Trapped in the Media Hole

Media consumes my life. The first and last thing I see every day is some form of media; whether it is a tweet, a text from my mom, or the snooze button on my iPhone alarm, media plays a huge role in my life. I knew this prior to the media fast, but I didn't appreciate or acknowledge the importance of media until I accidentally broke the fast waking up on Saturday morning. I didn't realize how deep I was into the media hole until I read the, "is your media fast over yet?" text from my mom after checking the weather application once I woke up. I swore, turned my phone off, and restarted the fast. It consumes my life, and I thought I loved it, until I realized I could not function without it.

While my fast date was closer to the due date than I wanted, I decided on Saturday, September 16th. I didn't want to have homework to complete on my laptop or stress myself out with texts about group projects, so I chose a weekend. I prepared ahead of time by informing all my family and friends and writing a list of things to think about while I was technology-free. I even got lucky when, two days before, my laptop broke, removing that temptation from my day. I was confident, prepared, and excited to prove my family wrong and go the full twenty-four hours. They still don't know I lasted less than a minute. I didn't intentionally break the fast; my body and mine were unaware of the change in schedule. The first thing I do every morning is stop my alarm, look for important messages, check the weather, and get ready for my day, and my mind wasn't aware of doing anything else. While I started the fast again, it is still worth acknowledging that my instinct to check it overruled my conscious effort to avoid it. It didn't matter how prepared I was, my first thought every day is media, whether I'm aware of it or not.

Once I restarted the fast, media was still on my mind constantly. I wasn't able to completely ignore it; I was watching my roommate texting or listening to music with headphones. While I wasn't the one using it, I was still thinking about her use of it and how much I missed it. I didn't realize how difficult it was for me to avoid it altogether. I was literally incapable of blocking it from my mind. I'm interested to see how the results of the media fast would change if we couldn't think about media either. I think we would

all fail pretty quickly. We would all wonder about what we're missing out on, see people around us constantly using it, and desire it for ourselves. Once media was in my thoughts again, my mind drifted off to whether or not people were trying to reach me. Did my friends eat yet? Are we still meeting later to do homework? And then I thought about politics and current events. Did Donald Trump tweet today? Is Congress working on the debt ceiling? Is Hurricane Jose going to be a major problem? On any other day, I wouldn't have even thought of these problems. I would have already known the answers. It wasn't until I didn't have the answers at my constant disposal that I really thought about the problems. I have similar thoughts when my phone dies for long periods of time, or when I have three straight classes. However in those scenarios, I know I can ask a friend or google the questions at anytime, with the media fast, turning my phone or TV on wasn't possible. Two hours after I broke the fast, I broke it again. I was stressing myself out by not knowing what was happening with my friends, family, and the world, and my mind was so consumed by media, despite not even using it, that eventually there was no other option other than turning my phone back on.

Throughout the entire day I had to check my phone. I didn't need to watch television or listen to music, but I did need to quickly check the news and confirm that I didn't have any urgent messages. I spent two minutes maximum every time, turned my phone off, and the process would start all over again. Once I accepted the fact that I wouldn't be able to go longer than two hours at a time, I was able to analyze what was happening to and around me. For starters, I'm not the only one consumed by media. Despite knowing that I was fasting, my friends were incapable of avoiding media with me. When I suggested we all do it together, they laughed and refused. The thought of disconnecting was insane to them. They insisted that avoiding media is a waste of time. We have the ability to communicate with others, watch any show we want, and discover what is happening anywhere in the world with a click of a button, so why would anyone voluntarily delete these advantages from their lives? If they asked me this when I read the syllabus, I would've agreed. However now I'm stuck wondering what would happen to us if there was a cyberattack. If Facebook won't load for five minutes there's hysteria.

What if it was shut down permanently? Would we be able to adapt and go back to the days of letter-writing and horseback? I don't think we could and if I didn't cut media out of my life, I wouldn't have realized the extent of how dependent we are of it in our everyday lives.

I love media. I love snapchatting ridiculous pictures to my friends and reading the Washington Post application on my phone every morning. However, I think it is dangerous to love something so much that you are unable to function without it. We unconditionally trust that media will never leave our lives, but one day it might. One day I might wake up, unconsciously grab my phone to check the weather, and it won't work. There will be no option for me to turn my phone back on two hours later. It'll be gone permanently, and none of us will be be prepared for the supposedly impossible to happen. Who or what will pull us out of the media hole, when all of us are stuck in it? We need media to function in our lives and careers and it is irrational to willingly abandon it from our lives altogether. However, it's even more dangerous to assume that media will always be here, safely plugged in an arm's reach away.