

Educationally Speaking
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Living in a Bubble

When I was a kid I never liked playing with bubbles. They always popped too soon and they were sticky. It was a no-win situation. It was like they taunted me by saying, “No! I will not float away for you! Watch me explode all over your face so that I can make you sticky and smell funny!” Today as a young adult I still don’t like playing with bubbles. The only difference is now I have to live and work with bubbles. Allow me to explain.

As an employee of State government I have developed a litmus test for determining whether the project I’m working on is anything anyone cares about. I do the same thing for my co-workers but as an intern I don’t expect to get a bunch of really important projects. Nevertheless, my test goes like this: If whatever I’m doing directly impacts my Dad then it must impact a majority of Hoosiers. Needless to say, I’ve never done anything at work that my Dad would ever need or use. This leaves me to believe that people working in dense areas like Indianapolis are in a different bubble than the vast majority of rural Indiana. The federal government is an even better example of this phenomenon.

Additionally, cars fit inside bubbles, too. When you’re driving along we’ve all come across the guy that stays in the fast lane when they really aren’t going that fast and the road is empty. It’s as if some people have a problem understanding, “Oh – you use this road too?” The same holds true for the grocery store. The aisles at the grocery store are only wide enough for one bubble to get through at a time, evidently.

My professors all live in bubbles, too; at least for the first 15 weeks of the semester. They all live in their worlds thinking, “This student only takes one class and it’s mine.” Or they might think, “This student takes a couple other classes but they only really care about mine.” Thus, they assign work to do in waves. The end result is a lot of work to do in one weekend and the next you’re not doing anything. Then, at the end of the semester I think they’re humbled when they realize they have to grade everything they assigned.

The trash collector also lives in a bubble. As I write the garbage truck is outside my window and two guys are helping connect the dumpster with the truck. Next they’ll set the dumpster back down, close all the lids and shove it back in a corner so no one can access the rear lids. This would be fine if I were a pelican or a goat and I could just eat all my trash. But, alas, I’m not and I need to throw my trash into the dumpster. The trash collector is just thinking, “I have to get to the next receptacle.” The thought of people needing to use the dumpster likely never crosses their mind.

I have to acknowledge my own bubble, too. I feel very fortunate that for 18 years of my life I lived in rural Indiana and now I live in the most urban area of Indiana. For the first

18 years I never thought much of Indiana beyond farmland and winding roads that lead to nowhere. Now I know otherwise but I worry my bubble will pop someday and I'll think of Indiana as nothing more than a city covered with bright lights and concrete. If I stick around here long enough it'll probably happen – that's just the way our human brains work.

I'm guilty of living in my proverbial bubble whenever I'm driving, shopping at Meijer and when I'm working. Researchers at IU have developed a term for this phenomenon – they call it the “iPod Effect” – or that someone can have instant access to whatever they want to watch or listen to at a moment's notice. They also claim that younger generations have a “It's all about me” mentality. That's not even close to being fair. We, as the younger generation, are just used to that sort of lifestyle. If I want to know what year George Washington died, listen to Aerosmith for precisely 23 minutes and play a game of Sudoku at the same time all I have to do is type in a few words and it's there. My generation didn't invent that – the generations before me did. It's as if people living in their bubble think the younger generation is a bunch of typing idiots and their generation were superior because they walked up a lot of hills to get to school. Or so I'm told.

Luckily our bubbles will pop someday – either by force or by global warming. Which, by the way, is also a product of earlier generations. Happy popping!