
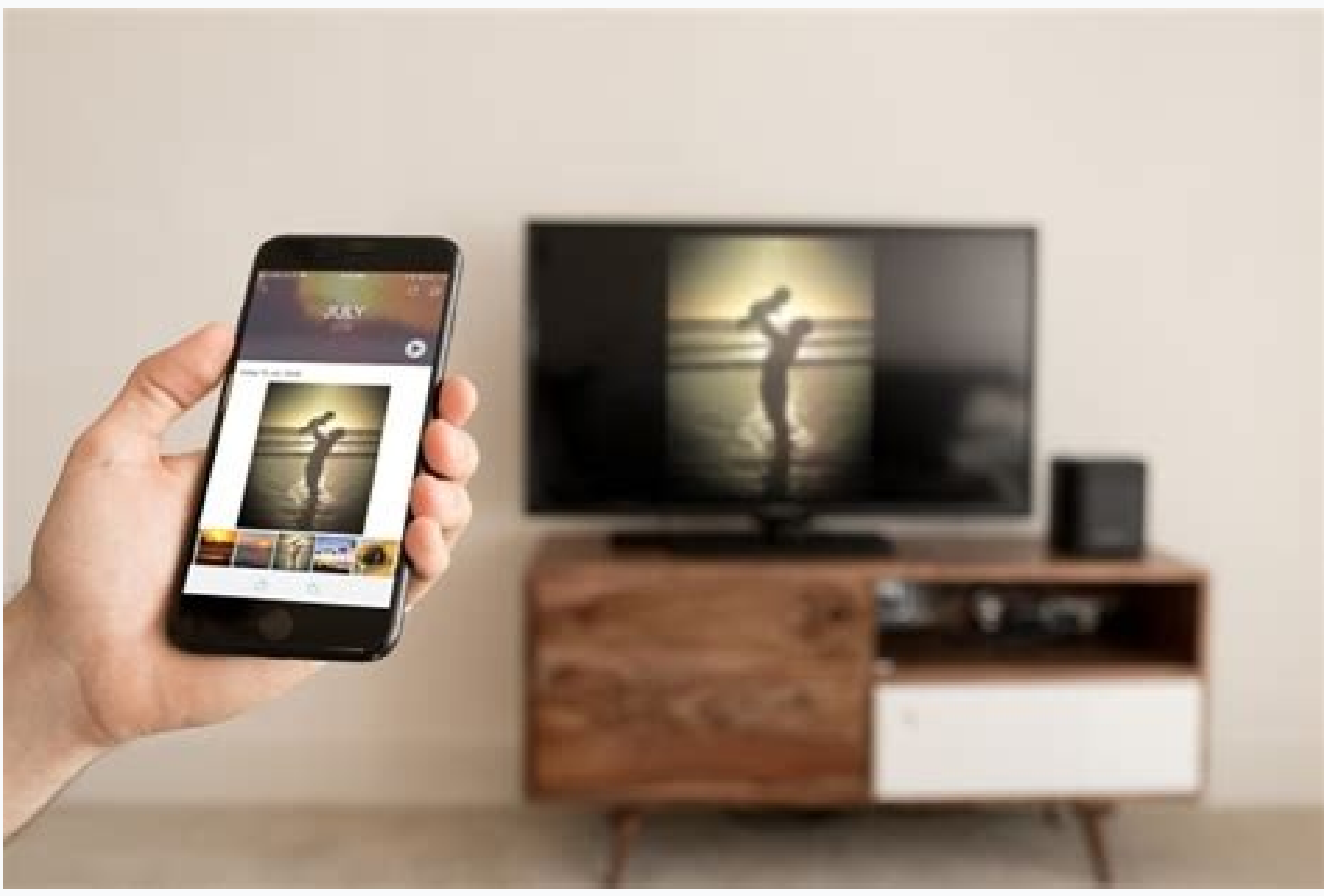


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CHAPTER 44
HUMAN FACTORS IN ONLINE COMMUNITIES
AND SOCIAL COMPUTING

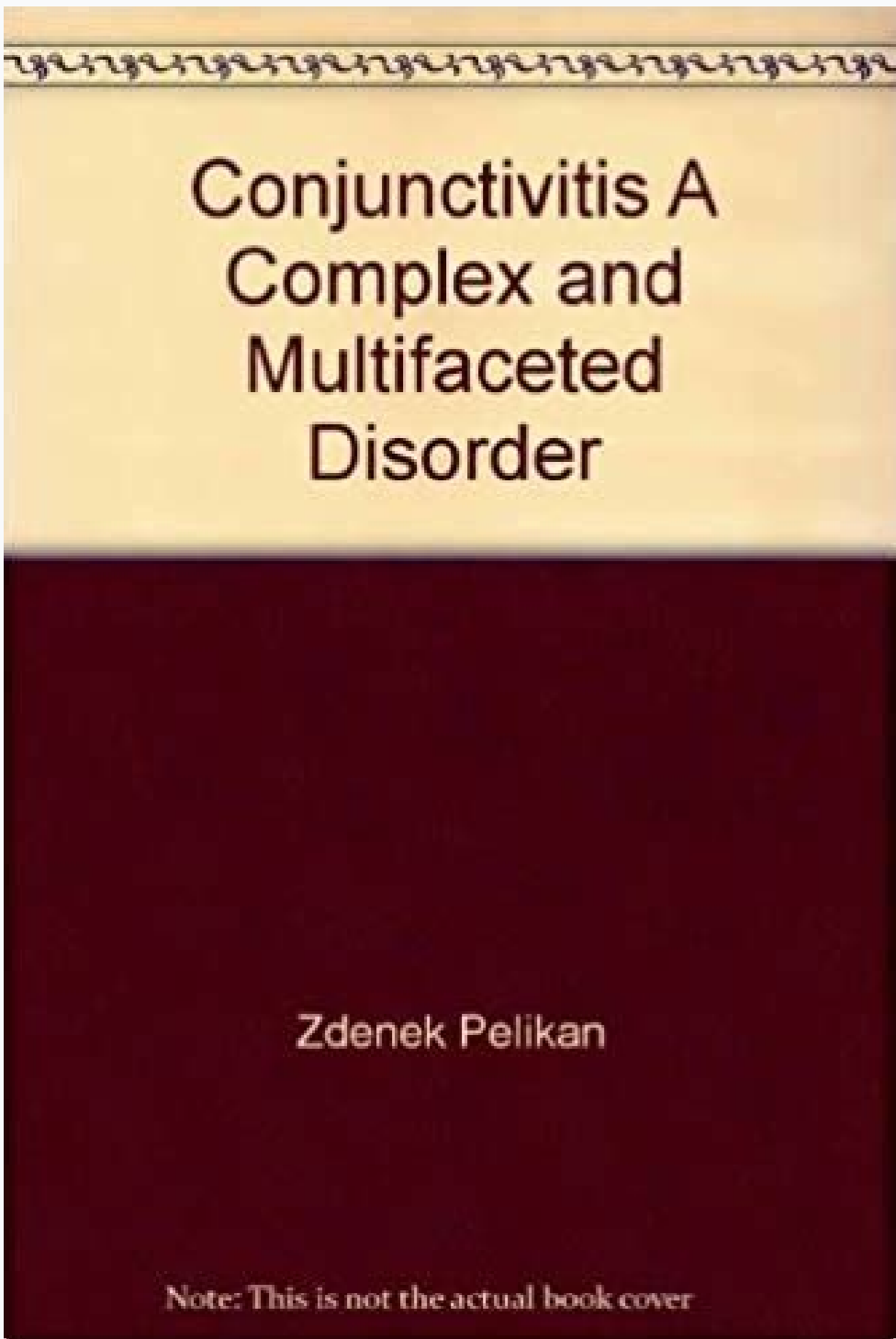
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1 INTRODUCTION	1217	4 ANALYZING ONLINE COMMUNITIES, PATTERNS, AND METROLOGIES	1241
2 DEFINITION OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES IN SOCIETY AND THEIR FUNCTIONS	1217	7 CASE STUDIES	1243
3 BRIEF HISTORY OF COMMUNITIES IN SOCIETY AND THEIR FUNCTIONS	1218	7.1 Computer-Assisted Language Learning Communities	1243
4 TODAY'S ONLINE COMMUNITIES AND THEIR FUNCTIONS	1218	7.2 Game Communities and Activity Theoretical Analysis	1245
5 TYPES OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED COMMUNICATION AND ONLINE COMMUNITIES	1219	8 FUTURE ISSUES IN ONLINE COMMUNITY DESIGN	1247
5.1 Communities for Interest Groups	1219	REFERENCES	1248
5.2 Communities for Health Care	1219		
5.3 Online Virtual Game Communities	1219		
5.4 Communities for Profits	1219		

1 INTRODUCTION
The popularity of online communities is expanding. It was estimated that there were over 1.70 billion Internet users globally in 2009 (Pughen, 2010) with over 100 million users participating in chat rooms or online discussion (Madden and Rainie, 2010). Especially social networking sites have been exponentially increasing in popularity in the last few years. For example, just on the social network site Facebook, there are around 50 million users, and 50% of these users log in everyday (Pughen, 2010).
In this chapter we try to provide a synopsis of the types of human factors for online communication and social computing by first defining online communities and computer-mediated communication (CMC). This is followed by a review of the different types of CMC, with specific categories of online communities described in more depth. The chapter concludes with their summary and suggestions for new directions in the area of online communities.

2 DEFINITION OF ONLINE COMMUNITIES
Online communities emerge through the use of CMC applications. The term online community is individualized in nature, means different things to different people, and is slippery to define (Phour, 2000). There are a number of different definitions of online communities. The term was first used by Rheingold (1993). He meant about the "virtual" communities are social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on these public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.
The adherence to the new frontier in social relationships, and people are using the Internet to make friends, relationships, friends, as well as romantic relationships. In Rheingold's opinion, the term was used in 1976, online communities are formed across borders and not physical proximity (Rheingold, 1993). People with common interests, such as hobbies, ethnicity, education, and beliefs are brought together through online communication.



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