INTERCONNECTIONS

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Connecting through time: A Stage 4 Case Study 'Dating and Technology'

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A fun lesson exploring how information technologies have changed the way we date over the years.

The Inspiration

While working from home during the Covid-19 quarantine, like many others, I did an autumn clean and found all manner of old phones and electronics that I dutifully sent to Officeworks for recycling like a true responsible citizen (and geography teacher). However, they were not recycled before they were duly extracted for an interactive geography lesson.

These old phones ranged from old antennae phones, to the ubiquitous classic Nokia 3315 (which probably still works) and to more recent models of the iPhone which are forced (or planned) obsolete due to software updates. It got me thinking about my teen years and how quickly communications technologies have changed in the past 20 years (or so).These old phones got me had me nostalgic and thinking about the times when phones were just about calling and texting people. When Snake 2 was the most exciting feature of a phone and when phone screens were green, black and pixelated, cyber-gossip was spread via

MySpace and flirting with your crush over MSN messenger. Those were the beginning years of Web 2.0, where user generated content as in its infancy and we were all trying to figure out the 'rules' of engagement. I remember clearly agonising over the 160 character text limit in an SMS to an early crush- wanting both to flirt, but also to flirt economically as my phone was prepaid and I wanted to stretch my phone credit for as long as possible. I also remember the first time someone in my close friendship group announced that they were 'in a relationship' on Facebook, it was quite the news! I have memories of conversations with peers about appropriate ways of being dumped or dumping someone in the face of all these 'new' technologies (can I just text him? Do it online- I know of someone who got dumped on MySpace! Send an email? Nah, probably should suck it up and do it face to face). These conversations the result of the advent and quick uptake of social media.

This got me thinking about how flirting/dating and coupling has changed over the years as a result of these changes in technology. Thus began my series of lessons using dating as a case study to illustrate how technology has changed the way people have connected over time using real life experiences and drawing data from people who have palpably seen the change. I hope you find these ideas fun and useful in your classroom!

Figure 1: Some of the phones I found (and friends donated for the cause!)

The lessons

The program that came to mind which best suited what I wanted to illustrate with these old phones was the Stage 4 Interconnections program where students are required to make an:

- Examination of how information and communication technologies increases people's connections to services, information and people in other places

- Assessment of the impact of increasing global connectivity on people and places.

Below is what I did with these phones and how they made for a fun few lessons where we examined communications technologies and connections to people through exploring how dating has changed over the years.

Preparation

Old Phones

- Student homework: to bring an old phone from home that is out of commission for 'show and tell' next lesson- it could be a mobile phone, a landline phone etc. They need to know the make and model of the phone.

Dating Interviews

- Teacher Preparation:
  - Interview at least 3 people who have dated in 3 different decades (e.g. 80s, 90s, 00s and 10's) (A good idea is to interview teachers at the school who don't mind being filmed and then showing the film in class in later lessons- see below for lesson plan).
  - In my lessons, I interviewed 5 teachers – one who dated in the 80s, 90s, 00s, early 10s and late 10's and filmed their responses and show them in class.
- Alternative to Teacher preparation:
  - An alternative task is to get the students to interview teachers or parents/ grandparents as their homework to expand this activity and bring their reponses in 2 lessons time (see lesson outline below).
- Interview questions about what it was like to date in their 'time':
  - What was the main form of non face to face communication with your beloved? (You might be in luck and have an older member of staff willing to talk about letter writing and love letters as a form of communication. Was it a

landline phone? MSN? Text messaging? This is a great starting question that 'places' the interviewee in a timeline).
  - How did you organise dates? (Via phone, face to face, text messaging, you might have someone who met through online dating application which would be an interesting case in point of how communications technologies provide a service to connect peoples).
  - What would happen if you were late? Or if there was an emergency situation? (Did you have to find a landline phone? Phone box).
  - What was acceptable time to wait for someone before you were 'stood up' on a date. (This question is pertinent for those who dated before mobile phones were commonplace and perhaps gives the students an idea of the instantaneous nature of their life today due to the current nature of communication technologies).
  - Cost to make a phone call (if you remember) (This question helps students see how communications technologies have become cheaper to access, gone are the days of counting text message characters in order to minimise cost).
  - Ways people broke up. (A fun ending question. This is a good question to see how communications technologies facilitated different ways such as the 'text message breakup' or 'being ghosted' – a term that I was unfamiliar with until this exercise).

Lesson 1

The lesson

- Homework the previous lesson – Students are required to bring ONE old phone they have retired that is sitting in a drawer at home somewhere. (they can work in pairs as well)
- Students come into class and spend 20 minutes with an A3 sheet of paper OR with their device to create a basic advertisement for their phone. In their advertisement, they noted the key 'defining' features on the phone when it came out to highlight the changes in technology.
- Students share their advertisement (30 seconds) in chronological order (From oldest phone to newest phone) and note the changes.

Reflection

- Reflection Activity: Students reflect on the impact of these changes on communications technology on:
    - People's connection with other people.
    - People's connection to services.

- Students may post their reflections on an online forum or discussion board (or any other format).

What they learn from this activity:

- Students can trace how technology has evolved over the last 10 to 20 years (depending on how old their phones get) and see how different technologies have developed and have changed the way we communicate.

- Students are also made aware of how people's connection to other people and services have increased over time with the advent, and fast development of communications technologies.

Lesson 2

These lessons provide a fun and engaging way to introduce and the changes in communication technologies and assess its impacts on people's connection other people as well as services that these new technologies provide.

The Lesson

- Case Study: Dating though the ages.

- Students are given the worksheet: *Case Study:Dating through the ages.*

- Students watch the interviews completed in the preparation and fill out the worksheet as they go to trace how technology has changed the dating landscape.

- Alternative Task: Students may have done their own interviews for homework, students can work in small groups to watch or share the interviews they have conducted. It is important in this instance to ensure that the groups are made so that there is a mix of 'eras' so that there is variety in sharing.

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- Reflection activity:
    - Students can complete this in groups or individually. Students reflect on these two questions:
        a. How has technology impacted how people date and connect with each other?
        b. Has technology made dating easier or harder?
    - Students can create a 200-word response on those questions and post their discussion online in an online forum or discussion board.

What students learn from this activity:

- Students can see tangibly how changes in communications technology have changed dating and increased people's connectivity to other people (for better or worse).

- Assessment of the impact of increasing global connectivity on people.

These lessons provide a fun and engaging way to introduce and the changes in communication technologies and assess its impacts on people's connection other people as well as services that these new technologies provide.

Changes in Technology Case Study: Dating though the eras

ERA	Describe the main form of communication? How did you organise dates?	What would happen if you were late? Emergency situation?	Acceptable time to wait for someone before you were 'stood up' on a date?	Cost to make a phone call?	(Acceptable) Ways to break up?
1900s–1950s **(example)**	Letter writing. Determining time and place of meetup and keeping to that. Visiting people face to face Later in the 1950s there were telephones and you could call from phone booths. You knew the number of your local phone booth sometimes.	You were not late! If you didn't show up something REALLY bad had to have happened to you! Someone could run and take a message. You explained later in a letter or face to face.	Up to 1 hour or sometimes more.	Didn't exist until later.	You could write a long letter Go to their house and meet them face to face. Later in the 1950s there were telephones in houses.
1980s					
1990s					
2000s					
2010s					