

Topic #1: Define the term social media.

Write a *definitional argument* of the term “social media.” Make an original argument that defines “social media” based on your understanding, analysis, and conception of the term. While you will draw from the readings, keep in mind that you are not limited to the readings in making your argument. Try to use some of the strategies and techniques described below.

Descriptive details

Examples

Comparison and/or Contrast

History of Usage or Word Origin

Use or Function

Metaphors (or Similes)

Topic #2: How Does Social Media and other Technology Influence How We Form Our Identity?

a) Identity is a construct that encompasses the way we think about ourselves and our role in larger social environments; identity is enacted through social interactions with others and our relationships with them. Along one continuum, identity can be understood as containing both individual, personal differentiators (such as one’s personal history) as well as components related to one’s role in social groups. How does social media influence how we construct our identities? Consider the essay from the text and those posted online when answering this question.

b) With children and teens today having smart phones equipped with the ability to utilize many social media apps, they are constantly posting events and happenings to the various sites. They also have the ability to be anonymous on many sites and speak with honesty and candor they are unable to use in their everyday lives. How has the technology affected how the younger generation forms their identities versus how you went through the process just a few years ago. Remember to highlight the good and bad changes as you explain the differences in the process.

c) How will the constant tracking of an individual over the course of his or her formative years affect how he or she forms an identity? Consider the companies working in the background to influence the individual’s choices. Discuss how this helps individuals and hampers them as well.

Topic #3: How does technology define us as individuals? As a society?

Does technology allow us to be a better, more connected society? How does it affect the individual, the family, and the community?

Other Ideas:

How has social media and apps changed the way we communicate with one another? Consider dating, friendship, family and other ways in which we communicate and interact.

How does social media influence the way political, civil, and social activism is conducted? Are these changes for the better?

How does social media affect couples who are dating, married or in a long-term relationship?

Does social media promote a celebrity culture among young people? If so, is it healthy or realistic?

Should employers have the right to hire or fire a person for what he or she posts on social media? Should schools have the same right with their students?

# Classic Model for an Argument

No one structure fits all written arguments. However, most college courses require arguments that consist of the following elements. Below is a basic outline for an argumentative or persuasive essay. This is only one possible outline or organization. Always refer to your handbook for specifics.

## I. Introductory Paragraph

- Your introductory paragraph sets the stage or the context for the position you are arguing for.
- This introduction should end with a thesis statement that provides your claim (what you are arguing for) and the reasons for your position on an issue.

### A. *Your thesis:*

- states what your position on an issue is
- usually appears at the end of the introduction in a short essay
- should be clearly stated and often contains emphatic language (should, ought, must)

### B. *Sample Argumentative Thesis*

- The production, sale, and possession of assault weapons for private citizens should be banned in the U.S.

## II. Body of your Argument

### A. *Background Information*

- This section of your paper gives the reader the basic information he or she needs to understand your position. This could be part of the introduction, but may work as its own section.

### B. *Reasons or Evidence to Support your Claim*

- All evidence you present in this section should support your position. This is the heart of your essay. Generally, you begin with a general statement that you back up with specific details or examples. Depending on how long your argument is, you will need to devote one to two well-developed paragraphs to each reason/claim or type of evidence.
- Types of evidence include:
  - first-hand examples and experiential knowledge on your topic (specific examples help your readers connect to your topic in a way they cannot with abstract ideas)
  - Opinions from recognized authorities
  - The tipsheet on the three logical appeals covers the types of evidence you can use in argumentation.

1. **Claim:** Keeping assault weapons out of private citizens' hands can lower the increasing occurrences of barbaric public slayings

#### • **Evidence:**

- Jul 93 Law firm murders
- Columbine School Shootings
- University of Virginia incident

- How did these individuals gain access to weapons?
- 2. **Claim:** The ban on assault weapons is backed heavily by public opinion, major organizations, and even law enforcement.
  - **Evidence:**
    - 12% favor ban (Much 92 Timetable News)
    - Organizational endorsements
    - Nat'l Sherriff's Assoc./Intn'l Assoc. of Police Chiefs
- 3. **Claim:** The monetary and human costs incurred by crimes committed with assault weapons are too great to ignore.
  - **Evidence:**
    - 10,561 murders in 1990 by handguns
    - Study of 131 injured patients' medical expenses paid by public funds

### III. Addressing the Opposite Side

- Any well-written argument must anticipate and address positions in opposition to the one being argued.
- Pointing out what your opposition is likely to say in response to your argument shows that you have thought critically about your topic. Addressing the opposite side actually makes your argument stronger!
- Generally, this takes the form of a paragraph that can be placed either after the introduction or before the conclusion.
- A. **1st Opposing View:** *Strict gun control laws won't affect crime rate*
  - Refutation: Low murder rate in Britain, Australia (etc., where strict controls are in force.
- B. **2nd Opposing View:** *Outlaws would still own guns*
  - Refutation: Any effort to move trend in opposite direction would benefit future generations

### IV. Conclusion

- The conclusion should bring the essay to a logical end. It should explain what the importance of your issue is in a larger context. Your conclusion should also reiterate why your topic is worth caring about.
- Some arguments propose solutions or make prediction on the future of the topic.
- Show your reader what would happen if your argument is or is not believed or acted upon as you believe it should be.

Adapted from:

*Simon & Schuster Handbook for Writers*. Ed. Lynn Quitman Troyka, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2002.

*The Writer's Workplace*. Ed. Sandra Scarry and John Scarry, 6<sup>th</sup> ed. Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2008.

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 Facebook has totally reinvented human identity: Why it's even worse than you think

 Facebook and Twitter are creating a vain generation of self-obsessed people with child-like need for feedback, warns top scientist

 How Facebook Can Affect Your Body Image

 How Facebook Makes Us Unhappy

 The Secret Language of Girls on Instagram

Mark Zuckerberg (Benjamin Wheelock/Reuters/Stephen Lam/Salon)

## **Facebook has totally reinvented human identity: Why it's even worse than you think**

Mark Zuckerberg's ideas about what constitutes "identity" aren't just laughable — they're downright destructive

4

**SUSAN COX**



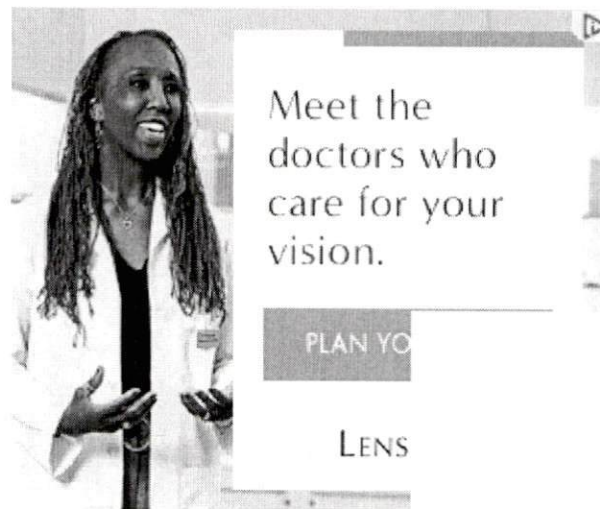
**salon**

**L**et's face it: Feminism is hot right now. Like, actually fashionable. Chalk it up to a boom in online journalism critiquing tired media tropes and holding politicians accountable with acerbic wit. But there's one related trend that doesn't seem to be getting fashionable again: "Cyberfeminism." Remember that?

be the stage of cultural transformation! We were all going to be super-cool cybernetic avatars, existing in multiple dimensions with boundless potential. Sadly, all we ended up getting was a bunch of porn and misogynistic cybermobs. (Perhaps feminism has emerged with renewed relevance, because the Internet has actually worked to regressively reinvigorate damaging conceptions of gender and promote hateful divisions.)

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But then again, it's undeniable that the Internet really has been nothing short of culturally transformative. Communication technologies have become woven into the very fabric of personhood. With companies increasingly making employees sign "social media contracts" holding them professionally accountable for their online presence, digital identities are gaining recognition for their representative authority.

Our Facebook profile pictures have symbolic weight, strengthened through the repetitive labor of association. Have you ever changed your Facebook profile picture and not really liked it -- but then, after a while, decided it was awesome? Like our face in the mirror after a weird new haircut, we need time to readjust our self-image through repeated association.

It may not be as cool as we imagined it in sleek '90s sci-fi, but we really are creatures existing in multiple dimensions, transcending space and time with our cybernetic reach. And who controls

Facebook profile. Sometimes the reduction of your person to Facebook's arbitrary determinations can be uncomfortable and insulting.

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Facebook has redefined the standard of what information should be immediately known about you as a person. It was a slow process, where it gradually increased the "About" fields, but now when I meet someone, it is somehow appropriate for me to see their exact age, residential history and entire résumé of work experience and education. (No, Facebook, I don't want to display where I went to high school. Stop trying to guess at it!) Facebook can even reduce your personal journey on this earth to a chronological list of "Life Events." It knows the true measure of what's important in this crazy world and can tell you everything noteworthy that's happened to you in this one helpful list. Facebook has turned our lives inside out to the point where all of this very specific information now seems to be what constitutes a social identity.

(The Facebook generation has gotten so bad that I've had to tell friends to inform me when they are making a recording of our conversation, and to not post my complete address online when they tag

x

What was once nebulous and unknown about a life is now defined and categorized in this culture of hyper-transparency. It is little wonder why the journalistic coverage of Facebook's recent "real name policy" scandal was as uncritical as it was in accepting of Facebook's legitimate right to the verification of users' legal names.

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In case you didn't hear, Facebook was demanding everyone to use their "real names" on their profiles, which they defined as their legal names. Users were shut out of their accounts if they were suspected of being untruthful, and only allowed back in once they uploaded a copy of legal ID. Journalistic outrage over the event largely took a defensive position reporting on why certain people who do not use their legal names on Facebook are not being duplicitous, but have legitimate reasons for their actions. Articles documented cases, such as individuals who are transgendered, or victims of abusive relationships.

Mark Zuckerberg has repeatedly affirmed that we only have one identity, and that the idea of having multiple constitutes a "lack of integrity." Thus, Facebook has promoted a policy of authenticity, where everyone uses their "real name" under the banner of keeping everyone safe. Sounds familiar? If you are an American, you should know by now that invasions of your privacy are only for your own good!

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Thus Facebook's policy is viewed as legitimate, rather than hilarious, when it includes bullet points such as: "Pretending to be anything or anyone isn't allowed." That's right, you must know the truth of your nature before you post anything on Facebook, and all posts must reflect this authentic self. Facebook's technology is causing an existential shift in what we consider to be our personal identities, and how we interact in the world. This shift is caused by not only the material form of their technology, such as the "About" fields, but also by the discourse surrounding it.

There are great ideological stakes when asking, "What is your *real* name?" We are essentially asking: "What definitively constitutes a person?"

Historically, identification technologies have served to consolidate people as objects of knowledge into discrete political units. Their regulation is then easily rationalized and demonstrably justified. The question of *what should be done with you* is much easier to answer when we can definitively say *what you are*.

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The crux of the issue boils down to this: Is Facebook's normalization of hyper-transparency and information-oriented mode of self-definition conditioning young people to be submissive toward institutionalized forms of subject formation? Does it quell unrest in response to those power structures invested in telling you who and what you are? Will the young people of the future question social values if they are trained from a young age by technological demands to express their person in a corporately constructed template?

The outlook appears grim when the current conversation surrounding identity on the Web has been reduced to an impoverished debate weighing the importance between "safety" (real names + accountability) and "anonymity" (freedom of speech in theory, but trolls in practice).

However, there is still something interesting occurring in the wake of Facebook's "real name policy" scandal. Facebook apologized for conflating legal names with "real names" and conceded that a legitimate identity may not be constituted by the name you were given at birth. Although Facebook failed to directly apologize to the members of the LGBTQ community disproportionately affected by the incident, Facebook's concession is, in a sense, a deployment of Trans politics. The conceptual implications of their policy change are: somewhere, somehow, over the course of life, you go through a process of becoming, and your *true* identity may be something more elusive than what can be verified by a government document.

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ideological armor is actually strangely reminiscent of cyber-feminist prophecies, such as Donna Haraway's iconic "Cyborg Manifesto." Haraway famously argues that essentialist ideologies would be revealed as inadequate in a complex world where nature fuses with the artificial; thus overflowing the boundaries of the conceptual regimes used to justify their regulation.

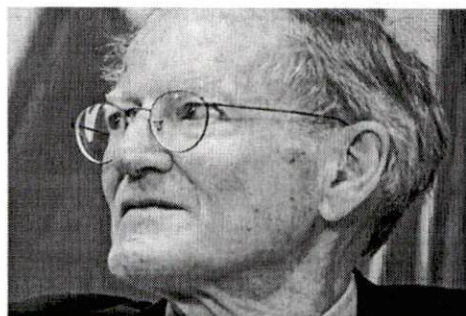
We've just witnessed exactly this occurring in the politics of Facebook. The company relied on a certain understanding of authenticity, which was revealed by complex subjectivities interwoven with technology to be a gross oversimplification. Facebook then lost the justification for their power to regulate and was forced to open their concepts to an amorphous process of reconfiguration. As Facebook scrambles to "update" how they verify "real names," how will this technological giant redefine its reality.

## SUSAN COX

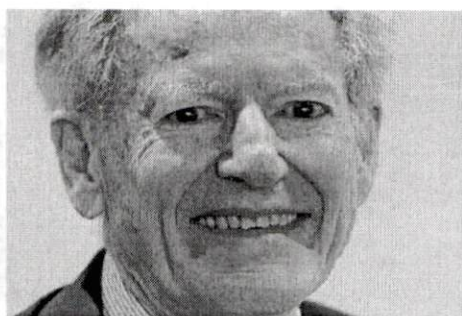
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## Facebook and Twitter are creating a vain generation of self-obsessed people with child-like need for feedback, warns top scientist

By SARAH HARRIS

UPDATED: 09:41 EST, 30 July 2011

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Facebook and Twitter have created a generation obsessed with themselves, who have short attention spans and a childlike desire for constant feedback on their lives, a top scientist believes.

Repeated exposure to social networking sites leaves users with an 'identity crisis', wanting attention in the manner of a toddler saying: 'Look at me, Mummy, I've done this.'

Baroness Greenfield, professor of pharmacology at Oxford University, believes the growth of internet 'friendships' as well as greater use of computer games – could effectively 'rewire' the brain.

**TODAY'S  
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**Vain generation:** A top Oxford scientist has warned that repeated exposure to social networking websites could harm users. (Picture posed by model)

This can result in reduced concentration, a need for instant gratification and poor non-verbal skills, such as the ability to make eye contact during conversations.

More than 750million people across the world use Facebook to share photographs and videos and post regular updates of their movements and thoughts.

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Millions have also signed up to Twitter, the 'micro-blogging' service that lets members circulate short text and picture messages about themselves.

Baroness Greenfield, former director of research body the Royal Institution, said: 'What concerns me is the banality of so much that goes out on Twitter.

'Why should someone be interested in what someone else has had for breakfast? It reminds me of a small child (saying): "Look at me Mummy, I'm doing this", "Look at me Mummy I'm doing that".

'It's almost as if they're in some kind of identity crisis sense it's keeping the brain in a sort of time warp.'

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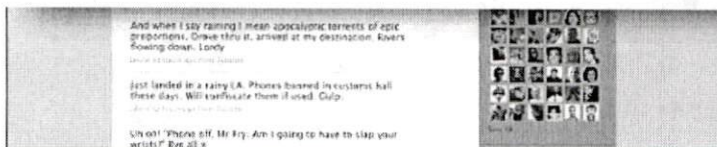
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# TODAY'S TOP VIDEOS



#### A twitter message from Stephen Fry

The academic suggested that some Facebook users feel the need to become 'mini celebrities' who are watched and admired by others on a daily basis.

They do things that are 'Facebook worthy' because the only way they can define themselves is by 'people knowing about them'.

'It's almost as if people are living in a world that's not a real world, but a world where what counts is what people think of you or (if they) can click on you,' she said.

'Think of the implications for society if people worry more about what other people think about them than what they think about themselves.'

Her views were echoed by Sue Palmer, a literacy expert and author, who said girls in particular believe they are a 'commodity they must sell to other people' on Facebook.

She said: 'People used to have a portrait painted but now we can more or less design our own picture online. It's like being the star of your own reality TV show that you create and put out to the world.'

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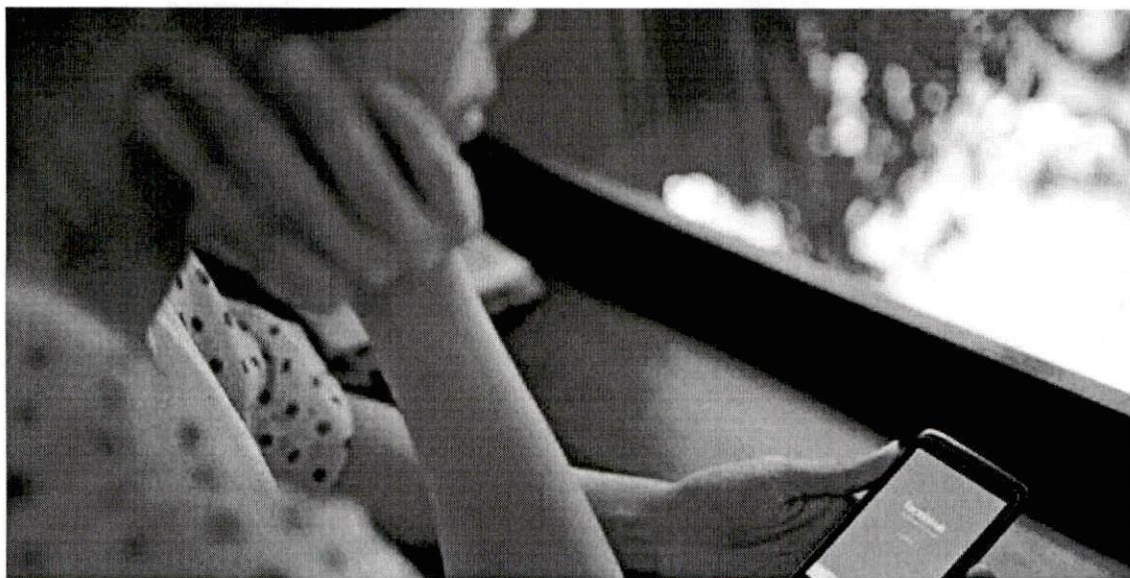
ANNALS OF TECHNOLOGY

# HOW FACEBOOK MAKES US UNHAPPY



By Maria Konnikova

September 10, 2013



No one joins Facebook to be sad and lonely. But a new study from the University of Michigan psychologist Ethan Kross argues that that's exactly how it makes us feel. Over two weeks, Kross and his colleagues sent text messages to eighty-two Ann Arbor residents five times per day. The researchers wanted to know a few

the more people used Facebook in the time between the two texts, the less happy they felt—and the more their overall satisfaction declined from the beginning of the study until its end. The data, he argues, shows that Facebook was making them unhappy.

Research into the alienating nature of the Internet—and Facebook in particular—supports Kross’s conclusion. In 1998, Robert Kraut, a researcher at Carnegie Mellon University, found that the more people used the Web, the lonelier and more depressed they felt. After people went online for the first time, their sense of happiness and social connectedness dropped, over one to two years, as a function of how often they used the Internet.

Lonelier people weren’t inherently more likely to go online, either; a recent review of some seventy-five studies concluded that “users of Facebook do not differ in most personality traits from nonusers of Facebook.” (Nathan Heller wrote about loneliness in the magazine last year.) But, somehow, the Internet seemed to make them feel more alienated. A 2010 analysis of forty studies also confirmed the trend: Internet use had a small, significant detrimental effect on overall well-being. One experiment concluded that Facebook could even cause problems in relationships, by increasing feelings of jealousy.

Another group of researchers has suggested that envy, too, increases with Facebook use: the more time people spent browsing the site, as opposed to actively creating content and engaging with it, the more envious they felt. The effect, suggested Hanna Krasnova and her colleagues, was a result of the well-known social-psychology phenomenon of social comparison. It was further exacerbated by a general similarity of people’s social networks to themselves: because the point of comparison is like-minded peers, learning about the achievements of others hits even harder. The psychologist Beth Anderson and her colleagues argue, in a recent review of Facebook’s effects, that using the network can quickly become addictive, which comes with a nagging sense of negativity that can lead to resentment of the network for some of the same reasons we joined it to begin with. We want to learn about other people and have others learn about us—but through that very learning process we may start to resent both others’ lives and the image of ourselves that we feel we need to continuously maintain. “It may be that the same thing people find attractive is what they ultimately find repelling,” said the psychologist Samuel Gosling, whose research focusses on social-media use and the motivations behind social networking and sharing.

But, as with most findings on Facebook, the opposite argument is equally prominent. In 2009, Sebastián Valenzuela and his colleagues came to the opposite conclusion of Kross: that using Facebook makes us *happier*. They also found that it increases social trust and engagement—and even encourages political participation. Valenzuela’s findings fit neatly with what social psychologists have long known about sociality: as Matthew Lieberman argues in his book “Social: Why Our Brains are Wired to Connect,” social networks are a way to share, and the experience of successful sharing comes with a psychological and physiological rush that is often self-reinforcing. The prevalence of social media has, as a result, fundamentally changed the way we read and watch: we think about how we’ll share something, and whom we’ll share it with, as we consume

Virtual social connection can even provide a buffer against stress and pain: in a 2009 study, Lieberman and his colleagues demonstrated that a painful stimulus hurt less when a woman either held her boyfriend's hand or looked at his picture; the pain-dulling effects of the picture were, in fact, twice as powerful as physical contact. Somehow, the element of distance and forced imagination—a mental representation in lieu of the real thing, something that the psychologists Wendi Gardner and Cindy Pickett call “social snacking”—had an anesthetic effect— one we might expect to carry through to an entire network of pictures of friends.

VIDEO FROM THE NEW YORKER

**How to Write a New Yorker Cartoon Caption: Danny DeVito Edition**



The key to understanding why reputable studies are so starkly divided on the question of what Facebook does to our emotional state may be in simply looking at what people actually do when they're on Facebook. “What makes it complicated is that Facebook is for lots of different things—and different people use it for different subsets of those things. Not only that, but they are also *changing* things, because of people themselves changing,” said Gosling. A 2010 study from Carnegie Mellon found that, when people engaged in direct interaction with others—that is, posting on walls, messaging, or “liking” something—their feelings of bonding and general social capital increased, while their sense of loneliness decreased. But when participants simply consumed a lot of content passively, Facebook had the opposite effect, lowering their feelings of connection and increasing their sense of loneliness.

the areas just above their eyebrows and just below their eyes recorded their facial expressions in a procedure known as facial electromyography. When the subjects were actively engaged with Facebook, their physiological response measured a significant uptick in happiness. When they were passively browsing, however, the positive effect disappeared.

This aligns with research conducted earlier this year by John Eastwood and his colleagues at York University in a meta-analysis of boredom. What causes us to feel bored and, as a result, unhappy? Attention. When our attention is actively engaged, we aren't bored; when we fail to engage, boredom sets in. As Eastwood's work, along with recent research on media multitasking, have illustrated, the greater the number of things we have pulling at our attention, the less we are able to meaningfully engage, and the more discontented we become.

In other words, the world of constant connectivity and media, as embodied by Facebook, is the social network's worst enemy: in every study that distinguished the two types of Facebook experiences—active versus passive—people spent, on average, far more time passively scrolling through newsfeeds than they did actively engaging with content. This may be why general studies of overall Facebook use, like Kross's of Ann Arbor residents, so often show deleterious effects on our emotional state. Demands on our attention lead us to use Facebook more passively than actively, and passive experiences, no matter the medium, translate to feelings of disconnection and boredom.

In ongoing research, the psychologist Timothy Wilson has learned, as he put it to me, that college students start going "crazy" after just a few minutes in a room without their phones or a computer. "One would think we could spend the time mentally entertaining ourselves," he said. "But we can't. We've forgotten how." Whenever we have downtime, the Internet is an enticing, quick solution that immediately fills the gap. We get bored, look at Facebook or Twitter, and become more bored. Getting rid of Facebook wouldn't change the fact that our attention is, more and more frequently, forgetting the path to proper, fulfilling engagement. And in that sense, Facebook isn't the problem. It's the symptom.

*Maria Konnikova is the author of the New York Times best-seller "Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes." She has a Ph.D. in psychology from Columbia University.*

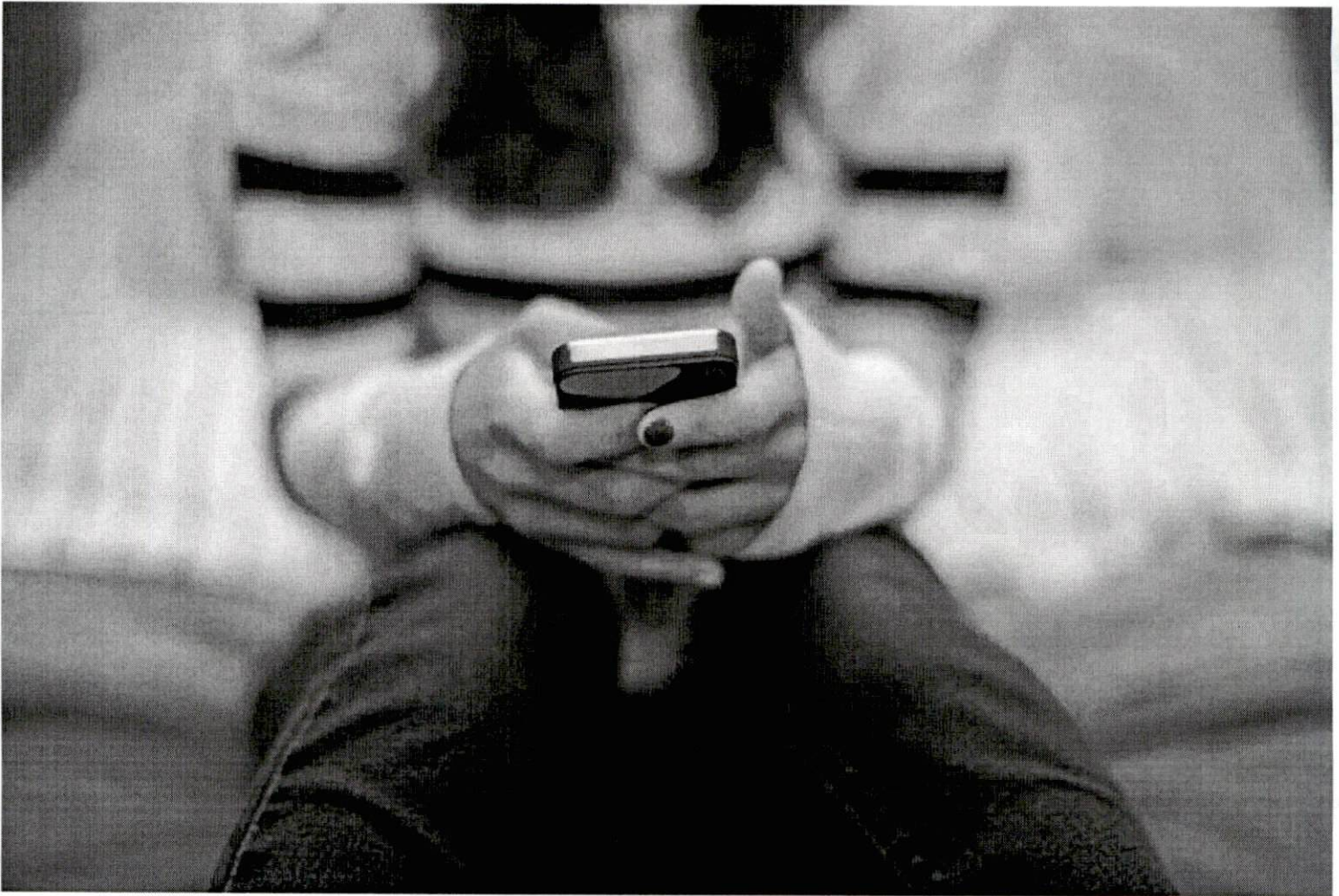
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*Maria Konnikova is the author of "The Confidence Game" and "Mastermind: How to Think Like Sherlock Holmes."*

# TIME

## The Secret Language of Girls on Instagram



Getty Images

BY RACHEL SIMMONS

NOVEMBER 10, 2014

**S**ecrecy is hardly new on Planet Girl: as many an eye-rolling boy will tell you, girls excel at eluding the prying questions of grown ups. And who can blame them? From an early age, young women learn that to be a “good girl” they must be nice, avoid conflict and make friends with everyone. It’s an impossible ask (and one I’ve studied for over a decade) – so girls respond by taking their true feelings underground.

Enter the Internet, and Instagram: a platform where emotions can run wild – and where insecurities run wilder. The photo-sharing app is social media's current queen bee: In a survey released earlier this month, three quarters of teens said they were using Instagram as their go-to app.

Instagram lets users share their photos, and “like” and comment on their friends'. The competition for “likes” encourages creativity in young users, who can use filters and other devices to spruce up their images. And its simplicity – it's just pictures, right? – comforts parents haunted by the cyberbullying they hear about on Facebook and Twitter.

But Instagram's simplicity is also deceiving: look more closely, and you find the Rosetta Stone of girl angst: a way for tweens and teens to find out what their peers really think of them (*Was that comment about my dress a joke or did she mean it?*), who likes you (*Why wasn't I included in that picture?*), even how many people like them (if you post and get too few likes, you might feel “Instashame,” as one young woman calls it). They can obsess over their friendships, monitoring social ups and downs in extreme detail. They can strategically post at high traffic hours when they know peers are killing time between homework assignments. “Likes,” after all, feel like a public, tangible, reassuring statement of a girl's social status.

That's not what the app creators intended, of course, but it does make psychological sense: as they become preteens, research shows that girls' confidence takes a nosedive. Instagram, then, is a new way for girls to chase the feeling of being liked that eludes so many of them. Instagram becomes an popularity meter and teens learn to manipulate the levers of success.

Here are a few of the ways that girls are leveraging Instagram to do much more than just share photos:

### **To Know What Friends Really Think Of Them**

In the spot where adults tag a photo's location, girls will barter “likes” in exchange for other things peers desperately want: a “TBH” (or “to be honest”).

Translation? If you like a girl's photo, she'll leave you a TBH comment. For example: "TBH, ILYSM," meaning, "To be honest I love you so much." Or, the more ambivalent: "TBH, We don't hang out that much."

### **To Measure How Much a Friend Likes You**

In this case, a girl may trade a "like" — meaning, a friend will like her photo — in exchange for another tidbit of honesty: a 1-10 rating, of how much she likes you, your best physical feature, and a numerical scale that answers the question of "are we friends?" and many others. Girls hope for a "BMS," or break my scale, the ultimate show of affection.

### **As a Public Barometer of Popularity**

Instagram lets you tag your friends to announce that you've posted a new photo of them. Girls do the app one better: they take photos of scenes where no person is present — say, a sunset — but still tag people they love and add gushing comments. It's a kind of social media mating call for BFFs. But girls also do it because the number of tags you get is a public sign of your popularity. "How many photos you're tagged in is important," says Charlotte, 12. "No one can see the actual number but you can sort of just tell because you keep seeing their name pop up."

#### **| SPOTLIGHT STORY |**

### **From 'Love Is Blind' to 'The Circle,' Netflix Is Getting Terrifyingly Good at Reality TV**

The streamer is building a reality empire on a foundation of viewers' most addictive impulses.

### **To Show BFF PDA**

That broken heart necklace you gave your bestie? It's gone the way of dial up. Now, girls use Instagram biographies – a few lines at the top of their page – to trumpet their inner circle. It's a thrill to be featured on the banner that any visitor to the page will see – but not unusual to get deleted after a fight or bad day, in plain, humiliating sight of all your friends.

### **A Way to Retaliate**

Angry at someone? Don't tag the girl who is obviously in a picture, crop her out of it entirely, refuse to follow back the one who just tried to follow you, or simply post a photo a girl is not in. These are cryptic messages adults miss but which girls hear loud and clear. A girl may post an image of a party a friend wasn't invited to, an intimate sleepover or night out at a concert. She never even has to mention the absent girl's name. She knows the other girl saw it. That's the beauty of Instagram: it's the homework you know girls always do.

### **A Personal Branding Machine**

Girls face increasing pressure not only to be smart and accomplished, but girly, sexy and social. In a 2011 survey, 74% of teen girls told the Girl Scout Research Institute that girls were living quasi-double lives online, where they intentionally downplayed their intelligence, kindness and good influence – and played up qualities like fun, funny and social. On Instagram, girls can project a persona they may not have time, or permission, to show off in the classroom: popular, social, sexy. Cultivating a certain look is so important that it's common for girls to stage 'photo shoots' with each other as photographers to produce shots that stand out visually. (Plus a joint photo shoot is more evidence of friendship.)

### **A Place For Elaborate Birthday Collages**

Remember coming to school on your big day, excited to see what you'd find plastered to your locker? Now girls can see who's celebrating them hours before they get off the bus. Birthday collages on Instagram are elaborate public tributes, filled with inside jokes, short videos, and pictures of memories you

may not have been a part of. “There is definitely a ‘I love you the most. I’ve loved you the longest edge to these birthday posts,” one parent told me. Collages that document the intensity or length of a relationship are a chance to celebrate a friend – or prove just how close you are to the birthday girl. Although most girls know to expect something from their closest friends, not getting one is seen as a direct diss, a parent told me. And it can be competitive: another parent told me her daughter’s friend stayed up until midnight just so she could be the first to post.

While girls may seem addicted to their online social lives, it’s not all bad — and they still prefer the company of an offline friend to any love they have to click for. (In a survey that would surely surprise some parents, 92% of teen girls said they would give up all of their social media friends if it meant keeping their best friend.) And, of course, likes aren’t everything. As 13 year-old Leah told me, “Just because people don’t write me a paragraph on Instagram doesn’t mean they don’t like me.”

*Rachel Simmons is the co-founder of Girls Leadership Institute and the author of the New York Times bestselling book, “Odd Girl Out: The Hidden Culture of Aggression in Girls” and “The Curse of the Good Girl: Raising Authentic Girls With Courage and Confidence.” Follow her on Twitter @racheljsimmons.*

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