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Perceptions of Technology in Society

Technology is a resource that has been evolving for many years, in an attempt to make life easier and make daily tasks we perform more efficient. However, at the same time it has also raised the question of whether technology is truly helping or if it is harming society. People have adopted their own perspectives, deciding how they want to view our economy's technological advancements. Sometimes it isn't as easy as choosing one side or the other but gaining insight on both perspectives and just being overall educated on technology. It is important for everyone to have these perspectives and be able to question things going on because if we never raise concern, there will not be room for improvement, regulation, and advancements. Using contrasting approaches and tones, the texts of Bradbury, Twenge, and Gilles voice their negative opinions of technology and its harmful impacts on society communication, and mental health, while the Freakonomics podcast episode and text by Marston et al. inform their audience of their positive perceptions of technology and the benefits to society.

In the passage, *The Pedestrian*, Ray Bradbury uses an eerie, dystopian tone that resonates throughout the story. The author embellishes his fears for the future of our world if we continue being so reliant on technology. His approach to expressing his ideas was to dramatize the events that take place in a fictional story about an environment he designs by using rhetorical devices and storytelling. In 1951, when the story was written, television was mainly the only household form of technology people had. Meaning, TV specifically was seen as just a form of

entertainment, rather than a useful tool. Using vivid details and language (Bradbury 1) states, “If he closed his eyes and stood very still, frozen, he could imagine himself upon the center of a plain, a wintry, windless Arizona desert with no house in a thousand miles, and only dry river beds, the streets, for company.” Using words like “still”, “frozen”, and “windless Arizona desert” illustrate this empty, eerie, dystopian theme that continues throughout the story. It depicts what kind of society addiction to technology will create in Bradbury’s eyes emphasizing a drained life. It deprives society of warm, humane qualities. All in all, Bradbury’s use of imagery lays down the tone for the rest of the passage about these dangers.

In contrast to this, Jean M. Twenge, the author of “Have Smartphones Destroyed a Generation” relies heavily on the rhetorical appeal logos to present data and research to voice her negative view on technology’s impact on teenagers. She explains, “The time that seniors spend on activities such as student clubs and sports and exercise has changed little in recent years. Combined with the decline in working for pay, this means iGen teens have more leisure time than Gen X...” (Twenge 5). This statement provides proof that technology is actually impacting the education of high school students. By explaining the constant number of sport, club, and exercise participation side by side with the decreasing number of paid work, the author shows iGen teens having more free time than Gen X teens. This is important because it connects to broader conversations of generational models; not necessarily that iGen teens don’t have enough time for things, but rather that their time management and what they choose to do in this time not being efficient or of importance as opposed to what they could be doing.

In *Understanding Screen Addiction* by Renae Gilles, she uses statistics, displays pictures, logic, and storytelling real life examples to express the same overall idea that technology is harmful to society. She explains how technology is addictive and is starting to take over schools

by replacing whiteboards with computers, which feeds into the addiction (Gilles 7). She continues further describing how addiction to technology is a mental illness that just doesn't have a diagnosis yet, and claims it worsens anxiety, depression, and social skills. The text states, "Being hunched over a computer or phone for long periods of time can lead to headaches, neck pain, and back pain. Eye problems can develop. Sitting for long periods is linked to many illnesses. This includes heart disease, diabetes, and cancer." (Gilles 9) This serves to emphasize the health impacts technology has on people. Not only does the author list the specific illnesses that may be caused, but she also lists some of the causes such as sitting for long periods of time. Readers may also take this on a more personal or emotional level, being that she listed common sicknesses like cancer. Unfortunately, such a large number of patients are diagnosed with diseases like this, with many not being able to beat it. When readers take note of this, it becomes a sensitive issue. Gilles ties all of these effects to the collective cause of using technology.

In the episode "Is Screen Time as Poisonous as We Think?" of the Freakonomics podcast, the host Stephen Dubner brings economics professor and researcher David Blanchflower on to share that he has found that happiness has a U-shaped curve. This curve describes the peak highs of happiness in one's life and the low slopes of happiness they experience. He further reasons how this can be explained by many different contributing factors, not just the use of cellphones and other technology. According to the podcast, "...this can be overwhelming and if you consume too much of it you may get sick just as you'll get sick consuming too much of anything that humans consume, like food, but just like food is pretty important for humans, so is connectivity." (Freakonomics 11:53) The speaker connects the use of technology to a real-life situation that listeners can relate to and understand. He compares it to

getting sick by eating too much food or consuming too much of really anything. This puts into perspective on a relatable level; the damage technology will do.

Contrarily, the authors Hannah R. Marston et al. of “Transgenerational Technology and Interactions for the 21st Century: Perspectives and Narratives” explain the impacts on medical technology and how it has helped our economy in times of desperate need. The passage reads, “Citizens are using digital technologies for a myriad of reasons and ever more so since the COVID-19 global pandemic. Digital technologies such as laptops, tablets, video game consoles, and smart phones, to name but a few, are all interwoven into our daily lives through various layers of society...” (Marston & van Hoof, 2019). This actively demonstrates the use of technology in the field of medicine, especially in such a time of need, like during COVID. Technology is so present in different areas of the world where we don’t even think to consider, we are just so used to benefiting off it. For example, in hospitals, nurses and staff barely use paper records anymore. Almost everything is made into a digital copy that can be accessed easier.

In the light of these texts and the podcast, it can be concluded that they use contrasting approaches to vocalize their opinions on the way society uses technology and the impacts it has. Each article is able to speak on the same topic but uses different methods to do so. As previously mentioned, it is important for writers to voice their opinions on technology even if they have contrasting ideas because that is how society advances and improves.

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