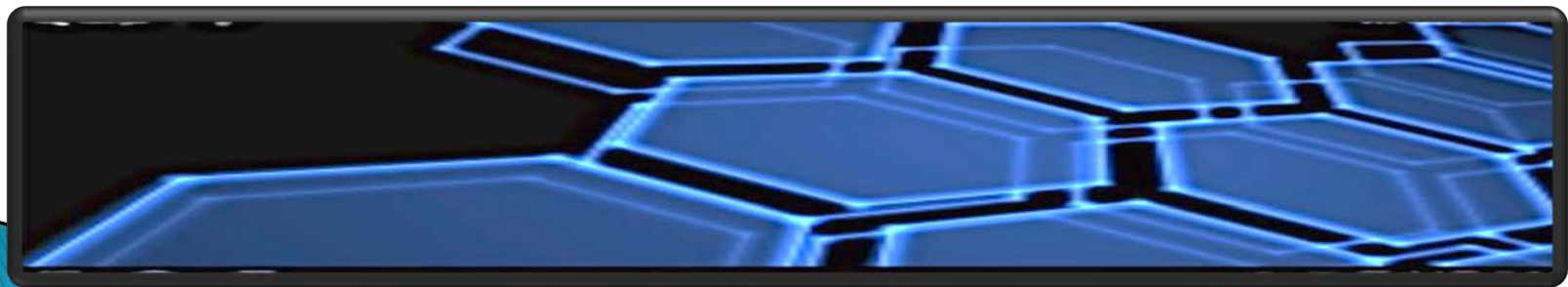| Group	Response Categories			
	Social Media	Importance	Texting	Importance
Middle/ Upper Class	Expanding and managing social networks (Connection)	Very High	Daily organization of networks and tasks (Communication)	Very High
Lower/ Working Class	Keeping in touch with family (Relationships)	High	Parental and peer support (Relationships)	Very High
Middle/ Upper Class	Managing on-campus social networks (Connection)	Very High	Daily organization of networks and tasks (Communication)	High
Lower/ Working Class	News and information access (Information)	Moderate	Family support, making decisions, reflexive contact (Relationships)	High

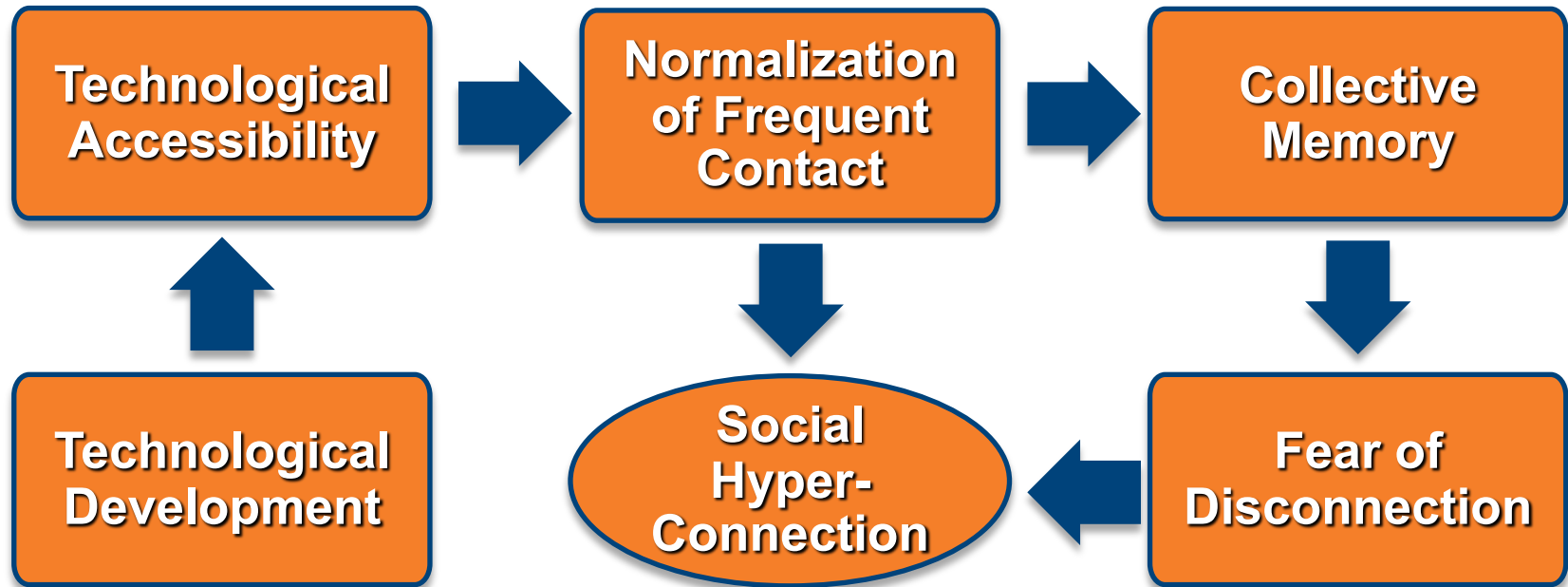# Concept: Social Hyper-Connection

From my research, I developed **Social Hyper-Connection:**

- A sense of connection that is experienced as abstractly universal

- While not practically "connected" at all times, a persistent idea that and individual is always potentially accessible

- Conversely, an understanding of "disconnection" rooted in potential loss of connection to the social network/collective

Visualize Social Hyper-Connection

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┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐      ┌─────────────────┐
│ Technological   │  →   │ Normalization   │  →   │ Collective      │
│ Accessibility   │      │ of Frequent     │      │ Memory          │
│                 │      │ Contact         │      │                 │
└─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘      └─────────────────┘
        ↑                        ↓                        ↓
┌─────────────────┐         ╭───────────╮         ┌─────────────────┐
│ Technological   │         │  Social   │    ←    │ Fear of         │
│ Development     │         │  Hyper-   │         │ Disconnection   │
│                 │         │ Connection│         │                 │
└─────────────────┘         ╰───────────╯         └─────────────────┘
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Let's Discuss

◆ Can you think of examples of Social Hyper-Connection in your life?

◆ Can you identify any negative cases – areas or groups who don't experience hyper-connection?

◆ How do you think being hyper-connected might shape your experience in different ways?
In relationships? At work?
Any other situations?

◆ What are some advantages and disadvantages of Social Hyper-Connection?