

## *Pros and Cons of Digital Media and Human Development*

### *Pros of Digital Culture*

Might give people from different backgrounds a culture in common, potentially uniting people globally, on various issues of human health and welfare.

The Cognitive Surplus theory- that people want to do something to help and make the world better, that ten minutes times 2 million people on the internet is not small it's huge, that it gives the masses more political power- realtime and unrestricted communication can reveal political injustice and crimes against humanity, large groups can move together in protest, anyone can publish and governments have less control over the media.

Visual motor and spatial skills improve.

Quicker broader access to information.

Technology as a tool serves as a prosthetic, increasing our abilities and making us potentially smarter.

Video games can help kids think in terms of goals and strategies, to take risks without fear of trying, to multi-task, and to expect and accept failure.

Kids who spend 30 minutes playing prosocial video games like SuperMario Sunshine are more likely to help others for a week after playing the game.

One study at Brigham Young showed that girls who played age-appropriate video games with their parents had higher levels of parent-child connectedness and had lower levels of anxiety, depression, and aggression.

Many video games have educational benefits, like starfall.com, and may improve literacy skills and Kindergarten readiness for lower income children.

Some video games may boost self-esteem, encourage exercise with motion, and may teach higher-order thinking skills.

Some games like World of Warcraft may teach cooperation and ability to delegate responsibilities.

### **Cons of Digital Culture**

Consumption of digital media displaces opportunity for social interaction.

Live social interaction is how we really communicate, it is integral to the development of empathy and perspective taking, it is how a child evolves from an egocentric 2 year old developmental stage sometimes called the autistic stage, if we want children to develop empathy, altruism, executive skills, in other words, to become fully human, then we must be wary of excessive screen feeding.

So I think my purpose here is to make a case for unstructured social play as vital for developing the language, social skills, and the thinking skills needed to survive in the modern world, we may expect to see a shift in the future from a need for technical or hard skills to a need for soft skills to survive economically.

More TV is associated in the research with increases in unhappiness, anxiety, and the development of the false idol of materialism.

TV can create unrealistic expectations of those we love, disrupting relationships by creating ideals of appearance and behavior in a love relationship which when compared to reality leave us unsatisfied with ourselves and the people we live with.



Decreases in face-to-face human contact may explain some of the rise in some disorders such as autism- examples of attachment disorder and babies adopted from Russia, conduct disorder, personality disorders.

TV creates “imaginary friends” which don’t require us to do anything to create, develop, or maintain a relationship besides push a button.

Materialism of media marketing and passive entertainment leads people to underestimate the importance of real relationships to our life satisfaction.

Appears to lead people to over-invest in income producing activities and under invest in relational activities.

Promotes lazy habits- passive participants and couch potatoes.

Concerns about declining attention span- average TV show shifts scenes every two seconds creating “two-second minds,” American Pediatric Association recommends children under the age of 2 watch no TV due to concerns about links between TV viewing at young age and ADD/ADHD, on the internet the average American spends just over twenty seconds on a page, only 16% of Americans ever read more than two pages on a given article on the internet, eyes scan in an “F” pattern, leading to shallow scimming of information distracted by hyperlinks and poor reading retention.

Technology can influence the way we think, for example the clock and the map enabled us to place a new stress on measurement and abstraction, on perceiving and defining forms and processes beyond those apparent to our senses, now we emphasize measuring children to find where they are lacking, creating inferiority, judgement, and a pattern of negative evaluation and focus on weaknesses in our interactions with children.

The internet presents information in a more distracted way than a book, it can be a less immersive experience with links and pop ups, creating an expectation of instant answers and it bombards our brains, overloads and weakens working memory, creating fatigue and stress

In the 70’s we thought machines like computers would make our lives easier and create more leisure time, what happened? Today Americans get less sleep by one hour than they did then.

How does technology dictate the course of human history? Karl Marx; “The windmill gives you society with the feudal lord, the steam mill, society with the industrial capitalist.” Power and wealth become increasing concentrated in the hands of the few.

Ralph Waldo Emerson; “Things are in the saddle, and ride mankind.”

We have created an ecosystem of interruptions. The average American worker is distracted 11 times/hour, and loses time trying to shift attention back to task. Why would we want to be interrupted by texts, calls, and emails while working or playing.

Will the constant redirection of our mental resources interfere with contemplation, reflection, deeper levels of processing, altering us from evaluation and making judgments to “mere decoders of information?”

Increasing cognitive load can overload working memory, some studies link ADD/ADHD to working memory overload. Frequent interruptions scatter thoughts, weaken memory, and make us tense and anxious.

Concerns about access- privacy, sexual content, predators, inappropriate online “friends.”



Video game addiction- play time increasing, lies about playing, thinking about gaming during other activities, doing poorly in school due to time spent on video games, using games to escape real problems, becoming irritable when trying to stop playing.

2011 Norton Online Family Report says kids spend over 1.6 hours/day online and two-thirds report a negative experience, yet only 45% of parents realize this.

Links between aggressive behavior and violent video game playing .

Brain imaging studies indicate the online experience changes the structure and functional pathways of the brain, but it is difficult to determine how this plays out in behavior.

TV shows often model unrealistic conflict resolution and poor anger management modeling.

TV shows usually focus 95% on the conflict and the resolution is that last few minutes, younger or delayed children may only perceive the conflict.

Many cartoons present violence as funny, so some children try it out in real life and disregard feedback that it's inappropriate.

Some shows exploit others by making us laugh at their misfortune or worse yet we have the Pokemon model similar to dog-fighting. Talk about Sociopathy/Conduct Disorder!

