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Positions Paper: Technology

Is technology becoming too advanced? My answer is yes. Over the past fifteen years or so, people have gone from personal computers with dial-up internet to smart phones that can do everything a computer can at their fingertips. At first glance, you would imagine that the rapid rate of technological growth in the last decade or two has provided us with remarkable developments to help make our everyday lives easier. Even though advanced technological products can be very accommodating and sometimes beneficial to one’s lifestyle, I truly believe that these products are causing unnecessary damage to society. When I say advanced technology I am referring to technological products that are used every day by the general public, not scientific developments. Although I am not here to bash on apple products, go-pro cameras, or high definition TVs, I intend to make it clear that all these items come with perpetual deficiencies that usually would not surface the mind of the average individual.

One of the biggest problems that technology has created is a lack of face to face communication. Instant messaging/text messaging is currently popularly used all over the world, and has become a main source of communication over the past decade. It has gotten to the point where nobody cares to have meaningful conversations in person, or even over the phone. Although this may seem a little far-fetched, you can believe that this has become a growing issue. In an article entitled *Is Social Media Sabotaging Real Communication?* posted on the Forbes magazine website, the author, Susan Tardanico, tells a story about a mother and her college student daughter who were ‘chatting’ back and forth through text messages. Contained in the messages were many emoticons, big smiley faces and hearts everywhere. What the conversation displayed was happiness. Later that night, the daughter attempted suicide. Instant messaging allows people to portray themselves in any way they want, even if they are feeling completely opposite. One may wonder why somebody would want to display themselves as something they’re not, and the reason for that is because people have become so accustomed to text messaging that society has unintentionally generated a universal text messaging ‘etiquette’. I’m sure everyone has had their own experiences with the ground rules of text messaging, whether it be contemplating the right emoticon to use or deciding what time it would be appropriate to send a text. The point being, an individual loses his/her uniqueness when instant messaging because they sometimes (purposely or not purposely) fail to administer their true meaning or feelings. Later on, the Forbes article goes on to discuss a study that showed only 7% of communication is based on the written or verbal word, and a whopping 93% is based on nonverbal body language. Also, things such as tone of voice and facial expressions have a major contributing role in communication. It just goes to show that some of the big advancements in social technology, for example instant messaging, are not viable sources of communication, seeing as words on a screen do not project facial expressions or body language.

Furthermore, one thing that directly correlates with the advancement in technology is the obesity rate. The obesity rate in America boomed just after the up rise of outstanding technological advances such as the laptop, cell phone, and apple products. You may be thinking this is just a coincidence, and claim that the obesity rate has increased because of unhealthy foods and fast food chains. However, haven’t fast food chains and unhealthy foods been around as long as you can remember? The fact that the obesity rate began a rapid increase in America around the same time as the recent exposure of major technological advancements is one form of evidence that confirms that the more technology advances the unhealthier it is for society. One might also wonder why the obesity rate is higher in America than anywhere else if all these technological advances are worldwide. Well, a website called the-top-tens.com has accumulated enough information to put America at the top of their list for countries that use the most technology and internet. It should now be easy for you to depict how much of an impact technology has on people and their health. In my opinion, the people of the younger generation have their future in jeopardy because they are being raised on the never-ending advancements of technology, which is causing them to forget about the importance of exercise. At this rate, we will hit an unbearably high number of obese citizens in the United States, mainly because of wasted time on the entertaining aspects of technology.

Correspondingly, physical exercise is not the only aspect of lifelong wellness that technology is creating a lack of. Advanced technology, more specifically video games, apple products, and high definition TVs, has misconstrued peoples values by being highly addictive and distracting. In other words, here in America, we are so accustomed to our freedom and independence that we forget to be grateful for our values and the things that we have. Instead, we sometimes complain about things like not having the new iPad or having the newest phone on the market, which is adding a new self-centered element to our society’s persona. As I previously stated, America has the highest rate in the use of technology and internet. This claim can be more comprehendible by analyzing other regions’ values. The countries with less freedom tend to use less social networking, video games, and iPods. But, they keep their values (whatever they may be) intact. Don’t interpret that as me saying other countries are better than America, because the point I am trying to get across is that we need to stop giving all of our attention to things like social media and videogames (mainly younger people) and start focusing on the values that really matter or this country may fall apart someday. On a side note, I found a few interesting statistics about social networking and voting while conducting research. Lee Rainie, after directing a project for pewinternet.org, discovered that 30% of registered voters were encouraged to vote for either Mitt Romney or Barack Obama via posts on social media such as Facebook or Twitter. The next statistic showed that 20% of registered voters used social media to encourage or influence other friends and family members to vote in their preference. After seeing how close the presidential race was last year, I think it is safe to say that social media, a form of advanced technology, had a crucial impact on the results. The idea that technology would someday take over and run the country has never seemed more real than now.

In the long run, I think more people need to realize that using their smart phones, videogames, and social media all day has a negative impact on their life as well as others close to them. Without letting further advancements in technology get in the way, communication needs to return to its natural form, our country’s obesity problem needs to be tended to, and our country’s values could use some renovating. If we begin to think outside of the technological world, these things will happen and it will assist our society in maintaining a lifelong wellness.

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