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ENG100: English Composition

Information Diet Analysis

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Of Stress, Entertainment, and Academic Shame

Looking at my Information Diet Log, I feel a strong sense of shame. I used to be so smart, I think. I used to be so much more refined, I tell myself. While it is nice to pretend that I do not know what has happened to me over the years, I can lie to myself only so long. I used to have fewer worries and more free time, and so I buried myself in academic pursuits. Now, I have very little free time and more worries than I can handle without medication, and so I bury myself in other things—far less productive, but somehow more relaxing, things.

During the week of the Information Diet Log exercise, I was even more stressed than usual. I was busy with work and school, busy with changing jobs, busy with managing a complicated and difficult home situation, and busy with a demanding pet bird. When I sat down to breathe for a moment, I wanted to shut off my brain and engage myself in something with pure entertainment value. At some point during almost every day, I wanted to blow off some steam by screaming at strangers who could not hear me while playing a video-game. More often than not, at the end of the day, I was too tired to play, read, or watch anything, and I simply turned off the light and passed out.

There are two simple correlations pointed out by my Information Diet Log. I knew these correlations before beginning this exercise. One: when I am stressed, I play more video-games.

Two: when I study, I watch more court television. Court TV has accompanied my studying since 2009. Video-games have accompanied my rage since I was a child. As such, it makes sense that court TV is the second largest category, following academia, and that video-games is a large category, as well. I could have divided academia into a few smaller categories, but, in the end, I decided that anything relating to school belonged in the same category.

What I discovered due to this exercise is that I do not read nearly as much as I thought that I did. While it was an unusual week, it was not so unusual that my lack of reading is not disturbing. I also discovered that I rarely watch movies anymore. That is something that I vaguely recognized before, but did not fully realize. I used to watch movies quite often. Now, I watch them on special occasions, and, even then, I do not pay much attention to them. My attention span has decreased dramatically, to the point where I can hardly pay attention to something for more than fifteen minutes at a time. I know that this is related to my severe anxiety, which I cannot control, but it still bothers me and it is something that I would like to work on improving.

It is important to mention that my percentages are based on a unit-based system. Every "event" of information consumption is counted as one unit. As such, one Judge Judy mini-marathon counts as the same amount of information as an algebra lecture or a period of video-gaming. If I had instead used a time-based system, it is likely that the only thing that would have changed would be the video-games category. In total, I likely spent more time playing video-games over the course of the week than I spent on anything else. Other than that, it is likely that everything else would remain very similar.

This was a very useful exercise, and I am glad that I did it. While I was not happy with the results, it was important for me to realize what I did. I am determined to set aside more time

for reading, as well as to pay more attention to informative news. I do not like watching the news, and I never will, but reading the news online is something that I enjoy. Entertainment is enjoyable, and it helps me to manage my stress, but I cannot spend all of my free time focusing on pure entertainment. I will definitely be taking steps to change my information diet in the near future.