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Social Media and Technology in Friendships

In the past decade, social media and technology have seemed to engulf our society and rule how we think of ourselves and our friends. The episode of Black Mirror “Nosedive,” illustrates this dynamic. This rise in technology can help our friendships become stronger and more trustworthy, but it can also tear them apart. In this essay, I will explain the background of this particular episode, then I will advance my view of how technology has some very good pros but also some cons on friendships, and lastly, I will consider an objection to my argument.

Black Mirror is not a very popular show, and this episode revolves explicitly around technology in the future and improving your socioeconomic status as time progresses (“Nosedive,” episode of Black Mirror). Each person can rate their peers on an app based on how they feel about them and how their interaction was at that specific time. Even people they do not know can be given this rating which is on a scale of five stars, and that gives them an average rating of zero to five. The main character, Lacie Pound, has a rating of 4.2. Lacie is interested in a fancy apartment complex that requires a minimum of a 4.5 rating, but it could take up to eighteen months to increase her rank by that much. She will do whatever it takes to improve her score in just a month because the down payment on the apartment has already been paid. Then, Lacie receives a sudden surprise, and she is invited to the wedding of her childhood best friend Naomi, and nearly all of the guests are at a 4.5 rating or above (“Nosedive,” episode of Black Mirror). Her plan ends up failing in the end, but a score on an app should not dictate how she lives and acts around others.

Technology, social media, and friendship are interrelated today as many friendships are formed through social platforms or ended based on a silly rumor online. In one aspect,

social media platforms can enhance friendship and make it stronger. The Pew Research Center researched and found that over 76% of all teens use some form of social media (Lenhart). This figure describes a large number of people that can all keep in touch at the same time. In this episode of Black Mirror, technology was able to help Lacie and Naomi because they would not have been able to communicate if it were not for their smartphones. Since Naomi had moved far away, this enhanced their friendship instead of them only seeing each other on special occasions (“Nosedive,” episode of Black Mirror). Similarly, I have had friends move away and attend different universities, but I can still keep in touch with them on various platforms. Secondly, these platforms help people form new friendships that would have never been possible before. Around 57% of people say that they have made at least one new friend online (Lenhart). The growth of technology helps people connect with different cultures around the world and connect with people they never thought possible. Even though there are many positives to social media and friendships, it can also put friendship in danger.

In Nosedive, everyone puts on a fake personality to make sure they get a perfect rating. This is what hurt Lacie in this episode; in the end, she realized she had never been herself. Her fake personality had engulfed her in a web because she only cared about her rating and not how she affected the lives of those around her by putting on this fake face. (“Nosedive,” episode of Black Mirror). In life, we should not have to put on a fake shell on our social media pages just to make new friends or even to make our old friends like us more. We should have friendships based on trust, honesty, and who we are on the inside. In this way, social media can hurt friendships more than help them because our friends never know who we are if we are fake online. Some of the closest friendships in my life have broken since there are many avenues online to start rumors that can break trust. There can be a strain on friendships if they cannot solve their problems face-to-face. This is seen when one friend

is very active posting statuses that can hurt others and their differences may need to be solved in person rather than online. Technology, in general, is a handicap on this generation because it has affected how people communicate in person. This generation has lost the more powerful and productive way of communicating with others, which is face-to-face, and that is the most critical form as tone and body language help get our point across more than the actual words. This is illustrated in Nosedive when Lacie sounds like a robot in most conversations she has (“Nosedive,” episode of Black Mirror). She does not know how to have a normal conversation because she is so worried about being downgraded in her status.

Despite my argument some might say that I focused my argument too much on online friendships when we should be able to connect with those around us. Today, we are so caught up in the advanced technology at our fingertips that we do not even try to make those real, personal connections around us. We sit in classrooms with others and do not create a single friend because we are too worried about what they might think of us, but we are brave enough to hide behind a screen putting on a fake face for our social media platforms. This problem can easily be solved if, in classrooms, teachers made us talk to each other daily instead of using a laptop, or including more group work where we could form deeper connections over days or even weeks. I can see where people are coming from with this objection, but I think that if people continue to make these one-on-one connections, the technology available to us will assist friendships to be even stronger when they are apart.

Technology and the rise of social media in the past few years has had its effects among different generations, and as seen in my personal life examples and the episode of Black Mirror. Various studies on the use of technology in friendships are being done to see if my claims are true or false, or if we need to take a break from our screens and get to know each other on a deeper level with better face-to-face communication. A large portion of my

generation would agree with my argument that it is something that plays the fence, helping but also hurting our connections while we hide behind a screen.

Works Cited

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