

child knows that what the parent is saying is opinion, not fact, a reaction, not a characteristic. If the parent does not communicate this effectively, the child will take the label as fact. I hope that I can remember this as I go through life.

*Ray Gozzi's Metaphors in Action feature in the July, 2006 issue was "Together Alone," in which he described the ways electronic media give us the sensation that we are experiencing events with other people.*

### ***Parenting: Taking the Easy Way Out***

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In "Together Alone" Dr. Raymond Gozzi gave the example of how watching a baseball game on television can make people feel like part of a crowd that is actually many miles away. Technology can be used to unite people in this way. I would like to suggest, however, that technology divides us far more than it unites.

The age of electronic entertainment technology began with the invention of the radio. Beginning in the 1920s, families would sit around the radio and listen to broadcasts. The radio only occupied the auditory sense and still allowed for semi-normal social interaction. After the radio came the television. The television occupies both the auditory and the visual senses and, as a result, limits interpersonal communication. Finally, in the late 1980s and 1990s the videogame revolution began. Videogames require complete immersion in an artificial world for hours on end and allow for no interpersonal communication while playing.

Looking at the history of entertainment technology, a clear trend presents itself. The technologies being developed isolate us more and more with each new development. We have gone from a nation entertained by movies in theaters and drive-ins to one entertained by iPods with noise cancelling headphones. Banks use automated teller machines, people do their shopping online, and grocery stores replace workers with automated check outs. It seems people are trying to keep their interaction with other people to a minimum. As a result of all our efforts, my generation and all the generations could have seriously impaired social skills.

As a child, I did not have cable television until middle school. My mom allowed no video games in the house, and long-distance family road trips were common. Every summer my mom, dad, sister, three dogs, and I all piled into the family station wagon and made the three-day drive from Georgia to Maine. Last summer we were on the second day of our trip and stopped in Brattleboro, Vermont for a good night's sleep. The following morning we went to breakfast as a family, talking, laughing and having an all-around good time. Halfway through

the meal I noticed a father and his elementary-school-aged son sitting across the room from us. The father was reading the newspaper, and the son was trying his hardest to talk to his dad about his teachers. It was apparent that the father was becoming annoyed with his son distracting him from his morning paper. To solve the problem, the father took out an iPod and pushed it across the table to his son. The son, looking dejected, grudgingly picked up the iPod, put in the headphones, and began to watch a video. Within minutes the attempted conversation was forgotten, and the child was entranced with the little images on the screen in front of him.

This memory has haunted me because, I believe, it shows an alarming trend. Socializing in person is hard work, and personal media players and other such technological devices provide people an easy out. We as a society are setting a trap for ourselves. We are forgetting the skills of conversation, losing our creativity, and forgetting how to successfully interact with other people. How far will we take technology before we realize we are committing cultural suicide?

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