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Are We Truly More Connected With Social Media?

Social Media is taking over some of our lives as much as technology. With new technology on the rise, it has become apparent that to use of social media will also rise. In today's society, social media has many applications, but the main one being its ability to connect and communicate with people. In Hilary Stout's article "Antisocial Networking?", the author claims that social media and technology is affecting not only communication, but also the quality of friendships. The articles that explore this effect and back this claim are: "Is Social Media Driving People Away From Real Interaction?" by Righ Knight, "Teenagers On Social Media: Socialization and Self Esteem" by Clive Anderson Jr., Eknoor Johar, and Jocelyn C. Key, and "Antisocial Networking?" by Hilary Stout. Each of these articles have a similar position on the effects of social media on communication. The position is that social media has an overall negative effect on communication because it lessens actual face-to-face interactions, close friendships are rare and usually will not come from social media, and social media can lead to cyberbullying because it allows people to be more connected.

To elaborate on my first point, social media lessens face-to-face interactions. New technology is being developed every day, with it's development comes people engrossing their time into it. In article/resource B ("Antisocial Networking") the author points out that "Americans between the ages of 8 and 18 spend on average 7 1/2 hours a day reported that Americans between the ages of 8 and 18 spend on average

7 1/2 hours a day using some sort of electronic device...” This use of technology can not all be attributed to just social media, but it still blatantly means that we are spending over a quarter of a day using some form of technology, looking at a screen instead of talking to someone face-to-face. To put this time into a practical use, if a person gets eight hours of sleep and uses technology for 7 and 1/2 hours, it is 15 and 1/2 hours, over half a day of possibly no real interaction with another person albeit 8 hours is unconscious. One should also note that 7 and 1/2 hours is about the same amount of time a student spends at school. The author of article D also states, “It seems that not only are we using these devices to hide from social gatherings, but the use of social media on a lone basis (in other words, those who rely on social media for their social and cultural stimulation) find it increasingly difficult to not only socialize in situations where it is called for, but they are generally more depressed and anxious in actual social situations.” This makes it apparent that social media is indeed making face-to-face interactions less, because the users use it as a reason to shy away from social gatherings, which in turn makes it harder to socialize, because the person is losing face-to-face connections. People may argue that in article A, a father endorses social media because, “...it’s helping him [His son, Evan] come out of his shell and develop social skills that he wasn’t learning because he’s so shy.” One can not come out of a shell by simply “talking to someone” on facebook, because it’s via text. To truly break out of one’s shell they have to go outside and talk to someone face-to-face. Social media may help people start to interact with others, but will never be a substitute for communicating face-to-face.

In addition, the second reason why is that close friendships are hard to develop and are not going to come from social media, even if it allows people to communicate easily. You can connect with people fast via social media, but the author of article B insist that close relationships may wilt away, and we can not allow it to happen. The only way for close childhood friendships/relationships to last is if

people talk to each other face-to-face, because you can not expect to become someone's close friend if you do not even know the sound of their voice. Building off this, the author of article B states that, "...exchanges are becoming more superficial..." If this is the case these exchanges will not help people form close relationships. This superficiality is what blocks close relations to actually flourish. This also brings the question to mind, who is a Facebook friend? The author of article B emphasizes that Andy Wilson, (an 11-year-old boy) has *418 Facebook friends*. If a person even has a quarter of these friends can each and everyone of those people be called a friend? Social media just doesn't allow for any close friendship or relationship form because these relations are simply shallow.

Further explaining my stance, social media allows for communication, but with that communication, it allows for cyberbullies to communicate and harass others. Social media can let bullies reach you can harass you, but it allows you to block them. The use of social media is very high, the author of article F stating 90% of 13-17-year-olds use social media, it also says 17% of teens experience cyberbullying at least once in their lifetime. If about one fifth of teens who use social media are being cyberbullied that is a problem that 'blocking' can not contain. You can block someone, but it does not mean they can not post something about you. People may say that you can flag the post or tell an administrator or parent that you are being cyberbullied, but it is too late, the damage dealt by the post has usually been done. Social media is a catalyst of sorts, the author of article F claims that social media can lead to cyberbullying, which can lead to low self esteem, which leads to depression, which leads to thoughts of suicide, and can eventually lead to suicide, the third leading cause of death among people ages 15-24. As stated previously cyberbullying does not affect everyone, but it does affect a significant enough amount of people to attract worries of it leading to depression. Once something leads to depression it is a hard hole to climb out of, and if using social media can cause it, that is a big price to

pay. People argue that social media even with its drawbacks allows you to connect with people. It is helpful in that respect, but it is unnecessary for connecting with people you can see almost daily (Friends at school and family), but it can let you talk to some friends you made online. Overall though the negative drawbacks, far outweigh the positive when it comes to social media.

To close out the argument, social media does indeed allow for people to be more connected, but that includes bullies. Social media can allow bullies to directly communicate with you, to harass you, it lessens face-to-face interactions, and that in turn makes close friendships/relationships scarce. Social media, it is taking over, but for positive or worse really depends on the user and what they use it for.