

The Dark Side of Social Media

By Thomas Morganelli

Social media has pushed porn out of the number one activity on the web (Cooper, 2014). Social networking has become the always on and always connected way of life. Communication has rapidly changed over the past decade due to the birth and rise of social media. Although social media has brought many benefits to society, social media has also had several negative impacts on American culture.

Social media has redefined communication amongst Americans and caused some challenges that are negatively effecting people's social skills. Americans have a false sense of connectivity with others due to social media's ability to bring together numerous individuals and allow them a platform to communicate instantaneously. Americans are overusing social media networks and are deteriorating their social skills due to the lack in face-to-face interaction (Mastre, 2014). Some people hardly notice that social media can provide an inauthentic approach to socializing. Americans believe that they are still getting their fill of face-to-face interaction—just virtually on social media. According to Jones (n.d.), "There needs to be a constant reminder that face-to-face interaction must remain a staple in our society because it is of a much higher quality and has the ability to satisfy so many more of our inherent social needs (Social Media's Affect on Human Interaction). Besides people falling victim to the false sense of intimacy brought on by social media, they are also using it as a place to get their daily news scoop.

Social media has become the one stop shop for Americans; it is a place for them to connect with friends, family and strangers, a place to find love and a place to get their news. According to Sonderman (2014), “For American adults under 30, social media has far surpassed newspapers and has equaled TV as a primary source of daily news (One-third of adults under 30 get news on social networks now). With Americans over-relying on social media for their news intake, there is a greater chance that they will only read information that agrees with their pre-existing opinions. This will keep Americans from getting a greater understanding of the different perspectives present in the world around them, which narrows their knowledge and can ultimately create ignorance. Social media takes extreme multi-tasking ability since people can spend time simultaneously connecting with friends to catching up on the news of the world. With the expansion of information available on social media, people have lost their ability to stay focused on one topic (Kemp, n.d.).

As mentioned, social media has given Americans an insincere sense of closeness with others, which has led to a decrease in privacy. Social media networks have become a resourceful tool for strangers, including marketers and burglars. According to "Bullguard" (2013), “There are several ways advertisers can invade your social media privacy, take advantage of your data and make you a target for their ads (Privacy violations – the dark side of social media). A person’s social media profile and even usage can give marketers an inside look into what that person likes, dislikes, wants and needs. These are all key components for a marketer to figure out what they can (easily) sell to you, but this is at the expense of a person’s privacy. Several social sites such as Facebook, Foursquare and Twitter have become tools for thieves to find homes to invade

(Shiff, 2014). Americans use social platforms to share information, but a post on Facebook that alerts everyone that you will be out of town for a week can be a welcome note to a burglar to come visit your home during that time. Foursquare and Twitter allow location-based check-ins that can be a useful tool for thieves. These sites can publicly announce when someone checks into a place, and it is a clear sign that that person is not home. Burglars are not the only ones invading people's privacy through social media employers are too.

Employers are now using social media to spy on their current employees and potential employees. The false sense of security that Americans have online is impacting their relationships with their employers and with their ability to be hired by a new employer. Richmond (2014), "According to a 2013 study by CareerBuilder, more employers are finding reasons not to hire candidates because of their social media presence" (Don't Let Social Media Derail Your Career -- Use It To Attract Potential Employers). Images and text that people post on social sites can be seen as inappropriate to current and potential employers (e.g. a post about how they hate their boss or an image of a person drinking heavily with friends). Dawnmarie Souza, who worked as an American Medical Response of Connecticut employee was let go from her job after she was caught posting on her Facebook timeline negative remarks about her boss (Hill, 2014). Social media has become a place where people feel comfortable speaking freely, while some are like Dawnmarie, who vents about their lives, others take it a step too far.

Social media has created a new form of bullying and it has had devastating effects on younger generation Americans. Social media, with its ease in communication and connection, has made it easier for children to bully their peers. According to "Internet

Safety 101" (2013), 81% of youth agree that bullying online is easier to get away with than bullying in person (Cyberbullying Statistics). Children and teens are more comfortable with vocalizing through social media than they are with face-to-face confrontation. They find it easier to post something hurtful about someone else on the Internet since they can do it quickly and not in person. According to "Examiner" (2014), "research from the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center has found that online harassment of American adolescents between 10 and 17 years of age has increased 50% from 2000 to 2005 resulting in a victimization rate of 9% (Playground bullying decreases while cyber-bullying increases). The dramatic increase of bullying has increased a more startling statistic over the past years—suicides.

The rise of youth suicides can be linked to the increased accessibility and communication generated through social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Laird (2014), one in ten cyber-bullied teens attempt suicide and 4,500 teens succeed in killing themselves each year (Cyberbullying: Scourge of the Internet). Social media sites allow children to share their thoughts and feelings, whether good or bad. People can team up on social sites and attack on individual instantly and constantly. A cyber bullied child can feel like everyone is against them since social media can make one bullying statement available to be shared over and over again, which intensifies the effects (Hakes, 2014).

Social media has brought change to American culture and some of these changes have been for the worse. Social media can be blamed for the erosion of social skills, overreliance of social networks and cyber bullying. Will social media continue to

deteriorate the culture we all know and love or will a new culture take over with social media at the center?

References

- BullGuard. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.bullguard.com/bullguard-security-center/internet-security/social-media-dangers/privacy-violations-in-social-media.aspx>
- Cooper, B. B. (2014). *Huffington post*. Retrieved from http://www.huffingtonpost.com/belle-beth-cooper/10-surprising-social-media_b_4325088.html
- Examiner. (2014). Retrieved from <http://www.examiner.com/article/playground-bullying-decreases-while-cyber-bullying-increases>
- Internet Safety 101. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.internetsafety101.org/cyberbullyingstatistics.htm>
- Hakes, F. (2014). *CNN*. Retrieved from http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/05/opinion/hakes-bullying/index.html?iid=article_sidebar
- Hill, K. (2014). *Forbes*. Retrieved from <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kashmirhill/2011/02/07/case-settled-union-employees-you-can-badmouh-your-boss-on-facebook/>
- Jones, H. (n.d.). *HASTAC*. Retrieved from <https://www.hastac.org/blogs/haley117/2013/06/07/social-medias-affect-human-interaction>
- Kemp, D. (n.d.). *Justia*. Retrieved from <http://onward.justia.com/2011/07/29/overcoming-confirmation-bias/>
- Laird, S. (2014). *Mashable*. Retrieved from <http://mashable.com/2012/07/08/cyberbullying-infographic/>

Mastre, B. (2014). *WOWT*. Retrieved from

http://www.wowt.com/home/headlines/Has_Social_Media_Killed_Social_Skills_106742408.html

Richmond, A. (2014). *Forbes*. Retrieved from

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/85broads/2013/11/21/dont-let-social-media-derail-your-career-use-it-to-attract-potential-employers/>

Shiff, B. (2014). *9News*. Retrieved from

<http://archive.9news.com/dontmiss/347884/630/How-burglars-use-social-media-to-steal-your-things>

Sonderman, J. (2014). *Poynter*. Retrieved from [http://www.poynter.org/latest-](http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/189776/one-third-of-adults-under-30-get-news-on-social-networks-now/)

[news/mediawire/189776/one-third-of-adults-under-30-get-news-on-social-networks-now/](http://www.poynter.org/latest-news/mediawire/189776/one-third-of-adults-under-30-get-news-on-social-networks-now/)