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There is a Gap in the Digital Divide

This project shed new light for me in how the digital divide and age has become so far spread out in just 20 years alone. While I knew from class about the digital divide and how different things were back 30 or 40 years ago, I did not know just how far apart my generation is compared to the newer tech-centric generation of today. Nowadays kids know so much more technology, like using an iPod or a cell phone, than even I do myself. From the interviews I had with family members and friends, technology has evolved so much that even if a person were proficient in one usage five years ago, it has become obsolete now and he/she has to relearn the newer technology to even catch up, and it is because of this evolution of technology that the digital divide increases with each generation. However, the gap from generation to generation is actually decreasing in the span, because of how much new technology is revealed yearly or even monthly. The digital divide is both increasing and decreasing and should technology continue to advance quickly then yesterday’s technology will become obsolete tomorrow.

First this paper will be about what the digital divide is and I will give some statistics to show how much of a gap there is, even within a ten year span. According to techopedia.com, they state that “The digital divide refers to the difference between people who have easy access to the Internet and those who do not. A lack of access is believed to be a disadvantage to those on the disadvantaged side of the digital divide because of the huge knowledge base that can only be found online” (techopedia.com). Basically it is the difference between, not only people in different areas or backgrounds, but the differences in generations as well (like the difference between the Baby Boomers and the current generation).

Now, with how rapidly technology is advancing the gap is becoming shorter and shorter. Where before, with the new technology like iPods, cell phones and “having an App for that”, the gap that spanned a couple of decades apart, to just a decade apart, to now five years apart and decreasing. “‘Each year, being digitally connected becomes ever more critical to economic, educational, and social advancement' (NITA, 2000)” (10). This quote gives an accurate statement, from the National Institute for Trial Advocacy, in how the digital divide grows and how we must try to keep up in order to help our society grow.

According to the Federal Communications Commission, they have estimated that “within the next decade about 80 percent of jobs one would need to know how to use digital technology… Since just 2010 alone, the need for digital knowledge basically has increase 38 percent, from 14% in 2010 to 52% in 2012” (fcc.gov). That is a major jump in the need for digital tech understanding in itself, let alone actually knowing how everything works in a system. Now because of this need, with the help from Connect2Compete (C2C), the FCC has created classes for Americans that are in need of help for learning digital technology for their employers.

This gap was very apparent during the interviews with my family members. The people I interviewed were my grandpa, my mom, older sister, brother and my nieces. For my grandpa, Clyde Fullerton, he had no experience regarding the digital divide. He did have a telephone but that was basically all he used. He never learned how to use a computer or anything tech related. With my mom, Mary Crivello, she too was out of the digital divide era. However she used a telephone, and had to take a typing class using a type writer. Not until she was in her 20’s did she use a computer. And back then, the computers she was using for her work were massive.

Then I interviewed my sister, Sarah Nielson. She was born at the tip of the “digital age”, when computers were becoming a computer. Growing up she didn’t use much of anything tech wise. But then she had a pager and later in high school she started to use a computer more. She actually didn’t get a cell phone until she was in her 20’s, when the Motorola Razor came out. Then I interviewed my younger brother, James, but who is in the middle of the digital native era. His experience was that growing up he didn’t want to play much of video games or anything technology really. He would almost always be outside unless it was raining or no one was able to play. But then he started to get more video games and started to be more inside, especially in his teens. Now he wants the latest and greatest things regarding technology, especially with Apple products. However, even being a digital native, he still will go outside and play.

Finally I interviewed my nieces, Haylie and Kenzy. They are very much in digital age. All they want to do is play games on the computer or with their mom’s iPad and play with the Apps. Their mom actually has to make them have “outside time” to keep them from just wanting to do the video games. Their school, actually, has links on the website where they can go onto and play games to help them learn more in school.

In their interview I was amazed in just how a ten year difference can be for an era. The divide is so great now that 5 year olds can figure out things on Apple products or on a video game, whereas their parents don’t even know where to start. This was really an eye opener for me in how just 30 years can be such a difference in how the times were, compare how the times are now.

By now, this paper may seem confusing because it may seem like it is contradictory. Well the concept is confusing in itself. There is a huge digital divide, regarding the gaps in generations. But, the gap of technology that has to be learned is decreasing and in due time the gap will not become generational, but monthly. It is all very confusing but there is not really any other way to say how the digital divide has become and is becoming.

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