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One Planet, Two Sides, Seven Billion Narratives

There is a world that dances to popular media and is surrounded by their virtual system. Their Safari gives them a cyber compass to direct them to anything they ask. They stare in a window that gives them a reality of everything that is not happening in front of them. They are a connected lamp that is always on and always plugged in. Another world exists on the other side, divided like the great earthquake in *The Land Before Time.* They are separated from the other dinosaurs. They dance to drums and human singing. Their Safari contains striped black and white creatures drinking from a peaceful barrier of water and long giraffe necks that can reach the top leaves. They stare out a window that gives a reality of what is happening in front of them. They are a candle that gives light for a small group to connect. But the flame will eventually rest. Digital technology divides these two worlds. There is a digital divide of a few different categories. Interviewing people provided an interesting insight of the age divide. An economic divide also plays an effect, showing who has access and poorer countries that may be disconnected from the Internet. Technology skills and lack of also create a line, separating who’s on and who’s not. A digital divide has an effect on society, but people from both ends of the divide can learn something from each other because it’s not necessarily a bad thing to be connected or disconnected.

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Most of the generations of people who are well off economically have at least a fair understanding of Internet technology. It can depend on the individual, but there is an age gap with differences in how often the person uses the Internet and what they use it for. For example, from interviewing the younger generation, they seemed to know a wider variety of Internet memes that some of the baby boomers didn’t recognize. However, the older folk, when interviewed showed to be more efficient with their use online and claimed to find it not to be too much of a distraction. “More than half of American households now use the Internet, and two thirds own home computers”(Mossberger 201). This fact shows that many Americans have access to and use the Internet. The divide starts because the younger the person is, the most immersed they are with technology and are less knowing of a time that it wasn’t there. The older a person is, the more difficult it is for them to adapt to the change.

According to Pew Internet, 95% of teens and adults aged 18-29 were on the Internet consistently from Nov. 4th to Sept. 12th from a study in 2013. Those aged 30-49 were at 89%, 50-64 were at 77%, and 65 and older were at 52%(Madden 3). A total of eight people were interviewed, split into two different generations. The ages were 19, 20, 21, 21, 52, 54, 55, and 61. The statistics from the *Teens and Technology* article reflected in the results. Everyone had at least some knowledge of computers and were comfortable using them for the things they wanted to do. The main difference was the amount of time spent online. For hours spent online each day, the total time for 19-21 was 15 hours, while the other group only added up to 6 hours and 30min. The most time spent online

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for the young group by an individual was hours and the least time spent in the elder group was 30min.

There were both positives and negatives from this. Each group was given a typing test to each type the same paragraph and see how fast they could type it. Generation Y as a whole were about 4 minutes faster than the baby boomers. However, Gen Y all said that the Internet could be distracting with such enthusiasm. But half of the older group didn’t see it as distracting and the other half only said “it was distracting sometimes.” One individual from the older group used her time wisely on the computer, doing efficient things like spreadsheets, accounting, and looking up how-to things. A conversation spurred up later on when her daughter shared some of her knowledge of online sites for psychology. Overall, there were many differences in the interviews, but each had something positive in them of a lesson that could be shared with talking to a different generation. College aged students are exposed to a different technological world than middle aged adults living at home, but there’s always something new to know on each side of the divide. For example, one could argue that it would be better to have more emails to separate school, work, and personal. Or, one could argue the meaningfulness of writing a letter.

The skills divide also separates individuals. This can be tied into age too. According to an article in the New York Times, online habits are slowly coming to seniors. People aged 65 and older went from 53% to 54%. Though, among the more elderly over age 77, there are only one third online(Span). Habits are coming just slowly though and many grandparents aren’t using it nearly as often. Six years ago, a certain

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grandparent from six years ago used a typewriter to tell a story about his family history to send in the mail to his granddaughter in high school for a family tree project. The girl thought it would have been simpler to email it. From the interviews, female subject of 61 has a Facebook and itunes, but refuses to spend the time to figure out how to put up pictures and always asks her daughter to help her put songs on her ipod. This evidence shows that the older generation is getting a handle of technology, but can be quite a bit slower grasping it. But certain people might not mind being in the lacking of skills side of the divide. According to Pew Internet in *Adoption over Time*, the main reason for non-internet users to not use it was that they were just not interested(Pew Internet).

Lastly, there’s a digital divide of people being cut off from the rest of the world. In the Digital Divide video, it tells of 300 million people that haven’t ever been connected to the Internet. “Industrialized countries are home to 88% of all internet users, yet they make up only 15% of the world’s population.” They showed that in Taiwan, the people were very good at growing peaches, but had a difficult time selling them, so it was suggested that they make a website to get others to know about this. People from outside their divide helped them. But also, they can help people on the other side of the divide think differently too, in a way to connect with what is in front of oneself instead of what is going on with everything else.

Each of the over 7 billion individuals is in one of the two worlds. But they all have a story to tell whether it’s to share the Internet connections or the outside connections. There’s something to learn from being online and disconnected.

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