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A look at the changing relationship between my generation and technology in Michael Harris's  
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A single click has the ability to grant you with a blessing or a nightmare. In today's technological world, we are presented with endless opportunities that were not available to previous generations. The ubiquitous presence of technology in our world has created a dangerous addiction in the lives of many. In the third chapter of Michael Harris's book, *The End of Absence*, he shares his intriguing analysis on the relationship my generation shares with technology and describes its repercussions. He specifically investigates how, despite the negative ramifications of technology, people always return, believing technology is their only option in solving their problems. This makes people rely on the technological world for self-approval, resulting in a distance between them and the world. In the chapter we can observe how technology has permanently shaped this generation's view on life.

Michael Harris begins chapter three by examining how people view technology as the only option available for fixing problems. Amanda Todd, a fifteen-year-old girl whose YouTube video went viral after she committed suicide due to being blackmailed, bullied, assaulted and stalked, is one example of this. In Todd's case, she kept returning to the very tool that caused her suffering in the first place: technology. Coming from this generation that only knows technology, I can agree with the view that "the solution to a tech-derived problem is more technology" (Harris, 55). Despite the setbacks it creates, being aware of the benefits that technology has to offer makes it easy to believe technology is the answer to my problems. The harmful parts of technology can easily hide behind the benefits it has to offer. Harris's words explain that "we desire both protection and revelation for our soul's utterance" (Harris, 70). Technology can allow people to let out a cry that has been lingering inside of them in a way that is easier than

facing the problem in reality. This call for help lets them express themselves, bringing relief to their life without the consequences an act would create if they were to do it in real life. Harris mentions that Todd “turned against all reason except that perhaps of an addict” (Harris, 50). To me, this addiction seems reasonable considering that my generation has grown up always having access to this other world through our cellphones, which are almost always in our hands and a part of reality. Since this is the reality, technology is an addiction that the majority of us have. Harris wonders how much of our emotional lives we put into “an online network that promises solace” (Harris, 51). I believe that relying on technology to help with emotional troubles gives a temporary fix to problems people are experiencing. By removing them from reality at the same time, they may lose the ability to differentiate from reality and the virtual world, altering the way they choose to live their lives.

Therefore, Harris explores the idea that people’s experiences must be shared through media to seem like a real experience to them. Most teens of my generation could likely understand the need one feels to post pictures to show the world that they “have a life” and are social. We rely on technology to make our lives better than they are, possibly giving us somewhere to hide. Harris’s words, “there’s a basic pleasure in accounting for a life that, in reality, is always somewhat inchoate” (68), bring to light how reality cannot always give people everything they want, whether self-acceptance or relief with emotional issues. Broadcasting our lives on social media can let people become more confident by either projecting themselves to be more like these people they wish they could be, or by finding friends to talk to if they are lonely. Having a chance online to be more like the person you wish you could be ties into the Erving Goffman’s

Dramaturgical Analysis, where he notes “All the world’s a stage”. The role that one may decide to play on his or her front stage setting (in this case, online) could be extremely different from a backstage self in reality. By publishing your life online, all the happiness that you gain from the “likes” your photos are receiving will not only fade but continue to distance you from reality, causing you to forget what happiness actually is. The fact that a number of “likes” can determine if one’s day is good or bad I find troubling, yet it happens to many of us. While finding friends to talk to online may bring company to a lonely life, this is convenient for a short amount of time, until one might begin to feel as if there was something missing without the actual physical interaction. Unfortunately, these acts of self-satisfaction that we gain from these friends or “likes” only exist within the world of social media. They may boost our egos for a certain amount of time, but when it is time to face reality we will realize how much we have distanced ourselves from the real world.

The distance between people and reality that is discussed in this chapter by Harris shows yet another example of how technology is shaping our lives. Harris’s comment, “to some degree, we all live out our emotional lives through technologies” (Harris, 55), could explain why many people in society today have forgotten how to feel. Living through our technologies and distancing ourselves from what is real has created people who lack real feelings. Since we are living our emotional lives through technologies, the lack of real connections eventually kicks in, creating more loneliness and resulting in social isolation or social phobia. I believe the options we have in our lives to talk to people without having face-to-face interaction has definitely made more people develop social anxiety and phobias, something I have struggled with in the past. It is when people

begin to realize technology is not making up for the loneliness inside them that they are driven, as Harris explains, to humanize technology. The human desire to connect all the time comes with a price; “connection is what our technologies are so good at offering” (Harris, 54). This constant connection to media, which can be efficient, has the power to alienate us from reality, trapping us in the illusion of the virtual world. Becoming wrapped up in this illusion can distance you from the world the more connected you become. But, it is hard to see your personal device being able to have this ability since the actual object is completely blameless. As we can see, the distance that technology has created between itself and reality influences people’s values and shapes their decisions.

The ideas presented in the third chapter of Michael Harris’s book, *The End Of Absence*, explain the grip technology has on my generation. By examining how people believe technology is always the answer; the need to share moments to make them real; and how the connection we experience is creating distance, we can understand that technology has permanently changed the way this technology-driven generation thinks, interacts, and views the world.

## References

Harris, M. (2014). This Kills That. *In The End of Absence: Reclaiming what we've lost in a world of constant connection*. HarperCollins.