

TAKING STUDENT DEBATES & DISCUSSIONS DIGITAL

Topic One—Social Media: Is social media destroying our social skills?

Rogerson, Karis. "» Can Social Media Help Build Self-Esteem and Social Skills Among Children?" *Yoursphere for Parents Can Social Media Help Build Self Esteem and Social Skills Among Children Comments*. College USA Today, 2 Oct. 2014. Web. 01 Mar. 2015.

It's the most annoying thing I hear on a regular basis: "Social media is destroying our social and communication skills! Social media is literally the devil!"

Give it up, guys. Social media, just like everything else, is imperfect, but simply because there are a few downfalls does not negate all the good it can create.

I was a missionary kid in Italy when I stumbled across my first social media platform — no, not Myspace — Xanga. It was a pseudo-blogging platform that all my friends were on — we used it to communicate with our friends overseas, tell funny stories about what was going on and essentially used it as a pre-Facebook. You could post photos, comments, etc.

Then I found Facebook. Then Twitter, Instagram and the explosion that followed. I've been on Facebook for the past seven years, and it's been one of the greatest communication tools I've found, for more than one reason.

First of all, social media has allowed me to keep in touch with people I would otherwise have completely lost. My current roommate is a girl I met in seventh grade, while I was back in the States for a weekend. We kept in touch over Xanga at first, then moved our friendship to Facebook. Because we were able to post on each other's walls, send private messages and view photos the other had posted, we kept up with each other's lives and, when the time came to choose colleges, picked the same one.

My roommate is my best friend, and I owe our friendship in part to Facebook. And for the record, we communicate just fine in person. She's the friend I tell everything to, no matter how hard, and we've helped each other through some of the toughest times of college.

Another reason I love social media is because it is a great mode of self-expression. Say what you will about Instagram-addicts, I think there's something beautiful about the way the Internet has allowed people to show off their personalities for the world.

In the early days of Facebook, people used to post poems and long non-fiction narratives for their friends to read; today, we use Instagram and Vine to express our creativity. Even Twitter has taught everyone something about the value of concise, witty statements.

Lastly, social media is awesome for marketing, which, call it what you will, is about the epitome of communication. This week, the school literary magazine I work for put on a "Longest Short Story Ever" event, and we spammed social media with pictures and invitations for people to come. As people heard about it through that and, of course, word of mouth, the line in front of us grew longer and longer.

People in the marketing world have to be excellent communicators in order to do their jobs well, and social media allows them to stretch their creativity in new ways and acquire new customers.

You might not love everything about social media, and maybe all the marketing gimmicks get on your nerves. You have every right to dislike social media, but please don't use the excuse that it is killing our social skills, because that is just not true.

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Clark, Kendra. "Social Media Affects Social Skills, Future Jobs." *The BG News*. N.p., n.d. Web. 26 Feb. 2015.

Technology is growing every day and with that growth comes the growth of how the world operates.

Our generation and the younger ones have had the opportunity to grow with the evolving way the Internet impacts our society. One of the biggest impacts students are finding in college is social media and how it affects our lives. We use it to connect with friends close and far away.

However, the use for social media has gone above that, from websites Facebook and Twitter to LinkedIn and Pinterest. All of these sites have shaped the way for not only how we communicate, but how we share ideas, get jobs and our news. That is why our month's theme for In Focus is about Social Media. It is a phenomenon that will shape future generations and the way we live.

One of the most popular things I hear these days is how social media and technology in general are affecting people and their social skills. We are more often communicating with people through a screen and the written word than chatting face to face with others. As I walk through the Union, I see students sitting by themselves with their heads bowed looking at their phones or computers. I also see people sitting together but doing the same thing, acting like they weren't even with the other.

Some believe these interactions are causing our generation to lose valuable social skills that help us communicate with one another.

Another story we have is how social media affects our future, which includes jobs. There are certain companies that will ask to see a person's Facebook or Twitter page in order to decide if they are the right person for the job. Even though those pages aren't made for employers to be looking at, what we post there can have some major impacts. On the reverse side, there are some positions that want to see constant usage, like journalism or public relations that now have jobs especially for social media.

Also, we look at how students themselves are using social media to interact with one another. One way we do is with our organizations that we are involved with. Students are using social media to try and get more people to come to events and interact with the organizations. They are also promoting events for more private lives like parties.

I know one thing that got me was how I am invited to events on Facebook I never heard of from a person that I might not even talk with anymore. And with the people I do, I've noticed we aren't officially invited to a party unless an invitation is received on Facebook.

Social media is changing every day, and I'm sure it will continue to grow along with our technology. Who knows what we will think of next.

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Caba, Justin. "Digital Devices Are Destroying Face-to-Face Social Skills." Medical Daily. N.p., 27 Aug. 2014. Web.

Due to the advent of electronic devices, such as smart phones and tablets, the amount of time children spend staring at a screen rather than communicating face-to-face with other people has varied greatly. A recent study conducted at the University of California, Los Angeles' Department of Psychology has revealed that even though the use of digital media has destroyed children's social skills by hindering face-to-face interactions, five days without any electronic devices can significantly improve a child's ability to identify another person's feelings.

"Many people are looking at the benefits of digital media in education, and not many are looking at the costs," said Patricia Greenfield, lead researcher and professor of psychology at UCLA, in a statement. "Decreased sensitivity to emotional cues — losing the ability to understand the emotions of other people — is one of the costs. The displacement of in-person social interaction by screen interaction seems to be reducing social skills."

Greenfield and her colleagues recruited 51 sixth-graders from a Southern California public school to spend five days at the Pali Institute, a nature and science camp that does not permit the use of electronic devices. The research team gauged each student's ability to identify other peoples' emotions when they got to the camp and when they left. Campers were shown 48 pictures of people with a happy, sad, angry, or scared expression and asked to categorize each feeling. They were also shown a video and were asked to identify what the actors were feeling during certain social situations.

The results of the first 51 campers were compared to a second group that did not attend the Pali Institute. After tracking the amount of errors campers made while attempting to identify the emotions displayed in each photo and video, the psychologists found that campers made an average of 14.02 errors when identifying emotions at the beginning of the study compared to 9.41 errors at the end. Sixth-graders who didn't spend five days away from their devices showed no perceivable changes in the amount of errors.

"You can't learn nonverbal emotional cues from a screen in the way you can learn it from face-to-face communication," said Yalda Uhls, senior researcher at the UCLA Children's Digital Media Center. "If you're not practicing face-to-face communication, you could be losing important social skills. We are social creatures. We need device-free time."

Campers and non-campers participating in this study reported spending an average of four-and-a-half hours a day watching TV or playing video games; however, some national averages indicate that American children spend more time buried in their electronic devices. Seeing as five days without the use of a smartphone, tablet, or TV significantly improved the social skills of these sixth-graders, researchers concluded that all is not lost for children in this digital era.

"We've shown a model of what more face-to-face interaction can do," Greenfield added. "Social interaction is needed to develop skills in understanding the emotions of other people."

Source: Uhls Y, Greenfield P, Zgourou E, et al. Five days at outdoor education camp without screens improves preteen skills with nonverbal emotion cues. *Computers in Human Behavior*. 2014.

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**Loop, Erica. "How the Internet Helps Improve Social Skills for Teens."
Everyday Life. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Mar. 2015.**

According to statistics published in 2013 from the Pew Research Center, 95 percent of teens in the United States use the Internet. Of the teens who are online, 8 out of 10 of them report using some form of social media. With the majority of teens using a networking site -- the Pew numbers show that 77 percent of adolescents use Facebook -- the Internet is quickly becoming a key way for kids to improve social skills.

Making Connections

With the overwhelming abundance of teens who use social media, making connections with peers and classmates is easier than ever for contemporary kids. Although teens must always use caution when accepting "friend requests" or making other connections online, getting to know other kids from school through the use of the Internet can help the shy or isolated teen to become much more social. Unlike face-to-face meetings, which may feel uncomfortable for a teen who lacks social skills, Internet connections may afford the awkward-feeling high-schooler the ability to act in a more confident manner.

Conversations

Messaging, chatting and other one-on-one and group conversations online can help the socially uncomfortable kid to open up and feel better about communicating. As long as your teen is only having conversations with other kids she already knows -- from school or the community -- she can practice the back and forth of effective communication in a low-stress environment. Without the added pressures of in-person communication, your teen may begin to feel a greater sense of comfort in having a discussion with her peers.

Similar Interests

Finding other teens with similar interests can help your child to open up and feel more comfortable in his social circle. Social networking allows teens who aren't sure where they fit in or don't think other kids have the same likes can meet and communicate online with peers who have similar interests, career aspirations, music and more.

Emotional and Social Well-Being

Research from the organization Common Sense Media demonstrates that teens may believe social media can help them to overcome emotional issues such as shyness or a lack of self-esteem. According to the organization, 29 percent of teens report that using Internet social networking makes them feel less shy, and 20 percent claim it makes them more confident. Additionally, teens who use networking sites online may develop a greater understanding of others, as 19 percent of teens believe using social media makes them more sympathetic to others.

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Media, Tech. "Can Social Media Help Build Self-Esteem and Social Skills Among Children?" Yoursphere for Parents Can Social Media Help Build Self Esteem and Social Skills Among Children Comments. N.p., n.d. Web. 01 Mar. 2015.

In the midst of all the news about cyberbullying and privacy issues, it's important to realize all of the wonderful benefits that social media has provided not only us, but our children. A [recent study](#) by Patti Valkenburg, a professor at the University of Amsterdam's Center for Research on Children, Adolescents and the Media, found that for most children social media mainly presents a positive experience that allows them to build their self-esteem, create friendships, and develop/hone their social skills.

"...the Internet gives them the opportunity to rehearse it [social skills] in a relatively safe way", said Valkenburg.

I thought this was interesting considering the fact that, contrary to what her study found, most parents/adults believe that the Internet and social media actually weaken the social skills of today's youth. And though I think this is true, it's only true when it pertains to a child whose online life isn't accompanied by a rich, resourceful "real life", one that offers real-life role models and aspirations.

That said, it's important that parents help their children balance their online time with things like family time, or "outside time"—in fact, setting simple rules like no cell phones at the dinner table or no Internet after 8pm can help create/maintain that balance. Failing to establish this equilibrium, and Valkenburg's study supports this, can have a negative effect on a child's self-esteem and perception on things like friendship, self-identity, and respect for others.

If we step back and take a balcony stance on the way the world works today, it's easy to see that social media has impacted who we are and the way we communicate, and more importantly, who our children are going to be. Granted, we parents grew up with the same social challenges that our kids face today: friendships, relationships, school, peer pressure, etc. But the obvious advantages that our children have over us are the dozens of different outlets in which they can face those challenges. Now the test that faces us as parents, website developers, politicians, and most importantly, role models, is to make those outlets as safe as possible by implementing smart solutions and educating our children so they can lead normal lives without having to worry about their identity being stolen, their privacy being jeopardized, or their reputation being destroyed because of cyberbullying or sexting.

Every day I see the results of the tiny steps being made in this direction. They're embodied by the kids in Yoursphere, with their creativity, their kindness, and their willingness to embrace the unique opinions and characteristics of other members. These kids have made it clear to me that, given the opportunity, they can be honest and reap the rich rewards that social media can provide while using it in a positive and constructive way.

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"Viewpoint: Why Social Media Is Destroying Our Social Skills." USA TODAY College. N.p., 11 Oct. 2012. Web. 19 Feb. 2015.

Excerpt from Why Social Media Is Destroying Our Social Skills

Facebooking, tweeting and texting are not only the prevalent but also the preferred forms of communication for many college students and young adults today.

Social media interaction now dominates both online and offline conversations. In a society where interacting and over-sharing online is the norm, you're probably more likely to speak to friends and family through electronic devices than face-to-face.

But are social media and modern technology destroying our interpersonal social skills? Recent research and studies say so.

A study conducted for online casino Yazino found that one in four people spend more time socializing online, via sites such as Facebook and Twitter, than they do in person.

Too often at events or parties, guests are attached to their smart phones tweeting or texting, but no one is truly engaging or interacting with the people around them.

As more generations are born into the social age, social media will continue to be the favored communication form among young people. However, this shift may begin to affect their ability to properly communicate in person with peers.

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**"Viewpoint: Social Media Is Helping Our Social Skills." *USA TODAY*
College. N.p., 02 Oct. 2014. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.**

Excerpt from Social Media Is Helping Our Social Skills.

I've been on Facebook for the past seven years, and it's been one of the greatest communication tools I've found, for more than one reason.

First of all, social media has allowed me to keep in touch with people I would otherwise have completely lost. My current roommate is a girl I met in seventh grade, while I was back in the States for a weekend. We kept in touch over Xanga at first, then moved our friendship to Facebook. Because we were able to post on each other's walls, send private messages and view photos the other had posted, we kept up with each other's lives and, when the time came to choose colleges, picked the same one.

My roommate is my best friend, and I owe our friendship in part to Facebook. And for the record, we communicate just fine in person. She's the friend I tell everything to, no matter how hard, and we've helped each other through some of the toughest times of college.

Another reason I love social media is because it is a great mode of self-expression. Say what you will about Instagram-addicts, I think there's something beautiful about the way the Internet has allowed people to show off their personalities for the world.

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"A Teen Speaks: Is Social Networking Damaging Our Social Skills?" *SocialTimes*. N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Excerpt from Is Social Networking Damaging Our Social Skills?

Not only is it irritating that many teens cannot go for longer than ten minutes without checking their Facebook pages before having withdrawal symptoms, but it is even more frustrating when they can't even go half as long as this without mentioning the site. What is this saying about our generation? With our whole social lives revolving online, some people seem to think that there is no longer a need for exceptional social skills away from the World Wide Web. I differ greatly. It is true that while people are young and at high school they may be able to get through life with fragmented sentences, abbreviated words and mere grunts if they can't be bothered speaking, but what happens when they leave the security of the school yard? When they're meeting a possible employer and can't construct a proper sentence let alone participate in a whole verbal conversation without mentioning a LMFAO or WTF? I, as a seventeen year old, honestly believe that social networking is having an impact on the social skills of today's youth and am worried about the effect it will have for my friends and peers in terms of employment. Employers, even of small, local supermarkets, are still looking for people who can speak adequately. They can't afford to get a bad name because they have staff that swear at customers or can't be understood or huff and puff when they don't want to talk.

In my final year of high school, it's time to think ahead and return to the world of properly constructed sentences, semi-colons and small talk. In the end it will be cooler to have a proper job and a proper salary than it will be to have the most online friends. After all, having more online friends than real-life-see-in person friends isn't cool. It's plain sad.

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"Cyberbullying Statistics." InternetSafety101.org: Statistics. N.p., n.d.
Web. 23 Feb. 2015.

Excerpt from Cyberbullying Statistics

Cyberbullying Statistics

- 95% of social media-using teens who have witnessed cruel behavior on social networking sites say they have seen others ignoring the mean behavior; 55% witness this frequently (PEW Internet Research Center, FOSI, Cable in the Classroom, 2011)
- 84% have seen the people defend the person being harassed; 27% report seeing this frequently.
- 84% have seen the people tell cyberbullies to stop bullying; 20% report seeing this frequently.
- 66% of teens who have witnessed online cruelty have also witnessed others joining; 21% say they have also joined in the harassment (PEW Internet Research Center, FOSI, Cable in the Classroom, 2011)
- 90% of social media-using teens who have witnessed online cruelty say they have ignored mean behavior on social media; 35% have done this frequently (PEW Internet Research Center, FOSI, Cable in the Classroom, 2011)
- 80% say they have defended the victim; 25% have done so frequently
- 79% have told the cyberbully to stop being mean and cruel; 20% have done so frequently
- Only 7% of U.S. parents are worried about cyberbullying, even though 33% of teenagers have been victims of cyberbullying (PEW Internet and American Life Survey, 2011)
- 85% of parent of youth ages 13-17 report their child has a social networking account. (American Osteopathic Association, 2011)
- 52% of parents are worried their child will be bullied via social networking sites. (American Osteopathic Association, 2011)
- 1 in 6 parents know their child has been bullied via a social networking site. (American Osteopathic Association, 2011)
- One million children were harassed, threatend or subjected to other forms of cyberbullying on Facebook during the past year. (Consumer Reports, 2011)
- Bullying over texting is becoming much more common(University of New Hampshire, 2011)
- 43% of teens aged 13 to 17 report that they have experienced some sort of cyberbullying in the past year.[1]
- More girls are cyberbullies than boys (59% girls and 41% boys).[2]
- Cyberbullies spend more time online than other teens overall (38.4 hours compared to 26.8 hours).[3]
- Cyberbullies are more likely to have engaged in sexting (31% vs. 19% for teens overall).[4]
- 34% of those who have had any engagement in cyberbullying have been both a cyberbully and been cyberbullied.[5]
- 68% of teens agree that cyberbullying is a serious problem with today's youth.[6]Reasons cyberbullies said they engaged in cyberbullying:[7]

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Logan, Sarah. "Social Media and Its' Unknown Long Term Affects." *Reflexion5.docx*. Sarah Logan, n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2015. <chrome-extension://bpmcpldpdmajfigpchkicefoigmkfalcv/views/app.html>

Excerpt from Social Media and its Unknown Long Term Effects

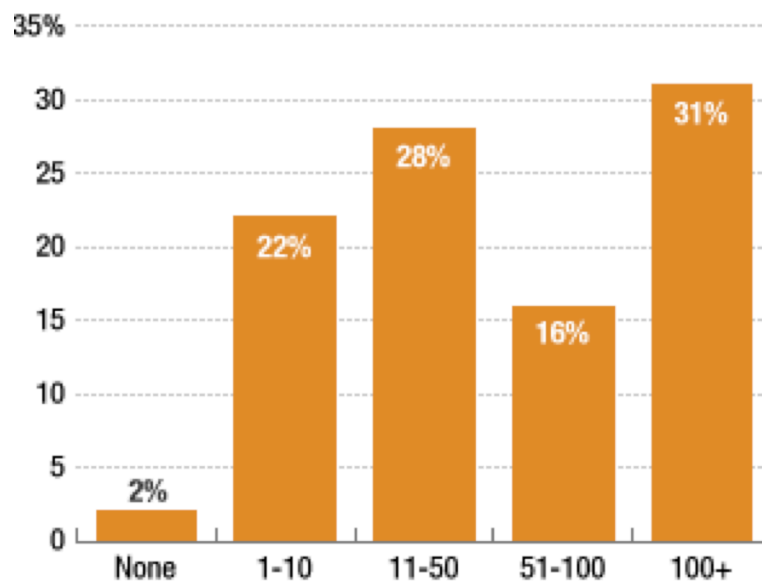
Social media was founded as a way to connect and share with others. MySpace and Facebook were the pioneer sites that launched this growing epidemic. The obvious positive value to sites like these is the constant access to photos and information about people you care about. Wondering how your cousin across the country is doing? Check out their facebook. What about your friend who went away to college a couple hours away? Just follow them on Twitter. The ability to keep in touch with others you wouldn't usually just call up on the phone or regularly see around, is why people have become so invested in social media sites. Spreading the word about something inspirational or motivational is another positive feature offered through social media. For example, a friend of mine shared her story via Facebook about a heartbreaking event that left her brother critically injured. Through the site, over 10,000 people shared her story and she was able to influence a much larger number than that to sign a petition in order to deny parole to the defendant who injured her brother. Stories like this circulate through Facebook everyday and are able to make a positive impact on real life situations. Social media connects and allows us to communicate with a large amount of people, when this concept of social media is used for the common good of a situation; the power of people and the Internet is truly incredible.

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"Teen Texting Soars; Will Social Skills Suffer?" *NPR*. NPR, n.d. Web. 23 Feb. 2015.

Number of outgoing texts per day



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"6 Things Social Media Is Ruining." *6 Things Social Media Is Ruining*.
N.p., 10 June 2013. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

Younger generations that spend their formative years attached to smartphones and social media appear to be losing their ability to form complete sentences. The reliance on text speak and compressed language necessary for Twitter seems to be hard to break even in the face of, say, a passing grade. In Britain, high school teachers have encountered abbreviations, like "u" for "you" and "4" instead of "for," on exams, for God's sake. The degradation of language has gotten so bad that some of these schools have been forced to run remedial English classes to bring students up to a standard writing level. Essay skills "are going down the plug hole," a British historian and professor tells the *Telegraph*.

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"Parent Today: Is Social Media Ruining Our Kids' Social Skills?" *Parent Today: Is Social Media Ruining Our Kids' Social Skills?* N.p., n.d. Web. 24 Feb. 2015.

From my perspective, my kids — at 9 and 10 years of age — are really too young for social media. Facebook thinks so too, restricting membership to ages 13 and above. But I know at least a handful of kids in our neighborhood with profiles on that particular social network, and talk on the street indicates that the pre-teen set is active in other venues as well.

For these children, hanging with their friends is more often a virtual activity than actually getting together in person.

We've always encouraged our kids to be friendly and make friends. Now, thanks to social networking, the opportunity to "friend" hundreds of people all around the world is simple. No one has to leave their own room, let alone do the hard work of developing deep, honest relationships.

Counselors and social science experts argue that a balance needs to be found between online chatting, tweeting, video chat, and actual face-to-face interactions. They fear that some kids are letting the Internet take control of their social lives, and slowly the desire and ability to socialize face-to-face is decreasing.