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Unit 8

If you were to ask me if I am a fan of technology I would quickly say no. I believe it is creating a generation (although after this unit I am leery to use that term) that is becoming more and more fixated on themselves and more and more isolated. I think that the most important moments that build a good life are those that are spent actually with people, and the new technologies allow and enable people to have less true human interaction. Instead of calling a person, or better yet, going to their house when, let say something bad happens, people now post on facebook or send an e-mail. I think this is leading to a society who will not have the skills to truly love or belong to a group. It makes me nervous.

All that being said, when asked how my classes are going, I usually respond with something about how I love taking online courses because it allows me so much flexibility, and I don't have to drive to campus, and to be totally honest, I am very much an introvert and I don't really enjoy sitting in class with lots of other students. This semester, I posted on a forum (without it being assigned), because it is fairly ambiguous. I would have never have raised my hand to ask a question in class like that even though I would have been thinking it. Even now as I type, I feel somewhat "safer" behind the shield of the internet in that I have never met my professors face to face, so the things I write, to me, are much bolder than things I would ever think about saying in a class. Does that mean I am learning more? Am I pushing myself in a way I haven't academically because I am allowed a certain level of ambiguity? Does it change the learning at all? Honestly, I am not sure of the answers to those questions, I am not sure anyone could know.

When it comes to technology in the sense of digital technology (because as one of my former teachers put it, blackboards were at one point a new technology for education) I do not remember a time before computers. I had a computer class in elementary school where we played games and typed. Digital technology has followed me through my formal education, although was not very much a part of my home life. I grew up in a family where both parents were teachers and so instead of having to find things to do inside during vacations and summer break, we spent most of our time traveling, being outside, and playing sports. I believe some of my technology aversion comes from a very happy childhood, that I think everyone should be allowed to have, and since it was saturated with physical family interaction (as opposed to digital interaction), that is a value I hold onto very strongly. (Gardner would be proud of me for beginning to look into my background) Nonetheless, digital technology plays a large role now in how I teach, communicate and learn.

The first thing that I remember learning using technology was how to play the guitar. I did have some musical background in that I had been a member of my high school band, but that hardly counts as a backdrop for the skills required to play guitar. For the most part I learned by looking up chords and their fingerings. I found simple songs at first that had easy chord progressions and went from there. While at this point in my guitar life I am no rock star, I did learn enough to play in my church's worship team for a while.

Technology now obviously plays a role in my formal education. I am working through an online masters degree program which I have never had any apprehension in my ability to use the technology necessary to complete the course work. I also used technology through my undergraduate courses as well. I am not sure how my parents ever completed a class if they had to use a typewriter for papers.

Digital technologies are also a part of my daily work life. I use a computer everyday to type lesson plans, print assignments, store grades, take attendance and find digital media to aid in my teaching. I keep an up to date website going for my class and grades are available to parents through an online grade book which they have access to at any time. I engage students using a smartboard and am somewhat fascinated and engaged with that myself. All of these technologies were of course new to me at some point in my life and with all of them I know the way I learned to use them was from a brief overview from someone who knew more than I did, and then I played.

For me, playing with a new technology is the only way I ever feel comfortable with it. What I like about technology is that it is really hard to screw anything up to the point of unfixable. I continually tell my parents that they just need to play with whatever it is they are afraid of using (cell phones, e-mail etc) and that eventually it will sort of make sense to them. I am surprised still that my father still is scared to save something because he doesn't know where it goes. My mother-in-law owns her own business and insists that she and her employees print a hard copy of everything. (She is pretty successful, so I probably shouldn't question her business tactics, but it still makes me chuckle sometimes.) The part that is interesting to me is that I am becoming them. Not with saving files, but new technology for sure.

Technology has passed me. My 14 year old step daughter has me very aware of my own fears and apprehensions of new technologies. I am sure she looks at me sometimes the way I see my parents and in-laws. To her I am sure it is not as complicated as I feel like it is. One simple example is that I do not want a smart phone. (I am not a fan of my cell phone) I have no idea how they work, and the thing is I don't care, nor do I want to know. I am sure though if I played with one I would become more comfortable and eventually be fine with it, because I know that is the best way I learn. I learn technology with inquiry. I ask myself what a button does, then I attempt to push it and get an answer. That is what I mean when I say I play with technology to understand it and eventually use it.

Here is the thing, I know all of my ideas and prejudices and excitements about technology are stuck in that I can only see through my vision, which has been formed and focused through many experiences, beliefs and abilities. As I stated before I am sure that my childhood and my positive view of it affects what I believe people should get out of their lives. I am sure also, that my personal beliefs and convictions about the best human experiences being of those that are shared relationally affect my ideas as well. That is the downfall of personal inquiry; it has a very narrow view no matter how open-minded the person with the view is. Other forms of inquiry, while they each have their own strengths and weaknesses allow for other factors not as subjective as those of a single person. (This then leads to the debate of the idea that anything can be truly objective which was discussed in one of the readings earlier in the course.)

Overall, I would have to say that technology in education can be a great tool. However, it must be used as a tool rather than a way of life. *Digital Nation* discussed

many of the issues that are beginning to come up, and to be totally honest, some of it scared me and it definitely made me consider lots of different ideas, most of which conflicted with each other. For example, the idea that people are killing people from thousands of miles away seems wrong somehow, but at the same time, I found myself thankful that their families would not have to suffer the loss of their family member, nor the fear and uncertainty that comes with having a loved one away far away. I suppose like many things, the question is where is the line and how do you gage the loss vs. gain. I don't have those answers. I think those were the answers the directors and producers of *Digital Nation* were attempting to find, and in the end it didn't seem like they had the answers either.

I do not know where technology is headed and I wonder often how it will affect my children and grandchildren, and I suppose me as well. I am thankful there are people like those who were a part of *Digital Nation*, who are looking into what it is doing and through their inquiry hopefully only good will come from new technologies. And while I will probably never get rid of my landline, and continue to use a map to get to where I am going, I will continue to use self inquiry to ask myself questions on why and how I am using technology.