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### Pixelated Perfection: What's Behind the Filter?

[About?]

How perfect do I look online? Does my hair fall the right way? Is the angle of that picture one that makes me look skinny? Will that post get a lot of likes? If I didn't post about an event, did I even go? Did I get the most likes possible on that picture you posted last Tuesday? These questions are what teens ask themselves in regards to social media. My friends and peers would attest that this mentality has taken over. Spending hours deciding a caption, making alterations, and posting at prime times is what teens do to get the biggest popularity vote on every post. Each time my friends post about something fun we did it's a whole different world. To begin with, what they post is the glamorous 5 second peak captured in a picture, which that is perfectly angled. It also neglects to show any semi-dull parts of the trip, like if parking was bad, or if they waited in line for hours just to get that one moment on the Ferris wheel at the fair, or if their friends got in a huge fight right after they all happily smiled for the picture. Not to mention with each post my friends change into expert editors, caption writers, and data analysts to manipulate the situation and get the amount of likes they want. For example, I have friends that only post during prime time, 7pm- 8 pm, because everyone is either finishing dinner or bored and checking their phones which means maximum opportunity for likes. Also, the mind set to have the best life on social media has come to such an extreme that my friends have created separate social

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media accounts called “Finsta’s” **fake Instagram’s**. Finsta’s are used to post about everyday encounters that are the more human activities of my friend’s days, like doing poorly on a test, losing something or just plain bad luck.

**Commented [RHJ7]:** fake Instagram accounts

Upon reflection, I noticed that social media has truly changed my friends and dynamic of the teenage population. Besides how teens make themselves seem perfect online, what else has social media transformed in our minds? **Well, with these initial inquiries started me thinking of all the traumas teens go through and what great lengths users will go to for popularity on social media.** With these questions, I set out to find what effects social media had on teen users. **My research ventured various **lens**** of the situation and whether social media is a positive or negative outlet for teens.

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My research began by gathering an open scope of information, both the potential good outcomes and bad outcomes of social media. The cons of social media on teens include lower test scores and GPAs, exposure of personal information, access for sexual predators, personality disorders, poor social skills, and depression. Meanwhile some positive effects are easy access to informational resources, outlets for communication with peers, facilitation of social movements, quicker ways to receive news, and an open field for job opportunities and recruitment. From this starting point, my research dug deeper into the details of these effects. Most social **psychologist** in the field focus on the detrimental effects that negatively impact teens; meanwhile, some sources focus on the full effects of **social** and eliminate the biases. Additionally, through exploration of this topic I found that there is an array of problems, terms, and diseases teens have that are specific to the social media society. For example, teens can experience imposter syndrome, which exposes teens to the harsh societal need to be perceived as perfect, and

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phantom vibration syndrome, where teens feel the need to check their phones because they think they felt it vibrate when it didn't. These avenues are what got the research journey ignited.

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Social Protocol- in and out groups, liking pics,

One of the first findings that came across in research was how social protocols are effected by social media and teens psychological mindset. A study done by Lauren Sherman, a UCLA doctoral student, showed that teens will alter their posts to be similar to the post getting the most number of likes at the time. Lauren Sherman analyzed brain activity of teens viewing and liking pictures that simulated an Instagram feed of their friends and their own posts. This study illustrates that our perception of what we admire in photos and thoughts is manipulated by the forum of social media. Teens minds have come to accept that posting isn't about always sharing with the world what you admire, but it's about getting the most likes and neglecting self-interests to do it. Another study done by experts in the field of applied social psychology from Eötvös Loránd University and the University of Groningen showed that the actions of users will be a strong reflection of what the in-group is doing. The experts found this by doing a study which was used to see the correlation between online and offline participation in a protest at a University in Budapest. The study was conducted by creating an online survey to track participation during a six-week protest. The results revealed that there is a connection between social affirmation and the use of social media through conforming to the in-groups ideals and not the out-groups. Resulting from these findings, my research has established that social media psychologically has altered the priorities of users and promoted conforming to the socially accepted in-group.

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Along with the findings on in-group and out-group behavior the experts conducted another study. The study tested the relationship between instrumental social media use (giving

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information about a topic) and interactivity on actions made. By using surveys giving information and controlling the access to information, the second study tested instructiveness and instrumental uses of social media. This study's **result help** explain how social media interaction is helping engage users in collective actions. Findings from the first study also help show this by the actions taken for the protest. Overall, these conclusions help provide evidence that users of social media can come together and participate in collective action. Collective actions that are caused by social media bring a positive effect on teens and make it easier for users to participate in social movements and bring social change. Additionally, social media has made a huge impact on a community basis. In the Charlotte's NPR news source the panelists talked about how social media has made a huge impact by connecting individuals with similar issues **and been** an outlet for individuals to reach out and get support from others who have been through the tough times already. Social media in this case has a positive effect on users by sending support, information, and awareness to large groups of people without difficulty.

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Having extra support online can be great, but with extra support it leaves a door open for extra hate. Suren Ramasubbu, a well-versed UCLA graduate on internet filters, safety, and other services, wrote a news **article a wide** variety of topics such as cyberbullying, sexting, and Facebook depression. The main idea about cyberbullying from the article is how it is easier and less guilt-inflicting for the bully because of the ability to hide behind the walls of social media. This was similar to what was mentioned about sexting and how social media creates an invincible feel to users and makes users think that private information, such as sexual pictures, are totally safe or will even possibly create popularity. As for other negative effects from social media on teens there is a huge population that suffers from Facebook depression. Ramasubbu mentions how social media has shifted from connecting users to comparing users. This

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depression from comparing users to each other aligns with users need to follow the in-groups' ideals. A term used to describe this concept is imposter syndrome. Rachel Ehmke, highly qualified Senior **Editor for the institute,** the Disability Services Coordinator at Rhode Island College, and a graduate from the University of Chicago, wrote an article that touched on the key component of imposter syndrome. As stated in the article, **““Adolescence** and the early twenties in particular are the years in which you are acutely aware of the contrasts between who you appear to be and who you think you are,” says Dr. Wick. “It’s similar to the ‘imposter syndrome’ in psychology. As you get older and acquire more mastery, you begin to realize that you actually are good at some things, and then you feel that gap hopefully narrow. But imagine having your deepest darkest fear be that you aren’t as good as you look, and then imagine needing to look that good all the time! It’s exhausting.”” Ehmke’s point that society pressures self-perception in teen users justifies points discussed in other studies, that social media negatively effects what teens truly admire and what they genuinely believe. Overall, **there are** the lens teens use to view themselves has been dramatically altered by the creation and consequences of social media.

**In conclusion,** social media plays many roles in the lives of teen users, from connecting them to friends far away, to the bully behind the screen, to the supportive community they lack at home or even to the news from the world around them. **Many psychologists find there to be** many more negative outcomes from social media on teenage minds than positive ones. The culture of the uprising generations are transformed into a revolutionary state of mind; a mindset that with the click of a button all the information needed will be there, or the person you need to talk to can talk in an instant. Whether the benefits outweigh the bad or vice versa, social media has changed this generation of teens. The measurement of this is different based off perspective and the level of interactivity of the teen user on social media. A less active user may not be as

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exposed to cyberbullying harm, but will they also miss the chance to develop a relationship with a support system that can cause a world of good. That is for the information to structure and the reader to interpret.

Works Cited

<https://turbofuture.com/internet/The-Dangers-of-Social-Networking-Why-you-need-to-be-careful>

<http://wfae.org/post/charlottes-lgbt-community>