 HW1: The Internet and the News

**1. What did you read / watch?**

* [Facebook Knows Instagram Is Toxic for Teen Girls, Company Documents Show](https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739?mod=hp_lead_pos7&mod=article_inline)
* [Is Facebook Bad for You? It Is for About 360 Million Users, Company Surveys Suggest](https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-bad-for-you-360-million-users-say-yes-company-documents-facebook-files-11636124681?mod=article_inline)

**2. Describe the controversy / issue raised in the articles / film (~1/2 page single spaced)**

The articles that I read both dealt with the negative impacts that social media can have on people. I was interested in these articles because, someone who runs and Instagram account for a club at school, has a personal Instagram account and is a teenager, I can understand some of the negative impacts that media can have on young people. The first article took a look at how Instagram negatively impacts teens, especially young women. Many young girls felt as if being constantly bombarded with edited pictures of women who had what would be considered a “perfect” body, was making them feel insecure about the way they looked; many even developed eating disorders after trying to achieve the same look. These types of posts were also hard to avoid, as many noticed that it did not matter what interests they had, they were still constantly being shown posts that promoted a certain look. That was the case of one of the girls in the article, as she started following fitness influencers and then all the posts the algorithm was sending her were promoting a specific lifestyle and being thin. These posts showing edited pictures of people with “perfect” bodies and “perfect” lives made may feel insecure about themselves, the way they looked and their weight. This caused many to spiral into depression and eating disorders. Although the people in charge of Instagram claimed to have made changes to help mental help, such as adding options to hide the amount of likes on posts (a feature that I am guilty of using often), they have still not done enough. Which is not surprising because, by selling glamorized images of influencer’s lives, they can make large amounts of money. By creating a popularity game, Instagram gains the opportunity to sell more ads and cause people to spend more time on the app. This of course comes at the price of teen’s mental health.

The second article was about Facebook. This article was focused on adults and how many have developed an addiction to the app. Similar to teenagers, adults also get sucked into the shiny, and over-edited world of social media; feeling the urge to always be checking the account for updates and new posts, even if it affects their work, sleep and in-person relationships. This obsession over the app has cause people to lose sleep and even spend less time with their loved ones, or even their children. Although the app has cause many to spend less time in-person with their loved ones, it is not all negative, as it has allowed for many to keep in contact with friends and family who may live far away. While social media can have good impacts such as spreading helpful information, it still has many negative effects. While it may seem easy ignore posts, I can personally attest to how easy it is to get sucked into the web. Whenever a post does well, (meaning it gets plenty of views and a large number of likes) you feel really good, and want to replicate that feeling. It is almost like a drug, and it’s hard to stop; I personally had to turn my notifications off and limit the time I spent in the app.

**3. Analyze the controversy (~1/2 page single spaced)**

While I recognize that social media can be used for good, I feel as if the negative aspects of it are never going to fully go away. I have seen social media being used to bring attention to important events, to organize strikes, walkouts and to bring awareness to certain topics that affect people. Yet, I have also seen it cause eating disorders, being used to bully others and spread misinformation. At the end, the only ones who end up benefitting from this are those who own the apps. Afterall, they gain views, likes, interactions, placement ads and ultimately money by selling edited picture of an idealized and ultimately fake life. This affects easily influences people, who usually end up being young teenagers.

Because of how ingrained social media is in our current world, an because bad people have aways existed and will likely always exist, I do not believe that this problem will ever fully go away. However, I do think that platforms such as Instagram could do a better job of filtering out accounts that promote unhealthy habits, and stop the overuse of beauty filters. While I do not believe that these controversies will fully go away, I do hope that people (especially young teens) will be able to recognize that those images through their screen are fake. No one has skin that clear, teeth that white or a perfect life.