COMS203 Assignment 2: Reflexive Report:

Communication technologies:

Due to the lockdown leaving some of us outside of Wellington, we elected to hold all of our group communications online. Initial contact was made via email, where we each detailed which method of communication would best suit us; a loose consensus was reached that Facebook messenger and email would be the best fit for everyone to organise meetings due to them being modes which most of us frequently checked. The meetings we would hold via zoom (hosted by me), which countered to not being able to meet in-person, and allowed for real-time communication, reducing time-delay between messages. A Google Doc was set up to put down our research notes, and also to ask each other for help with certain areas of work. This allowed us to instantly see the progress our group members were making and if they had any questions or concerns we could help with.

Overall our communication as a group was good, we responded to queries and requests within one day at most, and everyone attended all of the meetings. We took an EMCA approach to communicating as a group, utilising technology to allow for and enhance communication possibilities (by scheduling meetings outside of normal working hours for example) despite not being able to meet in person. There were more meetings than anticipated, with three zoom meetings of the whole group in addition to two tutorial sessions spent working on the project, although this was due to our need to change research direction part-way through the project, rather than issues with communication technology.

Leadership and labour:

The workload distribution between group members was distributed relatively evenly, with each of us playing to our particular strengths. Initial contact among the group members was made via email, from where we established that we would primarily utilise Facebook Messenger to coordinate and organise meetings, which would be held via zoom due to lockdown constraints and not all group members being in Wellington. These meetings were irregularly timed due to work and university schedules among the group, as well as adapting to fit our needs (specifically, the need for more meetings than anticipated) as the project progressed. In this way we oriented our decision-making around the fundamental constraint of the project being that of time, as the presentation day was the "urgent" requirement similar to the need for website repair in the study by Alby & Zucchermaglio (2006, p. 961), which then shaped how decision-making unfolded with regard to meetings and in-group targets to be achieved before each meeting. We also established that all research would be collected in

a Google Doc, and when we reached the point of having enough, would be transferred to Google Slides for the final presentation.

Tasks were allocated by group members volunteering for specific tasks or opting out of others, with the remainder of tasks being divided up by group consensus after this. The group completed the assignment without a leader, with all decisions made via group consensus. This led to some slow-down of work, as we all tried to avoid stepping on each other's toes, leading to some time being wasted as we tried to be democratic. However, once we got past this hurdle and found a workable direction (our first direction being scrapped part-way through), the work was done effectively and efficiently, likely aided by the feeling of investment and being valued that came from this democratic process. The change in direction needed due to our initial research taking a direction which did not come from an EMCA standpoint bears resemblance to the approach of Suchman (2006) regarding plans, in that the plan needed constant updating and revising as new findings or challenges came to light. This approach to plans was also highlighted in that each group member needed help with certain aspects of the project, and therefore the areas of focus as determined in our initial plan constantly underwent minor adjustments, which had a large and positive impact on our final product. Finally, when we needed help, we asked for it before the situation was dire (as we had outlined in our ground rules), and in return quickly received aid. This attitude adopted by the group of asking for and receiving help in a rapid fashion aided in our continued good working relationship, adding to our own investment in the group and the project begun by the democratic process of decision making and task allocation.

For my own contribution; I first put out the idea to study on-call work, as I feel that it is a practice that is very much underappreciated in terms of everyday work. I additionally contributed the real-life experience portion of the presentation when it came to on-call work. Additional research I did that included into the gig economy and the precariat, as well as early research attempting to find ways to relate on-call work and technology to an EMCA context. I set up and hosted the zoom meetings we used for our group collaborative discussions.

Personal reflection:

During this group project I learned firstly, that when joining a group of peers who do not know each other beforehand, time is needed to establish how we will interact together as a group before we can effectively work together. This reminded me of the bucket vs yellow-brick-road theories as described by Heritage & Clayman (2010); just because each group was given the same brief and were comprised of similar numbers of students taking the same course, individual agency determined that the output of each group varied greatly.

Working in a group highlighted for me how prominent some of my own strengths and weaknesses were: I was able to clearly see that I had grasped certain concepts from the course

to date, as well as how far my ability to research has progressed; able to find and understand articles relating our study to the course content without much difficulty, in addition to articulating them well. In terms of my weaknesses, the project highlighted the fact that I prefer to avoid confrontation; even if I was at times frustrated with how long decisions took to make, I found that preferable to potential conflict. Finally, the project further highlighted my weakness of not wanting to ask for help; even when I had difficulty with certain aspects of the assignment I was uncomfortable asking for help from the group.

The next time I work in a group, I would try to focus on my weakness when it comes to confrontation; I would be clearer about what I want and how I would like to go about it, whilst still refraining from taking over the whole project.

References:

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