



Book review of Marie-Pierre Fourquet-Courbet & Didier Courbet, 2020, Connectés et heureux! Du stress digital au bien-être, Paris, Dunod.

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► To cite this version:

Maya Velmuradova. Book review of Marie-Pierre Fourquet-Courbet & Didier Courbet, 2020, Connectés et heureux! Du stress digital au bien-être, Paris, Dunod.: (Connected and happy! From digital stress to well-being). RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics, 2022, Special Issue on Digital Society as a Cultural and Historical Context of Human Development, 19 (2), pp.406-410. 10.22363/2313-1683-2022-19-2-406-410 . hal-03669046

HAL Id: hal-03669046

<https://hal.science/hal-03669046>

Submitted on 27 Nov 2023

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DOI 10.22363/2313-1683-2022-19-2-406-410

UDC 159.95

Book Review of
Fourquet Courbet, M.-P., & Courbet, D. (2020).
Connectés et heureux! Du stress digital au bien-être numérique.
Paris: Dunod

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Published in 2020 by Dunod Editions, a mainly academic and university literature publishing house, the book *Connectés et heureux! Du stress digital au bien-être numérique* (*Connected and Happy! From Digital Stress to Well-Being*)



is aimed at a wider readership than the academic community made up of students, researchers and teachers. Indeed, the adopted style is clear, light and resolutely pedagogic, which shows the will of the authors to adapt their work to the professionals and the general public.

This doesn't impact in no way the merit of this structured, rigorous and well-documented work, with a rich bibliography of 325 references coming from international scientific literature. The book is also embellished with textboxes and endnotes, giving details or links to certain professional and journalistic press sources.

The context of the book lies in the profusion and omnipresence of digital media, that is to say digital *screens* and *content*, in our daily lives, representing today the most consequent consumption of daily time after

the sleep. The main question set as the common thread of the book is then to examine, list and synthesize the known negative but also positive effects of these new

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media on physical and psychological health defined as individual and collective well-being.

The objective of the authors is twofold: on the one hand, they aim to make an inventory of the scientific literature on these negative and positive effects on human well-being; and on the other hand, based on these findings, they aim to give certain recommendations for reflection and improvement of our adaptive strategies to “cope” with this new environment.

The two authors are university professors in Information and Communication Sciences, and adopt here a multidisciplinary approach, situated in particular at the intersection of Information and Communication Sciences (CIS) and Psychology of well-being, known as positive psychology.

The title of the book *Connected and Happy!* reflects not so much a statement or *the object* of the work, but rather its call to action or its *project*, also presented on the back cover: “For finding the way to happiness while being connected.” The titles and subtitles of the book chapters are eloquent and easily refer the reader to the arguments unfolded throughout the book.

In the introduction, the authors plant the context and the concepts used thereafter. Starting from the problematic of our daily (over)use of digital media, they address their negative effects on health, observed by a growing number of scientific studies. To counterbalance the widespread ideas of the “wholly negative,” they then evoke the scientific results on certain positive effects which can also take place. Thus positioning themselves as a neutral arbiter, the authors state the objectives of the book, namely the synthesis of scientific evidence and the recommendation of solutions. In this sense, they evoke the need for adaptive strategies and for *digital intelligence*, the concept that will be developed in the conclusion.

The authors then turn to the definition of the dependent variable that will be examined in their synthesis: the well-being. To define the concept of *well-being*, the authors are inspired by the definition given by positive psychology, itself rooted in the philosophical tradition: they distinguish *hedonic well-being* (the subjective well-being of immediate pleasure and positive emotions, overall life satisfaction) and *eudemonic well-being* (the long-term well-being related to self-actualization, meaning in life, engagement in exciting activities and the experience of *flow*), also adding the component of “*social well-being*.”

In order to meet their dual objective, the authors review in 8 chapters several fields of research and the corresponding scientific results: 1) social networks and their effects; 2) Smartphone use; 3) hyper-connection and digital stress; 4) Internet uses; 5) multitasking practices and their effects; 6) the effects of screens on physical health; and finally 7) and 8) digital entertainment content and its effects.

The first chapter is devoted to the “active” versus “passive” uses of social networks. “Active” uses would rather have positive effects on well-being, in particular on social self-image and social capital; while “passive” uses would increase ill-being, which is also linked to the phenomena of cyber-harassment and cyber-bullying.

The uses of Smartphones are the subject of the second chapter, as well as their relationships with anxiety, narcissism and accidents of daily life.

The third chapter deals with digital stress, resulting from permanent vigilance and from FOMO (fear of missing out), in connection with the weight of social norms.

Excessive use of the Internet is examined in chapter 4, where the authors pose the question of the definition of Internet *addiction*. They review the pro-addictive practices of the digital media producers, but also explore the potential transfer of drug addictions to digital content.

5th chapter discusses the trends in multitasking activities and transactive memory, linked to the digital uses, as well as their consequences for our intellectual performance, in particular cognitions, attention, behavioral performance, as well as the risks of social ties distortion.

The effects of screens on physical health are summarized in chapter 6: on the one hand the negative influences of screens on obesity, overweight, sleep; on the other hand, possibly positive effects of *Serious games* and *Exergames* on improvements in health and in learning.

Chapters 7 and 8 are devoted to digital entertainment content and their respective dual effects on hedonic well-being and eudemonic well-being. Although entertaining content would be mainly linked to hedonic well-being (pleasure, alleviation of negative emotions, of stress and fatigue), the authors evoke the possible positive effects of certain entertainment and digital content on the construction of identity, the social well-being, and the reduction of anxiety about death.

The conclusion is intended to be rather optimistic while summarizing the contributions of the aforementioned studies. It offers an opening towards the recommended behaviors and the need to develop the *digital intelligence*, as an adaptive strategy for humans face to their new digital environment. The authors develop further on this new concept of *digital intelligence* (not to be confused with the digital intelligence in computer sciences where it is “correlated with artificial intelligence,” nor with “the digital intelligence (of numbers) and of logical reasoning” in developmental psychology). Here, the *digital intelligence*, being alike the *emotional intelligence* or the *economic intelligence*, is defined by the authors as:

“the ability to understand and to learn, in order to better adapt oneself (in terms of behaviors, thoughts and affects) to the permanently changing digital environment, to use in an optimal way and according to one’s objectives, the functionalities of the digital information and communication technologies, while preserving or even improving one’s psychological and physical health and his short and long-term well-being” (pp. 185–186).

The authors present the three stages of this process, highlighting some recommendations at each of these stages: first, to better understand the contributions and effects of digital media; second, to get to know oneself better by asking oneself questions about his well-being, not only immediate but also existential one; and third, to learn to better manage and control oneself digital behaviors.

The book *Connected and Happy!* is undoubtedly of great interest not only for the academic public, but also for the general public: all those who ask questions about how to adapt themselves and better master the digital environment that we face on a daily basis.

Throughout the book, the authors develop well-founded and structured arguments to meet their two objectives set out in the introduction. Neither denying nor venerating the new technologies, the authors show, with supporting evidence, that the effects of those depend above all on their uses. The thesis defended consists in saying that humans are in a period of psychological adaptation to the new

digital environment, which involves trial and error in learning it. To improve this functioning of human intelligence, it would be necessary to get involved into a thorough process of digital intelligence.

Some researchers in ICS (Information and Communication Sciences) or in critical sociology could criticize the assumed socio-psychological approach and a certain methodological individualism of the book. The delimitation of the examined studies perimeter is defined by the authors (introduction), in their concern to carry out a systematic synthesis of the empirical and experimental scientific proofs. The reader will hence find with interest the critical discussion on certain structural factors determining digital behaviors, or on adjustments between the digital content demand (principally based on hedonism and materialism) and its supply provided by the private actors regardless of the public goods logics; whilst some other meriting works and concepts fall outside the perimeter of the book. Thus, we would have also liked to hear the authors' statement on: the selection and confirmation biases within the "information bubble" phenomena (Proulx et al., 2014) and its reinforcement by the algorithms, the over-confidence biases and the contemporary crisis of "expert" knowledge in the digital public space, the new phenomena of the blockchain world (crypto, NFT digital arts, meta-realities)...

The prescriptive scope of the work is interesting by its proposition and development of the original concept of *digital intelligence*. More than just a reactive response to the environmental change, for us it would rather be here a proactive concept co-constructing and even re-constructing the social reality, akin of the logics of *appropriation* ("subject-object-project," see: Perriault, 2008). Indeed, the evolution and the social change don't they pass in the first place by the change of the representations and of the social conducts of some (Moscovici, 1988), which shall in turn be potentially determining for the future structural environment?

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Article history:

Received 1 April 2022

Revised 9 April 2021

Accepted 14 April 2021

For citation:

Velmuradova, M. (2022). Book review of Fourquet Courbet, M.-P., & Courbet, D. (2020). *Connectés et heureux! Du stress digital au bien-être numérique*. Paris: Dunod. *RUDN Journal of Psychology and Pedagogics*, 19(2), 406–410. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2022-19-2-406-410>

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DOI 10.22363/2313-1683-2022-19-2-406-410

Рецензия на книгу:

***Fourquet Courbet M.-P., Courbet D. Connectés et heureux!
Du stress digital au bien-être numérique. Paris: Dunod, 2020***

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История статьи:

Поступила в редакцию 1 апреля 2022 г.

Принята к печати 14 апреля 2022 г.

Для цитирования:

Velmuradova M. Book review of Fourquet Courbet, M.-P., & Courbet, D. (2020). *Connectés et heureux! Du stress digital au bien-être numérique*. Paris: Dunod // Вестник Российского университета дружбы народов. Серия: Психология и педагогика. 2022. Т. 19. № 2. С. 406–410. <http://doi.org/10.22363/2313-1683-2022-19-2-406-410>

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