|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Student Name: | Christopher Olvera | | |
| Date: | | 10/4/21 | |
| Period: | | | 2nd |
|  | | | |

Impact of the Internet: The Social Dilemma

Write an essay on the issues and concerns presented in the documentary, *The Social Dilemma*. Your essay should not only address the issues and concerns presented in the documentary but should also include your own thoughts on how you are grappling with these same issues, and if you have come to any resolutions for yourself. Here’s a list of topics and issues you may want to address. If you have a concern or issue that you would like to address regarding *The Social Dilemma* that is not listed, you are welcome to include it in your essay. A quality paper would include at least three distinct issues or concerns addressed in *The Social Dilemma*.

* Describe A.I. and the idea of algorithms. Should we be concerned? Why or why not?
* What is the great divide or polarization of society? How has technology contributed to it or influenced it? What can you do to be mindful of the great divide?
* The documentary follows a family and their daily use of technology. What issues does the family grapple with? How does your family make use of technology? What guidelines does your family live by regarding the use of the Internet, cell phones, or technology in general?
* What is fake news, how does it spread, and what are the consequences? Should tech companies have a moral responsibility of how technology affects us?
* Is technology bad? Are tech tools starting to erode how a society should work? When the documentary states that “Social media is not a tool”. What does that mean?
* Who are the customers of tech companies? Who or what is the product? What is the business model that tech companies are operating under? Can anything be done to change it?
* What do tech companies keep track of? What kind of data? What do they do with the data? Should this be regulated?
* What are the three main goals or dials of social media? What are these dials and how do they work? How does a tech company meet their goals? What is the tech industry’s motivation?
* What is positive intermittent reinforcement? How is persuasion built into technology? Are tech companies capable of modifying someone’s behavior?
* Do parents have a legitimate concern about the content and amount of time their children spend on their devices?
* How do you feel technology effects our self-worth and identity? What are some of the statistics presented in the documentary? What are some good habits to fight against those pressures?
* What is an algorithm? What does it mean that the algorithm has a mind of its own?

Have we have lost control? Who is in control?

* What is an extensional threat? What is the threat addressed in the documentary?

What is exponential gossip and exponential hear-say?

* As technology becomes more integrating into our society, what are the concerns? What can be done? How can we design technology humanely? How can we use technology to make the world better?
* Do you feel that there is evidence that teens, as well as adults, have lost the ability to calm and soothe themselves with real-world reflection, activities, and relationships? How do you and your family participate in real-world reflection, activities, and relationships?

Do you have a concern or issue that you would like to address regarding *The Social Dilemma* that is not listed? If so, write it within this box.

|  |
| --- |
|  |

The particulars . .

~ Highlight the three topics above that you will writ about.

~ Begin writing your paper on the next page of this document.

~ Put a proper heading.

~ Double space your sentences.

~ Perhaps a five-paragraph format would work well with an Intro, your 3 topics, and a Conclusion.

~ Use your notes to support your writing.

~ You can find more info at [www.thesocialdilemma.com](http://www.thesocialdilemma.com)

~ You can find the film on Netflix and YouTube.

~ You are welcome to use other sources to support your writing as well.

Christopher Olvera

Way Cool Coding School

10/4/21

2nd Period

The Divider of All

Technology in and of itself is quite amazing; technology brings people together, provides information, helps those in need, and grants nearly everyone entertainment, no doubt about it. It goes hand in hand with science and brings about new advancements constantly. But technology also has as many downfalls as it does accomplishments, and the people at fault are the large corporations behind the innovations. Major offenses include tracking users and collecting data, incentivizing addiction and building reliance, anonymizing hate messages that otherwise could’ve been prevented, and amidst this they pretend as if they’re the ones supporting the customers. “The Social Dilemma”, a documentary created by Netflix, reveals that retired developers for these platforms are concerned for their users and the platform they’re worked tirelessly on. This is the new age of the Internet: misinformation, isolation, and manipulation.

Misinformation is an extremely volatile topic online; children and adults alike are receiving false information and perceiving it as real, leading to the health of these people being jeopardized. Fake news itself is archaic, but as our ability to communicate gets better and better, so does the spread of fake news. In a study done by MIT in 2018, they learned that false info spreads six times faster than true news. Fake news mainly spreads through social media such as Twitter, Reddit, Facebook, Instagram, but the consequences of such widespread technology and incorrect information is an increasing number of deaths due to avertible causes. Tech companies should have a responsibility to protect their users from this fake info, such as how Reddit recently banned anti-vaccination believers and fake “COVID-cures” like ivermectin. I myself have done many things to protect myself from fake news; by not using social media as much and checking the sources of questionable topics. I believe it’s time for both the population and the corporations to step up and try and stop this problem.

Isolation is a growing worry for parents, children seem to be spending more and more time in their rooms and on their phones. It is a justified worry however, according to Oberlo: in 2016 there was only 3.7 billion people who owned a smartphone, now there are 6.4 billion in 2021. Elite Content Marketer states that teens now spend around 5.1 hours a day on their smartphone, which is about a 5th of the day. This is a huge issue for a lot of people, from kids to the elderly, almost everyone uses their phone. Infinite Internet access should be allowed if parents believe so, but only when the user isn’t isolated. My parents were able to fix this issue with me by placing my computer right in the living room, so I can always stay connected with them and they can stay connected with me. I believe other parents could fix this by making sure teens can’t charge their phone in their room, making conversation, and getting their children into some hobbies. After all, the best way to spend your time is doing something productive and enjoyable, not staring into a screen isolated from your friends and family.

Manipulation is terrifying. Just the thought of being controlled and told what to do whilst being online, which is meant to be a place for freedom, is scary. What’s even scarier is that social media apps have been mastering the art of manipulation for over 10 years through algorithms. Algorithms are a set of rules followed by computers, and in this case social media apps utilizes them to make sure you’re spending the most amount of time possible. These algorithms have the special ability to learn and adapt their own rules, which makes it seem like they have a mind of their own, so to speak. Algorithms have got so advanced that it seems like we, as customers and users, have lost control of the info being displayed to us. A majority of popular apps includes some form of it and there truly is no way to get away from all of it: Google uses it, YouTube uses it, Reddit uses it, Twitter uses it, Instagram uses it, Facebook uses it, and as such there isn’t a concrete way to avoid this form of manipulation. For me, the best way to solve this issue is to use Google’s built in “incognito” mode and research true news from there. Search results tend to skew depending on what you’ve previously inquired, and by logging out of your account (which is practically what incognito mode does) the results are usually normalized. The word “normalized” shouldn’t be used here though, as there is no real “normal” anymore; everyone’s results are altered in some way.

All in all, technology has its ups and downs; its goods and bads. Digital education and information, but sometimes that information isn’t true; freedom of speech, but nearly everyone can and will be anonymous; endless entertainment, but growing isolation and addiction. Social media causes teens to feel bad and harm themselves when they compare themselves to others who use makeup and filters. Misinformation spreads very quickly, and sometimes people get addicted to fake news and isolate themselves due to said addiction. Social media manipulates people into thinking differently by showing users different content. But it’s not all bad, if you know what’s real and what’s not, it can be a good news output and a way to communicate with friends and family. That, however, is not reason enough to simply ignore the facts: social media is currently doing more harm than good to most of the population.