Weyman

Leaping the Digital Gap

The digital divide is the gap between understanding of media technology and not understanding. This gap has been studied by many people and many statistics are offered to the public about it. Everyone uses media, or, at least the greater majority of people do. The question is, how well do they use it? Or perhaps, how often do they use it? When looking at individuals, the answer may vary, but when looking at people as a whole, a clear pattern can be cut out. After interviewing a younger child at age of 12, two friends that are 18/19 and Mr. /Mrs. Weyman who are 42 and 57, results were found to be both expected and unexpected in relation to the statistics about the digital divide. After questioning them about their media, results were found that very closely match the statistics of online sites like PewInternet.org and other reputable sources, answers that promote age difference, exposure to media and even cultural acceptance.

Matthew is 11 years old. He is in 6th grade and is in very involved with his friends, school, etc. When asking him about media and his understanding of it, his answer was not far from the “usual” for his age group. He spends most of his free time playing video games either with friends or at home. He does not yet have a cell phone which could potentially contribute a lot to his media use. When it comes to social media, he does not have a Facebook but whether, uses things like chat apps on his iPod and through Wi-Fi on his 3DS. According to Pew internet, the average age for most media use is around 18 to 19 years old. (1) While this may be the case no, over time this average age could drop, with today’s youth gaining access to a more wide supply of digital technology. As media slowly creeps down the

1. “What People Do Online,” *Pew internet and American Life Project.* Graph 3 - Age

age line, younger kids will be more exposed to media and will inherit the trait of “most media savvy age group.” Another interesting statistic that affects Matthews’s age group is that digital use is heavily reflective of family income. This may sound like nothing new, but families who make over $75,000 a year have 2x more media use than those who make under $30,000. (2) Next on the interview list were Adrian and Marissa, both of whom are 18. Adrian is a male who works many hours a week, goes to Clark College and lives with his dad. Marissa on the other hand, is not currently employed and does not go to school. The before stated statistic about 18 or 19 years old being the most media inclined is very supported by interviewing these two people. They depend on the media, (mostly social) to get them through the day, whether its texting, Facebook messaging or even Skype. Marissa put it this way; “I feel lost sort of, if I don’t have my phone on me or access to Facebook in general.” Marissa did not disclose how many hours of the day she spent online, but Adrian put his number at around 4-5 hours a day. In Adrian’s case, he relies on a lot of media for homework, contacting his work, etc. Marissa simply uses it for social media and communication with friends/family. Another interesting graph on Pewinternet.org is one that compares the digital divide amongst types of school students. Full time students use 30% more digital technology than employed citizens, who use 75%. (3) This gap is most likely caused by the heavy integration that digital media has been intertwined with school. This data proves that the digital divide is affected and shifted by age.

1. “What People Do Online,” *Pew internet and American Life Project.* Graph 5 – Household Income
2. “What People Do Online,” *Pew internet and American Life Project.* Graph 4 – Employment Status

After 1950, the use of digital media in adults shot through the roof, according to another graph on Pewinternet.org. (4) The real question was, how much of it did they use? Interviewing Mr. and Mrs., Weyman, two adults who live together, results were not as expected. Mr. Weyman is 57 years old and works as a lighting contractor. He is also pursuing his own goal of being a farmer at his home. The most amount of digital media that he uses is e-mail, through which he contacts his employees about upcoming jobs. He has a phone, but only uses it to call/text rarely. Mrs. Weyman relies on digital technology in a totally different way. She uses social sites like twitter and Facebook on her IPhone on a regular basis she says. She is a teacher at an intermediate school, which provides the accountability for the larger amount of digital media use, (computers in class, videos, etc.) An interesting statistic I found on an infograph via Ansonalex.com was that over 6,000,000 students were taking online courses in 2012. (5) This is a wide age group, starting at about 12 and going until late 30s and 40s. The age group that Mrs. Weyman is dealing with in her classes are the ones who make up the lower portion of the above said statistic. Once in middle/High school, online and digital media becomes a necessity for many students. A question to consider is, when these kids (whom are already using digital media in mass) grow up, will they continue to use media in the same way? This information supports the idea that the digital divide is based on the amount of exposure that younger children have to digital media.

The digital divide has many variables that change the results. From education, to household income and even age, the Digital divide fluctuates regularly. It would be no surprise if in the

4. “What People Do Online,” *Pew internet and American Life Project.* Graph 1 – Internet Adoption

5. “Infograph,” *2012 Digital Divide Statistics*

next few years, the data changes and new statistics are taken. From children who rely on video games and not so much social media, to teens who almost literally live on social media and finally adults who either use media frequently or are too old and don’t, digital media is somehow integrated into everyone’s life. After questioning these people about their media use, results were found that very closely match the statistics of online sites like PewInternet.org and other reputable sources, answers that promote age difference, exposure to media and even cultural acceptance.

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