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Instructor Name

Course Number

15 June 2019

Title: Narrative Essay

The contemporary digital age is a result of technological progression spanning several decades. As a person who grew up in a relatively later part of the digital progression, I have had a firsthand experience of how it has affected nearly all components of my life. There is little disagreement that it has brought about unprecedented convenience when it comes to our personal, social, academic or professional lives by creating faster and easier ways of doing things. However, it has arguably also become a source of pressure when it comes to our social relationships, especially due to constant connectivity. In turn, it has created more distraction and risks in our lives alongside the convenience it brought. As an Individual who is interested in understanding how technology changed the way human beings interact or learn, I decided to narrate and document a day of my life without technology to comprehend the extent of that change.

In my life, internet and mobile communications technology have become integral to staying connected with family members, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances. As a college student, I can rely on this technology to stay connected with my parents and enhance my personal and professional networks. Over time, my reliance increased to the extent that I feel insecure or wearisome even after a few hours of solitude. Every few minutes, I’m eager to know what interesting thing is happening around me or what is the rest of the world up to? It’s not until I have browsed every major social network that I feel relaxed and calm. I know I am not alone in this since everywhere I go I find people hooked on to their tablets, computers, or phones. People constantly check their phones for emails, texts, and notifications. Pondering over this new normal, I found it essential to try and spend the next complete day without the use of any technology.

As I woke up on my first technology-free day, the first thing I realized was that I had woken up late for class. I did not have a separate alarm clock since I always relied on my smartphone to wake me up at 8 o’clock. As I started walking to class, I realized that I had no music to listen to on the way. However, this gave me an opportunity to observe my surroundings and see what other people were doing. It was surprising to see hardly a few actually interacting since nearly everyone seemed to be silent or on their phone. One student was barely able to halt at a stop sign as he was too caught up with whatever was on his phone. It was unsettling to realize that I had exactly become what I was just witnessing in other people, quiet and absorbed into their phones. It seemed a shame that all that constant talking and laughter had been replaced by points of silence and that getting to see a group of friends engaged into a healthy social interaction without anyone scrolling down their smartphone would become a rarity.

On a personal level, I too felt a new strain of nervousness. The constant feeling of being disconnected with everyone else was beginning to hit me every now and then. What if something were to happen to my family and they cannot get a hold of me? What if the day I turned off my email and phone was the day when something bad or something really important happened? On the other hand, I was also concerned about being able to coordinate plans with friends. Without a smartphone and internet connectivity, I had to inform everyone else about the plan beforehand and had no idea whether it would follow through. Although in class, I am quite used to taking manual notes on paper instead of my laptop, I constantly missed the feeling of being connected to everyone else around me. As I walked back to my room, I noticed children playing on the grass, and some elderly couples gossiping. I also noticed that every drop of water that fell off green leaves caused a tiny ripple on the lake’s surface. Pausing at the scene for a while, I could not help but become mesmerized by the sound of the wind, the gentle scenery, and the partially cloudy sky. It was during this moment that I realized many of the positive things that we as a society ignore as we remain immersed into our devices.

The phenomena I experienced was discussed by Jenkins, Ford, and Green who argued that media technologies have become completely integrated into our day-to-day lives and interaction. We have developed into a society that has begun relying on technology for nearly everything they do, especially communicating with other people. In particular, the ability to profoundly interact with other people from home, rather than in-person, has allowed us to develop social interactions without the need for physical movement. The habit has developed to the extent that any temporal loss of the ability to connect via this form of mediated communication creates feelings of helplessness and isolation (Jenkins, Ford and Green).

In the afternoon, I felt that my technology-free day was not as dreadful or difficult as I initially presumed it to be. I did not watch television or use my laptop to watch any video. Although I had a paper due the next day, I thought it would be nice to write down my assignment with a pencil and a paper instead of typing up my assignment. It was also nice not to receive dozens of text messages back and forth which always used to distract me from work. As I worked on the paper, I could not remember the last time I needed to go the library and consult printed research material, since all the research I needed before was available online on my college’s database. Yet somehow, consulting printed material and using it to manually write down my paper seemed to help me put thoughts and ideas into words more easily. Not only was I not distracted by irrelevant information, but I also realized how much text messages and social media notifications would distract me while working on papers.

The day moved by smoothly until 7pm in the night, where I experienced a serious craving for my phone. The feeling was nothing but a fear of missing out since nearly 11 hours had passed without me accessing any form of technology. However, I soon realized that the craving was nothing more than my brain wanting a dopamine rush through newer and more exciting information, and that it was possible to be entertained even without a screen. No form of online communication, even with emojis or animojis, can replace real-life face-to-face communication. The world is a fascinating and beautiful place that I realized I needed to venture out into more. I understood how simpler life could be if we were not always concerned with peer-approval or instant gratification. The temporary euphoric feelings of connectivity are in fact short-lived and do not substitute for real-life communication.

To conclude, there is no doubt that digital technology has profoundly impacted the way human beings interact with one another or learn new information. Yet, even as it became such an integral factor in our lives, I realized that it was still possible for me to leave my house securely without the feeling of being constantly connected to everyone else. I also learned that I needed to appreciate the little things in life that I would normally ignore while engrossed into my phone, especially as I prepare for a career that would later require me to embrace technology and engage the digital world. Being someone who grew up in the digital progression era, I knew a childhood that was significantly less rife with gadgets, devices, or technological influences than others, yet it was my parents and their generation whose experience with technological progress was substantially more dramatic. As much as technology fascinates me and is integrated into nearly anything I do, living a day without it made me somewhat afraid of what the future may hold.

# Works Cited

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford and Joshua Green. *Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green*. 1st. New York, NY: New York University Press, 2018.