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October 10, 2014

Comm 200:New Media Diet

Final Paper

Losing My Technology: “its not that bad”

Technology has become a daily routine in our lives. As much as we do not want to acknowledge it, it is true. On a daily basis, while you commute to school or work, walk around the city, or just observe people around you, you will find that people are disconnected from each other. The irony in this is that new technology was created to “connect” individuals, but what it has really done is disconnect them from each other. Many will argue that new technology and social media has had no impact on their lives, but this is false. It has had a major impact on human interaction and communication. Social media in particular has had a major influence on how people act around each other. Technology plays a pivotal role in my daily life; it connects me to my work, family, and friends who are not always available. Technology is now a crucial element in everyone’s daily life, giving him or her the opportunity to do things that they would otherwise not be able to. Social media has become a form of communication for our social communities; it however does not change or affect people. It’s the habit of using social media that changes the way peoples personalities are shaped.

New technology and social media have impacted and changed how human beings see themselves, each other, and the world around them. It is now seen through a lit up screen and on the go. New technology plays a major role in how someone’s personality is formed and why it is a certain way. However, new

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technology and how it has affected communication is not a bad thing. On the contrary, it has opened up the doors to numerous opportunities and connections.

My first interaction with media came at a very young age. In elementary school they began to show us the use of a computer and how effective it was to store information and communicate with people from all over the world. As young children we were exposed to this technology that would eventually become how we communicate with each other. Once AOL was introduced into our lives and the dial up tone logged us into the Internet, we discovered AOL Instant Messenger, otherwise known as AIM. On this platform not only were we able to communicate with a much larger group of students in my class, but private chat rooms and group chats made our communication quick and instant.

This reliance on instant messenger to communicate affected our relationships to the point where we could communicate freely online, but when it came to face-to-face communication, we were awkward and in a complete loss for critical communication. Thankfully, we outgrew the awkward stage and developed people skills. Looking back, when I first began to realize the amount of time we spent as kids online, was not because of technology, but because of bad habits. As time passed and new technology became more advanced, consumers began to live their lives through this technology. Living specifically through your small screen and picture captions does not allow you to grow as an individual on both an emotional and personal level. It’s a scapegoat to confronting things that are awkward, frightening, or in some instances pleasurable.

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As an individual who is constantly in need of being in front of a screen because of work, I have moments of disconnect from the “real world.” Not in the sense of becoming a hermit and not interacting with anyone, but rather that I find myself finding information about people and their lives through Facebook or twitter and then find no need to actually connect with them on a person to person level. Social media gives us the power to do this, by simply uploading a picture of your most recent vacation, your hundred of friends know what you are up to and therefore don’t need to personally contact you and see what is new with you. I might at times feel this disconnect but its simply because I don’t take the initiative sometimes to think outside of social media.

Starting in September of 2014, I began monitoring my technology use. I monitored how much I went on my phone, laptop, tablet, how long did I use it, and for what reasons. What I found was completely opposite of what I actually thought I did. For the longest time, I felt that I was that small percentage of people that do not waste their time on social media. I believed that I was a person who actively used social media and new technology for work purposes and personal usage but nothing more. What I found was that I constantly checked my phone for no reason. There were times when I didn’t even notice that I had pulled out my phone and opened up apps I didn’t need to. New technology is a distraction from the things around you, but only because it is a habit that we have picked up. While monitoring my media habits, I came to the conclusion that I was reliant on social media and that I would have a difficult time letting it go. I believed this because I had the constant need to

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look at my phone and see what was going on in the digital world around me. The only way to properly test and come to a conclusion as to whether or not my reliance on social media would affect me came in a 72+ hour fast of my social media accounts.

Logged off from my accounts and ready to start my 72+ hour fast, I found myself wanting to reach for my phone but not necessarily wanting to log back into my accounts. Logging off did make me feel “free” in a sense, but it did not affect how I went about my day. When I became bored I found some other way to take up my time, I simply found other things to do when I needed to. The only time I felt disconnected from my social community was when I was asked via text for stuff like whether I had seen something that was posted. I only then felt a little disconnect, but it did not critically affect me. Thompson’s suggestion that individuals should experience life outside of media is true. Like stated before, sometimes when I would be to busy to reach out in person to my friends I would quickly look to social media to fill the void.

Like I had believed before, social media and new technology receive the negative stigma that it is nothing but a waste of time. It is seen as a blatant anti-social platform instead of a communication platform. Although I once agreed with this, there is no denying that new technology brings a lot of positive outcomes for consumers. It is a form of communication that allows for people all around the world to communicate in real time. Having new technology has also given us the opportunity to think and write differently. While some will argue that the internet

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has affected literacy and communication between individuals, I believe it has simply shaped into something different. We are now given the opportunity to communicate with communities all over the world.

I have to agree that media usage affects the way individuals read and communicate. For example, during my media fast, I decided to carry around a book I had wanted to read for a long time. I found myself at times skimming through the page like I would on an online page. When I would do this, I simply went back and reread what was on that page. Due to the constant need to make reading material concise, and quick, I find that I implement that mindset to everyday life. Media literacy requires that individuals shorten their thoughts and learn to decipher shorter messages. This doesn’t mean that individuals are being dumbed down but that they are adapting to a new form of thinking and reading, which in turn changes how they communicate with people around them. After my media fast, I felt that my level of communication had been changed. I was writing and thinking a little differently. Communities are now learning to communicate in different forms, which bring them closer together.

New technology and media will always have a negative stigma. People will accuse it of making people anti-social, dumb, or too reliant on the internet. Although some of this can be true, its only because new technology becomes addictive. It’s a habit that people will find hard to break if they don’t watch how much time they spend online. People have the capability of functioning without their new technology. During my media fast, after a day or so, I was completely fine being

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“disconnected” from social media. Social media isn’t a bad thing, and like Thompson suggests, it is beneficial to sometimes drop your new technology and experience the world around you. It is after all, what makes our social media post interesting. Being disconnected from your social media and new technology won’t affect who you are as an individual person, it will give you an opportunity to experience and further shape your personality and the world around you.