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Endless Scrolling Through Social Media and Boredom - A Tool for Organizational Control

Young adults as knowledge workers who acquire, interpret, analyze, and apply information for a living, are overstimulated by a constant bombardment of information from digital channels, social media, television, and advertisements. Social media and texting have made everyone available all the time, blurring the lines of leisure and labor. They are perennially in an information overload that looms around their cognitive environment like a phantom, keeping them updated and indirectly active in the infosphere - a metaphysical realm of information and communication - through notifications and alerts. There is no end to the interaction with information in the infosphere; no final cathartic episode where everything reconciles to create a crescendo of meaning and purpose because the nature of this information overload is twofold - redundant and noisy. In my proposed presentation I will explore how information overload or the consumption of information faster than it can generate meaning extracts significant cognitive resources from the consumer through attentional demands, leaving them overstimulated, dry, and bored - an aversive state of wanting, but being unable, to engage in a meaningful activity. Overstimulation generates state boredom through a debilitation of the attentional systems in successfully orienting the mind to focus on the present task. Next, I will theorise a dynamic spillover of state boredom into organizational life. The position-practice relations lens in Giddens' Structuration Theory states that an actor, present in multiple spaces, is affected by their actions in all of these spaces. Their actions in one space are linked to the outcome in another space through the positional relationship of the actor and the spatial interconnectedness. The boredom generated in their private spaces through overstimulation sustains itself in their organizational spaces which diminishes their ability to sustain higher cognitive involvement with the task at hand or perform tasks that have higher cognitive demands that employ elements of individual agency like autonomy, creativity, variety, and initiative. They find comfort in repetitive,

mechanised, and oversimplified tasks which stymie their chances of finding meaning or deriving a purposeful trajectory from their work. In the final part of the presentation, I will explore the insidious use of state boredom as a tool for organizational control. Organizational practices that place constraints on agency and behavior, exploit the lack of mental resources available to the overstimulated and bored worker. They reduce efforts (monetary and emotional) at coaching and training the workers to achieve heightened work consciousness, actualisation, and meaning in their jobs; place them under unobtrusive controls like nudging them to make organisationally dictated decisions, where they fail to identify the managerial and bureaucratic practices that stifle their voice, stunt their professional growth, and alienate them from their own labor and eventually their own selves. The work practices, conditions, pay, and productivity measures defined by the upper echelons of the organization become normative rules which do not go through any inclusive or discursive intellectual choreography. The boredom of workers is exacerbated as they are placed in a meaningless existential vacuum, propagating the managerialist agenda of control and exploitation.