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DTC 101

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30 April 2013

Digital divide within my Family

What does digital divide mean? If you were to ask this question to a family member or friend it is more than likely that they wouldn’t know the answer to it. According to Mossberger and Tolbert on page 201 digital divide means “To describe the pattern of unequal access to information technology based on income, race, ethnicity gender, age, and geography that surfaced during the mid-1990s”. It would be interested to find out who from my family members falls within the digital divide. The same questions were asked to my five family members that were interviewed. Older people are the ones falling into the digital divide due to a lack of interest and understanding its relevance and full capabilities.

While looking over all the answers, it was noticeable that the oldest people interviewed had limited capability when using modern technology. The first person interviewed was my mother because she hardly uses any kind of new technology. According to pewinternet.org my mom falls on the digitally uncomfortable category. She is part of the “7% of the general population…to own a computer, but lack skills and interest in taking advantage of all the internet has to offer”. My mom is a 39 year old, Hispanic, working adult that owns a computer, a laptop, a Wii console, three plasmas, two blue rays, a dvd, a smartphone and has access to internet. Although she has a laptop she prefers the computer. She says she can live without a computer but not without her smartphone. She was asked why and she responded “I’m a busy person; I am a single mother of five kids and two grandchildren.” She gets an average of 20 calls a day either from her son’s school, lawyers, Vancouver housing, job agencies, and her daughter that lives in Seattle. “I just need my phone for everything that’s how I communicate with the world.” She does not use any kind of social media although she has heard of Facebook before. Since she is a single parent she was asked if she was interested in online dating and her response was, “I have no time to date and I’m not interested in meeting anyone, I just want to focus on my family”. She was also asked if she used any technology when she was in school and she said she only made it to the ninth grade and all she used was the library and books. Finally she was asked if she used any technology today and she said she only uses the computer to search for jobs, apply for jobs, type resumes, and to check and send emails. “That’s all I know” she said.

Similar responses were collected from 25 year old Eduardo who is also a working Hispanic adult. He owns a laptop, an Ipad, a smartphone, and has access to internet. He prefers the Ipad because it is easier to use. He mainly uses his smartphone because he works all day and is barely home. He uses the Ipad to watch soccer games he missed on TV, to listen to music, and to play games. He has a Facebook account and uses it to entertain himself and to communicate with his friends and relatives in Mexico and other parts of the world. Natalia gave different responses. She is 22 years old and a full time college student. She owns a laptop, an Ipad, a smart phone and has access to internet. She has a Facebook account but barely gets on it because she does not have time to check it. She uses her Ipad in school and her laptop at home. “My laptop is too heavy to carry around campus.” She spends at least six hours in school every day. She uses her laptop mainly to type papers and turn in assignments. She barely uses her smartphone to communicate; she even forgets it at home sometimes. “My smartphone is not as important as my laptop and Ipad.” When interviewing my other sister Esmeralda it was obvious that she uses social media more than anyone that was interviewed. She is a working 20 year old adult. She owns a laptop, Ipad, smartphone, and has access to internet. She has a Facebook, Tumblr, and Instagram but uses Facebook the most. Since she got an Ipad she doesn’t use her laptop any more. She can’t go anywhere without her smartphone. She mainly uses her smartphone to text and to communicate with friends. She is an outgoing girl and likes to socialize but she is always on her phone, so much so, that sometimes she forgets about the world she lives in just like Rushkoff mentions in page 43 “The most social girl in her class doesn’t really socialize in the real world at all.” The last person interviewed was my brother Benjamin. He is a nine year old elementary student. He was interviewed because he is always using some type of technology. He is either on the computer, on the ipad, on his 3ds, playing Wii, or watching TV. His favorite is the Ipad and only uses technology to play game or watch videos on YouTube.

In conclusion, the older people fall within the digital divide because they are not interested in learning and/or creating new technology. The reason the older people are not interested in learning new technology is because they grew up without it. It’s too complicated for them to use and to learn new technology. According to pewinternet.org “The main reason they don’t go online is because they don’t think the internet is relevant to them”. Seniors are at risk to be programmed just like Rushkoff stated in page 139 “If we don’t learn to program, we risk being programmed ourselves.” My mom knows the basics of using the computer but she is still not up to date with the digital age. A college student uses technology such as a laptop and ipad more than a working adult. According to my interviews a working adult uses social media to communicate more than a college student does.

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