Local Pocket Internet and Global Social Media
Bridging the Digital Gap: Facebook and Youth Sub-Stratum in Urban India

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Abstract: As Web 2.0 technologies penetrate the world and as more people are spurred to go online, the digital literacy gap shrinks. However, differences do persist, mainly between users who have infrastructural support and those who access and use ICTs under acute infrastructural constraints. Technologies in developing countries like India have found new ways to immerse and embed into the social milieu of users. Our paper offers a Development 2.0 framework (Thompson 2008), in which ICTs are no longer assemblages of hardware, software and user behaviours but 'architectures of participation' and opportunities for generating digital social lives. The focus of this paper is Facebook as appreciable and compelling new media for non-elite youth in urban India with development impacts on everyday day life. Having reached the socially disadvantaged, Facebook is transforming as a space to learn, play and connect with the global digital culture and conferring hitherto unavailable media entitlements. Our arguments in this paper focus around two main points: 1) Social media for the digital-poor is central for priming digital experiences and literacies; and 2) Development 2.0 is a nascent yet powerful lens to read Web 2.0 platforms energizing new forms of communication behaviours. This research is an anthropologically informed study about low income users of the mobile [pre-pay] internet accessing Facebook primarily on their [modest] phones. It explores the possibilities of SNSes like Facebook transgressing social identity, transforming self-perception, expanding social connections and life chances. The key to understanding this relationship is for a more reflexive understanding of developmental benefits accruing to user engagement through Web 2.0.SNS technologies.

Keywords: Facebook, Social Networking Site [SNS], Development 2.0, Urban Slum, India, Ethnography, Anthropology, Mobile Internet.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is Facebook as significant and compelling new media for non-elite youth in urban India. Defining appreciable social media experiences for resource-constrained users, Facebook behaviours are undermining previously resilient socio-cultural norms in creating opportunities for capacity building. In the hands of the socially disadvantaged, Facebook is a space to learn, play and connect with global digital culture. Our research with teenage and young socio-economically disadvantaged social media users highlights the encompassing yet diffused power of Web 2.0 technologies. Contextual affordances, both technical and social, bring affordable and self-sustaining ICTs to underserved contexts and social media is no exception. Facebook, for the non-elite youth in India, is ignited by two products: the modest feature phone and the micro pre-pay pocket internet serviced by local and global providers and mediated by the desire of young Facebook users. Once ignited, we argue the mobile phone as the central, sometimes only, device for multi-media affordances priming socio-digital experiences that are a) mobile-centric furnished by market-driven technology products and services for social media b) specific skill building behaviours primarily through the use of social media c) opportunities for global citizenry through cultural appropriation of social media

 This research is an anthropologically informed study about low income users of mobile [pre-pay] internet accessing Facebook primarily on their [modest] phones and the possibilities of transgressing social identity, transforming self-perception, expanding social connections and life chances. We adopt an ethnographic approach to this research, interviewing and observing 21 male and 2 female youth Facebook profiles in the urban slums of Hyderabad and Chennai. The study is predominantly about male youth because of small opportunities locating young female Facebook users in the socially restrictive and economically challenging contexts of these areas. We began our study of constrained Facebook use to explore digital capacity building. This entailed the investigation of the relationship between on-line profile creation and off-line social aspirations and opportunity building. Our research is a response to the relative paucity of knowledge about social media practices in India, especially with users constrained by economic and technical resources. As mobile phone sales and mobile internet penetration are set to increase following augmented broadband and 3G investments from the Indian state and service providers, our research is timely and is a relevant mapping exercise of the dispersion and immersion of digital media and the accompanying in-flow of literacies and skills.

With over 65 million users, India is already Facebook's third-largest market. We use this research as a springboard for understanding the ways internet technologies are continually re-defining social practices in the urban edges of developing economies. We are particularly interested in how youth engagements in India redefine access to and interactions on social media platforms. New media youth practices in India are popularly viewed in two ways: as either techno-elites or as strapped humans in need of assisted digital literacy (Gajjala & Gajjala 2008). Indian youth is by no means a simple or a socially flat category, but an internally segmented and economically stratified group. This paper will signal ethnographic interpretations of social media cultures among one such youth segment in exploring how constrained mobile internet and social media use tussle to overcome infrastructural snares and social barriers.

In developed contexts Facebook has become an increasingly important tool for people engaging in a range of communication behaviors, meeting information needs and building social capital. While

showing similar consequences, our study of Facebook use among non-elite users in India, point to specific implications for socio-personal experiences and expectations. We argue that Facebook, as an open ended medium for social interactions, remains the only channel to navigate and cross local barriers, offering reasonable chances to overpower entrenched conventions of sociality. Our ethnographic research points to opportunistic engagements surrounding Facebook: in profile creation, in friending patterns, in status updates and photo/video uploads. Though looking for romantic opportunities play a big role in Facebook activity they are not restricted or dominated by heterosexual dating possibilities but possibilities of upward class mobility in the areas of education, skill building and employability. Facebook pages are also engagements for better material affordances and of socially elevating heterosexual relations. While romantic pursuits may fuel the desire to be on-line, other aspirations influence possibilities of social mobility. Youth learn English language skills, global netiquette and fashion, forge diasporic identities, explore professional opportunities and build techno-social digital capacities and skills.

The motivation for this research comes from evaluating the consequences of emerging Web 2.0 technologies. ICTs can no longer be conceived as assemblages of hardware but as 'architectures of participation', generating, mediating and moderating a particular paradigm of social life (Thompson 2008). Can Web 2.0 SNSes such as Facebook incubate and fuel progress and 'development', with its associated visions for crafting an unparalleled socio-digital life for its users? Evidence from our primary research of Facebook, a Web 2.0 SNS platform, suggests a relationship between new architectures of participation and enhanced well-being, and represents liberatory potential from a social space of disadvantage and constraint.

2. Literature Review

We first review Facebook as a widely studied phenomenon in developed contexts subjected to many theoretical currents. We pick the performance theory, needs/gratification theory and sociological perspectives for review. Next, we use selective literature to summarize the ways of viewing Facebook through an ICTD lens. We conclude this section with broad overviews for coupling Facebook and ICTD.

Our paper applies a Development 2.0 lens (Thompson 2008) in the service of an ICTD framework to investigate Facebook amongst non-elite youth in India as social media with development impacts on everyday day life. Our main motivation in this paper is to ask if social media, like Facebook, close the gaps of an already fragmented and multi layered phenomena called the digital divide (Wilson 2001, Warschauer 2003, and Selwyn 2004). Development 2.0, in this case, should examine ways in which the provision of SNS platforms of social and economic exchange can work to create new social interactions, revolutionary in terms of communication and media entitlements for the digital-poor.

Much of established studies of the global North (Ito et al.2009, boyd & Ellison 2007, boyd 2007) view social media more expressive than conditional, pervasive than constrained and private than mediated experience. The broad use of performative (Gofffman 1959) and gratification (Blumler and Katz, 1974) theories situates social media and its users as satisfying specific needs and expectations. Drawing inspiration from Daniel Miller's (2010, 2011) study of a 'Trini Facebook' we investigate anthropological meaning making of why youth are on Facebook and how they articulate this need and act it out in their Facebook pages. It's 'Fasbook,' for online communities in Trinidad who share social norms internally, such that the use of Facebook can look quite different in two different places. For instance Internet for making friends and dating allows young, urban Ghanaians to craft lifestyles, devising and sharing sensibilities incorporating globally circulating cultural and symbolic forms into their identities (Fair et al, 2009).

The process by which people convey to others, that they are a certain kind of person or possess certain characteristics (Leary 1996:17) is linked to the belief that those who view one's profile pages the most are members of one's offline social networks (Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe, 2007). This belief in turn links up to Goffman's 'dramaturgical approach' comparing people's everyday self-presentation as role playing for an 'audience'. Gofffman alludes to the socialization of performance when aspects of a personality is molded, modified and concealed to fit a specific understanding and expectations of the society in which it is presented. There are two main motivations for presenting oneself in an idealized light. One is a motivation to influence others and thereby gain rewards such as being liked, being considered competent, and possibly (by extension) gaining material rewards (i.e., job promotions); the second is aimed at 'constructing a certain image of self and claiming an identity for oneself' (Baumeister, 1998).

Early research on consumer needs to use media identified diversion (escape from routine, emotional release), personal relationships (companionship, social utility), personal identity (personal reference, reality exploration, value reinforcement), and surveillance (information gathering, event monitoring) as primary drivers of use (McQuail, Blumler, and Brown, 1972). Facebook's forte is attributed to its inherent quality of anonymity and lack of 'gating features' alleviating the influence of various socio-physical stigmas and anxieties preventing the building of off-line relationships (McKenna, Green and Gleason 2002). On Facebook, profiling a self is profiling a persona to confirm, modify or completely change impressions of them. Focused more on relationship building rather than individual need gratification, Facebook is also a mechanism for creating and performing impressions of a particular identity. In our research, much of Facebook involves the customization of an online space very much a part of an impression management strategy offering a specific public identity for circulation through on-line networks. Our participants, overwhelmingly young and male, suggested that they are on Facebook to satiate their needs for fantasy and escape, and to associate with the rich and famous to allow a personal gaze hitherto unavailable in personal or public everyday space.

Development 2.0 is not only about how ICTs can be implemented appropriately, sustainably, or equitably within a developmental context but focuses on a set of enabling dynamics at the core of Web 2.0 technologies (Thompson 2008). As Web 2.0 technologies penetrate the world and as more people are spurred to go online, the digital literacy gap shrinks. Yet differences persist, mainly between users who have infrastructural supports and those who must access, use and persist with ICTs in resource-constrained environments. Technologies in developing countries like India have found new ways to immerse and embed into the social milieu of users. State policy, market and service providers have combined to render Web 2.0 as distinct opportunities for a range of digital behaviours. Now, an individual can choose from a slew of service providers to pay less than half a dollar to access the internet on the feature phone with a certain download cap over a certain number of days. All our subject profiles accessed Facebook in this manner. If the 'digital divide' can be seen as a practical embodiment of the wider theme of social inclusion, it needs further qualifications to recognize and include representations of the digital divide, not as only technological, but as social, economic, cultural, and political phenomena (Selwyn, 2004). This argument suggests a shift in the digital divide debate to include and elaborate information, resources, applications, and services that individuals are accessing via new technologies. Moving away from the current predominance of "pundit suppositions, travelers' tales and laboratory studies" in the domain of ICTD (Wellman, 2001) towards more qualitative research begins to unpack the complexities of the digital divide (DiMaggio & Hargittai, 2001). Issues of time, cost, quality of technology, and use-environment are all crucial mediating factors in people's access to ICT. It is important here to acknowledge the importance of an individual's perceived or effective access in everyday life over theoretical (or formal) access to ICT (Wilson, 2001). Engagement with ICTs is more about the ways people develop relationships with ICTs and forge socio-technical resources to enable access and use.

Information networks are becoming less hierarchical and more participatory by broadening costs of entry (access to and inclusion in), deepening more information flows (higher quantity and quality of interactions) and aiding easy mobilizing and organizing resources (information and people) (Hagel et al., 2010). What is new about the network society is that 'key social structures and activities are organized around electronically processed information networks' (Castells, 2001). The term 'open development' (Smith et al., 2011) is used as shorthand for information-networked activities that have, relatively speaking, more information that is freely accessible and modifiable and more people who can actively participate and collaborate. Our empirically grounded research attempts to carefully demonstrate that Indians who venture online are hungry to negotiate with technology; they learn to navigate and craft content in ways not only meaningful and useful, but emancipatory in nature. In its emerging Web 2.0 form, ICT can no longer be conceived as assemblages of hardware, software, and user behaviour. Viewed instead as 'architecture of participation', ICT becomes an opportunity for generating, mediating and moderating a particular paradigm of social life (Thompson, 2008 pp 4). Can Web 2.0 SNS such as Facebook, with its associated visions for crafting a hitherto unavailable socio-digital life, pose challenges to pre Web 2.0 forms of 'development' thinking? In suggesting a relationship between new architectures of participation and enhanced well-being, we are drawing attention to a technology-enhanced activity blooming in spaces among broken infrastructures and crippled opportunities.

3. Research Method

Studying global technologies localized in a defined geographic setting imposes methodological and conceptual challenges on researchers. Methodologically, this means researchers must spend time in this setting in order to get to know—both online and offline— their research participants. Conceptually, drawing on Wittel's (2001) qualitative approach to networked sociality, researchers must read technological impacts as a layered process on local structures and conditions. As networked ties evolve, playful a first and then gradually intensify, the exchange of information constitutes the infrastructure to build stronger social and on-line identities (Wittel, 2001, p. 68) The concept of networked sociality describes social relationships turning into social capital, where the main objective is to build and maintain a volume of relationships (Wittel, 2001, p.72). These informed our primary analytical concern of linking a Development 2.0 framing to the potential of SNS technologies among users with limited economic capacity and social privileges. We connect ground realities to this framing as part of an approach to broadly conceptualize how ICTs can act as a catalyst or enabler for development.

We conceived and executed our research from March to November 2012 in three socio-geographic communities: 1) Hafeezpet, a slum in the shadows of the Global IT Park in Hyderabad; 2) Krishna Nagar a low-income habitat for youth aspiring to work in the Telugu cinema industry (Tollywood); and 3) Urur, a coastal fisherman slum in South Chennai. We employed a mix of online and offline research methods to chart Facebook usages. We adopted two techniques to understand social networking behaviours on Facebook: 1) face to face in depth interviews with Facebook users in the three communities and 2) qualitative profile building of the same users by an extensive study of their Facebook pages. We received explicit permission from users to view and profile their pages and to mine their data feeds. All interviews in the field were recorded and transcribed. We built 23 user profiles from the interviews and Facebook pages. We spent an average of 3 to 4 occasions with each user interviewing them, each session lasting anywhere between 45-90 minutes. We broadly coded and organized data manually into thematic matrices to check for emerging patterns in a transparent manner. We coded empirical data to triangulate with on-line data, especially about what is articulated in face to face dialogues and actually playing out

as Facebook behaviours. We further probed pivotal elements, such as the beginning and the amplification of the use of Facebook, and the unfolding and maturation of skills to use it.

The profiled interviewees were drawn from a snowball sampling in each of the communities: 6 from Hafeezpet, all male, between 17-21 years of age, 4 in high school, one working in a family owned mobile store and one working in a small retail store; 9 from Krishna Nagar, 7 young men and two young women between the ages of 19-21, 5 of them with college degrees and all working part-time as support artists and technicians in the fringes of the Tollywood film industry; and 8 young persons from Urur all male, in the age group of 18-21, 6 in school, 2 with college degrees looking for employment. All our profiles come from low-economic backgrounds with a family income in the range of 1700-2500 $US (a monthly income 140-170 $US). Youth in Urur and Hafeezpet save money or work summer jobs to procure a mobile phone and pay for their pocket internet. One young man in Hafeezpet was the only one working full time in his family retail shop. The youth in Krishna nagar were all working with an average monthly income ranging from 100-200 $US. An average monthly spend on mobile internet is around 1 to 3 $US per person.
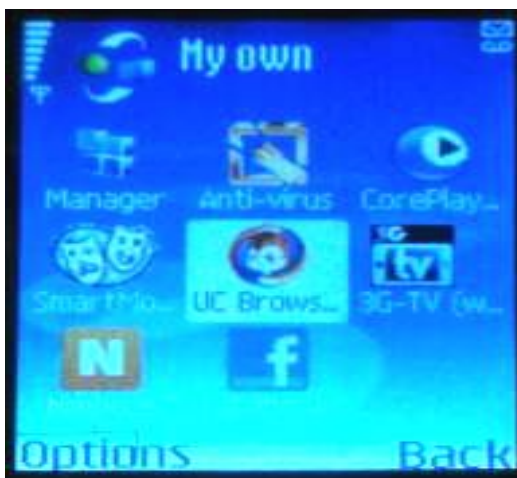
Picture 1: Phone screen with Facebook clients   Picture 2: Urur Youth

We investigated the social contexts of our subjects to understand their financial and educational status and gauge technical expertise with mobile phones and PC usages. We particularly concentrated on the motivations to join Facebook and the paths that led them to the social media site. We further focused on their articulations of behaviours exclusive to Facebook, their friending patterns, what they post and how they share and exchange information, photos and messages. We paid careful attention to their phones, the way Facebook was accessed via applications and clients downloaded specifically for this purpose. We friended and interacted with them on Facebook mining data on their news feeds and pages. We focused specifically on the content and patterns of posts, comments, likes, their friend lists (making note of the social profiles of their friends) and exchanges that were public on their pages. Next, we made a gallery of all the images that appeared on their pages with an intention to analyze aspects of persona building and representations they signify. From profiling our participants, both on and off line, we gathered a) their social locations, b) what they post, and c) for whom (their sense of audience). This gave us a good grip on the purposive strategies and communication patterns with their Facebook audience.

A number of our young participants offered coherent pictures of how they fit Facebook into their lives, and what they gained as a result of these practices. Many described behaviours that Facebook allowed them to carry out, not just as a social media site but as a social tool to author their digital footprints, simultaneously making friends, chatting, building new relationships, and most importantly, curating content available on the web to tinker with, mould and present an on-

line persona. They spoke of using social media technologies as a means of 'finding and managing a socio-personal self', a way of imagining it as an important element in conducting their own lives.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The communities in which our users live are constrained by various socio-economic and cultural factors impacting the everyday of Facebook use. Limited education, restricted English communication skills, and offline personalities rooted in socio-economic barriers shape and mould Facebook as a channel offering multiple affordances seldom available in their lived social reality. Entering and immersing in the social media world of Facebook is a path to satiating many desires, be it exploring heterosexual romantic possibilities like chatting/ dating, pushing boundaries of a limited communication repertoire, acquiring digital literacies including netiquette and gaining a toehold in global communities and citizenship. It appears Facebook is a path to global modernity catapulting these youth away from the lived reality of the urban slums and down-market neighborhoods.

Affordances for low-income India on Facebook are driven primarily by two market forces: the affordable mobile phone and the micro pre-pay mobile internet. The 'pocket internet' as it is called has revolutionized access, affordability and use of the internet as an 'everyday' technology (Rangaswamy & Cutrell 2012). Feature phones afford users the ability to do practically anything on Facebook. Users can post and consume content the same way they would on a computer. However, by comparison, accessing and consuming Facebook's image-heavy media-scape on a phone is characterized by an economy of time and attention. A tremendous dexterity with letter-by-letter phone typing and the complicated steps necessary to access Facebook require certain skill level and tech literacy.

4.1. Facebook as Vocation: Learning English, Communication and Technology Skills

While Krishna nagar boys use Facebook to get in touch with their professional networks, the Urur boys use FB to get job notifications and Hafeezpet youth are champions in searching and downloading freeware on the web which in turn aids their tech-literacy. However, these activities are not primary. The following sections will highlight activities dominating Facebook and how they bring intended and unintended consequences into the lives of our youth profiles.

Almost all of our interviewees have had access to basic education and are comfortable in speaking, reading and writing in their native language. On Facebook, English offers critical advantages ranging from starting and understanding conversations to circulating and sharing information. To be on Facebook motivates a strong reason to improve these skills. As these young Facebookers chat, post, comment and like their way, English mediates their expressions, be it a transliteration of their native tongue or employing local pidgin slang. As Poovarasan (20, Urur) said "…when chatting with someone on Facebook, when they use a word that I don't know, I immediately want to find out its meaning. I didn't know another word for 'fear' is 'scared' or 'panic' until I saw it on chat. I studied completely in Tamil medium throughout. But on Facebook, I have come to the level of chatting in English…. I keep telling new users of FB here that on using FB, your language improves…"

Friendships and other interactions on Facebook usually trigger a flux in these youth personalities who transform into internet 'pundits,' onboarding peers to the social media site. The zeal to cope with new knowledge, information, technology and friendships holds sway over their acquired confidence and respect among community peers. These changes become visible on their Facebook walls, in the kind of posts and comments they make and the photographs they upload. For example, Dinesh, (18, Urur) created his Facebook profile with a rose flower but has updated it to a hip and stylish Photoshopped picture of himself. Jitendra (20, Krishna nagar) is 2 months old on

Facebook, "… I used to struggle to update my status message… but, today, I create and fashion profiles for my friends and associates …" Jitendra is self-taught and navigates his mobile internet for apps and clients to help reduce his data costs, video editors that help enhance his profiles pictures and web dictionaries to post trendy and savvy updates. Kamma (21, Krishna Nagar) said, "I used it for chatting only... Later, I also started sharing my study stuff in groups, sending important updates to my group, getting general knowledge about outside world"

The use of Facebook ushers in learning netiquette. Kiran (19 Krishna Nagar) said "... It did not come easy. Our accounts were blocked because we were sending several friend requests indiscreetly … we learnt to navigate pages and discern pages/girls that interested us …. Suppose, I interact with a stranger, even to him or her, I should introduce and interact without boring them. So, instead of asking normal, general things, I learnt how to interact in a short and sweet manner at the same time extracting the information that I seek from them… Kathir, (18 Urur) adds, "... I have to be decent on Facebook…" There is an overwhelming 'greeting card' culture of communication permeating the use of phrases like "good morning", "good night", "hello, how are you", in early use that quickly gains in sophistication with added repertory of internet slang and hip words like dude, cool interspersed with local terminology.

With limited money to spare for Facebook data feeds on their phones, various software applications, clients, and messengers are downloaded and shared with friends. These enhance chat speed, download/upload photos, and facilitate and cater to the needs of using Facebook on their mobile phones. The immense desire to enable and extend one's time on Facebook propels our informants towards the latest in appropriate and customizable technologies. Kiran calls his phone his 'Chelli' or younger sister, because she is smarter and made him learn to use a system to email, chat and lead a digital life, "…because of FB today so many people look at my pictures, I get so many comments, because of FB so many people know me. This makes me feel very empowered…"

4.2. Facebook as Digital Life and Path to Global Citizenship

> "...Initially, to be honest, I would add everybody. On the side, Facebook keeps asking you to add friends. I would send a friend request to just anybody. ... I really liked to add "English" people… like Americans. I would look for such names and add them...like "Jack" for instance. I did it because I felt like I wanted to be in touch with "English" people. So I would add people I didn't know": Tony (19, Urur)

Kulbeer (17, Hafeezpet) said "Every byte of Facebook is exceptional. Nothing goes waste!" Awareness is multilayered on Facebook. It is also about viewing the world, their country, city and neighborhood through the walls of Facebook. The range of content in their data feeds move from cherished news about film stars to politically charged information to religious content and diasporic affiliations. Information is often exclusive to and inaccessible without Facebook. Saif (18, Hafeezpet) "… I use the photo of the day app and see remarkable things that I never knew about… how would I search for them… Facebook does it for me…" The Krishna Nagar youth transform Facebook into a channel leading closer to their world of dreams and film stars. They get updates from their favorite stars, share pictures and re-post these in a display of unadulterated 'fandom'. Facebook is a space to record and imprint their unregulated loyalty. As Jitendra said "… My Facebook wall is my dedication to the stars and world of Cinema…" Almost all of our Krishna Nagar profiles populate their profile pages with plenty of content on Tollywood cinema and pictures of favorite film stars, especially heroines. In the process they represent a claim on their fandom and passionate preferences in life on a public Facebook profile. Wider connections on Facebook are ways to socially associate with famous or successful social units and taking part in some of these units' positive associations [McQuail, Blumler, and Brown, 1972] Going global is often dreamt of and obsessed with. Our young research participants have little opportunities to step

out of their physical communities to strike deep friendships. But ICTs have changed that scenario. They were quick to realize Facebook disregarded geographical or cultural boundaries: more importantly, from their point of view it disregarded socio-economic boundaries.

Facebook pages are less of a passive repository and more of an active agent in defining and re-defining our user subjects. Many of them search, fetch, post, and re-post content and enjoy a status of valuable content aggregators by reliably disseminating beautiful/cute/funny pictures and posts to their intended audience. The identities our users cultivate and the signifiers they choose to represent themselves depend in part on these perceived audiences. Much of the content chosen by our profiles reflects a desire to acquire a cosmopolitan, hip and global persona. Deena (19, Urur) shares a music video, 'Hot like a Sun Devil' that is a parody of an American pop song and is made for the students of a university in Arizona. He has managed to find it and appropriated its meaning for his own enjoyment. Tony, (21 Urur) shares a friend's comedy video of someone who can't speak English very well interacting with a customer sales rep on the phone. The majority of Amaran's (19, Urur) visible Facebook activity comprises tailoring his online profile and posting photos to express certain aspects of his persona for a perceived online audience. The photos he posts coalesce around traditionally masculine roles: wild, loving speed, being stylish like a rock star with a guitar and sunglasses. This persona is also multidimensional: Amar posts photos of his friends, 'likes' movies and musicians, and plays games. There are traces of what he dreams of and aspires for in the things he has chosen to like: romantic Bollywood films [he has never seen nor does he understand Hindi], Justin Bieber and A. R. Rahman. In the next photograph, we see another picture of a road, taken while driving; the road is stretching into the distance, and it is a beautiful, sunny day. From the reflection of the dashboard on the frame, we can see that Amar is in a car, and it is likely that he is driving. Amar is presenting himself to be seen around roads, hip two-wheelers and as the driver of fast cars.

4.2.1. Profiling Omar

"The significance of these friendships is that if not for Facebook, they would seldom happen!": Omar, 21, Hafeezpet

Facebook channels and establishes an identity that is yearned for and pursued with consistency on its walls. Omar (21, Hafeezpet) is one of our most articulate informants, an avid Facebook user and self-taught specialist. Omar runs his family mobile shop in Hafeezpet, offering re-charge coupons and mobile accessories. An internet 'junkie', Omar was constantly discovering 'stuff on the net' for downloads and amassed a wealth of content. He was the resident consultant for customizing the needs of his friends to an appropriate mobile internet package. He arrived on Facebook around 10 months ago and has quickly become an expert customizing it to his phone and his needs.

One of the most compelling reasons for boys from this sub-stratum in India to be on Facebook is to get close to young women who are culturally unapproachable off-line for dating, even striking casual conversations . Profiles like Omar have transformed to content aggregators, not only entertaining the women he friends but acquiring an elevated status on his page. Omar acquires a voice as he speaks [via posts by copy/paste] in the English language of many others on his FB feeds. However, in the themes of his curated content, his likes and patterns of use, he finds a voice to express and shape his persona. When he does build close friendships with men and women, he maintains them almost every day. He posts an inspirational message and to increase its importance on his friend's newsfeeds, he formats it to take up a lot of space. He uses brackets, all-caps and symbols to make his text stand out compared to other posts. This makes it very hard to miss and highlights the importance of words to him [like the way quotes are used to alter the prosody and emphasize certain words]. He treats his Facebook walls as a primary canvas, tagging friends and pushing content onto his friend's walls simultaneously. For women's day, Omar posts the following on a friend's wall: "The willingness to listen, patience to understand, strength to support and a heart to care that is the beauty of a lady. Wish you a Happy Women's Day" [the lines can be

downloaded from SMS library sites]. Omar is regular visitor of these sites and has a good repository of quotes for the day, checking their meaning from web dictionaries to learn new words in English. He engages in a lot of behaviors to incite responses from young women. Photo- and picture-tagging is used more as a sort of greeting or catching up with friends. This acquires a good deal of significance in the context of user populations who are low-literate and appreciate photo tagging as a sort of gift economy fostering reciprocal relationships. If the content they tag is interesting or cute enough, it can raise their status in the eyes of a new friend. It also promotes a pattern of communication by tagging close friends in a photo-update, to interact with them quickly such that these behaviors represent time and data resources being used most efficiently. For Omar, shared activity is foundational to identity formation and strengthening relationships.

Picture 3: Profile pic Photoshopped with Justin Bieber   Picture 4: Profile picture representing romance

The walls of our participant profiles seem to us a collection of people and material culture they enjoy 'gazing' or looking at will. These youth want to be associated with these images as well as to use Facebook as a space to collect and store content for easy access. With little access to personal computers or broadband, these activities support the idea of Facebook as a spatial repository. A repository where   assemblages of 'self', primarily in the form of images, are stored and eventually contribute to a process of identity cultivation signaling the acquisition of material aspiration, dreamy romance and a suave urbane persona.

5. CONCLUSION

Social network sites (SNSs) have the potential to change the character of social lives, function as a personal resource and a tool to manipulate social capital. In our study, the social and cultural significance of on-line behaviours are affined to offline affordances and hold a powerful sway over media use. We found recurring patterns in the use of Facebook as social media defining the social group of participants in this research study. The more powerful themes such as idealizations of social qualities, be it romantic engagements, persona building, communication or netiquette patterns, seem to us, as opportune to the contexts of low-income ecologies in a bid to transcend socio-economic constraints. Behaviors on Facebook strongly suggest friending aspirationally, outside of local contextual affordances, especially young women of a higher class and from international locations. Not only is social media familiarizing these aspirations, but offering a new materiality to view and articulate a global aesthetic and life chances in unaccustomed ways; Facebook opens a window to something that was previously a distant mirage.

SNS [as part of Web 2.0 technologies] are distinguished from earlier technologies by encouraging a person to incubate his social world online with the 'articulated network' at its heart. This is especially important for young people living local lives bounded by social-geographies of constrained social status and education levels, infrastructural breakdowns, and in habitats of dubious citizenship such as the urban slum in India. On Facebook, they craft a social world created from and pushing beyond the lived world of values, beliefs, attitudes, images, and desires developed over a life time of battling with constrained and aborted life chances. The act of

consuming, manipulating and configuring global and multi-cultural content urges the boundaries of sociality to include several experiences eluding them as authors of real world social experiences. SNS powerfully combine and channel several disparate elements of personhood to a single repository, in this case, Facebook. Facebook ostensibly is transcending and bypassing differential limits to technology access, knowledge acquisition and digital literacy. The manner in which young Indians on Facebook craft their pages is vital to understanding their imagination of a future in India. Their use of SNS to reach out to the world affords them personal and social space to move in and out of conventional spaces and networks. Mastering the Web 2.0 is mastering cutting edge technologies to birth, foster, evolve a strategy for hooking into a digital world of unconventional affordances, despite real social distances and off-line social hierarchies that carry over and play out in the on-line world.

In its ability to generate an alternative social-digital infrastructure and network-enabled social life, Web 2.0 poses an implicit challenge to many forms of socio-economically motivated cultural constraints including romance, dating, play, and leisure. This further enables an expansion of the social universe of life-chances, digital literacies and skills. Development 2.0 should examine ways in which alternative platforms of social and economic exchange can work to create new forms of social interactions. These are often primary and first time experiences in terms of communication and media entitlements especially for the digital-poor in the world (Fair et al, 2009). The key to understanding these emerging digital experiences is for a more reflexive, critical and beneficial understanding of developmental benefits accruing to user engagement with Web 2.0 SNS technologies. The Development 2.0 lens seeks a conscious engagement with Web 2.0 technology models and ways of thinking about broader debates on empowerment among the digitally disenfranchised. Such a lens illumining empirical examples, like those offered in this paper, allows a deepening of ICTD research to challenge and contribute to key debates 'engendering a networked and plural form of social and economic exchange as an 'engine' for a form of self-determined development' (Thompson 2008pp 12)

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