

VILLAINIZATION OF SOCIAL MEDIA

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Layout | Noah Gilbert

Social media is a controversial topic in today's society. Generation Z is the first generation to grow up with it. For most of us checking social media is as instinctive as tying a shoe, maybe easier. A study from the Pew Research Center found that 98% of Americans regularly use social media. It has been a part of our lives since elementary or middle school, almost becoming a necessity in our society.

The world, however, continues to question whether or not social media positively contributes to our lives. For those of us participating in the social media community, we understand that it can't be put into a category of good or evil.

Social media is a tool that was designed to be used how the user chooses. "I don't think social media is something that's all bad or all good," says business teacher Tim Brickley. "I can learn from it, and teach students how businesses can interact with their customers, and how musicians can interact with their fans. Instead of having a third person, whether that's the media, I think social media has allowed people to interact with each other in a new way."

Social media has evolved into a new form of communication we've never seen before. It's direct, and you can reach out to whoever and receive an instant response. It's allowing us to share our ideas in an immediate way.

Brickley continues on to express the advantages of fast communication. "You could tweet at somebody or you could make a connection to somebody that inspires you. You could reach out to one of those travel bloggers or fitness creators and say, 'Hey I find this really intriguing, tell me about this,'" said Brickley. "And they might personally get



back to you. But with social media, Youtube for example, I see so many cool things that I never would have seen before. I wouldn't have that concept in my head, I can ride my bike across Colorado or whatever interests me. 'Cause there's positives that way for students, they can see things and be inspired by things."

Our goal on social media should be to share our ideas and encourage other people. The meaning of social media can be different to every individual. That's why we keep it around, to share and encounter new ideas.

"I feel like social media takes up a lot of time and even me not having TikTok, it still takes up a lot of time like when I'm with friends," said Ella O'Brien '24. "It's just a constant topic and it's a lot of time that you could be spending doing other stuff." We've all experienced the time suck, the hours-long endless scroll of content. Spending a lot of time on social media can be draining if we don't manage our usage.

There are many ways to compare yourself to other people, but social media shouldn't make you feel worse about yourself. On Instagram for example, it is easy to cross the line between browsing and stalking due to the plethora of constant content.

In the end, it is not healthy to envy people on the internet. The love for social media comes because it provides that window that allows us to see into our peers' lives. We just as easily forget that our peers are cultivating their accounts just as we do. We can portray ourselves however we want, even if it's unrealistic.

"I think it gets too much hate for the wrong reasons," said Maren Rasmussen '22. "I think that's what's frustrating to the younger generations when [older generations] don't understand [social media], so they just hate it

because of that. They don't necessarily know what they're hating. That's what's frustrating to me. It's like you didn't grow up in a generation where you had social media. It's okay to see the issues in it, but they should be giving us grace. This is our generation and this is how we communicate. Obviously, the negative impacts of social media are very seen but it's impactful for a reason. As much hate as it gets, there's also some positive attributes to it."

Social media is not one or the other. It can't be defined as right or wrong. We all use it in such different ways, and we should continue to search for new passions and hobbies on the internet.

Maren continues by saying, "Also TikTok is fun because you get to do different things,



Brickley_Tim

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try different recipes, give you different ideas, and it's just a form of entertainment. At the end of the day, it's healthy in a nutshell. I think it's fun. I keep doing it cause I enjoy seeing people interact with @Dudewithsign. Johnston. I keep doing it because I find enjoyment in interacting with other people."

Social media is an effective way to communicate with the outside world. A place where people can be inspired by other people and share their stories to learn about the world around us. Social media opens doors to creative outlets past generations did not have access to.

We can't control the negative aspects of social media, but we can control how it affects us by learning to take advantage of its positive attributes.