

# How social media and technology slowly strip people of humanity

[Science](#), [Computer Science](#)



Just a decade or two ago, the world we live in was entirely different. If we go back a decade or two, we would be living in a different world. Instead of Skype, we made phone calls- on a landline, not a cell phone. Instead of Tumblr, people made scrapbooks. Before Pinterest, there were magazines and newspaper clippings tacked to a corkboard. Instead of Reddit, we had comic strips to read. Facebook was merely an address/phone book with all your friends' contact information. Twitter was sticky notes around the house. Instagram was framed photos placed on a desk or wall. Instead of LinkedIn, there was a Rolodex (business card holder). While the thought of YouTube was simply looking out your window and watching the people going by and interacting with one another.

Today, we have tags, DMs, retweets, filters, OMG, followers, likes, friends, lol; these words used to be meaningless. Now, thanks to technology and social media, our society has become accustomed to these words. The Merriam Webster dictionary has added definitions for all of them (Merriam-Webster). But how did technology and social media advance so much that there is specific vocabulary allocated to it? It began with a little site called Facebook, which was merely a small start up in the early 2000's.

Unbeknownst to the founders, over the next decade their website would grow exponentially and lead to the formation of many other social media platforms as well as advancement in technology. Almost all of the platforms invented since then have grown greatly and continue to do so today. With technology becoming interwoven into our world today, it plays a large part in people's everyday lives and comes with a multitude of unintended effects.

While the introduction of technology and social media in the past decade has

presented several benefits, it has also extensively changed the life of the individual in overall negative ways, and poses significant threats to younger generations. Technology and social media have developed a new way for us to connect with one another but with the consequences of threatening the way that people interact and the way we choose to establish a sense of status between one another.

Technology and social media allow for communication and connectivity of people across the globe. However, before delving into the unwanted effects both have made on society, it is important to mention a handful of the benefits they have provided. Technology and social media can be used for good. They connect minority groups in ways that never would have been possible before. It allows like-minded individuals to find one another and create a community of their own, one they otherwise would not have the platform for. For example, social media builds strong connections and provides a support system for adults and adolescents alike, such as: the LGBTQ+ community, foster kids, and those with shared disabilities and illnesses. It allows groups of people to help each other realize they are not alone with whatever their struggles are (Jacewicz). Another benefit of social media is using it as a platform to encourage social change and activism. It allows for the sharing of individuals' stories about racist, sexist, or homophobic acts and makes a connection with others who have experienced similar situations, bringing light to the subject and calling for a change. Technology and social media can also be used in a positive light as a way to connect through self expression (Jacewicz). By an individual creating a profile

and posting about what they believe in, they have an opportunity to express themselves and define who they are as people, in ways that were never before possible. When people express themselves and their beliefs, it allows others to connect with them and start a conversation.

All of which is extremely impactful on today's youth who use social media. It can introduce them to a whole world of people with similar interests, making them more confident and helping to inspire self expression (Barnes and Laird). The digital world is a huge place and social media helps get young people into it. Technology is used by teens for one big reason: to connect with their peers (Barnes and Laird). Learning the ins and outs of technology and how to use it is much easier and much more rewarding for them later in life. It enables the learning of technical skills at a very young age, which gives younger generations a distinctive skill set that prepares them for the digital age of the workforce they will encounter later on (Ahmad). New jobs have been created in recent years that never existed before, due only to the introduction of technology and social media. When it is used the right way, there is a plethora of other benefits that social media provides. Regrettably, there is also a stream of mostly unintentional negative side effects that come with the advancement of technology and social media in the younger generations.

The integration of technology and social media into everyday life has made large scale impacts on how people socialize and interact with one another. As technology and social media are intertwined into everyday life, the large scale impacts seem to go unnoticed. For example, if you were to go to a

friend's house and hangout with a couple friends, everyone would be talking and interacting and having fun. Nowadays, people are more interested in beating a videogame with their friends, but none of them are in the same room. They are all in their own rooms, with a headset on, talking to a screen. There is no real social situation presenting itself, with no one to physically talk to because " A real social situation, even when people are not talking to one another, is full of faces and objects caught sight of, gestures seen, [and] sounds heard that keep communication going" (Siegel 172). The addition of a screen makes a large impact on what an everyday situation is, showing how the introduction of technology has altered everyday life. Unfortunately, the changes social media has also brought to the youth of today has been ultimately negative. One of the biggest changes that has occurred is in the way people interact with one another. It is sad but true; social media is quite frequently an unsocial activity. Parents yell at their kids to get off their phones and go hangout with their friends and socialize. Even though technology and social media connect humans to a virtual world with their friends, followers, and subscribers, it also instantly distances people from the ones physically right next to them, which causes a decrease in face-to-face social interaction. In the world today, this is apparent everywhere we go.

Two strangers will be sitting next to one another in a class, on a bus, or in a store and never say a single word to each other because they are so invested in what they are scrolling through on social media. People often miss out on the opportunity to meet someone new and have an authentic conversation because of this all consuming desire to scroll endlessly instead

of “[being] there, physically present, [and] visible” to others and holding an actual conversation (Siegel 173). Staring at a screen and scrolling has a particular characteristic that is very repetitive and monotonous, so much so that it is almost non-human in nature. The incessant attachment to technology and social media takes away what makes us human by lowering the amount of face-to-face social interactions and conversations that help in building deeper relationships, with a unique emotional base to each person. Not only has the way people interact been affected, but so has the way in which we spend our time interacting. Instead of participating in more meaningful activities and entertaining oneself outside, time is being spent on technology and social media. Entertainment online is very different from entertainment in person, the main difference being in words and images on a screen compared to the spoken words and actions of a person. Since people “never enter the Internet as [they] would enter a park, or go onto the street, or browse through a bookstore” anymore, a large amount of time is spent using technology and social media (Siegel 174). Now instead, people sit at their computers to enter a videogame, search through google maps to find a street, and browse countless websites to find the book they’re looking for, be it a hard copy or. pdf version. The time being spent on technology and social media has become a part of society’s everyday routine. The use of social media has become so frequent that studies are being conducted to prove the addictive qualities it has. Social media is known as a huge procrastination tool among high school and college-aged students trying to avoid doing classwork. Time spent on social media is taking away from people

participating in more meaningful activities and enjoying the amazing things the world has to offer.

Not only has social media caused unfavorable changes in society, it also poses several threats and risks to young people because it reinforces a sense of status and belonging. Based on the number of friends, followers, or subscribers an individual has, and how many likes, favorites, or views their posts get, allows them to quantify one's own popularity. However, this also "permits" those who are much higher up within the social hierarchy to degrade those of a lower social standing. It allows them to create their own "criterion for judging the worth of someone [they] engage with online [to] the degree of his or her availability to [their] will", which only increases the awareness of social status existing beyond that of the online world (Siegel 175). Social media is frequently used to keep up with others' social status. This is the idea that individuals who have more "friends" are more liked, are more popular, and thus are at the top of the social hierarchy obtain the status and at the same time push those who are "less popular" to the bottom of the social hierarchy. The mindset of the hierarchy can lead to the threat of cyberbullying. According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, cyberbullying is "the electronic posting of mean-spirited messages about a person" while a clinical report states that cyberbullying is when an individual "deliberately [uses] digital media to communicate false, embarrassing, or hostile information about another person" (O'Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson). In both cases, the youth receiving these messages are at a very high risk for long term trauma.

Some consequences include, but are not limited to, depression, isolation, and in extreme cases, suicide. Those who are at the most risk are teens, because socialization plays a very large role in the development of who they are as an individual during this stage of their lives (O’Keeffe and Clarke-Pearson). Social media also poses a large threat to teens, especially women, in the case of self-esteem and negative body image. There are pictures being constantly uploaded everyday and because of this, teens are exposed to a multitude of content showing others in a “ better light” than themselves. This often causes teens to compare themselves to their peers in an because they are seeing an edited, perfected version of what reality is. They compare themselves to others online “ because there is nothing to remind [them] that [they themselves] have limits—[they] can “ express” [themselves] out of the infinite conception [they] have of [themselves]” versus what they see online of what they “ should” be (Siegel 174). There is already enough pressure to fit in and look the part in today’s world, and because of this teens are at an extreme risk for medical issues connected to poor body image, including depression and eating disorders, when they are handed a platform of images readily available for their comparison. These are just some of the numerous risks presented to younger generations every time they log online, every single day. While social media and technology were created as a way to increase social connectivity, and proves its purpose today, the unwanted side effects of disabling communication and interaction with others impact people every day, and pose major threats to the younger generations. However, this manifestation was not solely due to social media, the release of technology in the past few decades opened the door to an enormous



inundation of new technological advancements. While the majority of these advancements are meant to assist and advance society as a whole, there are several side effects that come with the advancement. With the launch of new and improved technology, the number of effects that will come to fruition is unknown. If more attention is not paid to the consequences that could result from the advancement of technology and social media, the ramifications will only worsen. The possible side effects of technology and social media should no longer be ignored. The identification and reduction of the potential consequences of social media and technology need careful consideration, especially going further into the future of the digital age.