Cell phones and media consumption

Technology, Mobile Phone

Cell Phones and Media Consumption INTRODUCTION In today's society, the prolific use of cell phones has become so commonplace we barely realize how often we (and the people around us) are on our phones. Our culture has become accustomed to the widespread use and accessibility of cellphones, and we fail to realize the effect it has on people and society as a whole. The overuse and abuse of cell phones, specifically text messaging among high school and college students is cause for concern. Nowadays, people believe that it is impossible to survive without a cell phone. However, this perceived necessity causes a lot of wasted time and energy spent on text messaging, playing games, and engaging in social media applications and programs like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Cell phones have become portable distractions that never leave our sides. We feel a constant temptation to check our phones, even though you know the information is hardly vital to whatever you are currently doing. I've realized that during any free moment I get, I instinctively take out my phone, even though I haven't received a text message. I don't have any good reason to be looking at my cell phone, other than boredom, but the fact that it is in my pocket and full of potential information compels me to check it constantly. Cell phones have also caused a decline in face-to-face social interactions. Due to the convenience of our cell phones, we no longer need to be in the presence of the person with whom we are speaking. We don't even need to verbally address them. Text messaging has handicapped individuals with social anxieties, issues with public speaking, or problems with confrontation. Instead of these people learning to face their fears and maturing past these shortcomings, they simply avoid the issue altogether by communicating via text or email. The

excessive misuse of cell phones has also become downright hazardous. Text messaging and driving has become an epidemic not unlike driving under the influence. Studies have shown that there is no difference in the likelihood of causing a car accident between a drunk driver and an individual who is texting while driving. Not only are your eyes off the road and looking into your lap, but you also only have a one hand on the wheel. In many cases, individuals will steer the vehicle with their knee while the use both hands to text. Our society's excessive and unrestrained use of cell phones directly impacts our ability to learn, limits our social development, and in certain situations is hazardous to our health. ARTICLE REVIEWS In an article titled " Cell Phone Use and Grade Point Average Among Undergraduate University Students, " a study was done to analyze how cell phones may be affecting typical college students' ability to achieve good grades. Harman and Sato concluded that, " the results of this study suggest that the more an individual sends or receives text messages, the lower his or her grade point average typically is. " (Harman & Sato, 2011). The study demonstrates that it is clearly more difficult to focus during class when you are having several different conversations with friends or family via text messaging. The researchers used a survey of undergraduate college students to determine the results. 38 men and 80 women were asked to " complete an anonymous survey consisting of a variety of questions regarding cell phone use, academic standing, and demographic information. " (Harman & Sato, 2011). All of the survey questions required simple yes or no responses. The results indicated a negative correlation between grade point average and the number of test messages an individual sends. However, an interesting

discovery was that, " contrary to our expectations, grade point average was positively correlated with being comfortable text messaging in class. " (Harman & Sato, 2011). It was interesting to see that the students with higher grade point averages were the most comfortable with sending and receiving text messages during class time. On a side note, it seemed the gender did not have any bearing on the results. This study only further proved the validity of prior research and studies that have been done regarding lower academic scores and inability to recall lecture materials. The key point made in this article is that, " the association between lower grade point averages and sending or receiving a higher number of text messages can be explained by the fact that compared to individuals with lower grade point averages, those with higher GPAs are more likely to spend more time on academics and therefore they may have less time to send and receive text messages" (Harman & Sato, 2011). Obviously it is possible that this could be a self-fulfilling prophecy: if a person is likely to text during class, than it is unlikely they are very serious about their studies, and therefore will have a lower GPA. The texting could be the cause of the poor GPA, or a result of a student who is uninterested in or unable to pay attention in class. Either way, texting during class clearly damages a student's GPA, regardless of the reasoning behind the action. The article entitled, " Text or Talk? Social Anxiety, Loneliness, and Divergent Preferences for Cell Phone Use, " examines the connection between decreased face-to-face social interactions as a result of our ability to communicate more conveniently via cell phones. Not only is there a significant decrease in face-to-face interaction, but also, as a result of text messaging, people aren't even speaking to each other

anymore. I believe this is because we "…prefer to text because it gives them time to think about the wording of their messages, allowing them to be more informal and candid, even with close friends. " (Reid, 2007). We are able to avoid the potential stress and anxiety that comes along with the perceived confrontation those actual verbal conversations can provide. Text messaging has become the most prevalent form of communication, and Reid explains that, " By delaying or eliminating the audience reactions that normally accompany real-time spoken interaction, SMS (short message service) may offer anxious individuals a way of making social contact without fear of immediate disapproval or rejection, allowing attention to be refocused away from the observer's perspective and towards the composition of messages that more effectively achieve self-presentational goals" (2007). These moments of social anxiety and habits of social avoidance eventually result in an inability to effectively communicate in person. Dr. Dong-Chul Seo and Dr. Mohammad R. Torabi discussed the dangers involved with cell phone use while driving, along with the trends and statistics of cell phone related motor vehicle accidents in an article titled, " The Impact of In-Vehicle Cell-Phone Use on Accidents or Near-Accidents Among College Students. " Every study done recently unanimously agrees that talking on your cell phone or text messaging will significantly increase the chance of an accident occurring. The authors quote a Redelmeier and Tibshirani article consisting of, "… study of 699 drivers with cell phones who were involved in collisions and concluded that when a driver used a cell phone while driving, the risk of a collision was between 3 and 6. 5 times higher than when the phone was not used and that this increased risk was similar to that of driving with a blood-alcohol level

above the legal limit. " (Mohammad & Seo, 2004). The study performed by the authors of this article "…reported that 21% of the accidents or near accidents they had experienced involved at least one driver using a cell phone. " (Mohammad & Seo, 2004). Another major finding of their study was that the more often a driver was using his or her cell phone while driving, the more likely they were to also be speeding, eating or drinking, or were intoxicated as well. The use of the cell phone while driving clearly inhibits the ability of the driver to focus on the road and operating the motor vehicle as safely as possible. Not only are cell phone using drivers putting themselves at risk, but everyone else on the road. METHODS & RESULTS The method in which I analyzed my own personal media consumption was by keeping a media usage diary for 10 days. I kept track of how long I spent on my laptop, cell phone, watching television, or playing video games. I made note of what I used each individual media device for, and what my role or status was associated with that form of media usage. For example, I found that I used my cellphone for many different reasons other than its main function of communicating with friends and family. I use my cell phone to check Twitter and Instagram updates, and most of the time to see how my favorite sports teams are performing. The role of my cell phone was primarily to serve as entertainment. I also used my phone to read emails. While I may not use it to respond immediately, I realized that I am constantly checking for new emails. I found that my laptop was used for educational purposes about ¼ of the time, even though that is supposed to be its primary function. I use my laptop to download, stream, and listen to music, as well as watching movies, and following my favorite television shows. I found that the only thing I

actually watch on my real television is sporting events, and the channel ESPN, so that I can watch SportsCenter. I use a website known as " LetMeWatchThis. com" to keep up with my favorite television series. The main reason I do this is because the commercials and advertisements are totally removed from the episodes when you watch them on the Internet. *See Appendix for Media Usage Diary* DISCUSSION My results showed me that I am no different than the college aged individuals discussed in the research articles I read. I definitely have been known to use my cell phone during class. When I am not actually using it, my phone is constantly serving as a distraction because my phone rarely goes five or ten minutes without vibrating with some kind of alert. Whether it is an email or text message, or some kind of social media update, my phone is constantly reminding me of its existence in my back left pocket. While I try my best to give 100% of my focus to the lecture at hand, it is nearly impossible to do so when my phone buzzes. I can also distinctly recall using my text messaging and email to avoid confrontation or any unwanted to social interaction. For example, if someone calls me who I am not necessarily in the mood to speak to, I don't pick up the call. Then, I immediately text message them with a fabricated reason why I could not answer the phone. However, I make it clear that I am willing to engage in a conversation via text. It is somewhat embarrassing to admit to such a lame avoidance of social interaction. But, most of the time, I do this almost instinctively and without any hesitation. This may be a result of having had a cell phone since the 8th or 9th grade, and I have now grown accustomed to handling situations in this manner. I am also guilty of using my cell phone while I am operating a motor vehicle. In fact, I like to use my

time in the car during my commutes to and from school or work, to make phone calls to my friends and family. I would estimate that I make about 75% of my phone calls while I am in the car, and driving. I also have a tendency to text message and email while I am driving or stopped at a light. It definitely takes a large amount of focus off of the road, and is a hazard to those around me and myself. CONCLUSION Our society's excessive and unrestrained use of cell phones directly impacts our ability to learn, limits our social development, and in certain situations is hazardous to our health. The cell phone has become a metaphorical " crutch" in our culture today. They distract us from focusing in school or on driving safely down the road. They allow us to avoid face-to-face, live social interaction, and hide behind the screen of our cell phones in order to communicate. Cell phones also provide a very serious threat to our safety because of the time and place we choose to use them. We have become slaves to the convenience and entertainment that cell phones can provide us with.

-- I found it very interesting to discover that after researching these cell phone related issues and topics, that I was one guilty of everything I reading about. It was a bit of an eye-opening project as I was able to view some of the research findings and statistics that the articles provided. It was also very intriguing to see how the authors and researchers in the articles I read were able to collect their data. You hear people say things all the time like, " I'm constantly on my phone during class, " or " Texting while driving is the equivalent of having 6 beers. " It was interesting to finally see some hard data that validated those claims that have become common knowledge. ---

-- APPENDIX Media Usage Diary Media Usage Key: * Cellphone — I used my cellphone for texting, emails, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, Facetime, and the ESPN app to get Phillies score updates. I also use the Google Maps function as my GPS. * Laptop/ Internet — The schoolwork that I do on my laptop is writing papers, using Blackboard, using my Kindle program (I don't have an actual kindle, but I downloaded my Sociology textbook via Kindle and I can view it on my laptop). For entertainment purposes, I listen to music on iTunes and on Pandora. com. I stream new movies and TV shows on a website formerly known as " LetMeWatchThis. com" (due to copyright issues, they changed the web address to www. 1Channel. ch). I keep in touch with my brothers and extended family members via G-Chat on my Gmail account. In case you were wondering, I do not have a Facebook. * Television — I do not watch very much TV with the exception of sporting events and Sportscenter on ESPN. I use the above mentioned website to watch any TV shows that I follow. * Video Games — I am not very big into video gaming, but my roommate is. When I did, I played Halo and FIFA. Date | Media being used | Length of Time Using Media | Status/Role associated with media usage | 14-Apr | Laptop - Internet | 4 hrs | Consumer (e) | | Cellphone | 2 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Television | 1. 5-2 hrs | Consumer (e) | | Video Games | 45 min-1 hr | Consumer (e) | 15-Apr | Class Ppt/ Viewing Stocks | 2 hr | Student | | Video Games | 1. 5 hours | Consumer (e) | | Laptop - Internet | 2 hr | Consumer (e) | | Cellphone | 2. 5 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Television | 1 hr | Consumer (e) | 16-Apr | Cellphone | 1. 5 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Television | 3 hr | Consumer (e) | | Laptop - Internet | 2 hr | Consumer (e)/

student | 17-Apr | Class Ppt | 2 hr | Student | | Laptop - Internet | 4 hrs | Consumer (e)/ student | | Television | 1 hr | Consumer (e) | | Cellphone | 3 hrs | Friends & Family | 18-Apr | Cellphone | 2. 5 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Laptop - Internet | 3. 5 Hrs | Consumer (e)/ student | 19-Apr | Cellphone | 3. 5-4 hrs | Friends & Family | | Laptop - Internet | 1 Hr | Consumer (e) | | Class Ppt | 2 hr | Student | 20-Apr | Cellphone | 3. 5-4 hrs | Friends & Family | | Television | 2 hr | Consumer (e) | 21-Apr | Cellphone | 2 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Laptop - Internet | 4 hrs | Consumer (e)/ student | | Video Games | 2 hr | Consumer (e) | 22-Apr | Class Video/ Viewing Stocks | 2 hr | Student | | Cellphone | 1. 5-2 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Laptop - Internet | 3 hr | Consumer (e)/ student | | Television | 30 min | Consumer (e) | 23-Apr | Laptop - Internet | 5 hr | Consumer (e)/ student | | Cellphone | 2 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | 24-Apr | Class Video | 45 min | Student | | Cellphone | 3 hrs | Student/ Friends & Family | | Television | 1 hr | Consumer (e) | | Laptop - Internet | 4 hrs | Student | | | | | WORKS CITED

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