Halle Anderson

 Professor Lucia Elden

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How does social media affect society?

It’s hard to imagine our lives without social networking. With everyone’s faces glued to their phone screen it’s hard to remember the times where it didn’t exist. Many older people never had the kind of technology that we have today which explains why they don’t understand our society being so obsessed with it. There are many opposing viewpoints on whether or not social media is good for our society. You can find hundreds of articles on the topic. According to emarketer.com 1 in 4 people were using social networks around the world as of 2013 and it is expected to rise. With that many people using social media it makes this a current topic for debate. So, is social media good for our society?

I agree with the fact that not only our generation but society as a whole is social media obsessed. How many times have you heard someone talking about the number of “likes” they got on a tweet, picture, status, etc? Or how about the number of times you have been in the middle of a conversation only to be practically talking to yourself as the person across from you is in another conversation through social media? Yes we all love it, but it gets to a point where we need to take a step back and be in the here and now. On the one hand I agree with Ann Smarty in her article on seochat.com that states social media has widened the world we live in and has created easy communication around the world. She also states that sites like facebook, twitter and youtube also make it possible for like-minded individuals to discuss important topics and widen their knowledge. But on the other hand social media is not always used for such things. Instead, it is the source of bullying and harassment. Especially with suicide being a major topic for discussion in the world today many believe there is a correlation between the two. People say it is a lot easier to comment/post hurtful things through social media because you’re not directly saying it to their face. Instead you’re behind a computer screen. According to a study conducted by the website ditchthelabel.org 7 out of 10 teens have been victims of cyberbullying and 37% of young people have experienced cyber bullying on a highly frequent basis. Sites such as facebook, twitter and ask.fm are the most common for cyber bullying.

Social media has also made our society very narcissistic and self-obsessed. People laughed at the song “selfie” but let’s be honest, there are actually people who act like that about the pictures they upload to Instagram! You go to some people’s Instagram page and see selfie after selfie or pictures that give a misinterpretation of who they really are and a lot of times encouraging sexual objectification. For mock elections at my high school we even had an award called “selfie queen”. It’s gotten so bad people make memes saying “she’s a ten on Instagram but in real life she’s a 2” (talking about how good looking someone is on Instagram vs. in person) Since when did Instagram posts go from photos of things people enjoy or a special occasion, night out with friends etc., to a vain, self-obsessed website? Now a day’s people with a lot of followers are considered twitter “famous” or Instagram “famous” it’s almost like they’re living in a fake world. According to a top oxford scientist all of this can result in a need for instant gratification and poor non-verbal skills. While it is true that people can post whatever they like to Instagram, it gets to a point of asking is it really self-confidence or just being self-obsessed?

Social networking sites are addictive. Many social network users admit to checking their news feed before they go to bed and as soon as they wake up which is a sign of addiction. A lot of people try to quit using their social media networks “cold turkey” but within months they find themselves back on the sites causing a continuous cycle. An article by Katherine Boyle in “The Washington Post” makes a valid point that yes, America wastes time on social media but before that it was wasting past times on tv series. She says “unlike sugary, carbonated beverages, the government sees no need to regulate our social media intake.” With the way technology and social media plays a major part of our everyday life I don’t see it going away any time soon.

Social media has a lot of bad components to it but like everyone else out there, I still use it. With a little self-control and being aware of how much you use it, and the ways you use it, it is possible to be what its original intent was- a harmless way to keep up with your family and friends, to post things you find interesting and like the first paragraph stated; a way for like-minded individuals to discuss important topics and widen your knowledge.