

The Use of Phones in Society

The people of Hawaii have a strong sense of 'ohana. However, with the advent of the smartphone, the strong relationships that tie people together to create a sense of community even amongst strangers are threatened by social media sites and virtual games. This notion of "no one gets left behind" is slowly disappearing as the phone industry grows exponentially as more of the population clamors for better features. Today, the constant use of phones distracts the population, especially teenagers, where a decrease in studies, an inability to socialize, and a loss of focus, whether at home or at school, becomes apparent.

According to the Hawaii State Department of Education, ACT scores for students, both public and private, are not only below the standard of the nation, they have dropped over time. Part of this drop is related to students' obsession with phones, a gateway to the world of social media. Dr. Chris Bjornsen of Longwood University found that students with higher GPAs used their phones less than their peers, while researchers at Kent State University in Ohio discovered that not only does more phone usage lead to lower grades but higher levels of anxiety as well. According to PrepScholar, last year's average composite score for Hawaii was 20.73 for the ACT exam and 1056 for the SAT exam. These scores corresponded to only 56% of Hawaii's public school students, which accounts for 95% of Hawaii's teenage population, attending a two or four year institution after high school, which can severely limit the job opportunities one may achieve (Department of Education).

Not only may the constant use of the phone limit a student's future, the indiscriminate use of the phone also stifles the ability to socialize for both teenagers and adults. The days of having an actual conversation with people are replaced by texting and social media sites. I distinctly

remember having a friend who struggled to maintain a conversation with my family but had no difficulty in engaging in texting immediately after dinner; her whole social life, similar to many other of my classmates, revolved around her phone. According to *Scientific American*, this increased reliance on cell phone usage not only inhibits our ability to connect with one another, through a loss of respect and being easily irritated toward others, but may also even reduce our social consciousness. While this phenomena may be found all over the world, the effect of having one's social life revolve around a digital world is particularly harmful here. When one lives in such a small society and people abuse electronics to the point of offense, negative consequences abound, from strained relationships, to lost jobs, to the loss of one's self-worth, as news quickly travels around the state.

Aside from harmful social effects, the overuse of the phone also results in a lack of focus. To many, losing a phone signifies the "end of the world." While a phone can be useful in certain situations, such as calling for help, an obsession over one's phone, no matter how small, may lead to an unhealthy infatuation with social media sites and games, not to mention the replacement of family and friends with digital personas. Furthermore, when one loses focus of his or her surroundings, one may endanger oneself and others as exemplified by the game "Pokémon Go!" According to the National Safety Council, 26% of all car accidents nationwide are caused by cell phone usage; as a result of distracted driving, roughly 431,000 drivers and pedestrians were hospitalized with 3,179 people dying from sustained injuries (Federal Communications Commission).

If the problem is allowed to fester and grow for another fifty years, we will soon discover ourselves in a society in which all people live in a digital world. Relationships between people,

once valued, may be destroyed with a single tap or swipe of a finger. Fortunately, such a problem has an easy solution; we need to incorporate more chances to put the phone away and socialize more with one another in our society. A practical solution for the next generation would be to create a joint partnership between parents and teachers, who would strive to minimize the use of electronics at school and home. Teachers can implement rules mandating specific consequences if phones are not turned off during the school day, while parents can actively restrict their child's phone use by taking away their child's phone. By preventing children, especially teenagers, from constantly using their phones, the next generation will be more inclined to study harder and socialize with their peers. As for adults, an innovative solution would be a weekly social time mandating that all adults "unplug" with incentives offered by their employer for attendance. This opportunity to socialize with other adults may not only improve communication skills but help them be attuned to the needs of their community and create life-long relationships.

If Clarence T.C. Ching were alive, he would be disappointed in today's society. He built his legacy on meaningful relationships with his fellow citizens, not on emails and social media posts. He truly valued the relationships he made with others, using them to create a better society. For example, his purchase of the Damon Tract was made possible by his fellowship with Sam Damon, who later helped Mr. Ching purchase more land in Moanalua. Another example would include the relationship between Clarence Ching and K.J. Luke; their close partnership with one another is evident through the creation of Hawaii National Bank. Most importantly, his friendship and desire to help the community resulted in a Chinese cultural center, Kukui Gardens, and St. Francis Hospital. Clarence T.C. Ching would have therefore understood the need for why we as a community must stifle the influence of phones; we, too, must learn how to

be an 'ohana once again by setting the phone aside and socializing with our fellow members of society in order to value real-world and personal relationships.