

90% of texts are read within 3 minutes of receiving them

95% of teens now report they have a smartphone or access to one

45% of teens believe social media has neither a positive nor negative effect on people their age

45% of teens say they use the internet "almost constantly," a figure that has nearly doubled since 2015

Filtered Reality

What are we hiding behind our final drafts?

Anyone born from the 90's on has heard the ever so infamous, "You young people, always on your cell phones!" or some variation of the phrase. Younger generations like to dismiss this as an annoying, old-person stereotype, but do the disgruntled elderly have a point? As much as I hate to admit it, the boomers might be right: technology and social media could be ruining our ability to interact in the real world.

Don't believe me? Think about the last time you posted something online. Was it a tweet that you drafted and revised to get the perfect balance of punchy hilarity? Was it a strategically taken picture on Instagram with the perfect caption? Maybe it was a long and opinionated Facebook post with carefully collected sources and skillfully crafted arguments. Whatever you posted, it probably wasn't the first thing that came to mind, but a carefully considered publication representing your online persona.

This kind of online conversing has put a major hindrance on people's ability to simply speak in real time. In a text or tweet or comment, a person has the chance to revise what they say before they say it. They're afforded the opportunity to hone their voice so they come off as the best possible version of themselves, and they have the privilege of deleting anything they've said if they so choose. In life, you can't just go back and delete. You only have a moment to think of what you'll say before you say it, and it's undeniably difficult to formulate profound and coherent thoughts on the fly. Verbally articulating your thoughts completely and concisely--maybe even eloquently if you're feeling particularly verbose--is a skill that is lacking in younger generations who've grown up with a built in filter on their smartphone.

Is social media's influence on youth culture a good thing or a bad thing?

"Social media is good because if someone's going through the same problems as you, you can relate. There are people who can help you through things. It's a good way for people to show their talents like photography or art. People can get ideas from it, but then that can also be bad because some ideas can be bad."

Drew Stoufer, '22



KATE DOOLITTLE
PHOTO EDITOR

The filtered reality that Gen Z is growing up in has created an entire generation of people who are uncomfortable with living in the moment. A generation whose need to control public perception has led to the creation of manufactured online personas that strategically showcase exactly what they want people to see: exactly what they think people will like. The instant gratification of a “like” only fuels this incessant need for approval, making it that much harder to face the criticism that the real world can dole out (and that much easier to hide behind a screen). Don’t think I put myself above criticism, though, as the irony of my current situation is not lost on me. After all, the article you’re currently reading is my final draft: a revised version of my own opinion that I’ve deemed good enough to put into the public eye.

Despite all this disparagement, I’m a firm believer that teens’ access to such a wealth of knowledge is not a bad thing. A person can teach themselves anything from how to do makeup to television repair with the help of a youtube tutorial. Today’s youth have access to current events and news up to the minute, and more and more they’re cultivating their own opinions and contributing to important conversations. People from all over the world can interact and share jokes, opinions, art, and culture, exposing kids to experiences far outside their own. Subjection to such a huge and varied body of media forces us to think about everything we’re seeing, analyze it, and decide what to take away from it. In my opinion, technology and the way young people use it is making the world a better place. That said, it isn’t a bad idea to get your head out of the cloud and actually enjoy that world every now and again.

47% of parents think their child is addicted to their smartphone

The average user spends an hour and sixteen minutes a day on the top 5 social media apps

80% of smartphone users check their phone within 1 hour of waking up, 35% of whom will do so within 5 minutes

Is social media’s influence on youth culture a good thing or a bad thing?

“I don’t think anything that kids obsess over as much as social media can be a good thing. If it’s in moderation then it’s fine but social media is just really not good for your mental health overall. You compare yourself to ideal versions of other people. The way it’s being used now, it’s like a life source for some people. I don’t think that’s healthy.”

Kate Kavars, ‘20

