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## Positive and Negative Aspects of Social Media

In the past decade, the amount of internet users has proliferated replacing bygone forms of media and entertainment with a skyrocketing trend among all ages known as social media. At its basis, social media is a website or application that enables users to create and share content or to participate in social networking which is the form of communication through social media. With social media capturing the internet's attention, as many as 65% of American adults use social networking sites. Erik Qualman states that "we don't have a choice on whether we do social media, the choice is how well we do it" (Qualman). As social media gains popularity amongst adults, the influences of social media branch off into youth creating a rapidly increasing social network audience among all ages quite contrary to the audience observed in the past decade. While social media may appear to be aiding a variety of youthful people to discover their proclaimed identity through technology, social media is gradually eradicating humanity's social interaction as online communication becomes one's voice.

The concern arises when examining the repercussions of social media such as cyberbullying and the significant decrease in social interaction amongst younger generations exposed to vast amounts of technology and media. Furthermore, social media may seem to be a harmless tool that can be utilized for socializing with acquaintances through technology, yet many youthful people do not realize that technology-oriented form of interaction is not a natural human aspect. In addition to the deficiency of natural human interaction caused by social media, social media is invading other areas of human life such as school, work, and relationships.

Prior to the invention of social media, household telephones were commonly utilized for communication with friends and family, whereas with social media, the natural interaction of conversing by voice is void. Social media eradicates the presence of conversing by voice, therefore, many people feel more secure when conversing via social media. By means of social media, people have regulated contact with society in order to increase their self-esteem. Albert Einstein, one of the most astute figures in the 20th century, quoted: "I fear the day technology will surpass our human interaction. The world will have a generation of idiots" (Einstein). This quote often applies to younger generations made up of millennials and post-millennials. Many people argue that in a certain aspect Einstein made a valid point in his reasoning while others tend to rebut his philosophy.

With the many rapid advances being made in technology and the internet, people express concern for the future of society as a whole. Many people argue that theoretically, social media is having a negative impact on youth (typically teenagers) by decreasing the amount of social interaction, whereas others are in disbelief of the "decreasing" amount of social interaction

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amongst youth. Self-identities play a big role in social interaction, yet a person's self-identity is partially derived from social media. One's self-identity is developed by self-awareness and gaining feedback on achievements. With the recent invention of social media, people are tending to base their identities solely off of the latest trends over social media, and the blatant image of the "perfect person" that has undermined every positive self-images of oneself. Whether it is "the perfect body-image" or "the perfect personality" being propelled towards people, many people feel the lack of confidence which degrades their self-image.

Before social media's existence, many people lacked these degrading feelings of self-image, yet the tide has turned. Society is now incessantly veered to the prominent teaching that self-image is the very basis of humans, and if one has an inferior self-image, that person is inferior to society. Subsequently, there becomes a loss of identity when one becomes wrapped up in "all the hype" on supposedly Facebook or Instagram. Society as a whole is not perceiving the detrimental outcome of the negative brainwashing social media can have on people. Society has simply become immune to popular influences and believes that the way of popular self-image pertains to what each individual's self-image should be. "Self-identity is no longer self-identity, meaning derived from the self, but rather is an identity projected onto us by popular culture and in no way an accurate reflection of who we really are" (Taylor).

On the upside, as much as social media has reduced self-identities, social media has made a positive impact on society when used in a constructive manner. Social media can positively affect society by providing a canvas for a ravishing masterpiece. Many people find it easier to express their self-identities in an environment desolate of the anxiety a real-life situation possesses. Along with the ease of anxiety, social media has provided society a unique opportunity to create our self-image through the means of a "digital museum." There are many routes available on social media. One can easily mask their identity through social media due to the fact that social media allows for more control, especially when it comes to customizing the layout of one's profile. Contrary to hiding one's identity, a person can reflect on their self-image without having any anxiety from peers.

In conclusion, social media has many drawbacks in terms of the expression of identity when people feel obligated to blend in with popular idols that are adorned across social media, whereas others may simply articulate their identity throughout social media. Individuals can either construct a synthetic identity that deviates from their true one, or construct a bona fide identity projecting their personality and qualities to the outside world. Coming to a conclusion, social media does not affect the identity of the individual, rather how the individual handles social media is what affects their identity.

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