Introduction // About Tyler // About this project

I'm at the beginning of my career as a strategist, but not of my interest in UX design. I have been drawn not only to experiences, but the ways in which they work, how they were made, and the different possibilities of how they could be portrayed. I'm similar of other technologically loving people out there in the world. I get bored very quickly with the present technology, and can't help but look forward and imagine what's next. My personal taste in design can be seen as minimalism one day and progressive the next. I tend to merge away from classical/ American design dating before 1950. George Nelson, Dieter Rams, and Johnathan Ive have produced many concepts I admire. More recently to today, I'm interested in work by designers like Andrew Kim and Peter Moleneux. I'm currently working as a web designer living and going to school in Kirkland, WA where I am about to graduate with a Bachelor of Technology in Applied Design from Lake Washington Institute of Technology. I'm interested in coming up with an original concept, something that will lay the foundation for me to create a new methodology in UX design.

This study is a collection of data, interviews, and personal thoughts I have organized in order to explain a current problem and how it arose. The topic is communication in the 21st century and the UX associated with it. This project was originally inspired by a short documentary called, "Connecting", produced by Basset & Partners. The film takes the discussion of UX and UI design to a theoretical level. It analyses our decisions thus far as designers in leading the consumers of this technology down a particular direction in giving input and receiving output from

our devices. Raising questions like, “have we lost what is important in life?” One of my favorite statements is, “UX should be more about experiencing the content and less about using the device.”– Jennifer Bove

I worked with a few people in person or through live chat to brainstorm, strategize, help me answer important questions and provide first hand insight into the world of what I’ve started to call, linked devices. This name was chosen early in the project and has now changed several times as I learn more about what I’m actually studying, because it’s easy to think that UX design in a mobile context is all about how people use their devices. Pablo Wenceslao is a design instructor at LWIT, specializing in industrial design, computational design, and architecture. I knew I wanted to collaborate with Pablo on this project since I had taken his design theory course and we work well together, feeding off each other’s ideas. The other instructor I had conversations with is Steve Ater(Also owner of Think2A). He gave great insight into the evolution of aesthetics and overall personal ownership of electronics. He is a very refined designer and is head faculty of the BTAD program. The last person I talked to was Kevin Ashton. I believe he is most well known for sparking this concept of the “Internet of Things”.

I want the reader of this report to think about the effectiveness of UX design as it relates to the interaction with our devices. We go to great lengths to make UI usable by everyone but once in the hands of the users they end up styling it to their own personal aesthetic anyway. I have found that this often gets in the way of what is truly important, our experiences. Not just on the device but mostly off the device in

connecting to the real world. Please enjoy, brainstorm and comment. I hope you find that while the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, the conclusions I make are new and interesting.

Report Start

I'm approaching effectiveness not only as how well our interactions with smart devices produce desired individual results but on how those interactions effect future results and ultimately eliminate the noise created by the current relationships between the physical and the virtual. In order for our devices to be as effective as possible and create meaningful experiences for us we have to somehow connect ourselves virtually to other physical things in our lives. We can't expect to be completely connected through our smart phones when there are so many other devices we interact with throughout the day. We have become reliant on the smart phone as our only means of connecting with each other that it has become a distraction from real interactivity resulting in making the user physically and mentally un-present. Our ability to stay present in the future of UX is reliant on our innovation in connecting the virtual with the physical, i.e. GPS tracking of a phone, and an output of data on something physical such as a window in your home. This narrows in on what the most important aspect is here, the current task. Using my GPS output on a window example, the task here could be as simple as letting someone in your home know you have stopped to get gas and will be a little late coming home. Your task is to direct the phone to tell the person that you are going to be late. In reality, the phone knows you have stopped at a gas station and you shouldn't have to reach into your pocket, pull out the phone, and text that message.

Currently, one has to do exactly that. Small tasks like these are repeated hundreds, if not thousands of times a day, that distract us from what is important, being present now.

What does it mean to be *present now*? First of all, we have a tendency to be somewhere else in our minds, even if we aren't on our phone. We think about lots of things like, something bothering us, an event this weekend or where we are going to go for lunch. No matter how important or near or far off the event is, we distract ourselves naturally from being present now. Once we unlock the smart phone, we are no longer present. We are physically off in virtual space on the internet, connected with a lot more people than when we are here and now.(Kevin Ashton, 2013)

"we are a little bit confused what is really important in life, I'm here with you, my phone is silent, but there are millions of things I can do... am I really with you?"

- *Younghee Jung*

Kevin Ashton talked about social etiquette being a backbone when discussing importance in communication. Essentially, whatever rules apply in real life socializing apply to the web on Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks. If someone Tweets you asking a question you should respond just like you would if someone asked you a question in person. With these new kinds of social networks that connect millions and recently billions of people, come new forms of the same etiquette. Though they are new it is mostly common sense. You shouldn't follow

people on Twitter because of the desire for them to follow you back and then drop them later to increase your numbers. You shouldn't say or show anything on Facebook that you wouldn't say or show outside of it. I think some people will argue that these new kinds of social networks have given us the opportunity to say and show things we wouldn't otherwise, and it completely makes sense. It's understandable that people feel more comfortable talking about private or possibly embarrassing issues to people they don't have to speak to up close and in person. For the most part, this kind of behavior is considered misuse and it's to be expected. How come we are so shocked when we see someone acting out of line on the internet? People misuse technology all the time. You can use a drill improperly and hurt yourself, the fact is, millions of people won't see it. On the internet, everything can be seen by anyone using it. And of course this has a positive side too when considering the amount of exposure now available to smaller business, freelancers, and writers. It comes back to etiquette. When the internet is used properly, it does some really amazing things that we could never go without now. When used improperly, it has the same effects as any other piece of technology that is also misused.

When we start to relate the misuse of social networks with the idea of being present, the answer is clear. If you aren't present because of the use of social networks, you are guilty of misuse. Dissecting the problem further, it's not actually your fault that you have been misusing this technology. The technology has created the ability for distraction. It has been designed in a way where one becomes un-present when texting, or updating your status. You are enticed to look at, touch,

even talk to, and in general, interact with the device. All of these actions have become so normal that it is hard to say that there is anything wrong with any them. When you look at your phone, un-lock it, and dive into the world of Facebook, Twitter, and text messaging, you are no longer attentive to the physical world. Engaged with the virtual world (the screen of your phone) you are now virtually on. Therefore, if you are virtually on, you are physically off. This concept of differentiating being physically and virtually on and off came about when discussing positioning and personal presence with Pablo Wenceslao at the beginning of this project. He talked about how easy it is for us to be virtually or physically on, or virtually or physically off. But never both on, or both off at the same time. We concluded that you can never be physically off if you are virtually off. He asked, looking at our grid (figure 1) "what would it look like to be virtually and physically on at the same time? How do you do that?" We can't currently do this with our design of this social networking structure. He also introduced an idea that dealt with real time events versus "my time events". The events being interactions between the devices that belong to me and devices that belong to the rest of the world. (Wenceslao, 2013) This proved to be a vital part in my solution which I will demonstrate later. It was clear early on in the project that these questions would provide a great challenge, both in scale and in my interests. I

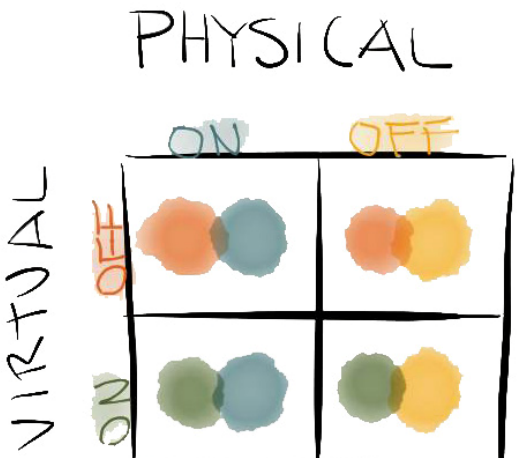

Figure 1

needed to look at activity centered design (ACD) and break down what it means to perform a task.

In researching task completion and ACD I discovered that it's not the performance of tasks on our devices that takes us off the physical and puts us on the virtual. If you back chain an activity in ACD, you can see that it encompasses many different parts. (figure 2) The devices we use to schedule, communicate, and even participate in these activities are what carry out the different actions thus performing a task. (jnd.org, 2012) As users, we are operators, precisely inputting the next action to perform a task. When all tasks are completed, our activity can take place. In order to know what particular moment of the UX needs re-designing we have to look at the root of the issue with performing operations on our devices.

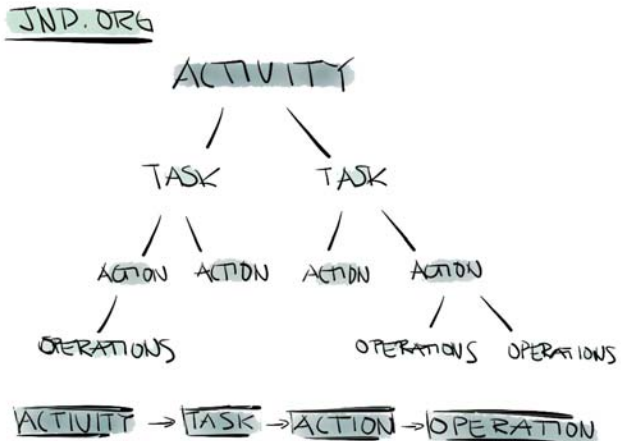

Figure 2

We didn't always have so many operations we needed to perform. In 8th grade, I could text my friends as much as I wanted and not tie up our home phone line. Further more, I could do this while watching T.V. and talking to my parents at dinner. All I had was texting and I was connected to anyone who shared this technology. So what is so different now? There are many more things we can use our devices for, and we want to experience the things they can do. In my interview with Kevin Ashton, we came to a critical realization that over time, as our ability to

communicate became more varied and mobile, the access to stay connected increased. The other aspect that came with increased frequency of communication is also the responsibility of social etiquette. The responsibility to respond to other's actions toward us.

Now that we can ask, comment, and criticize others at any time of the day, we have a new responsibility to respond to those doing it back at any time of the day. It's that same social etiquette and manors we all expect just used in new ways of communicating. If someone asks you a question, you answer them. If somebody gives you something, you say thanks. In a technical sense, it's the corresponding output of the others input. Though we think that our social networks have become strung out on knowing what's happening right now and only now, we have really just quickly increased our social responsibilities. This notion of having answers now, knowing what's going on now, and seeing what's *here* now. We are getting our now, without being *here*. We are physically off, and still knowing what is now. How are we doing this? We do it by being on *there*, virtually on and physically off.

When back chaining even further from activity centered design, I look past the operations that we perform and instead, looked at why we perform those operations. The answer was clear. We have a social responsibility to perform those operations, to be responsive. When we do this we leave the physical, enter the virtual and the importance of connecting is lost, the importance of remaining here physically on. As the level of output we expect goes up, the level of input required rises as well. It creates a distraction from the here and now. We are actually living in

two worlds that until recently were not connected at all, and still have a very long ways to go in order to be effective to us.

How we can take this information about an increase of social responsibility and start re-designing UX? How can we continue connecting, socializing, and staying here, physically on while we are also virtually on? By addressing our disturbability, we can start re-designing how our devices interact with us. They chime, vibrate, show little red numbers to indicate quantitative data, and flash banners on their screens, even if we aren't using them. They demand our attention and it's not that we are being sensitive to the devices feelings by picking it up and using it. The fact is that there is another person on the other end. That's who we answer to. And we answer because it's expected of us. What happens if you don't answer it? "I asked you a question on Twitter and you didn't respond till the next day. What's happened to you?" By carrying your smart device, you are now obligated to respond here and now, and have given others permission to disturb you to do so, wherever you are. If we were able to just ignore our devices when we needed to, we would. But the truth is that we don't. I've been sitting at my desk typing for two hours, and I haven't made a single *operation* into my phone. But it's still sitting here face up showing me alerts as they are received. It's not important to me that I stay connected to everyone while I'm writing this, yet I still have this need to know at least what's going on. And as indirect as it may be, the badge flashes, dings and vibes are noticed by me. They are distracting, and affect my thoughts in one way or another.

So it's clear now. In order to return to the days where we can enjoy communicating without being so responsible to be *there* now while still remaining

physically here, physically on, we have to look at managing disturbability. And as they say in the business, “there’s an app for that”. There are actually many apps that have been made in the last 5 years that attempt to monitor when you can be reached and when you can’t. The single largest problem with these apps is that it only solves the smallest part of the entire activity. You don’t get disturbed, but what about the person on the other end? How do you own a smart device, gain this increased social responsibility, prevent your phone from interrupting, and maintain the normal social etiquette? The answer is addressed in two parts, your location and you. Location is made up of your current location, the location of those around you and the location of devices that belong to the world, (not you). You are made up of your disturbability, your friends, your friends disturbablity, and devices that belong to you. In summary, this creates a term I’m calling, relevant locational disturbability, or RLD.

We spend so much time using our devices, but they never use us, unless we tell them to. Maybe we would like to keep it that way, but we can definitely get more out of them. The level of output could greatly surpass the level of input not from us physically using the devices, but by how effective they are at delivering the experience we ask of them. Fact is the internet was not designed initially to communicate as we do right now. It was designed strictly to share data with each other. We were never expecting to stare at the internet for extended periods of time, reading and posting our lives together. It just so happens that we considered this method previously used for transferring content, good enough for displaying content. The important aspect of designing a device is no longer how the user will

interact with it or use it. It is about how the device will interact with the user. There is no need for a response from the user. The device does not have to chime or vibrate and demand our attention.

We have now focused so heavily on using our things, that we forget what is important. We use these things to communicate, stay organized, and overall, assist us. It comes down to interaction design in the sense of creating less interaction as we know it. The degree of interaction between user and things decreases, but increases between devices. Using RLD is a means of grouping certain activities and our devices recognizing patterns in our everyday repeated behaviors. Through an increase in device interaction, a rise in experiencing their output of data can occur. Ultimately this is what's important and why we have things.