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English 2010-05

26 March 2014

Ever Texting Never Moving

In the last decade, texting, for better or for worse, has spread like wild-fire revolutionizing the world of communication. It's no surprise that young people are most proficient, but even the older generation is beginning to feel its effects. Text messaging is the suspect of many social issues but its effects on society are just beginning to be understood. One question worth contemplation is as follows: does the number of texts sent in a day somehow adversely affect the efficiency of the average person, student, or worker? In this analysis, various studies exploring the negative effects of excessive texting, and specifically texting during class among college students are examined. Looking at the larger implications of these studies, it becomes apparent, that the negative effects of texting extremes are not limited to college students but are also extended to individuals, workers, and society as a whole.

Not surprisingly, texting while driving is related to numerous avoidable tragedies. But one aspect that is not so widely understood is what effect the frequency of texting in class can have on academic success. Texting has become very commonplace; texting while in class has become a social norm that is difficult to reverse. It becomes especially tempting to text in class when the information being shared is perceived as much less interesting as something that is going on in a friend's life. Many people assume that it makes little difference whether they text in class or not. For this issue, a careful analysis of a paper by Sylvia E. McDonald called "The Effects and Predictor Value of In-Class Texting Behavior on Final Course Grades" is very enlightening. This study looks at the factors contributing to the likelihood of a freshman college

student to excel academically. She pulls from other sources that state that ACT/SAT test scores, GPA, and class attendance are the largest factors in predicting if a student will succeed. Sylvia McDonald expands this understanding in her study of a number of classes at a university, each with different “in class phone policies”, who she surveyed at time of course completion to ascertain knowledge on final grades and “in class texting habits”. As a result, she concluded that “The more a student participated in in-class texting behavior, the lower their final grade” (McDonald 39). The results were sufficient to calculate a predictor value of 22% for the factor of texting in class causing decreased likelihood of success in the classroom.

From this study, it becomes evident, that texting in class plays a significant factor in achieving lower grades. It is interesting to note that, not only did it have a negative effect on grades, but was also a big enough factor, that it could be used to partially predict the success of students. This trend of trying to multitask while performing other tasks also correlates to the workplace. If a student is willing to text during class, he or she will, likely, not think twice about texting during work. When this trend increases, the declining productivity of the employee and place of employment, like grades, is imminent. From this study, it becomes clear, that the distraction of texting while performing other tasks plays a significant factor in the decrease of other achievements, such as, but not limited to, GPA.

If a simple web search is conducted to ascertain the average number of texts sent by individuals age 18-24, the results vary anywhere from 40-100(+) sent and received per day. While it is hard to estimate an exact number, it is obvious that a large number of texts are sent and received daily, which also correlates to a large amount of time spent texting and not doing other things; from a time perspective, it is clear that more texting equals less time spent focusing on a specific subject and therefore less retention of new information. A study conducted by

Brittany Harman and Toru Sato called “Cell Phone Use and Grade Point Average among Undergraduate University Students” found conclusive results of frequent texting on undergraduate students’ grades. The conclusion was, “The more an individual text messages, the lower his or her GPA is likely to be” (548). Texting not only ineffective due to its multitasking nature, but is also a large time commitment. This paper about texting’s effect on grades doesn’t relate to distractions in class, but rather the time commitment of texting. The article continues,

Not being constantly preoccupied with a cell phone allows the individual to have more time to reflect on information presented to him or her throughout the day, and make meaningful associations between what they are learning and their own experiences, and participate in more advanced communication with others about academic material than what is typically communicated through text messages. (Harman-Sato 547)

In contrast to the results found about texting, phone calls were also investigated in the study, but “No correlations were observed between... the number of phone calls made, received, or the number of people an individual called” (548). It is interesting to note that the frequency of texting affected academic performance but the amount of time spent on calls did not. The reason for this is likely due to the nature of texting, which breaks up simple activities into larger and more scattered blocks of time.

The implication that texting while performing other activities results in a large amount of wasted time is supported by a study conducted by Amanda Gingerich and Tara Lineweaver. In their paper “OMG! Texting in Class = U Fail :(Empirical Evidence that Text Messaging during Class Disrupts Comprehension” they asked two groups to read a research article then take a quiz afterwards. One group was asked to text a prescribed message before reading, while the other group was asked to text the message while reading the article, therefore simulating the time

commitment of texting. Not only were the scores of the “texting-while reading” group lower, but another observation was that “After 15 minutes, 70% of the “text-first “group had started the quiz compared to only 40% of the “text-while reading” group” (45). From these results it can be deduced that excessive texting equates to decreased comprehension and more wasted time for undergraduate students, which is no doubt also true for other ages of students and individuals alike.

While texting may seem like a harmless activity that requires little time, the time can add up, if an individual is not careful, and result in decreased productivity of students and individuals alike. Regardless of all the other technological distractions afforded by a cellular phone, especially smartphones, it is irrefutable that excessive texting can diminish personal achievements whether academic, personal, or corporate and, moreover, result in the norm of “ever texting, never moving”.

Works Cited

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